

SOME ASPECTS OF THE CONFUCIANISM OF OGYŪ SORAI

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1. Sorai's Linguistic Studies.

Linguistic studies, and in particular the study of modern Chinese, were an important influence in the development of Sorai's Confucianism.

Towards the end of the seventeenth century knowledge of the Chinese spoken language began to diffuse from the trading port of Nagasaki to all parts of Japan. In the earlier stages of this process the chief bearers of the new knowledge were members of the newly introduced Ōbaku sect of Zen Buddhism, and a number of natives of Nagasaki who had been in contact with Chinese residents from childhood. Later, Sorai and his school were to play an important part in the popularization of the study of Chinese colloquial literature in Edo.

Sorai's patron, Lord Yanagisawa, was an enthusiastic student of Zen. As a part of his Buddhist studies he had studied colloquial Chinese, and Chinese-speaking priests were frequent visitors in his mansion when Sorai entered his service in 1696. Two years later Kuraoka Sozan (1679-1750), a native of Nagasaki, was enrolled among the retainers of Yanagisawa and Sorai began the study of colloquial Chinese under his direction.¹ The use of colloquial Chinese in the Yanagisawa mansion was not confined to Buddhist studies but was also employed in the expositions of the Confucian classics given by the resident Confucian scholars. It is recorded that in 1703, during one of the many visits of the Shōgun Tsunayoshi to the Yanagisawa mansion, the company was entertained by the performance of a Nō play, followed by a number of lectures on the classics including an exposition of part of the *Ta Hsüeh* given by Kuraoka Sozan in colloquial Chinese, and interpreted in Japanese by Ogyū Sorai. Again we learn that in 1705 Sorai took part in a discussion on the term "chung" (the Mean) which was carried on in colloquial Chinese.²

In 1711 Sorai and a number of his associates organized a society for the study of modern Chinese bearing the title of Yakusha, or interpretation society, and invited as their instructor Okajima Kanzan (1675-1728), a man

¹ Ishizaki, M., *Kinsei Nihon ni okeru Shina Zokugo Bungakushi* (History of Chinese Colloquial Literature in Japan during the Tokugawa Period), 50.

² *ibid.* 49.

who probably played the chief part in establishing modern Chinese studies in Japan. Kanzan was born in Nagasaki, and while still a youth was employed by one of the feudal lords as an interpreter, but finding this to be a "base occupation" he returned to his native town and began to study the philosophy of the Sung Confucianists. But it was not as a scholar that Kanzan excelled, but as a linguist, translator and teacher. It appears that in 1706 he visited Edo and made the acquaintance of Sorai and his school. After spending a period in Ōsaka he returned to Edo in 1710, and in 1711 enrolled himself among the pupils of Hayashi Hōkō. It was at this time that he was invited to become the instructor of the Yakusha.³

The articles of association of the Yakusha have been preserved.⁴ The members were to meet on four or five days in each month, or whenever Sorai and Kanzan were free from their other duties. The meetings of the Yakusha seem to have extended over the greater part of each day on which they were convened. There is evidence that the Yakusha remained in existence until at least 1725.⁵

His linguistic studies had a profound effect on Sorai's Confucianism. In teaching the Confucian texts he insisted that the classics were not holy scriptures to be learned by rote in a spirit of religious awe, but were the products of men writing in a language which, though no longer spoken, was in their times as vital a means of communication as the Japanese of his own day. In reading the texts he rejected the traditional method of using a form of Japanese based on a rearrangement of the order of the characters with the aid of diacritic marks, and held that Chinese books should be read in Chinese and translated into colloquial Japanese.⁶

As a teacher of Chinese composition Sorai was a supporter of a movement in favour of a return to older models in Chinese literature which had been headed in Ming China by Li P'an-lung (1514-70) and Wang Shih-chen (1526-90). The adherents of this Ancient Literature (Kobunji) school advocated the imitation of the prose writers of the Ch'in and Han dynasties and the poets of the T'ang dynasty of the period A.D. 713-66.⁷ It is not known when Sorai adopted the opinions of the Kobunji school, but there is evidence that he bought books which included works of the Chinese exponents of the doctrine about the year 1705.⁸

³ Kanzan's career is described in Ishizaki, *op. cit.* 73 ff. See also the article by Aoki in *Shinagaku* 1, 10.

⁴ In *Soraishū*, Bk. 18.

⁵ The organization of the Yakusha is described in Ishizaki, *op. cit.*, 94 ff.

⁶ *Yakubun Sentei Daigen*.

⁷ *Ming Shih*, 287. See also Toyoda, J., *Ri-Ō no Bungaku to Sorai no Shūbun* (The writings of Li and Wang and Sorai's Prose and Verse) in *Kangakukai Zasshi*, 3, 8.

⁸ The matter is discussed by Ono, H., in his *Soraigaku Benseki* (An Analysis of Sorai's Philosophy) in *Shigaku Zasshi* 47, 12.

