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FROM SORAI TO NANKAKU
——The Development of the “Bunjin” Consciousness——

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I

“The study of books, like a wart, is good for nothing” remarked Nankaku Hattori in the opening in his Jo (a kind of stylistic literary exercise) which he presented as a farewell gift to Den-Daishin who was then leaving Edo to return to Kyoto to take care of his parents. It is rather surprising to find so nihilistic an attitude of introspection expressed by Nankaku himself, who was said to be so highly respected at that time that people told the following story about him. “There are very few who can afford to lead a more luxurious, a more comfortable life from lecturing on Confucianism than he. Once, when he opened a lecture course on Zhuangzi at his home, so many students wanted to see and hear him that the front of his house was thronged with crowds enough to open a fair.”

In tracing outstanding influences of Lao-Zhuang, it seems proper to turn to one who has written, “I am convinced that in the ultimate moral society, the best government is the one that is least governed; and if politicians were pure in virtue, dignified in manner, and content with their present station, then the people would be sufficiently well off to spend time for amusement, with still enough food and clothing for a comfortable life. To achieve this end, very little assistance is required from government officials and scholars.” On the other hand, however, we find Nankaku also saying, “One who is not in a position, directly or indirectly, connected with the administration, who must ask his friends to pay for their own food and drink, and who leads a bare existence in a small shack with mugwort doors and mulberry pillars—for such a one, it is indeed a shame and unwarranted luxury to discuss moral issues while stroking his beard, to criticise the tendency of the times with loud and irresponsible clamours, and otherwise, to denigrate whatever he chooses.” It is evident that Nankaku deliberately tried to avoid political discussions which he considered matters far beyond the function that scholarship, “like wart, is good for nothing,” would seem to be a logical sequence.

According to Nankaku, “Only those who, like Banzan Kumazawa, were born with a talent for politics and at the same time were in a position of high rank, able to participate in the pivot of policy making for clan governments, were able to give structure to their own

2 Sentetsu Sodan by Nensai Hara, Vol. VI.
3 Kankai Matsuzaki’s remark in Bunkai Zakki by Jozan Yuasa, in which he said, “According to Nankaku, it seems to me, government reasonably run if one faithfully follows Laoism.”
5 Ibid.
political theories and to perform distinguished service.\textsuperscript{6} And furthermore, Nankaku continues, "Even Banzan was a very particular case, because he was in the position of handling actual politics."\textsuperscript{7} For other non-official scholars, "Even though they sometimes expressed views on current affairs which deserved a hearing, it was almost impossible to bring such views into the realm of actual politics. And whenever they tried to advance their views by means of force, they would without fail commit mistakes leading astray the national destiny; for these non-official scholars were not in a position of direct responsibility for the conduct of government, and their views were advanced merely to strengthen their own reputations.\textsuperscript{8}

In other words, as Nankaku says elsewhere, "It is possible for those who do not take direct part in governmental policy-making to develop their own individual opinions, but it is forbidden them to realize such views in actual politics."\textsuperscript{9} And further, "It is a deplorable situation to have those in power who hope to govern people by mere paper-planning without any direct contact with the people or knowledge of what the people are searching for."\textsuperscript{10} Consequently, Nankaku writes of himself, "Once I thought I would express an opinion regarding the policies for rice production and distribution; but upon reconsideration, even if I express my own opinion on this matter, it would be obviously impossible in my present status to realize it, and even though my opinion should happen to attract the attention of those who govern, whether it is put into practice or not is completely dependent upon circumstance. Thus I concluded that it was useless to write such a treatise, and gave it up."\textsuperscript{11} In this way, he escaped from politics and decided to seek elegance by devoting his energies to the world of letters.

Though convincing evidence is lacking, according to Ken'en Zatsuwa, Nankaku was said to have been indicted for his article on current affairs. It is perhaps from this experience that he later said of himself, "I never talk about politics, because if I strongly criticize policies, it is taken to mean, unfortunately, that I willfully intend to chide the Government."\textsuperscript{12} But any attempt to associate this purported experience of indictment directly with his later attitude toward escapism and indulgence in poetry, should be disclaimed as an overly hasty conclusion. For, if we establish the thesis that once a scholar commits himself to politics as his subject of learning, he, fully realizing that the fruits of his endeavor will never be effected in practical politics, consciously forfeits all satisfaction from life as a scholar—then if follows that we would logically find that Confucianists generally at that time held nihilistic attitudes similar to that of Nankaku. But this is not necessarily true.

There is, for example, the case of Banzan, who, after winning the confidence of Mitsu-masa Ikeda, Lord of the Bizen clan, was given the high rank of Bangashira, receiving an annual stipend of 3,000 koku of rice. The role of statemanship at the top of government which he enjoyed, made Nankaku extremely envious. Yet, even Banzan believed, "It has been a long time since doctrines set up by Confucianists was applied to actual policy. It is to be deplored, indeed, that reality and science have been so completely separated,
and have never since been united."13 Elsewhere, Banzan says, "Confucianism now belongs to the bourgeoisie and no longer to the Samurai class,"14 which indicates that within the Samurai class, the Confucianist was not regarded as powerful enough to participate in actual political life.

