A. Introduction

This essay traces the *bakumatsu*-Meiji revival of Yamaga Sokō's 山鹿素行 (1627-85) shidō 士道, or samurai philosophy, first as promoted by Yoshida Shōin 吉田 松陰 (1830-59) during the early *bakumatsu* period (1853-67), and then as continued by various political, military, and ideological leaders of Meiji Japan who were influenced by Shōin's teachings. The paper initially highlights the metamorphosis in critical value, from negative to positive, in allegations linking Sokō's shidō with the Akō rōnin 赤穂浪人 vendetta of 1703. It suggests that the same spurious charges which had damned Sokō's philosophy in the intellectual world of mid-eighteenth-century Edo, were largely responsible for the widespread support that it gained during the Meiji period (1868-1912). The paper then distinguishes two phases in the Sokō revival. The first featured an unprecedented expression of imperial praise for the self-sacrificing loyalty that the Akō rōnin had demonstrated for their daimyō, or samurai lord, in carrying out their vendetta. During the second phase, occurring in the late-Meiji period, Sokō was posthumously honored with imperial rank and his shidō exalted for its proimperial focus. The implicit message of this revival was that Meiji Japan possessed a valuable ideological asset in Sokō's shidō since the latter could presumably inculcate in Japanese the kind of imperial loyalty that the rōnin had displayed for their daimyō. Because of its special ideological potency, Sokō's shidō was acclaimed in late-Meiji times as a key ingredient in a nascent “civil religion,” one combining imperialist, ultranationalist, and militarist themes.

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B. The Late-Tokugawa Metamorphosis of the Sokō-Akō Rōnin Link

As was explained in the introductory essay to part one of this translation of Sokō's *Seikyō yōroku*, opponents of Sokō's teachings such as Satō Naokata 佐藤直方 (1650-1719), a disciple of Yamazaki Ansai's 山崎 阪齋 (1618-1682) purist Neo-Confucian philosophy, and Dazai Shundai 太宰春台 (1660-1747), an advocate of Ogyu Sorai's 萩生徂徠 (1666-1728) ancient learning, first blamed Sokō's shidō for the Akō vendetta. Their accusations sought to discredit Sokō's philosophy in the eyes of the Tokugawa bakufu. They were deemed credible because of incriminating but ultimately circumstantial links between Sokō and the rōnin. For example, between 1652 and 1660, Sokō had served Asano Naganao 浴野長直 (1610-1692), the tozama 外様 daimyō of Akō domain, as an instructor in martial philosophy. *Tozama* daimyō were major samurai lords who had not been vassals of the Tokugawa family before the battle of Sekigahara 三河 (1600) which secured Tokugawa hegemony over Japan. Not all *tozama* fought against the Tokugawa, but those who did were generally viewed as the least loyal daimyō in the new political order. Asano Nagamasu 浴野長政 (1544-1611), the head of the main line of the Asano family, was one of the relatively few *tozama* daimyō who had supported the Tokugawa at Sekigahara. As a result he was well rewarded after the Tokugawa victory, receiving a much enlarged domain including the relatively new Hiroshima castle.

The branch of the Asano family which Sokō later served, led by Asano Naganao, was treated more ambiguously. While initially entrusted with Kasama 笠間 domain (in modern Ibaraki 茨城 prefecture), with an assessment of 30,000 koku, they were transferred, in 1644, to Akō, a domain with a larger rice yield, 53,000 koku, but a castle in a bad state of disrepair. The Tokugawa eventually allowed the Asano daimyō to build a new castle in Akō, but did so only in 1653, and then unenthusiastically. However in 1701, Naganao's grandson, Naganori 長矩 (d. 1701), criminally violated Tokugawa law by drawing his sword on a high ranking master of court ceremonies, Kira Yoshinaka 吉良義央 (d. 1703), within the inner confines of the shogun's castle. Exacerbating the seriousness of Naganori's offense was the fact that it had been committed during preparations for an annual New Year's ritual welcoming representatives of the imperial court to the shogun's castle.

The Tokugawa wasted no time in revealing that Naganori's branch of the Asano family merited little special treatment: in less than 24 hours the bakufu ordered Naganori to commit suicide. Tragically for Sokō's shidō, his earlier service to Naganao as an instructor of samurai philosophy linked him, albeit decades before Naganori's 1701 attack, with the daimyō family that later capitally violated bakufu law. Sokō's service to Naganao also linked him with Akō, the domain that later carried out the 1703 vendetta against Kira Yoshinaka as revenge for Naganori’s death. Because the bakufu also judged the vendetta to be a criminal act, Sokō's earlier links to the Asano family and the Akō samurai seemed

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especially incriminating since their misdeeds seemed to have had only one philosophical denominator: his shidō.

Making Sokō seem all the more culpable was the fact that the bakufu had once exiled him to Akō, between 1666 and 1675, as punishment for publication of his supposedly inflammatory treatise, the Seikyō yōroku (Essential Meanings of the Sageiy Confucian Teachings). Because the bakufu had already cast Sokō as an ideological offender, the allegations of Naokata and Shundai seemed to corroborate its earlier verdict. Thus, Sokō’s shidō was easily and convincingly assigned philosophical responsibility for the Akō vendetta. Though the allegations were tantamount to slander, being based on evidence that was at best circumstantial, many Edo samurai found them to be sufficiently credible. What remained of Sokō’s school of samurai philosophy was soon shunned by all but its most dedicated followers. Following decades of continuing atrophy, Sokō’s shidō completely disappeared from Edo in 1744. That fate seems most ironic when one recalls that Sokō, a resident of Edo since early childhood, had dreamed throughout his adult life of serving the bakufu as an instructor of samurai philosophy.

By Yoshida Shōin’s day, however, the Akō rōnin were increasingly being viewed as chivalrous samurai who had broken bakufu law, but only so that they could fulfill a more praiseworthy ideal, that of self-sacrificing loyalty to their lord. Of course, the ever-growing popularity of productions of Kanadehon chushingura (Treasures of Loyalty and Fidelity) in puppet and kabuki theatres facilitated these more positive appraisals of the rōnin. More significantly, the increasing ineffectiveness of the bakufu as a ruling force further contributed to the popular idolization of the rōnin as valorous men of action. The allegations that had vilified Sokō’s shidō when Tokugawa authority was strong thus underwent a metamorphosis paralleling the transformation of the Akō rōnin from official criminals to popular heroes. Instead of implying that Sokō’s shidō had incited Akō samurai to engage in violent and illegal behavior, those allegations came to suggest, with praise, that Sokō’s learning could instill in samurai an exceptional readiness to sacrifice themselves courageously for the sake of loyalty and fidelity.

The Sentetsu sōkan gohen (Biographies of Confucian Scholars, Part Two, 1829), thus claimed, quite admiringly, that Sokō had decisively transformed Akō samurai between the years 1652 and 1660, i.e., the period when Asano Naganao had first retained Sokō as a shidō instructor. Almost fifty years later, after the bakufu ordered Naganori to commit seppuku and confiscated the family’s domain, forty-seven ex-retainers of the Asano family

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4 Ibid., p. 319.
5 Ibid., pp. 304-315.
made evident what they had learned from Sokō, successfully taking revenge on their deceased master’s enemy by brutally assassinating him. Of course the *Sentetsu sokkan gohen* did not mention that Sokō spent only seven months in Akō during his entire eight-year tenure in service to Naganao. Most of the time Sokō had remained in Edo. Nor did it address the fact that even the eldest of the forty-seven Akō *rōnin* was a mere child when Sokō was exiled there. Those problems notwithstanding, Shōin, like many samurai of his day, apparently accepted, as pure and simple fact, the popular myth that Sokō’s *shidō* had been the key philosophical force behind the *rōnin* vendetta.

