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Introduction

The story of Zhu Shunshui 朱舜水 (1660–1682) in Japan is well known: émigré from China who settled in 1660, and from 1665 onwards spent the remainder of his life in Edo, in service to Tokugawa Mitsukuni 徳川光圀 (1628–1701) as teacher and advisor, assisting with the implementation of Confucian teachings and ritual in Mito and also Kaga domains. Much has been written about Zhu's activities and legacy in Japan, but for purposes of this article, the focus will be on how Zhu himself perceived the nature of Confucian knowledge and study as it existed in China, in particular as revealed by what he said was lacking or wrong in how it was understood and practiced in Japan. This study forms part of a wider investigation of what Zhu's writings reveal about the culture and practice of Confucianism in China and Japan, and the quite different ways it manifested in both places.⁽¹⁾

1 The reader may wish to consult two previous articles on Zhu Shunshui, which explore related themes and include background also relevant here: Robert L. Chard, "Zhu Shunshui's Plans for the Confucian Ancestral Shrines (*Zongmiao* 宗廟) in Kaga Domain," *Tōyō Bunka Kenkyūjo Kiyō* 東洋文化研究所紀要 (*Memoirs of the Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia*) 164 (2013), pp. 21–52; and Chard, "Patterns of Confucian

The focus here will be more on understanding Confucianism as a cultural phenomenon (or cultural phenomena) rather than as a system of thought. It will be argued that what Zhu has to tell us about Confucian learning is pertinent to the overall problem of how we approach Confucianism and understand what it really is. A substantial proportion of the scholarly project to account for Confucianism works through the disciplines of philosophy and intellectual history, treating it as a body of teachings and values. Such study has been fruitful, and there is no denying the wealth of Confucianism throughout the history of East Asia as an intellectual tradition of many strands. However, it is my view that we need to pay more attention to the fact that Confucianism elicits a degree of commitment and devotion among its adherents that is in many respects akin to religious belief, especially in China, and that this cannot be satisfactorily explained solely in reference to the content of Confucian teachings. There were Confucian ‘believers’, and for purposes of the current study the real question is not *what* they believed, but rather *how* they came to believe what they believed, the enculturation, or conditioning (to risk using a potentially negative term), that they received. How was Confucianism acquired? To examine this, it is necessary to take into account the wider cultural context: patterns of learning and education; visible and public conformity to norms of speech, manners, and behaviour; and of course the overwhelming influence of the civil service

Cultural Transmission as Reflected in the Self-Perception of Zhu Shunshui in Japan,” *Tōyō Bunka Kenkyūjo Kiyō (Memoirs of the Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia)* 166 (2014), pp. 1–38. For the date of Zhu’s settling in Japan as being in 1660 (rather than the usually-stated 1659) see “Zhu Shunshui’s Plans,” p. 27 and “Patterns of Confucian Cultural Transmission,” pp. 16–17, following the argument in Zenan Shu, “Cultural and Political Encounters with Chinese Language in Early Modern Japan: The Case of Kinoshita Jun’an (1621–1698)” (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 2009), pp. 119–21.

examination system. No comprehensive account of the entire picture is possible here, but a look at Zhu's comments on Chinese and Japanese learning, and an account of their background and context, allow the formulation of a few observations on wider patterns of Confucian transmission, primarily in China, but also elsewhere in East Asia.

It should be stressed that the approach used in this article will be closely text-based and empirical, telling the story through a small selection of voices (mainly Zhu's) to tell the tale. It will be analytical, rather than theoretical, coming to grips with Confucian transmission as described by the people involved with it in their own terms, mostly Zhu himself, augmented by one voice from outside, that of the Portuguese Jesuit Álvaro Semedo (1585–1658).

Zhu Shunshui on Confucian Learning Gone Wrong

We begin with a few typical examples to highlight the tenor of Zhu's comments on what he thought was wrong with Confucian learning in Japan, and in China. In the case of Japan, he frequently observed that conditions were ripe for a Confucian transformation, and that, given the right conditions, this could be achieved very swiftly. The main stumbling block was the lack of Confucian schools, and what he describes as an incorrect understanding of the nature of learning, and the lack of commitment to study.

One of Zhu's most trenchant statements appears among his written conversations with Oyake Seijun 小宅生順 (1637?–1674), the Mito Confucian sent by Mitsukuni to Nagasaki in the summer of 1664 to find Zhu, assess his qualities, and invite him to take service under Mitsukuni in Edo. In one of their first exchanges, Seijun speaks in glowing terms of the spread of Confucianism in

Japan: 'In recent generations, Confucian ways (*jufū* 儒風) have grown daily more prevalent in our country,' his evidence being that teachers and their students wear Confucian garb (the 'long garment', Ch. *Shenyi*, J. *shin'i* 深衣). Zhu rejects this assertion in stark terms, pointing to deficiencies in Japanese learning:

Your honoured country is magnificent in its mountains, rivers, and people, vast in land area, with an abundance of products. With the exception of my poor land, there is no match for it anywhere. However, it is deficient in civil (or non-martial) teachings (*wenjiao* 文教); this truly is a matter of everlasting regret (*shi wei wandai zhi kexi* 實為萬代之可惜) ... And dividing the practice of study (*weixue* 為學) and self-cultivation (*xiushen* 修身) into two separate forms of righteousness – this is something your servant understands even less. [You say] 'Confucian ways have grown daily more prevalent' – I make so bold as to ask: how many people have actually achieved equal excellence in both learning and conduct (*xue xing jianyouzhe jihen* 學行兼優者幾何人)? How many have actually produced writings that crown a generation?⁽²⁾

A comment to Seijun during a later conversation adds to this:

Your honoured country follows entirely the wrong path in study (*dushu shen*

2 The most complete record of Zhu's conversations with Seijun is that left by Seijun himself, the *Saiyū shuroku* 西遊手録, postface dated the eleventh month of 1664, included in Shōkōkan'in 彰考館員 comp., *Shu Shunsui kiji zanroku* 朱舜水記事纂錄 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1914), p. 2. An abridged version of this also found its way into Zhu's collected works, including the current passage: see *Zhu Shunshui ji* 朱舜水集, Zhu Qianzhi 朱謙之 ed. and comp. (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1981), p. 404.

fei qi dao 讀書甚非其道). Composing poetry cannot be said to be study, but not only that: even practising the Learning of the Way (*daoxue* 道學, i.e., Neo-Confucianism) cannot be said to be study. But the instant I say this, most are furious.⁽³⁾

A few years earlier Zhu had expressed similar views, somewhat more gently, to the Japanese Confucian Andō Seian 安東省庵 (or 省菴, 1622–1701),⁽⁴⁾ in a letter written in late 1659 during Zhu's final trip to China. Explaining why Japan had never had a sage like Confucius, Yan Hui, or the sage kings Yao and Shun, he says:

The only reason for this is precisely that [the Japanese] do not study (*zheng yi bu xue zhi gu er* 正以不學之故耳). Not studying, they maintain impropriety as propriety (*zhi fei li yi wei li* 執非禮以為禮), and subvert unrighteousness to masquerade as righteousness (*xi bu yi yi chong yi* 襲不義以充義). Even those of highest wisdom tolerate such error, not to mention their inferiors. There are three reasons why these defects occur. Lofty and prideful, vainly self-assured, they find it shameful to seek out those beneath themselves; this is the first reason. Those in Japan are dissatisfied with their station, those in

3 *Saiyū shuroku*, p. 13. This exchange is not reproduced in Zhu's collected works.

4 Personal name Morinari 守約, a man of samurai class who held office as domain Confucian scholar in Yanagawa, supported Zhu financially during the years he lived in Nagasaki, and became Zhu's student. For more details on Zhu's interactions with Seian see Robert Chard, "Patterns of Confucian Cultural Transmission," pp. 14–18. A brief biography of Seian may be found in Komoguchi Isao 孤口治 and Okada Takehiko 岡田武彦. *Andō Seian, Kaibara Ekiken* 安東省庵・貝原益軒. Tokyo: Meitoku Shuppansha, 1985.

