

**CHANGES IN 18TH-CENTURY
JAPANESE ACADEMIC CIRCLES AND
TONGSINSA EXCHANGE: FOCUSING ON
THE EMERGENCE OF THE SORAI
SCHOOL AND THE PUBLICATION
PROCESS OF THE
PILDAMCHANGHWAJIP**

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Abstract: Of the 18th century in Japan, new academic trend that called Soraigaku (徂徠學) have emerged. Soraigaku has expanded the force while criticizing the Neo-Confucianism and poet of Song dynasty (宋詩). In the mid-18th century, Soraigaku is as prevalent widely in Japan. However, in fact, crucial opportunity to Soraigaku has become epidemic, it was for the publication to criticize the Tongsinssa. The Sorai school (徂徠學派) was in conflict relation with Rinke (林家), Mokumon (木門), Jinsaimon (仁齋門). So, the opportunity to contact with the Tongsinssa was little. In addition, Sorai school's literary works aren't included in *Geyrimchngghwajip* (鷄林昌和集). So, the Sorai school published *Munsagisang* (問槎畸賞) that include their own literary works. He was severely criticized the Tongsinssa in *Munsagisang*. As a result, Sorai school's reputation has become to be known throughout the

country. Sorai is to criticize the authority of Tonsinsa which was very high in Japan, so it was able to improve their own phase of school.

Keywords: Tongsinsa, Ogyu Sorai, Soraigaku, *Munsagisang*, Huma Susumu

18세기 일본 학계의 변화와 통신사 교류: 소라이학파의 출현과 필담창화집의 편찬 과정을 중심으로

초록: 18세기 일본에서 소라이학이라 불리는 새로운 학문이 등장하였다. 소라이학은 성리학과 송시를 비판하며 세력을 확장하였다. 18세기 중반에는 소라이학이 일본 전역에 널리 퍼졌다. 그런데 소라이학파 형성에 결정적 계기가 된 것은 통신사를 비판하는 출판물이었다. 소라이학파는 린케, 기노시타학파, 진사이학파와 갈등 관계에 있었다. 따라서 통신사와 접촉할 기회가 거의 없었다. 게다가 소라이 학파의 문헌은 계림창화집에 거의 수록되지 않았다. 이에 소라이는 독자적으로 자기 학파의 필담과 창화시를 수록한 문사기상이라는 필담창화집을 출판했다. 그는 문사기상에서 통신사를 혹독하게 비판했다. 그 결과 소라이학파의 명성은 전국적으로 알려지게 되었다. 소라이는 일본에서 존송의 대상이었던 통신사의 권위를 비판함으로써 자기 학파 위상을 높일 수 있었다.

키워드: 통신사, 오규 소라이, 소라이학, 문사기상, 후마 스스무

1. Introduction

Pildamchanghwajip (筆談唱和集) has recently garnered attention as a resource that provides concrete evidence of the scenes of Tongsinsa (通信使) and the diverse forms of exchange between Joseon and Japanese literati. Through the collection of brush talks, we can now glimpse the vivid scenes of exchange that existing diplomatic mission records failed to show. We can obtain more concrete information about what the common interests of Korean and Japanese literati of the time were, and the sharp positions they took in opposing each other on these issues. Among Japanese scholars, Huma Susumu stands out as an early researcher who focused on these collections of brush talk. Through his series of studies on the envoys, He questioned

the prevailing scholarly view that the missions primarily served to introduce advanced Joseon culture, such as Confucianism and Classical Chinese, to Japan. Furthermore, after extensively analyzing the collection of brush talk published in the late 18th century, he argued that the missions were highly responsive to emerging scholarly trends in Japan and made persistent efforts to assimilate them. (Huma, 2015)

The new academic trend mentioned by Huma Susumu refers to the expanding influence of Gohak (古學) during that era – specifically, the Kogigaku (古義學) of Ito Jinsai (伊藤仁齋, 1627–1705) and the Soraigaku (徂徠學) of Ogyu Sorai (荻生徂徠, 1666–1728). These two schools criticized Neo-Confucianism, which had been imported through Joseon in the early Edo period. The Kogigaku and Soraigaku exerted a profound influence on Japanese academia, providing the impetus for the diversification of the previously Neo-Confucian-dominated scholarly world.¹