C. Yoshida Shōin’s Idolization of Sokō and the Akō *Rōnin*

From early childhood, Yoshida Shōin’s life was dominated by Sokō’s philosophy. As hereditary instructors of Sokō’s *shidō* for the daimyō of Chōshū 長州 domain, the Yoshida family had first gained certification in those teachings in 1714, just a decade after the then infamous Akō *rōnin* incident. Close vassals of the Tokugawa had rallied behind the *bakafu* and its denunciation of the vendetta, and, by implication, Sokō’s teachings. That was not the perspective, however, of the Chōshū daimyō, the Mōri 毛利 family. As *tozama* lords, the Mōri were not at all comfortable with Tokugawa rule. Prior to their defeat at Sekigahara the Mōri had ruled the second wealthiest domain in Japan, their holdings totalling 1,205,000 *koku*. But after 1600, following the Tokugawa decision to quarter their holdings, the Mōri domain was assessed at a mere 298,480 *koku*, and the territory that they ruled was reduced to two provinces, Nagato 栃門 and Sō 隋, “less than a fourth of their previous domains.” In later generations, the animosities engendered by this reduction facilitated a fascination for, and then dedication to, Sokō’s teachings partly because they were linked to defiance of Tokugawa laws.

In 1835, Shōin, then only six years old, became the official instructor of Sokō’s philosophy in Chōshū. In 1840, at eleven, he began lecturing his daimyō Mōri Takachika 毛利敬親 (1819-71) on Sokō’s *Bukyō zensho* 武教全書 (Complete Works of Yamaga Sokō on Martial Philosophy), a compilation that Shōin studied and taught for the rest of his life. With Takachika’s support, Shōin travelled, in 1850, to Hirado 平戸, a hallowed center of Sokō’s

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9 David Earl’s *Emperor and Nation in Japan* admits that Ōishi Kuranosuke, leader of the Akō *rōnin*, was “only a boy” when Sokō was exiled to Akō, but insists that Kuranosuke was among Sokō’s pupils, and declares that “there is no doubt that the action taken by the men of Akō...was inspired by Sokō’s personal teaching of *bushidō*.” Earl, *Emperor and Nation in Japan: Political Thinkers of the Tokugawa Period* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964), p. 39. However, it offers no evidence proving that Sokō inspired the *rōnin*. Nor does *Emperor and Nation* mention Hori’s argument that Sokō exerted no direct impact on the Akō *rōnin*. Many other equally reputable Western studies of Tokugawa Japan repeat the same line without critical analysis.

since its institutional demise in Edo in 1744. In Hirado, Shōin studied under Yamaga Bansuke (d. 1856), a distant relative of Sokō. But Shōin's time there must have been frustrating because Bansuke, apparently rather ill, cancelled his lectures repeatedly. Shōin thus returned to Chōshū, hoping for another opportunity to gain advanced instruction in Sokō's samurai philosophy. The next year, 1851, Shōin received that chance, accompanying his daimyō to Edo and enrolling in Yamaga Sōsui's newly opened academy, the first Yamaga school in the shogun's capital in over a century. While studying under him, Shōin was asked to edit Sōsui's 練兵説略 (Summary of Yamaga Military Strategies). Shōin also studied with the Neo-Confucian scholar, Asaka Gonsai (1791-1860), of the Shōheikō, and Sakuma Shōzan (1811-64), an admirer and advocate of Western military techniques. Though impressed by Shōzan's views about the practical need for Western learning, Shōin remained a proponent of Sokō's shidō, instructing his daimyō twice monthly at the Mōri residence in Edo.

Shōin revealed how strongly the exploits of the Akō rōnin loomed in his mind when, without receipt of written permission from his daimyō, he and two other students of Sokō's philosophy left on a journey to northern Honshū on 12/14 of 1852. Shōin recorded in his Tōhoku yō nikki (Diary of My Travels North) how the three had pledged to leave Edo on the same date that the rōnin had executed their vendetta against Kira Yoshi-naka. The destination of Shōin and his comrades was Tsugaru domain, the stronghold of Sokō's teachings in northeastern Honshū. Not surprisingly, during their pilgrimage the three shidō students often discussed Chūshingura.

On returning to Edo in the spring of 1853, Shōin turned himself in to his daimyō. Like the Akō rōnin, who reported their vendetta to the Tokugawa authorities in Edo as soon as they had successfully completed it, Shōin had no intention of evading responsibility for his deeds, despite the fact that he had offended his daimyō. In departing without official written permission Shōin had violated an important aspect of lord-vassal protocol. As punishment, Shōin's daimyō Takachika ordered him back to Chōshū and there reduced him to rōnin status. Although a serious demotion, that punishment possibly gave Shōin what he wanted since it provided him with a social status identical to that of his apparent heroes, the Akō rōnin.

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12 Shōin, Shokan (Correspondence), in Yoshida Shōin, NST, vol. 54, p. 56.
13 Shōin's lifelong bond with the Yamaga school is often omitted by even respected studies. For example George M. Wilson's interpretive study of the Meiji Restoration, Patriots and Redeemers in Japan: Motives in the Meiji Restoration (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) does not mention Shōin's affiliation with the Sokō's teachings.
14 Shōin, Tōhokuyō nikki (Diary of Travels to Northeastern Japan), in Yoshida Shōin, NST, vol. 54, p. 447.
15 Cf., Shōin, Ibid., NST, pp. 505, 507, 522.
Takachika also revealed his sympathy for Shōin by permitting him to travel outside of the domain for ten years. Shōin promptly returned to Edo to resume study under Sosui.

Throughout the 1850’s Shōin regularly alluded to Sokō’s writings. For example, Shōin opened his Tōhoku yū nikki by speaking of yishi no shi 有志の士, or samurai with resolve, referring to impassioned activists who were ready to sacrifice themselves for some cause, much as the Akō rōnin had for their lord. Shōin discussed the same figures elsewhere calling them shishi 志士. In doing so he made multiple allusions. One was to Lunyu 論語 (Analects), where Confucius spoke of shi 士, or “knights,” whose shi 志, or “intentions,” were centered on the moral Way. Another was to Sokō’s military writings, especially his works entitled Shido 士道 (Samurai Philosophy) and the Bukyō shōgaku 武教小學 (The Elementary Learning for Samurai), where Sokō described shishi as ideal Confucian samurai. But often it appears that when Shōin spoke of shishi he had in mind the heroic, loyalist activism of the Akō rōnin. The latter kind of allusion, along with expressions of intense concern for the welfare of imperial Japan, the new focus of his loyalty, pervaded Shōin’s final years.

For example, in 1854, after violating the official Tokugawa foreign policy of sakoku 影國, or national seclusion, by trying to stowaway on one of Commodore Matthew Perry’s flagships, the USS Powhatan, Shōin explained that he saw his violation of baku.fit law as continuing a paradigm that the Akō rōnin had exemplified earlier, one calling for principled disobedience when the demands of righteous action conflicted with those of the law. Writing from Denma-chō 間町 prison, Shōin reasoned: “When Akō was offended, the 47 righteous samurai sacrificed themselves to take revenge on their lord’s enemy... The Akō samurai, in serving their lord, defied the law. For the sake of my country, I too had to defy the law.”

