

## Proto-Genbun Itchi Discourse and the Philology of Itō Jinsai

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*Genbun itchi* is conventionally described as a Meiji-period language reform movement that sought to eliminate archaic forms in written Japanese, and instead develop a style closer to the spoken vernacular of the time. This study seeks an expanded linguistic model for *genbun itchi*, rooted in pre-Meiji philological discourse. Although overt calls for language reform would not emerge until the Meiji Restoration, changing approaches to lexicographical studies by leading scholars such as Itō Jinsai (1627-1705) served as important precursors to the *genbun itchi* movement. In *Gomō jigi* (The Meaning of Terms in the Analects and Mencius), Jinsai rejected the notion of literary Chinese as a medium embodying abstract, fixed meaning, and instead rooted his philological analyses within the parameters of the concrete, everyday, contemporary world. By insisting on direct, transparent relationships between kanji signifiers and their real-world referents, Jinsai contributed to the formulation of a new discourse focused on the status of the written word itself. Proto-*genbun itchi* is a neologism I have created to describe the growing awareness of the gap between the written and spoken languages that surfaced in seventeenth-century Japan, and to mark the significance of this as a harbinger for later nineteenth-century proposals directly advocating writing reform.

### Toward a Theory of Proto-Genbun Itchi

Critical works and analyses traditionally situate the origins of the *genbun itchi* movement in Maejima Hisoka's (1835-1919) 1866 unsolicited petition to the shogun Tokugawa Yoshinobu (1837-1913) entitled "Kanji gohaishi no gi" ("Proposal for the Abolition of Kanji"). In this petition, Maejima vehemently attacks both the cumbersome system of kanji as well as the traditional style of education, particularly its focus on Sino-Japanese writings (*kanbun*), a course of study that took years to master and served as a powerful discourse effectively separating the educated elite

from the rest of society.<sup>1</sup> Other calls for writing reform in early Meiji were also primarily concerned with the adoption of a simplified script to facilitate education and increase literacy rates, whereas later *genbun itchi* advocates such as literary critic and writer Tsubouchi Shōyō (1859-1935) sought a new written form capable of elevating the Japanese literary tradition beyond the perceived frivolity of Edo-period *gesaku* writings. Despite these differing goals, *genbun itchi* proponents in the early decades of Meiji shared two significant points of commonality: an emphasis on the need for a transparent written medium capable of realistically depicting contemporary society, and a heavy reliance on contrastive analyses of Japanese and Western writing scripts and literary traditions. The introduction of Western discourse as the impetus for the *genbun itchi* movement has characterized the majority of twentieth-century critical writings on *genbun itchi* as well.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Yamamoto Masahide, the foremost scholar on *genbun itchi*, traces a framework for the movement that locates its origins in Maejima's petition. See *Genbun itchi no rekishi ronkō* (Tokyo: Ōfūsha, 1971); *Genbun itchi no rekishi ronkō zokuhen* (Tokyo: Ōfūsha, 1981); and *Kindai buntai hassei no shiteki kenkyū* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1965). In English, prominent scholars of the *genbun itchi* movement such as Nanette Twine have followed the same framework. See her *Language and the Modern State: The Reform of Written Japanese* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991). However, this is not to suggest that Maejima was the first to criticize the unwieldiness of the Japanese writing system. Arai Hakuseki's (1657-1725) *Seijō kibun* (Tidings of the West, 1715-25), a work based on interviews with the Italian missionary Giovanni-Battista Sidotti (1668-1714), observed how comparatively concise and efficient the Western alphabet was. Although Hakuseki did not go so far as to call for script reform, this is one more piece of evidence illustrating that the status of the written language was at issue well before the start of the Meiji period.

<sup>2</sup> Several scholars have challenged the critical emphasis on Futabatei Shimei's novel, *Ukigumo* (The Floating Cloud, 1887-89), as the seminal

While not discounting the impact of the West, locating the development of modern written Japanese within the narrow confines of Western discourse has resulted in the construction of an unrealistic linguistic model that attributes the creation of *genbun itchi* to a few prominent individuals. This framework also places *genbun itchi* firmly outside all pre-Meiji traditions, despite the fact that the limitations of conventional written forms were very much at issue in the Edo period as well.<sup>3</sup> In fact, a growing awareness of the gap

work in the *genbun itchi* movement. Karatani Kojin, for example, considers Mori Ōgai's *Maihime* (The Dancing Girl, 1890) closer to the goal of *genbun itchi*. Although written in classical *bun-gotai* style, Karatani finds it "easier to translate into English" because it is more realistic and follows "the conceptual and grammatical structure of a work written in a European language and translated into Japanese." *Ukigumo*, on the other hand, he states, never escapes "the pull of the *ninjōbon* and *kokkeibon* styles of Edo period *gesaku* fiction." See his *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, trans. Brett de Bary (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993), 50-51. In *Accomplices of Silence: The Modern Japanese Novel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), Masao Miyoshi uses Futabatei's own translation style as a point for comparative analysis, concluding that Futabatei's Russian translations more accurately approximate the realism of Western novels and exhibit a style closer to a modern Japanese narrative than *Ukigumo* (37). Karatani and Miyoshi offer fresh perspectives from which to examine the *genbun itchi* movement, but it is worth noting that they still locate it within the framework of Meiji-period Western discourse.

<sup>3</sup> Recent studies on *genbun itchi* have placed more emphasis on pre-Meiji written forms as models for *genbun itchi* writers. See, for example, Hida Yoshifumi, ed., *Genbun itchi undō*, *Kokugo ronkyū* 11 (Tokyo: Meiji Shoin, 2004). This edited volume focuses on language style (*buntai*). In Chapter Two, Hattori Takashi situates his analysis within the framework of the "langue/parole distinction," and brings up the important point that the wide variety of sentence endings found in early *genbun itchi* works were already in existence in the

between the spoken and written languages, generally described as one of the key impetuses for the *genbun itchi* movement, is also frequently cited as one of the defining characteristics of language in Edo Japan.<sup>4</sup> However, this is not to suggest that conventional written forms such as literary Chinese steadily lost ground to increasing use of vernacular-based language. On the contrary, Chinese written discourse proved stubbornly adaptable to linguistic and literary shifts, frequently serving as the medium for new genres and forms of expression well into the Meiji period.<sup>5</sup> This study

late Edo period, thus suggesting that the goal of these writers was not to "create" a new written language, but rather to establish and stabilize a standardized written form from among the many in use. Other chapters in this collection provide historical background for the etymology of forms with which later *genbun itchi* writers would experiment, highlighting both the diversity of written forms in the early modern period, as well as the complexities of *genbun itchi* language discourse not captured in many other critical studies. Still, this work does not present an overall framework for incorporating *genbun itchi* discourse into pre-Meiji writing. Possible reasons for this will be discussed in the conclusion of this paper.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Okimori Takuya, *Nihongoshi* (Tokyo: Ōfūsha, 1989), 31; and Kamei Takashi et al. ed., *Kindaigo no nagare*, *Nihongo no rekishi* 5 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2007), 260-61. In English, see Naoki Sakai, *Voices of the Past: The Status of Language in Eighteenth-Century Japanese Discourse* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), and H.D. Harootunian, *Things Seen and Unseen: Discourse and Ideology in Tokugawa Nativism* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 40-75.

