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SAI ON (1682-1761) AND CONFUCIANISM IN THE EARLY-MODERN RYUKYU KINGDOM

VOLUME II

by

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CHAPTER SIX: THE STANDARD

Introduction

Sai On argued that unlike Buddhism, Confucianism offered a set of standards rooted in the pattern of nature suitable for informing the daily lives of people at any stage of moral development. The ancient sages of China created many of these standards, which generally had universal validity even if they were not applicable all circumstances. It was the duty of government, thought Sai On, to clearly codify these standards in the form of laws, regulations, and other forms of official guidelines. It should not be surprising, therefore, that during Sai On's tenure in office, Ryukyuan government and society became ever more standardized.

The related Confucian concepts of *ching,* "the standard" or "standards," and *ch'üan,* "situational weighing," were of particular importance for Sai On.[1] *Ch'üan* and its relationship with *ching* was a subject of academic controversy

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[1]*Ch'üan* is often translated "expedient" or "expediency." In rendering the term "situational weighing," I am following Fu, and the meaning of the term shall become clear when I discuss it in detail in the next chapter.

during the Sung period, and I discuss the topic in detail in the following chapter. Here, however, we need only understand the much simpler *ching,* which Ch'en Ch'un (Ch'en Pei-hsi) described as, "the principle which can always be practiced every day," and "the constant standard of Heaven and Earth."[2] Donald J. Munro describes the term as follows:

> The term *ching* covers customary ritual rules (*li*), social role duties, and the broad theses governing both (such as the naturalness of distinctions between superiors and inferiors). A number of classical Confucians treated the ritual rules as human inventions, although it was generally accepted that the sages formulated them on the basis of certain cosmic principles, for example, hierarchy.[3]

Sai On, too, saw standards as being based on cosmic principles. For example, he wrote in *One Man's Views*: "The way of the five phases and the four socio-occupational classes may seem an arbitrary creation of human beings, but all things considered, it is the way of *t'ien,* deriving from yin and yang and the five phases in nature."[4] Because of its clarity and alleged cosmological basis, Confucians were virtually unanimous in their preference to act in accordance with *ching,* although most acknowledged that situations could arise

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[2]Chan, *Terms Explained*, pp. 129, 131.

[3]*Images of Human Nature: A Sung Portrait* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 178.

[4]HMG, #58. In this particular passage, I have translated *go gyō* (C. *wu hsing*) as "five phases," although in most other passages in which the term appears, Sai On clearly employed it with a meaning closer to "five elements."

that would temporarily render a particular standard impossible to carry out.

Beginning around the time Sai On entered the Council of Three, and continuing after his death, the royal government established law codes, dress codes, regulations for funerals and other ceremonies, codes regulating the *shi* class, detailed guidebooks for the conduct of local government in each district, and so on. Sai On was directly or indirectly involved with most of these attempts by the royal government to standardize Ryukyuan life, and we have seen in his writings that he argued vigorously against those who denied the necessity of codified standards. An important aspect of Sai On's thought and political activities was the establishment of *ching* in Ryukyu. Although he was involved with a variety of projects such as revising regulations concerning mourning practices and systematizing government finances and budgeting, here I deal only with Sai On's regulating and standardizing activities in three major areas: 1) increased central government control over local activities; 2) social structure and household regulation; and 3) the place of Kumemura in Ryukyuan politics.

Increased Central Control

Starting in the 1730s, the royal government began to implement wide-scale measures to reform the government, economy, and customs of local areas, which of course had the overall effect of enhancing central government control over the districts. The approach was multi-faceted, involving official ritual, regulation and cooptation of local festivals, the dissemination of specific guidelines for local officials to follow, careful surveying and classification of all agricultural land in Ryukyu, the integration of forestry policies with the local corvée system, and similar measures. I examine these measures in the course of discussing three major projects that began in the late 1730s, a large-scale cadastral survey, dissemination of *kujichō* (official guidebooks), and dissemination of the *Articles of Instruction*.

The Genbun Survey

Sai On's five-month survey of forest lands, while tremendously important in and of itself for the agricultural data and first-hand knowledge of rural conditions it provided, seems also to have served as a preliminary training session for a much larger and more ambitious project that followed two years later—the Genbun Survey of 1737-50. The survey established the basic economic framework for the early-modern kingdom, and so important was it that Tasato has

called its planning and execution Sai On's greatest achievement.[5] Nakama points out that the single greatest change in the peasants' land-use patterns took place as a result of the survey, and that the Ryukyuan survey was modeled on Satsuma's 1724-27 Kyōho survey.[6]

Purpose and Background of the Survey

The Genbun Survey has attracted a great deal of attention from historians, and all agree that the royal government had several objectives in carrying it out. There is also general agreement on what those objectives were, with some minor variation from one historian to another. Nakama points out three main goals. The first was to close the gap between officially listed levels of production (based on Satsuma's immediate post-invasion survey) and actual production (which had clearly increased); next was to measure and deal with the geographical changes in villages and agricultural fields, and the final goal was to tighten and systematize control over the districts.[7]

Tasato points out five objectives, the first being to begin to do away with the *jiwarisei*, or practice of periodically redistributing land among the peasants. The second objective was to increase production by establishing new

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[5]"Seiji," p. 69.

[6]"Somayama," p. 120.

[7]"Somayama," p. 120.

villages and moving old ones (based, says Tasato, on geomantic principles taught by Sai On). A further goal was to implement a program of forest self-sufficiency (the groundwork for which Sai On had already laid). A fourth objective was to implement the so-called *yadori* (O. *yaadui*) program, which I shall discuss in the Chapter Eight. Briefly, however, this program encouraged destitute *shi* to move to the countryside and take up farming without official loss of status. As part of the *yadori* policy, peasants were encouraged to devote extra time and effort to caring for forest lands, and the government sought to have the "*yadori shi*" compensate for the peasants' time and labor caring for forest lands by working as tenants on district and village *shiakechi*. Finally, Sai On expected to substantially increase government revenues as a result of tax assessments based on more accurate data.[8]

Maeda points out four major survey objectives, beginning with the need to relieve the economic distress of certain segments of both the *shi* and peasant populations. Citing a rise in the power of certain local landowning/local official families (because they had acquired large amounts of land under Shō Shōken's *shiakechi* program), Maeda says that a second objective was to curb the power of such families. Stabilizing royal government finances was the third objec-

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[8]ODJ, 2, p. 42.

tive, and the granting of permanent cultivation rights to peasants, the fourth.[9]

An entry for 1737 in the *Kyūyō* explains the purpose, general procedure, and (preliminary) result of the survey as follows:

> In our country, though it was official policy that fields be distributed equally, boundaries had changed over the passage of many years. *Hōshi* Sai On was ordered to teach this system [for dividing land equitably] for the first time, and Shō *Hōshi* (Shikina *Ueekata* Chōei) was ordered to lead officials throughout the country on a tour of inspection. They went to the villages of the various districts correcting boundaries and equalizing fields. They have already determined [which lands are] forest lands and [which are] flat fields, and have largely determined the guidelines under which the people are to produce.[10]

Clearly the survey had both political and economic objectives. As we have seen, since the Satsuma invasion there had been a great deal of movement of peasant populations, extensive new lands had been opened to cultivation, sugar, sweet potatoes, and other new crops had come to flourish, and new forestry policies had begun. For these and other reasons, the royal government's records of agricultural productivity

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[9]*Sai On*, p. 153. In explaining the background of the survey, Maeda relies heavily on the exploitation of the peasants by local officials as an explanatory device. While it is no doubt reasonable to assume that many officials sought to enrich themselves whenever possible, Maeda presents no specific evidence that local officials *in the mid-eighteenth century* were preying on the peasants to the extent that he portrays. See pp. 144-53.

[10]KY, #1037.

had become badly out of date. The survey allowed the royal government to collect new, accurate information, and it also enabled the government to implement new policies such as those connected with forestry in each area as the survey team visited.

The survey was also an excellent opportunity for the royal government to tighten and standardize its control over local areas. Simply finding out precisely what the agricultural resources were in each area was an essential prerequisite for better (here meaning both more equitable and larger) tax collection and supervision of corvée labor. The presence of the survey team and the information it obtained also assisted the royal government in standardizing local administrative practices, to be discussed below in conjunction with the *kujichō*.

Such attempts at standardization were not new, for Shō Shōken and others, with support from Satsuma, had similar objectives, as we can see from such documents as the *Haneji shioki* and *Hōshiki*. The Genbun survey, then, was a continuation of previous royal government efforts to regulate the activities of local officials and the peasantry, as well as to increase production. The key difference is that the survey marked a major turning point in the effectiveness of such efforts. As central government officials measured and inspected each parcel of land throughout Ryukyu, they

projected the authority of the royal government down to the level of each individual household.[11] We should not overlook the power of Satsuma in the background, for its officials were well aware that a thorough survey would enable the royal government to better collect tax revenues and thus be in a better position to remit rice payments to Satsuma on time. Satsuma, in fact had been encouraging the royal government to undertake such a survey since the early 1720s.[12]

Another major reason for the survey can be seem from the following 1737 passage from the *Sai-uji kafu*:

> Sai On was ordered to begin teaching the techniques of standardizing (*ching*) the boundaries of agricultural fields. Although we have established agricultural officials in the country, they do not yet know the correct techniques. Thus the field boundaries shift with one side encroaching on the other or vice versa, resulting in litigation, and the agricultural officials must labor unbearably. Furthermore, the [boundaries between] mountain land and flat fields are not respected, causing the peasants unbearable grief. . . ."[13]

Incomplete or inaccurate records resulted in numerous

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[11]Tasato, "Seiji," pp. 69-70.

[12]A 1723 notice to the *sessei* and Council of Three from Tanegashima Hikimasa and other Satsuma officials stated that Satsuma had been asking Ryukyu to undertake a detailed survey for several years, but Ryukyu had objected citing alleged hardship it would cause the peasants. Satsuma thus excused Ryukyu from undertaking the survey, but saying that productivity in Ryukyu had surely risen, it levied a higher annual tax (ROHM, 1, pp. 145-6. See also pp. 155-6). The tax increase surely served as an added impetus for the royal government to undertake the survey.

[13]p. 372. The *Honsaroku* states: "The peasants are the foundation of the realm, and there is a method for governing them. First, clearly delineate the boundaries of each field" (NST, #28, p. 289.)

disputes among peasants over which fields belonged to which village, apparently keeping local officials quite busy mediating them instead of working at more productive tasks. The land-use patterns in early-modern Ryukyu were numerous and complex. In the case of forest land use for example, cases in which two or more villages jointly managed a single land unit (called *moai*) were not uncommon. There were at least four types of *moai* use: 1) one village used forest land belonging to another; 2) several villages jointly used and "owned" an area of forest land; 3) an area of forest land was entirely within the territory of one village but was used by that village and one or more others; and 4) several villages (but not the village in which it was located) jointly used an area of forest land within the territory of one village.[14] Not surprisingly, the complexity of these arrangements spawned inter-village disputes as well as misuse of the land (for example, clearing forest land to use for other crops). These disputes and misuse were surely a hindrance to productivity, and the clear delineation of boundaries and the settling of all disputes was another objective of the survey.

Execution of the Survey

Six high-ranking officials actually conducted the survey, and in the field, they split into several teams, each of which included a number of secretaries and other support

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[14]Nakama, "Somayama," pp. 117-119.

staff. Sai On selected the six and personally trained them in techniques of hydraulic engineering, forestry, and surveying techniques.[15] He directed the survey personally for the first few years until the teams had become experienced. They used staves and compasses to measure the exact dimensions and position of each parcel of land. At the same time, they recorded information about the type of land, its quality, and other relevant information. As they went from village to village, the teams put Sai On's forestry management system into place.[16]

The detailed nature of the survey meant that the relatively small teams had to work slowly. Had more officials been involved, the survey undoubtedly would have been completed sooner, but the room for inconsistencies would also have increased. It is likely that Sai On favored a small team of hand-picked officials trained by him so as to maintain the highest possible degree of accuracy, consistency, and manageability. Over the course of the thirteen years required to complete the survey, the royal government compiled a detailed four-volume register of all lands, known as the *Go-tōkoku go-kenchi no shidai* (Results of the survey of the country).

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[15]Maeda, *Sai On*, p. 154; *Kafu*, p. 372.

[16]Tasato, "Seiji," pp. 69-70; Maeda, *Sai On*, pp, 153-4.

Results and Significance

The survey seems to have accomplished many of the objectives stated above. Its records indicated a 2.5-fold increase in total productivity since the time of Satsuma's survey,[17] and this information was surely useful in revising tax assessments. The survey clarified the boundaries between different types of land and clarified the ground rules for the various types of land use. It also established Sai On's forest management system throughout Ryukyu, and the majority of forest lands came to be classified as "*somayama*," which meant that they were under the supervision of the central government and local forestry officials.[18] Disputes over the boundaries of districts, villages, and lesser parcels of land also came to an end.[19]

Sai On, however, did not achieve his goal of having land distributed to peasants on a permanent basis to encourage better care of the land and better planning. The old *jiwarisei* continued, apparently owing to the strength of local custom.[20] Nevertheless, the survey as a whole was a

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[17]Maeda, p. 155, based on work by Toguchi.

[18]Nakama, "Somayama," p. 120.

[19]Maeda, *Sai On*, p. 155.

[20]Ibid, p. 156. It is not clear to what extent other government officials besides Sai On wanted to do away with the *jiwari* system, and I am aware of no specific edicts prohibiting it. If, however, it was indeed the intention of the royal government to do away with the system,

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major turning point for Ryukyuan government and society, for it was the means by which Sai On implemented many important political and economic reforms, and it greatly strengthened central government control over the Ryukyuan countryside. After the Genbun Survey, the royal government never again conducted a cadastral survey, and Tasato points out that because the Genbun survey laid the economic foundation for the remainder of the kingdom's existence, it was the major reason Sai On was known to later generations of Ryukyuans as the "fourth member of the Council of Three."[21]

Regulation of Local Festivals

In 1735, the royal government began to produce and distribute *kujichō* (also pronounced *kōjichō*) for each district.[22] *Kujichō* were administrative guidebooks containing detailed regulations and specifications for the conduct of local government.[23] They also regulated local festivals,

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[20](...continued)
its failure to do so (along with the failure to curtail shamanism) shows a significant limitation on the extent of royal government power.

[21]ODJ, 2, p. 42. Many historians have commented that later generations referred to Sai On in this fashion, indicating how strong and lasting was his influence over political affairs.

[22]Despite the many district *kujichō* in existence during the days of the kingdom, no single complete *kujichō* is extant today. Using partial *kujichō*, however, modern scholars have reconstructed a typical *kujichō*, which is available in Tasato et al., *Magiri kujichō*. My references to the content of *kujichō* shall be from this reconstructed text.

[23]The following passages are examples of the degree of specificity found in the *kujichō*. Regarding the work schedule: "On work days and duty
(continued...)

religious practices, and any other *kuji*, or "public affairs." Although the *kujichō* were specific to each district so as to take particular local conditions into consideration, their content was largely the same from one district to the next. Unlike the Genbun survey, the writing and dissemination of the *kujichō* does not seem to have been specifically identified with Sai On, although he was surely involved in the project. Production of the *kujichō* was the royal government's attempt to standardize local practices throughout Ryukyu, and the guidebooks served as concrete, verifiable standards against which to assess the performance of local officials.

Some of the entries in the *kujicho* dealt with religious practices. By the 1730s, if not before, the royal government was involved in an attempt to channel local religious activities into officially-prescribed modes. One of the tasks

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[23](...continued)
days every month, officials from the *jitōdai* on down to the *tikugu* shall go to the district office. Addendum: The *utchi* for each village will go to the district office on the first, tenth, fifteenth, and twenty-fifth day of each month" (p. 58). Regarding routine maintenance: "On the first and fifteenth of each month, the *tikugu* shall be ordered to clean and remove any insects from the *Ikokuhō go-jōgaki*, the registers of official notices, and so on. The *jitōdai* is to inspect this work from start to finish and approve it" (p. 57). Regarding training of *tikugu*, who were apprentice officials: "*Tikugu* and others taking lessons in arithmetic and penmanship shall be made to demonstrate their writing ability. The various results are to be evaluated and graded, and at the end of the year, the writings shall be sent to the *ryō sō-jitō*, who will grade them" (p. 58). Regarding certain taxes: "Receipts certifying the payment of miscellaneous taxes are to be consolidated at the end of the month, and a cash value calculated. A statement from the *shunōbugyō* regarding this matter should be obtained and presented to the Kanjōza by the tenth day of the next month" (p. 59).

of either the district or central government (depending on the importance of the event) was to specify the date for customary religious festivals and observances. The following brief passage is typical: "After the day for holding prayers for productivity has been decided, the entire district is to be notified three days in advance."[24] Of importance here is not only that the district office set the date for the prayers, but the purpose of the prayers. Productivity was certainly a matter the royal government would have wanted the peasants to take seriously, and indeed, most of the official prayers or religious festivals listed in the *kujichō* dealt with matters of agricultural productivity.

Background.

During Shō Shōken's administration, the royal government began to regulate local festivals, and Sai On was particularly interested in such regulation. Like many Confucians, he saw the rectification of popular customs as an essential duty of government. He saw this rectification coming about in large part by the ruler and his top ministers themselves being virtuous and thus serving as a model and source of moral authority for society.[25] But the government

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[24]*Magiri kujichō*, p. 55.

[25]A typical passage in *Essentials of Governance* reads: "A country's morality can incline toward public righteousness or private greed. One direction means prosperity, the other decline. Those who are not firm regarding where they stand on this matter need a foundation to rely on.

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also had the duty to establish laws and regulations to actively encourage ordinary people to do good and to discourage them from doing evil. "The enlightened ruler and wise minister must both endeavor to rectify popular customs," wrote Sai On in *Essential Discussion of Popular Customs.*[26] In an analytical section of the *Chūzan seifu,* he wrote, "Governing lies in raising the worthy and giving them responsibility, having pity on the people and esteeming agriculture, [making them] assured of rewards and certain of punishments, and clarifying rites and rectifying customs."[27] Clearly Sai On saw active intervention by the government to "rectify customs" as essential for raising the level of popular morality.

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[25](...continued)
Let us compare the situation to water. Those at the top of government and society are like a spring, while those at the bottom are like the stream that flows from the spring. If the spring is clear, so too will be the stream, but if the spring is muddy, so too will be the stream" (TYD, #11).

[26]SYR, #9.

[27]RSS, 4, p. 26. Sai On did acknowledge the possibility of a more Taoist (*wu-wei*) sort of rulership in which an enlightened ruler governs simply by "letting his sleeves hang down," but seems to have consigned this passive style to ancient times when people were much more simple and naive. He began the *Chūzan seifu,* for example, as follows: "I have heard that the [monarchs of the] Hsia, Yin, and Chou dynasties governed by letting their sleeves hang down, and all under heaven called [them] virtuous. But [such a style of governing] declined, and [rulers] rejected *t'ien* and created evil, arousing the anger of the people. [This result] was the rulers' own doing. How could it necessarily have been [an act] of *t'ien*?" (p. 3).

Such "rectifying," of course, also enhanced the political power of the central government over the localities, which was probably a major element in the royal government's campaign to regulate local festivals. Relying on the work of Yasuragi Moriaki, Tasato lists the following four objectives for the government's attempt to regulate and limit local festivals: 1) certain festivals had associated with them taboos that hindered agriculture; 2) too many days that could have been spent working were lost to the numerous festivals; 3) the festivals themselves resulted in what the government saw as excessive expenditure; and 4) some festivals involved naked dancing or other activates many government officials viewed as immoral.[28] Tasato further points out that old Ryukyu society evolved during a time when agricultural productivity was relatively weak and the economic base of the country was trade. At this time, festivals proved quite useful in promoting a degree of unity within the districts (recall that districts were arbitrary creations of the central government).[29] During the early modern period, of course, agricultural productivity had become terribly important, but festivals had also become firmly entrenched local customs.

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[28]Tasato Osamu, "Magiri to kuji," *Shin Ryūkyūshi, kinsei hen*, vol. 2 (Naha: Ryūkyū Shinpōsha, 1990), p. 101.

[29]Ibid, p. 103.

In summarizing the main reason the royal government undertook the difficult task of regulating the festivals, Tasato concludes: "Indeed, it is probably safe to say that the early-modern revolution and restrictions on festivals took place in order to refashion society into an entity capable of producing tax rice for Satsuma and the royal government."[30] The primary reason for the royal government's increased control over and regulation of activities in the districts was surely as Tasato says: the need to increase productivity to alleviate economic difficulties. Confucian thought played a role as well, since Sai On regarded active intervention to "rectify customs," as well as policies to encourage productivity, as the duty of good government. Regulation of festivals, of course, also served to enhance the power of the central government. Standardization of festivals and religious practices served economic, moral, and political ends, at least as far as the royal government was concerned.

Specific Measures.

The government prohibited some festivals outright.[31] Often, however, it took the less direct, though perhaps

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[30]Ibid, p. 104.

[31]For example, Sakihara points out that the royal government prohibited the popular *shinugu* dance, an agricultural fertility dance that retained its symbolism of sexual intercourse, and in which the women involved sometimes danced totally nude (p. 58).

ultimately more effective approach of modifying existing festivals so that they tended to reinforce values the government sought to promote.[32] For example, it selected four agricultural festivals of particular importance, standardized them, and made them into nation-wide events (a policy that Shō Shōken initiated but which was reinforced in the *kujichō*).[33] A *kujichō* entry regarding one of these festivals reads: "When the notice fixing the date for the Festival of the Barley Ears arrives [at the district office] from the Shunōza [which was in charge of government revenue, taxes, and so forth], it is to be sent to each village immediately."[34]

It was, of course, no accident that the government selected festivals celebrating agricultural productivity as nation-wide events. A related approach was to take a religious festival and secularize it so as to promote an attitude or behavior that would contribute to greater productivity. Perhaps the best example of this approach was the *kama mawari* (hearth visitation) festival, which originally centered on worship of the hearth deity, or *hi-no-kami,* and was thought to purify that deity. In early-modern writings, however, the

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[32]Itokazu Kaneharu, "Sai On no shisō to sono jidai," *Shin Ryūkyūshi, kinsei hen*, vol. 2 (Naha: Ryūkyū Shinpōsha), p. 204.

[33]Ibid, pp. 95, 103.

[34]*Magiri kujichō*, p. 53.

"festival" had changed to a promotion of fire safety and a general village cleanup.[35] A *kujichō* entry describes it as follows:

> Because the first day of the [tenth] month, as has been the case in the past, is the day of *kama mawari*, the Bujitō and Ōsabakuri are to divide the task among themselves and inspect every village. They are to ascertain that cleaning has been done properly and are to exhort the people to be conscious of fire safety.[36]

Changes in the festivals reflected a basic change in the Ryukyuan economy, as well as a fundamental change at least among those who governed Ryukyu. The hold of the native religion on the hearts and minds of this group was, if not totally absent, at least weaker than the kingdom's pressing economic needs. The spread of Confucian thought among the Ryukyuan upper classes probably served as a catalyst to speed up and intensify the royal government's campaign of standardizing and modifying popular religious festivals.

Conflict

It is hard to imagine that the peasants welcomed the royal government's measures to increase the output of their labor, even if such measures may have indirectly benefited them in the long run (which may or may not have been the case, although they certainly benefited the royal govern-

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[35]Ibid, p. 102.

[36]*Magiri kujichō*, p. 55.

ment). That the government's policies involved modifying long-established religious practices surely made them even less palatable. To what extent the peasants complied (willingly or otherwise) is difficult to say, although there do not seem to have been any peasant uprisings in early-modern Ryukyu as there had been in early-modern Japan.

It would be interesting to know how people such as the peasants viewed Sai On and his activates. Although clear documentary sources are lacking, Sai On's reputation in popular folklore seems to have been that of a cold-hearted technocrat. Such a portrayal of Sai On is also common today among scholars of Ryukyuan literature, as well as other scholars who take a Marxist view of history.[37] For such scholars, of course, Sai On's policies were attempts by the Confucian ruling class to exploit the labor of the peasants. Even in modern fiction, Sai On has been associated with coldly, or even cruelly rational policies.[38] In the discus-

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[37]See, for example, Tamae Seiryo, *Junkyō no bungaku* (Dainippon insatsu, 1984) and a series of articles on Heshikiya Chōbin in *Aoi umi*, no. 138, Dec., 1984.

[38]Ōshiro Tatsuhiro, in his 1967 novella, *Kakuteru paatii* (Cocktail party), for example, includes the following dialogue between Okinawans and others at a cocktail party set in Okinawa in the 1960s. An Okinawan has been asked if it had ever been customary in Ryukyu to abandon old people to die in remote areas:

"'I haven't heard of it, but there does seem to have been a brutal custom called "thinning out" for ending the lives of newborns.'

'Yes, I believe that was the regent Sai On's policy in the eighteenth century.' Mr Ogawa took this opportunity to display his erudition. 'According to what I've read, ancient rulers were deeply troubled over

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sion of Sai On's conflict with Heshikiya Chōbin, it will become clear that Sai On was indeed capable of dealing ruthlessly with those who opposed him.

The *Articles of Instruction*

Closely related to the royal government's efforts at fiscal, administrative and cultural standardization described above was an attempt to impose a measure of ideological standardization on Ryukyuan society. In 1732, the Hyōjōsho published the *Articles of Instruction,* which had the force of law throughout Ryukyu. Scholars of Ryukyuan history all agree that Sai On was the actual author of this work, which was a wide-ranging description of basic Confucian morality written in *sōrōbun.*[39] Many scholars of Ryukyuan history have com-

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[38](...continued)
the population problem, though if such cruel measures were accepted, they can't really be said to have agonized all that much.'" (Steve Rabson, trans., *Okinawa: Two Postwar Novellas by Ōshiro Tatsuhiro and Higashi Mineo* [Berkeley: Institute for East Asian Studies, University of California, 1989], p. 41.)

[39]The individual article titles of the *Articles of Instruction* are: The Situation of Ryukyu; Rulers and Subjects; Occupation of the Aristocracy; *Jitō* and Peasants; Local officials and Peasants; Peasants; Merchants and Craftsmen; Filial Piety; An Extended Family's Main Household; Coming of Age and the Way of Women; The Way of Husband and Wife; What the Family Should Bear in Mind; The Education of Children; Education of Aristocratic and Wealthy Youths; A Bride's Path Vis-a-vis Her Parents-in-law; Relatives and Friends; Honoring the Elderly; Assisting Relatives; Servants; Social Interaction; Education for Progeny and Savings; Morality About Life; Warning About Liquor; Money and Righteousness; Putting an End to Superstition; Funerals and Fire Assistance; Mourning; Rituals and Observances; Controlling the Emotions; Fluctuations in Household Fortunes; The Country's Laws and the People's Education.

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mented on the significance of the *Articles,* Itokazu saying that the work extended Confucianism beyond the realm of personal cultivation to make it a nation-wide ideology.[40] He also argues that the dissemination of the *Articles* was an attempt to bring Confucianism into the ranks of the common people, saying: "The intention behind the promulgation of the *Articles of Instruction* was to create a properly-governed society by attempting to transform the common people based on Confucian ethics."[41]

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[39](...continued)
The content of the *Articles of Instruction* is simple and basic. Limited to moral teachings, it contains no discussion of metaphysics, Chinese or Japanese history, or philosophical issues.

[40]"Sai On no shisō to sono jidai," *Shin Ryūkyūshi, kinsei hen,* vol. 2, p. 185.

[41]Itokazu Kaneharu, "Kinsei Ryūkyū ni okeru jukyō rinri no kakuritsu: *yōjō* no bunseki o chūshin ni," *Ti-erh-chiai chung-kuo yü-wai han-chi kuo-chi hsüeh-shu hui-i lun-wen-chi* (Taipei: Lien-ho-pao wen-hua chi-chin-hui kuo-hsüeh wen-hsien-kuan, 1989), p. 690.
Elsewhere, Itokazu has gone even further, saying that the *Articles* did in fact spread Confucianism into the ranks of the common people ("Juyō" in *Ti-yi-chiai chung-liu li-shih kuan-hsi kuo-chi hsüeh-shu hui-i lun-wen-chi,* p. 72). In this case, however, it is essential to clearly distinguish a possible *attempt* to spread Confucian values to the common people, and whether or not such a thing ever happened, particularly because the *Articles* were written in a foreign language and would have had to have been explained to most peasants before there would even have been the possibility of acceptance. In general, Itokazu's discussions of the *Articles* tend too readily to assume that the peasantry understood and accepted (or was successfully made to understand and accept) the content of the text. They may have, but I have yet to see any convincing evidence to this effect. Instead of focussing on the common people, it may be better to examine possible effects of the *Articles* on local officials.
Portraying the *Articles* as a reader or textbook for the common people was common among earlier generations of scholars, Iha Fuyū and Majikina Ankō having lavishly praised the work as a "splendid reader for the people" (*rippana kokumin dokuhon*). See *Ryūkyū no goijin* (Onozawa chōzō, 1916), pp. 127-8.

The promulgation of the *Articles* may have been an *attempt* by the central government to impose basic Confucian values on the general populace, but it is doubtful that the attempt was ever more than minimally successful. Although there is some evidence that the nineteenth-century royal government intended that peasants read or listen to readings of the *Articles*,[42] the majority of peasants were illiterate and would hardly have been able to understand a text written in the formal literary style of a foreign language. Instead, it seems that the government's main strategy was to have local officials study the text. The teachings of the *Articles*, presumably, would inform the actions of these local officials. The peasants would learn the content of the *Articles* from their dealings with local officials, who Sai On exhorted to instruct the peasants in their area, as well as to rectify local customs.[43]

Indeed, local officials seem to have been the primary intended audience of the *Articles*, and it became the main text for training apprentice officials in basic literary skills. Apprentice officials were required to recite the text

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[42]See Itokazu, "Jukyō rinri," p. 692 and the accompanying endnote (#5, p. 706).

[43]For example, "[Local officials] should even work hard to improve and correct the customs of their area" (GKJ, #5); and "The essential duty of those who oversee peasants is simply that by having pity for the peasants and seeing to it that their needs are met, they become older brothers to the peasants and teach them agricultural methods" (TYD, #75).

aloud on the first and fifteenth days of each month, and a *kujichō* clause states: "Before the fourth hour [10:00 am] on the above-mentioned two days, the *tikugu* are to be made to recite the *Articles of Instruction* and the *Ikokuhō go-jōgaki*, and officials from the *jitōdai* on down to the [other] *tikugu* are to listen."[44] By the time a *tikugu* took on official duties, he would likely have memorized the text, and listening to others recite it twice a month would have kept its contents fresh in his memory.

The dissemination of the *Articles* was a clear attempt to impose ideological standardization (in the form of basic Confucian ethics) on the lower officials. It is safe to say that Confucianism, at least in simplified form, had reached even the lowest levels of officialdom by the mid eighteenth century. To the extent that local officials then acted on these teachings and "rectified" the customs of the peasantry, it could be said that basic Confucian teachings penetrated as far as the common people. We have seen considerable evidence, however, that old-Ryukyuan customs, beliefs, and practices remained strong among the peasantry. The exhortation against *yuta* in the *Articles*, for example, certainly seems to have had no impact on peasant behavior. At this time, more research is necessary to ascertain what effect, if any, the promulgation of the *Articles* had on the peasantry.

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[44]*Magiri kujichō*, p. 57.

Standardizing the Social Structure

From the late 1720s through the late 1730s, the Hyōjōsho promulgated a number of regulatory guidelines, some of which Sai On wrote personally and all of which he was involved with to some extent. The most important of these guidelines included the *Shina sadame* (1729) and *Ikai sadame* (1732), which dealt with such matters as court ranks and the hierarchy of *shi* and commoners, the *Fukusei* (1725, reissued 1737) and *Go-shinsō teisei* (1737), which dealt in great detail with funeral and mourning practices,[45] and the *Keitoza kimochō* (1730), which dealt with regulations concerning *shi* household matters and the admission of a household to *shi* status.[46] Sai On's first eleven years on the Council of Three was a time of intense efforts by the royal government to standardize vast areas of Ryukyuan life. Here I shall examine in some detail the standardization of the social hierarchy and the regulation of extended lineages and households.

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[45]Sai On seems to have been particularly interested in standardizing funeral and mourning practices. He was the author of *Go-shinsō teisei*, and probably of *Fukusei* as well, for a 1725 entry in the *Kyūyō* reads: "*Kokushi* Sai On was ordered to revise regulations concerning mourning practices" (#784).

A 1729 entry in the *Kyūyō* points out that lavish funerals were still a problem (as they were in Shō Shōken's time) and includes a list of prohibited items and practices (#875).

[46]The title *Keitoza kimochō* is provisional, as the full document (including parts that would have indicated the title) is no longer extant.

Standardization of Rank and Hierarchy

The *Shina sadame* is a brief document that lists eighteen gradations that I shall call "court ranks." There were actually nine ranks, each subdivided into "upper" and "lower" categories. Along with each rank, is the corresponding title in the Shuri hierarchy, and a description of the type of cap or clothing persons in each rank were entitled to wear. Members of the Council of Three, for example, were of the lower first rank and could wear the purple floating-pattern cap. A notch below (upper second) were those with the (typically) honorary rank *sanshikan zashiki,* who wore (ordinary) purple caps. The posts of *ginmiyaku* and magistrate of Naha corresponded to the upper fourth rank and the yellow cap (*ginmiyaku zashiki* were at the lower fourth rank). *Sedo* and *sedo zashiki* were the upper and lower sixth rank respectively. *Chikudun* and *chikudun zashiki* respectively comprised the upper and lower ninth rank.[47] The 1729 *Shina sadame* did not make any major changes in the Ryukyuan court rank hierarchy, but rather confirmed and codified prevailing custom.

A much more interesting and important document is the *Ikai sadame,* which is a detailed listing of who will or may advance to what rank at what age, from the highest royal rank down to various types of specialized commoners. A person's

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[47]OKS, 6, p. 3.

category depended on his father's highest rank and such factors as whether he was a first, second or third son. The document lists dozens of categories, both typical and atypical. Advancement in rank and status depended on a mixture of heredity and merit, in which advancement to a certain point (distinctly lower, however, than the father's rank in all cases but the lowest levels) was assured, but further advancement depended on ability (at least officially). In general, the system seems to have made it difficult for most households to remain at high rank over several generations. Examination of a few specific examples reveals a great deal about the organization of upper class Ryukyuan society in the eighteenth century.

Let us first consider the case of a very high status household, headed by someone who attained a seat on the Council of Three. The specified course for the son who would become household heir (normally the first son) was as follows:

> Household heirs of Council of Three members shall, upon coming of age, become *satonushi*, from twenty-two years of age shall wear the yellow cap, from twenty-seven years of age shall become *atai* [upper fifth rank], and from thirty-two years of age shall be granted the rank of *zashiki* [here meaning lower fourth court rank]. Advancement to *mōshikuchi* [third rank] shall depend on the person's actual accomplishments.[48]

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[48]OKS, 6, p. 8.

Notice that advancement to rather high rank was assured simply because of the father's status, but this level (lower fourth) was nevertheless far below what the father's had been (lower first or upper second). As was typical throughout the system, second sons advanced at a slightly slower pace, and to a level a notch lower, than household heirs:

> Second sons and lower of [Council of Three members] from age twenty-two shall become *satonushi*, from age twenty-seven shall wear the yellow cap, and from age thirty-two shall be granted the rank of *atai*. Advancement to *zashiki* [lower fourth rank] shall depend on the person's actual accomplishments.[49]

It is not difficult to imagine how quickly a household could decline in status over several generations unless its members, particularly those designated household heir, were sufficiently hard working and competent to be promoted beyond the automatically assured level. Sai On's frequent discussions of the rapid rise and fall of household fortunes, the dangers of complacency, and ways to maintain stability in an ever-changing world undoubtedly reflected the context of the eighteenth-century Ryukyuan social hierarchy to some extent. The large number of *shi*, particularly after the second *kafu* registration of 1712, intensified competition for government posts at all levels.

At the lower levels (roughly seventh through ninth ranks), first and even second sons could automatically reach

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[49]Ibid.

their father's position (though it would take longer for second sons). The problem, of course, was that *shi* at these lower levels had only the slimmest chances of finding sufficiently worthwhile official employment so as to be able to support their families. To be assured of advancing to the same upper eighth rank-level as one's unemployed or underemployed father, for example, would have been of little comfort to the son of an ordinary *satonushi shi*. In theory, even an ordinary *chikudun* could rise as high as *mōshikuchi* (upper third rank), but in practice for any *shi* to rise above his father's rank was difficult. The socio-political hierarchy codified in Sai On's time seems to have functioned by design to apply strong downward pressure to high-level *shi*, as well as to make it difficult for lower-level *shi* to rise to more than minor posts.

The situation of lower-level *shi* was even more severe than the official guidelines indicated, for the *Ikai sadame* contains an important qualification to the automatic advancement guidelines: "The age-based scale of advancement for various *shi* is as described above, but for those not employed in an official capacity, advancement shall be delayed."[50] Times were difficult for all *shi*, but particularly for those at the lower levels, for whom low status made finding employment difficult, which in turn delayed their rising in

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[50]Ibid, p. 9.

status, which in turn hindered finding employment. This situation reflected the glut of urban *shi*, which by Sai On's time had become a major social problem (which I shall examine in the Chapter Eight).