¹ The Jinsai School and the Sorai School emphasized gomunsa (古文辭) in literary study and composition. They adopted the classical prose of the Pre-Qin (先秦) period as their model instead of the Tang-Song (唐宋) style prevalent in their own era, and they preferred Tang poetry (唐詩) and Ming poetry (明詩). In Confucian studies, a tendency emerged to emphasize the Six Classics over Neo-Confucianism (六經). This phenomenon, though differing in timing, appeared commonly across Korea, China, and Japan. The gomunsa movement initiated by the Jeonhuchilja (前後七子) exerted a certain influence on Joseon and Japan. In Joseon, the collected works of Jeonhuchilja had already been transmitted by the late 16th century, and thereafter, scholars inclined toward gomunsa emerged one after another. For example, the 17th-century Joseon Confucian scholar Heo Mok (許穆) not only embraced literary theories but also advocated an sanggojui (尙古主義) emphasizing the Six Classics (六經) at the scholarly level. This tendency persisted steadily until the 18th century, primarily among literati affiliated with the Southerners (南人) faction. (Lee Hyowon, 이효원 2007; Ha Jiyeong, 하지영 2014). However, it is necessary to note the historical and cultural differences between Joseon and Japan. Compared to Japan, Joseon had a longer history of adopting Neo-Confucianism and establishing it as the official state doctrine. Moreover, the Confucian scholars who were responsible for literature were also the main actors in politics. Their mode of existence was fundamentally different from that of Japanese literati, who built a self-contained scholarly world detached from practical politics. Furthermore, the asymmetry of the exchange must be considered, as the Jeoseulgwan (製述官) and Seogi (書記) of Tongsinso (通信使), who interacted directly with Japanese literati, were not top-tier scholars in Joseon. Without considering these points, applying a simplistic theory of historical development to

According to Huma Susumu, the envoys first detected these changes in Japanese academia during the 1748 mission, and it was during the 1763 mission that the envoys actively responded for the first time. However, considering that Jinsai advocated the Kogigaku and generated significant resonance in the late 17th century, and that Sorai first published his writings advocating the Kobunjigaku (古文辭學) and presenting his literary theories in the early 18th century, it is difficult to conclude that the envoys visiting Japan in the early 18th century failed to detect Japan's new scholarly trends at all. Of course, substantive literary or scholarly exchanges via brush talk only began during the diplomatic missions of 1748 and 1763. However, a thorough reading of 18th-century collections of brush talk reveals that scholars from the Kogigak school (古義學派) and the Sorai school (徂徠學派) were actively participating in diplomatic envoy exchanges even before the two missions of the late 18th century. It also shows that the envoys themselves were to some extent aware of new trends in Japanese academia.

This fact appears to have been largely overlooked until now. Furthermore, the missions' visits exerted a certain influence, directly or indirectly, on Japan's literary circles and academic community. Notably, the visit of the mission played a role in the nationwide popularity of Soraigaku in the late 18th century, a point that has also been neglected in Japan. Ogyu Sorai appears to have been well aware that the envoys formed a kind of exchange network by interacting with literati across Japan, and that their critiques carried a certain authority within Japanese academic circles. Sorai, needing to draw the attention of the academic world as a new school of thought, seems to have attempted to leverage the envoys' authority to elevate the status of his own school. While established Japanese scholars sought to secure their own authority by venerating the envoys and gaining recognition for their literature and scholarship from them, the Sorai school took the opposite approach. They sought to elevate the Sorai school's name throughout Japan by sharply criticizing the envoys based on the Kobunjigaku, which was considered the latest literary theory in Japan at the time.

This paper focuses on this point, highlighting that the visits of

argue that Japan departed from Neo-Confucianism earlier than Joseon and that Joseon actively sought to embrace this trend, as Susumu Huma interprets, appears to be an arbitrary and biased perspective that does not align with reality.

the envoys and the publication of their collection of brush talk served as a catalyst for the nationwide popularity of Soraigaku in Japan from the mid-18th century onward. It aims to trace this process.

2. Conflict Surrounding the Publication of the Sorai School's Brush talk collection

When the Tongsinssa visited Japan in 1711, scholars from across Japan flocked to exchange poetry with the envoys. Three scholars from the Sorai School also met with the mission to exchange poetry. In Shimonoseki (下關), Yamagata Shūnan (山縣周南, 1687–1752) participated; in Edo, Andō Tōya (安藤東野, 1683–1719) and Honda Iran (本多猗蘭, 1691–1757) took part. At the time, the Kenen Academy (護園塾), which served as Sorai's private study hall, was attracting outstanding scholars drawn by his reputation. However, their numbers were still small, and since he had not yet gained nationwide fame, it appears they did not participate extensively in the brush talk.