<sup>5</sup> The poet Kan Sazan (1748-1827), for example, first trained as Confucian scholar but later returned to his hometown and appropriated the medium of Chinese poetry, or *kanshi*, to describe the everyday activities in the lives of the people around him. Similarly, in the genre of *gibun*, or playful literature, writers such as Hattori Bushō (1842-1908), who produced *Tōkyō shin hanjōki* (Record of Tokyo's New Prosperity, 1874-76), appropriated Sino-Japanese discourse for descriptions of modernization and Westernization. Early

examines how Jinsai's philological approach as presented in *Gomō jigi* reflects a shift in discourse aimed at transparent language capable of depicting contemporary society, and in doing so, highlights the not insignificant role that Chinese discourse played in the eventual realization of *genbun itchi*.

### Jinsai and the Writing of *Gomō jigi*

By the time of Jinsai's birth, the Neo-Confucian teachings of Zhu Xi (1130-1200) were already well known to scholars in Japan. Although Jinsai, too, began his studies of Confucianism through the works of Zhu Xi, he would eventually reject these writings and develop his own approach.<sup>6</sup> The general structure of *Gomō jigi*, however, is not without precedent; in fact, John A. Tucker traces the framework directly to *Xingli ziyi* (The Meanings of Neo-Confucian Terms) by Chen Beixi (1159-1223), a disciple of Zhu Xi's whose work was well known in the early Tokugawa period. The writing of *jigi*, a genre that Tucker has termed "philosophical lexicographies," can be found in the works of other Tokugawa-period Confucian scholars as well. Yamaga Sokō authored *Seikyō yōroku* (Essential Teachings of the Sages, 1665), and Ogyū Sorai wrote *Benmei* (*Distinguishing Names*, 1717) in direct response to *Gomō jigi*.<sup>7</sup> For

translations and adaptations of Western literature (*hon'an*) as well as political novels (*seiji shōsetsu*) are also examples of Meiji-period genres that used Sino-Japanese written forms.

<sup>6</sup> For a biographical overview of Jinsai's early life and studies in Confucianism, see Kaizuka Shigeru, *Itō Jinsai*, *Nihon no meicho* 13 (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron, 1972), 7-33. For a detailed discussion of Jinsai's shift away from the writings of Zhu Xi, see Samuel Hideo Yamashita, "The Early Life and Thought of Itō Jinsai," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 43, no. 2 (1983): 453-480. Yamashita seeks to go beyond the conventional interpretation that Jinsai's status as a *chōnin* led him to pursue a framework for Neo-Confucianism aimed at commoners rather than the warrior class. Yamashita also provides a detailed analysis based on events and writings from Jinsai's life prior to his rejection of Zhu Xi.

<sup>7</sup> According to Tucker, "Tokugawa *jigi* were literary mediums by which empires of meaning were distinguished for the sake of legislating well-

the purposes of this article, the preponderance of lexicographies is one more piece of evidence supporting the status of language itself as an issue in Tokugawa Japan. Thus, Jinsai's method, to apply lexical analysis in support of a new philosophical approach, was not a new one, but the manner in which he reformulated the written medium of the Neo-Confucian lexicon had far-reaching effects. Jinsai's approach, known as *kogigaku* 古義学 (the study of ancient meaning) sought an interpretation of the writings of Confucius and Mencius based on a world-view reflecting human beings as living creatures existing in a physical world.<sup>8</sup> As will be shown, Jinsai stressed action over explication and discussion, and in doing so challenged the notion of the Way as static and unchanging. It was not literary Chinese itself with which Jinsai took issue, but rather the intertextual interpretations that had built up over the centuries and which, in his opinion, had compromised the meaning of the texts. By reformulating the connections between the ancient written language and concrete referents in contemporary everyday life, Jinsai sought an interpretation of the texts in which meaning could be perceived through cognitive processes, thereby highlighting the role that context plays in the creation of meaning. In contrast to Yamazaki An-sai's (1618-82) Kimon school, where the curriculum concentrated on techniques designed to focus attention inward, including rote memorization and *seiza* (seated mediation), Jinsai's teachings emphasized the importance of living out the Way through daily-life actions.<sup>9</sup> As will be seen,

defined parameters vis-à-vis humanity, ethics, society and the metaphysical realm." See John A. Tucker, *Itō Jinsai's Gomō jigi and the Philosophical Definition of Early Modern Japan* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 7.

<sup>8</sup> For a discussion of Jinsai's notion of human beings as living creatures, especially in contrast to Zhu Xi's approach, see Koyasu Nobukuni, *Itō Jinsai no sekai* (Tokyo: Perikan-sha, 2004), 18-21. For a discussion of his life-affirming world view (*seiseiteki sekaikan*), see *ibid*, 222-226.

<sup>9</sup> Among the many competing ideologies that emerged in the first decades of Tokugawa rule, An-sai may have been the first to create a coherent ideology incorporating Neo Confucianism with Shinto and Buddhism. For a detailed discussion,

he was frequently critical of Neo-Confucians who emphasized discussion over action.<sup>10</sup>

*Gomō jigi* was first written in 1683, in response to a request from junior councilor Inaba Masayasu, but by the mid 1680s copies had begun to circulate among Jinsai's students. When an unauthorized copy was published in 1695, Jinsai started to gain national attention. He continued to revise *Gomō jigi* until his death; the text was then further edited by his son, Itō Tōgai (1670-1736) before being officially published posthumously in 1705.<sup>11</sup> Given this textual history, there can be

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see Herman Ooms, *Tokugawa Ideology: Early Constructs 1570-1680* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), 194-286. Although Ansai's school was located across the street from Jinsai's, there was apparently little or no contact between the two. John A. Tucker argues that the differences between the two camps were not really so great. (See Tucker, 62.) However, Jinsai's frequent critical references to Neo-Confucianism are evidence that he clearly perceived himself to be in opposition to the Neo-Confucians such as Ansai, and wished to distance himself from this discourse.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, *Gomō jigi*, *Nihon shisō taikai* 33, 124. Ansai in turn responded to Jinsai's *Gomō jigi* with *Gomō jigi benhi* (*Critique of Gomō jigi*) a reactionary work in which he meticulously criticized Jinsai's work section by section.

