CAMBRIDGE TEXTS IN THE
HISTORY OF POLITICAL THOUGHT

KUMAZAWA BANZAN
Governing the Realm and Bringing Peace to All below Heaven

KUMAZAWA BANZAN'S (1619–1691) *Responding to the Great Learning* (*Daigaku wakumon*) stands as the first major writing on political economy in early modern Japanese history. John A. Tucker's translation is the first English rendition of this controversial text to be published in eighty years. The introduction offers an accessible and incisive commentary, including detailed analyses of Banzan's text within the context of his life, as well as broader historical and intellectual developments in East Asian Confucian thought. Emphasizing parallels between Banzan's life events, such as his relief efforts in Okayama domain following devastating flooding, and his later writings advocating compassionate government, environmental initiatives, and projects for growing wealth, Tucker sheds light on Banzan's main objective of "governing the realm and bringing peace and prosperity to all below heaven." In *Responding to the Great Learning*, Banzan was doing more than writing a philosophical commentary, he was advising the Tokugawa shogunate to undertake a major reorganization of the polity – or face the consequences.

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KUMAZAWA BANZAN

Governing the Realm and Bringing Peace to All below Heaven

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Translator's Note

The cover title of this book, *Governing the Realm and Bringing Peace to All below Heaven*, is an abbreviation of the subtitle of Kumazawa Banzan's *Daigaku wakumon*, here translated as *Responding to the Great Learning*. Banzan's subtitle is highlighted because it more accurately alerts readers to the intensely socio-economic and political content of *Daigaku wakumon*.

The main title, whether romanized as *Daigaku wakumon* or translated as *Responding to the Great Learning*, suggests a dry, abstruse commentary on an obscure Confucian text. Yet nothing could be further from the truth: Banzan's work deals with politics as high drama, offering a vision of peace and plenty for all as the best-case scenario flowing from good government, coupled with, on the other hand, graphic descriptions of chaos, warfare, anarchy, and doom awaiting rulers who ignore the text's wise counsel.

It is tempting to imagine that Banzan presented his text in the guise of a Confucian commentary to hoodwink shogunal authorities ready to outlaw overtly political discussions of controversial issues. But Banzan was not a man given to deceit: he had an early draft, absent any title, sent to the shogunal authorities for their perusal and, incidentally, suffered the consequences for having boldly done so.

The title and subtitle later given Banzan's text are intimately related. The subtitle, *Governing the Realm and Bringing Peace to All below Heaven*, refers to the central goal of rulers as discussed in the *Great Learning* (*Daigaku*), making it a suitable metonym for Banzan's work. In order to best convey the highly political character of the latter, Banzan's subtitle is privileged on the cover, while the present translation of his main title, *Responding to the Great Learning*, is used herein.

Portrait of Kumazawa Banzan from the 1880 edition of the *Sentetsu sōdan*, courtesy of Special Collections, Waseda University Library

Introduction

Speaking Truth to Power: The End of Kumazawa Banzan

Confinement unto death in Koga Castle. Such was the fate of Kumazawa Banzan (1619–1691)[1] following a lifetime of teaching, domain administration, and theorizing on matters related to politics, fiscal policy, civil engineering, disaster relief, religion, literature, ethics, history, education, and national defense. More specifically, Banzan's final years in detention resulted from his summary account of his wide-ranging views – invariably critical of the ruling samurai regime, the Tokugawa shogunate – on how best to administer and govern the realm. Banzan proposed nothing less than a comprehensive, radical reorganization of the Tokugawa polity, one which, if implemented, would have effectively revolutionized the early-modern realm, transforming everything from the hinterlands to the shogun's capital, the socio-economic hierarchy, the spiritual order, the ecological integrity of mountains and rivers, the structure of education, and even the theoretical foundations of the political order. Yet, ironically enough, the revolution would not necessarily have been a progressive one, moving the realm forward toward a recognizable version of

[1] Banzan went by several names during his life. His formal name was Ryōkai. He was also known by his personal name Jirōhachi, and later, Suke'emon. By birth his surname was Nojiri, which was later changed, with his adoption, to Kumazawa. In 1660, he took Shigeyama as his name. The latter, read in Sino-Japanese, is "Banzan." After his passing, "Banzan" became his courtesy name and was most commonly used alongside his surname by adoption, Kumazawa. Hara Nensai, "Kumazawa Banzan," in Minamoto Ryōen and Maeda Tsutomu, eds., *Sentetsu sōdan*, Tōyō bunko, vol. 574 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1994), p. 124.

modernity, so much as one returning it to a socio-economic platform of agrarian unity and simplicity wherein the wealth of the nation, that is, the rice harvest, might be more fully shared by all, samurai and farmers alike, while politically reviving a more decentralized, less demanding approach to shogunate–daimyō relations.

Banzan cast his proposals as an expression of the Confucian ideal of "compassionate government" (*jinsei*). An essential corollary was his "grand project for growing wealth," a multifaceted initiative meant to strengthen the realm economically, enabling all within it to enjoy new levels of prosperity and, most importantly, stand prepared to defend the country against foreign invasion. Adding a confrontational edge to his vision of compassionate government, Banzan reminded the Tokugawa regime that rulers who disregarded the welfare of the people ran the risk of losing the legitimating decree of heaven and so faced the prospect of removal and replacement. Even worse, Banzan suggested that the survival of the country was at stake, sketching out in quasi-apocalyptic terms scenarios wherein the world of Tokugawa Japan (1600–1868) might end up in utter anarchy and chaos if his proposals were not acted upon forthwith. Responding to Banzan's proposals, the Tokugawa shogunate declared them outrageous and forthwith sentenced the outspoken Confucian to internment in Koga Castle. Despite his ignominious fate as a scholar silenced in captivity, not a few of Banzan's proposals ultimately anticipated, in general terms, some of the more noteworthy initiatives enacted during the opening decades of the Meiji period (1868–1912) over a century and a half after his passing. Banzan's proposal to return samurai to the countryside to live and work alongside the agrarian estate foreshadowed the early Meiji abolition of the samurai class, and the call for socio-economic unity throughout the land. On another count, Banzan's calls for a reduction in Buddhism and a restoration of Shintō prefigured Meiji religious policies of a similar thrust.

Banzan recorded his thoughts in a provocative work, here translated as *Responding to the Great Learning* (*Daigaku wakumon*). Then, without solicitation, prompting, or coercion, he presented his handwritten text to the Tokugawa authorities. No doubt, Banzan imagined it his professional duty as a sincere Confucian scholar to communicate his ideas, however critical, boldly and forthrightly. The shogunate's reaction was quick and unequivocal: imprisonment for the aged – then 69 – rōnin theorist-critic. Banzan was allowed some freedom, such as strolling around his place of internment, yet still he died, four years later, in 1691, a detained man,

effectively cut off from his family, friends, followers, and associates, and surely denied any chance at overhauling the Tokugawa polity which, in his view, was headed toward grave socio-economic peril if not foreign conquest and possible obliteration. As a curious dimension of his punishment, Banzan was buried at a Buddhist temple in Koga,[2] the castle town of his confinement just north of Edo (now Tokyo), the shogun's capital, hundreds of miles from his birthplace, Kyoto, and the Kansai area in southwestern Japan where he spent most of his life. Banzan's separation from Kyoto and its environs in his few remaining years, and then, ultimately, in the finality of death, was for him perhaps the worst part of his punishment.

Some of Banzan's proposals now seem admittedly farfetched. Repeatedly, he warned that Japan faced imminent invasion by "northern barbarians" (*hokuteki*), that is, Manchu tribal forces that were in the process of consolidating their rule over China following the collapse of the Ming (1368–1644) dynasty. Banzan's fear of impending Manchu invasion, though not ungrounded, was surely overblown. In part, his dread was generated by his admiration for shogunal policies dating back to the Kamakura (1185–1336) shogunate, and his knowledge that that earlier samurai regime had been seriously strained by another foreign invasion, that of the Mongols in the late thirteenth century. Banzan advocated a return to some of the more frugal administrative policies of the Kamakura shogunate, and at the same time sought to preclude any possible foreign military challenge of the kind that earlier shook the Kamakura polity.

Yet Banzan's outspoken warnings left him an isolated man: educated Japanese in the late seventeenth century knew of the Manchu conquest of China, but no other scholar of comparable standing sounded the alarm as loudly and repeatedly as did Banzan. On this count alone, those familiar with his thought might have found enough grounds for dismissing his ideas as little more than hysterical exaggerations and alarmist nonsense of an aging, perhaps paranoid scholar. Indeed, other Confucians, including Yamaga Sokō (1622–1685), Hayashi Gahō (1618–1688), and Asami Keisai (1652–1712), saw in the fall of the Ming dynasty evidence of the ethical inferiority of China, a country given to dynastic overthrow, compared to Japan, a sacred imperial realm still led by an unbroken line of

[2] The Keienji, a Sōtō Zen temple. While the site has been altered and refurbished several times, Banzan's gravestone dates from the early nineteenth century.

divine emperors. From the perspective of other scholars, the fall of the Ming signaled imperial China's descent into foreign rule and barbarism, not its rise as an imminent danger for Japan.

On the other hand, in the final decades of the Tokugawa and the early years of the Meiji, as barbarians from the north and south, including most notably Czarist Russia and the United States, bore down on Japan, imposing their imperialistic and/or expansionistic agendas on the country, Banzan seemed precocious and farsighted in his awareness, a century and a half before matters came to a head, that foreign domination was a profound threat and that any responsible government should prepare its population to meet such challenges or face the consequences.

Responding to the Great Learning was not published in Banzan's lifetime. Instead, it circulated only in manuscript copies. The work finally appeared, for the first time, in the late-eighteenth century in a woodblock edition, but shortly thereafter was banned by the shogunate. Subsequent editions nevertheless attained some circulation as the power of the Tokugawa to control the press dwindled. As anxieties over impending domination by foreign powers spread in the first half of the nineteenth century, Banzan attained new levels of credibility as a prescient statesman-scholar. Not surprisingly, in the Meiji period, Banzan was far more appreciated as a Confucian scholar and political theorist than he had been in his own life and times.

Yet even before the end of the Tokugawa, some of Banzan's ideas on political economy resurfaced in the world of Tokugawa political thought. At the request of the eighth shogun, Tokugawa Yoshimune (r. 1716–1745), another noteworthy Confucian scholar, Ogyū Sorai (1666–1728), authored a text addressing the social, political, and economic crises of the day. Sorai submitted the text, known to history as *Seidan* (*Political Discussions*), to the shogunate for its consideration. Therein, Sorai suggested that samurai living lives of wasteful indulgence in castle towns, including most notably Edo, be returned to the countryside to dwell and labor alongside the hardworking peasant-farmer population.[3] Sorai's suggestion reiterated Banzan's earlier proposal of essentially the same initiative in socio-economic engineering, though without any mention of Banzan. Oddly enough, the considerable attention given Sorai in contemporary scholarship has left many with the impression that the call for returning

[3] For a translation of this work, see Olof G. Lidin, *Ogyū Sorai's Discourse on Government Seidan* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 1999).

samurai to the land was his own original proposal instead of a replay of Banzan's.

Any reader of Banzan's *Responding to the Great Learning* well realizes that decades before Sorai offered concrete proposals for addressing the socio-economic and political ills of the Tokugawa regime, Banzan had advanced, in considerable detail, the notion of returning samurai to the countryside as well as a range of other related proposals, effectively pioneering, in early modern times, the genre of practical political theory (*keizaigaku*) that Sorai, Dazai Shundai (1680–1747), and a host of other later early-modern and modern theorists continued. And it should be added that while Sorai did not footnote Banzan in suggesting that samurai be returned to the countryside, he did praise Banzan posthumously as one of the more authentic Confucians of his age.[4] Other Confucian scholars chimed in, admiring and in some cases quoting Banzan's *Responding to the Great Learning*, revealing that despite the fact that a woodblock edition did not appear for nearly a century after the text was drafted, it nevertheless circulated widely and garnered significant favorable attention among some of the scholarly elite of eighteenth-century Japan.

This book presents a new translation-study of Banzan's text.[5] An introductory essay on Banzan's life and thought situates *Responding to*

[4] For a detailed study of Sorai and Banzan, see Miyazaki Michio, "Kumazawa Banzan to Ogyū Sorai." Parts 1–2. *Kokugakuin zasshi*, vol. 84, nos. 1–2, 1983.

[5] For the first English translation, see Galen M. Fisher, "*Dai Gaku Wakumon: A Discussion of Public Questions in the Light of the Great Learning*, by Kumazawa Banzan," *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, 2nd Series, vol. 16 (May 1938), p. 263. There is also a more recent translation, into French, by Jean-François Soum entitled, *Questions sur La Grande Étude: Daigaku wakumon*. (Tokyo: Maison Franco-Japonaise, 1995). Soum has also authored a major study of Banzan and Tōju, *Nakae Tōju (1608–1648) et Kumazawa Banzan (1619–1691): Deux penseurs de l'époque d'Edo* (Paris: Collège de France, Institut des Hautes Études Japonaises, 2000). A modern Japanese translation of the *Daigaku wakumon* is in Nishida Taichirō, ed., *Fujiwara Seika Nakae Tōju Kumazawa Banzan Yamazaki Ansai Yamaga Sokō Yamagata Daini shū* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1970). The present translation is largely based on the text in *Banzan zenshū* (*Banzan's Complete Works*), ed. Masamune Atsuo, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Banzan zenshū kankōkai, 1940), pp. 233–283, as well as on the modern, annotated edition of Banzan's classical Japanese text in Gotō Yōichi and Tomoeda Ryūtarō, eds., *Kumazawa Banzan*, Nihon shisō taikei vol. 30 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1971). Several early manuscript and woodblock versions of the text are online through the Kokubungaku kenkyū shiryōkan. An undated manuscript copy, including notes throughout in red ink, is online at https://kotenseki.nijl.ac.jp/biblio/200018535/viewer/85?ln=en. An undated woodblock edition is at https://kotenseki.nijl.ac.jp/biblio/100132667/viewer/1?ln=en. A copy of the 1788 woodblock edition is at https://kotenseki.nijl.ac.jp/biblio/100209409/viewer/7?ln=en. The latter includes a new preface, and lists publishers in Edo, Kyoto, and Osaka. A manuscript

the Great Learning in relation to his development as a Confucian theorist and statecraft-thinker, especially as that development crystalized in response to his historical predicament and, most especially, the intellectual and political dynamic of the Tokugawa period. Unlike textbook accounts casting Banzan as one of the period's earliest Wang Yangming (J: Ō Yōmei, 1472–1529) scholars, one profoundly at odds with the well-ensconced Zhu Xi (J: Shu Ki, 1130–1200) version of Confucian learning more dominant in his day, this book reappraises Banzan philosophically as a pragmatic relativist, willing to draw ideas and forms of praxis from whatever sources he thought valid and practical, including those of Zhu Xi, Wang Yangming, Nakae Tōju (1608–1648), and others.[6] It is worth noting on this count that Banzan's title was not original: a work compiling Zhu Xi's discussions of the *Great Learning* with his disciples bears the name *Daxue huowen*, which in Japanese is read *Daigaku wakumon*. Presumably, Banzan, who surely knew of that text, understood his own work as, within the context of its unique time, place, and social circumstances, yet another expression of the project earlier advanced by Zhu Xi and his disciples.[7]

In interpreting Banzan as a pragmatic relativist, this book supplements James McMullen's view that Banzan was an idealist.[8] Surely Banzan's lifelong efforts on behalf of compassionate government and socio-economic prosperity would not have been possible had he not subscribed to high-minded hopes and ideals for the polity, the natural environment, and humanity. Yet Banzan was hardly a philosophically doctrinaire, Panglossian idealist. Instead, he grounded his esteem for ethical ideals such as compassionate government in a pragmatic socio-economic acknowledgment of the contingent, practical realities of time, place,

of the 1788 edition, dated to the eleventh month, is at https://kotenseki.nijl.ac.jp/biblio/100199929/viewer/85?ln=en.

6 Inoue Tetsujirō (1855–1944), in his *Nihon Yōmei gakuha no tetsugaku* (Tokyo: Fuzanbō, 1900), pp. 215–230, pioneered this interpretation of Banzan. While grouping Banzan in with the "Japanese School of Wang Yangming philosophy," Inoue acknowledged that simply classifying Banzan as a Wang Yangming scholar was questionable because, as Banzan himself acknowledged, he drew from Zhu Xi's learning as well. Also, while Banzan began his studies with Nakae Tōju and respected him, he did not typically quote Tōju or recite his views. Most commonly, Banzan put things in his own words. In the end, rather than a doctrinaire schoolman, Banzan was an exceptionally independent thinker.

7 For a Japanese edition of this text Tomoeda Ryūtarō, ed. *Mōshi wakumon, Daigaku wakumon, Chūyō wakumon*, Kinsei Kanseki sōkan wakoku eiin, shisō 3, hen 5 (Kyoto: Chūbun shuppansha, 1977).

8 James McMullen, *Idealism, Protest, and the Tale of Genji: The Confucianism of Kumazawa Banzan (1619–91)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999).

and circumstance, and a realistic understanding, based on his personal experiences, that good can come from any corner. Unlike many Confucian scholars who only sanctioned actions and policies that embodied the highest ethical standards, Banzan was ready to acknowledge the importance of considering, if necessary, expedient measures and temporary fixes as legitimate if not wholly ideal options, depending on the exigencies of human circumstances and the dire needs of the day. As one readily acknowledging the historical variables of time, space, and circumstances as well as the legitimacy of the highest standards and more practical temporary expedients, Banzan is here interpreted as both an idealist and a pragmatic relativist.

Banzan held that everything, including ideas and their practice, should be understood in terms of time, space, and circumstances of rank and order, that is, in terms of the larger geo-historical predicament, problematique, or facticity comprising the overriding, at times determining background informing and affecting every person, event, and moment. In light of his emphasis, especially in *Responding to the Great Learning*, on time, place, and circumstance, the book emphasizes that Banzan, although building on Confucian sources known for their universalistic, trans-temporal and trans-spatial nuances, invariably rendered them in ways expressing the contingent particularity and subjectivity of the early-modern Japanese socio-political environment. Other prominent scholars such as Hayashi Razan (1583–1657), an Edo-based Confucian serving the Tokugawa shogunate, authored politically relevant philosophical treatises as well, though without nearly as much attention to distinctively Japanese subjectivities of time, place, and circumstance. With Banzan, those dimensions in their very particularity were of first-order significance, while otherwise universalistic Confucian notions and their various nuances were, in his writings at least, typically contextualized in relation to them.

The result was that Banzan's writings convey some of the most specifically Japanese expressions of Confucian political thought and action to emerge in seventeenth-century Japan and, for that matter, the Tokugawa period. This is especially evident in *Responding to the Great Learning*, a work that had arguably less to do with the words and passages in the Confucian text, the *Great Learning*, than with Banzan's overall response to that canonical work's utopian goal, "rightly governing the realm [*chikoku*] and bringing peace to all below heaven [*heitenka*]." Banzan's focus on the latter is laid bare in the subtitle to his work – *Another Volume*

on Governing the Realm and Bringing Peace to All below Heaven.[9] Banzan's subtitle is used here, in abbreviation, as the cover title of this translation-study of *Responding to the Great Learning* due to its explanatory value, highlighting the very political nature of Banzan's work. Alternatively, due to the radical socio-economic and political ramifications of Banzan's proposals, the main title for this translation-study of Banzan's text might well have been *A Plan for Restructuring the Realm*. Though this is not a translation of Banzan's title as such, it aptly captures, along more interpretive lines, what his text was about and what its proposals amounted to socio-economically and politically.

Banzan's Life, Thought, and Action

Kyoto Confucianism, the Legacy of Fujiwara Seika

Banzan was born in 1619, in the south-central section of Kyoto in Gojō-chō, the eldest child of a rōnin, Nojiri Kazutoshi (1590–1680), and his wife, Kame. The same year, Fujiwara Seika (1561–1619), a leading Confucian scholar in the early-Tokugawa, passed away. Seika's legacy as a relatively independent Confucian based in Kyoto appears to have, in part, shaped Banzan's philosophical development both in terms of his independence as a thinker and his admiration for Kyoto's erudition and civility. As a mature scholar, Seika helped establish the ancient imperial capital as an alternative center of Confucian learning, one less obliging to the interests and sensibilities of the newly risen samurai regime than was Edo, the shogun's capital and increasingly the dominant center of Confucian studies in early modern Japan. Banzan did not, like Seika, remain in Kyoto the majority of his life. Nevertheless, Banzan did return to the imperial capital more often than any other center of learning and culture, and envisioned for Kyoto and the sons of its aristocracy, and even its commoners, an essential role as future educators of the Tokugawa realm. Simply put, Banzan wanted the teachers of the realm to come from Kyoto's educated aristocratic elite, spreading the sophistication in

[9] Most translations of the *Great Learning* render *chikoku*, or *zhi guo* in Chinese, as "governing states." Banzan's understanding of *koku* seems best translated as an imperial "province" rather than state. Banzan's respect for the imperial line and the geo-political order it defined presumably led him to discuss the polity as composed of provinces rather than daimyō domains. When he refers to the rulers of the *koku* or provinces, he refers to, in virtually all instances, the daimyō vassals of the shogunate. Nevertheless, Banzan's text was not addressed primarily to daimyō as such but instead to the shogunate, prompting the translation here of its subtitle as "governing the realm."

learning and culture that distinguished the ancient capital throughout the country. Seika never imagined as much, but through his efforts as a Confucian teacher in the imperial capital, he contributed to the growth of Confucianism as well as the educated aristocracy that Banzan planned to enlist and mobilize as teachers for all of Japan.

A transitional figure, Seika, as a young Buddhist monk, first studied Confucianism and Buddhism at one of Kyoto's grandest Zen temples, the Shōkokuji, only to later move toward a more exclusive focus on Confucianism. Seika's evolution accelerated following his encounter with a Korean prisoner of war, Kang Hang (1567–1618), captured during Toyotomi Hideyoshi's invasions of the Korean peninsula in the late 1590s. Kang provided Seika with a wide-ranging introduction to newer expressions of Confucianism that had emerged in China during the Song, Yuan (1279–1368), and Ming dynasties. These had long circulated among Korean scholars, but in Japan made limited headway prior to the early seventeenth century as teachings independent of Buddhism. While mediated by Kang, Seika's Confucianism included, somewhat eclectically, the multifaceted, multi-dynastic developments from China and Korea rather than adhering, along doctrinaire lines, to one school of philosophy or set of ideas formulated in a single dynasty.[10]

Seika promoted the new learning among the educated elite of the imperial capital as well as warrior-leaders and aspiring intellectuals. One of the latter who briefly studied with him, Hayashi Razan, subsequently took a position in Edo as a scholar-secretary in service to Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616), the founding shogun of the Tokugawa regime. From that position, Razan and his progeny, who emerged as hereditary scholar-servants of the shogunate, advanced the fortunes of the new Confucian learning in Edo. Yet unlike Seika, Razan focused on the teachings of Zhu Xi and one of Zhu's last disciples, Chen Beixi (1159–1223) to the relative exclusion of others. In contrast, Seika's thought was wide-ranging and broad-minded, finding value in the teachings of Zhu Xi, his Ming rival, Wang Yangming, and even later followers of Wang such as the late-Ming syncretist, Lin Chao'en (1517–1598). Much the same was true of Banzan's Confucianism, which drew on the ideas of Zhu Xi, Wang Yangming, and other thinkers as their ideas fit the times, locales, and human circumstances of contemporary Japan.

[10] For a translation of Kang Hang's writings, see JaHyun Kim Haboush and Kenneth Robinson, translators, *A Korean War Captive in Japan, 1597–1600: The Writings of Kang Hang* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

Seika's legacy in textual production apparently influenced Banzan at another level. Seika's best-known treatise, *Essentials of the Great Learning* (*Daigaku yōryaku*), was completed in his final year and published posthumously in 1630. In focusing on the *Great Learning*, Seika was at one with many Song, Yuan, and Ming Confucians including Cheng Yi (1033–1107), Zhu Xi, and Wang Yangming, all of whom authored pivotal works on the *Great Learning*. Prior to Cheng Yi, the *Great Learning* was the forty-second of forty-nine chapters in the ancient Confucian classic, *Book of Rituals* (*Liji*). Cheng Yi, however, declared the chapter a separate work unto itself, describing it as "the gateway" to learning. Zhu Xi also privileged the *Great Learning* as a separate text and moreover designated it the first of the so-called Four Books[11] of Confucian study. After Zhu's commentaries on the Four Books became, in the early-fourteenth century, orthodox learning for civil service examinations, the *Great Learning* was studied far and wide by aspiring civil servants and the philosophically astute. Even Zhu's critics, including Wang Yangming, fashioned their interpretations of Confucian learning via their own commentaries on the *Great Learning*, making it arguably the single most important text in post-Song Confucianism.

In *Essentials of the Great Learning*, Seika rightly emphasized the ultimate political importance of the *Great Learning*. There he explained,

> If a student learns this book by heart, he will need no other texts … There is no Confucianism outside this work. Lectures that exclusively focus on the literary arts, so popular these days, are in fact of no use to a ruler. Rulers need only discipline their own mind and heart and try to apply the teachings of the *Great Learning*.[12]

Seika thus agreed with the emerging East Asian consensus recognizing the *Great Learning* as the most primary book in the Confucian curriculum of study. Moreover, he affirmed, as did Banzan, the *Great Learning*'s political importance for rulers.

Following his departure from the Shōkokuji, Seika's studies were sponsored by a samurai lord, Akamatsu Hiromichi (1562–1600), a loyal

[11] The Four Books are the *Great Learning*, the *Analects* of Confucius, the *Mencius*, and the *Middle Way*.

[12] Fujiwara Seika, *Daigaku yōryaku*, in Ishida Ichirō and Kanaya Osamu, eds., *Fujiwara Seika/Hayashi Razan*, Nihon shisō taikei, vol. 28 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1975), p. 44. Translation adapted from Wm. Theodore de Bary, Carol Gluck, and Arthur Tiedemann, eds., *Sources of Japanese Tradition,* vol. 2: *1600–2000* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), p. 44.

supporter of the doomed Toyotomi cause at the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600. A month later, the Tokugawa ordered Hiromichi to commit suicide.[13] Having lost his patron as a consequence of the Tokugawa victory, Seika found it difficult to serve the new regime in any capacity. According to Kang's writings, Ieyasu, in an attempt to buy Seika, offered him a new residence in Kyoto along with an annual rice stipend of 2,000 *koku*.[14] Not a man to be bought, Seika refused both.[15] Though only 39, Seika remained in Kyoto, a "retired" scholar, independent of Tokugawa patronage and control, until his passing in 1619. His integrity as an independent teacher was made possible by support from other warriors, often with ties to the defeated Toyotomi cause, including merchants such as Suminokura Ryōi (1554–1614), as well as aristocrats and others in Kyoto interested in his learning. Seika's last decades were ones of modesty, a result of his decision not to peddle himself as a scholar in service to the ruling house whose rise to power entailed the death of his late patron.

