

THE *BANSHO SHIRABESHO*: A TRANSITIONAL INSTITUTION IN BAKUMATSU
JAPAN

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In the Bakumatsu period (1853-1868), Japan experienced many changes and challenges. One of these challenges was regarding how to learn from the West and how to use that knowledge in the building of Japan. One of the most important institutions for such Western learning was the *Bansho Shirabesho*, an institution created by the Tokugawa government in 1856 to translate Western materials, provide a school for Japanese scholars, and to censor the translations of Western works. This institution eventually gave language instruction in Dutch, English, French, German, and Russian and it also gave instruction in many other practical subjects such as military science and production. This thesis examines in detail how the *Shirabesho* was founded, what some of the initial difficulties were and how successful it was in accomplishing the tasks it was given. It also assesses the legacy of the *Shirabesho* in helping to bridge the transition between the Tokugawa period's emphasis on feudal rank and the Meiji's emphasis on merit. The legacy of various scholars at the *Shirabesho*, including Katsu Kaishu, Katō Hiroyuki, Nishi Amane and Tsuda Mamichi is also addressed. Finally, the thesis summarizes the evolution of the *Shirabesho* during the tumultuous early Meiji Period into the University of Tokyo by 1877. In addition to the thesis, in the appendix there is a full translation of a previously untranslated speech delivered by Katō Hiroyuki in 1909 concerning the *Bansho Shirabesho*.

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I. INTRODUCTION

One and a half centuries have passed since Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry and the Tokugawa government signed the treaty in 1854 that reopened Japan to the Western world. Though the Tokugawa *bakufu*¹ was weakened by this incident in the eyes of many in Japan, it was by no means obvious that the 250 year-old regime would be toppled in 15 years. The conflict between the *bakufu* and the anti-Tokugawa military forces in Japan during the Bakumatsu Period (1853-1868) has been well documented. But the heated debates during this crucial transitional period over which aspects of the West to adopt and how they could best be implemented have been somewhat overlooked. Almost everyone, including the Tokugawa government, agreed that change was necessary. Thus, the government adopted certain new approaches during this time to try to address some of the problems facing the country. One of these was the establishment of new institutions of Western Learning (*yōgaku* 洋学) in order to strengthen the country and learn about the West. Though there were numerous official institutions, the most important of these was the *Bansho Shirabesho* 蕃書調所 “Bureau for the Investigation of Barbarian Books,” formed in 1856. This institution had roots in prior Tokugawa institutions, and it lasted until 1862, when the

¹ The word *bakufu* refers to the shogun’s “tent government” and refers back to the military origins of the Tokugawa Shogunate.

bakufu gave it a new name and a different location in Edo. Many of the scholars at the *Bansho Shirabesho*, although minor officials of the *bakufu*, played important roles as bureaucrats, scholars, and educational leaders during the Bakumatsu-Meiji Period. In light of its vital role in the translation of Western materials and the establishment of a school for *yōgaku*, the *Bansho Shirabesho* was the most important government-sponsored institution of Western learning in the Tokugawa period, and reflects how the *bakufu* wanted to learn from the West. The *Bansho Shirabesho*, as a transitional institution, not only helped the scholar-officials who worked and studied there to develop their foreign language skills and to learn from the West, but it also helped in establishing a modern educational system and in developing the ideal that scholars trained in useful subjects should serve as government bureaucrats. Thus, the *Bansho Shirabesho* provides an example of continuity between the Confucian scholar of the Tokugawa Period, and that of the Westernized intellectual of the Meiji Era.

The Tokugawa *bakufu* created the *Bansho Shirabesho* to serve as an institution of translation and investigation of written materials from West, and to serve as the *bakufu's* official school for Western Studies (*yōgaku*). One of the primary functions of the *Shirabesho* was an attempt by the government to control foreign learning by using its officials to investigate all Western publications and translations brought to Japan. This was not effectively carried out because of the opening of Japanese ports to the West and because of the inability of the government to control the importation and dissemination of

books through outside domains. The *bakufu* initially emphasized the *Shirabesho*'s function as translator of materials from the West because it benefited from the translation of vital diplomatic documents, technical information on military matters, and general information about world events. The *bakufu* opened the school in 1857 and, though it was originally limited to Tokugawa retainers, by the time of the Meiji Restoration it had educated many scholars from a variety of backgrounds in the fields of Western language acquisition and in practical subjects like Western military science. This thesis will address questions regarding the establishment of the *Bansho Shirabesho*. First of all, why did the *bakufu* establish the *Shirabesho* and what were some of the challenges facing those who proposed the institution? Second, how did the *bakufu* form the *Shirabesho* and what were the main considerations involved in its formation? Third, what scholars were involved with the *Shirabesho*? What did they do there, and what were some of the difficulties they faced in their work? Fourth, what was the legacy of the *Shirabesho*? What happened to the institution, where did the scholars go, and what was the *Shirabesho*'s impact on the development of modern Japan?²

² The only work in English that exclusively focuses on the *Shirabesho* is a brief article by Marius B. Jansen published in 1957 in the *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, entitled "New Materials for the Intellectual History of Nineteenth-Century Japan." There seems to have been little written about the *Shirabesho* in the Meiji Period, perhaps because the Meiji oligarchs did not want to acknowledge a debt in their program of Westernization to the discredited Tokugawa regime. Most of the descriptions of the modernized education system—even such early materials as a book on education written for the 1876

II. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE *BANSHO SHIRABESHO*

A. Katsu's Proposal for a New Institution

When Commodore Perry's demands in 1853 reached the *bakufu's* Senior Councilor (*rōju*), Abe Masahiro (1817-1857), he took the unprecedented step of asking various daimyo and selected officials for suggestions as to how the government should respond. Among the many suggestions were proposals to establish a larger, more comprehensive institution for

Philadelphia Exhibition and other materials published by the Ministry of Education (*Mombusho*), devote only a few sentences to the *Shirabesho*.

Towards the end of the Meiji Period, scholars began to express more interest in the *Shirabesho*. In 1907 and 1908, the Japanese government reminisced as Japan celebrated the 30th anniversary of the establishment of Tokyo University and the 40th anniversary of the Meiji Restoration respectively. Also, the modern Westernized Japanese military had gained the respect of the world in the Russo-Japanese War. It was a time for reflection, and in 1909 one of the last surviving instructors who had worked at the *Shirabesho*, Baron Kato Hiroyuki, then a very old man, gave a short reminiscent speech about the *Shirabesho* to the Historical Society (*Shigakkai*) and this was published in the *Shigaku Zasshi* and entitled "*Bansho shirabesho ni tsuite.*" As far as I know, it has never before been translated in its entirety (see Appendix A for my translation of the entire text of the article). The most significant scholarly study of the institution began in the 1930s, when a professor at Tokyo University, Hara Heizo, began to study the formation *Shirabesho* and published at least two scholarly articles specifically on the topic.

the study and translation of Western materials. Abe had earlier proposed to the *bakufu*'s supreme council, the *Hyōjoshō*, that a Western “experts” department be created under the newly-established Office for Coastal Defense. This new office was to gather together “Dutch Studies” (*rangaku*) scholars from all direct *bakufu* retainers (called *bakushin*) and from all the domains of rear-vassals (called *baishin*). Previously, the Dutch interpreters (*Oranda tsuji*) who communicated with the Dutch in Nagasaki, or the personnel who worked in the Translation Bureau (*Bansho wage goyō*) at the Astronomical Observatory in Edo had handled the study of Western materials.³ But many officials in the *bakufu* considered both of these groups of officials inadequate to the task. Responding to this deficiency of Western translators, in August 1853 a young Tokugawa retainer named Katsu Rintarō (Kaishu, 1823-1899) submitted a proposal for a new institution to Abe Masahiro.

It contained many ideas that were incorporated into the *Bansho Shirabesho*:

³ The role and significance of the Dutch interpreters (*Oranda tsuji*) on Western learning is difficult to assess and debated among scholars. Their language capabilities varied, and some were very competent and talented, but the *bakufu* limited the translators' interaction with the Dutch in Nagasaki. It is true that they laid the groundwork and trained many of the *rangaku* scholars who became important in the 18th and early 19th centuries. There are many good sources on the role of these interpreters, such as Numata Jiro, *Western Learning* and Grant K. Goodman, *Japan and the Dutch: 1640-1853*, Curzon Press, Richmond, Virginia, 2000.

I respectfully suggest that a school for instruction and training should be established at a place three or four *ri* from Edo, that for its library there should be collected all sorts of books in Japanese, Chinese, and Dutch having to do with military matters and gunnery, and that within the school orders be given to set up faculties for the study of astronomy, geography, science, military science, gunnery, fortification, and mechanics. If the number of retainers proves insufficient, men could be called up from the fiefs to offer instruction, and then within a short time men more capable than their teachers should emerge. Moreover, although the number of books translated has grown very much in recent years, it is my impression that many are done very carelessly. But now if books of value to the country were to be given to scholars for translation by the government and published officially, I think that it would not be necessary to fear the bad effect of such careless and misleading works.⁴

Katsu's proposal was the initial basis for the establishment of the *Bansho Shirabesho*. What Marius Jansen recognizes as the "three-fold purpose of instruction, translation, and control for such an institution"⁵ was evident in this proposal, though the government control seemed to be less emphasized. Katsu most likely had in mind an expansion of the Translation Bureau (*Bansho wage goyō*) of the Astronomical Observatory (*Tenmondai*) in Asakusa in Edo. This bureau was created after several ships of Western powers landed in Japan in the first decade of the 19th century. In one embarrassing

⁴Quoted in Marius Jansen, "New Materials for the Intellectual History of Nineteenth-Century Japan," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 20, Dec. 1957, 578.

⁵ *Ibid*, 578.

incident in 1804, the Russian expedition of Nikolai Petrovich Rezanov, after failing to open Japan to trade, raided some of the northern territories near Ezo (Hokkaido). Rezanov's subordinate left documents in Russian and in French on Etorofu, one of the Kurile Islands he had raided, and none of the *rangaku* scholars or interpreters could read them. They took them to the Dutch in Nagasaki, who translated them into Dutch so that the interpreters could read it. As a result, the *bakufu* was painfully aware that they were entirely dependent on foreigners to translate the French note for them.⁶ Despite recognition by the 19th century that the acquisition of Western languages was important, this translation bureau contained *rangaku* scholars who were largely not competent in languages other than Dutch and thus the *bakufu* remained unable to translate other Western languages such as French, English and Russian. When Katsu and others presented proposals for a translation bureau, the *bakufu* liked the idea of training their own officials to read and to translate foreign documents, rather than relying on the Dutch to serve as middlemen in any language

⁶ Numata Jiro, "The Introduction of Dutch Language," *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 19, Issue 3/4, 1964, 251-252.

but Dutch.⁷ In addition to this, the only news of the outside world came from the Dutch or Chinese *fusetsugaki*, or “newsletters,” that ship captains were required to submit each year when a ship came into port.⁸ The *bakufu* had few other means of learning about the West and about the state of the world and it did not like to be this position of ignorance and dependence. Katsu also later wrote why he thought a government institution like the *Shirabesho*, that investigated military science and other subjects, was important in maintaining relations with foreign nations and being prepared as a nation:

Friendship [with foreign nations] is possible if Japan has the [military] potential to maintain its independence. Therefore we must not fail to inform ourselves intimately about [other nations]. If we conduct friendly relations with them our first and greatest concern is military preparation. We must understand both them and ourselves well. Once this process is begun, we must not be negligent.⁹

⁷ Jansen, "New Materials," 579.

⁸ Many of these *fusetsugaki* have been preserved—about 2000 of them remain. In addition to the *fusetsugaki*, some information was gleaned through foreign castaways and illegal foreigners, the Dutch officials in Deshima, and imported books and maps from Korea and the Ryukyu Islands. But these were all limited sources of information.

⁹ Marion William Steele. "Katsu Kaishu and the Collapse of the Tokugawa Bakufu." Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University Press, 1976.

B. Other Proposals Relating to this Matter

Katsu seemed, in his original proposal, to prefer an institution that would “serve a purpose of enlightenment and education” while others in the *bakufu* feared “philosophical and spiritual infection from the West” and wanted to think of it more narrowly in terms of military and practical utility. Tsutsui Masanori, one of the *bakufu* officials hired to work with Katsu on the formation of the *Shirabesho*, seemed to be one of the latter, for in a memorandum to Abe he writes:

It is urgent that we know more about the West: by studying the truly useful things like the strength and weakness, the semblance and the reality of each country, the state of its army and navy, the advantages and drawbacks of its machinery, we can adopt their strong points and avoid their shortcomings...[We should translate] books on bombardment, on the construction of batteries, on fortifications, books on building warships and maneuvering them, books on sailing and navigation, books on training soldiers and sailors, on machinery, books that set forth the real strength and weakness, appearance and reality, or these countries, books on geography, books on products....¹⁰

These two proposals, Katsu's and Tsutsui's, contain the early rationale given to the *bakufu* for the formation of the *Shirabesho*; namely, to read and learn about the West and to prepare the government and the nation to defend itself militarily.

¹⁰ Jansen, "New Materials," 579.