<sup>11</sup> The evolution of this text is a complex one, and has raised questions about how Jinsai intended the text to be read. In his review of John A. Tucker's *Itō Jinsai's Gomō jigi and the Philosophical Definition of Early Modern Japan*, I. J. McMullen states that "Jinsai undoubtedly saw himself as writing in Chinese," and "the *Gomō jigi* needs to be read as a Chinese text." See "Itō Jinsai and the Meaning of Words," *Monumenta Nipponica* 54 no. 4 (1999), 513. In his response to McMullen's review, Tucker asserted that there is no "Chinese" reading of the text, because Jinsai "wrote in *kanbun* for a Japanese audience." See "Correspondence," *Monumenta Nipponica* 55 n. 2 (2000), 321. For a detailed discussion of variations in all extant manuscripts, produced over a period of 22 years (1683-1705), see Miyake Masahiko, "*Gomō jigi* no seiritsu katei to sono kōi," in *Nihonshi no kenkyū*, ed. Kimura Takeo (Tokyo: Mineruba Shobō 1970), 197-216. The issue of

little doubt that Jinsai considered *Gomō jigi* to be an important work, and that it had a significant impact in his own lifetime.

### ***Gomō jigi* as Proto-Genbun Itchi Discourse**

Unlike later Meiji-period advocates of *genbun itchi*, Jinsai's approach did not attack the medium of literary Chinese itself.<sup>12</sup> However, he challenged its status as what Benedict Anderson has termed a truth language:

Christendom, the Islamic Ummah, and even the Middle Kingdom - which, though we think of it today as Chinese . . . imaginable largely through the medium of a sacred language and written script . . . all the great classical communities conceived of themselves as cosmically central, through the medium of a sacred language linked to a superterrestrial order of power. Accordingly, the stretch of written Latin, Pali, Arabic, or Chinese was, in theory, unlimited. (In fact, the deader the written language - the farther it was from speech - the better: in principle everyone has access to a pure world of signs.)<sup>13</sup>

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whether the Chinese version or the *kanbun* version should be seen as the primary text is clearly an area for further research; however, it should be noted that both modes of writing fall under the parameters of Chinese discourse, which is the focus of this study.

<sup>12</sup> Literary Chinese was, of course, just one written form among the many in use during the Edo period. In addition to a growing use of vernacular-based Japanese written forms aimed at the general populace, this period also saw an increase in imports of foreign books, including works in vernacular Chinese and Western languages. As the language of the educated elite, however, literary Chinese would continue to maintain a tenacious hold as the privileged discourse in scholarly and official realms. For a brief overview of written forms from the Edo through early Meiji periods, see Bjarke Frellesvig, *A History of the Japanese Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 377-83.

<sup>13</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of*

Anderson's description of truth languages highlights two important aspects relevant to the status of literary Chinese in premodern Japan, both of which Jinsai's philological approach addressed. First was the notion of a "sacred language linked to a superterrestrial order of power," suggesting a discourse in which the medium of the language itself was imbued with a sense of authority.<sup>14</sup> This was certainly the case in pre-modern Japan, where the mere ability to read or recite literary Chinese was enough to accord one elite status. With the breakdown of esoteric forms of teaching and the rapid expansion of print culture in the seventeenth century, the ranks of those participating in

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*Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1991), 12-13.

<sup>14</sup> The perspective of the language as a medium embodying authority is based on part on the presumption of written Chinese as an ideographic system. It should be noted that the appropriateness of the term "ideogram" to describe Chinese characters is not without controversy. On one hand are opponents of the ideogram theory who argue that Chinese characters are best described as logograms, representing not ideas, but rather words (or syllables), a stance based on the premise of the primacy of speech over writing. These scholars argue that the notion of Chinese characters as ideographic has seriously impeded Western understanding of the Chinese language, and contributed to exoticized notions of the uniqueness of Chinese culture. Critics on the other side challenge the primacy of speech over writing, and uphold the notion of Chinese characters as ideograms. For a summary of these debates in recent scholarship, see Edward McDonald's "Getting over the Walls of Discourse: 'Character Fetishization' in Chinese Studies," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 68 n. 5 (Nov 2009), 1189-1213. While the ideogram/logogram debate is certainly relevant to the status of written Japanese as well, it should be noted that the text being analyzed in this article is neither Chinese nor Japanese, but *kanbun*, a written form based on no natural spoken language. In addition, my focus is not on contemporary approaches to linguistic analysis of written Chinese or Japanese, but rather on the philological discourse employed by Jinsai in *Gomō jigi*.

intellectual discourse grew significantly.<sup>15</sup> For Confucian scholars, many of whom served as tutors and advisors within the governmental system, establishing the applicability of Confucian thought to Tokugawa Japan was key to their success. A syncretic approach, which downplayed Chinese aspects and instead sought to emphasize the universality of Confucianism through parallels with indigenous Shinto traditions, can be found in theories such as those promoted by Hayashi Razan (1583-1657) and Yamazaki Ansai, among others.<sup>16</sup> This domestication of Confucianism also led some to emphasize cognitive understanding of the ancient texts themselves.<sup>17</sup> Kumazawa Banzan

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<sup>15</sup> This growth was due to a number of factors, including policies implemented by Tokugawa Ieyasu that allotted government funds for the printing of books and the creation of a library (known today as Momijiyama Bunko). For an in-depth analysis of the rise of commercial printing in seventeenth-century Japan, see Peter Kornicki, *The Book in Japan: A Cultural History from the Beginnings to the Nineteenth Century* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), 129-140.

<sup>16</sup> For example, in Section 18 of *Shintō denjū* (Introduction to Shinto), Razan discusses his Ritō Shinchi Shinto School, which fuses principles of Shinto and Confucianism. See *Kinsei shintōron, zenki kokugaku*, Nihon shisō taikai 39 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1972), 18-19.

In *Jindai no maki kōgi* (Lectures on the Age of the Gods Volume [of the Nihon Shōgi]), Yamazaki Ansai links Neo-Confucian concepts to Shinto terms. See Taira Shigemichi and Abe Akio, ed. *Nihon shisō taikai 39* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1972), 143-88. For a detailed discussion of Ansai's approach, see Ooms, 239-41. The notion of words being the embodiment of universal truths themselves was a key part of Ansai's philosophy because it allowed him to merge Neo-Confucianism and Shinto into his *Suika Shintō* 垂加神道 school. By searching for these truths, he could claim that a concept in Chinese also existed in Japan, simply under a different name.

<sup>17</sup> For a detailed discussion of the varied approaches to Confucianism in early Tokugawa, see Kate Wildman Nakai, "The Naturalization of Confucianism in Tokugawa Japan: The Problem of Sinocentrism," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*

(1619-1691), for example, defined knowledge (*meichi* 明知) not as an increase in cognizant ability in relation to facts or language, but rather the improvement of one's ethical nature (*dōtokuteki risei* 道德の理性).<sup>18</sup> As will be shown, however, Jinsai rejected the transference of Confucian principles to other thought systems, including Daoism, Buddhism, and Shinto, and promoted learning based on philological analysis of the ancient texts themselves.

