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A New Tradition: Legitimizing the Authority of the Tokugawa through the Hands of Japanese Neo-Confucians

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Introduction: An Overview

I. A Brief Overview of Confucianism in Japan

When examining the history of Japan's political development, it is important to consider the influence that various religions and traditions have on the island nation. In dealing with a syncretistic society like Japan, where people's daily religious practices are influenced by three major traditions (*Shintô* 神道, Buddhism, and Confucianism), the lines that divide the religions from each other can often seem to disappear, making the three appear to have always coexisted. In Japan, all three traditions play respective roles in the average citizen's life, and all three serve specific purposes in answer to various ideological and metaphysical questions. However, in the case of Confucianism, which along with Buddhism was imported from foreign lands, there was a point when the process of its integration into Japanese society began. This beginning is as fascinating as it is rich with discourse.

Neo-Confucian doctrine had been studied for centuries before its induction into Japanese society as a dominant ideology, and the reasons for the sudden shift as diverse as they are complex. What becomes certain is that Neo-Confucianism became the political and educational center of the Tokugawa society in 17th century Japan. Through the aid of various prominent Japanese Neo-Confucians, the government of the time was able to manipulate and modify a foreign tradition into something that was distinctly Japanese, which they did in order to legitimize their authoritative rule over the people. Thus, this paper will explain that the Neo-Confucianism developed in Japan during the Tokugawa, was a uniquely Japanese creation that stemmed from the debate existing between the *bakufu* and their Neo-Confucian scholars and among the scholars themselves.

The story begins when Confucian teachings were first introduced to Japan, though the historical record of this account is anything but clear. It is possible that Confucianism may have entered Japan as early as the 3rd century CE via Korea, however, it is generally believed that it came packaged with the first importation of Chinese culture in the 7th century CE during the reign of Prince Shôtoku 聖徳太子, as explained in the *Nihon Shoki* 日本書記 (Japan's second oldest account of its classical history).¹ During this period, the Confucian classics were studied and taught in the Court Academy (Daigakuryô 大学寮) from the beginning of the 8th century. While the teachings did not become widespread during this time, Japanese intellectuals, thanks in large part to the patronage of the Kiyowara family 清原氏, had been informed about shifts in Confucian teachings during the 12th century.² Neo-Confucianism was introduced to Japan at some point at this time as an interpretation of nature and society based on metaphysical principles (having arrived highly influenced by Daoist and Buddhist thought).

The efforts of Song Dynasty Neo-Confucian scholar Zhu Xi, responsible for the grouping of The Four Books and a leading figure of The School of Principle, were instrumental in shaping the development of Confucianism on the archipelago. For this reason, the word for Neo-Confucianism in Japanese is *shushigaku* 朱子学**, which is a word that was derived from the Japanese pronunciation of Zhu Xi.³ His

¹ Wm. Theodore de Bary, Sources of Japanese Tradition: Volume 2 (New York: Columbia University Press) 27.

* *myôgyôke* 妙行家 a family in charge of explaining the classics to the Court Academy

² de Bary 27

** a more general term for Confucianism is *kyûkyô* 儒教

³ Warren Smith, Confucianism in Modern Japan: A Study of Conservatism in Japanese Intellectual History (Tokyo: Hokuseido Pres) 4

new brand of Neo-Confucianism made its way to Zen Buddhist temples in Japan through their interactions with Chinese monks.

Zhu Xi's teachings may have made the largest impact on Japan, but much of the background knowledge already existed passively in Buddhist intellectual circles, concerned with certain aspects of Chinese teachings and affairs. It would not be until the 17th century that a select few Japanese Zen Buddhists would force a renewed breath of life into Neo-Confucian teaching, causing it to slowly awaken from its dormant state, and ultimately rising up to organize it into a cohesive doctrine accessible to a wider audience.

However, before Neo-Confucianism could spread, Japan would first have to resolve the internal crisis of war that plagued the three islands of Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu. It wouldn't be until the warring feudal states led by various powerful warlord *daimyō* ceased attack and surrendered control to the unified polity under Tokugawa Ieyasu that Neo-Confucianism would surface as the dominant ideological force in Japan.

II. The Tokugawa Conquer the Lands

The Edo Period (1603 – 1867, also known in Japanese as the *Edo Bakufu* 江戸幕府, or the *Tokugawa Bakufu* 徳川幕府*) is one of the first steps, and arguably the most significant, in the formation of the modern Japanese state. At this time, marked by the supreme rule of Tokugawa Ieyasu (and his heirs) that 260 years of peace went unbroken. Under the first Shogun of Tokugawa Japan, Ieyasu, the first Japanese bureaucratic government was fashioned (although in essence it remained a

* *bakufu* being the Japanese word for government

feudal military dictatorship). During this period, the *daimyo* ceased warring with one another under a strict system of control enforced by a newly centralized form of government designed by the Tokugawa *bakufu*.

The country had previously been involved in roughly a century and a half volatile state of warfare known as *sengoku jidai* (戦国時代) or the age of Warring States. During this long struggle for power, Tokugawa Ieyasu consolidated his authority over the entire nation, a process that actually continued into the Edo period. Life during the Tokugawa period was strict and hierarchical, with the population divided into four distinct classes: samurai, farmers, craftspeople, and merchants. The period was marked by immobility, in that classes and physical movement were fixed for life for the majority of the population (with one's class and status passed to one's heirs). Thus, the Tokugawa period, while enjoying a relative level of peace and prosperity, also saw the decline of the samurai class who no longer had any reason to fight. The lowest level of samurai, practically becoming useless, turned to various intellectual pursuits, and along with the former Zen Buddhists, would be instrumental in the spread of Neo-Confucianism. The polarization and rigidity of the classes implemented at the hands of the Tokugawa were intended for the purpose of maintaining power and privilege (in any way they saw fit). Of course, the Tokugawa Regime faced many ideological problems of legitimacy, and with the period of peace, the *bakufu* saw intellectualism flourish among of the samurai, threatening its power and legitimacy to rule (which eventually caused their end and the start of the Meiji Restoration).

While Neo-Confucianism had been developing independently of the *bakufu*,

its rise in popularity among various former Zen Buddhists intrigued the new authorities who were looking for ways to legitimize their power. Thus, much of the rise in Neo-Confucian intellectualism can be attributed to an invested interest from the Tokugawa shogunate. During the Tokugawa shogunate, Neo-Confucian society flourished, undergoing many stages of development, but ultimately becoming the dominant ideology and tradition of the era.

Tokugawa Ieyasu's central concern was the restoration of peace and order to the war-ravaged Japan. In order to accomplish this, he looked to China for answers. Seeing a great potential for the Chinese bureaucratic system, which was based on the principles of Confucianism, and had come into effect following China's own warring states period, he saw Chinese intellectualism as a way to legitimize his own control in Japan. The prestige and success of the Chinese model appealed to Tokugawa Ieyasu, who modeled, along with his successors, the *bakuhau* system of government. In this system, the *bakufu* (military government) devised a system of two hundred and fifty autonomous regions, known as *han*, that could be systematically controlled by the central government. Each region was controlled by one *daimyō* (military warlord) who served directly under the Shogun. In a system of alternating years known as *sankin kōtai* 参勤交代, each *daimyo* was forced to attend to the main court housed in Edo (modern-day Tokyo) one year and were allowed to return to their *han* the next. It was during this period that various Neo-Confucian scholars came to attend the court under the Tokugawa as special advisors, alongside Zen Buddhist monks who traditionally held these positions.

Inevitably, the Neo-Confucian ideology would come to overtake their Zen

counterparts as the official doctrine of the Tokugawa court. That being said, the other traditions that existed in Japan did not disappear. Confucianism and Buddhism, along with *Shintô* (the native religion of Japan) would meld over the years into a state of syncretism. While aspects of *Shintô* had already found their way into Buddhism by the time the Tokugawa came into power, Confucianism had not made a significant impact. As different Japanese scholars started to see similarities in the traditions, they began to devise ways for the three to harmoniously coexist. While historically the three traditions have each had their periods of dominance, the Tokugawa era is marked by Confucianism's turn to reign as the state ideology, and a decline in Buddhism's authority. Even so, Buddhism does not disappear during the Tokugawa, rather, it is no longer the state sponsored ideology.

The pinnacle of a model Confucian society within Japan became part of the legacy of the Tokugawa; one that would never fully disappear even after the Tokugawa fell. Even today, Lee Kuan Yew, former Prime Minister of Singapore (perhaps the greatest modern example of a functioning Confucian state), recognizes the modern Japanese government as a system founded on Confucian ethics and moral values, a testament to the efforts of various scholars and rulers of the epoch.⁴

III. Why does Neo-Confucianism Come to Dominate?

As already stated, during the period when Neo-Confucianism came to be the hegemonic frame of thought, Buddhist and Shinto traditions were over time actively suppressed, and Confucian education, which focused on the study of classical Chinese, would remain intact until the Meiji Restoration, when the former would once again surface as a tool for creating a national identity.

⁴ Zakaria Fareed, "Culture is Destiny: A Conversation with Lee Kuan Yew," Mar.-Apr. 1994: 113

Tokugawa Ieyasu, having just come in to power through the means of militaristic might, faced the ultimate question of how was he going to secure his place, and that of his family, as the de facto ruling party of Japan. In other words, if longevity was Ieyasu's primary concern, how was he going to ideologically underpin his control and silence any dissenting voices? As a ruler, he had to find some way to legitimize his power, and to establish a new structure of control so that Japan would not plunge back into a state of total chaos.

Ieyasu turned to China and a group of newly established Neo-Confucians educated in Chinese scholarship. Hailing from various Zen monasteries in Kyoto, the Japanese Neo-Confucians, under the auspices of Fujiwara Seika 藤原惺窩, appeared to offer answers for which the Tokugawa was searching. They could offer the new government an ideological frame that would secure their power and legitimacy as the rulers of Japan. In addition, Ieyasu and various daimyō sought out the skills of Neo-Confucians, who had a superior command of the Chinese language and the teachings of the Chinese classics, since they were considered assets to have at the time (it was believed that the Chinese had something important to teach the war-torn Japan).⁵ In other words, Neo-Confucianism carried with it the prestige of the Chinese bureaucracy, which the Tokugawa wished to emulate.

Though the fate of Neo-Confucianism in Japan was undoubtedly linked to the Tokugawa government, the rise of Neo-Confucianism cannot solely be attributed to the rise of the Tokugawa. While the emergence of the two entities (Tokugawa Shogunate and the Japanese Neo-Confucians) occurred simultaneously, they developed independently from one another. That being said, their paths of progress

⁵ de Bary 32

are wholly connected in a profound way. The rise of Neo-Confucianism to the status of hegemonic ideology, and eventual replacement of Buddhism as the dominant tradition in Japan, is due to the Tokugawa's interest in promoting it as the representative credo of the regime. Therefore, it cannot be ignored that the Tokugawa did in fact play a large role in Neo-Confucianism's role in the country.

The Tokugawa had just come to power through military might and faced a number of concerns that will be examined in this paper. The first question that the Tokugawa had to face was whether it was legitimate to seize power through regicide* (i.e. since they had conquered the lands, it should be theirs for the taking) and if this action could be morally justified. Neo-Confucian scholars in dialogue with Ieyasu were pressed to answer this question time and again. What Tokugawa hoped Neo-Confucianism could offer was the ideological support necessary in order to legitimize their power. What is more, it outlined a detailed system of education as part of the complete package to ensure that countless generations would follow and believe that the Tokugawa was their legitimate ruler (as opposed to other warlords who had controlled Japan during the Warring States period).

Historically, Confucian ethics were at odds with militaristic, violent governments. In a strictly Mencian** sense where rulers are supposed to provide for the welfare of the people, rulers were peaceful and diplomatic. They divinely ruled through Heaven in order to guide and educate the people, not to coerce them into devotion. However in the case of the Japanese, a few Neo-Confucians restructured notions of power to include violent measures, and placed the Tokugawa, who had

* meaning, "to kill the king"

** Mencius is one of the developers of Confucianism and believed that human nature was intrinsically good, also one of the Four Books

acquired their divine right to rule by conquering “illegitimate rulers,” in the position of having received the legacy of power from Heaven.

To ensure this doctrine’s peaceful acceptance (because despite using forceful means of coming to power, they were the victors of a longstanding war, and were committed to maintaining peace), the *bakufu* implemented a strict educational program that adhered to the principles of Neo-Confucianism in order to secure future citizens’ loyalty to the *bakufu*. It is important to remember that while the complete ideological shift was slow, the importance and pursuit of Neo-Confucian knowledge to the Tokugawa were significant from the onset of their regime.⁶

IV. Disputing and Diversifying Orthodoxy: The Rise of the Three Schools

The development of the Neo-Confucian brand of Confucianism in Japan was diverse and varied, since various schools of thought were exported to the country. Internally, the Tokugawa did not at first endorse one brand of Neo-Confucianism, but rather for quite some time embraced a relatively free atmosphere of intellectual discourse and debate, highly uncharacteristic of the regime’s general authoritarian stance on most issues. However, again, it becomes clear that the Confucianism developed in Japan was entirely unique to the country and inspired by a direct nudging from the *bakufu*.

In response to different interpretations of Confucian doctrine, three major schools of Neo-Confucianism developed in Japan: the Zhu Xi school, Wang Yangming School, and the School of Ancient Thought. The argument that arose between the three can be generalized by their disagreements over the meaning of heterodoxy versus orthodoxy, and which Chinese scholars were responsible for

⁶ de Bary 32

transmitting the orthodox point of view. The first schools to develop in Japan were that of the Song dynasty Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming, with Zhu Xi's learning slightly more dominant. The School of Ancient Thought developed later as a reaction to Neo-Confucianism and a call to return to the ancient classics of Confucius and Mencius. More specifically, explained in greater detail throughout the essay, their debates on orthodoxy encompassed how the *dao* 道 is transmitted (i.e. principle *li* 理, material force *qi* 氣, and the Great Ultimate *taiji* 太極) and why it is transmitted in such a way. This fed into the discrepancies that arose on human nature, in other words, whether man was inherently good or evil, and for that matter, the origins of the concepts of good and evil. While all of the schools recognized the significance of fellow scholars, each held their chosen scholar as the orthodox Neo-Confucian view.

For the most part, the conflict between Zhu Xi's and Wang Yangming's schools mimicked the timeless argument between Xun Zi and Mencius. The third school, the School of Ancient Learning 古学, went in a completely different direction by attempting to cut out the majority of Neo-Confucian doctrine developed in the Song Dynasty, and return to the ancient teaching in the four books and five classics. Before Neo-Confucianism had become the standard brand of the tradition, the Song Dynasty scholars in China were considered unorthodox. Zhu Xi's teachings were also once considered unorthodox, in Japan, however, Zhu Xi had suddenly become the authority. The School of Ancient Learning wished to return to the original teachings of Confucianism, and while they recognized the Song intellectuals as important to organization of the Neo-Confucian texts and canon, they almost completely subvert the commentary of Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming.

Despite the internal discourse amongst the intellectuals, in the beginning of the 17th century, the *bakufu* (including various *daimyō*) had little concern for what was orthodox or not. In fact, the *bakufu* almost seemed to take advantage of the dysfunction in order to garner support for their own regime, taking from the scholars what was needed to legitimize their power and leaving the rest for the scholars to duke out amongst themselves. In the end, it seems that the Tokugawa were more interested in creating something new that would support their specific needs to support their authoritative rule. As will be seen throughout the paper, at various different stages in the Tokugawa, the *bakufu* both directly and indirectly endorsed all three of the schools, depending on what interested the leaders of the time, and which scholars were properly able to transmit what the Tokugawa wanted the people to believe. Although the Tokugawa eventually endorsed various institutions set up by the scholars as the official educators of Japan, they rarely seemed concerned with the squabbling, and for a long time they even created an atmosphere that welcomed the diversity of thought. The development of Neo-Confucianism, in addition to mapping the progression of the state's ideological advancements, also brings to light an important debate on the nature of the word "orthodox" and who, or what is controlling the meaning of this word.

V. The *Great Learning* and the Japanese Neo-Confucian Scholars

In order to properly explain the conflict that occurred in Japan between various schools of thought, their interpretations of Neo-Confucian doctrine, and their interactions with the Tokugawa shogunate, three distinct Japanese Neo-Confucian scholars will be examined in the following three chapters. Each scholar represents

one of the three schools and each played a significant role in the development of the tradition within the country. Not all of them had direct contact with the *bakufu*, but they all contributed to the popularization of the tradition in a significant way.

The primary text that will be examined throughout the three chapters in relation to the scholars will be the *Great Learning* (*j. daigaku; ch. daxue* 大学). All three of the scholars devoted significant study to this text, and all three had distinct interpretations of it.

The discussion of Japanese analysis of this text begins in Chapter two with Fujiwara Seika (藤原 惺窩, 1561-1619), who is often considered to be the father of Neo-Confucianism in Japan and responsible for introducing the *Great Learning* to the country in the Japanese vernacular. Seika, a former Zen-Buddhist, is representative of a group of monks who, at the start of the 17th century, shifted their ideological beliefs from Zen-Buddhism, believing it be morally corrupt and outdated, to Neo-Confucianism. He paints a vivid picture of the intellectual atmosphere at the time of the rise of Neo-Confucianism and provides a strong base for the works of future scholars. Generally, he is associated with the Wang Yangming school (though he often associates himself more strongly with Lin Zhao'en); however, this school had not really organized itself during his lifetime. Seika met Tokugawa Ieyasu when the future shogun served under Toyotomi Hideyoshi, long before he had become shogun. Though Seika greatly influenced Tokugawa Ieyasu, he never ended up working for him, rather choosing to serve as advisor to various *daimyō*.⁷ A staunch Neo-Confucian (although remnants of Zen-Buddhism exist in his works), he was

⁷ Paolo Beonio-Brochieri, "On the Importance of Fujiwara Seika," *Modern Asian Studies* 18.4 1984: 609

convinced that the most important advance in China was the establishment of the Neo-Confucian tradition as the official doctrine, and wished to do the same for Japan, due mainly to the fact that the tradition has a strong understanding of the human and material worlds.⁸

Chapter three follows Seika's prodigious student Hayashi Razan (林 羅山, 1583-1657), as he attempts to synthesize Neo-Confucian doctrine with the shogun's own ideals. Razan not only worked directly with the shogun's court, but also set up Japan's first officially government sponsored Neo-Confucian academy. Razan's commitment to Zhu Xi in the *Great Learning* is at times unnerving, especially when he rewrites history to portray his master Seika to also be a member of Zhu Xi's school. Razan is instrumental in synthesizing Confucianism and Shintoism, seeing the two traditions as interconnected in their doctrine.

Finally in Chapter four, not strictly representative of the School of Ancient Learning, but nonetheless affiliated with its scripture, Kaibara Ekken (貝原 益軒, also known as *Atsunobu* 篤信, 1630-1714), who was actually a low-level *samurai* rather than a former Zen Buddhist monk, modernized Neo-Confucian language into understandable Japanese by combining the *Great Learning* and other documents into a simplified textbook intended for the common people. Ekken was primarily concerned with making the tradition accessible to all members of Tokugawan society rather than just to the intellectual elite, thanks in large part to new technologies like the wood-block press. By the time that Ekken arrived on the scene, the Tokugawa bureaucratic system has become far more structurally organized, and the three schools

⁸ Richard Hooker, "Japanese Neo-Confucianism," 1996. 6 Dec. 2007 <http://www.wsu.edu:8000/~dee/TOKJAPAN/NEO.HTM>

of Neo-Confucian thought have firmly established themselves in Japan. Since the Tokugawa have fully established their bureaucracy by this time, Ekken provides a more “contemporary” spin on Neo-Confucianism as it too begins to “modernize” in conjunction with the government.

Since Neo-Confucianism is intrinsically linked with the political center and state-sponsored education, the three Japanese scholars are in an interesting position. Although they might disagree with the motives of the shogunate, rarely are they overtly at odds with the political regime. Yet, they are constantly confronted with issues of plurality; wanting to both further their own ideological paths (whether it is a question of defending orthodoxy or just promoting their own standard of Neo-Confucianism) and simultaneously trying to find a way to make Neo-Confucian ideals fit into the new Tokugawa society. The three are all linked by their common zeal for creating what they think is a model society based on Neo-Confucian ethics and their explicit disdain of Buddhist influence.

VI. Problems of Concern

In following the three scholars, three recurrent problems of concern invariably come into the foreground. For each scholar, some of the points will be far more of a concern than for others, but regardless of how pronounced they are at a given time, they are the keys to driving through Japanese Neo-Confucian territory.

The first problem is the legitimization of the Tokugawa, or, what exactly in the tradition was the shogunate searching for that would help it to understand its own position in society. How were those in power going to deal with the fundamental issue of remaining in power? How do they explain moral expediency to the ruler?

And who exactly was helping them sort out these issues?

The second problem comes from how the scholars dealt with these and other problems proposed by the shogunate. In the process of making the tradition accessible to a militaristic regime, how exactly did the scholars deal with one another? What issues arose from within the context of the tradition that created debate amongst the intellectuals in Japan? And what effect, if any, did this have on the rulers in power? This encompasses how the scholars looked at issues of orthodoxy and how they dealt with discrepancies in each other's interpretation of the tradition.