In addition to *shi*, the *Ikai sadame* dealt with ranks for certain groups of commoners such as local officials. Most local officials advanced not by age but in accordance with what office they held. At the lowest levels, assistant *utchi* were permitted to wear the blue cap, and other *utchi* wore red caps. They had no court rank, however. *Sabakuri*-level local officials did hold low-level court rank (*shuri ōyako*, for example were *chikudun zashiki*, while *jitōdai* were allowed the yellow cap, and roughly the sixth court rank). Upon retirement, *utchi* were promoted on an age-scale used for specialized artisans and craftsmen. When higher local officials retired, their records would be reviewed, and, if all was found satisfactory, they would be promoted to *sedo* (sixth rank).[51]

The *Ikai sadame* contains a number of other informative provisions. Those who worked in such specialized occupations as ship captains, scribes, artists, cooks, and skilled craftsmen could also be promoted in court rank. *Shi* who did such kinds of work were promoted as per their ordinary age-based scale. It is significant that such kinds of "commoner"

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[51]Ibid, p. 10.

occupations counted as official employment for *shi*. Particularly outstanding or meritorious rural commoners were also eligible for court rank, typically quite low, although in theory they could be promoted as high as *sedo*. It is important to remember that despite court rank, these commoners were not normally granted *kafu* and made *shi*. Those *shi* too ill or otherwise impaired to work were promoted in accord with their status category, but at a much slower pace and to a substantially lower final rank. A *shinzanshi* in such a situation, for example, would not receive the lowest court rank until age fifty. Finally, there was a provision that improper conduct could result in loss of rank.[52]

By Sai On's time, the Ryukyuan socio-political hierarchy had become quite complex. The court ranks were a direct carryover from old Ryukyu and date back to the time of Shō Shin. These ranks had originally been based on merit, not heredity. In the early-modern period, the *shi* (with all of its gradations) versus commoner distinction became formalized based strictly on heredity. In addition, there had evolved a hierarchy of general occupational categories (*sedo, atai,* etc.), which correlated with the specific type of official work its members would normally do, but which could also indicate honorary status. In the early-modern period, the court ranks continued to be available to reward merit, as in

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[52]Ibid, pp. 11-12.

the case of local officials, specialized commoner technicians, or unusually outstanding rural commoners. A certain level of court rank was also tied to the automatic age-based promotion of *shi*. The royal government under Sai On codified and standardized this complex, multi-faceted system. Of particular interest here is the tension between the principle of heredity and the principle of merit as the basis for rank and advancement. The number of unemployed *shi* became so great that Sai On found it necessary to send many of them out to rural areas to work as farmers. While still retaining their *shi* status, they lived in special villages apart from other commoner peasants (who were often better off economically than the *shi* farmers).

Dana claims that the court rank system functioned to help obscure contradictions inherent in the *shi*-commoner division, and thus make "control" (presumably by the royal government over the rest of the population) smoother.[53] Although Dana rather simplistically attributes the strength of the hereditary status system to the government's utilization of Confucian thought (much as it has been common to attribute the official status of the *samurai* class in Tokugawa Japan to the bakufu's alleged adoption of Chu Hsi's thought), this assertion is problematic. As we shall see in surveying

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[53]"Mibunsei," p. 61. Dana points out that many commoners attained both greater wealth and higher court rank than many *shi*.

developments late in Sai On's life and in the generation after his, as Confucian thought became more deeply entrenched in Shuri, so too did the idea that merit should weigh more heavily in official promotion than heredity.

Certainly most Confucians, Sai On included, were interested in standardizing some sort of social hierarchy, for they generally regarded hierarchy as a basic principle of nature. The interest in formal hierarchies, however, did not necessarily mean that Confucians thought heredity should be the basis for one's place in the hierarchy. In China since the Sung dynasty, for example, merit was the dominant principle *in theory* for socio-political advancement.[54] Shō Shōken's strong push to formally establish a hereditary *shi* class seems to have been a part of his overall campaign to promote Japanese social and cultural forms, and I would argue that Tokugawa Japan's rigid social hierarchy had little to do with Confucian thought, at least insofar as it was based on the principle of heredity.[55] Sai On seems to have been less

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[54]In practice, however, heredity and family connections were a major factor, and recent scholarship has begun to revise the hitherto dominant notion that the Chinese examination system, on the balance, promoted significant social mobility. A particularly thoughtful revisionist article that summarizes and analyzes past scholarly trends regarding this matter is Benjamin A. Elman, "Political, Social, and Cultural Reproduction via Civil Service Examinations in Late Imperial China," JAS, 50.1 (February, 1991): 7-28.

[55]In Tokugawa Japan, heredity as a basis for socio-political status was always stronger than merit, but the relative strengths of the two different criteria varied over time. For details, see Thomas C. Smith, (continued...)

interested in directly addressing the issue of heredity versus merit than he was in clarifying and standardizing Ryukyu's complex socio-political hierarchy. However, because the system contained two contrasting aspects, one merit-based and the other heredity-based, such standardization necessarily involved dealing with the issue to some extent.

Household Matters

An important social change in early-modern Ryukyu was the government's formal recognition and registration of extended lineages for *shi* in 1689, as well as its attempt to regulate and standardize these lineages. Called *uji* or *munchū* (= J. *monchū*), extended, patrilineal lineage groups had been a part of upper class Ryukyuan society for at least a century prior to their formal establishment, and the practice of keeping lineage registers in Ryukyu probably had its origins in the fourteenth century with the start of formal intercourse with Ming China.[56]

The *Munchū*

Prior to 1689, members of those lineage groups who had dealings with China selected and used a Chinese-style name in addition to their Ryukyuan name. After this time, the

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[55](...continued)
"'Merit' as Ideology in the Tokugawa Period," R.P. Dore, ed., *Aspects of Social Change in Modern Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), pp. 71-90.

[56]ODJ, 1, pp. 286-7.

government assigned a Chinese-style name to all *shi* lineages. The Chinese-style name usually appeared in all formal written records, with typical usage being, for example, *Mō-uji munchū* to indicate a lineage group corresponding to the Chinese name Mao. In dealings with China, Ryukyuan *shi* used their Chinese-style name as if it were a Chinese name (Sai On, for example, would have been Tsai Wen when in China). The *shi* also had native Ryukyuan names, usually based on a place name. Shō Shōken, for example, was Haneji Chōshu, Sai On was Gushichan Bunjaku, and Tei Junsoku was Nago Chōbun. Shō Shōken was "prince" of Haneji District (Haneji *ōji*) and Sai On and Tei Junsoku were *jitō* of Gushichan and Nago respectively.

Patrilineal descent from a common ancestor was the basic defining characteristic of the Ryukyuan *munchū*. Its members shared the same ancestor, the same lineage register (*kafu*), the same Chinese-style surname, and a common grave site for *munchū* patriarchs.[57] The eldest male had the exclusive authority to conduct worship before the ancestral tablets, and male descent was the firmly-established principle for generational succession. As the early-modern period continued, the practice of Chinese ancestral rites spread among the *shi* class and the number and complexity of ancestral rites also increased.[58] *Munchū*, large and geographically wide-

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[57]Regarding grave sites, see Ogawa, p. 117.

[58]Ibid, pp. 119, 267.

spread, usually included several distinct households, called *yaa*. When there was no male heir for the main household or any of its branches, it was permissible to adopt one from another household in the same *munchū*.[59]

The main function of the *munchū* was to provide for the proper worship of common ancestors, but there were examples of *munchū* co-functioning as mutual friendship and support organizations, or as joint economic ventures. Compared with Japanese *dōzoku*, the Okinawan *munchū* were less likely to be confined to a particular geographical area, and *munchū* held together by economic ties were rare, at least among *shi* (though commoner *munchū* were more likely to have been located in a specific area and engaged in cooperative economic ventures). For *shi*, economic cooperation typically characterized the household, or *yaa*. *Munchū* were held together mainly by a strong consciousness of descent from a common, usually heroic, ancestor.[60]

On Managing and Strengthening the Household

Sai On had great concern about lineage (*munchū*) and household (*yaa*) matters, particularly the latter, and wrote four essays to instruct Ryukyuans on how to properly manage households. Three of them were written primarily to and for the *shi* class and rank-holding commoners, and they are the

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[59]For a basic description of *munchū*, see ODJ, 3, p. 775.

[60]Ibid. See also Ogawa, pp. 110-111.

only extant essays Sai On wrote in semi-colloquial Japanese (albeit with Japanese words sometimes "spelled" in Okinawan pronunciations). His choice of language indicated these works were intended for the widest possible audience, probably including women in *shi* households who typically would not have been trained to read *sōrōbun*, the language of official Ryukyuan written communications.

Essential Views for Household Living (*Kyoka hitsuran*) is a brief essay in which Sai On likened the household to the human body. The work covers filial piety, reciprocal relationships, husband and wife relationships (the wife's virtue being a barometer for overall household conditions), the treatment of servants, dealings with related households, and a final section stressing the broader duty of *shi* and ministers where Sai On likened the country to a ship (as he also did in *Articles of Instruction*). Of particular interest is a rather lengthy discussion of child development and education, parts of which appear to have been taken from the late Sui Chinese classic on household management, *Yen-shih chia-hsün*. The discussion included a theme Sai On seems never to have tired of—minimizing the role of predetermined fate: "In general, although good and evil is said to be that which

derives from the physical endowment (*kishitsu*), it definitely has its basis in socialization (*shūzoku*)."[61]

Sai On described the advanced stages of the education of a male[62] child as follows:

> When a child grows up and it is time to give a strong impetus to his academic ability, a worthy teacher should be sought. They must discuss and plumb the depths of the fluctuation between periods of stability and upheaval in the past and present with respect to teachings about governance, as well as the principles of [alternating] prosperity and decline, the trends of the times (*jisei*), and the goodness of the standard (*kei, kyō*) and situational weighing (*ken*). They should be made to realize the origin of morality in [all] affairs and enterprises.[63]

This passage (and others like it) clearly shows that Sai On's essays on household affairs were aimed primarily at *shi* and rank-holding commoners. It is also instructive in that it shows what Sai On considered the essence of advanced education to be, namely, the study of fluctuation, change, and situational weighing.[64] We have already seen Sai On's inter-

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[61]KHR, #7. A passage toward the end of the discussion reads: "If, for the most part, a child's education is as described above, the physical endowment will become most splendid . . . ."

[62]For girls: "Girls should start learning the domestic arts and should also be taught the virtue of humble obedience. All children should be taught to respect their elders, . . . " (Ibid).

[63]Ibid.

[64]And it should not be surprising that Sai On stressed the study of such matters in an essay intended to promote long-term household stability, for we have seen that he regarded a thorough understanding and acceptance of the fact of constant change as essential for achieving stability.

est in such subjects as change, vicissitude, alternating cycles of prosperity and decline. In the following chapter we shall see his views on the related issues of the trend of the times and situational weighing.

Expeditious Household Regulation is a longer essay, and less coherently organized than *Essential Views for Household Living*. Its first half consists mainly of random lists of quite obvious points, two adjacent sections often being identical except for one being phrased positively and the other negatively.[65] In contrast to the banality of the first half of the essay, however, the second half (titled, "Wealth") is a detailed description of sources of income, necessary and optional expenses, budgeting, types and techniques of saving, and of course, exhortations to work hard, be frugal, never be complacent and never give up ("Even though such poverty may be said to be extreme . . . how could anyone just give up and die?").[66] Space does not permit

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[65]For example, section seven, "Three Rules for Proper Household Life," reads: "It is proper that wives of the household's sons be on good terms without jealousy. It is proper that children be respectful and not be self-indulgent. It is proper that servants be circumspect and not be lazy" (JSK, #7). Section eight is titled, "Three items contrary to proper household life," and reads: "It is improper for the wives of the household's sons to be jealous and not be on good terms. It is improper for children . . ." (Ibid, #8).

[66]JSK, #20 (g). The section titles are: How to Divide and Use Wealth; Constant Expenses; Techniques for Operating an Enterprise; The Rules of Spending and Saving for Wealthy Households; The Rules of Spending and Saving for Poor Households. This last section is divided into seven subsections and comprises about half of the total discussion

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analysis of the particular points of Sai On's discussion of household wealth, but just its existence is significant. In discussing Kaibara Ekken's writings on household affairs, Tucker points out, "[Ekken] also suggested new grounds for joining morality and economics, the latter being a subject not often addressed directly by Neo-Confucians . . . ."[67] In Sai On, we find another Confucian—one solidly within the Ch'eng-Chu tradition—who wrote extensively about economic matters (as we shall see in Chapter Eight).

It is less surprising that Sai On's views often so closely resembled those of Kaibara Ekken in certain respects upon examining his third and longest essay on household affairs, *Precepts for the Household,* over half of which is taken directly (often in blocks of verbatim quotes) from

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[66](...continued)
on wealth. By contrast, the discussion of spending and saving for wealthy households consists of but a single sentence.

[67]p. 111. Certainly the general impression from the secondary literature on Neo-Confucianism is that such Confucians rarely discussed issues of economics or wealth. Perhaps, however, this impression is in need of revision. In Tokugawa Japan for example, not only Kaibara Ekken, but Kumazawa Banzan, Yamaga Sokō, Ogyū Sorai, Dazai Shundai, Arai Hakuseki, Nishikawa Joken, Miura Baien, Kusama Naokata, and Yamagata Bantō—to name but a small number of major thinkers—wrote extensively on economic issues. Yamaga Sokō, Ogyū Sorai, (and to a lesser extent Dazai Shundai), of course, explicitly rejected the Ch'eng-Chu variety of Confucianism, but all of the scholars named above were associated in some major way with the Confucian tradition broadly defined.

I am less familiar with the writings of Chinese Confucians on economic topics, but certainly Lü K'un wrote at some length on such topics, often sounding exactly like Sai On. For example, Handlin points out that, "Lü stressed that the fortunes of rich and poor alike were cyclical, and he dispassionately analyzed in a chart the principles by which families rise and fall" (p. 136).

Ekken's identically titled *Kadōkun*. This essay too (both Sai On's and Ekken's) contains lengthy discussions on wealth, with the entire second half of Sai On's version devoted to the topic. Sai On's discussion (often taken directly from Ekken) on wealth in *Precepts for the Household* was, of course, more general than the Ryukyu-specific discussion in *Expeditious Household Regulation*. Although it is difficult to sort out any views unique to Sai On in *Precepts for the Household*, that his views and Ekken's matched so closely on many points is in itself important.

Finally, Sai On wrote *Ordinary Household Matters* for the people of Gushichan District. As this text was an official communication to the district residents in his capacity of *jitō*, Sai On wrote it in more formal *sōrōbun*. The major theme is planning ahead for unexpected changes, and Sai On reiterated the theme in a variety of specific examples. Of course, as with the *Articles of Instruction*, the majority of Gushichan's residents could not possibly have read the text or understood it were it read aloud to them. Its primary intended audience was likely the village-level local officials, probably with the hope that they would convey its messages to the peasants.

Lineage and Household Standardization

Sai On's essays on household affairs, while probably widely read, did not have the force of law or of official

administrative guidelines. The *Keitoza kimochō* of 1730, however, revels the royal government's official guidelines for regulating households and lineages. Perhaps the most important issue was that of succession to the position of household head when no male heir (or no competent male heir) was available. The *Kimochō* contains a rather lengthy provision for such a case:

> When in *fudai* and *shinzan* households there is no heir and one is to be adopted from outside, a petition should be put forth calling upon someone from the same lineage to become heir. When a petition is put forth asking for an heir from among relatives of the same social standing, after investigation [into his suitability], he shall advance [to the status of heir]. If by chance there is no possible heir from among relatives of the same standing, because it would be improper for the lineage to die out, an adopted heir may be selected from a *shinzan* household, and upon carefully scrutinizing his background, he shall advance [to the status of household heir]. Requesting that a commoner become household heir is definitely not acceptable.[68]

If, despite all attempts to find an heir, a household remained without a successor for twenty years, the government would no longer recognize it.[69]

It was apparently the case that *shi* in difficult circumstances sometimes took on commoner status (perhaps by being adopted into a commoner household—recall it was not uncommon for rank-holding commoners to be more wealthy than many *shi*).

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[68]OKS, 6, p. 53.

[69]Ibid.

Once having taken commoner status, says the *kimochō*, such persons would be forever ineligible to head a *shi* household "because it would ultimately corrupt [the commoner-*shi* distinction]."[70] Interestingly, however, daughters of *shi* were permitted to become wet nurses or servants in commoner households, and "as it is a matter relating to [their household's] prosperity or decline, it will not affect their being entered into the household register."[71] Such a provision is another indication of the extreme financial difficulty of some *shi* households.

The following article is most instructive, for on the one hand it shows how low in status even descendants of *aji* and *ueekata* could eventually go, and on the other hand it shows that even the lowliest of *shi* could (and probably did) occasionally advance to high posts:

> If descendants of *aji* or *ueekata* who have declined to being *chikudun* advance as far as the Mōshikuchiza or [work as] *ginmiyaku*, because he shall have revived the fortunes of his lineage, his branch shall revert to their original status as *satonushi*.[72]

Similarly, it was also possible for anyone to move from

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[70]Ibid, p. 54. See also p. 55: "Though someone was formerly a *fudai* or *shinzan shi*, if he has descended to commoner status, being excluded from lineage succession and formally taking a [Chinese-style] surname, though his descendants may petition to return to the former status, such a thing is definitely not to be permitted."

[71]Ibid.

[72]Ibid.

shinzan to *fudai* status based on merit: "Those *shinzan shi* who are promoted to the Mōshikuchiza or who work as *ginmiyaku* may, upon nomination, be made *fudai*."[73] Even commoners with particularly outstanding accomplishments were eligible for *shi* status: "Those without genealogical records [i.e., commoners] . . . with outstanding achievements, because they have distinguished themselves, shall after investigation be nominated to receive a *kafu* [i.e. to become a *shi*].[74] As we have seen, however, there was no coming back for a *shi* who had become a commoner. In the *Keitoza kimochō*, as in other official regulations, we see both heredity and merit coexisting as the basis for socio-political status.

Prostitution and the *shi* class was a major concern for Shō Shōken, as we have seen, and it was also a concern for Sai On and his contemporaries in the royal government. Shō Shōken seems to have been mainly worried about prostitution corrupting officials' sense of duty and professional competence, particularly insofar as officials spent a great deal of money on prostitutes. In Sai On's time, however, the concern seems to have shifted to the confusion of household records that prostitutes and their offspring could cause. Even the *Kyūyō* records official concern over the matter in the following 1725 entry:

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[73]Ibid, pp. 54-5.

[74]Ibid, p. 55.

> Prostitutes wreak havoc on great ethics, [lying with] countless people in a single night . . . . A thousand seeds in one womb make it difficult to discern [the father of any resulting children], and among customers who have taken such children as their own, many have been mistaken. Therefore, this [practice] has been forbidden. In recent years, the number of violators of this law has grown large, and those who have disrupted the legitimate line of succession by having been entered into registers are to be expunged and made commoners . . . "[75]

The *Kimochō* of five years later contains a number of articles regarding illegitimate offspring. The most general clause forbade entry into the register of children born to any women other than the wife or official mistresses "because such a thing would ultimately confuse ethics and corrupt their basis."[76] An additional clause dealt explicitly with the case of prostitutes: "Because entering children born of prostitutes into the [household register's official] line of succession wreaks havoc on the basis of ethics, it is never to be done."[77]

Itokazu points out that the household and lineage assumed much more prominent and official roles in early-modern Ryukyu than in old Ryukyu. Old Ryukyu *jireisho,* for example, contained the delimiting clause "*hitori*," indicating the appointment applied to a single individual alone.

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[75]KY, #785.

[76]OKS, 6, p. 54.

[77]Ibid.

Significantly, however, in early-modern *jireisho* the "*hitori*" clause changed to "x-*uji*." Appointments to official posts were not only for the individual, but for his family and extended family as well.[78] The household had become the basic social unit in early-modern Ryukyu, unlike the case in previous periods. Furthermore, Sai On and the royal government tried to regulate and standardize *shi* households and lineages, as well as to promote their prosperity. Let us now consider possible reasons why there was so much official interest in households and lineages.

Household Regulation and Broader Issues

It is useful to consider the place of the institution of the household in Sai On's overall thought. Like many Confucians in the Ch'eng-Chu tradition, Sai On regarded the *Great Learning* as the summation of the sages' teachings. For example:

> The way of dealing with the world and coming into contact with things and affairs is found in the concepts of righteousness (*i*) and service (*ching*). . . . The countless words of the classics and commentaries all boil down to nothing by these [two concepts]. . . . Service is personal life, the household, the state, and the world. Righteousness is cultivating, regulating, ordering, and spreading peace. . . .[79]

Here, Sai On has taken the last four of the eight steps in

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[78]"Sai On no shisō," pp. 204-5.

[79]SHG, #43.

the *Great Learning* as a summation of the goals of Confucian learning and practice: 1) cultivation of the personal life; 2) regulation of the household; 3) ordering the state; and 4) bringing peace to the world.[80]

We have already discussed in detail his views on how one achieves the first goal of a cultivated personal life, and in his philosophical essays, Sai On provided descriptions and discussions of this matter for educated Ryukyuans. The *Articles of Instruction* (which was law, an essay in basic Confucian morality, and a *sōrōbun* textbook all in one) and later law codes provided concrete guidelines regarding personal behavior for the general population. The four essays on household affairs, and the official guidelines on household and *shi* matters served a similar purpose for the second goal of a regulated household. Regulated households, in turn, was a prerequisite for ordering the state. The *kujichō* were part of ordering the state, as were Sai On's economic writings and policies that I examine in Chapter Eight. In short, Sai On's strong interest in household regulation made perfect sense in the context of his Confucian thought.

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[80]Recall the relevant passage from the *Great Learning*, given here in Chan's translation: ". . . When things are investigated, knowledge is extended; when knowledge is extended, the will becomes sincere; when the will is sincere, the mind is rectified; when the mind is rectified, the personal life is cultivated; when the personal life is cultivated, the family will be regulated; when the family is regulated, the state will be in order; when the state is in order, there will be peace throughout the world" (pp. 86-7).

There is at least one other possible reason for the strong interest in household and lineage matters. We have seen that poverty and lack of sufficient official employment was a major problem for many *shi* households and for the *shi* class as a whole. Sai On regarded serving as moral exemplars for society to be the primary duty of the *shi* class (not necessarily government service).[81] If impoverished, *shi* moral would naturally go down, and it is unlikely that many would have been much concerned with rectifying morality and customs. Even worse may have actually happened. The *Kyūyō* description of the famine of 1709 includes the following passage: ". . . In the spring of the next year, four bands of robbers arose and the *shi* lost their dignity. They secretly broke into homes and stole anything of use, and stole food and clothing they saw in the streets."[82] *Shi* poverty was not merely an economic problem, but a major social, political, and ideological problem as well. It is not surprising there-

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[81]According to the *Articles of Instruction*, for example: "There are very few administrative positions available in this country, and the number of *shi* increases every year, so there are many who cannot serve in an official capacity. *Shi*, however, are conspicuously different from commoners in certain respects. If, with this point in mind and while constantly thinking of loyalty above all else, *shi* would faithfully strive to be concerned with the country's customs in every way, it is in fact national service, which is not to be taken lightly. As we all know, if customs degenerate, they well naturally corrupt all of our descendants. . . ." (GKJ, #3.)

[82]KY, #654.

fore, that Sai On wrote extensively on how households could improve their economic situation.

The Rise of Kumemura as a Political Force

Closely related to the above-mentioned efforts at standardization was the rise of Kumemura as a locus of political power within the kingdom. For roughly the first decade after the Satsuma invasion, Shuri was clearly the sole locus of political power, and Kumemura may have been politically discredited owing to Tei Dō's having been made the scapegoat for Satsuma's invasion (although privately he may well have been admired for his courage in refusing Satsuma's demands). In any case, Kumemura went through a period of economic and scholarly renewal during the seventeenth century, and was firmly entrenched as the center for Chinese studies and diplomacy with China. Throughout the eighteenth century, the political influence of Kumemura also expanded significantly.

Scholarly Authority

The potential political power of leading Kumemura scholars expanded in an important way during the reign of Shō Tei. From this time, scholars from Kumemura began to tutor the king, crown prince, and other members of the royal family. Sai On, as we have seen, was made *kokushi*, and

Kumemura scholars continued to hold the position until the end of the kingdom. Furthermore, Sai On forged a particularly close relationship with Shō Kei, which as we have seen was undoubtedly a boon to his political career.

The eighteenth century was an interesting transition period in the spread of Confucianism in Ryukyu. During the seventeenth century, Confucian learning first took firm hold in Ryukyu, but only in Kumemura. But by Shō Tei's time, it had also found its way into the royal chambers, and thus into Shuri. Sai On was tremendously important in that he had the king's ear, he advocated Confucianism as a basis for the conduct of government, and he was a competent and vigorous promoter of Confucian values. Sai On more than any other individual was responsible for instilling Confucianism in Shuri as an ideology of government, and providing it with the legal, institutional and textual (i.e. his own writings and legacy) basis to continue to flourish. On the other hand, Confucianism—and particularly in its Ch'eng-Chu variety—was quite new to the Shuri elite, even in Sai On's day. This meant that Kumemura continued to supply all the major tutors and instructors in Confucian learning. In short, as Confucianism became an ideology of politics, its custodians in Kumemura came to wield increasing political power.

In *Okinawa, yogawari no shisō: hito to gakumon no keifu*, Maeda mentions a point which, if true, is of tremendous

importance. Prior to Sai On's time, the only residents of Kumemura permitted to vote in elections for members of the Council of Three were the magistrate and assistant magistrate. Sai On extended the Kumemura electorate to include anyone from the rank of *tsūji* on up, a rank virtually every able-bodied male reached by age forty, if not sooner. Needless to say, this change greatly expanded the voice of Kumemura in royal government affairs. One result was that anyone aspiring to high office found it to their political advantage to be on good terms with Kumemura scholars, as well as to support Confucian scholarship.[83]

In short, by the middle of the eighteenth century, the scholarly authority of Kumemura had in part been transformed into political authority. The efforts by Sai On and his peers to standardize various aspects of Ryukyuan life had the effect of formally instilling Confucian values as the basis for laws and administrative guidelines. With Confucian values (or at the least, official espousal of Confucian values) undergirding politics, the specialists in Confucian learning gained political power. It is also significant that until the early nineteenth century, Kumemura retained its monopoly on scholarly intercourse with China, and when the strong-willed king Shō On broke this monopoly, Kumemura residents rioted in protest for days.

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[83]Maeda, *Yogawari no shisō*, p. 94.

Creating Ryukyu's Official Past

Another major dimension of Kumemura's scholarly-political authority was the ability of its scholars to define and create Ryukyu's past. Two Kumemura scholars, Sai On and his contemporary Tei Heitetsu (1695-1760), directed the several historical projects of the eighteenth century, one of which included Sai On's revision of Shō Shōken's *Chūzan seikan*. Writing in the introduction to the *Chūzan seifu*, Sai On pointed out that Shō Shōken had written the *Chūzan seikan* based on incomplete sources. Fortunately, Sai On said, he had received numerous sources unknown to Shō Shōken from Chinese investiture envoys, and was thus ordered to make revisions.[84] In so doing, Sai On's voice effectively replaced Shō Shōken's.

Recall that Sai On criticized Shō Shōken for praising kings who abdicated in the face of "heavenly" warnings. I discussed this matter mainly from the standpoint of Sai On's view of human power, *t'ien*, *ming*, and so forth. The other element of Sai On's critique, however, was that kings such as Gihon violated the principle of hereditary succession and had betrayed the "great enterprise" of his ancestors. It may also be significant that Sai On's *seifu*, or "genealogy,"

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[84]RSS, 4, p. 4. Sai On's father wrote a work called *Chūzan seifu*, but this *seifu* (called the "*Sai Taku hon*") was mainly a translation of Shō Shōken's work into classical Chinese. The "*Sai On bon*," Sai On's 1725 version of the *Chūzan seifu*, was actually a substantial revision, which included passages quite critical of Shō Shōken's views as we have seen.

superseded Shō Shōken's *seikan,* or "true mirror." More so than Shō Shōken, Sai On stressed the importance, authority, and pivotal role of the king. "Though the ruler is only one person, his power exceeds that of the masses. . . . The rise and fall of the country depends on the single person of the ruler,"[85] wrote Sai On in *Essentials of Governance,* and such passages were common in his writings. One of Sai On's projects while in office was to elevate the symbolic power of the throne. For example in 1727 and 1728, royal ancestral tablets were set up in major Buddhist temples. In Enkakuji, they displaced a large Buddhist image, which was then moved to a smaller side hall.[86] Under Sai On, the *ancestors* of the "sage above" replaced the Buddha in the county's most important temple. With these circumstances in mind, it is even more apparent why Sai On was so concerned with household and lineage regulation, proper hereditary succession, and related matters. As author of the *Chūzan seifu,* it was Sai On who spoke authoritatively of the most important "genealogy" in the land.

Tei Heitetsu studied in China as a *kanshō,* as well as in Fukien where he studied books on rites. In 1730, he lectured to King Shō Kei on the *Chin-ssu lu chi-lüeh,* a well-known abridgement of the *Chin-ssu lu.* He spent most of the rest of

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[85]TYD, #23.

[86]KY, #813, 826.

his career in Shuri overseeing various historical projects. He was one of the main compilers of the *Kyūyō*, and wrote supplementary chapters to Sai On's *Chūzan seifu* to bring it up to date. He also compiled the *Ryūkyū kyūki*, a revision and classical Chinese translation of the older *Ryūkyukoku yuraiki*.[87] In short, by the middle of the eighteenth century, Kumemura scholars had written the *Kyūyō*, and had revised the other two official histories. In Chapter Nine I examine certain aspects of the past these Kumemura historians created for Ryukyu.

To what extent and in what forms this rise of Kumemura as a political power generated conflict is not clear, although it is hard to imagine that prominent Shuri households would have been eager to share political authority. It is also possible that Kumemura residents themselves were not always in agreement. We have seen, for example, Sai On's criticism of the sort of scholarship Tei Junsoku excelled at (although such criticism may also have been aimed at Shuri literati), and the policies of Shō On that caused such consternation in Kumemura were apparently conceived by the king's tutor, a relative of Sai On from Kumemura. Whether and when Kumemura spoke with a united voice is difficult to say, but it is at

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[87]ODJ, 2, p. 843. Tei Heitetsu also went to China three times as tribute envoy, and to Edo in 1751. He served as magistrate of Kumemura and held the rank of Murasaki Kintaifu and Sanshikan Zashiki.

least certain that officials in eighteenth-century Shuri took notice the voices of its prominent residents.

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Compared with Shō Shōken's time, the central government under Sai On gained substantial control over local administration by standardizing procedures via *kujichō*, and by gathering information and putting its policies into place at the village level via the Genbun survey. Furthermore, the government moved to standardize various aspects of Ryukyuan society such as funeral and mourning practices, the socio-political status hierarchy, and household and lineage procedures. At the same time the central government was asserting greater control over Ryukyu, prominent residents of Kumemura were becoming more politically powerful within the central government. This development was closely connected with the spread of Confucianism to Shuri via the royal household, and to Sai On's vigorous and apparently successful attempts to make Confucianism the royal government's guiding ideology.

CHAPTER SEVEN: SITUATIONAL WEIGHING AND THE SAGE ŚĀKYAMUNI

The concept of situational weighing (C. *Ch'üan* J. *ken*) was the central element of Sai On's Confucian thought and statecraft. By Sai On's time, the theory behind the concept had become highly refined in the hands of thinkers like Chu Hsi in China and Nakae Tōju in Japan, and Sai On generally relied on their formulations without making further theoretical refinements. His distinctive contribution was to make situational weighing the center of his Confucian thought and statecraft, and then to translate theory into practice in the realm of Ryukyuan politics.[1]

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[1]To my knowledge, at least in China and Japan, there were no cases of individuals who held sustained, significant political power and who also sought to use situational weighing to carry out the Confucian way. Ch'en Liang (1143-94), for example, viewed situational weighing favorably as a tool for governing, but died while on his way to take up the only official post to which he was ever appointed. Nakae Tōju, wrote at length about situational weighing, and perhaps found the concept useful in his own personal cultivation, but lived as a semi-recluse and had no connection with the world of politics (at least not until certain Bakumatsu-period activists made a saint out of him). The few major Confucian scholars in Japan who did have long careers in important government posts—and perhaps the Tosa *han* reformer Nonaka Kenzan (1615-63) is the only example—did not seem to have been interested in the concept of situational weighing.

Most Confucians who discussed the theory of situational weighing at any length—such as Ch'eng I, Hu Hung (1100-1155), Chu Hsi, Ch'en Ch'un, Nakae Tōju, and Yamazaki Ansai (1618-82)—illustrated their points mainly with examples from ancient Chinese history, many involving legendary sage kings. While some of these Confucians did include a few examples from their own times or from dilemmas in daily life to illustrate points about situational weighing,[2] few other than Sai On had the opportunity to explain major political policies they had enacted while in office in terms of the principles of situational weighing. By Sai On's time, a number of divergent views of situational weighing had developed within the Confucian tradition, and because of the relative dearth of studies on situational weighing[3] and

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[2]For example, in answer to students' questions, Chu Hsi discussed the conflict between filial piety and proper funeral and mourning practices in cases where parents wanted their sons to provide Buddhist funeral services for them (see Wei Cheng-t'ung, "Chu Hsi on the Standard and the Expedient," Roseanne E. Freese, trans., in Wing-tsit Chan, ed. *Chu Hsi and Neo-Confucianism* [Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1986], pp. 266-67). Furthermore, Nakae Tōju invoked the example of the famous Japanese marksman Inatomi Ichimu to illustrate a point about situational weighing (NST, #29, p. 136).

[3]There is only one specific study of situational weighing in English to my knowledge (Wei). The concept comes up in Tillman occasionally, and his treatment of it is quite good (see, for example, pp. 28-9 within the context of the entire chapter "Configurations in Sung Thought" [pp. 23-67]). Donald Munro provides a brief but insightful discussion in *Images of Human Nature*, pp. 177-181. There is a Chinese version of Wei's article ("Chu Hsi lun 'ching,' 'ch'üan'," *Shih-hsüeh p'ing-lun*, no. 5 [January, 1983]: 99-114), as well as a useful but brief article by Ch'en Yung-chieh (Wing-tsit Chan), "Ch'üan," Wei Cheng-t'ung, ed., *Chung-kuo che-hsüeh tz'u-tien ta-ch'üan* (Taipei: Shui-niu ch'u-pan-she, 1989), pp. 849-851.

because of its importance for understanding Sai On, I shall begin by discussing major features of the history and development of situational weighing in China and Japan. Instead of an exhaustive discussion, I shall concentrate on points that are important for situating Sai On's views with respect to certain key issues.

History of Situational Weighing in China and Japan

In China

Earliest Examples

The Original meaning of the term *ch'uan* was "steelyard," "scale" or "to weigh."[4] In a meaning closer to "situational weighing," it appears only twice in the *Analects* (18:8 and 9:29), and only the passage in Chapter Nine involves a significant explanation of the term. It reads as follows:

> The Master said, 'A person capable of being a partner in the pursuit of learning may not be capable of being a partner in the pursuit of the way. A person capable of being a partner in the pursuit of the way may not be capable of being a partner in standing firm. A person capable of being a partner in standing firm may not be capable of being a partner in the exercise of *ch'üan*.[5]

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[4]Morohashi Tetsuji, *Daikanwa jiten* (Taishūkan, 1959), vol. 6, p. 605.

[5]I have modified Lau's translation. In some versions of the *Analects* the passage is 9:31. According to a passage provided by Watanabe Seiichi, an alternative version of the *Analects* continues as follows:

(continued...)

Here we see that *ch'üan,* whatever its precise meaning may have been for Confucius, was the most difficult of the several activities listed and required the highest degree of moral authority.

The term also appears twice in *Mencius,* once in 7A:26 in which Mencius criticizes Tzu-mo for adhering to the mean between two extremes without weighing the situation to see where he really should stand.[6] Here, the term more clearly meant "situational weighing," as it also did in the other passage, the first part of which reads:

> Ch'un-yü K'un said, 'Is it prescribed by the rites that, in giving and receiving, man and woman should not touch each other?'
> 'It is,' said Mencius.
> 'When one's sister-in-law is drowning, does one stretch out a hand to help her?'
> 'Not to help a sister-in-law who is drowning is to be a brute. It is prescribed by the rites that, in giving and receiving, man and woman should not touch each other, but in stretching out a hand to help a drowning

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[5](...continued)
". . . *Ch'üan* is what a sage alone can see. Therefore, that which at first seems to be contrary but later is in accord is called knowing *ch'üan.* What is at first in accord but later misses the mark is called not knowing *ch'üan*" (Watanabe, *Sosho,* p. 104). This statement seems to reflect the interpretation of *ch'üan* that prevailed during the latter Han.

[6]Here, Lau translates *ch'üan* as "proper measure": ". . . Tzu-mo holds on to the middle, half way between the two extremes. Holding to the middle is closer [than the extremes of Yang Chu and Mo Tzu] to being right, but to do this without proper measure is no different from holding to one extreme. . . ."

sister-in-law one uses situational weighing.'
[. . .][7]

Various interpretations of this passage from *Mencius* became particularly important to later generations of Chinese thinkers who debated the meaning and implications of the term *ch'üan.*

The Han Conception

In addition to the *Analects* and *Mencius,* the term *ch'üan* appeared in a number of other Chinese classics.[8] Although it was never a major philosophical category in these texts, situational weighing certainly seems to have been widely known in Chinese intellectual circles by the Han period if

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[7]4,A:17. Here I have substituted "situational weighing" for Lau's "one's moral discretion." The passage continues, taking what is perhaps a somewhat unexpected turn:

"[Ch'un-yü K'un:]'Now the Empire is drowning. Why do you not help it?'

'When the Empire is drowning, one helps it with the Way; when a sister-in-law is drowning, one helps her with one's hand. Would you have me help the Empire with my hand?'"

As Tillman correctly points out, "This skillful rejoinder enabled Mencius to avoid a rigorous consideration of the debater's point that ethics were situational" (p. 28). Indeed, as we shall see in this discussion of situational weighing, later Confucians also had difficulty dealing with evidence that ethics are situational.

[8]For example, in the *Han-shi wai-chuan* there appears the following comment on Mencius' words: "There are two ways. That which is ordinary is called the standard, and that which is altered is called *ch'üan.* For one to be able to take up *ch'üan* while holding to the standard, he must be a worthy." Notice that this passage is ambiguous regarding whether or not the standard and situational weighing are two different things. This question became a major issue in the debate over situational weighing in Sung times. According to the *Hui-nan-tzu,* "The upper words are the standard; the lower words are *ch'üan.* These are techniques related to life and death. Only a sage can know and practice *ch'üan.*" (Passages are quoted in Watanabe, *Sosho,* p. 104.)

not earlier. One of the most important early definitions was the following brief passage from the *Kung-yung chuan,* one of the three classical commentaries on the *Spring and Autumn Chronicles*: "*Ch'üan* is that which is opposed to the standard but is later good. The practice of situational weighing is always a gravely serious matter."[9] This passage presaged the definition of situational weighing that became generally accepted by the latter Han.