China attempt to seek out others' faults to win victory in verbal disputes; this is the second reason. Foolishly deluded by other traditions (i.e., Buddhism), [the Japanese] hope to gain something which is obviously not true, with no regrets even in old age and death; this is the third reason. With all three blocking the way within, how can they advance in their studies?⁽⁵⁾

In another letter to Andō Seian he says:

The ministers and officials of your honoured country esteem the wise and capable; this is plain to see. Your honoured country has always venerated books (*jing shu* 敬書), but up to now there has never been anyone truly able to study (*wei you zhen neng dushu zhi ren* 未有真能讀書之人), so toward what can they direct this veneration? To say that your honoured country does not love study because you esteem martiality is absurd (*wei guiguo zhong wu bu ai dushu, wang ye* 謂貴國重武不愛讀書者，妄也). If you, sir, engage in study and cultivation of virtue (*dushu xiude* 讀書脩德), then at home you will bring glory to your parents, and above you will carry out the will of your lord and ministers. Is this not precisely the task of the Great Man (*dazhangfu* 大丈夫)?⁽⁶⁾

In the end, these statements tell us rather less about Japan than they do about China. And, Zhu was critical of study and learning in China as well. An important example of this is his oft-repeated narrative of the decline of Confucian learning

5 Zhu Shunshui ji, p. 170.

6 Zhu Shunshui ji, p. 178. The 'Great Man' is one who conducts himself with dignity and supports virtuous rule, as defined by Mencius (*Mencius* 3b.2).

at the end of the Ming. He alludes to this in a letter to Andō Seian as a negative example to show Japan the correct way to follow by doing the exact opposite:

China was lost in recent times, and it was lost because of the ruin of the Sagely Teachings (*shengjiao zhi huifei* 聖教之隳廢). When the Sagely Teachings were abandoned, this opened the way to a headlong race for immediate gain, and the culture of propriety, righteousness, and shame died away. Could they have avoided doom even if they had wanted to? If you understand how China was lost, then you will know how the Sagely Teachings can flourish.⁽⁷⁾

In what follows, we take a closer look at the different strands of Zhu's criticisms, which reveal important aspects of the intense cultural immersion which underlay the transmission of Confucianism in China. From such a cultural perspective, we can see that the transmission of Confucianism was quite different in China and in Japan, for all that they studied the same canonical texts, employed the same discourse, and displayed a similar level of dedication. This cultural transmission took place against very different socio-cultural backgrounds: in China one which exerted pervasive pressure to conform to the educational and behavioural dictates of Confucian learning from early childhood; and in Japan another in which the visible Confucian presence was relatively small. This shows how Zhu, coming from a typical gentry-class background (*shidafu* 士大夫, in his own terminology) in the Lower Yangtze region in the late Ming, made it inevitable that he would react in the way that he did to the more purely scholastic

7 *Zhu Shunshui ji*, p. 183.

tradition of Confucianism in Japan.

Zhu Shunshui's Conception of Confucian Learning – basic themes

‘Learning’ and ‘Confucianism’: Definitions

If we are to make sense of Zhu's conception of Confucian learning on his own terms, it is only prudent first to take note of the terminology he himself used to describe ‘learning’ and ‘Confucian’.

In the case of ‘learning’, it is not surprising to find *xue* 學 by itself or in various combinations figuring prominently. *Xue* denotes the actions of studying and learning, and at the same time includes the knowledge and skills that one acquires through study, hence the English ‘learning’ seems a reasonable equivalent. Zhu deploys a fair number of compounds with *xue*, which include *xuewen* 學問 (‘learning’, or as a verb phrase ‘to engage in learning [and ask questions]’),⁽⁸⁾ *wenxue* 問學 (‘to learn’),⁽⁹⁾ *weixue* 為學 (‘engage in study’), *xueye* 學業 (‘the enterprise/process of study’),⁽¹⁰⁾ *haoxue* 好學 (‘be studious’, ‘fond of learning’),⁽¹¹⁾ *xueshu* 學術 (‘the arts of learning’),⁽¹²⁾ *jiangxue* 講學 (‘to teach or lecture’),⁽¹³⁾ and *wenxue* 文學 (‘literary learning’, in which Zhu explicitly did not

8 For example, in *Saiyū shuroku*, p. 4; *Zhu Shunshui ji*, p. 406. Here and below the examples cited are illustrative, not intended as an exhaustive list.

9 Xu Xingqing 徐興慶 comp., *Xinding Zhu Shunshui ji buyi* 新訂朱舜水集補遺 (Taipei: Taiwan Daxue Chuban Zhongxin, 2004), p. 277.

10 *Zhu Shunshui ji*, p. 111.

11 *Ibid.*, pp. 108, 117.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 111.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 85.

include what we would think of as 'literature', such as poetry and *belles lettres*).⁽¹⁴⁾ He frequently also uses *dushu* 讀書 ('to study', 'to study writings') in much the same sense as *xue* and its compounds. Sometimes he uses terms which connote effort and application, such as *yonggong* 用功 ('study hard', 'apply oneself to study') and *moli* 磨勵 (lit. 'grind and polish' or 'work with great intensity').⁽¹⁵⁾

Then there is 'Confucian' and 'Confucianism'. In a general way we know what we mean by these English terms, and understand that they are imperfect equivalents to Ru 儒 and compounds formed with Ru in both literary and modern Chinese. Zhu does in fact use Ru to denote a Confucian scholar (for example *da ru* 大儒 as a 'great scholar'),⁽¹⁶⁾ and employs compounds such as *rujiao* 儒教 ('Ru teachings'),⁽¹⁷⁾ *rujia* 儒家 ('the Ru school'),⁽¹⁸⁾ and *ruzong* 儒宗 ('the original Ru authority')⁽¹⁹⁾ to mean something like 'Confucianism'. However, he uses Ru much less frequently than he does compounds with *sheng* 聖, such as *shengxue* 聖學 ('sagely learning'),⁽²⁰⁾ *shengren zhi xue* 聖人之學 ('the learning of the sages'),⁽²¹⁾ *shengxian zhi xue* 聖賢之學 ('the learning of the sages and the wise'),⁽²²⁾ *shengjiao* 聖教 ('sagely/sage's teachings'),⁽²³⁾ *shengdao* 聖道 ('Way of the sages'),⁽²⁴⁾

14 *Ibid.*, p. 265.

15 *Ibid.*, pp. 98, 107, 239, and 277 respectively.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 87.

17 *Ibid.*, pp. 56, 58, 98.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 249.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 406, *Saiyū shuroku*, p. 4.

20 *Zhu Shunshui ji*, pp. 66, 76, 169.

21 *Ibid.*, pp. 312, 411, 412.

22 *Ibid.*, pp. 175, 187, 202.

23 *Ibid.*, pp. 92, 183, 312.

24 *Ibid.*, pp. 181, 253, 406.

shengxian zhi dao 聖賢之道 ('the Way of the sages and the wise'),⁽²⁵⁾ *shengxian daxue zhi dao* 聖賢大學之道 ('the Way of the Great Learning of the sages and the wise'),⁽²⁶⁾ and other similar combinations. It would be precipitate to claim that *sheng* has definitely religious connotations, but I would argue that this terminology clearly reflects a typically Confucian reverential attitude on the part of Zhu towards the ancient sages, their teachings, and their texts, one that is fundamentally the same as that of a religious believer.

Learning as moral cultivation

According to Zhu Shunshui, one of the most important characteristics of Confucian learning is that textual study and moral cultivation should be integrated. As we have already seen, he mentions study (*dushu* 讀書) and moral cultivation (*xiushen* 修身) together, and expresses to Oyake Seijun his strong disapproval that Japanese Confucians have separated the two.

This idea comes up again in a later conversation with Seijun. Seijun has mentioned a problem with some of the people teaching Confucian texts in Japan, who have abandoned the Song-dynasty commentaries in favour of using modern, easily-understood speech to explain the texts. Though their analyses flow smoothly and are quite long, Seijun complains, their 'feet are not on the ground' (*bu bu bu you shidi* 步步不由實地), and he has long been troubled by this defect (*bi* 弊). Zhu concurs:

When engaging in study, there should be practical effect (*shi gong* 實功) and

25 *Ibid.*, pp. 110, 176, 178.