At that time, Japan's Confucian circles were dominated by several factions: the Hayashi family (Hayashi-ke, 林家; represented by Hayashi Hōkō [林鳳岡, 1645–1732] and his disciples), who had served as Confucian advisors to the shogunate for generations; the Ansai school (Ansai-mon, 闇齋門; consisting of Yamazaki Ansai [山崎闇齋, 1619–1682] and his disciples), active mainly in Kyoto; and the Mok school (Mokumon, 木門; consisting of Kinoshita Jun'an [木下順庵, 1621–1699] and his disciples), who served as Confucian officials for the shogunate and interacted with the Hayashi family. The Jinsai school, which advocated for the kogigak (古義學), also formed a certain influence centered in Kyoto. In contrast, the Sorai School, which advocated the slogan 'Prose must be Qin-Han, poetry must be the Tang' (Munpil Jin-Han, Sipil Seongdang, 文必秦漢, 詩必盛唐) – a concept unfamiliar in Japan at the time – was regarded as an alien presence within the scholarly community. This was because, prior to Sorai's promotion of gomunsa, the works of the Jeonhuchilja were merely one among many Chinese literary texts imported via Nagasaki. The Sorai School dismissed not only Joseon poetry and prose but even Dangsonggomun (唐宋古文) as lacking literary merit. This extreme preference for Ming literature drew ridicule from Japan's mainstream

literati, who regarded the Joseon envoys as progressive.

In this context, an incident occurred in 1711 surrounding the publication of a collection of brush talk, hinting at the conflict between Japan's mainstream schools of thought and the Sorai School. Shortly after the Tongsinso returned to Joseon in February 1712, a collection of brush talk and poems exchanged between the mission and Japanese literati, similar to an anthology, was published in various parts of Japan. This collection of literary exchanges, titled *Gyerimchanghwajip* (鷄林唱和集), was compiled by Kyoto publishers Izumonojo Izumiji (出雲寺和泉掾) and Seo Genbei (瀬尾源兵衛, 1691–1728) and Tohonya Seibei (唐本屋清兵衛), a publisher in Edo. It primarily contains brush talk and poetic compositions from regions where envoys stayed during their sea voyages: Edo, Kyoto, Osaka, Akamagaseki (赤間關), Iwakuni (岩國), Murotsu (室津), Ōtsu (大津), Ogaki (大垣), Imazu (今須), Yoshida (吉田), Hamamatsu (濱松), and Mishima (三島). The number of individuals featured in this book reaches 121. Izumoji Izuminojo and Tohonya Seibei were venerable booksellers, significant enough to be included in the Compendium of Booksellers Since the Keicho Era (慶長以來書賈集覽). Izumoji Izuminojo also held the position of Shobutsu Bugyo (書物奉行) within the shogunate, responsible for collecting, classifying, organizing, preserving, and researching books. He was so closely connected to the Hayashi family that rumors circulated suggesting he was a member of Hayashi Razan (林羅山)'s clan. (Jeong Yeongs-sil, 정영실 2012: 124)

Meanwhile, the shogunate stipulated that all results of the exchanges between the Korean envoys and Japanese scholars, beginning with the 1682 visit of the Korean envoys, must be submitted to the shogunate. Furthermore, an official was always present at the locations where brush talk and discussions took place, ensuring everything was meticulously recorded and reported to the shogunate's Daigakunokami (太學頭). The Daigakunokami was the highest authority appointed by the shogunate, a Confucian scholar responsible for diplomacy and official documents. This position was held by the Hayashi family for generations. The reason for requiring all brush talk to be recorded and managed by the shogunate was to prevent Japanese literati from boasting about their knowledge or engaging in poetic exchanges out of mere curiosity, thereby avoiding damage to the shogunate's authority or unnecessary friction. The Hayashi family played a role in implementing the shogunate's control measures on the

ground and was also deeply involved in the collection and publication of brush talk collections. (Jeong Yeongs-sil, 정영실 2012: 128-132) Given these circumstances, the publication of *GyerimChanghwajip* can be seen as deeply influenced by the shogunate's intent to monitor and control exchanges between the diplomatic missions and Japanese literati, beyond the previously known commercial purposes.

At this time, Yamagata Shunan, a disciple of Sorai, exchanged letters with the Tongsinsa at Akamagaseki, while Ando Toya and Honda Iran met the mission in Edo, engaging in brush talk and composing poetry together. When the shogunate compiled the *pildamjip*, their poems and brush talk should have been included. However, most of Yamagata Shunan's poems were deleted during the publication process, and not a single poem by Andō Tōya or Honda Iran was included. Their poems were deleted during the censorship process by the Hayashi family. Knowing his work was excluded from *Gerimchanghwajip*, Yamagata Shunan expected poems by his school's scholars to appear in the subsequent sequel. However, their poems were scarcely included in the sequel either. The sequel was published under the title *Chilgachanhwajip* (七家唱和集), compiling seven anthologies of poetic exchange. The included anthologies were: *Banhyeongjip* (班荊集, 2 vols.), *Jeongdeokchngchwajip* (正德和韓集, 2 vols.), *Jigihandam* (支機閑談, 1 vols.), *Jeosongaekgwansimungo* (朝鮮客館詩文稿, 1 vols.), *Sanghanchangsujiip* (桑韓唱酬集, 1 vols.), *Sanghanchanghwajip* (桑韓唱和集, 1 vols.), and *Bingwanhojeojip* (賓館縞紵集, 2 vols.). The figures featured in each collection are Kinoshita Kikutan (木下菊潭, 1667–1743), Fukami Teni (深見天漪), Miyake Kanran (三宅觀瀾, 1674–1718), Muro Kyūsō (室鳩巢, 1658–1734), Hattori Nakaku (服部寬齋, 1667–1721), Dohi Kashū (土肥霞洲, 1693–1757), Gion Nankai (祇園南海, 1677–1751). All were disciples of Kinoshita Jun'an (木下順庵, 1622-1699).