Chao Ch'i (106?-201) was apparently the first to write a full commentary on the *Mencius,* and by so doing was instrumental in establishing that work as a classic. He explained situational weighing as "that which is contrary to the standard but nevertheless good (*shan*)."[10] As Ch'en points out, the passage could be taken two ways. An emphasis on the first part suggests situational weighing is opposed to or the opposite of the standard, while an emphasis on the result being "good" suggests that the two are either ultimately one or at least lead to the same place. Ch'en further points out that since the Han, most scholars in fact seem to have interpreted situational weighing as being in opposition to the standard, an interpretation Ch'eng I strongly opposed.[11]

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[9]Duke Huan, 11th year. Quoted in Watanabe, *Sosho*, p. 104.

[10]Quoted in Ch'en, "Ch'üan," p. 849. See also Minamoto, p. 359.

[11]See, "Ch'üan," p. 849.

The Sung Debate

More so than in previous eras, Sung scholars frequently debated the meaning and significance of *ch'üan*, and depending on the particular thinker and the context in which he used the term, in many cases it can be translated "expedient" as well as "situational weighing." Debates over *ch'üan* were closely bound up with many of the new philosophical issues that characterized Sung scholarship. They were also closely related to various political factions, particularly the supporters of the radical reformer Wang An-shih (1021-1086), the Su family and their supporters, and the so-called "*tao-hsüeh*" (or "Neo-Confucian") scholars such as the Ch'eng brothers and later Chu Hsi.[12] Of particular importance in the philosophical realm was the debate over the phases of the mind.

Metzger has provided a particularly trenchant discussion of Sung and Ming conceptions of the mind, which he rightly characterizes as "most complicated."[13] He describes one aspect of the Sung conception of the mind as follows:

> . . . [T]he mind existed at a double cosmic intersection, that between the metaphysical and the experiential levels, and that between the good and bad cosmic forces. Moreover, the

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[12]The best discussions of Sung political and intellectual developments in English include Tillman, pp. 23-67; Smith et al, pp. 26-55; and Ira E. Kasoff, *The Thought of Chang Tsai (1020-1077)* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 7-33.

[13]See especially pp. 85-108.

> 'mind' also incorporated a capacity to act on and transform this intersection.[14]

From the Sung on, Confucians of all schools retained a strong interest in the mind as the site where the great potentialities of humans were either realized or, more typically, obscured.[15] For most Sung and later Confucians the mind, like all else in the universe, oscillated between a state of stillness (often characterized by the term *hsü*) and activity. In so doing, it went through five phases, which Metzger describes as follows:

> Five phases . . . were distinguished as forming a pseudo-temporal sequence: total stillness, sensation of an outer object, imminent issuance, incipient issuance, and accomplished issuance. It was in terms of this sequence that the mind existed at a double cosmic intersection. That is, this sequence had an origin which was both good and metaphysical, and which coincided with at least the first three phases. Passing through the last two phases, one not only came into the experien-

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[14]pp. 85-6.

[15]De Bary is quite right to point out that since all Confucians were concerned with issue of the mind in their thought, the long-standing dichotomy between the so-called "*li-hsüeh*" ("learning of principle") and "*hsin-hsüeh*" ("learning of the mind") schools is problematic. See *Message of the Mind*. De Bary also points out how important a particular sixteen-word passage from a spurious portion of the *Shu Ching* had become for Chu Hsi and others as the essence of the "message of the mind." It is interesting that Sai On also explicitly proclaimed the importance of the sixteen-word message: ". . . Shun commanded Yü, saying, 'The mind of the way is barely perceptible; the mind of man is precarious. Be refined and single-minded. Hold fast to the mean!' How could this sixteen character transmission be anything other than the essence of the learning of the mind (*hsin-hsüeh*) for all ages? And so it was for our country [as well] (*Chūzan seifu*, RSS, 4, p. 26).

> tial realm but also was exposed to the danger of succumbing to the bad cosmic force.[16]

The key phase for most Confucians (and for the issue of situational weighing) was the fourth one, that of "incipient issuance."

The term Sung Confucians used to indicate the mind's incipient movement was *chi,* which Metzger defines as "incipient, almost imperceptible phase in the movement of something."[17] Sai On, Chu Hsi, and many others spoke frequently of the response of the human mind upon coming into contact with "things and affairs" (which it typically would be doing during all waking hours unless, perhaps, one were in a meditative state or engaged in "quiet sitting"), with "things and affairs" broadly defined as anything that impinged upon consciousness. Just after the moment of contact, a thought or sensation would issue forth in the mind. The very instant of such issuance was *chi,* and this phase was so important because it was then and only then that the perceiving mind could make the proper response.

If the thought or sensation were evil, the well-trained mind could eliminate it just at the instant it was becoming fully manifest (nipping it in the bud). But if the opportunity was missed, the evil though or sensation would become

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[16]p. 87.

[17]p. 86.

fully manifest (the stage of "accomplished issuance") and the damage done. In the case of a good thought or sensation, of course, the well-trained mind would not interfere with it, thus allowing it to become fully manifest. Needless to say a great deal of rigorous training, self cultivation, and refinement would be needed for one to acquire the ability to perceive *chi* and then appropriately respond to them.

Although none of the articles on situational weighing that I am aware of discuss this point, it seems that particularly during the early years of the Sung, several scholars explicitly linked the concepts of *chi* and *ch'üan*. Su Shih's father Su Hsün (1009-1066), for example, wrote of the following three-way distinction between the standard, situational weighing, and *chi*:

> In the way of the sages there is the standard, there is situational weighing, and there are *chi*. Those who employ these three are [respectively] the common people, regular ministers, and finally, subtlely attuned ministers. The standard is that which all the people of the realm can know, but they cannot know situational weighing. Situational weighing is that which regular ministers can know. *Chi* is that which even a regular minister cannot know. Subtlely attuned ministers are capable of knowing it. . . .[18]

According to Su Hsün, situational weighing seems to have been a process similar to the perception of *chi*, but one not so refined and thus practicable by a larger number of people (if

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[18]From the essays "Hung-lün" and "Yüan-ying" in *Chia yu chi*, v. 4, quoted in Watanabe, *Sosho*, p. 105.

still a small minority of the population). The common people, of course, were simply to follow the clear, constant standard.

Ssu-ma Kuang (1019-86) also associated situational weighing and *chi*. Unlike Su, however, Ssu-ma saw situational weighing and *chi* as being at the same level of subtlety, with the refined person's ability to perceive *chi* enabling him to also perform the act of situational weighing. The following passage is from *I shuo*, Ssu-ma's commentary on the *I ching*:

> *Chi* is [like] that by which a crossbow shoots arrows. If the *chi* is correct, [the arrow] hits the mark. Off ever so slightly, and it misses by a wide margin. And so the sages' use of *chi* is like this. The *I* [*ching*] says that *chi* is subtle movement, the harbinger of good fortune. . . . That is, *chi* is the time before a matter becomes manifest, the time when it is just on the verge of budding. Sages see this subtle entity and can do away with calamity and seize prosperity, embrace good fortune and ward off bad fortune, and that by which this is done is *shen* [spirituality]. What a sage is cautious of is not to overlook *chi*. . . . *Ch'üan* is weighing—that by which lightness as heaviness is assessed. The sage uses *ch'üan*, comparing the lightness and heaviness and deliberating the mildness or urgency. Be it heavy or be it light, [the sage] will [accordingly] discard it or adopt it; be it mild or be it urgent, [the sage] will set it aside or deal with it. The activities of discarding, adopting, setting aside, and dealing with are not separated from the way, and this [appropriate action united with the way] is what is called *ch'üan*. *Chi* are the beginning of *jen*, and *ch'üan* is the measure of their righteousness. According to common talk of today's world, [people] want to abandon *jen* and righ-

> teousness and carry out *chi* and *ch'üan*. Is such a thing not perverse?[19]

In addition to the linkage of *chi* and *ch'üan*, here we see Ssu-ma take a stand on a number of issues relating to situational weighing. Situational weighing was a part of the way, not something separate—an idea Chu Hsi later used to try to resolve the differences between Ch'eng I and the Han scholars. Particularly important for understanding the theory behind situational weighing is the statement about *ch'üan* as the measure of the righteousness of incipient thoughts and feelings. In other words, *ch'üan* was the ability to properly evaluate *chi* so that one could act accordingly.

For Chu Hsi, Nakae Tōju, Sai On, and others with an interest in situational weighing, a person with a high degree of moral authority could encounter any situation whatsoever and almost instantly know how to act in perfect accordance with righteousness (*i*). The sequence, then, was that the circumstances of a particular situation would impinge upon the mind of a sage or worthy, resulting in the incipient issuance of thoughts or emotions so subtle (at that point) as to be imperceptible to ordinary people. The sage or worthy would perceive these thoughts or emotions before they became fully manifest and exercise *ch'üan* to weigh or evaluate them, eliminating evil thoughts and emotions and allowing good

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[19]Quoted in Lo Kuang, *Chung-kuo che-hsüeh ssu-hsiang shih*, vol. 1 (Sung dynasty) (Taipei: Hsüeh-sheng shu-chü, 1984), p. 52.

thoughts and emotions to become manifest. Although Ssu-ma Kuang made a temporal distinction between *chi* and *ch'üan,* they were clearly both part of the same process. Because *ch'üan* involved assessing *chi,* the term *ch'üan* alone could stand for the entire process. Chu Hsi did not speak of *chi* when discussing *ch'üan,* but it is important to bear in mind that his conception of situational weighing was closely connected with prevailing assumptions about the five phases of the mind.

Up to this point the discussion has focussed on the theory behind situational weighing from the standpoint of Sung Confucian views of the mind. With respect to the mind, a highly refined person would necessarily have engaged in situational weighing whenever conscious, though he might not have been conscious of the weighing process itself. It was also common for Confucians to speak of situational weighing with respect to the external world. In terms of the workings of the mind, the opposite of *ch'üan* was simply its absence. With respect to the diverse world of human society, the opposite of *ch'üan* was *ching,* "the standard" or "standards." These two points of view for conceptualizing situational weighing were, of course, closely related, but discussion of one or the other tended to focus on different issues.

The following statement on situational weighing in the *Su Shu*, a work discussing Confucian terms and concepts,[20] is a straightforward definition from the standpoint of the external world:

> To enact situational weighing in the face of change is a way to break out of a deadlock. (Commentary: There is what is normal and there is what is abnormal; there is situational weighing and there is the standard. In situations in which one cannot act as he normally does, he adopts an alternative approach so as to return the situation to what is normal. In circumstances in which the standard cannot be employed, one uses situational weighing to return to the standard.)[21]

There are a number of key components of this description. First, the standard is preferred. Situational weighing is only to be used in a "deadlock" or in "abnormal" circumstances. The goal and result of situational weighing was to make such abnormal circumstances return to the ordinary state, that is, "to return to the standard." Contrast this view of situational weighing with the Han scholars' view of "that which is opposed to the standard." If the point of situational weighing was to return to the standard, was it really "opposed" to the standard? If,

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[20]The book purportedly dates back to the Ch'in dynasty, but most modern scholarship attributes its authorship to its Sung-period "editor" Chang Shang-ying (1041-1121). Chu Hsi and many Japanese Confucians were familiar with this text.

[21]Watanabe, *Sosho*, p. 104.

however, it was the same as the standard, why discuss situational weighing as if it were something different?

Ch'eng I asked such questions and answered then by saying that the Han scholars were wrong. Situational weighing and the standard were the same thing, so to say one was "opposed" to the other was ridiculous. Furthermore, because situational weighing was the same as the standard, people need only follow the standard. The following passage illustrates Ch'eng I's views and is typical of his statements on *ch'üan*:

> In discussing matters it is necessary to use the term *ch'üan*. In the past and the present, people have frequently misused the word *ch'üan*. Regarding *ch'üan* as subterfuge or expedient techniques, they say that *ch'üan* does not come up to [the level of] the standard (*ching*), and they do not know that it is nothing other than measuring weight to make [a situation] accord with righteousness. At the instant something accords with righteousness, it becomes the standard. People of today say that *ch'üan* is not the standard, but it is the standard. . . . Confucius said, 'Even though he may be suitable as a partner in taking a common stand, he may not yet be suitable as a partner in the exercise of situational weighing.'[22]

Ch'en points out that since the Han, "*ch'üan* became synonymous with techniques or power, in opposition to the standard," and that in this passage, Ch'eng I displayed his complete opposition to this interpretation.[23] For Ch'eng I, if Confucius placed such a high value on *ch'üan,* it could not

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[22]STK, 2, pp. 371-72.

[23]"Ch'üan," p. 849.

possibly mean mere expedient techniques and contrivances below the level of the standard. The term surely indicated something equivalent to the standard. Why, however, did Ch'eng I not consider (or discuss the possibility) that situational weighing is actually a higher order of accomplishment than the standard? I shall return to this matter after discussing Chu Hsi's conception of situational weighing.

Chu Hsi and "*ching-ch'üan* Situationalism"

Chu Hsi frequently discussed situational weighing with his students, and managed to reconcile various conflicting views in the course of such discussions. Chu agreed with Ch'eng I that *ch'üan* did not properly mean expedient contrivances, and that because *ch'üan* necessarily accorded with righteousness, it was as morally good as the standard. On the other hand, Chu disagreed with Ch'eng I that situational weighing and the standard were identical. In his commentary on the *Analects,* he wrote:

> Master Ch'eng said, 'The Han scholars took situational weighing to be that which is opposed to the standard but in accord with the way. Therefore, there is discussion of expedient adaptation and expedient techniques. But this is all incorrect. Situational weighing is the standard. Ever since the Han dynasty, there have been none who knew the meaning of *ch'üan.*' If I may comment, the former scholars mistakenly appended the phrase 'as a deviation, opposed to [the standard]' to the end of this passage to make a single passage, and so the theory of opposed to the standard but in accord with the way came about. But if we

> think through the meaning of Mencius' statement that 'to save a drowning sister-in-law one extends one's hand,' we see that there should be some distinction between the standard and situational weighing.[24]

In conversations recorded in the *Chu-tzu yü-lei,* Chu occasionally elaborated on the nature of this distinction, saying in one particularly concise statement: "The standard is situational weighing that has been fixed (*ting*); situational weighing is standard that has not yet been fixed."[25]

As Wei points out, Chu used the concept of the way to both unify the standard and situational weighing and to allow for a distinction between the two.[26] He explained: "The standard is the constant aspect of the way; situational weighing is the fluctuating aspect of the way. The way is a unified entity with the standard and situational weighing permeating it."[27] He explained this point in somewhat more concrete terms as follows:

> Situational weighing arrives at a certain destination such that it accords with the pattern of the way and is thus carried out. For this reason, though it is different from the standard, it is in effect also the standard. In the winter months it is appropriate to wear quilted clothes and face the fire, which is the standard. But if suddenly there should be a warm day, then one should cer-

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[24]STK, 7, pp. 179-80.

[25]CYL, p. 989.

[26]"Standard and Expedient," p. 258.

[27]Ibid, p. 989.

> tainly use a fan and sit in the breeze, which is situational weighing.[28]

In this example, maintaining appropriate body temperature is what accorded with righteousness. In the winter, there is a typical or standard way to achieve this goal based on ordinarily expected conditions. In altered circumstances, however, one would use a different method. Certainly sitting by the fire is different from using a fan, but with respect to the goal of maintaining appropriate temperature, and under the different sets of circumstances, each is the same.[29] In this way, Chu was able to at least partially reconcile Ch'eng I's views with the idea that situational weighing and the standard are not identical.[30]

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[28]Ibid, p. 988.

[29]Similarly, Chu used a medical analogy: "A feverish illness is treated with cold medicine, while an illness [making the body] cold is treated with hot medicine. But there are times when, despite a feverish illness, hot medicine is used to expell [the illness] from a sick person. There are also times when, despite a cold-inducing illness, cold medicine is used to expell [the illness] from the sick person. Neither such case can be called the norm, but owing to necessity, they become possible." Here, too, both the conventional treatment and the exceptional treatment, while different, are the same in that—properly applied—they cure the patient. Circumstances dictate which treatment to use, but the person applying the unconventional treatment must be an expert, for "if it be so much as a hair's breadth off, it will kill the patient . . ." (CYL, p. 991).

[30]Chu typically explained the reason for Ch'eng's insistence on their being identical in ways such as the following: ". . . It was just that he regarded 'the standard' as terribly important and so was partial to it" (CYL, p. 988); and ". . . It's simply that [Ch'eng] I-ch'uan saw the Han scholars' one-sided statement that situational weighing is what is opposed to the standard, and feared that later generations would be unrestrained, all adapting expedient measures to suit their own personal

(continued...)

Chu Hsi's views on situational weighing may be sumarized as follows: Chu and many others saw situational weighing as closely related to other concepts such as the mean (*chung*)[31] or timely equilibrium (*shih-chung*). Consider the following passage:

> It is like the crime a criminal commits. One with a hard nature would execute him; one with a generous nature would show mercy. But applying righteousness, neither [course of action] accords with what is most appropriate. This [doing what is most appropriate] lies entirely within weighing the situation extremely carefully followed by their being no divergence between what is intimately connected with oneself and what has been determined. One who wants to weigh situations extremely carefully will nurture the basis in daily affairs, making the mind vacuous, bright, pure, and unitary, [thus coming to] naturally weigh situations carefully.[32]

In short, one with a perfectly clear, unbiased mind could almost instantly ascertain the nature of all relevant circumstances. His reaction would not be based on what is

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[30](...continued)
purposes. It is only for this reason that he argued as he did" (CYL, p, 989).

[31]For virtually all Confucians, the mean did not mean simply the average between two extreme, but rather the most appropriate position in a given set of circumstances. The following passage from Ch'eng I is typical of the Confucian view: ". . . If one wants to know the mean, there is nothing more important than situational weighing, whereby one must accord with the times and achieve the mean. For example, if one were to take the middle ground between one so active his hands and feet became callused, and one who shuts his door and never goes out, it is not the mean. Getting callused hands and feet can be within the mean and closing the door and not going out can be within the mean" (ECC, p. 164).

[32]CYL, p. 988.

best for himself or on what his personal desires are, but only on what accorded with righteousness in that situation. Such behavior was true situational weighing.

Regardless of their different views, Su Hsün, Ssu-ma Kuang, Chu Hsi, and virtually all other Confucians agreed that the common people should never attempt situational weighing, but only follow established standards. Anyone other than a sage or worthy would not have the unbiased "scale" (that is, a clear mind) with which to accurately weigh a situation, and would therefore tend to act on behalf of their own selfish interests. While willing to discuss situational weighing at length and in detail, Chu was reluctant to encourage anyone to actually try it. Indeed, the majority of his dialogues on the subject ended with a statement such as the following: "Both ordinary people and scholars can comply with the standard, but when it comes to situational weighing, anyone not a sage or a worthy cannot put it into practice."[33] For Chu Hsi and most other Confucians, situational weighing was for a select, elite group of individuals with a high degree of moral authority. For everyone else, it was irrelevant.[34]

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[33]Ibid, p. 989.

[34]Recall that Su Hsün seems to have accorded the widest latitude to situational weighing, saying that all ordinary ministers could enact it. Su, however, saw situational weighing as a lesser order of task than perceiving *chi*, whereas Ssu-ma Kuang, Chu Hsi, and most others saw

(continued...)

Let us now return to the question raised earlier of why Ch'eng I and Chu Hsi did not regard situational weighing as a higher order of activity than following the standard. Of course implicitly, they did, since situational weighing was by definition something only for sages and worthies. Unlike Sai On, however, they did not explicitly single out situational weighing as a particularly important or essential activity, nor did they ever compare it with the standard in such as way as to portray situational weighing as a superior type of activity. Instead, in their writings and conversations both Ch'eng and Chu were more concerned with specifying three key restrictions on the use of situational weighing: 1) that it be done only when the standard could not be made to apply; and 2) that only sages and worthies ever do it; and 3) that it be temporary. Practically speaking, it was probably sensible to emphasize restrictions on an activity so fraught with the potential for abuse. Nevertheless, as Donald Munro points out:

> It is ironical that Chu Hsi, a Mencian Confucian who believed in innate moral principles, generally prefers that people in any complicated situation do what the *ching* say rather than to follow their intuitions. The message for the ordinary person is that one must continue to investigate a lot more things and

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[34](...continued)
perceiving *chi* as a part of situational weighing. Sai On seems to have basically followed Chu on this matter, but with one major difference: Sai was more optimistic about the possibility that people could become sages or worthies.

> remove a lot more obstacles before one's intuitions will become clear enough to be reliable.[35]

In addition to strong doubts about the reliability of most people's intuition, there remained a strong (and potentially contradictory) tendency in Confucianism to resist the notion that ethics are situational, even while acknowledging the fact of constant change and flux.

The Confucian idea that the world is characterized by constant change came, of course, from Buddhism and Taoism. Despite the strong influence of Buddhism in shaping Sung-era Confucian notions of the mind and cosmos, Confucians in the Ch'eng-Chu tradition consistently criticized Buddhism for lacking what Ch'eng I called "righteousness to square the external life." While acknowledging that Buddhist theory was lofty, profound, and offered certain insights into the mind and cosmos, they criticized it as being what Fu calls "sociomorally worthless." In this context, Fu astutely describes the significance of Chu's views on situational weighing as follows:

> . . . [T]he greatest contribution of Chu Hsi's own philosophy does not, as he claims, lie in metaphysics or theory of mind/nature, but rather lies in his ability to tackle [the] Confucian problem of 'situational weighing' (*ch'üan*) of the constant moral standard or principle (*ching*). . . . [T]he great strength of his method of gradual cultivation and particularly this theory—though in a rather

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[35]Munro, p. 179.

> incomplete form—of conduct and action, which I wish provisionally to call *'ching-ch'üan* situationalism,' can be fully appreciated if ethically contrasted with Ch'an Buddhism, the Lu-Wang School, or any other school that takes a 'simple and easy' approach to the sociomoral issues, which only become more complicated in accordance with sociohistorical change.[36]

Chu's theory of situational weighing was indeed "in a rather incomplete form." Tensions and potential contradictions remained, but no Chinese thinker ever significantly reformulated the theory after Chu. As Ch'en points out, "Later theories about the standard and situational weighing were not few, but none went beyond the boundaries Chu Hsi established."[37] As we shall see, however, Sai On did go beyond those boundaries by using situational weighing in his historical critique of Buddhism, by incorporating situational weighing into his political theory, and by enacting policies that were clearly contrary to established norms, but which, he argued, Ryukyu's unusual circumstances made necessary.

In Japan

Many Japanese Confucians in the early Tokugawa period seem to have been aware of Chu Hsi's conception of situational weighing, but few significantly engaged the issue in their writings. This relative lack of interest in situational weighing is somewhat surprising, considering the

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[36]Fu, pp. 399-400.

[37]"Ch'üan," p. 851.

many cultural differences between Japan and China and the resulting need for Japanese Confucians to rethink certain key concepts in terms of Japanese conditions. One possible explanation is that Confucian thought and practice (particularly its modes of self-cultivation) was so personally appealing to Japanese as to render cultural differences negligible.

The major advocate of regarding cultural differences as negligible in explaining Confucianism in Tokugawa Japan, of course, is de Bary. De Bary sees Confucianism as having "unfolded" in Japan in largely the same way it did in China owing to the inherent potentialities in the original Ch'eng-Chu formulation.[38] In speaking of the "schools" of thought of Fujiwara Seika, Yamazaki Ansai, and Ishida Baigan, for example, he writes:

> These schools exhibited both the introverted and extroverted forms of Ch'eng-Chu teaching. To this extent, they shared a common legacy with Chinese Neo-Confucians but in circumstances so different systematically from the Chinese case *as to render the social and political setting of either country a negligible factor* in accounting for the common methods of thought and self-cultivation.[39]

Although certain aspects of Confucianism such as its methods

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[38]In making this point, however, de Bary was not addressing the issue of Japanese views of situational weighing.

[39]Italics added. *Neo-Confucian Orthodoxy and the Learning of the Mind-and-Heart* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), p. 211.

of self-cultivation probably did have trans-cultural appeal as de Bary says, many Japanese Confucians were keenly aware of cultural differences between their country and China as well as the need to be selective, therefore, in adopting Confucian thought. A thorough investigation of this matter is beyond the scope of this study, but with regard to the question of situational weighing, I shall suggest an explanation for Japanese lack of interest in the topic based in part on perceived cultural and institutional differences.

The Way of Po-i and King Wen

Watanabe Hiroshi points out that in Sung China, blind loyalty to the ruler was not esteemed, for righteousness, not loyalty was an official's highest virtue. To serve an unrighteous ruler, accepting a stipend from his government, was immoral. In Tokugawa Japan, however, absolute, unquestioning loyalty was the ideal, though of course it is not difficult to find examples in either country of people who acted in ways contrary to what was considered ideal. The concept of *taigi meibun,* for example, was a Japanese creation to express the absolute nature of the ruler-subject relationship, and had no basis in any of the Confucian classics.[40]

Related to the Chinese view that both the ruler and subject were subordinate to higher moral principles was the idea that under certain (albeit quite limited) conditions, it

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[40]Watanabe, *Sōgaku* pp. 83-4, 86.

was proper to overthrow an evil ruler. Indeed, Chu Hsi sometimes used historical examples of certain of those who had done so, especially T'ang and Wu (founders of the Shang and Chou dynasties respectively), to illustrate situational weighing (as well as to point out how infrequently it should be practiced).[41] Tokugawa Ieyasu, not surprisingly perhaps, spoke favorably of T'ang and Wu. A generation later, however, political thinkers like Hoshina Masayuki (1611-72) and Tokugawa Mitsukuni (1628-1700) found such historical figures anathema. Soon after the Tokugawa established themselves, the act of overthrowing one's ruler became utterly unacceptable for many Japanese thinkers.

As a result, a dichotomy in Japanese Confucian discourse developed between the symbols of T'ang and Wu on the one hand, and Po-i and King Wen on the other.[42] While Chu Hsi saw the actions of both T'ang and Wen as having been appro-

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[41]For example, in response to a question Chu said: ". . . T'ang's overthrow of Chieh, Wu's destruction of Chou, and I Yin's banishing T'ai Chia were all cases of situational weighing. If it were to be used frequently on a daily basis, what a world this would become! Further question: Is not situational weighing the mean? Answer: It is the mean at a particular time. If it were not the mean it would not be situational weighing. But it was six or seven hundred years after Shun and Yü before there was T'ang, and after T'ang, it was another six or seven hundred years before King Wu. . . ." (CYL, p. 990.)

[42]As the story goes, Po-i and his brother Ch'i were sons of a local lord who, when Wu overthrew the Shang, fled to the mountains and starved themselves to death rather than eat the grain of a dynasty that had come to power by overthrowing its former overlord. King Wen was Wu's father, but unlike Wu, continued to serve the Shang (again, as the story goes) even though he was strong enough to have successfully overthrown it.

priate under their different sets of circumstances, in many Japanese circles, there was outright denunciation of T'ang and Wu and exclusive affirmation of figures like Po-i and King Wen.[43] Hoshina Masayuki, for example, said, "What is the least bit regrettable about one who studies only King Wen and Po-i, and knows nothing of the way of T'ang and Wu?," and Tokugawa Mitsukuni said, "King Wen was a sage, but we cannot call King Wu a sage. . . . It is hard to avoid [the conclusion] that King Wu's ['righteousness'] was the 'righteousness' of usurping the throne."[44] In discussing the thought of the Tosa Confucian Tani Jinzan (1633-1718), Takada Hironari points out that Jinzan thought "the reality of the way of the subject for Japanese was not to overthrow a wicked ruler as King Wu had done, but must be that 'the minister takes all the blame; the ruler is sagacious' way of King Wen."[45]

Yamazaki Ansai, of course, is perhaps the most well-known theorist on such matters, and he occasionally discussed situational weighing in conjunction with the actions of T'ang, Wu, and other classical figures from Chinese history.

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[43]Ibid, p. 87.

[44]Quoted in Ibid. The actions of both T'ang and Wu were, in Chinese thought at least, justifiable because of the extreme evil of the depraved rulers they replaced was causing great hardship to the people of the realm.

[45]STK, 12, p. 41.

The first part of a passage from his essay "Tō-Bu kakumei ron" (On the rebellions of T'ang and Wu) reads:

> It was furthermore stated that 'though Chou is an old state, its possessing the mandate is new,' for [under Wen] it served the Shang. This was the virtue of King Wen and the great standard (*taikyō* or *taikei*). The words, 'T'ang and Wu renewed the mandate, obeyed heaven, and accorded with man' refer to what is and has always been the great situational weighing (*taiken*). . .[46]

Thus far in the passage at least, Ansai, who claimed to have followed Chu Hsi's thought in every detail, has indeed followed Chu's characterization of T'ang and Wu as sage kings who performed situational weighing.

In his discussions of situational weighing, Ansai placed great stress on Chu's caution that situational weighing should be an extremely rare occurrence,[47] and his use here of the term "great situational weighing," conveys a sense of finality regarding the act. The passage continues:

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[46]STK, 12, p. 135.

[47]In *Heki'i* (Heresies refuted), for example, Ansai wrote: "In the way under heaven, there is the standard and situational weighing. The standard is the constant way for all ages to which all people can adhere. Situational weighing is something of temporary utility that cannot be employed by anyone not a sage or a worthy. Chu Hsi said, 'Cases like king T'ang's deposing King Chieh, King Wu's destruction of King Chou, and I Yin's banishment of T'ai Chia were examples of situational weighing. If such methods were employed every hour of every day, however, what would the world be like?'" (Nishida Kitarō, ed., *Fujiwara Seika, Nakae Tōju, Kumazawa Banzan, Yamazaki Ansai, Yamaga Sokō, Yamagata Daini* [Chikuma shobō, 1970], p. 245.)

> . . . After the three dynasties,[48] the Han, T'ang, Sung, and Ming have been called prosperous eras. But if all under heaven was the ruler's land and everyone the ruler's subjects, was not the founder of the Han a common citizen of the Ch'in? Was not the founder of the T'ang a minister of the Sui? Were not the founders of the Sung and Ming a minister and a common citizen of the Chou and Yüan respectively? Confucius' saying 'Wu had did not fully exhaust goodness' was because [Wu] was a vassal of the Shang. Even a heavenly messenger cannot escape such scrutiny—how much less so the expedient plotters who founded the Han, T'ang, Sung, and Ming dynasties. . .[49]

Here we see Ansai downgrading Wu's accomplishment slightly, and then severely criticizing all subsequent dynastic founders as "expedient plotters." It is difficult to imagine that Ansai would have been favorably disposed to the idea that one of his contemporaries in Japan could possibly perform situational weighing. We also see in Ansai's words the nucleus of one of the main arguments Japanese of the Tokugawa and modern eras used to assert the inherent superiority of Japan over China. To drive home his point, Ansai ended the passage as follows:

> . . . During this time, the rise of Kuang Wu[50] was a happening of the utmost righteousness, and superior to the rise of T'ang and Wu. I therefore say that of those who gained the realm by military uprising, the only one who

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[48]Hsia, Shang, Chou.

[49]STK, 12, p. 135.

[50]The descendant of the Han house who ousted the usurper Wang Mang and founded the Latter Han dynasty.

> need not have been ashamed before heaven and earth was Kuang Wu.[51]

Diverging even farther from Chu Hsi, here Ansai came up with his own example of the sole ruler who came to power via military force. Significantly, Kuang Wu was far superior to T'ang and Wu, who went from enactors of "great situational weighing" at the beginning of the passage to becoming but two more usurpers who should have been "ashamed before heaven and earth" by the end.[52]

A major reason for the relative lack of Confucians in Tokugawa Japan who saw situational weighing as viable for their place and time was probably the strong tendency to view the ruler-subject relationship as absolute and then to associate situational weighing with the activities of people like T'ang and Wu. Not all Japanese Confucians, however, shared this view of history or this interpretation of situational weighing. Some like Nakae Tōju wrote at great

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[51]STK, 12, p. 135.

[52]There was also a tendency among Chinese Confucians to make some distinction between sages like Yao, and Shun on the one hand, and T'ang and Wu on the other, although not to the point of denying sagehood to the latter group. A passage from Ch'eng Hao in *Reflections on Things at Hand*, for example, reads: "Master Ming-Tao [Ch'eng Hao] said: Yao and Shun were beyond comparison. When it came to T'ang and Wu, they were different. Mencius said that [Yao and Shun] 'were what they were by nature' whereas [T'ang and Wu] 'returned to their nature.' . . . We know therefore that Yao and Shun were born with the knowledge [of virtue], whereas T'ang and Wu learned and acquired the ability to practice it. . . . Essentially they were all sages" (p. 289).

length about situational weighing, and viewed its use quite favorably.

Favorable Japanese Views of Situational Weighing

Itō Jinsai (1627-1705) and Kaibara Ekken had relatively little to say about situational weighing. When the subject did come up in their writings, however, they viewed it positively and regarded it as more widely applicable than did scholars like Yamazaki Ansai. Indeed, one of Kaibara Ekken's discussions of situational weighing is found in the midst of a larger passage clearly critical of Ansai's views. In his essay *Taigiroku* (Record of grave doubts), Ekken reacted to what he regarded as Ansai's overemphasis on the practice of *kei* (C. *ching*, seriousness, reverence, mindfulness), and was at pains to point out that *kei* was not the ontological basis for the mind but only one method for its cultivation. It was in this context that he discussed situational weighing, describing it as follows:

> The way to guide the mind is like using a scale (*kenkō*, situational weighing) to measure weight. If even one unit [too many] is added, it becomes too heavy. If reduced by even one unit [too few], it becomes too light. If we want the perfect balance, it is nothing other than striking the proper balance between a lack of neglect on the one hand, and excessive concern on the other.[53]

For Ekken, one should constantly evaluate his mind so as to

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[53]NST, #34, p. 53.

ensure a proper balance between excessive laxity and excessive zeal (à la Ansai).

In his commentary on the *Analects,* Itō Jinsai directly criticized the claim that the practice of situational weighing should be restricted to only those at the level of sages. He wrote:

> The statements by former Confucians to the effect that if one is not a sage, he must not practice situational weighing are particularly mistaken. Situational weighing is the most important part of learning, and . . . it is like a boat's pilot adjusting to the wind by moving the scull. . . .[54]

We saw that Ansai took Chu Hsi's substantial reservations about the practice of situational weighing and restricted the scope of its legitimate practice even further (to past events in ancient China). In contrast, Jinsai broadened the scope of its legitimate practice in this passage to anyone engaged in the pursuit of learning.

Nakae Tōju's views were similar to those of Jinsai and Ekken, and unlike them, he wrote at length about situational weighing and related concepts in several of his essays. Most important was his discussion in *Okina mondō* (Discussions with an old man), a widely circulated text during the Tokugawa period that Sai On almost certainly read and occasionally

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[54]Kaizuka Shigeki, ed., *Itō Jinsai,* Nihon no Meicho, #13, paperback edition (Chūō Kōronsha, 1983), p. 223.

responded to in his similarly titled *Words of an Old Man.*[55] Tōju began his discussion of situational weighing in *Okina mondō* as follows:

> Situational weighing is the wondrous instrument (*myōyō*) of the sages and the all-encompassing name for the way of the gods. An example of its greatest dimensions is Yao's relinquishing [his throne] and Shun's acceptance of it, or the military campaigns of T'ang and Wu. Smaller scale examples start with the Duke of Chou's taking [power] and then giving [it back], as well as Confucius' reliability and explanatory powers, and extend to every minor word and deed. These things are all the way of situational weighing.[56]

In this passage and in others, Tōju saw a wider role for

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[55]Because Sai On never mentioned contemporary books in his texts, it is difficult to know which books he read and to which text he may have been responding in a given passage. We have seen that Japanese writings were important for him, that there is a strong probability that he read *Honsaroku,* and no doubt that he read Kaibara Ekken's *Kadōkun.* In his discussion of Buddhism in particular, Sai On seems to have taken specific issue with statements Tōju made in *Okina mondō* (though they also seem to have agreed on many other issues). As in the case of the other Japanese texts Sai On read, nobody to my knowledge has yet pointed out the possibility that he read and reacted to *Okina mondō.*

For evidence of Sai On's reading of *Okina modō,* compare the following passages (references to *Okina mondō* are OM, #x, with x being the number in the NST edition of the text): GKJ, #45-6 vs. OM, #12 regarding the definition of filial piety; SHG, #40 vs. OM, #13; SYR, #13 vs. OM, #45 on the three spiritual animals; SHG, #24 vs. OM, #48 on *ming*; TYD, #10 vs. OM, #56 same analogy; TYD, #98 vs. OM, #69 on favoritism; SHG, #41 & TYD, #22 vs OM, #70 on Shun's asking questions of ordinary people; SHG, #35 vs. OM, #78 on Śākyamuni; SHG, #18 vs OM, #80 on inner classics versus outer classics; SHG, #8 vs. OM, #81 on the fundamental unity of Confucianism and Buddhism; SHG, #30 vs. OM, #82 using the same quote from Sung Confucians about Yang Chu and Mo Tzu; SHG, #45 vs. OM, #83 on the "one"; SHG, #30 vs. OM, #83 on the futility of chanting the *nenbutsu*; SHG, #12 vs. OM, #85 mountain climbing analogy for gradual enlightenment; SHG #16, vs. OM, #99 on going beyond merely loathing evil, etc.; SHG, #33 vs. OM, #103 on Taoist hermits; SHG, #29 vs. OM, #86 on liquor (same quote from the *Analects*).

[56]NST, #29, p. 136.

situational weighing than did Chu Hsi and especially Japanese Confucians like Yamazaki Ansai. Most importantly, the concept of situational weighing occupied a more central place in Tōju's overall thought than was the case with the other thinkers we have examined thus far (except, of course, Sai On).