Jinsai's philological approach also challenged the second significant aspect of Anderson's definition of truth language: the notion of literary Chinese as a "dead" language, a "pure world of signs" as far removed from speech as possible. Sino-Japanese *kanbun* styles that developed out of literary Chinese in premodern Japan represented written forms that had never had oral counterparts outside of formal recitation. These forms had slowly compromised the content of the Chinese texts and blurred the boundary between the two languages. More problematic for Jinsai, however, were the multiplicity of meanings that had come to be associated with kanji historically through intertextual connections. While the syncretic approaches of Razan, Ansai and Banzan further expanded these connections, Jinsai sought to eliminate meanings acquired through subsequent interpretations of the ancient texts, often based on the influence of later thought systems, particularly Buddhism and Daoism.<sup>19</sup> Of course, Jinsai was hardly the first to question interpretations of ancient works, or to call for a move back to a rigorous analysis of archaic texts. In fact, the tradition of referring to new approaches not as innovations but rather as a return to the true teachings is an old

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40, n. 1 (1980): 157-99. It should be noted that the merits of these approaches are not at issue in this study. They are mentioned here only as a point of contrast to Jinsai's philological approach.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Bitō Masahide, *Nihon hōken shisōshi kenkyū* (Tokyo: Aoki Shoten, 1961), 230. Bitō also provides an insightful discussion in this section of contrasting views on the concept of learning between Banzan and Ogyū Sorai.

<sup>19</sup> Examples of this will be given later in this article.

one, dating back to Confucius himself.<sup>20</sup> However, this article will show how Jinsai's distinct philological approach helped lay the groundwork toward a perception of literary Chinese as a linguistic system distinct and separate from that of Japanese.

### Aspects of Jinsai's Philology

In *Gomō jigi*, Jinsai introduces movement and action into his theory of Confucianism by defining the Way not as a set, fixed form, but rather as a system constantly in flux. This is evident in the opening lines of the work, which begins with a sweeping sense of the dynamic nature of the Way:

A way is like a road that people pass along as they come and go. That which is called a way is thus a passage for all things. That which is called the Way of Heaven refers to the ceaseless comings and goings of yin and yang, one by one. *The Book of Changes* says, "Yin and yang, one by one: this is what is called the Way." The character for "one," which is combined with each of the characters "yin" and "yang," most likely means, "first yin and then yang," or "first yang and then yin," and also describes the ceaseless revolutions of coming and going, and of prosperity and decline. Between heaven and earth is a unifying life force that is yin and sometimes yang. These two

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<sup>20</sup> See, for example, *Analects*, sections 12.17 and 13.3. The Neo-Confucian thought of Zhu Xi which Jinsai attacks in *Gomō jigi* also purported to be a reinterpretation of ancient texts based on historical analysis, and later Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) contemporaries of many of the Tokugawa scholars discussed in this article advocated meticulous linguistic analysis of ancient texts as the best method for recovering the true meaning of the ancient texts. Of particular prominence at this time in China was the Evidentiary School (考証学 Ch: *kaozheng xue*; Jp: *kōshōgaku*) which sought to recover the pure, golden age of Confucianism untainted by the influences of Buddhism and Daoism. Many scholars in Japan would have been aware of these concurrent movements on the mainland, and undoubtedly drew upon them in their own work.

things respond to all on heaven and earth, as they fill and empty, prosper and decline, come and go, without ever stopping. This, which is the whole of Heaven's Way and the transformative force of nature, gives birth to the myriad transformations and all creatures under heaven.<sup>21</sup>

Likening the philosophical notion of the Way to a physical road helps to locate Jinsai's approach within the realm of everyday life. The concrete language he employs throughout the passage creates a vibrant, lively description that supports his focus on everyday physicality. The abstract notions of yin and yang are concretized by parallel phrasing of action verbs: "coming and going," "prosper and decline," and "fill and empty." These lexical choices further enhance the notion of movement, and give the passage itself a sense of rhythm and energy. Jinsai also uses close analysis of the kanji signifiers themselves to emphasize his points. The Chinese character for "one" which attaches to both yin and yang, he noted, might suggest "first yin and then yang," or "first yang and then yin," an interpretation that again highlights movement over fixity. Thus, within the first few lines of *Gomō jigi*, Jinsai introduces two important characteristics of his philological approach: concrete, active imagery and close attention to detail.

Jinsai also regularly applies rigorous diachronic analysis in order to argue for a particular contextual reading from among the multiplicity of meanings that had arisen over time. For example, Jinsai's interpretation of the Way rejects the Neo-Confucian notion of principle (*ri* 理) because the term is not found in the writings of Confucius or Mencius, but appears only later in

<sup>21</sup> *Gomō jigi*, ed. Yoshikawa Kōjirō and Shimizu Shigeru, *Nihon shisō taikēi* 33, 115. For a full English translation of *Gomō jigi*, see Tucker's translation in *Itō Jinsai's Gomō jigi and the Philosophical Definition of Early Modern Japan*. Tucker's translation is unquestionably more eloquent than the versions I offer here. However, for the purposes of this study I have chosen to sacrifice natural expression and elegance for a more literal translation in an effort to highlight the detailed philological aspects of Jinsai's writing.

commentaries. He strengthens this argument by emphasizing that the derivations of the character are grounded in lifeless, inert meanings, making it incompatible with a concept of the Way as a process connected to the constant motion of everyday life:

The character for "Way" was originally an active one, describing the mysteries of all life's transformations. Characters such as "principle" are lifeless. This character, originally said to have referred to the grain in a jade stone, is classified under the jade radical (玉), and derives its pronunciation from the character for *ri* (里).<sup>22</sup> Later it came to be used to describe the order of things, but it is insufficient for describing the mysteries of all life's transformations under heaven and earth.<sup>23</sup>

The imagery in this passage emphasizes the notion of life as a concept inherently "active" (*katsu* 活) and reflecting "the mysteries of all life's transformations" (*seiseikaka no myō* 生生化化の妙). In contrast, the Neo-Confucian interpretations which Jinsai is refuting are described as an unchanging "order of things" (*jibutsu no jōri* 事物の條理) and even "lifeless," or dead (*shi* 死).

Outright rejection of the signifier *ri* also allows Jinsai to discount the historically associated meanings and nuances which such a term brings to the discussion. Jinsai rejects Laozi's depiction of the Way not only because of the latter's usage of *ri*, but also because of the associated incorporation of concepts from Daoist and Buddhist thought:

The sage Confucius used the expression, "heaven and earth" to refer to living things. This is why *The Book of Changes* states, "We can also gaze upon the heart of heaven and earth." To the Daoists, who interpreted the Way as emptiness and nothingness, gazing upon heaven and earth was no different from gazing upon an inanimate thing. Furthermore, Confucius spoke of "the Way of Heaven," but Laozi spoke of

<sup>22</sup> A unit of measurement: 3.9273 kilometers.

<sup>23</sup> *Gomō jigi*, 124.