Shōin’s Kaikoroku 回顧錄 ([Prison] Memoirs), finished during his confinement in Chōshū, further reveals that he modelled his life in prison after the example of the Akō rōnin. Regarding Shōin’s austere, self-imposed diet, the Kaikoroku recalls, with admiration, how the Akō gishi den 赤穂義士傳 (Accounts of the Akō Samurai) related that the rōnin, though detained in groups isolated from one another, consistently declined the succulent dishes offered to them. Later in the Kaikoroku Shōin argued that his own suffering for a righteous cause would benefit the nation just as the righteous samurai of Akō had benefitted Japan, and just as the righteous martyrdoms of Bo Yi and Shu Qi 叔齊 (12th cent. B.C.E.) had benefitted China. Shōin then suggested that the Akō samurai, Bo Yi, and Shu Qi were all seijin 聖人, or Confucian sages, who deserved respect as “the teachers of hundreds of generations.” Thus did Shōin reveal that he modelled his martyr’s course after that of the Akō rōnin, whom he considered to be Japanese exemplars of a sagely way which was traceable even to ancient China.

In 1856, after being released from Noyama 野山 prison, Shōin was allowed to lecture on his samurai philosophy at the Shōka sonjuku 松下村塾, an academy founded in Chōshū by his uncle Kubo Seitarō 久保清太郎. Shōin’s pupils included Itō Hirobumi 伊藤博文 (1841-1909), Yamagata Aritomo 山縣有朋 (1838-1922), and other Chōshū samurai who later became leaders in the Meiji imperial regime. At the Shōka sonjuku one of Shōin’s key

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16 Quoted from Earl, Emperor and Nation, pp. 125-26.
17 Shōin, Kaikoroku (Prison Memoirs), NST, vol. 54, p. 549.
18 Shōin, Ibid., p. 562.
texts was Sokō’s *Bukyō zensho*. In his lectures, Shōin lauded Sokō’s impact on the rōnin while simultaneously linking it to imperial loyalism.

We samurai...must strive to repay the grace and bounty provided for us through this imperial land by striving always to fulfill the way of the samurai... If samurai wish to comprehend their way they must accept the precepts of our samurai teacher, Yamaga Sokō. Throughout history myriad books have been written, so why are Master Sokō’s so worthy of belief? When you have studied what Master Sokō recorded in the *Bukyō zensho*, you will fathom this completely. But allow me to explain just one point... When one thoroughly examines the Akō vendetta, one realizes what Ōishi Kuranosuke 大石内藤助 (1659-1703), the leader of the Akō samurai, learned from Master Sokō.¹⁹

According to Shōin, the heroics of the rōnin exemplified how Sokō’s shidō could inculcate in samurai an admirable willingness to respond to duties, including those to the imperial nation, which possibly transcended mere bakufu decrees.

Shōin also expanded themes that were only marginally present in Sokō’s writings. For example, he claimed that the essence of Sokō’s *Bukyō shōgaku* consisted in its account of shidō and kokutai 国體, or the distinctive national essence of Japan. The latter Shōin explained as the national essence of Japan as a *shinshū* 神州, or divine land. He claimed that Sokō wrote the *Bukyō shōgaku* to keep Japan from losing its divine kokutai. In formulating this interpretation Shōin was combining ideas from Sokō’s years in exile, when Sokō had expounded a nationalistic and pro-imperial line of thought in his *Chūchō jijitsu* 中朝事實 (The True Reality of the Central Kingdom), with Sokō’s earlier works which were more concerned with the basics of samurai behavior than theories about the national polity. Nevertheless, Shōin’s reinterpretation of Sokō reveals that Shōin’s extreme pro-imperial line, often indicated by the phrase sonnō 奉王, or rever the emperor, had clear and distinct roots in Sokō’s thought.²⁰

Shōin’s study of Sokō’s philosophy was the strongest, most resilient thread binding his intellectual development. In a letter to his uncle, dated 1858, Shōin related: “Having studied the *Bukyō zensho* for decades, I am beginning to grasp some of its meaning.” Evidently, however, Shōin was most inspired by shidō teachings which could be related to or explained in terms of the bravery of the Akō rōnin. Not surprisingly, Sokō’s final years seem to have been an attempt at matching the loyalist martyrdom of the rōnin, though with the imperial throne serving as the focus of his efforts. After hearing that Li Naosuke 井伊直助 (1815-60), then the guiding force within the bakufu, planned to conclude treaties with several Western nations despite imperial opposition to them, Shōin decided that the bakufu had to be stopped. After all it had become, in his eyes, the enemy of the emperor and the imperial nation. In late 1858, he

and seventeen Chōshū samurai thus made a blood pledge to assassinate Manabe Akikatsu 関部 諏訪 (1804-84), a rōnin 老中, or Senior Councillor, whom the bakufu was sending to quash anti-Tokugawa sentiment in Kyoto. Again Shōin and his co-conspirators mimicked the Akō rōnin. Shōin and his comrades, however, meant to avenge imperial honor, not that of a daimyō. In their conspiracy, the Chōshū samurai were not alone: a band of Mito 水戸 samurai also plotted to assassinate Ii Naosuke. In 1859, the bakufu uncovered the conspiracy led by Shōin, and promptly executed him at Denma-chō prison on 10/27. In his last testament, Ryūikon roku 留魂録 (My Spiritual Pilgrimage), Shōin declared: “Even if I return seven times from the dead, I shall never forget to drive away the foreigner.” In his final hours Shōin thus dreamed of compounding himself into a one-man battalion, ready to sacrifice every self his imagination could muster to more fully approximate the daring heroics for which the rōnin were famous.

D. Sokō and the Akō Rōnin in Meiji Culture

1. Legitimization of the Rōnin

Shōin was buried by his ex-pupils, including Itō Hirobumi and Kido Kōin 木戸 貞允 (1833-77). Another of his former students, Yamagata Aritomo, remarked that Shōin’s death was “an ineradicable tragedy, causing great sadness to all [imperial] loyalists and ineffable sorrow to me.” Shōin’s disciples soon made sure, however, that his interpretations of Sokō’s philosophy gained a kind of legitimization via imperial decree. By Tokugawa legal standards the Akō rōnin remained outlaws, despite the widespread public following that they enjoyed, theatrically and otherwise. Shōin had glorified the rōnin because he, too, was an outlaw of sorts, one intent on challenging if not overthrowing the bakufu. Much the same could be said of Shōin’s ex-disciples including Itō Hirobumi, Yamagata Aritomo, and Kido Kōin. Yet once the bakufu had been destroyed and those surviving Chōshū revolutionaries had become Meiji statesmen, they sought to rehabilitate their late-teacher (and themselves) by having his idols, the Akō rōnin, imperially designated as exemplars of samurai loyalty. In the process they were also inadvertently legitimizing Sokō’s philosophy since it was widely believed that Sokō’s shidō had inspired the rōnin vendetta.

In early-Meiji Japan Shōin’s earlier glorification of the rōnin as paragons of Sokō’s shidō was therefore brought to an ultimate state of completion. In the eleventh lunar month of 1868, the Meiji emperor, having moved to Tokyo from Kyoto, dispatched an envoy to the Sengaku 水戸 temple to deliver an imperial declaration before the gravestones of Ōishi Kuranosuke and the other rōnin buried there. The decree read:

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21 Earl, Emperor and Nation, p. 134.
Kuranosuke and the rest of you resolutely grasped the duty that samurai have to their lord. You met death serving the rule that samurai should take revenge against their lord’s enemies. You inspired the sentiments of one hundred generations. We convey our profound approbation.  

This statement was most surely engineered by representatives of the Chôshû clique in the new imperial government, many of whom had once studied under Shônin. More than any of Shônin’s other ex-students, Kidô played a crucial role in moving the imperial capital to Edo, and in working with the Meiji emperor to consolidate his power there during the first year of the restoration. Kidô was therefore possibly the Chôshû representative who encouraged the Meiji emperor, upon arrival in Tokyo, to honor Kuranosuke. The imperial declaration was certainly most meaningful to those Chôshû samurai who had studied under Shônin, taken part in the anti-bakufu and pro-imperial struggles, and then risen to positions of high authority in the Meiji regime.

