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Nakamura Keiu and Samuel Smiles: A Victorian Confucian and a Confucian Victorian

EARL H. KINMONTH

IN EARLY 1868, shortly after toppling the Tokugawa house, the leaders of the new Meiji government issued a proclamation known as the “Charter Oath.” “The common people, no less than the civil and military officials,” it declared, “shall be allowed to pursue [their] own calling[s] so that there shall be no discontent.”¹ This statement implied that the new government was dedicated to dismantling the social structure of the previous regime, a structure based largely on hereditary succession. That regime had been bolstered by legal restraints on social mobility and supported by ideologues who advised that, since wealth and honor were determined only by heaven, the individual ought not to seek to alter his status.² Despite its implied commitment to reform, the new Meiji government maintained the restrictions on personal activities, especially as they applied to members of the samurai class, with little change. Samurai continued to receive their hereditary stipends and to move about, wearing the two swords that were the symbols of their membership in a hereditary ruling class. And, on all levels of society, the distribution of wealth and rank remained essentially what it had been during the last days of the Tokugawa house.

In the face of this apparent continuity, there was one early indication that Meiji Japan would not simply be Tokugawa Japan with a new set of rulers. In early 1871, members of the samurai class,³ especially government officials and educators, were lining up—even camping out overnight—to buy copies of a work that attacked hereditary wealth and power from its very first line,

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¹ Ryusaku Tsunoda *et al.*, eds., *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, 2 vols. (New York, 1964), 2: 137.

² The theme that heaven assigns wealth and honor—rank—at birth and that they cannot be changed by human effort is found throughout Tokugawa writing. For examples that had wide circulation, see “Rikuyu engi tai-i,” in *Kyōjun*, vol. 5 of *Nihon kyōkasho taikai* (Tokyo, 1969), 421; and Kaibara Ekiken, “Rakujun,” in *Kaibara Ekiken*, ed. Matsuda Michio, vol. 14 of *Nihon no meicho* (Tokyo, 1969), 251, and “Yamato zokujun,” in *Kaibara Ekiken*, 123.

³ I am using “samurai” here with full knowledge that the term was not commonly used during the period under discussion, and it did not stand for a precisely definable social category. For a cogent discussion of the problems in defining the limits of the samurai class, see W. G. Beasley, *The Meiji Restoration* (Stanford, 1972), 22–34.

“Heaven helps those who help themselves.”⁴ The book with the famous opening sentence was *Saikoku risshi hen*, a rendering by Nakamura Keiu (Masanao) of *Self-Help* by the English author, Samuel Smiles.

This initial popularity was only the beginning. Reprints of *Saikoku risshi hen* were still commercially viable as late as 1921, and new translations of *Self-Help* were produced as late as 1938.⁵ Nevertheless, the works are most intimately associated with the first decades of the Meiji era. Meiji writers who had grown up with *Saikoku risshi hen* declared that its impact on early Meiji youth was “almost beyond imagination” and that it and *Seiyō hinkō ron*, Nakamura’s translation of Samuel Smiles’s *Character*, “had a greater influence over young men in the early [1870s] than any other book of the day.”⁶ Enumerating those Meiji figures who used *Saikoku risshi hen* in their own writings, praised it, or cited its influence on their lives amounts to listing the Meiji intellectual, academic, and journalistic worlds.⁷ Early Meiji Japanese not only read *Saikoku risshi hen* but also attended plays based on its stories, studied it as a textbook, and were treated to a variety of imitations and derivative works.⁸ Commonly and quite correctly, *Saikoku risshi hen* is described as one of the “holy books” (*seisho*) of the Meiji era.

THE FIRST STEP IN ANALYZING the popularity of *Self-Help* must be an explication of its ideas and the motivation behind them. The Anglo-American tradition of writing on personal advancement has changed radically since the mid-nineteenth century. Contemporary works on self-advancement, such as Norman Vincent Peale’s *The Power of Positive Thinking* and Robert J. Ringer’s *Looking Out for Number 1*, differ considerably from their Victorian counterparts. The message of Samuel Smiles in *Self-Help*, moreover, should not be confused with that of Horatio Alger in his many novels.⁹ The earlier tradition of writing on self-culture contains more than one genre, each of which preaches somewhat different

⁴ That the readership was largely samurai is suggested both by contemporary recollections and by the language and style of *Saikoku risshi hen*; for the latter, see pages 549–54, below. For example, Ishii Tamaji has claimed that the initial readers of *Saikoku risshi hen* were largely officials and educators, and in the early Meiji period these were primarily samurai occupations; Ishii, *Nakamura Masao den* (Tokyo, 1907), 10–11. One G. Takeda reported to Samuel Smiles that “almost all the high class of our fellow countrymen know what *Self-Help* is”; Smiles, *The Autobiography of Samuel Smiles, LL.D.*, ed. Thomas Mackay (New York, 1906), 230.

⁵ For the publication history of *Saikoku risshi hen* and its derivatives, see Sangu Makoto, “‘Saikoku risshi hen’ oyobi sono ruisho ni tsuite,” *Gakutō*, 43 (February 1939): 20–25, (March 1939): 15–16.

⁶ Yone Noguchi, “A True Founder of Empire,” *Japan Times*, March 9, 1907, as reprinted in Ishii, *Nakamura Masao den*, unpaginated foldout; and Ukita Kazutami, “Educationalists of the Past and Their Share in the Modernization of Japan,” in Okuma Shigenobu, ed., *Fifty Years of New Japan*, 2 (New York, 1910): 156.

⁷ For an example of such a listing, see Mitsuhashi Takeo, *Meiji zenki shisō shi bunken* (Tokyo, 1976), 80–86.

⁸ For a list of various editions of *Saikoku risshi hen* as an ethics text, see Torii Miwako, *Meiji ikō kyōkasho sōgō mokuroku-I: Shōgakkō hen* (Tokyo, 1967), 18. Concerning plays based on *Saikoku risshi hen*, see Yanagita Izumi, *Meiji shoki honyaku bungaku*, vol. 5 of his *Meiji bungaku kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1961), 169.

⁹ Timothy H. E. Travers has noted these and other misinterpretations in his study of Samuel Smiles; Travers, “Samuel Smiles and the Victorian Work Ethic” (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1970), 211–12. For examples of such misinterpretation in the secondary literature on Japan, see Marleigh Grayer Ryan, *Japan’s First Modern Novel: Ukigumo of Futabatei Shimei* (New York, 1965), 171; and Thomas P. Rohlen, *For Harmony and Strength: Japanese White-Collar Organization in Anthropological Perspective* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1974), 202. Ryan has attributed to Smiles and *Self-Help* the advocacy of sycophantic behavior, opportunism, and materialism, and Rohlen has linked Smiles to Norman Vincent Peale.

values. *Self-Help* belongs to the “character-ethic” genre,¹⁰ in which accomplishments and advancement derive primarily from an individual’s virtues: hard work, diligence, frugality, perseverance, attention to detail, and the like. The task for the individual is to develop these virtues, upon which achievement depends. Chance has no place in this ethic. As Asa Briggs, a noted scholar of Victorian England, has observed, “There [are] no fairy god mothers or fairy god fathers in Smiles assisting the thrifty hero to find money and success as there [are] in Alger’s stories.”¹¹ Smiles’s character ethic is not immediately concerned with making money or with personal success.¹² In *Self-Help* Smiles defined individual accomplishment not as a publicly recognized increase in rank and wealth but as the achievement of something that advanced civilization in either its material or its cultural aspects. The character ethic has little to say about human relations, nor does it tell the individual how to cultivate a “success personality.” Smiles did not suggest, as did Norman Vincent Peale, that positive thinking leads to pleasure and success.¹³ The character ethic emphasizes—rather than minimizes—the difficulties, especially the hard labor, involved in any type of accomplishment.