Sorai was attacked both in his own times and by later writers for his adoption of the literary programme of the Ancient Literature school. The chief arguments brought against him were that the Chinese representatives of the school were feeble imitators devoid of originality,⁹ and that concern for literary pursuits implies a denial of the moral austerity required of a scholar. However, Sorai's exposition of his views on this subject in the introduction to his *Yakubun Sentei* shows that his chief concern was to enlarge the narrow curriculum of Confucian studies and to allow the student to grasp the historical development of the Chinese language in its entirety.

"After the Sages, the course of Chinese literature flowed in two divergent streams—one in which emphasis was placed on the meaning of the writing and another in which emphasis was placed on the mode of expression. In fact, the two are interdependent, for no meaning can be expressed without some attention to verbal form. However, since the time of the Three Dynasties in which these two traditions diverged, writers gave greater importance to one or other of them. Mencius, Hsün Tzu, Lao Tzu, Lieh Tzu, Chia Yi, Ssu-ma Ch'ien and Pan Ku were writers who were mainly concerned with the meaning of what they wrote. The *Tso Chuan*, *Kuo Yü*, *Chuang Tzu*, the *Li Sao*, *Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju* and *Yang Hsiung* gave greater emphasis to the mode of expression. During the Eastern Han dynasty excessive importance was given to expression and the opposing tradition fell into decay. The period of the Six Dynasties was one of decadence, and this tendency reached its culmination in the T'ang dynasty. At this point Han Yü and Liu Tsung-yüan led a revival of the tradition which placed greater emphasis on meaning and thereby brought about a reformation of the literary world. Their efforts led to a revival because they took their models from among the ancients. But their successors, Ou-yang Hsiu, Su Hsün, Su Shih and Su Ch'e, sought their models in Han Yü and Liu Tsung-yüan, with the result that literature again lapsed into decadence. From that time until the Ming dynasty literature was written in the language of the recorded discourses of Confucian teachers. New uses of particles appeared which were completely different from those of the ancient language, and thus a wide gulf was set between the ancient and modern languages. It was at this point that these two truly great men Li P'an-lung and Wang Shih-chen brought about a revival from the point of view of expression. Both took their models from among the ancients. This is the reason for my opinion that in the Chinese literature of the period after the Western Han dynasty one should

⁹ See Inoue, *Nihon Kogakuha no Tetsugaku* (The Philosophy of the Japanese Kogakuha), 491.

take as models, in the T'ang dynasty, Han Yü, and in the Ming dynasty, Li P'an-lung and Wang Shih-chen. . . .

"Some raise the objection, 'There is a fundamental difference between the ancient and modern literature. Why aim at a strained imitation of the language of the time when men wrote on wooden tablets?' This is a most unreasonable view. For if there were any fault in imitation, the Japanese would do well not to learn Chinese at all, but should compose only in Japanese. . . .

"It was said of old, 'A Confucian is one who is conversant with both ancient and modern matters'. And again, 'A Confucian is one who is conversant with Heaven, Earth and Man'. Thus the object of my theory of translation is to bring together the Chinese and Japanese languages in unity. The aim of my doctrine of ancient literature is to bring together the ancient and modern languages in unity."¹⁰

The emphasis on the historical evolution of language and the historical background of the classics runs through all Sorai's writings. It receives expression in general terms in the following statement in his *Gakusoku*. "Society changes, bearing language with it as it does so. Language changes, bearing the tradition of the Way with it as it does so."¹¹

His view of language led Sorai to adopt entirely new attitudes to several of the classics. The *Chung Yung* and *Mencius* were regarded by him as Confucian reactions to the Taoism represented in *Lao Tzu*. In particular, the doctrine with which the *Chung Yung* opens, that the Way consists in following the "nature" (hsing), is seen by Sorai as an attempt to parry the accusation of "artificiality" brought against the Confucian Way by Lao Tzu.¹² The doctrine of the goodness of man's nature in *Mencius* is said to be in the same tradition.

"In Mencius' time a host of thinkers was attacking and vilifying the Sages. Hereupon Mencius rose up to do battle with them, and it was then that the Way of the Sages fell to being the business of schools of Confucian philosophers. Although it was indeed occasioned by the circumstances of the times, it was a mistake for Mencius to devote his efforts to extolling the virtues of the Confucians in an attempt to show that the Way of Confucius was superior to the philosophies of other schools. For the Way of Confucius is the Way of the Two Emperors and the Three Kings. There is no need to establish its worth by argument. Besides, to shout one's opinions at men who have no intention of listening is a sure way of inviting humiliation. Hence all the things which later generations have praised as great

¹⁰ *Yakubun Sentei Daigen*.

¹¹ *Gakusoku*, in *Nihon Rinri Ihen*, 6, 121.