C. Influence of Foreign Affairs in the 19th Century

1. Creation of Translation Bureau (*Bansho wage goyō*)

Katsu and Tsutsui were not the only ones who showed interest in the learning of the West—in fact, *rangaku* scholars had been pursuing the knowledge of the Western astronomy and medicine for more than a century before the *Shirabesho* was formed. The Shogun Tokugawa Yoshimune in 1720 appointed two officials to study Dutch in order to reform the calendar and learn from Western astronomy. There was also some government sponsorship of translation work, including the previously mentioned Translation Bureau (*Bansho wage goyō*) formed in 1811 at the Astronomical Observatory (*Tenmondai*) under the leadership of two *rangaku* scholars, Otsuki Gentaku and Baba Sajurō. Though many *rangaku* scholars worked on various translations at this bureau, their work was not a high priority for the government—few of the translations were published and the staff remained fairly small.¹¹ The *rangaku* scholars at this bureau studied a variety of subjects in addition

¹¹ Though the translators (which included *rangaku* scholars who were later involved in the *Shirabesho* such as Mitsukuri Gempo and Sugita Seikyō) at this institution worked on many translation projects, the most ambitious was a translation of large portions of an 18th

to foreign languages—subjects like military technology, geography, history, botany and other natural sciences, and painting. One interesting scholar was Udagawa Yōan, a young doctor who had been adopted into the Udagawa *rangaku* family, and was one of the first to extensively study chemistry and was also the first to seriously study Western music.¹²

century Dutch translation of the French *Dictionnaire Oeconomique* by Noel Chomel (1632-1712). This was first translated into Dutch in 1743, and was later expanded several times. The Translation Bureau mainly worked on parts that covered practical subjects on medicine, agriculture, animal husbandry, manufacture, construction, official management, technology, botany, zoology, etc. When they stopped working on the translation, they had compiled 152 articles on zoology and botany, 39 on fish, 83 on medicine and sickness, 28 on technology, and many other smaller categories. It also contained voluminous footnotes, and in 1846, when one of the translators died, they had over 135 volumes. This project absorbed much of the *rangaku* scholars' time at the bureau, but it was never completed and was not even published until 1939, long after the Tokugawa era had ended. The only remaining hand-written manuscript copy is in Shizuoka where the last shogun retired. Though for years historians were unsure exactly which edition the *rangaku* scholars had translated, in 1954 some Japanese scholars found an eight-volume set from 1778-1786 in an Ueno storehouse which was most likely the edition that was translated. See Numata, Jirō, *Western Learning*, Netherlands-Japan Association, Leiden, 1990, 575-576.

¹² Tsukahara Tōgo, "The Founder of Western Chemistry in Japan, Udagawa Yōan," in *Bridging the Divide: 400 Years The Netherlands—Japan*, Ed. Leonard Blusse, Willem Rammelink, Ivo Smits, Hotei Publishing, Leiden, 2000, 96.

2. Opposition to *Rangaku*

But much of this work was not officially done for the government and it took the renewed threat of Western encroachment on Japanese shores in the 19th century to convince the government to reform its government to promote *yōgaku*. Why did it take so long for the government to acknowledge this? First of all, the isolationist (*sakoku*, or “closed country”) sentiment was very strongly enforced and supported, even by *rangaku* scholars. Second, the reputation of *rangaku* scholars had always been low--in a society that emphasized Chinese learning over “barbarian” learning—and it was not helped by two damaging incidents in the 19th century. The first incident was the so-called “Siebold Incident” in 1829 when Takahashi Sakuzaemon—one of the chief official astronomers and *rangaku* scholars who worked at the *Tenmondai*—gave Philipp von Siebold, a German doctor who had accompanied the Dutch to Japan, a prohibited map of Hokkaido and the northern islands. This map was one that the *bakufu* had only recently received following the expeditions of the famed surveyer Ino Tadataka, and it was a detailed map of disputed territory. Several *rangaku* scholars, including Takahashi, were imprisoned for this, and

Siebold was expelled from Japan. The second incident, in 1838, became known as the *Bansha no goku* or the “Barbarians Sympathizers Incident,” when the *bakufu* imprisoned and killed prominent *rangaku* scholars for privately criticizing some of the government’s policies relating to the inadequate coastal defenses and the country’s isolationist policy.¹³

The third reason that the *bakufu* did not want to support such learning was because of the disparaging views of the powerful and prestigious Confucian university, the *Shōhei Gakkō*, (or *Shōheikō*) towards *rangaku*. The *Shōheikō* had roots that extended back to Tokugawa Ieyasu, and it had gradually gained the designation as the official university of the Tokugawa government and was reluctant to give up any of its influence to a Westernized institution of learning.

3. The Opium War and Aftermath

When the Opium War erupted in 1840-1842 and China was easily defeated and forced to sign humiliating “unequal treaties,” that opened the doors of China to the West, the Japanese anxiously watched. Many Japanese officials saw in the Chinese case a lesson to

¹³ Bonnie Abiko, “Persecuted Patriot: Watanabe Kazan and the Tokugawa Bakufu,” *Monumenta Nipponica*, 44, No. 2, 1989, 199-219.

be learned: the West was eager for conquest and trade, and Japan might be their next goal. Virtually all Japanese observers agreed that Japan was not ready militarily to face the West. Thus, many Japanese officials and scholars began to call for reforms. One of these came from the influential Confucian scholar Sakuma Shozan, who had also studied Dutch and Western military science. Shozan—who taught some of the scholars who were later involved with the *Bansho Shirabesho* including Katsu Kaishu (who was also his brother-in-law), Katō Hiroyuki, and Tsuda Mamichi¹⁴—encouraged the study of Western mathematics and also urged that “there is no better first step than to be familiar with barbarian tongues.”¹⁵ In 1842, at the request of his daimyo, Sakuma presented his views to the *bakufu*. He argued that the *bakufu* needed to construct fortifications and larger seaworthy ships, found schools throughout the country to provide a modern educational system, and establish a method of selecting and employing men of ability in official posts.¹⁶

¹⁴ Torii Yumiko, “‘Dutch Studies’: Interpreters, Language, Geography and World History, in *Bridging the Divide*, 126.

¹⁵ Excerpt from Sakuma Shozan, “Reflection of my Errors,” 1855 in Herbert Passin, *Society and Education in Japan*, Columbia University’s Bureau of Public Teacher’s College and East Asian Institute, New York, 1965, 201-202.

¹⁶ Jerry Kamm Fisher, *The Meirokusha*, Ph.D, University of Virginia, 9-10.

He argued that it would be “useful to establish schools in his country primarily for the translation of foreign writings and foreign histories and to promote a clear understanding of conditions among the enemy nations.”¹⁷

In addition to the perceived threat of Western invasion after the Opium War, in 1844, the Dutch King William II sent a letter warning Japan of the imminent arrival of Westerners such as the Americans and the British to its shores and advising the *bakufu* to reconsider its isolationist policy. In response to the threat of the West, Tokugawa Nariaki, a powerful daimyo who supported the study of Western military science in his domain of Mito, urged the Senior Councilor Abe in 1846 to improve Edo’s facilities for “translating and circulating western books on military science.”¹⁸ In order to do this, the *bakufu* created the new position of Commissioner of Foreign Affairs (*gaikoku bugyō*), and assigned translators to his office. Abe also appointed Yamaji Yazaemon (Yukitaka), an official who had worked at the Astronomical Bureau as a translator of Dutch books, and other translators

¹⁷ In Masuda Wataru, *Japan and China: Mutual Representations in the Modern Era*, St. Martin’s Press, New York, 2000, 24-25.

¹⁸ W. G. Beasley, *Japan Encounters the Barbarian: Japanese Travellers in America and Europe*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1995, 46.

from the Translation Bureau (*Bansho wage goyō*) such as Mitsukuri Gempo and Sugita Seikei (who both later taught at the *Shirabesho*) to assist him in the periodic task of translating some of these crucial diplomatic and military documents.¹⁹ Abe's reforms were a start, but it took the arrival of Perry's "Black Ships" to convince the *bakufu* of the necessity of more thorough government-sponsored training and education in Western studies.

4. Commodore Perry's Arrival and Aftermath

When Perry arrived on the *U.S.S. Susquehanna* in 1853, he came with 560 men and a letter for the "Sovereign of Japan" (with an attached Dutch translation) asking for Japan to be opened for trade, and that he would return the following year. Perry refused to allow any Japanese delegation to board his flagship, insisting that he would meet only with the highest officials.²⁰ The *bakufu* chose the scholar Hayashi Fukusai—known to his contemporaries as Hayashi Daigaku-no-kami, the head of the official Confucian academy,

¹⁹ Numata, *Western Learning*, 128.

²⁰ Thomas G. Paterson, J. Garry Clifford, and Kenneth J. Hagan, *American Foreign Relations: A History to 1920 (Vol 1)*, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 2000, 130-131.

the *Shōheikō*—to prepare documents to be handed to the American envoy.²¹ On March 8, 1854, Perry returned to Edo Bay with three steamers and five more warships and Hayashi gave the *bakufu*'s reply to Perry's demands in both Dutch and Chinese. He was accompanied by two other interpreters from the Translation Bureau (*Bansho wage goyō*), Nomura Gohajiro, who had the best enunciation of those sent, and Moriyama Einosuke, who spoke English "well enough."²² By the end of the month, a treaty had been signed and Japan had agreed to open a few designated ports to the Americans.

The reactions of the Japanese people to this Kanagawa Treaty were immediate and intense. On the one hand, it could be argued that the *bakufu* agreed to the treaty because it was forced to do so and it was just buying time until they were strong enough to defeat the "barbarians." And, considering the terribly unequal treaties that had been imposed on China after the Opium War, this was by comparison not an oppressive treaty.

²¹ Noel Nouet, *The Shogun's City: A History of Tokyo*, Translated by John and Michele Mills, Paul Norbury Publications, Sandgate, England, 1990, 173.

²² Moriyama was a student of Ranald McDonald, an American who snuck into Hokkaido in a row boat from a whaling vessel. Though he was captured and sent to Nagasaki, he taught English to some students. Another student of his, Hori Tatsunosuke, who also worked with Moriyama on Perry's negotiations, became an assistant instructor at the *Kaiseijo* for English language instruction. See Numata, "Dutch Language," 252.

On the other hand, the *bakufu* had set a dangerous precedent of appeasement, and the Americans promised to send another representative to sign a more comprehensive treaty (which resulted in the more unequal Harris Treaty in 1858). In addition, the Russian envoy Admiral E. V. Putiatin arrived in Nagasaki (the true port of call for foreigners) in July 1853—just months after Perry had appeared off the coast of Uraga—and requested an audience with the senior councilor Abe Masahiro. However, the death of Shogun Ieyoshi caused a state of near paralysis in the *bakufu*, and the Russians were rudely sent home.²³

The British and French, in the midst of the Arrow War in China, were threatening to push their way into Japan as well. And the Dutch, naturally, did not want to see their trade with Japan superseded by commerce with other Western nations, and were thus demanding a new arrangement with the *bakufu*. In the midst of all the subsequent controversy over *sakoku* (“closed country”) versus *kaikoku* (“opened country,”) the various sides debated over what should be done—from outright opposition, such as China had done with disastrous results, to accommodation, which could be seen as weak. Change was upon

²³ Steele, 61.

Japan, and it became clear that the *bakufu*'s military defenses, as well as their old institutions for translation and investigation of Western works and for training and instruction in Western learning were inadequate to the task.

D. Changes in *Rangaku* by the mid-19th Century

1. Change in the Center of Scholarship from Nagasaki to Edo

By the Bakumatsu Period, the center for *yōgaku* was no longer in Nagasaki. Though it remained an important place of study because of its continual foreign presence throughout the Tokugawa era, it was eventually eclipsed by Edo, even though Edo was still off-limits to most foreigners despite the opening of some of the ports to trade. By the early 19th century, *rangaku* scholars in Edo were able to acquire many books that even those in Nagasaki (which was owned and controlled by the *bakufu*) could not. Shizuki Tadao, a brilliant *rangaku* scholar from Nagasaki, wrote the following request to a fellow scholar in Edo, Otsuki Gentaku, when his servant was chosen to accompany a daimyo to Edo:

“Could you send me any book you have there that describes stimulating and interesting

theories of physics and astronomy, whether in Chinese or in a Western language?”²⁴

Official Dutch visitors to Edo in the 19th century (which occurred every four years) commented that the *rangaku* scholars who interviewed them there were “far better informed than they had been a few decades earlier.”²⁵ One of the Dutch factors (the chief Dutch representative at Deshima) at the time, Hendrik Doeff, wrote that “The questions...were addressed directly to the *Opperhoofd* [Doeff] and this made it difficult for him, as he had not concentrated in that subject [Western science] and could not answer their questions....”²⁶ These periodic visits of the Dutch to Edo gave the *bakufu* an advantage over the domains in acquiring Western learning. The *daimyō* were also more limited financially and politically than the *bakufu*, and, according to Marius Jansen, “no domain had the opportunities to order and collect books as great as the shogunate enjoyed.” Perhaps the greatest advantage was that every year the *bakufu* gave the Dutch an order list (*Eisch boek*), in which they requested certain books, many of which ended up in Edo.²⁷

²⁴ Marius Jansen, *Japan and its World*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1980, 30-31.

²⁵ Quoted in Jansen, "New Materials," 574.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 574.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 574-75.

2. Other Changes in the Mid-19th Century

Not only did the focal point of *rangaku* change in the 19th century, but the types of people who were attracted to *rangaku* also began to change. The development of *rangaku* in the 18th century had been largely a private concern of medical doctors to obtain more accurate medical knowledge. But, in the 19th century the *bakufu* made a concerted effort to gain practical knowledge, particularly about Western technology, weaponry, and geography in order to defend itself and protect Japan's shores.²⁸ In order to do this, the *bakufu* supported the centralized translation of Western works in Edo, which began in the early 19th century. Another change was in terminology. Although the word *rangaku* continued to be used and the majority of the books were still in Dutch, the word *yōgaku* or “Western studies” came to be used by the end of the Bakumatsu Period because the study of English,

²⁸ This does not mean that the *bakufu* stopped pursuing Western medical interests. In fact, they continued to support the spread of Western medicine and established a Western hospital in Nagasaki, which eventually moved to Edo. Also, in 1858, in Kanda near the *Shirabesho*, Itō Genboku founded a vaccination institute called the *Shutōjo*, which the *bakufu* took control over in 1861 and renamed *Seiyō igakusho* (Institute for Western Medicine). This institute (renamed the Western Medical School or *Igakkō*) together with the *Kaisei Gakkō*, the successor to the *Bansho Shirabesho*, formed the modern Tokyo University in 1877. The history of Western medical studies in Japan is a fascinating topic, but it lies outside the scope of this paper, except for the fact that many of the scholars at the *Shirabesho* had been taught by doctors or had studied Western medicine at some point.