Although ultimate responsibility lies with the individual, the character ethic does not preclude mutual aid or cooperation. Nothing demonstrates this better than the genesis of *Self-Help*, which began as a series of lectures that Smiles gave in 1845 to a mutual study group organized by young workmen in Leeds. Smiles had lived in the city for a number of years, practicing medicine and editing a Radical newspaper. When these young workmen asked him “to talk to them a bit,” he responded with a series of lectures entitled “The Education of the Working Classes.” During a subsequent career as a secretary for several railroad companies operating in the vicinity of Leeds, Smiles continued to lecture on the subject of self-help for the working class and to embroider those lectures with more examples. In 1857, at a low point in his railroad career, Smiles assembled his notes and pieces of his lectures into the manuscript of *Self-Help*. Initially, no publisher would accept it, and Smiles was forced to subsidize its publication.¹⁴ His risk was well rewarded, for, beginning in 1859, *Self-Help* started on its course, and in the next thirty years more than one hundred and sixty thousand copies were sold in England alone.¹⁵ *Self-Help* was translated into several languages, including Japanese, and in later years Smiles traveled to a number of countries (though not to Japan) where his work had been popular and received awards and acclaim. In England, W. E. Gladstone, George Eliot, and even

¹⁰ For a comparison of the “character ethic” and later American writing focused on personality, see Richard M. Huber, *The American Idea of Success* (New York, 1971), 160–63. Note that even within the “character ethic” there is considerable variation; the explanation that appears below is most applicable to Smiles.

¹¹ Briggs, *Victorian People: Some Reassessments of People, Institutions, Events, and Ideas, 1851–1867* (London, 1965), 126. For Alger in the American context, see John G. Cawelti, *Apostles of the Self-Made Man* (Chicago, 1965), 101–20.

¹² For the difference between “success” and “achievement,” see Karl Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, ed. Paul Kecskemeti (London, 1952), 236–37.

¹³ On Peale, see Huber, *The American Idea of Success*, 316–17.

¹⁴ Smiles, *Autobiography*, 131–34, 221–23.

¹⁵ Travers, “Samuel Smiles and the Victorian Work Ethic,” 333.



Figure 1: Samuel Smiles. Photograph taken from the frontispiece of Smiles, *The Autobiography of Samuel Smiles, LL.D.* (1906), published by E. P. Dutton.

Queen Victoria acknowledged Smiles and praised his works.¹⁶ After *Self-Help*, Smiles wrote four other didactic works of similar style, of which three were published: *Character* (1871), *Thrift* (1871), and *Duty* (1880). All three were translated into Japanese but only *Self-Help* through *Saikoku risshi hen* was so widely popular as to be counted as one of the holy books of the Meiji era.

Smiles's literary method was to illustrate his lessons with anecdotes. In *Self-Help* he mentioned nearly three hundred figures, ranging from Richard Arkwright to Francis Xavier and including Benvenuto Cellini, Humphrey Davy, Isaac Newton, Granville Sharp, and James Watt. Many names merely appeared in lists—"the common class of day laborers has given us. . .," "shoemakers have given us. . ." and the like. In other instances, however, Smiles devoted several pages to each model. Those to whom he gave the greatest attention were scientists, engineers, and particularly technologically innovative manufacturers. In describing such manufacturers, Smiles became most enthusiastic, styling them

¹⁶ Smiles, *Autobiography*, 224–31.

“Industrialized Heroes of the Civilized World.”¹⁷ As a trained though seldom practicing physician, Smiles had a personal and professional interest in science. He first achieved fame as an author with his biography of George Stephenson in 1857, beginning a series, *Lives of the Engineers*. Smiles took considerable pains with these biographies, doing substantial research, making extensive interviews, and giving attention to both technical accomplishments and personal attributes. These works still have value for scholars.¹⁸

Despite his veneration of technologically and scientifically creative men, Smiles did not give them extraordinary attributes, least of all genius. Instead, he claimed that “the men who have most moved the world have not been so much men of genius, strictly so called, as men of intense mediocre abilities and untiring perseverance.”¹⁹ Genius as it appeared in *Self-Help* was not raw intelligence but the ability to work diligently toward a single goal, to combine simple principles and common knowledge, and to turn them to new ends—that is, to put together what many had seen but no one had been able to use before.²⁰ According to Smiles, those of even mediocre ability could achieve by intense application and perseverance, although he did not deny talent entirely. He merely argued that talent without hard work and similar virtues would come to nothing.²¹ Smiles did not seek to reduce invention to a series of mechanical steps carried out by methodical mediocrities. He vividly and sympathetically described one Bernard Palissy, who, consumed by his experimental quest, was reduced to smashing his last, unpawned pieces of furniture to fuel one final experiment, while his wife and neighbors stood by in shocked amazement.²² Smiles’s concept of scientific creation definitely belonged to an era before the think tank and the research institute!

Inventors and innovative industrialists embodied the virtues that Smiles admired, but he claimed that the origin of those virtues was social circumstance rather than middle-class values. Over and over again *Self-Help* documents accomplishments that were achieved only after difficulties during formative years were surmounted. Smiles denied that poverty was a misfortune and claimed instead that “it may, by vigorous self-help, be converted into a blessing,” for it roused “a man to that struggle with the world in which, though some may purchase ease by degradation, the right-minded and the true-hearted find strength, confidence, and triumph.”²³ A statement such as this may be interpreted as an apology for the unequal distribution of wealth. In asserting the benefits of poverty, however, Smiles framed his statements in terms of “may.” He did not play down the hardships that rising from poverty entailed, nor did he portray ad-

¹⁷ Smiles, *Self-Help, with Illustrations of Conduct and Perseverance* (2d ed., London, 1876), 93. This version, published by John Murray, is a slightly later printing of the revised edition of 1867, which Nakamura used for *Saikoku risshi hen*.

¹⁸ Interest in these biographies is indicated by their continued republication. See, for example, Samuel Smiles, *Selections from Lives of the Engineers*, ed. Thomas Parke Hughes (Cambridge, Mass., 1966).

¹⁹ Smiles, *Self-Help*, 96–97.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, chap. 5: “Helps and Opportunities—Scientific Pursuits.”

²¹ *Ibid.*, chap. 6: “Workers in Art.”

²² *Ibid.*, 69–74.

²³ *Ibid.*, 19.

vancement as automatic. By the same token, he was not a blind and uncritical believer in laissez faire, though he shared many of its assumptions and its vocabulary. He was particularly critical of the “let alone” philosophy that resulted in contaminated food and dirty, crime-ridden cities.²⁴

While championing those of humble origins, Smiles did not celebrate uncritically all who had risen. The mere acquisition of fortune by a man born in poverty had no intrinsic value. “Riches,” he declared, “are no proof whatever of moral worth; and their glitter often serves only to draw attention to the worthlessness of their possessor, as the light of the glow-worm reveals the grub.” Disturbed that the original edition of *Self-Help* had been misinterpreted as a “eulogy of selfishness,” Smiles reworked it in an attempt to clarify his position. “It will also be found, from the examples of literary, scientific men, artists, inventors, educators, philanthropists, missionaries, and martyrs,” he wrote in the preface to this revised edition of 1867, “that the duty of helping one’s self in the highest sense involves the helping of one’s neighbors.” To support this assertion, he extensively treated a number of social activists, including such men as Jonas Hanway and Granville Sharp.²⁵

In attacking wealth, Smiles paid more attention to inherited than to first-generation fortunes. As Reinhard Bendix has aptly noted, much in Smiles’s celebration of lowly origins and his condemnation of the rich supported the claims of new wealth against established power and privilege.²⁶ His treatment of the English peerage explicitly demonstrates this distinction. Smiles observed that the English nobility, unlike Continental aristocracies, had been enriched by new blood, by men who had moved up by “the diligent exercise of qualities in many respects of an ordinary character, but potent by force of application and industry.” Men with only inherited, unearned wealth, he believed, were likely to lose their privileged positions.²⁷ Only those who resisted the corrupting effects of unearned wealth could expect to retain their social status.

While pressing the claims of the new, manufacturing elite against the privileges of the old, hereditary rich, Smiles defended industrialists against the claims of their social inferiors. Despite his concern for the workingman and his criticism of the wealthy, Smiles did not speak *for* a rising working-class consciousness so much as he spoke *to* such a consciousness. By attacking the immorality of the rich, by emphasizing the rise from poverty of his “industrialized heroes,” and by describing the qualities needed for advancement as ordinary and available to all men, Smiles made the new manufacturers into the moral leaders of the working class. The successful industrialist had arrived where he was not by special privileges or foul means but by a more diligent application of qualities that all men possess, accessible to anyone of equal diligence. When Smiles railed against “over guidance and over government,” when he asserted that “the value of legislation in human advancement has usually been overestimated,” and when he declared that “voting for one or two men once in three or five years . . . can exer-

²⁴ Briggs, *Victorian People*, 133–34.

²⁵ Smiles, *Self-Help*, 330, iv, 245–57.

²⁶ Bendix, *Work and Authority in Industry* (New York, 1963), 112.