Because the Meiji period was an age of modernization and Westernization in Japan, the Meiji emperor’s communique to Kuranosuke might seem more like a throwback to the feudal past than a harbinger of significant future trends. Proof that the imperial decree echoed, and perhaps had excited, widespread public sympathy for the rônin appeared in a press controversy following the publication of Fukuzawa Yukichi’s Gakumon no susume (An Encouragement of Learning). Among other things, Gakumon sharply criticized vigilantes who took the law into their own hands executing those whom they had deemed to be criminals. One of the most egregious examples of this, Fukuzawa noted, occurred when vigilantes assassinated government officials just as the Akô rônin had done. Though Fukuzawa recognized that the Japanese public admired the rônin, he declared that they had died a meaningless death, literally that they had died like “short-tempered dogs” (kenkai no imujini) in sacrificing themselves for the sake of their master. In making this point Gakumon equated the rônin with a pathetic samurai named Gonsuke whom Fukuzawa fabricated for the sake of illustrating his point. Gonsuke hanged himself with his loincloth after losing a coin that his master had given him. The suicides of the Akô rônin were no more meaningful, Fukuzawa boldly declared, than that of Gonsuke.

\[^{25}\text{Cf., Meiji tennô ki, vol. 1, pp. 851-911. As the Meiji tennô ki reveals, Asano Nagakoto 浅野長勲 (1842-1937), daimyô of Hiroshima domain, was also close to the Meiji emperor during the same time. Perhaps he wanted the rônin, who had been loyal to his distant relative, exonerated. Kidô and other Chôshû samurai allied with the Meiji emperor had reason to see Nagakoto as a one of their own: Nagakoto had earlier refused a bakufu request that he mobilize troops for an expedition against Chôshû.}\]
\[^{27}\text{Fukuzawa, “Kokuhô no tôtoki o ronzu” 国法の貴きを論ず (On Respecting the Laws of the State, ch. 6) and “Kokumin no shokubun o ronzu”国民の職分を論ず (On the Duties of Citi-}\]
Due to his criticisms of the rōnin Fukuzawa was repeatedly lambasted in the press. Threats were even made on his life. These finally prompted him to write a defense of Gakumon in which he admitted that the ideas which he advanced had come from an ethics text by an American philosopher, Francis Wayland. By shifting the blame to Wayland, Fukuzawa partly relieved himself of responsibility for his shocking assessment of the rōnin. Though he never apologized, Fukuzawa’s criticisms of the rōnin, and the concomitant threats against Fukuzawa, diminished shortly after his defense of Gakumon appeared. Albert Craig’s study of Fukuzawa sees 1875, the year in which this controversy was largely played out, as a “transitional point in Fukuzawa’s thought,” it being the year that Fukuzawa became “uncertain” and more and more “disillusioned.” Craig explains that as of 1875, Fukuzawa had lost faith in a utopia ruled by natural laws, and was tending towards a “moderate relativism”; the latter perspective supposedly reflecting his doubts about the prospects for real progress in Meiji Japan.28

Kada Tetsuji 加田哲二 has similarly suggested that Fukuzawa’s backsliding in the wake of the media imbroglio reflected the practical need for him to be less headstrong in expressing ideas, like his criticisms of the rōnin, that could provoke hostile reactions rather than enlightenment.29

Vis-à-vis Shōin’s thought, Fukuzawa’s retreat from an outspoken liberalism is quite significant. In exonerating the Akō rōnin, the Meiji emperor decisively reversed the Tokugawa verdict that they were criminals. The emperor even praised the rōnin, much as Shōin had, as teachers who had instructed hundreds of generations. Thereafter the Akō rōnin were not just popular folk heroes of kabuki theatre; they were imperially sanctioned cultural models as well. Even eminent thinkers like Fukuzawa felt obliged to accommodate, via prudent silence, the Akō rōnin. To criticize them further, Fukuzawa apparently concluded, was unwise and counterproductive; moreover such criticism could be construed as an insult directed at the Meiji emperor. After the rōnin were vindicated from on high, perhaps it was simply a matter of time before their supposed teacher, Yamaga Sokō, was granted similar legitimacy.

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Kada, Shisōka to shite no Fukuzawa Yukichi, p. 135.
2. Legitimization of Sokō in Late-Meiji Japan

Due to Shōin’s impact on many of the key leaders of the Meiji leadership, ties between Sokō and the Akō rōnin were glorified, celebrated, and then sanctified in Meiji Japan. One Meiji newspaper, for example, ran a serial account of the Akō rōnin incident, providing details of the vendetta along with biographies of the rōnin. The latter, written by the journalist Fukumoto Nichinan 福本日南 (1857-1921), was so well received that the same material was later published as a monograph, Akō kaikyo roku 赤穂快挙録 (Record of the Akō Incident), and went through many late-Meiji editions. At theatres in Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto, sell-out crowds attended Chushingura so regularly that it became a metaphor for things immensely popular. A quasi-religious sect devoted to remembrance of Sokō also emerged, sponsoring ritual ceremonies commemorating Sokō’s life and publishing literature by or about him. On September 26, 1885, a decade before the Sino-Japanese War, the Sōsanji 宗三 temple (in modern Shinjuku), where Sokō was buried, commemorated the 200th anniversary of his demise. Twenty years later, on June 6, 1906, following the Russo-Japanese war, it held another memorial service for him. Three months later there was yet another. Thereafter these rites became annual events, adding a religious layer to the Sokō revival. On April 20, 1907, the Sōsanji continued its apotheosis of Sokō by sponsoring an exhibit of his Bukyō zensho, Nenpu 年譜 (Chronological Biography), and Kafu 家譜 (Family Genealogy).

Tokyo University Professor of Philosophy Inoue Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎 (1856-1944) took the lead in academia in identifying Sokō’s thought as a key ingredient in Japan’s kokusui 國粹, i.e., national essence, and its kokutai, or national substance. Inoue’s Nihon kogaku no tetsugaku 日本古学の哲学 (The Philosophy of the Japanese School of Ancient Learning), published in 1902, advanced the revival by crediting Sokō’s teachings with having decisively influenced Ōishi Kuranosuke and the Akō rōnin. In doing so Inoue appointed myths linking Sokō to the Akō rōnin with the kind of academic respectability that only a professor at Japan’s premier imperial university could have given them. Inoue’s socio-political thought, recently dubbed “neotraditionalism,” typically blended elements of Confucian morality with nativist myth. Also, Inoue often deployed Sokō’s ideas about Japan’s kokutai to fashion an unofficial

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30 Quoted in Tawara, “Yamaga Sokō to shidō,” Yamaga Sokō, p. 11.
33 Duus and Scheiner, “Socialism, Liberalism, and Marxism, 1901-1931,” pp. 654-55. Also see Irokawa Daikichi, The Culture of the Meiji Period (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 280, 288, 291. Irokawa characterizes Inoue as an ideologue who followed Katō Hiroyuki 加藤弘之 (1836-1916) in solidifying the emperor system in late-Meiji Japan via notions such as “the family state” (kazoku kokka 家族国家), “loyalty to the emperor” (chikun 忠君), and “patriotism” (aikoku 愛国). Irokawa does not explore Inoue’s thoughts on Yamaga Sokō, though similar
but widely accepted “civil religion” which buttressed the imperial state with traditional mili-
taristic teachings glorifying self-sacrificing loyalty. Reiterating ideas that Sokō had developed
in his Chūchō jijitsu, Inoue, for example, claimed that the unbroken imperial line which had
ruled Japan since antiquity was the crucial factor differentiating Japan from all other
nations. Sokō had argued that Japan’s unbroken line reflected the virtue of its people who
would not dare murder their emperor as Chinese had so repeatedly done; it also proved
the true divinity of the imperial line itself. Significantly, Inoue’s popularization of this
emperor-centered understanding of Japan’s kokutai “informed textbooks, the education of
schoolteachers, and the training of lesser functionaries in the police, the military, and the
judicial service.”