French, and German became increasingly important. Thus, by the mid-19th century, the pressing need of the government in Edo was for a place where various Western languages and translation skills could be acquired and used to assist the *bakufu*. The reforms of Abe and others were not enough to meet the growing task of translating Western materials. The number of Western books increased dramatically once the country was opened, and by this time European books could reach Japan a year after publication in Europe (though it often took longer). The Dutch even imported a small printing press to Nagasaki during the Bakumatsu Period, and it was later taken over by the Japanese government. Kikuchi Dairoku, who attended the *Shirabesho* and was later Minister of Education and President of Kyoto University and President of Tokyo University, wrote in his memoirs, “The shogun’s government, perceiving that we had much to learn from the Western nations, established a school or academy, where European languages—Dutch, English, German, French, and Russian—were taught, not only to the direct retainers of the shogun, but also to those of the *daimyō*, and even to common people.”²⁹ In the following section, I will elaborate on how

²⁹ Baron Kikuchi Dairoku, *Japanese Education: Lectures Delivered in the University of London*, John Murray, 1909, 42.

the *bakufu* established this new institution, the *Bansho Shirabesho*. The *Shirabesho* was not only important during the Bakumatsu Period, but it was significant for the future of modern Japan in that it was “the germ out of which has grown the present Imperial University of Tokyo.”³⁰

E. Formation of the Committee to Establish the *Bansho Shirabesho*³¹

1. Early Formation of Plans for the *Bansho Shirabesho*

The *bakufu* very favorably received Katsu’s original proposal for the *Shirabesho* in 1854, and the Senior Councilor Abe Masahiro chose some of the most capable *bakufu*

³⁰ Ibid, 42.

³¹ One source of frustration for scholars writing on the *Bansho Shirabesho* is a confusion over names of the institution. The name of the institution was changed seven times (*Yōgakusho*(1855)—*Bansho Shirabesho*(1856)—*Yōsho Shirabesho*(1862)—*Kaiseijo*(1863) — *Daigaku Kaisei Gakkō* (1868.?)—*Daigaku Nankō* (1869.12)—*Tokyo Daigaku* (1877). The translations sometimes alternatively call it *Bansho shirabedokoro*, *Bansho tori shirabesho*, and even *Bansho Chōsho*. The English translations include “Bureau for the Investigation of Barbarian Books,” “Office for the Investigation of Foreign Books,” “Institute for the Study of Western Books,” “Office for the Inspection of Foreign Books” and others.

officials—namely, Kawaji Toshiakira, Iwase Tadanori (Senshu) and Mizuno Tadanori—to begin preparations for the establishment of a new institution.³² Though none were scholars of Western learning, they were very capable officials. Kawaji Toshiakira was one of the highest and brightest officials of the *bakufu*. Iwase Tadanori was an administrator in the Office of Foreign Affairs (*gaikoku bugyō*) and was important in bringing about a shift in policy towards a greater openness concerning foreign countries. Fukichi Genichiro, who became one of the pioneer newspaper editors in early the Meiji Era and who was also a scholar at the *Kaiseijo*, called Iwase “one of the three outstanding men of the Bakumatsu period.”³³ Mizuno Tadanori was the *kanjō bugyō*, one of the top fiscal posts of the *bakufu*, and he also served as the Nagasaki *bugyō* (Commissioner) to negotiate with the Dutch about building a Western navy. In addition, he was in charge of the newly established Office of Foreign Affairs, which employed Katsu Kaishu at one point. In addition to the three previously mentioned officials, Abe Masahiro also appointed Tsutsui Masanori (whose proposal was cited earlier) and Koga Kinichiro, a Confucian scholar from

³² Abosch, 132-134.

³³ Masuda, 19, Abosch 134-135.

a famous family of scholars, as “officials responsible for contacts with foreign nations” (*ikoku ōsetsu kakari*). Both became important in the formation of the *Shirabesho*. Koga Kinichiro, who also held a post at the Confucian *Shōheikō*, was later named director of the *Yōgakusho* (forerunner of the *Bansho Shirabesho*) in 1855, and he remained there until 1862. Though Koga had received some training in *rangaku*, he was chosen largely because the *Shōheikō* did not feel threatened by his leadership over this rival school for officials.³⁴

All of these officials were ordered to establish a *bakufu*-sponsored institution of Western learning that was initially going to be called the *Yōgakusho*, but in 1856 it was renamed the *Bansho Shirabesho*. The planning commission was founded at Ushigafuchi in Edo under the supervision of Koga Kinichiro. In addition to the five individuals mentioned previously, there were a number of officials and *yōgaku* scholars on the commission, including Katsu Kaishu, Mitsukuri Gempo, Moriyama Einosuke (the chief interpreter for Perry’s treaty), and Ōda Matazō, most of whom were affiliated with the

³⁴Ibid, 38

newly established foreign affairs bureau³⁵ This planning commission was called the *Yōgakusho kakari tetsuki bansho honyaku goyō*.³⁶ There were differences of opinion between the various officials involved in the formation of the *Shirabesho*, and therefore they wrote many memoranda regarding the *Shirabesho*. Likewise, there were several drafts of the *Shirabesho*'s charter that were submitted to Abe Masahiro. Much of 1854-1855 was spent in working out the various parts of the charter by Tsutsui, Oda and Katsu, the officials who the *bakufu* designated to be in charge (*Shirabesho gakari*) of preparations for its establishment.³⁷

2. Katsu Kaishu's Draft

Katsu submitted the first draft for the establishment of the institution in which he described one of the goals of the *Shirabesho*: to gain supremacy against foreign nations and to take

³⁵ Abosch, 134-135.

³⁶ Numata, *Western Learning*, 128.

³⁷ The following section is taken from Hara Heizo (Ed) *Bansho yōgakushi no kenkyu*, Shin Jinbutsu Oraisha, Tokyo, 1992, 36-65. This work reprints much of Hara's previous work, including his article *Bansho Shirabesho no sōsetsu*, ("On the Establishment of the Bansho Shirabesho) which was written in 1942 and analyzes all the important documents relating to the establishment of the *Shirabesho*. He also summarizes the major points of each document. Since the original documents are often long and difficult, I have decided to summarize the major points in the relevant documents, without translating each document. The translations are my own.

precautions against Christianity (which he calls “heretical religion”—*jushumon*). He wrote that the scholars would be required to have a background in Chinese learning (*kangaku*), and that Western language acquisition would be the primary emphasis, with progression into specialized studies. The translation work at the *Shirabesho* would emphasize books dealing with military subjects. The professors would be those who excelled in talent and ability, without regard to rank, and the other staff would include teaching staff, students, porters, tea pourers, gatekeepers, and others. He even specified that the building should have rooms for reception, sitting, research, kitchen, fires [heating], reading, and a library. There would also be a storehouse built to house previously translated books. Though this proposal was much more specific than his previous one, he kept the same method of recruiting teachers by merit and ability. There is no mention of government censorship of translations, aside from the vague statement that it was to take “precautions against heretical religion [Christianity].”³⁸

3. Oda Matazō’s Draft

³⁸ Hara, 24.

A second draft regarding the *Shirabesho*'s establishment was submitted to Abe from Oda Matazō. Oda seemed concerned at the outset that most of the people who advocated *yōgaku* could not discern what to keep and what to throw away. In a similar vein with Katsu, he asserted that the scholars were to follow the example of those who studied ancient Japanese and Chinese manuscripts, and that the *rangaku* scholars who ran the *Shirabesho* would be under the authority of the Hayashi family (the head of the Confucian *Shōheikō*). In addition to this, the scholars at the *Shirabesho* would study matters concerning various countries, such as geography, government, customs, conditions, military, navigation, technology, production, and others. Oda also added that they would investigate and closely monitor barbarian books and translations, both those arriving in Edo and in Nagasaki. It seems that the impetus for censorship came more from Oda than from Katsu in that he wanted the *Shirabesho* to monitor and control the types of Western books and translations in circulation.

F. Appointment of the Staff of the *Bansho Shirabesho*

1. Proposals and Restrictions Related to Appointment of the Staff

After the *bakufu* received these proposals regarding the function and structure of the *Shirabesho*, two of the scholar-officials—Mitsukuri Gempō, and Katsu Kaishu—each submitted to Koga a list of *yōgaku* scholars in Edo from which the staff was to be chosen.

After Koga approved them, these lists were presented by Tsutsui, Kawaji, Mizuno, and Iwase to Abe Masahiro, along with some specific details about the establishment of the institution. They stated in their proposal that the purpose of the translation bureau was to quickly translate materials that would be useful, with an emphasis on books dealing with military, geography, and industrial and military production. In addition to the translation bureau on the premises of the *Shirabesho*, they would establish a *rangaku* (or *yōgaku*) training center for direct *bakufu* retainers (*bakushin*) and for rear-vassals (*baishin*).³⁹ This

³⁹ Abosch, 136. There were three classifications of daimyo domains in the Tokugawa period: the *shimpan*, *fudai*, and *tozama*. The *bakushin* and *baishin* came from the first two types of domains. The *shimpan* domains included the collateral Tokugawa houses (Mito and Echizen) from whom a worthy shogun could be chosen if the main line did not produce an heir. Perhaps the most powerful figure from the *shimpan* domains during this time was Matsudaira Shungaku from Echizen, who was influential in the *bakufu*. The main Tokugawa line, in 1853 did not produce an heir, and happened there was great debate between the Mito “Hitotsubashi” supporters, and the supporters of Tokugawa Yoshinobu. The *Fudai* domains were those who had allied with Tokugawa Ieyasu against Toyotomi Hideyoshi, and they were very involved in the *bakufu* bureaucracy. The last classification was the *tozama* (outside) domains, mainly in Western Japan. These daimyo sided against

restriction of admission only to Tokugawa retainers was initially adopted over Katsu's objections, though they were eventually forced to concede to Katsu's proposal to open it to scholars from all domains. The committee emphasized that only direct retainers (*bakushin*) would be given rooms and receive training as interpreters, and only *diligent* people would be encouraged to help in translation.⁴⁰

The foundations of the *Shirabesho* had been laid, and now the *bakufu* needed to find an adequate location for the institution and to deal with other specific details relating to its formation. In a proposal in early Ansei 2 (1855) from Koga to Tsutsui, Mizuno and Iwase, Koga stated that the *Shirabesho* should be located in a good, large area with an adequate supply of water, and that land should be provided on Ishikawajima as well. He reiterated that admission and board would be limited to *bakufu* retainers and rear-vassals, and that these people would gain practical experience. He also wrote that all matters

Tokugawa Ieyasu in the 17th century. They had more freedom over their domains and became the backbone of the Meiji oligarchy (i.e. Satsuma, Choshu, Tosa). These *han* had little influence on the *bakufu* during the Tokugawa period, but in the Bakumatsu period, they began to intermarry with the shogun, and daimyo like Shimazu Nariakira from Satsuma also became very influential.

⁴⁰ Futami, Gōshi, "*Bansho Shirabesho no seiritsu shijō (Documents related to the founding of the Bansho Shirabesho)* Nihon Daigaku Seishin Bunka Kenkyu sho/ Kyoiku seido kenkyu sho kiyo (Journal for the Study of Moral Culture) Vol. 10, 1979, 39-40.

relating to publication and to the study of instruments for manufacturing would have to receive approval from the authorities. Koga wrote that the teaching staff were to be given the offices of *ō-metsuke* and *metsuke* (“inspectors”) or *bugyō*, titles that apparently had no relation to the tasks of the former owners of those positions.⁴¹ David Abosch views the creation of these titles as a transition to the merit-based Meiji aristocracy. Though they were *bakufu* titles that already existed and were a means by which the staff of the *Shirabesho* were grafted into the *bakufu* hierarchy, Abosch thinks that giving such positions to persons who had gained it by their scholarship in Western studies “masked a process of innovation.”⁴² Koga also wrote that these officials were to receive a salary based on their positions, and were expected to fulfill their duties without respect to their status (as *bakufu* officials, retainers, or *rōnin*). In addition to professors, the teaching staff would include assistant instructors and junior rank instructors, as well as non-teaching staff, including a

⁴¹ For example, Katsu Kaishu held the post of *ōmetsuke* (superintendent inspector of feudal lands) as well as the post of *kanjō gashima* (finance officer). Paul Duncan Scott, *Constitutional Thought in Bakumatsu Japan: Katō Hiroyuki's Tonarigusa*, University of Virginia Master's Thesis, New York, 1982, 11. Also, Hara, 32.

⁴² Abosch, 143-144.

head servant, other servants and a librarian. It seemed that Koga emphasized the function of the *Shirabesho* as a center of instruction, though he mentioned submission to the control of the government and translation of Western materials.