Nakae Tōju's conception of situational weighing was more sophisticated and nuanced than that of any other major Japanese Confucian. Although Sai On probably read *Okina mondō*, he does not seem to have been concerned with the details of Tōju's views on situational weighing. Tōju's placing great importance on situational weighing, however, may have had an impact on Sai On, who made situational weighing the center of his thought and political activity. An analysis of Tōju's theory of situational weighing is beyond the scope of this study, but I have written in some detail on this topic elsewhere.[57]

Another Japanese Confucian favorably disposed toward situational weighing and who contributed to its theory was Goi Ranju (1697-1762) a scholar at the Kaitokudō academy on Osaka and a contemporary of Sai On. According to Tetsuo Najita, Goi stressed quality of information as a key factor

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[57]See Gregory J. Smits, "The Sages' Scale in Japan: Nakae Tōju and Situational Weighing," *The Transaction of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, forthcoming.

in whether or not to deviate from the standard.[58] This focus on the information itself contrasts with the theoretical discussion of Chu Hsi and others who focussed instead on a person's capacity to properly perceive and deal with the information. Situational weighing for Goi also necessarily involved an element of risk, for it was enacted in a situation in which the ordinary rules by which one could predict success or failure did not apply. Regarding the image Goi presented of one who carries out situational weighing, Najita wrote, "The image that Goi sketched here clearly was that of a political reformer."[59]

To summarize the discussion to this point, while many Japanese Confucians were no doubt aware of the concept of situational weighing, either from the writings of Sung Confucians or from *Okina mondō*, few significantly engaged the subject in their writings and none who did were in a position to apply situational weighing in the political realm. Furthermore, while some Japanese Confucians were favorably disposed to the idea, many were even more uneasy about the relativism inherent in the concept than was Chu Hsi. Scholars

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[58]p. 144. Najita writes that he finds it "especially intriguing" that Goi used the term *ken* to describe action in the absence of fixed rules, but *ken* was simply the ordinary term for this sort of thing in Confucian discourse.

[59]Ibid.

such as Hoshina Masayuki, Tokugawa Mitsukuni, and Yamazaki Ansai stressed the superiority of the way of Po-i and King Wen over that of Kings T'ang and Wu, and to the (often large) extent that they associated situational weighing with these latter figures, they rejected it for Japan.

Skillful Means in Mahayana Buddhism

Situational weighing not only informed Sai On's activities as a political reformer, but his critique of Buddhism as well. He often described the activities and certain teachings of the historical Buddha as situational weighing, but he sometimes used the similar Mahayana Buddhist term *fang-pien* (Skt. *upāya*, J. *hōben*) as well. Therefore, before examining Sai On's views of situational weighing, it is necessary to briefly survey similar concepts in Buddhist theology.

The Buddhist concept of *upāya* developed in India independently of the Chinese notion of situational weighing, and has been translated with such terms as "expediency," "adopted teaching," "provisional teaching," and "skilful means," the latter being the closest approximation. The concept had its origin in a dilemma that the historical Buddha faced, which Alicia and Daigan Matsunaga explain as follows:

> The problem the historical Buddha faced was how to communicate his experience, and this was the nascence of *upāya*. Fully realizing the inadequacies of human language, which is based

> on a conceptualized view of reality, he knew that the degree a single individual would profit from his preaching was highly dependent on diverse factors such as the existent spiritual level, past experience, present environment, psychological needs, and so on. He was aware that it was possible for a layman to benefit as much as a learned monk if the teachings were presented in a manner comprehensible to the layman; thus different varieties and intellectual modes of approaches were necessary. All these forms of communication constituted *upāya*, an exceedingly egalitarian concept that ultimately embraced every level of Buddhist teaching.[60]

While I am less confident of our ability to know so clearly what the historical Buddha was thinking, the idea of skillful means undoubtedly developed early in the history of Buddhism as a pedagogical device.

Of all major Buddhist texts, the *Lotus Sutra* most clearly expounds the concept of skillful means, providing numerous tales of its use. In one such parable, a physician goes off on business, and while way, his sons drink some sort of poisonous medicine, causing some to lose their sanity and all to suffer various pains and agony. Upon his return, he prepared an antidote, and those sons who remained of sound mind quickly drank it and were cured. Those who had gone mad, however, refused to drink it, thinking the antidote to be poisonous as well. The father thought, "I must now devise an expedient with which to induce them to take this medicine."

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[60]Daigan and Alicia Matsunaga, "The Concept of *Upāya* in Mahāyāna Buddhist Philosophy," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 1.1 (1974): 53.

He shocked them back to their senses by appearing to have died (when he actually had just gone to another realm). In their grief over the father's death, the reaming sons drank the medicine, after which time, the father returned. The Buddha then asks, "Is there any man who can say that this good physician is guilty of the sin of willfully false speech, or is there not?" After the audience answers, "There is not, O World Honored One," The Buddha says:

> So, too, am I. Since my achievement of Buddhahood it has been incalculable, limitless hundred thousands of myriads of millions of nayutas of asamkhyeyakalpas. For the beings' sake, by resort to my power of expedient devices I say that I shall pass into extinction. Still there is no one who can, in keeping with the Dharma, say that I am guilty of the sin of willfully false speech.[61]

Here we see that within the Buddhist tradition, there is a major textual basis for regarding certain of the historical Buddha's teachings as skillful means to assist the masses of ignorant beings.

Upāya, of course, was a temporary measure, to be discarded when it had outlived its usefulness. Chih-i (538-97), who founded the T'ien-t'ai school of Buddhism upon his interpretation of the *Lotus Sutra,* wrote of skillful means as follows:

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[61]Leon Hurvitz, trans., *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma (The Lotus Sutra)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), pp. 240-41.

> For the sake of the true there is the provisional (*ch'üan*).
> Open the provisional and reveal the true (*shih*).
> Abandon the provisional and establish the true.[62]

Provisional teachings are a tool to be used for revealing true teachings to those too ignorant to otherwise comprehend them, and the tool is ultimately to be abandoned. Notice as well that writing in Chinese, Chih-i used the term *ch'üan* to convey the Buddhist idea of skillful means in teaching.

Michael Pye also stresses the provisional character of skillful means, saying "Whether considered as a working downwards or upwards the skillful means are above all provisional. . . . As the beneficiaries become enlightened the expedients become redundant.[63] He further points out that Buddhism itself, as an identifiable body of specific teachings, writings, and practices, is skillful means:

> The 'answers' which Buddhism apparently offers, such as the teaching of cessation (Skt. *nirodha*) or nirvana, are devised entirely in terms of the problem [of conveying the essence of the Buddha's enlightenment to ignorant beings] and they are not intended to have any particular meaning beyond the attainment of the solution. Thus 'Buddhism', as a specific religion identifiable in human history, is a skillful means.[64]

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[62]Quoted in Matsunaga, p. 66.

[63]*Skilful Means: A Concept in Mahayana Buddhism* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 1978), p. 4.

[64]p. 5,

It is remarkable that, to my knowledge, Sai On was the only Confucian to have explained Buddhism in almost precisely these terms. He did so, of course, to question the usefulness of provisional teachings specific to a particular time and place (ancient India) so removed from Ryukyu. He also criticized those who did not understand the origin of popular Buddhist teachings as an instance of skillful means or situational weighing (he used both terms). Let us now examine Sai On's views of situational weighing in general, and then consider his historical critique of Buddhism.

Sai On and Situational Weighing

General Conception

Sai On discussed the details of situational weighing only in his philosophical texts written in Classical Chinese, especially in *Words of an Old Man* and *Essentials of Governance*. The extensive discussion in the latter text points to one of the major characteristics of Sai On's view: he not only considered it permissible for government officials to exercise situational weighing, but he saw the constant use of situational weighing as essential for the country's survival. Officials had to use situational weighing because of the constant change inherent in the pattern of nature. By weighing the situation and making the appropriate adapta-

tions, a country could achieve stability. The following passage is perhaps most representative of Sai On's overall conception:

> Those who govern a country must understand the standard and situational weighing. That which is enacted in the face of conditions that follow past precedents is called 'the standard.' That which is enacted in response to a change in conditions is called 'situational weighing.' For this reason, those charged with a country's administration must give priority to considering adaptation to change. A country that can adapt to good and bad, fortune and misfortune, and the echoes from eight directions[65] without harm is what is called a stable country. If one engages in ordinary routines without considering adaptation to changes, an infinitesimal misalignment could lead to a grave error. Do not allow such a thing to cause regrets later![66]

Chu Hsi and many others tended to discuss situational weighing as a category separate from most other dimensions of their Confucian thought. Sai On, however, closely integrated the concept with other aspects of his thought, in this case the idea of maintaining stability in the midst of constant change. I shall now discuss Sai On's views of situational weighing from a number of different perspectives, comparing it with key issues in the overall Confucian debate on situational weighing and with other aspects of Sai On's thought.

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[65]That is, a variety of complex changes.

[66]TYD, #38.

Relation to the Standard; The Issue of T'ang and Wu

For the most part, Sai On spoke of situational weighing and the standard as if they were two different things, such as in the passage quoted above. He was clearly aware that the nature of the relationship between the standard and situational weighing was a significant philosophical issue, however, because a fictional questioner directly asked about the matter in *Words of an Old Man*:

> [. . .]
> The *shi* then said, 'Even the sages adapted to their particular time and circumstances but it is better to act in accordance with the standard. Why did they use situational weighing?'
> The old man said, 'The standard and situational weighing are two and yet not two. The standard is situational weighing and situational weighing is the standard. They are both the natural way of the heavenly pattern (*t'ien-li*). The yielding of Yao and Shun and the military aggression of T'ang and Wu both have the same basis. But only a sage can apply situational weighing.[67]

Here we see that Sai On closely followed Chu Hsi. By affirming the fundamental unity of the standard and situational weighing, Sai On also characterized T'ang and Wu as having been as great as Yao and Shun, the assertion many Japanese Confucians found unacceptable.[68]

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[67]SHG, #38.

[68]In HZR, #9, in the context of defending the historical Buddha's activities in India, Sai On wrote: "If the employment of situationally-dictated techniques is considered heterodox, then Yao's relinquishing the throne to Shun, Shun's relinquishing the throne to Yü, T'ang's ousting

(continued...)

In another passage Sai On made the same point about T'ang and Wu even more strongly, this time via a questioner whose mind the old man had just changed:

> [. . .]
> The *shi* had a pensive look on his face and knowingly said, 'When I read in history books of the time prior to the Han dynasty, it is said that those who want the realm to look up to them study the way of Shun and Yü. It is said that those who would kill their rulers learn the way of T'ang and Wu. Ah! But is [such a distinction] really the way of Shun, Yü, T'ang and Wu or is it other people's misinterpretation of it? I feel sympathy for Shun, Yü, T'ang, and Wu.[69]

Clearly Sai On was aware of the controversy surrounding T'ang and Wu, and he clearly affirmed the validity of their actions. Like Chu Hsi, Sai On mentioned the restriction on who could practice situational weighing at the end of the first passage cited above. It is important to note, however, that this passage is the only place in which Sai On mentioned this restriction, unlike Chu Hsi who appended it to the end of virtually every discussion of situational weighing he

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[68](...continued)
of Chieh, and Wu's chastising of Chou were all one-time situationally-dictated techniques. How could they too be heterodox?"

[69]SHG, #35. The context of this passage is interesting. The part I quoted comes at the end of a lengthy passage in which the old man defended the historical Buddha against those who would disparage his actions, criticizing Ch'eng Hao in the process. He then said: "I feel deeply sympathetic toward Śākyamuni. For this reason I say, 'In the summer wear hemp and in the winter wear fur.'" This last statement was one of Sai On's metaphors for acting in accordance with circumstances. The *shi* has thus understood the basic principle in what the old man said and applied it to the case of the often-maligned practitioners of situational weighing T'ang and Wu.

engaged in, and unlike Yamazaki Ansai who implied that situational weighing was something entirely restricted to ancient China.

A related issue the extent to which Sai On envisioned the achievement of sagehood as possible. Despite repeated laments about the stupidity of the common people, he nevertheless seems to have been generally optimistic about the ability of even the common people to become sages:

> . . . Common people usually think deeply of their own benefit and for this reason, there is the evil of attachment to *ch'i*. Therefore, their heavenly-endowed true ability is obstructed and cannot become manifest. But if they could be encouraged to think deeply about what would benefit the country, then their heavenly-endowed true ability would materialize and arise in [proper] response to particular conditions and circumstances. If we study the way of government and nurture this true ability, in what way should the people of today need worry about not being on par with the ancients?[70]

This statement is particularly strong because it affirms that people of the present, even common people, could become as great as the legendary sages of antiquity since all humans had the nature of a sage within their minds. Most Sung Confucians of Chu Hsi's time also held this view in theory, but placed much more weight on the evil cosmic forces,

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[70]TYD, #111.

thereby portraying sagehood as a lofty ideal rarely achieved in practice.[71]

We should recall that in Sai On's Ryukyu, Confucianism of any sort was relatively new, particularly Ch'eng-Chu Confucianism. The Confucian way that Chu Hsi found so difficult to put into practice seemed to Sai On to hold the promise of transforming Ryukyu into a place as excellent for its size as was ancient China under the sage kings. Particularly in light of the twentieth-century tendency to see Confucianism as a hindrance to "modern" development in East Asian countries, it is important to keep in mind the obvious fact that Sai On was a Ryukyuan of the eighteenth century. As such, he clearly regarded Ch'eng-Chu Confucianism as the most advanced, sophisticated body of thought available, and he seemed to believe that once large numbers of Ryukyuans mastered its doctrines, Ryukyu would be transformed.[72]

Situational Weighing and Prayer

On several occasions, Sai On discussed the issue of prayer as a form of situational weighing. In so doing he used two examples from ancient Chinese history, the case of King T'ang praying for rain and the case of the Duke of Chou praying for the health of the currently-reigning king. The

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[71]This subject, of course, is a major theme in Metzger.

[72]Such a view was, perhaps, similar to the belief that many nineteenth and early twentieth century European intellectuals held that science could and eventually would solve all human problems.

passage from *Words of an Old Man* is lengthy and the two examples make the identical point, so what follows is only the discussion of King T'ang:

> Two members of the *shi* class came to visit the old man. One said, 'There is a drought now. Don't we need badly to pray for rain?'
>
> The old man said, 'Is there a pattern (*li*, principle, basis in the pattern of nature) for such a thing?'
>
> The *shi* said, 'T'ang was a sage. He prayed for rain in a field in a mulberry forest.'
>
> The old man said, 'You know that King T'ang prayed for rain, but you do not know his ideas about praying for rain.'
>
> The *shi* said, 'I beg you to explain this matter.'
>
> The old man said, 'King T'ang drove out Chieh of the Hsia dynasty and founded the Shang. The hearts of the people were joyous and they regarded it as a time when a violent ruler had been overthrown and replaced by an enlightened ruler. But unfortunately, after the good omen of T'ang's ascendancy, there was a drought for several years. The people secretly harbored doubts in their minds and thought that *t'ien* was going to replace T'ang. At this time, had King T'ang not had moral authority (*te li*, the force of virtue), *t'ien* would have brought about a change and the people would have been in misery. Therefore, he expeditiously established the practice of praying for rain and offered himself up as a sacrifice. The way he conducted himself brought him respect, and following that time, the realm believed in and obeyed him. He became a father and mother to the masses and set their minds at ease. This practice was something T'ang thought up to stabilize the people's minds and to preserve society. Is there, then, really a pattern for praying for rain? If there is, T'ang should have prayed for rain when the drought started. Why did he wait until seven years had passed before praying for rain?'
>
> [The other *shi* then asked about the Duke of Chou's having prayed.]

> The two *shi* understood and said, 'Hearing this now is like waking from a dream for the first time.[73] But we ask, is it possible to do without such false practices entirely?'
>
> The old man said, 'Such popular customs may be appropriate under certain circumstances.'[74]

This passage is significant, for it reflects prevailing circumstances in Sai On's Ryukyu, and as such, it is an example of how he integrated the theory of situational weighing with his own thought, with Ryukyu's conditions, and with certain government policies.

As we have seen from the discussion of state religion in Chapter Two and Adachi's analysis of *seiji hi-no-kami* worship and royal authority, during Sai On's time, religious officials regularly offered prayers at designated sites throughout the country. In the above passage, Sai On was arguing to an audience of educated *shi* that the prayers were not literally effective in that the deities would hear the prayers and cause the requested result. They were instead an example of situational weighing, intended to make the realm "believe in and obey" the ruler and "to stabilize the people's minds and to preserve society." As such, Sai On argued, these practices "may be appropriate under certain

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[73]These words, of course, were those Sai On used in his autobiography to describe his "enlightenment" at the hands of the recluse in Fukien.

[74]SHG, #36. See SYR, #13 for a discussion of the same matter, but with the emphasis on the insubstantiality (*hsü*) of praying, and ending with a lament that people so easily confuse what is non-substantial with what is substantial.

circumstances." In other words, official prayer was necessary for the time being to augment the ruler's authority vis-a-vis the ignorant masses of common people. Presumably, however, as Confucian teachings spread and more people realized the essentially empty (*hsü*) quality of prayers, they would no longer be needed.

In the above passage, Sai On specifically used the example of praying for rain in a drought. Okinawa prefecture is subject to periodic droughts, which can be so severe that the public water lines have to be shut down (which is why houses and other buildings in Okinawa have supplementary water tanks on their roofs). *Amagoi* (O. *Amagui*, literally "begging for rain") were public worship ceremonies to pray for rain, and were conducted at the village level or higher in Sai On's time (and continued into the twentieth century).[75] This fact is further evidence that Sai On wrote the above passage to address important issues of his time and place, with the discussion of King T'ang having been intended to address the practice of *amagoi*, and the passage in the Duke of Chou praying for the ruler's health aimed at the official *hi-no-kami* prayers. Furthermore, the cases of King

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[75]The particular practices of *amagoi* worship varied from place to place, with at least five major varieties. The basic procedure was first for the *noro* to pray at the *utaki*. Then, the villagers would all perform a dance, forming an elliptical pattern, and the *noro* would perform a ceremony that involved sprinkling water on the participants. (See ODJ, 1, pp. 76-7.)

T'ang and the Duke of Chou praying were *not* part of the standard repertoire of examples used by Japanese or Chinese Confucians in illustrating situational weighing.[76] Sai On's use of these examples seems to have been unique—a clear reflection of his religious, political, and geographical contexts. Significantly, however, were Chu Hsi to have read the above passage, it is quite possible that he would have had no objection to such a characterization of official prayers as situational weighing.

Situational Weighing and Governing

Other than the historical critique of Buddhism, the context in which Sai On most commonly discussed situational

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[76]See Wei, pp. 264-65 for a brief discussion of the historical examples Chu Hsi mentioned.

Sai On's essays were not random collections of thoughts as were the writings of many Confucians. Although an analysis of the structure of his various texts is beyond the scope of this study, each one addressed certain themes, and the order of the passages was significant. Note that the passage in which the *shi* affirmed that T'ang and Wu were as great as Shun and Yü (#36) came just prior to the passage on prayer (#37). It is quite likely that Sai On was not concerned with the issue of whether or not T'ang and Wu were truly sages for the same reason Japanese Confucians were. Aware of the controversy surrounding the issue, however, he may have tried to first clearly establish T'ang as a sage in preparation for using the example of his praying for rain to address Ryukyuan concerns.

The example of King T'ang's praying for rain may have come from *Honsaroku:* "When in ancient times King T'ang of Yin ruled the realm, there was a long drought and the people were in distress. King T'ang abandoned his position as Son of Heaven and took off the royal robes. He clothed himself in miscanthus reed matting and set out for a field in a mulberry forest. There, he prayed to heaven, citing six items: '. . . [S]hould I have any faults, take and kill me, saving the people and setting them at ease.' As the mind of the sage is in direct contact with *t'ien*, before he even finished these words, a great rain fell" (NST, #28, p. 281). The major difference, of course, is that Sai On denied that the prayers themselves had any power to actually bring forth rain.

weighing was when discussing techniques of government and the duty of officials. He clearly associated situational weighing with governing, saying in *Record of Additional Thoughts,* "The function of the standard and situational weighing lies in governing the country and putting the people at ease."[77] Even Śākyamuni used situational weighing (and thus created Buddhist teachings) for the purpose of governing India.

Sai On associated situational weighing in government with related issues such as proper timing and sequence in enacting policies, planning ahead, and anticipating changing circumstances before they become fully manifest. In *Essentials of Governance,* directly after the passage quoted above at the outset of the discussion of Sai On's conception of the standard and situational weighing (TYD, #38), Sai On included the following two passages:

> Those who govern a country must anticipate and distinguish downward or upward tendencies *before they become manifest*. They must anticipate stability and danger *before it arrives.* To do so is called 'long-term planning' and is also called 'planning before a problem forms.'[78]
>
> Long-term planning is a type of planning before a problem forms and will bring a country permanent benefit. Skill at dealing with what is before one's eyes is connected with

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[77]HZR, #14.

[78]TYD, #39. Italics added.

> planning after a problem assumes definite form and will cause permanent harm.[79]

Recall the close connection in Sung thought between situational weighing, the phases of the mind, and in particular, the ability to detect and deal with incipient issuance (*chi*). What in Sung texts had been a matter pertaining to the individual's mind, has become, in Sai On's writings, an essential technique of government administration.

If those in high-level positions all conquered and eliminated selfish desires (*ch'i* in Sai On's terminology), their minds would become still, calm, and unbiased, like a clear mirror. Then, they would be attuned to even the faintest and most subtle changes in the country's situation, and be able to respond to potentially large problems while they were still small. This mechanism conforms exactly to the process whereby one detects thoughts and feelings at the instant they first impinge on the attuned consciousness of a highly-cultivated mind, and then deals with them appropriately, eliminating improper thoughts and emotions before they can become fully manifest. The time frame, of course, would be different—an instant in the case of the mind, much longer in the case of governing—but relatively speaking, the speed with which the highly-cultivated person acts in either case would be much faster than normal.

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[79]Ibid, #40.

Furthermore, the type of basic training required in each case was identical. Those who trained their minds to the point of being able to perform situational weighing would be the same people—the only people—who could perform situational weighing at the level of governing a country.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, Sai On was certainly concerned with standardization, and indeed, Confucianism in general has a reputation for concern—excessive concern some may say—with rules, guidelines, and formalities. At least for Sai On, however, such rigid rules were meant to apply to the common people and lower-level officials, those who "could be made to follow a path but not understand why." Higher officials (like Sai On himself), on the other hand, had greater flexibility owing (at least in theory) to their superior moral authority. They were the ones who understood the principles behind the rules and were thus freer to make modifications to established norms in response to changing times. As for the common people, "The peasants, craftsmen, and merchants work only at ordinary occupations." Government ministers, on the other hand, "have a different sort of work, for it is they who must do most of the planning, which is essential for a country. Otherwise, how would those engaged in ordinary occupations know how to labor most effectively?"[80] A major problem with such an arrangement, of

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[80]TYD, #35.

course, is the potential for abuse by those at the top who may enact measures for their own personal gain in the name of situational weighing. It was precisely to this sort of potential (and actual) abuse that Ch'eng I objected when he said that since the Han nobody knew the true meaning of *ch'üan*.

Sai On, however, was more optimistic about the ability of Ryukyuans to cultivate their minds sufficiently to carry out effective situational weighing in governing. He also stressed that if Ryukyu, or indeed any country, were to survive and prosper over the long run, it must adapt itself to changing circumstances:

> It is essential for those who rule a country to anticipate changing conditions over time. the past was one time and the present is another. What was done in the past was good for that time. What is done in the present is to be appropriate for the current situation. Thus Mencius said, 'This is one time; that was another time.'[81]
>
> For a country to exist as a country, it must adapt to changing circumstances. Thus Confucius said, 'If in the midst of barbarian tribes, [the superior man] does what is proper in the midst of barbarian tribes.'[82]

The precarious political, economic, and diplomatic position of Ryukyu was undoubtedly a major reason for Sai On's concern

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[81]TYD, #57. Sai On often cited this brief passage from *Mencius*, 2,B:13 (which he quoted out of context).

[82]TYD, #68. The quoted passage is from the *Mean*, #14 in a passage commenting on the adaptability of the superior person.

with situational weighing, early detection of change, long term planning, and adaptation to change. Any change in the political situation in China or Japan had major ramifications for Ryukyu (and of course in 1879, changing world conditions brought the kingdom to an end, realizing what had been Sai On's worst fear). Also, Ryukyu's economic situation was always precarious. In the generation after Sai On, for example, Satsuma began to grow sugar in its own southern islands, a change to which Ryukyu did not (or could not) adapt, and from which the Ryukyuan economy never recovered.

For Sai On, the characteristics of the human mind and nature, the proper cultivation of that mind, situational weighing, and governing the country, were all closely related. The following is the first and last portions of a lengthy passage in which Sai On summed up his views on such matters in *Essentials of Governance*:

> True knowledge is the spiritual light of the heavenly nature. Consciousness is the extension of this light of the heavenly nature. Birds, beasts, insects, and fish also have consciousness. But humans, by their nature, have a consciousness that is all-encompassing and can respond to the myriad situations.
> . . . Hopefully, those who have aspirations in their hearts will work hard at self-cultivation and learning the way of government, going to the root of things with true knowledge and going to the end of things with consciousness. If the evil of confusion brought on by the attachment of *ch'i* is absent, then we can react properly to events, have proper application of the standard and situational weighing,

> the country will be at peace, and everyone's nature will be settled and at ease.[83]

As we have seen in other contexts, Sai On was clearly confident that in the end, Ryukyu could become an ideal Confucian society. Furthermore, the application of situational weighing by government officials was essential for bringing about and maintaining such a society.

Situational Weighing and Śākyamuni

Sai On closely integrated his historical critique of Buddhism with his views on situational weighing. He was, to my knowledge, the only Confucian to have specifically used the idea of situational weighing to undermine the validity of Buddhism, even though such a view could have been derived from Mahayana Buddhist doctrines themselves, for example the idea that Śākyamuni's teaching was a case of skillful means. The only non-Buddhist text to explicitly call what Śākyamuni did situational weighing was *Honsaroku*, and it is this text that probably gave Sai On the idea (although his discussion went much father than that in *Honsaroku*). Adopting the strategy of characterizing the historical Buddha's actions as situational weighing gave Sai On a way to attack popular Buddhist doctrines in a manner consistent with both Confucian teachings and certain Mahayana concepts and texts (such as the *Lotus Sutra*). At the same time, the strategy required

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[83]TYD, #119 (#115 in SSS).

that he defend the actions of Śākyamuni as those of a sage every bit as great as those of ancient China. A result of this defense was a considerable divergence from Chu Hsi, the Ch'engs and other Sung Confucians who criticized Śākyamuni himself.

On the other hand, Sai On's position on the issue of Śākyamuni was much closer to that of many Tokugawa-period Japanese scholars such as Nakae Tōju and Kumazawa Banzan. There were, however, significant differences, and a comparison of the often subtle differences between Sai On, Nakae Tōju, and Kumazawa Banzan will show where Sai On's position was unique and will shed light on the issue of universal verses particular with respect to cultural differences and situational weighing. I begin by explaining the particulars of Sai On's critique, intending to present Sai On's views, and not to make any statement about the history of Buddhism. Following this description, I bring in the views of Tōju and Banzan to more clearly identify Sai On's position (as well as that of Tōju and Banzan) within a range of possible views.

Critique of Buddhism; Defense of the Buddha

Sai On made a clear distinction between the activities of the historical Buddha himself, and the development of Buddhism. The former was the act of a sage; the latter the misguided views of later generations. The distinction also involved situational weighing and cultural differences

between ancient China and ancient India. The following passage from *Essential Discussion of Popular Customs* is typical of many Sai On wrote describing these matters. The first half reads:

> According to my own study, Confucius was born during the Warring States [period] and Śākyamuni was born in India. At that time, popular customs were extremely evil, but China was fortunate enough to have had some past legacy of sages and their customs. [Śākyamuni] saw only evil and depravity without restraint among the populace. Although he was a sage, he had not the strength to save them. So there being no choice, he stayed at Vulture Peak[84] where he secretly pondered and calculated. When he left the mountain, he travelled to the west and to the south for several decades, widely [teaching] the provisional theory of *andhakara* [the underworld, hells, and so on], and spread the expedient teaching of the Law. All [aspects of his theory] were an instance of skillful means (*fang-pien*) at a particular time. After passing the age of seventy, Śākyamuni was eventually able to change the customs of his country and popular customs gradually improved. . . .[85]

In Sai On's view, Śākyamuni fulfilled the two essential conditions for the enactment of situational weighing: "he was a sage" and there was "no choice." He conceived of certain teachings that later became an integral part of Mahayana Buddhist doctrine solely because there was no other way to make the people of ancient India give up their evil ways. Furthermore, his actions did not achieve the desired goal

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[84]Grdhrakūtra, a mountain in Magadha where the historical Buddha is said to have expounded many of his teachings.

[85]ZYR, #13.

until after Śākyamuni had passed the age of seventy, a small but key element in Sai On's argument as we shall see. Here, Sai On called Śākymuni's actions skillful means, but he more often called them situational weighing and sometimes used both terms at once. He apparently saw no difference in meaning between the Buddhist and Confucian terms.

From other passages, Sai On implied that Śākyamuni was not only a religious leader, but also a political leader who used situational weighing to govern India.[86] His portrayal of Śākyamuni was remarkably similar to the following *Honsaroku* description:

> He who is known as Śākyamuni Buddha was unable to govern India because its people's minds were not harmonious. He shut himself up at Mt. Dandaloka and came up with ad hoc notions of heaven and hell as a technique for improving the customs of India, and as a skillful means (*hōben*) for governing the country. [He taught that] if one does good in this world, he will be born in heaven, and if one does evil, he shall fall into hell. There is not really any heaven or hell. The [theory] was for the sake of governing *this* world. The mind of the Buddha was particularly superior, and it measured up to the pattern (*ri*) of governing the country. This is the way of situational weighing.[87]

The passage so closely conforms to Sai On's later views that,

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[86]For example, HZR, #9, 14.

[87]NST, #28, p. 293. This passage shows the "Machiavellian" potential in a concept like situational weighing. Indeed, it may have been precisely because they found such "Machiavellian" implications so distasteful that Sung Confucians did not take an approach to criticizing Buddhism similar to that of the *Honsaroku* and Sai On.

if he did not derive his historical critique of Buddhism at least in part from this widely-available early Tokugawa-period text, it is a remarkable coincidence.

That Śākyamuni's actions and teachings were all instances of situational weighing, of course, undermined the validity of Buddhist teachings in any other context than ancient India because situational weighing was, by definition, temporary and context specific. For Sai On, it was the ancient Chinese sages who created the timeless standard for mankind.[88] The situational weighing of the historical Buddha was temporary, but his misguided followers did not understand this point. The remainder of the above passage from *Essential Discussion of Popular Customs* clearly shows Sai On's view:

> . . . What is regrettable is that he died while in the midst of his task, before he was able to spread [teachings] of the true pattern of the heavenly way and the true function of the human way. In the end, there was nobody to continue to expound [Śākyamuni's] true intention and spread teachings of the true function. As a result, the people of India knew there was a teaching of the Law that was skillful means, but they were ignorant of the true intention of Śākyamuni, which he had not yet stated. Extending to later generations, the theory of *andhakara* spread in all directions, and throughout the world, common people all regard the underworld as really existing, never awakening [to the truth] in the end. Ah!

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[88]For example: ". . . [T]hey explained benevolence and righteousness, spread teachings on government, and rectified customs, which put the masses at ease. That past and present their way is changeless, and that there is not a single day under heaven that we are not all Confucians, is surely for this reason" (SHG, #17.)

> The basis for popular customs is so outlandish![89]

Sai On never explained how he had become privileged to know the "true intention" of Śākyamuni when the whole world was ignorant of it. Presumably he thought that at least some of his audience would take his word for it, and *Words of an Old Man* contains numerous passages in which the old man informs a *shi* or a monk of Śākyamuni's "true intention."

Sai On defended Śākyamuni's actions based on his alleged knowledge of this "true intention," a knowledge that apparently not even the Sung Confucian masters had. In the following passage, Sai On lamented a lack of knowledge on the part of both Confucians and Buddhists:

> . . . Regrettably, later generations who became Confucians did not know the true message of Śākyamuni's teachings. They recklessly made up words arguing that Śākyamuni was more harmful than even the doctrines of Yang [Chu] and Mo [Ti].[90] Later generations who became monks did not know the true message of the sages. They recklessly made up words, arguing that the learning of the sages involves explaining reflections, not the true substance. Ah! That the world's people are like

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[89]ZYR, #13.

[90]A reference to a rather well-know statement from Ch'eng Hao that Chu Hsi included in *Reflections on Things at Hand*: "Master Ming-Tao [Cheng Hao] said: The harm of Yang Chu and Mo Ti is greater than that of Shen Tzu and Han Tzu, and the harm of the Buddha and Lao Tzu is greater than that of Yang and Mo. . . . Shen Tzu and Han Tzu are shallow and vulgar, and obviously so. . . .

The words of the Buddha and Lao Tzu are somewhat reasonable. In this they cannot be matched by Yang and Mo. This is why they are very much more harmful. . . ." (pp. 279-80).

> this—content to be ignorant of the great way![91]

Here, Sai On has suggested that Ch'eng Hao's critique of Śākyamuni was of the same magnitude of error as Buddhist characterizations of Confucian learning as empty. Again we see Sai On consistent in his portrayal of Śākyamuni as one who practiced situational weighing. By definition then, such a person must be a sage or worthy. If the historical Buddha had in fact been a Sage as Sai On claimed, then for Ch'eng Hao and others to have criticized him was like Buddhists criticizing the Chinese sages.

Sai On repeatedly drove home the point that Śākyamuni was a sage, and that his actions and accomplishments in India were as great, for that time and place, as were those of the ancient Chinese sages. In the following passage, he reiterated the point about Śākyamuni's greatness, and explained what the historical Buddha would have done had he lived longer:

> . . . Even though Śākyamuni was a great sage (*ta sheng*), he was unable to correct such [evil practices] with the Three Bonds and the Five Constants.[92] He saw the trend of the times and observed the vulgar customs, and there being no choice, he purposely established situational weighing and contemplated

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[91]HZR, #14. For a similarly stated defense of Śākyamuni, see SHG, #35.

[92]The Three Bonds were the bonds between ruler and minister, father and son, and husband and wife. The Five Constants were the five constant virtues of humanity, righteousness, decorum, wisdom, and trustworthiness.

> skillful means, exhausting his mind and using up his strength to first do nothing but simply eliminate the evil of depravity. The root of the disease afflicting the customs of India was so deep that it was only after Śākyamuni had turned seventy that at last the vulgar customs had been modified and had become virtuous. Had he been permitted a longer life, then without a doubt Śākyamuni would have implemented the Three Bonds and Five Constants, his governance attaining to the same beauty and goodness as that of Shun's reign in China. This is to say that Śākyamuni's implementation of skillful means was a one-time use of situationally-dictated techniques. If the employment of situationally-dictated techniques should be considered heterodox, then Yao's relinquishing the throne to Shun, Shun's relinquishing the throne to Yü, T'ang's ousting of Chih, and Wu's chastising Chou were all [instances of using] one-time situationally-dictated techniques. How could these cases too be called heterodox?
> [. . .][93]

Again we see a consistent stance on certain key issues. The historical Buddha was a great sage, and as such, he would have eventually instituted the same moral and ethical standards as had the Chinese sages. To regard his teachings as heterodox would be to regard the actions of all the great Chinese sages as heterodox as well. The above characterization, of course, also set up a strong argument against the validity of Buddhism outside of ancient India, and indeed, the passage continues at length to make precisely this point.

Ultimately, Sai On was probably less interested in defending Śākyamuni than he was in promoting certain of his

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[93]HZR, #9.

ideas for Ryukyu. First of all, he wanted to show other Ryukyuans that the Buddhism around them was not valid in their time and place (although he did have to concede that Buddhist doctrine contained an extremely high-level teaching, which the sage Śākyamuni taught to his few capable students)[94] Defending Śākyamuni would have had no adverse consequences for Sai On since Śākyamuni was around in eighteenth-century Ryukyu. We have seen, however, that certain forms of Buddhism were well-entrenched in early-modern Ryukyu, and Sai On clearly considered Buddhism a hindrance to the spread of Confucianism.

Sai On could, of course, have attacked Buddhism without also defending the Buddha. Perhaps in part he intended the defense of Śākyamuni as a way to get his message through to Ryukyuan Buddhists. Certainly portraying Śākyamuni's actions as situational weighing seems like an effective strategy for this purpose, assuming his intended audience accepted the premise. The fact that major schools of Buddhism also portrayed Śākyamuni's teachings as skillful means, undoubtedly lent credibility to Sai On's arguments. Furthermore, Mahayana Buddhist doctrine stated that after the skillful means had done their job, they were to be discarded, leaving behind only the profound truth that could not be

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[94]One might wonder why did these few superior students not make clear Śākyamuni's "true intention"? Not surprisingly, Sai On did not address this point.

expressed in words—again, a point that Sai On worked into his argument.

Finally, by stating that Śākyamuni's actions were situational weighing, and then vigorously defending him as a great sage, Sai On was able to subtly make a number of points about situational weighing. Both Sung Confucians and those of Tokugawa Japan discussed situational weighing using examples mainly from ancient Chinese history, even though in theory, thinkers such as Nakae Tōju and Itō Jinsai acknowledged situational weighing as something anyone could perform after proper self-cultivation. Sai On, however, actually put forth an example of a non-Chinese, a "barbarian," who performed situational weighing and was therefore a sage (or was a sage and therefore performed situational weighing). Sai On, in other words, made a powerful case for the use of situational weighing outside of China, while at the same time attacking his Buddhist rivals in Ryukyu. To further understand Sai On's use of situational weighing, let us now examine the matter of cultural differences versus universal standards.

Situational Weighing and Cultural Differences

Underlying Sai On's discussion of Buddhism in ancient India was the point that the historical Buddha lived in a land with a different culture from that of China. That he could and did characterize Indian customs as evil indicates that he envisioned an overall, universal standard, and as we

have seen, this standard was that established by the ancient Chinese sages.[95] Sai On was not a cultural relativist, and he seemed to think that the basic values of the ancient Chinese sages would eventually become the norm in any society that thoroughly adopted the Confucian way (and that all societies should adopt such a way). Such a view enabled Sai On to suggest that Ryukyu, despite its small size, could be as great or greater than any other country if its people would create a proper Confucian society. In other words, although Ryukyu may lack political and military authority, its potential moral authority was not limited by its small size and lack of resources. A Ryukyuan could align himself with the way of *t'ien* with no more or less difficulty than someone from Japan, China, India, or anywhere else, and the sages' teachings were the standard by which such alignment should be judged.

To point out that Sai On saw the ancient Chinese sages' accomplishment as the universal standard, however, is not to say that he disregarded cultural differences between countries. On the contrary, he regarded the recognition and acceptance of such differences as essential for governing a country. In *Essentials of Governance,* for example, he wrote:

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[95]"The way is based on *t'ien*. It cannot be a matter of one's personal views. Thus, the sages pointed out the laws of *t'ien,* and their way is called *t'ien*'s way. They pointed out the rules of self-cultivation and their way is called *t'ien*'s way. . . ." (SHG, #35.)