¹² *Bemmei*, in *Nihon Rinri Ihen*, 6, 11.

contributions to the defence of Confucianism—his doctrines of the goodness of human nature, of the Four Principles (ssu tuan), of preserving the mind (ts'un hsin), of finding the lost mind (shou fang hsin), his discussions of Yao and Shun, T'ang and Wu—were errors resulting from his love of argument. Moreover, the Confucians of his day had to some extent lost the tradition bequeathed to them by Confucius. Rites and Music had fallen into decay, and Confucius' moral precepts alone were maintained. Thus Mencius said little of Rites and Music but instead treated Po I and Liu-hsia Hui as Sages,¹³ invented the doctrines of Jen, Yi, Li, and Chih and of nourishing the flooding spirit (hao-jan chih ch'i), none of which had any part in the original doctrines of Confucius."¹⁴

Sorai saw Hsün Tzu as attempting to redress the balance upset by Mencius. The same passage continues:

"Hsün Tzu countered these doctrines with his theory that the nature of man is evil, with his attack on the theory of the Five Elements, by making a Sage of Tzu Kung,¹⁵ and by his authorship of the treatise on Rites. He may indeed be said to have exposed the shortcomings of Mencius to good effect."

Sorai's view of the *Ta Hsüeh* was also an original one. For him the title of the work did not mean "The Great Learning" nor "Learning for Adults", but "The Great School". He held that the book was not a classic (ching) but a manual of ritual for use in the chief educational institution of the state on the occasion of the reception of the elders by the Emperor for the purpose of obtaining political advice.¹⁶

Sorai rejected the moralistic interpretation of the *Shih Ching* which was current among the Sung philosophers and their Japanese adherents. He believed that the *Shih* were poetic productions similar to the poetry of more recent times.

"When Confucius edited the *Shih* he was concerned only with their literary qualities, and in ancient times students studied them as literature. As Confucius said, 'If you do not study the *Shih* you will be at a loss in conversation'. But later generations have read the *Shih* in the way appropriate to the reading of the *Shu*¹⁷ and have put

¹³ Two ancient worthies whose common characteristic was the refusal of office on moral grounds. See *Mencius*, 7, 2, 15.

¹⁴ *Mōshi-shiki*, in *Kanutei Sōsho*, introduction.

¹⁵ See *Hsün Tzu*, Bk. 8. Tzu Kung was active in politics.

¹⁶ *Daigaku-kai*, Introduction.

¹⁷ The *Shu Ching* was to be studied for the lessons in political matters which it contained. The *Shih Ching* was to be studied as an aid to the understanding of the minds of men and women in all classes of society. (*Bendō*, in *Nihon Rinri Ihen*, 6, 24).

forward the idea that they were written with a didactic purpose. The absurdity of this is shown by the licentious poems of the *Cheng Feng* and *Wei Feng*. Moreover, there are no more than a handful of poems in the *Shih* which contain any moral instruction."¹⁸

In conformity with these views of the nature of language Sorai produced three major works of text-critical scholarship, the *Rongochō* on the *Analects*, the *Daigaku-kai* on the *Ta Hsüeh*, and the *Chuyō-kai* on the *Chung Yung*. Three more works, on *Mencius*, the *Hsiao Ching* and the *Shu Ching*, remained unfinished at his death. Of the last two, little more than the introductory passages had been written.

Alone among the works of Japanese scholars of the Tokugawa period the *Rongochō* had the distinction of being seriously considered by the Ch'ing text critics in China.¹⁹ It seems that interest in Sorai's writings had been stimulated among the Chinese by a work compiled by his brother Ogyū Hokkei and one of his pupils Yamai Tei, entitled *Shūchikei Mōshi Kōbun Hoi* (Textual Notes on The Seven Classics and *Mencius* with Supplement) for in 1804 this work was in great demand among the Chinese merchants in Nagasaki. Quotations from the *Rongochō* are to be found in a number of Chinese works on the *Analects* written in the 19th century. Yü Yüeh (1821-1906) describes a copy of the *Rongochō* written in the hand of one of Sorai's pupils, Itō Genkei, which had been found in a Hang Chou book shop. He remarks that Sorai "is fond of taking issue with the Sung philosophers, although in some instances he agrees with the commentary of Chu Hsi. His arguments are informed and penetrating, and the book contains much that is of value." He goes on to select seventeen passages in the *Rongochō* for special commendation.²⁰

It is recorded in the biography of Sorai in the *Sentetsu Zōden* that his *Bendō* and *Bemmei* were printed in China in 1836 by one Ch'ien Yung, a native of Chiang Su province. The edition was prefaced by a portrait of Sorai, accompanied by a short biography based on that in the *Sentetsu Sōdan*.²¹

2. Sorai's Confucian Doctrines and the Philosophy of Itō Jinsai.

Before considering Sorai's Confucian doctrines it is necessary to give some account of the system of Chu Hsi, the orthodoxy of the Tokugawa Shogunate, and of that of its most notable critic, Itō Jinsai.

At the base of the philosophical system of the Sung Confucianists lay

¹⁸ *Bendō*, 24.

¹⁹ See Fujitsuka, *Butsu Sorai no Rongochō to Shinchō no Keishi* (Ogyū Sorai's *Rongochō* and the Ch'ing Text Critics), in *Shinagaku Kenkyū*, Vol. 4.