2. Proposed Subjects to be Studied

On the 18th day of the first month of Ansei 2(1855), Oda and Katsu jointly submitted to Tsutsui Masanori a draft entitled “The articles on the plan for the proposal of the office for the translation and study of barbarian books.” These articles combined and restated what Katsu and Oda had said in their earlier drafts, though they added some of Koga’s ideas, such as a secondary emphasis on the acquisition of practical arts. The primary emphasis was language acquisition, particularly for the purpose of gaining knowledge about geography, measurement and surveying, the arts of power[political science?], military studies, electrical technology, logic, techniques using water and wind, and various technical arts of manufacturing.⁴³ These are very specific subjects and, for the most part, very practical subjects; Katsu and Oda wanted to reiterate that the scholars at the *Shirabesho*

⁴³ Hara, 39-40.

would receive training in such useful areas.⁴⁴

3. The Defense of *Yōgaku*

At around the same time, members of the committee submitted another statement regarding the *Shirabesho* to Tsutsui, apparently to defend themselves against those who thought studying *yōgaku* was wrong. They asserted that the use of *rangaku* scholars and the collection of Dutch books was appropriate and dignified. They also stated that the items to be researched by the *Shirabesho* included maps, conditions, wars, military books, naval methods, technology, and production of various countries. All of these subjects could provide knowledge that would help Japan to defend itself against outsiders, and therefore

⁴⁴ In addition to institutions for military training, there was a continuing need for Western medicine and science. One of the instructors who arrived to teach in 1857 was Pompe van Meerdervoort, a Dutch physician who helped the *bakufu* open up a hospital and medical training in Nagasaki. He gave lectures on theory and elementary science, with practical demonstration and diagnosis. Pompe also complained about the low level of competency in Dutch, saying that the scholars “could not talk to me nor understand me.” Another problem was that many of the older students, who were practicing doctors, did not want to study theory and avoided these lectures, only to discover that without the theory there was little sense in teaching the practical. Of the 61 students who completed the course, over one-third received diplomas in which they were described as “having attended classes without much result.” Beasley, 48.

few people would object to the study of such useful subjects. These advantages of *yōgaku*

were also emphasized in another memorandum they submitted to Abe in the same year:

Since the arrival of [emissaries from] various Western countries will continue in the near future, the most important matter for our government is to “know the opponent,” in order that we may be able to separate fact from fiction regarding the state of their military, the strengths and weaknesses of their machines and instruments, and their methods of construction of ships. We must study their strengths and adopt them and also to discover their weaknesses. We should translate books on their weaponry, fortifications, construction of naval vessels and warfare, on machines and instruments, written materials on the various strengths and weaknesses of countries, books on geography and production, and other things that will be useful to us. In these times, particularly with the taste for new fashions, we must, however, be careful not to get caught up in too many things.⁴⁵

This memorandum implies that the slogan of many *rangaku* scholars at the time—*saichō*

hotan (“fill gaps, overcome deficiencies”)—had become more influential among the

leadership of the *bakufu*.⁴⁶ In addition, they stated in the memorandum that it was

important in the establishment of the *Shirabesho* to prevent the scholars from becoming

like the barbarians, and, if there was any doubt on that matter, it was clear that the

⁴⁵ Hara, 41 (translation mine)

⁴⁶ Scott, 11.

Shirabesho would be under the supervision of the very orthodox Confucian Hayashi family.

The fact that the *Shirabesho* had to be defended in such a way reveals that not everyone was enthusiastic about the establishment of an institution devoted to the study of Western learning since officials, such as Katsu and Mizuno, continually had to defend themselves against their critics.

4. Choosing the Staff of the Shirabesho

With this last draft, the charter for the establishment of the *Shirabesho* was basically completed. The committee submitted some additions to Abe in one final draft of the proposal. One addition gave the *Shirabesho* the rights for the publication of various Western books such as those relating to military equipment, apparatuses, and manufacturing. The committee also set the initial number of professors and teachers at 15, and recommended offering a “considerable” sum for these positions as well as the opportunity for those of lower rank to raise their status. The non-teaching staff was

initially set at 17, and included librarians (*shōmotsu-kata*), secretaries (*hikki-kata*), and printers (*katsu-ji-kata*).⁴⁷

Though the head of the *Shōheikō*, Hayashi Daigaku-no-kami, technically presided over the entire *Shirabesho*, he rarely visited, and even the director, Koga Kinichiro was not often there. Ōkubo Ichiō was appointed the first rector (*sōsai*) of the *Shirabesho*, and he was put in overall charge of daily operations—Katō Hiroyuki mentions him frequently in his reminiscent speech about the *Shirabesho*. In order to staff the *Shirabesho*, the *bakufu* was forced to follow Katsu's advice and look beyond the direct Tokugawa retainers. Out of the staff of fifteen that was hired in 1856, most came from samurai rank, and six, including the highest professors, had been trained as doctors. Only three were direct *bakufu* retainers, four came from the domains of vassals (*hatamoto*), two from the Tokugawa collateral houses (*shimpan*), and three from outside (*tozama*) domains of Satsuma, Chōshū, and Uwajima.⁴⁸ The two full professors (*kyōju*) were Mitsukuri Gempo and Sugita Seikei, who, in addition to research and occasional lecturing, supervised the

⁴⁷ Hara, 43-44.

⁴⁸ Beasley, 48.

lower-ranking staff. There were six assistant instructors (*kyōju-tetsudai*)—Takabatake Gorō, Matsuki Kōan, (Terajima Munenori), Tezuka Ritsuzō, Harada Keisaku, Kawamoto Yukitami, and Tajima Junsuke—and five junior rank instructors (*kyōju-tetsudai-nami*)—Matsugi Hiroyasu, Tōjō Eian, Murata Zōroku, Kimura Guntarō, and Ichikawa Saigu.⁴⁹ The assistant instructors and junior instructors were the ones who did much of the lecturing and were required to translate many of the documents that the government gave them. The staff also included several reading instructors (*kutōshi*), and only these last (and lowest ranking) were originally Tokugawa retainers. These reading instructors (*kutōshi*) were responsible for the reading instruction of beginning students, and the explanation of the text was left to the junior assistant instructors (*kyōju tetsudai-nami*). These staff members were hired beginning in early 1856, though the school did not open until early 1857.⁵⁰ The number of reading instructors at the *Shirabesho* steadily increased because every time a new language was added, new instructors who were able to read texts in those languages needed to be hired. Positions that could not be filled by direct retainers

⁴⁹ Hara, 43-44.

⁵⁰ Beasley, 47-48.

(*bakushin*) were filled with rear vassals (*baishin*) or were “borrowed” from the domains. Sometimes problems arose when the *bakufu* and a domain wanted to use the same scholar; usually the *bakufu* prevailed, but not always. For example, in 1859 Tajima Junsuke resigned his position at the *Shirabesho* because of poor health and the *bakufu* decided to hire Hosokawa Junjiro of the Tosa domain to replace him, but since the daimyo of Tosa refused to consent to this, he could not fill this position. Some scholars, such as Nishi Amane, left their domains (thus becoming *rōnin*) in order to study *yōgaku* and found employment at the *Shirabesho*. Generally, however, the *bakufu* had no trouble attracting talented people for the *Shirabesho*, both because of the salaries they offered and because Edo had become a very attractive place for *yōgaku* scholars.⁵¹

In its second year in 1858 the *bakufu* opened the *Shirabesho* not only to students who were *bakushin* (direct retainers), but to any who were *baishin* (rear vassals) as well. Sometime earlier the *Shōheikō* had accepted *baishin* students, but this was an exception that was made for specific students and not an official arrangement.⁵² This change meant that

⁵¹ Abosch, 139-140.

⁵² Ibid, 138, 148.

the *Shirabesho* was the *bakufu*'s first institution to explicitly provide official training to a much wider proportion of the population, and could be seen as a small step toward a more egalitarian system of education and training for government officials. However, discrimination according to rank continued in that *bakufu* retainers were given a stipend and lodging, whereas the others had to provide for themselves (or, if they were samurai they could receive stipends from their domains). By 1863, when the institution's name was changed to *Kaiseijo*, the *bakufu* opened the school to scholars from all the domains of Japan.

One of the sources that provides specific information concerning the *Shirabesho* during these early years is the *Bansho Shirabesho Kigen Kōryaku*. According to this source, in the fourth day of the fourth month of Ansei 3 (1856), the *bakufu* stipulated how much of a stipend each level would receive (for instance, the assistant instructors received 15 *ryō*). They also added some staff members on that day, including a librarian and a recorder. There were also designated *bakufu* officials assigned to the *Shirabesho*, and these changed frequently depending on when they either came on-duty or went off-duty in

Edo. In Ansei 4 (1857) new students and more reading instructors (*kutōshi*) were added.

The *bakufu* also occasionally added new subjects, as well as periodic official awards of

recognition for those staff who were in high positions of authority such as Koga and

Ōkubo.⁵³

⁵³ “*Bansho Shirabesho kiken kōryaku.*” *Nihon kyōiku shiryō ka*, No. 7, 663-667 in *Nihon Kagaku Gijutsu Shi Daishi*. Vol. 8. (Education) Ed. Tanaka Shigeya. Tokyo: Daichi Hōki Shuppan Kabushiki Gaisha, 1964, 53

III. GENERAL PURPOSES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE *BANSHO*

SHIRABESHO

Having examined the formation of the *Shirabesho*, we can now begin to determine whether or not the *Shirabesho* fulfilled its three purposes of translation, instruction, and control.

A. Bureau for the Translation of Western Materials

1. Translation of Western Materials
 - a. Western newspapers and articles

Numata Jirō, in his work, *Western Learning*, states that “the most important function of the *Bansho Shirabesho* was the translation of Dutch and Western books related to artillery techniques, military architecture, shipbuilding, navigation, military science, mechanics, geography, production technology, and other sciences.”⁵⁴ Though originally the language they studied and read was Dutch, they quickly added English, and then French in 1860, German in 1861 and Russian in 1864.⁵⁵ Because of the importance of translation, the highest-ranking instructors at the *Shirabesho* helped to translate diplomatic documents

⁵⁴ Numata, *Western Learning*, 128-29.

⁵⁵ Thomas C. Smith, “The Introduction of Western Industry to Japan in the Last Years of the Tokugawa Period, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 11, Issue 1/2, June, 1948, 132.

and other materials, and the lower staff and reading instructors did most of the teaching.⁵⁶

Most of the translation work consisted, in Katō Hiroyuki's words, of "Dutch-Japanese scientific works and miscellaneous matters from a variety of magazines which were partially translated and were published two or three times a year."⁵⁷ After Japan signed the treaty with Perry, the Dutch stopped giving the *fusetsugaki*, and the the *bakufu* no longer received annual news reports about the West from the Dutch. Thus, the Japanese government needed to translate foreign newspapers to receive news about the state of the world. This translation of news articles was given high priority—Katō recalled staying up all night to translate a foreign newspaper article on the bombing of Kagoshima.⁵⁸ Many of the foreign newspapers articles were translated from the Dutch by the scholars at the *Shirabesho*, and then these articles were often compiled and published by the private publisher of the Tokugawa *bakufu*, Yorozuya Heishirō. For example, the *Kanpan Batabiya Shimbun* (a newspaper based out of Batavia in the Dutch East Indies) and the

⁵⁶ Jansen, "New Materials," 581; Katō Hiroyuki "Bansho Shirabesho Ni Tsuite," *Shigaku Zasshi*, XX, no. 7, 1909, 84-96. (The translations for Kato's article are my own).

⁵⁷ Katō, 91.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 92.

Kanpan Kaigai Shimbun, were both translated from the Dutch by the *Shirabesho* in 1862.

Yorozuya also published *Kanpan Kaigai Shimbun Besshu*, which was a compilation of

Shirabesho-translated articles that had appeared in foreign newspapers concerning matters

such as the U.S. Civil War and Takenouchi Shimotsuke's official delegation to Europe. In

addition, there was the compilation *Kanpan gyokuseki shirin*, a collection of articles from

foreign magazines found in the *Bansho Shirabesho*.⁵⁹ The translation of these articles

was conducted by Mitsukuri Gempo and was initially to be on a monthly basis, which

turned out to be too ambitious. There are no records that list specifically which scholar

translated which articles, but historians have examined some of the Dutch magazines which

were used in the *Bansho Shirabesho*, (now in the Tokyo National Museum), and have

found evidence from the handwriting on pieces of paper inserted into it, enabling

⁵⁹ These papers were forerunners of the *Nihon Bōeki Shimbun*, for which Yorozyua published the *Shirabesho* translated Chinese newspaper articles which dealt with foreign affairs under the title *Kanpan Chugai Shimpō (1865-1866)* and *Kanpan Honkon Shimbunshi (1867-1869)*. By the time the Meiji Restoration broke out, there were at least 13 newspapers for sale in Edo in 1868. One of them, the *Fuku Shimbun*—a pro-bakufu paper—concerned itself mainly with domestic politics, and after the Imperial Army stormed the city, its publication was stopped and never revived. In 1870, the *Kaigai Shimbun*, published by the *Daigaku Nankō* (the successor to the *Kaiseijo* in the Meiji Period) was principally about foreign news. See Albert A. Altman, "The Press and Social Cohesion during a Period of Change: The Case of Early Meiji Japan," *Modern Asia Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 4, 1981, 865-869.

researchers to guess which members of the staff at the *Shirabesho* were responsible for the translations.⁶⁰

b. Translation and study of technical materials

Some other translation assignments included specific treaties and news stories.

Nishi Amane, one of the scholars at the *Shirabesho*, was asked to translate a treaty between China and Britain, while another assignment he received related to the investigation of a Russian ship that had landed in Hokkaido (Ezo). The small tasks were often done in conjunction with other larger translations—for instance Nishi Amane and Tezuka Ritsuzō worked together to officially publish the first English grammar in Japanese.⁶¹ They sometimes recruited *yōgaku* scholars who were not a part of the *Shirabesho* to translate and publish works—for example Fukuzawa Yukichi and Furukawa Masao together published a Dutch statistical survey of world resources. Katō also recalled that official documents were submitted to the *Shirabesho* by the Office of Foreign Affairs (*gaikoku bugyō*), which

⁶⁰ Asakura Haruhiko, “The Origin of Newspapers and Magazines in the Bakumatsu and Meiji Periods” in *Japanese Studies: Papers presented at a Colloquium at the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Ed. Yu-Ying Brown, The British Library, London, 1990, 180-185.