There is also the case of Hakuseki Arai, who was engaged in the administration of the Shogunate Government, and who was just as capable as Banzan. Hakuseki is said to have credited the fifth Shogun Tsunayoshi Tokugawa with recognizing the true usefulness of Confucianists so that from Tsunayoshi's Shogunate on, proper respect for the Confucianists existed on all levels of society. Before that time, Hakuseki pointed out, Confucianists had been received by society with a cold indifference akin to the attitude encountered by early Christians in Japan.15 At the same time, it should not be forgotten that after struggling through his political life under these circumstances, he finally arrived at a feeling of resignation concluding, "Everything today has the end-of-the-world aspect in which there tends to be no social justice or truth. It is either a stupid Confucianist with no discretion or just a foolish man, who seeks his own path clinging to the ideal he has in his mind, unaware of reality."16

A similar example is the case of Sorai Ogyu, Nankaku's teacher. Sorai attained eminence "as a useful scholar," and won recognition from his lord, Yoshiyasu Yanagisawa, when he advised his lord in a case of prosecution against a peasant who deserted his mother because of poverty.17 He later won further repute, and became so respected that he earned the title, "the Pride of the Yanagisawa."18 It was Sorai's counsel that was adopted in the disposition of the case against the Ako-roshi (the Loyal Forty-seven Samurai Band), well known to everyone.19 But he never received treatment equal to his reputation, for his annual allowance remained only 500 koku of rice, half the stipend received by the ex-Noh player, Norifusa Mabe. When he was invited to the Chiyoda Castle, the Shogunate stronghold, he proposed to Yoshimune Tokugawa, the eighth Shogun, that in order to strengthen the feudal system, warriors should be restricted to their own territories,20 and that the clan lords should be limited to less than 300,000 koku of rice.21 These proposals were totally unacceptable to the cabinet members who ridiculed and dismissed them, saying, "There is nothing so preposterous as a Confucianist these days."22

In view of this evidence that even such a great Confucianist as a Sorai Ogyu, the founder of the science of politics, who is generally acknowledged as the innovator of great changes, was forced to resign himself to such shameful treatment—it is not difficult to understand the persistent nihilism that overcame Nankaku.

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13 Shugi Gaisho, Vol. III.
14 Shugi Gaisho, Vol. I.
15 Honroku-Ko.
16 Sakuma Dogan ni Atauru Sho.
17 Seidan, Vol. I. Sorai's opinion was that, in the time of famine in other countries, so many people would commit the same crime, and that he should not be singled out for blame: rather more responsible for the occurrence of such cases were the Daikan and Kori-bugyo, first of all, and Karo who should supervise these officials, and finally the lord himself. Other Confucianists insisted, it was said, on making clear whether or not the peasant was guilty rather than whether or not he willfully deserted his parent.
18 Yanagisawa Jikki.
19 Sorai Giritsusho.
20 Seidan, Vol. II.
21 Seidan, Vol. IV.
II

As is well known, according to Sorai, learning is “to study Senno-no-Michi.” (The word “Senno” means the Emperors in Yao and Shun dynasties and the three consecutive eras of Xia, Yin and Zhou, generally regarded as the historic example of the realization of the ideal community during the early period of China. “Michi” means the arts of how to govern the country, and thus, how to keep the world peaceful.)

Sorai amplified his explanation of Senno-no-Michi by saying, “Fuyi, Shennong and Huang-di were also sages, but their best achievements were confined to fortunetelling, letters, medicine, and producing tools of practical usage such as ships and wagons. After the ages of Cuanyu and Diago the concepts of Rei (Li) and Gaku (Yue) (generic expressions for ‘institution’ and ‘substance’, both of which are necessary in governing people) were for the first time invented in the ages of Hsiao and Hsun and in the later eras of Xia, Yin and Zhou, and these concepts were given shape and form. Rei-Gaku are the manifestations of the souls and intellect of many sages whose lives cover several thousand years; they are not concepts that could have been formulated through the contributions of one sage’s lifetime.”

Sorai comments further, “Senno-no-Michi was created by such the Senno as Yao and Shun, and it is not an entity existing of itself in the universe. It is thought that by God’s will, these sages, through their intelligence and wisdom, were delegated as terrestrial supremes who were entrusted with the mission of concentrating their minds solely on maintaining peace on earth, and to this end, the creation of the Michi represents the ultimate effort of their will and ability. If posterity follows this Michi to fulfillment, utopia will surely be realized. Until the time of Yao and Shun, such a Michi had never existed in this world.”