Seika's independence need not, however, be explained exclusively in terms of his personal loyalties to fallen opponents of the Tokugawa. Chinese and Korean representatives of the new Confucian learning – new at least for men like Seika – were driven individualists, intent upon offering their insights and thoughts on an ancient tradition of thinking, Confucianism, in an effort to make it more meaningful to present realities. As Seika learned more about Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming, he saw in them examples of intellectual integrity even in the face of exclusion, punishment, and isolation. More immediately, Seika's encounter with Kang Hang, a Korean prisoner of war who remained loyal to his homeland and determined, even at the risk of life and family, to escape from captivity, must have impressed him. Kang's stand possibly inspired Seika to new levels of righteousness in remaining committed to his beliefs rather than stooping to mercenary scholarship. As one apparently loyal in human

[13] For an account of Seika's relationship with Akamatsu Hiromichi, see W. J. Boot, *The Adoption and Adaptation of Neo-Confucianism in Tokugawa Japan: The Role of Fujiwara Seika and Hayashi Razan* (Leiden: Ph.D. Dissertation, 1982), pp. 15–16, 19–20.

[14] One *koku* equals 180 liters or 380 US pints, or five US bushels. Measured in terms of weight, 1 *koku* equals 150 kilograms, or approximately 330 US pounds. The *koku* was a standard unit of measure for rice income during the Tokugawa period. It was generally considered to be the amount of rice that one adult would need in one year.

[15] Evidence of Seika's distance from Ieyasu and the Tokugawa regime appears in the writings of Kang Hang, the Korean prisoner of war whom Seika befriended. According to Kang Hang, Seika helped him and his family escape captivity in 1600 and return to Korea, clearly in violation of the emerging law of the land. Haboush and Robinson, trans., *A Korean War Captive in Japan*, pp. xiii, xix, 95.

relations instead of selfish material gain, Seika embodied Confucian ethics in assisting his friend in learning, Kang Hang, escape from captivity and return to his homeland in Korea.

Also, it must be added that Seika seemingly enjoyed, even in the aristocratic poverty required by his highmindedness as a Confucian scholar, the cultured environment of the imperial capital and its air of ancient civility. With later scholars such as Banzan who gravitated toward the cultured, aristocratic world of Kyoto rather than the upstart, samurai-dominated Edo, Seika's legacy was again apparent.

Relocation and Adoption

In 1626, Banzan's father sent his wife and children to Mito domain to live with her father, Kumazawa Morihisa (d. 1634), a samurai retainer of Tokugawa Yoshifusa (1603–1661), the daimyō lord of that domain. Earlier, Morihisa had served, among others, Shibata Katsuie (1522–1583), a retainer of Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582), and Fukushima Masanori (1561–1624), a retainer of the Toyotomi family. But when Banzan, age 8, arrived in Mito, his maternal grandfather was a retainer of Tokugawa Yorifusa, lord of the domain and son of Ieyasu, founder of the Tokugawa shogunate.

Morihisa adopted Banzan into his family, giving him the Kumazawa family name. As Banzan's surrogate father, Morihisa most likely imparted to Banzan some of the issues that one-time Toyotomi loyalists, as the losers in the Tokugawa rise to power, especially in the wake of the siege of Osaka Castle in 1615, retained. Fukushima Masanori, one of Morihisa's previous lords, had, incidentally, switched his allegiance to the Tokugawa at the Battle of Sekigahara (1600), nimbly negotiating his way into the new age of Tokugawa power. Banzan's early upbringing, in Kyoto and then later in Mito with his grandfather, perhaps predisposed him to a complex loyalty to the Tokugawa as a habitual critic of the regime to which he had somewhat ambiguous cause to feel but so close.[16]

When Morihisa passed away in 1634, Banzan's next move hardly improved his relationship with the still crystalizing Tokugawa order. Family connections in Kyoto enabled Banzan, then age 16, to take up service as a page to Ikeda Mitsumasa (1609–1682), the *tozama* "outer

[16] Akiyama Kōdō, *Bokenroku* (Okayama: Okayama ken, 1901), pp. 1–3. A digital version of the text is available through the Kokuritsu kokkai toshokan dejitaru korekushon at http://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/781327. Also, Gotō Yōichi, "Kumazawa Banzan no shōgai to shisō no keisei," in Gotō and Tomoeda, eds., *Kumazawa Banzan*, pp. 467–469.

lord" of a sizable 320,000-*koku* domain, Bizen-Okayama, in southwestern Honshū. Outer lords included those who had opposed the Tokugawa at the Battle of Sekigahara, but successfully came to terms with the new order as vassals, and so were typically kept at a distance from the main centers of power in Kyoto and Edo. Like all vassals, however, *tozama* were expected to render service to the shogunate, affirming, through participation, their subordination within a ceremonial and administrative hierarchy central to the Tokugawa polity.[17] Ikeda Mitsumasa was also, by his strategic political marriage to a granddaughter of Tokugawa Ieyasu, one of the closest "outer lords" to the shogunate. As Mitsumasa's page-boy, Banzan gained additional insights into the uneasy, often complex relationship between Edo and those subsumed within its evolving power structure.

Christianity and the Shimabara Uprising

In Bizen-Okayama, the young Banzan soon gained the trust of his daimyō whom he accompanied to Edo in 1637,[18] while the latter was rendering service to the shogunate. This trip was Banzan's first to Edo, the shogun's capital, already a politico-military boom town centered around the Tokugawa castle. As things turned out, Banzan's time in Edo coincided with a major military challenge, the Shimabara Uprising of 1637–1638, fueled in part by Christian peasants rebelling against the oppressive lord of Shimabara Province, Matsukura Katsuie, on the southwestern island of Kyushu.

Whether Banzan had previously been exposed to anti-Christian sentiments, he was in 1637. That year, his biological father, Kazutoshi, joined the shogunate's forces in putting down the uprising. Also, the shogunate ordered Banzan's lord, Ikeda Mitsumasa, to return to Bizen-Okayama to raise forces to assist in quashing the rebellion. In 1638, Banzan, on his own initiative, left Edo, returned to Okayama, and then, having declared himself of age, requested permission to join Tokugawa forces in the southwest suppressing the Shimabara forces. The rebellion ended

[17] Daimyō were required, under the "alternate attendance" (*sankin kōtai*) system, to spend half of the year, or every other year, in Edo, rendering various forms of service to the shogunate. The other half of the year, or every other year, they could return to their home provinces. Still, their wives and children were required to remain in Edo. This requirement was a major drain on daimyō resources. Also, shogunally decreed building projects and other official undertakings were often financed by daimyō funds.

[18] Itō Tasaburō, "Nenpu," *Nakae Tōju Kumazawa Banzan*, Nihon no meicho vol. 11 (Tokyo: Chūō kōron, 1976), p. 51.

before Banzan's request could be acted upon, but his decision, however well intended, to leave Edo without permission was not well received by his daimyō. The resulting strained relations between Mitsumasa and Banzan prompted Banzan's next decision, to relinquish his position with the Ikeda daimyō.[19]

Even at this early stage, Banzan's preference for engaged practical activity as opposed to the life of ceremonial, urban leisure, was evident, as was his distaste for Christianity and his determination to see it eliminated. Later, in chapter 15 of *Responding to the Great Learning*, "Eliminating Christianity," Banzan addressed the topic in some detail, especially as it related to the shogunate's requirement – established after the Shimabara Uprising – that the population register itself at Buddhist temples as a way of ensuring that there were no lingering practitioners of Christianity. While Banzan did not sanction Christianity, he criticized the shogunate's temple registration requirement as a wasteful procedure often administered by a corrupt Buddhist clergy. In his *Accumulating Righteousness, Further Writings* (*Shūgi gaisho*), Banzan described Christianity as a teaching that Japanese had been prepared for by another that he, Banzan, had a distaste for, Buddhism. According to Banzan, "Unless Confucianism prevails and Buddhism is cut off, then Christianity will steal the realm. If that happens, then Shintō and Confucianism will be destroyed, Japan will end up as a country of beasts, and the imperial throne will be lost."[20]

The root of Christianity's appeal, in Banzan's view, was the confusion and poverty of the people. Rather than temple registration, the best way to combat the foreign religion was by a comprehensive program of education for the Japanese people in the fundamentally secular teachings of Confucianism regarding the right ethical way of human relations in this world. Unless this were done, Banzan feared that Christianity would grow because of its resemblance to the other otherworldly teaching that for a millennium had already dominated the realm as a religious force. Ultimately, however, Banzan viewed Christianity as superior to Buddhism and therefore as a real threat to both Buddhism and Confucianism, and of the three, the one that might, if not effectively checked, prevail.[21]

[19] Akiyama, *Bokenroku*, p. 4.

[20] Kumazawa Banzan, *Shūgi gaisho*, in Itō Tasaburō, ed., *Nakae Tōju Kumazawa Banzan*, Nihon no meicho, vol. 11 (Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 1976), ch. 10, p. 426; *Banzan zenshū*, vol. 2, p. 175.

[21] Kumazawa Banzan, *Shūgi washo*, in Gotō Yōichi and Tomoeda Ryūtarō, eds., *Kumazawa Banzan*, Nihon shisō taikei, vol. 30 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1971), pp. 222–223. Also, Inoue Tetsujirō, *Nihon Yōmei gakuha no tetsugaku*, pp. 234–237.

Without question, Banzan's concern that Christianity, which he likened to an "internal disease" (*naibyō*), would undermine Japanese political and spiritual culture began to intensify from this pivotal moment. His readiness to break with protocol, leave Edo, and then as a determined volunteer seek to serve in the military suppression of the foreign teaching, gave practical expression to what would become his later theoretical opposition to Christianity.[22]

Other Confucian scholars of the day – including Hayashi Razan in Edo and Matsunaga Sekigo (1592–1657) in Kyoto – criticized Christianity openly, contributing as intellectuals to shogunal efforts to eliminate the foreign religion. In the opening decades of the Tokugawa period, Ieyasu, the founding shogun, had outlawed Christianity and expelled missionaries from the realm. Thereafter, successive efforts by the shogunate and vassal daimyō were made to rid the country of the foreign teaching. The persecution was particularly harsh in Kyoto and on the island of Kyushu where Christian missionaries had earlier established a presence. Banzan's views, while harsh, thus reiterated the strong anti-Christian sentiments characterizing the Tokugawa period. Within anti-Christian discourse, Confucian scholars of all stripes were vocal opponents of the foreign religion, and Banzan, a native of Kyoto and a later retainer, once again, in Bizen-Okayama, halfway between Kyoto and Kyushu, was no exception.

On another count, it is noteworthy that Banzan's 1637 experience in Edo did not transform him into a devoted urbanite, won over by the comforts and amusements of the bustling big city. His readiness to depart the burgeoning shogunal capital and the relative security it offered foreshadowed his later proposals, made in *Responding to the Great Learning*, to reduce the ceremonial and service requirements expected of shogunal vassals and return not only samurai back to the countryside, but most of Edo back into rice fields. Banzan's seemingly incredible suggestion on this count would have effectively reversed, at its epicenter, the urbanization process rapidly transforming the socio-economic and political landscape of Tokugawa Japan.

Study with Nakae Tōju

In 1638, after leaving Bizen-Okayama, Banzan, age 20, moved back to the Kansai, taking up residence in Kirihara village, Ōmi Province (now,

[22] Miyazaki Michio, "Kumazawa Banzan no kirishitan ron," *Kokugakuin zasshi*, vol. 85, no. 9. 1984.

Shiga Prefecture), the area where his paternal grandmother's family lived, not far from Kyoto. The years that followed were formative ones for Banzan's education. Reportedly, his father gave him books on military learning. In 1640, Banzan, then 22, first read Zhu Xi's *Commentaries on the Four Books* and apparently was moved by their teachings,[23] resulting in something akin to a conversion experience prompting his commitment to Confucianism. In search of a teacher, he visited Kyoto in 1641, where he learned of Nakae Tōju's work in the nearby village of Ogawa, also in Ōmi Province. Later that year, Banzan visited Tōju twice and then subsequently, in the spring of 1642, heard his lectures on the *Classic of Filial Piety*, the *Great Learning*, and the *Middle Way* (C: *Zhongyong*; J: *Chūyō*). Subsequently, while Banzan's father was traveling to Edo, Banzan, as the eldest son, returned to Kirihara to take care of his family.

Banzan's brief study with Tōju, followed by several years of study on his own while taking care of his family in Kirihara, has prompted some interpreters, largely following Inoue Tetsujirō's (1855–1944) early-twentieth-century writings on Japanese Confucianism,[24] to associate Banzan with the Japanese Wang Yangming school. While there is some truth in this, when Banzan first studied with Tōju in 1641, the latter was only 34 years old, and Banzan a mere 23. Also, Tōju had yet to obtain a copy of the *Complete Works of Wang Yangming*. Their teacher–student relationship only lasted a matter of months and occurred at a time in Tōju's intellectual development when he himself had just begun his move away from Zhu Xi's teachings and toward those of Wang Yangming, but not via Wang's own writings so much as those of Wang Ji (1498–1583), one of the more radical disciples of Wang known for his claim that neither good nor evil resided in the original substance of things.

Equally if not more important for Banzan's development as a thinker was Tōju's advocacy of the unity of Confucianism and Shintō. Similar teachings had appeared even in the Kamakura period, but they became more commonplace in the seventeenth century as thinker after thinker, beginning with Hayashi Razan and Nakae Tōju, endorsed similar ideas.

[23] Akiyama, *Bokenroku*, pp. 4–6.

[24] Especially relevant here was Inoue's *The Philosophy of the Japanese School of Wang Yangming* (*Nihon Yōmei gakuha no tetsugaku*), but even Inoue emphasizes how Banzan's thought drew on that of Zhu Xi, and often criticized Wang Yangming's ideas. Though Inoue described Banzan as an eclectic thinker of sorts, who situated earlier thinkers according to their time, place, and circumstances, he did, in the end, tie Banzan to the Wang Yangming school. Later scholarship seemingly lost the nuances of Inoue's analysis, and simply categorized Banzan as a Wang Yangming scholar.

Soon, Yamaga Sokō and Yamazaki Ansai advocated their own versions of Confucian-Shintō unity. Banzan became a central figure promoting this view, a legacy in part of his brief study with Tōju. The same year Banzan attended Tōju's lectures on the *Classic of Filial Piety*, the *Great Learning*, and the *Middle Way*, Tōju had made a pilgrimage to the Grand Ise Shrine, one of the holiest Shintō sites in Japan. Commenting on it, Tōju noted that Ise was devoted to "the primal ancestor of the country and was a place every Japanese should visit." In a poem written on the occasion, Tōju compared the creative work of the high Shintō deity, Amaterasu the Sun Goddess, to that of Fu Xi,[25] a legendary ancient sage figure extolled by Confucians for having invented written Chinese and the trigrams used in the *Book of Changes* (C: *Yijing*; J: *Ekikyō*).

In *Responding to the Great Learning*, Banzan similarly paired the three treasures of Shintō – the jewel, the mirror, and the sword – with the three virtues of Confucianism as explained in the *Middle Way* – compassion (*ren*), wisdom (*zhi*), and courage (*yong*). Banzan added that whatever writing existed in the age of the gods in Japan had been lost, and the three spiritual treasures (*shingi*) were all that was transmitted. Even though the utmost in simplicity, the three treasures were the divine origins of morality and culture, and were endowed with exceptional spiritual significance, lofty, expansive, luminous, deep, mysterious, and profound. Further extolling the three treasures, Banzan added that they conveyed all that was necessary for understanding Confucian methods of mind control and concomitant teachings about government.[26] Banzan's ideas were not identical with Tōju's, but their syncretic approaches, pairing Shintō and Chinese philosophical notions, were similar. In the end, both were arguably as devoted, at the most fundamental level, to preserving and rejuvenating the spiritual beliefs and practices of Japan as they were to Confucianism qua Confucianism. As noted earlier, in Banzan's thinking at least, Confucianism as such was not ideally suited to Japan's environmental circumstances (*suido*).

Tōju also emerged, around the time of Banzan's study with him, as an advocate of Confucian learning as "no different from the [arts of]

[25] For an excellent discussion of Tōju's life and thought, see Barry D. Steben, "Nakae Tōju and the Birth of Wang Yang-ming Learning in Japan," *Monumenta Serica*, vol. 46 (1998), pp. 233–263. Also see Gregory J. Smits, "The Sages' Scale in Japan: Nakae Tōju (1608–1648) and Situational Weighing," *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, Fourth Series, vol. 6 (1991), pp. 1–25.

[26] Banzan, "Suido kai," *Shūgi gaisho*, ch. 16; *Banzan zenshū*, vol. 2, pp. 279–280.

government by which the world is ruled."[27] This political understanding of Confucianism was echoed in Banzan's later work, especially his *Responding to the Great Learning*. It also meshed well with Banzan's thinking about Shintō religiosity, which viewed government as an expression of ritual (*matsurigoto*). Equally important for Banzan was Tōju's opposition to Buddhism. As of 1631, a decade before Banzan's study with him, Tōju had already criticized Hayashi Razan for submitting to the shogunate's demand that he, Razan, shave his head and wear Buddhist robes as a condition of service. In criticizing Razan, Tōju perhaps sought to appear high-minded even while calling attention to himself and his supposed integrity. At the very least, Banzan's antipathy for Buddhism resonated with Tōju's thought.

Tōju was surely important to Banzan, but in the end Banzan's ideas developed along independent lines. Later, when asked about Tōju's teachings, then referred to as "Jiangxi teachings" alluding to the Chinese province where Wang Yangming had developed many of his ideas, Banzan, in his *Accumulating Righteousness, Japanese Writings*, responded:

> While there is some benefit in them, there is harm as well. It is not clear that those receiving his teachings understand the Confucian classics and their commentaries, nor do they seem to grasp the main ideas of the Confucian way. They declare their own narrow perspectives to be the right ones and, in the process, set forth mistaken views. Nevertheless, they call them the learning of the sage Confucius, leading fools down the wrong path. Prior to Tōju's learning, there was none of this kind of harmful learning. Although it has enlightened many people below heaven about Confucian learning, one finds few among them who are truly fond of virtue. Worse still, more than a few of Tōju's students take great pride in their coarse learning.[28]

When told that he seemed arrogant in espousing his own ideas while only infrequently mentioning those of Tōju, Banzan replied as follows:

> What I have received from my teacher and have not differed with are true moral principles. In response to [changes in] time, place, and social circumstances, insufficiencies in learning and practice begin to develop … Those who come after me will supplement insufficiencies in my learning. And it would be best for them to revise my words and actions if they do not match later times. Yet it is impossible that

[27] Ibid., p. 256. [28] Kumazawa Banzan, *Shūgi washo*, pp. 200–201.

> there is even a hair's worth of difference between my teacher, Tōju, and me regarding the true principles of the great moral way. It will be the same with those who rightly follow me.[29]

When asked about the true moral principles of the great way, Banzan replied:

> They [true moral principles] state that a person should not do anything that is contrary to righteousness and justice. They also state that a person should not execute another person for minor crimes simply so that they might take control of the realm below heaven. Moral principles have this power because the luminous virtue that we hold as our foundation prompts us to detest what is wrong and to be ashamed of what is evil. The method of the mind consists in maintaining our minds so that we cultivate this luminous virtue and daily make it shine by not doing any wrong to others due to our selfish desires. Such are the true principles in the method of the mind.
>
> Regarding these, not only do my teacher Tōju and I not differ, neither do China and Japan differ. If I neglect these principles, then even if my words do not differ in the least from those of my teacher, then I am not truly a follower of my teacher. Even if one of my followers later declares that my words are mistaken and does not follow them, if they have these true principles in their minds, then they have the same sense of purpose as do I.[30]

Banzan's time with his teacher might have been brief, but it apparently was exceptionally meaningful. The few months with Tōju led Banzan to a vision of the foundations of morality, the basis of his idealism, as well as an understanding that there were contingent factors of time, place, and social circumstances that would result in relative truths that were not always and everywhere expressed in quite the same terms, the basis of his pragmatic relativism. On the latter count, Banzan allowed, he and Tōju were not always necessarily the same, but on the former, he insisted that they did not differ a single iota.

Return to Bizen-Okayama

In 1645, Banzan returned to Okayama domain to take up service in a minor capacity once again to the daimyō lord there, Ikeda Mitsumasa. This time, however, Banzan, 27, was more mature and educated, having

[29] Ibid., pp. 254–255. [30] Ibid.

briefly studied under Tōju, and then having devoted himself to book learning for several years thereafter. Within one year after having arrived in Bizen-Okayama, Banzan distinguished himself as a scholar-samurai and was rewarded with a new role as a chamberlain to Mitsumasa, a position with a stipend of 300 *koku*. By most counts, Banzan had risen quickly, and he continued to do so.

The following year, in the eighth month of 1648, Tōju passed away, age 41. Shortly thereafter, Mitsumasa permitted Banzan to attend Tōju's final services in Ōmi. With Mitsumasa's backing, Banzan went, renewing his ties to the Tōju legacy and making overtures to some of Tōju's disciples regarding service in Okayama domain. Many of them subsequently became Ikeda retainers. Earlier, Mitsumasa reportedly found Tōju's ideas worthy of attention and had invited him to Okayama to serve. Whether Mitsumasa found in Tōju, who had criticized the shogunate's scholar-servant, Razan, a scholar of his own taste is open to question, but the resonance between the powerful outer lord and a marginal, independent-minded Confucian increasingly associated with alleged heterodoxies, as Tōju's learning and Wang Yangming thought came to be viewed by the shogunate and its most obliging vassals, seems more than coincidental.

The Flower Garden Learning Center

In 1641, well before Banzan's arrival, Mitsumasa founded, just outside the walls of Okayama Castle, the Flower Garden Learning Center (*Hanabatake kyōjō*), one of the first domain schools in Tokugawa Japan. Shortly after retaining Banzan, Mitsumasa had him serve as the center's director. Some have suggested that the Flower Garden Learning Center was not so much a school as what turned out to be a private study space for Banzan, his followers, and others interested in his teachings.[31] While that might be so, the center nevertheless marked an important secular development in the history of Tokugawa educational practices, one in which Banzan played an important role as the lead scholar-instructor. Banzan's teachings were wide-ranging, but most distinctive insofar as they included, rather than excluded, Tōju's teachings and ideas associated with Wang Yangming learning.

[31] Okayama shi dejitaru myūjiamu, "Kaenkai to Kumazawa Banzan," *Okayama no kyōiku* (Okayama daigaku fuzoku toshokan, 2009), p. 1. Accessed on February 23, 2019, http://www.lib.okayama-u.ac.jp/ikeda/pdf/h21.pdf.

As director of the center, Banzan drafted its "Flower Garden Oath" (*Kaen kaiyaku*), the opening provision of which is indicative of the center's overall nature and purpose as a place of study and learning. The oath suggests that the duty of samurai consists in taking responsibility for the protection and education of the people via exercising intuitive knowledge in the civil and military learning of compassion and bravery.[32] With the oath's reference to exercising "intuitive knowledge [C: *liangzhi*; J: *ryōchi*]," a Wang Yangming ethical teaching, its philosophical identity seemed, at least superficially, cast. As the director of the center, Banzan became, through the oath, more publicly associated in the minds of some with Wang Yangming thought and all the political baggage that went with it. After Banzan's departure from Okayama in 1657, the Flower Garden Center was dissolved. Nevertheless, during his tenure there, it emerged as an educational space where Banzan trained like-minded samurai, many of whom later served in Okayama administration, in his thinking about Confucianism, Shintō, government, culture, and spirituality.

Rifle Command

In 1650, Banzan was also named a domain commander of the Okayama rifle brigade with a stipend of 3,000 *koku*, a tenfold increase over his earlier stipend, making him one of the most favored retainers in the domain. As commander, Banzan emphasized not only the brigade's responsibility to protect and defend the domain, but also the essential unity of the way of the samurai and Confucianism, one wherein responsibility, trust, compassion, and concern for people were taught alongside military formations and the basics of using a rifle. Some of those trained in Banzan's rifle brigade later held administrative positions as village intendants. By 1663, in four Okayama districts, nearly seventy-five village officials were former members of Banzan's rifle brigade.[33]

Banzan also took advantage of his role as commander to relocate some samurai in training to a rural village, Hattōji-mura, strategically located on Okayama's frontier. Though hardly Banzan's intent at the time, this exercise involved, in part at least, what he later advocated for the entire realm, transfer of samurai away from castle towns and back to the countryside to take up life as warrior-farmers. In *Responding to the Great*

[32] Gotō, "Kumazawa Banzan no shōgai to shisō," p. 481.
[33] McMullen, *Idealism*, p. 107.

Learning, Banzan's strong views on this arguably drew from his experiences as an Okayama rifle brigade commander when he personally supervised an analogous relocation.[34]

Banzan's work with the domain rifle brigade paralleled somewhat Wang Yangming's life experiences. In addition to being a philosophical thinker, Wang served intermittently as a military commander who led Ming forces that suppressed several rebellions. On another count, Banzan's work with samurai trained in the use of firearms made him both a more respected and suspected samurai retainer, since the rifle forces that defended the realm could also be marshalled to challenge it. When coupled with his allusions to the, in some corners at least, heterodox Wang Yangming teachings, Banzan appeared, in the eyes of those ready to conclude the worst, a possibly dangerous man with a loyal and militarily trained following. Wang Yangming also had found that his military accomplishments in putting down rebellions soon bred jealousy and slander, resulting in his own eventual exile.

Early Prominence in Edo

In the spring of 1649, Banzan accompanied his daimyō Ikeda Mitsumasa to Edo for the latter's time there in service to the shogunate. While in Edo, Banzan, age 31, emerged as a popular teacher, attracting numerous students including rōnin as well as some daimyō and lower-level retainers of the shogunate. The same year, Banzan completed a short treatise, *Western Inscription for Japan* (*Yamato nishi no mei*),[35] his reformulation of ideas earlier set forth by the Song dynasty thinker Zhang Zai (1020–1077) in his *Western Inscription* (C: *Ximing*; J: *Nishi no mei*). The latter expressed an ethical vision affirming a personal sense of familial oneness with the ten-thousand things of existence grounded in the recognition of heaven as one's father and earth as one's mother, and the plurality of being, including plants, animals, and even inorganic things, as one's brothers and sisters.

Zhang Zai's ideas were incorporated into Zhu Xi's thinking, especially as presented in his philosophical anthology *Reflections on Things at Hand* (C: *Jinsilu*; J: *Kinshiroku*), coedited with Lü Zuqian. Nevertheless, this kind of Confucian mysticism later came to be more associated with

[34] Galen M. Fisher, "Kumazawa Banzan, His Life and Ideas," *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, 2nd Series, vol. 16 (1938), p. 236. Gotō, "Kumazawa Banzan shōgai to shisō," p. 480. McMullen, *Idealism*, pp. 97–98, 100, 107.

[35] This text is in the *Banzan zenshū*, vol. 5, pp. 117–132.

Wang Yangming's teachings than Zhu Xi's, in large part because Wang included a variation of it prominently in his central writing *Inquiry on the Great Learning* (*Daxue wen*). Banzan's readiness to draw on the environmentally sensitive thought of Zhang Zai reflects his relatively nondoctrinaire approach to Confucian learning. Also, Banzan's authorship of this treatise while in Edo reflected, to an extent, his concern for and sense of oneness with the natural order even while residing in the singularly artificial urban density of Edo. In *Responding to the Great Learning*, Banzan took his admiration for nature to new heights, calling for a deconstruction of much of the shogun's capital city for the sake of returning it to agrarian countryside.