⁶¹ Abosch, 153-154.

had few translators and often could not handle the number of written documents it received from various foreign countries. Katō said that “At those times we had to translate them [the documents] one-by-one, and we had to show them to the *wakatoshiyori* [junior councilor] of the Council of Elders....When they [the Office of Foreign Affairs] were in a rush, the staff would stay up all night in order to complete the translations.”⁶²

c. Translation of materials on practical subjects

Not only did the scholars at the *Shirabesho* translate news articles and diplomatic documents, but they also translated writings on practical matters and technical manuals. The *bakufu* gave Katō the task of going to the Prussian envoy’s residence in Edo to learn how to use one of the first telegraphs given to the Japanese.⁶³ Another professor, Ichikawa Kaneyasu, was given the duty of learning what he could about Western printing presses and techniques. Also, Oda Matazō, one of the founders of the *Shirabesho*, was “mad about electricity,” and thus, the *bakufu* appointed him to study the telegraph apparatus that Perry had given them. He subsequently contributed to the development and

⁶² Kato, 92.

⁶³ Ibid, 91.

study of electrical engineering in Japan.⁶⁴ The staff also translated works that dealt with Western industrial and military production. In addition, the *Shirabesho* became the first institution of *yōgaku* to hire instructors to teach about Western painting and artistic techniques. Though the work at the *Shirabesho* focused on technological and military expertise, they also began to translate works on the humanities and social sciences. Two of the instructors, Mitsukuri Gempo and Sugita Seikei, had translated some works on Western constitutional thought prior to their years at the *Shirabesho*, but the real pioneers in these subjects were Nishi Amane, Tsuda Mamichi, Katō Hiroyuki, and Kanda Kōhei whose contributions will be considered later in this work. These scholars thought there might be a connection between the superiority of Western technology and their theories of governance and were truly “creative adaptors and synthesizers.”⁶⁵ In addition to law and politics, Mitsukuri Gempō and Udagawa Yōan, though trained as doctors, were particularly interested in Western historical development. Yōan compiled a history of the Netherlands entitled *Oranda shiryaku* and Mitsukuri wrote treatises entitled *Kyokusei shiei* (*Historical*

⁶⁴ Abosch, 134, 153.

⁶⁵ Numata, *Western Learning*, 154.

Shadows from the Far West), *Taisei Shiei (History of Europe, 1856)* and *Taisei Daijisaku*

(*About Europe, 1848*).⁶⁶ In all, Mitsukuri had 99 works on medicine, geology, mining,

physics, astronomy, geography, history, military science and arms, shipbuilding and

communications, language, etc.... Though only one-third of Mitsukuri's works dealt with

history and geography, the fact that almost all his lectures at the *Bansho Shirabesho* were

about geography or history shows the importance he attributed to these subjects.⁶⁷

2. Difficulties in Translation

Translation work entailed many difficulties, aside from the obvious difficulty of

comprehending foreign languages. One was the lack of qualified scholars for the work.

The *bakufu* addressed this problem by hiring its staff from all over Japan. The fact that

these scarce scholars were also in demand in various domains made this situation even

more difficult at times. Another problem that the translators had to deal with was how to

address the foreign monarchs, especially when they translated and replied to foreign

emissaries' letters. In the Japanese language used at the time, there were two titles that

⁶⁶ Ibid, 156-157.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 158.

could be apparently be used for royalty or the sovereign of a country (*heika* and *denka*, with *heika* qualifying as a more honorific title, according to Katō). In Japan, they had the Emperor, who had little interaction with foreign nations, and also the Shogun, who was in charge of dealing with foreigners. If one did not put the Shogun on equal par with the leaders of other nations, this posed a problem in relations with foreign countries (in fact, even with Perry there was some confusion, since Perry had addressed his letter to the Emperor, though the officials took this to mean the Shogun). Thus, according to Katō the *bakufu* chose not to address any of the foreign monarchs as *heika*, but simply as *denka*. Katō said that this confusion over titles was a semantic concern only in Japanese, and thus foreign leaders did not make a fuss about it.⁶⁸ But it does illustrate, not only the difficulty of the translation work, but also the fact that they always had to consider the political impact of their work.

3. Interpreting and Housing for Foreign Delegations

⁶⁸ Katō, 93.

Another related function of the *Shirabesho* was to serve as interpreters for Western emissaries and to provide a relatively safe place of residence for foreign delegations.

Some of the Western emissaries during this time chose to reside in the capital of Edo, including Townsend Harris's delegation in 1857-1858 when the United States was working on a treaty to open more ports to the West and to gain more trading privileges.⁶⁹ The subsequent Harris Treaty was an unequal treaty that limited import tariffs and gave rights of extraterritoriality to foreigners in Japan. It also caused a backlash of violence against the *bakufu* and against Harris, whose young Dutch secretary, Henry Heuxsen, was brutally murdered by a band of xenophobic samurai. Kikuchi Dairoku recalls these days and the fact that these men not only terrorized foreigners, but also *yōgaku* scholars at the *Shirabesho*. He writes that, "the Conservatives were indignant and regarded those who encouraged or pursued such studies [in *yōgaku*] as traitors: my own grandfather, Dr. Mitsukuri Gempo, who was a doctor of the Dutch school of medicine and a professor of

⁶⁹ Henry Satoh writes that "On November 30, 1857...the government building for the study and investigation of Barbarian Books was placed at his (Harris') disposal. The building was situated between the Kudan Hill and the Kiji bridge of the Castle, quite close to the site now occupied by the French Embassy. (Henry Satoh, *Lord Hotta: The Pioneer Diplomat of Japan*, Hakukubunkan, Tokyo, 1908, 48.)

Dutch in this academy in the sixties, received letters with threats of assassination from some of these wave-men [also called *shishi* or *rōnin*, men free and fearless as waves].”⁷⁰

Thus, the men at the *Shirabesho* sometimes had contact with the foreigners who came through the region. Mizuno Tadanori, who was previously mentioned in relation to the formation of the *Shirabesho*, was the Financial Commissioner (*kanjō bugyō*) and the official responsible for the reception of foreigners. Harris’ journals also frequently mention the names of officials who were involved in the administration of the *Shirabesho*—such as Mizuno, Kawaji, and Koga—because Harris was allowed to use a portion of the *Shirabesho*’s buildings for his residence. Fortunately for the scholars at the *Shirabesho*—whose association with foreigners put them in danger at times—few foreigners took up residence in Edo during these tempestuous years, and by the Meiji Period, when they did, they had established their own residences. Guido Verbeck and many of the foreign teachers who were later hired by the government, however, resided at

⁷⁰Kikuchi, 42.

the school, and Verbeck's letters record incidents when they were threatened and even targeted by "anti-foreign" elements in Edo.⁷¹

B. *Bakufu* School of Western Learning (Yōgaku)

1. Location and Name Changes

The second, and arguably the most enduring purpose of the *Bansho Shirabesho*, was the school of Western Learning (*yōgaku*) that was established. When the *bakufu* started planning for this institution of *yōgaku* in 1855, it was to be called the *Yōgakusho* (Institute for Western Learning), but this name was replaced the following year (Ansei 3/1856, second month, eleventh day) by the name *Bansho Shirabesho* (Bureau for the Investigation of Barbarian Books). The character 洋(*yō*) which means Western, was replaced with 蕃 (*ban*), which means "barbarian," but according to Jansen, it was "rapidly losing its

⁷¹ Guido Verbeck was one of the first Protestant missionaries to Japan. He also worked for the *bakufu* as a teacher of Dutch, English, French, and German. As well as taking a leadership role at the Kaisei Gakkō/ Daigaku Nankō, he also served in the Dajōkan Council and in the Genro-in Senate. Eventually, he was also given honorary Japanese citizenship and buried in Japan. See William Elliot Griffis. *Verbeck of Japan*, Fleming H. Revell, Co., New York, 1900, 203-253.

pejorative content, so it would not be inaccurate to translate the title as “European books.”⁷²

Some scholars translate *bansho* simply as “foreign books.” Another character for barbarian, also read “*ban*” (蛮), had been used previously in the name of the Astronomical Observatory’s Translation Bureau (*Bansho wage goyō*). Though the character for “barbarian” may not have been as offensive as previously, in 1862 it was nevertheless changed back to *yō* in *Yōsho shirabesho*, and then changed to *Kaiseijo* or *Kaiseisho* (Institute for Development) in 1863. The *Kaiseijo* (or *Kaiseisho*) has often been referred to in English as the “Institute for the Study of Languages” which is accurate as far as a description of what was emphasized there, but it is not a good translation of the name. The name *Kaiseijo* was also used for schools of *yōgaku* in Kōchi, Satsuma and Hakodate. This popular name portrayed a much more positive nature for the school’s function, and it is taken from a locus in the *I-ching* which is read “*kaibutsu seimu*,” or, “*mono no hiraki tsutomu mo nasu*” which means “developing things, and fulfilling one’s duties, or “To bring fulfillment (or perfection) by illuminating the areas in which one is still ignorant or to

⁷² Jansen, "New Materials ," 580.

realize or to effect one's aspirations."⁷³

As mentioned previously, the *Shirabesho* school was exclusively for the training and instruction of *bakufu* retainers and their sons, but by 1858 the *bakufu* opened it up to rear vassals (*baishin*) and later they allowed scholars from any domains. Many of the instructors and students at the *Shirabesho* became important officials and educators in the Meiji Period, and no less than 16 members of the Meirokusha ("Meiji Six Society") were teachers or students at the *Shirabesho*.⁷⁴ The school opened in February 1857, after more than two years of planning and gathering staff members.⁷⁵ It was located in Kudanzaka-shita in Edo on the residence of a small Tokugawa retainer, (3000-4000 koku, according to Katō) that the *bakufu* had confiscated. It was apparently previously used by

⁷³ Abosch, 152.

⁷⁴ The Meirokusha, formed in 1874, was the first Japanese intellectual society that devoted itself to the study of Western ideas through lectures, debates and the publication of a periodic journal. One of the most significant Meirokusha founders was Fukuzawa Yukichi. According to W. B. Beasley, Fukuzawa spent some time studying English at the *Bansho shirabesho*, though in his *Autobiography* this is not mentioned, and Numata Jirō says that Fukuzawa merely visited the library, and quickly left when he realized that he could not check out any books. Fukuzawa had accompanied the official *bakufu* missions to the U.S. and to Europe and he was recruited by the *bakufu* as a translator and interpreter. Fukuzawa also worked on projects with scholars from the *Shirabesho*. But he was not a student or an instructor there. Instead he opened up a private school devoted to the study of *yōgaku*, which became Keiō University. In speeches he never ceased to reiterate that Keiō remained open, even in 1868 during the battle of Ueno, so that even when the *Kaiseijo* was not in operation (for two years, he claims), Keiō was open.

⁷⁵ Beasley, 48.

the *bakufu* for a college (*gakumon*).⁷⁶ Townsend Harris, described the school and its location in his journal: “The building is very large. It is government property and was formerly used as a college. It is situated within what is called the “Castle,” that is, it is the outer one of four circles (rather irregular ones), the center of which is the residence of the Tycoon.”⁷⁷ The school remained there until 1859 when the *bakufu* moved it to the residence of the *kanjō-bugyō*, Matsudaira Chikanao in Ogawamachi in Kanda. Then they moved again in 1862 to a new residence that was built for them just outside the Hitotsubashi gate in Kanda.⁷⁸ Katō said that this new location was not a former retainer’s estate like the previous school, but was newly constructed, had large open fields, and was near a temple.⁷⁹ The *Kaiseijo* remained at that location until the Meiji Restoration in 1868, and then in 1869, after the new government had established control, it moved back to this location.

⁷⁶ Katō, 85-86.

⁷⁷ Abosch, 149.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 150.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 150; Numata, *Western Learning*, 129-130.

2. Opposition from the *Shōheikō*

Though the *Bansho Shirabesho* was a school, it could not be officially called a school (*kō* 校) but could only be called an institute or bureau (*sho* 所) because, according to Katō, the *Shōheikō* was jealous of its designation as *the* official *bakufu* school, and would not allow another competing institution to use that *kō* character.⁸⁰ This animosity between the *Shōheikō* and the *Shirabesho* continued, and in Katō's words, at first they "got in the way and made things difficult [for the *Shirabesho*]."⁸¹ The disparity of respect between the two institutions was particularly apparent when Koga Kinichirō, the director of the *Shirabesho*, came to the school. When he was in attendance, according to Katō, the staff, when they met him, were to bow, with their heads down. On his part, Koga only had to stand and tilt his head in greeting...If such was the case with the director, it was all the more so with Hayashi Daigaku-no-kami [the head of the *Shōheikō*]. When he came to the school, the staff was required to bow with their heads on the floor (*tatami*) and Hayashi Daigaku-no-kami merely stood and slightly nodded his head.⁸²

⁸⁰ Katō, 91.

⁸¹ Ibid, 88.

⁸² Ibid, 91.

Katō later states that even before the fall of the *bakufu*, he had been promoted to about the same rank as Hayashi and so he “jokingly talked to him about that [practice] and he laughed about it.”⁸³ This incident shows the strides that *yōgaku* made during the Bakumatsu period.

3. Difficulties Regarding Feudal Status and Rank

When the *Bansho Shirabesho* school opened in 1857, a large number of retainers applied for admission—perhaps as many as 1000 applicants. Though the study of *yōgaku* was important for entrance into the school, the *bakufu* limited the selection by requiring that the scholars have a minimum background in orthodox Confucian Chinese studies in order to enter (fortunately, many scholars had such training). The number of students on the first day was officially listed at 191, though Numata writes that the archival documents give the number of students at 340, with an average of ten additional students joining daily.⁸⁴ A dormitory was installed in 1858 for the boarders, and more students enrolled. In 1862, when the school moved to Hitotsubashi and constructed new buildings, there was more

⁸³ *Ibid*, 91.