Sorai then defines the Michi as the composite existence, as well as the general term for Rei-Gaku-Kei-Sei, that is, the forms and institutions created by the Senno. No Michi exists apart from these objective, concrete forms and institutions. It goes without saying that, by such a definition, Sorai totally denied the existing theories, not only of the Shushigaku (the school of Cheng-Zhu), but also of Jinsai Itoh who belonged to the Kogaku-ha.

Thus, Sorai was convinced that Senno-no-Michi, which is the general term for the forms and institutions created by the Senno, is clearly revealed in four of six volumes of Rikupei (Liu-jing): Shi (Shijing), Sho (Shujing), Rei (Li-ji), and Gaku (Yue-ji). Therefore, to study these four books is learning itself. For, according to him, by studying Rei and Gaku, one can learn Rei-Gaku-Kei-Sei, the concrete embodiment of Senno-no-Michi. More specifically, one may gain knowledge of literature and the arts, good customs and manners,
and of the regulations through which the national authorities exert their authority for maintaining social order. And from Shi-jing and Shu-jing, on the other hand, because these two books are the treasury of "Senno’s doctrines" and "Emperors’ Great Testaments," one may learn much about that which is called “Senno-no-Gi.”

From this conviction came his well known theory of the Kobunji (guwenci). In it he said, “There is no other method of learning in this world except by interpreting writings. Any doctrine of an earlier sage can be seen in books, which consist of compositions. Therefore, the spirit and thoughts of the ancient sages can be thoroughly explicated if one grasps their real meanings and correctly understands them just as they are without any arbitrary explanation. Moreover, the Michi that sages advocated cannot be understood without faithfully following up the methods by which they educated. And finally, these methods can be found in such books. In short, everything rests upon interpretations of compositions. Unfortunately, while the later Confucianists should have been keenly aware of the fact that compositions and/or their meanings are modified by succeeding generations, they pay respect, with self-styled arguments, not so much to the interpretation of compositions as to the philosophical study of moral, so that they could pay but scant heed to the fact that words undergo changes in meaning as time advances. Furthermore, they could not understand the educational methods of the old sages; and because they tried to interpret the sages' Michi on the basis of their own judgments, many dogmatic theories were in vogue.” Sorai cites Zhu-Xi, a great Confucianist of the age of Nan-Song in China, as an example. Zhu-Xi is said to have had a brilliant mind and a noble spirit, but ultimately, he still failed to comprehend "Senno-no-Michi," for he based his examination of the classical documents on the books of later years, and he tried to interpret the old languages through current meanings of words. Sorai thus concluded that “the proper method of reading rests primarily upon the proper understanding of old words and phrases.”

He thought that the function of the scholar should be limited to “preserving the real meanings of words and phrases in the Rikuhei and to transmitting them to later generations.” Sorai said, “We are looking forward to the sages of the future to clarify Senno-no-Michi, and to carry on the work of many preceding scholars so that the meaning will eventually be worked out in real life. This is my hope.” This hope, in fact, is embodied in the above mentioned method which emphasized the interpretation of compositions rather than philosophical thinking.

From this point, Sorai went on to advance the sages’ “thesis of two species,” which divides all men into two categories, one that is placed on a level higher than the norm, and the other ranked below the first. Based on his noesis that “People are foolish” and that "Nothing is so absurd and incapable of self-discipline as people," he went on to explain that learning should be included in the “political arts,” and should be directed toward “Keisei Saimin” (i.e., to govern the world and succor the people). In this way, learning can provide indispensable knowledge for the Samurai class, considered to be superior to the middle social.
In reality, however, notwithstanding the fact that the Samurai were supposed to belong to controlling political class with manifest power to maintain a social order, and notwithstanding the fact that some of them were either Bugyo or other officials belonging to the "Shitai" (bureaucratic) category who were supposed to pride themselves as Kunshi (men of integrity)—notwithstanding these facts, the Samurai class failed in enlightening itself through learning directed toward the proper administration of their country in accordance with Senno-no-Michi. Furthermore, they were guilty of vainglory, displaying glaring eyes and perked-up shoulders, threatening people with punishment, pressing fear and uneasiness upon them, and feeling self-satisfied in the vain boast that they were, indeed, capable of maintaining order. Confronted by this situation, Sorai once proposed to the Tokugawa Government that Confucianists be qualified as government officials. But as was expected, these proposals were ignored.

It seems to me that Sorai’s contention that “learning is in the long run a private, non-political matter, and has nothing to do with public office,” implies, in a way, a feeling of deep sorrow in the face of the incompetence of the scholar and of learning. I hope that such an interpretation of his remarks reflects more than my own personal prejudices.

III

It is very difficult task to determine clearly what Nankaku thought of academism. For, while Sorai clearly defines it as the political arts by which to govern and succor the people, Nankaku, who was one of the most prominent disciples of Sorai, would say that he “would never raise arguments on politics on his own.” Other would criticize him by saying, “he has not one opinion of his own.” Still, it is possible to reconstruct his thought to a reasonable degree from the fragmentary works he has left.