In 1651, Banzan again accompanied Mitsumasa to Edo on the latter's duties serving the shogunate. Once again, in Edo, Banzan distinguished himself as a teacher, attracting the attention of many. That year, those seeking instruction included Tokugawa Yorinobu (1602–1671), the tenth son of Ieyasu; the shogunal elder counselor, Matsudaira Nobutsune (1596–1662); the shogunal deputy, Itakura Shigemune (1586–1657), a succession of daimyō including Inaba Masanori (1623–1683), Kuze Hiroyuki (1609–1679), Itakura Shigenori (1617–1673), Nakagawa Hisakiyo (1615–1681), Asano Nagaharu (1614–1675), as well as various lower-level Tokugawa retainers. There was even talk that the then-reigning third shogun, Tokugawa Iemitsu (1604–1651), was considering Banzan for a position within the shogunate. Iemitsu's passing that year, however, ended Banzan's immediate chances for high service.[36] Nevertheless, in a very brief time, he had evidently risen to considerable prominence in relation to his daimyō, his domain of service, and, most fatefully, the shogun's capital, Edo.

Rōnin Uprisings and Razan's Slanderous Critique

Iemitsu's passing in the fourth month of 1651 was followed, later that year, by a failed uprising led by Yui Shōsetsu (1605–1651), an Edo commoner-rōnin who had achieved notice for his efforts in military studies and samurai academies. The latter served not only as training grounds for samurai of all levels, but also, in some instances, as spaces wherein samurai, rōnin, and sundry others shared opinions, hopes, dreams, and

[36] Banzan discusses his prominence among the "three lords" (*sanke*), or the heads of families directly related to Tokugawa Ieyasu, around this moment, in *Banzan zenshū*, vol. 2, pp. 113–114. Also see Gotō, "Kumazawa Banzan no shōgai to shisō," p. 482. McMullen, p. 94.

frustrations with the existing order. Despite his commoner background, Shōsetsu was closely associated with rōnin and samurai and so later came to be known, along with Banzan and Yamaga Sokō, as one of "the three great rōnin" of the early Tokugawa period. Working with Marubashi Chūya (d. 1651), a rōnin martial arts instructor, Shōsetsu plotted an insurrection to be launched immediately after Iemitsu's passing and meant to overthrow the Tokugawa shogunate. The conspiracy was uncovered, however, and effectively quashed in its early stages. Chūya and Shōsetsu died in the process, in the ninth month of 1651. The following year, 1652, another anti-Tokugawa plot led by Betsuki Shōzaemon (d. 1652), wherein the shogun's capital was to be set ablaze and the top leadership of the shogunate assassinated, was uncovered. Betsuki and others in the conspiracy were crucified.[37]

Such uprisings intensified shogunal awareness of potentially explosive threats the growing rōnin population posed to Edo and the provinces. The shogunate soon clamped down, monitoring martial arts academies where rōnin sometimes aired their grievances. In 1652, one of the great elders in the shogunate, Sakai Tadakatsu (1587–1662), moved to suppress scholarly gatherings in the domains, fearing that they might be occasions for rallying rōnin discontent.[38] As a prominent teacher serving an outer daimyō, Banzan's even brief references to Wang Yangming teachings such as intuitive knowledge and action, along with his earlier service as commander of a rifle brigade in Okayama, prompted shogunal suspicions. With prevailing anxieties over possible rōnin uprisings, Banzan was apparently viewed, perhaps due to his philosophical independence, as potential trouble, a loose cannon needing a tether.

It did not help Banzan's fortunes that Tōju had in 1631, two decades before, openly criticized Razan for submitting to the shogunal demand that he shave his head and wear Buddhist robes as a condition for service as a scholar. Tōju saw Razan's compliance as a betrayal of the integrity that Confucians – who did not typically shave their heads and wear Buddhist robes – were supposed to embody. By 1651, Tōju was long gone, but his apparent successor, Banzan, was now vulnerable because his profile increasingly resembled that of Yui Shōsetsu and Marubashi Chūya: he was a charismatic teacher leading a samurai school, moreover in an outer province over which the shogunate had limited, remote authority.

[37] Gotō, "Kumazawa Banzan no shōgai to shisō," p. 482.
[38] Kimura Mitsunori, "Nenpu," in Kimura and Ushio Haruo, eds., *Nakae Tōju/Kumazawa Banzan*, Nihon no shisōka, vol. 4 (Tokyo: Meitoku shuppansha, 1978), p. 318.

By this point, the Flower Garden Learning Center had been educating Okayama samurai for several years, producing a cadre of philosophically informed activists ready to extend their intuitive knowledge in administrative practice. Guilt by hazy association seemed sufficient, and just as punishment of Shōsetsu and Chūya had been inflicted, posthumously, on their kin, so, in a convoluted way, might Banzan be punished for his alleged sins as well as those of Tōju in earlier having questioned Razan's integrity.

Soon slanders surfaced in Edo linking Banzan with the rōnin uprisings of 1651–1652, and deceptive teachings that smacked of Christianity. Allegations attributed to Razan suggested that Banzan's teachings were a version of Christianity and had inspired lawless rōnin in their attempted uprisings.

> Kumazawa is a minor official in Bizen-Okayama. With bewitching arts, he misleads those who cannot hear or see for themselves. Those who heed him end up confused and even more ignorant. Yet many have pledged their lives as his followers, gradually becoming part of his cohort. He does not allow them to talk with others who do not share his aspirations. His teachings are essentially a variation of Christianity … The [rōnin-]bandits [of late] have all heard Kumazawa's bewitching words.[39]

Coming from a scholar serving the shogunate, Razan's remarks virtually indicting Banzan[40] were heeded at the highest levels.

Ikeda Mitsumasa's diary records that he was soon warned by the grand elder, Sakai Tadakatsu (1587–1662), about shogunal displeasure over the rise in Okayama domain of the so-called "Learning of the Mind" (*shingaku*), a reference to Wang Yangming's teachings. Hints were made that the Flower Garden Oath smacked of Christian liturgical formulations. As a result, the oath was soon viewed with suspicion. When it became known that one of Banzan's relatives by marriage had been involved in Betsuki's plot, suspicions intensified. Ikeda Mitsumasa's diary records that he, Mitsumasa, was notified that the shogunate suspected some daimyō, including Mitsumasa himself, who appeared Confucian but were possibly sympathetic to the rōnin and their uprisings.

Two years later, in 1654, while in Kyoto on his way back to Okayama, Mitsumasa was informed by the shogunal deputy in Kyoto, Itakura

[39] Gotō, "Kumazawa Banzan shōgai to shisō," p. 482. Also, McMullen, *Idealism*, p. 118.
[40] Ibid.

Shigemune (1586–1657), of Sakai Tadakatsu's order that he, Mitsumasa, be instructed to prohibit "the Learning of the Mind." Despite such warnings, Mitsumasa's trust in Banzan remained unshaken.[41] Perhaps so, but at the same time, except for a brief visit in 1660,[42] Banzan did not return to Edo again until nearly thirty years later when summoned by the shogunate, just before he was sentenced to final confinement in Koga Castle. Though not yet a detained man, Banzan had attracted the attention of the shogunate, and then soon found fame a double-edged sword and himself a watched man.

Disaster Relief and Domain Administration

Soon after, in 1654, Okayama domain fell victim to massive flooding leaving 156 dead from drowning, and a swath of destruction cutting across socio-economic and political lines: losses included 493 samurai houses, 573 homes belonging to foot-soldiers, 443 homes belonging to townspeople, 2,284 peasant homes, and rice fields with a productive capacity of 11,660 *koku*. Bridges, ponds, and irrigation ditches were destroyed in every area of the domain. Starvation took an additional 3,684 lives. Mitsumasa reportedly saw the disaster as heaven's warning to him as the domain lord.[43]

Banzan quickly assumed a leading role in formulating plans for dealing with the disaster. According to Gotō Yōichi, "Banzan became Mitsumasa's right hand man" in coordinating disaster relief efforts. The domain soon opened its storage facilities, making rice available to the starving. Where more was needed, additional grain from neighboring provinces was purchased. Grain stored in Osaka was returned to Okayama for use in continued disaster relief. In many respects, policies later outlined in Banzan's *Responding to the Great Learning* regarding the necessity of maintaining storage facilities in every domain to provide emergency grain in times of disaster echoed the strategies deployed in Okayama in the wake of the 1654 flooding.[44]

James McMullen notes that at one point, "Forty-six percent of the financial aid disbursed to 'districts and towns' by the domain passed through Banzan's hands."[45] When Mitsumasa went to Edo in 1655 to render service to the shogunate, he left Banzan in charge of overseeing

[41] Ibid.
[42] Gotō and Tomoeda, eds., "Nenpu," *Kumazawa Banzan*, p. 583.
[43] Gotō, "Kumazawa Banzan shōgai to shisō," p. 484.
[44] Ibid. McMullen, *Idealism*, p. 107. [45] McMullen, *Idealism*, p. 107.

matters and resolving unanticipated issues and problems. During the recovery effort Banzan led, domain administration was reorganized along more centralized lines. Not surprisingly, many of Banzan's former students staffed new positions in emergency relief. And, much of the relief work done focused on the peasantry, with seemingly scant concern for upper-level samurai. Banzan's involvement in disaster relief and economic reconstruction shaped his thinking about compassionate government and came to inform his proposals outlined in *Responding to the Great Learning*. Conversely, Mitsumasa's administrative efforts toward flood and disaster relief most likely reflected Banzan's practical commitment to those compassionate strategies from early on, as well as his, Banzan's, considerable influence on his daimyō in administering ethically informed government that was more than simply an ideological mask cynically disguising daimyō indifference toward the people.

Resignation

In 1657, Banzan, age 39, relinquished his 3,000-*koku* position in service to Ikeda Mitsumasa. For the next four years, until 1661, he remained in Okayama, living in relative seclusion in a village, Terakuchi-mura. His parents and approximately a dozen followers joined him there. Appreciating the beauty of the location, Banzan called it "luxuriant mountain village" (Shigeyama-mura). The written characters for "Shigeyama" generated, via Sino-Japanese reading, the name Banzan, which he later adopted as his personal name. The words "shigeyama" also alluded to a poem by an eleventh-century Heian aristocrat, Minamoto Shigeyuki, in the ancient compilation of Japanese verse, *Anthology of Old and New Poems* (*Shinkokinshū*, no. 1013), noting the abundant beauty of Mt. Tsukuba. Commemorative stones marking the location of Banzan's dwelling, next to the Shōrakuji, a Shingon temple, are in Bizen City. Gravestones for Banzan's parents are located nearby, behind the temple.

Banzan's time in Shigeyama-mura modeled, on a personal level, his later advocacy of returning samurai to rural areas. Though he did not engage in farming during his retirement, neither did he retreat to a castle town or urban area as he might well have following his relentless work in disaster relief. Banzan's avoidance of strenuous agrarian labor presumably resulted from an injury he sustained in a fall while hunting.[46]

[46] Itō Tasaburō, "Tōju Banzan no gakumon to shisō," *Nakae Tōju Kumazawa Banzan*, p. 47.

Complications from the injury left him with a debilitating illness which prevented him from fulfilling his official duties, prompting, according to his account, his decision to resign his post and stipend. Most likely, even before his injury, Banzan was exhausted following two years of relief work.

Other factors contributed to Banzan's resignation. First, shogunal officials had pressured Mitsumasa, following the rōnin uprisings of 1651–1652, to end Banzan's role in domain education. While Mitsumasa remained a faithful supporter, from the perspective of Edo powerbrokers, Banzan was a liability for the Okayama daimyō. Resentment from within Okayama over Banzan's quick rise to power did not help. Worsening matters, Banzan's readiness to move away from established patterns in government that privileged samurai over the peasantry elicited opposition from the warrior elite in the domain. Opposition led to innuendo and even accusations about egregious waste and mismanagement. At one point, rumors circulated that certain domain samurai wanted Banzan dead. Surely Banzan understood that for the sake of his health and well-being a lower profile would be advantageous.

Before resigning, Mitsumasa allowed Banzan to adopt his, Mitsumasa's, third son, Ikeda Masatomo (1649–1714), as his heir. There were good reasons for Mitsumasa to do this since it meant that, upon Banzan's resignation, his 3,000-*koku* fief would return to the Ikeda. In *Responding to the Great Learning*, Banzan criticizes hereditary stipends and suggests that they last no longer than one generation. Considered in that light, his resignation issued out of a sense of his responsibility not to misuse domain resources for his own personal gain, especially when he no longer felt capable physically of tending to his responsibilities. At the same time, by adopting one of his daimyō's sons, Banzan became even closer to his daimyō than ever before.

Coinciding with Banzan's resignation in 1657 was the passing of Hayashi Razan, longtime Confucian scholar in service to the first four Tokugawa shoguns. Razan had advanced, gradually, the fortunes of Zhu Xi-style Confucianism in Edo for nearly six decades. Though never a strict orthodoxy, Razan's bookish interpretations of Zhu Xi thought prevailed in Edo far more than did the activistic Wang Yangming teachings. Yet most importantly, Razan had set in motion a hereditary line of Hayashi scholars that, one generation after the next, built upon his gains, incrementally growing the presence and power of Zhu Xi learning. While Razan's clout was limited, he was, as his mean-spirited remarks

about Banzan showed, no friend of Banzan's nor the least bit sympathetic to the kind of quick learning for which claims to intuitive knowledge allowed. And just as the outer lords were, in the mid-seventeenth century, still vassals the shogunate kept either at a distance or under administrative surveillance, so did Razan seek to make sure Banzan knew he was a watched man, not welcome in Edo, nor in Okayama domain for that matter. Even after Razan had passed, his successors close to the shogunal halls of power continued his efforts in compromising the abilities of samurai and rōnin intellectuals who seemingly posed a threat, philosophical or professional, to them.

Pressure from on high continued, but it was not always from the Hayashi. Shogunal elder, Hoshina Masayuki (1611–1673), half-brother of the third shogun Iemitsu, and close advisor to the fourth shogun Ietsuna, was, even more than the Hayashi, a stern advocate of Zhu Xi-style Confucianism. Masayuki and the Hayashi were not at one on philosophical issues, especially after Masayuki became a patron of Yamazaki Ansai (1619–1682) and his more exclusivistic approach to Zhu Xi learning. Both agreed, however, that Wang Yangming teachings were anathema, and that their prominence in domains such as Okayama needed to be undone. Banzan, age 39, was a casualty of this struggle for philosophical power.[47] For the time being, at least, he retreated to the countryside for rest and recuperation.

Kyoto and Imperial Culture

In 1659, two years after his resignation from service in Okayama domain, Banzan stayed briefly in Kyoto, meeting a number of court nobles including the scholar-aristocrat Nakanoin Michishige (1631–1710).[48] In the spring of 1660, Banzan traveled to Edo at the invitation of Nakagawa Hisakiyo (1615–1681), the daimyō of Oka domain in Bungo Province, apparently with the blessing of Mitsumasa. That winter, Banzan served in Oka as an advisor on matters of domain administration.[49] The following year, 1661, he returned to Kyoto and took up residence near the Kamigoryō Shrine, just north of the imperial palace. The same year, Itō Jinsai opened a private school in Kyoto, pioneering a new dimension of

[47] Wajima Yoshio, "Kanbun igaku no kin, sono Hayashi mon kōryū to no kankei," *Nihon Sōgakushi no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1988).
[48] For a study of Nakanoin and Banzan, see James McMullen, "Courtier and Confucian in Seventeenth-Century Japan," *Japan Review*, no. 21 (2009), pp. 11–23.
[49] Gotō, "Kumazawa Banzan shōgai to shisō," pp. 499–500.

Kyoto Confucianism at odds with the Hayashi in Edo, the leanings of Hoshina Masayuki as shaped by Yamazaki Ansai, also in the shogun's capital, and finally those of Nakae Tōju earlier espoused just outside of Kyoto, in Ōmi. Although not a hundred schools, Confucian philosophical thought was blossoming with every decade of peace, prosperity, and cultural growth.

Banzan remained in Kyoto for the next six years, until 1667, reading and discussing Japanese history and literature with court nobles and scholars, as well as studying Japanese music, including two string instruments, the *biwa* and the *koto*, revealing along the way a talent for music. Banzan also taught many of Kyoto's elite, including a dozen prominent nobles, as well as lesser aristocrats, samurai, physicians, and townspeople. During this period, he began work on his commentary on the *Tale of Genji*. At odds with many earlier commentators, Banzan interpreted the court romance novel, written by a courtesan, Murasaki Shikibu (c. 973–c. 1031), in radically Confucian political terms. In Banzan's view, the novel was not simply a great work of literature, but a "resource for his own times," one that had "universal relevance" in its depiction of the age of royal rule before the country came to be dominated by a military class. In the shining prince Genji, Banzan envisioned an exemplar of "humanity and creative altruism."[50] While Banzan's time in Kyoto led him to a deeper appreciation for imperial culture, Shintō, Japanese poetry and music, and other aspects of aristocratic refinement, it was only following his years in the ancient imperial capital that he completed his study of the *Genji* and most of his other works on ancient culture, including a novel, *Tale of Miwa* (*Miwa monogatari*).

In *Tale of Miwa*, Banzan showcases his thinking about time, place, and circumstances, and in the process, his leanings toward relativism. The novel features three speakers who voice different perspectives on Japanese spirituality, the origins of the people, its imperial line, and its divinities. One speaker, a senior priest at a Shintō shrine, affirms literal belief in accounts of the age of the gods (*kami*) found in the histories of ancient Japan, insisting that the emperor is the descendant of the heavenly gods, and that the spirit of the country must be divine. Because *kami* are sagely and virtuous, Amaterasu and then the earliest emperors were full of virtue as well. Consequently, there was no need to borrow anything from China. In the view of the priest, "Shintō is the foundation,

[50] McMullen, "Courtier and Confucian," p. 15.

the Confucian way comprises the branches and leaves, and Buddhism is the fruit" of Japanese spirituality.

In opposition, two samurai express a contrary view. They note that Kyushu is close to Korea and China, and that there have been exchanges between the two lands. As a result, the way of Kings Wen and Wu, two ancient sage kings in China, entered Japan along with many other dimensions of Chinese culture and civilization. Through the study of Confucianism, Japanese came to understand the moral way. Rationalizing and historicizing Shintō, the samurai thus portray Japanese spirituality as in large part derived, in its principles and sensibilities, from neighboring China.

An aristocrat, however, delivers what seems to be Banzan's view, negotiating an affirmation of indigenous Japanese spirituality and yet recognizing the unmistakable resonance with Chinese religio-philosophical thinking by means of appealing to a universal essence and particular manifestations. Without attributing to it a particular country of origin, the aristocrat states that "the way of great emptiness," also known as "the spiritual way of one foundation in heaven and earth," is the source of the way of the sages in China and the way of gods and emperors symbolized in the three treasures of the imperial throne. In the case of Japan, while the three treasures came to be paired with the three Confucian virtues – compassion, wisdom, and courage – they existed before Japanese had learned those words. In effect, through the aristocrat's view, Banzan preserves both the particularity of Japan and China, while accounting for both by reference to a transcendent universal, "the way of great emptiness."[51] The aristocrat's views are not, however, presented dogmatically. Instead, the dialectical progression of the tale suggests that the various perspectives are generated, and to a certain extent valid, for those representing different times, places, and circumstances.

Yet Banzan's innovative, even iconoclastic interpretations of imperial history, literature, and culture also brought trouble: in 1667, Makino Chikashige (1607–1677), the shogunal deputy in charge of Kyoto, had Banzan, then 49, expelled from the imperial capital, supposedly because

[51] This analysis is based on Gotō, "Kumazawa Banzan no shōgai to shisō," pp. 504–506. The *Miwa monogatari* is in *Banzan zenshū*, vol. 5, pp. 207–290. For other discussions, see Bitō Masahide, *Nihon hōken shisōshi kenkyū* (Tokyo: Aoki Shoten, 1966), p. 222. Also, McMullen, *Idealism*, pp. 411–412, and Kate Wildman Nakai, "The Naturalization of Confucianism in Tokugawa Japan: The Problem of Sinocentrism," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. 40, no. 1 (1980), pp. 190–194.

of his standing as a rōnin. Banzan first relocated to the Yoshino Mountains south of the imperial capital, again taking refuge through a retreat to the countryside. Shortly after, he moved to the area of Kaseyama Castle in Yamashiro Province, living there in seclusion.

Although the real reasons for his expulsion from Kyoto remain unclear, speculation is that Banzan was driven away by the same forces that had earlier exiled Yamaga Sokō from Edo. In both cases, Hoshina Masayuki, advisor to the shogun and patron of Yamazaki Ansai, a Zhu Xi purist scholar who detested Sokō's learning and any version of Wang Yangming thinking, is suspected of having sanctioned if not engineered their exile for the sake of driving out heterodoxies and facilitating dominance of the variety of Zhu Xi learning advanced by Yamazaki Ansai.[52] At the time, Ansai was spending half his time in Kyoto, and half in Edo. It is therefore conceivable that Ansai was behind Banzan's troubles as well, and that by working through his patron, Masayuki, he was ridding both the shogun's capital and the imperial capital of prominently troublesome philosophical opposition which happened to be, in both cases, of rōnin status and therefore highly vulnerable. Most likely, Banzan's outspokenness had also landed him on the wrong side of some of the aristocracy with whom he studied the *Genji*. Rumors circulated that Banzan was an enemy of Buddhism, and even that his inclination toward Wang Yangming teachings, however superficial, was simply a mask for his sympathy toward Christian teachings. Groundless though these accusations seem to have been, they and others had been voiced before, making them, via repetition, even more credible for some. Whatever the real reason for his expulsion, Banzan clearly had upset not a few powerful people and so came to suffer the consequences.[53]

Semi-Exile in Akashi

By 1669, Banzan had negotiated his relocation in banishment to Akashi, a castle town west of Kyoto, near the area to which the shining prince Genji, in the novel, had been exiled. Instrumental in securing Banzan's preferred place of exile was Itakura Shigenori, the shogunal deputy in Kyoto who had, in 1651, studied briefly with Banzan when the latter was in Edo otherwise assisting his daimyō, Ikeda Mitsumasa. Yet

[52] For an in-depth study of Sokō and Banzan, see Miyazaki Michio, "Kumazawa Banzan to Yamaga Sokō," *Kokugakuin zasshi*, vol. 82, no. 8, 1981.
[53] Gotō, "Kumazawa Banzan no shōgai to shisō," p. 511.

even with Shigenori's support, Banzan was not able to secure exoneration enabling him to return to the imperial capital. The best Shigenori could do was arrange a pleasant place of exile for Banzan. This suggests that there must have been other forces higher, possibly the shogunal regent, Hoshina Masayuki, and his scholar-vassal, Yamazaki Ansai, still intent on marginalizing Banzan. Nevertheless, it was during this period that Banzan completed work on his study of the *Tale of Genji* (*Genji gaiden*).

In Akashi, Banzan lived in exile, but not heavy-handed detention, under the watchful supervision of a daimyō, Matsudaira Nobuyuki (1631–1686), a Tokugawa relative. Although banished from Kyoto, Banzan was allowed to move about with permission. Just two months after moving to Akashi, he was permitted to travel to Okayama to officiate at the ceremonies honoring Confucius held on the opening of a new domain school there. The following year, Okayama founded the Shizutani Academy, the first domain-supported school for the education of commoners. Although typically credited to Ikeda Mitsumasa, Banzan's earlier role in the educational development of Okayama and his later advocacy of education in *Responding to the Great Learning*, suggest that credit for such educational advances in Okayama domain was, at least indirectly, his.[54]

In 1672, Banzan published one of his major works, *Accumulating Righteousness, Japanese Writings* (*Shūgi washo*). A second, considerably expanded edition appeared before his passing. From the start, however, *Accumulating Righteousness, Japanese Writings* affirmed both the eternal and universal nature of the way – understood as consisting of the three bonds (ruler–subject; father–son; husband–wife) and the five constants (compassion, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and honesty) as well as the relativity inherent in expressions of them in relation to time, place, and circumstances of rank and status. Banzan left no doubt that the way existed before anything and would continue to exist long after reality as it then existed was gone. In that respect, the way was constant, universal, and eternal, transcending time, place, and circumstance. On the other hand, human creations such as the fundamentals of civilization, laws, rites, and music were meant to approximate the way, and necessarily corresponded to the time, place, and circumstances in which they originated. As such, they were subject to change, modification, elimination, and innovation as particular, subjective expressions of the universal way.

[54] Akiyama, *Bokenroku*, pp. 6–9.

According to Banzan, these factors – time, place, and circumstance – were key determinants in assessing the validity of received traditions, wisdom, rules and regulations, and approaches to realizing success in the world.[55]

Banzan insisted that even the laws and regulations of the sages of antiquity, when no longer appropriate to the time, place, and circumstances of contemporary problems, should not be deemed expressions of the way. Conversely, efforts to impose ancient laws on present-day humanity simply because they were attributed to the sages, regardless of their resonance with contemporary time, place, and circumstances, were contrary to the way. In this regard, Banzan's *Accumulating Righteousness, Japanese Writings* sets forth a dialectic of universalistic idealism and conditional relativism that while affirming the abiding, eternal reality of the fundamentals of morality, left ample room for contingent modifications as required by and appropriate to the exigencies of time, place, and circumstance.[56]

In emphasizing the importance of these contingent factors, Banzan continued a line of thought Tōju developed in his *Discussions with an Old Man* (*Okina mondō*), which in turn was shaped by the ideas of a late-Ming follower of Wang Yangming, Wang Ji.[57] And, Banzan's *Accumulating Righteousness, Further Writings*,[58] a text he began during the early 1670s but edited and expanded until his final days, further developed these same views. In addition to continuing themes from *Accumulating Righteousness, Japanese Writings*, Banzan emphasized subject matter such as the importance of mountains, rivers, and forests for the realm, declaring them the foundations of the country, thus according them a level of ultimate political importance more typically reserved for the people. Implicit in Banzan's view, however, was the belief that humanity could not exist in any suitable manner without active respect for and cultivation

[55] A modern edition of the *Shūgi washo* is in Gotō and Tomoeda, eds., *Kumazawa Banzan*, pp. 7–404. Another modern edition is in Itō, *Nakae Tōju Kumazawa Banzan*, vol. 11, pp. 175–309.

[56] Gotō and Tomoeda, *Kumazawa Banzan*, pp. 7–404. Also, Itō, *Nakae Tōju Kumazawa Banzan*, pp. 175–309.

[57] Yamashita Ryūji, "Nakae Tōju's Religious Thought and Its Relation to 'Jitsugaku,'" in Wm. Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom, eds., *Principle and Practicality: Essays in Neo-Confucianism and Practical Learning* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), pp. 307–336.

[58] The translation of *Shūgi gaisho* here follows that of Richard Bowring, *In Search of the Way: Thought and Religion in Early-Modern Japan, 1582–1860* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 82.

of the best interests of the surrounding environment, including in Japan's case mountains, rivers, and forests. Degradation of the latter, in Banzan's view, marked the beginning of the end of any political community. Similar ecologically oriented themes appeared prominently in Banzan's *Responding to the Great Learning* wherein the integrity of the natural world is emphasized, and ways in which to maintain the vitality of forests, mountains, rivers, and arable land are outlined.