Finally, in the third problem, an examination is necessary of how the scholars' analytical discrepancies are translated back to the *bakufu*, and how the scholars engaged in promoting their own motives. This will follow the nature of legitimacy to its greatest depth, dealing with a severe problem posed to the Tokugawa. If the government is looking for a way to legitimize its own rule, what does it do when the source of the legitimizing process is in fact also struggling with the meaning of what legitimacy is (i.e. orthodoxy, heterodoxy, or neither, and, for that matter, says who)? How, by whom, and with what reasoning are texts and their interpretations being legitimized, and how does the *bakufu* understand and deal with this problem? Perhaps more importantly, how do the debates like the one over human nature get transmitted to the people (i.e. via education)?

To reiterate, through the examination of the works of three distinct Neo-Confucian scholars, the development of the tradition within Japan will be outlined in relation to the *bakufu*'s own progressive expansion and solidification of their power.

As Neo-Confucianism developed over the course of the two hundred and sixty year regime, the government would attempt to assess and select from an existing pool of Neo-Confucian doctrine that which would best fit their needs. Thus, the Neo-Confucianism developed during this time will prove to be the unique and diverse offspring of ideological and metaphysical debates stemming from both internal scholarly discourse as well as developments that occurred from interactions with the *bakufu*.

Although in Richard Bowring's own analysis he brings to light the idea that Fujiwara Seika's text *Daigaku Yōryaku* 大学要略 was adapted to fit local Japanese conditions during the Tokugawa period, this paper argues the extension of this idea to all three scholars under examination.⁹ Bowring interprets these "conditions" as Seika trying to understand how to develop an ideology that would serve the Tokugawa and unify Japan under the rule of a singular, centralized entity. Though it is true that Seika and other scholars were adapting the doctrine to fit the conditions of the time, it is important to examine that this process is an extension of the scholars engaging in the government. In other words, the "conditions" were not solely developed independently by the scholars, but rather in reaction to discourse stemming from various ideological debates that occurred both between the scholars and the government and internally among the scholars themselves.

It is also important to remember that the three scholars under examination predate the Kansei Edict of 1790, perhaps the Tokugawa shogunate's most severe ideological law, which made Neo-Confucianism the official philosophy of Japan and outlawed the teaching of anything in disagreement with the established teachings of

⁹ Bowring 449

Zhu Xi. Thus, by 1790, orthodoxy meant strict adherence to the Zhu Xi school, and all “heterodox” studies, or anything that deviated from Zhu Xi, was contraband (despite its immense popularity).¹⁰

¹⁰ Hooker 1996

Two

Fujiwara Seika 藤原惺窩：
Understanding the *Great Learning* through
the *Daigaku Yôryaku* 大学要略

I. Introduction

Fujiwara Seika 藤原惺窩 (1561-1619), often writing under the nom de plume Hokuniku Sanjin 北肉山人, is perhaps best known as one of the major founding figures of Neo-Confucianism in Japan, if not as the actual father himself. While Seika alone is not responsible for the consolidation of the Neo-Confucian practice in Japan, his ideology has been identified strongly as the defining base for the Tokugawa regime, thanks in large part to his disciple Hayashi Razan (who was responsible for popularizing his great works). While he was linked with the early Tokugawa *bakufu* (government), his writings and scholarship were never intended for a large audience. In fact, Seika shied away from political life and is known to have turned down offers from Tokugawa Ieyasu himself to join his personal court, however, he did lecture frequently, and served as a companion/advisor to the daimyô Kobayakawa Hideaki 小早川 秀秋 and was sponsored by the daimyô Akamatsu Hiromichi 赤松 博道 to develop a new edition of the Four Books and Five Classics based on Neo-Confucian readings and interpretations.¹¹

Seika's contribution to the study of Neo-Confucianism occurred mainly towards the end of his life. The majority of Seika's life was spent as a Zen Buddhist monk at a Gozan Temple in Kyoto under the position of Chief Seat, serving just below the abbot. He served as a monk for thirty years before beginning his Neo-Confucian scholarship (however, his study of Chinese philosophy and academia had always been of interest).¹² Many of his unconventional approaches towards Neo-Confucian

¹¹ Richard Bowring, "Fujiwara Seika and the Great Learning," *Monumenta Nipponica* 61.4 (Winter, 2006): 444

¹² Herman Ooms, "Primeval Chaos' and 'Mental Void' in Early Tokugawa Ideology of Fujiwara Seika..." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 13.4 1986: 247

doctrine may have been influenced by his own Buddhist upbringing.¹³ Seika's *Daigaku Yōryaku* 大学要略 (*The Epitome of the Great Learning*) is perhaps the most famous and influential scholarly title that he wrote. Written in classical Japanese with some degree of vernacular form rather than in classical Chinese, *Daigaku Yōryaku* is Seika's personal interpretation of the Chinese Confucian text the *Great Learning* (*da xue* 大学) selected by Zhu Xi 朱子 during the Song Dynasty as one of four great foundational works of Neo-Confucianism.¹⁴ Seika was the first of the Japanese Neo-Confucians to interpret the text into Japanese. Seika's interpretation differs greatly from that of Zhu Xi and is worth considerable study. However, as will be discussed in later chapters, Hayashi Razan is primarily responsible for the portrayal of Seika as the "father of Neo-Confucian studies in Japan" and, in general, identifies him as responsible for bringing the works of Zhu Xi to the country (as explained in his biography of Seika's life, *Seika-sensei gyōjō* 惺窩先生行状).¹⁵

Despite Razan's efforts, it is clear that Seika had his own message that is clearly distinct from that of Zhu Xi. Through the exploration of the *Daigaku Yōryaku*, one can begin to understand the complexity of Seika's interpretation of the *Great Learning* and further understand how he ascribed his own personal Zen Buddhist background to the Neo-Confucian text, despite having renounced his Buddhist past. It is these changes (i.e. the end result of Seika's intellectual pursuits), which would prove to be quite fruitful for the Tokugawa government as a way of legitimizing their

¹³ Bowring 437

¹⁴ de Bary 44

¹⁵ Bowring 444

own power. The following sections will focus primarily on exploring Seika's interpretation of the Great Learning from a translation done by Richard Bowring in comparison to Zhu Xi and Lin Zhao'en's own versions with additional commentary by WJ Boot and Theodore de Bary. This will be followed by a brief explanation of how Seika's writings were received by the rulers of his time.

II. Zhu Xi and the rise of Neo-Confucianism in Japan

Historically speaking, before the rise of the Tokugawa Shogunate, Shinto and Buddhism were the dominant traditions of Japan. In contemporary Japan, it is understood that these two traditions exist, and have existed for some time, in a form of syncretic harmony. Japan's religious syncretism extends to Confucianism and comes to full effect during the Tokugawa. In fact, according to "medieval" interpretations of the *Nihon Shoki* (日本書記, Japan's 2nd oldest historical account dating from 720AD, often translated as *The Chronicles of Japan*), there are myths that referred to Chinese texts for examples, justifications, and parallels, leading to a belief that these earliest records show the beginnings of the marriage between Shinto and Confucianism (far earlier in Japan than had been previously perceived).¹⁶

In addition to looking at how Seika interprets the *Great Learning* in relation to Zhu Xi, it is also important to look at the question, "how does Neo-Confucianism offer a challenging alternative to Buddhism?"¹⁷ Neo-Confucianism brings to light the concepts of *li* 理 and *qi* 氣. The former is the "universal pattern branching by division from the Supreme Ultimate", which defines the movement of all things. The latter is, according to A.C. Graham, the "universal fluid out of which things condense

¹⁶ Bowring 438

¹⁷ *ibid.*

and into which they dissolve.”¹⁸ Inanimate things are immobile due to the density of their solid *qi* while animate objects enjoy free movement from the pure lightness of their *qi*. In the case of man, *qi* is at the center of being. At birth, man receives a certain endowment of *qi* that governs the nature of each individual, both good and bad. This Neo-Confucian idea is derived from the Mencian concept that human nature is intrinsically good, and as expressed in the *Doctrine of the Mean*, nature is the ordinance of Heaven.¹⁹ For lack of better words, human nature (xing 性) is expressed as *li*, which connects humans with the material world. However, *li* must manifest itself in the form of *qi*, which brings with it a sense of materiality that can be either good or evil.²⁰ Zhu Xi likens the relationship between *qi* and *li* to water:

If we say the mind is water then nature is still water (no activity), feelings *qing* 情 are flowing water (activity) and desires (*yu* 欲) are the waves (result of activity). There can be good desires and bad desires”²¹

Thus, as Richard Bowring explains, good results occur when “[we] act in accordance with our original nature, in other words, in consonance with *li*”²² and bad results occur from acting against it. The process described by Zhu Xi of trying to discover the clarity of one’s *qi* and the stillness of the water is equivalent to pursuing the way of the sage.

Both Zhu Xi and Seika had a personal attachment to the *Great Learning*. For Zhu Xi, the text offered a complete explanation of the process by which *qi* is purified by *li*, which he believed encompassed the Confucian path to enlightenment (i.e. soteriological path). In more practical Confucian terminology, it offered a link

¹⁸ Bowring 439

¹⁹ Wing-Tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press) 109

²⁰ Bowring 441

²¹ Bowring 439

²² Bowring 440

between self-cultivation and enlightened rule. The *Great Learning* offers the student of Confucianism a blueprint for understanding the way of the sage through self-cultivation (and thus, peace for the whole nation). According to Zhu Xi's restructuring of the text, the *Great Learning* has two sections: *the Classics* section (*jing* 经), which is the primary text, and *the Commentary* section (*zhuan* 伝), which is a series of ten expositions.

In *the Classics* section, the “Three Cardinal Principles” (*san gangling* 三綱領, also translated as the Three Guiding Principles) are discussed in great detail. As Zhu Xi explains, “The way of the *Great Learning* (*daxue zhi dao* 大學之道) lies in [1] clearly manifesting luminous virtue (*zai ming mingde* 在明明德), [2] renewing the people (*zai shinmin* 在新民), and [3] resting in the utmost good (*zai zhi yu zhishan* 在止於至善).²³

Zhu Xi lays this out in eight steps: five that cover “luminous virtue” (investigating things, extending knowledge to the utmost, making one's intention's sincere, rectifying the mind, and cultivating the person) and three that cover “renewing the people” (regulating the family, governing the state, and pacifying the Empire).

The Commentary expands on the principles and the steps through various examples. In this part of the text, Zhu Xi adds what he considers to be a lost section of the original text. Most importantly, it explains the meaning of the word *gewu* 格物, which he believes to mean, “to reach things,” in the phrase *zhizhi zai gewu* 致知在格

²³ Bowring 441

物, interpreted as “the extension of knowledge lies in the investigation of things.”²⁴

It is in this phrase, central to his interpretation of the *Great Learning*, that many discrepancies form between Zhu Xi and other Confucian scholars, including Fujiwara Seika.*

III. Seika and *Sameness*

Herman Ooms has suggested that perhaps the most important lesson that Seika conveys through his study of the *Great Learning* is his refusal to attach importance to differences within the overall tradition.²⁵ Rather, he focuses on the sameness underlying the differences. This is also what he calls “undifferentiatedness.” This translates as Seika being more interested in dissecting and deconstructing Zhu Xi’s language through supporting analysis from other Chinese scholars (namely Lin Zhao’En and Wang Yangming) who had a different ideological approach to the text than adhering strictly to Zhu Xi’s viewpoint.

Daigaku Yōryaku contains Seika’s interpretation of the *Great Learning* along with personal commentary on Zhu Xi’s analysis. He supports his viewpoints by referencing other Chinese scholars who preferred the experiential side of Neo-Confucianism and were traditionally at odds with Zhu Xi. For example, Seika’s analysis of the three Cardinal Principles, which will be explained in further detail in the following section, attempts to show how they are interconnected (i.e. that one cannot exist without the other), rather than having an innate hierarchy and order of importance (as believed by Zhu Xi). Seika focused on finding similarities within the

²⁴ Bowring 441

* The interpretation of *gewu* is different for scholars of different schools. Seika’s approach to this complicated term is examined in section six of this chapter.

²⁵ Ooms 247

differences of scholarly interpretation, and looked for a means of explaining this by applying the discourse on the Five Relationships to the *Great Learning* (despite the fact that the Five Relationships never appear in the original document).

To summarize, Herman Ooms states, “[Seika’s] aim was Sagehood through total immersion in the teachings by experiencing them in mind and body: to become totally suffused by the truth with a mind stilled and full at ease.”²⁶ This may be why he preferred to focus his efforts on studying Neo-Confucian Chinese scholars who stressed learning through experience and practice. It could also explain one of many examples of how Seika’s Buddhist background finds its way either consciously or peripherally into his overall study.

Most significant to Seika’s study of the *Great Learning* and to the themes explored in this paper is the influential connection between Chinese Confucian scholar Lin Zhao-en’s (林兆恩) works and his own. Lin Zhao-en’s meditative practice of “stilling in the back” (self-cultivation by quieting the mind and body in order to think about good thoughts) could be considered an example of “experiential” Neo-Confucianism, which appealed to Seika. However, it was Zhao-en’s school of mind-and-heart and the “spiritual tenets of Neo-Confucianism” that appealed most to Seika.²⁷

To Seika, the rites are not simply rules of etiquette; rather, they are the rules of heavenly principle. In Seika’s text, he disposes of several distinctions, mainly those between “self”/“others” and “inner”/“outer.” Seika’s interpretation is innately Mencian in that he expressly distinguishes himself from Zhu Xi in the *Daigaku*

²⁶ Herman Ooms and Kurozumi Makoto, “Introduction to ‘The Nature of Early Tokugawa Confucianism,’ *Journal of Japanese Studies* 20.2 Summer, 1994 : 373

²⁷ Ooms 247

Yôryaku by stressing that “illuminating virtue,” “nurturing the people” and “resting in the utmost good” (or “supreme excellence”) are inborn traits inherent in the Five Relationships, not progressively learned through practice.²⁸

While not exclusively Japanese in origin, the analysis laid out by Seika’s own discourse of the *Great Learning* would later become a major source of intellectual development amongst his successors. His efforts not only provided a text that piqued the interest of the Tokugawa, but, as will be explained, also provided a base for Neo-Confucian development within the nation itself.

IV. Deviating from Zhu Xi in favor of Lin Zhao-en

Seika’s *Daigaku Yôryaku* is strongly influenced by a set of commentaries (*da xue zhengyi zuan* 大学正義纂), written by Lin Zhao-en. Seika frequently refers to Lin (as Master Lin) in *Daigaku* and even refers to the path of Sagehood metaphorically as “chikurokuhyô”, which means “an evaluation of pursuing the deer,” in reference to a phrase from Lin’s *da xue zhengyi zuan*. Relying heavily on Lin’s commentary, Seika is able to construct his own approach to the *Great Learning*. It is also important to remember that Lin’s interpretation follows Wang Yangming.²⁹

Perhaps it was Lin’s syncretic approach to synthesizing Buddhist and Daoist traditions with Confucianism in his study of the *Great Learning* that appealed to Seika, but nonetheless, Lin remains a key influential figure in the *Daigaku*.

Seika’s interpretation of the *Great Learning* begins with the title. Seika explains:

The character 大 signifies both the unity of self and other and the unity of inner and outer. “Unity of self and other” refers to “manifesting luminous virtue” and “having affection for the people”; in other words, making no distinction between self and other. “Unity of inner and outer” treats “manifesting luminous virtue” and “having affection for the people” as the outer and “resting in the utmost good” as the inner. Therefore when you no longer distinguish

²⁸ Ooms 248

²⁹ de Bary 45

between self and other, or between inner and outer, you will know the meaning of 大. The character 学 should not be interpreted exclusively as book learning.³⁰

In this selection, Seika makes it clear that his analysis does not differentiate between “self” and “Other” nor “inner” and “outer.” Here Seika prefers to not make such distinctions. Zhu Xi, on the other hand, begins his commentary by explaining that the *Great Learning* is the way in which “a student enters virtue.”³¹ Zhu Xi states, “The Way of learning to be great (or adult education) consists in manifesting the clear character, loving [or renewing] the people, and abiding in the highest good,”³² which suggests that he is far more concerned with clearly distinguishing the path of the Way.

Seika, on the other hand, follows Lin from a text in the *Record of Rites** rather than accepting Zhu Xi’s changes to say “has affection for the people” instead of “renewing the people.” For Seika, “greatness” is defined as absolute unity of all things.

V. Seika on the *Great Learning*: The Cardinal Principles

The *Great Learning* was an extremely important text for Fujiwara Seika. He was once quoted as saying about it:

If one has learned this one book by heart, one will need no other volumes, whether a hundred, a thousand or ten thousand. There is no Confucianism outside this work. Lectures exclusively treating the literary arts, which are so popular nowadays, are of no use to a ruler of men. Anyone who is a ruler of men need practice only the disciplining of his own heart and try to apply the teaching of the *Great Learning*.³³

Thus, it becomes evident that Seika believed that if one could understand the *Great Learning*, he/she would have everything that is needed to understand and follow

³⁰ Bowring 446

³¹ Chan 86

³² *ibid.*

* One of the Five Classics, an ancient text that included the *Great Learning* and the *Doctrine of the Mean*

³³ de Bary 44

Confucian code. The other volumes are for “Confucian intellectuals,” however, the *Great Learning* outlines everything a ruler needs to know to be virtuous. Seika, who was writing for various lords of the Tokugawa, probably recognized the potential for the *Great Learning* to become a crash course handbook that Japanese politicians were looking for, and focused his efforts on the *Daigaku* for this purpose.

The *Daigaku Yôryaku* is divided into two sections; the first focuses on the analysis of a few opening phrases in the *Great Learning* and the second, and much longer section, is a detailed line-by-line explanation of the text. As explained in the previous section, Seika’s explanation of the unification of the three Cardinal Principles so that they are no longer distinguishable from one another represents the unification of “self and other”/“inner and outer” and is encompassed by the “greatness” of 大.

Seika begins by analyzing the first Cardinal Principle, as mentioned earlier, *zai ming mingde* 在明明德, meaning [*manifesting*] *luminous virtue*. Here Zhu Xi and Seika produce two very different definitions of what this phrase means. According to Zhu Xi:

[The first] *ming* 明 means clarifying. *Mingde* 明德 is what a person acquires from Heaven; it is unprejudiced, spiritual, and completely unmuddled and thereby embodies the multitudinous manifestations of principle and responds to the myriad affairs. But it may be restrained by the endowment of *qi* (*qibing* 氣稟) or concealed by human desire, so at times it will become obscured. Never, however, does its original luminosity cease. Therefore, the student should look to the light that emanates from it and seek to keep it unobscured, thereby restoring its original condition.³⁴

Zhu Xi extracts meaning from the first Principle by dissecting each of the individual characters for their overall meaning. According to Bowring, Zhu Xi is concluding that the Way of the Sage is not just applicable to the Ruler, but rather for every

³⁴ Bowring 446

student of Confucianism through the application of the concept of *qi*.³⁵ However, Zhu Xi makes no reference to human relations as a method of understanding the Way.

Contrary to the opinions of Zhu Xi, Seika has his own explanation of the *zai ming mingde*. Seika's own interpretation of the phrase *mingde* "luminous virtue" is the key to his overall analysis of the *Great Learning*. According to Richard Bowring, the first line of his analysis is borrowed from Lin; however, the rest appears to be his own invention, focusing on the importance of the Five Relationships, or the relationships that exist between human beings including ruler and minister, father and son, husband and wife, elder and younger, and friends. He explains that the Five Relationships must be recognized to avoid disorder. Seika explains the first Principle as follows:

Mingde 明德 refers to human relationships (*jinrin* 人倫). If human relationships are not correct then nothing will be of any use whatsoever. It is therefore vitally important that the Way of human relationships be made clear. As it says in the Classic of Documents: "Heaven has its illustrious courses [of duty], of which the [various] characters are quite plain. The term 明德 [refers to] the fundamentals of the Five Relationships (*gorin no goten* 五倫の五典) between ruler and minister, father and son, husband and wife, elder and younger, and friends. The first 明 [of 明德] is a verb and means to clarify and instruct. It is precisely because there are those who do not follow the fundamentals of these relationships that punishment and the use of military force exist: the one for less serious matters, the other for major conflicts."³⁶

Seika makes Zhu Xi's abstract concept into something more practical for the Japanese audience doing away with the concept of *qi* and introducing human relationships as a method of manifesting the Way. Thus, it becomes a process of clarification in order to prevent disorder in the land as a whole. His definition of clarity differs from Zhu Xi's own analysis. The final line, "It is precisely because there are those who do not follow the fundamentals of these relationships that punishment and the use of military

³⁵ Bowring 446

³⁶ Bowring 447

force exist: the one for less serious matters, the other for major conflicts” is also quite significant when considering how Seika’s texts appealed to the Tokugawa *bakufu* and his patron daimyō.

Seika’s own stance on military force and its use in enforcing the Five Relationships is something that distinguishes him from his predecessors in China. As will be expanded in further detail below, the Tokugawa Shogunate, (and the “elite members of the new ruling class,” who had just come to power), were founded on principals of militarism but were looking to form a bureaucratic government to legitimize their power. The new ruling class turned to Seika for ideological support precisely because of his stance on the role of the military in law enforcement. Seika provided an “ethico-metaphysical discourse”³⁷ that appealed to the Shogunate for reasons of legitimizing the military rule and newly developing bureaucracy. By equating the path of the Way to the Five Relationships, he cements the power of the ruler and legitimizes their ability to control all relationships in society.

