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**Abstract:** This essay examines Meiji-period discussions of the utility and function of classical Chinese scholarship (*kangaku*) between the years 1880 and 1895. In contrast to earlier studies that have presented this period as a time in which Japan rejected Chinese texts and bodies of knowledge in favor of recently imported Western works, I argue that the era was marked by a sophisticated and sincere attempt at reconciling epistemes. As previous scholars have noted, Meiji-period *kangaku* was marked by a shift in emphasis from the ethico-political concerns characterizing earlier Confucian scholarship (*keigaku*) in favor of analysis of China as a geographically and temporally bounded space. While this shift has traditionally been interpreted within a larger rhetoric of Meiji-period “de-Asianization,” I demonstrate that this emphasis on the Chinese uniqueness embodied in classical texts served as the basis for a range of arguments that *kangaku* was an inherently adaptable episteme, capable of addressing the concerns of the rapidly modernizing Japanese nation-state.

**Paradise Lost and Regained:  
The Passion of Chinese Studies (*Kangaku*) in Meiji-Period Japan**

**Introduction**

In November of 1891, the second assembly of the newly instituted Meiji Parliament was marred by a squabble over a question of prosody. Following the emperor's convocation address, the members of the House of Peers expressed their desire for a fruitful and orderly session through a formal response (*hōtō*) containing the following passage:

Having received your Rescript, your servants humbly undertake the mission of enriching the nation and its people. Indeed, can we not anticipate many instances in which, through faithful devotion to the principles of our Great Constitution, we might contribute to the advancement of your August Plan?<sup>1</sup>

臣等謹聖旨を奉体し専ら帝国の隆昌と人民の幸福とを以て目的とし益々大憲の条章を恪遵し所見を啓瀝して以て皇猷を贊襄する所あるを期せさらむや。

It was not the content of the seemingly anodyne passage that sparked debate, but rather its wording: in particular, the rhetorical “can we not anticipate” (*ki-sezaramu ya*) that concluded the phrase in question. Although precisely the same phrasing had appeared in the previous year's response with no apparent objection, it now came under attack by the historian Shigeno Yasutsugu 重野安繹 (1827-1910), who argued that the formulation was ungrammatical and should be replaced with the less cumbersome *ki-su* (“we anticipate”). Despite support from prominent intellectuals like Kawada Ōkō 川田鸞江 (1830-1896) and Iwaya Ichiroku 巖谷一六 (1834-1905), Shigeno's proposed emendation was rejected, and *ki-sezaramu ya* was permanently entered into the historical record.

In light of the myriad other intrigues and controversies that accompanied the establishment of parliamentary government in Japan, the Shigeno anecdote seems like small potatoes indeed. Yet, it bothered one young writer enough that he utilized it as the starting-point for a withering invective against an entire epoch. In an 1892 polemic entitled “On the Present and Future of *Kangaku* in Our Nation” (*Waga kuni ni okeru kangaku no genzai oyobi shōrai*), the translator and journalist Morita Shiken 森田思軒 (1861-1897) analyzed the parliamentarians' rebuff of Shigeno as evidence of a precipitous fall from cultural grace. Situating the incident within what, by the early 1890's, was an increasingly familiar narrative, Morita lamented:

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<sup>1</sup> Preserved in *Meiji shōchoku zenshū* 明治詔勅全集, ed. Shibata Yūnosuke 柴田勇之助 (Tokyo: Kōdōkan, 1907), “Gikai,” p. 12.

Around the time of the Revolution, the older system of scholarship known as *kangaku* went into battle with the newer system of scholarship known as Western learning (*yōgaku*): the result of which was the defeat of *kangaku*.<sup>2</sup>

維新の前後に於て、漢學なる旧學問は洋學なる新學問と相争ひ相戦ふて敗北せり。

Surveying the intellectual landscape of the third decade of the Meiji period, where political hacks treated the erudite Shigeno like “the barbarians of Gaul encircling the Roman senators,” Morita argued that the millennium-old tradition of *kangaku* had declined to the point that it was useful for little more than writing epitaph inscriptions, book prefaces, self-pleasuring poetry, and “good-for-nothing”<sup>3</sup> lecture records. When he considered the once vibrant place of classical scholarship in Japan, Morita could offer only a glum threnody for the present, concluding the first part of the essay by announcing a desire to “recite *Paradise Lost*” on behalf of a dying intellectual tradition.<sup>4</sup>

Morita’s melodramatic style provides ample evidence of a true epistemological crisis, but needless to say, his central claims should be approached with extreme caution. The influx of Western texts, technology, and sociopolitical institutions in the preceding decades had indeed engendered a growing anxiety about *kangaku*’s place in Japanese intellectual life, and Morita’s claim about *kangaku*’s “defeat” (*haiboku*) at the hands of these imports was an echo of earlier statements by Nakamura Masanao, Nishimura Shigeki, Katō Hiroyuki, and others. Leaving aside for the moment its accuracy, it is important to note that the effects of this line of argumentation are still evident over a century later. Foundational postwar histories of language and script reform by scholars like Yamamoto Masahide centered on a progressive quest toward *genbun itchi*: a conceptual framework that positioned Chinese language, learning, and scripts as a foreign Other to be overcome or effaced in the process of linguistic modernization. More recent research on linguistic nationalism, education reform, and anti-Chinese sentiment in the wake of the First Sino-Japanese War has provided a welcome counterbalance to the excessive emphasis on Meiji phonocentrism. However, as Atsuko Ueda has argued in her recent publications, the suggestion that “all efforts at linguistic reform in the Meiji era contributed to the production of an ideologically charged ‘national language’ [that] forcefully excluded or assimilated other languages” has led to one telos being swapped

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<sup>2</sup> “Waga kuni ni okeru kangaku no genzai oyobi shōrai” 我邦に於ける漢学の現在及び将来 was first published as a two-part essay in *Waseda bungaku*, Vols. 7 and 9 (1892). The essay was based on a speech Morita delivered at Tokyo Senmon Gakko (present-day Waseda) in December, 1891. Citations refer to the reproduction in Katō Shūichi 加藤週一, ed., *Buntai* 文体, in *Nihon kindai shisō taikēi*, vol. 16 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1989), pp. 29-42.

<sup>3</sup> Written in English in the essay.

<sup>4</sup> Morita, p. 35.

for another.<sup>5</sup> Subsequent research by Ueda, Saitō Mareshi, Seth Jacobowitz, and others has drawn long overdue attention to the profusion of alternative scripts and technologies of inscription that challenge any narratives of incremental, unidirectional development.<sup>6</sup>

To a certain degree, analysis of Meiji-period *kangaku* has been a victim of narrative itself: its vicissitudes being presented as a contiguous series of rises and falls at key transitional moments.<sup>7</sup> I have no desire to trivialize the effect of concrete educational policies and historical events on the fate of *kangaku*. However, this focus on “net” gains and losses occludes the roiling variety of conflicted and often contradictory opinions on the subject observable at any given moment. While it is certainly true that Chinese thought, scripts, and texts came under repeated attack in the first decades of the Meiji period, it is impossible to ignore the simultaneous emergence of discourses that presented *kangaku* not as antithetical, but rather vital to the task of modernization. Shortly after symbolically burying *kangaku* in the aforementioned essay, for instance, Morita Shiken immediately undercut his own position by remarking that the classical poetry of writers like Mori Kainan 森槐南 and Noguchi Neisai 野口寧齋 represented a highpoint in “progressive” (*shinpo*) poetics: a statement echoed by many of Morita’s contemporaries and supported by the recent research of Sugishita Motoaki and Matthew Fraleigh, who highlight the innovative and reformatory properties of Meiji-period Sinitic poetry.<sup>8</sup> Throughout the 1880’s and 1890’s, a common response to the question of whether *kangaku* was on the ascendancy or in decline was a resounding affirmative: a seemingly contradictory stance that betokened profound disagreement over what precisely *kangaku* itself was, and where it fit into a rapidly transforming educational edifice.

In their seminal monographs on the subject, Watanabe Kazuyasu, Miura Kanō, and Machida Saburō have emphasized the differences between Meiji-period *kangaku* and

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<sup>5</sup> Atsuko Ueda, “Competing ‘Languages’: ‘Sound’ in the Orthographic Reforms of Early Modern Japan,” in *Rethinking East Asian Languages, Vernaculars, and Literacies, 1000-1919*, ed. Benjamin Elman (Leiden: Brill, 2014), esp. pp. 220-23.

<sup>6</sup> See Saitō Mareshi 齋藤稀史, *Kanbunmyaku no kindai: Shin-matsu = Meiji no bungakuken* 漢文脈の近代: 清末 = 明治の文学圏 (Nagoya: Nagoya daigaku shuppankai, 2005), and Seth Jacobowitz, *Writing Technology in Meiji Japan: A Media History of Modern Japanese Literature and Visual Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2015).

<sup>7</sup> Miura Kanō’s encyclopedic *Meiji no kangaku*, for example, is largely structured around an oscillation between Westernizing and anti-Westernizing impulses: key events including the 1872 Educational Rescript, which fostered Western-style education; a backlash against excessive Westernization in the early 1880’s; the establishment of a Western-sympathetic cabinet by Itō Hirobumi in 1885, etc. Miura Kanō 三浦叶, *Meiji no kangaku* 明治の漢學 (Tokyo: Kyūko shoin, 1998).