Referring to Rei-Gaku, the main concerns of Sorai’s thought, Nankaku pointed out the fact that Senno-no-Michi lost its appeal during Yao and Shun dynasties and the three consecutive eras of Xia Yin and Zhou, and that there was no political aspirant in the following ages of Chinese history who was successful in his attempt to revive the way of Yao-Shun. Every attempt failed to produce the results. He said, “Kunshi in the old age embellished themselves with Rei-Gaku, but such things had nothing to do with the life of common people. It seems futile, therefore, for us to seek the essence of Senno-no-Michi which was formulated in the Yao-Shun ages, and it seems equally futile to seek enlightenment and foresight through the comprehension of the essence of Rikukei.” Nankaku then concluded that Rei-Gaku had totally lost the functions that were originally intended for them.

Although Sorai also recognized that Senno-no-Michi had already manifested a definite
declining tendency long before the end of the Yao-Shun ages, and before the coming of Confucius,\textsuperscript{44} he still maintained that it was owing to Confucius' tremendous efforts to go everywhere to set aright Senno-no-Michi which had been bogged down by an academic debate between right and wrong, that Senno-no-Michi in the form of the \textit{Rikukei}, lasted for a thousand years without losing its way.\textsuperscript{45} Thus, according to Sorai, even though Senno-no-Michi hadn't been advanced in actual life, it was quite possible to explicate it by studying the \textit{Rikukei}, by living up to it, and giving form to its ideals.

But Nankaku's view differed slightly from Sorai's. According to Nankaku, only one third of the clans (all of Japan was then divided into 66 clan territories) could compare in size to Qi and Lu of China. Each of the clans had sufficient human resources and land, grains, mulberries, flax plants, and livestock; industries such as gold, steel, fisheries and salt production were all so prosperous that even the people of smaller clans were never left in want. Therefore, the clan governments had enough capacity to develop many qualified officers who could study whatever they liked. Even in these favorable conditions, however, there were very few scholars throughout Japan who were willing to enter the service of the government as Confucianists and thus earn the right to participate in the administrations. But even if a scholar received such a position and was given a high-ranking post within the government, he still would not be able to assist the government in accordance with the doctrines of Shi, Sho, Rei and Gaku, unless he was fortunate enough to have an exceedingly excellent lord as a ruler. And, in truth, this world has never seen such a ruler who would both pay proper respect to scholars and at the same time appoint them to important governmental posts.\textsuperscript{46} For this reason, Nankaku could never in any way hope for, nor believe in, the possibility of a future embodying the spirit of Rei-Gaku. In fact, even in the eyes of the self-flattering Confucianists themselves, it could hardly be said that their social status was highly recognized; moreover, the government itself was so ramified and specialized that there was hardly room left for them. Even such a great Confucianist as Sorai did nothing but play the clown in the presence of shogunate cabinet members.

It was from this point of view that Nankaku denied from inside Sorai's ideas which were based on learning Senno-no-Michi and on living up to the spirit of Rei-Gaku. Nankaku said of himself that he was "not interested any more in practicing Senno-no-Michi,"\textsuperscript{47} and even said, "As far as moral discussions are concerned, I am only one of a morally-ruined herd, and I have never pursued a human cause on my own."\textsuperscript{48}

\textbf{IV}

Disappointed with politics, Nankaku left the government service in the tradition of the Chinese "Bunjin," and tried to seclude himself by indulging in poetry. But poetry at that time was generally considered by the Shushi-gaku school and others to be an instrument of Kanzen-Choaku (rewarding the good and punishing the wicked) and was not allowed its proper role as literature.

\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Benmei}, Vol. I.
\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{46} \textit{Nankaku Sensei Bunshu,} Vol. I, part 6: \textit{To-Shizen o okuru Jo.}
\textsuperscript{47} \textit{Nankaku Sensei Bunshu,} Vol. II, part 10: \textit{Sei-Taikiku Zenshi ni Kotau.}
\textsuperscript{48} \textit{Op. cit.}, Goi-sei ni Mukuyu.
It was Sorai who first tried to make poetry more respectable. He claimed that "it is a big mistake to think that a poem is created in order to reward the good and punish the wicked."\(^49\) According to Sorai, "It is natural for the human mind to function, so the mind functions even in periods of do-nothing leisure. Thus, if a man has anything in mind, he is no doubt capable, in that state, of feeling pleasure, anger, sorrow, merriment, love or hate, any or all of which may be turned into words or voices. This is poetry, and essentially is no different from the Waka which has enjoyed a long tradition in the history of Japan. Such a poem is in no way intended either to propagate moral principles, nor is it intended to indicate some way to bring about order and peace in the country."\(^50\) In such long respected books as Shi-jing, Sorai pointed out, there are a fair number of lewd poems, and if such poems were compiled with a view of punishing the wicked or warning others as Zhu-Xi once claimed, it must be said that such an interpretation is quite inconsistent with the fact that there seems to have been no reason for the willful venturing of such lewd poems which ran a deliberate risk of leading people to indecency. In short, Sorai said, the literary views of those who want, in a sense, to enslave poetry to morality are totally irrelevant, and the proper attitude is to appreciate the poems of even Shi-jing as plain anthologies or as literature, not as Bibles of morality.\(^51\) This view of Sorai can, in fact, be said to be epoch-making in the history of Japanese literature, and, as I will discuss later, it paved the way to such self-righteousness and arrogance with which, aside from Sorai, followers of the Ken'en school were allowed to control freely the literary circles of their time.