To an extent Inoue’s emphasis on (1) Sokō’s impact on the Akō rōnin, and (2)
Sokō’s imperial loyalism, was not an entirely accurate historical recapitulation of Sokō’s
thought. After all, Sokō never pointed to his impact on Akō samurai as proof of the
efficacy of his teachings. In fact it seems that Sokō’s experiences in Akō domain were not
his proudest ones. Apart from his Haisho zanpitsu 配所残筆 (Exile Testament) and his
Nenpu (Chronological Diary), Sokō rarely referred to Akō. Though his Chūchō jijitsu,
written during his last years in exile, did foreshadow later kokugaku 国学, or national
learning, literature by emphasizing the sanctity of Japan’s imperial line, there is little evi-
dence that the Chūchō jijitsu was a widely known work in Tokugawa Japan. Moreover
there is no strong evidence suggesting that Sokō saw the imperial loyalism of the Chūchō
jijitsu as a definitive feature of his thought. For example, Sokō did not emphasize imperial
loyalism after returning to Edo following his pardon in 1675. Inoue’s reading of Sokō’s
philosophy thus seems to derive more from Shōin’s lectures on Sokō’s Bukyō zensho: there
Shōin argued that samurai must master Sokō’s ideas so that they could repay the imperial
virtue and preserve Japan’s sacred kokutai. Shōin also explained the efficacy of Sokō’s ideas
by observing that they conveyed the same wisdom which Sokō had communicated to Ōishi
Kuranosuke. In combining samurai loyalism and imperial loyalism as characteristics of Sokō’s
thought, Inoue’s understanding of Sokō then seems to derive mostly from Shōin’s interpreta-
tion of Sokō’s shidō which focused loyalism on the imperial center.

Because they impacted popular and scholarly literature about Sokō, in both Japan
and the West, for the much of the remainder of the twentieth century, Professor Inoue’s
writings on Sokō, the Akō rōnin, and Japanese kokutai were undoubtedly among the most
influential elements of the Sokō revival in Meiji Japan. However General Nogi Marusuke
(1849-1912), the son of a Chōshū samurai, eclipsed Inoue’s contributions to the
Sokō revival by attempting to embody the kind of self-sacrificing loyalty that had earli-
er been displayed by the Akō rōnin, while giving that loyalty a distinct imperial focus. In
1907, Nogi spearheaded an effort culminating in Sokō’s posthumous receipt of the fourth
imperial court rank, junior level (shōshii 正四位). Thus did the Meiji emperor reverse
the 1666 bakufu verdict that Sokō’s Seikyō yōroku was futodoki naru shomotsu 不屈な

themes appear in Inoue’s exposition of Sokō’s shidō. One could arguably find traditional grounds
for Inoue’s pro-imperial ideology in Sokō’s ideas.

Not long after, Nogi and a small group of Sokō admirers visited the Sōsanji cemetery. Nogi read the following statement before Sokō’s grave, announcing to him his posthumous elevation to imperial rank by the Meiji emperor:

My teacher, your virtue was the highest in your generation; your perception surpassed that of ancient and modern times; your learning was broad and profound; your discourses were excellent. Early on you illuminated the essential blossoms of the spirit of our national polity, clarifying the difference between the true Central Empire and things alien. You rectified matters of name and station, explaining brilliantly the way of the samurai. Your intentions were always focused on the administration of the realm; your talents combined both the martial and civil arts. Unfortunately, your age did not appreciate you. Your exile separated you from the world. Thus you passed away unable to have realized your magnificent aspirations. Was it not tragic?

When I was a child, my father taught me your philosophy as we read your works together. In my heart I revere the lofty wind; gazing up I strive to be a model samurai.

The next year, 1908, the newly organized Sokō kai 素行會, or “Yamaga Sokō Commemorative Society,” began sponsoring annual memorial services for Sokō at the Sōsanji, as well as lectures on Sokō’s thought and publication of his remaining works. Not surprisingly, Professor Inoue, General Nogi, and Admiral Tōgō Heihachirō東郷平八郎 (1847-1934) were among the Society’s more prominent members.

In 1912, Nogi personally underwrote the first post-Tokugawa edition of Sokō’s Chūchō jijitsu. On 9/11 of the same year, the day before his death, Nogi presented a copy of the Chūchō jijitsu to the crown prince, the future Taishō 大正 emperor. On the day of the Meiji emperor’s funeral, Nogi and his wife followed their lord, the Meiji emperor, in death by committing seppuku. In his suicide note, Nogi deplored the decadent self-indulgence of young people, exhorting them to live by the warrior code of the samurai. No doubt he had in mind Sokō’s shidō. After Nogi’s death, a contemporary newspaper, Taiyō 太陽 (The Sun) remarked, “nothing has so stirred up the sentiments of the nation

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36 Quoted in Tawara, Yamaga Sokō, p. 13.
since the vendetta of the 47 rōnin in 1703.” 41 However, Nogi’s links with the rōnin, and Sokō as well, were most definitively established by Professor Inoue who, in his later writings, emphasized the exceptional potency of Sokō’s shidō by pointing to its successive exemplars---the Akō rōnin, Yoshida Shōin, and General Nogi---in Japanese history. (To be continued.)

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Translation of Yamaga Sokō’s Seikyō yōroku (cont.)

Chapter Two

(1) The Mean (chün)

The mean refers to duly regulated behavior without any partial biases. 42 Confucius noted that “perceptive people often go beyond the mean in their actions, while less capable ones do not always attain it.” That is why the mean is not more widely practiced. 43 If it were widely practiced then all human feelings---pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy---would be well governed, as would families, states, and the world. After all, the Doctrine of the Mean states that “the mean is the great foundation of the world!” 44

The sagely way consists of practicing the mean (J. yō, Ch. yong). 45 Such practice consists of extending one’s knowledge of the rites and following that knowledge

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41 Ukita Kazutami, “Nogi Taishō no junshi o ronzumu” 乃木大将の殉死を論する (A Discussion of General Nogi’s Suicide after the Meiji Emperor’s Death), Taiyō 太陽 18.15 (Nov. 1912), p. 2; quoted in Carol Gluck, Japan’s Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 221-25. Gluck also notes, “it was Nogi—not the emperor—who became the embodiment of the Meiji period in popular culture. Along with the forty-seven rōnin, he appeared the ubiquitous protagonist...the most popular entertainment of the time.” Gluck, Japan’s Modern Myths, p. 224.


43 The Mean, ch. 4, pt. 2, p. 46.

44 Ibid., ch. 1, pt. 2, p. 37.

45 Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017-73), “Teachers,” Tongshu 通書 (Penetrating the Book of Changes); Fumoto Yasutaka 藤保孝 et al., eds., Shushi no senku 朱子の先覚 (Master Zhu’s
exactly in practice. The sagely Confucian remarks: “Be discriminating, be unified,” “use the mean,” and “choose the mean and its practicality,” emphasize the importance of practicing the mean. However, one cannot practice the mean by merely examining the mind’s intentions and hoping for enlightenment. Nor can one practice the mean by scrutinizing the mind prior to its agitation. Rather, practice refers to what one does regularly. People can only practice the mean in their daily tasks. It is mistaken to think that practice refers to a special method of cultivation distinct from the mean.