<sup>8</sup> Sugishita Motoaki 杉下元明, *Edo kanshi: eikyō to hen’yō no keifu* 江戸漢詩: 影響と変容の系譜 (Tokyo: Perikansha, 2004) and Matthew Fraleigh, *Plucking Chrysanthemums: Narushima Ryūhoku and Sinitic Literary Traditions in Modern Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2016), esp. “Introduction.”

the classical study (*keigaku*) of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>9</sup> In particular, these scholars center on the new relational schema engendered by the florescence of Western studies in Japan, a shift from universalized metaphysical inquiry to a discrete focus on Chinese textual and material culture, the effects of the modern university system, and the proliferation of discipline-specific academic journals. As scholars such as John Brownlee, Richard Reitan, and Michael C. Brownstein have noted, the establishment of universities and the codification of information along departmental lines had the effect of dispersing traditional knowledge among a variety of newly constituted academic disciplines, including religion (*shūkyō*), ethics (*rinrigaku*), history and historiography (*shigaku*), and literature (*bungaku*).<sup>10</sup> Often, the priorities and considerations of classical studies were not effaced, but rather transplanted to new contexts, where Chinese texts were “discovered” to be foundational sources for these modern disciplines. In this process, the Warring States-period Zhuangzi became a philosopher (*tetsugakusha*); Confucius an ethicist<sup>11</sup> (*rinrigakusha*); Laozi, the putative founder of Daoism, an advocate of freedom and popular rights (*jiyū minken*); and the Zhou-period *Book of Rites* a repository of legal statutes (*hōritsu*). In all cases, these arguments presented a counter to the potentially leveling and homogenizing discourse of modern academia and created a space in which to reify and safeguard a unique Japanese or “Oriental” (*tōyō*) cultural essence.<sup>12</sup>

I fully agree with earlier arguments about the role of Western studies in transforming *kangaku* in the first decades of the Meiji period, but it is misleading to consider *kangaku* purely within the context of an episteme under siege: what Watanabe calls a “passive standpoint” (*ukemi no tachiba*) locked in a perpetual struggle to define itself against an aggressive interloper. Although scholars and practitioners of *kangaku* were unquestionably competing with other disciplines for resources, students, and

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<sup>9</sup> Watanabe Kazuyasu 渡辺和靖, *Meiji shisōshi: Jukyōteki dentō to kindai ninshikiron* 明治思想史: 儒教的伝統と近代認識論 (Tokyo: Perikansha, 1985), esp. pp. 343-56; Miura, esp. pp. 3-12; and Machida Saburō 町田三郎, *Meiji no kangakusha-tachi* 明治の漢學者たち (Tokyo: Kenbun shuppan, 1998).

<sup>10</sup> For recent studies on the development of history and ethics in Meiji Japan, see John S. Brownlee, *Japanese Historians and the National Myths, 1600-1945: The Age of the Gods and Emperor Jinmu* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014) and Richard Reitan, *Making a Moral Society: Ethics and the State in Meiji Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2016). The establishment of literary historiography is discussed in Michael C. Brownstein, “From *Kokugaku* to *Kokubungaku*: Canon-Formation in the Meiji Period,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 47.2 (1987): 435-60.

<sup>11</sup> Or a philosopher, or a politician, or a religious founder. With the exception of literary historians, everyone, it seems, wanted to claim Confucius for their own.

<sup>12</sup> As Carol Gluck demonstrated, this strategy was highly effective in some spheres of public discourse, such as the reification of a public ethos and its enshrinement in a Constitution that was overtly Confucian with all references to Confucius himself removed. Carol Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 126.

attention, this does not mean that their ideas were exclusively defensive or reactive.<sup>13</sup> In this essay, I focus primarily on a network of debates and discussions occurring between the years 1880 and 1895, to better elucidate the processes by which intellectuals created a space for *kangaku* in contemporary discourse, as well as the many ways in which the arguments of earlier thinkers such as Ogyū Sorai 荻生徂徠 (1666-1728) were adopted (and adapted) to advance new arguments.

Although the standing of *kangaku* in modern Japanese society was an issue discussed in a variety of journals, editorials, and other publications, it was a central focus of the *Tōkyō gakushi kaiin zasshi* 東京學士會院雜誌: the official forum for the newly constituted Japan Academy, founded in 1879. The membership of the Japan Academy overlapped substantially with that of the recently disbanded *Meirokeisha* 明六社, and a similar constellation of authors, questions, and concerns are found in the societies' respective journals. However, if the central theme of the *Meirokeisha zasshi* 明六雜誌 was that Japan still had a long way to go in terms of catching up to Western civilization, many of the articles in *Tōkyō gakushi kaiin zasshi* raised the possibility that Japan had gone too far in its pursuit--often advocating a return to classical studies and even China itself as a means of locating alternative paths to civilization and enlightenment (*bunmei kaika*). What united Meiji-period *kangaku* more than any shared ideas about corpus or application was the attempt at interrogating the claims to universality inherent in newly imported Western epistemes and a resurgence of interest in China as a contemporary and potentially knowable space. Although the term *kangaku* certainly predated the Meiji, its deployment in the 1880's and 1890's was subject to the same epistemological contractions that had created Sinitic poetry (*kanshi*) and Sinitic prose (*kanbun*) out of what were previously simply poetry (*shifu*) and prose (*bunshō*).<sup>14</sup> As balances of political power in East Asia shifted and many Japanese scholars, educators, and literati traveled to China for the first time, discussions of classical-language texts were increasingly linked to considerations of developments on the continent. The issue of whether *kangaku* was a moribund and dying corpus to be jettisoned, or a progressive discipline with revolutionary potential was related in no small degree to the individual writer's understanding of China's standing within the contemporary geopolitical configuration.

### **Reconciling Epistemes and Rethinking the “Universal”**

If there is one point upon which nearly all contemporary scholarship on Meiji-period *kangaku* agrees, it is that the unprecedented influx of a wide range of Western-language texts, cultural artifacts, and political institutions engendered a dramatic

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<sup>13</sup> The best study of enrollment patterns and curricula in Meiji-period *kangakujuku* is Margaret Mehl, *Private Academies of Chinese Learning in Meiji Japan: The Decline and Transformation of the Kangaku juku* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2003).

<sup>14</sup> Karatani Kōjin, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, trans. Brett de Bary (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), esp. chapter 1.

reappraisal of what would soon be consecrated a traditional patrimony. As will be discussed below, the impact of Western epistemes is apparent not only in individual arguments, but also at the level of institutions. To say, however, that Western learning was presented solely in an antagonistic relationship with Chinese *kangaku* is to create a false dichotomy between the two. For every figure who emphasized the archaic Chinese origins of the traditional canon as a way of claiming its incompatibility with the modern Japanese nation-state, there was a writer who argued that the longevity of *kangaku* traditions in Japan had led to its naturalization, and that *kangaku* was the only way by which to safeguard and develop what could be defined as inherently Japanese. The potential harmony between epistemes was manifested by the fact that many of *kangaku*'s most stalwart defenders were the scholars and educators who also enthusiastically embraced the study of Western languages and scholastic methodologies. For instance, an 1887 essay entitled “Why *Kangaku* Should Not Be Abolished” (*Kangaku fukahai ron*), by the pioneering educator and translator Nakamura Masanao 中村正直 (1832-1891), was framed as a reverse Damascus narrative, in which Nakamura lamented his former decision to banish *kangaku* from the modern curriculum:

When I first returned from London, I had my students cease their studies of *kangaku* and devote themselves solely to the study of English. In the beginning, the students made progress in their studies, but when they finally came to a point of difficulty, then they were forced to give up--making me regret that I had caused them to abandon *kangaku*.<sup>15</sup>

予倫敦より帰りし初め、児輩をして漢學を廢して専ら英學を為さしめたり。然るに児輩の英學の業始めの程は進みたれども、進み難き所に至って止まれり。予是に於て漢學を廢せしめたることを悔ゆ。

The body of the essay itself took a metaphysical turn by emphasizing *kangaku*'s potential as a means of apprehending a universal Truth (*shinri*): manifested in the case of the Chinese classics through Confucius's injunction to “show reverence to Heaven” (*keiten*). The Christian Nakamura identified this reverence as a bedrock principle of human societies in general, and he argued that the value of its preservation outweighed the retrograde, superstitious, and empirically unverifiable elements of China's textual corpus. Nakamura argued that truth and delusion (*mōsō*) were like flecks of gold dispersed in sand, and that rejecting the Confucian classics *in toto* would lead to an irreparable loss of those elements central to civilization.<sup>16</sup> Whereas many of his contemporaries presented the canon as reactionary and inimical to modernization, Nakamura claimed that the problem lay in the *practice* of Confucianism rather than with the tradition itself. He held

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<sup>15</sup> “*Kangaku fukahai ron*” 漢學不可廢論. Nakamura's essay was originally printed in the 1887 *Tōkyō gakushi kaiin zasshi*, but has been reprinted in Katō Shūichi, ed., *Buntai*, pp. 7-25.

<sup>16</sup> Nakamura, p. 9.

up for special ridicule the intense fear of “heterodoxy” (*isetsu*) inaugurated by Matsudaira Sadanobu’s 松平定信 (1759-1829) Kansei Reforms: an unreasonable anxiety that had led to a close-minded and exclusive view of Confucius’s teachings, and prevented scholars from understanding the central tenets of the canon in the pursuit of particulars. Despite its preservation of quasi-mystical elements, Nakamura’s polemic was similar to other defenses of *kangaku* in its suggestion that Chinese texts could and should be subjected to critical scrutiny, and its contention that scholars should not refrain from flexibly selecting and adapting from the canon to address contemporary concerns.

Other writers adopted a more pragmatic approach in their defense of *kangaku*. Among the many reasons advanced for turning sustained critical attention to classical Chinese texts was the persistent argument that Japan was already belated in doing so. In the inaugural issue of the academic journal *Tōyō gakkai zasshi* 東洋學會雜誌, Mikami Sanji 三上參次 (1865-1939), at the time a student at Tokyo Imperial University, argued for the necessity of a government-sponsored academy devoted to the study of “the Orient.”<sup>17</sup> As suggested by the title of the 1888 essay--“On the Value of Oriental Scholarship” (*Tōyō gakumon no kachi*)--Mikami’s argument was framed by a rhetoric of utility. He claimed that the current tendency to look down on traditional texts was due to ignorance of their inherent value (*shinka o shirazu*) and lamented Japan’s inability to learn from the West in this respect, when it had copied the West in nearly all other particulars. Westerners, Mikami asserted, were keenly aware of their own societies’ indissoluble links to classical Greek, Roman, and Egyptian cultures and considered classical study a central part of modern disciplines like philosophy, law, and the sciences. Moreover, Mikami continued, they had recently turned their attention to Eastern learning as well, as evidenced in the proliferation of learned societies--often the beneficiaries of royal or government patronage--devoted to the explication of texts from China, Japan, India, Southeast and Central Asia, and the Middle East. This boom in study enabled (and was enabled by) the establishment of professorships and new curricula at European universities. Not only was it embarrassing for Japan to lag behind the West in the study of Asia, it was politically dangerous. In a perceptive comment predating Edward Said by nearly a century, Mikami commented on the links between the institutionalized study of Asia and political expansion by connecting the British colonization of East and South Asia to their sustained scholarly presentation of Asia as the “mother of world civilization” (*sekai bunmei no haha*).<sup>18</sup>

These sentiments were neither isolated nor unique. Four months after the publication of Mikami’s article, the military commander Torio Koyata 鳥尾小弥太 (1848-1905) advanced a similar argument in the inaugural installment of *Tōyō tetsugakkai sōsho* 東洋哲學會叢書. Although Torio could not have been more different from Mikami in background, expertise, and temperament, he voiced a similar admiration

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<sup>17</sup> Mikami Sanji, “Tōyō gakumon no kachi” 東洋學問の価値, *Tōyō gakkai zasshi* 1 (1888), pp. 1-4.