"the Principles of Heaven." Their teachings refer to different things. Our Way is fundamentally different from that of Daoism and Buddhism, and these should not be mixed together as if they were all one. An investigation into the two characters used in the expression "principles of heaven," shows they often appear in the writings of Zhuangzi, but not in the writings of Confucius.<sup>24</sup>

The distinction between "Way of Heaven" and "Principles of Heaven" is of utmost importance to Jinsai because it reveals how the use of terminology from other thought systems such as Daoism has produced new combinations of kanji compounds, which in turn leads to additional meanings for each character. He further distinguishes his own interpretation of the Way from that of Laozi through contrastive active and static imagery: "living things" (*katsubutsu* 活物), terminology that he attributes to Confucius, are equated with "the heart of heaven and earth" but "inanimate" or "lifeless things" (*shibutsu* 死物), the terminology of Buddhists and Daoists, are equated with "emptiness and nothingness" (*kyomu* 虚無).<sup>25</sup> In this way, he is able to both discredit later commentaries and reiterate his stance that the Way is rooted in the everyday world.

Jinsai concludes the section on *ri* by again emphasizing the contrast between the use of the terms "Way" and "principle" as a dichotomy between active and static states:

Of course, the Way is an action word, embodying activity. Principle is a static word, embodying non-action. Confucius saw the Way as a reality, so he explained its principles through action. Laozi saw the Way as empty, so he explained it in static terms. Confucius spoke of "Heaven's Way" or "Heaven's Decree," but he never said "Heaven's Principles." He often said "The Way of Human Beings" or "Human Nature," but he never said "Human Prin-

cles."<sup>26</sup>

Here, Jinsai argues through one simple but important term how Laozi's use of the phrase "Heaven's Principles" (*tenri* 天理) rather than "Heaven's Way" (*tendō* 天道) is a significant lexical distinction separating the two thought systems. Although the notion of diachronic change in language is an unquestioned component of any modern linguistic theory, Jinsai's insistence that meaning be attached to context represents a significant innovation in Tokugawa period philology. By rejecting the notion that a concept such as *ri* embodies fixed meaning(s) across time and traditions, and by linking it instead to a specific tradition, he introduces a new linguistic discourse in which language reflects content rather than embodying it.

The notion that each kanji must correlate to meaning deriving from a verifiable concept also frames Jinsai's criticism of Zhu Xi's notion of human nature (*sei* 性). He begins by stating: Confucius said, "Although human nature itself is not so varied, behavior varies considerably. This is the basic standard for all discussions of human nature throughout time. . . Mencius also said, "The inequality among things equates to their nature/feelings."<sup>27</sup> Jinsai then contrasts this with the following comments about Zhu Xi:

In *The Collected Commentaries of Zhu Xi*, it says, "Human nature is the principle that people receive from heaven at birth. This is completely good, never evil." In other words, it says "Human nature is namely principle." If we can see evidence of this, then we can say [human nature] is good. However, if we cannot see evidence of this, then there is nothing that points to goodness. If we cannot see evidence of evil, and also cannot see evidence of goodness, then even if we say it is "completely good," in

<sup>26</sup> *Gomō jigī*, 124-5.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 134. Mencius' reference to nature uses the term *jō* rather than *sei*, but Tucker's translation notes that this usage of *jō* has generally been taken to mean "nature."

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>25</sup> It is unclear what text Jinsai is referring to here.



reality this is just an empty term.<sup>28</sup>

Jinsai rejects abstract statements such as "human nature is namely principle" because there is no method by which to confirm or deny such an assertion. The orthodox Neo-Confucians' notion of human nature, in which all human beings share the universal principle equally, also does not account for the variation of human nature found in daily life, and is therefore incompatible with Jinsai's approach.

Jinsai's rejection of abstraction is also seen in his criticism of Zhu Xi's interpretation regarding the connection between *sei* and *jō* 情, emotions. For Zhu Xi, human nature and emotions are in a dichotomous relationship consisting of an abstract concept (*sei*) and its concrete realization (*jō*). In the passage below, Jinsai challenges this dichotomy, arguing instead that *sei* and *jō* are on equal footing. He explains the connection between the two terms as follows:

Feelings are desires of human nature. They are said to be that which activates. Thus, human nature and feelings can be considered together. . . . Neo-Confucians say, "Feelings activate human nature." This is not substantiated. First, we must look carefully at the term "desire" and understand it. . . . The ancients usually said "human feelings," "feelings and desires," or "feelings common in the world." Human nature describes what color means to the eyes, what sound means to the ears, what taste means to the mouth, and rest means to the limbs: this is human nature. Feelings describe the eye's desire to see a beautiful sight, the ear's desire to hear something pleasant, the mouth's desire to taste something good, and the limb's desire to get some rest.<sup>29</sup>

The phrase that Jinsai criticizes, that "feelings activate human nature," is problematic for his interpretation of the Way because it suggests that human nature exists as a transcendent process, beyond the parameters of everyday experiences. If

the precise effect of the activation cannot be discerned through the physical world, then *sei* as a signifier cannot be linked directly to any definable concept. Instead, Jinsai links human nature to sensory experiences, such as the eye's reaction to color. Feelings, or the desire for a particular sensory experience, are also linked to concepts that form part of everyday life experience.

Samuel Hideo Yamashita outlines a similar argument in Jinsai's analysis of the relationship between humanity (*jin* 仁) and love (*ai* 愛) in his 1658 essay, "Jinsetsu" ("Theory of Humanity"). Much like the argument between *sei* and *jō*, Jinsai challenges Zhu Xi's statement that "humanity is the principle of love," which suggests that humanity exists in the higher realm of principle while love occupies the lower realm of material force. In "Jinsetsu," Jinsai states, "If one considers the emotions external and then speaks of humanity, he not only loses human nature, but also forces scholars to grope in the dark and to seek the distant. And this leaves them little room for action."<sup>30</sup> "Groping in the dark" suggests a statement devoid of a real-world context, a form both undefinable and not perceivable via the senses, leading to a state of inertion, or nonaction. The incorporation of the notion of desire into the argument once again highlights Jinsai's emphasis on the Way as a concept reflecting individual variation. The parallels in these arguments illustrate how the focus on active, verifiable signified concepts forms a vital component of Jinsai's philological approach.

Critics may well question the extent to which Jinsai effectively argues his case. Naoki Sakai, for example, takes issue with Jinsai's criticism of Zhu Xi and the Buddhists for neglecting the mundane, noting that "both of these teachings held paramount the notion that philosophical ideas should never be uprooted from the sphere of 'nearness,' where one encounters things and people in everyday life."<sup>31</sup> He adds that Zhu Xi's collected works, containing titles such as *Reflections on*

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 135.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 138.

<sup>30</sup> English translation from Yamashita, 463. The Japanese version of this passage can be found in *Nihon shisō taikai* 33, 277. Yamashita notes that this is one of the key factors that led Jinsai to turn away from the writings of Zhu Xi (461-63).