26 *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 394.

practical application (*shi yong* 實用). It is not just poetry and songs that have no benefit for study. Those who in their words and sentences seek to display the new and unfamiliar – we may doubt whether they actually are great Confucians (*da ru* 大儒), whether they have anything to do with the governance of the realm, or whether they are able to transform the customs of the common folk. You, sir, are thoroughly aware of these defects (*bi* 弊). Do not tread the same path! If you are truly able to combine the practice of study and moral cultivation into one (*yi weixue xiushen he er wei yi* 以為學修身合而為一), then the [Song-dynasty] commentaries of Cai [Chen] 蔡 [沈], Zhu [Xi] 朱 [熹], and Hu [Anguo] 胡 [安國] will be entirely sufficient for tracing the sages and wise men of the past...⁽²⁷⁾

Zhu takes a somewhat different tack elsewhere, in a document he purports to have written in 1657 during his stay in Vietnam, and posted up for the edification of officials and artisans there. Here he says it is unusual for one person to achieve equal attainment in book learning and cultivation:

By and large, there are two sorts of Confucian (Ru 儒) in China. One is called the gentleman of learning (or ‘scholar’, *xueshi* 學士). He knows much of the words and deeds of the past, but his moral conduct may not entirely reach the appropriate standard. This is what Han imperial edicts refer to as ‘Having comprehensive knowledge of the ancient canons, broad in

27 *Saiyū shuroku*, pp. 3–4; *Zhu Shunshui ji*, p. 406. Cai Chen, Zhu Xi, and Hu Anguo were the Song-dynasty commentators Seijun had identified as those most commonly consulted in Japan at the time for study of the *Yijing* and *Shijing* (Zhu Xi), the *Chunqiu* (Hu), and *Shangshu* (Cai).

knowledge with a consummate command of drafting documents' (*yantong fendian*, *boxue hongci* 淹通墳典, 博學宏辭).⁽²⁸⁾ The other sort is called the gentleman of goodly wisdom (*xianshi* 賢士). He devotes himself exclusively to moral cultivation and personal conduct (*xiushen xingji* 修身行己), but his literary talents may not be entirely adequate. This is what Han imperial edicts refer to as 'wise, good and foursquare, filial and fraternally devoted, assiduous in the fields' (*xianliang fangzheng*, *xiaoti litian* 賢良方正, 孝弟力田).⁽²⁹⁾ Rarely can anyone combine the two. For those who can, humanity, righteousness, ritual propriety, and (moral) intelligence will accumulate within, and respect, reverence, and mild refinement are expressed externally (*gongjing wen wen fa hu wai* 恭敬溫文發乎外).⁽³⁰⁾ Such a one is truly the most precious treasure to a nation...⁽³¹⁾

28 Neither of these phrases actually seems to appear in Han-dynasty edicts as preserved in the *Shi ji*, *Han shu*, or *Hou Han shu*, and the designation *Hongci* 宏辭 seems not to occur until the Tang period.

29 These terms do appear many times in Han-dynasty imperial edicts, e.g. *Hanshu* 漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1962) 4.116, 6.174. All seem to have been descriptive to begin with, but later become formal titles referring to the status of those recommended for office in various capacities, especially for remonstrating with the emperor (*Xianliang Fangzheng*), or different grades of local leaders (*Xiaoti* and *Litian*).

30 This appears to be an allusion to the 'Wen wang shizi' 文王世子 section of the *Li ji*, regarding the effects of training in ritual propriety and music (*li yue* 禮樂): 'Ritual propriety and music combine within, and are expressed externally (*fa xing hu wai* 發形於外); thus in their completion he feels joy, and becomes reverent and mildly refined (*gongjing er wen wen* 恭敬而溫文)', *Li ji zheng yi* 禮記正義 (Wuyingdian 武英殿 edition of 1739, scan of woodblock print accessed on Chinese Text Project) 20.15a.

31 *Zhu Shunshui ji*, p. 26. For the overall background of this passage, see Chard, "Patterns of Confucian Cultural Transmission," pp. 7-9.

Zhu also frequently uses the phrase *xuexing* 學行, 'learning and cultivation' or 'study and conduct', for example saying that people 'do not combine study and conduct' (*xuexing bu jian* 學行不兼, in this case referring to the defects of Chinese people in Japan), or praising Andō Seian because his 'study and cultivation are both superior and worthy of esteem' (*xuexing ju chaochao zu shang* 學行俱超超足尚).⁽³²⁾

The integration of book learning and moral cultivation is clearly important to Zhu, and for someone situating himself within the Confucian tradition this is hardly surprising. But, in concrete terms, what did this mean, and how did he think it should be achieved?

The Acquisition of Confucian Learning

We turn now to Zhu's statements on the process of learning itself: how it should be acquired, and what content is to be studied and learned. Not surprisingly, he argues that a key element in study is determination and hard work. He specifically denies that anyone, even a sage like Confucius, is born with knowledge:

As far as [the idea of] Confucius being a sage and having knowledge at birth is concerned, throughout his life he never said anything about knowledge at birth. All he ever spoke of was gaining knowledge through study, as when he said such things as, 'I love antiquity and seek it assiduously' (*hao gu min qiu* 好古敏求), 'When I study I am never satiated' (*wo xue bu yan* 我學不厭),

32 Zhu Shunshui *ji*, pp. 170 and 84.

and 'They do not love study as I, Qiu, do' (*bu ru Qiu zhi haoxue* 不如丘之好學).⁽³³⁾ From this we can see the method by which the sage(s) taught others (*shengren jiao ren zhi fa* 聖人教人之法). The error of Lu Xiangshan 陸象山 (Lu Jiuyuan 陸九淵, 1139–1192) and Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472–1529) is perfectly evident from this.⁽³⁴⁾ Whether in China or your honoured country, they should not be taken as models.⁽³⁵⁾

Zhu makes seemingly contradictory statements on the level of effort required. He praises men like Andō Seian for their extraordinary diligence, but elsewhere says that study itself is not difficult, and that the benefits of learning – both for individual attainment and for the transformation of society – will quickly make themselves felt. In a letter to Yano Hō'an 矢野保菴 he says:

I once heard my teacher say that it is not the practice of study that is difficult; rather it is setting one's will to do it (*lizhi* 立志) that is difficult. Once one's will is firmly set, then nothing, hot and cold, light and dark, poverty and wealth, safety and danger, rising and descending, success and frustration, can deprive you of it. If so, can there ever be one who fails in learning?⁽³⁶⁾

Related to this is Zhu's oft-repeated assertion that the Japanese 'do not study'

33 Quoting (and paraphrasing) from *Lunyu* 7.20, 7.2, and 5.28.

34 Zhu objects to the idea of innate moral knowledge as taught by Lu and Wang, the main proponents of the School of Mind (*xinxue* 心學).

35 *Zhu Shunshui ji*, p. 166.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 86.

(*bu xue* 不學), 'do not like to study' (*bu hao xue* 不好學), or 'do not know how to study' (*bu zhi xue* 不知學). As he tells Andō Seian, if only they would study, the benefits would come quickly:

The Japanese are superb in disposition and highly intelligent in basic nature, but it is a shame that at high levels and low [in society] none know how to study. You cast it aside and in your refined customs ignorance is esteemed. My only fear is that one of wisdom will never be born amongst you. If there should be such a one, customs will be transformed, and there will no difficulty in proceeding swiftly to the Way of the Great Learning of the Sages and the Wise (*shengxian daxue zhi dao* 聖賢大學之道).⁽³⁷⁾

Such a statement is neither new nor surprising within the Confucian tradition; obviously it is derived from the argument expressed by Mencius long before: it is not a matter of whether one *can* do it, but rather whether one *does* do it.⁽³⁸⁾

What, then, does Zhu say about what content he expects people to study, and how they should study it? Of course this includes the study of texts, and writing. He advises different people to study different Confucian texts, and in one case explains this by saying that different people need different texts in the same way that patients need different medicines, according to the nature and severity of

37 This is from Andō Seian's record of his written conversations with Zhu; see Andō Seian comp., *Shinsō shūgo* 心喪集語, ms. reproduced in *Andō Seian shū: ei'in hen* 安東省菴集——影印編, Part II, in *Yanagawa bunka shiryō shūsei* 柳川文化資料集成 2.2 (Yanagawa: Yanagawa-shi, 2004), p. 355a.

38 *Mencius* 1a.13.

their illnesses. In one case he recommends the Four Books (*Sishu* 四書), the *Daxue* 大學 above all; for someone else he recommends Zhu Xi's *Xiaoxue* 小學.⁽³⁹⁾ In the case of Andō Seian he advises beginning by reading broadly in the Five (Confucian) Canons (*wujing* 五經), then narrowing down to specialized expertise in one canon, and finally concentrating on just those passages in that canon which are most helpful. Studying enormous amounts of material, even ten thousand books, without adequate understanding is of no benefit.⁽⁴⁰⁾

When Zhu speaks of studying texts, he usually means the Confucian canons, though he also recommends historical texts such as the *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑 of Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019–1086) for its practical value.⁽⁴¹⁾ Practicality is something he frequently stresses, so much so that some have proposed that he was a follower of the Practical Learning (*shixue* 實學) school, which in a general way at least is certainly plausible.⁽⁴²⁾ One consequence of his emphasis on practicality is his opposition to artistic writing without practical value, such as poetry, on the grounds that this was an impediment to true Confucian learning. He says, for example, that Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072) was the most skilled

39 *Zhu Shunshui ji*, p. 67.