<sup>18</sup> Mikami, pp. 2-3.



for Western interest in Eastern culture and enumerated its benefits based on the firsthand experience he had gathered during his time abroad. Whereas Mikami's concerns were institutional, Torio focused on epistemology. He argued that Japanese intellectuals were in no way inferior to their Western counterparts in terms of their encyclopedic knowledge of Eastern texts, but they were hampered by the fact that they approached this corpus as a religion (*shūkyō*) rather than a field of study (*gakumon*).<sup>19</sup> The strength of Western scholarship on the Eastern classics, Torio claimed, was its devotion to the objective syncretism enabled by comparative methodologies. In contrast to Japan, where Buddhists, Shintoists, and Confucians squabbled over their narrow versions of truth, Western scholars denied the primacy of any one branch of knowledge and devoted themselves to comparative investigation of “multiple explanations” (*isetsu*).<sup>20</sup> Adopting a similarly catholic and comparative methodology would allow Japan to transcend factional difference, leading Torio to conclude:

Not only will Japanese study Western matters from the West; they will ultimately be unable to comprehensively understand *Eastern* matters unless they study from Western scholars as well.”<sup>21</sup>

今日西洋流の學問を西洋に學ぶのみならず終には東洋の學問も西洋の學者に就て學ばざれば其全体を得ること能はざるに至るべし。

What is remarkable about the plethora of articles devoted to the past, present, and future status of *kangaku* in Japan is how rarely the term itself is explicitly defined: a lacuna that can be interpreted as either proof of shared understanding, or more cynically, as evidence of disagreement or uncertainty on that point. One subgroup of *kangakusha* who did not have the luxury of leaving key terms undefined was the increasingly large number of authors who published *kangaku* textbooks. A representative early work is Kishigami Shikken's 岸上識軒 (1860-1907) *Kangaku issendai* (*A Thousand Kangaku Questions Answered*), which was published in 1892 as a preparation guide for university

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<sup>19</sup> Torio Koyata, “Tōyō tetsugaku iken” 東洋哲學意見, *Tōyō tetsugakkai sōsho* 1 (1888), pp. 1-11.

<sup>20</sup> Another possible translation for *isetsu* 異説, and most certainly a meaning in Torio's mind at the time he wrote his essay, is “heterodoxy” of the type decried by Matsudaira Sadanobu. As the earlier example of Nakamura Masanao demonstrates, Matsudaira Sadanobu was a perennial *bête noire* for Meiji-period *kangakusha*, who viewed his advocacy of Zhu Xi at the expense of other classical scholars as a reason for contemporary Japan's intellectual myopia. For information on Matsudaira Sadanobu's reforms, see Robert L. Backus, “The Kansei Prohibition of Heterodoxy and Its Effects on Education,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 39.1 (1979), pp. 55-106 and Makabe Jin 真壁仁, *Tokugawa kōki no gakumon to seiji: Shōheizaka gakumonjo jusha to bakumatsu gaikō hen'yō* 徳川後期の學問と政治: 昌平坂學問所儒者と幕末外交変容 (Nagoya: Nagoya daigaku shuppankai, 2007), esp. chapter 2.

<sup>21</sup> Torio, p. 3.

entrance exams. Although the preface noted that there were already several excellent guides to the study of the Confucian classics, Kishigami--like Mikami Sanji and Torio Koyata in their respective polemics four years earlier--argued that disciplinary standards and methodologies had changed in the present:

In the past, those who proclaimed themselves scholars of *kangaku* split themselves into minuscule and mutually dismissive factions. We had those who followed Han-dynasty commentaries and those who followed Tang-dynasty commentaries. Some preferred the [Song-period] exegeses by the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi, while others gravitated toward Lu Xiangshan and Wang Yangming. There were historicists, archaists, and syncretists: all of whom castigated and scorned each other as heathens and heretics. It was precisely like the way in which followers of a certain religion pay reverence to their own creed and lay waste to the beliefs of others.<sup>22</sup>

昔時の漢學を為す者は曰く漢唐曰く程朱曰く陸王曰く史子或は古學或は折衷等仔細に門戸を立て流派を分ち互に相敵視し相詆罵して以て異端となし邪説となすこと恰も宗教家の自宗を尚ひ他宗を毀るが如し。

The author went on: “Would-be *kangakusha* of the present must exert themselves to the utmost to make sure that these habits are completely destroyed.”

As demonstrated above, Kishigami was not alone in lamenting the devolution of Confucian thought into a faction-ridden “religion,” but his claim to bypass later arguments by focusing on the texts themselves is disingenuous, since all the figures named in the preface had legitimated their intellectual projects by making the same claim. Kishigami’s particular methodological axe emerges in the body of the text, in his answer to the first question, “What Exactly is *Kangaku*?” (*Kangaku to wa ika-naru gaku zo*):

*Kangaku* is the learning of China. Originally, the graph *kan* referred to the name of the realm during the period in which the Liu family ruled over China. However, when we use terms like *kangaku* or *kanbun*, we are referring to all the periods before and after the Han dynasty as well. Put succinctly: *kangaku* is the tradition of scholarship unique to China.<sup>23</sup>

曰く漢土の學なり、元來漢とは劉氏支那に王たりし間の国号なれども、漢學漢文など云うときは汎く其の前後に通して云へり、約言すれば支那固有の學と見て可なり。

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<sup>22</sup> Kishigami Misao [Shikken] 岸上操, *Kangaku issendai* 漢學一千題 (Tokyo: Hakubunkan, 1892), p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> Kishigami, pp. 1-2.

Despite his emphasis upon the Chinese genesis of the *kangaku* tradition, Kishigami also emphasized the role Japan had played in its dissemination, preservation, and development in a section entitled “When Did *Kangaku* Come to Japan?” (*Kangaku no Nihon ni watarishi wa nan no koro naru ya*). Japan’s earliest history, the *Kojiki*, claims that the *Analects* of Confucius (*Lunyu*) and the *Thousand Character Classic* (*Qianziwen*) were first brought to Japan by a Paekche scribe named Wani 王仁 during the reign of emperor Ōjin 応神 (4<sup>th</sup> c. CE?): an account referenced in most Meiji-period discussions of *kangaku* as a way of emphasizing the tradition’s long-standing connections to Japan.<sup>24</sup> Although the Wani account is dutifully presented in Kishigami’s textbook as well, it is preceded by an alternative account that claimed the Chinese classics had been imported into Japan much earlier. During the Qin dynasty (221-206 BCE), Kishigami writes, Chinese sailors had arrived in Japan while searching for magic elixirs in the waters east of China.<sup>25</sup> Following this initial contact, the canon was sent to Japan by the First Emperor of Qin. The anecdote concluded:

Thirty-five years after the Qin emperor sent these texts to Japan, he burned all of the Chinese books and had the Confucian scholars buried alive. Thus, the entire corpus of Confucius was preserved in Japan.<sup>26</sup>

その後三十五年、かの国書を焼き儒を埋みにければ孔子の全経日本にとどまるといへり。

The story is apocryphal, but the point is clear. By emphasizing the Qin “bibliocaust” over the more familiar account of Wani the scribe, Kishigami was able to emphasize the central role played by Japan as a repository for the canon. The section devoted to Japan ends with mention of the bidirectional travel of monks and diplomats during the Sui and Tang dynasties--again suggesting that although the Confucian classics were undeniably Chinese in origin, Japan had played an important custodial role in its history.

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<sup>24</sup> For the *Kojiki* account, see Gustav Heldt, trans., *The Kojiki: An Account of Ancient Matters* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), p. 125. The original passage can be found in *Nihon koten bungaku taikei*, vol. 1, pp. 248-49.

<sup>25</sup> The first emperor of Qin was presented as superstitious and gullible in both official historiography and popular legend. Obsessed with long life and immortality, he supposedly sent sailors in search of magic herbs and elixirs in the seas east of China. Burton Watson, trans., *Records of the Grand Historian: Qin Dynasty* (Hong Kong: Research Centre for Translation, 1993), p. 49.

<sup>26</sup> Kishigami, p. 4. This passage references the infamous “bibliocaust,” in which the Qin emperor allegedly attempted to burn all historical records aside from those of the Qin itself. This was done in order to standardize the reading of classical texts, as well as prevent people from “studying antiquity to criticize their own age.” Watson, p. 55.

## The Utility of *Kangaku* and the Question of Confucius

Kishigami's textbook demonstrates in capsule form a foundational assumption shared by many Meiji-period discussions of *kangaku*: namely, the assertion that *kangaku* was both inextricably rooted in Chinese culture, as well as the product of long-standing contact between Japan and China. The assertion is so immediately self-apparent that it appears unnecessary: surely even the neophytes who purchased Kishigami's introductory textbook were at least aware that *kangaku* had its roots in China and had been a crucial component of Japanese civilization for over a millennium. On a rhetorical level, however, this emphasis on the rootedness of *kangaku* in archaic Chinese culture was the basis for larger arguments that could potentially be harnessed by *kangaku*'s defenders, detractors, and "agnostics" alike. As is well-known, critics of *kangaku*, like Fukuzawa Yukichi 福澤諭吉 (1835-1901), argued that its geographic and temporal distance from Japan made it irrelevant to a rapidly modernizing and aspirationally progressive nation-state.<sup>27</sup> On the other end of the spectrum, pioneers of the positivist methodologies embedded in academic disciplines like Oriental history (*Tōyōshi*) and Sinology (*Shinagaku*) premised their fields of study on the idea that Chinese culture could be apprehended through the objective, scientific analysis of texts and material artifacts.<sup>28</sup> A third deployment of this rhetoric was apparent in the writing of *kangaku*'s defenders, who insisted that--properly pursued--*kangaku* was an inherently flexible episteme with continued relevance to contemporary issues. For scholars such as Katō Hiroyuki, Kawada Ōkō, and Mishima Chūshū, the Confucian canon was best conceived of as a collection of case studies, rather than an inflexible set of prescriptions to be blindly applied to contemporary problems. The value of the "scholarship unique to China," to borrow Kishigami's formulation, lay not in specific tenets, teachings, or solutions, but rather in its insight into the ways in which particular individuals responded to problems in historically appropriate ways. These writers were critical of "Confucian ideologues" (*jukyō shugisha*), who mistook historically contingent solutions for universal panaceas. The uniting refrain among the writing of these authors was that it was not the texts themselves that were the problem, but rather their adherents' rigid and literal devotion to them. In a 1880 polemic published in the *Tōkyō gakushi kaiin zasshi*, for instance, Kawada Ōkō turned to Confucius himself for support: citing the famous passage in the *Analects* in which Confucius described his ideal teacher as someone who "understands

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<sup>27</sup> By way of very brief example, see Fukuzawa's 1897 essay "On the Centrality of Practical Learning" (*Jitsugaku no hitsuyō 實學の必要*), which blamed *kangaku*'s poor reputation in turn-of-the-century Japan for the popular misconception that "study and practice are incompatible, and learning to read is the root of penury." Fukuzawa Yukichi, *Fuku-ō hyakuwa* 福翁百話 (Tokyo: Jiji shinpōsha, 1897), p. 103.