> Be they large or small, all countries necessarily differ in matters of physical appearance, language, clothing, manners and customs, and so on. To want all countries to be the same is foolish.[96]
>
> The various arts and technologies of the world, though they may be said to be flawless creations of mankind, should be scrutinized by each country for use or rejection. Frankly speaking, an art that is worthy of acceptance and called beautiful in one country, might not be worthy of use in another country and called empty. If we just follow our desires and develop a liking for empty arts, it will not only be of no use to the country, but will lead people astray by fostering *ch'i*, unreasonably taxing the strength of the people's minds, and needlessly using up the country's financial resources.[97]

In the day-to-day governing of a country, cultural differences mattered greatly for Sai On, and Ryukyuans in government service would have been more keenly aware of cultural differences than their Chinese and Japanese counterparts.

Ryukyuans such as Sai On and Tei Junsoku, for example, probably had to deal with at least four languages in addition to their own. The following passage from the *Satsuma fudoki* (Satsuma gazetteer) describing Ryukyuans at the embassy in Kagoshima suggests something of the situation:

> . . . Regarding the Ryukyuans' speech, when they meet a Chinese, they speak in Chinese.

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[96]TYD, #95. One is reminded of Shō Shōken's desire to promote Japanese customs among Ryukyuans.

[97]TYD, #96. Based on other statements, this passage is probably about the importation of expensive art objects and crafts from Japan.

> When they speak to a Japanese, they are more proficient at speaking ["standard"] Japanese than the language of Satsuma. It is said that they study the Japanese language in their own country.[98]

The language of Kagoshima at the time was almost entirely unintelligible to residents of other parts of Japan, and apparently Ryukyuans studied a form of Japanese based either on the speech in and around the Shogun's court in Edo or based on formal written Japanese. Although high-ranking Satsuma officials would have understood such speech, most of the ordinary residents of Kagoshima probably did not. In China, Ryukyuans would have spoken with other officials in the so-called *k'uan-hua,* the *lingua franca* among members of the official class based on Peking speech. While in Fukien, however, the vast majority of people around them would have spoken the local language. Of course, not all Ryukyuans who went to China became proficient in speaking Chinese, and even Sai On had to revert to written communication for important matters. Formal written Chinese was yet another variety of language many Ryukyuan *shi* had to learn. And language, of course, is only one aspect of culture. In short, talk of differences between countries was no abstract matter for Ryukyuans like Sai On.

Situational weighing provided a means for Sai On to acknowledge and deal with the many ways in which Ryukyuan

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[98]Quoted in KDJ, p. 1032.

society differed from that of other countries or from the universal standard, without denying the validity of the universal standard. Similarly, situational weighing fit in perfectly with Sai On's general method of problem solving, which was first to acquire extensive, accurate data by direct observation and then to implement policies specific to the conditions that the information described (recall Goi Ranju's stress on the quality of information for effective situational weighing). To better illustrate how well-integrated situational weighing was in Sai On's overall thought, and to see how it enabled him to effectively acknowledge particular differences without denying universal standards, let us return to the discussion of the historical Buddha and compare Sai On's views with those of two like-minded Japanese Confucians, Nakae Tōju and Kumazawa Banzan.

Was Śākyamuni a Barbarian Sage?

In *Okina mondō,* Nakae Tōju wrote that Śākyamuni was a great man and worthy of respect:[99]

> . . . All along, Śākyamuni was a man of ardor (*kyōsha*) who knew the gist of the way, personally carrying his father King Suddhodana's coffin and explaining in the *Brahmajāta Sutra*

[99]Tōju's views on Śākyamuni and Buddhism changed after he wrote *Okina mondō*, and in the later part of his short life he developed an even more favorable view of Buddhism. Because Sai On would have known Tōju's views through *Okina mondō*, however, we shall use that text as the basis for Tōju's statements on Buddhism.

> that filial obedience was the method of reaching the way. . . .[100]

Here, Tōju depicted the historical Buddha as a filial son, and in Tōju's hierarchy of notables, a "man of ardor" indicated someone who, while wise and good, was two notches below the level of the Chinese sages (with a *kenjin,* or "worthy" being one notch below). The passage continued as follows:

> Though he was not ignorant of filial piety, because he did not know the entirety of filial virtue, nor its greatest secrets, he did not rise to the rank of one who operates perfectly within the mean. If he had heard of the Confucian way, he surely would have believed it respectfully and taken it to heart. . . .[101]

We see that Tōju qualified the extent of Śākyamuni's moral accomplishment. He was wise enough to have understood the Confucian way had he been instructed in it, but not so wise as to have created something on the same level of greatness in India. Significantly, neither here nor in any other passage does Tōju describe Śākyamuni's activities or teachings as situational weighing, as skillful means, or as anything similar.

In the above passage, Tōju compared the historical Buddha to a Chinese standard, and rated his level of moral development as being somewhat below that standard. Sai On, too,

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[100]NST, #29, p. 124.

[101]Ibid.

compared Śākyamuni with a Chinese standard, but he took (alleged) conditions in India into account as well. The conclusion was that Śākyamuni accomplished as much in his circumstances as the sages had in theirs. Since India, however, was farther from the standard than China to begin with, the Buddha did not get as far as the sages in absolute terms. But the degree of improvement Śākymuni fostered in India, however, was the same as that which the sages fostered in China. Furthermore, had he lived longer, Śākyamuni would have continued to bring India closer to the Chinese standard. In short, cultural differences between India and China were significant for Sai On.

Nakae Tōju directly addressed the issue of cultural differences:

> Although the distinctions between different countries and parts of the world are numerous, because they all derive from the same fundamental way of the Great Vacuity (*taikyo*), that is, the heavenly pattern, the way of the gods[102] is the same throughout the world. Therefore, though countries separated from each other have different languages and customs, because the level of people's minds is one and the same with the way of the gods, whether it be China, India, or my own coun-

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[102]Here and elsewhere in Tōju's writings, the term "way of the gods" (*shintō*) did not specifically mean "Shinto" in its modern meaning, that is, native Japanese deities. During the Tokugawa period and earlier, the word *shintō* typically meant "local religious beliefs and practices" (for example the seventeenth-century text *Ryūkyū shintō ki*, or *Record of Local Ryukyuan Religious Practices*). "Shinto" as a designation specifically for Japan's native religion(s) is mainly a post-Meiji creation.

> try—or any and all other countries—there is not the slightest difference. . . .[103]

Although Sai On certainly thought that all people had the same potential owing to having the pattern of nature within their minds, he also thought that the customs and practices of different countries affected the degree to which the inhabitants' minds would be obscured by turbid *ch'i*. The above passage continues with Tōju's evaluation of Śākyamuni and Lao Tzu:

> . . . Hence, a wise man (*tetsujin*) whose mind's eye is clear will disregard the legacy of the different conditions of different places, and evaluate on the basis of knowing that all countries are the same. In general, because sages, worthies, men of ardor, and men of caution (*kensha*) all see into their natures (*kenshō*) and establish the way with the same mind, we observe their minds and decide their level [of achievement]. Even though the languages and etiquette of Chuang Tzu, Bodhidharma, and Śākyamuni were different, the degree to which their minds saw into their natures and established their ways was the same, and so, . . . their level of achievement was the same.[104]

Sai On, however, made a clear distinction between Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu on the one hand, and the Buddha on the other:

> [. . .]
> The *shi* said with amazement, 'Śākyamuni is in the same category as Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu and the harm they did is not light. How can he compare to the sages?'
> The old man said, 'Don't you know? China is the land where the sages lived and travelled.

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[103]Ibid, p. 120.

[104]Ibid.

> Even though Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu were born and lived there, they still discussed emptiness and threw the human way into confusion. Are they not the criminals among the sages? Śākyamuni was born alone in India. There were no sages before him and no worthy people after him. He saw the violent ways of the people of India . . . [the rest of the story].[105]

Tōju considered the historical Buddha, Lao Tzu, and Chuang Tzu to have been the same *despite* cultural differences because their degree of deviation from the ideal standard was the same. Sai On, on the contrary, raised the Buddha to the level of the Confucian sages *because* of cultural differences between India and China. He saw the failure of Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu to come up to the level of the sages as a true personal shortcoming because they lived in the same cultural environment as the sages.

Thus far we have seen that Tōju's approach was to view both the Confucian standard and the human mind in absolute, universal terms. Likewise, Sai On saw the human mind as the same everywhere and regarded the sages' standard as universal. The difference is that he also saw cultural and other situational factors as coming between the mind and the standard, and therefore being significant. The concept of situational weighing enabled Sai On to reconcile any tension between the relativism of cultural factors and the universal values of the sages' standard. Nakae Tōju avoided tension

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[105]SHG, #35.

between universal and particular not by using situational weighing, but by stating that cultural differences were insignificant when compared with the universal way that was within each human mind.

Kumazawa Banzan's views on the Buddha were different still from those of Sai On and Nakae Tōju. Banzan stressed the importance of cultural differences, praised the Buddha, and strongly implied that his activities were situational weighing, but ultimately stopped short of calling him a sage:

> Question: Was Śākyamuni a barbarian (*ebisu*) sage? Was his teaching also a method in keeping with the times?
>
> Answer: His was not the way of the sages. Had he gone to China and learned from Confucius, he certainly would have had the capability of becoming a sage. His benevolent mind was broad and deep, and we can see that his physical nature was endowed with wisdom and courage as well. The country of his birth was terribly benighted, most of its inhabitants having deep [evil] desires, and was the extreme of non-benevolence (*fujin*). Because it was a terribly hot country, the meat of killed [animals] could not be set out [for long without rotting]. [So meat] was cut and sold while [the animals] were still alive. He who was of deeply benevolent mind [Śākyamuni] put forth the prohibition against killing so as to limit this [evil behavior]. Japan is a country of benevolence. Had he been born in this country, it is hard to imagine that Śākyamuni would have created the Buddhist Law. . . .[106]

For Kumazawa Banzan, the Buddha, though clearly of the same caliber as the sages, was prevented from becoming a sage by cultural differences. The evil practices of India resulted in

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[106]*Shūgi washo*, NST, #30, pp. 53-4.

Śākyamuni acting in a way that Sai On clearly would have called situational weighing, but which Banzan did not. Therefore, India's extreme situation prevented the Buddha from reaching the sages' standard.

Banzan's assessment was not as consistent as that of Sai On or Nakae Tōju. For Tōju, had the Buddha been taught by Confucius, he would have become a sage. For Banzan, a change of environment was all that would have been necessary. In other words, he strongly impled that the Buddha's "deeply benevolent mind" was manifestly that of the sages. But if the Buddha had the same mind as a sage, why was his "way" (that is, the Buddhist Law) different from that of the sages? For Sai On, Śākyamuni's mind was that of a sage, and he was a sage even though the particulars of the "way" he taught differed from that of the Chinese sages. Situational weighing served, most conveniently, both to explain how such could be the case, and as proof that such was the case. Banzan had to portray the cultural differences themselves as having been sufficiently extreme to prevent someone who was a sage from acting like a sage. For Sai On, the Buddha did act like a sage, for any sage in his set of circumstances (Confucius, for example) would have had no choice but to do what Śākyamuni did.

Significance

To fully understand the significance of Sai On's conception of Situational weighing, we must first consider one of the broader goals of all of his writings. As we have seen, Sai On wrote to inspire his fellow countrymen to take responsibility for creating an ideal society. He urged them not to rely on destiny or *t'ien,* but on their own effort combined with the knowledge available in Confucian texts. Even Sai On's autobiography was a hortative text, and we shall see more examples of this aspect of his writing in Chapter Nine. If we think through the implications of the three views we have examined above from Sai On's perspective, it will be clear how potentially empowering his own formulation was.

Had Sai On taken Tōju's view, and regarded cultural differences and other country-specific circumstances as insignificant, then the Ryukyu of his day would have been well below the sages' standard. In the next chapter we shall see examples of certain of Sai On's policies, such as setting up agricultural villages for unemployed *shi,* that were clearly contrary to ordinary Confucian standards. Sai On recognized that such measures were not ideal, but he justified them as essential given Ryukyu's particular geographic and economic conditions. Had he not regarded Ryukyu's particular circumstances as significant, and measured

himself, his government, and his society solely against an ideal, absolute, universal standard, the results would hardly have been inspiring or encouraging. It was probably not only for rhetorical effect that Sai On wrote of his great sympathy for Śākyamuni, for it seems that he saw himself in an analogous situation within Ryukyu. It is therefore not surprising that Sai On was so intent on stressing both situational weighing and the Buddha's sageliness.[107]

Had Sai On taken Kumazawa Banzan's view, the situation for Ryukyu would have been hopeless. Regardless of how hard Ryukyuans labored to become sages or worthies, they would never have been able to reach the standard, and their efforts would, for all practical purposes, be in vain. The adverse circumstances of their country would have forever held them back from sagehood as was the case with Śākyamuni in India.

Taking the view that he did, however, Sai On empowered Ryukyuans like himself (that is, Ryukyu's elite) to create a society that could eventually become as great for its size as was ancient China under the sage kings. The universal standard, the ideal way, could be achieved, but the achievement would first require temporary, provisional measures to

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[107]Sai On was clearly cognizant of the important part he played in Ryukyuan society, and the unprecedented presentation of an autobiography is but one example. The final passage of *Words of An Old Man* is worded such that the old man clearly appeared as a latter day Confucius (whose teachings differed from Confucius' owing only to different circumstances).

hold society together. Then, as Confucian learning spread throughout the *shi* class and eventually even to the common people, evil customs would be rectified, more people would utilize productive technologies (for more people would understand the pattern of nature), society would advance, and the provisional measures would no longer be necessary.[108] The word *ch'üan* meant situational weighing in typical Confucian discourse, but in other contexts, it meant political power and authority. In a country lacking such power and authority vis-a-vis its larger neighbors, Sai On turned to the only sort of authority Ryukyu could possess—moral authority. In so doing, he found the concept of situational weighing empowering both for himself and for his society.

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[108]Itokazu has written on Sai On's view of situational weighing. Making reference to the Ch'ing scholar Tai Chen, Itokazu sees as normative a thought process whereby one ultimately concludes when faced with evidence of a universe in constant, random change that situational weighing and the standard are two different things entirely. Of Sai On, he wrote: "Sai On's theory of situational weighing was ultimately no different from that of Ch'eng and Chu. But within Ryukyu's unusual relationships of subservience to both Japan and China after 1609, we can see how his thought tended to incline toward giving weight to situational weighing. But that [Sai On's theory] did not develop in the direction of Tai Chen's . . . is where we find both the special characteristics and the limitations of Sai On's Ch'eng-Chu Confucianism (*Shushigaku*)." See, "Sai On no ken shisō: sono tokushitsu to genkai," Ryūkyū hōgen kenkyū kurabu sanjū shūnen kinenkai, eds., *Ryūkyū hōgen ronsō* (Naha: Ryūkyū hōgen ronsō kankō i'inkai, 1987), p. 39.

CHAPTER EIGHT:
REINING THE GALLOPING HORSE

Having described the key role of situational weighing in Sai On's thought, I now examine certain social and economic problems of Sai On's time and his attempted solutions to those problems. Sai On's philosophical essays were general discussions of principles, and only rarely made explicit reference to Ryukyu. In many of his other essays, however, particularly *One Man's Views,* Sai On discussed the present situation of Ryukyu, defended and explained his policies, and urged future leaders to follow particular courses of action. Sai On wrote all of these Ryukyu-specific essays in *sōrōbun,* indicating a wider intended audience than in the case of the philosophical essays.

There are no extant writings in which Sai On directly discussed his social and economic policies in terms of the theory of situational weighing. He did, however, explain his rationale for certain policies, particularly when there had been opposition to those policies. Many of these policies clearly deviated from either standard past Ryukyuan practice or from the norms that most Confucians adhered to. In explaining such policies, Sai On naturally had to address the

issue of why circumstances dictated unconventional measures. In such cases, Sai On was in effect defending his application of situational weighing, albeit to a wide audience that included many who were unfamiliar with the subtleties of Confucian philosophy. He therefore needed a straightforward, even pragmatic explanation in order to prevail upon his audience. Here, I shall examine a representative variety of Sai On's social and economic policies, paying particular attention to those which involved unconventional solutions.

An Acute Sense of Dilemma

Liquor, Grain, and Prostitution

Essentials of Governance and *One Man's Views* are complementary writings in that the former text described the theory of governing based on Confucian philosophy, and the latter text described in detail Sai On's specific recommendations on how best to govern Ryukyu. In both essays, he used the metaphor of a man on a galloping horse trying to guide it with rotten reins to express the dilemmas and difficulties inherent in governing. The passage in *One Man's Views* reads:

> As for the true principles of the way of government, in order to give an impetus to the production of grain, the sale of *shōchū* [a type of strong liquor] is allowed. But we also have the duty to see that the custom of drunkenness does not arise. For this reason, even the ancient sages said that the way of government, which we put care and effort into carry-

> ing out both day and night, is like reining a galloping horse with a rotten rope.[1]

Sai On had argued at length with other members of the government that the sale of *shōchū*, as well as the manufacture of certain other products based on grains, must be permitted in order to provide an incentive for the peasants to produce grain above and beyond that needed to pay taxes (for their own consumption, the peasants ate mainly sweet potatoes). Should the peasants not produce the grain, there would be no reserve buffer in times of famine. On the other hand, Sai On argued at length about the great harm to the country that widespread drunkenness would cause.[2] In the passage above, he acknowledged his awareness of the dilemma posed by these conflicting interests.

We have seen that both Shō Shōken and Sai On were concerned over what they perceived as the adverse social and moral effects of prostitution. Sai On's particular worry was that prostitution would corrupt the ethical principles that undergirded the early-modern household and lineage system. We saw that Shō Shōken was unable to totally prohibit prostitution, even in theory, owing to Ryukyu's diplomatic situation.

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[1]HMG, #23. See also TYD, #118.

[2]See HMG, #18-21 for a discussion of the harmful effects of drunkenness. See #25-26 for a discussion of the cause and effect relationships between the manufacture of *shōchū*, noodles, and tofu and grain production. The passage stating the dilemma (#23) is in between these two sets of passages, and serves as a transition.

Indeed, he actually established an official brothel district to serve visitors from Japan and China (although urban Ryukyuans also frequented the district).

In terms of Confucian moral, social, and ethical standards, prostitution was an unacceptable practice. Sai On clearly argued that the government had the duty to rectify improper customs, and we have seen that his government did so. The *kujichō,* indicate that prostitution was outlawed in rural areas, and that reasonably strict control measures were in place there. In *One Man's Views,* Sai On argued as follows about the brothels Shō Shōken established:

> Speaking of prostitutes, their behavior should be regarded as a hindrance to ethics and a severe obstacle to carrying out the way of government. As for Naha, however, since it is a port where various ships gather, if no prostitutes were placed there, I am afraid that all sorts of problems might develop. Thus, if one thinks the matter over, the placing of prostitutes in Naha since former times should actually be considered to promote carrying out the way of government, and this point of view should be given ample consideration.[3]

This passage was a statement of situational weighing cast in simple, concrete terms. The standard, of course, was that prostitution is evil and should be prohibited. The circumstances of the port of Naha, however, were such that the elimination of prostitutes there would have made dealing with Chinese and Japanese envoys and officials, their entourages,

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[3]Ibid, #30.

their ships' crews, as well as perhaps the crews of Ryukyuan ships most difficult, for it is hard to imagine that they would not have sought some sort of sexual outlet. We have seen, for example, what sort of disruption a disgruntled group of Chinese sailors and merchants caused during the *hanga jiken*. By maintaining the official brothels in Naha, the government promoted limited prostitution, but in Ryukyu's circumstances, to do otherwise might have resulted in even greater harm to "ethics and the way of government." In Sai On's time and place, the standard could not be fully applied with respect to prostitution. The official brothels, therefore, were a case of situational weighing.

Economic and Social Problems and Policies

Demographic Changes

Most of the social and economic problems that Sai On dealt with had existed since the seventeenth century. By the time he began his political career, however, some of them, such as the impoverishment of the *shi* class had reached crisis proportions. Most of the social and economic problems that Sai On dealt with were related to demographic changes. Population statistics for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries indicate that the total population of Ryukyu increased steadily. The total population in 1729 was roughly

173,969, which was a 64% increase from 1654.[4] Such an increase is not surprising considering Shō Shōken's policies to open new lands to cultivation, and considering the spread of the sweet potato. The increase, however, was not at all even. Rural areas barely showed a small increase, while the population of the cities rose at a disproportionate rate. According to Dana and Takara, the population of urban areas rose 140% over the same period, or 2.7 times the rate of total increase. Itokazu's figures indicate an increase of 90%. Itokazu specifies a higher 1654 urban population figure than Takara and Dana, but his ending figure of 32,821 for 1729 is almost identical with theirs.[5]

There is no doubt that by the time Sai On became a member of the Council of Three, the urban population had at least doubled from what it had been a century previously.[6] Of

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[4]For statistics on early-modern population trends, see Dana Masayuki, "Shizoku, machikata mondai to Sai On," *Kinsei no mondai shiriizu 1: Sai On to sono jidai* (Naha: Richūsha, 1984), pp. 52-3; Takara, *Ōkokushi*, pp. 306-311; Itokazu, "Juyō," in *Okinawa bunka*, pp. 2-3. Takara derived many of his figures from Dana's earlier research, and the figures both Takara and Dana provide are the same. Itokazu's figures, however, differ somewhat, although they show the same general trends.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Itokazu claims that the rate of growth of the urban population had significantly slowed by 1690, owing to tough measures to prevent migration to the cities by the government. He puts the 1690 urban total at 30,340, and the 1729 total at 32,832. Takara and Dana, however, put the 1690 total at 24,032 and the 1729 total at 32,823. The latter figures suggest that the rate of increase continued unabated into the early eighteenth century (urban population figures from the middle and late eighteenth centuries are not available). I am not able to say whose

(continued...)

particular importance is the fact that roughly half of the urban population consisted of *shi*, and the number of *shi* shot up in the early eighteenth century after the second *kafu* registration. In 1654, *shi* comprised only 3% of Ryukyu's population, while in 1729, they comprised 8%.[7] To put this figure in perspective, it was roughly the same as the percentage of samurai in the total Japanese population (although this figure varied considerably from *han* to *han*), and Chinese officialdom at this time was only slightly more than 1% of the total population.

Sai On was faced with a large and growing *shi* population, a large percentage of which was unable to find employment in government posts. There was also a rural labor shortage, for as we have seen in Chapter Two, a major reason for the increase in urban population was migration from the countryside. With more land under cultivation than ever before and a growing sugar industry, the need for more rural labor increased throughout the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Satsuma faced a similar demographic problem, and had a disproportionately large samurai population. It alleviated the problem by sending many lower ranking

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[6](...continued)
figures are more accurate, but for our purposes, the trajectory of urban population growth between 1654 and 1729 is less important than the end result, on which all are in agreement.

[7]Dana, "Machikata," pp. 52-3.

samurai to rural areas to support themselves through agriculture, while permitting them to retain their samurai status. Sai On ended up implementing similar measures for the unemployed Ryukyuan *shi*.

Creating Jobs and Employing the *Shi*

During the years Sai On served as *kokushi*, the royal government began to address some of the above-mentioned problems. Although, it prohibited rural migration to the cities in 1654, the prohibition does not seem to have been well-enforced. In the early years of Shō Kei's reign, the royal government stepped up its enforcement measures, and a *Kyūyō* entry for 1718 states, "People of the various districts were strictly prohibited from moving their residences to Shuri, Naha, Tomari, or Kumemura."[8] According to Itokazu such measures were effective in stemming the growth of urban population by 1728.[9] At about this same time, certain relatively low-level jobs traditionally done by commoners became available to *shi*. The *Kyūyō* points out, for example, that in 1720, "For the first time, the rank-holding *shi* of Shuri were employed to serve in attendance, guarding the royal castle."[10]

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[8]KY, #723.

[9]"Juyō," in *Okinawa bunka*, p. 3.

[10]KY, #751.

Opening Up Commoner Occupations to the *Shi*

While slowing the urban population growth and adding a few more jobs to those available for *shi* were undoubtedly of some benefit, they did not solve the basic problems of widespread *shi* unemployment and a shortage of labor in the countryside. The next major move came in 1725, when the government allowed the *shi* to perform virtually the whole range of commoner occupations without losing their status. A *Kyūyō* passage describes the matter in some detail:

> For the first time, *shi* households were permitted to work as artists, cooks, artisans, currency overseers, ship's captains, craftsmen, tribute cargo officials, and overseas embassy supervisors. According to previous regulations, for *shi* to do such work was demeaning, so commoners were to do it. Moreover, the *shi* themselves would have been too ashamed to do such things. But the number [of *shi*] in extreme poverty became great. Unfortunately, the number of *shi* households has expanded at present, and as the time when [their ancestors] engaged in official service grew ever more distant, they experienced tremendous difficulty in their lives. Allowing them to undertake such work was not done only for this reason, but also so that impoverished *shi* would apply themselves to such work, thereby properly governing their households and being of use to the country.[11]

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[11]KY, #791. Other sources such as the *Articles of Instruction* indicate that the *shi* were also permitted to work as merchants. One article in the *Keitoza kimochō* of 1730 reads as follows: "In the past, the various *shi* who relied upon [commoner] occupations were demoted [to commoners], but recently, they have been permitted to work at whatever occupations they see fit without affecting their [*shi*] lineage." A later addendum qualified this freedom of occupation somewhat, saying: "Because mendicants, preachers, pig butchers, and beggars are lowly occupations, if any *shi* engages in them, he shall be made a commoner" (OKS, 6, p. 55).

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This passage clearly indicates that many whose fathers or more distant ancestors had served in government were unemployed and impoverished. It also points out that the *shi* themselves were reluctant to undertake commoner employment—a reluctance Sai On tried later to overcome by stressing that any type of work could be "of use to the country" and thus a form of public service. The final sentence is particularly important, for it suggests that poverty was threatening the stability or viability of *shi* households. For *shi* to work at commoner occupations, while not ideal and not the standard, was preferable to their being unable to "properly regulate their households," one of the eight steps in the *Great Learning*.

To what extent this major 1725 policy change resulted in *shi* actually taking up commoner occupations is hard to say. First of all, there is no indication that even commoner occupations were available in abundance in urban areas, and the change in regulations apparently made no provisions for *shi* moving out to the countryside to become farmers. Furthermore, there must have been strong resistance, even among those *shi* pressed by poverty, to working as commoners. Those who did take up such work surely lost status among their peers who did not, and they may also have felt that by working like

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[11](...continued)
The need for the addendum suggests that some *shi* did in fact pursue such occupations.

commoners they would lose any chance to eventually work as government functionaries. After all, if *shi* did the same work as commoners, what was really to distinguish them from commoners other than the legal technicality of having a *kafu* on file at the Keitoza?

In the *Articles of Instruction,* Sai On addressed the question of how *shi* in commoner occupations did in fact differ significantly from commoners:

> There are very few administrative posts available in this country, and the number of *shi* increases every year, so there are many who cannot serve in an official capacity. *Shi,* however, are conspicuously different from commoners in certain respects. . . [12]

Although a *shi* may earn a living in the same way as a commoner, his *shi* status carried with it the added responsibility to be an exemplar of proper behavior. The *shi* were the ones who would largely determine the moral quality of Ryukyuan society:

> . . . With this [conspicuous difference] in mind, if, while constantly thinking of loyalty above all else, *shi* would faithfully strive in every way to be concerned with the country's customs, this is national service, which is not to be taken lightly. As we all know anyway, if customs degenerate, [the situation] will naturally corrupt all of our descendants. With this thought well in mind, placing importance on the duty of the *shi,* one should carry out the righteous path in all matters.[13]

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[12]GKJ, #3.

[13]Ibid.

By the time the *Articles of Instruction* was written, at least some of the *shi* had taken up work as merchants and craftsmen. It is possible that large numbers had done so, for the section describing the obligations of those working as merchants and craftsmen seems mainly to have been addressed to *shi*. The passage further reveals that at least some *shi* felt resentment over having to do such work:

> The various craftsmen and those who operate shops are all engaged in making a living. All things considered, however, this work is [also] useful for the country. Such being the case, even members of the *shi* class who work at crafts they are adept at or who distribute goods via operating a shop are doing work that is useful for the country. Such work, then, is national service, and is nothing to be bitter about. With this point in mind, it is essential for each household to work hard at their occupations and raise their children. The various members of the *shi* class, along with commoners, produce goods that are useful for the country whatever they may be, and they should be concerned with their work.[14]

Not only had the royal government permitted *shi* to work at commoner occupations, but in the *Articles of Instruction,* Sai On encouraged them to do so, and to do so without bitterness. This encouragement of *shi* to work at "commoner" occupations was another instance of applied situational weighing.

Promoting Commerce

If *shi* were to find work as merchants and craftsmen, there would need to be a thriving commercial economy. Itokazu

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[14]Ibid, #6.

points out that the division of Okinawa's population into urban dwellers living in Shuri, Naha, Tomari and Kumemura, and the rest of the population who engaged exclusively in agriculture, served as a stimulus to commerce because it separated producers and consumers for many items. This separation in turn necessitated improved distribution systems. He points out that small shops were first established in Shuri in 1715, and by 1728, established businesses were in continuous operation. By 1742, the government found it necessary to build a formal, fenced market and business district so as to be better able to regulate commerce. In Naha, the growth of commerce was even more pronounced.[15]

Itokazu argues that there were three essential preconditions for the widespread establishment of Ch'eng-Chu Confucianism in Ryukyu: 1) the establishment of an official class to serve as custodians of the teachings; 2) consciousness of "*kokka*" (country, state, nation); and 3) the spread of a commercial economy.[16] Regarding the third item, Itokazu points out that Ch'eng-Chu Confucianism was a highly "rational" (*gōriteki*) teaching, unsuited to tradition-bound, relatively closed-minded rural areas. It was commercialized urban areas, which Itokazu characterizes as "rational,"

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[15]"Juyō," in *Okinawa bunka*, p. 3.

[16]"Juyō," in *Okinawa bunka*, p. 2; "Juyō," in *Ti-i-chiai chung-liu li-shih kuan-hsi kuo-chi hsüeh-shu hui-i lun-wen-chi*, p. 51.

"practical," and "realistic," that afforded the intellectual environment most amenable to Ch'eng-Chu Confucian thought.[17]

Itokazu's depiction of the relationship between commerce and Ch'eng-Chu Confucianism is quite different from those who would claim that Confucians or Confucian teachings contained an inherent bias against commerce and the activities of merchants. I examine this issue in broader comparative perspective later in the chapter, but for now let us note that in Sai On's writings we see no indication whatsoever that he considered the activity of merchants to be any less economically or morally important than the work of other occupations, as the above passage from the *Articles of Instruction* has already suggested. For Sai On, merchants performed the essential task of distributing the country's material wealth, and in a country composed of numerous islands, rugged terrain, and with consumers and producers of many products separated from each other, it is not difficult to imagine reasons for this view.

Sai On did not merely acknowledge in writing that merchants were valuable assets for society, he worked for a major policy change directly aimed at stimulating commerce. In *One Man's Views* he described the change as follows:

> In the past, four or five *kanme* of silver were collected as a tax on merchants, but the merchants were not able to do business as they

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[17]"Juyō," in *Okinawa bunka*, p. 4.

> saw fit and they gradually declined. Twenty years ago, the tax was removed, and they were told to work as they wanted. This change encouraged merchants, and the number of people engaged in trades increased and expanded. Indeed, along with those whose hands are skilled at crafts, various products are made and sold, and this flourishing of trades is good, needless to say, and a treasure for society.[18]

According the *Kyūyō*, the elimination of taxes on individuals engaged in commerce took place in 1733.[19] Sai On's overall approach to improving Ryukyu's economy involved increasing wealth through more efficient and innovative use of natural resources on the one hand, and creating jobs by reducing or eliminating government-imposed restrictions (including taxes in this case) and promoting entrepreneurship on the other. He knew that permitting *shi* to work at commoner occupations would not solve the problem of their poverty unless there were in fact jobs for them to take. Fostering the growth of commerce was one of the approaches Sai On took to make such jobs available.

The *Moai* Program

The same year merchant taxes were lifted, the royal government initiated the *moai* program to help needy *shi*, and historians commonly attribute the idea to Sai On. The *Kyūyō*

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[18]HMG, #24.

[19]KY, #21.

contains a rather lengthy description of the program, the first half of which describes the rationale behind it:

> In our country, farmers, artisans, and merchants each work hard at their occupations and save up wealth. Though they may encounter drought or cold, they have the capacity to guard against [the harm caused by] such things. As for the households of *shi* and ministers, those who are appointed as *jitō* or to other stipended positions deeply receive the king's benevolence and are able to perform the work of *shi*, which is to oversee customs, ceremony, and laws. Those who lack such [stipended positions] lack only material assets. . . .[20]

The work of *shi*, in other words, was to oversee customs, ceremony, and laws. While government officials were clearly in a position to perform such work, the passage suggests that those without stipends, too, had at least the non-material qualification to perform the work of *shi*. A *shi* serving as *jitō* and an unemployed *shi* were much the same except that the former had sufficient material wealth to enable him to actually "perform the work of *shi*." All *shi* (in theory or in wishful thinking) possessed the moral attributes of their status, but not all possessed sufficient wealth. The task at hand, then, was to provide impoverished *shi* with the means to get started in some sort of productive work so that by supporting themselves materially they could also "perform the work of *shi*."

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[20]KY, #982.

The remainder of the passage describes the details of the program:

> . . . Therefore, starting with the *sessei* and members of the Council of Three, the *moai* method has been established. Those with *jitō* lands or stipends set aside some of their rice, and it is either stored in a warehouse, or each year, twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty *koku* is sent directly to a needy household. If each [needy] household could be assisted [like this], then in less than four or five years they would be able to acquire enough [surplus] wealth to use as capital. Therefore, this program was begun.[21]

The idea behind the *moai* system was apparently not to provide minimal assistance simply to allow an impoverished *shi* household to barely get by. Instead, substantial quantities (by Ryukyuan standards) of aid would go to a needy household for four or five years, and would enable that household not only to get by, but to acquire a surplus of wealth to use in establishing some sort of productive occupation. The household would ultimately become self-sufficient and no longer need aid.

The *Shi* Take Up Farming

The measures described thus far were still insufficient to relieve *shi* poverty, and as long as *shi* remained in urban areas, there was little the government could do to actively address the labor shortage in the countryside. Sai On's most radical policy did directly address the rural labor shortage.

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[21]Ibid.

The exact date of the start of the *yadori* (O. *yaadui*) program is not clear, but it was at roughly the same time as the other measures discussed above. There were numerous variations in the details from case to case, but basically the program involved groups of *shi* moving to a location in the countryside and setting up an agricultural village. Those *shi* who took up farming were known by the term *kyojūnin* (roughly, "resident"), in contrast to the local peasant inhabitants who were called *jiinchu* (roughly, "people of the land").[22]

The central government typically arranged for such groups to rent land that local peasants preferred not to cultivate or were unable to cultivate. Often, of course, these lands were marginal, but sometimes good land was also available, especially to those who were among the first to settle in a particular village. When land became available for use by *shi*, prospective residents would be recruited from the urban areas.[23] Though the *shi* farmers rented their land from the village it was a part of (or from the "owners" in the case of *shiakechi*), they paid no taxes to the government. It was therefore possible for the *kyojūnin* to make a living, though

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[22]Tasato Yūtetsu is the leading authority on the *yadori* program and related policies. See his article in ODJ, 3, pp. 730-31, and *Okinawa ni okeru kaitaku shūraku no kenkyū*, comprising the whole of *Hōbungaku kiyō, shigaku-chirigaku hen*, no. 23 (March, 1980).

[23]Tasato, *Kaitaku shūraku*, p. 68. Dana points out that the formalities involved for *shi* in applying to become farmers were rather complex and costly ("Mibunsei," p. 54).

there is no indication that such farming generally provided for much more than basic subsistence.

The *kyojūnin* viewed their agricultural work as temporary, and almost universally expressed a strong desire to return to their urban communities. They were legally permitted to do so, but the poverty that drove them out of the capital area also prevented them from returning in most cases, and on the contrary, the number of *yadori* villages increased throughout the early-modern period.[24] The *yadori* villages were comprised entirely of *shi,* and they lived separately from commoners. Some *yadori* villages comprised their own separate political unit and others were attached to an existing village. Even in the latter case, however, the commoner and *shi* residents lived apart and rarely interacted.[25] So strong in fact was *shi* pride and consciousness, that it was not until after the Second World War that there began to be any significant intermarriage between residents of former *yadori* villages and other Okinawans.[26]

The political and religious organization of the *yadori* villages differed from commoner villages. *Yadori* villages,

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[24]ODJ, 3, p. 730; Tasato, *Kaitaku shūraku*, pp. 74-5. Dana points out that the *kyojūnin* typically farmed land of poor quality and that their lives were often materially worse off than the commoner farmers in nearby villages ("Mibunsei," p. 54).

[25]Tasato, *Kaitaku shūraku*, pp. 73-5.

[26]Dana, "Mibunsei," p. 54.

for example, had no *utaki, noro,* or other official institutions of the native religion.[27] By the end of the early-modern period, of the roughly 600 villages in Okinawa, about 138 were *yadori* villages, and most were concentrated in the districts near the capital. Sai On pointed out in *One Man's Views* that the program had permitted previously unemployed *shi* to eke out a living, but he also expressed concern that eventually the population of rural areas would grow to the point that *shi* from Shuri would not be able to make a living by farming.[28] In evaluating Sai On's efforts to employ the *shi,* Dana summarizes his accomplishments as follows:

> Sai On's policy of allowing *shi* to engage in agriculture and forcing impoverished members of the upper class to become self-sufficient was, on the one hand, directly connected with controlling the urban population. On the other hand, having [the impoverished *shi*] go out to the countryside augmented the rural labor force and increased agricultural production. Indeed, it is even fair to say that this program furthered the government's forest management policies.[29] There is the view that Sai On and others aimed at such a policy of killing two birds or three birds with one stone, but putting aside the question of whether or not they foresaw such a result from the start, it was indeed the final outcome.[30]

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[27]Ibid, p. 76.

[28]HMG, #41.

[29]Generally, the extra labor provided by the *yadori shi* enabled nearby peasants to spend more time developing woodlands.

[30]"Shizoku," pp. 58-9.