²⁷ Smiles, *Self-Help*, 222, 203.

cise but little active influence upon any man's life and character," he carried his argument to social and political reform. Since those whom he styled "industrialized heroes" had had no need of an extended franchise and social welfare legislation, he opposed such measures; and his attitude reflected far more than simple admiration for the manufacturers' technical accomplishments and respect for their courage.²⁸

Although a "bourgeois ideologue," Smiles cannot be dismissed merely as a defender of the new industrialists. To be properly understood, moreover, his ideas must be seen in the context of mid-Victorian social thought. When he wrote *Self-Help* in 1859, aristocratic and mercantilist ideas that put small value on work and frugality were still current.²⁹ Yet Smiles had a special appreciation of labor and the laboring man. "Labor," he wrote, "is not only a necessity and a duty, but a blessing; only the idler feels it to be a curse." Work was, for him, an absolute value for people of all classes and ranks. In declaring that labor was "not inconsistent with high mental culture," he gave the workingman a greater measure of recognition and respect than many of his contemporaries did. His assertion that "there is no reason why the condition of the average workman should not be a useful, honorable, respectable, and happy one" contrasted sharply with the Malthusian view that working-class poverty and degradation were inevitable, even desirable. His words seem to justify working-class discontent and the quest for a better life.³⁰

WHEN THE JAPANESE EDITION of *Self-Help*, *Saikoku risshi hen*, first appeared as a runaway best-seller in 1871, neither the political issues nor the social classes to which *Self-Help* had been addressed existed in Japan. There was no industrial bourgeoisie to use the antiaristocratic rhetoric of Smiles and assert its own claims against established hereditary privilege. The issue of state aid and the extension of the franchise versus self-help as alternate means of aiding the working class had no meaning in Japan, which had no industrial labor force, no franchise, and no legislature. What, then, was the appeal of *Self-Help* and *Saikoku risshi hen*? For the translator, Nakamura Keiu, the chief attraction of *Self-Help* was Smiles's assertion, "National progress is the sum of individual industry, energy, and uprightness, as national decay is of individual idleness, selfishness, and vice."³¹ For Smiles this statement was an injunction against tampering with the free play of natural forces in the market place and an argument against state aid to the working class, but for Nakamura it was a formula for achieving national prosperity and security and world peace. Thus, *Saikoku risshi hen* provides a prime example of what can happen to the meaning of ideas in their transition from one culture to another.

In his preface to the first chapter of *Saikoku risshi hen*, Nakamura noted that he

²⁸ Bendix, *Work and Authority in Industry*, 112; and Smiles, *Self-Help*, 1-3.

²⁹ Briggs, *Victorian People*, 141.

³⁰ Smiles, *Self-Help*, 28, 294. For earlier attitudes, see Bendix, *Work and Authority in Industry*, 46-72.

³¹ Smiles, *Self-Help*, 3.



*Figure 2: Nakamura Keiu. Photograph taken from *Meiji shisōka shū*, vol. 13 of *Nihon gendai bungaku zenshū* (1968) and reproduced courtesy of Kōdansha publishers.*

had been asked why he did not translate a work on military affairs. Explaining that it was a mistake to believe that the strength of the West lay in military might alone, he argued that Western nations were strong because their people followed the way of heaven (*tendō*), because they had the right of autonomy (*jishu no ken*), and because they enjoyed benevolent government. As for war, no less a military figure than Napoleon, whom Smiles had cited, had declared that moral conduct (*tokkō*) was ten times more important than military might, and Smiles himself had explained that a country was weak or strong according to the character of its people. To emphasize martial virtues and military affairs would be to invite war and killing, to go against the way of heaven, which sought to have all men enjoy tranquility and happiness. The way to national strength and social benefit was, therefore, through the cultivation of peaceful virtues, respecting the will of heaven and doing good on the basis of a true heart. This was the way for the individual, the family, the nation, and the world. If men cultivated such virtues, the light of love and the wind of benevo-

lence would spread to the four seas, and clouds of affection and the spirit of harmony would envelop the universe.³²

These Confucian-sounding expectations that Nakamura Keiu tacked onto *Self-Help* did not just reflect the intellectual background that all educated Japanese of the period shared. Nakamura had been and, for all practical purposes, still was a Confucian scholar in the employ of the Tokugawa house. Born in 1832 into an ambitious peasant family that had purchased samurai status, Nakamura had early shown intellectual brilliance. At the age of ten he won a scholarship to the Shōheikō (“School of Prosperous Peace”), the official Confucian academy of the Tokugawa operated by the Hayashi family. He studied at the Shōheikō between 1848 and 1853 and, upon graduation, served the Tokugawa in various educational posts. In 1862, at the unusually young age of twenty-nine he was appointed as a full-fledged Confucian scholar at the Shōheikō. Although educated and employed within one of the more conservative academies of the period, Nakamura had early tempered his Confucian learning with a secret study of Western works that he had hidden inside Confucian texts. When the Tokugawa policy on foreign studies changed, this surreptitiously acquired knowledge served him well. In 1866, he was chosen to go to London to study English and to chaperon younger students sent abroad by the Tokugawa government.³³

The England that Nakamura confronted was virtually at the height of its power, and it was more than enough to overawe him. He later remarked that the Chinese text³⁴ he had read before leaving Japan had not prepared him to understand how such a tiny nation, let alone one ruled by a woman, could have humbled the Middle Kingdom in war. In contrast to the Chinese view of the English as fond of liquor, extravagant, and only clever with gadgets, Nakamura came to see them as exceptional. The English were ruled by a Parliament, whose members were learned; they loved heaven and revered mankind; and the workers were prudent and exercised self-restraint.³⁵ Less than a year after Nakamura had arrived in England, the Tokugawa regime was overthrown, and, after some debate, he and his charges decided to return to Japan. Before leaving, Nakamura sought advice on how he might transmit to the Japanese people the spirit he had discovered in England. In answer, one of his English friends, H. U. Freeland, presented Nakamura with a copy of the revised edition (1867) of *Self-*

³² Nakamura Keiu, “Jijoron dai-ichi hen jo,” in Ōkubo Toshiaki, ed., *Meiji keimō shisō shū*, vol. 3 of *Meiji bungaku zenshū* (Tokyo, 1967), 283–84. For an alternative source for this and the other prefaces, see *Meiji shisōka shū*, vol. 13 of Itō Sei et al., eds., *Nihon gendai bungaku zenshū* (Tokyo, 1968), 89–110.

³³ Biographical details for Nakamura’s career are largely taken from Takahashi Masao’s *Nakamura Keiu* (Tokyo, 1966). In addition, the following are useful: “Nakamura Masanao,” in *Kindai bungaku sōshō*, 1 (Tokyo, 1956): 406–58; Maeda Ai, “Nakamura Keiu,” *Bungaku*, 33 (October 1965): 61–71; Yanagita Izumi, *Meiji shoki no bungaku shisō-I*, vol. 4 of *Meiji bungaku kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1965), 250–61; and Jerry K. Fisher, “The Meirokusha” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1974).

³⁴ Nakamura specifically referred to Wei Yuan’s *Hai-kuo t’u-chih*, a geography written between 1844 and 1852.

³⁵ These comments were originally contained in an afterword appended to the first book (chapter) of *Saikoku risshi hen*; “Sho Saikoku risshi hen go,” in *Meiji keimō shisō shū*, 286. In 1876, they became the preface to a revised edition of the translation; see Takahashi, *Nakamura Keiu*, 47–49.

Help. On the way back to Japan, Nakamura—in good Confucian fashion—set out to memorize the book. Still a loyal retainer of the Tokugawa, he dutifully followed the former ruling house into exile in Shizuoka. There he returned to his profession of educator, operating the local domain school and translating *Self-Help*. The translation was a major undertaking given the brevity of his training in the English language and the difficulties of rendering the ideas of a work aimed at the British working class into terms comprehensible to Japanese, for whom many features of feudalism were more than just a memory. The first, hand-printed copies of *Saikoku risshi hen* were ready for sale early in 1871,³⁶ a remarkable achievement under the circumstances.