<sup>28</sup> For a thorough discussion of the methodological underpinnings of *Tōyōshi* and *Shinagaku*, see Joshua Fogel, *Politics and Sinology: The Case of Naitō Konan (1866-1934)*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984) and Stefan Tanaka, *Japan's Orient: Rendering Pasts Into History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), esp. chapters 1 and 2.

the new by refreshing the old” (*wengu er zhixin*).<sup>29</sup> Kawada interpreted this description as a kernel of progressivism at the heart of Confucius’s thought, and like many of his contemporaries, attempted to rescue Confucius from Confucianism--in doing so, laying the groundwork for a revamped *kangaku* able to navigate the Scylla and Charybdis of nineteenth-century imperialism and cultural self-alienation.

This attempted rescue took many forms and borrowed language and conceptual apparatuses from a variety of disciplines. Katō Hiroyuki 加藤弘之 (1836-1916), who played a key role in establishing Chinese and Japanese humanistic tracks of study at Tokyo Imperial University, argued for the continued relevance of *kangaku* throughout his lengthy career.<sup>30</sup> He predicated this relevance on extensive reform, however, and he turned to the nascent disciplines of sociology and biology to explain how China and Japan had arrived at antipodal positions by the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>31</sup> An 1887 essay entitled “The Great Problem of East Asia” (Tōyō ichi dai mondai) began with a healthy dose of self-criticism, by comparing Chinese conservatism to the alacrity with which Japan had jettisoned its native traditions, language, and even racial purity in its eagerness to emulate the West. Katō argued that in Japan, social transformation had occurred far too quickly and had only been achieved through a series of superficial cultural grafts that had not had adequate time to take root. China, on the other hand, displayed little interest in transformation whatsoever. While the earliest days of contact with Western technology and institutions had led to some cosmetic changes in Chinese society (primarily in military matters), the Chinese had been content, for the most part, to glide by on the unique features of traditional culture:

The Chinese stubbornly cling to the millennia-old distinct features of their culture, and they have no intention whatsoever of carrying out any kind of sweeping reform. Yes, it’s true that several years ago, they grudgingly recognized the superiority of Western military technology and made a few updates to their system. And yes, they have recently recognized that technologies like the railroad and telegraph are beneficial, and gradually attempted to install them. But, let me tell you again: there is not one drop of concern for the adoption of newer systems and institutions, let alone at the level of character and ideology, where I’d be surprised if you found one person out of the hundreds of millions of people in the country who was interested in Western ideas. Only the leftovers of the antique Sage Kings and the archaic ideology of Confucius and Mencius are treated as

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<sup>29</sup> *Analects* 2.11: “The Master said, ‘He who by warming up the Old can gain knowledge of the New is fit to be a teacher.’” Translation modified from Arthur Waley, trans., *The Analects* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), p. 82.

<sup>30</sup> One of the clearest examples being the Classics Training Course (*Koten kōshūka* 古典講習科) established as an *ad hoc* field of study at Tōdai in 1882. See Michael C. Brownstein, “From *Kokugaku* to *Kokubungaku*.”

<sup>31</sup> Katō Hiroyuki, “Tōyō ichi dai mondai” 東洋一大問題, *Tōkyō gakushi kaiin zasshi* 10 (1887).

untarnished treasures. They labor to preserve these intact and are completely unable to understand the meaning of progress: one suspects that their aged eyes are unable to see the beauties of Western culture.<sup>32</sup>

依然として数千年来固有の舊物を守株して決して改革一新を企てん杯云ふ考は無いであります唯数年前より兵制軍器の類は西洋の己れに優るを知りて稍之を取らんとするに至り且つ頃日に至り鉄道電信等の利器たるを悟り漸く之を布設せんとするに至りたことであるなれども唯今も申す如く制度文物の如きは敢て之を取らんとする志は露程もなきことなれば況て氣風思想の如きに至りて西洋に倣はん杯との考は恐らくは支那三億萬の人民中一人もあるまじと思はれます唯々唐虞三代の遺教孔孟の舊主義を万世不朽の宝物の思考して只管之を守株することをのみ務むる有様で絶て進歩と云ふことを知りません西洋文明の美花も支那人の老眼には殆ど見る能はざる歟と疑ふ程の次第であります。

In a world structured by the principle of “survival of the fittest” (*seizon kyōsō*), Katō’s excoriation of Chinese archaism seems damning indeed. Yet a careful reading of the argument suggests that it is not the Sage Kings themselves or even their teachings that he objected to. Katō’s distinction between the technologies (*gijutsu*) of civilization and the larger institutions and systems (*seido*) that subsume them was developed in a subsequent essay entitled “On Ogyū Sorai and the Way of Confucius” (*Kōshi no michi to Sorai-gaku*), whose seemingly abstruse focus belied a contemporary concern. Katō prefaced the essay by writing:

Ogyū Sorai argued that the Way of Confucius and the Sage Kings did not exist in the natural workings of Heaven and Earth, but rather in the institutions created by the Sage Kings. Thus, the arguments of Zi Si and Mencius, down to the later scholars of the Tang and Song periods were deemed incorrect by Sorai. When I examine the political structures of classical China along with the words and actions of Confucius himself, I cannot but agree that Sorai’s understanding is entirely correct.<sup>33</sup>

物徂徠は、先王孔子の道を以て天地自然に存するものに非ずして、先王の製作せる所なりと説き、以て思孟以下唐宋儒家者流の言ふ所を非としたることなるが、余は支那古代の政体と並に孔子の言行とによりて推考して、此説を大に當れるものと思ふ。

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<sup>32</sup> Katō, pp. 25-26.

<sup>33</sup> Katō Hiroyuki, “Kōshi no michi to Sorai-gaku” 孔子之道と徂徠學, *Tōkyō gakushi kaiin zasshi* 16 (1894), p. 347.

The preface is followed by a selection of quotations from Sorai's major treatises, including *Bendō* (*Discourse on the Way*) and *Benmei* (*Discourse on Proper Naming*): all of which centered on Sorai's understanding of the Way (*dō*, *michi*) elucidated in the Confucian classics. In contrast to contemporaries like Yamazaki Ansai 山崎闇齋 (1619-1682), who followed the example of the Song-period Neo-Confucians and identified the Way with man's inner nature (*sei*) and the ordered principles underlying the cosmos (*ri*), Sorai defined the Way as a man-made (*jin'i*) entity comprising the rituals, political institutions, music, and poetry created by the Sage Kings of antiquity.<sup>34</sup> As characterized by Katō, in his summary of Sorai's thought:

Sorai's argument is clear: the Way is not to be interpreted as something inherent in nature and the cosmos. Rather it's something that, with the blessings of Heaven and availing itself of the people's dispositions, was established through the wisdom and brilliance of the Sage Kings: from [the mythical rulers] Zhuanxu and Diku on down to Yao, Shun, Yu, and the Kings of Shang and Zhou.<sup>35</sup>

以上挙ぐる所に據れば、徂徠の意は凡そ道なるものは、決して天地自然に存するものにあらず、顓頊帝嚳以下、堯舜禹湯文武なる先王、即ち聖人が其聰明睿智の徳を以て天地を享け、人性の自然に率て制作建立したるものなりとの主義。

By privileging Sorai's interpretation of the Way over that of Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200) and his Edo-period disciples, Katō presented Confucianism as a system based on the establishment of specific institutions designed to solve historical problems. The implications for the modern era were clear, and Katō continued by situating the writing of Sorai within a Darwinian-Spencerian framework. The institutions of governance established by the ancients were appropriate for their time but ill-suited to the contemporary world, Katō argued. In particular, the classical Chinese emphasis on social distinctions and obedience to Heaven engendered a "patriarchal theocracy" (*patoriarukii seokurashii*) that is no longer consonant with modern civilization. By mistaking historically contingent solutions for timeless precedents to be slavishly imitated in the present, China has remained a backward theocracy well into the nineteenth century. And as for Japan, the dramatic transformations apparent in the Meiji period's cultural landscape could still be explained within a Confucian framework. As Katō claimed: "In the language of the present, what Confucius called rites, music, punishment, and administration (Ch. *liyue xingzheng*, Jp. *rigaku keisei*) are simply the institutions and

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<sup>34</sup> *Bendō* and *Benmei* have been translated by Tetsuo Najita in *Tokugawa Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>35</sup> Katō, p. 349.

laws of the nation” (*kokkai no seido hōritsu*)--establishments that can be freely adapted and changed as historical necessity dictated.<sup>36</sup> As for Confucius himself:

Confucius’s actions at the end of the Zhou period were targeted at restoring the divine governance and system of hierarchy that had been established by the Sage Kings. What this means is that Confucius was not a “Transcendent Principle-ist”<sup>37</sup> (that is to say, a “philosopher”) who was interested in finding the Way (*michi*) in nature and the cosmos. Rather, it’s beyond question that he devoted all his energy to the restoration of rites, music, punishment, administration, filiality, and benevolence: what is called “the Way of the ancient Sage Kings.” To put it another way: Confucius was not a scholar like Laozi, Zhuangzi, and all the thinkers of the Tang and Song periods; rather he was a politician from head to toe.<sup>38</sup>

孔子周末の世に出て、古来神権政治と族長政治とを行はれ、唐舜禹湯文武を祖述憲章して以て、此諸先王の道を復興するを以て本意となしたることによりて推考すれば、孔子は決して理學的即ち哲學的に、天命自然の道を求めたるにあらずして、全く所謂先王の道たる禮樂刑政孝悌仁義の復興に心力を盡ししものなることは敢て疑ふべからざるが如し、之を換言すれば、孔子は決して老莊若くは唐宋儒家者流と同じく學者を以て任じたるにはあらずして、全く政治家を以て任じたるものと云ふべきなり。

In light of his earlier insistence upon flexibility and adaptation, Katō’s emphasis on the “restoration” of earlier modes of thoughts is somewhat jarring--echoing the rhetoric of the Meiji ascension itself, which could be presented as either a revolutionary “renewal” (*ishin*) of outmoded institutions, or as a retrospective “restoration” (*fukko*) of a preexisting system of government. The question of whether Confucius was a politician (*seijika*), a scholar (*gakusha*), or a philosopher (*tetsugakusha*) was not merely a semantic quibble; rather, it was a rebuke to contemporary academics who attempted to elevate Confucius to the role of an Oriental Socrates in the recently constituted fields of philosophy, ethics, and religion. To use the admittedly simplistic distinction created by Katō, philosophers concern themselves with the elucidation of eternal (and often impractical) principles, while politicians identify and implement concrete solutions for specific problems. In Katō’s hands, Sorai’s emphasis on the institutions of the Sage Kings was not simply an abstruse eighteenth-century debate; rather, it was a key intervention that Meiji intellectuals might use to reestablish a place for Confucius in the contemporary paradigm. Interpreting the Confucian classics “philosophically” leads to

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<sup>36</sup> Katō, p. 350.