<sup>31</sup> Sakai, 33-34.

*Things at Hand*, indicate that his approach was certainly not without reference to the everyday. Although Jinsai's approach to Confucianism may not have been as different from Zhu Xi as he would have liked his readers to believe, his insistence on connecting kanji signifiers to the everyday, physical world represents a unique approach which seeks to lessen the gap between the written medium of literary Chinese and the concrete world of Tokugawa Japan.

An active notion of the Way rooted in meticulous diachronic analysis is also reflected in Jinsai's explanation of the term "learning" (*gaku* 学). He is particularly critical of his contemporaries who equate "lecturing on the principles of morality" with learning:

[My] learning method is based on two aspects that are called (blood) vessels and meaning. Vessel means the teachings of Confucius and Mencius, such as Mencius' explanation of humanity and righteousness. Meaning is namely that contained in the writings of the sages. Of course, meanings are derived from the vessel, so scholars must first understand the vessel, or they will be just like a rudderless boat without a light, drifting about, not knowing where they may land. The subject of the vessel must be considered prior to any discussion on meaning, even though the vessel is more difficult. This is because the vessel is like a straight road. We know where it leads only after a long journey of ten million *ri*. Like meaning, the road is vast and expansive. A person lacking in perception, who sees meaning as simple and stable, will not be aware of this.<sup>32</sup>

This passage sets up a contrast between (blood) vessel (*ketsumyaku* 血脈) and meaning (*imi* 意味). By using the term "(blood) vessel," Jinsai has again selected a concrete term rooted in physicality.<sup>33</sup> Just as one might trace the path of an

object as it moves through a vessel, Jinsai suggests, so too might a scholar trace the derivation of a word back to its roots in earlier writings. However, to be aware of this movement requires perception (*gugan* 具眼). In other words, understanding of a text comes only through direct cognitive input in which the reader correlates each kanji signifier with a referent in the material world. The use of the term "vessel," equated here with the writings of Confucius and Mencius, also suggests that correct meaning is impossible without knowledge of the historical context of a text.

Jinsai's insistence on distinguishing the vessel from the meaning highlights again his emphasis on separating content and form, or medium and message. In the traditional approach to the study of Chinese classics promoted by Jinsai's neighbor and rival Ansai, repeated reading and/or copying of the classics was one of the primary modes of learning, a process that students were advised to continue for as long as necessary until the significance of the text became clear.<sup>34</sup> Clarity of meaning, or understanding of the text, was revealed not by analyzing the language as a vehicle for communicating content, but rather through repeated exposure, presumably leading to absorption of the language and its significance. In other words, the act of reading could be equated with knowledge of the text itself. This suggests that the acquisition of knowledge might be described not as comprehension gained by understanding of signifier/signified relationships but rather by familiarity created through repetition. Although recitation of a text could demonstrate successful achievement of the learning method (memorization), this was proble-

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Although *ketsumyaku* is a term that fits well into Jinsai's emphasis on materiality, he was not the first to use it. It is also found in the works of the thirteenth century Song scholar Lin Xiyi, whose writings on Zhuangzi were particularly well known and circulated among Danrin school poets of the seventeenth century. Jinsai may have very well drawn upon them, although adapting them to his own philological approach, in *Gomō jigī*. For a more extensive discussion, see editorial notes for *Gomō jigī* in *Nihon shisō taikēi* 33, 516.

<sup>34</sup> For a more extensive discussion of the teaching methods used by Ansai and Jinsai, see Tucker, 46-48.

<sup>32</sup> *Gomō jigī*, 148.

<sup>33</sup> *Ketsumyaku* is often translated as "major argument" or "line of reasoning" (Yamashita, 475-6). It has been left as "vessel" in this translation to emphasize the concreteness of Jinsai's philology.

matic for Jinsai because comprehension itself remained unverifiable. The correlation between memorization and learning also supported the perpetuation of literary Chinese as a medium imbued with a sense of authority.

Jinsai does not discount the importance of repeated actions in the learning process, noting that the character for "learning" originally meant "imitation." Using calligraphy as an analogy, Jinsai explains how a student begins by "copying" the characters from a primer until he has mastered the use of the brush and the stroke order of the characters. After sufficient repetition, he will come to understand the meaning of calligraphy as an art. However, Jinsai does not equate this repeated action with knowledge of the art itself. He also insists that the student apply sensory input to the task, explaining that "to see and hear is intrinsic to learning," and suggesting that students must use cognitive skills to analyze and understand the content of the texts by recognizing connections between the printed language and the physical world.<sup>35</sup> Jinsai is particularly critical of the Zen-style focus on meditation, a technique that encourages the practitioner to cut off all sensory input and cannot, therefore, lead one towards the "real" principles of heaven and earth.<sup>36</sup>

The discussion above, focusing on Jinsai's analysis of the concepts of principle (*ri*), human nature (*sei*), and learning (*gaku*), illustrates key elements of Jinsai's philological approach. First, through ongoing diachronic analysis supported by the use of concrete imagery emphasizing the ongoing state of flux common to all language systems, Jinsai develops a theory of the Way that firmly rejects abstract interpretations that cannot be verified. In addition, by emphasizing the importance of context for determining meaning, he not only rejects later intertextual meanings introduced

<sup>35</sup> *Gomō jigi*, 73.

<sup>36</sup> These references are based on comments Jinsai made regarding his experience with *hakkotsukan* (skeleton meditation), a Tendai Buddhist practice that he engaged in following a prolonged illness in 1655, but later denounced. Through quiet meditation, practitioners of *hakkotsukan* come to see themselves and those around them as skeletons. See Ishida Ichirō, *Itō Jinsai*, Jinbutsu sōsho 39 (Tokyo: Yohikawa Kōbunkan, 1960), 35-6.

through later traditions, but also establishes a clear distinction between the medium, the language of literary Chinese, and the everyday actions that express it. Elements of Jinsai's approach would play a key role in the philology of later-period scholars as well, as discussed in the next section.

### **Itō Jinsai and the Socio-Political Framework of Proto-*Genbun Itchi* Discourse**

Clearly, the use of a philological framework in and of itself did not set Jinsai apart from other Confucian scholars who advocated lexicography as a method of inquiry. In many ways, he was simply one more in a long line of scholars who carried out meticulous lexical analysis as a means of providing substance to his particular version of Neo-Confucian philosophy. However, Jinsai's approach, focusing on rigorous diachronic analysis and emphasizing identifiable links between kanji signifiers and concrete, definable concepts, reflects a significant shift in early modern language discourse. His legacy can be traced through later Tokugawa-period Confucian scholars, most notably Ogyū Sorai (1666-1728), who drew on the work of Jinsai to advocate a pedagogical approach to the learning of literary Chinese which insisted on recognizing Japanese, literary Chinese, and even vernacular Chinese as separate and distinct language systems.