Exile-Detention in Yamato Province (1679–1687)

In 1679, the shogunate relocated Banzan's supervising daimyō, Matsudaira Nobuyuki, former lord of Akashi Castle, to another location in the Kansai, Kōriyama Castle (now Yamato Kōriyama). Banzan, still in Nobuyuki's custody, was permitted to reside in rural Yata village just outside Kōriyama Castle, in Yamato Province (now, Nara Prefecture). During the years that followed, Banzan, then in his sixties, was allowed to take excursions every so often, making his time in supervision not terribly restrictive. In 1683, Banzan received an invitation from Hotta Masatoshi (1634–1684), the shogunal great elder, with overtures of possible service to the shogunate. Then 65, Banzan went to Edo but firmly refused the offer. Rather than accept and enjoy the more urbane life a shogunal stipend might afford, Banzan, apparently unwilling to serve the shogun – Tokugawa Tsunayoshi (1646–1709), for whom he had little respect – returned to Yamato, close to his birthplace, Kyoto, and the cultural region he most admired. As things turned out, Banzan's refusal was a wise choice: the following year, in 1684, Masatoshi was assassinated in Edo Castle in one of the most shocking political murders of the Tokugawa period.

Masatoshi's overture was made possible by the passing, in 1682, of Yamazaki Ansai, perhaps the most charismatic and politically scheming, even somewhat Machiavellian Confucian teacher of his day. Ansai's insistence, as a Confucian scholar, on fidelity to Zhu Xi's teaching attracted many, but not Banzan. The hardships Banzan faced in the decade and a half prior were in part due to Ansai's considerable power over philosophical discourse in Edo and Kyoto. However, following the death of Ansai's patron, Hoshina Masayuki, in 1672, Ansai's power declined as evidenced in the shogunate's pardon of Yamaga Sokō, whom Masayuki had earlier exiled from Edo. Nevertheless, while alive Ansai and his patron Masayuki had made life difficult for those whose teachings differed from his own.

Introduction

In 1684, a year after refusing Masatoshi's offers, Banzan visited Kyoto twice, once in the third lunar month, and then again in the tenth. The following two years, 1685 and 1686, Banzan, in his late sixties, made similar trips to Kyoto in the spring and autumn. In 1687, he enjoyed two brief trips to Kyoto, one in the second lunar month and another in the fifth. His frequent travels might have been prompted by a growing awareness on his part that his time was growing short. Earlier, in 1682 the same year Ansai died, Banzan's former daimyō, Ikeda Mitsumasa, who had also helped supervise Banzan's exile for over a decade, also passed away. Two years prior, Banzan had lost his father, age 91.

In addition to travel, Banzan continued to work on several manuscripts, bringing them to varied states of completion. In 1686, he finished, for the most part, work on three texts: *Brief Explanation of the Great Learning* (*Daigaku shōkai*), *Brief Explanation of the Analects of Confucius* (*Rongo gekan shōkai*), and *Commentary on the Great Treatise of the Book of Changes* (*Keiji denkai*). Banzan also made plans for publishing a revised and expanded version of his *Accumulating Righteousness, Japanese Writings*.

Well along in years and relatively isolated from the realities of the times, Banzan remained fearful of an imminent foreign invasion by northern barbarians, that is, the Manchus. Earlier, he had expressed concerns about the same while serving Ikeda Mitsumasa. Worried that such an invasion would soon become a disastrous reality, Banzan voiced his concerns to his son-in-law, Inaba Hikobei (1659–1734), claiming to do so not for fame or personal gain but instead "for the sake of his country, Japan." Banzan's son-in-law was then a retainer of the daimyō, Kitami Shigemasa, a chamberlain and close confidant of the fifth shogun, Tsunayoshi. Banzan apparently asked his son-in-law to share his anxieties with Shigemasa. Most likely Banzan hoped that Shigemasa would in turn inform the shogun.

In his letter dated the first of the eighth month, 1686, Banzan, writing from his residence in Yata to his son-in-law, Hikobei, in Edo, explained:

> I do not know what will become of our transitory existence during this year. However, for the sake of Japan (*Nihon no tame ni*) saying nothing about matters would be criminal …
>
> Quite possibly, the Tartar tribes (*Dattan*) living north of China will come down next year or the year after. If they come next year and if the authorities have not prepared by the eighth, ninth or at latest the tenth month of this year, by the eleventh or twelfth month

> the situation will be beyond [the abilities of even the great generals of China who long ago sought to defend that land] … The Tartar tribes will come suddenly and without warning. There is not the slightest evidence of the necessary preparations … However, unless we begin preparations during the fall of this year, we will not be ready for the battle to come next spring or summer.[59]

Banzan added that if the shogun's chamberlain was interested in his thoughts, he would write them out, probably fifty to sixty pages' worth. Banzan added that he had considered discussing these matters with Matsudaira Nobuyuki, but sickness had kept him from doing so.

Responding to the Great Learning addresses the supposed invasion of Japan by northern barbarians repeatedly. There is no question that the list of contents Banzan mentioned to Hikobei was essentially that of the work later known as *Responding to the Great Learning*. According to Inoue Michiyasu, Banzan proceeded to draft the text after having sent the letter to Hikobei, finishing it around the ninth month of the following year, in the autumn of 1687.[60] Presumably he did so in the hope that the shogun's chamberlain, upon hearing of it, would share it with the shogun, Tsunayoshi, who might in turn wish to read the text, or perhaps even meet with Banzan and discuss the supposedly imminent dangers facing Japan. Quite possibly, Banzan imagined that he might be elevated to high office, one responsible for coordinating emergency measures needed to provide for national defense and internal prosperity.

Nearing his own end, Banzan felt compelled to speak. Not sharing his thoughts, he suggested, was criminal. That very statement, however, suggests that Banzan also realized that in sharing his proposals, he might well be charged with high crimes vis-à-vis the shogunate. Rather than recoil, once again Banzan spoke out, but no response, at least not from the shogun's chamberlain, came.

[59] Inoue Michiyasu, an early twentieth century scholar of Banzan's life and thought, is credited with piecing together the documentation establishing these connections. Kumazawa Banzan, "Letter to Inaba Hikobe," *Banzan sensei shokan jūi*. Excerpt quoted from Gotō, "Kumazawa Banzan no shōgai to shisō," p. 530. Ian James McMullen, "Kumazawa Banzan and 'Jitsugaku': Toward Pragmatic Action," in Wm. Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom, eds., *Principle and Practicality: Essays in Neo-Confucianism and Practical Learning* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), p. 337. Also, McMullen, *Idealism*, p. 415. For Inoue's writings, see Inoue Michiyasu, *Banzan kō* (Okayama: Okayama-ken, 1902); Inoue, *Banzan sensei ryakuden* (Kogamachi, Ibaraki-ken: Kogakyō yūkai, 1910); and Inoue, *Banzan sensei shokanshū* (Tokyo: Shūseidō, 1913).

[60] Gotō, "Kumazawa Banzan no shōgai to shisō," p. 531.

Yet the matter somehow did come to the attention of one of Banzan's followers, Tanaka Magojurō, a low-level Tokugawa retainer then serving as a shogunal censor. Magojurō asked Banzan for his thoughts about government affairs, which prompted Banzan to send him a copy of his manuscript. After deliberating over what to do, Magojurō, realizing the sensitive nature of Banzan's text and his responsibility to report it, contacted the elder counsellors and turned a copy of the text over to them. Foreshadowing what was yet to come, Magojurō was stripped of his position as shogunal censor for having hesitated before reporting receipt of Banzan's text to the elder counsellors. Realizing the sensitive, even problematic nature of the text, later known as *Responding to the Great Learning*, some of Banzan's students had referred to it as "a secret writing" (*hisho*).[61] Their assessment of its nature and how it most likely should have been handled was not, apparently, mistaken.

Final Confinement in Koga Castle (1687–1691)

In the eighth month of 1687, Matsudaira Tadayuki (1674–1695), successor to his father as the daimyō supervising Banzan's custody, was relocated to Koga Province, north of Edo. He soon instructed Banzan to proceed to Koga as well. Tadayuki was acting on directives from the shogun's chamberlain, Makino Narisada (1634–1712).[62] Consequently, Banzan, in the ninth month, departed Yata but first stopped near Kyoto, in Fujinomori, to part company with friends and followers in and around the imperial capital. Most likely, he realized that he might not be seeing them again.

The following month, Banzan arrived in Koga, no doubt exhausted by the lengthy trip from the Kansai. He might well have imagined that finally he had been heard and the opportunity to address the shogunate on a range of matters was at hand. However, shortly after arriving he learned that the occasion was otherwise. Banzan was permitted to write one of his friends in Kyoto, Kitakōji Toshimitsu, noting that he had arrived in Koga. Banzan must have said more because Kitakōji

[61] One of Banzan's high disciples among the Kyoto aristocracy, Kitakōji Toshimitsu, in his diary, *Toshimitsu nikki*, referred to Banzan's "twenty-one-chapter secret text." The standard version of the *Daigaku wakumon* includes twenty-two chapters. Nevertheless, the diary entry is thought to have been to Banzan's *Daigaku wakumon*. Tomoeda Ryūtarō, "Shūroku shomoku kaidai," in Gotō and Tomoeda, eds., *Kumazawa Banzan*, pp. 590, 592. Itō, "Tōju Banzan no gakumon to shisō," p. 45.

[62] McMullen, *Idealism*, pp. 441–442. Gotō, "Kumazawa Banzan no shōgai to shisō," p. 532.

responded, acknowledging Banzan's misgivings and advising him to "trust in the decree of heaven," an indication that fate might be at hand. Later in the tenth month, Banzan was informed that he was prohibited from traveling to Edo, and that he was to remain in Koga indefinitely. Initially, at least, the shogunate was not expressing its condemnation of Banzan in any harsher terms.[63]

Subsequently, in the twelfth month of 1687, Banzan was informed of a shogunal decree placing him in confinement in the southeastern extreme of Koga Castle. According to the shogunate's verdict, Banzan was to be allowed no travel outside Koga, and nothing more than license to stroll around his place of confinement. He was not allowed to conduct correspondence with anyone, nor was he to have visitors from outside the domain. Even within Koga, he was only allowed to associate with those with whom he had good reason to associate. And of course, there would be no visits to Kyoto, nor to any other part of Japan. He was allowed the company of his wife, Ichi, but she passed away, age 55, in the following year, 1688, the first year of the Genroku period. This personal loss compounded Banzan's punishment. Together, they had had ten children, four sons and six daughters.

The shogunate's verdict stated that it found the writing Banzan had sent to Tanaka Magojurō offensive. In the shogunate's judgment, the untitled text was of "no interest whatsoever." Worst of all, from the perspective of the authorities, it was "not appropriate"[64] for Banzan to have written and submitted such political writings to the shogunate. He was, after all, a rōnin who had been living in the custody and supervision of a daimyō for two decades, not an official advisor to the shogunate or any of its trusted vassals.

The message was, in part, that if the shogunate had wanted advice, it would have sought it. Furthermore, it would not tolerate the writings of a scholar proposing what amounted to a wholesale reorganization of government, society, the economy, as well as the educational and spiritual realms. Also, Banzan's somewhat apocalyptic vision of a coming invasion by northern barbarians must have seemed, to the shogunal authorities,

[63] Gotō, "Kumazawa Banzan no shōgai to shisō," p. 528. Also, McMullen, *Idealism*, pp. 441–442.

[64] This account is from a memorandum by a Koga samurai, Tsutsui, that the early twentieth century Banzan scholar, Inoue Michiyasu, introduced. Quoted from Gotō, "Kumazawa Banzan no shōgai to shisō," p. 529. Also, see McMullen, *Idealism*, p. 443, for another translation.

the product of a disturbed if not deluded mind. True, the Manchus had taken control of China in the wake of the fall of the Ming dynasty, but their conquest there had occurred four decades earlier, and still there was no credible intelligence suggesting an imminent move against Japan. Banzan's alarmist calls on this count impaired, it seems, his credibility on virtually all others.

Banzan's confinement was real, yet also relatively mild. Then again, for a 69-year-old scholar in failing health, being cut off from contact with the remainder of the world was emotionally debilitating if not torturous. In *Accumulating Righteousness*, *Japanese Writings*, Banzan left a brief statement conveying his more noble sentiments while imprisoned at Koga Castle.

> I have been slandered repeatedly by various parties. As a result, I am no longer free to visit with friends who have come from afar, or even discuss morality and virtue with those nearby. Others might see me reduced to confinement and think that I am suffering in distress. However, in my mind and heart, I am most aware of the blessings I have received from heaven.
>
> It is indeed true that seeing a clear moon in exile is something to be desired. The quiet moonlight seen by those who have escaped from the world is something that people still bound up in it can only hope for. It is precisely because I am in exile now that I can see the moon that glows beyond the everyday floating world.
>
> Even if a person is wealthy, of high rank, and worldly, if he knows in his mind and heart that he has indeed committed crimes and misdeeds, then he will suffer. But the person who has been [falsely] accused of crimes and so feels no shame will never lose sight of the vast and lofty original substance of their minds and hearts.[65]

Such testaments suggesting that a wrongly victimized party free from guilt could continue to enjoy peace of mind were not unusual. They allude back to the opening passage of the *Analects* where Confucius asks, "Is it not the princely man who, when ignored, is not disturbed?" By "ignored," Confucius referred to the fact that contemporary rulers had not heeded his ideas about government and ethics. Yet Banzan's fate went well beyond Confucius': not only were his ideas ignored, he was being punished for them. By paraphrasing Confucius and seeing his own predicament in relation to that of the ancient sage, Banzan found solace

[65] Banzan, *Shūgi washo*, p. 376.

in noble sentiments affirming the ultimate importance of a clear conscience regardless of exile and confinement.

Following Banzan's death in 1691, the daimyō of Koga Province, Matsudaira Tadayuki, had his remains interred at the Keienji, a Sōtō Zen temple, next to the grave of his wife, Ichi. However, both were buried, as Banzan wished, according to Confucian rites. Banzan had impacted many in his turbulent, often controversial life, but in the end died in detention, excommunicated from his friends, his remaining family, and followers in the Kansai, as well as from his mission of working for the sake of his country.

The Genre: Political Economy (*keizaigaku*)

Before his final detention, Banzan's draft text circulated among his disciples and followers, going by various names. In his *Commentary and Questions on the Classic of Filial Piety* (*Kōkyō gaiden wakumon*), completed by 1690, Banzan mentioned having written *Responding to the Great Learning and Bringing Peace to the Realm below Heaven* (*Daigaku heitenka no wakumon*) for those intent on governing. By that point, the work had evidently been given a version of the title by which it would be known, for the most part, to history.[66] Initially, however, it was not commonly referred to as *Responding to the Great Learning*. Surviving manuscript copies and diary accounts reveal that it was, early on, something of a confidential if not secret writing known variously as *Discussions of Political Economy* (*Keizai ben*), *Gleanings from Political Economy* (*Keizai jūi*), *New Discussions of Government and Political Economy* (*Shinsei keizai ben*), and *Essentials of Politics and Viable Administrative Measures* (*Keizai katsuhō yōroku*). In each case, the alternative titles announced, via the word *keizai*, Banzan's central concern with politics, political economy, statecraft, and political philosophy.

In modern Japanese, *keizai* refers to economics and matters related to the economy. However, the components, *kei* and *zai/sai* first emerged in meaningful proximity in a fourth-century Chinese Daoist text, the *Baopuzi*, by the Eastern Jin dynasty scholar, Ge Hong (283–343), in speaking of "ordering the world and helping the common people" (C: *jing shi ji su*; J: *keise saizoku*). Later, in the Sui dynasty (581–619), the Confucian scholar Wang Tong (584–618), in *Discussions of Master*

[66] Kumazawa Banzan, *Kōkyō gaiden wakumon*, *Banzan zenshū*, vol. 3, p. 76.

Wenzhong (*Wenzhongzi*), brought the components together, noting that in rites and music there is "a way of ordering and helping" (*jingji zhi dao*; *keizai no michi*) that, more fully stated, consists in "ordering the world and helping people" (*jing shi ji min*; *keise saimin*). In the Song dynasty (960–1279), the Confucian scholar Wang Anshi (1021–1086) and a growing number of other scholar-statesmen likewise spoke of *jingji*, or *keizai* in Japanese, as an abbreviated reference to "ordering the world and helping people," that is, vis-à-vis matters related to politics, government, and socio-economic administration.[67]

Centuries later, with the ongoing introduction of Song Confucian literature, Tokugawa writings on statecraft and political economy multiplied. Prominent examples from the early eighteenth century include Ogyū Sorai's *Political Discussions* (*Seidan*) and his *Plan for an Age of Great Peace* (*Taiheisaku*), reportedly written at the request of the eighth Tokugawa shogun, Yoshimune (1684–1751). Sorai advocated some radical proposals like the ones Banzan had earlier advanced, including returning samurai to the countryside. However, unlike Banzan, who proposed his ideas without invitation, Sorai only wrote at the request of the shogun, Yoshimune. One of Sorai's followers, Dazai Shundai (1680–1747), also authored a noteworthy work in the *keizai* genre, *Writings on Political Economy* (*Keizai roku*, 1729).[68] In Shundai's case, however, he did so without shogunal invite, assuming the more headstrong strategy of Banzan.

Decades before Sorai and Shundai, Banzan had pioneered the genre in the late seventeenth century with *Responding to the Great Learning*. The early aliases for the latter make its East Asian genre clear, but the contents even more so. In the work, Banzan introduces accounts of political legitimacy as well as administrative policies at the shogunal and domain levels that could, in his view, alleviate the socio-economic hardships facing the population, and secure the defense of the realm. Banzan also outlines other policy proposals that would stimulate production of wealth and prosperity as well as educate the population at large. Insofar as Banzan's *Responding to the Great Learning* pertains to the interplay of political

[67] Morohashi Tetsuji, "Keizai," *Dai Kan Wa jiten*, p. 9211.

[68] For a translation of Sorai's *Seidan*, see Lidin, *Ogyū Sorai's Discourse on Government (Seidan)*. Lidin lists Banzan as the first of the five great authors of works in the *keizaigaku* genre in Tokugawa Japan. For a study of Shundai's text, see Tetsuo Najita, "Political Economism in the Thought of Dazai Shundai (1680–1747)," *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 31, no. 4 (1972), pp. 821–839.

thought, political administration, and the socio-economic well-being of the governed, it stands as the major pioneering work in the development of the *keizaigaku* genre in early-modern Japan.

Sorai, an important contributor to the genre, knew of his predecessor, Banzan, and expressed respect and admiration for him as a man of learning and talent. Shundai also acknowledged reading Banzan's *Responding to the Great Learning* as a youth. In his *Writings on Political Economy*, Shundai quoted Banzan's discussions of the growing problem of samurai debt and its magnitude in his own day, reportedly greater than all the gold and silver in Japan combined.[69] Other eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Tokugawa thinkers also recognized Banzan as one of the great political writers of the age. In Meiji Japan, as modern scholars began tracing the beginnings of the study of political economy, Kumazawa Banzan's name almost invariably was at the top of the list.[70]

In *Responding to the Great Learning*, Banzan warned rulers against the consequences of misrule and reminded ministers of their responsibility to remonstrate with their rulers when the latter erred. The ideal Banzan upheld was compassionate government, sometimes referred to as "benevolent government" or "humane government." Although he did not define it as such in *Responding to the Great Learning*, Banzan apparently meant by compassionate government a concern for the economic

[69] Other Tokugawa intellectuals who went on record praising Banzan included the eighteenth-century physician-scholar Nagatomi Dokushōan (1732–1766) who declared Banzan one of the four great samurai of his age. Another follower of Sorai, Hattori Nankaku (1683–1759), stated, "I read Kumazawa Ryōkai's discussions of political economy (*keizaisetsu*) … [and his analyses] were nothing like the empty talk of other scholars." Also, a student of Shundai, Yuasa Jōzan (1708–1781), and late-Tokugawa pro-imperial activist-scholars such as Fujita Yūkoku (1806–1855) and Yokoi Shōnan (1809–1869), expressed respect for Banzan. As Inoue Tetsujirō notes, despite his issues with the shogunate, Banzan was well regarded by many Tokugawa thinkers. Inoue, *Nihon Yōmei gakuha no tetsugaku*, pp. 201–203.

[70] Soeda Juichi, "Conditions of Study of Political Economy in Japan," *Kokka gakkai zasshi*, vol. 6, no. 79 (1893). Soeda viewed Banzan as a physiocrat. Also, Kawakami Hajime (1879–1946), "Essay on the Theory of Political Economy in the Tokugawa Period," *Kokka gakkai zasshi*, vol. 17, no. 191 (1903), listed Banzan as the first in a succession of thinkers including the likes of Ogyū Sorai, Satō Nobuhiro (1769–1860), and others. In the early twentieth century, the Nihon bunko series included a volume on Banzan, featuring a modern printing of his *Daigaku wakumon*. The first volume of *Kinsei shakai keizai gakusetsu taikei* (*Compendium of Early Modern Learned Discussions of Society and Economics*) is the *Collected Works of Kumazawa Banzan* (*Kumazawa Banzan shū*, 1935), edited by Nomura Kanetarō, and it presents Banzan's *Daigaku wakumon* as its opening text. See Honjo Eijirō, "Development of the Study on the History of Japanese Economic Thought," *Kyoto University Economic Review*, vol. 29, no. 2 (1959), pp. 1–2.

and overall well-being of the people and the realm. It is tempting to add that, for Banzan, compassionate government culminated, in a philosophical and practical way, with the ruler identifying with all aspects of existence and forming one body with them. After all, Wang Yangming, in his *Inquiry on the Great Learning*, suggested such an understanding of compassion and Banzan surely knew of it. But Banzan does not endorse this quasi-mystical, ethico-metaphysical understanding of compassion in *Responding to the Great Learning*. Instead, he associates compassionate government with, in part, initiatives meant to expand wealth and economic prosperity, as well as advice on how best to prevent human suffering from floods, famine, droughts, and other disasters including possible invasions by northern barbarians.

Banzan's concern for the realm extended to maintaining the vitality of its mountain forests, rivers, and streams, which he called the very foundations of the state. Banzan repeatedly criticized the wastefulness of the alternate attendance system requiring vassals of the shogun to maintain residences in Edo and reside there half of every year or every other year. In advocating what amounted to socio-economic engineering, Banzan set forth revolutionary policies that would have entailed a wholesale restructuring of the realm. Rather than resort to mere philosophical abstractions, Banzan's grasp of compassionate government was defined concretely and specifically, in terms of the times, places, and pressing political circumstances of his day.

Banzan also called on the shogunate to do away with Christianity, the internal foreign threat, by restoring Buddhism and Shintō as spiritual teachings capable of filling the needs of the population with integrity and honor. Banzan proposed that secular schools be established for the essentially Confucian education of the samurai elite and the rest of the population, at times sounding as if he envisioned all being enrolled and educated together for the sake of realizing an enlightened realm, peaceful and well governed. Throughout his text, Banzan additionally emphasized, again along ancient Confucian lines, elevating men of talent and abilities in governing rather than privileging a hereditary elite with positions of power they were often unfit to fill. In effect, Banzan criticized the hereditary order generally, suggesting instead that real ability be the determining factor in one's fate. Simply put, in advocating compassionate government, Banzan was calling for nothing less than a reorganization of the realm, one so radical in scale that his apparent hope that the

shogunate would heed his words and act on his proposals seems, despite his presumed sincerity, profoundly naive.

Instead, the shogunate had Banzan interned in Koga Castle. Its verdict ended up being more than a passing fancy. A century later, in 1788, an Osaka publishing house, perhaps thinking that Banzan's writings were no longer problematic, published, for the first time in the Tokugawa period, *Responding to the Great Learning*. However, the following year – which happened to be the first of the Kansei period during which a high shogunal official, Matsudaira Sadanobu, led a purge of heterodox forms of learning – the shogunate banned sale and circulation of Banzan's text.[71] Banzan's book thus ended up being one of the most consistently silenced if not censored publications of the early-modern period.

Only as the old regime moved toward crisis and then collapse were two later Tokugawa editions of *Responding to the Great Learning* published, in 1848 and then in 1863, but even those were kept quiet for fear of another round of censorship. The last Tokugawa edition went by an alias, *New Discussions of Government and Political Economy* (*Shinsei keizai ben*), but included on the opening page of its first volume, the title, *A Discussion of Political Economy, also known as Responding to the Great Learning: Another Volume on Governing the Realm and Bringing Peace to All below Heaven*.[72] Then as before, the opening chapters of Banzan's text must have appeared to many as downright revolutionary. His calls throughout the work for a systematic overhaul of the polity were surely even more so.

Although many of the details of Banzan's proposals were rather dated by that point, on other counts his line of thought seemed more pertinent than ever and surely more than Banzan himself might have imagined. Indeed, some of Banzan's proposals remained relevant until well after the Meiji Restoration when some were approximated if not enacted, in one way or another, by the innovative imperial regime. Banzan's call for returning samurai to the countryside was a first step in their demotion

[71] Itō, "Tōju Banzan no gakumon to shisō," *Nakae Tōju Kumazawa Banzan*, p. 43. Several months elapsed between the first publication of the text and the shogunate's decision to ban it. As a result, many copies of this edition came to circulate. The Nihon shisō taikei version of *Daigaku wakumon* is based on this edition. Waseda University holds a copy dated 1788. The title listed on the table of contents is *Responding to the Great Learning: Another Volume on Governing the Realm and Bringing Peace to All below Heaven* (*Daigaku wakumon: chikoku heitenka bekkan*).

[72] "Kaidai," *Banzan zenshū*, vol. 3, pp. 12–13.

as a privileged, hereditary estate, carried forward in the Meiji with their eventual abolition as a class followed by an imperial call for all peoples of the nation to unite as one, regardless of matters of birth. Banzan's critiques of Buddhism also foreshadowed, along unfortunate lines, the Meiji attack on Buddhism in the name of elevating Shintō as a state religion. Also, Banzan's calls for the establishment of schools throughout the realm as a means of uplifting all areas with an infusion of education and cultural enlightenment from an elite group of teachers trained in the imperial capital was a harbinger of the Meiji move to found a national school system led by teachers trained at imperial universities, broadcasting a new form of government, one sanctioning both enlightenment and political control through education.

Parallels in Confucian Existentialism: Banzan and Wang Yangming

Textbook accounts of Banzan typically identify him as an advocate of Wang Yangming teachings in early-modern Japan. The preceding biographical sketch acknowledges some basis for this: Banzan studied, albeit briefly, with Nakae Tōju, the so-called founding figure in the Japanese Wang Yangming movement. Closer examination of Tōju's thought and that of Banzan makes it clear that while Tōju and Banzan did, to an extent, admire Wang, neither was as exclusively devoted to Wang's thinking as facile labels might suggest. Nevertheless, a look at Wang's life and thought is worthwhile because, doctrinaire allegiance aside, Banzan's life did echo Wang's as much as, possibly more than, did his philosophical ideas.