<sup>37</sup> *Rigakusha* 理學者 (Ch. *lixuezh*)

<sup>38</sup> Katō, p. 356.



stagnation and antiquarianism; reading them “politically” establishes the groundwork for a specifically East Asian progressivism.

Katō was far from unique in turning to the classics to explain the contemporary geopolitical configuration: particularly in the years surrounding the First Sino-Japanese War, when Japanese belief in China’s political and military decline attained a dogmatic fixity. Nor was he the only one to argue that Chinese “archaism” (*shōko shugi*) was a perversion of Confucius’s original teachings. Kawada Ōkō revisited the topic of Chinese archaism within the rhetoric of “decline” (*suijaku*) in a November, 1894 lecture, against the backdrop of rapidly escalating hostilities.<sup>39</sup> Like Katō in his reading of Sorai, Kawada argued that it was a mistake to think that China had been hobbled by faithful adherence to the Confucian classics; rather, China’s precipitous fall from grace was due to its failure to properly implement (*katsuyō*) these teachings:

When the Han dynasty destroyed the Qin and was firmly ensconced on the throne, they were worried about falling into the same rut as their predecessor.<sup>40</sup> Thus, they collected and assembled the fragments of all the old Classics and summoned the aged scholars to court so that they could explain them and put them into practice. As a reaction [against the Qin destruction], the idea emerged that the past should be venerated, the ancients were all outstanding standards of virtue and talent, and all classical institutions were flawless treasures. This belief took root and was eventually passed down so that the ancient was always taken for the correct, and the contemporary taken for incorrect: a shared fault among all scholars. But open your eyes and really read the Classics: Confucius and Mencius aren’t saying that the past is correct in all ways. For instance, in the “Weilingong” chapter of the *Analects*, Confucius says, “Observe the calendar of Xia; ride in the chariot of Yin; wear the cap of Zhou. As for music, follow the Coronation Hymn of Shun and the Victory Hymn of Wu.”<sup>41</sup>

漢其機に乗じ。兵を起し秦代を滅し。大業既成の後。前車の覆轍に懲り。山巖屋壁より。先王の遺経を捜求し。遍く老儒を徴し。之を講習せしめしかば。反動の勢。古を尚ぶの情更に一層を進め。古人は皆才徳兼備せり。古制は皆至美無瑕の寶玉なりと思ふに至りしが。此風凝結して。後代に伝はり。遂に古を是として。今を非とするは。學者の通弊とはなれり。乍去。活眼を開て。経典を読まば。孔孟の教は。唯何事も。古代を善とするに非るを知らん。論語衛靈公篇に顔淵問為邦。子曰。行夏之時。乘殷之路。服周之冕。樂則韶舞。とあり。

<sup>39</sup> Kawada Ōkō, “Shina no sui-jaku no riyū” 支那の衰弱の理由, *Tōkyō gakushi kaiin zasshi* 17 (1895). The lecture itself took place the preceding November.

<sup>40</sup> Alluding again to the Qin emperor’s bibliocaust and persecution of Confucian scholars.

<sup>41</sup> Kawada, pp. 19-20. *Analects* 15.11. Modified from Simon Leys, trans., *The Analects* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2014), p. 46. The text has 路 for 輅.

In other words, Confucius was able to selectively adapt institutions and customs to respond to the unique needs of the present--something Kawada undoubtedly saw himself doing in his attempted resuscitation of Confucian thought.

Kawada's emphasis upon the proper implementation of Confucian thought carried with it the clear implication that were Japan to defeat China in war, it would be because of Japan's adherence to these principles. Writing after the war had concluded and was far enough removed for postmortem analysis, Kawada's colleague Mishima Chūshū 三島中洲 (1831-1919) came to precisely that conclusion. In the transparently titled "Confucius Was Not an Archaist Reactionary" (Kōshi hishukyūka ben), Mishima brought Katō's and Kawada's discussions to their logical apotheoses.<sup>42</sup> Although, Mishima argued, China was the first state able to lay claim to the status of civilization (*bunmei kaika*)--as reflected in its early adoption of the toponym "Central Florescence" (*Chūka*)--its post-Zhou history had been a swift and inexorable decline. By conveniently ignoring two thousand years of eventful history, Mishima was able to connect the political and social unrest in contemporary China directly to hoariest antiquity:

China baselessly believed that it [alone] was civilized among barbarian neighbors, and clung to the ancient customs of the Three Dynasties.<sup>43</sup> Two thousand years passed in a daze, and thus we arrive at the present pitiful state, where China is lifeless, inert, and on the brink of self-destruction. Even those of us who have devoted ourselves to the study of China (*Shinagaku*) cannot but be chagrined. This habit of clinging to old ways is often blamed on Confucius, but this is an unjust accusation. I truly believe that, were the teachings of Confucius to be correctly practiced, today's regression would never have happened.<sup>44</sup>

我は文明、他は野蛮と妄信し、三代の舊を守り、二千年も夢中に経過したる故に、今日の委靡不振の有様とはなれり、自業自滅可憫次第なり、故に吾々支那學を修むる者も此には感服せざるなり、然るに此の守舊の風は、孔子より出てたりと、往々論するものあり、此は甚しき冤罪にて、孔子の學を能く修めば、今日の如き退歩は、決してあるまじと信ず。

Mishima followed this thesis with a lengthy enumeration of quotations from the *Analects*: all intended to demonstrate the progressive and even revolutionary potential of the classical Sage. The quotations were accompanied by Mishima's idiosyncratic commentary, illustrated by the examples below:

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<sup>42</sup> Mishima Chūshū, "Kōshi hishukyūka ben" 孔子非守舊家辨, *Tōkyō gakushi kaiin zasshi* 19 (1897).

<sup>43</sup> The Zhou 周, Shang 商, and semi-legendary Xia 夏 dynasties.

<sup>44</sup> Mishima, p. 238.

*Analects*: The Master said, “He who by warming up the Old can gain knowledge of the New is fit to be a teacher.”

Mishima: This means that in addition to refreshing what one learned in the past, it’s important to learn new things as well--this is the kind of person one takes as a model. In responding to various problems, one shouldn’t incline toward either the old or the new; rather one should practice a balance of both.<sup>45</sup>

子曰：溫故而知新，可以為師矣。

此は故く學びたる事も温め復習すれども、新しき道理も知りてこそ、人の師匠となり、萬般の質問に応ずる事が出来ると云ふ事にて、舊にも新にも偏せず、新舊兼ね修むる公平の説なり。

*Analects*: The Master said: “According to ritual, the ceremonial cap should be made of hemp; nowadays it is made of silk, which is more frugal; I follow the contemporary practice. According to ritual, one should bow at the bottom of the steps; nowadays people bow on top of the steps, which is arrogant. Even though it goes against contemporary practice, I bow at the bottom of the steps.”<sup>46</sup>

Mishima: Here, a hempen cap is used in the ancient ritual, but Confucius advocates the more frugal silk. However, he follows the customary practice of bowing to the lord below the hall to avoid arrogance. He is not constrained by considerations of past and present--he follows only what is appropriate in each situation. Thus we see that Confucius was no archaist. Had he been born in our time, he wouldn’t have been bound by thoughtless adherence to the [classical ritual texts] *Zhouli* and the *Yili*.<sup>47</sup>

子曰：麻冕、禮也。今也純、儉。吾從眾。拜下、禮也。今拜乎上、泰也。雖違眾、吾從下。

此は麻の冕は古礼なれども、今の純の儉なるに従はん、今は臣が堂上にて、君を拜するは泰りなる故に、古礼の堂下に拜する方に従はんとて、古今には拘はらず、唯だ義に適する礼に従ふ意にて、孔子の守舊家に非ざる事知る可し、故に孔子をして、今日に生れしむれば、儀礼や周礼をかつぎだす如き迂闊は決して為さざるなり。

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<sup>45</sup> Mishima, p. 239.

<sup>46</sup> *Analects* 9.3. Modified from Leys, p. 23.

<sup>47</sup> Mishima, p. 241.

*Analects*: The Master wanted to settle among the nine barbarian tribes of the East.