In 1702, Sorai wrote to Jinsai, expressing his admiration for *Gomō jigi* and asking to be accepted as a disciple, but Jinsai never responded. At the time he wrote the letter, Sorai was moving in the highest levels of political circles, serving as a retainer under Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu, grand chamberlain to Shogun Tokugawa Tsunayoshi, so Jinsai's silence may have simply been an attempt to avoid political entanglement. In any case, Sorai's attitude towards Jinsai turned critical after this. One of Sorai's best-known works, *Benmei*, was written primarily as an attempt to discredit *Gomō jigi*.<sup>37</sup> The two works are strikingly similar both in organization and methodology, however, suggest-

<sup>37</sup> For the full text, see *Ogyū Sorai*, *Nihon shisō taikē* v. 36, ed. Yoshikawa Kōjirō et al (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1973), 9-36. For an English translation, see *Ogyū Sorai's Philosophical Masterworks: The Bendo and Benmei*, trans. John A. Tucker (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006).

ing that Sorai was heavily influenced by Jinsai, despite his comments and writings to the contrary. A quick glance at the contents reveals the similarities between these books: Jinsai's work is divided into 25 categories, while Sorai's has 34, but many of the categories are either identical or very similar, and both writers use lexical analysis to support their claims.<sup>38</sup> Sorai's teachings focused on the Six Classics rather than the works of Confucius and Mencius, but he used an approach he termed *kobunjigaku* 古文辞学 (archaic literary studies), a method based on lexicographical analysis strikingly similar to Jinsai's. Like Jinsai, it was not the language or culture of China itself which Sorai attacked, but rather the annotated *kanbun* forms which Sorai argued were mere gibberish — neither Chinese nor Japanese — and had seriously corrupted and compromised the meaning of the ancient Chinese texts.<sup>39</sup> Instead, he insisted that the study of literary Chinese be approached as the study of any foreign language, with translation into either vernacular Japanese or Chinese as a means of confirming comprehension. In other words, Sorai expanded the proto-*genbun ichi* discourse initiated in Jinsai's philological approach by overtly differentiating literary Chinese and *kanbun* as distinct linguistic systems.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> For a brief discussion, see Kanaya Osamu, ed. *Ogyū Sorai shū* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1944), 108.

<sup>39</sup> Some critics may argue that, similar to Nakai's analysis of early modern scholars who sought to detach Confucianism from its Chinese context and establish its relevance within a Japanese cultural setting, Jinsai and Sorai were simply doing the same through a separation of linguistic form. However, their greater emphasis on the language of the ancient texts contributed to their common rejection of unverifiable abstractions, one aspect of their philological approach that I argue here served as an important precursor to *genbun ichi* discourse.

<sup>40</sup> *Ogyū Sorai zenshū* 5, ed. Imanaka Kanshi and Maramoto Tatsuya (Tokyo: Kawade Shobō, 1977), 16. Sorai's approach also no doubt drew on the fact that he had access to books in both literary and vernacular Chinese due to the ongoing importation of books from China during the Tokugawa period. See Ōba Osamu, *Edo jidai ni okeru Chū*

Despite a vastly different research agenda, Motoori Norinaga's (1730-1801) philological approach also advances the proto-*genbun ichi* discourse propagated by Jinsai and Sorai.<sup>41</sup> Although Norinaga himself denied that his method had any connection to Sorai's, the existence of a pamphlet in Norinaga's own writing entitled *Sorai shū* attests to the fact that, at the very least, Norinaga was familiar with his work. Like Sorai, Norinaga distinguished clear boundaries between linguistic systems, in his case, between the language of ancient Japan and that of literary Chinese. As a *kokugaku* (native studies) scholar Norinaga was interested not in the ancient Chinese texts, but rather the earliest extant Japanese texts, namely the *Kojiki* (Record of Ancient Matters, 712).<sup>42</sup> Like Sorai, Norinaga also used vernacular-based language as a medium of instruction. In *Kokin wakashū tōkagami* (A Kokin Wakashū Telescope, 1797), Norinaga opted to create a translation of this tenth-century poetry collection in contemporary Japanese (using the *de gozaru* sentence-ending form) rather than a more conventional annotated commentary. The telescope, he explains in the preface, serves to pull the text out of the distant past and place it directly in front of the reader, thereby allowing for a more immediate and direct emotional response. On the first page of the preface, he glosses the character for *yaku* (translation)

*goku bunka juyō no kenkyū* (Kyoto: Dōshōsha, 1984), 190-200. Miyake notes that Jinsai's *kanbun* incorporates euphony and nuances of daily conversational vocabulary, suggesting an attempt to accommodate the students at his school. Unlike Sorai, however, he does appear to have employed *kanbun* as a teaching tool for understanding texts in literary Chinese.

<sup>41</sup> For a detailed discussion of the impact of Confucian studies on Norinaga, see Usami Kiso-hachi, *Kinsei karon no kenkyū: Kangaku to no kōshō* (Osaka: Izumi, 1987), 247-286. This section discusses the impact of Horii Keizan, Norinaga's teacher in Kyoto, but also makes reference to Sorai.

<sup>42</sup> See *Kojikiden* 1, Motoori Norinaga zenshū 9 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1968), 17-18. Norinaga is, of course, referring to the Japanese language as it existed prior to the introduction of Chinese characters.

as *utsu* (reflect), suggesting that he is not attempting to define or rectify terms, as previous Confucian scholars had done, but rather to reproduce the text through another linguistic system. Norinaga refers to the language of his text as *satobigoto*, or vulgar language, and goes on to explain that, while vernacular language is more familiar and understandable, the writer must choose words carefully to avoid becoming too unrefined.<sup>43</sup> His comments foreshadow numerous *genbun itchi* advocates, most notably Tsubouchi Shōyō, who would praise the directness and transparency of the colloquial language while deploring its vulgarity.<sup>44</sup>

Despite Maejima's focus on a comparative analysis with Western languages, his call for written language reform also reflects a tone surprisingly reminiscent of Jinsai. In the opening of "Kanji gohaishi no gi," Maejima criticizes the "roundabout education methods [of Japan] in which knowledge comes only after one has learned the kanji," insisting that the true purpose of learning should be "nothing but an understanding and knowledge of the facts."<sup>45</sup> As an educator, Maejima was criticizing the excessive number of years required to learn the thousands of kanji necessary for literacy, something that did not concern Jinsai. However, Maejima's proposal for script reform also reflects the frustrations of a linguistic system in which cognitive understanding of the content of a text is, if not unverifiable, at the very least a secondary goal. A theory of proto-*genbun itchi* highlights the fact that the frustrations which *genbun itchi* advocates expressed over the gap between the spoken and written language, as well as the very notion of Japanese as a distinct linguistic system, was not initiated solely by the influx of Western culture, but in fact surfaced in the beginning of the early modern period. *Gomō jigi*, an early work to challenge the notion of literary Chinese as a medium embodying fixed

meaning, is a clear precursor of these later discursive shifts.