(2) The Way (michi 道)

Because “the way,” as a concept, generally refers to the course that one should follow in daily activity, it also signifies, more specifically, those rational and ethical principles which a person ought to follow. Heaven revolves around all things; earth supports them; and human beings and animals dwell among them. Each realm has a way from which it cannot differ.

The moral Way is practical. Unless it can be followed everyday in practice, it is not the true moral Way. The sagely Confucian Way is the moral Way of humanity; thus it consists of the ethical course that everyone should follow in their daily activities regardless of time and place. If it were artificial or contrived so that only one person could practice it but others could not, or so that the ancients could embody it but moderns could not, then

Predecessors), ST, vol. 2, p. 143. “The mean is the principle of regularity, the universally recognized law of morality, and is that to which the sage is devoted.”


Sokō objects to treating yong/yô 常 (practice) as distinct from “the mean.” Cf., Chen Beixi 陳北溪, “Centrality [The Mean] and Ordinary [Practice],” Xingli ziyi 性理字義 (hereafter, XLZI), (1632 edition), pp. 68a-b, Wing-tsit Chan, trans., Neo-Confucian Terms Explained (hereafter, NCTE), (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 126. Beixi criticizes the same tendency. Zhu Xi explained “the mean and practice” as distinct notions in his Lunyu jizhu 論語集注 (Commentary on Analects), 6/27, ST, vol. 7, pp. 128 (409). But Beixi insists: “This should not imply that outside the mean there is another practice.”

Cf., Chen Beixi, “The Way,” XLZI, p. 51a; Chan, trans., NCTE, p. 105. “Essentially dao (J. michi) signifies those principles people should follow in daily affairs and human relations. Only what is followed by all people can be called the way. Generally the word dao conveys the idea of something that is used daily in practical human affairs, as well as the idea of something people follow.” Translation adapted.

it would not be the moral Way of humanity, nor would the *Doctrine of the Mean* have stated that the moral Way “follows human nature.”

The notion of “the moral Way” arose from the word *dao* 道 which signifies a road that people follow. In travelling, people must follow roads. Their wagons and carriages, for example, all proceed along large highways linking the imperial capital with every direction. Because these highways facilitate the flow of people and commodities, everyone wants to use them. Back alleys, although convenient for locals, are narrow, cramped, and difficult to navigate; nevertheless they are occasionally pleasant. Confucius’ moral Way is a great thoroughfare, while heterodox ways are mere alleys. The latter provide trifling amusements but no real peace or security. Great thoroughfares may lack roadside attractions but myriad alleys flow into them; therefore one can never really leave them.

(3) Principle (*ri* 理)

Principle refers to rational order. Everything has an order. If that is thrown into confusion, then matters of precedence and hierarchy will never be right. One errs greatly in defining human nature and heaven as principle. A natural order pervades heaven, earth, and humanity. Rituals embody that order.

(4) Virtue (*toku* 德)

Virtue (*toku* 德) refers to gaining (*toku* 得). As one’s knowledge is perfected, one comes to embody it. Practicing virtue refers to gaining virtue in one’s mind and physically embodying it in one’s behavior. When virtue is practiced impartially, one comes to com-

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50 *The Mean*, ch. 1; Shimada, pt. 2, p. 29.
51 Chen Beixi, “The Way,” XLZY, pp. 51a-b; Chan, trans., *NCTE*, p. 105. “The word *dao* (J: *michi*) refers to a road. Originally *dao* signified people on a road. As roads refer to places that many people follow, one would not call something a road if only one person used it. Essentially, *dao* signifies those principles people should follow in daily affairs and human relations... In reality, however, the word *dao* derives from places that people walk along.” Translation adapted.
52 Cf., Mencius, 1A/7; *Mengzi yinde* 孟子引得 (Concordance to the Mencius; hereafter, *MZYD*), eds. Hong Ye 洪業 (William Hung) et al. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1988), p. 4. “Travellers all would wish to use the King’s roads (if he ruled humanely).” Also Mencius, 6B/2, *MZYD*, p. 47. “The way is like a large road.”
53 Cf., Mencius, 5B/1; *MZYD*, p. 39. “Proceeding along with...the rational order of things is the work of wisdom.”
54 This refers to the Cheng-Zhu position that “nature is principle” and that “heaven is principle.” In “The Decree” (*ming* 命), Beixi states that the decree of Heaven can be understood in terms of principle or material force. *XLZY*, pp. 1a-b; Chan, trans., *NCTE*, pp. 37-38. Discussing “Human Nature” (*xing* 性), Beixi says “Human nature is principle.” *XLZY*, p. 5b; Chan, trans., *NCTE*, p. 46.
prehend heaven and earth without being confused by anything. Such all-penetrating virtue is called heavenly virtue or luminous virtue. If one's achievements are weak and shallow like thin ice, then one cannot be called virtuous.

(5) Humaneness (jin 仁)

Humaneness enables people to be truly human. One becomes humane by “overcoming selfishness and returning to propriety.” Just as heaven and earth manifest the virtue of origination, people should display humaneness in their daily behavior. Confucius exhaustively explained the total substance and the great functioning of humaneness by answering Yanzi’s questions about humaneness with both general and particular explanations. Humaneness encompasses all of the five constant virtues; thus, it is the highest of all the sagely Confucian teachings.

Han and Tang scholars explained humaneness as love (ai 愛), but their accounts are insufficient. Song Confucians equated humaneness with human nature (sei 性), yet

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57 Analects, 12/1; Lunyu yinde 諫語引得 (Concordance to the Analects; hereafter, LYYD), eds. Hong Ye et al. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1988), p. 22.


59 The substance/function dichotomy, which derived from Neo-Daoist writings, is crucial to Zhu Xi’s “Treatise on Humaneness.” Huian xiansheng Zhu Wengong wenji 許廬先生朱文公文集 (Collected Literary Works of Zhu Xi), eds. Okada Takehiko 岡田武彦 and Satô Hitoshi 佐藤仁 (Taipei: Dahua Book Co., 1986), vol. 2, p. 4950.

60 Analects, 12/1; LYYD, p. 22. After Confucius generally described humaneness as “overcoming selfishness and returning to propriety,” Yan Hui asked about the particulars. Confucius said, “Do not look, listen, speak, or act contrary to propriety.”

61 The five constant virtues are humaneness, rightness, propriety, wisdom, and faithfulness. Zhu Xi’s “Treatise on Humaneness” states: “The human mind possesses four virtues, humaneness, rightness, propriety, and wisdom. But none of these four is not included within the one virtue, humaneness.”

their views exaggerate its meaning. Thus did Han, Tang, and Song Confucians badly misunderstand Confucius's teachings on the notion of humaneness. The ideas of the Han and Tang scholars were relatively innocuous, but the philosophical damage done by the Song and Ming Confucians was egregious. In explaining humaneness Confucius was much more specific than the Han, Tang, and Song scholars ever recognized.

Contrasted with rightness, humaneness refers to what one likes as opposed to what one dislikes. Yet humaneness and rightness cannot be dissected: one practices humaneness by relying on rightness and one completes rightness by relying on humaneness. Human feelings, which consist of our likes and dislikes, are natural emotions. Humaneness and rightness are our duly regulated likes and dislikes.

As Mencius explained, each of the five constant virtues has its own function. In this respect they neither overlap nor exist independently of one another. One Song Confucian claimed, however, that "all beings composed of vital fluids and generative force are endowed with the five constants." That is most absurd! The five constants are the duly regulated manifestations of human feelings. Without extending knowledge and energetically practicing the moral Way, a person cannot embody the five constant virtues. Everyone has feelings; only by practicing the Way can they be duly regulated.