Someone said: “It is wild in those parts. How would you cope?” The Master said: “How could it be wild, once a gentleman has settled there?”<sup>48</sup>

Mishima: Here, the term *rō* 陋 means “stubborn” or “narrow-minded” (*korō*) and refers to the uncultured barbarians. Confucius proposes to bring them civilization by living among them. Thus we see that terms like “barbarian” and “civilized” are not fixed properties of a given place. Rather, they are a function of the people living there. A barbaric place can become a site of civilization, and vice versa. Confucius understood this truth--hence he made this statement. The Chinese of today, however, assume that just because they were civilized in the past, they’re civilized in the present--that civilization is a fixed property of where they live. They are always calling themselves the center of civilization (*Chūka*), but don’t realize that they’ve dropped into barbarity. *In short, they’re not very good students of Confucius!*<sup>49</sup> [italics mine]

子欲居九夷。或曰：陋、如之何。子曰：君子居之、何陋之有。

此陋は固陋にて開けざる野蛮を云、孔子は之を開きて、文明を為し、住居せんと欲するなり。然れば野蛮と云ひ、文明と云ふは、土地の固有物に非ずして、住居する人次第にて、野蛮の地が文明の地となり、文明の地が野蛮の地となるなり、孔子は此の道理が能く分て居る故に、此言あり、然るに今の支那人は、昔が文明なれば、今も文明なりと思ひ、文明を土地の固有物となし、自ら中華々と称し、其実野蛮に陥り居るを知らず、皆孔子の學を能く修めざるの弊なり。

In all cases, Mishima’s point is easy to discern. His selective quotation from the *Analects* dissolves any perceived organic links between the ideas, texts, and institutions that constitute “civilization,” and the “soil” (*tochi*) in which they were produced. The representation of Confucius as a creator, inventor, and pioneer is stubbornly defended, even when Mishima encounters direct objections from the Master himself:

*Analects*: The Master said, “I am one who transmits but does not invent. I simply trust and love the past.”<sup>50</sup>

Mishima: This is purely an example of Confucius being humble—something you find a lot of in the *Analects*. . . It’s hard to make a case that Confucius was an archaist from this phrase alone. Confucius was not someone who merely transmitted the

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<sup>48</sup> *Analects* 9.14. Modified from Leys, p 41.

<sup>49</sup> Mishima, pp. 241-42.

<sup>50</sup> *Analects* 7.1. Modified from Leys, p. 18.

words of the ancients; rather, most of the *Analects* consists of his new discoveries and new ideas.

子曰：述而不作、信而好古。

此は全く一時謙遜の語にて、論語中往々ある事なり... 此一言にて、守舊家とは断定しがたし、何となれば、孔子は古人の言を述るのみで無く、自分の新發明にて、始て作られたる言多し。

In the twelfth century, Zhu Xi had annotated this passage from the *Analects* by writing “this means to transmit the ancient and do nothing else” (*chuanjiu eryl*), but Mishima dismissed Zhu’s explication as a shallow misrecognition of Confucius’s paramount focus on innovation. Rather than removing Confucius from the pedestal he had occupied for well over two millennia in East Asia, Mishima and his peers simply swapped out one Confucius for another: replacing the lover of antiquity and vessel of transmission with a forward-looking progressive.

### **Toward a Practical and “Professional” *Kangaku***

If Meiji-period defenders of *kangaku* broadly agreed that *kangaku* itself was flexible enough to adapt to the challenges of a new epoch, they were less sure about the shape a reformed curriculum might take. As early as 1879, Shigeno Yasutsugu sketched a proposal for an updated methodology centered on the study of language. The prolixly titled “Disquisition on the Necessity of Establishing a Proper Course of Study for *Kangaku* and of Selecting Outstanding Young Scholars for Study in the Qing Empire” (*Kangaku yoroshiku seisoku ikka wo mōke shōnen shūsai wo erami Shin-koku ni ryūgaku se-shimu beki ronsetsu*) began by refuting arguments that *kangaku* had outlived its usefulness in Japan.<sup>51</sup> For Shigeno, *kangaku* reform was above all a question of raising linguistic proficiency. Although the Chinese classics had been transmitted to Japan nearly two millennia earlier and were by now an indissoluble part of Japan’s national essence (*kokutai*), Shigeno argued, their reception had been derailed early on by the fact that the majority of Japanese readers read them in Japanese translation (*kokuyaku*). By “translation,” Shigeno referred to the long-entrenched practice of annotated reading called *kundoku* that allowed Japanese readers to reconstrue Sinitic texts in accordance with Japanese syntax.<sup>52</sup> This reliance on *kundoku*, Shigeno concluded, had

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<sup>51</sup> Shigeno Yasutsugu, “Kangaku yoroshiku seisoku ikka wo mōke shōnen shūsai wo erami Shin-koku ni ryūgaku se-shimu beki ronsetsu” 漢學宜く正則一科を設け少年秀才を選び清国に留學せしむべき論説, *Tōkyō gakushi kaiin zasshi* 1 (1879).

<sup>52</sup> The question of whether or not *kundoku* reading should be considered a form of translation has been the subject of extensive debate in recent scholarship. See Judy Wakabayashi, “The

distanced would-be scholars from the classical canon by creating an artificial distinction between content (*rigi*) and the language (*genko*) in which it was encoded. For Shigeno, reforming *kangaku* involved jettisoning these mediated readings and returning to the Sinoxenic readings (*kan'on*) of the text.

Like Katō Hiroyuki's disquisition on Chinese archaism, the entire trajectory of Shigeno's argument should be immediately recognizable as an updated presentation of the ideas of Ogyū Sorai. Sorai had similarly inveighed against the use of Japanese *kundoku* in treatises and reference works like his *Yakubun sentei* (*Weir and Snare for Translation*), where he described *kundoku* as a form of translation (*yaku*) that hindered an unmediated experience of the text itself.<sup>53</sup> Sorai famously invited commercial interpreters like the Nagasaki-born Okajima Kanzan 岡島冠山 (1674-1728) to lead sessions of his Translation Society (*yakusha*), where Sorai and his coterie practiced reading and speaking "contemporary Chinese" (*Tōwa*) in addition to classical texts.<sup>54</sup> Shigeno praised Sorai's "grand discernment" (*chōshiki*) in emphasizing the study of spoken language alongside the written and lamented the fact that scholars who devoted their lives to the study of Chinese texts could not speak a word of Chinese. This lacuna was particularly perplexing for Shigeno in light of the central place of language study in the context of Western studies. Proper language instruction could only take place *in situ*, and as the title of his essay suggests, Shigeno proposed sending promising Japanese students abroad for a period of ten years. The *kangaku* curriculum envisaged by Shigeno would combine Japan's traditional emphasis on classical scholarship (using the Sinoxenic readings) with instruction in contemporary spoken Chinese:

In addition to mastering the Classics, Histories, Masters, and Collections in accordance with *Chinese* reading practices (*kano dokuhō*), students would learn spoken Chinese (*kanwa*) so that they might become adept in the refined and informal registers necessary for daily life. After completing their studies, they could return to Japan and act as instructors at the middle school and higher levels.<sup>55</sup>

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Reconceptionization of Translation from Chinese in 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Japan," in *Translation and Cultural Change*, ed. Eva Hung (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2005), pp. 119-45 and Rebekah Clements, *A Cultural History of Translation in Early Modern Japan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), esp. chapter 3. Two recent studies that situate *kundoku* within a larger network of glossing practices are Peter Francis Kornicki, *Languages, Scripts, and Chinese Texts in East Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) and Matthew Fraleigh, "Rearranging the Figures on the Tapestry: What Japanese Direct Translation of European Texts Can Tell Us about *Kanbun kundoku*," *Japan Forum* 31.1 (2019), pp. 4-32.

<sup>53</sup> For a discussion and annotated translation of *Yakubun sentei*, see Emanuel Pastreich, "Grappling with Chinese Writing as a Material Language: Ogyū Sorai's *Yakubun sentei*," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 61.1 (2001): 119-70.

<sup>54</sup> Yoshikawa Kōjirō, *Jinsai, Sorai, Norinaga*, trans. Kikuchi Yūji (Tokyo: Tōhō gakkai, 1983), p. 203.

<sup>55</sup> Shigeno, p. 91.

經史子集悉く彼の読法に遵ひ傍はら其官話を學習せしめ雅俗文体の日用を辨するものは務て兼修するを要すべし。帰朝するに及び官校に入り正則を以て中學以上の生徒に教授し。

The essay concluded with a call for a supplemental curriculum that would prepare students for an extended period of study and service in China. As he pointed out, his suggestion was hardly unprecedented--after all, the archipelago's first contact with continental culture had taken the form of regular missions to the Sui and Tang empires.<sup>56</sup> As an example of a scholar who was equally at home with the Chinese classics and contemporary language and administration, Shigeno pointed to the Nara-period envoy, Abe no Nakamaro 阿倍仲麻呂 (698-770 CE), who passed the civil examinations, served the Tang court as the governor (*jiedushi*) of Annam in modern Vietnam, and enjoyed close friendship with cultural luminaries like the poets Li Bai 李白 and Wang Wei 王維. In creating a modern Nakamaro, Shigeno envisioned an individual:

[Who] combines the strengths of the traditional classical scholar with the professional interpreter--only then can we be said to have a “professional *kangakusha*” (*senmon kangakusha*).<sup>57</sup>

予の期望する所は今の漢學者と譯官とを合併して一人となすに在り之を合せて始て専門漢學者と稱すべきなり。

Language occupied central focus in other polemics that argued the vocabulary and concepts imported from the Chinese classics might serve as the basis for a consistent methodology for translation--a potential antidote to the translation “chaos” (*ranzatsu*) surrounding initial engagement with Western-language texts. In an 1883 inaugural address to the second class of Tōdai's recently established Classics Training Course (*Koten kōshūka*), Nakamura Masanao ruefully recalled the first years of the Meiji period as a time in which “my translation of [Samuel Smiles'] *Self Help* had taken the place of the *Peiwen yunfu* 佩文韻府 as the most prominent imported text.”<sup>58</sup> However, Nakamura asserted, his translation of Smiles' text could only have been undertaken by

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<sup>56</sup> It was not only the Heian court that recognized a need for this instruction, but also the contemporary Chinese government, who Shigeno approvingly noted, dispatched Chinese students to the United States for a period of fifteen years. Far from being an outdated relic, the Chinese empire was responding to the contemporary situation with a foresight that, it is suggested, outstripped Japan's.

<sup>57</sup> Shigeno, p. 88.