⁸⁴ Numata, *Western Learning*, 129. Perhaps Numata’s number is the average number of students enrolled during the first year, which fluctuated.

space, and the number of students grew. The staff had also increased by 1862, and 32 of the 34 highest-ranking teachers were not retainers but instructors from other, non-*bakufu* domains.⁸⁵ By 1866, the institution (by then called the *Kaiseijo*) had ten professors, twelve assistant professors, eighteen instructors, and many other personnel.⁸⁶

Though the *Shirabesho* eventually dropped requirements of feudal rank, for several years the school leadership continued to argue over whether or not rank was important. This was perhaps because its system was based on the precedent of the *Shōheikō*, the institution that officially supervised the *Shirabesho*. The *bakufu* did not like the fact that initially only two of the *Shirabesho*'s staff were direct *bakufu* retainers, and so they covered up this fact by quickly “naturalizing” many of the instructors by enrolling them on the Tokugawa “rolls” as retainers.⁸⁷ Sometimes staff of lower status, like Sugi Kōji or Nakahama Manjiro were promoted to *bakushin* (direct retainer) status not because of service to the *bakufu* or a feudal lord, but because of their accomplishments in *yōgaku*.

⁸⁵ R. P. Dore, *Education in Tokugawa Japan*. University of California, Berkeley, 1965: 168.

⁸⁶ Numata, *Western Learning*, 130.

⁸⁷ Abosch, 143-144.

Some of the leading scholars like Nishi Amane and Tsuda Mamichi, were rewarded with a high feudal rank (*hatamoto* for Nishi) because they sacrificed their status as domain retainers and became *rōnin* when they left their domains to study *yōgaku* full time.⁸⁸ This rank also enabled the staff to live more comfortably because of the increase in the stipend. Katō, before he became an instructor at 25 in the *Shirabesho*, was so poor that he wrote, “When I laundered my clothes, I had no change to put on.” By 27, the *bakufu* further increased his stipend and he began to live more comfortably.⁸⁹ However this does not mean that all of students and staff at the *Shirabesho* with high feudal ranks were the most diligent. In fact, according to Jansen, the high-ranking scholars tended to be less diligent and thus “there was a group of highly born men who were irregular in attendance and uneven in their abilities.”⁹⁰ In the domain schools (out of which the majority of the *Shirabesho*’s students came) attendance was supposed to vary based on rank—older sons of 300-koku families or above were required to attend 15 days a month, junior sons of 300-koku, only 12 days, and for sons of less *koku*, it was only 8-10 days. In addition,

⁸⁸Fisher, 38.

⁸⁹ Scott, 13.

⁹⁰ Jansen, “New Materials,” 581.

there was a difference in dress, the number of servants or attendants, the seating position, and even in classwork.⁹¹ By the end of the Tokugawa period, the modern principle of merit began to erode this feudal ranking, and the *bakufu*'s interest in "cultivation of talent" made considerations of rank secondary to scholarship.

4. Daily School Schedule

What did a typical day at the *Shirabesho* school look like? The day began at five a.m. and ended at seven p.m., with "...class meetings, recitations, reading practice... Classes were held from New Year's Day to the 26th of the 12th month... Holidays —summer, the 13th day of the 7th month to the 16th day, the five communal festivals, the first day of the eighth month."⁹² According to the proposals submitted by Kawaji and Mizuno, reading practice and seminars were to be held from five in the morning until seven at night and during the writing practice, the clothing to be worn was a *kamishimo* (apparently at other times it was up to the individual to choose the appropriate attire). Though this seems like a full schedule, there were considerable differences between the students and staff members.

⁹¹ Herbert Passin, *Society and Education in Japan*, Columbia University, Bureau of Public Teacher's College, New York, 1965, 20.

⁹² Okubo Toshiaki, *Nihon no Daigaku*, 150-151

Students had to submit their names when they left the *Shirabesho*, and they were not permitted to leave between morning and noon, but after noon they were allowed to leave with permission. Though students were admitted who did not have their own practice books, they were encouraged to have their own practice books, since space was limited for those without practice books.⁹³ One scholar, Kikuchi Dairoku, related in his memoirs, that the professors, assistant professors, and reading instructors would line up in front of the students in the morning, and the students would go to the teacher who was appropriate for their level.⁹⁴ The textbooks they used included a Dutch grammar (*Grammatica of Nederduitsche Spraakkunst*) and wordbook (*Syntaxis of Nederduitsche Woordvoeing*). Though not everyone had a copy of the textbooks, Katō revealed that the lack of qualified teachers was the most significant handicap: “There were sufficient books, but there were no teachers to explain what I did not understand. I read by myself and had to solve problems as they came up myself. This was a laborious process. Today, it could be done in a

⁹³ Hara, 52.

⁹⁴ Futami Gōshi.” Kinsei to kindai no kakebashi—Bansho Shirabesho,” *Kyōiku to Igaku*, Vol. 29, Issue 1, 1981, 88- 89.

year—at that time—even four years wasn't enough."⁹⁵ In fact, many of the students ended up teaching because they had advanced as far as some of their teachers. Kikuchi was a young boy of seven when he entered, and soon he was tutoring some of the older students. The following excerpt from his memoirs gives an interesting perspective of the life a young scholar in the *Bansho Shirabesho*:

The methods of teaching in the academy were, like all teaching in those days, individual, i.e., each pupil was taught separately during some quarter of an hour or more by a teacher; there was a necessity for a large staff of teachers, but as such a large number could not be found, the pupil, after he had advanced a little, was made to help in the teaching. I remember that I entered this academy at the age of seven to learn English, and after I had been there for a year or so and got through my alphabet and conversation-book, I was set to teach them to new pupils, mostly a good deal older than myself, some even grown up, while I got my own lessons in the afternoon.⁹⁶

5. Languages and Subjects Studied

Normally, a student began his studies with *sodoku*, which was the rote copying (without much interest in meaning) of Western language texts. This method was apparently very

⁹⁵ In Scott, 13-14.

⁹⁶ Futami, "Kinsei," 88-90.

similar to the method used in Chinese studies (*kangaku*) to read Chinese works, which was modeled, as Katō says, after the *Shōheikō*. Then, after a student advanced to a certain level, he could join a reading and discussion group (like a seminar), and occasionally the higher instructors would deliver lectures. Kikuchi also recalls being divided into teams, being asked questions, and competing with other students for prizes.⁹⁷

Initially, instruction was in the Dutch language with Dutch texts, but when Japan opened their ports to various Western countries beginning in 1858 with the Harris Treaty, it became obvious that the most pressing diplomatic concerns were not with the Dutch, but with nations like America, Britain, France, and Russia. Therefore, as mentioned earlier, the *Shirabesho* quickly added English language instruction, in 1861 they added French, and in 1862 they began giving instruction in German, and later in Russian, as well. This switch from Dutch to other Western languages was inevitable once most scholars realized the importance of the other countries. In fact, when Matsuki Kōan, a staff member of the *Shirabesho*, visited Europe in 1862 he was surprised to find that Holland was a rather small

⁹⁷ Ibid,

unimportant country. He wrote “I must honestly say that the country is so small and insignificant as to startle one...I had planned to come to Holland to buy books, but I found not a one. Moreover, even the Hollanders themselves read their books in French and German...In all things Holland, when compared with England, France, and Germany, is about one hundredth of what they are.”⁹⁸

Not everyone was in favor of the methods of language instruction at the *Shirabesho*, however. They tended to focus on rote reading and writing and not on practical conversation (in contrast to the Dutch interpreters in Nagasaki). One such scholar was Shimpachi Seki, who, as a student of English at the *Shirabesho*, found “the uselessness, from a practical point of view, of the so-called *hensoku* or ‘wrong method’ in studying language which was pursued at the [*Bansho shirabesho*].” Desiring to converse directly with foreigners, he first studied with Nakayama Manjirō (who had spent time in America after being shipwrecked), and then became a servant of a foreigner in Yokohama.

⁹⁸ Marius Jansen, “Rangaku and Westernization,” *Modern Asian Studies* 18, no. 4, Special Issue: Edo Culture and Its Modern Legacy, 1984, 541-53. Also quoted in Jansen, “New Materials,” 595.

Ironically, in 1861 he became an official interpreter for the *bakufu* and went to America as a Japanese envoy.⁹⁹

There were many classes at the *Shirabesho* in other subjects besides Western languages, such as military studies, construction of fortifications, and the study of conditions in the West.¹⁰⁰ Kawakami Togai pursued the study of Western art techniques at the *Shirabesho*. Kawakami was influenced by English painter Charles Wirgman, who was in Japan in 1857 as a correspondent from the *Illustrated London News*. Kawakami leaned heavily upon the techniques and style of Western painting, but his themes were often Japanese.¹⁰¹ Some of the professors pursued their own studies in subjects such as politics and economics—especially Nishi Amane and Tsuda Mamichi, and Katō Hiroyuki—but that did not mean that their students immediately benefited from this because they did not offer classes at the *Shirabesho* on these subjects. Nishi and Tsuda were the first scholars to study Western natural law, public law, international law,

⁹⁹Ukita Kazutami, “Educationalists of the Past, and their Share in the Modernization of Japan in Okubo Toshimichi, *Fifty Years of a New Japan (Kaikoku Gojunenshi) Vol. II*, English version edited by Marcus B. Huish. Smith, Elder and Co., 1910, 155.

¹⁰⁰ Abosch, 47, 58.

¹⁰¹ Fernando Gutierrez, “Artistic Trends in the Meiji Period,” 171.

economics and statistics as official exchange students with Simon Vissering at Leiden University in the Netherlands. In 1866, the *bakufu* ordered Nishi to translate the lectures notes and publish them. But Nishi and Tsuda did not merely study these subjects abstractly; they used them to try to reform the *bakufu*. For example, towards the end of the *bakufu*, Nishi and Tsuda both submitted a draft for a new Constitution. Nishi's proposal placed the Tokugawa house at the center of power, with an elected assembly, and with the Emperor as the symbolic position of the source of authority.¹⁰² Though men like Nishi and Tsuda were very important in Japan's Westernization, it is difficult to assess to what degree these scholars' endeavors influenced the students' education at the *Shirabesho*.

Though the *Shirabesho* added many subjects, the *bakufu* did not permit all subjects. Christianity, or Western religion, was banned, but it was not alone. The *bakufu*, in fact, initially proscribed lectures on certain scientific subjects. For example, in March 1857, shortly after the school opened, the *bakufu* officials Kawaji Toshiakira and Mizuno Tadanori issued an edict against the teaching of physics in the *Shirabesho*, declaring that:

¹⁰² Abosch, 58.

It is perfectly appropriate to deal with matters of a military nature in lectures at the [Western Studies] Institute. But whether works on science should also be presented is quite another matter. Those captivated by outlandish theories come inevitably to resemble the Europeans and Americans in the way they look at the world. Such things also lead to unorthodox [Confucian] views. There seems to be some element in physics [*kyurigaku*] which inevitably gives rise to unorthodox views. We are concerned that the study of science...will destroy the relations—between lords and retainers of fathers and sons—which have existed in Japan for so long. Consequently, ordinary lectures [at the *Bansho Shirabesho*] should deal only with military books.¹⁰³

Eventually this skepticism on the part of the *bakufu* lessened, and by 1862 the *Shirabesho* had added new subjects including chemistry, mechanics, production technology, drawing, and mathematics.

6. Overseas Students (*Ryugakusei*) from the *Shirabesho*

Unlike the other *bakufu*-sponsored *yōgaku* projects at the time, such as the Naval Training Institute and the Western Medical School, no foreign staff members were recruited to work

¹⁰³ James Bartholomew, *Science and Society in the Tokugawa Period*, Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn., 1984, 41.

at the *Shirabesho*. This may have limited the *Shirabesho*'s choice of instructors and some scholars may think that it was less successful as a result. But, it was also the only one that used all native Japanese *yōgaku* scholars. But in order to do this, the Japanese scholars had to be trained and learned in many Western subjects, and the solution to this was for the *bakufu* to send scholars overseas. The first official *bakufu* exchange students were sent abroad to the Netherlands in 1862—Nishi Amane and Tsuda Mamichi, who had become colleagues at the *Shirabesho*. Though the Netherlands was an obvious choice for Japan, it was actually the second choice, since the United States was in the midst of a Civil War. These scholars were advised as far as what to study, but when Nishi went to Leiden in 1862, he expressed a desire to study other subjects in addition to the law he was sent to learn. He said to his advisor, Professor Hoffman, “I hope to learn those subjects within the realm of philosophy...from those things advocated by Descartes, Locke, Hegel, and Kant, so I hope to study them too. This work is probably difficult, but in my opinion, there are not a few points in the study of these subjects which will serve to advance our civilization.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴Jansen, “New Materials,” 592.

Though the first party studied in the Netherlands, the next went to Russia in 1865; a third went to England in the winter of 1866, and a fourth to France.¹⁰⁵ In 1865, at a send-off party for the students going abroad, the *Kaiseijo* staff members gave their colleague Ichikawa Bunkichi a booklet with messages from them in various languages, wishing him “God’s speed” and good luck as he left for Russia. Supposedly, the entire staff attended Ichikawa’s going-away party. Thirty-five staff members contributed themes in this booklet addressed to Ichikawa—eighteen penned in Dutch, eight in English, five in German, and four in French. This booklet reflected the multilingual faculty that had developed in the *Shirabesho* and its successor, the *Kaiseijo*.¹⁰⁶

In 1862, not only was the *Bansho Shirabesho*’s name changed to *Yōsho Shirabesho* and then to *Kaiseijo*, but Matsudaira Yoshinaga became the new rector (*sosai*) of the *Shirabesho* and Hayashi Daigaku-no-kami of the *Shōheikō* was made the administrative officer of the *Shirabesho*. More importantly, a separate *bugyō* (commissioner) was appointed to the *Shirabesho*. This was a preliminary step to the attachment of the

¹⁰⁵ Kikuchi, *Lectures*, 42-43.