Turning to the second Cardinal Principle *zai xinmin* 在親民 Seika begins to lay the foundation in more detail for his approach towards the Five Relationships. He explains in detail:

This means to have correct human relationships, and for ruler and ruled to be close to each other and in harmony. So in Mencius it says: “When those above manifest proper human relationships, the people will be affectionate.” The character 親 signifies both “cherish” and “educate”; in other words “nurture.” These two activities of “instruction” (*ming mingde*) and “nurturing” (*qinmin*) are the basis of “governing others and governing the self.” The character 親 should not always be interpreted only as “be affectionate.”³⁸

Here Seika comments that the duty of a ruler is to instruct and nurture (as in nurture the relationship between ruler and people), but this does not necessarily mean that a

³⁷ Ooms 249

³⁸ Bowring 447

leader must be affectionate. Again, this becomes quite significant when considering Seika's position on using violence when necessary for controlling the population. Seika, according to Bowring, is using Lin's definition, who in turn is quoting from *Mencius*. Lin reconsiders the definition of the character, noting that its meaning is more complex than just "affection" depending on what compound it forms.

Seika continues:

Lin here quotes *Mencius* to this effect, but in *Mencius* the character 親 as used in the compound *qinmin* is to be interpreted in a causative sense; since it is one of the virtues inherent in human relationships, it is one with "luminous virtue." I would venture to suggest that as "luminous virtue" carries the sense of "instruction," the phrase *qinmin* should be interpreted to mean "nurture the people." Thus we speak of "cherishing and educating." Whether later generations condemn me or agree with me, they should do so on this basis.³⁹

Bowring points out that the quote from *Mencius* "*renlun ming yu shang, xiaomin qin yu xia* 人倫明於上, 小民親於下," (*Mencius* III.1.3.10) to which Seika is referring, never mentions the compound *qinmin* and would not normally consider "cause to be affectionate" as the standard interpretation. What's more, this seems to be quite distinct from Lin's own interpretation and the point of Seika's divergence from his source.⁴⁰ Again, Seika wants to create the idea that all of the Cardinal Principles are interconnected by human relationships. By using "nurturing the people" he can emphasize the importance of the Five Relationships as a means of establishing the Way.

As stated before, Seika's interest in the Five Relationships recurs often in the *Daigaku Yôryaku*. In the following passage, Seika seeks to further establish the meaning of *min* 民 and *qin* 親. Seika also explains his stance on 'heterodox' and the place of the four occupations in society. He gives explicit rules on human relations

³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰ Bowring 448

and the duty of the ruler:

民 means the four occupations of the gentleman-scholar, farmer, artisan and merchant. 親 means ‘cherish and educate.’ To seek instruction that is not focused on the Five Fundamentals or not to seek it [at all] is what is called ‘heterodox’ and is something that a ruler of men should prohibit. In [the ordering of] human relations, instruction and nurturing cannot be missed even for a single day. And for those who do not follow instruction it is necessary to have punishment and the use of military force...⁴¹

Seika makes it explicitly clear in the passage that it is the ruler’s duty to punish those who do not fall in line with the government’s prescribed instruction. In other words, when education fails, Seika approves of turning to violence. In the following section, Seika elaborates on social hierarchy and individual duties based on office and rank. He lays a foundation that is particularly interesting considering the rigidity of class during the Tokugawa regime. This may explain why the Tokugawa government was so strict about one’s class and duty being fixed for the entirety of one’s life. Seika remarks:

Gentlemen-scholars (sages) are those who rise to office and rank, so one chooses them on the basis of wisdom and talent. Of these, talent relates to office, wisdom to rank. As for wisdom and talent, if a gentleman-scholar has both he is especially to be prized. If he has one of them he will certainly be of use, but if he has neither, he should be returned to the fields. Farmers are the source of clothes and food. Artisans have various trades. Among these men, too, are those who are no use and squander resources on frivolous pursuits; they are not worthy of the name artisan and should be severely dealt with. ‘Merchant’ refers to those who facilitate the movement of goods. In degenerate times some among them practice deception, and the rich among them, failing to keep to their proper station in life, join with officials, striving to rise above their status and oppressing those under them; they usurp for their own use the styles of dwellings, gardens, clothes, and utensils of kings and nobles, and so disturb the order of things. That such behavior should be admonished has been true in both ancient and modern times. When putting the people in order, one must understand the rationale behind the sequence from top to bottom: farmer, artisan, merchant. Those who have an occupation outside the four accepted ones or who have no occupation at all are no more than outcasts (yûmin 遊民) and should be banned.⁴²

Interestingly, Seika advocates severe punishment for those who do not uphold their societal duties or abuse their own positions, contrary to the archetypal Confucian position of nonviolence. Zhu Xi’s original text states:

⁴¹ *ibid.*

⁴² Bowring 448

Yao and Shun led the world with humanity and the people followed them. (Wicked Kings) Chieh and Chou led the world with violence and the people followed them. The people did not follow their orders which were contrary to what they themselves liked. Therefore the superior man must have the good qualities in himself before he may require them in other people. He must not have the bad qualities in himself before he may require others to not have them. [9]⁴³

It would seem that Zhu Xi never intended for the ruler to use force or violence in order to control the people. Contrary to Seika, he warns that leaders who use violence can only force people to follow them, but it cannot make them enjoy or agree with the orders that they command. Zhu Xi's version of the *Great Learning* seems far more concerned with respect and compassion as a means of enhancing social order than Seika's does. To elaborate, Zhu Xi believes that a respectful and compassionate ruler who promotes filial piety and fraternal respect will garner more support than one who employs violence as a means of control. Zhu Xi offers a peaceful alternative to violence for controlling the people:

What is it meant by saying that peace of the world depends on the order of the state is this: When the ruler treats the elders with respect then the people will be aroused toward filial piety. When the ruler treats the aged with respect, then the people will be aroused toward brotherly respect. When the ruler treats compassionately the young and the helpless, then the common people will not follow the opposite course. Therefore the ruler has a principle with which, as with a measuring square, he may regulate his conduct.

What a man dislikes in his superiors, let him not show it in dealing with his inferiors; what he dislikes in those in front of him, let him not show it in preceding those who are behind; what he dislikes in those behind him, let him not show it in front of him; what he dislikes in those on the right, let him not apply it to those on the left; and what he dislikes on the left, let him not apply it to those on the right. This is the principle of the measuring square. [10]⁴⁴

Seika's answer to the problem of controlling the people seems to be the four occupations commentary, which is completely unique to Seika, and something which neither Lin nor Zhu Xi examined. Bowring explains that this was probably added as a point of reference for the two daimyô that Seika assisted as a means of legitimizing

⁴³ Chan 91

⁴⁴ Chan 90

their control.⁴⁵ This idea has a strong authoritarian stance, since during the Tokugawa regime class hierarchy was very strict. Those who were not in the ruling class, farmers, artisans, or merchants were considered to fall outside of mainstream society. This seems to lay the foundation for Tokugawa's complex and rigid social class system.

The above paragraph sets up the kind of institution that the Tokugawa *bakufu* and later Neo-Confucian scholars would attempt to emulate. Using Seika's new system as interpreted from the *Great Learning*, including a new Neo-Confucian vocabulary that he translated from Chinese, Japanese Neo-Confucian scholars and the *bakufu* alike used this structure as the foundation for the framework for Tokugawan society.⁴⁶ It is important to remember that Seika is not a nefarious warlord interested in political gain; his writing is both spiritual and political. He saw government as a means for saving the population from internal strife, and not being a member of the warrior class, he held no bureaucratic influence over the people.

However, Seika is certainly interested in seeing an increased level of control over the lay population. Seika says in a letter to Razan:

The world is now in decline and customs are lax. Things are not debated in the common interest. Tongues wag, those on high enter into abstractions while the base seek profit. There are those who are lazy, those who flatter, and those who just bend with the wind. In dealings with others they seek warmth, avoid cold, tell the truth in the morning but practice deceit in the evening. And at the extreme if given half a chance, they wield the sword that is their tongue, stab people in the back, and ignore the blood.⁴⁷

Seika is clearly distressed by the fractured society of Japan. Therefore, it is understandable that Seika would seek to legitimize the newly formed Tokugawa *bakufu* if it meant that it would bring about harmony and peace within the

⁴⁵ Bowring 448

⁴⁶ Beonio-Brocchieri 610

⁴⁷ Bowring 450

community. Perhaps Seika believed that the synthesis of the Five Relationships with the Four Occupations would be a successful way of bringing about peace. In Seika's case, Bowring sheds some light on this possibility by explaining that *Daigaku Yōryaku* 大学要略 was adapted from *daxue* 大学 to fit local Japanese conditions during the Tokugawa shogunate. Moreover, as Bowring notes, this is not “the language of a Confucian sage whose duty was to chastise the ruler and ensure that the people were properly looked after; but rather language of a man who knows the damage that a lack of social order can do when one needs to impose control.”⁴⁸ Therefore, it would seem that Seika's concern led him to seek alternative measures considered unconventional by most Neo-Confucians, even if that meant using punishment when nurturing and education failed.

Seika elaborates on this subject by quoting Lin's own commentary on Zhu Xi's understanding of “luminous virtue.” He explains by quoting Master Lin:

[1] *Lies in clearly manifesting luminous virtue (zai ming mingde 在明明德)*. (Master Lin has the following detailed explanation of the correct meaning of *mingde*)

Zhu Xi comments here: *Mingde* is what a person acquires from Heaven; it is unprejudiced, spiritual and completely unmuddled and thereby embodies the multitudinous manifestations of principle and responds to the myriad affairs

[2] *My Way has one thread running through it (wu dao yi yi guan zhi 悟道一以貫之)*

Zhu Xi comments here: The heart of the sage is perfectly at one with Heaven's principle, so broad in its responsiveness and sensitive in its application.

[3] *The ancients who wished to clearly manifest virtue to all-under-Heaven (gu zhi yu ming mingde yu tianxia zhe 古之欲明明德於天下者)* (*The Great Learning*)

Zhu Xi comments here: “To manifest luminous virtue to all-under-Heaven means to enable all men through-out the empire to keep their inborn luminous virtue unobscured.”

Now consider the matter with these three comments in mind. *Mingde* [in Zhu Xi's interpretation] is the one unifying thread. But to want to “enable all men throughout the empire to keep their inborn luminous virtue unobscured” is tantamount to desiring that “those who cannot be made to understand” be made to grasp the essence of that which is “unprejudiced, spiritual, and completely unmuddled” as instinctively as Master Zeng responded to the phrase about “one thread.” This cannot be right. I therefore say that “luminous virtue” is the “path of fullest attainment in the world,” “of which the [various]

⁴⁸ Bowring 449

characters are quite plain.” It is what the *Classic of Documents* calls “the illustrious path.”⁴⁹

Richard Bowring explains that this is a cross-reference of passages from the *Great Learning* ([1], [3]) and the *Analects* ([2], IV.15). [2] is in reference to Master Zeng who is considered to be the compiler of the *Great Learning* by Zhu Xi; having understood Confucius’s message “immediately and intuitively.” Bowring also states, “The phrase ‘those who cannot be made to understand comes from *Analects* VIII.9: ‘The people may be made to follow [a path of action], but they cannot be made to understand it.’”⁵⁰ The *Doctrine of the Mean* states, “Master-servant, father-child, husband-wife, elder brother-younger brother, friend-friend: these five are the path of fullest attainment in the world,” and explains Seika’s use of “the path to fullest attainment in the world.”

To Zhu Xi, the common thread in all of these phrases is *mingde* “luminous virtue.” While this all may seem fairly complicated, in short, Lin is trying to disprove Zhu Xi’s definition of “luminous virtue,” since the common man is not capable of understanding something so abstract and subtle. Thus, “the aim to enable all men throughout the empire to keep their inborn luminous virtue unobscured” is not possible so long as *mingde* is understood in these terms. Lin looks to the Five Relationships as a more practical explanation of the concept, which Seika also finds appealing.

In reference to the *Daigaku Yōryaku*, perhaps Seika was influenced by his desire to explain education. In the *Analects* (VIII.9), it states, “although the people might not be made to understand something, they could be made to follow it. *Ming*

⁴⁹ Bowring 449

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

mingde meant to clarify ‘the illustrious path.’” Again, Seika could be interpreting this as a need to use force in order to maintain social order.

What were the conditions that might have led Seika to choose the path that he chose? While there are certainly many speculations, this complex question could be looked at from a practical sense as Seika’s reaction to Japan emerging slowly from a state of constant warfare. Perhaps he was searching for a means of maintaining peace in the newly emerging government. Seika, who as stated earlier was a committed Buddhist, saw that Buddhism had lost its power to act as a moral force in the newly emerging state that was beginning to form under the Tokugawa shogunate. Seika first came into contact with Chinese and Confucian studies while training as a monk at Shōkokuji Temple in Kyoto, whose teachings he found more appealing than Buddhism. Eventually this led him to leave the monastery and renounce his beliefs.⁵¹ It would appear that Seika saw that Confucianism acted as a better alternative to Buddhism, since it emerged as a successful model of government following China’s own warring states period. What is more, as Bowring notes, it offered “practical value, intellectual stimulation, and soteriological possibilities,”⁵² making it an ideal substitute of the sort that powerful daimyō like Nobunaga and Hideyoshi sought in order to catalyze change.

Again, it would not be prudent to label Fujiwara Seika a staunch conservative whose only motivation is to produce an authoritarian version of a Confucian document. While he links the four occupations with the Five Relationships in a manner that seems to meet certain political needs of the time, Seika is influenced by

⁵¹ de Bary 33

⁵² Bowring 450

the dimensions of spirituality just as much as (if not more than) political authoritarianism. Clearly in his analysis of the Third Cardinal Principle, *Resting in the utmost good* (*zhi yu zhishan* 止於至善), Seika is presenting the spiritual aspects of Neo-Confucianism in the *Daigaku Yōryaku*.⁵³

Seika begins by comparing the relative importance of the three Principles:

When you ask to which one of the three you should apply yourself first, my answer is that our Confucian teaching is a teaching of the “complete substance and great functioning.” Therefore, when the substance - that is, the “utmost good” - is there, the functions - that is, “luminous virtue” and “having affection for the people” - will necessarily also be present. You rest in “the utmost good,” and the transforming and nurturing of the people will spontaneously be achieved; this is how you “manifest luminous virtue.” The clarification of human relationships, which are “luminous virtue,” begins with “having affection for the people.” Yao’s merit reached all bordered by the Four Seas, but that was because he started from “having affection for the people.” In his case, however, we are talking about a sage. Even though an ordinary scholar may do everything he can, he will not be able to enter by practicing this discipline. For ordinary scholars, the discipline to which they should apply themselves and by which means they can enter is *gewu*, which appears in the next passage.⁵⁴

In this passage, Seika again deviates from Zhu Xi by explaining that the three Principles have no defined order, but rather are “coterminous” in nature (Zhu Xi believed that the Cardinal Principles had an innate order). He explains this by saying that when one “rests in the utmost,” the transformative process of nurturing the people can take place. When this occurs, “having affection for the people” leads to the development of “luminous virtue.” Therefore, the “manifestation of luminous virtue” comes from “the utmost good” of “having affection for the people.” However, “having affection for the people” manifests “luminous virtue.” As one can see, the three principles are mutually interchangeable and having no prescribed, innate order, they are infinitely free in their production of each other. One cannot exist without the other, making it difficult to pinpoint exactly where the process begins.

⁵³ Bowring 450

⁵⁴ Bowring 451

Seika is particularly interested in Zhu Xi's phrase "complete substance and great functioning" (*quanti dayong* 全体大用), which is the Chinese scholar's personal commentary on the concept of *gewu*. Interestingly, Seika is using the scholar's own phrase to counter Zhu Xi's understanding of the definition of this word rather than support it. The allocation of the Cardinal Principles in terms of "substance" and "function" is also against Zhu Xi's own wishes, who would probably have equated "manifesting luminous virtue" with substance. Thus, one can conclude that the three Cardinal Principles are all equally important, and collectively contribute to Seika's spiritual and soteriological quest of interpreting Neo-Confucianism.

VI. Seika's Understanding of *Gewu*

In addition to the Cardinal Principles, Seika toys with a few other concepts that continue to put himself at odds with Zhu Xi. Of particular note is the mentioning of the concept *gewu*, which is considered by many to be the greatest source of distinction. Bowring clarifies that for Seika, "the sage can start from 'affection for the people', but the scholar who is not a sage must begin somewhere else, with *gewu*."⁵⁵

Seika chooses to elaborate Lin's understanding of *gewu*:

Gewu 格物. Master Lin says: "Here the word *wu* does not mean 'things' as in the compound 'affairs and things' (*shiwu* 事物); it is the *wu* that is used in the *Record of Rites* in the passage 'where a man's likings are not subject to regulations [from within], he is changed into the nature of things as they come before him.' And the word *ge* does not mean 'to impede,' 'to resist' (*gange* 杆格); it is the *ge* that is used in the *Classic of Documents* in the phrase 'to expel the evil mind' (*ge qi feixin* 格其非心). The mind has changed into a thing; if one does not call that an evil mind, what then? Therefore, when one expels this evil mind, at the same time one 'expels a thing.' *Ge* has the meaning of 'to remove.'

Master Lin says: "In the commentary by Zheng Xuan of the Han it says: '[the character] *zhi* 知 here means to know what brings about good and bad, fortune and misfortune. *Ge* means

⁵⁵ Bowring 451

‘[cause to] come about,’ and *wu* means the same as “affairs” (*shi* 事).’ What he is saying is that the affairs come about in response to one’s preferences. Sima Guang 司馬光 says: ‘*ge* means “resist” (*han* 扞) or “block” (*yu*). By blocking out extraneous things (*waiwu* 外物), you gain knowledge of the ultimate Way.’ Zhu Xi says: ‘*ge* means “attain” (*zhi* 至) and *wu* means “things.” By investigating, one attains the principle of things.’ Wang Yangming says: “To correct (*ge* 格) what is wrong and thereby to return to the upright.”

In this fashion everyone has his own explanation, and it is easy to get confused. I have here given a précis of Master Lin’s interpretation and so will not add to it further.⁵⁶

In the previous section, Seika adheres to Lin’s definition of “removing things” for *gewu*. It would seem that in this section and the following, Seika seems to rely on a certain aspects of his Zen Buddhist training to explain the process by which one might achieve perfect knowledge of self and other.⁵⁷

Seika also interprets the phrase *Only once things have been removed can knowledge be attained* (*wu ge erhou zhi zhi* 物格而后知至). He explains:

Wu stands for all things. If there is one single calculating thought in your heart, the [natural] spiritual knowledge will not be revealed. This can be compared to a mirror. “Things” are like dust. Inside, the mirror is limpid and clear, so that you only need places in a mirror are called “empty.” In the mirror dwells “spirituality,” which is also called “the utmost good,” or, in the *Doctrine of the Mean*, the state of equilibrium in which the passions have not yet stirred, or in the *Analects*, the “[undifferentiated] unity that pervades all.” In all the limpid and clear places of the mirror, emptiness and spirituality dwell.

If you apply yourself consciously to “removing things,” this application itself is also a thing. If there is only one speck of darkness and turbidity in the heart, all kinds of thoughts will arise. If these thoughts were not there, the heart itself would be empty and spiritual, and clear knowledge would be born. Then the functioning of the mind in response to the myriad things would be effortless and appropriate. To think not to have thought, that is thought. It is not that the *Great Learning* dislikes thought; what it says is that thoughts should be clear of themselves. This is called the “complete substance and great functioning.” If there were only substance and no functioning, or only functioning and no substance, then we would be uttering heterodox teachings...Some people also think that the real point is to make the heart empty and that emptiness is the same as being completely free from all distracting thoughts, but these are dumb, benighted people. The *Great Learning* does not say that not to know east from west or north from south is emptiness; that would be the same as taking a piece of iron, flattening it out into a disk, and looking into it as if it were a mirror. Even if its form were the same as a mirror, it would lack the clarity needed to reflect things.⁵⁸

The above passage proves that there is a strong connection between Neo-Confucian spirituality and Seika’s own Zen practices. Seika is deconstructing the word in a

⁵⁶ Bowring 451

⁵⁷ Bowring 452

⁵⁸ Bowring 453

manner similar to his explanation of *Daigaku* by explaining *ge* separately from *wu*. While Neo-Confucian writings are filled with Buddhist references, the above is mainly Seika's own creation (borrowing only the first three lines from Lin's teaching). *Gewu* is defined as "removing things" and Seika prefers to deal with how one attains knowledge rather than where that knowledge may lie.⁵⁹

Since Seika's aim was Sagehood through total immersion in the teachings by experiencing them in mind-and-body, *gewu* is a way of explaining the process of becoming totally suffused by the truth. Ooms clearly explains:

"things" for Seika are things of desire, thus the phrase stand for the acquisition of the correct, innate knowledge of the mind – it is knowledge that is present from the beginning and cannot be activated, i.e. brought from the outside. Outer is a speck of defilement producing thoughts that are not born by themselves naturally from the harmonious undifferentiated void of highest excellence, so these "things" must be avoided – "they are the dust that clouds the mind's mirror and have to be 'removed' not 'investigated.'⁶⁰

Seika is again looking for a way to explain how the Cardinal Principles are inborn traits, recognized through the Five Relationships. Seika is doing away with the differences between "self" and "other."