Kinoshita Junan (木下順庵) studied Confucianism under Matsunaga Sekiko (松永尺五, 1592–1657), a disciple of Fujiwara Seika (藤原惺窩, 1561–1619), who is regarded as the founder of Japanese Confucian studies. He served in the Kagahan (加賀藩) and in 1682 became an official responsible for Confucian studies within the shogunate, teaching Confucianism to the fifth shogun, Tokugawa Tsunayoshi (德川綱吉, 1646–1709). He participated in various compilation projects undertaken by the shogunate and interacted with scholars from the Hayashi family, such as Hayashi Hōk (林鳳岡, 1644–

1732) Ten of his most outstanding disciples are known as the Mokmunsipcheol 木門十哲. Among them, Arai Hakuseki (新井白石, 1657–1725) became a tutor to Tokugawa Ienobu (徳川家宣, 1662–1712) and led the shogunate's foreign policy. When the Tongsin arrived in Japan in 1711, he implemented policies favorable to the shogunate, such as reducing the enormous reception costs and scaling back the ceremonial welcome for the envoys.

In short, during the 1711 diplomatic mission, not only the Hayashi family but also Kinoshita Junan and his disciples played a significant role in the exchange by meeting the envoys, engaging in brush talks, and exchanging poems. Consequently, they were in a favorable position when compiling the collection of brush talk and would have strived to include many of their own poems and brush talks. All of them were Neo-Confucian scholars. From their perspective, the Sorai School, which criticized Neo-Confucianism, was likely not a welcome presence. Furthermore, it is possible they believed the Sorai School's poetry and brush talks, which rejected Song poetry and contained content critical of Neo-Confucianism, violated the shogunate's regulations instructing them to avoid friction with the envoys. In any case, the *Gyerimchanghwajip* and its sequel, the *Chilgachanghwajip*, included almost no poetry by the Sorai School. During the compilation of the *Chigachanghwajip*, Yamagata Shunan, realizing their own poetry and brush talk had been omitted, was deeply disappointed. He wrote to his teacher Sorai, expressing the opinion that it would be better to publish the Sorai School's poetry and prose separately. In response, Sorai resolved to personally publish a collection of brush talk containing the poems and brush talk exchanged between Shunan, Andō Tōya, and Honda Iran with the envoys. He entrusted the publication to Irie Jakusui (入江若水, 1671–1729), a literati townsman from Osaka with whom he shared a close friendship. Ultimately, they decided to include Jakusui's own poetry and prose as well. Thus, the Sorai School's brush talk collection, *Munsagisang* (問槎畸賞), was published.

Irie Jakusui was a pivotal figure in the publication of the *Munsagisan*. He was born into a family that had operated a sake brewery in Osaka for generations, he nevertheless devoted himself to scholarship and literature from an early age. He passed the family business on to his son and cultivated relationships with literary figures throughout Japan. In his youth, he studied poetry under the Kyoto poet Toriyama Shiken

(鳥山芝軒, 1655–1715) and later devoted effort to compiling his master's posthumous poetry collection. Subsequently, he studied Confucianism under Ito Togai, son of Ito Jinsai. In Edo, he also associated with Ogui Sorai, who had been in opposition to Togai. Sorai, impressed by Irie Jakusui's poetry, wrote the preface to his poetry collection *Seosanchochang* (西山樵唱), thus establishing their friendship. (Hino Tatsuo, 1999: 444) However, it appears that Jakusui remained close to Sorai while not following his scholarship.

Jakusui, a wealthy merchant from Kyoto, cultivated relationships with diverse figures across schools of thought and appears to have wielded influence over Kyoto's prominent bookstores and publishing houses. Seo Genbei, one of the co-publishers of the previously mentioned *Gyerimchanghwajip*, was a prominent Kyoto publisher and poet. Given that he published most of Jakusui's works, it can be inferred that he was very close to Jakusui.