As Situational Weighing

Sai On clearly stated his view that social status should determine one's general type of occupation. In *Essentials of Governance,* for example, he paraphrased *Mencius* and wrote, "Those above should labor with their minds while those below should labor with their physical strength. This situation is the natural way of *t'ien.*"[31] He also said, "The officials are to be regarded as the means for governing a country and are thus fundamentally different from peasants, craftsmen, and merchants."[32] Not only Sai On, but most other Confucians as well, saw hierarchy as a principle of nature and thought it natural that social and occupational organization would reflect such a principle. Those at the top of society should work as government officials, while the common people should labor at more simple tasks.

For *shi* to work as government officials and only as government officials was clearly the standard in early-modern Ryukyu, as well as in Sai On's mind. Furthermore, until 1725 the standard of *shi* working only as government functionaries or officials was encoded in law. The royal government faced a dilemma on this point, however, for only a few decades after the *shi* class had become officially established in 1689-90, it had become clear that the majority would not be

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[31]TYD, #6.

[32]Ibid, #10.

able to be gainfully employed as government officials (and the royal did not have funds to support unemployed *shi*). Even prior to 1725, there was some relaxation of the strict rules that had been established in the seventeenth century. For example, in 1718, the Hyōjōsho announced that while in the past, *fudai shi* who had become very low ranking officials were made *shinzan shi,* the policy was henceforth to be discontinued. It also permitted *shi* to work at certain commoner occupations, but with the condition that the person thus employed would not count as a generation in his *kafu*. If any of his heirs were ever to return to "proper" work, they would then be recorded as the "next" generation.[33] Dana reports that in seventeenth and early eighteenth-century *kafu,* there were frequent blanks, such as "_____*-niya*" or "_____*-chikudun,*" probably representing persons engaged in commoner occupations. Later, however, such people began to be inscribed in the *kafu,* probably because of the 1725 policy change.[34]

The principle that *shi* should ideally not engage in commoner occupations, however, continued to be reflected in official pronouncements until the end of the kingdom. The basic message of these pronouncements was that during the time they were doing the work of commoners, *shi* were to

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[33]Dana, "Mibunsei," p. 51.

[34]Ibid, p. 52.

attire themselves as commoners so as not to publicly "advertise" the gap between the ideal and the actual. A 1742 law, for example, prohibited the wives of *shi* from wearing silver hairpins (the primary outward sign of their status) when going to the marketplace to engage in commerce.[35]

Sai On undoubtedly recognized that for otherwise unemployed *shi* to work at commoner occupations was necessary under the circumstances, and we have seen that he specifically encouraged such a course of action. This position forced Sai On not to regard the "commoner" work as being the *shi*'s real or primary occupation, but rather a *means* by which impoverished *shi* could acquire the material basis to engage in their primary occupation. As for what this primary occupation was, we find a contradiction in Sai On's texts. In *Essentials of Governance,* this occupation was clearly that of a government official. In the *Articles of Instruction,* however, it was to be a general moral exemplar for society, whether employed as an official or not. From the perspective of either definition of a *shi*'s primary occupation, however, work as a farmer, craftsman, merchant, cook, and so on would have been but a means to an end. The difference was that for a *shi*-as-official, the temporary nature of situational weighing would dictate that eventually the person (or his heirs) would give up commoner employment and again find work

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[35]Ibid, pp. 52-4.

as an official. The *shi*-as-moral exemplar, however, could continue pursuing commoner work indefinitely, provided the goal of such work was to support his moral self-cultivation.

Of course, the above conception of the *shi* class was an idealistic vision, even if working like commoners could be regarded as a case of situational weighing. In actual practice, it seems that many of the *shi* who engaged in commoner work were bitter, looked down upon, terribly poor, and generally miserable. The case of the *yadori shi* illustrates, however, that the social prestige of being a *shi*, no matter how lowly and poor, was an intense source of pride not only for early-modern Ryukyuans, but even for some of their post-kingdom descendants. One final point to keep in mind with respect to the *yadori* program in particular is that certain Japanese *han* such as Tosa and Satsuma permitted low-ranking, impoverished samurai to live in the countryside and work at agriculture without official loss of status. Ryukyu was not unique in this regard, even if it was atypical.

Sai On's Economic Thought

Sai On's writings, particularly his Ryukyu-specific writings, reveal a great deal concerning his economic thought. He conceived of certain economic principles at work in society, and saw government policy as facilitating economic effort that accorded with such principles. Significantly, he tended not to see the government as the primary

regulator of economic activity. Instead, the economic laws themselves, because they were part of the pattern of nature, would determine the character of economic relationships. Government restrictions or other regulations that would hamper the free operation of these principles were particularly harmful, and much of Sai On's activity in the economic realm was to oppose and eliminate what he considered artificial and harmful government restrictions on economic activity.

The Money Supply and Prices

The supply of money was a constant problem for early-modern Ryukyu (as it was for Japan during the same period). Coins were always in short supply, and at most times, Chinese, Japanese, and Ryukyuan (*hatome sen*) coins all circulated in Ryukyu. I shall not go into the rather complex matter of Ryukyuan coinage, but the important point is that Sai On was well aware that fluctuation in the money supply was a major factor in fluctuations in price. In *Essentials of Governance,* he stated: "If money is plentiful relative to goods, the price will necessarily rise; if goods are plentiful relative to money, the price will necessarily fall. This is the basic truth of all mercantile activity."[36]

Sai On applied this principle in taking a stand contrary to most other high officials within the royal government. At

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[36]TYD, #86.

least from Sai On's own account, their position was generally to try to control rising grain prices by prohibiting the manufacture of products such as *shōchū*, noodles, and tofu when prices were high. The reasoning seems to have been that because such products were made from grain (or beans), their manufacture increased the demand for grain and thus drove up the price. At some point during Sai On's tenure in office, grain prices apparently rose sharply and the Council of Fifteen asked repeatedly that he impose a ban on such items. Sai On, however, argued that a ban would have no beneficial effect, because the rise in price was caused by a recent influx of money:

> . . . Though strictly prohibited, for the last seven years silver coins have been illegally brought in [to Ryukyu] from Satsuma. In the spring and in the fall, ships from Satsuma have brought in 40,000 or 50,000 *kan* of *zeni* [copper cash] to circulate in Shuri, Naha, and Tomari, and the price of grain, not to mention everything else, has recently gone up.
> . . . Although I repeatedly said that I wanted to insist on allowing these occupations, nobody would agree with me. There being nothing I could do, therefore, I imposed the ban.[37]

This passage is significant not only for what is shows of Sai On's economic views, but also for what it shows of the limitations on his authority. While immensely powerful in Ryukyu, Sai On was not a dictator.

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[37]HMG, #26. The passage concludes with Sai On explaining that prices did not in fact go down, and that the ban became "a hindrance to the true principles of the way of government."

Demand Stimulates Increased Productivity

Sai On had a favorable view of consumption and demand, and often argued that they should be encouraged. He saw increased demand for products as the major factor in stimulating increased production and encouraging economic growth. He expressed his general view in *Essentials of Governance* with respect to demand for grain stimulating increased production:

> If the general public competes to make use of the various grains, the peasants will benefit. If the power [of demand to stimulate production] is not encouraged and the general public does not use [as much grain as it could], the peasants will tire of their labor and surely abandon their duty. It is this way for all agricultural products.[38]

Sai On did not see the amount of wealth in society as being a fixed quantity (which is particularly noteworthy for someone in a small, resource-poor island country). By intelligent application of techniques based on natural laws, humans could greatly increase the productivity of almost any endeavor, but the common people needed an incentive to do so. Demand for more goods helped provide this incentive.

Returning to the discussion of the ban on *shōchū*, noodles, and tofu, we find that Sai On's favorable view of demand and consumption was a key element in his argument:

> Prior to twenty years ago, even in times of famine, the manufacture of *shōchū*, noodles,

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[38]TYD, #80.

> and tofu was consistently prohibited, and more than 50,000 *koku* of rice, barley, wheat, and beans remained shut up within the earth,[39] and although this situation caused harm, nobody realized it. Just as I explained above for merchants when their trades were sometimes prohibited, the farmers produce very little grain other than the amount needed to pay taxes and provide for official stipends. Throughout the country, they have come to be content with sweet potatoes [for their own consumption]. As a result, when a typhoon arose twenty years ago and destroyed the sweet potato crop, a great famine arose throughout society. Needless to say, the treasury was extremely hard-pressed and although people starved to death, there was nothing that could be done to save them. Indeed, even in normal times, the Department of Finance has had shortages and needed to take out loans to get by. Because since that time, the free production of *shōchū*, noodles, and tofu has not been prohibited at all, the potential of 50,000 plus *koku* of grain has in fact been produced, and even though the sweet potato crop was damaged by a typhoon, there was much grain on hand. Indeed, although the treasury did have to distribute most of its famine relief rice, there was no major problem. . . .[40]

The increased demand provided by the manufacture of the three items stimulated an increase in grain production above minimal levels. The increased productivity created an essential buffer against famine. Here, Sai On presented a scenario in which the consumption of nonessential food items served to keep overall food production at levels sufficient

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[39]In other words, this amount of crops could have been produced but were not.

[40]HMG, #25.

to sustain the population in the event of the failure or destruction of the sweet potato crop.

Removal of Government Restrictions

Sai On did not oppose government regulation of economic practice per se, but he clearly felt that in practice, society would be better off if economic forces such as supply and demand would operate freely in the marketplace. He explained the general principle as follows: "Regarding local products, no matter what the item may be, it is certain that to the extent that buyers are many, more items will be produced. If there are few buyers, then certainly, few items will be produced. . . ."[41] He then illustrated this point with an actual case in which the government had severely limited the number of "pig butchers" (here probably meaning pig farmers). The restriction resulted in a shortage of pigs when the Chinese investiture delegation arrived to invest Shō Kei:

> . . . Twenty years ago, there was only one pig butcher apiece for Shuri and Naha, and there were not many pigs in rural areas. Thus, when the investiture ships came, twenty pigs a day had to be slaughtered to feast the Chinese delegates, but there were not enough pigs in the whole country. Pigs were brought in from Yoron-tō, Ōshima, Tokunoshima, and Kikaijima, and at last, the demand was barely met.[42]

In order to increase production, the government lifted

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[41]Ibid, #28.

[42]Ibid.

restrictions on the number of pig butchers, with the following effect:

> . . . Twenty years ago, however, in order to increase pig production, we declared that even if there be several tens of pig butchers in Shuri and Naha, they can practice their trade as they would like, and the number of pigs has increased. Now, even if it were necessary to slaughter forty or fifty pigs a day, the demand could be met from the countryside near Shuri alone.[43]

As with the case of the prohibition of *shōchū*, noodles, and tofu, Sai On saw restrictions on pig farming as seriously inhibiting the total supply of a valuable commodity. His general opposition to government restrictions on economic activity was closely related to a favorable view of demand and consumption. He did not always oppose restrictions or close government regulation, of course, his forestry policies being an excellent example.[44] Even in this case, however, Sai On was careful to provide material incentives for peasants and local officials to properly care for the forests in their areas.

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[43]Ibid. It would be interesting to know what the reason for the original restriction was. As we have seen, the slaughter of pigs was considered too base an occupation for *shi*, even after 1725. Unlike most parts of Japan at the time, however, pork was a significant item in the diet of wealthy Ryukyuans.

[44]In this regard recall his argument that because of the time involved, growing trees was a different sort of enterprise from the growing of other agricultural products, and thus required particularly close management and long-term planning.

The Profit Motive as a Stimulus to New Enterprises

In his writings on economic subjects, Sai On had a favorable view of profit, and saw the assurance of compensation for one's labor as both a stimulus to work diligently, and as a stimulus to entrepreneurship. In *One Man's Views,* for example, he detailed an ambitious plan to construct harbors in each coastal district suitable for small vessels. Such a transportation system, he pointed out, would serve a number of useful purposes.

A key component of the plan was to construct a harbor near Shuri at Chanazaki so that it would link together Shuri and all the other districts. The next part of the plan was to construct a fleet of small boats, which could travel from one coastal district to another selling firewood, "which would be a great treasure of first importance for the whole country."[45] Furthermore, the boats could pick up tax rice as well as barrels of sugar to be sent to Naha as payment. Sending such items by boat would require much less time, effort, and supervision than sending them overland, "which would not waste the peasants' time."

Peasants with access to the transportation system would have more time on their hands, which would result in increased productivity in more ways than one. For example, "If trees such as pine, bamboo, pampas grass, and other

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[45]Ibid, #39.

miscellaneous trees are planted in the nontaxed wastelands of each district and sold when the boats come around, the peasants could sell them quickly, without having to go to Shuri."[46] A more efficient transportation system, in other words, would make certain marginal lands productive, which would be to everyone's benefit.

A major reason for Sai On's proposal of the transportation system (which to my knowledge was never actually constructed) was to provide future employment for the *shi* who lived in Shuri. He explained that the *yadori* system was adequate at present for allowing Shuri *shi* to make a living, but as the population increased, sufficient land may not be available in the future. Fortunately, however, the *shi* and other residents of Shuri would be able to purchase and operate some of the small boats:

> Unlike the people of Naha and Tomari, the residents of Shuri are not much as sailors. But if even the people of Shuri would take lessons in sculling the above-mentioned boats, anyone would be able to work on such a vessel with vigor. . . .[47]

The increase in the transportation of goods into Shuri, and the gathering of merchants and shippers there alone would have been a source of additional jobs.[48]

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[46]Ibid, #40.

[47]Ibid, #42.

[48]Ibid, #41.

Sai On's proposal to build a transportation system and his explanation of the various benefits that would accrue from it shows that he viewed all parts of the economy as closely interconnected. It also reveals his general view of the role of profit in the economy. Clearly, Sai On saw the profit motive as serving to motivate Ryukyuans to undertake new forms of work. With respect to the boats mentioned above, for example, he said, "It is natural to expect that the boat owner would charge fares, and all the occupations involved would prosper."[49] For Sai On, profit by one person or group did not necessarily mean profit at another's expense. In the case of the boats, for example, the peasants, the boat owners, and the urban residents would all profit, and thus would the country as a whole. Again, Sai On did not view the quantity of wealth in society as fixed, but rather as something that humans could always increase.

Unlike some of his socio-economic policies that we have examined, the concept of situational weighing does not shed much light on Sai On's economic thought. His views on economic issues instead seem to have been based on the idea that people can control their own destiny by intelligent and diligent effort. A prerequisite for making such effort, of course, was an understanding of, if not the whole of the

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[49]Ibid, #39.

pattern of nature, at least several of its sub-patterns or principles. Sai On's discussion of economic principles in general and as they applied to Ryukyu, is best understood within this aspect of his Confucian thought.

Righteousness Versus Profit

Studies assert that Tokugawa Japan was a Confucian society sometimes explain certain bakufu and *han* economic problems in part because of an alleged Confucian bias agaisnt (or ignorance of) mercantile activity.[50] Studies of Chinese history, too, occasionally mention such a bias (but less commonly attribute a great deal of causal force to it), although in China from the Sung period on, it was not uncommon for Confucian literati and officials to support themselves through commerce. While it is certainly possible to find passages critical of commerce and merchants in the writings of some Confucians, to say that therefore Confucian thought was inherently anti-commercial is too simplistic. The issue of Confucian views of mercantile activities requires a great deal more research, but here I address primarily the

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[50]Indeed, in his otherwise solid study of Osaka's Kaitokudō academy Tetsuo Najita relies uncritically on the unproven and problematic assumption that merchants were a despised class in Tokugawa Japan, and that they were such because of Confucian ideas. Such a premise is even more doubtful in the case of Osaka, which was populated almost entirely by merchants.

For an excellent critique of the "*teisetsu*" that Ch'eng-Chu Confucianism served as an ideology of social class to support the division of Japanese society into the four distinct classes, samurai, farmers, craftsmen, and merchants in descending order or prestige, see Watanabe, *Sōgaku*, pp. 43-7.

question of *li* (J. *ri*), or "profit," and its relationship to *i* (J. *gi*), or righteousness, as well as to motives and human desires. The subject is too complex to deal with fully here, but I provide a few examples from Confucian texts to illustrate several possible views, and these examples help to contextualize Sai On's position.

Early Chinese Views

There are passages in the early Confucian classics on which to base a strong critique of *li* as a source of motivation. For example, *Analects* 4:16 states, "The Master said, 'The gentleman understands what is moral. The small man understands what is profitable.'" The first dialogue in *Mencius* is a strong critique of *li*:

> Mencius went to see King Hui of Liang. 'Sir,' said the King, 'You have come all this distance, thinking nothing of a thousand *li* ["miles"]. You must surely have some way of profiting my state?'
>
> 'Your majesty,' answered Mencius, 'What is the point of mentioning the word "profit"? All that matters is that there should be benevolence and righteousness. If Your Majesty says, "How can I profit my state?" and the Councillors say, "How can I profit my family?" and the Gentlemen and Commoners say, "How can I profit my person?" then those above and those below will be trying to profit at the expense of one another and the state will be imperilled. . . .'

Later Confucians frequently made reference to this passage in arguing that one must not be motivated by *li*, but only by a desire to do what is righteous (*i*). We also see the idea that "profit" means enriching or benefitting one's self or one's

immediate interests at the expense of the good of the larger group—the state in this case.

During the Sung period, although some scholars such as Ch'en Liang argued that *li* was not necessarily evil, for the vast majority of major thinkers such as Shao Yung (1011-1077), the Ch'engs, Yang Shih (1053-1135), and Chu Hsi, *li* and righteousness were opposed to each other and mutually exclusive.[51] To translate *li* as "profit" is reasonable, but the English word too readily suggests profit in the sense of that which is the goal of commercial enterprises. But neither the classical Chinese texts, nor the discussions of most Sung scholars singled out merchants as exemplifying motivation by *li*.

Clearly most Sung thinkers were opposed to *li* as a goal in any undertaking, and they were aware of how easily and subtlely *li* could distort a person's thinking. To say that they were opposed to *li* as a source of motivation, however, is not necessarily to say that they were opposed to mercantile activity. Ch'en Ch'un, for example, wrote:

> Righteousness and profit are coupled with each other but are really opposed. As soon as one departs from righteousness, one gets into profit. The distance between them is very small. The student should examine it carefully. In terms of their meaning, righteousness is what is proper according to the Prin-

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[51]See Ch'en Yung-chieh, "I-li," Wei Cheng-t'ung, ed., *Chung-kuo che-hsüeh tz'u-tien ta-ch'üan* (Taipei: Shui-niu ch'u-pan-she, 1989), pp. 636-39, for representative excerpts from Chinese thinkers on this issue.

> ciple of Heaven, while profit is what [selfish] human feeling desires. Desire means to wish to get something for oneself. . . . However, goods, wealth, fame, position, titles of nobility, emoluments, etc. should not in themselves be considered profit; they should only be looked upon as objects. However, they easily lead one to fall into the trap of profit.[52]

This passage should make clear the problem with translating *li* as "profit" in Confucian discourse. Often, "profit" meant an attitude, the desire for selfish feelings. Objects, such as the payment a merchant would receive for selling an item, for example, were not "profit," but could easily become the objects of "profit." With respect to merchants, whether or not their activities were "profit" or not depended not on how much or how little money they made, but on *how* and *why* they made it. As Ch'en Ch'un explained in general terms:

> If fame, position, titles of nobility, and emoluments are obtained according to the Way but not the result of selfish ideas of calculation, such gains should be achieved and that is righteousness. If the acquisitions are contrary to the Way but are the results of selfish ideas and calculation, they are gains that should not be achieved. . . .[53]

Profit, in the sense of the wealth beyond expenses that one received from his labor, was often not the same thing as *li*, or "profit" in Chinese Confucian discourse.

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[52]Chan, *Neo-Confucian Terms*, p. 135.

[53]Ibid, p. 137. Ch'en went on to give numerous examples of "gains that should not be achieved," but mentions not a single case of mercantile activity.

In seventeenth century China, there was considerable academic debate over the question of righteousness versus "profit," much of it connected with the ledgers of merit and demerit (*kung-kuo-ke*, handbooks to assist people in mastering their destiny). In describing the general view of many Tung-lin thinkers that good deeds, selflessly performed, would often bring about good fortune, Brokaw points out:

> [The Tung-lin thinkers] tended to emphasize good responses that were not specific to the individual actor; their good men transformed local customs and brought prosperity to a whole community. . . . Such individual rewards demonstrated, too, that 'selfish' (*si*), personal goals need not conflict with broader 'public' (*gong*) good—indeed, they might, if appropriately pursued, contribute to the general good.[54]

Sai On, as we have seen, stated similarly that those "engaged in making a living" were also doing work that was "useful for the country," and that such work therefore was "national service."

We have seen that almost all major Sung thinkers were critical of "profit," as absolutely opposed to righteousness. By the seventeenth century, however, more Confucians in China were willing to acknowledge that "profit" and righteousness were not necessarily incompatible. Brokaw summarizes the change as follows:

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[54]Brokaw, pp. 155-6.

> What seems to be going on here is an adjustment on the part of the ledger authors to the importance of wealth and the improvement in merchant status that marked the late Ming and the transition to the Qing. They retained the traditional Confucian suspicion of commerce and wealth for its own sake, while tacitly admitting that wealth could be a source of goodness. . . . It is fair to say, then, that the accumulation of wealth gains a new legitimacy in the morality books and ledgers of the seventeenth century. But it is important to recognize the heavy qualification imposed on this legitimacy: it operates only if the wealth is used morally. . . .[55]

This view of wealth resonates well with that which Sai On put forth in his writings on household management.

"Profit" and Merchants in Tokugawa Writings

Nakae Tōju discussed the matter of domain-changing among samurai in order to receive higher stipends. He pointed out in *Okina mondō* that for one to be rewarded with a higher stipend purely on account of virtue, talent, and accomplishment was a truly legitimate case of advancement in society (*risshin*). On the other hand, he characterized advancement on account of favoritism and maneuvering as "merchants' advancement," and commented:

> Because it is something that someone with even a little training in the way of the samurai should despise, it cannot be called a great accomplishment (*tegara*). To normally be concerned with self-advancement is to have an unclean, greedy mind, *like the profit-loving*

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[55]Ibid, p. 215.

> *mind of a merchant.* Of what use is a mind that does not adhere to righteousness? . . ."[56]

Here, Tōju has made merchants into a symbol or archetype of "unclean, greedy" minds motivated by "profit" (*ri*). Tōju's comment was based entirely on the alleged mindset of merchants (in keeping the meaning of "profit" as a way of thinking). This and similar passages, however, say nothing about merchants' functional, economic role in society.

Muro Kyūsō (1658-1734) also saw the merchant as an archetype of "profit," and portrayed merchants as the precise opposite of the "righteous" samurai:

> To know that samurai and merchants are naturally different is the beginning of generosity. The work of samurai is done for righteousness (*gi*); the work of merchants is done for profit (*ri*). The difference between righteousness and profit separates samurai and merchants.[57]

These two passages indicate that there were some Japanese Confucians who associated mercantile activity and thinking with a selfish desire for personal gain. Here too, it is important to note that like Tōju, Kyūsō did not comment on the functional role of merchants in society. In such comments, the merchant was a metaphor for a greedy and selfish mind.

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[56]NST, #29, pp. 110-11. Italics added.

[57]NST, #34, p. 508.

It was hardly the case, however, that all Japanese Confucians had a negative view of merchants, even rhetorically, for many were of merchant background themselves. Even Confucians among the samurai had a wide range of views of merchants and their activities, not all of them negative. Yamaga Sokō (1622-85), for example, took a position very similar to that of Sai On. According to his classified conversations, he said, "The wealth of the realm belongs to the realm. It is not the wealth of a single person. Well should it circulate, transform, and enrich, passing through all things."[58] Commerce, of course, was the primary means by which wealth circulated, and Sokō was in effect affirming the potential social and economic value of commerce and those who engaged in it.[59]

Sokō also directly addressed the issue of "profit" versus righteousness. In so doing, he strongly affirmed the validity of human desires and emotions, saying that "former Confucians advocated having no desires, which view is terribly mis-

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[58]*Yamaga Sokō gorui* in NST, #32, p. 152. Sai On and Kaibara Ekken likewise stressed the need for wealth to circulate, comparing it to the need for blood to circulate through the body (See *Kadōkun*, SZS, p. 184, a passage based on Ekken's *Kadōkun*). Kumazawa Banzan, however, argued precisely the opposite in *Shūgi washo*, saying that the ruler should control all the wealth of the realm (See NST. #32, pp. 260-61).

[59]The idea that wealth must circulate would, of course, also lend itself to strong criticism of those merchants who engaged in price-fixing and hoarding, even if in general if affirmed the value of merchants to society.

taken."[60] Sokō then said that the "profit" and desire the sages warned of was that which was selfish (*watakushi*) and self-serving. "The learning of the sages," he said, "consists of moderating desires and making profit correct, not totally eliminating all desire."[61] Regarding profit, he explained that the "profit" of a proper Confucian (*kunshi*, "gentleman") was broad-based, meaning it extended beyond one's self and benefited the larger society:

> [Profit] is part of the function (*yō*) of the investigation of things and the extension of knowledge. There is profit for the self, profit for others, profit for things, as well as profiting the household, the domain (*kuni*) and the realm (*tenka*). . . . The act of profiting one's self could contain both the profit of the proper Confucian and the profit of the inferior person. . . .[62]

With Yamaga Sokō, we find a more nuanced view of the issue of "profit," than in the passages above from Tōju and Kyūsō, for whom it was the absolute opposite of righteousness. The passages from Tōju and Kyūsō were statements of ideal types,

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[60]From the essay "Gi-ri o ronzu," in NST, #32, pp. 215-16.

[61]Ibid, p. 216.

[62]Ibid, p. 217. Robert Bellah has described attitudes toward economic activity on the part of early-modern Japanese in the following general terms: "Economic behavior tends to be suspect because it may not be subordinated to the system goal, but rather to some sub-system goal; it may be selfish. But to the degree that economic behavior can be seen as furthering the system goal, it is perfectly legitimate" (*Tokugawa Religion: The Cultural Roots of Modern Japan* [New York: The Free Press, 1957, 1985], p. 15).

whereas that from Sokō was an attempt to describe the actual, functional world in its complexity.

Sokō's depiction of merchants differed considerably from that portrayed in the passages by Tōju and Kyūsō, again in large part because Sokō was interested in the functional role of merchants. Like Sai On, Sokō envisioned a society in which all parts were mutually dependent on each other:

> In order to live, people must eat. . . . Since farm work cannot be done properly by hand only, agricultural implements must be manufactured. . . . and for their manufacture, artisans are necessary. Since manufacturers of articles cannot go about selling their goods to people in distant districts, people to act as intermediaries between the artisans and the consumers of their manufactures become necessary, and these middlemen form the merchant class.[63]

In Sokō's description, merchants performed an essential function within society by circulating needed items. Combined with his view that profit for one's own self could also benefit larger groups, even society as a whole, it is not difficult to see why Sokō held a functional, positive view of the activities of merchants.

Sai On

When Sai On discussed merchants, his interest was always in their functional role in society. Unlike some (but by no means all) Japanese Confucians, Sai On never spoke of the

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[63]Quoted in Eijirō Honjō, *Economic Theory and History of Japan in the Tokugawa Period* (New York: Rusell & Rusell, Inc., 1965), p. 26.

merchant as a metaphor for the greedy, selfish mind characterized by *li* ("profit" in its meaning of a state of mind). We have seen that Sai On repeatedly warned against desires for wealth, fame, sex, and so on, but he did not see any one form of economic activity as being particularly associated with such inappropriate desires. The desire for sufficient wealth to support one's household was certainly acceptable to Sai On, who, like Kaibara Ekken, wrote extensively on the subject of how to properly increase household wealth. Like the seventeenth-century Chinese thinkers discussed above, and like Yamaga Sokō, Sai On did not see profit for an individual as necessarily stopping with that individual or being profit at another's expense. Because he regarded the county's total wealth as expandable through intelligent human effort, one person's properly gained profit would have a ripple effect and profit many others in society as well.

If Sai On tended to see any one group as most likely to place "profit" above righteousness, it was perhaps local officials. Unlike the case in Tokugawa Japan, there do not appear to have been any extremely large, powerful, or wealthy merchant households in early-modern Ryukyu. Furthermore, it is important to bear in mind that in old Ryukyu, merchants were government officials, and the trade they conducted provided the material foundation of the state. Sai On had no reason, therefore, to consider merchants less morally worthy

than other commoners. As for Confucian thought as it had evolved by Sai On's time, it contained numerous possible interpretations and views of mercantile activities, ranging from the rather positive view of Yamaga Sokō to the negative view of Muro Kyūsō. Sai On's economic thought and his views on commerce were not typical Confucian formulations, but they were also not inimical to Confucian principles.

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To summarize Sai On's economic and social policies, he was keenly aware that the actual application of principles of government to specific situations often involved dilemmas in which the ideal standard could not fully apply. Ryukyu's poverty and atypical diplomatic and political status undoubtedly added to the frequency of such dilemmas. Sai On knew that the lines between right and wrong, and correct and incorrect in any given situation might not be clear, or might be so fine and subtle that "an infinitesimal misalignment at the beginning would result in a grave error at the end," to use a common Confucian formulation that he frequently quoted. It was for these reasons that Sai On characterized governing a country as "reining a galloping horse with a rotten rope." Pulling too hard would break the rope, while not pulling hard enough would allow the country to go in the wrong direc-

tion.[64] We have seen from examining Ryukyu's diplomatic and political situation that there were times when the margin for error on the part of top officials was very small indeed (for example, Shō Nei's decision to ignore Satsuma's demands and Sai Kokki's diplomatic mission to Ch'ing China after the visit of the Ming loyalists).

In the previous chapter we saw how well situational weighing (in what was basically Chu Hsi's theoretical formulation, but much more widely applied) served Sai On as both a critique of Buddhism and as an empowering concept. In this chapter we have seen some of the ways in which Sai On applied situational weighing to very specific problems in his society, and it is clear that situational weighing further served him as a tool for governing in those circumstances in which ordinary Confucian norms were not realistically applicable. Sai On had a good understanding of Chu Hsi's writings on situational weighing, but did not develop the theoretical framework beyond Chu's formulation. On the other

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[64]Sai On's writings on government contained frequent references to the importance of this sort of balance. In *Essentials of Governance*, for example, he wrote: "The two concepts of firmness and flexibility form a touchstone by which a ruler can measure his virtue. If there is an excess of firmness and flexibility is lacking, his officials will withdraw in fear and the ruler will be out of touch with the thoughts of his officials both high and low. If there is an excess of flexibility and firmness is lacking, a ruler's officials will think lightly of him, which will cause confusion in the proper hierarchy of relations within all levels of society. . . . Therefore, those who want to cultivate the virtue of a ruler must realize this very point: It is essential to achieve the proper balance between firmness and flexibility in the administration of government" (TYD, #14; see also #70).

hand, he went much farther than any other major Confucian thinker in applying situational weighing. Chu Hsi apparently found little use for situational weighing other than as a device to explain why certain highly-acclaimed historical figures killed their rulers or otherwise acted in ways ordinarily considered evil. Sai On applied situational weighing to a critique of Buddhism, to defending certain government-sponsored practices such as official prayers for rain or to the *hi-no-kami*, and in the formulation of difficult social and economic policies.

CHAPTER NINE:
SATSUMA, HISTORY, HESHIKIYA CHŌBIN

In the preceding chapters, I have presented Sai On's thought as an internally consistent system that also made sense within the contexts of his time and place. By having done so, however, I do not claim to have been a transparent medium through which the "sources" have spoken to tell what *really* happened. Instead, my own mind has engaged the sources, and it has mediated and organized them (as, I would argue, happens in all historical writing). I have presented *a* reading of Sai On and his world, which is not to be confused with *the* reading.[1] As stated in the Introduction, I have tried to avoid explanatory concepts that would have been foreign to Sai On and his generation of Ryukyuans, but it is also essential to acknowledge that my mind is not, and cannot pretend to be, that of Sai On or any of his contemporaries. I have, in other words, created Sai On and his world

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[1]There are of course, many possible readings of the same material. One obvious possibility is to see Sai On as a pioneer in "rational" or "modern" thought, someone ahead of his time, which is an approach Itokazu tends to take (though not without qualifying what he sees as "limitations" on the "modern" or "rational" aspects of Sai On's thought). Another reading, common among scholars of Ryukyuan literature and Marxist scholars, is to portray Sai On as a cruel tyrant. His written texts, in such a reading, would become propaganda to bolster his program of control.

anew through the act of reading his texts and writing mine.

Similarly, perhaps, Sai On and some of his Kumemura contemporaries created pasts for Ryukyu by writing its history. Formally creating Ryukyu's past was a matter of considerable political importance for Sai On and his contemporaries, a state of affairs hardly unique to eighteenth-century Ryukyu. In this chapter, I discuss three topics. The first is Sai On's discourse on Satsuma, which depended in part on his portrayal of a benighted past for old Ryukyu that changed for the better only after coming under Satsuma's control. Second is the creation of a long Confucian past for Ryukyu. While Sai On was explaining Ryukyu's status and relationship with Satsuma, Tei Heitetsu and his team of historians writing the *Kyūyō* were busy with their portrayal of old Ryukyu. In contrast to Sai On, they tended to speak of old Ryukyu as if Confucian learning had existed there since the coming of the Fukienese immigrants to Kumemura in 1392. Sai On and the *Kyūyō* writers, however, had a great deal in common, for they both tried to portray relationships based on political and military power (in which Ryukyu was overwhelmingly the weaker party) as having instead been relationships of moral authority (in which Ryukyu had the potential to be as great as any other country). Finally, I examine Heshikiya Chōbin's challenge to Sai On. Although not directly related to the writing of history, it is significant that the

textual record Sai On and his contemporaries created had virtually nothing to say about this important struggle for political power. Ryukyuan historians have created no shortage of theories about the "Heshikiya Incident," all speculation constructed around a small core of evidence. I present no alternative theory, but instead examine the incident from the standpoint of the above-mentioned process of suppressing references to political conflict or transforming it into something else.

Satsuma's Metal and Ryukyu's Wood

One Man's Views

As with most of his essays, Sai On wrote *One Man's Views* in his old age after retiring from a long career of full-time government service. In the text, Sai On explained to subsequent generations of Ryukyuan officials and *shi* the rationale behind certain of his views and policies. He also presented proposals for future action, such as the transportation system described in the previous chapter. Within the context of presenting his views on specific political issues of the day, Sai On also constructed a theory of the Ryukyu-Satsuma relationship. The theory portrayed Satsuma as essential for Ryukyu's continued survival as a quasi-independent country, but also minimized the extent of Satsuma's role in determin-

ing the direction of Ryukyuan society. Ultimately it was Ryukyuans, argued Sai On, who can and must take active responsibility for shaping their own destiny—a theme that permeated many of his writings, even the autobiography.

A major purpose of *One Man's Views* was to help ensure the continued prosperity and survival of Ryukyu. Of course, the islands would always be there and people would always live on them, but Sai On was concerned about the survival of the Ryukyu Kingdom, that is, the bounded political and cultural entity that was Ryukyu in his day. In the course of explaining what Ryukyuans should do to ensure the continued existence of their country, Sai On had to deal with the issue of Satsuma's control. The fact of Satsuma's control, in turn, required that he provide some explanation about Ryukyu prior to coming under Satsuma's control.

Sai On tied his discussion to basic Chinese cosmological and ontological concepts such as *t'ien* and the five elements or phases. He provided a two-part definition of what constituted a country (*kokudo*), the first part of which was material, and the second moral. In this way, he connected cosmological, ontological, economic, and moral issues so as to argue that Ryukyu, despite its small size and scarcity of resources could create an ideal Confucian society. The introduction of the cosmological dimension also provided Sai On with a way to portray his theory as something other than

his own personal creation. Instead, he portrayed himself as simply pointing out the timeless laws of nature for the benefit of future generations of Ryukyuans.

There are important silences in *One Man's Views,* all pertaining to Satsuma, as Sai On skirted or simply ignored problematic issues. There is no mention, for example, of why Satsuma invaded Ryukyu, or for that matter, even that an invasion took place. The only military matters discussed in the text pertain to the minimal naval training Ryukyuan sailors received prior to embarking on voyages to China. Topics such as the authoritarian nature of Satsuma's immediate post-invasion control and Satsuma's use of Ryukyu for its own aggrandizement are likewise conspicuous (at least for present-day readers) by their absence. Perhaps it was because Satsuma's policy of concealing the nature of its relationship with Ryukyu had been in place for roughly fifty years by the time Sai On wrote *One Man's Views* that he was able to ignore these issues and still present a plausible argument.

One Man's Views, like almost all of Sai On's essays, is a series of enumerated passages. The passages are arranged thematically, however, and the text as a whole consists of three broad divisions. In the first part, Sai On stressed two points: 1) that Satsuma's control has been beneficial; and 2) that even poor, small countries can achieve peace and prosperity provided they follow the "fundamental principles

of the way of government" (*go-seidō no honpō*). In the middle part of the text, Sai On explained how Ryukyuan officials should translate these fundamental principles into effective policies specific to Ryukyu's circumstances. In the final sections, Sai On returned to certain issues raised at the start of the essay, and provided a theoretical framework for defining a country. He then fit Satsuma into this framework in an essential but limited role. In the previous chapter I examined many of the points Sai On made in the middle portion of *One Man's Views*. Here, I shall mainly examine the first and last sections.

Ryukyu and Its "Venerable Foundation"

The Way of Government

One Man's Views begins by explaining that Ryukyu was poor and lacking in natural resources. Furthermore, the kingdom had major obligations to both China and Japan that took a large share of what resources were available. As a result, the kingdom had never been able to fully discharge its obligations to other countries, and furthermore, it had long lacked knowledge of the true principles of the way of government. Despite such problems, Ryukyu had managed to get by for two reasons related to its geographical circumstances.

First of all, the geomantic features of Okinawa were perfect. Its mountain ranges were all interconnected and formed a serpentine shape. The overall shape resembled that

of a dragon, symbolic of longevity and good fortune. Furthermore, Ryukyu's islands were located under an area of particularly fortunate stars. Therefore, even though Ryukyu had not followed the true principles of the way of government until recently, it had managed to get by as a country owing to a fortunate accident of geography.[2]

As we have seen, knowledge of geomantic theory had become widespread among educated Ryukyuans and had even become connected with political disputes. Not only did the above discussion reinforce what Sai On wrote in the *Sanpu ryūmyaku hi* inscription, but it undoubtedly provided a plausible answer to the question: If the fundamental principles of the way of government are so essential, why was Ryukyu able to get by so long without them? Sai On was clearly not interested in discussing geomancy, for the subject never again appears. In the next passage, in fact, Sai On argued that if Ryukyuans did not abide by the true way of government in the future, the country would surely decline.[3] Why the superior geomancy and stars alone would no longer suffice, he did not state. In any case, Sai On made clear his view that it was to the way of government, not geomancy, that Ryukyuans must look for the continued existence and prosperity of their country.