### Conclusion

This study began by challenging the conventional notion of *genbun itchi* as a language reform movement arising exclusively in the early Meiji period, and instead proposed an expanded linguistic model for proto-*genbun itchi* beginning in the seventeenth century. However, the tendency to situate *genbun itchi* as a modern phenomenon precipitated almost wholly by Westernization remains difficult to dispel. Unlike Meiji-period *genbun itchi* advocates who overtly critiqued the inadequacies of conventional written forms, philological methods and language discourse in the writings of Jinsai and others did not lead to overt attempts at overhaul or reform of the written language. On the contrary, it would lead them back to the past, as they attempted to recover the origins of pristine languages, unaltered by later linguistic frameworks or thought systems. For Meiji leaders, however, Japan's future lay not in the past, but in the seemingly more advanced technology and culture of the West. The 1868 *Gokajō no goseimon* (Meiji Charter Oath) asserted that the "evil practices of the past" should be discarded, and prominent scholars of Western studies took a similar line.<sup>46</sup> In an 1885 editorial, Fukuzawa Yukichi (1834-1901) boldly declared that "today's China and Korea have not done a thing for Japan," and suggested that Japan "leave the ranks of Asian nations and cast our lot with civilized nations of the West."<sup>47</sup> As the entire nation became swept up in the fervent pursuit of *bunmei kaika* (civilization and enlightenment), *genbun itchi* advocates also strove to garner support by publicly rejecting pre-Meiji traditions, and instead connecting themselves with forward-looking Western discourse. Ueda

<sup>43</sup> See Norinaga's preface to *Kokin wakashū tōkagami* in Motoori Norinaga zenshū 3, ed. Ōkubo Tadashi (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1969), 5-13.

<sup>44</sup> Tsubouchi Shōyō, *The Essence of the Novel*, trans. Nanette Twine. (Australia: University of Queensland, 1981), 55.

<sup>45</sup> Maejima Hisoka, *Maejima Hisoka jijoden* (Tokyo: Nihon Tosho Sentā, 1997), 167.

<sup>46</sup> See David J. Lu, *Japan: A Documentary History* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc, 1997), 309. The phrase "evil practices of the past" refers to policies such as *jōi*, expelling foreigners.

<sup>47</sup> Fukuzawa Yukichi, "Datsu-a ron" (Escape from Asia). First published as an editorial in the *Jiji shinpō* on March 16, 1885. Reproduced in *Gendai Nihon shisō taikai* 8 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1963), 38-40. English translation by Lu, 352-3.

Kazutoshi (1867-1937), who was educated in Western linguistic theory in both Japan and Europe, harshly criticized the education of *kokugo* (national language) based on the study of *kokubun* (classical Chinese or Japanese texts). His insistence that *kokugo* should only refer to contemporary spoken or written language illustrates how language reform advocates felt a clear need to distance themselves from Japan's linguistic past.<sup>48</sup>

The ongoing tendency to consider *genbun itchi* only within the context of Meiji-period discourse can also be attributed to the public sense of crisis regarding the status of the written language that both political and literary leaders such as Maejima and Shōyō openly expressed. Nanette Twine defines the term "language modernization" in relation to *genbun itchi* as "some aspect of a particular language [that] requires modification before it can meet the requirements of the society it serves."<sup>49</sup> She goes on to explain that this may include growth of the lexicon to "reflect the multiplicity of new concepts, institutions, and objects abroad in society," as well as syntactic changes that may occur "under the influence of foreign language or in response to changes in patterns of thought and logic as a result of new value orientations."<sup>50</sup> In one sense, language modernization might be used to describe the constant state of flux and ongoing change that is part of any language system, but the suggestion that there is a need for modification in order for a language to adequately serve as an effective medium of communication implies a time of rapid language change in response to large-scale social or political shifts.

In recent years, these social and political shifts have increasingly become the focus of linguistic and literary scholarship, offering new perspectives on *genbun itchi* discourse. Kamei Hideo's *Kansei no henkaku* (Transformations of Sensibility, 1983)

revitalized the field of Japanese literary studies by moving away from the three broad tendencies of literary criticism (literary histories, bibliographical studies, and author studies), and challenging conventional assumptions that literature necessarily reflected the author's interiority.<sup>51</sup> Kamei's discussion of what he terms the "non-person narrator" in Futabatei's *Ukigumo*, which he argues is transformed by the end of the novel through the author's growing awareness of his own sensibility, suggests that, in the formation of his *genbun itchi* style, Futabatei struggled with much more than selection of linguistics forms. Similarly, Lee Yeonsuk's analysis of the ideology of *kokugo* situates the emergence of this concept not within *kokugaku* studies, but rather "as a peculiar manifestation of Japan's modernity, more specifically, Japan's linguistic modernity." She asserts that *kokugo* is certainly connected to *nihongo* (the Japanese language), but the ancient language of Japan (*yamato kotoba*) that forms the focus of *kokugaku* studies is not. She adds that as the "ultimate representation of the idea of connecting the Japanese language to the Japanese spirit," the formation of *kokugo* required both policies of standardization to establish the homogeneity of the Japanese language, and the production of Benedict Anderson's imagined community, situating it clearly in the Meiji period.<sup>52</sup>

The focus of this study, however, has not been to dispel, or even downplay the impact which newly emerging ideological frameworks had on written language change following the Meiji Restoration, but rather to highlight the over-emphasis on linguistic and literary discontinuity between the early modern and modern periods. Although this study challenges the notion of *genbun itchi* as a wholly Meiji-period language reform movement, my intention is not so much to establish a new boundary for (proto) *genbun itchi*, but rather

<sup>48</sup> For a detailed discussion of Ueda and the concept of *kokugo* in the Meiji Period, see Lee Yeonsuk, *The Ideology of Kokugo: Nationalizing Language in Modern Japan*, trans. Maki Hirano Hubbard (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2010), 73-113.

<sup>49</sup> Twine, *Language and the Modern State: The Reform of Written Japanese*, 7.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Kamei Hideo, *Transformations of Sensibility: The Phenomenology of Meiji Literature*, trans. Michael Bourdaghs (Ann Arbor, MI: The Center for Japanese Studies, The University of Michigan, 2002). Kamei's preface to the English edition also includes an overview of the process that led him to reformulate his thoughts on literary criticism.

<sup>52</sup> Lee, 4.

to develop a theory realistically rooted within the parameters of Japanese socio-linguistic discourse itself. Jinsai's philological reexamination of classical Chinese texts was situated within the tradition of philological studies, but was also significantly innovative in its diachronic approach to linguistics. By emphasizing transparent language and verifiable meaning, Jinsai initiated a discourse that brought the issue of the status of language itself into the sphere of intellectual discourse, thus opening the door to new possibilities. In this way, *Gomō jigi* played a key role in setting the stage for the rise of *genbun itchi*.