More than the merely coincidental, Banzan and Wang shared ground in what might be called the Confucian existential quest, or the search for and discovery of the meaning of existence in knowing their obligations as Confucians and acting upon them with commitment and vigor, defining for their lives greater meaning and authenticity thereby. Existentialism, of course, refers to a branch of philosophical inquiry and practice concerned with the meaning of existence, if there is any, and, if there is, how to realize it with authenticity. Banzan's answer, and before him, Wang's, was that human existence has meaning through active engagement of the inborn ethical goodness of human nature with the myriad things of the world. Rather than withdraw from reality, Banzan and Wang threw themselves into existence via direct ethical action as

Confucian scholar-administrators, ever ready to act on behalf of what they thought right, and to remonstrate for the same. As a result, both men endured repeated punishment in exile. While substantial portions of their lives were spent isolated from the socio-political arena, their periodic isolation was due not to a flight from engaged authenticity so much as a consequence of the extent to which they invested their existence in practical, righteous engagement with the flawed reality they confronted. Banzan and Wang both affirmed through action that outspoken integrity and remonstration with the unethical were integral to their authentic being as Confucian scholars, and as a result, each man paid a real and substantial price.

Wang was born in 1472 in Zhejiang Province in east central China to a family of scholar-officials. Wang's father served the Ming dynasty as an official in the Ministry of Rites before being exiled after offending a powerful eunuch. An exceptional student, Wang nevertheless earned the highest degree in the Ming civil service examination system in 1499, proving his relative mastery of Zhu Xi's thought which, during the Yuan dynasty, had been designated as the official subject matter for testing. As a Ming official, Wang served in various capacities until being banished in 1506, for, as with his father, offending a eunuch. In exile in remote southwestern China, Wang developed, contrary to Zhu Xi and others, his own understandings of Confucianism.

Wang emphasized the primary role of the mind and heart in action. For Wang, "the investigation of things" meant not, as with Zhu Xi, investigating external things one by one, but rather investigating things by grasping their principles as they constituted the human mind itself. In effect, for Wang, investigating things meant investigating the mind. Similarly, for Wang, "the extension of knowledge" was achieved not as Zhu Xi claimed by incremental advances in knowledge of external things or by extended book learning and textual study, but instead by using the intuitive ethical knowledge each person has at birth. Wang stressed that active engagement with the world need not wait on years of book study. Instead, he insisted that with action, our intuitive ethical knowledge emerges fully evident, and through that intuitive knowledge, action is rightly directed. Existential authenticity, then, was realized via human nature in action.

Exercise of intuitive ethical knowledge, according to Wang, culminates in a person's realization of oneness with the myriad things of the world, a realization that enables the enlightened agent to engage the world with

care and compassion. Ultimately, this engaged realization culminates, for Wang, in the achievement of sagehood. Zhu Xi spoke of sagehood but conceived its attainment as something real but at the same time rare, virtually beyond the reach of the common lot. With Wang, however, everyman has the potential for sagehood in the here and now. Emphasizing this, Wang reportedly quipped that the streets were full of sages.

Wang's exile ended in 1510. It was followed by a period of success in administrative, military, and philosophical ventures. Between 1514 and 1516, Wang served as an official in Nanjing and attained some renown as a thinker at odds with Zhu Xi. One of their more important differences concerned the *Great Learning*. Rather than follow Zhu Xi, who added a substantial section to the ancient text written by one of his Song dynasty predecessors, Cheng Yi, explaining "the investigation of things," Wang insisted on respecting the "ancient version" which, of course, never included Cheng Yi's remarks or Zhu Xi's commentary. Wang's thinking about the *Great Learning* later culminated, toward the end of his life, in one of his most representative philosophical expressions, *Inquiry on the Great Learning* (C: *Daxue wen*; J: *Daigaku mon*). While the title of Wang's text is similar to that of Banzan's *Daigaku wakumon*, the two works differ profoundly in content. Despite Wang's claim to be following the ancient text, he interprets the *Great Learning* in terms of his earlier-mentioned notion of realizing oneness with all things. Banzan's *Responding to the Great Learning* is mostly concerned with practical political proposals for reorganizing the polity of Tokugawa Japan, although there are several significant allusions to the *Great Learning* in his work as well. However, the politically confrontational portions of the *Great Learning* that Banzan emphasized were not the ones that Wang had focused on first and foremost.

Between 1515 and 1516, Wang emerged as a man of action, suppressing several rebellions in Jiangxi and Fujian Provinces. In doing so, he presided over the recruitment of troops, a reorganization of the local military, and implementation of a family registration system. In 1519, Wang gained new fame as a military commander by successfully subduing a rebellion led by an imperial prince, Prince Ning. At the end of the year, Wang was rewarded with appointment as the new governor of Jiangxi Province. Yet Wang's victory brought jealous reactions from the inner circle of the imperial court. Rumors surfaced that Wang succeeded because he had been conspiring with Prince Ning in the first place to overthrow the Ming dynasty and then turned on Prince Ning in support

of the Ming. Wang defended himself, but still ended up a persona non grata at the Ming court.[73]

Between 1521 and 1527, Wang lived in seclusion while hostile attacks and ridicule continued. Worst of all, his teachings were prohibited. Despite his disfavor at court, when rebellions broke out in Jiangxi in 1528, Wang was called on to quash them. Thereafter, he continued his philosophical work, authoring, between 1527 and 1528, his *Inquiry on the Great Learning*. Wang died the following year, 1529, while returning from a military expedition suppressing rebels in Jiangxi. Wang's enemies at the court did not cease their attacks even after his death. Instead, they charged that prior to his passing, Wang had left his post without permission. As a result, Wang's hereditary privileges were revoked and his ideas condemned as "strange doctrines." Nearly forty years later, however, Wang's titles were posthumously restored. By imperial decree, sacrifices were also to be offered to Wang at Confucian temples.[74]

Wang's life-course was not unlike Banzan's. Both were men of action who, in part due to their bold engagement with the world, found themselves in trouble repeatedly with the ruling elite. Rumors, jealous slander, and philosophical resentment seem to have followed them. Their biographical details vary significantly, but both lived under the surveillance of the authorities who seemingly at every turn were ready to clamp down on their power and influence. Also, in terms of their key texts, both men authored studies of the *Great Learning*, yet in neither case were those studies strict commentaries on the text itself so much as expositions of philosophical visions grounded in their unique forms of practical experience and distinctive understandings of intuitive ethical knowledge.

Wang and Banzan focused on the *Great Learning* arguably because Zhu Xi had made so much of the text. Rightly or wrongly, Zhu had taken the text, once a mere chapter in the *Book of Rituals*, and declared it a book in its own right, one that Confucius himself had transmitted. Zhu even declared the *Great Learning* the first and most primary book in the Confucian curriculum. Given Zhu's elevation of the *Great Learning*, Wang and Banzan were arguably compelled to address it, even if only in name, as a means of advancing their understandings of Confucianism.

[73] Wing-tsit Chan, trans., *Instructions for Practical Living* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), p. xxvii.
[74] Ibid., pp. xxviii–xxix.

The elevation of the *Great Learning*, from book chapter to premier Confucian text, thus continued with both Wang and Banzan. The *Great Learning* lent itself well to Banzan's ends because, unlike Wang, he sought to advance a primarily political message and the *Great Learning* offered a ready protocol for realization of his grand political proposals. In its opening chapter, the *Great Learning* explains that its philosophical program climaxes in nothing less than "governing the realm and bringing peace to all below heaven." The latter phrase became the subtitle to Banzan's text, specifically indicating the dimension of the *Great Learning* to which he was most directly responding.

Banzan and the *Great Learning*

The first English translation of Banzan's text, authored by Galen M. Fisher and published in 1938, rendered the title as "Certain Questions respecting *Great Learning*."[75] Fisher was right in rendering *wakumon* literally as "certain questions," but in Banzan's work the questions opening each chapter are typically little more than formulaic prompts for his essay-answers. Because Banzan's text lacks an ongoing dynamic interplay of interlocutors and author-teacher, the result is neither dialogue nor dialectic so much as often pro forma questions followed by relatively polished, conclusive essays on the political responsibilities of rulers and their ministers, the socio-economic organization of the realm, taxation and currency, environmental concerns, administrative policies related to clergy and religious institutions, disaster prevention, foreign threats, and education as a way of uplifting and assisting in governing the populace.

Fisher recognized the discrepancy between title and actual content in a follow-up observation where he stated,

> In reality, however, it is an exposition on the views of a radical economist respecting the acute problems which confronted the Tokugawa shogunate during the latter part of the seventeenth century … It embodied the practical experience of a student of the Chinese classics who, because of his rugged non-conformity, had spent more than half his manhood in exile. Its criticism of the ruling powers was as daring as it was original and pithy. It is easy to understand why the work offended the Tokugawa authorities, and was long suppressed. In a score of passages Banzan rebukes the shogunate and the daimyō

[75] Fisher, "*Dai Gaku Wakumon*," p. 263.

> for their stupidity and self-indulgence. It was the defiant counsel of one who loved the truth and country more than personal liberty.[76]

Fisher thus acknowledged that Banzan's text was not really a commentary on or discussion of the *Great Learning* as such, but instead a series of confrontational policy proposals that were as offensive to the existing powers as they were honest, penetrating analyses of the problems confronting them.

There is much truth in Fisher's analyses. Yet he adds a subtitle – *A Discussion of Public Questions in the Light of the Great Learning* – that, while perhaps a good summary, bears little similarity to Banzan's own subtitle which so well clarifies his work's real textual ties to the *Great Learning*. Banzan's text most meaningfully pertains to the *Great Learning* insofar as it addresses the grand political project mentioned in that work's opening lines. There, a Confucian vision is presented regarding how a ruler might provide for "governing the realm and bringing peace and prosperity to all below heaven." Taking this vision as its subtitle, Banzan's work immodestly, perhaps, suggests that its central concern is nothing less than the socio-economic and political well-being of the entire realm below heaven.

The *Great Learning* claims that this grand vision can be achieved by a ruler through self-cultivation wherein the ruler's mind, thoughts, and will are made correct, his knowledge extended, and the myriad things of the world are exhaustively investigated. Via this protocol, a ruler can, supposedly, bring peace and good government to the entire world. The *Great Learning* thus relates:

> The ancients who wished to illuminate luminous virtue throughout all below heaven first ordered their states. Wishing to order their states, they first regulated their families. Wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivated their persons. Wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectified their minds and hearts. Wishing to rectify their minds and hearts, they first sought to make their thoughts sincere. Wishing to make their thoughts sincere, they first extended their knowledge.
>
> The extension of knowledge consists in the investigation of things. Once things are investigated, knowledge is extended. Once knowledge is extended, thoughts are made sincere. Once thoughts are made sincere, minds and hearts are rectified. Once minds and hearts

[76] Fisher's foreword in "*Dai Gaku Wakumon*," p. 263.

> are rectified, people can engage in self-cultivation. Once people can engage in self-cultivation, families will be regulated. Once families are regulated, states will be governed. Once states are governed, the realm below heaven will realize peace and prosperity. From the son of heaven down to the masses of people, all must consider self-cultivation the root of everything else. When the root is chaotic, what springs from it cannot be well ordered.[77]

The grand political project of the *Great Learning* thus moves from investigating things, to knowledge, the mind and heart, the self, the family, governing the state, and finally climaxes in the achievement of peace and prosperity for the entire realm below heaven.

In *Responding to the Great Learning*, Banzan says virtually nothing about the *Great Learning*'s teachings on self-cultivation, investigating things, extending knowledge, and so forth. However, he does not broach that content arguably for a good reason. *Responding to the Great Learning* emerged as the last of three works that Banzan, in his final decade, authored on the *Great Learning*. Banzan's previous two works were *Japanese Explanation of the Great Learning* (*Daigaku wakai*), completed in 1685, and *Brief Explanation of the Great Learning* (*Daigaku shōkai*) completed in 1686, and published in 1689.[78] In the latter, Banzan explains the *Great Learning*, clause by clause, in some cases word by word, focusing mostly on the text itself with rare references to contemporary circumstances.

With *Responding to the Great Learning*, which amounted to yet "another volume" on the *Great Learning*, Banzan sought to outline his thoughts about how the domains of Tokugawa Japan should be governed and how the entire realm below heaven might be brought to a state of peace and prosperity. In that sense, Banzan's work is "responding" to the *Great Learning*. However, Banzan's responses are not presented in terms

[77] *Daigaku*, Uno Tetsuto, ed. (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1999), pp. 34–38. Translation based on Wing-tsit Chan, trans., *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 86–87, with significant modifications.

[78] Banzan's *Daigaku wakai* and *Daigaku shōkai* appear in volume 3 of the *Banzan zenshū*, immediately before the *Daigaku wakumon* and after Banzan's *Kōkyō shōkai* (*Brief Account of the Classic of Filial Piety*) and *Kōkyō gaiden wakumon* (*Explanations of the Classic of Filial Piety*). Banzan's *Brief Explanation of the Middle Way* (*Chūyō shōkai*) is the last text presented in that volume. In a note at the end of his handwritten manuscript of the *Daigaku shōkai*, Banzan refers, incidentally, to his *wakumon* on the *Great Learning*, establishing that the text was his. This note is included in the *Daigaku shōkai* edition found in the *Banzan zenshū*, vol. 3, p. 217. See "Kaidai," *Banzan zenshū*, vol. 3, pp. 8–9. However, there is no surviving manuscript from Banzan's hand of the *Daigaku wakumon*.

of notions such as "illuminating luminous virtue," "self-cultivation," "making the ideas sincere," "correcting the mind," "investigating things," or "extending knowledge," but rather by reference to the fundamental Confucian political approach first advanced in the *Mencius*, that of "compassionate government." Banzan's central message is that compassionate government is a political imperative for the sake of saving the realm from internal socio-economic collapse and external conquest.

In one of his lengthier works, *Accumulating Righteousness, Japanese Writings*, Banzan clarified his overall understanding of the *Great Learning*. In response to the question of why the Confucian *Analects* focuses on compassion while the *Great Learning* emphasizes knowledge, Banzan analyzed the differences between the two works not in terms of right and wrong, but rather in terms of their time, place, and circumstances, noting that Confucius offered his instruction on compassion directly to those who would listen, making it his central message. By the time the *Great Learning* was composed, Confucius had passed away and it was unknown when another sage would appear. The *Great Learning* therefore emphasized knowledge and wisdom instead of compassion. Knowledge, in Banzan's view, is the spiritual luminosity of virtue while compassion is its foundation. Though he does not say as much, Banzan presumably understood knowledge to be the intuitive knowledge, or the inborn moral conscience and ethical sensibility of humanity that Wang Yangming and Nakae Tōju extolled as a faculty of the mind ready at birth for use in dealing with people and things of the world at large. The *Great Learning*, in supposedly emphasizing this form of knowledge, served to illuminate and clarify human ethics, providing through intuitive ethical knowledge the real foundation for self-reflection and self-scrutiny.

Modifying Zhu Xi's views, Banzan added that with the sage Confucius gone, people who engaged in learning took the *Great Learning* as "the gateway" for their entry into virtue, while the *Analects*' teachings on compassion served as "the inner chambers" of virtue.[79] If Banzan's analyses of the *Analects* and the *Great Learning* are applied to *Responding to the Great Learning*, then the latter text can be seen as his attempt to synthesize the teachings of the *Analects* and those of the *Great Learning* by way of the *Mencius* and its advocacy of compassionate government, thus bringing them to bear on the social, political, and economic problems challenging the Tokugawa realm.

[79] Kumazawa Banzan, *Shūgi washo*, p. 134.

Introduction

Zhu Xi on the Great Learning

Banzan's studies of the *Great Learning* followed the contents of the "old text," i.e., the text that appears as a chapter in the *Book of Rituals*. For a millennium, that was how the *Great Learning* was known, as one chapter in the *Book of Rituals*. The same was true with another chapter later known as a text unto itself as the *Middle Way* (*Zhongyong*). In his reinterpretations of Confucianism, Zhu Xi elevated the two chapters as books in their own right, and added prefaces, emendations, and detailed commentaries to each. Expanding on the thinking of an earlier Song dynasty Confucian scholar, Cheng Yi, Zhu Xi called the *Great Learning* the gateway to learning and the first of the Four Books. The *Middle Way*, in his new curriculum, was the last of the Four Books and its most metaphysical.

In a questionable move, Zhu included as a "supplement" to the main text – not as part of his commentary – a passage by Cheng Yi explaining the "investigation of things." Zhu justified this textual alteration of the *Great Learning* by claiming that a portion of the original text had been lost and needed replacement. In Zhu's mind, Cheng Yi's passage filled the gap nicely. Zhu also reinterpreted a crucial word in the opening of the *Great Learning* by suggesting that the phrase, "love the people" (*qin min*) be read as "renew the people" (*xin min*). That, he claimed, was the correct understanding of it.[80] Zhu's alterations of the *Great Learning* were subsequently criticized by many who charged that he was taking unwarranted liberties with if not rewriting portions of the classics. No doubt they were right.

Zhu Xi's understanding of the *Great Learning* was countered by Wang Yangming who did not accept his alterations. Though hardly the majority, a fair number of later Confucian thinkers, in China, Korea, and Japan, also challenged Zhu's revisions. Banzan joined them, presenting his commentaries as explanations of the old text rather than Zhu's emended text. Arguably, in following the old text, Banzan revealed his standing as a follower of Wang's views, at least regarding the *Great Learning*.

However, Banzan did not criticize Zhu for his emendations, he simply did not follow them. When pressed by his disciples about Zhu, Banzan was characteristically gracious, noting that Zhu had done what he did in response to the time, place, and circumstances in which he

[80] For a study of Zhu Xi's thinking on the *Great Learning*, see Daniel K. Gardner, *Chu Hsi and the Ta-hsueh: Neo-Confucian Reflection on the Confucian Canon* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 1986).

lived, attempting thereby to revive the truth of Confucianism against the mistaken foes of the day. While the latter went unidentified, Banzan most likely meant Buddhism. Like Zhu, Banzan had little use for contemporary Buddhism, and frequently took the opportunity to criticize its latter-day failings. That aside, Banzan's willingness to contextualize historically Zhu Xi's emendations of the *Great Learning* reveals his, Banzan's, own pragmatic relativism: without judging right or wrong, Banzan viewed Zhu as a man who did what he thought was necessary, in response to his historical predicament.

Banzan's decision to address the old text of the *Great Learning* need not be viewed as an indication that he was following Wang Yangming. After all, one of the supposed founding figures in Zhu Xi Confucian studies in the early seventeenth century, Fujiwara Seika, authored his own interpretation of the *Great Learning*, *Essentials of the Great Learning*, following the old text instead of the one that Zhu had groomed as his signature expression of Confucian learning.[81] When Hayashi Razan later wrote a summary of Zhu's views, *Writings on the Three Virtues* (*Santokushō*), he too followed the older version of the *Great Learning*. Nevertheless, both Seika and Razan have been cast as followers of Zhu Xi. Due to the controversial nature of Zhu's emendations of the *Great Learning*, it seems that utter fidelity to Zhu on that text was not taken necessarily as an absolute indication of one's philosophical lineage.

Despite textbook characterizations of Tokugawa thought in terms of doctrinaire schools, individual thinkers were less given to following rigid orthodoxies as spiritual slaves than to finding their own answers by drawing from various, seemingly disparate sources including Zhu Xi, and Wang Yangming, and others. Yet in focusing on the *Great Learning* as a work apart from the *Book of Rituals*, even Wang owed much to Zhu Xi and his earlier textual reorganization of the Confucian curriculum. Whether acknowledged or not, the post-Song plethora of East Asian writings on the *Great Learning* reflected Zhu's view, following his philosophical predecessor Cheng Yi, that the *Great Learning* was the first text students of Confucianism should master. Banzan likewise treated the *Great Learning* as a premier work, eminently worthy of serious comment and consideration.

[81] De Bary, Gluck, and Tiedemann, eds., *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, p. 44. Richard Bowring, "Fujiwara Seika and the *Great Learning*," *Monumenta Nipponica*, vol. 61, no. 4 (Winter 2006), pp. 437–457. A modern edition of Seika's text is in Ishida and Kanaya, eds., *Fujiwara Seika/Hayashi Razan*, pp. 41–78.

Introduction

Banzan's Brief Explanation of the Great Learning

Much as Zhu did in his commentaries on the *Great Learning*, Banzan wrote into his *Brief Explanation of the Great Learning* a substantial amount that arguably had little or no basis in the original text. A few examples will suffice. In explaining the *Great Learning*'s remark "the one who wishes to govern a state must first regulate their family," Banzan notes that the "family" referred to here is that of "the emperor." He adds that much the same applies to the various lords of the realm, but disparages the common people as ones who, even if they attain wealth and rank, will continue to behave poorly. Only if the ruling elite, and primarily the imperial family, establish good customs, might the remainder of the realm reap the benefits and be well governed. This is because, Banzan claims, the emperor and the lords of the realm are the teachers of the samurai and the common people.[82]

In his *Brief Explanation of the Great Learning*, Banzan's admiration for the Japanese imperial line and its potential role in the polity is evident. Compared to the disrespect later Japanese Confucians such as Ogyū Sorai showed the imperial throne, Banzan's outspoken esteem for it is noteworthy. Banzan's thinking on this count was surely a byproduct of his upbringing in and around Kyoto, as well as his continued contacts with the ancient imperial capital throughout his adult life. Added to that was his acquired admiration for the aristocratic cultural expressions of Kyoto, including Murasaki Shikibu's *Tale of Genji*, as well as court music and poetry.

Regarding the *Great Learning*'s remark, "things have their roots and branches," Banzan explains that "things" refer to everything in the world below heaven, and that the root or origin of heaven and earth is "the spiritual way of great emptiness" (*taikyo no Shintō*).[83] Here, Banzan's regard for Shintō, again a likely byproduct of his time in Kyoto and at the shrines there catering to imperial spiritual culture, enters his accounts of the *Great Learning*. In a summary explanation of "governing the realm and bringing peace to all below heaven," Banzan suggests that it consists in "following ranks and circumstances in loving people and thereby embracing the reality of their oneness [literally, 'one-body']."[84] In affirming a vision of becoming one with all things, Banzan shows sympathy with one of Wang Yangming's central teachings. Yet no mention is

[82] Kumazawa Banzan, *Daigaku shōkai*, *Banzan zenshū*, vol. 3, p. 187.
[83] Ibid., p. 185. [84] Ibid., p. 186.

made of Wang as Banzan's source. Banzan might have just as well cited the all-embracing vision of one of Zhu Xi's predecessors, Zhang Zai, author of the "Western Inscription" (*Ximing*), because after all, Banzan wrote a commentary on the same work entitled *A Japanese Commentary on the Western Inscription*. Zhang Zai opened his "Western Inscription" by declaring that heaven was his father, earth his mother, all people his brothers and sisters, and the stuff that fills all between heaven and earth, his body. In effect, Zhang Zai's was a more poetic expression of the vision of oneness that Wang Yangming later affirmed. Significantly enough, Zhu Xi included Zhang's way of thinking within his own formulation of Confucianism, making the vision of oneness part of his perspective long before Wang did much the same in the Ming.

Banzan's all-embracing vision was in fact relatively selective. *Responding to the Great Learning* makes it clear that he was not interested in forming one body with the so-called northern barbarians whose imminent invasion he warned against. Banzan's sense of oneness with things was most real vis-à-vis the natural beauties of Japan's mountains and rivers, its imperial culture and its Shintō religiosity, yet considerably less so with foreign threats, Buddhist clergy, and Christianity. At the same time, Banzan did, on occasion, note that when viewed from the grandest metaphysical and ethical perspective, insofar as heaven and earth are the father and mother and give birth to humanity, the people of China (*Chūgoku*), Japan (*Nihon*), the Ainu (Ebisu), and the northern barbarians are all brothers. Yet such all-embracing social statements are not characteristic of Banzan's *Responding to the Great Learning*, while his discussions of the threat posed by northern barbarians are far more so.

Later, in commenting on a line from the *Book of Poetry* quoted in the *Great Learning*, "the realm of one thousand miles is where the people rest," Banzan gives a brief account of the ancient Japanese imperial realm, one wherein harmony and centrality naturally prevailed and military and civil virtues, rites and music infused the customs of the people. During this idyllic age, samurai wanted to serve their ruler, farmers wanted to till his fields, and artisans and merchants wanted to work in his towns. Therein the minds and hearts of the people rested. Such, Banzan suggested, was the state of things in Japanese antiquity.[85] In this passage, Banzan sounds like the legendary Daoist philosopher Laozi, describing

[85] Ibid., p. 196.

simple village life in a time when people were so at one with the way that they never wanted to leave their homes. Not surprisingly, Banzan's critics claimed that some of his ideas were from ancient Daoist texts. And rightly so: Banzan's accounts of the *Great Learning* drew on diverse sources, including some that had no necessary relation to the *Great Learning* other than Banzan's contextualization of them therein.

Banzan's Japanese Explanation of the Great Learning

As a short work reinterpreting the *Great Learning*'s ethico-epistemological protocol for right government, Banzan's *Japanese Explanation of the Great Learning* anticipates *Responding to the Great Learning*. In its opening pages, Banzan explains that regulating families, governing the state, and bringing peace to all below heaven involve following the circumstances of things and "loving people and embracing the reality of our oneness [literally, 'one-body'] with them."[86] By focusing on the old text of the *Great Learning* and "loving the people" rather than Zhu's reading of it as "renewing the people," Banzan's compassionate leanings – which inform the translation of *jinsei* (sometimes rendered as "benevolent government" or "humane government") here as "compassionate government" – emerge as a core emotive theme in his thinking about the *Great Learning*. Banzan's intent was not, presumably, to distinguish himself as a doctrinaire associate of this or that form of Confucianism, but instead simply as a scholar of the way, interpreting Confucian philosophy and practice according to the needs of his time, place, and circumstances.

Though Buddhism is not mentioned in the *Great Learning*, Banzan takes the opportunity to criticize it in his *Japanese Explanation*. First, however, he praises Confucius as a sage who taught the way of kings and was concerned for those below him. On the other hand, Buddhist teachings discarded emperors and called on the faithful to abandon their families. In the end, those teachings would mean the ruin of a state. Banzan adds that Buddhism entered China and brought harm to it. After it entered Japan, the Japanese way of the gods (literally, Shintō) was damaged and the country nearly brought to ruin. Banzan charges that Buddhism had brought no benefits to the realm below heaven, not even one, even though countless injuries resulted from it.[87] Banzan expands the

[86] Kumazawa Banzan, *Daigaku wakai*, *Banzan zenshū*, vol. 3, pp. 219–220.
[87] Ibid., p. 222.

political critique of Buddhism initiated in his *Japanese Explanation of the Great Learning* in *Responding to the Great Learning*.

Commenting on "the investigation of things," Banzan mentions neither Cheng Yi nor Zhu Xi, but clearly differs with their externally oriented epistemological approach by instead explaining it along more internally focused lines as "overcoming one's own selfish tendencies." Moreover, Banzan views the "extension of knowledge" not as a matter of understanding the principles of external things in the world, but rather in behavorial terms as "returning to ritual propriety." In offering these accounts, Banzan, as he acknowledged, was reinterpreting key notions in the *Great Learning* by reference to Confucius' teachings to his most promising disciple, Yanzi, on "compassion" (*jin*). In that context, Banzan also praised modesty as a virtue of heaven, enabling it to give life, and of earth, enabling it to nourish life. In the way of the gods (Shintō), fullness is cursed but modesty and yielding is blessed, and likewise in the way of humanity, pride is despised and modesty, adored.[88] On these counts, Banzan had moved some distance beyond the interpretations of Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming.