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[2]HMG, #1.

[3]HMG, #2.

Praise of Satsuma

The *Kyūyō* writers portrayed the way of government (and all other aspects of the Confucian way) as having existed in Ryukyu since the founding of Kumemura. A reason Sai On was unable to take this approach in *One Man's Views* was that his strategy for dealing with Satsuma and its control over Ryukyu required portraying Satsuma's overlordship as beneficial for Ryukyu. Sai On implied that Satsuma's control resulted in true principles of the way of government finally coming to Ryukyu. Obviously, therefore, such principles had to have been either lacking or at least insufficiently understood and practiced prior to 1609.

Sai On described the annual payment of rice to Satsuma as follows:

> The annual sending of tax rice to Satsuma can be viewed as a great harm to our country, but all things considered, it is actually a great benefit which cannot be fully expressed in writing. In former times, the way of government was not at all established in our country. The peasants were negligent in their way of cultivating and the people were hard-pressed. Selfish customs gradually worsened, and from time to time there were revolutions. The situation of people being in extreme difficulty was inexcusable, but since coming under Satsuma's rule, customs have been corrected, and the peasants now compete with each other to exert themselves in their way of cultivating. Throughout the country, things have become as we would like them to be. This fortunate state of affairs at this late date has come about because of Satsuma, and we should feel that it is difficult to fully express our indebtedness in writing. I have

> also written about this matter in the *Articles of Instruction*.[4]

Sai On suggested not merely a correlation, but a cause and effect relationship between Ryukyu coming under Satsuma's rule and the rectification of evil customs. But the rectification of customs "came about" without any clear description of precisely what Satsuma did to cause such a thing—a matter Sai On never clearly explained.

A common interpretation of Sai On's praise of Satsuma is that it reflects the general fear Ryukyuans at the time had of Satsuma. Because of Satsuma's oppressive rule, Sai On had

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[4]HMG, #3. The relevant passage in the *Articles of Instruction* reads: "Our country was founded by the Tenson line, but there were absolutely no methods of government, rites, and so on, and with the resources of a small country, we were unable to meet our needs. Toward the end of that period, we were able to meet the country's [material] needs by maritime trade, but in each district, the *aji* set up castles and vied with each other for power. So it should go without saying that year after year all the people high and low were grieved because there were armed uprisings. At that time, the king received investiture from China, thus establishing the beginning of rites and ceremonial forms. In various other matters, however, things continued unchanged. Even worse, armed uprisings gradually sprang up, and there was unrest throughout the land, which was an inexcusable situation. The armed uprisings gradually came to an end later, but methods of government and customs nevertheless continued to be poor . . . Since coming under Satsuma's rule, however, everything has become as we would like it to be, and even methods of government and morality have been corrected. . . . Because there are some who are not familiar with the situation in former times, after all the people come to understand and appreciate these facts, I am sure that men and women, young and old alike will feel grateful and satisfied" (GKJ, #1).

The comment about the lack of methods of government under Tenson is interesting in light of the vigorous praise of his "spiritual insight" in the *Sanpu ryūmyaku hi* inscription. On the other hand, we have seen that in his historical writings Sai On gave a Taoist portrayal of the ancient kings, who "ruled by letting their sleeves hang down," which, however, would not necessarily be incompatible with spiritual insight or lack of methods of government.

no choice but to include such words of flattery, though of course he did not really believe them.[5] This interpretation is certainly not unreasonable, but political pressure from Satsuma does not seem to be reflected in Sai On's words. For one thing, the passages in both the *Articles of Instruction* and *One Man's Views,* appear to have been directed at Ryukyuans who resented Satsuma's control. In pointing out how Ryukyu benefited from Satsuma's control, he was clearly putting forth an argument, not stating a commonly-known fact. We have seen that for Sai On, "methods of government" and the "way of government" meant government according to Confucian principles. Also, it was not until the seventeenth century that Confucian studies became significant in Ryukyu, and it was not until the eighteenth century, with Sai On himself, that Confucianism began to inform politics in Shuri. The government of old Ryukyu was dominated by the native religion and Buddhism. Shō Shin established certain Chinese ceremonial forms at court, but Shō Tei was the first king to have received any sort of Confucian education.

The eighteenth century in Ryukyu, particularly the middle part when Sai On was writing *One Man's Views,* was a period when cultural forms of all sorts, literature, music, drama, and the arts, as well as technical studies, flourished as

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[5]See, for example, Shinzato et al, *Okinawa-ken*, p. 115. "This display of a fawning attitude toward Shimazu . . . was surely because of his acute cognizance of Satsuma's political pressure."

never before. Furthermore, the country was in the best financial condition it had been in since at least the early days of Shō Nei's reign (if still not rich). From this perspective, Sai On's praise of Satsuma might not have been merely hollow flattery. It is also important to note that Satsuma's control over Ryukyu had been indirect for all of Sai On's career, and Ryukyu had a considerable measure of autonomy regarding internal affairs. Nevertheless, Satsuma's control was not entirely unproblematic for Sai On, for if it had been, he would not have needed to explain it.

To shed further light on Sai On's view of Ryukyu's past and his praise of Satsuma, let us briefly consider a passage from *Words of an Old Man.* A member of the *shi* class expressed doubts to the old man as to whether common people really felt a sense of loyalty to the government since they did not receive stipends. The response is very lengthy, but for our purposes two portions of it are important. In the following excerpt Sai On explained the key role methods of government played in elevating humans beyond the level of animals:

> . . . In heaven and earth, human beings and animals are both part of the myriad things. The only reason that people are different from animals is that they have decorum and righteousness (*li-i*). This decorum and righteousness comes from methods of government. Thus, the ruler, as head of the country, necessarily clarifies methods of government and corrects customs. Then, decorum and righteousness shine forth, all the people of a country both high and low are secure in their dwellings and pleased with their occupations, and they

> receive widespread blessings. But if there are no methods of government, decorum and righteousness will surely perish. If decorum and righteousness perish, then even though people may be called human beings, what will distinguish them from the animals? . . . [6]

Although he frequently used examples from Chinese history, Sai On only rarely illustrated general principles in his philosophical essays with examples from Ryukyuan history. He did, however, in this case, and we see that his view of Ryukyuan history is identical with that presented in *One Man's Views*:

> . . . Considering former times in our own country, the rulers were benighted, the ministers negligent, and there were no methods of government or customs and morality. Nowhere was free of evil and violence. At that time, there was someone called Kazui, who was a commoner. He planned to murder the *aji* of Komeji.[7] At that time, there was nobody who dared oppose Kazui, so the wife [of the *aji*] made a plan herself and wreaked vengeance on Kazui. To this day, she has been called a wise woman. In those days, people could not be secure in their dwellings, they could not work at their occupations, and mothers, children, and siblings scattered and separated from each other. Truly, human misery could be no worse. If clarifying methods of government and rectifying customs, bringing forth decorum and righteousness, and making the people secure in their dwellings and pleased with their occupations is not a debt we owe to the ruler, then what is? . . . [8]

For Sai On, Confucian government kept Ryukyuans far away from

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[6]SHG, #40.

[7]Today Komesu, a part of the city of Itoman.

[8]SHG, #40.

their previous miserable and uncivilized existence. Beyond its support for politicians like Shō Shōken and Sai On, Satsuma's precise role in the establishment of Confucian government in Ryukyu is difficult to say. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to imagine Sai On's general perception that the state of affairs in Ryukyu had improved steadily since 1609.

Ranking the World's Countries

The next development in the theory at first glance seems entirely unrelated to the relationship between Ryukyu and Satsuma. Sai On discussed nine grades of countries, apparently a concept of his own creation. He came up with these grades by subdividing each of the three categories superior, median, and inferior into three parts (high, middle, and low) to produce a range from high-superior to low-inferior, with middle-median tghe midpoint between these extremes. The basic three-way division was based on a country's general level of resources. Some were naturally well-endowed, and others were not. The high, middle, and low sub-rankings within each of these three resource levels depended upon how heavily each country drew upon those resources. A country with few resources but with few expenditures would, for example, be high-inferior, whereas a similarly-endowed country that needed to spend a great deal would be low-inferior. At the opposite end of the scale, "the superior countries having a

high level of available resources, because they spend at a low level, should be regarded as high-superior countries."[9]

Though Sai On did not explicitly state Ryukyu's rank in the course of this discussion, the first sentence in *One Man's Views*, "As our country is meager in resources, it is beyond our means to carry out our obligations to China and Japan," leaves little doubt that he saw Ryukyu as both meager in resources and high in expenditure of those resources. Materially, Ryukyu was the lowest of the low among countries. This rather lengthy explanation of the possible range of countries' material wealth seems to have been intended to give added force to Sai On's main point at the end of the discussion: If they scrupulously follow the true principles of the way of government, even countries ranking low-inferior can achieve a stable and prosperous society.[10]

After making this point, Sai On stated that if even the lowest could achieve such stability, it is all the more certain that higher ranking countries could as well, a significant point. What Sai On was saying is that the ultimate goal for *any* country was achieving a stable, prosperous society. Some countries were better off materially than others and therefore would have an easier time achieving such a goal. Ryukyu, however, though it would have to work

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[9]HMG, #16.

[10]Ibid, #17.

harder and adhere more scrupulously to the way of government than a country in any other category, could in the end achieve the ultimate goal. Here again we see Sai On placing responsibility for Ryukyu's destiny in the hands of Ryukyuans.

A Country Defined

The middle part of *One Man's Views* contains a detailed discussion of problems, policies, and plans, some of which I have discussed in the previous chapter. In this section, Sai On showed specifically what sorts of things Ryukyuan officials needed to do to bring about the prosperous and stable society he asserted was in fact possible. After a lengthy discussion of forestry policies, Sai On returned to the question of Satsuma, which he typically referred to by the term *o-kuni moto,* literally, "venerable foundation of the country."

The discussion began with Sai On defining a country (*kokudo*).[11] For an entity to be a country, he said, it must

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[11]In Sai On's usage this term indicated a bounded geographical entity with its society structured in some fashion and governed by a political organization. In short, Sai On's *kokudo* was almost identical in its basic meaning with the English word country (although not with the word nation).

Sai On never used this term to refer to Satsuma or other Japanese *han*, and it is unclear whether or not he considered an entity like Satsuma to have been one of several Japanese "countries" or a part of the single country of Japan (although I suspect the latter case because he also used the word Yamato to refer to Japan as a whole). In any event, Sai On seems to have had no interest in the question of Satsuma's status within Japan. He also had virtually nothing to say about the bakufu.

fulfill two conditions. The first was possession of a sufficient material foundation, which consisted of all of the five elements: water, fire, earth, wood, and metal. Of the five, said Sai On, water, fire, and earth were ubiquitous, so the real question was whether a place had wood and metal. If a place lacked either of these elements, it would not qualify as a country unless was able to obtain them from elsewhere. Ryukyu had no metal. Fortunately, however, it was rich in timber resources and it was able to import what metal it needed from Satsuma. By providing metal, Satsuma enabled Ryukyu to meet the first qualification for being a country.[12]

Certainly Ryukyu needed certain metal goods such as agricultural tools and cooking pots in order to maintain a reasonably high standard of living. Furthermore, and perhaps even more prominently in Sai On's mind, the standard tribute to China every other year consisted of fixed quantities of three types of metal. On special occasions (a new emperor, for example), it was customary to present some sort of artwork, often an article made of one or more metals. Ryukyu's ability to maintain formal relations with China and receive investiture of its kings from the Chinese emperor quite literally depended on Satsuma's metal. Satsuma's metal

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[12]Ibid, #57.

was, therefore, essential in more ways than one for Ryukyu's existence as a quasi-independent kingdom.

Although Sai On provided an explicit definition of a country only in *One Man's Views,* he often dealt with closely related matters in other texts. In *Essentials of Governance,* for example, he wrote:

> Countries may be large or small, wealthy or impoverished. A country may have to depend on [i.e., be subordinate to] adjacent countries, or it may be able to have friendly relations with its neighbors. A country may be stable and peaceful, or it may be imperiled by changing conditions. . . .[13]

Ryukyu was undoubtedly in the category of small, impoverished, dependent countries. That it was dependent on other countries, however was not a point Sai On ever stressed. Instead, he strove to show how Ryukyuans could be more independent.

The second condition for an entity to be a country was not material but moral and organizational. It was that the people of that place must understand and carry out "the five ethical relationships and the four socio-occupational groups."[14] This phrase was a concise way of saying that to qualify as a country, the people must build an ideal or at least functional Confucian society. How to build such a

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[13]TYD, #56.

[14]Ibid.

society is what Sai On explained in the middle portion of *One Man's Views*.

There is a significant silence with respect to the second condition: Satsuma. Furthermore, there is some dissonance with the praise for Satsuma at the start of the text, cast in terms that strongly suggested some sort of cause and effect relationship between Satsuma's control and a much-improved Ryukyuan society. Was is only Satsuma's metal that caused such an improvement? What about the metal of its guns and swords in 1609? Regardless of how Sai On would have answered such questions, by the end of the text, Satsuma's role had become that of a supplier of metal—essential but not particularly impressive compared with the task of creating a Confucian society.[15] It was the Ryukyuans who were to take the basic materials and construct a proper, Confucian society.

The Cosmological Underpinning

To complete his discussion of the Ryukyu-Satsuma relationship, and to give it more authority, Sai On grounded it in a higher cosmological entity—*t'ien*. He wrote:

> The way of the five elements and the four socio-occupational groups may seem like an

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[15]In a later section, Sai On wrote: ". . . If we forget the greater substance and the greater function, and only put effort into the lesser substance and the lesser function, *though a country may have yin and yang and the five elements in abundance*, it will gradually decline, and in the end, it is natural the grief will arise over the destruction of its values and customs" (Ibid, #59, italics added).

> arbitrary human creation, but all things considered, it is the way of *t'ien*, deriving from yin and yang and the five elements in nature. . . .[16]

The ideal Confucian society, built upon the material foundation provided by Ryukyu's wood and Satsuma's metal, was not the to be discursive creation of Sai On or anyone else. It was instead to be a reflection of the basic pattern of the universe. In last section of the essay, Sai On reiterated his appeal for all officials—both *shi* and non-*shi*—to work cooperatively to further the way of government.

In *One Man's Views*, Sai On in effect defined a framework in which Ryukyuans, particularly officials, could view the Ryukyu-Satsuma relationship. There do not seem to have been any writings describing the theoretical basis of the Ryukyuan state prior to Sai On's essays. The Ryukyu-Satsuma relationship Sai On inherited was, of course, the direct result of the military invasion of 1609, but from Sai On's writings alone, one would not know that such an event took place. He defined the Ryukyu-Satsuma relationship not in terms of its true basis—military and political power—but in terms of basic Confucian morality and ethics. If such a definition was plausible to Sai On's audience at the time, it was partially because Satsuma's military and political force had receded to

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[16]Ibid, #58.

the background, and Ryukyu and Satsuma had settled into a relatively smooth and routinized working relationship. To the extent that Satsuma officials paid any attention to Sai On's message in *One Man's Views* (and there is no evidence that they did), it is likely that they would have found it fully consonant with Satsuma's interests. Throughout Sai On's discussion, a consistent and familiar message came through repeatedly: Ryukyu's destiny is primarily in the hands of its own people, and it could be a great destiny if only those people would endeavor tirelessly to implement Confucian principles of government and social relations.

Moral Authority and Ryukyu's Past

We have seen that a major component in Sai On's discussion of Satsuma-Ryukyu relations, as well as in his hortative appeals to Ryukyuans to work together for a better future, was the portrayal of old Ryukyu as having been benighted, lacking in "methods of government" or "the true principles of the way of government." Another key component was his portrayal of relationships based on coercion or the threat of coercion as having been relationships based on moral authority. At roughly the same time Sai On was writing his essays, other Kumemura scholars under the direction of Tei Heitetsu

were writing the *Kyūyō*, a much more substantial account of Ryukyu's past than any of the previous official histories.

Interestingly, however, many *Kyūyō* passages portrayed Ryukyu as having had a long Confucian past, at least in the sense that Confucian learning allegedly came to Ryukyu with the original Kumemura inhabitants. Coming from a group of Kumemura scholars, this claim is not surprising, but it differed from Sai On's emphasis on the absence of Confucian learning in Ryukyu until more recent times. Like Sai On, the *Kyūyō* writers tended to portray relationships of military or political authority as having been relationships of Confucian moral authority. An additional significant theme in the work is its stress on the primacy and importance of Ryukyu's relationship with China.

History According to the *Kyūyō*

Several passages described the initiation of formal relations with Ming China during Satto's reign. One straightforward description described the significance of the event by saying, "It was the first time Ryukyu had official contact with China, which was the basis for revamping cultural forms."[17] The idea that it was contact with China that enabled Ryukyu to learn the arts of culture and civilization was a recurring theme in the text. Indeed, the Chūzan court came to function as the center of civilization and moral

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[17]KY, #27.

authority within the Ryukyu islands as the Chinese court did within Asia, and it did so because of its connection with China:

> Previously, Chūzan dispatched envoys who entered the [Chinese] capital. Propelled by the wind, these envoys arrived at [the islands of Miyako and Yaeyama]. The people of the two island groups saw that Chūzan was carrying out ceremonial forms of great importance, and the heads of each island group led the way in declaring themselves subjects [of Chūzan], and submitted tribute. As a result, Chūzan became strong for the first time.[18]

It was, in other words, not for economic, military or political reasons that the rulers of Miyako and Yaeyama declared themselves subjects of Chūzan, but out of awe for Chūzan's level of civilization and culture.

The next event of major importance, of course, was the arrival in Ryukyu of Kumemura's original inhabitants. According to the *Kyūyō*, Ming T'ai-tsu "bestowed" these people on Ryukyu after the king stated his desire to rectify popular customs:

> . . . [The king] humbly said [to the Ming emperor] that he had received investiture as well as a crown and sash, which made the people and ministers of Chūzan look up to him with the highest respect. With this [legitimacy and its resultant power], he stated his desire to rectify popular customs. T'ai-tsu assisted him in this matter. He bestowed [upon Chūzan] the thirty-six households, who for the first time regulated music and created the laws of propriety and ceremony. They reformed

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[18]KY, #43.

> popular customs of the time, and caused literary teachings to flourish. . . .[19]

Instead of the small, rather isolated group of specialists in navigation and trade that present-day historians typically portray Kumemura's original inhabitants as having been, the *Kyūyō* writers portrayed them as the instrument by which T'ai-tsu chose to assist the Ryukyuan king in rectifying his country's customs.

Notice also the emphasis on music and ceremonial forms here and in other passages (as opposed to something like methods of self-cultivation or methods of government). We have seen that even in Sai On's time, Kumemura Confucianism was characterized by an emphasis on ritual forms. Furthermore, in the *Articles of Instruction,* Sai On stated "At that time, the king received investiture from China, thus establishing the beginning of rites and ceremonial forms. In various other matters, however, things continued unchanged."[20] In Sai On's view, ceremonial forms, while highly desirable, were not sufficient to create a Confucian society, for such a society was one in which Confucian principles formed the basis for *government*. Although I have said that the *Kyūyō* compilers and Sai On emphasized different views of when Ryukyu's Confucian past began, it is necessary

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[19]Ibid, #46.

[20]GKJ, #1.

to qualify this statement. For want of a better term, I have used the same adjective, "Confucian," in each case but the *Kyūyō* compilers and Sai On stressed quite different aspects of the Confucian tradition. For Sai On, the essence of Confucianism was self cultivation for the purpose of governing the country, a view consonant with the Ch'eng-Chu tradition. On the other hand, the *Kyūyō* compilers (and probably most Kumemura scholars) had a view more in line with classical Confucianism, with its stress on rites, music, ceremonial and literary forms. Even within a small country like Ryukyu, there were significantly different conceptions of the Confucian tradition.

We have seen that Shō Shin and some of his immediate successors to the throne ruled based in large part on military power, and that even society and government in old Ryukyu were structured along military lines. The *Kyūyō*, however, had rather little to say about military affairs other than brief descriptions of major military expeditions, and even these campaigns typically had a morally-desirable result. Shō Shin's forcing the *aji* to move to Shuri, for example, was a matter of major military and political significance. The *Kyūyō* explained that the *aji* stayed at their castles and worked to transform the people of their districts through education—just like the various marquises (*hou*) in ancient China. For some unexplained reason, however,

these alleged agents of moral education and transformation began to engage in armed conflict during Shō Shin's reign, so he intervened to bring about peace, revising the rules for *aji* and making them live in Shuri.[21] The brief mention of political and military conflict in the passage stands out in marked dissonance with the overall stress on public duty, educational transformation, and similar matters. Similarly, after the Okinawans won a great victory at Ōshima in 1571, "The king ordered that a different ruler be established and that the peasants be put at ease."[22]

Ryukyu's most important military conflict, of course, was the Satsuma invasion. We have already seen the *Kyūyō*'s brief explanation of the event, which made Tei Dō responsible for bringing on the invasion. The passage explaining the king's return to Ryukyu is most interesting:

> Already two years had passed with the king staying in Satsuma. The king said, 'I serve the Chinese court, and it is a matter of righteousness that [my stay here] come to an end.' [Satsuma's] daimyo was deeply impressed by such loyalty and righteousness and in the end had the king return. After that, our country returned to peace and tranquility.[23]

This passage shows more clearly than most the process of replacing relationships of coercion with relationships of

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[21]KY, #195.

[22]Ibid, #224.

[23]Ibid, #250.

moral authority. So righteous and loyal was the Ryukyuan king toward the Chinese emperor, his legitimate overlord, that his moral authority impressed Satsuma's daimyo, who permitted the king's return. Then, upon the return of Ryukyu's moral center, society returned to its former peaceful state. There was no mention, of course, that the king returned only after he and all but one of his top ministers signed humiliating surrender documents. One may wonder how impressed Shimazu was with the "loyalty" and "righteousness" of Tei Dō, promptly beheaded when he refused to sign the documents.

Significance

Both Sai On and the compilers of the *Kyūyō* attempted in their writings to obscure past and present relationships of political and military power, both within Ryukyu and between Ryukyu and Satsuma. They did so by describing such relationships in Confucian language of moral and ethical authority. The writing of the *Kyūyō* took place at precisely the time Kumemura was becoming a major political power center within Ryukyu, and indeed the *Kyūyō* project itself was probably a reflection of that power. Whereas a century earlier Shō Shōken, the Japan-oriented representative of the Shuri elite had defined and created Ryukyu's past, in the mid-eighteenth century, it was the China-oriented Kumemura scholars who did so.

Ryukyu's relationship with China had always been one of ritual subordination to a culturally superior entity. Of course, China was also militarily much more powerful than Ryukyu, but such power was irrelevant in its relationship with Ryukyu (unlike, for example its relationship with Vietnam or with central Asian states). The *Kyūyō* scholars wrote of Ryukyu's internal political and military conflict, as well as its relationship with Japan, in the same terms they wrote of the relationship with China. Such terms were most awkward for expressing political and military conflict for what it was. They were, on the other hand, quite useful for expressing such conflict in terms of what it was not.

Such a portrayal was in the best interests of the Kumemura scholars. If Ryukyu's internal and external relations were and had long been based on "righteousness" and proper ceremonial forms, then it was the custodians of such knowledge and skills who should direct the governing of the country. Furthermore, if the king had long served the Chinese emperor, and if even the daimyo of Satsuma recognized and admired such subservience, then again, the experts in dealing with China should take priority over those Shuri elites familiar more with Japanese culture. Indeed, to the extent that Chinese norms were the standard for diplomacy even in Japan, Kumemura residents should also conduct relations with Japan (and both Tei Junsoku and Tei Heitetsu did go to Japan

in important diplomatic capacities). The *Kyūyō* reflects the fact that by the mid-eighteenth century Chinese culture and Confucianism (albeit variously conceived) had come to dominate the governing elite of Ryukyu, as well as the terms by which this elite defined the nature of Ryukyu's political, social, and diplomatic relationships.

Heshikiya Chōbin's Challenge

To say that Chinese culture and Confucianism had become predominant in certain Ryukyuan scholarly and government circles, however, is not to say that this domination was complete or without conflict. The *Sanpu ryūmyaku hi* inscription suggests conflict within the ranks of those educated in Chinese studies. Perhaps even more importantly, the Heshikiya Chōbin Incident shows that there was strong resistance to Sai On's political activities within the traditional Shuri elite. One would normally expect such resistance, but as Sai On and his Kumemura counterparts controlled the official histories and chronicles, indications of such conflict rarely surface in the texts. The lack of textual voice for such dissidents means that it is terribly difficult to hear their stories today. In Sai On's time, however, it is likely that many urban Ryukyuans did hear their voices.

Ryukyu's Literary Giant

Sai On had little to say about literature, and most of what he did say was, if not disparaging, then at least cautionary. He saw literature as a recreational diversion, acceptable as such in small amounts perhaps, but not at the expense of time and energy spent on the essential tasks of self-cultivation, regulating the household, and learning the way of government. This study has focussed on Sai On's texts and thus has not dealt with early-modern Ryukyuan literature. It is important to bear in mind, however, that during the eighteenth century, Japanese literature and a new Ryukyuan form of drama called *kumiodori* flourished among the well-to-do in Shuri. The major literary figures of Sai On's day included the poet Onna Nabe (dates unclear), playwright and creator of *kumiodori,* Tamagusuku Chōkun (1684-1734), and numerous others.[24] Like their Chinese-educated counterparts in Kumemura serving as envoys to China, many of these Japanese-educated Shuri literati served as envoys to Japan. Some, like Tamagusuku Chōkun who became *jitō* of Tamagusuku district, also served in high government office, and many others served in clerical posts. Of the many early-modern literary figures, Heshikiya Chōbin was most prominent in his time, and his high literary reputation has continued into the

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[24]The best overview of major early-modern literary figures is Ikemiya Masaharu, *Kinsei Okinawa no shōzō: bungakusha, geinōsha retsuden,* 2 volumes (Naha: Hirugisha, 1982).

present day. Heshikiya Chōbin was born to a distinguished *shi* household, and his father, Chōbun, was in the midst of an already distinguished political career when he died unexpectedly at age twenty-nine. At the time of his death, Chōbin's father was *jitō* of Yomitanzan district, and held the post of Ginmiyaku in the central government. Chōbin was the household's eldest son.[25]

Many of Heshikiya's writings are extant,[26] but little is known of his official career, information that would normally appear in his household register. Because he was executed as a criminal, however, his *kafu* was confiscated and destroyed. In addition to numerous poems, Heshikiya's major works of fiction are extant. *Wakakusa monogatari* (Tale of young grass) is a tale set in Japan. The protagonist, a samurai and poet named Ozasa Tsuyunosuke (*tsuyu* meaning "dew," a favorite metaphor of Heshikiya), meets and falls in love with a high-class prostitute named Wakakusa ("Young Grass"). The two must part, however, for the woman had been sold to the daimyo of another domain. In the end, they both commit suicide in their grief. *Koke no shita* (Beneath the moss) is set in Ryukyu, where an *aji* and a high-class prostitute, Yoshiya fall deeply in love. Yoshiya's step-

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[25]Biographical information is based primarily on Ikemiya, vol. 1, pp. 159-177.

[26]For a well-annotated collection of Heshikiya Chōbin's novellas, see Tamae.

mother, however, arranged for her to marry someone else, so she stopped eating and starved herself to death, after which time the *aji* resolved to do the same. Chōbin's most famous work is *Temizu no en,* a *kumiodori* drama about illicit love between a young couple.

Heshikiya's works abound with Buddhist imagery and talk of life, this world, etcetera as being "*hakanai*" or "*tsuyu*" (fleeting, transient, like the morning dew). One of the many poems in *Koke no shita,* for example, reads:

> Like a morning glory that knows not of its fleeting life,
> I pray I'll live as long as the pines and bamboo.[27]

A passage at the end of the same work reads:

> . . . A monk who seated at a temple practicing *zazen* at night was startled to hear the voice of a young woman say:
> 'The mountain path I've entered leading to the world of the dead is dark and steep,
> May the lantern of the Law illuminate it with its light.'
> But when he opened the window to look out, there was nobody. 'Ah! It's someone lost in the dark,' he thought, and taking pity on her, . . . he recited the sutras most respectfully and performed funeral rites.
> When the *aji* heard of this matter, he said, 'Ah! It must have been Yoshiya. She must be so lost by herself. Well, shall I go and show her the way? She's waiting.' He then made up his mind to stop eating and die.[28]

Giving free rein to the emotions such as love and grief,

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[27]Tamae, p. 68.

[28]Ibid, p. 72.

freedom from social constraints, the impermanence of this world of sorrow and disappointment, and a deep faith in Buddhism and the efficacy of Buddhist religious practices, were all prominent themes in Heshikiya's writings.

Heshikiya's message was the opposite of Sai On's, and it was a message cast in poignant prose and poetry. It is not difficult to imagine that many *shi* would have preferred the literature of Heshikiya and other Shuri literati to the arduous study of Confucian classics, commentaries, and essays that Sai On urged them to undertake. The Buddhism permeating Heshikiya's writings is of considerable importance, for it is perhaps the strongest evidence we have yet seen that Buddhism retained a powerful hold on the hearts and minds of many Ryukyuan *shi* in Sai On's day. The repeated and lengthy attacks on Buddhism in Sai On's texts make sense when seen in the context of Heshikiya's widely-read and admired literature.

Beyond Literature: The Heshikiya Incident

Had Heshikiya been content only to write literature, he would undoubtedly have been a source of aggravation to Sai On and like-minded Ryukyuans, but it is difficult to imagine that he would have come to any serious harm. Heshikiya was reputed to have been impulsive and rash, and to have been vigorously opposed to Sai On and his policies. Sai On made no mention of Heshikiya in any of his extant texts, but in

Kagenroku, apparently a record of his household affairs, there was a passage about "a certain person," who was almost certainly Heshikiya Chōbin. Fortunately, the passage is available today because it has been cited in secondary works by scholars writing early in this century. It reads as follows:

> In the past, there was a certain person (*mou-shih*). He appeared good on the outside but his mind was that of a wolf. Although he was from a local [*shi*] household, his mind contained jealous thoughts, and everyone avoided him. This person ordinarily despised me and harbored plots to do me harm, which was known to everyone and to myself.
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> One day, he unexpectedly paid me a visit, and the members of my household were quite alarmed. I made tea and received him as a guest. He laughed and talked, and as evening arrived he took his leave.
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> The household members admonished me saying, 'He belongs among the carnivorous beasts and owls.[29] Why did you not avoid him?' I said, 'He did not intend to do any harm, so what harm could he have done?' Later, this person committed a treasonous crime and was executed. . . .[30]

Details of the "crime" Heshikiya committed remain largely unknown owing to a lack of documentary evidence. Most scholars agree, however, that it involved an attempt to oust Sai On via Satsuma's officials stationed in Ryukyu.

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[29]In Chinese lore, owls were reputed to eat their mother, thus becoming symbolic of that which is unfilial and evil.

[30]Quoted in Iha and Majikina, p. 131.

Although Chōbin's own *kafu* was destroyed, brief references to the "Heshikiya Incident" can be found in other *kafu*, including his father's. The relevant section reads:

> . . . [Chōbin] conspired with Tomoyose [Anjō] and came up with a imprudent plot. They delivered a letter to the residence of the [Satsuma] inspector Kawanishi Hiraemon, and even after that, mentioned various things about delivering another letter. They planned for the matter to become a difficult problem for the country (*kokka*), and because they were [deemed] evil and reprehensible, they were executed at Ajaminato on the twenty-sixth day of the sixth month of 1734. The writings and emoluments of those involved in the incident were taken and are now gone. . . .[31]

An entry from another *kafu* describing the other major conspirator, fellow literati Tomoyose Anjō (1677-1734), is almost identical with the above passage, except that it specifies that Tomoyose also conspired directly with Kawanishi and the two then sent a letter to the Zaiban bugyō.[32]

The exact content of the letter, unfortunately, is not known, although there has been no shortage of theories handed down in folk legends and put forth by historians. Ikemiya's

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[31]Quoted in Ikemiya, *Shōzō*, p. 162. Ikemiya's reading of the text is that the actual crimes of the party were delivering the letter and talking about doing so again, with the "planning to create a difficult problem for the country" being an inflated charge brought against them by the government, though he has no particular evidence for this interpretation. Ikemiya also points out that in the 1786 law code, the crime of delivering a petition inappropriately was merely four to ten years' banishment.

[32]Ibid, pp. 163-4.

interpretation of the incident is similar to that of many scholars:

> . . . Because a letter was sent to the Zaiban Bugyō, it is thought that it must have contained a critique of the nucleus of the royal government. The group who made the critique embraced the Satsuma official Kawanishi, and furthermore, we can know that it was a group comprised mainly of people who felt close to Satsuma through Japanese literature and Japanese arts. It was probably the case that by delivering a letter critical of Sai On they hoped to have him removed from office. But because Satsuma supported Sai On's realistic (*jitsugakuteki*) economic policies and his feudal (*hōkenteki*) ethics, it was shocked to find that even the Satsuma official Kawanishi had been drawn into the incident, and asked for decisive punishment. Sai On took this stance by Satsuma as an opportunity to silence a source of internal dissent and meted out even more severe punishment than necessary. . . .[33]

In all, roughly fifteen of Heshikiya's supporters were executed, and numerous relatives and others on the periphery of the incident received lesser punishments such as forfeiture of *shi* status or banishment.

Although we will probably never have a clear idea of precisely what took place, the scholarly consensus is that Heshikiya, Tomoyose, and others tried to topple Sai On from power via Satsuma, that their plan backfired, that Satsuma supported Sai On and his policies, and that Sai On was able to eliminate many of the major Shuri literati who opposed his policies. Ikemiya also states that a key context of the

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[33]Ibid, p. 165.

incident was a growing conflict between the Chinese thought of Kumemura and the Japanese literature of Shuri. He points out that Satsuma's more indirect control was an impetus for the strengthening of "feudal," i.e. "Confucian," ethics, which in turn made the residents of Kumemura ever more important. The *shi* of Shuri had a crisis mentality (*kikikan*), and it is natural that they would have wanted to have Sai On ousted.[34]

Ikemiya explained the matter from the standpoint of a scholar of literature (and a sympathizer with Heshikiya). Itokazu, an intellectual historian, has put forth the following tentative theory, which complements Ikemiya's explanation:

> . . . Chōbin was a so-called anti-establishment writer, and resisted the singular control of *ri* (the pattern of nature), speaking on behalf of the demands of those groups who were controlled. In this sense, it may be fair to say that he was a most astute thinker who was cognizant of the modern spirit (*kindaiteki seishin*). At the very least, his understanding that literary arts should be a vehicle for the way was extremely weak. With respect to this point, he was sharply opposed to Sai On, who advanced the traditional Confucian view of the literary arts, and it is clear to see that the two were completely irreconcilable.[35]

The two were certainly irreconcilable, and because Sai On and his supporters emerged decisively victorious in the brief

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[34]Ibid, pp. 168-9.

[35]"Ten no shisō," p. 92.

power struggle, they were able to eliminate almost all traces of the Heshikiya incident.

Another Look at Sai On

Although Sai On and his supporters eliminated Heshikiya and the most vocal opposition to their polices, they were obviously not able to eliminate the ideas, beliefs, and attitudes that informed Heshikiya's writings, or even the writings themselves. Buddhism continued as a powerful force among the *shi* of Shuri, and many *shi* remained hostile toward Confucianism. These points help shed light on whom Sai On may have been writing to and about, as well as on the issues that informed the many polemical passages in his texts.

In the following excerpt from *Words of an Old Man,* a monk sharply criticizes Confucian norms and rules:

> . . . The Confucians set up a system of morality and established rites and music. They promoted the spread of methods of government and established rewards and punishments. Then they bound the people together with the Confucian classics. By setting up a rank-ordered society, they made distinctions based on hierarchy. *In other words, they placed the earth in fetters.* Could it really have been the intention of the sages to assuage the world?[36]

Such a view of Confucianism was probably common among many Shuri literati. In response, the old man argued that government-imposed restrictions were necessary to prevent the

[36]SHG, #17. Italics added.

masses of dull people from retrogressing to a level little removed from animals:

> . . . Are the people of India all Śākyamuni? Are the people of China all sages? Even through the common people receive the heavenly nature, material forms come about, passions arise, and people rush to satisfy their every desire. It is most difficult for them to incline toward the good. If such things were not prevented by restrictive measures, most people would be little different from animals. The sages understood human emotions against the background of the times. They therefore explained benevolence and righteousness, spread teachings about government, and rectified customs, which put the people at ease. That past and present their way is changeless, and that there is not a single day under heaven that we are not all Confucians, is surely for this reason. . . .[37]

It seems that many Ryukyuans, even those in urban areas, failed to understand the "fact" that "we are all Confucians."

Shō Shōken was able to enact unpopular measures because of the firm support of Satsuma. The Heshikiya Incident reveals that Sai On, too, had strong backing from Satsuma. This support, combined with his close relationship with the king, goes a long way toward explaining his own power and the increased power of Kumemura scholars in general. That Sai On and the residents of Kumemura had a strong background in Chinese studies, not Japanese studies like the *shi* of Shuri, would not have been problematic for Satsuma at this time. Satsuma had long abandoned any attempt to make Ryukyu

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[37]Ibid.

culturally like Japan, since it was in the interests of both Satsuma and the bakufu that Ryukyu retain every appearance of a foreign country distinct from Japan. Perhaps most importantly, Sai On and his policies were effective in improving Ryukyu's productivity and economic strength, thus reducing the drain Ryukyu placed on Satsuma's resources. Considering Satsuma's support for his policies, Sai On's lavish praise of the "venerable foundation of the country" in *One Man's Views* and the *Articles of Instruction* was hardly empty flattery.