At that time, the Sorai School was just beginning to make a name for itself in Edo. Facing difficulties in independently publishing their brush talk collection due to opposition from the Hayashi family and figures like Kinoshita Junan, they approached Jakusui to pursue the publication of *Munsagisang*. Besides *Munsagisang*, Sorai's early works *Genenzuihits* (護園隨筆) and *Yeokmunjeonje* (譯文筌蹄) were also published by Kyoto publishers, likely facilitated through Jakusui's mediation. While preparing for the publication of *Genenzuihits*, Sorai, sensing attempts by the Jinsai school to obstruct it, sent a letter to Jakusui stating, "Let the world know that you are the one publishing it."² This episode reveals the public's wariness toward the Sorai school and Sorai's distrust of Kyoto literati.

Meanwhile, *Munsagisang* was originally published together with *Gwangreungmunsarok* (光陵問槎錄) under the title *Munsaijong* (問槎二種). *Gwangreungmunsarok* contains the brush talk between Ajiki Rikken (味木立軒, 1650–1725) and his disciple Terada Rinsen (寺田臨川, 1678–1744). Rikken was a disciple of Hayashi Hōkō, and both were Neo-Confucian scholars. Sorai published this collection of brush talk between Neo-Confucian scholars – specifically, scholars from the Hayashi family – alongside works from his own school, even writing the preface. In the preface, he stated, "Ajiki was a distinguished

² For details on the conflict between Kyoto literati and the Sorai school, see Hino Tatsuo 日野龍夫 (1999: 450–452).

disciple of Kukja Seonsaeng (國子先生), renowned from an early age, having received envoys from great nations. His literary skill and scholarship were already widely acknowledged.”³ Regarding Rinsen, he praised him as “blue surpassing the indigo”, meaning he excelled beyond his teacher. Kukja Seonsaeng refers to Hayashi Hōkō, the Daigakunokami. This preface represents an attitude completely at odds with the criticism in *Munsagisang* that the envoys were obsessed with Song poetry and Song scholarship. Why did Sorai publish a collection of brush talk with the scholars of the Hayashi family, with whom he had been in academic opposition, and even write a preface praising them?

As mentioned earlier, considering that the *Gyerimchanghwajip* and *Chilgachanghwajip* were published within the context of friendly relations with the shogunate and the Hayashi family, Sorai could not have been unaware of the Hayashi family when publishing his own school's collection of essays. A collection of essays containing criticism of the envoys could face shogunal regulation. Given that Sorai's school of thought took a critical stance toward Neo-Confucianism, it inevitably drew scrutiny from the Hayashi family and the Kinoshita Junan school, which dominated the academic mainstream at the time. Indeed, Sorai was extremely angry that scholars from his own school were excluded when the *Gyerimchanghwajip* and *Chilgachanghwajip* were compiled, blaming it on the “wickedness of the Kyoto people.” (Hino Tatsuo, 1999: 450)

The reaction of the academic community, including the Kinoshita Junan school, following the publication of *Munsagisang* clearly shows that Sorai was not at all welcomed by existing Neo-Confucian scholars.

Ogyu Sorai now proclaims himself the foremost master of literature in Edo. Recently he published a book titled *Munsagisang*, in which he personally critiques the poetry and prose exchanged between his disciples and envoys. It is a matter to be dismissed with a laugh. ‘Gisang’ (畸賞) seems to be synonymous with ‘appreciating the bizarre (奇賞)’. Not long ago, Mr. Hukami (深見) also scoffed that there was nothing ‘bizarre enough to appreciate’ – only ‘bizarre laughter (奇笑)’. Ogyu Sorai claimed that apart from Han Yu (韓愈) and Liu Zongyuan (柳宗元) of the Tang dynasty, and Wang Shizhen (王世貞) and Li

³ “味君者，今國子先生高第弟子，早歲蜚譽，應聘大國。其文章學術業，已經伯樂一顧者，是固亡論已。”(荻生徂徠. 光陵問槎錄, 光陵問槎錄序).

Panlong (李攀龍) of the Ming dynasty, there was no writing worthy of the name. He even went so far as to say that Ouyang Xiu (歐陽脩) and Su Shi (蘇軾) were ignorant of literature. How bizarre!⁴

(Muro Kyūsō 1853: vol. 110)

This is a text written by the Neo-Confucian scholar Muro Kyūsō (室鳩巢, 1658–1734). Muro Kyūsō was born in Edo and became a disciple of Kinoshita Junan. Later, through the recommendation of his fellow student Arai Hakuseki, he became a scholar of the shogunate. The Hukami mentioned by Kyūsō appears to refer to Hukami Teni (深見天漪, 1649–1722), who appears in the *Jeongdeokchanghwajip* (正徳和韓集). Teni was a descendant of immigrants who had come to Japan from Fujian Province (福建省), China. His father, Kō Daisō (高大誦), worked as an interpreter in Nagasaki. Teni studied medicine and Chinese under the Chinese-born naturalized monk Dokuritsu (獨立) and learned Confucian studies under Kinoshita Junan. He served as a Confucian physician in the Satsumahan (薩摩藩) and, through the recommendation of Arai Hakuseki, became an official of the shogunate.