Sorai, however, did not free literature from all moralistic restraints. For instance, he said of Shi-jing, "The sages compiled them and conveyed them to us; their words are pure and natural, being the voices of olden times speaking of their passing thoughts on hardship and happiness. Furthermore, there is much to be learned about the customs of a given country in a given age from excellent writing. Such writing can hardly lead us to discern the difference between good and evil, but by virtue of the skillfulness with which human nature is described in them, not only can we manage to keep ourselves flexible and receptive, familiar with public manners and national customs, and in touch with delicate human nature, but also, through such writing, the noble can understand the humble, men can understand women, and the wise can understand the foolish. The vivid and concise words used are effective and powerful, and are easily understood without long detailed explanations. The phrasing is well patterned, and effective when teaching wisdom and morals to others. Indeed, without Shi-jing, one cannot arrive at the realization that it is possible for Kunshi to live by manners and by a way of life independent of pure reason."\(^52\) In view of the above, we may conclude that Sorai recognized that, although poetry lacks moral judgment, it enables us to be comfortable in the manners and customs of society through our efforts to compose it, and it enables us to develop in Kunshi a personality that is stable and balanced in sentiment, so that such men can assume their roles as members of leading social class. He admitted, also, to a practical value in poetry to the extent that, by knowing the manners and customs in Senno's ideal society, one can realize the "cause of Rei" which was the fundamental principle of Rei-Gaku institutionalized by Senno. One can fulfill his mission and

\(^{49}\) Sorai Sensei Tomonsho, Vol. III.

\(^{50}\) Kei-Shi-Shi Yoran, Vol. I.

\(^{51}\) Sorai Sensei Tomonsho, Vol. III.

\(^{52}\) Op. cit.
responsibility as a leader by making this “cause of Rei” a governing standard when Rei-Gaku, which in a way are mere social institutions, become ineffective in responding to the transient aspects of this floating, changing world. It was from this contention that Sorai went on to say, “The Waka of Japan, for all its identity of substance to Chinese poetry, still has something effeminate in its character, seeming to reflect the historic fact that Japan has never had her sage.” Since the manners and customs described in the Waka are not the products of Senno’s ideal society, they are not necessarily the living knowledge; the “cause of Rei” of Kunshi.

In short, Sorai set literature free from the fetters of morality, but he bound it tightly to the tenets of Senno-no-Michi, that is to say, to politics. This view that elevates politics above literature was transmitted from Sorai to the later Shishi (loyalists) type intellectuals, and was thought to occupy a position in direct opposition to the non-political literature of the “Bunjin” (literary men) type intellectuals, the other school of intellectuals during the Edo Era. The former school was the mainspring for the formation of an original tradition within the mainstream of modern literature in Japan after the Restoration, a topic which I hope to discuss at another opportunity.

Meanwhile, Nankaku for his part, despite the fact that he did not completely deny the superiority of politics to literature, considered himself a heretic, leading a useless existence. Although he was a so-called “Shitaru” within the controlling political class, he could not feel any real desire or compulsion to participate in political activity. Consequently, he gave up his role of politician governing the people and maintaining the peace of the world, and chose a way of life by which he attempted to establish the ego in art, thus becoming the forerunner of the “Bunjin.”

In writing on the “Poet’s Sentiment,” he said, “There was once a man, whose lord and parents disowned him in spite of his innocence and love. All the people seemed to regard the attitude of the lord and parents as quite reasonable, but the man himself didn’t mind at all, leading himself to believe, ‘it’s of no use to try to plead innocence now that a heartless master and heartless parents offer no understanding; as Mencius once said, so long as I myself know that I’m right, I don’t care what people think of me.’ But a poet’s sentiment is altogether different. On the one hand, he knows very well that it is of no use in such circumstances to attempt to appear innocent, and he tends to disassociate himself; on the other hand, however, the conflict remains and he is unable to bear the grief and indignation within himself which are so deep and tormenting that out of them he produces poetry, hoping that it may eventually remove the misunderstandings from the lord and parents and evoke pathos or sympathy for him. This we call the sentiment of elegance. On an occasion such