40 Written conversation transcribed in Xu Xingqing 徐興慶 comp., *Xinding Zhu Shunshui ji buyi* 新訂朱舜水集補遺 (Taipei: Taiwan Daxue Chuban Zhongxin, 2004), p. 189.

41 *Zhu Shunshui ji*, pp. 256, 274.

42 See Julia Ching, “The Practical Learning of Chu Shun-shui (1600–1682),” 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. 189–229. My own view is that his pragmatic approach makes it difficult to establish a tie to any particular strand of Confucianism: he speaks both positively and negatively of Zhu Xi, for example, depending on whether he believes him right or wrong on a particular point.

writer of his age, and yet never reached any deep attainment in Confucian learning (*wei chang shen de yu shengxue* 未嘗深得於聖學).⁽⁴³⁾ He advised his Japanese students not to practice such forms of writing.⁽⁴⁴⁾ He also opposed formulaic writing such as the ‘Eight-legged Essay’ (*baguwen* 八股文), which people mastered solely for success in the examinations, and associated it with the deterioration of Confucian learning and the fall of the Ming, as described further below.

The Physical and Visible Dimension of Confucian Learning

Further comments by Zhu on how canonical texts and their teachings should be mastered introduce a dimension of physicality, with mention of the body. This is in part a description of whole-hearted practical implementation, but clearly extends also to physical training, of the sort defined by *li* 禮, as described in canonical texts, particularly sections of the *Li ji*. This is where the significance of Zhu’s insistence on the moral training inherent in Confucian learning starts to become clearer. In his above-cited statement advising Andō Seian to narrow down the focus of his textual studies, he goes on to say:

And further, the emphasis should be on practical application (*zhong zai jianlü* 重在踐履), what we call vigorously putting it into practice with one’s body (*shenti er li xing zhi* 身體而力行之). Otherwise, it is of no use.⁽⁴⁵⁾

In his first letter to Andō Seian in 1659, he also says:

43 *Zhu Shunshui ji*, p. 66.

44 *Ibid.*, p. 257.

45 Written conversation with Andō Seian in Xu, *Xinding Zhu Shunshui ji buyi*, p. 189.

The world hears nothing of taking humanity, righteousness, ritual propriety, and music as venerated teachings, much less transforming oneself bodily by them in speech and action (*yanxing er shen hua zhi* 言行而身化之).⁽⁴⁶⁾

The result of such cultivation becomes visible in words and actions, as we have already seen in Zhu's above-cited statement to the Vietnamese officials in which he correlates inner moral attainment with outer manifestations: 'Humanity, righteousness, ritual propriety, and (moral) intelligence will accumulate within, and respect, reverence, and mild refinement are expressed externally' (*gongjing wen wen fa hu wai* 恭敬溫文發乎外).⁽⁴⁷⁾ However, Zhu is emphatic that the external manifestation should never be an end in itself, as he explains to Seian:

In the practice of learning, there is no benefit in cultivating one's reputation externally (*wai xiu qi ming zhe wu yi ye* 外修其名者無益也). One must vigorously practice with one's body (*bixu shenti li xing* 必須身體力行), and only then does one achieve something.⁽⁴⁸⁾

In a reply to one Kiriya Chiki 桐山知幾, who seems to have written to Zhu inquiring about undertaking Confucian learning, he says:

In learning it is essential to seek it within; it has nothing to do with fashioning an external appearance (*xue xu nei qiu, bu zai mao qu ye* 學須內

46 Zhu *Shunshui ji*, p. 170.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 26.

48 Xu, *Xinding Zhu Shunshui ji buyi*, p. 201.

求，不在貌取也). Most people in recent generations do nothing more than fashion an external appearance to dazzle the world. There are none who seek genuine advancement in learning.⁽⁴⁹⁾

Such an emphasis on the internal, and warnings not to focus on the external, are consistent with Zhu's overall attitude toward the external forms associated with Confucianism. For his Japanese interlocutors, establishing correct external forms was a distinct priority. They frequently ask him for instructions on the design of such items as the 'long garment' (*shenyi* 深衣), the temple to Confucius, ancestral shrine buildings, ritual vessels, and coffins.⁽⁵⁰⁾ Zhu, while he does provide them with the technical advice they need, often reminds them that this is not what is really important (as he tells Seian, 'More urgent is to recite the words of [the sage-king] Yao, and put into practice the actions of Yao').⁽⁵¹⁾ Clothing and buildings in the Japanese style will do just as well.⁽⁵²⁾

However, this does not mean that he disregards the external; quite the opposite, especially the observance of manners in behaviour and speech. Such external manifestations are reflections of internal attainment, and the outer and

49 *Zhu Shunshui ji*, p. 87.

50 The temples are discussed in Chard, "Zhu Shunshui's Plans for the Confucian Ancestral Shrines (*Zongmiao* 宗廟) in Kaga Domain." Other specific Confucian ritual forms will be the subject of a forthcoming article.

51 *Zhu Shunshui ji*, p. 178.

52 He tells Oyake Seijun that he would not want the Japanese to change their forms of dress, *Saiyū shuroku*, p. 2; *Zhu Shunshui ji*, p. 404. He advises that Confucian ancestral shrines in Japan use Japanese building styles, rather than trying to reproduce Ming architecture; see *Zhu Shunshui ji*, p. 483, and the discussion in Chard, "Zhu Shunshui's Plans," p. 49.

internal attainment should go together. This is very much in line with the Confucian view of *li* 禮 as both moral and physical training, in which punctilious observance of external forms arises out of genuine inner feelings and dedication,⁽⁵³⁾ and Zhu frequently expresses his views in terms of *li*. He echoes Confucian views on education generally, saying that the first stage of education in schools should be training in *li*, so that pupils acquire a sense of social order before moving on to the study of texts.⁽⁵⁴⁾ In a letter of uncertain date to an unnamed correspondent, Zhu says the following:

For the young children of the junior generation, if they do not yet know 'the discipline of sprinkling and sweeping, when to advance and when to withdraw' (*sa sao jin tui zhi jie* 灑掃進退之節),⁽⁵⁵⁾ and have not yet attained the ways of loving their parents and respecting their elders, then if we engage in minute analyses and debates on the [philosophical] interfaces of Heaven and Humankind, Principles vs. Desire, Duty vs. Profit, and Public vs. Private, then even if they do not flee in haste, they will become

53 This is an issue which has attracted attention from scholars on early Confucianism; one of the most 'physical' interpretations is the chapter 'Masters of the Dance' in Robert Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven: Philosophy and the Defense of Ritual Mastery* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), pp. 30–41.

54 For a discussion of training in *li* as a standard part of traditional Chinese education, see Patricia Ebrey, "Education Through Ritual: Efforts to Formulate Family Rituals During the Sung Period," in William Theodore De Bary and John W. Chaffee eds., *Neo-Confucian Education: The Formative Stage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 277–306.

55 An allusion to *Lunyu* 19.12.

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despondent.⁽⁵⁶⁾

Zhu also speaks of the physical performance of rituals, such as the *shidian* 釋奠 sacrificial offerings to Confucius, as a skill studied and perfected by Confucians (Ru 儒). This appears in a letter when he praises Hattori Kichū 服部 其衷 (dates unknown), a young pupil of his from Kaga 加賀 domain, with no more than ordinary achievement in book-learning, but one who had in a short time reached an extraordinary level of skill in ritual performance:

When it comes to the particular discipline of rehearsing rituals, however, there is not a single person in the arena who comes out ahead of him. Not only that, not even Confucians who have studied ritual for many years can match him (*ji duonian xue li zhi ru, yi wu you neng ji zhi zhe* 郎多年學禮之儒，亦無有能及之者). He performs the steps with calm, and never an error in the rite; he is not loud, lacks all arrogance, and is gentle and mild. I never thought he could reach such a level. He has a unique ability to take on that which others find difficult, and never opts for the simpler usage. If he could improve in his precision and gravity, and achieve more grandeur and appropriateness, that would be good.⁽⁵⁷⁾

It is clear that Zhu did not reject the external, physical, and visible aspects of Confucianism. He only objected to using them in false and empty display, at the

56 Zhu Shunshui *ji*, p. 112.

57 Zhu Shunshui *ji*, pp. 329–30, modified from the translation in Zenan Shu, “Cultural and Political Encounters with Chinese Language in Early Modern Japan: The Case of Kinoshita Jun’an (1621–1698),” D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 2009, p. 179.

expense of inner improvement. Genuine Confucian learning and moral cultivation manifested through the punctilious observance of *li* 禮 was praiseworthy, and, conversely, one could judge a person's Confucian attainment through their observance of *li*. This becomes even more apparent in his narrative on the breakdown of Confucian learning in the late years of the Ming, in which he identifies a failure of *li* – non-observance of appropriate social etiquette – as a key symptom.