Nakamura's translation was only the first stage in what would be a long and productive career of intellectual and social endeavor. As early as 1868, Nakamura had demonstrated an interest in Christianity. In 1871, he addressed to the emperor a famous memorial on the subject, entitled "Gi taiseijin jōsho" ("Memorial on the Imitation of Westerners"). He noted that, although official Meiji policy promoted the introduction of Western forms generally, Christianity was not tolerated, let alone encouraged. Christianity was, however, the source of the spirit and essence of Western civilization, the ultimate base from which the wealth and power of Western nations derived. Attempting to adopt Western ways without adopting Christianity amounted to seeking the fruit of Western civilization without planting in Japan the tree that bore the fruit. Nakamura urged not only the toleration of Christianity but the baptism of the emperor himself—as a model for the people to follow.³⁷

Although he phrased his appeal in terms of national interest, Nakamura, who was baptized as a Methodist in 1874, was attracted more by the charitable and social-welfare orientation of Christianity than by its utility in the quest for national wealth and power. As early as 1871–72, he had worked with missionaries to found a school, orphanage, and "mission home" for children of mixed parentage. In 1875, he began what proved to be a five-year campaign to establish the first modern school for the blind in Japan. Nakamura was also especially interested in the proper and equal education of women, which he regarded as essential to achieving a prosperous and peaceful society.³⁸ When he founded his own academy, the Dōjinsha, in 1873, he included a separate school for women. In 1879, he merged the two, symbolizing his commitment to equal education for women. He used texts that stressed equal rights for women and encouraged political activism, a striking contrast with other contemporary institutions for women that concentrated on rationalized home economics. Appointed principal

³⁶ For a detailed discussion of the printing and financing of *Saikoku risshi hen*, see Ōkubo Toshiaki, "Nakamura Keiu no shoki yōgaku shisō to 'Saikoku risshi hen' no yakujitsu oyobi kankō," *Shien*, 26 (January 1966): 67–92.

³⁷ Nakamura, "Gi taiseijin jōsho," in *Meiji keimō shisō shū*, 281–82. This appeal appeared in three languages—English, Japanese, and Chinese—both with and without the suggestion for an imperial baptism. The version cited here is in Chinese (*kanbun*) with reference to the emperor. For the background to this appeal, see Ōkubo Toshiaki, "Kaidai," in *Meiji keimō shisō shū*, 448–49; Takahashi, *Nakamura Keiu*, 98–99; Kosaka Masaaki, ed., *Japanese Thought in the Meiji Era*, trans. David Abosch (Tokyo, 1958), 117; and A. Hamish Ion, "Edward Warren Clark and Early Meiji Japan: A Case Study of Cultural Contact," *Modern Asian Studies*, 11 (1977): 557–72.

³⁸ Nakamura, "Zenyō naru haha o tsukuru setsu," in *Meiji keimō shisō shū*, 300–02.

of the government-financed Tokyo Women's Normal School (Tōkyō joshi shihan gakkō), he tried to make it into an institution of higher, not just vocational, education for women.³⁹ A founding member of the *Meirokeisha* ("Meiji Six Society"), Nakamura was a prolific essayist on a number of subjects, including education for women, literature, and Chinese studies (*kangaku*). His official positions included a professorship at the Imperial University, counselor to the Council of Elders (*Genrōin*), and, shortly before his death, a peerage. Although the emphasis here must be on *Saikoku risshi hen* and the import of that work for Meiji society, it is of some interest to note that Nakamura's career resembled the philanthropic models Smiles celebrated in *Self-Help*. Yet paradoxically, Nakamura—with his commitment to charitable activities and his emphasis on peaceful progress—has largely been ignored by Japanese historians, who have instead sought a liberal Meiji tradition in Fukuzawa Yukichi, known to his contemporaries for his materialism, elitism, and belligerent rhetoric derived from Social Darwinism, and whose commitment to raising the status of women was never more than rhetorical.⁴⁰

On its title page, Nakamura styled *Saikoku risshi hen* in English a "translation of *Self-Help*."⁴¹ By modern standards, however, it is a paraphrase, and an incomplete one at that. Nakamura frequently cut and occasionally expanded sections of *Self-Help* with the net result that *Saikoku risshi hen* is at least 20 percent shorter than a full rendering would have been. His cutting and compression is most noticeable in those chapters dealing with industrial and artistic activities. And his fullest renderings, in contrast, cover the ethical and moral portions of the text. For example, the third chapter, on potters, is 6 percent of *Self-Help* but only 4 percent of *Saikoku risshi hen*, and the thirteenth chapter, on character, is 6 percent of the original but 10 percent of the translation. Thus, *Saikoku risshi hen* is even more an ethical text than is *Self-Help*, but not absolutely. There is still more about pottery-making in *Saikoku risshi hen* than most people, other than would-be potters, would want to know. Because of the repetition in *Self-Help* and the moderate nature of the cuts, no theme disappeared entirely in its transition to *Saikoku risshi hen*.

The interest in national prosperity and social progress expressed in Nakamura's preface to *Saikoku risshi hen* is much in evidence in the text itself. Over and over again, Nakamura inserted references to national prosperity in passages

³⁹ For this aspect of his career, see Takahashi, *Nakamura Keiu*, 161–68.

⁴⁰ I hope to be able to report sometime on this interesting historiographical issue. Here it is sufficient to note that, for all the neglect of Nakamura by Japanese historians, he was quite highly regarded by his contemporaries, who saw his influence as comparable to or greater than that of Fukuzawa. See, for example, Kitamura Tōkoku, "Meiji bungaku kanken," in *Kitamura Tōkoku to Yamaji Aizan*, vol. 6 of *Gendai Nihon bungaku taikei* (Tokyo, 1969), 135; Tokutomi Iichirō, "Kunshikoku no shin-kunshi Nakamura Keiu kō," *Kokumin no tomo*, June 23, 1891, pp. 1–6; and Abe Isoo, "Nakamura Keiu sensei," *Chūgaku sekai*, April 1, 1912, pp. 8–18. For the discrepancy between Fukuzawa's rhetoric and action with respect to women, see Carmen Blacker, *The Japanese Enlightenment: A Study of the Writings of Fukuzawa Yukichi* (Cambridge, 1964), 78–89, 157–58 n. 44.

⁴¹ *Saikoku risshi hen* exists in numerous editions. Throughout I have used Nakamura Masanao, *Saikoku risshi hen* (Tokyo, 1888). This text is based on the original 1871 version. A portion of the original (the first three chapters) is available in modern printed form: Nakamura, "Saikoku risshi hen," in Ishikawa Ken, ed., *Nihon kyōkasho taikei*, 1 (Tokyo, 1961): 8–77. Because the pagination in the early editions is unreliable, citations here take the form "chapter (book)": arbitrary section number (a number that Nakamura gave to the subdivisions of each chapter). Corresponding material from the original work follows in parentheses, where appropriate.

that he otherwise translated more or less literally. When Smiles declared that “the world” was indebted to those from “humbler ranks,” Nakamura wrote of those who “profit the world and benefit the country.” When Smiles argued that not “a single step in civilisation has been made without labour,” Nakamura added “in our country.” When Smiles condemned petty businessmen who thought only to profit themselves but praised those “businessmen of large . . . and comprehensive minds, capable of action on the very largest scale,” Nakamura rendered the compliment as “those of a ministerial spirit who think of our country.”⁴² In making such changes, Nakamura altered the text more than he distorted Smiles’s thought. As Timothy H. E. Travers has pointed out, Smiles was intensely interested in the prosperity of England.⁴³ But, whereas Smiles was content to mention the nation once at the beginning of a paragraph or chapter and thereafter to refer to society, civilization, the world, or some other transnational beneficiary, Nakamura could never let the reader forget that the country (*hōkoku*) benefited from the virtues or actions under consideration.

A potentially more serious problem for Nakamura involved the lack of Japanese equivalents for many English terms, especially those that pertained to relations between individuals and the state or between individuals and society. Nakamura’s Confucian vocabulary was not well prepared to deal with such terms as “rights,” “liberty,” and “freedom,” and at some points he resorted to parenthetical explanations and English glosses; for example, he glossed *jishu jiyū* (“autonomy” and “freedom”) as “independence.”⁴⁴ Nevertheless, he did not avoid introducing such concepts, even though they conflicted with both Confucian and samurai values. On the contrary, Nakamura went out of his way to translate and explain these terms, which he could just as well have left out of *Saikoku risshi hen*. Nakamura ascribed importance to what he called “the right of autonomy” (*jishu no ken*) held by the English people, and he stressed the role of Parliament in both his preface to and his afterword for *Saikoku risshi hen*.⁴⁵ These emphases were unusual; such issues did not become matters of wide intellectual debate until the so-called *Jiyū minken undō* (“Movement for Liberty and People’s Rights”) of the 1870s and early 1880s.