The explanation of *gewu* aids in one's understanding of how Seika is interpreting the text. Seika prefers to explore the depths of various soteriological questions rather than give definitive answers. He explains that it is through the removal of evil thoughts from one's mind that one will be able to rest in "the utmost good," and so understanding *gewu* is key to the realization of the Cardinal Principles. Rather than focus on *li* and *qi* as a means of spiritual purification, Seika relies on *gewu* to explain this process. If *gewu* is not put into practice, then the Cardinal Principles could not be enacted.

⁵⁹ Bowring 455

⁶⁰ Ooms 242

VII. Conclusion

It is important to remember that, as Boot points out, with the exception of the commentary provided by Hayashi Razan in his biography of the scholar, *Daigaku Yōryaku* is the sole source for interpreting Seika and his analysis of the *Great Learning*. Seika produced very few scholarly pieces, making him the most difficult to interpret of the three scholars, and much of what is known today about the scholar comes from secondary sources. However, for reasons that will be explored in the next chapter, Razan will reinterpret Seika's own doctrine, repositioning him as a staunch supporter of Zhu Xi, even though the analysis from this chapter demonstrates that he has considerably altered Zhu Xi's ideas.⁶¹

It is possible that Seika was responding to Buddhist dogmatism, but it would appear that Seika was far more interested than Razan in keeping an open mind about different views concerning various interpretations of Neo-Confucian texts. He remained open and interested in exploring various differences and alternative interpretations, but his student Razan would prove different, constantly in search of definitive answers (which may prove why he was so insistent the reunification of Zhu Xi and Seika).

Seika stood at a crucial turning point in what was to be a long tradition of Japanese engagement with the *Great Learning*, one that Razan would continue for him posthumously. The system devised by Seika of equating the Five Relationships with “manifesting luminous virtue” puts him in at the forefront of the shift from Buddhism to Confucianism in Japanese popular ideology.

⁶¹ Bowring 455

Three

Hayashi Razan 林羅山:

*Defining Political Authority and the Neo-Confucian Religious
School in Japan*

I. Introduction

Hayashi Razan 林 羅山, frequently referred to by his Buddhist name Dôshun, lived from 1583-1657 during the initial stages of the development of the Tokugawa *bakufu*. Razan is perhaps most famous for serving as the tutor and advisor to the first four shoguns and for taking on the task of building the Neo-Confucian doctrine of the Tokugawa shogunate. A student of Fujiwara Seika, Razan too renounced his Zen Buddhist background in favor of Neo-Confucianism in his early twenties.

His career began with an interview with Ieyasu himself. A remarkably bright student, he supposedly demonstrated an impressive display of intelligence and education, and consequently he was hired by the shogun after a series of interviews (most likely three). However, Razan's own account describes only one audience with the court. Razan met with Tokugawa Ieyasu (referred to as "our lord"), presumably in other venues in addition to Kyoto, during which time he was able to procure a position in his court. Somewhat arrogantly, he portrays himself in a way that seems to say that even though he is young, his knowledge in Confucianism makes him far superior to the Zen monks at the time.⁶² By all accounts, however, Razan was quite gifted, and being in the service of the Tokugawa rewarded him with a life free from poverty (unlike his master Seika).

Hayashi Razan established a dynasty of Neo-Confucian philosophers in the Tokugawa court and is considered personally responsible for the creation of a uniquely Tokugawan version of Chinese Song Dynasty Neo-Confucianism.⁶³ Razan was mainly an educator and, along with his children and grandchildren, is responsible

⁶² de Bary 49

⁶³ de Bary 614

for the establishment of the of the state university Edo's Confucian Academy (*Shohei-ko*, later known as *Yushima Seido*) which would later become the official source of all Confucian education and instruction. During the Edo Period, all positions in society became hereditary in an effort to maintain peace, so the Hayashi family actually were made the de-facto head of education for the *bakufu* and Japan. Following Razan, his son Gahô 鷲峰 and grandson Hôkô 鳳岡 became *daigaku-no-kami* ("head of school", 大学頭) and the position was passed down to the succeeding generations until the Meiji Restoration when the school was converted into Tokyo University. The doctrine that came out of the school, which adhered principally to the teaching of Zhu Xi, was considered to be the orthodox dogma in Japan, although the government allowed for a relative degree of intellectual diversity. It was not until later in the 18th century, when dissenting intellectual heterodoxy based on Neo-Confucianism had become a threat to the *bakufu*'s legitimacy and power, that the government clamped down by sending the Kansei Edict to Hayashi Kinpô (banning heterodox interpretations of Zhu Xi's teachings).⁶⁴

Razan's three major contributions to Neo-Confucian Japanese society were the focus on the principle of *li*, Japanese historical study and learning, and the Confucian values of loyalty and obligation, which the shogunate employed as a means of governing its autonomous territories (*han*, or domains) and the *daimyo* (feudal lords) that ruled them. The system he helped develop, known as *sankin kotai* (参勤交代, "alternate attendance") set up a means for the *bakufu* to control the lords by having them alternate one year in Edo, the capital of the Tokugawa shogunate, and

⁶⁴ Peter Nosco, Confucianism and Tokugawa Culture (New Jersey: Princeton University, 1984) 20

one year in their *han*, thus forcing the daimyo to provide direct service to the central government every other year.

II. Laying the Foundation: Correspondence with the Shogun

Due in large part to the preservation of Razan's biography *Razan Sensei Bunshû* (羅山先生文集), a detailed account of various bureaucratic and personal correspondences is available for review. Razan's own accounts of his interactions with Seika and Tokugawa Ieyasu are particularly interesting for the purposes of explaining how Razan felt about taking on a position with the *bakufu*.

Razan initially seems to display a heightened sense of reluctance over his new political position, which is evidenced by his letters with Master Fujiwara Seika. Razan is clearly distressed by the internal struggle of conforming his ideals to meet the needs of the Tokugawa. The negative effects brought on by his new lifestyle are in no doubt assuaged by the prominence and prestige that he enjoys, further complicating his predicament. Razan is concerned about keeping his original principles unadulterated.

Razan states in a letter to Seika, after Ieyasu's court moved from his headquarters in Kyoto to Sunpu in July 1611 (having joined the *bakufu* during his first meeting with Ieyasu in Kyoto circa 1605):

Although as to outward circumstance, I have no cause for complaint (who, at my age has seen so much of the world and has such an excellent library at his disposal?), yet I feel lonely and misunderstood. I am urged to conform to people who have no understanding of my skills and aspirations; what is worse, I do conform. Great literary figures of former times maybe felt the same and perhaps turned Daoist precisely for that reason. However I do not want to follow their path. I want to follow the Confucian sages. But that course implies an obligation to act according to my convictions, and that I find myself unable to do. The strain caused by this conflict is showing in me and affecting even my literary talents.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ de Bary 52

Amazingly, and in a slightly comical way, it is almost as if Razan is foreshadowing his plans for the future. He is being forced to decide which is the lesser of two evils, conform and be “wealthy” or remain conservative in his loyalty to Confucian practice and be “poor” (a point exaggerated in his statement “turning to Daoism,” which seems to say that he could just abandon all material needs and turn to a life of eremitism). He is clearly distressed by the realization that his new setting is endangering his Confucian principles and commitment to the way of the Sage. At the same time, his obligations to education and learning necessitated engagement with the political center if he hoped to improve the moral life those ruled by the Tokugawa *bakufu*. With that in mind, it would almost seem *un-Confucian* to turn down the wealth of resources the *bakufu* offered.

Judging from Razan’s own works, his commitment to the creation of the Neo-Confucian school as a means of advancing Tokugawan policy, and his reinvention of Seika as a Sage-like figure in Japan, it would seem that he chose compromise (which he even admits to already having done at the time of the letter⁶⁶). Perhaps it was the pressures of the Tokugawa shogunate, which was strongly militaristic and wished to implement change quickly, that caused Razan to become more obsessed with conclusive, concrete results than his master, Seika. It is possible that this was never his original intention, and that the development of diverse Confucian doctrine (with inventions stemming from Seika’s own works and desires expressed by the *bakufu*) was largely caused by a need to fit their militaristic audience. In reality, Razan was probably troubled by the contradiction of his Neo-Confucian morals with the comfortable lifestyle he desired (and could only be provided by the *bakufu*). He

⁶⁶ De Bary 52

wanted to be a part of the Kyoto intellectuals who wished to emulate the lifestyle of the Chinese literati, yet he knew that working for the *bakufu* put him at odds with the general anticlerical/antimilitary sentiments held by his contemporaries.⁶⁷ However, Razan was probably more at odds with the *samurai* warrior class than he was with the *bakufu* or *daimyô*, since their values were quite different. The *daimyô* and *bakufu*, while having some very un-Confucian motives, were interested in learning how to properly rule the people, but the *samurai*, still considered to be the noble elite, who were not studying Neo-Confucianism or the Chinese classics, were uninterested in following the path of the Sage.

Again in another letter to Seika, one can see that Razan feels torn by his desire to remain true to the teachings of Zhu Xi and the temptation of wealth that the *bakufu* offers him. He states:

Here in Sunpu, there is nothing out of the ordinary...I feel as if I were opting more and more for fame and profit, as if I were hastening to get myself a flying [*sic*] neck shackle. It is shameful. It is terrible. However, I hold the keys of the library in Sunpu. I try one of the buildings, and the boxes are filled with books. I leave it to my hand which one to pick up. The happiness of reading a book I have not yet read!...My only pleasure is books. I never tire of reading them, reverently and at ease.⁶⁸

Razan wants to remain true to the ethical system taught to him by Seika, however, his drive to learn and the luxury of having an unlimited wealth of knowledge is causing him to change his attitude. It is as if he is justifying these changes by relying on his personal aspirations to acquire more knowledge. However, he still seems essentially concerned with the increasing awareness that he is changing and that he finds the life of service to the *bakufu* more rewarding than ethically challenging.

He elaborates in the letter on learning and education:

When I was about twenty years old, I read the books of the Cheng brothers, Zhu Xi, and other

⁶⁷ de Bary 30

⁶⁸ de Bary 53

Confucians. This was the first time I knew that the learning of human nature and principle existed. And when I was twenty-two, I arranged a meeting with you. I heard your arguments and luxuriated in your bountiful kindness. And then I thought that all the virtue and literature of our country lay in you.⁶⁹

Razan has a voracious appetite for learning, and explains to Seika, his own “path” towards “sagehood.” It seems that Seika had a profound effect on Razan, in that Razan views his master as the epitome of the Neo-Confucian sage. That being said, it seems like Razan dreamed of something bigger. He states:

The following year I met our lord in Kyoto. In this connection I went to Edo in Musashi... And now I am in Suruga. Every morning and every night, when I look up, I see Mount Fuji rising above the clouds. How can this not be happiness?...However, I am now twenty-nine years old. When I want to tell someone what I am studying all day, I feel useless, like somebody who is skilled in carving up dragons, like someone who is selling ceremonial caps to the people of Yue [where the people cut off their hair and tattoo their bodies].⁷⁰

Razan displays the naïveté of an idealistic adolescent. He probably thought the prestige of assisting the court would allow him to further pursue his own studies of sagehood, however, it seems that some entity (presumably the bureaucrats in charge of him) were pushing him in an entirely different direction (thus, he feels useless). Despite the low spirits, and his reluctance to engage in a government that has militaristic leanings, he continues to turn to the classics.

Deriving inspiration from *Mencius* and the *Analects*, Razan does not seem to express complacency and has settled into the fact that his literary skills are not as sharp as they once were (he probably did not feel challenged enough, since there were no other Neo-Confucians and clearly the Zen Buddhists posed no challenge). In a state of helplessness, Razan begins to wonder about what he is going to do in an environment where the *dao* is not present. He quotes from a section in *Mencius* where Confucius instructs on what to do when one cannot find companions who

⁶⁹ de Bary 53

⁷⁰ *ibid.*

follow the *dao*. Essentially, he instructs that one should turn to the “undisciplined and over-scrupulous”⁷¹ who make good and companions and students since they are eager to learn. Razan seems to try to stay optimistic by equating his own companions (the *bakufu*) to this story as companions worthy of teaching. He continues:

I “agree with the current customs and consent with an impure age”(Mencius 7B:37) and pretend that I do this for the sake of harmony. How could I pretend that I learned this from Hui Liuxia, who “was wanted in self-respect” (Mencius 2A:9) and “the most accommodating one under the sages?” (Mencius 5B:1) My present self if not my former self, and yet I am like that man. How could I say that I try to emulate Qu Boyu, who was in office when good government prevailed and who could roll up his principles and keep them to himself when government was bad? (Analects 15:7) My spirit is wilting, and the same thing is happening to my literary talents.⁷²

Here Razan quotes from Mencius 7B:37 in reference to a passage about the “village honest man.” In this passage, Mencius warns Wan Chang about avoiding those who seem to have no faults. Mencius states:

If you want to censure the [village honest man] you cannot find anything; if you want to find fault with him, you cannot find anything either. He shares with others the practices of the day and is in harmony with the sordid world. He pursues such a policy and appears to be conscientious and faithful, and to show integrity in his conduct. He is liked by the multitude and is self-righteous. It is impossible to embark on the way of Yao and Shun with such a man. Hence the name ‘enemy of virtue.’ Confucius said, ‘I dislike what is specious. I dislike the foxtail in case it should pass for seedlings; I dislike flattery in case it should pass for what is right; I dislike glibness in case it should pass for the truthful; I dislike the music of Cheng in case it should pass for proper music; I dislike purple in case it should pass for vermilion; I dislike the village honest man in case he should pass for the virtuous.’ A gentleman goes back to the norm. That is all. When the norm is properly set then the common people will be stirred; when the common people are stirred then heresy and aberration will disappear.⁷³

Mencius warns that things might not always be as they seem, and that the honest man is not necessarily a gentleman nor is he virtuous. He only appears to be virtuous, and those appearances are deceiving. Razan seems to feel that his own appearances are deceitful.

Razan is settling into his new role, despite consenting to work for something that was not conventional for neo-Confucian masters, and pretends to justify this

⁷¹ Mencius: Volumes I & II, Trans. D.C. Lau, (Hong Kong: The Chinese Press, 1979) 166.

⁷² *ibid.*

⁷³ Mencius 305

choice for the sake of harmony. He could have been trying to cover his back, it would be quite difficult to prove whether he is lying about his true feelings to his master or not, but if he is being true to his words, then it is more likely that he overcame these personal obstacles. Perhaps, he feels that it is important to stay quiet, even though he might disagree with the *bakufu*, a strategy that most of his contemporaries also used. Many Japanese Confucians were very quick to criticize the *samurai* warrior class, but few spoke out against their superiors the *daimyō* much less the central *bakufu* in Edo.

In order to better understand Razan's perspective on Neo-Confucian doctrine, it is best to look at his involvement with the Tokugawa government. Razan catalogs his interactions with the *bakufu* in *Bakufu Mondō* 幕府問答, a detailed account of various questions asked by Ieyasu on issues concerning Neo-Confucian doctrine. The majority of these questions focus on the possibility of applying the Way (*dao* 道) to the *bakufu* system, the legitimacy of overthrowing a ruler, and whether it was appropriate for Razan to be in court with Ieyasu (since his position was traditionally held by Buddhist monks and at odds with Confucian doctrine).

In the first section, Ieyasu is concerned with whether the Way can really be implemented in a concrete and practical way. He wonders whether Neo-Confucianism is just archaic and idealistic nonsense that does not really exist in pure form, or if it is effectively practiced in China according to the Way:

Ieyasu asked Dōshun [Razan]: 'Is the Way still practiced in Ming China? What do you think?' I said that it was. 'Although I have not yet seen it with my own eyes, I know it from books. Now, the Way is not something obscure and secluded; it exists between ruler and minister, father and son, man and wife, old and young, and in the intercourse between friends. At this time there are schools in China in each and every place, from villages and county districts up to the prefectural capitals. All of them teach human relations. Their main objective is to correct the hearts of men and to improve customs of the people. Do they not

then indeed practice the Way? Thereupon the *bakufu* changed his countenance and spoke of other things. Dôshun, too, did not talk about it anymore.⁷⁴

Razan is explaining the importance of education to Ieyasu and that in China all of the schools are geared towards explicating Confucian doctrine, thus, practice of the Way. Ieyasu seemed content with this response.

Ieyasu continues, seemingly probing Razan for holes in Confucian doctrine:

The Way has never been practiced, neither now nor earlier. Therefore [in the *Zhongyong** 中庸 it says] ‘The course of the Mean cannot be attained’ and ‘The path of the Mean is untrodden.’ What do you think of this? Dôshun answered, ‘The Way of the Mean can be practiced. What the *Zhongyong* says is, I think, something that Confucius said when he was complaining that the Way was not being practiced. This does not mean that the Way cannot actually be practiced. In the Six Classics there are many lamentations like this. It is not only in *Zhongyong*.’⁷⁵

Ieyasu is confused by a simple mistake of semantic interpretation. Razan clarifies by explaining that the books in the canon lay out the blueprint for following the Way, and that it can be implemented, however, at times Confucius lamented over the government’s failure to act. It seems like Razan is offering a very subtle and polite warning to Japan’s newest shogun to act according to the Way and that if he does not follow the Way of the Mean, then Confucius would continue to be right (in his lamentations over corrupt governments). However, Ieyasu is still curious about the meaning of the words, a task proven even difficult for Razan to explain:

Ieyasu asked what was meant by ‘the Mean’ (Jpn. *chû*, Chn. *Zhong*). I answered, ‘the Mean [or Middle] is difficult to grasp. The middle of one foot is not the middle of one *jô***’. The middle of the room is not the middle of a house. The middle of a province is not the middle of the empire. All things have their own middle. Only when you have found their principle [*li*] can you say that you have found their middle [mean]. However much they want to know the Mean, those who have only just begun their studies never find it, precisely because they do not know the principles [*li*]. For this reason we have the maxim valid now and earlier, that ‘the Mean is nothing but principle [*li*].’⁷⁶

⁷⁴ de Bary 54

* Often translated into English as the *Doctrine of the Mean*. Along with the *Great Learning*, it was once part of the *Record of Rites*, but now belongs to the Confucian canon (along with *Mencius*, *The Analects*, and *Great Learning*)

⁷⁵ de Bary 55

** one *jô* equals ten feet

⁷⁶ de Bary 55

Explaining the exact meaning of this word, which alone is quite complicated, was something that Ieyasu had already understood. Another way of looking at this translation/interpretive problem is through Wing-Tsit Chan's explanation. He retranslates this "principle" that is imbedded in "the Mean" as "equilibrium" found within "harmony."⁷⁷ Chan's translation of Zhu Xi's words reads as follows:

Before the feelings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy are aroused it is called equilibrium (*Zhong*, centrality, mean). When these feeling aroused and each and all attain due measure and degree, it is called harmony. Equilibrium is the great foundation of the world, and harmony its universal path. When equilibrium and harmony are realized to the highest degree, heaven and earth will attain their proper order and all things will flourish.⁷⁸

Chan's explanation clarifies why Ieyasu may have been so interested in the meaning of *Zhong* 中 because [similar to the *Great Learning*] it seems to hold the key to Confucian understanding, being a crucial concept in the *Doctrine of the Mean*.

Ieyasu, according to de Bary, prods a little more by employing Buddhist concepts to their conversation that Razan must counter. Razan must compare the *Buddhist Middle Way* to the *Confucian Mean*. Ieyasu seems to be searching for a way to legitimize his own power, having just come into his new role as shogun through military means. Ieyasu wants to know whether it is evil or good to overthrow another ruler. Again Ieyasu and Razan debate:

Ieyasu said, 'In both the Middle [Path] and Expediency there can be good or bad. Tang [in overthrowing the last king of Xia] and Wu [in overthrowing the last king of Shang] were vassals who overthrew their lords. Their actions, though bad, were good. As the phrase goes, "In taking the empire they went against the Way, and in keeping it, they followed the [Way]."' I answered, 'My opinion is different from this. May I be allowed to speak my mind? I think that the *Mean* is good, that it does not have one speck of evil. The *Mean* means that you grasp the principles of all things and that your every action accords with the standard of rightness [fitness]. If you regard the good as good and use it and regard evil as evil and shun it, that is also the *Mean*. If you know what is correct and incorrect and distinguish between what is heterodox and orthodox, this is also the *Mean*.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Chan 98

⁷⁸ *ibid.*

⁷⁹ de Bary 56

In an interesting twist, Razan explains that if you understand the Mean, then there can be no evil in the ruler's motives. Razan continues explaining "a good ruler":

Tang and Wu followed Heaven and reacted to the wishes of mankind. They never had one particle of egoist desires. On behalf of the people of the empire, they removed a great evil. How can that be 'good through bad.' The actions of Tang and Wu were in accord with the Mean; they are instances of [legitimate] discretion. The case is quite different from that of the usurper Wang Mang [22 B.C.E. -23 C.E.] who overthrew the Former Han dynasty or of Cao Cao [155-220], who was responsible for the fall of the Later Han dynasty. They were nothing but brigands. As for the phrase, 'In taking the empire they went against the Way, and in keeping it they followed the Way'- this [moral relativism] is applicable only to actions like lies, deceit, and opportunistic plotting"...⁸⁰

Razan again is explaining that if a ruler has the wishes and interests of the people at heart, then he is a righteous leaders worthy of the mandate bestowed upon him by Heaven.