²⁰ *Ch'un T'ang Sui Pi*, 1, 3, in *Ch'ing Tai Pi Chi Ts'ung K'an*.

²¹ The text of the biography is given in the *Sentetsu Zōden*.

a dualism of "ideal forms" (li)²² and "matter" (ch'i). The exact relation between these concepts was a matter of some controversy, but orthodox Japanese Confucianists followed Chu Hsi in regarding "ideal forms" as superior and antecedent to "matter". Every object was believed to be formed from "matter" superimposed on the pattern of its "ideal form". The Universe had its "ideal form", the T'ai Chi or Supreme Ultimate. Man had his "ideal form", the ideal man, the Sage. In each individual the "ideal form" of mankind was thought to be present in the "nature" (hsing), which, as Mencius maintained, is good, and the origin of all the good feelings which lie at the roots of moral conduct. Why then are not all men Sages? The fault lay with the "matter" of which the individual members of the human race were composed. Besides the original, good "nature", all men had a second "nature", the "nature" of their material selves, and this varied with the purity of the material substance of the individual. The "material nature" was conceived as antithetical to the "original nature" and manifested itself in the form of "human desires" (jen yü), which were the origin of evil. The ethical duty of the individual, therefore, was to remove the cause of evil in himself and return to the original goodness of his true "nature". This was to be achieved by a number of psychological techniques (hsin fa) designed to overcome the disturbing effects of the "material nature". The individual was to contemplate the manifestations of the "ideal forms" in the world around him, purge himself of "human desires" and so attain, eventually, the inner tranquillity characteristic of a Sage. Attention was to be paid first to the spiritual state of the individual and only afterwards to the outside world. Here the *Ta Hsüeh* provided a methodology of social action consisting of the following stages, arranged in order of priority—the investigation of things, the attainment of knowledge, the achievement of sincerity of intention, the rectification of the mind, the cultivation of the person, the regulation of the family, the good government of the state and the pacification of the whole kingdom.²³

The system was intensely conservative in outlook and ideally suited to

²² The translation "ideal forms" has been preferred to the word "law" usually employed by writers in English. This has been done for two reasons. First, the English word "law" has the connotations of (a) the statutory enactments of human or supernatural rulers, and (b) "laws of nature", rules which may be used to predict the occurrence of natural phenomena. "Li" is not used in either of these senses. (See J. Needham, *Human Law and the Laws of Nature in China and the West*, L. T. Hobhouse Memorial Trust Lecture, 1950.) Second, it is clear that "li" may be used in the plural, and that each class of objects has its own "li" which constitutes perfection (chi) for each member of that class. It is this normative function of the "li" which forms the basis of the ethical doctrines of the Sung Confucianists. Jinsai's attack on the Sung philosophers consisted in the denial of this function. The translation "law" does not make clear the contrast between the views of the Sung philosophers and Jinsai on this point.

²³ *Ta Hsüeh*, 1.

the preservation of the established order in a feudal society such as existed in Tokugawa Japan. Differences in status could be explained as due to the inferior material substance from which the lower orders were compounded.²⁴ The doctrine of the repression of "human desires" gave sanction to the limitation of consumption according to status.²⁵ At the same time the Confucian emphasis on filial piety and submission to superiors was used to uphold the feudal relation between lord and retainer. All possibility of change was precluded by the insistence on the priority of spiritual perfection.²⁶

It was Itō Jinsai's achievement to provide an original alternative to the philosophy of Chu Hsi. Jinsai, a townsman of Kyōto, propounded his new theories of Confucianism in 1683 in a work entitled *Gomō Jigi* (An Interpretation of Some Terms from the *Analects* and *Mencius*).

In contrast to the dualism of the Sung philosophers, Jinsai held that "the whole universe consists solely of one primordial material substance (ichi genki)".²⁷ The term "ji" is not to be used in the sense of "ideal form" as among the Sung Confucianists, but is to be used only of the "order" or "regularities" (jōri) which exist in this primordial matter.²⁸ Matter is eternal and is in constant movement in its positive and negative aspects, Yin and Yang.²⁹ It is homogeneous, so that there is no longer any question of the relative "purity" of the material substance of bodies.³⁰ The universe as a whole is a vast, living, growing organism (ichi daikatsubutsu). Man, too, is a living organism (katsubutsu).³¹ Since this is so, neither man nor the universe is to be explained in terms of a "dead", static, concept such as the "ideal form". "The Way", a term which has the connotation of progress and development, is the appropriate one for the description of the universe.³²

From Jinsai's rejection of the transcendental "ideal form" follows the rejection of the "original" good "nature" in man. For Jinsai only the material "nature" exists, and this is defined as that with which man is

endowed at birth. Since all men do not receive the same natural endowment their intelligence varies, but all alike intuitively recognize good and evil. Jinsai maintains that Mencius' theory of the goodness of the "nature" refers to this characteristic.³³

According to Jinsai the springs of moral conduct are the *ssu tuan*, the four innate virtues, Jen, Yi, Li and Chih, and the ethical duty of the individual consists in "nourishing" and developing these virtues, for "there is nothing which will not grow if it receives its proper nourishment".³⁴ Jen, the supreme virtue, consists in universal compassion and love; Yi, next in importance, consists in doing what is fitting and abstaining from what is not fitting. The virtues Jen and Yi are of greater importance than the remaining two, Li (meticulous respect for the degrees of status) and Chih (complete and included knowledge of the order of the universe).³⁵

The *Analects* and *Mencius* were for Jinsai the chief sources of inspiration in the cultivation of these four virtues.