Individualism and individuality were two important concepts in *Self-Help* that were not well articulated in either the Confucian or the samurai traditions. Thus, Nakamura’s translation had to be free, not literal. When Smiles quoted John Stuart Mill from *On Liberty*, for example, to the effect that despotism is never complete as long as individuality exists and that whatever stamps out individuality is despotism, regardless of the name attached, Nakamura wrote, “Whatever form of government destroys a people’s self-reliance [“jiritsu”] must be called a tyrannical government [“kyakusei”].”⁴⁶ Although Nakamura seem-

⁴² Nakamura, *Saikoku risshi hen*, 1: 25, 2: 2, 9: 1 (Smiles, *Self-Help*, 19, 27–28, 263). “Ministerial spirit” does not refer to the clergy; *daijin no seishin* is best rendered as “the spirit of a minister of state.”

⁴³ Travers, “Samuel Smiles and the Victorian Work Ethic,” 144.

⁴⁴ Nakamura, *Saikoku risshi hen*, 1: 6.

⁴⁵ This emphasis appears in both the preface and afterword of *Saikoku risshi hen*. See Nakamura, “Jijoron dai-ichi hen jo,” in *Meiji keimō shisō shū*, 283–84; and “Sho Saikoku risshi hen go,” in *ibid.*, 286. In addition, he endorsed the idea of a representative assembly in a speech printed in the journal of the Meirokusha; see Nakamura, “Jinmin no seishitsu o kaizō suru setsu,” in *ibid.*, 300.

⁴⁶ Nakamura, *Saikoku risshi hen*, 1: 4 (Smiles, *Self-Help*, 3).

ingly limited the rather broad concept of individuality to mere self-reliance, he actually rendered Mill's meaning better than Smiles did: Smiles used this passage out of context to support his arguments against state aid to the working class. And Nakamura's translation (again really a paraphrase) of *On Liberty*, which was published in 1872 as *Jiyū no ri* ("Principle of Freedom"), shows just how interested Nakamura was in the concept of individuality.⁴⁷ Having no equivalent for the term, he used a circumlocution—"that which makes each one distinct" (*dokuji ikko naru mono*)—or equated individuality with "character" (*hinkō*), something Mill himself did. Although he abridged *On Liberty* to a much greater degree than he did *Self-Help*, Nakamura struggled to render the full range of meanings Mill attached to individuality, including "eccentricity," which became "character that is out of the ordinary, disobedient, and evil" (*kaiheki hijō no hinkō*).⁴⁸ That he sought to introduce these concepts is more significant than the difficulties he experienced. He was taken by Mill's justification of individualism in terms of national and social progress, especially Mill's explanation of European progress (in contrast to Chinese stagnation) as the consequence of the "remarkable diversity of character and culture" existing in European countries.⁴⁹ Perhaps Nakamura distorted *On Liberty* by shifting its focus from the individual to the nation. For Mill, nevertheless, individual liberty was not an absolute right but a social utility.⁵⁰ Although Mill's social focus may only have been an argumentative strategy, Nakamura no more erred in emphasizing this aspect of Mill's thought than in adding references to the nation when he translated *Self-Help*.

Contrary to what might be assumed, the absence of an articulated concept of individualism and individuality in *Self-Help* did not represent a significant problem for its Japanese translation. Smiles's definition of individualism was narrower than that of Mill: Smiles did not celebrate eccentricity and was not interested in unusual behavior for its own sake. Those whose behavior Smiles thought went against social norms he always justified by their subsequent contributions to technological and social progress. When Smiles used the term "individualism," he meant individual initiative or self-reliance, nothing more. Expressions like "energetic individualism" or "strenuous individual application" had nothing to do with either philosophical or romantic individualism and were easily translatable with conventional Japanese or Chinese terms.⁵¹ Nakamura had little difficulty in rendering literally a statement such as "steady application to work is the healthiest training for every individual ["jinmin no tenten hitori"], so it is the best discipline of the state."⁵² While emphasizing social obligations, Confucianism required the individual to perfect his own conduct and did not allow blaming society for failure. Since no traditional word for "self-help"

⁴⁷ I have used David Spirtz's edition of Mill, *On Liberty* (New York, 1975). For the translation, see Nakamura Keiu, *Jiyū no ri*, in *Jiyū minken hen*, vol. 2 of *Meiji bunka zenshū* (Tokyo, 1969), 1–84.

⁴⁸ Nakamura, *Jiyū no ri*, 52 (Mill, *On Liberty*, 63). In this passage Mill stated, "That so few dare to be eccentric marks the chief danger of the time." Nakamura translated faithfully and thus endorsed the statement.

⁴⁹ Nakamura, *Jiyū no ri*, 55–57 (Mill, *On Liberty*, 66–68).

⁵⁰ Mill, *On Liberty*, 12.

⁵¹ Nakamura, *Saikoku risshi hen*, 1: 9, 1: 24 (Smiles, *Self-Help*, 6, 18).

⁵² Nakamura, *Saikoku risshi hen*, 2: 2 (Smiles, *Self-Help*, 27).

existed, Nakamura had to coin one (*jijō*),⁵³ but its constituent traits all had equivalents: “self-culture” became *mizukara mi o osamuru*; “self-control,” *mizukara onore ni katsu*; “self-development,” *jiko no chikara ni yorite shitaru*; and so on. Emphasis on individual effort in such a context was quite traditional, part of popular Confucianism in Japan and China. And Nakamura’s vocabulary derived from this tradition of advocating a moral scorecard, like that associated with Benjamin Franklin, on which the individual recorded his own successes and failures as he strove to improve himself.⁵⁴

The samurai ethos was centered on the performance of individuals, not groups. As Ronald P. Dore has pointed out, the traditional popular literature of the warrior class celebrated the exploits of individual heroes, and pre-Tokugawa samurai had been notorious for their individual search for glory and their unwillingness to work in disciplined units. The comments of Europeans who sought to train samurai in Western military techniques indicate little change in the samurai ethos by the end of the period. Peasants were much easier to train in close order drill and disciplined group action than were the samurai. Similarly, the late Tokugawa idea of patriotism, as developed by Yoshida Shōin, among others, championed unaffiliated patriots acting independently according to each individual’s sense of right and wrong.⁵⁵ Because they insisted on their own selflessness in their service to the nation, they cannot be said to have advocated individualism. They did not, nevertheless, think of themselves as cooperating for some collective goal.

Smiles, Nakamura, and late Tokugawa activists all regarded the individual as the unit of performance. Group action versus individual action was not an issue. The men who benefited society acted independently, not collectively. Like Adam Smith’s invisible hand, the connections between individual acts and social benefit were amorphous, although individuals presumably acted morally rather than selfishly. Nakamura was content with Smiles’s statements on the subject because they fit Japanese patterns. Smiles wrote, “No individual in the universe stands alone. . . . No man’s acts die utterly; and, though his body may resolve into dust and air, his good and bad deeds will still be bringing forth fruit after their kind, and influencing generations for all time to come.” “Every act”

⁵³ The lack of a vocabulary word or phrase does not in itself point to the lack of a concept. The term *onore* (“self”) occurs very frequently in Confucian writing. Although the context in which *onore* is used often involves the suppression of the self, the continual repetition of such injunctions could not fail to call attention to the concept. Moreover, “self-help” is not an especially old English word. The earliest example given in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is 1831, used by Thomas Carlyle. Smiles could easily have borrowed the word from Carlyle. Travers has suggested, however, that the term came to Smiles from Emerson; “Samuel Smiles and the Victorian Work Ethic,” 187.

⁵⁴ For an exceptionally interesting account of this aspect of popular Confucianism, see Tadao Sakai, “Confucianism and Popular Educational Works,” in William Theodore de Bary, ed., *Self and Society in Ming Thought* (New York, 1970), 331–67. For examples of this score-keeping in samurai writing, see Udonō Chōkai, “Kanyō kōfu,” in Inoue Tetsujirō, ed., *Bushidō sōsho*, 3 (Tokyo, 1905): 263; Yoshida Shōin, “Bukyō zensho kōroku,” in *Yoshida Shōin*, ed. Matsumoto San’nosuke, vol. 31 of *Nihon no meicho* (Tokyo, 1973), 131; and Kaibara Ekiken, “Yamato zokujun,” 74.