Razan continues with another passage:

On the twenty-fifth day of the sixth month the *bakufu* said to Dôshun,...
'What is the so-called unity that pervades all?' Dôshun answered, 'The heart of the sage is nothing but principle. Now, always and everywhere, principle runs through all actions in the world; the sage reacts to them and acts on them according to this one principle. Therefore it never happens that he goes and does not obtain his proper place. To give an example, it is like the movement of spring, summer, fall, and winter, of warm and cold, day and night: though they are not identical, yet they are cyclical stream of one and the same original matter that is not disrupted for a single moment. For that reason actions in the world may be [repeated] ten-, hundred-, thousand- or ten-myriad-fold, but that with which the heart reacts to them is only the one, uniting principle. With one's lord it is loyalty; with one's father, filial piety; with one's friends, trust; but none of these principles is different in origin'...⁸¹

Razan seems to have a moralistic understanding that judgments should be made based on the common good of the people, which seems to do away with all of the ambiguous language Ieyasu uses. Thus, for Razan, legitimacy in the political sphere comes from fair judgment and clearing away any ambiguous decisions or actions that might not have a proper place in society (i.e. when the leader is honest with his people). In other words, if the nation follows the five relationships (where the people are loyal to their lord, parents, spouse, siblings, and friends) and the ruler acts in

⁸⁰ de Bary 56

⁸¹ *ibid.*

accord with the Way of the Sage, then the ruler will be legitimate. The actions of the lord are less important than the reasoning that comes from the lord's heart (which is why the "heart of the sage is nothing but principle"). If the lord's heart is pure and honest and act in accordance with the Way and the Five Relationships, then the actions that follow will be just.

The conversation proceeds:

The *bakufu* again asked, 'Were the wars of Tang and Wu instances of discretion or expedience?' Dôshun answered, '...The Purpose of the actions of Tang and Wu are not to acquire the empire for themselves but only to save the people...If those above are not a [wicked] Jie or Zhou and those below [are] not a [virtuous] Tang or Wu, then one will commit the great sin of regicide; Heaven and earth will not condone this...It is only a matter of the hearts of the people of the empire. If they turn to him, he will become a ruler, and if not, he will be a 'mere fellow' [and killing him will not be regicide].⁸²

Again, Razan explains that if the motives of the ruler are to "save the people" (i.e. having the best intentions for the people), then they are not committing regicide when they usurp power from the current leader. He further explains that the people will know in their hearts if the ruler is virtuous, and thus, accordingly they will choose whether or not they will accept his rule.

The contrast between the conversations Razan has with Seika and with Ieyasu is quite interesting. In his conversations with Seika he is distressed over an increasing willingness to conform to the ideals of the *bakufu*, despite appearing extremely orthodox in his commitment to Zhu Xi's teaching of Neo-Confucian texts (more so than Seika). Razan clearly has reservations about engaging with a militaristic government, however, Razan appears to undergo an interesting metamorphosis during his time with the court as the *bakufu*. In his initial interviews with the *bakufu*, one can see in his quotes from *Mencius* and the *Doctrine of the*

⁸² de Bary, 56

Mean that he is committed to guiding the *bakufu* towards understanding the *dao* and establishing a bureaucracy founded in Neo-Confucian ethics.

Ieyasu knew that he needed Razan. The skills that the Confucian intellectuals offered were a superior command of the Chinese language and the teachings of the Chinese classics. Since it was considered an asset to have some general knowledge of Chinese, they had become an important thing to learn, something Ieyasu wanted very much to possess. As a new leader, Ieyasu needed to secure a future, and Chinese intellectualism seemed to offer *the Way*. For their patrons, it did not matter if the intellectuals were heterodox or orthodox in their practice of Neo-Confucianism; their only desire was the knowledge that the Neo-Confucians had to offer.⁸³ In reaction to the *bakufu*'s desires, the Confucians were forced to augment their ideologies to fit the new regime's needs.

For Razan, the motives for joining the court may have been complex and manifold, but that does not mean that he did not recognize, or simply ignored, what he was doing:

“I have read the books by the sages and worthies. I know that such is their intent; it is something I cannot endure. My ambitions, however, to provide for my parents, and the obligations I have to my friends and brothers, do not leave me any choice. To this state things have come...”⁸⁴

In the following chapter, Razan's own analysis of the *Great Learning* and various other “Seika-ian” concepts will be re-explored. What becomes important at this point is not whether Razan was changing his master's texts (that has already been proven), but rather, what exactly has transpired: where do the two meet and at what point/s do they disagree?

⁸³ de Bary 32

⁸⁴ de Bary 54

III. Razan revises the Master

The majority of essays that Razan wrote concerning the *Great Learning* were actually compiled by his son Hayashi Gahô 林鷺峰 in a volume that focused on Neo-Confucian self-cultivation. De Bary points out that the text, *Santokushô* 三徳抄 (The Account of the Three Virtues), is a compilation of Razan's commentary on the *Great Learning*.⁸⁵ The differences between Seika and Razan are astounding, caused primarily by Razan's personal commitment to *Shintô*, and how he manipulated the Japanese native religion to be compatible with Neo-Confucianism. In fact, Razan "superimposes" other texts onto Seika.

It is important to note his inclusion of the *Doctrine of the Mean* (or *Chûyô* 中庸 in Japanese) to explicate the *Great Learning* by including a section on the Three Virtues (this is not normally included in the *Great Learning*). Razan draws from commentaries by other Neo-Confucians including Zhu Xi, the Cheng brothers, and Wang Yangming, all of whom he considers to express the orthodox view of Neo-Confucianism. However, John Allen Tucker suggests that Razan was most heavily influenced by a text by Chen Beixi 陳北溪 titled *Xingli ziyi* (The Meaning of Neo-Confucian Terms), which Razan rendered as *Seiri jigi genkai* 性理字義諺解. The text is an explanation of Neo-Confucian terminology in Japanese using the kana system in a way that was simple for beginners to understand.⁸⁶ What seems apparent is that Razan's own textual analysis of the *Great Learning* was a synthesis of a variety of sources (including both preexisting scholarly works from various orthodox

⁸⁵ de Bary 57

⁸⁶ John Allen Tucker, "Chen Beixi, Lu Xiangshan, and Early Tokugawa Philosophical Lexicography," *Philosophy of East and West*, 43.4 Oct. 1996: 683

Neo-Confucians and various texts in the canon).

The *Santokushō* analysis includes six sections. The first section, known as “The Three Virtues,” explains the concepts of wisdom, humaneness, and courage. Again, Razan adds this section from his own studies of the *Mean*. The section begins:

1.1 Wisdom means having no doubts in one’s mind. Humaneness refers to having no regrets after making judgments or decisions. Being of firm mind and strong determination refers to courage. Wisdom, humaneness, and courage are the sage’s three virtues. Referring to these three virtues, Confucius states in the *Analects* that “the wise have no perplexities; the humane have no worries; the courageous have no fears...

Although distinguishable as three virtues, the three are present in man’s mind, and thus wisdom embraces humaneness and courage. Without humaneness and courage, great wisdom would be impossible to achieve. Similarly, humaneness includes both wisdom and courage. Without the latter two virtues, perfect humaneness would not be possible. Thus, when analyzed, they are three; yet, when synthesized, they constitute a unified moral mind.

The Way of learning begins with completely comprehending principle and thereby attaining wisdom. What is consistent with principle is morally good, whereas evil invariably violates principle. Understanding the difference between good and evil gives one certainty...If one has doubts, one should clear them away by inquiry. By overcoming doubts, one proceeds to a trust that harbors no doubt...⁸⁷

Chan comments that the *Doctrine of the Mean* embodies a completely different Confucian tendency than the *Great Learning*. The two embody different ancient Confucian tendencies similar to that of Mencius versus Xun Zi over the nature of man.⁸⁸ Xun Zi is generally considered to be the more pragmatic of the two, believing man to be inherently evil, but in order to follow the Way, man created ethical norms that needed to be learned in order to rectify their situation. Mencius, on the other hand, optimistically believed that man was inherently good, however, goodness was implanted in the human body from birth in the form of “seeds” or “germs” (i.e. the capacity to understand the *dao*) that would only “germinate” or “grow” if they were cultivated through practice and education. While Chan admits that this theory of their

⁸⁷ de Bary 57

⁸⁸ Chan 96

connection is unsubstantiated, it does seem interesting that Razan uses the *Mean* to explain the nature of man in terms of good versus evil. Seika, who focused primarily on the *Great Learning*, never concerned himself with conclusive terminology, and rarely addressed the question of the nature of man (as good or evil). However, it would seem that from Razan's conversations with Ieyasu (discussed earlier) that he felt a greater degree of pressure from the *bakufu* to conclusively answer such metaphysical questions.

The passage below comes from a section on cultivating the Way in *Doctrine of the Mean*:

The cultivation of the person is to be done through the Way, and the cultivation of the Way is to be done through humanity. Humanity (*jen*) is [the distinguishing characteristic] of man, and the greatest application of it is in being affectionate toward relatives. Righteousness (*i*) is the principle of setting things right and proper, the greatest application of it is in honoring the worthy...

There are five universal ways [in human relations], and the way by which they are practiced is three. The five are those governing the relationship between ruler and minister, between father and son, between husband and wife, between elder and younger brothers, and those in the intercourse between friends. These five are universal paths in the world. Wisdom, humanity, and courage, these three are the universal virtues. The way by which they are practiced is one.⁸⁹

By looking at this passage from the *Doctrine of the Mean*, one can deduce that Razan is concerned with the Five Relationships (like his master Seika) and applies them to the *Great Learning*. The second part of the Three Virtues touches on the “investigation of things” and mentions a concept called *gakumon no susumu* (学問の進む), which relates the principles to the advancement of learning. He explains:

If today one principle is investigated, and tomorrow one more principle is inquired into, soon one will be free of doubts. If one can thoroughly penetrate one principle, all principles will be clear, even though one has not investigated a great many matters.⁹⁰

The concept of Zhu Xi's *gewu* (investigating things) is again of great concern for Razan (like Seika), though the two have particular ways of understanding this phrase.

⁸⁹ Chan 105

⁹⁰ de Bary 58

In the following passage, Razan begins his analysis of *gewu*, which leads into a discussion on principle *li* and material force *qi*. In a conversation between himself and Fujiwara Seika concerning *gewu*, Razan records:

I [Razan] asked, ‘The extension of knowledge’ (*zhizhi*) and ‘the investigation of things’ (*gewu*) were first commented on by Zheng Xuan and later explained by Sima Guang. When we come to the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi, they also gave explanations of these phrases that were brilliant and clear. But Wang Yangming again offered a different opinion. What do you think of that?⁹¹

Razan, like his master, is attempting to distinguish between the doctrine of various scholars on the meaning of *gewu*. In the previous chapter, it was explained that Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming have differing perspectives on the definition of *gewu*. Seika favors Wang Yangming and Lin Zhao’en. However, he keeps an open mind about the interpretive differences. Razan, who happens to be the author of this passage, appears to present Zhu Xi’s definition of *gewu* in the form of Seika’s voice. Razan writes:

The Master said, ‘It is not easy as yet to tell you that. You must first read more closely and get the taste of it, immerse yourself in it, and take your time with it. The important thing is to understand it in silence. When you have reached the stage [spoken of by Zhu Xi as] ‘all at once achieving integral comprehension,’ in which you penetrate suddenly and clearly, then the similarities and differences among the Confucians will be resolved, and they all will be [seen as] essentially one.’⁹²

He then proceeds to use Zhu Xi’s definition of *qi* and *li* referenced on page six of the previous chapter as written in the *Mean*. Razan references Zhu Xi’s analogy of human nature as flowing and still water. He states:

Dôshun [Razan] once asked the meaning of ‘investigation of things.’ Master Seika answered, ‘The Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi explained it as ‘to fathom principle exhaustively’ (*qiongli* 窮理). Let us take it from there. What is above and consists of piled up *qi* is heaven; what is below an in massive form is earth...

Even though thousand, ten thousand or more years ago, if something was liquid and flowed down, that was surely water even if it was not called water. With cold, heat, day, and night, it is the same. Every plant and every tree, the smallest birds and insects, each has its principle (*li*). How much more [this is true] of man! In regard to the human body if we enumerate

⁹¹ de Bary 50

⁹² *ibid.*

those principles (*li*) that man possesses, then we will call the *li* of the eye ‘sight and clearness,’ those of the ear ‘hearing and acuteness,’ those of the mouth ‘speech and reverence,’ and those of the mind-and-heart ‘thought and sagacity.’ Therefore it is said, ‘Man is the most spiritual part of heaven and earth. The day that one suddenly penetrates this heart, these *li*, and understands them clearly is called ‘the investigation of things.’⁹³

Razan offers an interesting interpretation, arguing that the relationship between *li* and *qi* manifests itself in the form of tangible and intangible objects. Tangible, or solid, objects include humans, and their affairs are intangible and therefore free flowing.

Razan suggests that contemplating this relationship between humans and their affairs (and the five relationships) through *mind-and-heart* practices is “the investigation of things” (*gewu*). The section continues:

I [Razan] said: ‘Things’ (*wu*) means ‘affairs’ (*shi*). Now, if there is a ‘thing’ there is also an ‘affair’ (something that matters). When one talks of ‘affairs,’ however, one is talking about something intangible, and when one talks about ‘things,’ one is talking about something solid. Parent and child, lord and retainer, all are ‘things.’ The existence of parental love or of rightness ‘affairs.’ Principle is what makes them such [i.e. makes love, love and fathers, fathers]. Proceeding analogically in all similar cases and thus reaching the inner meaning exhausts the full capacity [for understanding] of the mind-and-heart. Doesn’t what one call ‘the investigation of things’ (*gewu*) mean reaching things?’ Seika replied, “Yes.”⁹⁴

Note how Razan’s definition differs greatly from Lin Zhao’En’s, which begins by saying that *wu* does not mean *shi*:

[Master Lin says]: Here the word *wu* does not mean ‘things’ as in the compound ‘affairs and things’ (*shiwu* 事物) ; it is the *wu* that is used in the *Record of Rites* in the passage ‘where a man’s likings are not subject to regulations [from within], he is changed into the nature of things as they come before him.’ And the word *ge* does not mean ‘to impede,’ ‘to resist’ (*gange* 杆格); it is the *ge* that is used in the *Classic of Documents* in the phrase ‘to expel the evil mind’ (*ge qi feixin* 格其非心). The mind has changed into a thing; if one does not call that an evil mind, what then? Therefore, when one expels this evil mind, at the same time one ‘expels a thing.’ *Ge* has the meaning of ‘to remove.’⁹⁵

Again it is interesting to note that Lin defines *gewu* as the “removal of things.”

Razan’s passage differs greatly from the views written in *Daigaku Yōryaku*. Seika’s view on *wu* (as paraphrased in Chapter one) is as follows:

Wu stands for all things. If there is one single calculating thought in your heart, the [natural]

⁹³ de Bary 51

⁹⁴ *ibid.*

⁹⁵ Bowring 451

spiritual knowledge will not be revealed. This can be compared to a mirror. “Things” are like dust. Inside, the mirror is limpid and clear, so that you only need places in a mirror are called “empty.” In the mirror dwells “spirituality,” which is also called “the utmost good,” or, in the *Doctrine of the Mean*, the state of equilibrium in which the passions have not yet stirred, or in the *Analects*, the “[undifferentiated] unity that pervades all.” In all the limpid and clear places of the mirror, emptiness and spirituality dwell.⁹⁶

Seika does not distinguish between tangible and intangible, but rather believes that *wu* encompasses all. Razan clearly sides with the orthodox definition as ordained by Zhu Xi. It is therefore interesting that Razan should choose to impose his own ideological perspective on Seika despite the Master clearly having a different analysis. Razan is using a language that is more concrete and that would appeal to the *bakufu*. The Tokugawa *bakufu* was looking use Neo-Confucianism as the state sponsored ideology, and therefore they needed concrete answers to make stronger claims of legitimacy. Razan revised Seika’s interpretation in order to remove any aspects of the doctrine that might seem to deviate from Zhu Xi, and that might make his argument for Neo-Confucianism weaker.

IV. The Three Cardinal Principles

Razan writes about various Confucian concepts discussed in the *Great Learning* in the *Santokushô* in eight different sections. As an overview, in section one “The Three Virtues”, Razan explains the meaning of the Three Virtues. In section two, “The Five Relationships,” he relates the Virtues to the Five Relationships (*Gorin* 五輪). Similarly to the way that Seika relates the Five Relationships to Three Cardinal Principles (also referred as the Guiding Principles), Razan too applies the Three Virtues to the Five Relationships. In section three (A Discussion of Principle and Material Force), which analyzes the human mind’s relation to heaven, and the final three sections, (The Five Constants, The Seven Feelings, and Seeing, Hearing,

⁹⁶ Bowring 451

Speech, and Action), are also included in Razan's essay, and elaborate on the manifestation of the Three Virtues outlined in section two. Section four, "The Great Learning" outlines Zhu Xi's commitment to education, and will be discussed later in the section.

But it is section five, "Three Guiding Principles" (i.e. Three Cardinal Principles), that most clearly shows the relationship between Seika and Razan, and how they each interpreted the *Great Learning*.

The section begins with Razan defining the Three Cardinal Principles:

5.1 The Way of learning to be great consists of manifesting one's luminous virtue, loving the people, and adhering to the utmost good. Luminous virtue (*meitoku* 明德) refers to one's original mind-and-heart. It is naturally endowed in man from birth by Heaven... The example of a bright mirror may clarify this... Just as a mirror receives all forms, so man's mind is endowed with the principles of all things.⁹⁷

Razan uses an old version of the Second Cardinal Principle (or Guiding Principle in Razan's case) *zai qinmin* (在親民), which means "loving the people," rather than the more popular Cheng-Zhu version *zai xinmin* (在新民), "renewing the people."⁹⁸ In 5.4, Razan continues explaining "luminous virtue" by stating:

Of all the living creatures, none is more respectable than man. Thus, his mind is endowed with the myriad principles of Heaven-and-earth. The material force of Heaven-and-earth is his material force, and the mind of Heaven-and-earth is his mind. Invariably, moral principles constitute the unity of man's mind. Manifesting this mind in thought, speech, and action so that it never darkens is called "manifesting luminous virtue"...⁹⁹

Razan is unquestionably conservative to Zhu Xi's teachings in his approach, unlike Seika who is far more open to alternative interpretation. The first thing that he adds that distinguishes him from Seika is his view of the heart. In 5.1 he states that "luminous virtue" comes from the heart and is bestowed directly upon man from

⁹⁷ de Bary 63

⁹⁸ *ibid.*

⁹⁹ de Bary 64

Heaven.¹⁰⁰ Seika on the other hand states, “luminous virtue is what a person acquires from Heaven,” bypassing the heart. Seika, who believed that “luminous virtue” manifested itself in the form of the five relationships, was far less concerned that Razan with *qi* and *li*. Though Seika argues that *qi* and desire can obscure “luminous virtue,” this “luminosity” can never cease to exist. As was explained in the previous chapter, Seika was far less concerned with making conclusive decisions about the nature of man than he was with deciding how to organize man under a system of Confucian ethics. Seika believes that “luminous virtue” exists externally in human culture, while Razan, more concerned with *qi* and *li*, wants to argue that these are internal qualities.

In the following passage, Razan stays true to Zhu Xi’s interpretation and explains that man’s comprehension of “luminous virtue” is undoubtedly obscured by desires of the physical world:

Whether luminous virtue is manifested or obscured rests solely with man; thus, no faults come from luminous virtue itself...If desires arise when one sees, if the sounds that one hears confuse the mind, if one longs for delicious tastes or seeks sweet odors, or if one is attached to one’s body or follows blindly the motion of physical forms in violation of moral principles, one will inevitably obscure one’s luminous virtue.¹⁰¹

Like Seika, Razan mentions that one’s luminosity can be obscured, but he stresses that there are no faults in the virtue, but rather, in the person. The heart, for Razan, is devoid of evil, and is clouded by the *qi*, which is the source of all evil. Thus, [based on Zhu Xi’s interpretation] Razan’s orthodox and dogmatic interpretation renders the heart as having dualistic character, or in other words, as a representation of the *qi* that obscures the *li* within the heart.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Willem Jan Boot, The Adoption and Adaptation of Neo-Confucianism in Japan: The Role of Fujiwara Seika and Hayashi Razan, (Leiden: University of Leiden Press, 1982): 139

¹⁰¹ de Bary 64

¹⁰² Boot 138-139

Razan continues to lay out the remaining Principles in a way that is easy for anyone to understand. Always looking for concrete answers, he avoids the process of deliberation and prefers to map out exactly how “luminous virtue” and “loving the people” relate, suggesting that unlike his master, Razan believes that the Principles have an innate order (again, agreeing with the orthodox view held by Zhu Xi). Razan writes in section 5.4:

“Loving the people” refers to manifesting one’s luminous virtue with the wish that people be instructed and enlightened by it. “Renewing the people” refers to cleansing them anew by washing away the foulness and dirtiness of selfish human desires that have soiled them for a long time... One should strive to illuminate those who do not yet understand their luminous virtue so that they too can manifest it... This is the meaning of “loving the people.”¹⁰³

Here Razan combines two definitions together. He explains that love for the people is expressed by illuminating others (i.e. that educating others helps to renew the virtue of those who might not know it yet). This differs from Seika’s own understanding. Seika explicitly states that “renew” (rather than “love”) also means to “educate” and that this principle directly references the harmony of correct human relationships.