(6) Rituals (rei 禮)

Rituals are the ethical rules of behavior that people should follow in their lives. People follow them so that they can regulate their actions according to the mean and bring order to their daily tasks. One who can both understand and practice rituals is a sage. Without rituals, people would not know what to do with their hands and feet, or what they should look at or listen to! Without rituals, people would not know when to advance and

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64 Cf., Mencius, 2A/6; MZYD, p. 13. “Mencius said, ‘The feeling of commiseration is the beginning of humanity; the feeling of shame and dislike is the beginning of rightness.’”

65 Mencius, 2A/6; MZYD, pp. 11-12. But here Mencius was speaking of the four virtues, not the five constants.

66 Cheng Yi, Yishu, sect. 7, Er Cheng quanshu, ch. 23, p. 780.


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when to retreat, or when to press on and when to yield. With rituals, peace prevails in the home, the community, the imperial house, and in civilian and samurai society. Rituals do not distort feelings nor do they simply embellish appearances: instead they provide natural regulation. Rituals thus constitute the moral Way from which we cannot depart. The sagely Confucian teachings therefore consist simply of rituals and music.

(7) Truth (makoto 誠)

Truth refers to what cannot be denied. Pure, unitary, and unadulterated, it spans past and present unchanged. The Book of Poetry's remark, "The decree &Heaven! How profound and unrelenting!" refers to that eternal aspect of truth. Sagely Confucian teachings never depart from truth. The moral Way, virtue, humaneness and rightness, rituals and music, are all inescapable truths for mankind. Like the love between fathers and sons, truth is not something artificially molded onto people.

The Song Confucians misunderstood the meaning of truth in claiming that "the absence of absurdity is truth" and "genuine reality without any absurdity is truth." Contrary to their claims, it is by advancing the undeniable truth that one achieves a level of moral behavior in which every word, deed, and task is void of any falsehood.

(8) Loyalty and Empathy (chigo 忠恕)

Loyalty (chú 忠) means doing things for others unselfishly; faithfulness (shin 信) means being honest, not deceitful. Loyalty demands that one not be selfish, while faithfulness requires that one refrain from deceit. Loyalty relates to the mind; faithfulness to tasks and affairs. Rulers and elders should be served with loyalty, while friends should be treated faithfully. Confucius' sagely teachings consist primarily of loyalty and faithfulness!

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68 Book of Rites, "Confucius at Ease in his Home;" Legge, Li Chi, Vol. 2, p. 273. "Without the rites, one would not know how to dispose of his hands and feet, or how to apply his ears and eyes; and his advancing and retiring, his bowings and giving place would be without any definite rules.” Translation adapted.


70 Cheng Yi, Yishu, sect. 7, Er Cheng quanshu, ch. 23, p. 781; Zhu Xi, Zhongyong zhangju (Commentary on the Doctrine of the Mean), ST, vol. 8, pp. 45 (457). These remarks are quoted in the same order in Chen Beixi, “Sincerity,” XLZY, p. 44a; Chan, trans., NCTE, p. 97.

71 Cf., Cheng Yi, as quoted by Beixi, states: "Loyalty means exerting oneself to the utmost and faithfulness means making things real." XLZY, p. 37b; Chan, trans., NCTE, p. 86.

72 Cf., Chen Beixi, “Loyalty and Faithfulness”; XLZY, p. 37b; Chan, trans., NCTE, p. 86. “Loyalty refers to what issues from within one’s mind... What emerges in relation to external events, being wholly real and true, is faithfulness.”
Empathy (jo 忍) means not doing to others what one does not wish for oneself. Loyalty means dealing with matters unselfishly; empathy entails governing people by taking them into consideration.

(9) Seriousness and Respectfulness (keikyō 敬恭)

Seriousness refers to being deliberate and reverent in conduct, and refraining from doing things in a wild and unregulated way. If one perfectly manifests seriousness in every aspect of the rites, one behaves with proper vigilance. When discussed apart from the rites, however, seriousness sounds oppressive, cramped, and uncomfortable.

Confucius' sagely teachings focus on ritual behavior. When practicing the rites one does become serious. Yet dwelling in seriousness is not the way to master ritual propriety. Song Confucians, however, mistakenly declared that seriousness is the foundation of learning; they also wrongly claimed that seriousness is the means by which one can perfectly embody the sagely Confucian learning from beginning to end. When people follow the Song methods of "concentrating on one thing" (shuichi 主一) and "quiet sitting" (seiza 靜坐), they become overly reverent, submerged in silence, and oppressively narrow. Confucius explained seriousness in terms of being cautious and apprehensive. Yet when one's seriousness is an outgrowth of ritual behavior, the caution and apprehension accompanying it engenders a natural calmness and serenity. Dwelling exclusively on seriousness as the Song Neo-Confucians did incarcerates the human mind within itself so that it penetrates nothing.

Respectfulness (kyō 恭) refers to seriousness manifested externally.

(10) Ghosts and Spirits (kishin 鬼神)

Ghosts and spirits are mysterious, omnipresent entities. The spiritual energies of yin and yang are traces of ghosts and spirits (kishin no ato 鬼神之跡), as are the all-

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73 Cf., Analects, 15/24; LYYD, p. 32.
74 Cf., Zhu Xi (1130-1200), Zhuzi quanshu 朱子全書 (Complete Works of Zhu Xi), 2:21b; Chan, A Source Book, p. 606. "Seriousness is the first principle of the Confucian school. From the beginning to the end, it must not be interrupted for an instant." Translation adapted.
75 Cheng Yi, Yishu, sect. 1, Er Cheng quanshu, ch. 16, p. 445. "Seriousness is concentrating on one thing." Also, Chen Beixi, "Seriousness," XLZY, p. 47a; Chan, trans., NCTE, p. 100. "Master Cheng said, 'Seriousness is concentrating on one thing.'" Quiet sitting was a Neo-Confucian meditative practice aimed at nourishing and preserving the mind. Li Yanping 李延平 (1088-1163), a student of the Cheng brothers, taught it to Zhu Xi.
76 Cf., The Mean, ch. 1; Shimada, pt. 2, p. 35. "Gentlemen are cautious and apprehensive."
77 Cf., Chen Beixi, "Respect and Seriousness," XLZY, p. 50a; Chan, trans., NCTE, p. 103. "Respectfulness is seriousness manifested externally; seriousness is respectfulness within."
penetrating, creative currents of heaven, earth, man, and things. Ghosts are associated with *yin*, and spirits with *yang*.

The sage Confucius first dealt with matters relating to heaven, earth, and human affairs; thereafter he discussed ghosts and spirits. Once people have mastered Confucius’s teachings on heaven, earth, and humanity, they too will begin to understand ghosts and spirits despite their invisibility.

Ghosts and spirits pervade everything, even mysterious, profound spaces. Although we can neither perceive nor hear them, they consist of the same generative force (*ki*) that humans do. Thus their existence cannot be doubted.

The heavenly components of the soul (*kon* 魂) belong to *yang*, and spirits are their spiritual forces. The earthly components of the soul (*haku* 魂) belong to *yin*, and ghosts are their spiritual forces.

Human beings and animals are incarnations of *yin* and *yang*. The essential spiritual forces of *yin* and *yang* (*inyō no reisei 阴陽之靈*) are the earthly and heavenly components of the soul.

As human beings and animals embody form, ghosts and spirits appear within them. Indeed the refined generative force of ghosts and spirits informs all things. When humans and animals no longer embody physical form their ghosts and spirits flow about, producing aberrations in the creative work of the universe. It is the wandering of the heavenly components of the soul (*yikōn 游魂*) that produces these aberrations.