In Banzan's *Complete Works*, compiled well after his passing by later followers intent on preserving his writings, *Responding to the Great Learning* appears after Banzan's other two works, *Brief Explanation of the Great Learning* and *Japanese Explanation of the Great Learning*. The three texts, uneven in style and content, do not seem to have been meant as a trilogy, but nevertheless ended up as a set of sorts reflecting Banzan's ongoing concern with that important Confucian text. Chronological accounts of Banzan's life suggest that his *Japanese Explanation of the Great Learning* was written first, in 1685, followed by, in 1686, his *Brief Explanation of the Great Learning*, and then finally his *Responding to the Great Learning*. No doubt, his *Japanese Explanation* is the least refined, more a draft than a polished work. On the other hand, his *Brief Explanation* is a more thoughtful commentary, interpreting and explaining the text, line by line. With *Responding to the Great Learning*, however, Banzan is not so much systematically addressing the doctrines and passages of the *Great Learning* as launching his own exposition of the text's overall political mission, governing the realm and bringing peace and prosperity to all below heaven, with a keen awareness of his historical time and its predicament, his geopolitical place and its challenges, and his circumstances

[88] Ibid., p. 227.

of status and birth, and the crossroads they presented him. In *Responding to the Great Learning*, Banzan does allude to portions of the *Great Learning*, but without calling attention to the extent to which his comments might be viewed as expositions of the text, preferring instead to present his allusions to the *Great Learning* as expressions of his own thinking as grounded in that text.

Many of the topics addressed in *Responding to the Great Learning* are also addressed, in varying degrees, in Banzan's *Accumulating Righteousness, Japanese Writings* and his *Accumulating Righteousness, Further Writings*. Quite possibly, Banzan compiled *Responding to the Great Learning* by bringing together essays he had authored over the years, the remainder of which later went into the two larger anthologies. However it was completed, Banzan gave his final work a name reflecting its thematic relationship to governing, thus tying it to the *Great Learning* and linking it inevitably to his two earlier writings on the same text, as well as to a host of writings by Japanese, Chinese, and Korean scholars on that brief but seminal work defining a protocol for governing the realm and bringing peace to all below heaven.

Banzan's Accumulating Righteousness *and the* Great Learning

In *Accumulating Righteousness, Japanese Writings*, Banzan discusses the *Great Learning* often. One essay opens with a simple question, "What are the essentials of governing the realm and bringing peace and prosperity to all below heaven?" Banzan's response is to the point: "For the sake of the realm and all below heaven, the essential thing is employing men of talent and ability in government."[89] Banzan sees this as crucial because men of talent will understand what is necessary and beneficial for the people of the realm in order that peace and prosperity might be realized for all. One of the most repeated teachings of *Responding to the Great Learning* concerns the importance of finding men with talent, that is, men with a propensity for governing well who can contribute to the realization of compassionate government.

In a follow-up essay, Banzan discusses the three most important things for a ruler who wishes to govern a state. This time drawing on the *Analects* (12/7), Banzan notes that food, an army, and the trust of the governed are the three necessities for governing. In the *Analects*, however, Confucius said that an army would be the the least essential, followed

[89] Kumazawa Banzan, *Shūgi washo*, p. 228.

by food. His reasoning was that without the trust of the people, a government would not be able to stand. In Banzan's response, the absolute necessity is food, because without food a military cannot be sustained and, more importantly, a people cannot be expected to refrain from all manner of behavior subverting the realm. Next in importance is the military because without it, Banzan reasons, chaos will ensue. Finally, with food provided and military order realized, the trust of the people will follow.[90]

Banzan's inversion of Confucius' ranking is striking. Banzan's assessment of the relative importance of these three most likely reflected his work in Okayama following the devastating flooding that reduced many to poverty and starvation. From his work in disaster relief, Banzan knew first-hand the importance of having sufficient food for civil behavior. It was also something he likely had gathered from the *Mencius* (3A/3) and its exposition of "compassionate government" (C: *renzheng*; J: *jinsei*). There, Mencius explained "the way of the people" is such that they will have a "reliable mind and heart" if they have a "reliable livelihood." Yet if people have no reliable livelihood, or at least food to eat, there is nothing that they will not do. Therefore, if one expects people to be moral, they must be able to provide for themselves. Mencius proceeded to explain how land could be distributed along egalitarian lines as a first step toward realization of compassionate government. In *Responding to the Great Learning*, Banzan's main concern is not with implementing the well-field system[91] so much as with economic policies that would maximize the material well-being and sustenance of everyone in the realm. In this regard, his understanding of compassionate government draws, with modifications, on the *Mencius* and, most especially, the Mencian imperative of ensuring a sufficient livelihood for all.

Compassionate government for Banzan, then, was more than platitudes about self-cultivation and ethical instruction: it involved practical matters like building retention ponds to prevent destructive flooding; adjusting taxation to provide relief for the peasantry; reconfiguring the currency so as to maximize the value of rice and prevent waste of edible crops; cultivating healthy forests, mountains, and rivers; regulating Buddhist clergy to ensure their integrity; restoring Shintō religiosity; returning samurai to the countryside; limiting urban growth; eliminating Christianity; reducing the alternate attendance requirements for daimyō rendering

[90] Ibid., pp. 246–247. [91] See translation, Chapter 12, n. 1.

service to the shogunate; preparing for possible invasion by northern barbarians; and establishing an educational program uplifting the cultural literacy and civility of the population. As these topics are broached successively in *Responding to the Great Learning*, Banzan's text appears less like a commentary specifically on the *Great Learning* itself, and more fully like a response to the political challenge of the *Great Learning*: how to find a way to govern the realm and bring peace and prosperity to all below heaven.

Early Tokugawa Studies of the Great Learning

Banzan's three studies were part of a larger literature on the *Great Learning* that emerged in the early Tokugawa period. The plurality of interpretations offered reflected in turn the extent to which the rise of Confucian learning in the early seventeenth century resulted in a relative boom in individual philosophical statements authored by various thinkers personally engaging the new discourse and its primary texts. The plurality also indicated the multifaceted nature of the learning, and how claims to orthodoxy were contested by the diverse perspectives that emerged from various socio-economic corners of the realm.[92]

While Banzan's text sought to address political matters as they pertained to the entire country, often referring to it as "Japan" (*Nihon*), his analyses issued most particularly from his experiences in southwestern Japan, in Okayama domain, as a samurai-retainer of a daimyō somewhat distant from Edo, and then later, in and around Kyoto, as a controversial rōnin-scholar watched by the shogunate. Banzan's Confucian voice, then, was one from the hinterlands, relatively speaking, formerly in service to an outer daimyō. By extension, Banzan, then, was arguably what might be called a *tozama* scholar, one who ultimately had to recognize the relative power of Edo-based shogunal Confucians such as the Hayashi, and then later, Edo transplants, including Yamazaki Ansai, but who himself subscribed to views that differed significantly from theirs. Following his resignation from service to the Ikeda, Banzan's standing then as a rōnin scholar left him more vulnerable than ever. Nevertheless, he was determined, as an authentic Confucian responding to his existential predicament, to offer his advice on how governing should proceed if the country were to attain peace, prosperity, and security for all. In doing so,

[92] For a detailed study of the *Great Learning* in Japanese early-modern intellectual history, see Minamoto Ryōen. *Edo no Jugaku Daigaku juyō no rekishi* (Tokyo: Shibunkaku, 1988).

he seems to have disregarded the very factors that he otherwise emphasized – time, place, and circumstance – and landed himself in considerable trouble even as he affirmed, at another level, his very authenticity as a scholar concerned about the political welfare of the realm and the socio-economic well-being of the people therein.

Fujiwara Seika and the Great Learning

As noted earlier, one of the first Tokugawa studies of the *Great Learning* was *Essentials of the Great Learning* authored by a Kyoto scholar, Fujiwara Seika, in the early seventeenth century. Though typically cast as Zhu Xi Confucians, neither Seika nor his student Hayashi Razan were blind followers of Zhu and indeed both included many insights and interpretations that had no precedent in Zhu's writings. Seika, for example, drew on a Ming dynasty commentary by Lin Zhao'en (1517–1598), *Correct Meanings of the Great Learning* (*Daxue Zhengyi zuan*), a work noted for its syncretic approach to Confucian learning, often pairing the latter with Buddhist and Daoist notions. An autonomous thinker, Seika did not follow Zhu Xi's view that "loving the people" should be understood as "renewing the people." In veering from Zhu on this count, Seika endorsed the Wang Yangming view that the old text, that is, "loving the people," should be accepted, without Zhu Xi's emendations. Razan, it might be added, did the same in his *Writings on the Three Virtues*.[93] Although not purebred adherents of Zhu Xi learning, for the most part Seika and Razan would be grouped closer to Zhu, especially when their writings are compared with those of Banzan which, while hardly statements of utter fidelity to Wang Yangming, did recognize teachings – such as the extension of intuitive knowledge – that were often considered, however simplistically, as ones quintessentially Wang Yangming.

Hayashi Razan on the Great Learning

Razan also addressed the *Great Learning* in his brief work, *Writings on the Three Virtues* (*Santokushō*). Although Razan claimed Seika as his teacher and sought thereby to enhance his scholarly standing in the early Tokugawa via that association, the explanations of Razan and Seika varied considerably in style, content, and most especially, socio-political context. Nevertheless, Razan, like Seika, devoted substantial attention to the

[93] Hayashi Razan, *Santokushō*, in Ishida and Kanaya, eds. *Fujiwara Seika/Hayashi Razan*, p. 172.

Great Learning and, moreover, left several additional studies of it including his *Explanation of the Great Learning* (*Daigaku kai*), *Summary of the Great Learning* (*Daigaku ryaku shō*), and *Vernacular Explanation of the Great Learning* (*Daigaku waji kai*).[94]

Most interesting, however, was Razan's essay, "Variant Editions of the *Great Learning*" (*Daigaku ihon kō*). There he noted that the *Great Learning* had been a part of the *Book of Rituals* ever since the Han dynasty. However, it was centuries later in the Song that a variant edition appeared including corrections and alterations that Zhu had made in the text. From that point on, there was an "old text," based on the *Book of Rituals*, and another, Zhu's text, that stood apart from the *Book of Rituals*. Notably, Zhu's text came to be studied widely by those aspiring to service in the imperial bureaucracy. Later, with the Ming dynasty, scholars such as Wang Yangming, contrary to Zhu Xi and the Song scholars, returned to the old text, denying it needed revisions, alterations, or supplements, even while proceeding to interpret it in terms of their own thinking about "extending intuitive knowledge." From that point forward, Confucian scholars discussed the *Great Learning* over and again, in more and more detail, with some defending Zhu's views and others lining up behind Wang.[95]

Razan does not strongly defend Zhu's views. And, when Razan's other writings on the *Great Learning* – which follow the old text, but not Wang's interpretations – are considered, it seems that over time he developed questions about Zhu's alterations, even while remaining, for the most part, more an admirer of Zhu's positions than any others. Here again, it seems, that school lines as previously drawn in Tokugawa intellectual history have been overly simplistic and even misleading about the extent to which doctrinal fidelity ever prevailed. That aside, Razan does not mention factors of time, place, and circumstance, but clearly his study of variant editions develops a historically contextualized analysis of the texts, one that anticipates the kind of thinking more characteristic of Banzan.

Nakae Tōju on the Great Learning

Banzan's focus on the *Great Learning* perhaps grew from his brief study with Nakae Tōju, a pioneer in advocating Wang Yangming thought in

[94] See *Razan sensei bunshū*, vol. 2 (Kyoto: Heian kōkogakkai, 1918), pp. 203–204, 208, for postscripts to these writings.
[95] *Razan sensei bunshū*, vol. 2, pp. 306–307.

Tokugawa Japan. Tōju is best known, however, for his emphasis on filial piety as a sense of reverence and respect not only for one's parents and grandparents, but for heaven and earth as the father and mother of all humanity, and then, ultimately towards the primeval "great emptiness" (C: *taixu*; J: *taikyo*), the source and foundation of heaven and earth. Tōju's account of filial piety went even further, positing the existence of an "august supreme monarch" (C: *huang shang di*; J: *sumeragi jōtei*) ruling over great emptiness and all creation, and to whom ultimate filial reverence was owed.[96] Tōju developed these ideas in his major work *Discussions with an Old Man* wherein he recognized the *Great Learning*, along with the *Classic on Filial Piety* and the *Middle Way*, as books that any student of Confucianism should read.[97]

Like Banzan, Tōju wrote three texts explaining his views: *Thoughts on the Great Learning* (*Daigaku kō*), *Commentary on the Great Learning* (*Daigaku mōchu*), and *Explanation of the Great Learning* (*Daigaku kai*).[98] In these, Tōju discusses "luminous virtue" as what resides in the center of the mind and heart, but also as what penetrates the great emptiness of the cosmos and embraces heaven, earth, and the ten thousand things of reality. Following the old text rather than Zhu Xi's emended version, Tōju interpreted the phrase "loving the people" literally as affirming an intimacy with and love for people at large. The "extension of knowledge," he explained, was the process whereby our innate intuitive knowledge engages the world in our practical relations with things.

As in *Discussions with an Old Man*, Tōju's *Explanation of the Great Learning* affirms his egalitarian views, especially regarding humanity and the project of learning. At odds with the hereditary, hierarchical divisions defining Tokugawa society, Tōju declared that "regardless of distinctions in rank, respect, and esteem, there was not an iota of difference between people, from the emperor, various lords, and samurai down to the common lot of humanity."[99] Although described as a Wang Yangming scholar, Tōju's ideas on the great emptiness and the august supreme monarch can be traced more to the late-Ming dynasty thinker,

[96] Yamashita, "Nakae Tōju's Religious Thought," pp. 307–336.
[97] Nakae Tōju, *Okina mondō*, in Itō, ed., *Nakae Tōju Kumazawa Banzan*, pp. 167–168.
[98] For a more complete listing of the works written during the Tokugawa period on the *Great Learning*, see Zhang Wenchao, ed., *Jiang hu shi dai jing xue zhe zhuan lüe ji qi zhu zuo* (Taipei: Wan juan lou, 2014) where myriad such writings are listed. Those discussed here amount to a sampling of the more relevant ones.
[99] Nakae Tōju, *Daigaku kai*, quoted from Kimura Mitsunori and Ushio Haruo, *Nakae Tōju Kumazawa Banzan*, Nihon no shisōka, vol. 4 (Tokyo: Meitoku shuppansha, 1978), p. 123.

Wang Ji, a disciple who further developed Wang Yangming's teachings, rather than to Wang Yangming himself.

While some of Tōju's thinking is apparent in Banzan's *Brief Explanation of the Great Learning*, it is not cited prominently in *Responding to the Great Learning*. And, as has been noted earlier, though Banzan studied briefly with Tōju and early on counted him as his "teacher," in the end Banzan stressed that his thinking had developed along independent lines, in response to his time, place, and circumstances, and that that was as Tōju would have expected it to be. One crucial difference between the two was that Tōju passed in 1648, just four years after the collapse of the Ming dynasty and the beginning of the Manchu conquest of China. At the time, successful Manchu rule of China was hardly a foregone conclusion. Four decades later, toward the end of Banzan's life, Manchu power was well established, resulting in the relative credibility of a possible Manchu invasion of Japan, something that Tōju had never imagined but that Banzan was obsessed with unto death. This difference alone in their time, place, and circumstances resulted in a considerable variance in their philosophical concerns and practical engagement with the polity.

Along other lines, Banzan criticized students of Tōju who did little more than recite their teacher's sayings and criticize others for not doing so. Rejecting that doctrinaire approach, Banzan declared that he had not sought to found a school and moreover "had not even a single disciple."[100] By this, Banzan conveyed his modesty as well as his belief that learning was, in the end, not a matter of repeating verbatim what had been said in the past, but adapting the truth of ancient wisdom and knowledge to ever-evolving contemporary circumstances.

Itō Jinsai on the Great Learning

The most provocative writing on the *Great Learning*, one that questioned not just one emendation or the other, but rather the wholesale integrity of the text itself, appeared in 1685, one year before Banzan completed his *Brief Explanation of the Great Learning* and *Responding to the Great Learning*. Itō Jinsai's *Established Text of the Great Learning* (*Daigaku teihon*) challenged virtually all previous literature on the *Great Learning* by arguing that, whether considered as a chapter in the *Book of Rituals* or as the first of the Four Books as defined by Zhu Xi, the *Great Learning*

[100] Banzan, *Shūgi washo*, ch. 2, pp. 38–39.

was not a text Confucius had transmitted and was not, in effect, a legitimate expression of Confucian discourse.

In formulating his argument, Jinsai designated the two most ancient texts of Confucianism, the *Analects* of Confucius and the *Mencius*, as his standards for judgments regarding orthodoxy. Jinsai claimed that the *Analects* was the most perfect writing in the entire world below heaven, and even the greatest work ever in the entire universe. The *Mencius*, in his view, occupied a subordinate position as a commentary on the *Analects*. Jinsai then noted that nowhere in either the *Analects* or the *Mencius* did the sequential formula presented in the opening paragraphs of the *Great Learning* appear. In those paragraphs, the *Great Learning* explains that those wishing to make evident luminous virtue and thereby govern the realm and bring peace and prosperity to all below heaven, that is, those intent on ruling, must first cultivate themselves by making their minds correct and their thoughts sincere, and should achieve that by extending knowledge and investigating things.[101] Such a formulaic protocol, Jinsai insisted, was foreign to the *Analects* and the *Mencius*. Its absence from the latter two texts meant, in Jinsai's view, that the *Great Learning* was not part of the Confucian lineage of learning.

Most importantly perhaps, Jinsai related that while the words "luminous virtue" appear in the ancient classics, neither Confucius nor Mencius ever spoke of them. The ancient classics wherein those words appear suggest that they are attributes of the sage-rulers, not ones that any person might hope to embody or exhibit. Conversely, Confucius and Mencius taught compassion (C: *ren*; J: *jin*) as a moral practice that all people should seek to embody, but in the *Great Learning*, it is exclusively associated with rulers. In Jinsai's view, the author of the *Great Learning* was simply using words as he wished without necessary regard for the teachings of Confucius and Mencius.

On another count, Jinsai notes that the *Great Learning* introduces the notion of "a great way [C: *da dao*; J: *daidō*] for growing wealth and prosperity." Confucius, however, never mentioned this. In the *Analects* (16/1), Confucius did acknowledge that if resources were divided

[101] John A. Tucker, "Skepticism and the Neo-Confucian Canon: Itō Jinsai's Philosophical Critique of the *Great Learning*," *Dao A Journal of Comparative Philosophy*, vol. 12, no. 1 (March 2013), pp. 11–39. Itō Jinsai, "The *Great Learning* is not a Confucian Text," *Gomō jigi*, translated in John A. Tucker, *Itō Jinsai's Gomō jigi and the Philosophical Definition of Early Modern Japan* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), pp. 233–244. A digital copy of the 1685 woodblock edition of Jinsai's text is online on the Kokubungaku kenkyū shiryōkan site at https://kotenseki.nijl.ac.jp/biblio/100160961/viewer/30?ln=en.

equally, there would be no poverty, and if society were ordered harmoniously, there would be no scarcity. That, Jinsai insists, was Confucius' teaching, but he said nothing about a "great way." Here, Jinsai's remarks are especially relevant to Banzan's text because *Responding to the Great Learning* refers to "the great way" a number of times suggesting a grand socio-economic program whereby the realm would be enriched, and all would share in prosperity. While an important notion in Banzan's text, Jinsai asserts that it has no place in Confucian discourse.

Finally, Jinsai critiques the *Great Learning* claim that there is profit (C: *li*; J: *ri*) in righteousness. Jinsai condemns this view as fundamentally at odds with the words and ideas of Confucius and Mencius. Both declared that their only concerns were with moral teachings and ethical behavior, and explicitly denied any interest in profit. In endorsing the profit mentality even by tying it to moral practice, the *Great Learning*, in Jinsai's view, was some distance from the teachings of Confucius and Mencius. Although Jinsai confessed that he did not know who wrote the text, he insisted that it was not, as Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi asserted, "a remaining work of Confucius." Instead, Jinsai speculated that the *Great Learning* was the product of a degenerate age when heterodoxies prevailed and came to be mixed with the ideas of Confucius and Mencius. By Zhu Xi's day, distinctions between heterodoxies and the original Confucian teachings had become so blurred that Zhu Xi mistook the *Great Learning* for a Confucian writing and elevated it as the first of the Four Books and the gateway to Confucian learning.[102]

Whether Banzan knew of Jinsai's work before his own writings on the *Great Learning* were completed, is unclear. However, given that Jinsai spent his entire life in Kyoto as a teacher-scholar and attained some renown as a Confucian, it is difficult to imagine that Banzan did not at least know of it. On the other hand, while Banzan was born in Kyoto and returned often, enjoying the erudite, civil culture that existed there, he was also a man of action, often elsewhere for extended periods, either in service to a lord or in the custody of a lord, living in seclusion as a banished man. Still, when in Kyoto, Banzan apparently made his mark, and must have come to the attention of Jinsai. Later, Ogyū Sorai, according to the late-Tokugawa work *Sentetsu sōdan* (*Discussions of the Early Confucian Philosophers*), linked the two men in one of the most memorable and amusing remarks of that age, noting "that if Kumazawa's knowledge and

[102] Itō Jinsai, "The Great Learning is not a Confucian Text," pp. 233–244.

Itō Jinsai's emphasis on practice could be combined with his [Sorai's] own learning, then the eastern sea (Japan) would have its first sage." In another remark, less prideful, Sorai stated, "among the Confucian giants of the last hundred years, Kumazawa was a man of talent, and Itō Jinsai was a man of learning. The others are not worth mentioning."[103]

That Sorai would reportedly link the two Kyoto scholars, but that they, as contemporaries, did not seem aware of each other, is unusual but perhaps explainable. Jinsai possibly heard of Banzan's troubles with the Kyoto authorities and so distanced himself from the controversial scholar because he understood just how provocative his very own ideas might appear from the perspective of the same authorities. Not wanting to invite presumption of guilt due to association, and surely not relishing the thought of exile into the hinterlands, Jinsai might have maintained reserve and a relatively low profile as a scholar-teacher, aware that Banzan's tendency was toward being outspoken, even pugnacious. Then again, by the time of Jinsai's writing on the *Great Learning*, Banzan was an aging scholar living in exile outside Kyoto and, despite his occasional visits and contacts with learned men in Kyoto, was most likely out of touch with the latest developments in Confucian studies there. On the other hand, Banzan remained a man of action until the end, one who might not have paid Jinsai's logical assessments of the *Great Learning* any mind even if he knew of them. Whether the *Great Learning* was a text that Confucius had left or not made no difference. It set forth valuable ideals, leaving Banzan with the task of proposing a strategy for their realization consistent with the time, place, and circumstances of his day.

If Banzan did know of Jinsai's critique of the *Great Learning* and simply ignored it, he was not alone. Despite the discrepancies and philosophical inconsistencies that Jinsai noted between the *Great Learning* and more ancient, authentic Confucian works, few later scholars – other than his own disciples – accepted Jinsai's judgments as the final word. The philosophical charisma that Zhu Xi and later Wang Yangming recognized in the *Great Learning* continued strong, Jinsai's views notwithstanding.

Banzan as an independent thinker

Banzan fully realized the differences between Confucius' teachings in the *Analects* and those of the *Great Learning*, but rather than elevate the *Analects* and abandon the *Great Learning*, he saw them as different

[103] Hara Nensai, "Kumazawa Banzan," pp. 132–133.

expressions relating to different times, spaces, and circumstances, legitimate in their own way given the relative historical crucibles from which they sprang. Banzan was apparently not as concerned about the purity of school lineages and discourse as he was about good ideas, from whatever provenance, and most especially, their real practicality. In Banzan's view, the *Great Learning*, in setting forth the goal of governing the realm and bringing peace to all below heaven, advanced a valuable agenda that would necessarily be responded to differently by different thinkers in different times.

Banzan was an independent-minded thinker who respected his predecessors but coupled that respect with an unwillingness to be confined by their thinking as if he and they lived in the same time, space, and circumstances. Appreciating his historical predicament and that of those who came before him, Banzan selected from earlier ideas those he deemed most credible and practical. In *Accumulating Righteousness, Japanese Writings*, Banzan rejected any facile categorization of his learning. He stated:

> I do not draw my views from Zhu Xi or Wang Yangming. I draw from the ancient sages. What has been transmitted in the lineage of the way is the same with Zhu and Wang. Their words reflect their historical predicaments. The truths of their teachings complement one another as do matching tallies.
>
> Zhu and Wang are not really different. For the sake of rectifying evil evident in his day and to rid the world of confusion and doubt, Master Zhu emphasized fully understanding rational principles. As a result, he did not discuss introspection and self-vigilance. Responding to the evils of his historical circumstances, Master Wang stressed introspection and self-vigilance, but did not emphasize fathoming principles.
>
> In practicing introspection and self-vigilance as a means of self-cultivation focusing on the inner mind, I draw on Wang Yangming's explanations of intuitive moral knowledge. In warding off confusion and doubt, I rely on Master Zhu's emphasis on comprehending rational principles. The doubts and misgivings of students differed during the time of Zhu and Wang, but with adjustments for time and circumstance, are their teachings not the same?[104]

Banzan's views of Zhu and Wang, then, were shaped by his understanding of their historical predicaments and his estimation of their

[104] Banzan, *Shūgi washo*, p. 141.

response to the same. Rather than declare one right and the other wrong, Banzan recognized in each thinker's ideas real philosophical value.

Banzan was harsher on Nakae Tōju. He allowed that Tōju's learning combined strengths from the teachings of Zhu and Wang, but also made it clear that he had no use for Tōju's accommodation of Buddhism. The unity of the three teachings, so evident in Tōju's thought, had no appeal to Banzan. Even more critically, Banzan stated that Tōju's followers often showed no real knowledge of the classics of Confucianism, nor the major teachings of the way. In the end, Banzan stated that despite claims about Tōju's teachings having prompted everyone below heaven to practice the way, people who were fond of virtue were indeed rare.[105] From Banzan's perspective, Tōju's teachings had, then, done little to bring about real change.