That being said, Razan continues:

Manifesting luminous virtue means governing (*osamuru* 治まる) oneself. Loving the people means governing others... The process of loving the people means leading others to filial piety by being filial to one’s parents, leading others to their public duties by being conscientious to one’s ruler, and leading other to doing good by personally doing good.¹⁰⁴

Razan replaces “educate” with govern. In essence, performing one’s public duties, following one’s ruler, and leading others equals “love”. Unlike his Master, Razan never justifies violence in this passage should the people not follow the ways of the ruler, again suggesting his commitment to Zhu Xi’s teachings. He encourages an alternative to violence for the newly developing Tokugawan bureaucratic system.

Finally, Razan concludes with the Third Guiding principle:

¹⁰³ de Bary 65

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*

“The utmost good” refers to both manifesting luminous virtue and loving the people so that matters are settled naturally in accordance with principle... Among the man matters of daily practicality, whether they be great or trivial, are none not governed by moral principles. In dressing, eating, speaking behaving, standing, and sitting, day and night, morning and evening, all matters are invested with moral principles. “Adhering to the utmost good” refers to fulfilling these principles...

Luminous virtue, loving the people, and the utmost good express “the three guiding principles of the Great Learning...”¹⁰⁵

Again, Razan reinforces that one must first “manifest luminous virtue” and “love the people” before he can “adhere to the utmost good.” This commitment to order puts him at odds with his master and emphasizes their ideological differences. Seika was never committed to the finality of things, but rather, more interested in the diversity of thought involved with trying to answer questions of Confucian dogma, while Razan was much more goal oriented. Razan wanted conclusive answers that could be applicable to all questions that might arise. He did not just want to implement a system of Confucian ethics that would mold Japan into an ideal, ethical society, he wanted to go a step further, and make the people (or at least the *bakufu*) truly understand their nature in the cosmos, and how they fit into the larger spectrum of following the Way.

V. Ideological Struggle: The Nature of Good versus Evil

In Razan’s analysis of the *Great Learning* there is always a question lingering in the background. He is edging closer and closer towards the issue of human nature and good versus evil. Perhaps for Razan, this was Confucianism’s greatest ideological struggle, as evidenced by his tendencies to questions of the nature of good and evil (including in his conversations with the Ieyasu), which he tries to explain using *li* and *qi*.

In *Razan-sensei Bunshû*, Razan states:

¹⁰⁵ de Bary 65

Li and *qi* are one and [yet] two, two and [yet] one. This is the sense in which the Confucianists of the Sung wanted to be understood. However, Master Yang-Ming said: ‘*li* is the innate norm (*tiao li* 條理) of *qi*, and *qi* is the movement (*yün-tung*) of *li*.’ If one takes [this last statement] into account and reflects [on the problem, one must conclude that] the order make rather too sharp a distinction. Since [the time that] this later scholar (i.e. Wang Yang-Ming W.J.B) [gave this definition], we cannot throw out the latter and choose the former. [However,] in the main they come down to one and the same: is not all this said of the heart?¹⁰⁶

Razan is struggling with the nature of *li* and *qi* and how they are interconnected.

However, W.J. Boot points out that Razan’s real problem was trying to find the origin of evil (a problem that neither Zhu Xi nor Wang Yang-Ming could answer).¹⁰⁷ While his master Seika had just ignored the problem, other Confucians made *qi* the origin of evil. Razan did not accept this because he believed that *qi* and *li* were too interconnected. This marks a point where his approach deviates from the classical Zhu Xi Neo-Confucian dogma¹⁰⁸:

Human nature is identical with *li*, [and since it is said that nothing is outside *li*], nothing in the world is outside of human nature. All *li* are good. This is the reason why Mencius called human nature good. However, if this is the case, is then what is called evil outside of the human nature, or inside? If you say that it is outside, then [you contradict the proposition that] human nature originally has no evil. What is in fact the origin from which evil arises? Former Confucianists have not told this. How then can it be easy to tell?

Heaven and earth and the myriad things originate from *li*. Does evil, then, also originate from *li*? The *li* are good. How could evil ever come out of them? In that case, however, what is the origin of evil? And what kind of heart is this heart of mine that knows this so-called evil? From this one can truly see that human nature is good. However, one can talk about this only with someone who is a great sage.

Human nature is good. Human nature is identical with the *li* in the heart. In the world there is nothing that is outside human nature nor is there anything that is outside *li*. If one believes these words, then what is the origin of that which is called evil? If one does not agree with them, one cannot dispel the perplexities [caused by] the theories concerning human nature of Kao-Zi, Xun Zi, and Yang Xiong.¹⁰⁹

The first two passages above were written circa 1610, during the prime years of his life, while the third passage was composed towards the end. He kept them mainly a secret, since they expressed serious doubts concerning Confucian doctrine for

¹⁰⁶ Boot 144

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Boot 145-146

someone so passionate in his commitment to Zhu Xi. Razan clearly had his own concerns about his works, which could suggest that perhaps he was less conservative than one might think. Considering the events in his life, and the pressures he must have felt from the *bakufu*, it is possible that these concerns were always lingering in the background, yet never surfaced in order for Razan to maintain his role in the *bakufu*. Nonetheless, Razan seems to come to terms with the belief that human nature *is* in fact good towards the end of his life.

VI. Conclusion

Today, when one considers Hayashi Razan, he is remembered for establishing the Hayashi family “private school” that was the officially recognized school of Confucian thought during the Tokugawa shogunate. It took three generations for them to get to be officially recognized. While the Razan family is significant for their involvement in the court, the process of change was slow, as Ieyasu and his descendents were cautious administrators. Therefore, Neo-Confucianism in the Tokugawa period spread mostly through the private sector, which allowed for great intellectual diversity and independent development. However, when Confucianism becomes the orthodox view of the Tokugawa in the 18th century, it was the Hayashi school that became a source of intellectual diversity (however, it was not the authority as a definer of orthodoxy in Japan until much later).¹¹⁰

It is important to remember that the Japanese neo-Confucians developed a school not wholly that of the Cheng brothers, Mingdao and Yichuan, and Zhu Xi. It was also different from the orthodox school of thought that developed in Korea. De Bary states, “Both Seika and Razan were aware of later developments in the Ming

¹¹⁰ de Bary 69

Dynasty, and if Razan opted for the Cheng-Zhu school, he did so for specific reasons and in full awareness that the Confucian tradition had more to offer.”¹¹¹ Seika didn’t choose the same school, so it is clear that this was in no way preordained for Japan.¹¹²

Razan once wrote in his own anthology *Shishû* (詩集):

When I was a child, I sometimes read modern stories [e.g. the *Taiheiki*]. The person who explained them to me [told me that he] thought that such-and-such a word came from Su Dongpo [1037-1101] or from Huang Tingqian [1045-1105] and that such-and-such a phrase came from Li Bo [701-762], Du Fu [712-770], Han Yu [768-824], or Liu Zongyan [773-819]. When I read the collected works of Li, Du, Han, Liu, Su, and Huang. I noticed that very often what they were based on was the *Wenxuan* (Literary Anthology), the *Shiji* (*Records of the Historian*), or the *Hanshu* (History of the Former Han Dynasty). When I read the *Shiji* and the *Hanshu*, I saw that they followed the texts of the ancient period. I then read the Five Classics and saw that before them there was nothing from which they derived. Thereupon I clearly realized that these classics constituted the foundation of all later theories, and in this broad perspective I understood what the Way was based on. I cherished only the extra teachings added to the classics by the Chengs and Zhu Xi and looked up to the abundant relics of Confucius and Mencius¹¹³

As a literary and ideological figurehead in the development of Japanese Neo-Confucianism, Razan was a conflicted and extremely complicated individual. This stemmed from his confrontation with various issues such as diverse perspectives, working for the *bakufu*, and his individual struggle with orthodoxy.

Regardless of how one looks at Razan, it is impossible to deny his commitment to the tradition. Through his analysis of the *Great Learning* provided in that *Santokushô* and the commentary provided in his biographies and anthologies (*Bakufu Mondô*, *Razan Sensei Bunshû*), Razan interpreted Neo-Confucian doctrine with a strict adherence to Zhu Xi’s interpretation. Razan brought up questions of “orthodoxy” as a means of legitimacy into the Japanese language, and was the first scholar to see a s Neo-Confucianism’s potential for greatness in Japanese society. He took Seika’s works, organized them into a form that was understandable to the

¹¹¹ de Bary 32

¹¹² de Bary 31

¹¹³ *ibid.*

bakufu, and directly put into place a new catalyst for religious and spiritual development in Japan. Razan's commitment to Neo-Confucianism's place in Japanese society ensured the longevity of the tradition and secured its place as the official ideology of Tokugawan society.

Four

Kaibara Ekken 貝原益軒:

Making Confucianism Accessible to All through the *Great Learning*

I. Introduction

Kaibara Ekken 貝原益軒 (also known as *Atsunobu* 篤信, 1630-1714), was one of the most prolific Neo-Confucians during the Tokugawa. Ekken is in a different position from that of Razan and Seika in that he lived in an era when Neo-Confucianism was the intellectual and spiritual authority of the *bakufu*. While he is not usually grouped as a member of the major Confucian intellectuals of his time, he is quite significant in his criticism of Zhu Xi's works. If Hayashi Razan was attempting to mold the Confucian system in Japan to be as orthodox as possible to Zhu Xi's ideology and make it into the state's, then Ekken is his mirror opposite in that he wished to make Neo-Confucianism accessible to the people, rather than the state, and he was opposed to the Zhu Xi's interpretations. By making the tradition accessible to the majority of Japan, Ekken probably did more for the tradition than Razan could have ever dreamed possible.

Following Razan's time, the so-called "School of Ancient Learning" (*kogaku* 古学) Neo-Confucians began to break away from the Zhu Xi school and those who viewed him as orthodox Neo-Confucianism. They began to mold the tradition to meet the needs of Japanese society's newly erected hierarchical bureaucracy (based on remnants of the militaristic structure). Before these so-called Confucians (i.e. Yamaga Sokô 山鹿素行, Itô Jinsai 伊藤仁斎, and Ogyû Sorai 荻生徂徠) came to break away from the development of the tradition, even the followers of Zhu Xi's school (who always enjoyed being the favored school of the Tokugawa) at times passively implied repudiation over issues of Tokugawa's methods of controlling the

people.¹¹⁴ However, this new generation of Confucian intellectuals, who were concerned about the place of the newly inactive *samurai* class in Tokugawan society, began to question the validity of orthodoxy in Japanese society. By the time Ekken came around, the Neo-Confucian practice of the Tokugawa had diversified from when Razan was the major influential figure into three major schools of thought (though they were never labeled as such): Zhu Xi's school (Razan), Wang Yangming's (*Jpn. oyōmei*) school (Seika), and the School of Ancient Learning (Sokō).¹¹⁵ While Ekken's ideas on Neo-Confucian moral metaphysics were unconventional, he was not interested in associating himself with Jinsai's radical critique and eventual abandonment of Zhu Xi.¹¹⁶ In fact, Ekken kept many of his critiques unpublished until after his death, though they have become some of his most significant. While Ekken met many influential scholars of his time (including Razan's son Hayashi Gahō, one of the leading scholars of the *bakufu*), he never strongly associated himself with any of their doctrine.

In the *Taigiroku* (The Record of Grave Doubts, 大疑録), Ekken expresses a great deal of concern over the teaching of Zhu Xi in the hopes that future generations would be able to resolve his issues. He states in the preface, "An earlier Confucian remarked, 'In learning one should be anxious when one has doubts. By doubting one makes progress. Consequently one learns.'"¹¹⁷ In a way, this is a recurrent theme in many of Ekken's writing. Through Ekken's own variety of Neo-Confucianism, one can see the tradition evolve into a form of intellectualism that fit the ideals of

¹¹⁴ de Bary 30

¹¹⁵ Tucker 697

¹¹⁶ de Bary 106

¹¹⁷ Tucker 698

Tokugawan society in the prime of the regime.

II. Contributions to the Tokugawa

According to Mary Evelyn Tucker, “Kaibara Ekken was regarded by his contemporaries and by later generations as a major figure in seventeenth-century Japanese intellectual history.”¹¹⁸ Ekken wrote over one hundred significant pieces however, *Taigiroku* was one of his most well known commentaries on Zhu Xi’s school of thought. Ekken is also responsible for turning *The Great Learning* into a textbook accessible to all Japanese, and it is marked as, more so than any of his other projects, an accomplishment that incorporated Neo-Confucianism into the very “fiber of Japanese culture.”¹¹⁹ Tucker points out that due to a prolonged period of war and suffering, the early Tokugawa period was an age of change, where people sought an alternative to a “means of validating human action that was distinct from the Buddhism that had dominated medieval Japan”.¹²⁰ Since Buddhism’s role as the dominant tradition during this stage of the Tokugawa was waning, Ekken’s role in the development of Neo-Confucianism in Japan as an institution is worth exploration.

Kaibara Ekken was primarily concerned with the transmission of the Way of the sages, and through close selective examination of the teachings of Zhu Xi, embraced the universal elements of Neo-Confucianism he saw applicable to Tokugawan society as a means of preserving peace. Similarly to Razan, one aspect of Neo-Confucianism that Kaibara found particularly appealing was the ease with which he could develop his ideas in relation to Shinto, considering that both traditions recognized, as Mary Evelyn Tucker puts it, a deep “reverence for heaven and earth as

¹¹⁸ Mary Evelyn Tucker, Moral and Spiritual Cultivation in Japanese Neo-Confucianism: The Life and Thought of Kaibara Ekken (1603-1714), (Albany New York: SUNY Press, 1989) 3

¹¹⁹ Hooker 1996

¹²⁰ Tucker Moral and Spiritual...3

the source and sustainer of life, and in the affirmation of the sacredness of all living things.”¹²¹ In other words, he found shared values in the virtues and naturalistic philosophies of both traditions.

Ekken was born during the period of the third Tokugawa shogun Iemitsu to a lower class Samurai family.¹²² During this period, Neo-Confucianism flourished, having already been fully implemented into the ideological and political system set up by the *bakufu*. Ieyasu was responsible for setting up a Tokugawan state of peace, however his son Hidetada (shogun from 1605-1622) and grandson Iemitsu (shogun from 1622-1651) were responsible for cementing the political system known as *bakuhan*, a bureaucratic administrative structure that employed a policy of seclusion from foreign nations and decentralized power among the 260 daimyo.¹²³

During the Tokugawa period, although learning and education were considered to be a function of the *samurai* class, Confucian scholars came from various social backgrounds and helped to educate different groups within society on Confucian teachings. Ekken, having been born to a lower class of *samurai*, was educated and employed by the *daimyô* of his domain (*han*) of Kuroda where he served as an advisor and educator.¹²⁴

It should be noted that Tokugawa Neo-Confucianism was not a teaching reserved solely for the upper echelon of the *samurai* class, nor was it simply an ideology of the elite used to keep others in their place.¹²⁵ Quite the contrary, it

¹²¹ Tucker *Moral and Spiritual*... 4

¹²² Mary Evelyn Tucker, “Religious Aspects of Japanese Neo-Confucianism: The Thoughts of Nakae Toju and Kaibara Ekken,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 5.1 1998: 63.

¹²³ Hooker 1996

¹²⁴ Kaibara, Ekken trans. Basil Hall Chamberlain, *Greater Learning for Women* [1762]. 1998. 18 Dec 2007 www.wsu.edu:8080/~wldciv/world_civ_reader/world.

¹²⁵ Tucker *Moral and Spiritual*...19

developed on many levels of society, thanks in great part to Ekken's contribution to making Confucian texts available in common Japanese. Historian Testuo Najita states:

The importance of Confucianism as a source from which key mediating concepts were drawn to grapple with specific moral issues confronting Tokugawa commoners is easily confirmed by the available literature of the period. In the case of merchants, Confucianism offered a language with which to conceptualize their intellectual worth in terms of universalistic definitions of 'virtue.' Thus, while Confucianism undeniably remained the preferred philosophy of the aristocracy, to view it as being enclosed within boundaries of that class would be to deny that system of thought its adaptive and expansive abilities.¹²⁶

Therefore, philosophers like Kaibara Ekken helped to spread Neo-Confucianism to all levels of Tokugawan society. The growth of printing, literacy, and education during the period also influenced the proliferation of Neo-Confucianism throughout Japan. He did much of this through the process of "indigenization" of Confucian moral cultivation and education. Ekken's activities included lecturing to *han daimyo*, tutoring his heir, writing about the connection between botany and Confucianism, and researching various projects commissioned by the *han*.

Despite deviating from Zhu Xi's teachings, he remained concerned with Zhu Xi's "practical learning" (Jpn. *jitugaku*, Chn. *shixue* 实学) which stressed practical knowledge of medicine, botany, agriculture, astronomy, mathematics, and geography.¹²⁷

His writings on the philosophy of education in Japan had the greatest impact on Tokugawan society.¹²⁸ Ekken made Confucian moral ethics (due in large part to the advancement of Japanese printing) into a "household name" and by removing the aspects of doctrinal language and creating a vocabulary that was understood in plain,

¹²⁶ Tucker Moral and Spiritual... 19

¹²⁷ de Bary 107

¹²⁸ Tucker Moral and Spiritual... 23

everyday speech. He did this by spreading Confucian ideas through moral treatises (*kunmono* 訓もの) written in a simplified Japanese style which he presented to particular groups of people; including *samurai*, families, women, and children.¹²⁹ Through Ekken's literature, one can truly get a feel for the intellectual atmosphere during the time of the Tokugawa shogunate.

III. Understanding Mind-and-Heart Tradition (*shingaku*, 心学)

In order to understand Ekken's analysis of the *Great Learning*, it is essential to understand the tradition of the mind-and-heart (Jpn. *shingaku*, Chn. *xin xue* 心学). According to Wm. Theodore de Bary, Sung Neo-Confucians developed mind-and-heart in the process of trying to explain an alternative to Buddhist doctrine of the mind and to develop an appropriate method for the cultivation of both the mind and the heart.¹³⁰ The syncretic nature of mind-and-heart appealed to both the Koreans and Japanese as a way of coming to terms with the new tradition and preexisting native religions.¹³¹

Yamazaki Ansai was first responsible for creating a system of Shintô and Confucianism which he called Suika Shintô. It combined self-cultivation as a part of the learning of the mind-and-heart, but was highly criticized as being too rigid. It was not until Ishida Baigan 石田梅巖 (1688-1744) that a successful version was popularized. Baigan's form of self-cultivation (*shingaku*) was created with the intention of ridding the human heart of selfish desires by means of meditation and asceticism, devotion to one's parents, respect for superiors, and honesty in all

¹²⁹ de Bary 105

¹³⁰ de Bary 255

¹³¹ Mary Evelyn Tucker, *The Philosophy of Qi: The Record of Grave Doubts, Kaibara Ekken* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007) 95.

dealings. It was devised for the Tokugawa merchant class however, it relied on earlier methods taught by the Ch'eng Chu school for methods on cultivating the mind-and-heart.

Ekken developed his own form of *shingaku* but, his was intended for all classes and occupations of Tokugawa Japan. In *Yamato Zokkun*, *shingaku* became the system he used for teaching Neo-Confucian self-cultivation and was the core of his moral and spiritual teachings. He believed that self-cultivation was the primary task of human beings as repayment for their heavenly nature. Ekken devised his version of *shingaku* from the *Great Learning*, the *Doctrine of the Mean*, and Zhu Xi's commentaries. He also used Chen De-Xiu's *Heart Classic*, which was the first commentary written about this style of Neo-Confucianism. Ekken's style of mind-and-heart is explained throughout the text, however, it stresses a need for self-cultivation to be both an internal and external process. He explains that human beings were given the mind-and-heart of heaven and earth. He states in the preface of *Yamato Zokkun* [45a]:

The principles of heaven and earth and the Way of the human were taught in the classics of the ancient sages, and their teachings are as clear as the sun and moon shining in the heavens. There is no one with eyes to see who does not recognize this. It is reasonable to say that for the people of old, had not heaven brought Confucius into this world, all ages would have been like a long dark night.¹³²

Ekken places a strong emphasis on the religious element of Confucianism in that tradition is an object ordained by heaven to show the people the Way. As Mary Evelyn Tucker explains, "the human being is extremely fortunate to be born a human and must develop his or her heavenly bestowed nature by serving heaven and earth."¹³³ Thus, one must attain Sagehood by realizing how he is linked to heaven,

¹³² Tucker *Moral and Spiritual*... 134

¹³³ Tucker *Moral and Spiritual*... 88

earth, and all things. The following section will focus on how Ekken elaborates on the achievement of Sagehood by using the teachings of the *Great Learning*.

IV. The Evolution of Neo-Confucian Education through the *Yamato*

Zokkun

For Kaibara Ekken, as Tucker has pointed out, “the moral transformation in human life is connected to and affirmed by larger generative processes in nature itself”.¹³⁴ In other words, Kaibara emphasized the importance of *qi* as equated with the ethical implications of the principle of humaneness (*jen*).