⁵⁵ Dore, “The Legacy of Tokugawa Education,” in Marius B. Jansen, ed., *Changing Japanese Attitudes toward Modernization* (Princeton, 1965), 126; Ienaga Saburō, *Nihon dōtoku shisō shi* (Tokyo, 1955), 80; Marius B. Jansen, *Japan and China from War to Peace* (Chicago, 1974), 62; and Harry D. Harootunian, *Toward Restoration: The Growth of Political Consciousness in Tokugawa Japan* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1970), 219–45.

performed and every word uttered, he stressed, influence “not only the whole” of one’s “future life” but also “the whole frame of society.”⁵⁶ These statements sound rather like the admixture of Buddhist and Confucian precepts found in popular ethical writing of the Tokugawa era.⁵⁷ Nakamura emphasized and slightly embellished this passage by defining the “whole frame of society” as “posterity [“shison”], friends [“hōyū”], other people, and the customs of the whole [“ittai no fūzoku”].”⁵⁸ Though the language is decidedly Confucian, the message is clear, because little differentiates Smiles’s ideas from those abundant in Confucian writings. Nakamura cannot be faulted for translating “our forefathers” as “our ancestors” (*sensō*), since Smiles declared that “our forefathers still to a great extent influence us.” Smiles wrote of the “vast importance of domestic training” and asserted that “the nation comes from the nursery”; Nakamura rendered these statements as “the way of managing one household is the way of managing the country [“ikka no jihō wa tsunawachi hōkoku no jihō”]” and “public morals [“fūzoku”] are the amalgam of house customs [“kafū”].”⁵⁹ Both are reasonable approximations, if not literal translations, of Smiles’s ideas.

As this analysis shows, any characterization of Western thought as individualistic and of Eastern, specifically Japanese, thought as collectivistic would overstate the differences between the two traditions. Certainly, within Western thought there is a tradition of absolute individualism, which celebrates all individual activity—good and evil, social and antisocial—and which has no analog in Japanese thought. But, to find such absolute formulations of individualism totally divorced from social utility, one must look beyond popular moralists like Smiles and even beyond major intellectuals like Mill. Especially at the level of popular morality, the cross-cultural comparison yields not the black and white contrast of an individualistic tradition versus a collectivistic tradition but, rather, many shades of gray.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL AND NATIONAL CHARACTER described in *Saikoku risshi hen* provides the reasons behind its use as a text in lectures given to the Meiji emperor and its distribution to the public under government auspices. That relationship also explains why Nishimura Shigeki, a Confucian scholar and government official, described it as one of the most important works for en-

⁵⁶ Smiles, *Self-Help*, 363–64.

⁵⁷ Throughout the course of my research I encountered statements linking Smiles to Puritanism, Protestantism, or Calvinism. Hirakawa Sukehiro, for example, has claimed that both Smiles and Franklin shared parts of a Puritan ethos; Hirakawa, “Franklin to Meiji kōgō,” *Shokun*, July 1975, p. 229. Those who have made this linkage apparently felt that, because Smiles stressed hard work and frugality and occasionally mentioned God or heaven, he belonged to one of these overlapping traditions. Certainly, Smiles came from a Protestant background (his family was Cameronian), and he was born in the same city as John Knox. Smiles was, however, hostile to his childhood tradition. See Smiles, *Autobiography*, 27. His concept of heaven was only vaguely Christian and not at all Protestant. His orientation to this-worldly material and cultural progress is the antithesis of any of the three traditions. Indeed, the very lack of any specific Protestant coloration in his thought made it easy—and, generally, appropriate—for Nakamura to apply Confucian terminology to Smiles’s references to heaven.

⁵⁸ Nakamura, *Saikoku risshi hen*, 12: 6–7.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 12: 1 (Smiles, *Self-Help*, 361).

lightening the people and why he quoted it extensively in his own ethics texts.⁶⁰ Yet nationalism and official sponsorship cannot begin to account for the popularity of *Saikoku risshi hen* in the early Meiji period, let alone explain its staying power. Nakamura did not make explicit the audience to which his translation was directed, but the title suggests the samurai class. Almost untranslatable into English, *Saikoku risshi hen* might loosely be rendered as “Lofty Ambitions in Western Countries.” The key word is *risshi*, a term used by Mencius to mean “righteous determination for the inspiration of others.” *Risshi* as used in samurai writing was closely associated with the *shishi*, “men of high moral purpose,” as late Tokugawa activists styled themselves.⁶¹ The format and the language also suggest a samurai audience. Nakamura wrote the prefaces in Chinese (*kanbun*) and the text in a rather stiff Sino-Japanese (*bungotai*), a style similar to that used in government documents of the time. He provided no glosses for the characters, except in the case of foreign names, and no illustrations. *Saikoku risshi hen* looked very much like a serious, scholarly work, and there is no indication that Nakamura intended it to be anything else. Reading it demanded a level of literacy that was largely, if not exclusively, a possession of the samurai. Only some wealthy peasants (*gōnō*) and wealthy merchants (*gōshō*) among the mass of commoners had the necessary language skills. Although Japanese scholars have frequently associated it with the notorious robber baron, Ōkura Kihachirō, evidence linking *Saikoku risshi hen* to capitalists in general or merchants in particular is nonexistent.⁶² Recollections and documentary sources indicate that the bulk of its readers were samurai and those wealthy peasants who shared major elements of the samurai ethos and often held quasi-samurai status.

Saikoku risshi hen was most explicitly linked to samurai through the Risshisha (“Society of Lofty Ambition”), an organization formed in 1874 by disaffected samurai from Tosa. Later other samurai formed branches throughout the country. The Risshisha took its name and part of its early program from *Saikoku risshi hen*, and its original statement of purpose quotes Smiles’s assertion that “the na-

⁶⁰ For a discussion of the lectures, which were delivered by Katō Hiroyuki, later president of the Imperial University, see Kimura Kaoru, “Meiji ten’no no shinteōgakū: *Saikoku risshi hen* denrai hyaku nen o kinen shite,” in *Meiji bunka kenkyū*, 2 (1968): 85–86. For Nishimura, see Donald H. Shively, “Nishimura Shigeki: A Confucian View of Modernization,” in Jansen, *Changing Japanese Attitudes toward Modernization*, 207. And, for modern editions of Nishimura’s ethics texts, see Miyata Fumio, ed., *Dōtoku kyōiku shiryō shūsei*, 1 (Tokyo, 1969): 89–116. On official and quasi-official sponsorship of *Saikoku risshi hen*, see Maeda Ai, “Meiji risshin shusse no keifu,” *Bungaku*, 33 (April 1965): 13.

⁶¹ Concerning the *shishi*, see Marius B. Jansen, *Sakamoto Ryōma and the Meiji Restoration* (Stanford, 1971), 95–104. For a good example of *risshi* as defined by a *bakumatsu shishi* (one who was executed for his activities), see Hashimoto Keigaku (Sanai), “Keitōroku,” in Inoue, *Bushidō sōsho*, 588–89.

⁶² Most Japanese scholars have simply cited the popularity of *Saikoku risshi hen* without considering who could read it and who did read it. Those who have gone further have usually linked it to Ōkura on the basis of a single statement in which Nakamura recorded a gift of appreciation from him. See Asukai Masamichi, “Keimō shugi minken ron nashyonarizumu,” in *Kindai Nihon shakai shisō shi I* (Tokyo, 1973), 86–87; and Kosaka, *Japanese Thought in the Meiji Era*, 115. Although Ōkura may have been inspired by *Saikoku risshi hen*, it was far more likely that he was trying to improve his image by association with Nakamura. For evidence of samurai readership, see note 4, above, and pages 551–54, below. If but a single reader is to stand for the whole readership of *Saikoku risshi hen*, one might just as well choose the late Meiji antipollution activist, Tanaka Shōzō, or the cofounder of the Japanese Communist Party, Yamakawa Hitoshi. Both were readers of *Saikoku risshi hen*. Kenneth Strong, “Tanaka Shōzō, Meiji Hero and Pioneer against Pollution,” *Bulletin of the Japan Society*, 67 (June 1972): 7; and Thomas D. Swift, “Yamakawa Hitoshi and the Dawn of Japanese Socialism” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1970), 70 n. 33.

tion is a reflection of its people” (*kuni wa jinmin hansha no hikari nari*). The statement further declares that the country was in jeopardy because the people—that is, of course, the Tosa samurai members of the Risshisha—were losing their vigor. To restore the spirit of the nation, members pledged to cultivate themselves, manage themselves, preserve the rights of the people, and become an independent people (*jishu dokuritsu no jinmin*) fully comparable to the free peoples of Western countries. In part, the samurai based their program on Smilesean principles, and they distributed texts based on *Saikoku risshi hen*.⁶³