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53 Sorai Sensei Tomonsho, Vol. II.
54 As we think of the genealogy of Bunjin in the Edo Era, the following fact cannot be ignored: beside those who by their poetic writings distinguished themselves from the stubborn Confucianists, there existed a group that had the Bunjin ga as their principal accomplishment. From the artistic point of view, the latter group assumed the Art-for-art stand, while the former were an intellectual group with the background of Confucianist culture. Both kept a pretentious attitude of particularity, but at the same time, both shared a common belief within themselves in the superiority of politics to literature. Here, the explanation of the latter group will be gone into, lest it should make the given theme more complicated. For further reference, see my article, The Artistic Views held by civilians in the Edo Era, in Kokugo to Kokubun-Gaku, Vol. XXXIX, No. 4 (April, 1962).
as when we see off an intimate friend, we recollect pleasant memories of our past acquaintance, and with tears in our eyes, we exchange verses expressing the feeling of loneliness and affection we will share after we are parted. This may seem like silly and childish business to such proper moralists as Zhu-Xi and his followers, who respect nothing but reason, but I am convinced that this is the essence of what we call the poet's sentiment.55

Nankaku went on to say, “Poetry is rhythm with which we feel. It is not a tool with which to preach reason.”56 He thought that it was because virtue for Kunshi consisted of maintaining within the heart this deep, vast sentiment, that Shi-jing were included within the Rikukei. These, together with other books were called by old sages “Shi-Sho” (Shi-jing and Shu-jing).57 Nankaku realized that poetry is that essence that originates from the deep, vast sentiment of humanity; it is neither a slave of moral nor a tool of politics; it has meaning and value in itself. Nankaku’s personality, however, would not allow him to pursue his own ideas to the extent of formulating an original theory, for he was man who so respected the theory of his teacher that he would never be so impolite as to criticize and defame him.

As I have already mentioned, Sorai maintained that “scholarship is exclusively a business for the ruling Samurai class.” It is interesting to see a similar view expressed by Nankaku who said, “Poetic phraseology belongs to Kunshi, therefore it is not necessary to be understandable to uneducated men and women.”58 Where Sorai asserts, however, that political science, which meant the study of Senno-no-Michi, was the province of the Samurai, or ruling class, Nankaku holds a slightly different contention. Nankaku insisted that the appreciative and creative acts connected with poetry should be the proper province of the Shi-kunshi, the intellectual class which was generally regarded as endowed with superior intelligence and talent. For whether the verses are good or bad, skillful or unskillful, depends on balancing the writer’s intelligence and talent. To be more specific, by Shi-kunshi here, Nankaku is not necessarily referring to the Samurai properly, as Sorai had implied, but he is specifically referring to a certain intellectual class characterized by its habit of reading, writing verses, and leading a literary, dilettante life separated from surrounding mundane affairs; a literary class which mixed with, or comprised the actual membership of, social clubs interested in literary dilettantism. Therefore, from Nankaku’s concept of the Shi-kunshi, the practice of Rei-Gaku was thought to be meaningful only as a means of self-improvement, first of all, for the intellectuals, whether they were officials or not; and it was not necessarily a discipline to qualify men for appointment as officials to govern people. In short, the Shi-kunshi may be thought of as monopolizers of culture or as intellectual aristocrats. The Shi-kunshi, therefore, were necessarily different, in every way, from the uneducated masses. Nankaku characterizes the Shi-kunshi as follows: “That which a man of integrity is particular about is what the vulgar is ashamed of; that which the latter looks up to is what the former disdains.”59

In this way, Nankaku’s literary criticism often tended to demand a distinction between “Ga” (elegance) and “Zoku” (vulgarity). He thought that the essence of poetry lay in rhetoric. This idea is clearly expressed in his comment, “It is generally thought among the

55 Nankaku Sensei Toka no Sho.
59 Jinsilu by Zhu-Xi and Lu-Zuqian, Vol. VII. This is Cheng-zi’s remark.
so-called intellectuals that writing is sufficiently functional if it ever is communicable."60 Also, "Writing that lacks a proper respect for rhetoric has no elegance of expression. And without elegance of expression, the thought represented cannot be beautiful, and if lofty thoughts cannot be represented, then the writing must be ultimately judged mean and vulgar.61 Thus, his theory of "Ga-Zoku" was expressed in terms of wording. He first distinguished "Ga-go" (elegant words) from "Zoku-go" (vulgar word), defining "Ga-go" as an embellished word differing from words used in actual life.62