Ekken elaborates on the principle of humaneness in *Yamato Zokkun*:

The principle of humaneness makes it a virtue to show kindness toward human beings and compassion for all things. The way to serve heaven and earth is by preserving this virtue of humaneness without losing it, and deeply loving humanity, which heaven and earth have produced. Then, by having compassion for birds and beasts, trees and plants, and adhering to the heart of nature through which heaven and earth love humans and all things, we assist the efforts of the great compassion of heaven and earth and make the serving of heaven and earth the Way. This, the Human Way, is humaneness. If we analyze the principle of humaneness, it is composed of both humaneness and righteousness; if we analyze humaneness and righteousness they encompass decorum, wisdom, and faithfulness. These five innate qualities together are called five virtues (or constants). For example, if we divide one year we get yin and yang, and if we divide it further it becomes the four seasons of spring, summer, autumn, and winter. [48a]¹³⁵

Shingaku (心学 *the study of mind-and-heart*) helped Neo-Confucianism in both China and Korea, and through the writings of Ekken and other scholars, also made it popular in Japan.¹³⁶ Perhaps more so than the previous two scholars’ studies, Ekken’s works more noticeably reflect *mind-and-heart* teachings.

Ekken’s works relating to Zhu Xi *Yamato Zokkun* (大和俗訓, *Precepts for a daily life in Japan*), *Onna Daigaku* (女大学, *Greater Learning for Women*), and *Taigiroku* (大義録, *The Record of Great Doubts*) which were all written in the

¹³⁴ Tucker *Moral and Spiritual*... 54

¹³⁵ Tucker *Moral and Spiritual*... 138

¹³⁶ Tucker “Religious Aspects...” 64

vernacular style and summarized Zhu Xi's learning methods in a way that was clear and concise (in a step-by-step fashion) for the broad Japanese population. Ekken emphasized the idea of learning through self-cultivation and cumulative growth, with education at an elementary level through study of the *Elementary Learning* (Chn. *xiao xue*, 小学) that would eventually lead to higher learning through the study of the *Great Learning* (Chn. *daxue*, 大学) for all classes and ages regardless of rank. The student began his study of the *Elementary Learning* (focusing on the essential virtues of filiality and respect) at the age of eight, while the *Great Learning* (governing the people through self-discipline) began at the age of fifteen.¹³⁷

Ekken's analysis of the *Great Learning* is found primarily in *Yamato Zokkun*. Ekken's primary concern seems to be outlining the three guiding principles and the eight steps in a simple format so that most Japanese could understand them. While the text deals with practically all aspects of Confucian education, including instruction on *Mencius*, *Analects*, *Doctrine of the Mean*, the study of the *Great Learning* begins in chapter two, part two of the *Yamato Zokkun*. He begins:

The *Great Learning* is the learning for adults from the age of fifteen, and it is concerned with the important principle of governing the people through self-discipline. The earth is extensive but it consists [essentially] of nothing but the self and others. The study of the Way of governing the people through self-discipline is the greatest and most important of the studies. Therefore it is called the *Great Learning*.¹³⁸

In the above passage from section [65ab], Ekken explains the role of self in society and that the central message is the importance of learning through self-discipline. He continues by explaining the Three Cardinal Principles (also referred as the Three Guiding Principles):

Making clear one's luminous virtue [i.e. manifesting the moral nature] is to discipline oneself.

¹³⁷ Tucker *Moral and Spiritual*... 94

¹³⁸ Tucker *Moral and Spiritual*... 162

“To renew the people” Is [the means of] governing the people. “Resting in the highest good” means that by manifesting illustrious virtue and by renewing the people we attain the highest goodness and should rest there. Therefore, there is no way to rest in the highest good other than by manifesting illustrious virtue and renewing the people. These three structural principles are the great essence of the *Great Learning*.¹³⁹

There are several points to note in this passage. First, like Razan, Ekken believes that the Three Cardinal Principles have an innate order. “Luminous virtue” precedes “renewing the people,” and both must be realized before “resting in the highest good” can be considered (also often translated as the “utmost good”). He then explains that there is no way for these principles to be attained out of order, therefore, they are structural in their form. It is also important to note that in less than one paragraph, Ekken has summarized three concepts that both Razan and Seika extensively analyzed. Therefore, one can see how Ekken is making a simplified textbook that is easy to understand.

Perhaps a more simplified summary of Ekken’s directives is outlined in section [58b], based on the *Great Learning*:

In general, the way to extend knowledge is by first knowing the Way of the five constant virtues and the five moral relations. We should extend this to the principle of regulating the family and governing principles. Next we should seek to know the principles of all things and affairs. Since all things in heaven and earth lie within the ken of our own mind-and-heart, we should learn their principles. The way of investigating principles first gives priority to what is primary (the root) and what is close at hand, and then follows up with what is secondary (the branches) and things farther away. We should not forget the order of sequence and priority.¹⁴⁰

Gewu or the “investigation of things” has once again become the principal aspect of knowing the Way. Like Razan and Seika before him, Ekken, too, is concerned with the importance of this concept. The investigation of things and the extension of knowledge are at the core of all learning. Ekken continues with an explanation of the eight steps towards embracing the three Cardinal Principles (which guides one

¹³⁹ Tucker *Moral and Spiritual*... 162

¹⁴⁰ Tucker *Moral and Spiritual*... 94

through the process of the “investigation of things”):

There are eight specific items in the method that leads to the three guiding principles. The eight items are the detailed methods included within the three structural principles. The investigation of things and extension of knowledge is a way which opens up knowledge by exploring and understanding the principle of things and affairs. [The items that come] after “making one’s intention sincere” constitute the way of vigorous practice. Above all, sincerity, honesty, and self-discipline are the Way to cultivate oneself. Ordering the family, governing the state, and bringing peace to all under heaven is a Way of ruling the people. In general, the Great Learning teaches these principles.¹⁴¹

At first, Ekken’s summary seems jumbled, but essentially he is concerned with intellectual pursuit. The eight steps begins with “investigating things” and “extending knowledge.” Without comprehension of the first two intellectual items, one cannot continue on to the remaining six. The two are connected in that through the practice of self-exploration, one can extend his or her understanding of things. He follows with an explanation that the remaining six items are the focus of the practice of the first two items. Three of the items are methods of moral and spiritual cultivation (Ekken calls them sincerity, honesty, and self-discipline but they are often referred to as “making the will sincere,” “cultivating oneself,” and “rectifying the mind”) and the other three are methods of social cultivation (ordering the family, governing the state, and bringing peace to all under heaven). Ekken believes that the order of the eight items is innate; after one is realized the next can follow with the end result being the union of all in a state of peace. It is also important to note that all of the eight items are an integral part of the pursuit of learning and the “Discipline of the Mind-and-Heart” (*shinjutsu*, 心術).¹⁴²

Ekken continues to elaborate on all of the items and their innate order:

In the *Great Learning* the clarifying of principles by investigating things and extending knowledge is the beginning of “governing the people through self-discipline.” “Investigating things” is thoroughly exploring and attaining principles of all things and affairs; “extending

¹⁴¹ Tucker Moral and Spiritual... 162

¹⁴² Tucker Moral and Spiritual... 94

knowledge” is fathoming what is known in our own mind-and-heart and clarifying it.¹⁴³

Again, the mind-and-heart practice is linked to the pursuit of learning through the first two items. Ekken continues to elaborate on the “investigation of things” and the order of the items. He also references the five constant virtues of mind-and-heart explained in Chapter I, part one as follows:

If we analyze the principle of humaneness, it is composed of both humaneness and righteousness; if we analyze humaneness and righteousness they encompass decorum, wisdom, and faithfulness. These five innate qualities together are called the five virtues (or constants), [48a]¹⁴⁴

He continues with the five moral relations:

There are five human relations, namely, those between ruler (lord) and minister (retainer), parent and child, husband and wife, older and younger, and between friends. These are the five relations and they are also known as categories. Although there are many people in this world, none fall outside of these classifications. [48b]¹⁴⁵

Ekken explains the virtues and relationships that regulate man are part of the investigation of things and essential in order to understand the other seven items. He continues:

The order of investigation of things begins with the Way of the five constant virtues and five moral relations and proceeds from things close at hand such as disciplining the self and regulating the family and, following this sequence, gradually reaching up to fathoming the principles for governing the country. This is the investigation of things. When we exhaustively fathom the principles concerning the myriad things and events, our self-understanding will naturally be clarified. This is the extension of knowledge. There is no method of extending knowledge other than investigating things. This is the beginning of the endeavor [to internalize] the *Great Learning*.¹⁴⁶

Ekken is creating a laundry list of how to understand and follow in the Way, which he believes starts with the “investigation of things” and continues with the “extension of knowledge.” In order to “investigate things,” one must first understand the Five Virtues and the Five Relationships. Through investigation of these concepts, one can extend their own knowledge. He follows by explaining the third item, “making

¹⁴³ Tucker *Moral and Spiritual*... 162

¹⁴⁴ Tucker *Moral and Spiritual*... 138

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ Tucker *Moral and Spiritual*... 163

intentions sincere”:

Next is making our intentions sincere. Intentions are like seedlings; they indicate when the mind-and-heart is first aroused. The substance of the mind-and-heart is quiescent before good and evil appear. When it is first moved, both good and evil arise and so do likes and dislikes. To dislike means to hate. At this point, making ones intentions sincere means loving the good, disliking evil, being honest and not deceitful. . .we should be honest in such things, for it is the beginning of effort and practice. [66a]¹⁴⁷

This section seems to be referencing Mencius, though he has not cited it as such.

Ekken uses sincerity to explain the nature of good versus evil. When intentions are good, the mind-and-heart is “moved” to do good. Ekken continues:

When we are not honest in loving the good and disliking the evil, the foundation will not be firmly established and we cannot practice the Way of all things. This method [described in the *Great Learning*] of “rectifying the heart, disciplining oneself, regulating the family, ruling the country, and making peace under heaven,” begins with making our intentions sincere. Thus the eight articles of the *Great Learning* have as their essence the investigation of things and making the intentions sincere. The investigation of things is the beginning of knowledge. Making our intentions sincere is the beginning of action. If we do not investigate things we cannot thoroughly explore all principles and so our knowledge will not be clear, it will be difficult to distinguish good and evil, and we will be confused and unenlightened. . .If we do not make our intentions sincere in loving the good and disliking the evil, we will be without a basis on which to practice the Way, and we still cannot be called a good person. Therefore, is it not natural that one takes these two [loving good and disliking evil] as the beginning of the extension of knowledge and vigorous practice? [66a]¹⁴⁸

At this point Ekken is clearly deviating from Razan’s own understanding of the nature of good versus evil. Ekken believes that man’s nature is defined by their “extension of knowledge” and their commitment to vigorous practice. In other words, it is man’s choices and actions that define whether he is good or evil. Man’s willingness to follow the way of the eight items as a guide for instituting the Three Cardinal Virtues will define his/her nature as good or evil.

Ekken continues simplifies what he is trying to explain:

All people definitely have the innate capacity to know, and even foolish people can distinguish somewhat between good and evil. In addition, when knowledge gradually opens up, by thoroughly exploring principles through study, the mind-and heart which sees good as good and evil as evil becomes increasingly clear. However, if we are not genuine in loving good and disliking evil, the good will not be practiced. . .if scholars wish to practice the Way, they must first be genuine in loving good and disliking evil. Consequently, the method of

¹⁴⁷ Tucker Moral and Spiritual . . . 163

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*

making the intentions sincere is indeed important.¹⁴⁹

Again, Ekken is clearly concerned with moral and spiritual cultivation. He believes that the connection between the mind-and-heart and good and evil is inherent, and it is through man's own learning that this distinction is clarified. In other words, man is born with the capacity for good, however, only through self-cultivation can he distinguish between what is good and what is evil.

This is a process of internal reflection and external investigation. Ekken recognizes that merely investigating human relations or moral virtues as separate entities is not sufficient, and that both must be seen in relation to nature itself. Therefore, the roles of heaven and earth and the metaphysical part that they play are also necessary for understanding the human Way.¹⁵⁰ This is the basis of his idea of investigating the nature of man from an empirical standpoint. Ekken's encouragement is airy and light rather than commanding, instructing that as long as one is sincere in his investigation of the truth, then he will be able to distinguish between good and evil.

Ekken concludes on the *Great Learning*:

There are two essentials for learning. When we still do not know, we should seek to know, and if we already know we should practice it. If we do not know it is difficult to act. If we know but do not practice, it is the same as not understanding, which makes it useless. Thus the Way of learning is just these two: knowing and acting... Thus the Way of the *Great Learning* is expanding our knowledge by fathoming the principle of everything through the investigation of things and the extension of knowledge. Then, making our heart sincere by loving the good and shunning the evil, we practice what we know. This is making the intentions sincere. If our knowledge is insufficient we cannot distinguish between good and evil in everything... These two are the essence of the Way of the *Great Learning*, and they represent the method [both] of knowing and acting. [66b]¹⁵¹

Ekken concludes that all one can do is know and act. He summarizes that if one does

¹⁴⁹ Tucker *Moral and Spiritual*... 63

¹⁵⁰ Tucker *Moral and Spiritual*... 95

¹⁵¹ Tucker *Moral and Spiritual*... 164

not know then one must act in order to figure it out, and to not do so would be useless. In the end, he cautions against giving into complacency and dilettantism. There are three major obstacles that Ekken warns are detrimental to the practice of mind-and-heart: selfish desires and evil thoughts, biased disposition, and faults. It is only through sincerity and understanding that one can distinguish between good and evil and progress in virtue.¹⁵²

V. Ekken Challenges Zhu Xi in the *Taigiroku* 大義錄

Perhaps one of the most fascinating aspects of Kaibara Ekken's scholarship is his dualistic approach to Zhu Xi's scholarship. On one hand, Ekken relies heavily on Zhu Xi's and other Song dynasty scholars' accomplishments in the organization of Neo-Confucianism, and yet, he puts himself completely at odds with some of Zhu Xi's most profound arguments. Tucker points out that Ekken followed Zhu Xi's basic platform of "a world-affirming spirituality that combined a profound inner authenticity with a participation in practical affairs."¹⁵³ However, the two disagree about the expression of the dialectic, commonly expressed as *qi* and *li*. To summarize, Zhu Xi articulates this dialectic as two dualistic elements. Ekken agrees that there is an interaction between these two concepts, but he expresses them as just one entity, *qi*. In the previous section concerning *Yamato Zokkun*, it was explained that there was a deep connection between the human and cosmological orders. Thus, the human order is working in an active response to nature. This intimate connection between the cosmos and humaneness in Ekken's scholarship is the foundation for his theories of *qi*. In other words, Ekken believed that the investigation of things

¹⁵² Tucker "Religious Aspects..." 66

¹⁵³ Tucker Moral and Spiritual... 65

included both the social and metaphysical, but both were linked by a singular principle of the natural world, which bound them together. Through empirical study, one could learn to examine man's place in this cosmology. Ekken's monistic creation of *qi* finds its way into many of his works, but was never fully explained until the *Taigiroku* was written.¹⁵⁴ One thing that is clear from the text is that Ekken is a purist who seems to want to return to the Confucianism of Mencius and Confucius before the Song Neo-Confucians.

In Chapter one, section two; Ekken addresses the formation of the *qi* and *li*:

In their teachings, the Song Confucians regarded the basis of the Supreme Ultimate [*taiji* 太極]^o to be the infinite or noninfinite [*wuji* 無極].** Thus noninfinite was regarded as the root of being. They divided principle (*li*) and material force (*qi*) and regarded them as two things. They did not consider yin and yang as the Way but as physical entities. They divided the nature of Heaven and Earth from physical nature, and they viewed human nature and principle as being without birth and death. These are ideas derived from Buddhism and Daoism; the teachings of the early Confucian sages are different. Scholars must distinguish this precisely and clearly.¹⁵⁵

Ekken is outlining the separation of the dialectic showing how principle and material forces were rendered as two concepts. He continues by explaining the principles of mind-and-heart:

In discussing the method of preserving the mind-and-heart [*shin*] the Song Confucians spoke of making tranquility central, of quiet sitting and of understanding the principle of Heaven through silent sitting to purify the mind-and-heart. They regarded quiet sitting to be a daily method for preserving the heart. This all tends toward quietism and implies that activity and tranquility are not in proper accord with circumstances [in balance]. In other words, these practices are the same techniques as Chan Meditation. True Confucians should not promote these views.¹⁵⁶

Again, Ekken explains that these methods of meditation developed by the Song are not true Confucian practices and do not in any way assist in the mind-and-heart because they focus only on the inward. They do not relate to the process of knowing

¹⁵⁴ Tucker *Moral and Spiritual*... 66

^o Jpn. *Taikyoku*

** Jpn. *Mukyoku*

¹⁵⁵ Tucker *The Philosophy of Qi*... 83

¹⁵⁶ *ibid.*

and acting as outlined in the *Yamato Zokkun*.

With regards to questioning Zhu Xi, Ekken encourages doubt as a healthy process of understanding. He explains:

An ancient scholar said [Lu Xiangshan],¹⁵⁷ “To Learn is to understand; it is to realize what we don’t know [fully]. Accordingly, the way of learning is to resolve doubts and misgivings. In learning we regard the ability to doubt as brilliance; the inability to doubt as dullness. In this spirit, Zhu Xi said, “If our doubt is great, our progress will be significant; if our doubt is small, our progress will be insignificant. If we don’t have doubts we won’t progress.

However, even in doubting there is a right and a wrong way. Our doubt is correct when, upon careful reflection, it is unavoidable. To doubt indiscriminately is to diffuse one’s efforts into unimportant things, and this should not be considered appropriate.¹⁵⁸

Ekken intelligently paraphrases Zhu Xi to legitimize his own doubts. It is as if he is saying, “Well, Zhu Xi told me I can question him, so I will.” He adds that doubting is only correct when it follows careful reflection.

Ekken is extremely critical of the carelessness of Zen Buddhists and Daoists in the process of transmitting Neo-Confucian ideology. He continues with the argument that they were negligent:

Being identical with techniques of Zen Buddhism, Song Confucians’ practices are unfit topics for true Confucians to discuss. Their notions of the mind’s substance as “vacuous, intelligent, and unobscured” and of heaven’s principles as “vacuous and traceless” are equally remnants from Buddhism and Daoism. Song Confucians’ ideas are indeed at odds with Confucius and Mencius teachings.¹⁵⁹

John Allen Tucker points out that the above section is actually referencing Lu Xiangshan’s line of reasoning, though it uses more general Neo-Confucian terminology. This is significant in that it shows that Ekken was aligning himself with other scholars, and that his doubts did not originate with him. Lu Xiangshan also criticized Zhu Xi’s metaphysical teachings however, Lu did not pinpoint actual sages as with which to align himself as legitimate discourse.¹⁶⁰ Ekken, on the other hand,

¹⁵⁷ J. Allen Tucker 698

¹⁵⁸ Tucker *The Philosophy of Qi*...82-83

¹⁵⁹ J. Allen Tucker 698

¹⁶⁰ J. Allen Tucker, 699

seems to be reactionary in the sense that he identifies strongly with the doctrine of Confucianism that existed in pure form before the Song Neo-Confucians.

Ekken strongly questions the terms “the ultimate of nonbeing and also the great ultimate” as he explains:

The notions “the ultimate of nonbeing and also the great ultimate” are found in the Huayan monk Dushun’s (557-640) *Fajieguan* [Realm of the Dharmas]. This text was transmitted to the Master Zhou Dunyi. Notions such as “the great ultimate comes from the ultimate of nonbeing”...derive from Buddhism and Daoism. Master Zhu’s respect for Master Zhou was extreme; thus he believed everything in Master Zhou’s thought, without doubting anything.¹⁶¹

Ekken clearly believes that these terms, popularized by Zhu Xi, are not naturally Confucian. He explains his own experiences with Zhu Xi:

From my youth I have read Zhu Xi’s writings. I respected his way, followed his model, and devoted myself to his teachings. However, with regard to unclear points, I have analyzed them thoroughly, but I have never followed the fashion of the times. Nonetheless, I hope for a resolution at some future time.¹⁶²

Central to Ekken’s argument is his approach towards the metaphysical. He summarizes his differences with Zhu Xi in the section On Human Nature:

Zhu Xi observed, “The physical body has life and death; but human nature does not.” Yi T’oegye, in his *Record of Self-Reflections*, states, “Material force has life and death, but principle has no life and death.” With the Wisdom of Zhu Xi and the scholarship of Yi T’oegye, one would not expect these teachings to be inaccurate. However, a foolish person like myself still cannot fathom them. Awaiting the clarification of wiser men, I will elaborate my doubts below and set forth my reflections. My only purpose in doing this is that I hope to be guided by those who possess my Way.¹⁶³

Here Ekken explains that the separation of principle and material force is puzzling and although he will outline his doubts, he will wait for wiser men than himself to explain what he has noticed. Perhaps this is why he waited until after he died to allow the *Taigiroku* to be published.