Through the quotations, we can see that Sorai's arrogance and his literary theory, overly inclined toward classical Chinese texts, became a laughingstock for the Kinoshita Junan school. *Munsagisang*, too, is being ridiculed as merely a laughingstock rather than the strange spectacle its title suggests. So, let us examine specifically what content *Munsagisang* contains and from what perspective it criticizes the envoys.

3. The Sorai School Exploiting the Reputation of Tongsinsa

The preface to *Munsagisang* was written by Tanaka Tōkō (田中桐江,

⁴ “荻生惣右衛門事、只今江戸にて文章は我一人と稱し申後。此度問榘崎賞と申物を板行仕、弟子共朝鮮人と贈答の詩文、自身に批評を加え出し、一笑を發申事に候。‘崎賞’は‘奇賞’と通申哉と存候。崎賞にては無之、奇笑にて候とて、先日も深見氏など笑申候。唐の韓・柳、明の王・李の外は外國にてても文章無之候、歐・蘇もいまだ文章を不存候由申候。近來の奇怪に候。” (Muro Kyūsō 1853)

1668–1742), a disciple of Sorai. He wrote that the poetry of Sora School scholars, “Even with dust, grime, chaff, and husks, one can mold the poets of the Three Tang Dynasties (三唐)

“How much more so the poetry of Koreans?”⁵ He subtly disparaged the envoys' poetry by comparing them to the hideously ugly figures Zhilishu (支離疏) and Aitaituo (哀駘它) mentioned in the *Zhuangzi* (莊子). This preface clearly reveals the nature and purpose of this collection of brush talk.

Sorai included the letters exchanged during the diplomatic mission in his publication, openly revealing his critical views on the envoys. After meeting the envoys in 1711 and exchanging poems with them, Irie Jakusui wrote to Sorai to inform him of this fact. Upon reading the letter, Sorai remarked: “It was as if I could clearly see you composing poetry with the Joseon envoys and being barred from entering the government offices. Thinking of the spectacle you must have made then, I cannot help but laugh. You really are quite the busybody.”⁶

Jakusui, of course, disparaged all the Japanese literati who flocked to the envoy to exchange poems as people seeking only honor and profit.⁷ Jakusui also enclosed the envoy's poetry with his letter to Sorai. Regarding the envoy's poetry, Sorai remarked, “Not only is it vulgar, but it uniformly imitates the outdated poetic styles of the Song and Yuan (元) dynasties. This is due to the customs of the Joseon.”⁸ Regarding the poems composed in response to Jakusui by envoys, he noted that they failed in both rhyme and parallelism, rendering them incapable of being proper responses.⁹ Sorai was evaluating the literary

⁵ “其塵垢糝糠將猶陶鑄三唐者，何況韓人乎？”(田中桐江. 問榭畸賞，問榭畸賞跋)

⁶ “足下與韓使相酬和詩及官禁嚴不得入者狀，宛乎在目，想足下其時作何態，遂至失笑也。好事癖，一至于此耶。”(This letter is included in the *Munsagisang* and is titled Letter to Jakusui 與江若水書 in Volume 16 of the *Soraishu* 徂徠集. Here, the version from the *Soraishu* is quoted. The same applies below.)

⁷ “足下懂懂爲利往來，嗚呼！當今世不可無足下矣。”(ibid.)

⁸ “亡論其卑靡，一沿襲宋、元之舊，是自三韓土俗使然。”(荻生徂徠. 徂徠集 volume 21, 與縣次公)

⁹ “卽其和子徹詩，猶且不能變子徹意而發之，窘窘乎既受病于韻與對之間，是未可以子和子徹之詩，而況對足下壘也乎？”(ibid.)

capabilities of the envoys as inferior to those of Japanese scholars. From Sorai's perspective, advocating the Gomunsaron (古文辭論) that took the ancient prose of the Pre-Qin (先秦) period and Tang poetry as models, it was clear that the Song-style poetry favored by the envoys appeared to be perpetuating long-standing flaws. However, citing the customs of the Joseon as the basis for this criticism is uncharacteristically weak logic for Sorai, and the standard of criticism is also arbitrary.

A noteworthy point is that Sorai provided evaluated and punctuated criticism in the *Munsagisang*. Given that among the over 200 collections of brush talk, very few contain such criticism, it is necessary to examine Sorai's purpose in offering these critiques. Sorai meticulously annotated poems and prose exchanged between envoys and his disciples, marking points for critique and offering commentary on noteworthy passages. He was particularly harsh in his criticism of the envoys' poetry, using expressions like 'too vulgar' and 'ridiculous'. Conversely, he excessively praised Shunan's poetry, comparing it to that of Li Panlong and He Jingming (何景明), declaring it superior even to Wang Shizhen's. This assessment is wildly divorced from reality. It is thought that Sorai's scathing criticism of the envoys and his excessive praise of his own school's scholars were intended to highlight his school's superiority through comparison with the envoys. In other words, Sorai published *Munsagisang* to emphasize that he could criticize the envoys' outdated literary theory based on his new literary theory, the Gomunsaron.