Sorai's Confucian doctrines were constructed on the basis provided by Jinsai's philosophy. He followed Jinsai in rejecting the Sung dichotomy of "matter" and "ideal forms", in recognizing only the "material nature" in man and in accepting the view of man and the universe as "living organisms" in a state of continuous development. But in Sorai's writings there is a marked shift of emphasis from the individual to the social plane. Jinsai's teachings had had as their aim the provision of a system of morality which, when followed by the individual, would lead (as among the Sung Confucianists) to moral perfection as a Sage. Sorai, deeply impressed by his historical studies in Chinese literature, was concerned with society as a whole, and for the same reason his doctrines placed more emphasis on the written sources of Confucian thought. Jinsai had regarded the *Analects* and *Mencius* as absolute sources of moral guidance. Sorai advocated the study of the whole Chinese philosophical literature, considering each work in its historical context.

Although Sorai accepted Jinsai's view of the universe as an eternal process he had little interest in cosmological questions, and in such matters as the nature of Heaven he professed a reverent agnosticism.³⁶ He was strongly opposed to any speculation on the subject of supernatural beings³⁷ or concerning the causes of natural phenomena such as thunder or lightning.

²⁴ See *Okina Mondō* in Nomura, ed. *Nihon Keizai Gakusetsushi Shiryō*, 4.

²⁵ See *Kissō Chawa* in *Nihon Zuihitsu Zenshū*, 9, 186: "Only by restriction of desire can the state attain peaceful government"; and *Gosō Mampitsu*, *ibid.*, 17, 79, where it is argued that the economic welfare of the state depends in the last analysis on "moderation in, and repression of, desire, self-mastery and the proper cultivation of the person".

²⁶ Sorai remarks in his *Taiheisaku*, in *Nihon Keizai Taiten*, 9, 204, "There can be no more roundabout way of doing things than to insist that we must set aside all consideration of matters of government until we have become Sages".

²⁷ Itō Jinsai, *Gomō Jigi*, in *Nihon Rinri Ihen*, 5, 11.

²⁸ *ibid.*, 22.

²⁹ *ibid.*, 11.

³⁰ *ibid.*, 11.

³¹ Itō Jinsai, *Dōjimon*, in *Nihon Rinri Ihen*, 5, 131.

³² *Gomō Jigi*, 22.

³³ *Gomō Jigi*, 33.

³⁴ *Gomō Jigi*, 35.

³⁵ *Gomō Jigi*, 26.

³⁶ "It is impossible to 'know Heaven'. The Sages revered Heaven, and hence spoke only of 'recognizing Heaven's decree'." *Bemmei*, 81.

³⁷ *Tōmonsho*, in *Nihon Rinri Ihen*, 6, 172.

He believed that "the learning of a person in a position of responsibility (chün tzu) should consist in the study of the principles of good government. Human affairs provide ample scope for study".³⁸

The first tenet in Sorai's Confucianism was "having faith in the Sages",³⁹ and the system as a whole was known by the various names, The Way of the Sages, The Way of the Former Kings, The Confucian Way, and The Way of the Chün Tzu. The Sages were the "makers",⁴⁰ the culture heroes of ancient China, the inventors of divination, agriculture, mechanical devices, and, most important, of Rites and Music, the institutions which make possible the development of a civilised society.⁴¹ Confucius, though by his own declaration not a "maker"⁴² was potentially one, and is accorded the title of Sage for his services to posterity in handing down the Way of the Sages in the form of the Confucian classics. The Way, as recorded in these classics, is the standard by which all conduct is to be judged. The direct study of the Way can be undertaken only after thorough linguistic and historical training, including the study of modern Chinese, prose and verse composition, history and institutions.⁴³ In contrast to the opinions of both the Sung Confucianists and of Jinsai, Sorai's Way is not a means of attaining moral perfection as a Sage, nor, primarily, a guide to individual conduct. It is a pattern for society as a whole, and as such is primarily the concern of the rulers of the state. The Confucian virtues are reinterpreted in the light of this conception of the Way. Here Sorai selected for special emphasis, not the virtues Jen and Yi extolled by Jinsai, but Jen and Chih. These two virtues are not innate, but are defined in terms of a passage in the *Shu Ching*⁴⁴ as "giving peace and security to the people" and "having knowledge of men".

³⁸ *ibid.*, 158.

³⁹ "The first point in Confucian studies (gakumon) is having faith in the Sages." *Bemmei*, 109.