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78 Cf., Cheng Yi, *Yi quan 易傳* (Commentary on the Book of Changes), 1:7b; *Er Cheng quanshu*. “Ghosts and spirits are the traces of creation.” And, Zhang Zai 張載 (1020-77), “The Great Harmony,” Zhengmeng 正蒙 (Correcting Youthful Ignorance), in Zhang Zai quanshu 張載全書 (Complete Works of Zhang Zai), SBBY ed., ch. 2, p. 4a; Chan, *A Source Book*, p. 505. “Ghosts and spirits are the spontaneous activity of the two generative forces (*yin* and *yang*).” Translation adapted. These remarks are quoted in succession in Chen Beixi, “Ghosts and Spirits,” *XLZY*, p. 73b; Chan, trans., *NCTE*, p. 143. Sokō’s view of “the spiritual forces of *yin* and *yang*” as “the traces of ghosts and spirits” derives from them.

79 Cf., Chen Beixi, “Ghosts and Spirits,” *XLZY*, p. 73b; Chan, trans., *NCTE*, p. 143. “Spirits are the spiritual forces of *yang* while ghosts are the spiritual forces of *yin*.” Beixi paraphrases Zhu’s *Zhongyong zhangyu*, ch. 16, ST, vol. 8, pp. 31 (454).

80 Cf., *Analects*, 11/12; *LYYD*, p. 20. “Zilu asked about the spirits of the dead. The Master replied, ‘If you are still not able to serve humanity, how can you serve the spirits?’”

81 Cf., Chen Beixi, “Ghosts and Spirits,” *XLZY*, p. 75b; Chan, trans., *NCTE*, p. 146. “Heavenly components of the soul belong to *yang* and make spirits, while earthly components of the soul belong to *yin* and make ghosts.”

82 Chen Beixi, “Ghosts and Spirits,” *XLZY*, p. 74b; Chan, trans., *NCTE*, p. 144. Beixi quotes the *Book of Rites* which states, “Human beings consist of the interaction of *yin* and *yang* and the convergence of ghosts and spirits.”


84 Cf., Chen Beixi, “Ghosts and Spirits,” *XLZY* (1632), p. 76b; Chan, trans., *NCTE*, p. 147. Sokō’s discussion essentially paraphrases this section of Beixi’s text which, in turn, is based on the *Book of Changes*’ remark, “The refined generative force integrates to become things. As it dis-
When people are busy, they remain diligent. Yet when idle, they become indolent. The myriad things are all rooted in heaven, but people are also rooted in their ancestors. The practices of making sacrifices to ancestors and worshiping distant kin reflect these inescapable truths of human existence. How could the religious rituals of humanity be mere artificial fabrications? When descendants worship their ancestors, the latter can respond to them because they share a common generative force with their descendants. Although the ancestral spirits may be far apart, they will gather to respond to the generative force of their progeny because it is the same as their own.  

A constant rule of ritual propriety is that great matters of state should be announced to heaven, earth, and the entire host of spirits. Apart from that, however, people have specific spirits to whom they should sacrifice. Likewise, ghosts and spirits have descendants from whom they should receive sacrifices.

(11) Yin and Yang (ínynō 陰陽)

Yin and yang fill all space in heaven and earth, effecting the creative activities of the universe. As complimentary forces that ceaselessly grow and disintegrate, come and go, expand and contract, produce and reproduce, yin and yang are the whole substance of heaven, earth, and humanity.  

Yang is light and so it rises; yin is heavy and therefore descends. Yang is the generative force of things, while yin provides form. Yet generative force and form are inseparable. Yin and yang are likewise mutually related: one cannot cleave from the other, nor can one function apart from the other. Therefore neither yin nor yang assumes a fixed position as they jointly preside over creation.

Of the phenomena that yin and yang inform, fire and water are the most salient: they mutually oppose and rely on one another as their activities pervade the universe. Of the myriad creations of yin and yang, they are the greatest.

(12) The Five Elements (gogōyō 五行)

integrates, the wandering away of its spirit becomes change. From this we know the characteristics and conditions of ghosts and spirits.” Translation adapted.

85 Cf., Chen Beixi, “Ghosts and Spirits,” XLZY, p. 78a; Chan, trans., NCTE, p. 149.
The five elements provide yin and yang with form, and are the active agents of creation within heaven and earth.\(^87\) Yin and yang are generative force, while the five elements provide the form of generative force. The five elements are not artificial; they exist naturally. Water and fire are the master elements. Water and fire are basically formless, despite the fact that they are real phenomena. Through mutual opposition and interaction, their creative powers exhaust myriad transformations.

Within the five elements there are cycles of production, action, and mutual succession. Amidst heaven, earth, and humanity, the five elements ceaselessly overcome, rely on, and then produce one another. Their cycles of creation, circulation, and succession are inexhaustible.

(13) Heaven and Earth (tenchi 天地)

Heaven and earth are the greatest forms manifested by yin and yang. Because they exist naturally and necessarily, heaven and earth never resort to artifice. They are eternal, having neither beginning nor end. Their dimensions cannot be measured, nor can instruments qualitatively analyze them further. One can only acknowledge that the flowing currents of yin and yang produce heaven and earth, the sun and moon, and the human and physical worlds.

Generative force ascends infinitely and thus forms heaven. Descending and congealing, it becomes earth. The truly inevitable nature of these ascents and descents is the most conspicuous characteristic of yin and yang.

Heaven and earth produce and reproduce ceaselessly.\(^88\) Their creative energy is inexhaustible. Thus, the Book of Changes notes: “The mind of heaven and earth is evident in the hexagram ‘Returning’ (fu 復).”\(^89\) When finished with one thing heaven and earth

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\(^87\) Cf., Zhou Dunyi, “Taiji tushuo” 太極圖說 (Explanation of the Diagram of the Great Ultimate), in Shushi no senku, ST, vol. 2, p. 130. “By the transformation of yang and its union with yin, the five elements of water, fire, wood, metal, and earth arise.” The five elements mutually oppose each other in that water overcomes fire, fire overcomes metal, metal overcomes wood, wood overcomes earth, and earth overcomes water. They interact in that water produces earth [ashes] by overcoming fire, earth produces wood by overcoming water, wood produces fire, and fire produces metal.

\(^88\) Cf., Cheng Yi, Yishu, sect. 7, Er Cheng quanshu, ch. 16, p. 442. “The transformations of heaven and earth naturally produce things.”

\(^89\) Book of Changes, “Treatise on the T’uan”; Legge, i Ching, p. 233; ZYYD, p. 16.
initiate another so that their creative work has neither beginning nor end. The virtues of heaven and earth are most magnificent, most just, and most correct; in them one sees the ethical sentiments of heaven and earth.\textsuperscript{90}

Of the myriad manifestations of \textit{yin} and \textit{yang}, heaven and earth are the greatest, but the sun and moon are the most essential. Suspended above all creation, the sun and moon illuminate every phenomena\textsuperscript{91} so that the myriad things of heaven and earth attain their proper lot. The sun and moon penetrate every transformation within heaven and earth; thus do they participate in the activities of heaven and earth.

\textsuperscript{90} \textit{Ibid.}, "Treatise on the T’uan;" \textit{ZYYD}, p. 20. "One sees the feelings of heaven, earth, and the myriad things."

\textsuperscript{91} \textit{Cf., Book of Changes}, "Appendix Judgments." Legge, \textit{I Ching}, p. 373; \textit{ZYYD}, p. 44. "Of the phenomena suspended in the heavens, none is more illuminating than the sun and moon."