Banzan added that he rarely repeated Tōju's words as such, even though he had learned much from Tōju. The teaching about the importance of time, place, and circumstance was one that Tōju emphasized, but in following that very teaching, it was only natural, in Banzan's view, that his own expressions would differ from Tōju's as surely as their time, place, and circumstances differed. In much the same way, Banzan acknowledged that his followers should not simply repeat his words but instead they should respond to their own predicaments with their own observations. In interpreting anew his teacher Tōju's words in response to his own historical circumstances, Banzan claimed he was most fully repaying his debt to Tōju.[106]

Banzan added that while some people referred to his learning as the "learning of the mind" (*shingaku*), he thought that label inappropriate. Instead, he insisted that "the way is the way, and learning is learning. Unfortunately, when names are applied, one-sidedness often results." Banzan saw Zhu and Wang as addressing different historical circumstances with each, in their own way, providing answers for their times. Banzan added that there had been a developmental progression in Confucian learning wherein each stage contributed to the growth of the next. Han dynasty commentaries made possible the rise of the Song dynasty "study of principle" (*rigaku*), and Song developments in turn made possible the rise, in the Ming, of the methods of the mind (*shinpō*), which in turn contributed to his own progress along the path of virtue. Banzan noted that while discussions had become more complex, it was doubtful

[105] Ibid., p. 200. [106] Ibid., p. 254.

whether later scholars matched the ancients in virtue. Nevertheless, Banzan made it clear that in his view Zhu Xi and his predecessors in Song learning were all "one body with the sages."[107]

Further historicizing Confucian philosophical developments, Banzan added that after the first emperor of the Qin dynasty attempted to burn all the Confucian classics, it was necessary for Han scholars to focus their work on textual studies and commentaries, recreating as best they could the philosophical literature that the Qin had attempted to eradicate. Thereafter, with the appearance of Buddhist heterodoxies, it became necessary for Song Confucians to emphasize the study of principle as a means of dispelling misunderstandings that the Buddhists had spread. Once confusion had been dispelled, Ming Confucians then focused on introspective methods of mind control and cultivation.[108] Via historical contextualization, Banzan thus cast Confucianism as a growing, evolving set of teachings, continually adapting to the temporal and environmental predicaments faced and thereby giving rise to new and progressive expressions. Reviewing the changes in Confucian teachings, Banzan recognized value in each developmental stage without narrowly confining himself, along exclusive, dogmatic lines, to any single one.

Elsewhere in *Accumulating Righteousness, Further Writings*, Banzan compared Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming, in a relatively fair and judicious manner, without taking sides. When asked whether Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming were "worthies," Banzan replied:

> Master Zhu can, presumably, be called a great scholar and a worthy. Through his commentaries on the classics, he made enormous contributions, and so he stands as the most renowned of all commentators, ancient and modern. Regardless of whether his commentaries were faithful to the minds and hearts of the ancients, his writings were meant, from the start, for beginners who needed ethical explanations that were meaningful and intelligible to them. On that count, later students of Confucianism are indebted to him for his efforts …
>
> Master Wang was, presumably, a scholar who possessed both culture and military learning. He earned fame as a great general. He was also a worthy. He further developed Mencius' teachings about intuitive knowledge and intuitive abilities and emphasized, in the process, introspection and self-vigilance. Wang's legacy for later students practicing introspection was not shallow.[109]

[107] Ibid., pp. 14–15. [108] Ibid., pp. 15–16.
[109] Banzan, *Shūgi gaisho*, ch. 6, *Banzan zenshū*, vol. 2, pp. 106–107.

In addition to recognizing significant contributions in the thought of both men, Banzan also recognized their weaknesses.

> Master Zhu went to excess with broad learning and study. As a scholar, he focused on learning principle but remained reserved regarding methods of the mind. Books are comparable to rabbit tracks in the snow while rabbits are like the mind. Commentaries on Confucian classics are like commentaries on our minds. When one gets the rabbit, its tracks are no longer useful. When one gets one's mind, the classics are no longer necessary. The path to penetrating the mind can be full of expansive stops, but once one has gotten the overall idea, one should be able to grasp the mind … Zhu's learning was excessively devoted to commenting on passages, and so became obsessed with the principles of words and phrases, often losing touch with the mind … As a result, it did make major contributions to the study of the classics. However, the methods of the mind are some remove from the classics. Thus, Zhu Xi's learning came to be viewed as a crime against the sagely Confucian teachings.
>
> Master Wang went overboard with compassion and self-vigilance and so ended up appearing very much like those who emphasize heterodox learning and Buddhist enlightenment. Those who saw Master Wang's excesses as wasteful and wrongheaded judged him to be a criminal as well … Both men were worthies insofar as they recognized the principles of heaven as their minds, left off selfish human desires, and deemed it wrong to seize control of the realm if it involved mortal injury to even a single innocent person. In that sense, Zhu and Wang can be called worthies.[110]

Banzan readily acknowledged that the disciples of Zhu and Wang had real faults, and were by far inferior compared to the teachers they claimed to follow. Again, in *Accumulating Righteousness, Further Writings*, Banzan stated:

> Those partial to Zhu's learning praise him. Those partial to Wang's learning praise him. Neither Master Zhu nor Master Wang were common men who were simply fond of fame and reputation. They were both princely, refined men who thought primarily of virtue. They both thought in terms of doing away with evil practices of their day and illuminating the way of the sages.
>
> However, when we look at those who belong to Zhu's school and Wang's school, they are neither fond of virtue nor interested

[110] Ibid.

> in accomplishing anything. They simply want to argue over who is right and who is wrong. Thus, the learning of the sages has not been realized.
>
> Although the fundamental thinking of Zhu and Wang was to make the way of the sages manifest in the world, it has actually become more obscure. This was not the intent of Zhu and Wang. Would they not be saddened by these shows of partiality and exclusive praise? ...
>
> The contributions of these two men to the sagely learning have not been minor. However, when we only follow one of them, harm results … Those who seek the original minds of these two masters will reap benefits and incur no harm.[111]

Despite his overall respect for Zhu in relation to the historical development of Confucian thinking, Banzan questioned the extent to which Zhu's learning was appropriate to Japan. Banzan added that while advocates of Zhu's thought claimed to practice the methods of sages and worthies, their minds and hearts were often the very same as those of ordinary common people.[112] It should be emphasized, however, that Banzan's view of Zhu's learning as ill-suited to the cultural environment of Japan should not be construed as an indication that he opposed it. After all, Banzan referred to Buddhists as barbarian heretics but added that their teachings were appropriate to Japan. More than either Confucianism or Buddhism, Banzan saw Christianity, a teaching he wanted eliminated, as even more appropriate to Japanese circumstances. Yet there can be no doubt that Banzan opposed Christianity and Buddhism, and saw in Confucian teachings a way that would uplift Japan out of its complacency and to a new and more ethical time, place, and circumstance.

Insofar as Banzan's works added to the overall prestige of the *Great Learning* as a gateway to virtue, and simultaneously clarified the political dimension integral to the *Great Learning*, he was arguably following both Zhu and Wang and any number of other commentators who had, through their explanations, altered and enhanced thereby the very text they claimed to be faithfully explaining. In *Responding to the Great Learning*, however, Banzan was concerned minimally with epistemological questions related to the investigation of things or with the ethical mysticism of forming one body with all things, and instead was far more concerned with providing a comprehensive account of how good

[111] Ibid., pp. 139–140. [112] Ibid., p. 177.

government might be effectively and actively achieved in his day, fully taking into consideration contingent factors such as the historical age in which he lived, the place, that is, Japan, to be governed, and the socio-political, economic, and religio-philosophical circumstances prevalent within that time and place.

Responding to the Great Learning: A Synopsis

Banzan's ideas in *Responding to the Great Learning* grew largely from politically oriented sections of the *Great Learning* as well as other Confucian philosophical writings such as the *Mencius*. Despite their importance for Confucian political thinking, the passages in the *Great Learning* most pertinent to *Responding to the Great Learning* were not ones previously emphasized by Zhu Xi, Wang Yangming, or most other later commentators. Banzan does not explicitly cite the relevant passages as such, and in some cases barely alludes to them, leaving their relationship with his work unclear to all except the Confucian cognoscenti. Much the same is true of Banzan's text and the *Mencius*, although this might seem less peculiar because Banzan's title does not call attention to the text's special relationship with the *Mencius*. Modern readers lacking familiarity with the *Great Learning* and *Mencius* will likely wonder just how they are related, if at all, to Banzan's *Responding to the Great Learning*. To clarify these ties as well as the content of Banzan's text, relevant background material in the *Great Learning* and *Mencius* is here underscored in tandem with a summary of Banzan's core ideas.

Banzan's foreword announces that *Responding to the Great Learning* proposes "viable measures" (*katsuhō*) that might save the country from its contemporary predicament. While "save" might seem too dramatic a word here, it must be emphasized that Banzan saw Japan as on the verge of economic implosion, with debt totaling more than all the gold and silver in the country, and on top of that facing the prospect of imminent invasion by northern barbarians. Simply put, Tokugawa Japan was, in Banzan's view, hovering over profound crisis if not impending doom and, without exaggeration, in need of rescue and salvation.

Making matters worse, Banzan viewed government measures (*hō*) then in place – those established by the Tokugawa shogunate – as contributing to if not causing the problems facing the country. In response to the times, the place, and the socio-economic and political circumstances, Banzan proposed a series of new measures that would, in his view, rescue

Japan from disaster and lead it to a new age of prosperity and security. Because these measures were specific to Japan's circumstances, one could not have found them earlier, in a different time and place, in either Japan or China, nor in ancient times or relatively modern. In a word, they were unprecedented and yet uniquely appropriate to Banzan's own day and the country's predicament. While some of the guiding principles of the *Great Learning* such as governing the realm and bringing peace and prosperity to all below heaven were surely relevant at an inspirational level, Banzan's practicable measures were not to be found as such in the *Great Learning* or any other ancient Confucian text.

Realizing the politically challenging nature of the proposed measures, Banzan stated that their realization would depend upon having the right person in government, one who could understand Japan's dire predicament and enact the measures forthwith. Until then, they would of necessity remain hidden and secret. Apparently in presenting a draft of the text to the shogunate, Banzan imagined either that the time had come and the right person was in place, or that his time was running out and that he would need to voice his proposals for the sake of the country, regardless of the consequences. The latter, it seems, was most likely the case. Had he kept the text to himself, a secret, at least until after his demise, he presumably would have passed his final years with far more liberty of movement and association than confinement and isolation in Koga brought him. However, by following that safe, self-centered course, he would have done nothing to help save the realm from the socio-economic and political disaster looming ahead.

Chapter 1, "The Heaven-Decreed Duty of the People's Ruler," is the most controversial of the entire work due to its account of "the people's ruler" and its radical remarks regarding the conditional nature of his legitimacy. While most Confucian literature refers to a ruler simply as a ruler (*kun*), Banzan refers to the ruler as "the people's ruler" (*jinkun*), that is, not as a ruler who rules in his own right, nor one designated by the imperial throne, but instead as a ruler whose standing is intrinsically related to and even derived from the people he governs. In speaking of the ruler in this way, Banzan echoes the *Great Learning*, section 7, wherein the words "the people's ruler" are used in reference to King Wen of the Zhou dynasty, otherwise described as an ideal ruler who governed his people with honesty and fidelity. There, the *Great Learning* adds "the people's ruler abides in compassion." Banzan's distinctive designation for the ruler also resonates with the *Mencius*, which suggests

that while heaven decrees that certain individuals serve as rulers, the people serve as the eyes and ears of heaven, expressing the will and decree of heaven, which in effect makes them, the people, arbiters of the fate of their rulers.

The *Mencius* (1A/6) also uses the term, "the people's ruler" in its opening chapter. There, Mencius responds to a question posed by King Hui of Liang, identified by Mencius as one who did not appear to be "the people's ruler." Nevertheless, King Hui asks Mencius, who can give a ruler his throne? Forthrightly, Mencius answers, "Everyone in the realm below heaven gives it to him … if there were a person who did not take pleasure in killing people, all people below heaven would gather around him … The people would return to him irrepressibly, just as water rushes downwards." Mencius' pointed use of the term "the people's ruler" – in effect suggesting that King Hui was not such a ruler, and so not truly legitimate – thus reveals that, far from a mere euphemism for a sovereign, the term "the people's ruler" is one that affirms the decisive role of the people in relation to the ruler and his standing as such, as well as the responsibilities of the people's ruler to those over whom he rules.

Chapter 1 is equally controversial in stating, as a matter of cosmo-political fact, that if the ruler forsakes his heavenly-decreed responsibilities to rule as the father and mother of the people and in accordance with compassionate government, then he will be removed and replaced by someone more suited to the task. Here, Banzan again draws on the *Mencius* which makes it clear that the people play a central role in deciding who "the people's ruler" will be. In Banzan's view, rulers are legitimate only if they preserve the decree of heaven which in turn is contingent on their real concern for the welfare of the people. When that concern is neglected, heaven sends warnings. If the wayward ruler continues to disregard his responsibility toward the people, then ultimately heaven, acting through natural events and human agency, will replace the individual who, at that point, will have effectively forfeited his right to rule.

Banzan's analysis of political legitimacy was profoundly at odds with the shogunate's. In its view, the line of shoguns or samurai rulers beginning with Tokugawa Ieyasu, founder of the Tokugawa line, had been appointed by the Japanese emperor to serve as practical governors of the realm. Their position depended neither on heaven nor the people. The shogun was, simply put, the emperor's shogun, not the people's shogun. Rather than endorse the Tokugawa understanding of shogunal

legitimacy, Banzan drew on ancient Confucian literature to affirm a more humanistic, people-centered, and surely conditional account of legitimacy that emphasized the ruler's responsibility to govern paternalistically, as the father and mother of the people, and humanely, in accordance with the principles of compassionate government. Equally emphasized in Banzan's account were the consequences met by rulers who abandoned their responsibilities to the people and ignored the warnings of heaven as communicated through its earthly surrogate, the people.

Without question, Banzan's remarks about "the people's ruler" were made in reference to the shogunate in Edo and, by extension, daimyō in the domains, not the emperor in Kyoto. Banzan's extensive writings on what he calls Shintō make it clear that he saw the imperial line as sacrosanct and not subject to heaven's decrees. It is questionable whether Banzan believed the emperor to be of divine descent, but he surely held that the imperial line had a spiritual standing. It was most certainly not, therefore, the line of contingent, secular rulers discussed in Banzan's writings on "the people's ruler." Although confrontational, Banzan's opening discussion is cast in abstract, even universalistic Confucian terminology, referring to "the people's ruler" and "the people" without, at least at that point, identifying them as specifically Japanese. However, there can be no doubt about who Banzan was discussing. Surely, his challenging, even radical remarks about "the people's ruler" were one reason for his final exile. Whether the shogunal authorities read past the first chapter is questionable because there alone was more than enough outrageous political discourse to justify banishment of the aged but still offensive and troublesome scholar.

In addition to the *Mencius*, the *Great Learning* provides Banzan with a substantial textual basis for his aggressive, populist political theory. The relevant material in the *Great Learning* appears in section 13, where the *Great Learning* addresses the grand political culmination of the text, governing the realm and bringing peace and prosperity to all below heaven. While Banzan does not explicitly cite that portion of the *Great Learning*, it is there that his thinking on the conditional nature of a ruler's legitimacy has a strong textual foundation. Section 13 relates the following:

> It is said, "… The great decree [of heaven] is not easy to maintain." This shows that, by gaining the people, a state is gained, and, by losing the people, a state is lost. Therefore, the ruler is careful about his own virtue. If he has virtue, he will have the people. If he has the people, he will have the realm. If he has the realm, he will have

> wealth. If he has wealth, he will have resources for necessary expenditures.
>
> Virtue is the root of everything, wealth is what flows from it. If the ruler makes the root secondary, and the wealth that flows from the root his primary concern, he will end up struggling with his own people [over wealth], leading them to thievery. For this reason, when a ruler [selfishly] amasses wealth for himself, he is effectively forcing his people to flee elsewhere [in search of sustenance].
>
> On the other hand, when a ruler distributes wealth among the people, he establishes a way to bring his people closer together. Accordingly, when the ruler's words are crooked, people will speak to him in the same way. And when the ruler acquires wealth by crooked means, he will end up losing it due to people's crookedness.
>
> In the *Book of History*, the "Announcement to Kang" observes, "The decree [of heaven] is not permanent." That remark conveys the fact that with goodness, a ruler obtains the decree of heaven, and with depravity, he loses it.

Although Banzan does not cite Section 13 of the *Great Learning*, it presents solid grounds for his opening description of the ruler as the people's ruler, and the ruler's legitimacy as contingent upon his willingness to rule with care and compassion for the people just as fathers and mothers show their children. Though paternalistic and condescending, Banzan's thinking about the ruler's responsibility emphasizes, without declaring the people sovereign, that rulers who neglect the people are doomed.

Banzan's central theme in *Responding to the Great Learning* is the importance of administering the realm according to the principles of compassionate government. The latter notion, distinctively Confucian, traces back most distinctively to the *Mencius*. Confucius in the *Analects* never mentions the two-word compound, even though he often discussed compassion and government separately. Nor does the *Great Learning* mention the compound "compassionate government." In making this notion his central message, Banzan links *Responding to the Great Learning* as closely to the *Mencius* as to the *Great Learning* itself.

In the *Mencius*, compassionate government is often a code word for right rule, virtuous rule, and the kind of government that secures for a ruler the support of the people, and for the people, their well-being. More specifically, Mencius (3A/3) associates compassionate government with socio-economic reform of a radical sort. After noting that people cannot be expected to have a constant mind and heart devoted to moral behavior if they do not have a constant livelihood, Mencius suggests that

a system of equitable land distribution be an integral part of compassionate government. Significant here is that Mencius understood compassionate government not simply as a set of moral platitudes, but as an ethical way of governing that provides for the economic well-being of the population and a secure material foundation for a moral polity. Banzan does not advocate, as did Mencius, an overall redistribution of land, but he does propose reforms meant to create a realm wherein the people are more adequately provided for, materially and economically, in terms of daily sustenance and livelihood, as well as educationally, culturally, and in regard to national defense. For Banzan, as for Mencius, compassionate government meant government that cares about the material as well as the ethical well-being of the people. Banzan's corollary message is that rulers who neglect compassionate government and the best interests of their people will face the consequences, as decreed by heaven and as executed by the people.

Chapter 2, "The Heaven-Decreed Duty of the People's Ministers," like Chapter 1, advances a people-centered agenda. It does so by referring to the ministers of the realm not as the ruler's ministers but as "the people's ministers," as if they in some sense represented the interests of the people rather than those of the ruler. In doing so, Banzan follows the usage in section 7 of the *Great Learning*. Other Confucian texts such as the *Mencius* occasionally used the same terminology. The *Mencius* (7A/31) notes that when "worthies serve as the people's ministers," they will please the people by expelling rulers who abandon virtue, if they do so for the sake of rectifying misrule. If that is not their intent, Mencius declares, then such a move against a ruler amounts to usurpation. Mencius' reference to "the people's ministers" thus suggests the power of the people at large in relation to both their rulers and their ministers as long as that power is wielded for the sake of virtuous rule. In this, Mencius was not typical of Confucian theorists so much as one of the most if not the single most confrontational and threatening. In alluding to the *Mencius* and the *Great Learning*, Banzan positioned himself similarly.

Along related lines, Banzan affirms that there is a way to predict when a state will prosper and when one will collapse into ruin. Simply put, Banzan states that if the channels of communication are open between the people's ruler and the people's ministers, then all will be well within the state. If the ruler shuts those channels, silencing the people's ministers, then the beginning of the end will have been set in motion. Banzan explains that heaven will send down various calamities, warning the ruler

that he is endangering the polity if he does not allow open communication with the people's ministers. Banzan does not dilute his prognosis. If rulers are obstinate and refuse to listen to the people's ministers, then a decline into ruin will ensue. Well-known examples from Chinese political history are cited in this context.

Equally controversial is the heavenly-decreed duty Banzan attributes to the people's ministers. In addition to assisting the ruler with compassionate government, the people's ministers are to remonstrate, as needed, with the ruler when his commitment to compassionate government wanes. Provided that the ruler heeds remonstration, his rule might last. But if the ruler silences his ministers and closes channels of communication, Banzan states that heaven will send down its judgment with effective finality, and then offer hope once again for compassionate government in the realm as guided by a new line of rulers.

Banzan's remarks draw on the *Great Learning*, section 14, which quotes the *Book of History* and its emphasis upon having a minister who is sincere, simple, and honest and, most importantly, recognizes the talents and capabilities of others. With such a minister, the *Great Learning* explains, a state will be well governed. On the other hand, when there are ministers who deceive and refuse, due to jealousy and worse, to recognize the talents of others, then the end of the state is soon announced by calamities sent by heaven. Although Banzan does not cite section 14, there the *Great Learning* links open, honest communication between the people's ministers and the people's rulers, as well as the people's ministers and the people below, as crucial to the prosperity of the state. The *Great Learning* also threatens that if such openness is not present, the state faces doom. To the extent that Banzan's remarks in Chapter 2 of *Responding to the Great Learning* are related to the *Great Learning*, they most conspicuously echo section 14 and its discussions of ministers and the state.

Chapter 3, "Revering Good Counsel," offers a brief discussion of the nature of good counsel, noting that it does not consist of philosophical discussions of the way so much as advice on the extent to which a ruler's policies and administrative initiatives are effective at the ground level. Once again, Banzan emphasizes the importance of maintaining openness in communication between the ruler and those offering good counsel to keep the realm from falling into a vortex of ruin. Here, as in the preceding chapter, Banzan draws on the ideas of the *Great Learning* as developed in section 14 where the ideal minister and his antithesis are described, and the consequences of each are laid bare.

Chapter 4, "A Grand Project for Growing Wealth," emphasizes the importance of wealth for compassionate government, suggesting that without it, government cannot help the helpless in society, including the increasing number of rōnin, as well as those in the countryside facing starvation due to flooding, drought, and bad harvests. To rightly achieve wealth for the realm, Banzan calls for a major overhaul of the socio-economic system realized via "the great way." The latter includes initiatives such as relieving daimyō of various financial burdens including regular ceremonial service in Edo to the shogunate. Such relief would allow daimyō to provide relief for the people below. Banzan also proposes recognition of rice as a currency, on par with gold and silver, at a fixed rate of exchange in relation to the latter. If implemented, daimyō would not have to sell their rice in Osaka or Edo to gain gold and silver currency necessary to finance their service to the shogunate. Also, the waste due to shipwrecked cargo and rot in port granaries would end, resulting in more rice for consumption, transactions, and storage to alleviate hunger during times of trial.

Banzan's emphasis on wealth for effective, compassionate government clearly echoes the *Great Learning* on this count, as well as the *Mencius* and its remarks linking compassionate government to the well-field system of land redistribution. However, Banzan's specific proposals – that daimyō be relieved of most of their Edo service requirements for the shogunate and that rice be made, officially, a form of currency alongside gold and silver – are his own contributions to the discourse, not ones found in either the *Great Learning* or the *Mencius*. These are two of the viable, practicable regulations that he proposes which, according to his foreword, were unprecedented in ancient and modern times, in either China or Japan. While Banzan does not make this point, these two proposals alone would have revolutionized the socio-economic and political order, reversing the flow of resources into the shogun's capital resulting from daimyō service to the shogunate, and laying the foundations for enhanced daimyō power and wealth in the hinterlands. Economically, a rice-based currency, alongside silver and gold, would have, if implemented, undercut the rice markets in burgeoning economic centers such as Osaka and led to a more locally centered economic order providing, presumably, for better material interests of the rice producers, that is, the peasants in the countryside. Banzan later proposes returning samurai to the countryside to live and labor alongside the peasantry, a move that would have furthered the empowerment of the hinterlands

as opposed to the shogunal center in what would have amounted to a major reorganization of the socio-economic and politico-military order of the realm.

Chapter 4 emphasizes the onerous burden for daimyō of rendering service to the shogunate, suggesting that such service needs to be rethought along more economic lines. Banzan also criticizes peasants for devoting good farmland to cash crops such as tobacco instead of rice because, in Banzan's view, this results in a reduction of rice yield so essential to the overall well-being of the economy. Banzan's strategy of returning samurai to the countryside is adumbrated in this chapter as part of a shift Banzan envisioned for a reorganized early-modern Japan away from burgeoning urban centers and their commercially dominant interests, and toward the countryside and the rice fields wherein Banzan saw enormous wealth potential of a most fundamental sort. If these initiatives meant to maximize rice productivity were implemented, Banzan projected that greater levels of agrarian wealth would be produced for everyone and the problems of poverty and starvation solved throughout the realm.

Banzan's thinking on the grand project for growing wealth expands on the *Great Learning*, section 15, which states:

> There is a great way for the production of wealth. Let there be many producers and only few consumers. Let the producers be quick in production, and the consumers consume in moderation. Then wealth will be constantly produced.
>
> Compassionate rulers, by means of their wealth, make something of themselves. Yet rulers who are not compassionate compromise themselves to accumulate wealth. Never has there been a ruler above who was fond of compassion while those below were not fond of righteousness and justice. Never has there been a ruler fond of righteousness and justice whose projects were not brought to completion.

Banzan's thinking about the importance of maximizing wealth in the realm is much more detailed than the *Great Learning* passage above. In the latter passage, however, Banzan found ample Confucian justification for government concern with wealth, allocation of resources, and the economic welfare of the realm. Rather than advance a robust agenda meant to promote economic diversity, commercialization, and urbanization as keys to growing wealth, Banzan's thinking was, like the *Great Learning*, focused mostly on maximizing agrarian production while simultaneously reducing non-essential consumption by the people at large. By expanding the number of rice producers and their rice yield, and minimizing

unnecessary expense, there would be, in Banzan's view, more than enough for all.

Banzan's discussion of the great way is also precedented, in Confucian literature, in the opening passage of the *Book of Rituals*' chapter, "Evolution of the Rites." It relates:

> Confucius said, "When the great way is practiced, everyone below heaven will share in common. Men of talents will be employed [in government] and men of ability will be promoted as well. Their words will be honest, and they will cultivate harmony and friendly relations with all. As a result, people will not simply love their parents, [they will love the parents of other people as well]. Nor will people simply treat their own children as their offspring, [instead they will treat other people's offspring as their own as well].
>
> "Suitable provisions will be secured for the aged, employment for the able-bodied, and support for the young. Those in government will show kindness and compassion to widows, orphans, childless men, and the disabled, so that everyone will be sufficiently cared for. Men will have their responsibilities, and women will handle domestic affairs.
>
> "People will accumulate wealth because they dislike seeing things going to waste, not because they seek wealth for their own selfish advantage. They will work because they dislike being indolent, not for selfish profit. As a result, conspiracies will no longer be hatched. Robbers, thieves, rebels, and traitors will be no more. And people will feel free to leave their doors open. Realization of the great way will lead to what can be called an age of great equality."

In *Responding to the Great Learning*, Banzan refers to "the great way" often, suggesting that his proposals overall were meant to realize, in contemporary times, the Confucian utopian vision of "the great way" and the age of "great equality." The *Book of Rituals* passage includes many themes at the heart of Banzan's *Responding to the Great Learning*, most importantly his emphasis on the need to employ men with "talents" in government, as well as men of ability. By doing so, Banzan hoped his series of reforms would contribute to the realization of his idyllic vision of an agrarian utopia wherein all shared according to their station enabling a common cultural harmony that provided for all.

Chapter 5, "Eliminating Anxieties over Flooding and Relieving Droughts," develops Banzan's conception of compassionate government along two very practical lines: (1) preventing floods and droughts by way

of civil engineering projects such as the construction of reliable retention ponds, and (2) using unhulled rice as a form of currency. While the first draws on Banzan's experiences in Okayama domain and reveals the extent to which his understanding of problems and their solutions was experientially grounded rather than simply the product of ivory-tower book learning, the second line of reform, currency reform, would have been, socio-economically, more widely consequential on a daily basis in early-modern Japan.