Although the Risshisha engaged in various self-help projects for samurai, including a tea plantation, forest management, a school, and a loan fund to keep samurai out of the hands of usurers, most of these projects came to nought. The samurai did not want to become farmers, woodsmen, or businessmen, and they seldom had the knowledge or application required. From its inception, however, the Risshisha had political interests, which only increased with time. It rationalized political activity through ideas taken from *Self-Help*, arguing that the samurai alone among Japanese had intelligence (*chishiki*) and a spirit of independence (*jishu no kifū*); farmers, artisans, and merchants lacked these traits because these three classes had been oppressed during the years of Tokugawa rule. But their economic difficulties after the Restoration and the government’s refusal to give them a voice in the new regime meant that even the Tosa samurai were losing their independent spirit. The Risshisha claimed that, if the nation were denied its members’ spirit, the prosperity of Japan would suffer. To preserve their independence and, thus, Japan’s as well, they had to be allowed to participate fully in government through a representative assembly and to be given economic aid to prevent their becoming meek and servile like commoners.⁶⁴

The uses to which the Risshisha put the formulas it took from *Self-Help* and *Saikoku risshi hen* were vastly different from those Smiles had intended. Indeed, the assertion of hereditary privilege and ability, the justification of political activity, and the request for state aid directly contradicted the activities Smiles recommended. Nevertheless, the Risshisha’s selective adaptation of *Self-Help* and *Saikoku risshi hen* did possess a certain tortured logic. This is not, however, enough to explain how it was that a work intended for industrial workers and craftsmen in a foreign country that had already passed through the Industrial Revolution could have been generally popular among members of a still partially feudal, hereditarily privileged warrior caste. This apparently bizarre association is in part to be explained by the substantial congruence between what *Self-Help* said and what significant elements of the mid-nineteenth-century samurai class thought and did. The workmen to whom *Self-Help* had been addressed were what one history of the period aptly styles “the upper crust of the working classes.”⁶⁵ Smiles himself recorded that those to whom he lectured had been teaching themselves and each other “reading and writing, arithmetic and

⁶³ For a modern reproduction of these statements in two untitled documents, see Gotō Yasushi, “Risshisha shimatsu kiyō,” *Shigaku zasshi*, 65 (January 1965): 64–69. And, for the background of the Risshisha, see Suzuki Yasuzō, *Jiyū minken kenpō happu* (Tokyo, 1939), 13–27.

⁶⁴ Untitled documents in Gotō, “Risshisha shimatsu kiyō,” 64–69.

⁶⁵ J. B. Conacher, *Waterloo to the Common Market*, vol. 5 of *The Borzoi History of England* (New York, 1975), 107.

geography, and even mathematics, chemistry, and some of the modern languages.⁶⁶ The many samurai who were struggling to acquire the rudiments of Western learning found a congenial self-image in the descriptions of self-education and self-cultivation contained in *Self-Help*. More importantly, because of the time lag between “humble origins” and ultimate accomplishment, the actual models in *Self-Help* were not nineteenth-century factory workers but eighteenth-century artisans, craftsmen, and petty functionaries. By the end of the Tokugawa period, most middle- and low-ranking samurai fell into these categories. Certain artisan occupations were even reserved for low-ranking samurai as a relief measure.⁶⁷ *Saikoku risshi hen*’s appeal lay in its promise of advancement out of such circumstances or, at the very least, respect and betterment within rank.

The possibility that samurai would identify with the models and values in *Self-Help* was increased by the vocabulary of *Saikoku risshi hen*. In discussing rank, Nakamura relied almost entirely on permutations and combinations of a compound meaning “wealthy and honored, impoverished and despised” (*fūki hinsen*). Smiles’s declaration that “great men belong to no exclusive class or rank” became Nakamura’s assertion that “great heroes come regardless of being honored or despised, being impoverished or wealthy.”⁶⁸ Nakamura captured the sense of what Smiles had said except for one peculiarity: this compound and its various components were usually applied to describe divisions within the samurai class, between those with high rank and great wealth and those with low rank and little money. The compound did not refer to the distinction between samurai and commoners. Popular Tokugawa texts specifically define the “honored” portion of the formula as a formal rank (*kurai*) and the wealth portion as the emoluments that came with rank. The phrase is explicitly Confucian, found in the *Analects*.⁶⁹ Nakamura’s terminology automatically fitted the models in *Saikoku risshi hen* into samurai concepts of the social order.

Numerous precedents existed in Japanese thought for asserting the merits of those of humble origin or circumstance. Early writers had found it expedient to ignore the Confucian emphasis on men of talent and to devote their energies instead to justifying the existing distribution of wealth and honor. Even they, however, had warned of the debilitating effects of hereditary wealth and occa-

⁶⁶ Smiles, *Self-Help*, vii.

⁶⁷ On the transformation of the samurai, see Fukuchi Shigetaka, *Shizoku to shizoku ishiki* (Tokyo, 1956), 70–71; Sasama Yoshihiko, *Ashigaru no seikatsu* (Tokyo, 1969), 196–97; and Fukuzawa Yukichi, “Kyūhanjō,” trans. Carmen Blacker, *Monumenta Nipponica*, 9 (1953): 320–21, and *The Autobiography of Yukichi Fukuzawa*, trans. Eiichi Kiyooka (New York, 1960), 9–11.

⁶⁸ Table of Contents for Chap. 1, *Saikoku risshi hen*.

⁶⁹ For the Confucian context of this term, see Arthur Waley, *The Analects of Confucius* (New York, 1938), 102–03; and, for a Japanese explanation of the term, see “Jitsugokyō genkai,” in *Nihon kyōkasho taiki*, 5: 189–90. (The *Jitsugokyō* was a popular ethics text that many early Meiji Japanese would have used during their elementary education.) For examples of the use of this term to describe divisions within the samurai, see Fujita Tōko, “Hitachi obi,” in *Fujita Tōko, Aizawa Seishisai, Fujita Yūkoku*, ed. Hashikawa Bunzō, vol. 29 of *Nihon no meicho* (Tokyo, 1974), 56 (*daimyō* versus *hatamoto*), 167–68 (samurai of the fief), 169 (those with large stipends versus those with small ones). Other examples can be found throughout the writings of such figures as Kaibara Ekiken and Yoshida Shōin. Generally, samurai did not think about commoners unless they happened to be in rebellion. Concerning the general samurai attitude, see Harry D. Harootunian, “*Jinsei, Jinzai, and Jitsugaku*: Social Values and Leadership in Late Tokugawa Thought,” in Bernard S. Silberman and Harry D. Harootunian, eds., *Modern Japanese Leadership: Transition and Change* (Tucson, 1966), 83–120, esp. n. 4.

sionally stressed the merits of low birth. In the early eighteenth century, Ogyū Sorai and his disciples came to emphasize the inherent Confucian notion of promotion by merit. Ogyū argued that the “absence of hardship and tribulation” had caused the “upper classes” to become “increasingly stupid.” Sounding distinctly like Smiles, he wrote, “Through the study of history . . . we may see, as clearly as in a mirror, that men of intelligence have all come from below; rarely have they come from hereditarily privileged families.” Hardship tempered those without high hereditary rank and made them more suited for office. Just as the ancient sage kings had recognized this principle and raised men of talent, so should contemporary leaders.⁷⁰ As Thomas C. Smith and Ronald P. Dore have demonstrated, such ideas were fairly widespread in Tokugawa Japan, particularly near its end.⁷¹ Readers of *Saikoku risshi hen* were well prepared for the special merit it attached to those of low birth, especially with Nakamura’s vocabulary.

Even without the modifications introduced by the translation, *Self-Help* matched well with samurai vocational preferences. A few late Tokugawa writers had worked to modify the prejudice of the class against commercial activities, but recollections, comments, and subsequent performance all suggest that the samurai’s first vocational preference was government service followed closely by academia.⁷² Neither *Self-Help* nor *Saikoku risshi hen* fundamentally challenged these preferences. Smiles was critical of businessmen in general and refused a number of lucrative offers to write panegyrics of contemporary merchants. Although the ninth chapter of *Self-Help* is entitled “Men of Business,” only one model is based specifically on the career of a merchant—David Barclay. Those to whom Smiles gave the greatest weight were military men—Napoleon and Wellington. The “business” Smiles described was almost exclusively managerial or governmental: military logistics and state fiscal affairs. Nakamura captured the sense of Smiles’s terminology by rendering “men of business” as “men who carry out affairs of office” (*shokuji o tsutomuru*) or “men who carry out official duties” (*jimu o tsutomuru*). Only for Barclay did Nakamura use the somewhat pejorative “one who trades” (*shōbai suru*).⁷³

The individual values that Smiles stressed matched well with those of the samurai. Frugality provides a prime example. In *Self-Help* frugality meant maintaining consumption within the limits of one’s income, spending appropriate to one’s station in life without false and costly display, and avoiding debt through

⁷⁰ For Ogyū’s basic arguments, see Tsunoda *et al.*, *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, 1: 421–24; and, in Japanese, Ogyū Sorai, “Seidan,” in *Ogyū Sorai*, ed. Bitō Masahide, vol. 16 of *Nihon no meicho* (Tokyo, 1974), 466–75. For a discussion of Dazai’s position, see Tetsuo Najita, “Political Economism in the Thought of Dazai Shundai,” *Journal of Asian Studies*, 31 (1972): 821–39. For an example of this assertion that preceded Ogyū, see Tsunoda *et al.*, *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, 1: 375–83, esp. 380.