Concluding Comments

I have argued that the Confucianization of the Ryukyuan upper classes did not take place suddenly in the wake of the Satsuma invasion, but rather over the course of roughly two centuries. In the Heshikiya Incident, and in the *Kyūyō* authors' creation of a Confucian past for old Ryukyu, we can glimpse certain aspects of this process. Confucianism was a recent arrival in Ryukyu, and had become the basis for the kingdom's government only with Sai On. Many, perhaps most, of the old Shuri elite perceived the spread of Confucian learning beyond the confines of Kumemura as a threat to their political position, as well as to certain of their beliefs and values. Heshikiya took direct action to oppose Ryukyu's

Confucianization, and failed utterly, owing mainly to Satsuma's support for Sai On.

Others may have taken action as well, perhaps in a less dramatic fashion, but if so, their voices were not recorded in the official histories. Indeed, the royal government at the time tried to silence Heshikiya and his followers, and largely succeeded. Nevertheless, Heshikiya's writings remain with us, and even Sai On's texts reflect something of Heshikiya's views. On a broader scale, Sai On and other Kumemura scholars sought to recast or recreate relationships based on coercive military and political force as relationships based on "righteousness" and moral authority. My own impression of Sai On is that he was a sincere "believer" in his conception of the Confucian way. Nevertheless, an effect of this recreation was to obscure the basis of Sai On's own power, which was not moral (at least in the eyes of many Ryukyuans) but political.[38]

We have seen the vigor with which Sai On argued for his vision of Ryukyu's future. That vision was of an ideal Confucian society, which in terms of its level of moral attainment would be as great or greater than any of Ryukyu's larger neighbors. Sai On's view was liberating and empowering, at least for himself and others in positions of

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[38]Sai On, of course, would surely not have made so sharp a distinction between what was political and what was moral.

authority in the central government. We have seen, however, that at least some Ryukyuans viewed Sai On's vision as anything but liberating and empowering. All indications are that after Sai On's death, the process of Confucianization continued in the hands of relatively strong kings and certain of their Kumemura advisors. The political power of Kumemura, however, seems to have waned to some extent. Ironically, by the early nineteenth century, the spread of Confucian learning to the *shi* of Shuri began to undermine the privileged position of Kumemura residents as the custodians of that learning.

CHAPTER TEN:
EPILOGUE AND CONCLUSIONS

Major Developments After Sai On

During the period from Sai On's death until the end of the kingdom, no political leader attained his stature and power. Furthermore, no scholar significantly developed, revised, or refuted Sai On's philosophical writings. Educated Ryukyuans studied Sai On's texts along with the Confucian classics, the writings of the Sung masters, and technical works. The process of giving Confucian thought institutional embodiment continued after Sai On's passing, producing results he undoubtedly would have approved of. Some of the most important developments included Ryukyu's first comprehensive legal code, the start of a limited examination system for certain government positions, the declaration by King Shō On that appointment to government office shall be based on the degree of one's mastery of Confucian learning, and not hereditary status, the establishment of a national academy and school system under Shō On, and Shō On's changing the *kanshō* system such that of the four students sent to China, two would be from Shuri households.

Shō Boku

Shō Kei died unexpectedly in 1751, which prompted Sai On's retirement from formal office. He continued, however, to serve Shō Boku in an advisory capacity, however, while spending most of his time writing essays. In contrast to his father, Shō Buku seems to have been more active in the political realm, or perhaps he simply appeared that way in the absence of Sai On. Shō Boku further enhanced the prestige of the royal lineage, establishing a hall for the veneration of the royal ancestral tablets in 1753, and initiating a feast before the royal ancestral graves.[1] He was also active in continuing Sai On's forestry system, and travelled to Kunigami to inspect forest lands in 1778. Later, upon hearing that forest lands were becoming run down, he had the *sessei* and Council of Three make a tour of inspection of forest lands in 1791.[2]

Shō Boku's reign was also a time when Ryukyu began to experience renewed financial and economic problems—problems that grew steadily worse until the kingdom came to an end. By chance, the number of embassies Ryukyu needed to send to Edo increased, and by 1791 the royal government was 7,000 *kanme* of silver in debt. Famine and other problems struck agricultural villages, and a devastating tidal wave struck Miyako

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[1]ODJ, 2, p. 434.

[2]KY, #1332, 1425; Ibid.

and Yaeyama. Sai On had devoted a great deal of resources in an effort to populate Yaeyama, but the tidal wave literally washed away most of the new villages. The government undertook numerous surveys, dispatched *gechiyaku* (official trouble-shooters sent from Shuri to oversee the revitalization of badly declining areas) and forced wealthy households in each area to make "loans." At this time, the percentage of *shi* in the population began to increase sharply, probably because many such wealthy households were given *shi* status in return for their "loans."[3]

Perhaps the single most important development during Shō Boku's reign was the writing and promulgation of the *Ryūkyū karitsu*, Ryukyu's first comprehensive legal code. The project to produce the code began in 1775, and the code was completed and promulgated in 1786. The *Kyūyō* contains the following description:

> In our country there has never been a fixed system of rewards and punishments. When confronted with a matter to attend to, it was decided based on the consideration of past precedents. But amidst the former precedents, there were a number that were unreasonable. Therefore, [*sessei*] Shō Tenteki Ie *Ueekata* Chōkei and Baa Kokugi Kōchi *Peekumi* Ryōtoku were ordered to gather [appropriate past examples], compile a book of noble deeds and of legal sanctions, and use it in creating laws.[4]

[3]ODJ, 2, p. 434.

[4]KY, #1315.

Other high officials such as Council of Three member and noted scholar of Chinese studies Yonabaru Ryōku (1718-1797) also participated in the project.

The introduction to the code is instructive for the typically Confucian outlook it reveals. It reads in part:

> Although the way of governing a country has virtuous teachings as its basis, a code of laws must also be established. If one ponders the basic meaning of such [legal] writings, [he will see that] it is to banish the evil the common people acquire, and to resurrect their inherent goodness. They are written for the purpose of avoiding punishment. . . . Because [the king] had this law code compiled to aid widely in the transformation of customs, one should respectfully recognize his regal mind, and enthusiastically read this text on a daily basis without fail so as to investigate the limitless pattern of the way, which is contained herein. . . .[5]

The entire code consisted of one volume of cases to serve as examples of exemplary conduct (and to encourage such conduct by specifying rewards), and eighteen volumes of laws, prohibitions, specification of penalties, and sometimes examples of past cases to illustrate the laws. The introduction to the code stated that its authors examined a wide variety of past Japanese and Chinese law codes as basic source material. Miyagi points out that the basic structure of the code (but not necessarily the details of its particular clauses) was virtually identical with the Ch'ing code,

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[5]Quoted in Miyagi Eishō, "Ryūkyū karitsu ni tsuite," *Nihon rekishi*, no. 155 (March, 1961): 12-21.

and said that the obvious Chinese influence reflected Shō Boku's strong admiration of the Ch'ing.[6]

Ryukyu under Shō Boku continued in the same general direction it had under Sai On, except for the worsening economy. Shō Boku and top officials made efforts to maintain Sai On's forestry system, apparently with success.[7] A well-researched, comprehensive legal code replaced Ryukyu's previous patchwork of past precedents. In the code we see a continuation and extension into new areas of the various standardization policies of Sai On's era. In the introduction to the code we see the firm place Confucian ideas come to occupy as the rationale for the conduct of government.

Shō On

There is perhaps no better testimony to Sai On's stature in eighteenth-century Ryukyu than the name of the second Shō dynasty's fifteenth monarch. It is remarkable that in a society as conscious of social status as was Ryukyu that a king would be named after a non-royal official of *ueekata* status, or for that matter, that a king would be named after any official at all. Shō On died at age nineteen, but during his short tenure as king, he gave every indication of following in the footsteps of his namesake.

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[6]Ibid, pp. 13-16.

[7]See KY, #1425.

The *Kanshō Sōdō*

Shō On became king in 1796 at age twelve. Before his death he made several major changes in Ryukyuan scholarly and political institutions. One of these changes was so radical, at least from the perspective of many in Kumemura, that it provoked a major disturbance there. In 1798, Shō On revised the *kanshō* system such that instead of all four of the students being residents of Kumemura, two would come from Shuri. A year previously, Sai Seishō (1737?-1798), an outstanding Confucian scholar and relative of Sai On, became *kokushi*, and most historians agree that Sai either came up with the idea himself or at least concurred with Shō On in it. The new policy was so unpopular in Kumemura that most of its leading residents signed a petition in protest. But two particularly prominent Kumemura scholars, Sai Seishō and Tei Kōtoku (1735-?), refused to affix their seals to the document. When the royal government would not change its new policy, some Kumemura residents marched to the residences of Sai and Tei and hurled insults, stones, and even excrement. The two also received threatening letters. Other Kumemura residents protested to Satsuma's Zaiban Bugyō, but to no avail. In response to such outrageous conduct, the royal government cracked down severely. Suspected instigators of the disturbances were questioned under torture, and most ended up exiled to remote places. Many historians attribute

Sai Seishō's 1798 illness and death as having been brought on at least in part by grief over the ugly and divisive incident.[8]

This incident, known as the *kanshō sōdō*, reveals a significant change since Sai On's time. First, more than sixty years after Heshikiya's execution, Confucian learning and Chinese studies in general had made solid headway among the Shuri elite. The proficiency of some was apparently sufficient to enable them to go to China as *kanshō*. To the extent that the Shuri elite began to take up Confucian learning, however, Kumemura residents lost their monopoly as the custodians of that learning, which of course was a potential threat to their economic and political position. The Confucianization of the royal government that Sai On promoted with a great deal of success also helped enhance the political power of Kumemura. But the very success of this process under subsequent kings, served ultimately to undermine Kumemura's privileged position. It seems that by Shō On's time, most of Kumemura's scholars were more interested in maintaining their privileged position than in seeing learning of the universal "way" expand to the *shi* of Shuri. It is important to note, however, that not all Kumemura scholars opposed Shō On's changes, including the two most prominent figures of the time.

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[8]ODJ, 1, p. 798.

Politics and Schools

The change in the composition of the *kanshō* was probably more symbolic than substantive, owing to the small number of *kanshō*. Shō On's establishment in Shuri of a school system headed by a national university, the Kokugaku, was an even more significant indication of the end of Kumemura's monopoly on Confucian learning.[9] Kumemura scholars were apparently uneasy about the new national academy, and petitioned the government in part as follows:

> . . . In Peking there stands the national academy, and it is called the "university" (*daigaku*). A Confucian temple is situated in the left part of the campus, and entering students first pay their respects there. Also, on the first and fifteenth of each month, rites are conducted at the temple. . . . The school you are constructing has no Confucian temple, and [even] if you call it the national academy (*kokugaku*), it is in fact more like the schools (*shoin*) in each district in China. . . If you call it a *shoin,* it would correspond to Chinese *shoin,* which we humbly think to be most appropriate.[10]

The Meirindō Academy, of course, had a Confucian temple. Again we see Kumemura scholars appearing anxious over the

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[9]The establishment of the school system, however, also brought new employment opportunities for Kumemura scholars, since they comprised the overwhelming majority of the instructors. Although the kingdom did not last long enough for Kumemura to lose its overall predominance in the area of Chinese studies, its position eroded steadily. Maeda, relying on earlier observations by Higashionna, points out that from Shō Shin to Shō Ei, all monument inscriptions in Ryukyu were done by Japanese monks. During the reigns of Shō Kei and Shō Boku, however, only Kumemura personnel performed such tasks. From Shō On's time, however, it was residents of Shuri who inscribed monuments (*Yogawari no shisō*, p. 187).

[10]Quoted in Majikina, p. 121.

growing importance of Shuri as a center of Chinese studies and Confucian scholarship.

Sai On apparently had little to say about establishing a school or school system, writing only the following brief statement in *One Man's Views*:

> If various schools are established, each with five or six teachers, and if the schools' students are examined and placed according to their particular talents in suitable posts, we can expect an annual increase in the number of talented individuals. It is at such a time when the greater part of the way of government has been established, however, that schools will really become impressive.[11]

In other words, Sai On gave carrying out basic political reform priority over establishing a school system. Scholars of Ryukyuan history have interpreted this passage in various ways, but Majikina's view seems most reasonable. According to a Kumemura diary entry for 1741, Shō Kei communicated to Prince Motobu his desire that all young *shi* in Shuri take up scholarship and that he hoped eventually to construct an academy. Shō Kei said that he was not sure how best to proceed, and suggested to the prince that a seminar for all *shi*, regardless of status, be started in Shuri castle, and an instructor be brought in from Kumemura. The king hoped that such a step would kindle sufficient enthusiasm for study among the *shi* as to pave the way for a successful school. He instructed the prince to sound out the opinion of leading

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[11]HMG, #35.

members of the nobility regarding the matter.[12] Majikina went on to point out that Sai On's statement above probably reflected the circumstances Shō Kei alluded to in his communication to Prince Motobu. In other words, Sai On was concerned that there was not yet a sufficient base of *shi* support in Shuri to support a school. Perhaps, wrote Majikina, he was also aware of how few official schools there were in Japan, for in the first decade of the eighteenth century there were approximately fourteen official *han* schools in all of Japan, with all of the major *han* schools of Kyushu yet to be established.[13]

Before describing the establishment and operation of the Kokugaku, let us return to the issue of Kumemura versus Shuri and the role of Confucian learning. The above-quoted passage (in which Kumemura scholars appealed to the king to call the Kokugaku by some lesser name because it lacked a Confucian temple) indicates more than ambivalence toward a rival center of learning. The passage also shows that ritual and worship remained major components of Kumemura Confucian practice. While Sai On certainly acknowledged the importance of rites, he was also critical of any form of Confucian practice that did not put primary emphasis on self-cultivation leading to the ability to govern the household and the state. Sai Seishō

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[12]Maeda, *Yogawari no shisō*, p. 185; Majikina, p. 81.

[13]p. 82.

became a *kanshō* in 1758, and before he departed, Sai On instructed him to "concentrate on learning the way of governing the country and bringing peace to the realm, not on literary studies." Furthermore, according to the record of his academic advisor in Peking, Sai Seishō did indeed concentrate on statecraft studies.[14] The Confucianism of Sai On and Sai Seishō was not incompatible with mainstream Kumemura scholarship with its focus on ritual and language skills (including literature and poetry), but its emphasis was nevertheless different. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the gap between these two varieties of Confucian practice may have widened.

Further research is needed for a more definitive conclusion, but it may be that the contention between Kumemura and Shuri indicates differing emphases in Confucian practice. The Meirindō academy in Kumemura continued to produce Ryukyuans capable of reasonably sophisticated interaction with Chinese officials. The goal of the Kokugaku, as we shall see, was to produce royal government officials. It is likely that the statecraft-oriented Confucianism of Sai On and Sai Seishō appealed to those Shuri aristocrats who took up Confucian studies, for after all, it was they who traditionally served as government officials. The tension between Kumemura and Shuri at the turn of the nineteenth century may have derived

[14]Maeda, *Yogawari no shisō*, p. 191.

in part from a widening gap between two different varieties of Confucian practice.

Establishment of the Kokugaku

The seminar that Shō Kei wrote of was soon initiated, and in 1751, lectures for the *shi* of Shuri began to be held in each of the three *hira* (districts) of the capital area. Three years later, the three lecture series were recombined into one, which later evolved into the Kokugaku.[15] It was at this time that Confucian study first became a part of the lives of many of the *shi* in Shuri. Another development that presaged the Kokugaku was the establishment of a limited examination system, called *kō* (J. *ka* = *kakyo*), probably in 1760, but no later than 1763. Unlike the civil service exams in China, the Ryukyuan exams were job-specific, and were for lower to middle-level specialist posts. Examples included exams for musicians, painters, secretarial and clerical posts in the Hyōjōsho and lesser government organs, the various grades of instructor in Kumemura, and exams to become *kanshō*. Generally, the exams consisted of a preliminary screening to test basic academic skills, followed by a second, more specific exam for those who passed the first. According to Majikina most exams were highly competitive, with only a small percentage of passers.[16]

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[15]Ibid, p. 185.

[16]See Majikina, pp. 164-8.

The original site for the Kokugaku was Nakagusuku Udun, the area presently occupied by Shuri High School, and it was moved to a new location in 1801, where it remained. The rules for the academy closely resembled Chu Hsi's rules for the White Deer Grotto academy.[17] Normally, officials from the Sasu-no-soba examined the students monthly, and the *sessei,* Council of Three, and other top officials examined them seasonally, four times a year. During the first year of operation, however, the exams were suspended, apparently owing to slow student progress.[18]

Admission to the Kokugaku was by examination, and a general prerequisite was graduation from one of the three *hira gakkō,* lesser schools that were established in conjunction with the Kokugaku.[19] In theory, attendance was open to any *shi,* regardless of status. In fact, however, circumstances virtually forced the sons of the top nobility (that is, those to whom hereditary status had given a reasonable chance of becoming top officials) to attend the Kokugaku, for graduation soon became a prerequisite for top official posts. Ordinary *shi,* on the other hand, found specific vocational training more practical. After completing such training, they

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[17]Ibid, pp. 123-4.

[18]Ibid, p. 126.

[19]The school system also included district school in some of the outlying areas.

would compete for lower and middle-level posts via the examinations.[20]

The number of students was not fixed and varied from time to time, but typical combined totals were between 300 and 400 in all the various courses of study. Students typically entered at age seventeen or eighteen, and stayed for seven or eight years.[21] The curriculum at the beginning level included study of the Four Books and Five Classics plus T'ang poetry. The more advanced levels stressed preparation for the *kanshō* examination, which included training in spoken Chinese and in various styles of Chinese composition.[22] Students who did not plan to take the *kanshō* examination were able to pursue other courses of study. Some, for example, learned to read Chinese texts in Japanese style, using *kunten* reading marks. In addition to the faculty, there were also (usually) three resident scholars at the academy pursuing specialized research, somewhat analogous to present-day graduate students.[23] By the early nineteenth century, Chinese studies had become firmly established in Shuri.

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[20]Ibid, pp. 127-8.

[21]Ibid, p. 128.

[22]Ibid; ODJ, 2, p. 98.

[23]Ibid.

Merit Over Heredity Under Shō On

Upon founding the Kokugaku in 1798, Shō On promulgated a set of general educational principles, the "Kokugaku shishi ni kunchoku suru no yu." The brief document described the reasons for founding the academy, and explained that a lack of resources had prevented Ryukyu from having such an academy until this comparatively late date. The most important part of the document, however, was an unequivocal declaration that merit, not heredity, would be the most important criterion in selecting officials. The relevant passage reads as follows:

> . . . Without consideration for whether his lineage be exalted or base, if someone accumulates [meritorious] deeds, works hard at scholarship, and puts forth plans that are beneficial to the country, then even if he be the son of a commoner, I will raise him up and make use of him. On the other hand, however, if someone fails his exams, indulges excessively in leisure, and fails to abide by wise teachings, then even if he be the son of a high-ranking *shi*, I will have him dismissed and removed from office.[24]

These were strong words from an assertive king only fifteen years of age.

Of course, the king's declaration by itself probably changed little. It would have been interesting to see if and how Shō On would have tried to implement this policy in concrete terms, but he died four years later. It is reason-

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[24]The text is included in the *Chūzan seifu* under Shō On. See RSS, 4, pp. 179-80 (quoted excerpt is on p. 80). The scholar Rin Kakai actually composed the text.

able to say that by 1798, at least in theory, Confucian scholarship had become the official basis for government in Ryukyu. Furthermore, by this year the institutional framework for Confucian learning had largely reached maturity. It is for this reason that I find the "bookend" analogy for Shō Shōken and Sai On problematic.[25]

Ryukyu's Steady Decline

After Shō On's time, Ryukyu's overall economic decline accelerated. Shō Kō (r. 1804-28) seems to have been an ineffective king, who abdicated in 1728 and secluded himself at Urasoe Gusuku, probably owing to mental illness brought on by the many problems of his time.[26] The state of royal finances declined, as did rural villages throughout the countryside (some even died out entirely). Outbreaks of famine and epidemic disease were common, and in each of the years 1825 and 1832, between 3,000 and 4,000 died as a result. Under Shō Kō, the royal government was unable to come up with any sort of a plan to deal with the crises facing

[25]It was certainly the case, however, that developments after Sai On's death were logical extensions of the general direction of his various policies. Another problem with the bookend analogy is that certain of Sai On's policies and views were major departures from those of Shō Shōken. Perhaps the better "bookends," therefore, would be Sai On and Shō On/Sai Seishō.

[26]Dana points out that while Shō Kō may not have been an effective leader, he left behind numerous poignant poems, and was perhaps the most "human" king (ODJ, 2, p. 418).

Ryukyu.[27] A major blow to government finances came when Satsuma learned that it could grow sugar on its own southern islands (the northern Ryukyu islands). AS the supply increased, of course, the price fell. Dana points out that the relative prosperity of the eighteenth century was due at least in part to a major expansion of sugar production. Entering the nineteenth century, however, Ryukyu was overdependent on this one commodity, which exacerbated the effect of Satsuma's production.[28]

Shō Iku (r. 1829-1848) had served as *sessei* for seven years prior to becoming king, and seems to have been a somewhat more vigorous leader than his abdicated father. He established additional local schools, and even had a Confucian temple built within the Kokugaku. In an interesting move, he had *funjirū* established throughout the country. *Funjirū* were lanterns for the purpose of respectfully disposing of wastepaper that had something written on it.[29] He does not seem to have come up with any effective economic policies, however, although he did skimp on his investiture ceremony and then distributed the surplus funds to the districts to provide economic relief. The situation in the

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[27]ODJ, 2, pp. 417-8.

[28]"Seiji," p. 70.

[29]The idea that any paper containing writing must be treated with respect was widespread in China and Japan prior to modern times.

countryside continued to decline, and visits from European ships also caused vexing diplomatic problems for Shō Iku and his officials.

By the time Ryukyu's last king, Shō Tai (r. 1849-79), came to the throne, the royal government was in such bad financial shape that his investiture was delayed for eighteen years. When the kingdom came to an end in 1879, the Meiji government pensioned off the king and the *shi,* much as it had done with the *samurai.* A few residents of Kumemura and others secretly fled to China where they stayed at the Ryukyuan embassy and petitioned the Ch'ing government to come to Ryukyu's aid. Ch'ing military assistance never materialized, and most of these Ryukyuans adopted Ch'ing attire and hair style and lived out their lives in China. Shō Tai was made a marquis in the Meiji peerage system and lived quietly in Tokyo. The former kingdom entered a new era in its history. Although theoretically a prefecture, Okinawa-ken was long ruled like a colony by a governor sent from Tokyo with dictatorial powers. Confucianism lost its much of its vitality as the Ryukyuan economy and society declined, and had become insignificant by the dawn of the twentieth century.

Conclusions

Although Confucian texts found their way into Ryukyu as early as the fourteenth century, Confucianism first became a significant part of Ryukyuan society only in the early seventeenth century. Even at that time, the extent of Confucian learning was limited mainly to Kumemura. Elsewhere in Ryukyu, Buddhism (along with certain elements of the native religion) appears to have been the dominant intellectual and spiritual force in Shuri and Naha, while the native religion (along with certain aspects of popular Buddhism and Chinese folk religions) was the dominant spiritual force in the countryside.

Starting with the reign of Shō Tei in the late seventeenth century, the king and other members of the royal family began to receive formal education, with a curriculum based in large part on Confucian texts. Throughout the first half of the eighteenth century, Sai On was instrumental in spreading Confucian learning beyond the confines of Kumemura and the royal family. In Sai On's hands, Confucianism became the basis for the conduct of government, an unprecedented development in Ryukyu. Sai On's Confucianism, however, differed in significant ways from that of Kumemura, for he was the first major Ryukyuan Confucian to promote the Ch'eng-Chu tradition of Confucian scholarship. While Sai On relied

heavily on the writings of the Ch'engs and Chu Hsi, particularly in matters of metaphysics, he was ultimately an independent thinker. Above all, he sought to apply Confucian principles in reforming Ryukyu's natural environment, economy, society, and government.

As the single most powerful person in the royal government for over thirty years, Sai On had ample opportunity to put his ideas into practice. He was not a dictator, however, and depended on the support and cooperation of other members of the royal government in order to implement key policies. There is also evidence of considerable opposition to Sai On and his particular Confucian vision of Ryukyuan society. The *Sanpu ryūmyaku hi* inscription, for example, suggests opposition from within the ranks of those trained in Chinese studies. The Heshikiya Chōbin incident, suggests strong opposition from within the traditional Shuri elite. The rise in importance of Confucian learning threatened the political power of this group, which had long been associated with Buddhism and Japanese studies. There was also resistance to Sai On's policies from the common people, among whom the native religion remained the dominant spiritual force. Sai On and his Confucian colleagues, for example, were unable to curtail the practice of shamanism in the countryside. Despite opposition from various quarters, owing to close ties with the king and to firm backing from Satsuma, Sai On was

reasonably successful in implementing his vision of a Confucian society for Ryukyu.

Shō Shōken was a political reformer active a generation prior to Sai On. To the moderate extent that Shō Shōken was able to improve the material standard of living in Ryukyu and to reform the conduct of government, Sai On undoubtedly benefited from his predecessor's work. Shō Shōken, however, does not seem to have had the comprehensive, long-term vision of Ryukyuan society that Sai On did. Furthermore, except for writing the *Chūzan seikan,* Shō Shōken was not a major scholar or thinker. Sai On, on the other hand, bequeathed to later generations a comprehensive textual blueprint for Ryukyu's future. To the extent that we can know Shō Shōken's thought, it differed from Sai On's in certain significant respects. For example, the two did not share the same view of *t'ien,* or "heaven," and most importantly, their conceptions of *ming,* "destiny" or "fate," were vastly different. While both politicians received Confucian educations, Shō Shōken seems to have been more interested in promoting the study of Japanese culture among the Shuri elite than Confucian learning.

Unlike some historians of Ryukyu, I find the "bookend" analogy for Shō Shōken and Sai On to be problematic. First of all, there was not a linear evolutionary or developmental trajectory from Shō Shōken to Sai On, and Sai On attempted to

guide Ryukyu in a significantly different direction than did Shō Shōken. The extensive similarities between the two in terms of their policies was mainly the result of their having dealt with similar economic and social problems. Another problem with the bookend analogy is that such major changes as the promulgation of Ryukyu's first comprehensive legal code, the establishment of a school system, and the royal declaration that merit would take priority over heredity in the selection of government officials, came after Sai On's death. If one were to select "bookends" from among major figures in Ryukyuan history, Sai On and Shō On might be a better pair than Shō Shōken and Sai On.

The early-modern Ryukyu Kingdom is an excellent window through which to view the Confucian tradition, in part because of the relatively late development of Confucianism there. Furthermore Ryukyu was a small, resource-poor island country with its own distinct culture, but under the political domination of Japan while also a participant in the Chinese tributary system. Confucianism in Ryukyu, therefore, came into contact with a significantly different set of contexts than in China, Korea, or Japan.

A significant feature of Sai On's Confucian thought was its comprehensive scope. For example, basic Ch'eng-Chu Confucian metaphysics informed Sai On's critique of Buddhism, his critique of popular superstitions, a wide variety of

environmental, agricultural, and scientific politics, and to some extent even political disputes (as we have seen in the case of the *Sanpu ryūmyaku hi* inscription). Of course, Sai On and other Ryukyuan officials of his time did much more than study Confucian texts. They also engaged in extensive empirical observation and research, Sai On's five month survey of forest lands being but one of many examples. Confucian metaphysics provided the theoretical framework within which Sai On conceived of the world and society around him, while extensive empirical investigation provided the knowledge of specific "principles" or "things" within that framework. Unlike Chu Hsi who regarded the Confucian classics themselves as the most important object of "investigation," Sai On regarded Ryukyu, its land and its people, as the primary object of "investigation" along the lines of the Eight Steps of the *Great Learning*.

Perhaps Sai On's greatest contribution to the Confucian tradition was his use of the concept of situational weighing. While relying primarily on Chu Hsi's theoretical formulation, Sai On transformed situational weighing from its primary role in China and Japan of a way to explain certain historical events and figures into a multi-faceted tool. By recourse to situational weighing, he was able to bridge the tension in Confucian thought between the Buddhist-inspired conception of a universe in constant flux and the idea that the ancient

sages had created universally-valid, timeless norms for all of mankind. Similarly, situational weighing enabled Sai On to effectively acknowledge the importance of cultural differences without denying the validity of the sages' universal standards. Situational weighing served as a key part of Sai On's critique of Buddhism, and other than the unknown author of *Honsaroku,* he seems to have been the only Confucian scholar in China or Japan to have made such a critique. Situational weighing also appears to have informed certain of Sai On's political policies, and perhaps enabled him to enact pragmatically effective measures despite their deviation from commonly-accepted Confucian norms.[30]

Sai On urged Ryukyuans to take responsibility for their own destiny despite the many apparent limitations on their freedom of choice, particularly the lack of abundant resources and de facto Satsuma control. He vigorously rejected fatalism or resignation to *ming,* or destiny. Instead, he urged Ryukyuans to make their own destiny, and he explicitly affirmed that the power of diligent, intelligent human effort was as great as that of *t'ien*. Despite Ryukyu's benighted past and lack of material wealth, by implementing the Confucian way (that is, Sai On's Confucian way), he

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[30]Or, of course, situational weighing enabled Sai On to rationalize such pragmatically effective measures.

argued, even small and resource-poor Ryukyu could become as great a society as ancient China under the sage kings.

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List of Abbreviations

CYL *Chu-tzu yü-lei*
ECC *Erh-Ch'eng chi*
GKY *Go-kyōjo* (*Articles of Instruction*), in *Sai On senshū*
HKM *Heiji kanai monogatari* (*Ordinary Household Matters*), in *Sai On senshū*
HMG *Hitori monogatari* (*One Man's Views*), in *Sai On senshū*
HZR *Hengen zokuroku* (*Record of Additional Thoughts*), in Itokazu Kaneharu, "Sai On chosakura hoi"
JAS *Journal of Asian Studies*
JJS *Journal of Japanese Studies*
JSK *Jika shōkei* (*Expeditious Household Regulation*), in *Sai On zenshū*
KDJ *Kagoshima daihyakka jiten*
KHR *Kyoka hitsuran* (*Essential Views for Household Living*), in *Sai On zenshū*
KY *Kyūyō*
OKS *Okinawa-ken shiryō*
ROHM *Ryūkyū ōkoku hyōjōsho monjo*
RSS *Ryūkyū shiryō sōsho*
SHG *Saō hengen* (*Words of an Old Man*), in *Sai On zenshū*
SSS *Sai On senshū*
STK *Shushigaku taikei*
SYR *Seimu yōron* (*Essential Views Upon Awakening*), in *Sai On zenshū*
SZS *Sai On zenshū*
TYD *Toji yōden* (*Essentials of Governance*), in *Sai On zenshū*
ZYR *Zokushū yōron* (*Essential Discussion of Popular Customs*), in *Sai On zenshū*

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APPENDIX A:
KINGS OF THE SECOND SHŌ DYNASTY

Dates indicate reigns.

Shō En 1470-76

Shō Sen'i 1477

Shō Shin 1477-1526

Shō Sei 1527-55

Shō Gen 1556-72

Shō Ei 1573-86

Shō Nei 1587-1620

Shō Hō 1621-40

Shō Ken 1641-47

Shō Shitsu 1648-68

Shō Tei 1669-1709

Shō Eki 1710-12

Shō Kei 1713-51

Shō Boku 1752-95

Shō On 1796-1802

Shō Sei 1803

Shō Kō 1804-28

Shō Iku 1829-1848

Shō Tai 1849-79

APPENDIX B:

GLOSSARY OF SELECTED RYUKYUAN TERMS

The following list includes Ryukyuan names, titles, and other terms that are important in this study. Japanese terms of particular importance for Ryukyuan history are also included.

Aji (or Anji): Local military and political leaders in old Ryukyu; high status rank in early-modern Ryukyu.

Aji-okite: Representatives of the *aji* sent out to manage their districts after Shō Shin forced all *aji* to reside in Shuri.

Arahitogami: Living persons regarded as deities.

Atai (J. Atari): Local officials who served as specialized inspectors (e.g. *yama-atai* supervised forests; *kōsaku-atai* supervised farmlands).

Bujitō: Local officials of high rank but appointed in an ad hoc, often advisory capacity. Not all districts had *bujitō*, and their numbers varied in those that did.

Chikudun (J. Cikunodono): A general status classification of *fudaishi* and all *shinzanshi* that existed prior to the formal creation of the *shi* class. At least in the early-modern period *chikudun* ranked below *satonushi*, and typically advanced in the hierarchy of official posts at a slower pace.

Chondaraa (J. Kyōtarō): A group of hereditary entertainers thought to have descended from shipwrecked inhabitants of Kyoto.

Fudaishi: A general classification of *shi* superimposed on the older *satonushi-chikudun* distinction. *Fudaishi* were those selected in the first *kafu* registration in the late seventeenth century, and enjoyed substantially more prestige than the newer *shinzanshi*.

Gusuku (or Gushiku): The castles or fortresses of the *aji* during the earliest period of Ryukyuan history.

Hi-no-kami (O. Hi-ni-kan): A hearth or fire deity, with a probably historical connection to the solar deity *teda*. There were two distinct varieties, the official deity, or *seiji hi-no-kami*, and the household hearth deity, or *minzoku hi-no-kami*.

Hiki: Political and military organizations that served as the core of government authority and administration in old Ryukyu. Little is know about the *hiki* today, but records indicate that there were twelve such organizations, each with members extending throughout Ryukyu.

Hōshikan: The Council of Three, a high administrative and policy-making council in both old Ryukyu and early-modern Ryukyu.

Hyōjōsho: The highest law-making body in the royal government. It consisted of the Council of Three plus the *sessei*.

Ichijama: A despised, malevolent shaman or sorcerer in the native Ryukyuan religion.

Jimoku: Another term for *mōshikuchi*. See *Mōshikuchihō*.

Jireisho: Certificates of official appointment in both old Ryukyu and early-modern Ryukyu.

Jitō: District administrators in early-modern Ryukyu who resided in the capital. There were several classifications of *jitō*, including *waki-jitō* and *aji-jitō*, distinguished by the person's social status rank and the size of the area he administered.

Jitōchi: Salary lands for *jitō* and other officials (=*oekachi*).

Jitōdai: Highest local officials. *Jitōdai* were not *shi*.

Kaminchu (J. Kami-no-hito): In Ryukyuan religion, a person, usually female, who has taken unto herself the powers of a deity.

Kikoe ōgimi: Highest rank in the official religious hierarchy, always held by the wife of a close blood relative of the king.

Kujichō: Administrative guidebooks.

Kuri (J. Kōri): In old Ryukyu, a level of political and military organization encompassing a group of three *hiki*.

Majiri (O. Magiri or Migiree): Major administrative districts in Ryukyu.

Monobugyō: The division of the royal government charged with the administration of finances and economic productivity.

Mōshikuchihō: The counterpart of the Monobugyō, charged with police and judicial affairs, education, and royal household affairs.

Mun: Malevolent spirits.

Negami (O. Niigan): The "root deity." An *arahitogami*, usually the highest-ranking female in a village's founding household. *Negami* were outside the official religious hierarchy, but were often more influential at the village level than the government-appointed *noro*.

Ninbuchaa (J. Nenbutsusha): Hereditary groups who chanted the *nenbutsu* at funerals and sang *nenbutsu* songs.

Niya: The lowest *shinzanshi* rank, automatically bestowed upon coming of age.

Noro (O. Nuru): The lowest level of the official religious hierarchy. *Noro* typically oversaw one village or several nearby villages.

Ōamu: High-level religious officials under the *kikoe-ōgimi* and in charge of the *noro* in a particular region.

Oekachi: Official salary lands (= *jitōchi*).

Okazugaki (O. Ukazugachi): A formal petition of support or recommendation, usually for an official appointment, presented from those lower in rank to those higher in rank.

Omote Jūgonin: The Council of Fifteen, comprised of major government officials and ranked immediately below the Council of Three.

Onarigami: A woman serving as a protective deity for a close male relative, typically her brother.

Otakabe: Official prayer sessions to the *seiji hi-no-kami*.

Peechin: A status term indicating a mid-ranking government official.

Peekumi: Similar to *peechin* (and written with identical characters) but indicating a higher rank.

Sabakuri: A term indicating local government officials sufficiently high in rank to hold official status in the Shuri status hierarchy.

Sanjinsō: Local charismatic religious figures and diviners, usually male, who combined popular Buddhism and native religious practices.

Sanshikan: The most common Chinese-style appellation for the Council of Three.

Satonushi: The more prestigious counterpart of *chikudun*.

Satonushi dokoro: A term in old Ryukyu indicating official salary lands.

Sedo (O. Shiidu): Leaders of *hiki* in old Ryukyu; mid-ranking palace guard officials in early-modern Ryukyu. In early-modern Ryukyu, the term also indicated a mid-level status rank.

Sessei (O. Sesshii): Roughly, "Prime Minister." A royal relative and the highest government official, who typically worked in conjunction with the Council of Three.

Shiakechi: Lands brought into cultivation for the first time under Shō Shōken's program to increase the amount of agricultural land.

Shinzanshi: Those appointed *shi* in the second *kafu* registration or thereafter, as well as those who purchased *shi* status. They were lower in status than *fudaishi*, and all were *chikudun*.

Shuri Ōyako: A high-ranking local official immediately below the *jitōdai*.

Shuri tenganashi: An honorific, literary appellation for the king.

Shuri owaru tedako: An honorific, literary appellation for the king.

Shūsai: The lowest status ranks in Kumemura.

Taifu: High Kumemura status rank.

Teda (O. Tiida): The solar deity.

Toki: Diviners in the native religion, usually male, who predicted lucky and unlucky days.

Tomi (J. Toyomi): In old Ryukyu, a term meaning "high status," appended to the names of both ships and *hiki*.

Tsūji: Roughly, "interpreter." A mid-level Kumemura status rank.

Ueekata (J. Oyakata): The highest status rank a non-royal relative could attain. Corresponded roughly to government posts of *sanshikan zashiki* or higher.

Utaki: Sacred places, often groves, that served as the focus of village-level worship in the native religion.

Utchi (J. Okite): Middle and low-level local officials who conducted much of the village-level administrative tasks.

Yoasutabe: Native Ryukyuan term for the Council of Three (*yo* = the world; *asu* = one who governs; *ta* is a plural indicator; *be* is similar in meaning to the ancient Japanese *be*).

Yuta: Shamans of great importance and influence in the native Ryukyuan religion.

Zashiki: Roughly, "quasi," or "associate." A term that typically indicated a slightly lower status.