The Decline of Confucian Learning

Zhu more than once attributes the fall of the Ming to a widespread moral breakdown among the scholar-gentry class (the *shidafu* 士大夫), a group in which he includes himself. We have cited one example of this already, when Zhu tells Andō Seian that the Ming fell because of the ‘ruin of the Sagely Teachings’ (*shengjiao zhi hui fei* 聖教之隳廢).⁽⁵⁸⁾ In a letter to Akashi Gensuke 明石源助 written in 1661, he speaks specifically of the decline in ritual propriety (*li* 禮) as the cause, or a sign, of the fall of the Ming:

When my hair was still bound in the twin knots [of childhood], I saw that whenever my late father interacted with [others] of the gentry (*shidafu* 士大夫), his garments and cap were invariably smart and formal, his speech cultured and sophisticated, and his movements – advancing, withdrawing, and polite exchanges – all were stately and cultivated. All the signs of this time were of an age of peace and prosperity, most worthy of admiration. After that, the gentry became fond of abbreviating and omitting usages, and

58 Zhu Shunshui *ji*, p. 183.

disliked speaking of ritual propriety, regarding it as something detestable, calling it the 'Way of Kings' (*wang dao* 王道). When they said 'Way of Kings', they were not venerating it; rather they were appropriating the name as a term of rejection. In less than twenty years, the nation had fallen.

The year before last, when I went to Xiamen to answer the summons of the National Surname (Guoxing 國姓, i.e. Zheng Chenggong 鄭成功), I saw that his generals and his officers, along with the gentry-officials residing there, were all frivolous and self-satisfied, rejecting the teachings of ritual propriety (*lijiao* 禮教) as antiquated and old-fashioned. It was clear that their enterprise was bound to fail. Though I had only just completed a journey of ten thousand *li*, I returned without casting a single spear. And, very unfortunately, they indeed succeeded at nothing, and have now scattered to goodness knows where.⁽⁵⁹⁾

Elsewhere, he speaks of the overall moral degeneration of Confucian learning, which he believes went hand-in-hand with the increasingly formulaic nature of the examinations and rampant corruption among the gentry:

The Ming court appointed men by examinations, assessing the level of their writing. At first, the regulations were strict, but after several decades the founder's original intent in establishing the examination grades was lost. The officials overseeing the examinations reached their posts through the contemporary writing style (*shiwen* 時文, i.e., the 'eight-legged essay', *baguwen* 八股文); the examiners likewise selected men according to the

59 *Ibid.*, pp. 82–3.

contemporary writing style. All strove to outdo each other in displays of novelty and beauty in literary expression, drawing nothing from original sources. When fathers trained their sons, and teachers their pupils, all were on an endless hunt for flowery phrases. They buried their heads in study and recitation, and called it literary composition, but achieved no more than whitened hair. Plundering [the works of others] was their skill, and high status their ambition. Who any longer knew the true meaning of study (*dushu zhi yi* 讀書之義)? Since they did not know how to study, the door was opened to headlong competition; the culture of modesty and shame was lost. Official posts were obtained with money, administration conducted by bribery. By then, what did anyone know of loyalty to sovereign, love of country, and dedication to governing the people?⁽⁶⁰⁾

In a written conversation with the Confucian Hitomi Yūgen 人見友元 (other names Chikudō 竹洞, Kakuzan 鶴山, 1638–1696), he links the failure to follow the true emphasis of Confucian learning with factionalism at court:

In the Great Ming there were two factions. One was all the masters of the Learning of the Way (*daoxue* 道學, or ‘Neo-Confucianism’). The more cunning among the men who [only] composed writing (*wenzhang zhi shi* 文章之士) joined them, though in reality they were only keeping one foot in each camp and watching which way the wind blew, adopting this strategy for purposes of self-advancement. The other faction were all the gentlemen of examination success. They had no real learning at all, and as soon as they

60 *Ibid.*, p. 1.

achieved their examination degrees they displayed a jealous hatred of the other [Neo-Confucian] gentlemen's lofty [philosophical] discussions of human nature and inborn destiny (*xing ming* 性命). Once they assumed power, they sought every possible means to drive out the Learning of the Way, and the men who composed writing went over to their side. As I always say, the loss of the Ming was not because the barbarian caitiffs possessed the might to conquer it. Rather, it was the examination graduates (*jinshi* 進士) who drove it [to extinction]. The examination graduates were able to overturn the whole of the world-empire – it was the eight-legged [examination] essay which brought about this destruction.⁽⁶¹⁾

Examination success parted company with true Confucian learning as Zhu saw it. Prominent in Zhu's narrative is the deviation from the correct nature and purpose of writing. We can append here one brief mention by Zhu of what he thought writing should be, which, not surprisingly, was in accordance with Confucian learning:

Writing (or literary composition, *wenzhang* 文章) assists the ruler in the propagation of [Confucian] teachings to the world (*shijiao* 世教), so it is essential to ensure that it accords with righteousness and accords with ritual propriety (*he hu yi, he hu li* 合乎義, 合乎禮), and harmonizes with the feelings of people in their myriads. It should not seek to ingratiate merely one or two [readers].⁽⁶²⁾

61 *Ibid.*, p. 390.

62 *Ibid.*, p. 205.

Zhu's ideal vision of Confucian learning finds its converse at the end of the Ming. The integration of learning with moral cultivation, and the bodily expression of Confucian attainment through strict observance of ritual propriety, all were (according to him) abandoned, with disastrous consequences.

Buddhism

There is one final theme that comes up frequently in Zhu Shunshui's writings on Confucian learning: the negative influence of Buddhism. Though he seems to have interacted on a cordial basis with Chinese and Japanese Buddhists, and wrote a polite letter to at least one of them decrying the ill will between the two creeds and blaming it largely on the Confucians,⁽⁶³⁾ he is in the main decidedly hostile to Buddhism, regarding it as a rival and key impediment to the spread of Confucianism in Japan. He sets out one of his clearest narratives on the inimical effects of Buddhism on Confucian learning in one of his letters. According to him, Confucianism had disappeared (*sheng xue yi ji miexi yi* 聖學亦既滅息矣) by the early Song dynasty. The influence of Daoism (Huang Lao Zhuang Lie 黃老莊列) and the 'Hundred Schools' (*zhuzi baijia* 諸子百家) had played a part in this, but:

And yet, for laxity bordering on the vulgar, and obvious absurdity, these were not the worst. The most pernicious by far were the words of those Buddhists. The likes of Fotudeng 佛圖澄 (d. 348 CE), Kumārajīva (334–413), Bodhidharma (fifth–sixth century), Huineng 惠能 (638–713), Zhi gong 誌公

63 See Zhu's letter to the Japanese monk Dangai Gensho 斷崖元初 in *ibid.*, pp. 62–3.

(Baozhi 寶誌, 418–514), and Sheng gong 生公 (Daosheng 道生, c. 360–434) were in the end able to bend the hearts of the entire world. Intelligent and stupid, noble and base, good and bad – all were ensnared by their arts, ending in extreme tragedy. There were the great men of the Song dynasty – Han Weigong 韓魏公 (Han Qi 琦, 1008–1075), Fan Xiwen 范希文 (Fan Zhongyan 仲淹, 989–1052), Fu Zheng gong 富鄭公 (Fu Bi 弼, 1004–1083), Wenlu gong 文潞公 (Wen Yanbo 文彥博, 1006–1097) – all renowned for their achievements, glorious throughout the world, yet even they were unable to be rid of [Buddhist influence], and went along with the tenor of the times.