⁴⁰ Defined in *Li Chi*, 17 "A maker is called a Sage, a transmitter is called enlightened".

⁴¹ The expression "Rites and Music" is used in the broad sense of "social and political institutions". In Sorai's writings the expressions "Raigaku-keisei" (Rites, Music, Justice and Administration), "Raigaku-seido" (Rites, Music, Regulations and Degrees) and "Seido" are used loosely in the same sense.

⁴² Sorai's commentary on *Analects* 7, 1, "The Master said, I have 'transmitted what was taught to me without making up anything on my own'", reads, "In these words Confucius recognizes the decree of Heaven. No kingly ruler had appeared and so Confucius was unable to assume the position of a creative Sage." *Rongochō in Rongochō Shūran* (1760), 7, 2a.

⁴³ "Whoever wishes to understand the present must understand the past. Whoever wishes to understand the past must study history. After a study of history the meaning of the Six Classics will become increasingly clear. When one has mastered the meaning of the Six Classics one will possess immediate knowledge of the Way of the Sages. It will then be possible to implement good government throughout the land." *Gakusoku*, 123.

⁴⁴ *Shu Ching*, *Kao Yao Mo*.

The following passages contain expositions of Sorai's conception of Jen.

"In Confucian doctrine Jen occupies the most important place. Why is this so? It is because Jen is that which advances and embodies the Way of the Former Kings. The Way of the Former Kings is the Way of giving peace and security to the world."⁴⁵

"Jen is the term used to refer to those qualities in a man which promote the growth and development of mankind and give peace and security to the people. This is the great virtue which was possessed by the Sages. 'The great virtue of the universe is life.' The Sage conforms to this."⁴⁶

"Giving peace and security to the people is what is meant by Jen . . . This is not the same as what is commonly known as 'benevolence' (jishi); it means causing the people to have peace and contentment. This means that they should be free from cold and famine and from molestation by robbers, that they should have feelings of trust for their neighbours, that they should be content to live in their country and their age, that they should find enjoyment in their various occupations and should spend the whole of their lives in happiness. Those who, under the Mandate of Heaven, hold the positions of Sovereign and Lords have the duty of giving peace and security to the people."⁴⁷

"Jen is the Way of 'nourishment'. Thus in matters of government one should 'set the straight over the crooked, and thereby make the crooked become straight'. In personal conduct, too, the individual should nourish his good qualities and thereby his evil qualities will disappear of themselves."⁴⁸

The second virtue, Chih, is defined in terms of Jen. It does not consist only in erudition, intellectual ability or capacity for practical affairs, although these are a part of it. "In a ruler, wisdom (chih) consists in possessing knowledge of men. Although it is correctly described as 'the virtue of Wisdom' it is entirely a part of the Way of Jen. No matter how much a ruler may apply himself to seeing that the people are given peace and security there are limits to human ability, energy and understanding. Hence, great wisdom in a ruler consists not in the ruler's own wisdom, but in his capacity for recognizing good men and raising them to positions of responsibility".⁴⁹

⁴⁵ *Bendō*, 15.

⁴⁶ *Bemmei*, 37.

⁴⁷ *Taiheisaku*, 213.

⁴⁸ *Bendō*, 18.

⁴⁹ *Taiheisaku*, 215.

Sorai's view of the individual owed much to Jinsai's doctrine of the "katsubutsu". Man is a living, growing being, not a wooden image.⁵⁰ Jinsai had applied the quotation from Mencius, "There is nothing which will not grow if it receives its proper nourishment", to the cultivation of innate virtues. Sorai now applied it to man's development as a whole and maintained that "learning" in the widest sense of all the influences of environment and education, determines the direction in which the individual's innate capacities develop. "The usages of society are a matter of learning. So are scholarly studies (gakumon)".⁵¹ From this Sorai deduces that good and evil in the individual consist in the direction and extent of his development. "Those who acquire good characteristics by learning are to be considered good men, those who acquire bad characteristics by learning, bad men".⁵² Like Jinsai, Sorai believed that good was to be equated with life and growth. "In general it is bad for anything not to receive its proper nourishment or to be unable to attain the state or position which is proper to it. It is always good for a thing to be nourished, brought to fulfilment and caused to attain the state or position which is proper to it."⁵³ However, Sorai differed from Jinsai on the question of the manner in which improvement in the individual was to be brought about. Jinsai had aimed at moral perfection, but Sorai refused to accept the possibility of qualitative changes in the "nature". A man could no more be made into a Sage than rice could be transformed into beans. "We receive our material substance through our parents from Heaven. Talk of 'transforming one's material substance' is nonsense invented by the Sung Confucianists. It is totally unreasonable to require people to do something which is altogether impossible."⁵⁴ Although the "nature" could not be transformed, its development might be channelled in a particular direction. In his commentary on *Analects*, 17, 3, "The Master said, 'It is only the very wisest and the very stupidest who cannot change'", Sorai says, "In what sense is the 'nature' changed? After it has been nourished by learning and its potentialities brought to full development it differs from what it was before. This is what is meant by 'change'."⁵⁵

In Sorai's Confucianism it is the Way of the Sages which is the source of guidance. What then is the content of the Way? Here Sorai gives little information. He gives directions as to how the Way is to be sought—by careful study of the classics and histories—but in his philosophical writings he gives no exposition of any systematic body of doctrine derived from

⁵⁰ *Tōmonsho*, 177.