<sup>58</sup> Nakamura Masanao, “Koten kōshūka itsubu kaisetsu ni tsuki kan ari shoshite seito ni shimesu” 古典講習科乙部開設に就き感あり書して生徒に示す, reprinted in *Tōkyō gakushi kaiin zasshi* 5 (1883), p. 32. The *Peiwen yunfu* is a highly influential early Qing compendium of rhymes and allusions for the composition of poetry.

someone with a firm grounding in *kangaku*, and he used his address to urge his students to follow his example:

At present, when you look at those individuals who have made a name for themselves in Western studies, you find that none of them were able to put their study into practice without first possessing a foundation in *kangaku*. Those who don't have credentials in *kangaku* can spend seven, eight, even ten or more years studying abroad in the West, but when they come back to Japan, they are unable to distinguish themselves. They have little impact--especially in terms of translation, where they are unable even to begin.<sup>59</sup>

且夫れ方今洋學を以て名家と称せらるる者を観るに、元來漢學の質地有りて、洋學を活用するに非ざる者莫し、漢學の素無き者は、或は七八年、或は十餘年、西洋に留學し、帰国するの後と雖も、頭角の嶄然たるを露はさず、其運用の力乏しく、殊に翻譯に至りては決して手を下す能はざるなり。

Nakamura did not clarify the relationship between *kangaku* and translation in his lecture, but similar arguments were advanced by his contemporaries. In the four-part essay "On the Literature of Our Nation" (*Nihon no bungaku*, 1888), Nishimura Shigeki 西村茂樹 (1828-1902) described the importation and translation of Western texts as a time of linguistic confusion, when translators freely adopted and created new vocabulary without any concern for consensus and standardization. The shared lexicographic patrimony of *kangaku*, Nishimura claimed, could act as a corrective. Nishimura argued that while *kanji* script was originally a foreign importation, its long presence in Japan meant that it could now be thought of as a Japanese script (*Nihon no moji*)--in the same way that archaic Greek and Latin had left an indelible trace on the grammar, alphabet, and lexicon of Western languages.<sup>60</sup> Rather than jettisoning this patrimony as some script reformers advocated, Nishimura argued that Sinitic vocabulary could play an important role in the stabilization of meaning:

It's especially when we come to the matter of nouns that we begin to encounter problems. It's not the older meanings that we're accustomed to from the past that are leading to chaos; rather, it's the words that are translated from Western languages that are the problem. The reason for this is that there are many people who are fluent in Western languages, but ignorant of *kangaku*. And on the other hand, you have many people who are excellent in *kangaku*, but ignorant of

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<sup>59</sup> Nakamura, pp. 34-35.

<sup>60</sup> Nishimura Shigeki 西村茂樹, "Nihon no bungaku" 日本の文學, *Tōkyō gakushi kaiin zasshi* 10 (1888), p. 79.



Western languages. Expertise in *kangaku* is no use in translation if you are ignorant of Western languages, but by the same token, if you know only Western languages, then you will be unable to create appropriate correspondences in translation without expertise in *kangaku*. It's for this very reason that there are so few appropriate translations in today's world. Some lose the original meaning of the term in question, others fall into obscurity or vulgarity, and some are simply meaningless! But the fact remains that in today's world, there are very few settled or fixed translations, and that most translators carry out their translations along different lines--leading to a situation that we might truly call linguistic chaos.<sup>61</sup>

此中殊に乱雑を致せるは名詞なり、名詞中にてても古来より習用の語は此乱雑甚しからずと雖も洋語を譯して国語となせるものは其乱雑実に甚し、其故を考ふるに洋學に通ずる者は多く漢學に通ぜず、漢學に通ぜる者は多く洋學を知らず、已に洋學を知らず故に漢學を知ると雖も洋語を譯する事能はず、既に漢學に通ぜず故に洋語を譯すと雖も適當の語辞を作ること能はず、故を以て今日世上に行はるる譯語にして適當なる者は甚だ少なく、或は其本義を失ひ、或は怪僻に流れ、或は鄙俗に陥り、或は何の義たるを知らざる者あり、故に世間譯字の一定せる者甚だ少なく文人各々其譯を異にする者甚だ多し、実に語言乱雑の世界と稱すべし。

The vast lexicon of the classical Chinese corpus could serve as a translational *lingua franca*, and Nishimura's concern paralleled Shigeno Yasutsugu's insistence on the need for a standardized and unified curriculum. However, not all writers shared this sanguine appraisal of *kangaku*'s potential as an intermediary for Western studies. Morita Shiken, whose essay on the present and future status of *kangaku* was quoted at the beginning of this study, structured his essay as a direct rebuke of the ideas expressed by contributors to the *Tōkyō gakushi kaiin zasshi*: listing “perfunctory apologies in the Japan Academy” (*gakushi kaiin ni gimuteki mōshiwake*) as one of the dwindling purviews of contemporary *kangaku* scholarship. Whereas writers like Katō Hiroyuki and Mishima Chūshū had claimed it was the practitioners of *kangaku* and not *kangaku* itself who were to blame for its reduced prominence, Morita argued that only a new research methodology (*kenkyūhō*) could save the Chinese classics from irrelevance and obscurity. Unlike Nishimura, Morita denied the usefulness of the classical lexicon as a basis for translation. His essay emphasized the historical embeddedness of this lexicon and the difficulty of divorcing classically derived neologisms from their earlier associations. Citing the recently forged association of the term *kyōwa* with the English “republic” as an example, Morita claimed:

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<sup>61</sup> Nishimura, pp. 88-89.

Usually, preexisting terminology have preexisting meanings, which are already present in the reader's mind. Led astray by these "prejudices,"<sup>62</sup> we end up with interpretations that run counter to the author's intention. A particularly funny example is what befell Yasui Sokken, who to be clear, is the greatest classical scholar of the past three centuries, and someone who could hold his own against any scholar from the Qing empire.<sup>63</sup> In his collected writing, there's a letter entitled "On Government by 'Shared Harmony'" (*kyōwa*). The gist of the piece is that the term *kyōwa* (Ch. *gonghe*) comes from the Zhou period in antiquity, where it referred to a temporary cooperation between the heads of state that took place after the death of the emperor. It was an arrangement of expedience, and not something intended to be instituted on a permanent basis. Now, to bring in the Zhou dynasty when you're discussing the idea of a modern republic (*repaburikku*) is more extreme than striking the neighbor's wife because you're fighting with your own. But this isn't Master Sokken's fault at all: it's a natural consequence of the ways in which the older meaning of *kyōwa* is entangled with the term itself.<sup>64</sup>

総じて旧語には旧語の旧意味ありて読む者に先入しをれば、そのプレジヨデスに謬られて、動もすれば述べむと欲する新意味とはいたく相違せる解をなさしむることあり。尤も笑しきは安井息軒先生、此人は経術に於て三百年間の第一位に在り、清朝の名家とて此人の右に出ずるは寡しと思はるる大儒なるが、其の文集の中に与某論共和政事書あり。其の趣旨は、元来共和政事と申すは、周の昔し天子無くなりて統御の処なきより、臨時諸大名協議して政事をなせし権宜の計なり。然るに之を以て常経とするは心得ずといふに在り。レパブリックを論ずるに周の共和を援かるるは、内の女房を叱るに隣家の細君をなぐるより甚し。然れども是れ息軒先生の陋なるに非ず、全く共和なる旧語に伴ふ旧意味の累らひあるに由りてなり。

Unlike the older Nishimura, Morita recommended that would-be translators avoid using classically derived compounds whenever possible.<sup>65</sup> This did not mean, however, that *kangaku* had outlived its usefulness in Japan. Whereas the essays by his predecessors argued that Japanese *should* not jettison the classical canon in their efforts at reform, Morita stated that the Japanese simply *could* not reject it. The language and content of the Chinese classics had become so deeply embedded in Japanese culture that

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<sup>62</sup> Written プレジヨデス.

<sup>63</sup> The classical scholar Yasui Sokken 安井息軒 (1799-1876), from Hyūga.

<sup>64</sup> Morita Shiken, "On the Present and Future of *Kangaku* in Our Nation," pp. 32-33.

<sup>65</sup> See, for instance, the list of precepts presented in the 1892 essay "On Translation" (*Hon'yaku no kokoro-e*). Reprinted in Katō Shūichi 加藤周一 and Maruyama Masao 丸山真男, eds., *Hon'yaku no shisō* 翻訳の思想 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1991).

a clean excision was not only undesirable, but ultimately, impossible. Morita described Confucian precepts as the bedrock for Japanese “common sense” (*komumon sensu*<sup>66</sup>) and claimed that it would be impossible to dispose of the Chinese texts (*kansho*) in which these precepts were enshrined. Similarly, the argument--made by reformers as disparate as Fukuzawa Yukichi and Nishimura Shigeki--that *kanbun* was a foreign language was a non-starter for Morita, who wrote that the grammatical rules, rhythms, and prosody of literary Sinitic were inextricable from contemporary language. Just look at Fukuzawa Yukichi, the “personification of reform itself” (*kaikaku no keshin pāsonifikēshon*), Morita urged. Even works like *Seiyō jijō* (*Account of Affairs in the West*)--Fukuzawa’s pro-reform manifesto--were written in a style entirely derived from literary Sinitic. Spoken discourse displayed the parallel influence of classical Sinitic “vernacularisms” (*kuchō*), and Morita advised those interested in “transcribing conversation directly” (*danwa wo tadachini bunshō ni seru*)--a clear reference to the network of debates surrounding the relationship between written and spoken language--to take another look at Japan’s traditional patrimony:

Now in a way, both *wabun* and *kanbun* are equally comprised of words from dead languages. But even so, when you look into whether one or the other is more familiar to the contemporary public, then I think you’ll find that the answer is *kanbun*. This is the inevitable result of an education that requires us to read the *Shiji* and the *Zuozhuan* but leaves no time for texts like *Tsurezuregusa*, and *Tosa nikki*. I remember one time that I made an excursion to the countryside, and I was met by one of the village elders, whose first words to me were: “I wave my pure white hempen sleeve to beckon you.”<sup>67</sup> Now that was the first time I’d heard that in casual conversation, and I suspect it will be the last.<sup>68</sup>

和文と云ひ漢文と云ひ、其中の或る点より言へば、均しく既死の口語を臚列するものなり。然れども、均しく既死の口語ながら、其の現在の公衆に馴染み多き者は和文漢文孰れに多かるべきやと検しなば、余は或は其の漢文のかた多きにあらざるやを疑ひをるなり。是れ縦ひ徒然、土佐日記は之を讀ましむに違あらざるまでも、史記、左伝は必ず讀ましめんと務めたる従来の教育の傾きが必ず生ずるの結果なり。余が嘗て田舎にゆけるとき、某家の老翁来り、訪て、第一の辞儀に私もそでふりはえて云々と述べられしは、余が談話のうへに聞きし空前の祠なり、恐らくは亦た絶後ならむ。

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<sup>66</sup> Written 常智常識.

<sup>67</sup> From a poem by Ki no Tsurayuki, included in the *Kokinshū*: “Waving their pure white / hempen sleeves beckoning to / each other are these / maidens bound for Kasuga / Meadow to pluck the young herbs.” Laurel Rasplica Rodd and Mary Catherine Henkenius, trans., *Kokinshū: A Collection of Poems Ancient and Modern* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 55.