Nankaku also said that books written with these embellished words varied in the degree of elegance according to the age of composition. In his judgment, the books of the Rikukei can be cited as the first usage of "Ga-go;" the second examples appear among writings of the eras of Zhanguo and Qian-Han. However, during the subsequent period of eight consecutive dynasties from Hou-Han to Tang, the level of writing degenerated to a kind of sportive amusement and fell into the excesses of technical displays of couplet making. It remained for Han-Yu and Liu-Songyuan, both of whom attempted to revive the discarded old style, to create a new style, which was inherited and transmitted by Ouyang-Xiu, Su-Shi and others—the highly respected Eight Great Writers of the Tang-Song eras, so that the new style continued for several subsequent ages. In a later age, however, Li-Xianji and Ho-Jingming leveled severe criticism against the style of Han and Liu charging that the style was a completely original one, and not the purported revival of the old style, which was, in effect, actually eliminated by Han and Liu. After this, Li-yulin, Wang-yuanmei and Wang-Daokun put forth the doctrine known as Kobunji, and this group renewed the appeal for the revival of the ancient form and style. According to Nankaku, communicability and rhetoric in writing were originally two principal factors, both of which had been equally esteemed since the age of Rikukei. During the subsequent era of Sun, however, so much emphasis was placed on communicability alone and so little attention was given to rhetoric, that there prevailed an erroneous trend supporting the contention that writing fulfilled its function as long as it was, in any way, communicable. Nankaku remarked that through the so-called Kobunji, Li and Wang made it their objective to reestablish the rhetorical standards,63 which had been established by such books as Rikukei, Shunju-Sashiden (Chunqiu-Zuoshizhuan) and Shiki (Shiji). Indeed, it may be concluded that "a savant is not one who creates something, but one who describes it, respects it and engages it with elegance."64

Nankaku asserted, "As we look into old Japanese anthologies such as the Keikoku-shu or the Kaifuso, there are almost no verses outstanding enough to warrant attention, and it seems a shame to have to admit that it has been only during the recent several decades that poetry in Japan has been given form."65 This is because those who are studying poetry nowadays have finally come to realize what poetry really is ever since they have had their

61 Ibid.
62 Nankaku Sensei Tokanosho.
eyes opened, so to speak, under Sorai's guidance, with the result that cultural progress has been remarkably advanced. They have also come to recognize as a fallacy the long-cherished thought that Santishi heralded a new era. It should be noted that, in prose, too, Nankaku put unconditional faith in his teacher. He declared, "It must be admitted that there is no outstanding prose to be seen in earlier ages. Until the appearance of Sorai, writing in our nation had been enclosed in complete darkness. The writings of Razan Hayashi are a prominent example of this darkness."

Nankaku's admiration for Sorai might be interpreted as an expression of confidence in himself. General evaluations of his poetry were so favorable that many were led to say, "Throughout the country, there is none to surpass Nankaku." It seems now to be generally recognized, and everybody actually says, that Nankaku is the No. 1 poet today; and it later became customary "to refer to Nankaku first whenever one spoke of poetry." His refinement, gentleness and broad mindedness became so widely respected that there was hardly anyone among literary aspirants who didn't pay respect to him, with the consequence that many youths came to call upon him.

Shundai Dazai, a talented man of the Ken'en school, who is often ranked as an equal of Nankaku, deplored the tendency that led so many scholars to strive for rhetorical and stylistic perfection as their principal attainments; and he bitterly blamed "those who give up the study of the sages' Michi to govern people, only to spend their whole lives in idleness devoting themselves to verses... They are not entitled to the name of scholar in true sense, and they are no different in the least from artisans who live by stunts such as Koto players, Go professionals, calligraphers, and painters." And in fact, aside from Nankaku himself, there were many among his followers who "greedily sought to improve their own reputations by claiming the honor of having met Nankaku, or boasting of having gained Nankaku's praise for their own verses." Even those who were thought to be better than the others tended to display their little knowledge, making such comments as, "Verses must be made interesting. Doctrines on human ethics, Rei-Gaku, and government which the earlier sages have set up should not be violated. But as for verses aside from the sages' concern, we had better make them amusing and pass them on to posterity." And as the Ken'en school grew more and more arrogant with increasing influence and power, bitter criticism even within the school itself began to be heard: "It is a terrible shame that Nankaku's students, professing to be true disciples of their master, arrogate privileges showing not the slightest awareness of the sloth within themselves." And Nankaku himself came to scorn his disciples by saying, "There are many who, boastful of being students of Sorai and myself, make great pronouncements in the name of their teachers, but never make any effort to study. They are

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68 Bunkai Zakki, Vol. I, part 1. This is the remark by Kankai Matsuzaki.
70 Kinsei Sogo by Kyuka Tsunoda, Vol. III.
71 Keizairoku, Vol. I. In those years, no clear-cut distinction was seen between concepts of study and literature, and much less distinctive were the relation among the concepts of hobbies, amusements and stunts. It was after the introduction of Western thoughts into Japan that the distinction of these concepts were established.
73 Bunkai Zakki, Vol. II, part 2. This is Kankai Matsuzaki's remark.
74 Ibid.
Far from paying serious heed to this criticism, however, these students fell in with Rantei Takano, a prominent poet who was ranked as an equal of Nankaku. But unlike Nankaku, Rantei tended to be overly indulgent and had curious habits such as using a human skull for a drinking glass. The indolent students not only paid scant attention to Nankaku’s ordinariness by nature, but they also overestimated their own talent, flattered others, competed to outdo each other in the pursuit of libertine pleasures, looked down with contempt upon the public, and were disdainfully content in their isolation from the common people. At the same time, they sought the patronage of country gallants and wealthy farmers who were awed by their reputations and who regarded it a singular privilege to entertain and associate with them, as well as the patronage of wealthy merchants in the cities who wanted to display their influence and insure their prestige through generous guardianship. These students formed a kind of literary salon (quite different in character from the literary circles of today), and many of them lost themselves in elegance, but idly self-indulged lives. It is this group that later came to be called “Bunjin Bokkyaku.”