⁵¹ *Taiheisaku*, 219.

⁵² *Taiheisaku*, 219.

⁵³ *Gakusoku*, 124.

⁵⁴ *Tōmonsho*, 175.

⁵⁵ *Rongochō*, 17, 6b.

these sources. In *Bendō* and *Bemmei* he is occupied mainly with the refutation of the opinions of the Sung Confucianists on certain points within the general Confucian tradition. In their place he puts forward the doctrine that the definitions of abstract terms which are to be accepted are those which have been delivered by the Sages.⁵⁶ These linguistic innovations were part of the creative work of the Sages. Among the institutions of the Sages mentioned by Sorai are the institutional forms of the division of labour, the Four Orders of the People—gentlemen, peasants, artisans and merchants⁵⁷—but no attempt is made to construct a detailed picture of an ideal society of the period of the Three Dynasties. Indeed, such a conception is incompatible with Sorai's view of the universe as being in a continuous state of development. The Way is no magical panacea. It consists in arranging matters so that they change in harmony with natural changes.⁵⁸ Sorai's attitude is basically utilitarian, and he says in his discussion of the term "good" in *Bemmei* that "anything, even if it is not a part of the Way of the Sages, which suffices to confer material benefits on men and to succour the common people is to be called 'good'".⁵⁹ For an exposition of the Way of the Sages as applied to his own times we must turn to Sorai's political writings, the *Taiheisaku* and *Seidan*.

3. Sorai and Hsün Tzu.

Sorai's Confucian doctrines show considerable influence from Hsün Tzu, the chief representative of the ritualist school of Confucianism in ancient China. The most important points at which this influence is apparent in his philosophical writings are in the doctrine that the Way was created by the Sages, and in the emphasis which is placed on the efficacy of education. However, Sorai's interpretation of the significance of the Confucian classics is made in the light of a study of the whole pre-Ch'in literature and is not based on a narrow adherence to the doctrines of any single author. In particular, Sorai did not accept that aspect of Hsün Tzu's teaching which is most widely known, the doctrine that man's nature is evil. As we have seen in a passage quoted above (page 205), he regarded the whole question of the goodness or badness of man's nature as an irrelevance introduced into Confucian doctrine by Mencius. This has not prevented a number of authors from crediting Sorai with adherence to the view that man's nature is evil, or with a Hobbesian "cynicism" in regard to the

⁵⁶ *Bemmei*, 29.

⁵⁷ *Tōmonsho*, 151. "The division of society into the Four Orders, gentlemen, peasants, artisans and merchants, was instituted by the ancient Sages. It is not the case that this division is a part of the natural order."

⁵⁸ *Taiheisaku*, 219.

⁵⁹ *Bemmei*, 74.

origins of morality.⁶⁰ It is therefore pertinent to note that Sorai did not regard society as consisting of mutually antagonistic individuals living in a state of uneasy truce under the supreme power of a sovereign. On the contrary, he believed that all men had inborn aptitudes for co-operation and mutual aid, and that the creative work of the Sages merely give institutional expression to these innate traits. He says, "Since all members of the human race possessed feelings which impelled them to love one another, to provide food for one another, to give help to one another and to bring one another's capacities to fulfilment and had the ability to undertake organized work together, the Former Kings established this Way, in order that every member of later generations throughout the world might follow it and thereby be able to fulfil his natural capacities and the mandate of Heaven."⁶¹

In addition to the influence of Hsün Tzu which is apparent in Sorai's philosophical works, resemblances to the views of Hsün Tzu on social and political questions are to be found in his political writings.

The political theory of Hsün Tzu rests on the conception of a harmonious association of the different orders of feudal society, of "harmonious unity in association".⁶² The function of a ruler is to make possible such association.⁶³ Society is regarded as being divided into the Four Orders and it is observed that although the members of the orders might exchange functions, in fact they do not.⁶⁴ Agriculture is regarded as the most important occupation among the lower orders,⁶⁵ and the attitude is taken that the peasantry should be allowed to accumulate enough wealth to assure them of some degree of security.⁶⁶ If this is done, and provided that unrestrained consumption is prevented, there will be ample wealth with which to meet the ritualistic expenditures of the Confucian court. A scarcity of wealth is not, as the Mohists would make out, the bane of society, it is

⁶⁰ See Murdoch, *A History of Japan*, 3, 342.

⁶¹ *Bemmei*, 31.

⁶² This expression occurs in Bks 4 and 19 of *Hsün Tzu*.

⁶³ *Hsün Tzu*, Bk 12, "What is the Way? It is the Way of the ruler (chün). What is a ruler? He is one who is able to cause association (ch'ün)." Sorai quotes this etymology in *Bendō*, 15.