<sup>68</sup> Morita, pp. 38-39.

However, Morita pointed out, Sinitic terminology, grammatical constructions, and compound phrases had become inextricably embedded in both spoken and written discourse.

Morita's essay concluded by suggesting that an eventual return of interest in *kangaku* was inevitable, because as Morita phrased it, "there is no greater aficionado than a scholar, who thinks nothing of prying open barrows to sniff desiccated bones and charging into frozen wastes with no fear of perishing."<sup>69</sup> In contrast to the political, ethical, and linguistic imperatives that had characterized other arguments, Morita predicted that *kangaku*'s inevitable resurrection in Japanese society would be the result of simple curiosity (*monozuki*):

Sooner or later, scholarly curiosity will lead someone back to Chinese texts again. What kind of person will this be? I can't say. However, among historians and writers and the like, I imagine that poets, philosophers, novelists, and dramatists are the most destined to do so. I say this because their tastes resonate most closely with the thoughts and feelings of an ancient people expressed in a long-dead language. For example, shouldn't scholars of the Orient carefully turn their attention to Confucius, Mencius, Laozi, Zhuangzi, Yangzi, Mozi, and the other great minds of yore, identifying similarities and differences from the Greek philosophers, and describing the influence they've had on later Eastern civilization? This is something that the perspicacious Mr. Inoue Tetsujirō is doing with great success, I'm told. Or think of all the stories and anecdotes scattered throughout the *Liezi* and *Hanfeizi*: aren't these to be thought of as the earliest examples of "tales" and "fables"? . . . The parables of Zhuangzi are an even better illustration. All of the examples that rolled off the tongues of the wandering persuaders are instances of classical Chinese "wit." What kind of texts were the strange tales collected by Yu Chu, and how preposterous was the account of Zhao Feiyan?<sup>70</sup> Can the rhapsodies (Ch. *fu*) that flourished during the Han and Wei periods be thought of as a form of "epic"?<sup>71</sup> And how did works like *The Water Margin* and *Journey to the West* come about? What relation did they have to the literary works of that period? Why was it during the Yuan and Ming that giants like these emerged? These questions would be a pleasant place for a poet or novelist to take a stroll through.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Morita, p. 39.

<sup>70</sup> Yu Chu 虞初 was supposedly the compiler of a set of classical tales during the reign of Emperor Wu of the Han. The Western Han "Unofficial Biography of [Zhao] Feiyan" (*Feiyan waizhuan*) discusses the sensational relationship between Emperor Cheng (r. 32-7 BCE) and his consort, Zhao Feiyan 趙飛燕. Both works were often cited by Meiji-period historians as early examples of Chinese "fiction" (*shōsetsu*).

<sup>71</sup> "Tales," "fables," "wit," and "epic" are all written phonetically in *kana*.

<sup>72</sup> Morita, pp. 39-40.

學者のキューリオシテー好奇の念は、早くか晩くか必ず漢書を涉獵するの人を出たさむ。而して其人は何種の人なるや、固より予めす可からず。然れども、余は其大抵詩人か、哲學家か、小説家か、芝居家か、將た歴史家文章家等の中に、尤も因縁多からむことを想ひ料る。何となれば、先民の才情意思が働ける所以の跡を既死の口語の上に尋ねて、其の美粹を観るとするは、尤も此種の人嗜尚に近かければなり。試に其の一二を挙げむ乎。孔孟老莊楊墨等の哲學系統は之を希臘の諸賢にくらべて、其の異同粗密如何なる、其の東洋の後代に及ぼせる影響は亦た東洋の學者たるものが細心精察すべきの一好題目にあらざる歟否な。是れ既に慧眼の井上巽軒氏ありて、現に砵砵講究しをる所なりと伝聞す。列禦寇、韓非等の諸書に散見せる瑣談逸話は、乃ち先秦の文學に伴ひ生ぜるテール・フヘーブルのたぐひなること母からむや。是れ余が嘗て少年園の第九号に於て一たび論じ及べる所なり。蒙叟の寓言はいふもさらなり、当時學者説客の舌にのぼれる許多の譬喩は、皆な當時の人のウイトを観るべき非るなし。又た虞初が採聚せる新聞は如何なるものなりしならむ歟。飛燕外傳は如何に馬鹿らしきものなりや。又た漢魏の間に盛なりし賦は時ありて一種のエピックをなさざる歟。又た水滸伝は如何にして生れしや。西遊記は如何にして生れしや。二書と當時の文學と如何の関係ありたる歟。元明の間には如何の事情ありて彬彬群小説を出たせるや。是等は皆な詩人小説家にとりて多趣多興の散歩場をなさざる歟。

In presenting his own “strolling ground” (*sanpojō*) of topics for the reader to consider, Morita also provided a sprinkling of suggestions for possible ways in which the traditional textual corpus might retain its vitality in the present moment. Despite his metaphor, Morita’s “curiosity” should not be read as a disengaged or apolitical search. In the final lines of the essay, Morita described China as an archive of “historical materials” (*rekishi no zairyō*) that might be used to contextualize and understand the political, economic, and demographic changes occurring in the modern world. As the forerunner of civilization (*bunmei no senku*) and a place where--in Morita’s memorable phrase--“Yao and Shun had already established systems of governance at the time when Noah was fearfully peeking his head out of the ark, believing himself to be the only person left in existence”--China might act as a source of information that would allow cosmopolitan citizens to better understand the forces at work in global history: from age-old questions like the genesis of religion to current issues like commercial treaties and population decline. As Morita writes:

China is a place that has already experienced the advances and pauses--I can’t bring myself to use the term “retreats”--of the world at large. For historians who don’t mistake history as the simple record of when such-and-such a monarch died or who won and who lost such-and-such a battle, then there’s no more engrossing material than this!<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Morita, p. 41.

支那は世界が方に履行しをる進歩と休息（余は退歩を云ふを肯ぜず）を既に経験せる者に似ること無き歟。彼の帝王の生死年月と争戦の勝敗輸贏を記するのみを以て歴史となさざる歴史家には、復た此に過ぎたるおもしろき材料あらむや。

As befitted its title, Morita's essay concluded in a messianic tone, by connecting the scholarly passion (*kōki*) motivating this line of inquiry to a very different type of passion altogether:

Those scholars who were motivated by a simple sense of curiosity will be completely transformed into enthusiastic *kangaku* scholars. Scholars of earlier ages were like those who proclaimed the beauties of Mt. Fuji without ever setting foot outside of Japan. Scholars of the future will travel the globe and be able to point out Fuji's outstanding features, after having taken in all the famous mountains of the world. And at that point, when the previously hidden beauties of *kangaku* are made visible to all, it will be like the moment when the sleeping Jesus removed the lid of his coffin and ascended to Heaven. Alleluia! *Kangaku* is reborn!<sup>74</sup>

初め只だ好奇の念を以て漢書を窺へる學者は、一変して熱心なる漢學研究者となるべきなり。従来 of 研究者は足跡日本の外に出でず、唯だ日本の内に在りて富士山の秀色を称したるなり。将来の研究者は遍ねく世界に遊びて、其の有らゆる名山を歴覽せる眼を以て、富士山が特に優れる所以の者あるを指点し出ださむとするなり。此に至れば、漢學は従来 of 研究者に知られざりし美所粹所を知られ、之を世に顕はさるるなり。仮に棺裡に睡りたる基督は、俄然蓋を排して登天するなり。嗚呼漢學は復活せり。

### Conclusion

This study has been structured as an investigation of variegated opinion rather than an attempt at discerning unitary and unidirectional trends. As such, it can be difficult to extract a cohesive narrative from the swirling mass of opinions and pronouncements on the status of *kangaku* in the first decades of the Meiji period. Going one step further, I would suggest that the construction of such cohesive narratives is potentially misleading: by thinking of the status of *kangaku* solely within the rhetoric of retreats and resurgences, we potentially overlook the creative ways in which intellectuals of the period redefined crucial terminology and explored possible points of convergence

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<sup>74</sup> Morita, p. 42.

between Western and Chinese texts. Earlier discussions of the status of scholarship during this period have primarily centered on an epistemic shift in focus from the “universal” moral and ethical truths explored in earlier modes of classical study to the collection, cataloguing, and analysis of Chinese textual and material culture. Rather than interpreting Confucian texts within a discourse of “universal” values like loyalty, benevolence, and filial piety, these texts were read as both a reflection and constituent part of a geographically, culturally, and temporally bounded society.

Scholars have debated whether the allegedly positivist, objective, and “scientific” (*kagakuteki*) methodologies characterizing Meiji-period Oriental history and sinology represent a break or continuation with earlier traditions of classical scholarship. Stefan Tanaka, for instance, has posited such a rupture, while Joshua Fogel has argued for a more cohesive lineage between nineteenth-century *keigaku* traditions and the later research of scholars like Naitō Konan 内藤湖南 (1866-1934).<sup>75</sup> I would suggest in closing that these two viewpoints might be reconciled, in light of the rhetorical ground shared by self-identified modern historians like Shiratori Kurakichi 白鳥庫吉 (1865-1942) and the thinkers discussed in this essay: all of whom described a distinction between an allegedly sclerotic Confucian “ideology” (*jukyō shugi*) and the verifiable historical, cultural, and environmental circumstances from which it allegedly emerged. Where scholars like Katō Hiroyuki and Kawada Ōkō differed from the next generation was in their emphasis on China’s cultural uniqueness as a way of advancing arguments about *kangaku*’s continued relevance by, in effect, creating a separation between Confucius (and the archaic thinkers who inspired him) and the ossified tradition erected on his thought. Arguments that the tradition was characterized by despotism, patriarchy, and above all, a stagnating antiquarianism (*shōko*) could be rebuffed by the counterargument that this ideological rigidity was a perversion of Confucius’s original teachings. Within such a discourse, Confucius was presented not as a conservative remnant from the epochs preceding him, but rather as the avatar of a startling progressivism that might be relevant to Japan’s own political situation. The question of whether Confucius was a conservative or a progressive equally impacted--and was informed by--understanding of contemporary China’s political situation, and whether its attempts to navigate the challenges of the late nineteenth century were the result of departing from or holding too closely to the principles enshrined in its earliest texts.

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<sup>75</sup> See Tanaka’s *Japan’s Orient* and Fogel, *Politics and Sinology: The Case of Naitō Konan (1866-1934)*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984).