¹⁰⁶ Fisher, 35.

Shirabesho to the *Gakumonjo* (the college) in 1863, which meant that, the *Shirabesho*, after only about six years, had achieved equal status with the *Shōheikō* in the eyes of the *bakufu*.¹⁰⁷

C. Official Investigation and Censorship of Western Works

As mentioned previously, one of the original purposes of the *Bansho Shirabesho* was the censorship of published translations and control of the importation of Western books. The idea that the government had the right to censor published works was hardly questioned in the Tokugawa Period, and, in fact, it was the norm throughout much of the world at the time. Though there were many decrees concerning government censorship of books, the first general laws concerning the publication of books in the Tokugawa Period were enacted in 1722, and these laws remained in effect throughout the remainder of the *bakufu*'s existence. This law made it mandatory for a published work to have a proper colophon stating the exact date of publication and the publisher and the author's true names. Also, during the 18th and 19th centuries most bookshops organized into guilds and the

¹⁰⁷ Abosch, 152.

bakufu generally relied on the guilds to exercise censorship over their publications to conform to *bakufu* laws. Ultimately, since publishers were primarily in cities, the City Commissioners (*machi bugyō*) were responsible for censorship.¹⁰⁸

But Western translated works were more difficult to censor because the content was not originally written in Japanese, and the accuracy of translation could not be easily investigated. The reason why so few *rangaku* scholars' works were officially published in the Tokugawa period is because many did not submit them for publication for fear of censure from the *bakufu*. But if the *bakufu* could not read the original works, then it would be difficult even to know if the content was correct. Thus, the *bakufu* saw a great need for a trained group of government officials who could read the foreign texts, especially as more ports gradually became open to trade with the West. In Nagasaki, the *bakufu* had previously required that the Dutch submit two copies of a work so that *bakufu* could read the contents of the book for anything objectionable. Even before the opening of the ports, the number of Western books that were acquired privately by wealthy daimyo

¹⁰⁸ Matthi Forrer. *Eirakuya Tōshirō, Publisher at Nagoya: A Contribution to the History of Publishing in Nineteenth Century Japan* (Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben Publisher, 1985), 73.

and private *rangaku* scholars was increasing and was difficult to monitor. After the ports were open the notion of strict censorship was practically impossible, and the idea that the *Bansho Shirabesho* was going to control foreign learning and investigate all Western books was never effectively executed. It could more effectively monitor translated works that were officially published, but could do little about manuscripts and privately published translations. One area of censorship that the *bakufu* attempted related to the translation of Western newspapers, which were a relatively new phenomenon in Japan in the Bakumatsu Period. But as the foreign communities increased in Yokohama, Nagasaki, Hakodate, and even in Edo, the censorship of Western translations became harder for the government to accomplish. Government censorship as a function of the *Shirabesho* perhaps sounded good to the *bakufu* in theory, but in practice it was not possible. Interestingly, after the Meiji Restoration, the new government tried to revive the idea of government censorship, originally through the *Shōheikō*, with similar lack of success. However, they did manage to censor the newspapers in the early Meiji years.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ In Passin, 187-188.

IV. LEGACY OF THE *BANSHO SHIRABESHO* AND *KAISEIJO*

A. *Bansho Shirabesho* and *Kaiseijo* Library

Another aspect of the *Bansho Shirabesho* that related to its purposes as a translation center, school, and investigator of Western works, was the provision of an extensive library for Western books received by the *bakufu*. In 1871, when Guido Verbeck arrived in Edo to work at the *Kaiseijo* (then called *Kaisei Gakko* or *Daigaku Nankō*), he described the remainders of this library as consisting of dictionaries, textbooks, literature, and files of the best periodicals from the West in six different languages (Dutch, English, French, German, Japanese, and Chinese). He also mentioned miscellaneous books such as catalogues of publishers and instrument makers.¹¹⁰ When the *bakufu* originally founded the *Shirabesho*, the Western books at the institute were acquired from various sources, including the *bakufu*'s Momijiyama collection and the Astronomical Observatory library,¹¹¹ as well as the private collections of various houses.¹¹² This *bakufu*'s library included about 600 titles

¹¹⁰ Griffis, 233.

¹¹¹ Much of the collection from this Astronomical Observatory was subsequently lost when it was sent on a ship in 1868 toward Hokkaido where the last remnant of the Tokugawa forces tried to make a stand. This ship sank somewhere off the coast of Hokkaido.

¹¹² Hara, 43.

by 1859, and from that point on it expanded rapidly, mainly through purchases by *bakufu* envoys in America and Europe in 1860 and 1862 respectively.¹¹³ The library of the *Shirabesho* was known as the best library in its day. Even Fukuzawa Yukichi, who never studied or worked at the *Shirabesho*, wanted to go there to use its famed library. He wrote in his autobiography that “To have access to these books, I had to become a bona fide student. But since it was an institution of the central government, it would not admit any member of outside clans without much formality. I had to go to the highest official of my clan in Yedo and get his seal on my petition.” Apparently, Fukuzawa was able to use the library, but he left after he realized that he could not check out any books from the library.¹¹⁴

What did the *Shirabesho* library look like? When Katsu Kaishu stipulated that there should be a library, he wrote that, “there should be gathered together any number of works in Japanese, Chinese, Dutch, on military science and gunnery. The curriculum should include books on astronomy, geography, physics, military science, gunnery, fortress

¹¹³ Beasley, 48.

¹¹⁴ Quoted in Jansen, “New Materials,” 585.

construction, mechanics.”¹¹⁵ When Katō Hiroyuki entered the *Shirabesho* he said “I found other books, books not available to anyone else. When I looked into them I found them very interesting; for the first time I saw books about things like philosophy, sociology, morals, politics, and law.”¹¹⁶ This library grew to over 3000 volumes, and was divided into various sections based on the subject matter. Though there were other *bakufu* libraries, notably the *Nagasaki Kaigun Denshukan*, which had many volumes as well, the largest was the collection belonging to the *Shirabesho* (later, the *Kaiseijo* and the *Daigaku Nankō*). Prior to this library, some of private collections of various daimyo or *yōgaku* scholars rivaled the *bakufu*'s collection, but by the Bakumatsu period, the *Shirabesho*'s collection was far superior. Little was known about this library until, in 1954, some Japanese scholars found over 3000 volumes dating from the late Tokugawa and early Meiji periods that had survived the 1923 earthquake and fire as well as the firebombing of World War II. These were analyzed by archival librarians, Asakura Haruhiko and Ishiyama Hiroshi, and have been preserved in a special collection of the National Diet Library, and

¹¹⁵ Abosch, 131-123.

¹¹⁶ Jansen, "Rangaku and Westernization," 547.

Marius Jansen's article in 1957 is primarily based on the analysis of this collection.

According to Jansen, there was a strange lack of medical texts (many which may not have been returned or even deposited since they were probably rare or used very regularly).

There also was a preponderance of practical texts—such as those dealing with military technology and Dutch grammar. There are few theoretical works or works on philosophy, and no literary works or works dealing with religion. In addition, some of the books have uncut pages, revealing that they were never read either because of the difficulty of the material, lack of language skills, or lack of interest. Though it is difficult to determine which books were more frequently studied, there are a few helpful clues. For example, some of the pages have pieces of wet paper that the scholars affixed as a sort of bookmark, thus revealing the importance of these pages to the scholars.¹¹⁷

The most thorough compilation of all the texts of foreign books that the late *bakufu* possessed (which included the *Shirabesho's* library) was completed in 1980 and is entitled a *Comprehensive List of Dutch Books Formerly Possessed by the Edo Bakufu*. The

¹¹⁷ Jansen, "New Materials." 588-597.

volumes listed in this compilation came from many different storehouses, repositories and libraries—32 to be exact—but 20 of those were very small with less than 20 books in their collections. The three libraries with the largest number of volumes are marked with stamps that show that they were deposited in the *Bansho Shirabesho*, the *Kaiseijo*, and the Nagasaki *Denshukan* (the library used for the Naval Training Institute). The *bakufu* established the *Denshukan* at around the same time as the *Shirabesho* (Katsu Kaishu was one of the prominent officials sent there to study) to address the *bakufu*'s need for naval training. In addition, even before the treaty was signed with Perry, the *bakufu* had asked the Dutch *opperhoofd* of Deshima, Donker Curtius, if they could purchase a warship and receive military training from Dutch officers. Curtius replied that this might be difficult to accomplish while Europe was in a state of war (the Crimean War), but then, in 1854, the commander of the Dutch navy vessel *Soembing* (which was later given to the Japanese and renamed *Kankō maru*) arrived in Japan. Lieutenant G. Fabius, the commander of this ship, insisted on giving Dutch language instruction, and began to teach some courses in Nagasaki in July, 1854. Then, after the ship was handed over, more instructors arrived the

following year, and the Nagasaki Naval Training Institute (*Nagasaki Kaigun Denshujo*) was born.¹¹⁸ The Nagasaki *Denshukan*'s collection had 575 titles listed (many in multiple volumes), with the majority in Dutch, though with a fair number of German volumes. They had few French books, and only two English books.

The *Bansho Shirabesho*'s collection that remains contains approximately 421 books, most of them in Dutch, though there are numerous German and English books and several French books. The number of volumes is much larger, since many works, particularly the encyclopedias, had multiple volumes. The *Kaiseijo* collection has 183 books and so the combined total for the *Shirabesho* and the *Kaiseijo* is 604 books. Thus, the remains of the library in Nagasaki has almost as many books remaining as the *Shirabesho/Kaiseijo*, and it is interesting to note that the two libraries are very similar and contain 163 books that were the exact same editions. The area of greatest disparity is in the Natural Sciences (*Naturwetenschappen en Geneeskunde*). The *Denshukan* collection has 119 books in this category and the *Shirabesho/Kaiseijo* collection has only 52 in this category. Another

¹¹⁸ Numata, *Western Learning*, 142-144.

difference is that the *Shirabesho/Kaiseijo*'s collections have many more volumes in English.¹¹⁹

B. The Contribution of Scholars

1. Katsu Kaishu

There were many scholars and officials who spent some time at the *Bansho Shirabesho* as students or instructors, and many succeeded to become instructors in the *Kaiseijo* in 1863. Though he spent comparatively little time at the *Shirabesho*, Katsu Kaishu was one of the most influential figures in the formation of the institution. He is often known as the “father” of the modern Japanese navy or as one who helped negotiate the peace between the Tokugawa and Meiji forces. Katsu likely would have been chosen as a member of the *Shirabesho* at its inception, but in 1855, after finishing his work on the establishment of the *Shirabesho*, he was sent to the Nagasaki Naval Institute (*Nagasaki Kaigun Denshukan*) in Nagasaki. He was one of the few officials there

¹¹⁹ *Edo-Bakufu Kyuzō Ransho Sōgō Mokuroku*, The Japan-Netherlands Institute and Nichi-ran Gakkai, Tokyo, 1980. This volume was edited by Ogata Tomio, but the calculations and analysis are my own.

who knew Dutch well, and thus he benefited greatly from the instruction he received from the Dutch staff there. In June, 1860, the *bakufu* chose him to be the commander of the *Kankō-maru* (the renamed Dutch vessel, the *Soembing*), the first Japanese warship sent to America. When he returned from this trip, he was promoted in rank and appointed assistant head of the *Bansho Shirabesho*, which gave Katsu a stimulating atmosphere for learning and reflection. In 1860 Katsu also wrote his work *Magaki no ibara no ki* (*The Vine of the Wall Journal*) in which he deals with the decline of the *bakufu* from the time of the Tempō Reforms (1840s) to the assassination of the regent, Ii Naosuke (1860). Katsu began to see the *bakufu* as the obstacle to change, and thought that if it did not change, Japan would end up like China after the Opium War. Thus, he committed himself to “a united Japan, strengthened through Western technology, responsive to national consensus, and maintained by universal principles.”¹²⁰ He continued to pressure the *bakufu* on the need for naval reform, and in October 1861, he was appointed an instructor in the *bakufu*'s new *Kōbusho*, the

¹²⁰ Steele, 56.

military academy. He opposed considerations based on status or rank rather than promoting men of talent, and he even suggested a peasant militia (*nōhei*). Between 1861-1863, the *bakufu* and various domains purchased twenty new and used warships altogether from the West, but Katsu thought that the country should have one unified navy in order to compete with the West.¹²¹ Undoubtedly, he was one of the most influential figures who was involved with the *Shirabesho*, and his views were both realistic in their focus on military preparedness, and progressive in the need to drop distinctions of feudal rank. Perhaps if the *bakufu* had accepted more of his critique earlier, they might have been able to reform and avoid the total collapse of their government. But, probably it still would have been “too little, too late.”