⁶⁴ *Hsün Tzu*, Bk 23.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, Bk 10, "If there are many artisans and merchants the state will be poor". Bk 25, "If the basic occupation is encouraged and consumption graduated the state will have wealth without limit". Bk 17, "If the basic occupation is strengthened and consumption graduated, no Heavenly interference will be able to make the state poor".

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, Bk 10, "The way in which a state may have sufficiency is by graduating consumption, allowing the common people to accumulate wealth and making good provision for the storage of the surplus. Graduation of consumption is to be accomplished by ritual, the people are to be allowed to accumulate wealth by [fiscal] administration." "If there are no degrees and measures [regulating consumption] the state will be poor."

social disruption which deserves this appellation. With the surplus produced by the lower orders the Confucian court preserves order by means of its rituals and by the effect of the rewards and punishments which it dispenses.⁶⁷ The ruler is charged to promote men of ability and to dismiss from office those who lack ability.⁶⁸ A practical attitude is to be adopted by the Confucian confronted by the problems of selecting rituals and political institutions. He is to follow the institutions of successful Confucian rulers of recent times, the "later kings", and to disregard those attributed to figures of remote antiquity.⁶⁹

On many points Sorai's view of society in the *Taiheisaku* and *Seidan* is similar to that of Hsün Tzu. He views the phenomena of history in the same way as Hsün Tzu. He is concerned with the institutions of feudal states and their ability to produce a condition of order.⁷⁰ In common with other Confucianists of his own times he accepts the division of society into the Four Orders and maintains that policy should be determined by the interests of the gentlemen and peasants, while the services of the urban merchants can be dispensed with.⁷¹ Again in common with his contemporaries he regards the prevention of excessive consumption as one of the first duties of the ruler in economic policy,⁷² and like Hsün Tzu he holds that this should be done by rituals which control the economic customs of society.⁷³ His proposals for widening the scope of recruitment to office and his opposition to the principle of hereditary succession to office, although supported by earlier precedents in Confucian doctrine, are in accord with the views of Hsün Tzu.⁷⁴ His choice of institutions from all periods of history as a basis for his recommendations in policy is similar to Hsün Tzu's attitude to the "later kings".

Other points on which Sorai's views coincide with those of Hsün Tzu are in his rejection of the military code of blind obedience to superiors in

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, Bk 10.

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, Bk 9. "Let the worthy be raised to office without regard to their status; let those who are not able be dismissed without hesitation".

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, Bk 5. "As regards ritual there is none greater than that of the Sagely Kings. There are a hundred Sagely Kings; which should we take as our pattern? . . . If one wishes to look upon the works of the Sagely Kings one should look upon them at their finest. These are the later kings."

⁷⁰ *Taiheisaku*, 206-12. *Seidan*, 50.

⁷¹ *Seidan*, 91.

⁷² The usual quotation in this connexion is from the *Ta Hsüeh*, 10, 19, "Let the producers be many and the consumers few; let there be activity in the production and economy in the expenditure".

⁷³ *Seidan*, 57.

⁷⁴ *Seidan*, 111-19. Compare *Hsün Tzu*, Bk 12, "Yü's method of government is preserved, but the Hsia dynasty has not retained hereditary possession of kingship".

the name of "loyalty",⁷⁵ in his opposition to scientific speculation,⁷⁶ and in his attitude to the position of the Confucian teacher in society.⁷⁷

In one important respect Sorai's view of society differs from that of Hsün Tzu. The times in which Hsün Tzu lived were marked by widespread disorder. How was this refusal to accept harmonious unity under a Confucian state to be explained? Two similar answers are given by Hsün Tzu. One is that the disorderly elements are "rough" or "uneducated",⁷⁸ the other that the nature of man, unless overlaid by civilized usages, is inherently evil.⁷⁹ Sorai does not accept this pessimistic conclusion. For him disorder in the state is a result of the inadequacies of the institutions of its rulers.

⁷⁵ Such loyalty is slavish and unmanly. True loyalty consists in a responsible attitude, in considering the welfare of others as one's own (*Tōmonshō*, 169). Compare *Hsün Tzu*, Bk 13, "To profit one's lord while acting contrary to his orders is to be considered loyalty".

⁷⁶ *Tōmonshō*, 158 (quoted above). Compare *Hsün Tzu*, Bk 17, "[The Confucian] casts aside useless eloquence and needless observation and does not practise them. But the proper relations between sovereign and subject, father and child, man and wife, he cultivates daily without remission."

⁷⁷ *Hsün Tzu*, Bk 1, "In undertaking study there is no better way of making rapid advance than by having esteem for one's teacher. To treat the teacher with the full respect of ritual is of secondary importance to this." This sentiment runs through Sorai's discussion of education in the *Taiheisaku*, 204-6 and in the *Seidan*, 188-93.

⁷⁸ *Hsün Tzu*, Bk 4.

⁷⁹ *ibid.*, Bk 23.