The colophon of *Munsagisang* also clearly reflects the stance of the Sorai School. Written by Hattori Nankaku (服部南郭, 1683–1759), one of Sorai's foremost disciples, it explicitly reveals how the Sorai School perceived the Korean envoys.

In his preface, Nankaku stated that when thunder roars, all creatures are startled, but the deaf remain undisturbed and at ease. He added that the same principle applies to writing.¹⁰ And he likened the envoys' failure to recognize the Sorai School, which had appeared like thunder in Japanese academia, to deafness. He also stated: "Weak-minded people of the world, upon hearing thunder, immediately flee into a closed room and boast that they are not afraid. Though not deaf

¹⁰ “雷霆之奮發也，則能驚物，而聾者恬焉，於文亦然。”(服部南郭。問榘畸賞，跋問榘畸賞後)

themselves, they follow the deaf, and thus are no different from the deaf.”¹¹ This was a condemnation of the Japanese literati of the time who ignored and turned away from the emergence of the Sorai School. Given the series of events mentioned earlier, this condemnation can be understood to target the Hayashi family and the Kinoshita Junan School, among other Neo-Confucian scholars in Japan at the time. Furthermore, the envoys who adhered to Neo-Confucianism were also targets of criticism.

Through the above discussion, the purpose behind compiling *Munsagisang* has become clearer. By likening the envoys to deformed or disabled individuals, it undermines the status that most Japanese literati had long admired in the envoys, while simultaneously enabling criticism of the Japanese literati who had followed them. This criticism effectively conveyed the Sorai School’s Gomunsaron (古文辭論) to the Japanese academic world. As is well known, the envoys traversed all of Japan, engaging in constant literary exchanges and exchanging poems with prominent scholars in key regions. In this process, scholars recognized by the envoys gained renown throughout Japan.¹²

It is thought that Sorai devoted such effort to publishing *Munsagisang* precisely because he understood this point. He likely reasoned that if, instead of seeking recognition from the Communications Office, he criticized it using new literary theory, this too could become a nationwide topic of discussion. The publication of *Munsagisang* can be seen as precisely leveraging the authority the Communications Office held in Japan against itself.

With the publication of *Munsagisang*, the Sorai School instantly emerged as a new school commanding attention in academic circles. The Sorai School’s status was significantly elevated by its critique of the Tongsinsa’s previously unquestioned scholarly and literary stature, grounded in the clear basis of the theory of ancient texts. Subsequently, the perspective toward the envoys in Japan changed

¹¹ “世之内荏者，一遇雷動，輒避諸密室中，而詫其不怯。非聾而學聾，均之聾耳。”(ibid.)

¹² For instance, Arai Hakuseki gained fame through his literary prowess during the 1682 diplomatic mission, leading to his appointment as a shogunate official. During the 1719 diplomatic mission, then an unknown poet Toriyama Shiken 鳥山芝軒 (1655–1715) became known even at the Imperial Palace in Kyoto because Shin Yuhan 申維翰 highly praised him and wrote the preface to his poetry collection.

rapidly. By the 1748 and 1763 envoy missions, individuals emerged who viewed the envoys critically and sought to engage in debate through scholarship and literature.

We have examined the perspectives from which Ogyu Sorai and his disciples criticized the Tongsinsa. It is noteworthy that while classical prose was popular in all three nations of Joseon, China, and Japan, Japan alone exhibited a particularly exclusive focus on Neo-Confucianism and Song poetry. It is natural for newly emerging ideologies or literary trends to achieve an intellectual turning point by criticizing and negating their predecessors. However, as previously examined, the criticism from the Sorai School was not justified or rational; rather, it consisted of exclusionary and contemptuous language bordering on condemnation. Underlying this, it is thought that a samurai mentality – believing Japan had overwhelmed Joseon through military might – was at play.

The following is a poem composed by Sorai after witnessing the horsemanship display held at Edo Castle during his diplomatic mission in 1719.