Only with the arrival of Zhou Dunyi and the Cheng brothers was true Confucian learning restored, for the first time since Mencius.⁽⁶⁴⁾

Zhu clearly felt that Buddhism was a significant barrier to the spread of Confucianism in Japan. During his conversations with Oyake Seijun in 1664, when Seijun proposed that Zhu come to Edo as a Confucian teacher, Zhu offered two reasons for declining. One was his own unworthiness, as a result of the degradation of his own Confucian learning during the many years of disruption in his life. The second was the pervasive and deeply-ingrained influence of Buddhism. As he put it, ‘The perverted teachings have penetrated deeply into the marrow of their bones (*xie jiao shen ru gusui* 邪教深入骨髓); how can this be cleared away all at once?’ Seijun protests that the influence of Confucianism in Edo was on the rise, with the support of *daimyō* and officials. One sign of this was the Confucius temple established there (presumably that of the Hayashi family in

64 Letter to Ōgushi Jirōzaemon 太串次郎左衛門, which contains a long discussion of study and learning; *ibid.*, p. 66.

Shinobugaoka 忍岡, at which the *shidian* 釋奠, J. *sekiten*, sacrifices to Confucius were held in spring and autumn). Zhu proclaims his own delight and astonishment at this good news, and says that he had been completely misinformed about this throughout the twenty years he has been in Japan.⁽⁶⁵⁾

When Zhu arrived in Edo the next year, however, his own assessment was considerably at odds with Seijun's optimistic claims, as he explains in a letter to his Chinese friend Dai Mangong 戴曼公 (or Dokuryū Shōeki 独立性易, 1600–1672) on the situation as he found it when arriving in the capital:⁽⁶⁶⁾

Dongwu 東武 (Edo) has a population of one million, yet those who are in name Confucians (*ruzhe* 儒者) number only seventy or eighty. If you include the women [in the population figure], this means one Confucian for every twenty thousand people. And, there is no guarantee that any of them are not also Buddhists. Even among this seventy or eighty they divide themselves into groups and sects, riven with jealousy and vain boasting. Hoping for the rise of Confucian teachings (Rujiao 儒教) is not much different from growing hair on a turtle or horns on a rabbit. Expecting to refute Buddhism under such circumstances is like a gnat trying to shake a mountain.⁽⁶⁷⁾

As he puts it elsewhere:

65 *Ibid.*, p. 407; *Saiyū shuroku*, p. 5.

66 Dokuryū had taken ordination as a Buddhist in order to be allowed to settle in Japan, but was from a background rather similar to Zhu's. See the substantial entry in Ōtsuki Mikio 大槻幹郎, Katō Shōshun 加藤正俊, and Hayashi Yukimitsu 林雪光 comps., *Ōbaku bunka jinmei jiten* 黄檗文化人名辞典 (Kyoto: Shinbunkaku Shuppan 思文閣出版, 1988), p. 322.

67 *Zhu Shunshui ji*, p. 58.

...I am Confucian, but the entirety of Japan is Buddhist (*buning ru er Riben biandi fo* 不佞儒而日本遍地佛). The breath from saying the Buddha's [name] will send me flying into the air; the spittle that moistens the Buddha will drown me.⁽⁶⁸⁾

Zhu's oft-stated objection to Buddhism is that it deludes people with colourful, arcane teachings, and is of no practical benefit. As he tells Seijun:

The benefit of our Way (Confucianism) is like that of hemp and cotton, beans and grains – wear it and you will not be cold, eat it and you will not go hungry. Their perverted teachings are nothing like this. They preach mysteries and marvels, spinning tales like flowers raining from the sky (*tianhua luan zhui* 天花亂墜). In a thousand years, in ten thousand years, no one will ever be able to see it. These 'enlightened ones' they speak of – everyone just falls into the same trap again and again; there is not a syllable of truth in it. What a pity that countless intelligent people have been deceived by them! It is truly a great tragedy.⁽⁶⁹⁾

A final point to mention is that Zhu's perception of an opposition between Confucianism and Buddhism (in which view he was obviously following in a long tradition) implies that he understood a similarity or equivalency at some level. Those people Zhu thought should be Confucians, and also those further down

68 *Ibid.*, p. 268.

69 *Ibid.*, p. 407; *Saiyū shuroku*, p. 5.

the social hierarchy who he thought should be beneficiaries of Confucian government, were being led astray by false Buddhist teachings. Both traditions had material characteristics and manifestations which took similar forms and could function in similar ways, for example canonical texts, rituals, temples, and clothing. In the context of this article, one could say that these manifestations on both sides were religious in nature, however much their followers' own interpretations might have differed, and they competed for converts on this basis.

We can find evidence for this in a letter Zhu wrote to Seijun and his fellow Mito Confucian Hitomi Bōsai 人見懋斎 (1638–1696) about the siting of a Confucius temple planned for Mito, in which he observes that people will view and understand the temple in the same way they would a Buddhist temple, and expect it to have similar properties and powers.⁽⁷⁰⁾ Zhu saw this temple as playing a key role in Mitsukuni's effort to induce the officials and people of Mito to turn away from Buddhism, and so urged that it should be situated prominently in Mito town, rather than in the mountains as Mitsukuni had planned. One of his arguments was that forcing officials to travel a long distance to attend the sacrifices to Confucius would arouse their antipathy, and since the building had little in the way of shelter there was a risk of their becoming ill through exposure to chill winds:

If two or three people contract even a minor ailment, then in their foolish way of thinking this will readily arouse suspicion. Inevitably they will say, 'Offerings to the most sanctified Confucius cannot bring good fortune; on

70 This letter and its wider background will be examined in detail in a forthcoming study.

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the contrary they only generate disaster. Truly he lacks the beneficent response of our Buddha!

Mitsukuni was making great efforts to win Mito over to Confucianism, Zhu says, but with no more than twenty or thirty percent success; the least setback would only strengthen people's determination to serve the Buddha.⁽⁷¹⁾

Of course Zhu himself saw Confucianism and Buddhism as being entirely different, and antithetical, but at the same time he was keen to see the Confucius temple situated in such a way as to be highly visible, and compete with its Buddhist counterparts for public attention as a site of religious power.

The cultural context of Confucian transmission in China

We turn now to a wider consideration of the background of Confucian learning in China, in order to clarify aspects of the context of Zhu's views, and to offer some observations on the nature of Confucian cultural transmission. Obviously, the subjects of Confucian cultivation and Confucian education are extremely broad, and well studied in the secondary literature, so I do not propose to touch on them here unless directly relevant to a particular point. The point in this study will be to isolate a few specific strands specifically relevant to Zhu's pronouncements, with a view to improving our understanding of the actual, practical transmission of Confucian learning in China. Set against the very different social and cultural context of Confucianism in Japan, this approach will shed light on how Zhu came to think – and believe – as he did.

71 *Zhu Shunshui ji*, p. 323.

Teaching and Learning

Zhu's highest priority in his vision for Japan was the establishment of Confucian schools, like those he said were found in every prefecture and county in Ming China. Given the prosperity of the country and the native talent of its people, he claimed, this would result in a swift cultural transformation and the achievement of ideal Confucian government.⁽⁷²⁾ But what, in practical terms, would go on in such schools?

We can begin with accounts of how Zhu himself taught his younger pupils, which presumably would have replicated the way he himself had been taught in childhood. The first of these students was Shimokawa Sansei 下川三省 (born c. 1650) from the sub-domain of Ogi 小城.⁽⁷³⁾ The biographical chronology of the third lord of Ogi, Nabeshima Mototake 鍋島元武 (1662–1713, r. 1679–1713), records the following under the year 1687:

[Sansei] was summoned by Lord Naoyori 直頼公 (Mototake's original name), who asked about his studies, and learned that from the age of fifteen Sansei had been sent to Nagasaki, and assigned to [Shu] Shunsui (Zhu Shunshui), in order for him to advance in his studies.⁽⁷⁴⁾ Night and day he

72 A typical example of what he says about this may be found in a letter to the Kyoto Confucian Kinoshita Jun'an 木下順庵 (1621–1698), *Zhu Shunshui ji*, pp. 200–01. His mention of Confucian schools throughout Ming China may be found in a series of questions and answers between Zhu and Hotomi Yūgen, *Zhu Shunshui ji*, p. 391.

73 For a detailed study of Sansei see Shu Zenan 朱全安, 'Hanju Shimokawa Sansei no tōyō ni miru Ogi-han kangaku kyōiku no tansho 藩儒下川三省の登用にみる小城藩漢学教育の端緒,' *Chiba Shōdai kiyō* 千葉商大紀要 52.1 (2014), pp. 47–63.