In Banzan's view, the Tokugawa economy had become severely inefficient as daimyō sold much of their domain's rice yield for gold and silver coins to finance their service in Edo as part of the alternate attendance duties required of them by the shogunate. When rice was shipped to major urban centers – Osaka and Edo – to be sold, large quantities ended up being lost at sea, or, once in granaries, to insects and rot. The result was that much of the fundamental foodstuff of the country was being, in effect, wasted. Banzan proposed eliminating that by having the value of a *koku* of rice fixed in relation to silver so that the *koku* could be used for business transactions of all sorts, precluding the need for shipping rice to urban centers and running the risk of incurring losses along the way.

Banzan does not, however, adequately address the practical, logistical issues involved in taking to market, for example, 50 *koku* of rice to do one's shopping. Then again, he seems to have envisioned a simpler, less commercialized economy wherein consumption patterns would have been few and essentially basic, so that large quantities of rice would not need to be transported to markets to make purchases. That aside, Banzan's diagnosis of the problems facing the Tokugawa economy are striking for both their revolutionary and reactionary character. Banzan's call for rice as currency is a prelude to his proposal that samurai be returned to the countryside as part of a massive, de-urbanization program shrinking urban areas and reducing the economic waste that he saw in them. Similarly, Banzan proposed reducing (1) the saké industry because it required excessive rice, (2) the tobacco industry because it displaced rice farming, and (3) cotton manufacturing because it, like tobacco, displaced rice as a crop. For Banzan, a healed Tokugawa economy, free from massive debt and chronic waste, would have been one that returned to its origins in the soil and largely operated via barter exchanges wherein rice was swapped for the most basic necessities. While the arc of these proposals was reactionary, implementing them would have required revolutionary

levels of social engineering, forcing samurai to return to the countryside, and those already in rural areas to forsake alternative economic activities that added spice and variety to their otherwise arduous existence.

Chapter 6, "Preparing for Northern Barbarians, Emergencies, and Bad Harvests," forecasts what Banzan apparently thought was an inevitable invasion of Japan by a shadowy group of people he consistently identifies as "northern barbarians." An early translation of Banzan's text cast this group as the Mongols because they had earlier invaded Japan and conceivably could have done so again. However, it is far more likely that Banzan's fears were directed at the Manchu peoples who in 1644 entered China to put down an anti-Ming uprising, but then proceeded, once the rebellion was quashed, to take control of the land and declare themselves the founders of a new imperial regime, the Qing (1644–1912). Tokugawa Japan learned of these events through Dutch reports coming in from Nagasaki as well as by way of Ming emigres fleeing their homeland, determined not to serve a dynasty that had conquered the one to which they felt an undying loyalty. Several of the emigres were outstanding Confucian scholars known to the Japanese scholarly elite of Banzan's day. Banzan possibly heard reports from them about an impending invasion of Japan, and rather than respond with caution, emerged as the most vocal prophet of Japan's coming doom. The only hope for the realm, in Banzan's view, was making immediate preparations for war.

Sounding very much like an alarmist, Banzan warned that if something were not done quickly, Japan would descend into defeat, ruin, and utter chaos. Yet more than a matter of military equipment and training, Banzan saw his country unprepared because it lacked the basic provisions, that is, rice, necessary to feed an army fighting in the field in defense of the realm. The result, he predicted, would be desertion and then defeat, largely due to Japanese domains having insufficient stores to field and feed an army for any length of time.

Yet an invasion never occurred and so Banzan ended up appearing somewhat deluded and out of touch with political and international realities. On the other hand, approximately a century and a half later, as barbarians began appearing in Japanese waters, this time coming from both the north (Czarist Russia) and the south (Europe and America) rather than simply the north, Banzan's calls seemed more prescient than paranoid, even if his policies for achieving military readiness, using rice as currency and returning samurai to the fields, were profoundly antiquated and askew. Then again, in the early twentieth century some two

hundred years after his passing, Banzan's warnings about northern barbarians seemed even more clairvoyant as Czarist Russia returned, seeking to check Japan's ambitions in northeast Asia. With that late-Meiji period moment, Banzan's status as a farsighted political thinker rose to new heights. Not surprisingly, the late-Meiji period witnessed a relative explosion in Banzan-related scholarship just as the imperial nation then sought to deal with foreign threats more aggressively.

Chapter 7, "Filling Shogunal Coffers with Gold, Silver, Rice, and Grain," continues Banzan's emphasis on measures necessary to prepare the country militarily for an invasion by northern barbarians. Banzan's specific proposals have little basis in either the *Great Learning* or the *Mencius*, or any other Confucian text for that matter, except insofar as the theme of compassionate government crops up time and again. Banzan's most interesting proposal here is his reiteration that the shogunate modify its alternate attendance rule requiring daimyō to remain in Edo while serving the shogun six months out of a year, or every other year, depending on the distance of the daimyō's domain from Edo. Banzan recognized that requirement as a major drain on daimyō and domain resources and so advocated a return to something akin to the Kamakura shogunate's model of alternate attendance which only required of daimyō fifty days of service once every three years. By Banzan's estimations, this approach would both ensure the loyalty of the daimyō and cost all parties involved considerably less, allowing them to store more provisions in preparation for a foreign invasion.

Chapter 8, "Eliminating Debt from the Realm below Heaven," discusses how debts owed by daimyō, retainers, and peasants might be either paid off or refinanced along reasonable lines. Banzan's key point is that with a reduction in daimyō expenses due to severely reduced alternative attendance demands, daimyō would have extra resources available to devote to repaying debts. Also, as they would need less money, they could allow peasants to turn over a smaller fraction of the total yield of their produce. The peasants could then use the additional rice to pay off their debts. In some cases, adjudication of debt repayment might be necessary. This, as well as debt-management generally, would be supervised by the shogunate, with the intent that it all contribute to the realization of compassionate government, that is, socio-economic and political peace and prosperity for all in the realm. Lenders would also be regulated, but only to enable them to remain in business making a good, though not extravagant, living. Through this plan, Banzan thought that the realm

would realize overall prosperity and economic well-being, as well as, at the personal level, contentment and peace of mind.

Chapter 9, "Helping Rōnin, Vagrants, the Unemployed, and the Impoverished," proposes means of alleviating poverty among rōnin by allowing them stipends sufficient to support their parents, wives, and children, allotted according to the number of individuals in each rōnin family. In modern parlance, Banzan proposes unemployment relief, as well as relief for those with fiefs but insufficient resources to provide for their families. Funds for such government assistance would be expected of daimyō who, no longer burdened annually by alternate attendance expenses, could devote a portion of their domain resources to rōnin assistance. If enacted, Banzan's plan for rōnin relief, along with helping homeless rōnin, would be, in his view, among the greatest achievements of compassionate government. With this chapter, the meaning of compassionate government becomes even clearer. Hardly a set of platitudes or mystic-metaphysical visions of oneness with all things, Banzan's understanding of compassionate government meant to provide material assistance to those in need. His sympathy for the downtrodden and outcast possibly issued from his feeling of oneness with all things, but his practical expression of it was grounded in the relief work he oversaw in Okayama domain following its earlier devastation due to flooding.

Chapter 9 is arguably an expansion of the *Great Learning*, section 12, which explains that "bringing peace to all below heaven is a matter of governing the realm." It adds that when the ruler has pity on the aged, the elderly, orphans, and those without others to assist them, then all below heaven will be decent and filial as well. While the *Great Learning* expresses concern for the less fortunate, it assumes that their care extends from the ruler's good example and humane sentiments. In Banzan's view, being a moral exemplar is not enough: material provisions in the form of stipends are necessary for the sake of truly assisting those in need. Also, Banzan's concern is most obviously for the rōnin population and their strained circumstances, though it surely extended well beyond the socio-economic confines of his own group.

Chapter 10, "Making Mountains Luxuriant and Rivers Run Deep," expands Banzan's understanding of compassionate government by relating it to maintenance of a healthy environmental balance for the sake of the welfare of the socio-economic and political realm. Banzan begins by addressing the proposition that mountains and rivers are the foundations

of the state. While he concurs with this, Banzan notes that mountains have been ravaged for the sake of harvesting their timber, and rivers choked with sediment from mountains stripped bare of forests. Banzan blames these problems on the high demand for lumber, resulting from unbridled construction of temples, shrines, castles, and samurai mansions. Widespread consumption of forest timber as firewood for hearths is also to blame. As a solution, Banzan calls on commoners to use field straw for cooking rather than timber. He also suggests that the number of temples and shrines be reduced, and that repairs to remaining shrines and temples be made with timber recycled from dismantled shrines and temples closed down or consolidated. With decreased demand for timber, mountain tops will have a chance to recover and, once again, emerge as well-forested forces in the ecological and political order. With established forests, sediment will no longer clog riverbeds, enabling rivers to flow well into the sea. The result will be, in Banzan's mind, another achievement of compassionate government, this time in the form of a well-balanced environment that serves as the foundation of the realm.

Neither the *Great Learning* nor the *Mencius* affirms that mountains and rivers are the foundations of the political order. However, in the *Book of Rituals*, the chapter "Rules for Sacrifices" recognizes in passing that mountains, forests, valleys, and rivers provide people with sustenance, but it stops short of declaring them the foundations of the polity. The *Mencius* (2B/10) denies that mountains and rivers provide for the security of the state, but in the denial offers the hint that such a relationship might well have been broached. Rather than do so, however, the *Mencius* recognizes the importance of harmony and good relations among people as the decisive factor in securing the state. Nevertheless, the idea – even if denied – does appear in the *Mencius*. With *Responding to the Great Learning*, Banzan takes these notions to the next level, affirming that mountains and rivers are the foundations of the state and so, matters of absolute political importance.

Chapter 11, "The Ebb and Flow of the Ruler's Blessings," addresses a question asking whether there are government measures ensuring that the shogunate and all domains and provinces enjoy prosperity together. Banzan's questioner asks because he has heard a saying that the shogunate does best when the domains and provinces are in dire straits. Banzan responds that poverty in the provinces and domains leads to poverty throughout the realm and that in turn results in a withering away of the

blessing of the decree of heaven, and so the ruler's tenure. When that happens, nothing can be done. Banzan insists that it is shallow, even despicable to view poverty in the domains and provinces as advantageous to the shogunate. Recalling shogunal rule in Japanese history, Banzan praises the Hōjō regents of the Kamakura period as the wisest because they required their vassals' attendance in Kamakura only once every three years, and then for only fifty days. When in Kamakura, daimyō were warned against excessive spending lest the resources of their domains be wasted there. The Kamakura model is one that Banzan later returns to and advocates as part of his proposals for restructuring the Tokugawa polity.

Banzan's view that the fate of the domains and provinces is inseparable from the fate of the shogunate has, incidentally, an overall founding in the *Great Learning* insofar as that text sees governing states – or domains and provinces in Japanese terminology – as intrinsically related to bringing peace and prosperity to the realm below heaven. While the political order historically relevant to the *Great Learning* was that of the Zhou dynasty kingdom and its vassal states, the political logic of part and whole integrally and inseparably related in prosperity and decline, makes that text relevant to this chapter of *Responding to the Great Learning*.

Chapter 12, "Returning to the Old Farmer-Samurai Society," details Banzan's plan – already adumbrated – for reuniting farmers and samurai. Realizing that this major undertaking in socio-economic engineering of an armed population would be problematic, Banzan proposed measures, all under the guise of compassionate government, whereby the reuniting might be facilitated, including resolution of farmers' debts, return of lost land to farmers, and reductions in grain demands on farmers. These would be made possible largely due to the decreased burden on farmers once daimyō no longer must serve the shogun in Edo half of every year or every other year. In Banzan's scheme of compassionate government which here follows the Kamakura model for vassal service, daimyō would only spend fifty days in Edo, once every three years. The result would be a drastic reduction in daimyō expenses, and for farmers, considerable relief. With the peasant farming population in better economic condition, Banzan presumably imagined that samurai accustomed to living in castle towns would be more amenable to relocation to rural areas to live among the agrarian stock.

Banzan warns that rulers who are too permissive or too accommodating in implementing this will not be able to realize his vision of compassionate government. Put differently, reuniting samurai with the farming

population would require shrewd, iron rule in the service of compassionate government. Banzan does not go into the details, but instead shifts to how samurai ought to behave in relation to farmers once they have been returned to the countryside. Banzan encourages consideration for the peasantry, especially since they will be neighbors to the samurai for generations to come. Banzan suggests that samurai take up the ways of the farmers in social behavior and pastimes such as hunting and fishing. Banzan emphasizes that samurai still need to practice the martial arts and engage in study and learning, but as much as possible they should live simply as farmers do. In several generations, for all practical purposes their descendants would have fully merged with the peasant population as farmer-samurai.

Banzan's vision for Edo is extraordinary if not downright incredible. He proposes a 90 percent reduction in Edo residential space and suggests that the vacated space once populated with daimyō mansions be converted to rice fields. In effect, Banzan thus proposes a massive de-urbanization of the shogunal metropolis as a means of economically strengthening samurai and the realm. New wealth, supposedly, would thereby be realized which, Banzan emphasizes, should be used for the sake of the realm, not for the shogunate and certainly not for any privileged group. Banzan's program of compassionate government thus entailed a colossal re-engineering of the Tokugawa polity, especially at the elite level of samurai, with the latter being downsized radically as they reunited with the agrarian elements in creating Banzan's utopian polity united in agrarian and military strength.

Chapter 13, "Eliminating Landless Income and Increasing New Fiefs," criticizes several peculiar practices hampering the overall prosperity of the realm. One is the tribute expected of daimyō on holdings that have no basis in land. Banzan calls this an undue and unfair imposition on daimyō which should be corrected with updated surveys of arable land or increases in the land-based holdings of a daimyō to make the "no-land" holdings less problematic. At the same time, Banzan admits that resolving this sort of issue will be difficult because the holdings, whether land-based or not, are combined and thus difficult to separate. Still, Banzan affirms that generally the fiefs given to daimyō should be based on arable land and not on other, amorphous factors. Banzan also criticizes transport fees that result in circuitous shipping routes that are preferred due to their lower costs as opposed to the safer land routes that are heavily taxed.

Banzan calls on the shogunate to allow those who bring new land under cultivation to till it for three years without taxation. Such leniency would make industrious farmers wealthier and encourage them in diligence for generations. Banzan also praises daimyō who, when their fiefs are near mountains and streams, take personal responsibility for them, ensuring that they are not ravaged or choked, thus becoming a source of disaster and hardship. Overall, Banzan's compassionate government proposals here are meant to enhance production of wealth and prosperity in the land, and contribute to social and political strength as well.

Chapter 14, "Lowering the Cost of Foreign Silk and Textiles," advocates efforts toward domestic production of silk rather than continued reliance on expensive imports from China. To facilitate this, Banzan proposes that mulberry bushes be planted around samurai dwellings so that silkworms can be raised and silk harvested. Recognizing that farmers are already burdened with growing rice, Banzan suggests that samurai women, high and low, find more productive ways of using their time than in frivolous pursuits. Banzan thus foresaw the emergence of a domestic silk industry driven by female labor that would, in approximately ten to fifteen years, compete with foreign products imported into Japan.

Banzan's thinking here is mercantilist in nature, seeking to cultivate a domestic industry and then protect it for the sake of enabling Japan to avoid having to pay foreign merchants in gold and silver. Yet Banzan is also a realist, recognizing for the moment that Japan had no choice but to import silk and other fine textiles. Additionally, Banzan criticizes the shogunate's decision to close Hirado as a port for foreign trade, leaving only Nagasaki open. Consequently, silk imports became more expensive. Instead of continuing that policy, Banzan advocates reopening Hirado. While Banzan's short-term forecast is that considerable efforts will be necessary to keep Japan from dependency on foreign silk, he envisions, optimistically, that with increased wealth and prosperity resulting from compassionate government, silk would eventually be produced and consumed by aristocrats, samurai, merchants, and artisans.

Chapter 15, "Eliminating Christianity," sets forth Banzan's critique of Christianity and his proposals for dealing with followers of the banned religion. Banzan claims that Christian teachings spread in Japan because of the poverty and ignorance of the people. The solution, in his view, is compassionate government. With the latter, poverty will be eliminated and enlightened teachings will prevail. By enlightened teachings

Banzan means those of Confucianism and Shintō, as well as rites, music, and martial arts. Evidence of the efficacy of Confucianism, he claims, is found in China, the land of sages and worthies, where Christianity never flourished despite the absence of any rules or regulations against it. Until compassionate government is practiced, however, Banzan thinks that shogunal strategies for eliminating the foreign religion, such as temple registration, waste the resources of the domains and provinces.

Even though Banzan was opposed to Christianity, he noted that reports from officials sent to apprehend those accused of being Christians stated that the suspects were more reverent and devoted to their beliefs than most Buddhists. To the extent that allowances of this kind typified Banzan's longstanding views of Christians, they possibly contributed to spurious charges that Banzan had secret leanings toward Christianity. That aside, Banzan's opposition to Christianity was shared by virtually all Confucian scholars of the day, and not a few went well beyond Banzan in denouncing the foreign religion and calling for its expulsion from the realm. In many respects, opposition to Christianity united Confucian scholars across virtually all lines, whether of the Zhu Xi, Wang Yangming, or other supposed lineages.

Chapter 16, "Reviving Buddhism," proposes that Buddhism be reinvigorated and restored by strict insistence on rigorous rules limiting entry into the clergy, and encouragement of frugal forms of Buddhist practice such as "sitting under trees and atop rocks" while wearing hemp-woven robes. Banzan admits that Buddhism appears to be flourishing in Japan due to the large number of Buddhist temples, priests, monks, and ceremonies associated with it. However, he claims that the clear majority of the clergy are immoral opportunists out for an easy livelihood rather than sincerely devoted practitioners of the three teachings: the Buddhist precepts, Buddhist mind control, and Buddhist wisdom.

Banzan even declares that most clergy are "robbers and thieves." During the coming invasion of northern barbarians or perhaps with a natural disaster such as a major drought, most of the clergy, in Banzan's view, would become thieves, abandoning their temples as soon as they encounter difficulties. Banzan predicts that if temples burned down, they would remain in ashes while most of the clergy deserted the faith to pursue their opportunism elsewhere. Yet out of the ashes, Banzan envisioned a rebirth of mountain forests and rivers, recovering from the environmental ravages caused by earlier overconstruction of Buddhist temples. Along with

a revival of nature, Banzan predicted a revival of Buddhism, stronger and more authentic for having shed insincere clergy who earlier only sought food and shelter.

Chapter 17, "Reviving Shintō," criticizes earlier accounts of Shintō such as those in *Chronicles of Japan* (*Nihon shoki*) as nothing more than the writings of ancient clergy addressing matters of behavior and comportment, metaphysical topics, and other matters related to shrines and ritual beliefs. Banzan claims that these accounts addressed the outer shell of Shintō, not its whole substance. Rather than revere Japan's ancient writings as the textual basis of Shintō, Banzan claims that Shintō has no sacred writings at all, only the three sacred treasures, the mirror, the sword, and the jewel, which serve as its holy texts. To the extent that there are commentaries on these three texts, they appear in the Confucian classics and their commentaries. Although Banzan does not emphasize the foreign identity of these texts, they were the Chinese Confucian classics. In effect, Banzan thus proposes a more universalistic, multicultural understanding of Shintō, one more broadly affirming the importance of Chinese Confucianism in relation to Shintō than had typically been the norm.

Banzan extolled the *Middle Way* as the most important Confucian text related to Shintō because of its discussions of the three virtues – wisdom, compassion, and courage – therein referred to as the "utmost way." Banzan in turn paired the three virtues of the *Middle Way* with the three sacred treasures of Shintō, with the mirror exemplifying wisdom; the jewel, compassion; and the sword, courage. Banzan also claimed that what Chinese Confucianism called the way of the sages and worthies was in Japan known as the way of the divine rulers.

In one of his more detailed statements, Banzan explained Shintō in political terms, relating it to the mission of governing central to the *Great Learning* as well as to the virtues described in the *Middle Way*.

> In whatever age, Shintō consists of the ruler's virtuous actions in governing and bringing order to the realm below heaven, responding to human feelings, and transforming things according to their time, place, and circumstances, thereby illuminating the virtues of wisdom, compassion, and courage. The writings that record the deeds of these spiritual rulers should be considered sacred literature.

Banzan repeatedly returned to these topics in *Accumulating Righteousness, Japanese Writings* and *Accumulating Righteousness*, *Further Writings,* and

in his other works. While an important portion of *Responding to the Great Learning*, Banzan's thinking on Shintō therein is by no means his most complete or definitive statement. It is significant insofar as it reveals that Banzan, like many Japanese political thinkers, viewed matters related to spirituality as an integral topic in any discussion of government and socio-economic matters.

Chapter 18, "Worthy Rulers Reviving Japan," soon becomes a discussion of whether Confucianism should be relied upon exclusively in a government that seeks to reinvigorate the realm. Banzan reveals, in his answer, the extent to which he meant *Responding to the Great Learning* to be an open-minded, non-doctrinaire analysis of how best to govern the realm and bring peace and prosperity to all below heaven. Despite his evident leanings toward Confucianism, Banzan explains that Japan can best be revived when wise rulers lack selfishness and partiality in governing, and draw on Confucianism, Buddhism, and Shintō as they are appropriate to the problems facing the country.

In explaining this further, Banzan warns against the six infirmities of the mind, each an expression of selfishness and partiality, that contribute to misgovernment of the realm, hampering Japan's vitality. The six infirmities are (1) promoting one's own views without considering those of others, (2) being reluctant to seek the advice and insights of others, (3) being partial in relation to Confucianism, Buddhism, or Shintō, (4) being inclined to rewards and punishments, (5) being obsessed with material wants and sexual passion, and (6) being too narrow-minded in searching for men of talent and ability.

In one of his few metaphysical remarks in *Responding to the Great Learning*, Banzan suggests that a realm well governed without selfishness and partiality is one wherein the way of humanity assists the creative processes (*zōkū*) of the universe. In this instance, Banzan draws, it seems, not from the *Great Learning* but instead from the *Middle Way*, sections 30–33, the final ones in that text. There, Confucius is described as one who harmonized with heaven above and merged with water and land below, and so was himself comparable to heaven and earth. In *Responding to the Great Learning*, Banzan imagined that the ruler without selfishness and partiality was such a person, embodying the very highest levels of sagacity and sincerity and so, like Confucius, could lead the realm in assisting heaven and earth in guiding the creative processes therein. However, if channels of communication were closed and these creative

processes obstructed, Banzan warned that heavenly disasters and earthly eruptions would follow, as well as illnesses and diseases. With the latter, Banzan warned, upheaval and chaos would not be distant.

Chapter 19, "Governing with Education," notes that schools have a political role insofar as they teach the way of humanity integral to governing the realm and bringing peace and prosperity to all below heaven. Within the school system that Banzan envisions, the shogun, daimyō, and other government leaders play important roles in cultivating learning about the way of humanity and compassionate government. The shogun is especially important given his prestige and authority. Banzan suggests that with just a few words of praise for learning, the power of the shogun is such that he can transform the entire realm.

In addition to the way of humanity, schools should teach culture and military arts. Banzan outlines a detailed curriculum primarily though not exclusively for the sons of samurai, assigning subject matter for various age groups as appropriate to the seasons of the year. The subjects range from reading and writing to literature, mathematics, ritual behavior, hunting, horsemanship, and archery. By systematic instruction of samurai youth and others, led ultimately by the shogun himself, Banzan hoped to provide the realm with an educated elite whose cultural and practical knowledge fully qualified them for the socio-political status that hereditary right otherwise conferred upon them.

While the *Great Learning* also outlines a program of education, it is more centered on the imperial person than the people at large. Its assumption is that through his self-cultivation and refinement, the entire realm might be transformed by extension. Banzan modifies this view, suggesting that the shogun and the samurai elite are the crucially effective figures in the educational transformation of the realm. Also, while the *Great Learning* succinctly explains the emperor's education in terms of rectifying the mind, making thoughts sincere, investigating things, and extending knowledge, it provides few specifics beyond that terse curriculum. However, it must be admitted that in the *Book of Rituals*' sixteenth chapter, "Records on Education," a locally based school system and curriculum of instruction corresponding with the age of the students and the seasons of the year is outlined. Though hardly the same as Banzan's, it was likely the model that Banzan followed in outlining his thinking about government through education. Banzan's discussion of schools and their curricula is, of course, detailed in a manner appropriate to the time, place, and circumstances of his day.

Responding to the Great Learning: *A Synopsis*

Chapter 20, "Those Who Should Teach in Our Schools," suggests that rather than allow Buddhists to teach in the schools, the best course would be to have children from the Kyoto aristocracy and cultured families therein educated so that they might in turn be sent out into the countryside to serve as the teachers at schools established in the domains and provinces throughout the realm. The result would be a countrywide broadcast of the educational sensibilities and refinement of the imperial capital, in the form of teachers. By suggesting that imperial progeny, aristocratic sons, and scions of cultured families serve as teachers in the domains and provinces, Banzan was proposing what might be called a return of the aristocracy to the countryside, in an erudite and civil capacity, as the counterpart to his proposal that samurai be returned to the countryside to work alongside the agrarian peasantry.

Chapter 21, "A Little Kindness Provides Benefits," discusses alternatives to Banzan's ideal, realization of compassionate government and the grand project for growing wealth, that might serve to alleviate matters in the here and now for people at large. Banzan, willing to offer an expedient for the present, returns to his proposal that rice, pegged at 50 units of silver per *koku*,[113] be recognized as a currency suitable for use in all commercial transactions. Rather than allow extreme fluctuations in the price of rice, Banzan advocated government involvement in the market, buying up rice in years of abundance to maintain the 50 units of silver valuation per *koku*, and selling the earlier purchased surplus in years of poor harvest to keep the population fed and prices from skyrocketing. By calling for active market intervention, Banzan hoped to prevent wild swings in the price of rice, even while ensuring that in years of plenty rice did not go to waste and that in years of poor harvests, there was plenty available to avert hunger and starvation. As a stopgap solution, Banzan's proposal fell short, as he recognized fully, of solving all the glaring problems of the day, and in no way approximated, to his admitted regret, the benefits of full realization of compassionate government.

Chapter 22, "Wasted Rice and Grain," returns to Banzan's earlier discussion of the unnecessary loss of large quantities of rice and the wild fluctuations in the price of rice given the market as it then existed. In discussing the enormous loss of rice, Banzan makes the frequently cited remark, that Japan had more debt than all the gold and silver in the entire

[113] Although the rates varied, one unit of silver, known as a *me* or *ginme*, was the equivalent of 3.75 grams. Generally, 1 *koku* of rice was worth approximately 50 *me* in silver. However, in years of abundance, the price would plummet, and in years of scarcity, it would escalate.

country could possibly pay. Banzan's solution to the problem of waste and market fluctuations amounts to a recapitulation of many of the key ideas in the previous chapters, including using rice as currency in transactions, setting the value of rice at a fixed rate, and conducting business transactions without preferring gold and silver over rice. Also, Banzan proposes extended time for repayment of debts, ending saké brewing, reducing the population of Edo, and reductions in the amount of rice shipped and possibly lost at sea in the process. These and other administrative measures, such as ensuring that talented and capable individuals are given positions in government and that their counsels are heeded, comprise Banzan's final recommendations.

Translation of *Responding to the Great Learning*

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