Have you not seen it? Toyotomi Hideyoshi's hundred thousand soldiers
Crossing the sea with wind and thunder roaring,
Capturing two capitals in less than ten days,
And conquering all eight provinces within three months.
This tactic is only good for fleeing
It cannot be used to stand firm and fight.
The emperor of Japan 皇和 now has a wise and enlightened ruler,
A century of peace has banished the spirit of war,
The way of appeasing neighboring lands is practiced,
So they do not hesitate to cross seas and climb mountains,
and petty men from distant lands follow envoys,

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delighting the imperial countenance 玉顏 with their lowly arts.¹³

(Ogyu Sorai, 1719)

The title of this poem is A Song Written Upon Seeing a Goryeo (高麗) bastard Performing horsemanship (麗奴戲馬歌). The horsemanship was performed by Joseon to demonstrate its military might to Japan, but Sorai dismisses it as a trivial skill only good for fleeing. This poem shows no reflection or remorse regarding Japan's invasion and ravaging of Joseon during the Imjin War. Instead, it proudly recounts the ravaging achieved through military force. Rather than reflecting the mindset of a Confucian scholar advocating civil governance, it prominently displays the mentality of a samurai seeking domination through military might (武威). “Enlightened ruler” denotes Tokugawa Ienobu (徳川家宣), the shogun of the Tokugawa shogunate at the time; “the imperial countenance” also signifies the shogun. These terms reveal a deliberate belittling of the envoys as mere tribute-bearing messengers. The phrase ‘appeasing neighboring lands (柔遠)’ similarly implies the superior nation gently coaxing and appeasing, reflecting an underlying perspective that places Japan in a position of dominance. It appears Sorai held a self-centered and exclusive perception, completely divorced from reality, that since Japan had subjugated Joseon not through civilization but by military force, Joseon was now paying tribute. This viewpoint recurs repeatedly in Sorai’s writings concerning the envoys.

Sorai’s ethnocentric and exclusive perception is thought to have had a certain connection with the shogunate's foreign policy. At that time, the Edo shogunate sought to suppress rebellion and stabilize its regime through military force by demonstrating its martial might to the daimyo 大名. This created a fictitious international order in which surrounding nations submitted to the shogunate’s military force, and it was for this purpose that the envoys were mobilized. Following the war, exchanges resumed out of mutual necessity and were staged within Japan as tribute missions. This staging appears to have been accepted as fact, particularly among the lower classes. For instance, puppet

¹³ “又不見豐王十萬兵，叱吒風雷度大瀛，二都決旬拔，八道三月平，此技祇云奔亡資，難與堂堂陣爭衝，皇和今值仁明君，百年昇平息戰氛，交隣柔遠賴有道，不厭航海梯山勤，遐方小人伴長官，聊以賤技娛玉顏。” (Ogyu Sorai, 1719)

theater jōruri (浄瑠璃) plays like Shingonghwanghusamhanchaek (神功皇后三韓責) or Bonjo Samgukji (本朝三國志), staged to coincide with the envoys' visits, enjoyed immense popularity among the populace. These works were based on the fictitious history of Empress Jingū (神功皇后) and the legend of her conquest of the Three Han (三韓). (Suda Tsutomu 2011: 276-390) Furthermore, the shogunate orchestrated calculated displays, such as having the envoys pass by the Ichong (耳塚) in Kyoto and hosting banquets at Toyotomi Hideyoshi's memorial hall, thereby subtly transforming the envoys into tribute missions. (Ronald Toby 2013: 84-87) Moreover, the legend of Empress Jingu's conquest of the Three Han, found in the *Kojiki* (古事記) and *Nihon Shoki* (日本書紀), was perceived as historical fact by Japanese intellectuals until it was revealed as a fictional account in modern times. Many Japanese scholars of the time linked ancient history to the present to justify wars of aggression and disparaged exchanges for friendship as mere tribute missions. It appears Sorai did not significantly diverge from this perception.

In short, Sorai's perceptions of the Tongsinša, and indeed perceptions of Joseon itself, are underpinned by a distorted historical view and a samurai mentality that values military force. As examined earlier, this mindset likely played a role in Sorai's extreme and exclusionary condemnation of Joseon in *Munsangisang*.

4. Conclusion

With the emergence of the Sorai School, Japan's Confucian academic world moved beyond merely importing Neo-Confucianism through Joseon and began to forge its own independent scholarly realm. Maruyama Masao (丸山眞男) assessed this as a turning point in intellectual history, breaking free from the premodern nature of Neo-Confucianism and moving toward modernity. However, since Neo-Confucianism never became the principle defining the consciousness and life of Japanese society as a whole, the schema that it was overcome and developed further does not hold either. I believe Huma Susumu's series of studies also uncritically follows Maruyama Masao's perspective. Therefore, Huma's claim that the envoys were desperate to learn Japan's advanced learning, the Go-hak, also requires

reconsideration.

Unlike earlier periods where envoys sought to learn Neo-Confucianism, the brush talk collections clearly reveal a situation where Japan evaluated Joseon's Neo-Confucianism from an equal footing, raising questions or expressing new scholarly theories. Thus, the 18th century can be seen as a period when Japanese academia displayed confidence and pride. The envoys also sensed this change and showed interest. On the other hand, it should not be overlooked that the new trends within Japanese academia could emerge as matters of nationwide interest through the visits of the envoys.

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