74 Sansei had been discovered by Mototake's father, the second lord of Ogi,

studied Chinese pronunciation (*ka'on* 華音), at first facing the books to read them out loud, afterwards reciting them from memory with his back to them. Whenever he was lax, he received a warning blow in the middle of the back.⁽⁷⁵⁾

Another of Zhu's students was Asaka Tanpaku 安積澹泊 (1656–1738), who later achieved fame as a domain scholar in Mito and close advisor to Mitsukuni. Some of his recollections of intense study with Zhu are preserved:

When I studied with Master Bunkyō 文恭先生 (Zhu Shunshui's posthumous name), I was still in my youth. The only texts I learned to read were the *Xiaojing* 孝經, *Lunyu* 論語, and *Xiaoxue* 小學 line by line. Master Bunkyō taught strictly. Each day he would transmit to us no more than fifteen, sixteen, or twenty lines. I would then withdraw and repeat them two or three hundred times, and always ensure that my recitation came readily to my lips before halting. Whenever tired I would doze, with never a thought for anything else. Of [Zhu's] learning and his Way, I heard nothing at all. What I remember to this day is only reading the texts out loud in Western (i.e. Chinese) pronunciation (*sai'on* 西音), entirely because of the discipline of

Nabeshima Naoyoshi 鍋島直能, 1623–1689, r. 1654–1679; see Shu, 'Hanju Shimokawa Sansei no tōyō ni miru Ogi-han kangaku kyōiku no tansho.' Naoyoshi was on good terms with Zhu, and in 1660 interceded with the Nagasaki commissioner to grant Zhu permission to settle permanently in Japan.

75 *Naoyoshi-kō go-nenpo* 直能公御年譜, in Saga Kenritsu Toshokan 佐賀県立図書館 comp., *Sagaken kinsei shiryō* 佐賀県近世史料 vol. 2.1 (Saga: Saga Kenritsu Toshokan, 2009), p. 813.

the daily lessons.⁽⁷⁶⁾

A useful comparison may be drawn from an entirely different source, the account of China by the Portuguese Jesuit Álvaro Semedo (1585–1658), who was in China from 1613 to 1636, and again from 1644 to his death in 1658.⁽⁷⁷⁾ He published his book on China in 1642.⁽⁷⁸⁾ His account of Chinese education

76 *Bun'en idan* 文苑遺談, in Seki Giichirō 関儀一郎 comp., *Kinsei Juka shiryō* 近世儒家史料 vol. 2. (Rpt. Tokyo: Iizuka Shobō 飯塚書房, 1976), p. 33 (*kan* 2); the passage is also reproduced in *Zhu Shunshui ji*, p. 825. The translation here is slightly adapted from Zenan Shu, “Cultural and Political Encounters with Chinese Language in Early Modern Japan,” p. 175.

77 See the entry in L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang eds., *Dictionary of Ming Biography, 1368-1644* vol. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), pp. 1157–9.

78 Semedo's book on China was first published in Spanish translation as Alvaro Semedo, *Imperio de la China i cultura evangelica en el por los religiosos [sic] de la Compañia de Iesus. Compuesto por el padre Alvaro Semmedo de la propia Compañia... ; publicado por Manuel de Faria i Sousa...* (Madrid: Impresso por Iuan Sanchez en Madrid: a costa de Pedro Coello, 1642). An Italian version was published in 1643. The English translation, which is the version cited here, is F. Alvarez Semedo, *The History of that Great and Renowned Monarchy of China, Wherein all the Particular Provinces are Accurately Described: as also the Dispositions, Manners, Learning, Lawes, Militia, Government, and Religion of the People. Together with the Traffick and Commodities of that Countrey* (Printed by E. Tyler for I. Crook in London, 1655). It is said to be a translation of the Italian version. Many more copies of the English version seem to survive than the original Spanish or the Italian, which may mean that it ultimately circulated more widely. The publisher was at pains to stress the comprehensiveness of the work, evident in the long English title, the book's reliability (the author had resided twenty-two years in China; the translator is described as a 'person of quality'), and its usefulness ('to satisfy the curious, and advance the Trade of Great Britain'). The preface, titled 'The Epistle to the Reader', appears to have been written specifically

contains striking points of similarity with what Zhu says and how he taught. Semedo's accounts are quite detailed, and include matters which Chinese sources might take for granted and never mention. At the start of the chapter on education ("Of their manner of study, and admittance to examination"), he says:

They are put to learn from their tender age. They have for beginners certain little bookes, containing good rules and precepts of virtue, good manners, obedience to their parents and superiors, or some such like matter. A few months after, they give them *Classicall* books, which they get all by heart, both the *Text* and the *Glosse*, as perfect as we do our *Pater Noster*. After this, commeth the Masters explanation. They say their lesson likewise by heart, the Scholars back being turned toward the master with the book lying open upon the table, and they use no other phrase for saying their Lesson, but only *Poixú* (transcription of *bei shu* 背書), which signifieth, to turn their back upon the book, and this is done, that they might not cast their eies upon it to help themselves. They are kept to their studies with so much rigour, (even

for this English edition, rather than translated from the Italian. The author Semedo is described as a man who lived in China, at court and the major cities, and was 'a diligent observatory of all their customs and manners', and, having learned Chinese, was 'a great student of their Histories, and Writings.' His book had already been translated into other European languages and was known in many countries, so it should 'no longer be concealed to a Nation [i.e. Britain], either for curiosity of knowledge, or industry of foreign commerce, no way yielding to her neighbours.' The preface also stresses how different the Chinese are from Europeans; the account combines 'the truth of History' with 'the delight of a Romance'. And, in many moral virtues the Chinese are said to be superior to Europe, and now that Christianity has arrived China will reach an even higher state of perfection.

the youngest of them) that they are allowed no manner of recreation or divertisement.⁽⁷⁹⁾

The next stage is training in calligraphy, which they do by tracing characters on a thin piece of paper laid over a sample of the schoolmaster's writing. Semedo stresses the necessity of good calligraphy, because: 'In their examinations, where their compositions are copied, it is sufficient to have their *Grace* denied, if there be but found one ill-shapen letter, before their exercise be read; they presuming; that no man can be learned, if he read or write ill...'

The next stage is practice in literary composition:

Next; when the *Chinenses* have learned a good quantity of their letters, and have some acquaintance with their books, they are instructed in the rules of composition. First, they give them some disordered compositions, which they are to reduce into order; then some abbreviations for them to enlarge upon, and afterwards in due time they give them only the point or Theme; in like manner they do, in their examinations. And because every three years the most approved compositions of those, who have taken degrees, are put in print, others take great paines in them, and get as many of them by heart as they are able.⁽⁸⁰⁾

There is also a very useful account of training in ritual propriety:

79 Semedo, *The History of that Great and Renowned Monarchy of China*, pp. 35–6. The original words and spellings are reproduced here to convey the flavour of the original, but not the long 's'.

80 *Ibid.*, p. 36.

They have no *Universities*, where they study together; but all, that are able, take a Master into the house for their sonnes, and sometimes two, if there be much difference between their childrens ages. This Master is always with them without any interruption, and teacheth them not only *letters* and *sciences*, but whatsoever concerneth *Civill government*, *good manners*, *moralitie*, and the way how to carry themselves in every thing. If they are persons of *Quality*, the Scholar never goeth abroad without his Master, who serveth to instruct him in all *Civilities*, and good behaviour; particularly in visits; where, as there are many *ceremonies* used, there is something of difficultie; and they might easily commit an error, if their Master did not help them. And without doubt, this way is most decent for their reputation, and more profitable for their studies, and lefte exposed to those venomous practices and company, which are apt to teach them such customs, as infect their minds; and spoile the *Decorum* of a *Gentleman*; and much more in China, where, if anyone have this evill fame, he cannot be admitted to examinations.⁽⁸¹⁾

Boys of lower status are taught in schools. Semedo claims that the masters in the schools take much more responsibility for the development of the boys than their counterparts in Europe, would never take on too many students, and the schoolmaster 'is with them all the day long, behaving himself with much gravitie,

81 *Ibid.*, pp. 36–7. Household tutors of the sort described here were held to be lower in status than schoolmasters, at least in the Song period; see Pei-yi Wu, "Education of Children in the Sung," in De Bary and Chaffee eds., *Neo-Confucian Education: The Formative Stage*, pp. 319–20.