Harsh criticism of these excessive tendencies within the Ken’en school began to be heard among other Confucianist schools.

The following are examples of such criticism.

“Until a century ago, scholars had been modest in their general behavior and held practical doctrines. But since the recent appearance of the Sorai school, studying has come to mean amusing oneself with useless poetry; and nowadays only a few lecture on Confucianist doctrines. During the last twenty years, scholarship has become so lax that it has degrades to a level lower than calligraphy, painting and poetry, which reflect nothing more than the taste of artisans.”

“Students of today are not familiar with poetics and are easily misled by Sorai and Nankaku; in spite of their lack of learning and knowledge, they brazenly plagiarize poems in the name of Kobunji. Thus, if a poem contains even one word which they have never read or heard, such a work does not qualify as poetry.”

“There are some talented students who are so self-assured in their extensive knowledge and exceptional memory that they fall into corruption and prodigality; others are boastful of the elegance and artistry of their writing to the extent of arrogance.”

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76 Following words will be suggestive in understanding the circumstances of the time: Tanso Hirose remarked in his book, Tanso Shitua, Vol. I, “Among the forms of verses now in vogue around the cities of Edo, Kyoto and Osaka, nothing is more popular than the Shichigon Zekku. But this is the effect of a trickery carefully undertaken to seduce those nobles and wealthy merchants, who have only a little experience of reading Chinese verses through Sodoku exercises, to join the poet groups. Because they are well aware that no other poetic form could be successfully attempted by these men of little learning, the professional poets who are running poets’ salons insistently assert that the Zekku is the most delicate form of all poems, and, when they compile anthologies of old and new poems, more often than not they select only Shichigon Zekku poems.”
Also, in Sasanyo Manpitsu, Naokai Nishida wrote: “I called upon Hanbei Ishida of Kanefukicho. His father is a celebrity, and under his patronage, such poets as Shibetu Okubo and Gozan Kikuchi have made their names.” (Sasanyo Manpitsu, Vol. VIII.)
78 Sakushi Shiko, by Hokuzaan Yamamoto.
79 Toko Zakki, by Tomonori Hatta.
"They delight in irresponsible bombast, deception, tales of fornication, and in plots to gain wealth; hearing such talk makes one feel as though he were walking through a slum area or talking with slaves."80

"In a word, they make drinking parties and addiction to art curios their business; they deduce the sons of the noble and of the wealthy, luring them to indecency and, in not a few cases, to complete ruin. For these reasons, they are despised and regarded as no better than gamblers or clowns by sincere, honest men.81

"Those who go by the name of Bunjin Bokkyaku are haughty, lazy, fastidious fellows, only a very few of whom display any conscience."82

"They detest those morals indispensable to real life, and once they pronounce such morals trivial and mean, they ignore them until they became meaningless."83

"One might allow them their sense of self-respect if their deeds as well as their words excelled those of Han-Yu, Lui-Songyuan, Li-Taibai or Du-Zimei. But what self-respect, what heroism, can be allowed from mere writing technique?"84

"Since literature, generally speaking, tends to debilitate men,"85 "it is poetry to scholars who are devoted to it, and poison to doctors who are tempted by it;"86 "literature, viewed from the histories of Japan and China, is quite obviously not beneficial, but, on the contrary, harmful."87

"A scholar, but for his unyielding spirit, is of no avail in a time of crisis."88 "He should, therefore, seek to be useful through his study, and not through associating with worthless fellows."89

"The object of learning should be the fulfillment of practical doctrines by which to govern and succor the people; poetry has nothing to do with any serious concern that might be raised among us."90

The above critical evaluations expressed the views commonly held by those who took anti-Sorai, anti-Nankaku or anti-Bunjin Bokkyaku stands.91 In this way, the Ken'ên and other school regarded each other with mutual disdain, and this contempt for each other 'aborted all fruitful efforts. They could not compromise nor meet in an Aufheben with any other school; thus, all were drowned in the tide of the approaching modern age.

80 Sundai Zatsuwa, by Kyuso Muro.
82 Matsunoya Sosho, by Tomokiyo Takata (Oyamada).
84 Seiken Chidan, by Seiken Terakado, Vol. I.
85 Toko Zakki.
86 Sundai Zatsuwa.
87 Toko Zakki.
90 Sakushi Shiko
91 For further details, see my article above cited, The Artistic views held by civilians in the Edo Era.