⁷¹ Dore, “Talent and the Social Order in Tokugawa Japan,” in John W. Hall and Marius B. Jansen, eds., *Studies in the Institutional History of Early Modern Japan* (Princeton, 1968), 349–62; and Smith, “‘Merit’ as Ideology in Tokugawa Japan,” in Ronald P. Dore, ed., *Aspects of Social Change in Modern Japan* (Princeton, 1967), 71–89.

⁷² For the rethinking of samurai attitudes toward commerce, see Kaiho Seiryō’s analyses in Tsunoda *et al.*, *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, 1: 488–93. For data on samurai preferences and performance in the early Meiji period, see Hiroshi Mannari, *The Japanese Business Leaders* (Tokyo, 1974), 133–45.

⁷³ Nakamura, *Saikoku risshi hen*, 9: 1, 32.

Careful budgeting. Smiles was concerned more with encouraging a surplus for emergencies than with capital accumulation. He did not talk about “turning pence into pounds,” compound interest, or other topics appropriate to an ethic of frugality directed at capital accumulation. Samurai moralists from Yamaga Sokō in the mid-seventeenth century through Yoshida Shōin in the mid-nineteenth had taught precisely the same ethic of frugality.⁷⁴ Proper use of time provides another example. Smiles stressed that workmen should use their spare time to acquire knowledge or to carry out experiments, a notion quite close to the samurai ethic that spoke of using all available time for the acquisition of knowledge and personal cultivation. Neither was concerned with the idea that “time is money,” although Smiles did mention it.⁷⁵

This matching of values and virtues in the Confucian and Victorian traditions existed throughout *Self-Help* and *Saikoku risshi hen* but was especially evident in the last chapter, “Character—The True Gentleman.” Here Smiles stressed the importance of a good name, temperance, benevolence, loyalty, truthfulness, bravery, and, of course, good character. These were samurai ideals as well, and, not surprisingly, Nakamura titled this chapter “Character—The True *Chün-Tzu*,” showing that he saw Smiles’s concept of a gentleman as essentially identical to the Confucian-samurai ideal.⁷⁶ In only one instance did Nakamura give an indication that he believed Smiles’s message might not be compatible with Confucian-samurai values. In a special preface to the fourth chapter of *Saikoku risshi hen* (“Application and Perseverance” in *Self-Help*), Nakamura emphasized that the true scholar (*shinsei gakushi*) was not embarrassed by menial tasks (*senkyō*), and he provided several examples of Chinese literati who had engaged in manual labor.⁷⁷ His fear that samurai would see intellectual activity as incompatible with physical labor was justified. Shortly after *Saikoku risshi hen* appeared, Fukuzawa Yukichi, Nakamura’s fellow Meirokusha associate, wrote a pamphlet directed at samurai, *Gakumon no susume* (“An Encouragement of Learning”). One of the first statements in this tract declares that those who perform intellectual work are properly regarded as important and deserving of respect, but those who perform manual labor are not.⁷⁸ Early Meiji schoolboys—a largely samurai group—wrote compositions based on *Saikoku risshi hen* in which they took the work *benkyō*, which Nakamura used to translate “labor” and “industry,” and converted it into “academic study,” a meaning that has remained to the present day.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Concerning the concept of frugality in Smiles’s work, see Travers, “Samuel Smiles and the Victorian Work Ethic,” 129; and Smiles, *Self-Help*, chap. 10: “Money—Its Use and Abuse.” Smiles developed a capitalistic view of frugality only much later, in *Thrift*. For some samurai attitudes toward frugality, see Yoshida Shōin, “Bukyō zensho kōroku,” 163–64; and Fujita Tōko, “Hitachi obi,” 172–75.

⁷⁵ Smiles, *Self-Help*, 274; and Nakamura, *Saikoku risshi hen*, 9: 21. For samurai concepts of time, see Yoshida Shōin, “Būkyō zensho kōroku,” 146.

⁷⁶ Nakamura, *Saikoku risshi hen*, 13. For the Chinese Associations of *Chün-tzu*, see Waley, *The Analects of Confucius*, 34–38.

⁷⁷ Nakamura Keiu, “Jijoron dai-yon hen jo,” in *Meiji keimō shisō shū*, 284.

⁷⁸ For a discussion of this difference, see Earl H. Kinmonth, “Fukuzawa Reconsidered: *Gakumon no susume* and Its Audience,” *Journal of Asian Studies*, 38 (1978): 688.

⁷⁹ Maeda, “Risshin shusse,” 19.

SPACE DOES NOT PERMIT A DISCUSSION of all of the interpretations and uses to which *Self-Help* was put in Japan in the late nineteenth century,⁸⁰ but even the evidence here largely resolves the commonly noted, but heretofore unexplained, question of the popularity in early Meiji Japan of what must be the most widely read celebration of the self-made man ever written. The translation of *Self-Help* and its reception in Japan illustrates a number of principles that should be common in the writing of bicultural history, but these principles have not generally been applied, at least for Japan. Ideas are shaped by the social and economic milieu in which they appear and serve the interests of the class or group that produces them. But ideas may also have an existence of their own. A work and the ideas it espouses that were constructed to serve one segment of society under one social structure may serve a very different segment of society under a very different social structure. A work that is part of the “popular culture” in one country may become part of the elite, intellectual culture in another. And the materials included in the purview of intellectual history need not be limited to those that present-day scholars consider valuable and original. The preferences and priorities of historical actors must be respected, even if their taste in reading matter seems questionable by contemporary standards. Works that seem trite and cliché-ridden today may well have been exciting, even revolutionary, to an earlier audience or to one facing a different set of socioeconomic and political problems.

The original text and the translation must be compared, for at the opening point of contact between two cultures ideas cannot be transmitted totally unaltered from one to the other. The translator may not even try such a transmission but may use the translation as a form of disguise for his own thoughts or seek to wrap his own ideas in the aura and prestige of a foreign work. Comparing the original with the translation can help point out important cultural and intellectual differences, but the comparison must be made with extreme care. Due consideration must be given to words that have changed meaning within recent history. This problem is especially acute with nineteenth-century English sources, because the familiarity of the vocabulary can lead to a false sense of understanding. “Individualism” is a case in point. Smiles and Mill did not attach to it the range of meanings current in contemporary American society. Far from meaning “doing one’s own thing,” individualism contributed to and was justified in terms of social progress, a value fully acceptable to Meiji Japanese. The sheer difficulty of reading the Japanese and Chinese languages contributes to a wariness about changed meanings of terms still in use. But the problem is even greater, because considering customary usage outside the text in question is necessary to understanding precisely how ideas are expressed. Only wide reading in the sources that would have been part of the education of the readers of the work makes it possible to know what nuance a given word-choice would convey.

⁸⁰ For a discussion of the various roles and interpretations of *Saikoku risshi hen* and *Self-Help* after the first decade of the Meiji era, see Earl H. Kinmonth, “The Self-Made Man in Meiji Japanese Thought” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1975).

Wide reading reveals, for example, that the term “wealthy and honored, poor and despised” was usually applied to gradations within the samurai class. In such cases, dictionaries are no help, and scholars may even find the original text misleading when they search for the meaning of a translated word or passage. Everything depends on how contemporaries interpreted it in light of their own intellectual preparation. Finally, even when such a detailed textual analysis has been carried out, actual interpretations of the translation must be documented. Readers often do more to make a work historically significant than does its author. No analysis of *Saikoku risshi hen* itself could explain how it became a political tract for disgruntled samurai. But that was precisely what it did become for the Risshisha.