Ekken continues to elaborate on the above discrepancy:

In my view, the body has life if material force is unified; if it disperses, the body dies. Human nature is the principle of life that we receive from Heaven. Principle is inherent in material

¹⁶¹ J. Allen Tucker, 699

¹⁶² Tucker *The Philosophy of Qi*... 87

¹⁶³ Tucker *The Philosophy of Qi*... 89

force; principle and material force are not two separate things. When the body dies, where does the principle go? The human body has material force as its basis, and principle is the essence of material force. Thus if one is living, one has principle; if one dies, principle also disappears. Therefore, it is not logical that when a person dies, human nature lives. If we have a body, there is a human nature; if we don't have a body, this nature also disappears. It has no place to lodge. For example, water and fire are inherently cold and hot or damp and dry, but if water and fire are already extinguished, those attributes of cold and heat, dampness and dryness are also extinguished. Then how can any such attribute survive separately?¹⁶⁴

Ekken's statement is exceptionally practical. If the principle of life is imbedded in human nature given by heaven, then it exists only when humans live. If one dies, then so does his body and the purpose of his life. Therefore, principle and material force are one.

Ekken blames the orthodox scholars (the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi) for not carefully looking to earlier Confucians as sources for their restructuring of the tradition. Since Ekken makes it clear from the onset how he feels about arrogance and dilettantism, he concludes that the fallacious doctrine imposed by Song Neo-Confucians was a matter of carelessness. He states:

Are the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi known as great scholars just because of the high level of their scholarship and insight? Even the greatness of their virtuous deeds is regarded as a model. The heterodox scholars at the end of the Ming attacked and despised the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi and, in addition, were contemptuous of their deeds. While they pursued their studies, they didn't recognize the profound knowledge of the earlier Confucians; they put on airs and slandered them carelessly without respecting their virtue. This is not the way of a true Confucian, but that of a petty person. They know neither others nor themselves. That is extremely foolish.¹⁶⁵

The *Taigiroku* is an exceptional window into Ekken's place as a Neo-Confucian scholar. In a way, Ekken seems to associate more strongly with the Confucianism that existed before the Song Dynasty. An advocate of questioning and doubting, Ekken seems open to the idea of heterodoxy, as long as it is founded in the principles of human nature as imbued from Heaven. His monistic view of *li* and *qi* puts him at odds with most of his contemporaries (including the Razan school), but

¹⁶⁴ Tucker *The Philosophy of Qi*... 89

¹⁶⁵ Tucker *The Philosophy of Qi*... 109-110

places him into an interesting context about what types of debates were going on within intellectual circles in Japan at the time. *Taigiroku* functions as a follow up to *Yamato Zokkun* in that it reinforces the urge to always act and search until knowledge is clearly understood.

VI. Ekken's Works as a Controlling Force for the *Bakufu*

Ekken's references to the relationships between human beings greatly interested the Tokugawa. The interpretation of Japanese Neo-Confucianism as a controlling ideology of the Tokugawa government seems clear enough, however, Tucker seems to reject this idea. In "Religious Aspects of Japanese Neo-Confucianism: The Thought of Nakae Toju and Kaibara Ekken", she states:

It was seen as a hierarchical system which kept individuals in their proper places and encouraged loyalty and obedience to the Tokugawa Bakufu (Maruyama 1975; Reischauer 1974, pp. 89-91). In light of more recent scholarship this is an over-simplified, and indeed, a somewhat distorted view of the role of Neo-Confucianism in early Tokugawa Japan.¹⁶⁶

In this case, rather than argue that Ekken's teachings were a means for the Tokugawa *bakufu* to justify and cement their regime (a theory that seems complex in and of itself), it might be more fruitful to explore how Kaibara Ekken himself adopted certain aspects of Confucian doctrine, altering and "indigenizing" them in a way that would seem to fit the already existing doctrine of the Tokugawa. As examined earlier from the *Yamato Zokkun*, Ekken explains the relationships that should exist between all humans:

There are five human relations, namely, those between ruler (lord) and minister (retainer), parent and child, husband and wife, older and younger, and between friends. These are the five relations and they are also known as categories. Although there are many people in this world, none fall outside of these classifications. [48b]

An obvious connection exists here between Kaibara Ekken's five human

¹⁶⁶ Tucker "Religious Aspects..." 55

relations and those found in *Doctrine of the Mean*. It is also another example of a Japanese Neo-Confucian looking for a way to incorporate the Five Relationships as a model for the Japanese hierarchical system.

Similarly to Seika and Razan, Ekken believes that the key to guiding society lies in the successful implementation of the Five Relationships. With the appropriate relations in place, people will be able to see a functional society based on the Three Cardinal Principles. However, Ekken does not explicitly organize Japanese hierarchy into the ruler, farmer, merchant, artisan sequence (the four occupations) like Seika does. Since Ekken believes that there is an innate order in fulfilling the Three Cardinal Principles, Ekken is more concerned that the individual first begin with investigation of the unknown in order to expand his/her own knowledge. In fact, ordering the family (or implementing the Five Relationships) cannot be realized until a person is sincere, honest, and self-disciplined. On the other hand, Seika, who sees no innate order in the process of fulfilling the Three Cardinal Principles, is free to mix the steps towards embracing these principles in any way he sees fit. Thus, he is able to use the principles to explain how a hierarchical system should be set up in Japan and legitimize the authoritarian ruler (and their use of violence), rather than concentrating first on the individual's self-cultivation.

Razan recognizes an innate order, but, he sees the Five Relationships as key to explaining the Three Cardinal Principles and seeing their fulfillment. Unlike his counterparts, Ekken is far more concerned with first cultivating the self and then extending outward to build a better society. Seika and Razan seem to feel that a Confucian society, based on the Five Relationships, will manifest the Three Cardinal

Principles and invariably cause the people to fall into place. Therefore, Razan and Seika have a much stronger stance in favor of authoritarianism than Ekken.

To understand how Ekken reads the Five Relationships, it is important to look at the *Doctrine of the Mean* for support. In Centrality and Commonality, Tu Wei Ming comments on the importance of *fiduciary community* through a brief explanation of the five universal ways:

Five Universal Ways represent basic human relations governed by five morals (ruler-minister {righteousness}, father-son {affection}, husband-wife {separate functions}, elder-younger brothers {proper order}, intercourse between friends {faithfulness}). Each interconnected but can't be generalized to any one relationship. (i.e. father-son is also a model for ruler-minister) [XX:8]¹⁶⁷

It is clear from this passage taken from *Chungyung* that Kaibara Ekken has interpreted this passage in a slightly less conventional fashion than more conservative Chinese scholars would have. Ekken may have changed his interpretation of these five human relations from the original in order to fit the new “Japanese model” of mind-and-heart that he developed. When Seika and Razan were proposing ways to incorporate Neo-Confucianism, they were also dealing with a government that was looking for a quick-fix way of legitimizing their ruler. It only seems natural that their proposed systems would favor the ruler over the people, since this was primarily what the Tokugawa wanted. Ekken, on the other hand, was not under any pressure to produce directly for the government, or any high ranking government officials. Therefore, he is able to return to focusing on ruling for the people first. This can be seen in how Ekken takes care to concern himself with balance of human relations, and therefore, prefers to remain gender neutral when he refers to “parent and child” and “older and younger”, letting the reader assume the women and daughters may

¹⁶⁷ Tu Wei-Ming, Centrality and Commonality (Albany: State University of New York, 1989) 54

have played a slightly different role in the Japanese society than Ekken was attempting to construct.

That being said, Kaibara Ekken was hardly a feminist by modern Western standards, and in his treatise *Greater Learning for Women* (which may have actually been written by his wife Kaibara Token) he states:

From her earliest youth, a girl should observe the line of demarcation separating women from men; and never, even for an instant, should she be allowed to see or hear the slightest impropriety. The customs of antiquity did not allow men and women to sit in the same apartment, to keep their wearing-apparel in the same place, to bathe in the same place or to transmit to each other anything directly from hand to hand...¹⁶⁸

The reference to “older and younger” may also have been derived from the importance placed in Japanese society during the Tokugawa on status; age being a significant factor in deciding one’s hierarchical standing within the confines of their own social group (i.e. a samurai of equal status would show deference to his or her elders, while a samurai of lower status would always show deference to one of higher status, no matter one’s age).

In the *Taigiroku*, Kaibara Ekken comments on the importance of reverence, another aspect of Japanese Neo-Confucianism that plays a significant role in the Tokugawa period. He states:

If one has reverence, one has virtue; if one does not have reverence, one does not have virtue. Therefore, the ancients believed that reverence was something that could protect and foster virtue. However, why did the sages regard loyalty and faithfulness as central, and why didn’t they make reverence central. Both sincerity and reverence are essential for the pursuit of learning. However sincerity is the basis and reverence is the effort. It is fundamental to place priority on loyalty and faithfulness such is the aim of learning.[70]¹⁶⁹

In this passage, Ekken clarifies that loyalty and virtue are equally as important during the Tokugawa shogunate as they are for Zhu Xi in the Song dynasty. Ekken places women in an interesting position, in that *Onna Daigaku* focuses on the

¹⁶⁸ Kaibara 1998

¹⁶⁹ Tucker *The Philosophy of Qi...* 135-136

concepts of self-cultivation and self development, where the woman is inferior to the man.¹⁷⁰ While it carries the name *Great Learning*, it carries a different message than the traditional views of the *Great Learning* as expressed in *Yamato Zokkun*.

VII. Conclusion

Though Kaibara Ekken plays an important role in the development of Japanese Neo-Confucianism in the time of the Tokugawa *bakufu*, he did not owe his influence to the regime's efforts. However, unlike openly antagonistic Neo-Confucian scholars Yamagata Sokô or Ogyû Sorai, his unorthodox views (i.e. that he disagreed with Zhu Xi's brand of Neo-Confucianism) did not put him on bad terms with government. Since he predated the extremism of Tokugawa Neo-Confucianism that occurs at the end of the 17th Century, when the *bakufu* clearly defines and mandates "orthodoxy" in Japan, he is still free to express himself without concern.

However, as understood from the previous chapter, scholars like Razan and others who promoted Zhu Xi as the orthodoxy were playing advisor to the highest members of the court; they were therefore exerting their influence in paving the way for Zhu Xi's school to become the reigning champion. That being said, there were enough alternative thinkers to allow for conditions of intellectual diversity to continue for quite some time. It is also important to remember that Ekken's most prolific dissenting account, the *Taigiroku*, was not published until after his life (although it was remarkably popular, as Ekken had already made a name for himself with *Yamato Zokkun*), and so he did not make a strong impact on promoting alternative thought.

In addition, his criticism of the Song Neo-Confucians sparks an interesting debate about the nature of orthodoxy, and the people who for a long time defined

¹⁷⁰ de Bary 261

what Confucianism means. Since the Confucianism that developed in Japan was innately syncretic, having been influenced by both Zen Buddhism and Shintoism, and since it had been molded to fit a specific society that was different from its native one, Ekken's pandemic literary contributions opened the doors to alternative thought. Since the Tokugawan militaristic past embedded in the bureaucratic government was expressly at odds with much of the Confucian doctrine developed by the followers of Zhu Xi, the Tokugawa welcomed Ekken as a healthy alternative that more readily applied to the societal structure of the time.

When Ekken came into the picture, the Tokugawa's power and bureaucracy had been well organized, and he was free to start thinking about how the *dao* and moral self-cultivation were going to be transmitted to the mainstream population. Fundamentally, Neo-Confucianism is about education. However, the tradition was written in language that was esoteric to the average Japanese citizen. Ekken appointed himself the task of educating the nation, and, charged with this mission, rewrote the entire tradition in a simplified, vernacular form. Ekken singularly defined how a Japanese citizen was going to practice and understand Neo-Confucianism, since the institutions and colleges set up by the Tokugawa were clearly for Japan's educated, intellectual class, the *samurai*. Being the first to think about the popularization of Neo-Confucianism beyond the scope of the elite, Ekken's impact and contribution to the understanding of Neo-Confucian ethics for the average Tokugawan citizen will always be recognized as unmatched.

Five

Conclusion: The Tokugawa Legacy

Before the Tokugawa came to power, Japan was a fragmented, feudal society of campaigning warlords trying to cement their power and authority over the greatest number of people that they could. People lived in a land filled with violence, and chaos ensued. The Tokugawa changed everything. They offered the people peace and prosperity, organization and safety. They might have been oppressive and authoritarian, but they were the country's first step towards creating a unified and orderly government that was able to sustain peace over the country for a number of centuries. The Tokugawa organized the nation into a system of fiefdoms under the control of one ruler, set up a system of taxation, and created a bureaucracy that required the loyalty of its subject in exchange for protection and support. And none of this could ever have been accomplished without the assistance of the scholars who worked with the Tokugawa to first implement a bureaucratic system established on Neo-Confucian principles.

It is, of course, important to remember that the Neo-Confucianism that evolved in Japan during the earlier half of the Tokugawa regimes' two hundred and sixty years of rule, departed from their Chinese roots. In other words, Fujiwara Seika, Hayashi Razan, and Kaibara Ekken were pioneering the creation of the a uniquely Japanese form of Neo-Confucian tradition, and in effect, they, along with a number of other influential Neo-Confucians of their time, shaped the tradition in a way that appealed to their own interpretive standards. However, since the tradition was new to the country, and the Tokugawa was relatively inexperienced, the scholars were able to thrive in an intellectually diverse environment, and develop their own ideologies. In examining their respective interpretations of the *Great Learning*, it is clear that no

Japanese scholar, not even Hayashi Razan (who despite remaining most literal to Zhu Xi's scholarship), emulated one hundred percent the teachings of the Song Neo-Confucian Zhu Xi. Therefore, in comparison to the Chinese tradition, Japan was always experiencing some level of interpretive intellectualism. Since there was no strongly enforced orthodoxy for the first two centuries of Tokugawa rule, all of the scholars under discussion are guilty of referring to the "self" (i.e. what the individual scholar had decided was true Neo-Confucianism) as orthodoxy, and all questioned the legitimacy of "the Other(s)" (scholars who had come up with contradictory statements) as heterodox.

If Neo-Confucian doctrine adopted by the Tokugawa had inevitably departed from Zhu Xi's original teachings, how did this affect the process of legitimization that was so important to the regime looking to create a strong, centralized ideology that would invariably control the people? It would seem that the process of transition from Zen Buddhism to Neo-Confucianism as a state ideology was quite slow, and Buddhism does not just disappear (it just is not dominant during the Tokugawa). The Kansei edict was not enacted until 1790, meaning that Neo-Confucianism was not the solitary ideology of the state in the strictest understanding until the last ninety years of the regime.

There are many reasons for this edict being put into effect, but one of the major concerns the Tokugawa had towards the end of their time in power was that Neo-Confucianism had lost the prestige it had during the time when Seika, Razan, and Ekken had lived. The Tokugawa became concerned that intellectual freedom lead to overly developed heterodox views, many of which were openly dissenting from the

Tokugawa shogunate. By deviating from the views developed by earlier Neo-Confucians, they were creating possible alternatives for political and social arrangements that challenged the *bakufu*'s legitimacy.

As people lost interest in the doctrine and began to question the authority of the Tokugawa (including many of the lower level *samurai*), the regime reacted by branding all views that posed a threat to the *bakufu* and questioned the validity of the Neo-Confucian view (as proposed by the Hayashi school who educated the *bakufu*), which served as an ideological base to legitimize their political and moral authority, as heterodox (and illegal). Thus, the Hayashi school, which favored Zhu Xi thought, became the Japanese "orthodoxy".

When Neo-Confucianism first came into the picture, it enjoyed the prestige and clout as the ideology that would organize the nation and legitimize the *bakufu*. The *bakufu* was uneducated in Confucian ethics, and it welcomed whatever could bring authoritative prestige to its regime, having both Zen Buddhists and Neo-Confucians in the court. What is more, each of the scholars had a relationship with another tradition separate from Neo-Confucianism. This *diverse* atmosphere was not an attempt at creating a pluralistic society, but rather, a necessary way for the Tokugawa to examine how they were going to legitimize their status and figure out how Neo-Confucian doctrine would serve their needs. In other words, the *diversity* of thought was a bi-product of the Tokugawa's search for solidifying their power.

Seika, while having denounced his Zen Buddhist background, was still invariably influenced by the Buddhist terminology, and spent much of his career trying to make sense of Neo-Confucianism in the context of a country that was

predominantly Buddhist. Razan, too had some Buddhist leanings, but was more fascinated by the similarities he saw existing between Shintô and Neo-Confucianism as a means of understanding man's nature. Ekken too was interested in this relationship between Shintô and Neo-Confucianism, but not Buddhism, as way to explain man's relationship to Heaven and the material world. In this sense, the three had always embraced syncretism, and the idea of combining different traditions together where they saw tendencies and similarities was not considered foreign. The government was not concerned with the internal debate amongst the scholars, as much they were looking for what best suited their needs. In this manner, each of the scholars examined here offered the Tokugawa something different.

Fujiwara Seika was active when Buddhism was still the dominant ideology. Seika acted as a bridge between Neo-Confucianism and Buddhism, and since he was well versed in both, he was unparalleled in his capacity to argue the positives of the former, and the negatives of the latter. That does not mean that he too was not latently affected by a tradition he committed himself to for forty years. Therefore, as it has been seen, it is not surprising that elements of Buddhism find their way into his version of the *Great Learning* as Seika tries to make sense of the two. In the end, Seika saw Neo-Confucianism as the more fitting ideology for a Japan that was in the process of implementing a new government. Buddhism was archaic and had failed to create a unified and secure Japan. Neo-Confucianism was the future, something new and fresh, capable of unifying the country and bringing stability to its government in an age where change was occurring rapidly.

Seika left the process of change in the hands of his most capable student.

Hayashi Razan was a politician in a way that Seika could never have dreamed of being. Seika was not comfortable in the services of the *bakufu* and avoided contact with political affairs. He left the duty of engaging in governmental affairs to Razan, who could argue for Neo-Confucian advocacy better than any Zen Buddhist could for Buddhism, as evidenced by his position in the *bakufu* under four shoguns. Razan was goal oriented and organized with a plan for reform by using Zhu Xi's school of thought, to which he was an acute observer. He set up the first school of Neo-Confucian thought in Japan that educated every member of the *bakufu* up until the end of the Tokugawa regime. It was Hayashi Razan who officially planted the seeds of change that would grow to develop Neo-Confucianism as the Tokugawa's new ideological base (although not without some reservation as to the motives of the government), and it was he who inevitably won over the shogun with his commitment to Zhu Xi learning. Enjoying the prestige and comfort of being favored by the *bakufu*, Razan produced a multitude of interpretive literature unmatched by the majority of his contemporaries, including his works on the *Great Learning*. However, Seika left one piece of the puzzle undone. While he was busy educating the elite, he forgot about the people. Japanese society was organized under a new ideology and a new government, which the people were forced to follow without having an understanding of what was happening.

Kaibara Ekken changed all of that. He came onto the scene with the goal of making Neo-Confucianism a household ideology. Since the majority of Japanese citizens were not intellectual elitists, he devised a way to easily explain the tradition to the masses. He rewrote the Neo-Confucian canon in a simplified, easily

understood format, and his writings were an instant success. Ekken finished the job that the Razan program started by extending Neo-Confucian education to all classes. If loyalty for the ruler first requires filial piety, then Ekken was instrumental in transmitting this concept to the people. If legitimacy is a question, then the rulers in a Neo-Confucian government could never really be enacted until the people followed the Way (since the Five Relationships define loyalty of the people to the lord). In his version of the *Great Learning*, he instructs the people on how they are going to act and how they are going to be good Confucians.

That being said, the three had their own motives too. Seika wanted Neo-Confucianism to remain open to interpretation, Razan wanted a staunch commitment to Zhu Xi that would be implemented as the orthodoxy (which unfortunately for his sake came a hundred years too late, and when it was not really wanted), and Ekken wanted Neo-Confucians to rethink Zhu Xi's interpretation of moral metaphysics. All three were creative interpreters of a tradition to which they were fully committed and all believed that their brand of interpretation should be considered by Japanese Neo-Confucians as the way the tradition should be observed.

The development of Neo-Confucianism during the Tokugawa shogunate was a complicated process that had many stages and evolved over the course of its two hundred and sixty year reign as the dominant ideology. At times the tradition (through the hands of individual Japanese Neo-Confucian scholars) gained the upper hand in the development of the government, and at other times the government controlled the development of the tradition for their own benefit. Both worked for and against each other depending on whether their individual motives were being met

or refuted, however they both needed each other to follow through with each of their goals. The Neo-Confucians needed to engage in the government if they were going to enact any moral and ethical changes in the lives of the people, and the government needed the scholars to provide them with the ideological structure necessary to legitimize their power. Through dialogue and dialectic, the government was able to engage in debate with the scholars so that they could create a tradition that provided both with what they needed to fulfill their respective objectives.

Together their creation was a tradition that contained the ideological views of Neo-Confucian doctrine as interpreted by a few scholars while simultaneously benefiting the ruling Tokugawa as the legitimate heirs of a unified Japan. The government inevitably established their own version of “orthodoxy” based on the interpretations of different scholars that best served the governments needs. What the Tokugawa *bakufu* and the Japanese Neo-Confucians made was a tradition that fit the needs of the time, and their creation was a Neo-Confucianism that was distinctively Japanese. The nature of their relationship was certainly an intricate one, but in the end, despite all of the discrepancies and differences, the Neo-Confucian tradition became a Japanese tradition.

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