neither do they go out of the school, unlesse it be at meales.' Semedo speaks admiringly of the intensity of teaching and training:

Their play-daies and time of *vacation* are only fifteen daies at the beginning of the new year, and some few daies in the *fift* and *seventh* moon; and as there are there no *Holy-daies*, they make all the rest of the year an un-interrupted application to their studies. So sensible are they of this truth: That it is necessary to take very great paines to bee learned; and, that seldome anyone passeth with the reputation of a knowing man, without much labour and industrie.⁽⁸²⁾

Semedo also notes that when the young men are grown and their schooling completed, it was common for the extended family to pool resources to hire a master to spend time with all the young men in turn. It was also common practice not to allow their study to take place in the students' own homes, for fear that this would be too comfortable and familiar an environment for them to be able to study effectively.⁽⁸³⁾

Two larger points emerge from both Zhu Shunshui and Semedo. First, learning in late Ming China was intensive, to an extent that favourably impressed Semedo, and which left a deep impression in the memory of Asaka Tanpaku. Intense memorization of canonical texts was a standard feature of traditional Chinese education, of course, and this is well known, but we should take note of the fact that it was striking to both a Japanese Confucian and a Western Jesuit,

82 Semedo, p. 37.

83 *Ibid.*, p. 37.

and to consider the implications. Second, both Zhu and Semedo describe an emphasis on manners, deportment, and morality in addition to book learning. Semedo's account of the master who accompanies his pupil wherever he goes, and ensures no lapse in manners, recalls Zhu's account of his father's punctilious command of formal etiquette in deportment and speech, which no doubt was acquired in similar fashion. The emphasis on ritual propriety in Chinese education throughout the imperial period is also well known, but needs deeper analysis within the context of the cultural transmission of Confucianism.

The Social Dimension of Confucian Learning

In both Zhu's writings and in Semedo's account, we see the social dimension of Confucian learning and cultivation in China: members of the gentry (*shi* 士) class knew that the expression of their Confucian attainment was visible in society and would be observed and judged. This attainment was thus an aspect of their public persona, an essential part of the display of high culture that they used in acquiring status and navigating their way through society. Confucianism was not the only component of this display, of course; it might include anything from poetry composition, calligraphy, and painting to antique collecting, fine residences, and gardens. However, there can be no doubt that mastery of the Confucian textual canon was a dominant element in the mix, not least since it was an essential precondition for success in the examinations and social advancement.

We see here an elite segment of society – the *shi* 士 – within which everyone was on display, where children were conditioned from birth on how to perform in the family and outside, where males received a Confucian education in which training in manners was an essential part, and where youths were at risk of

ruining their reputations and prospects for advancement by not conforming to elaborate rules of etiquette. All of this would have produced an environment of great social pressure. This is evident in the intense and immersive education described by Asaka Tanpaku and Semedo, which integrated book learning, moral standards, and manners. The pressure was of course not entirely negative; there was also the allure of spectacular success in the examinations. Such was the nature of the environment in which Zhu Shunshui's attitudes and beliefs were formed, and clearly it was an environment quite different from that of the Confucians in Japan.

Conclusions

In view of the above, we finish with an overall assessment of Zhu Shunshui's descriptions of Confucian learning, and determine why he was so critical of certain shortcomings in this learning in both China and Japan. Before doing this, there is one basic question to consider: to what extent were his views actually representative of the *shi* 士 class in the late Ming? A premise of the current study is that Zhu was a typical member of his class in his time and place, and that through his writings we can determine important characteristics of the cultural transmission of Confucianism in China. Is such a premise justifiable?

I believe that it is, but not without certain qualifications. To start with, it is difficult to take seriously Zhu's assertion that it was the degradation of Confucian learning among the *shi* class that was responsible for the fall of the Ming. We may wonder also about the way he sets himself apart from the vast majority of his fellow gentry, whom he accuses of being morally corrupt. I would argue that his narratives are starkly rhetorical, and conform rigidly to standard Confucian

discourse. His testimony need not be devalued on these grounds, provided we allow for his polemical slant. He was a purist with firm and idealistic views, and a certain disjuncture between the ideal and actual practice was inevitable. It seems unlikely that even a period of rampant corruption would have disrupted the overall pattern of Confucian education and familial enculturation to the extent that he describes. Semedo's account of the late years of the Ming, based on his personal observation up to 1636, certainly suggests quite the opposite. We need also to consider the likelihood that Zhu's bitter assessment of the whole of the late-Ming gentry was coloured by his own hardships, and a personal need to find an explanation for the Qing conquest, which had denied him the career success that otherwise might have come his way. His is only a single voice propounding his own values and version of events, and of course any historian must bear this in mind. However, given his unusual life experiences – above all his exposure to the very different cultures of Vietnam and Japan – we should acknowledge that his testimony is unique and valuable. His mind set and world view, however idealistic, were a product of his gentry background, and therefore sufficiently representative to tell us a great deal about the patterns of Confucian learning in China, and by extension also allow us to draw conclusions about the nature of Confucianism and its durability as a cultural force.

Zhu's comments on Confucian learning in Japan offer a useful window on the differences between the 'Confucianisms' in China and Japan. The focus of the current study is on China, and any comparative observations on Japan will be rudimentary at best. Still, consideration of the very different cultural contexts in the two places will allow us to sharpen our analysis of the Chinese case, specifically the audience to whom the visible expression of Confucian learning was displayed. These were inevitably very different as far as the presence and

function of Confucianism were concerned.

Nowhere is the contrast between the two more obvious than in Zhu's remark to his Nagasaki friend Dokuryū that there were only seventy or eighty Confucians in the whole of Edo, in contrast to Oyake Seijun's confident assertion that Confucian culture (*jufū* 儒風) was thriving there. Allowing for the two different social environments, both were right, according to their own lights. In Zhu's homeland in the Lower Yangtze, Confucians and manifestations of Confucian culture were ubiquitous, for all that they were associated with an elite culture making up only a small proportion of the general population. In Edo, Confucians were few in number, constituting only a marginal visible presence. This has obvious implications in the light of the argument on the display of the public Confucian persona proposed above. In Japan, the peer audience for this display was severely limited, lacking the critical mass found in China, which might explain Zhu's remark that the small Confucian community in Edo was characterized by jealousy and exaggerated praise. They would have pressured and encouraged one another, but society in general would not have done. There was nothing like the overwhelming weight of pervasive, universal pressure of the sort found in China.

It follows from this that the audience for the public persona, and the way in which this audience 'read' the visible expressions of the persona, were very different. In China, recognition of the manifestations of Confucian attainment were nearly universal, at least on a basic level, particularly in Zhu's native area. Most people would have recognized a scholar-official, an unemployed member of the local gentry, or a schoolteacher, as standard character types associated with Confucian learning and culture. This would not have happened in Japan. A Japan specialist would be needed to assess the general level of awareness of

Confucianism and Confucians in Edo during the 1660s and 1670s, but it is obvious that Japanese in general would have ‘read’ a Japanese Confucian’s public persona through the totality of their cultural experience, and that in most cases this ‘reading’ would draw mainly on perceptions that had nothing to do with Confucianism. Zhu was aware of this, hence his comment that people in Japan would assess the Confucius temple in Mito as an analogue of a Buddhist temple, according to whether it had the spiritual power to bring good fortune.

A man like Zhu Shunshui, whose forebears were high in status and steeped in the textual mastery and manners associated with Confucian learning, was from birth immersed in this culture, and put under great pressure to acquire and display it correctly. From the personal voice of Zhu as we have seen it above, it is apparent that for him this culture was not simply one of textual learning and impeccable manners. The texts were sacrosanct, their authority was unquestioned, and Zhu’s dedication to the entire mix of teaching and moral cultivation was very much that of a religious believer. Arriving in Japan, coming into contact with Japanese Confucians, and eventually asked to assist in the formulation of Confucian ritual forms, he expressed views on what he saw, and on how Confucian learning could be spread in Japan. It is not at all surprising that his views were strongly conditioned by the way the Confucian cultural transmission had come to him, and that he would have perceived a lack of intensity in Japanese Confucians’ approach to study, too much attention to visible forms at the expense of core teachings, and a failure to understand the moral dimension of all Confucian learning. Zhu’s experiences in Japan throw his own acquisition of Confucian culture into sharp relief. Understanding this transmission in its cultural entirety helps explain what the entire tradition of

Confucianism is, and why it achieved such remarkable durability.