2. Nishi Amane, Tsuda Mamichi, Katō Hiroyuki, Kanda Kōhei

In addition to Katsu, there were a large number of influential *yōgaku* scholars who spent time in the *Shirabesho* or the *Kaiseijo*. Many of them not only served the Tokugawa *bakufu*, but also served in the Meiji government. Ogata Kōan, who had taught many

¹²¹ Ibid, 103-05.

scholars (including the famous Fukuzawa Yukichi) at his private academy in Osaka, *Tekitekijuku*, was invited to become the Shogun's physician and president of the Translation Bureau of the *Bansho Shirabesho* in 1860.¹²² Perhaps the most significant contributing scholars of the *Shirabesho* were Kanda Kōhei, Katō Hiroyuki, Nishi Amane, and Tsuda Mamichi. Kanda Kōhei, though a poor samurai, was trained in *rangaku* by Itō Gemboku, which led to a teaching job for him at the *Shirabesho*. Kanda translated many books on a variety of subjects, including economics, mathematics, government, law, astronomy, and architecture. He was also the first to systematically teach Western mathematics.¹²³ Kanda Kohei's influential work *Keizai shogaku (Elementary Economics 1867)* was the first economics text based on Western texts.¹²⁴ Katō Hiroyuki concentrated his studies on philosophy, law, English and German. In 1861, Katō published a work entitled *Tonarigusa* in which he discussed political developments in the West and other parts of the world and provided what he later called "an immature theory of Constitutional

¹²² Lombard, 213. Ogata died soon after this.

¹²³ Richard Rubinger, *Private Academies in Tokugawa Japan*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1982, 248-251.

¹²⁴ Fisher, 36.

government.”¹²⁵ Katō also wrote a report, entitled *Nōshōben*, based partly on Western materials, on the relative importance of trade and agriculture (1862). Nishi Amane (who had studied Dutch under Sugita Seikei and later English under Tezuka Ritsuzō and Nakahama Manjirō), was the son of the physician of the daimyo of the small domain of Tsuwano. He gave up his samurai stipend to continue his studies in Edo, where he became an instructor in the *Shirabesho*. Nishi is sometimes seen as the first Japanese scholar “to see a close connection between science and philosophy (*tetsugaku*, a word Nishi coined).”¹²⁶ Tsuda Mamichi (who studied under Mitsukuri Gempo and Sakuma Shōzan) also became an instructor in the *Shirabesho* and *Kaiseijo*. Both Nishi and Tsuda also became government officials in the Meiji period, though initially they sided with the *bakufu*.

3. Other Scholars

Many of the *Shirabesho*'s scholars seemed to favor the *bakufu* when the Meiji Restoration began, but some fought on the Imperial side in the Restoration. One example was Omura

¹²⁵ Scott, 2.

¹²⁶ Numata Jirō, *Japan and Western Culture*, International Society for Educational Information, Tokyo, 56-57.

Masujirō, who had studied with Ogata Kōan and traveled to many parts of the country, even studying English under James C. Hepburn and his wife in Yokohama. Omura was appointed to the *Shirabesho*, and later returned to lead the military forces of Chōshū against the *bakufu*. Terajima Munenori (Matsuki Kōan) was born in Satsuma and studied at Itō Gemboku's *Shōsendō* in Edo. He also went on official *bakufu* missions to America and Europe, along with Fukuzawa Yukichi, and then studied in London for two years. When he returned he became an instructor at the *Kaiseijo/Kaisei Gakkō*, and served the Meiji government in diplomatic, educational, and legal positions. There were other individuals from the *Shirabesho/Kaiseijo* who served in the government. Shioda Saburō was originally from Hakodate—he learned French from the French missionary Mermet de Cachon, who arrived in Hakodate in 1859. Shioda became a Japanese diplomat and traveled to France with the second Japanese embassy to Europe in 1863. After the Meiji Restoration, he was a diplomat to France and China. Sugi Kōji, whose family were poor merchants, became a *rangaku* student and taught at the *Shirabesho* and *Kaiseijo*, later becoming a key member of the Meirokusha and a leading intellectual in the Meiji period.

He was also the first to introduce statistics to Japan, and one of the only scholars that Katō mentions by name in his 1909 speech.¹²⁷

The following list is an abbreviated list of the staff of the *Bansho Shirabesho/Kaiseijo* and the year in which they entered the institution.¹²⁸ The list excludes those who were merely students and who were only reading instructors (*kutōshi*). The first column contains those who were professors (or *kyōju*) and the second contains those who were the assistant-professors (*kyōju-tetsudai*) and teaching-assistants (*tetsudai-nami*).¹²⁹

<i>Kyōju:</i>	<i>Other staff position--kyōju-tetsudai, and tetsudai-nami:</i>
Mitsukuri Gempō (1856)	
Kawamoto Yukitami (1856)	Matsuki Kōan (Terajima Munenori) 1856
Takabatake Gorō (1856)	Harada Keisaku (1856)
Ichikawa Kaneyasu (1856)	Tezuka Ritsuzō (1856)
Tōjō Eian (Reizō) (1856)	Murata Zōroku (Omura Masujiro) (1856)
Nishi Shusuke (Amane) (1857)	Uchida Yatarō (1857)
Tsuda Shinichiro (Mamichi)(1857)	Kurokawa Ryōan (1857)
Sugita Seikei (1857)	Tsuboi Nobuyuki (1857)
Sugita Gentan (1858)	Murakami Eishun (1859)
Katō Kōzō (Hiroyuki) (1860)	Mitsukuri Shuhei (1859)
Hori Tatsunosuke (1860)	Oshima Sōzaemon (1860)
Sugi Kōji (1860)	Tsuboi Hōshu (1860)

¹²⁷ Rubinger, *Private Academies*, 216-219; Katō, 88.

¹²⁸ Okubo Toshiaki, 149-150.

¹²⁹ List taken from Okubo Toshiaki, 149-150.

Mitsukuri Rinsho (1861)
Kobayashi Teisuke (1861)
Watanabe Ichirō (1862)
Kanda Kōhei (1862)

Utsunomiya Kōnoshin (1861)
Toyama Shoichi (1861)
Ito Keisuke (1861)
Irie Bunrō (1861)
Okkotsu Tarōki (1862)
Otsuki Yasutarō (1862)
Tanaka Shigeo (1862)
Kuroda Kojirō (1862)

Kaiseijo

Yanagawa Shunzō (1864)
Ka Reinosuke (1867)
Shioda Saburō (1867)

Kaiseijo

Suzuki Tadakazu (1863)
Kurosawa Magoshirō (1863)
Tsuji Hinosuke (1863)
Obata Takujirō (1866)

Though the professors are generally the most well-known scholars of this list, Katō commented that the *kyōju-tetsudai* (assistant-professors) also included many scholars who later became very famous. In addition, the higher staff members at the *Bansho Shirabesho* (such as the *kyōju*) did not teach as much as the lower staff members (such as the *tetsudai-nami*) and thus many of the lower staff were more directly involved with the students.¹³⁰

Though the *Shirabesho* in some ways represented the *bakufu's* attempts at

¹³⁰ Katō, 88.

Westernization, it did not introduce or create a modern Westernized educational system; it took much longer for this to develop. Even in 1909, Okuma Shigenobu wrote in *Fifty Years of New Japan* that though many aspects of the Japanese educational system had been modernized, it was only a start. Okuma claimed that the system was “still wanting in breadth and profundity of knowledge, and, while rich in critical acumen, [our scholars] have not yet reached the stage of being able to claim originality and self-enlightenment.”¹³¹

It may have been the case that a half-century after the *Shirabesho*'s establishment the modern Japanese higher education was not on a par with its Western models. Nevertheless the scholars at the *Shirabesho* established a legacy of scholarship that helped a new generation of scholars bridge the gap between the Tokugawa and Meiji Periods.

¹³¹ Okuma, 565. Interestingly, Okuma's monumental work was published the same year as Katō's reminiscent speech about the *Shirabesho*.

V. EPILOGUE: FROM TOKUGAWA TO MEIJI

A. The *Kaiseijo* and Its Scholars During the Meiji Restoration

If the *Kaiseijo* was an institution to train officials loyal to the *bakufu*, then what happened to it during the tumult of the Meiji Restoration? It is much difficult to figure out exactly what happened, but during the Meiji Restoration, the school was apparently closed for almost two years, when, according to Fukuzawa Yukichi,

there was not anyone in our country who spent his time quietly reading books. The Kaisei[jo], founded by the Tokugawa Shogunate, was quickly abolished, and its building lay deserted. The many scholars of Western studies in Edo scattered hither and yon, and their whereabouts became unknown. Western studies appeared to be at a halt during the two years before and after this time. Amidst all this, our school[Keio], alone, never faltered even for a moment. We even built our new dormitory while the Imperial forces were marching upon Edo and battles were being fought in the city. We read our books and continued our lectures. Our school did not close even for one day. ...we did this because of our burning interest in Western studies....Two or three years after the Meiji Restoration, when things finally subsided, private schools for Western studies began to appear in Tokyo. The government, too, having realized the importance of education, established public schools called *Daigaku*, *Tōkō*, and *Nankō*.¹³²

¹³² Fukuzawa Yukichi, "On Education." From *The Speeches of Fukuzawa Yukichi: A Translation and Critical Study* by Wayne H. Oxford, Hokuseido Press, Tokyo, 1973,

Fukuzawa—who was not above self-promotion and often criticized the government—revealed the fact that the *Kaiseijo* did not remain open when the Meiji Restoration broke out. Fukuzawa turned down positions in the government under both the *bakufu* and the Meiji governments, and he was also very critical of scholars who simply want to learn so that they may get a position in a government bureaucracy. In fact, he wrote that in the early Meiji period that:

Today most Western scholars in our society have obtained government posts and few of them work privately. The reason is not only greed for better incomes but because of their inborn inclination, nurtured by their education to have eyes for official positions, believing that no worthwhile work can be accomplished except through the government.¹³³

Clearly, Fukuzawa did not approve of the path of government service that the majority of the *yōgaku* scholars, including those at the *Kaiseijo*, took after the Meiji Restoration.

When the Meiji government wanted to reopen the *Kaiseijo* after it had gained control of Edo, they put the scholar Mitsukuri Rinshō in charge of the institution, but the

¹³³ Fukuzawa Yukichi, *On Education: Selected Works*, Trans. Eiichi Kiyooka, University of Tokyo Press, Tokyo, 1985, 89.

government was unable to carry out its program in 1868 because the *Kaiseijo* was temporarily transferred by the Meiji leaders to the authority of the Tokyo metropolitan government until November of that year. The Meiji government then moved the school from Hitotsubashi to Tsukiji and then back to the previous *Bansho Shirabesho* grounds in Kanda's Nishiki-cho. The timing of the Emperor Meiji's arrival complicated matters, and the *Kaiseijo* was not able to function. The only previous *bakufu* institution that continued to operate during this time was the Medical Institute.¹³⁴

The *Kaiseijo* reopened in 1869, but they could not immediately occupy their former buildings in Hitotsubashi because they were being used as army barracks, a medical school and a hospital. Finally, by December of 1869 the school was back in Hitotsubashi. By the end of February, 1869, the Meiji government opened not only the *Kaiseijo* (renamed *Kaisei Gakkō* or *Daigaku Nankō*)¹³⁵ but also the *Shōheikō* (now called the *Shōhei Gakkō*) and all restrictions regarding feudal rank were abolished. This might have seemed like an

¹³⁴ Yukihiro Motoyama, *Proliferating Talent: Essays on Politics, Thought, and Education in the Meiji Era*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1997, 114-115.

¹³⁵ By the end of 1869, the school was officially called the *Daigaku Nankō* (*University South*), though the name *Kaisei Gakkō* was also used. I will use the term *Daigaku Nankō*, though both names are used in sources about the institution.

ideal learning environment, but a description by one student at the time, Naitō Meisetsu, gave another perspective of the attitudes of the new students (in this case at the *Shōhei*

Gakkō):

These days, with the opening of the Shōhei Gakkō...new dormitories have been built in addition to the old ones from the shogunate days, and I have heard estimates that there are more than 400 students. There may be lots of them, but they don't study much...Many students would go off in the afternoons and, depending upon how much money they had, go to a large or a small restaurant, drink *sake*, and summon a geisha, although some went to the brothels in Yoshiwara, Fukagawa, or Shinagawa. Upon returning they would tell tall stories and boast of their triumphs.¹³⁶

This environment at the *Shōhei Gakkō* was hardly conducive to scholarship and unfortunately (at least according to the historian Motoyama Yukihiro) we do not have similar records describing the atmosphere of the *Daigaku Nankō*. However, Guido Verbeck, who came to Tokyo from Nagasaki (a much safer city in this turbulent time) and became vice-principal of the *Daigaku Nankō* in April 1869, expressed concerns about the students and teachers' behavior and moral standards. Okubo Toshimichi had

¹³⁶ Ibid, 120-121.

recommended Verbeck to fill this position in a letter to Kido Kōin in 1868 where Okubo lamented the lack of men with the knowledge required to solve problems relating to foreign countries. Okubo wrote:

The two capable men I mentioned the other day, Fukuzawa Yukichi and Nishi Shusuke (Amane) are busy with other important work. So I asked Omura (Masajirō) for advice. I suggest you consult with him as well. As you know, Verbeck, an American residing in Nagasaki, is a knowledgeable and virtuous man and is well acquainted with our Imperial Land; I have felt for some time that he could be quite useful. I have also heard Soejima [Taneomi] say that Verbeck is learned in law and would be particularly useful in questions regarding diplomacy with foreign countries. If you hire him and take him under your wing, others will surely want to learn from him at once. Would that not be an excellent outcome? New schools are about to be founded. One like the shogunate's *Kaiseisho* ought, I think, to be opened immediately. When that happens you are apt to find him of great use indeed.¹³⁷

Beginning in 1869, English and French teachers were found, and students were separated into two groups—those taught by foreigners and those by Japanese scholars. Foreign teachers were found mainly by Guido Verbeck who, as the principal professor of the *Daigaku Nankō*, was asked to find many of the foreign instructors.

¹³⁷ Motoyama, 95.

During these early years of transition, it is hard to know exactly what the *bakufu* scholars were doing. Some, like Fukuzawa said, seemed to disappear. Nishi was in Kyoto in 1867-1868 tutoring Tokugawa Keiki and was forced to leave. He resurfaced in 1869 and became principal of the first modern Westernized military academy in Numazu, near where the ousted shogun resided. Later, he and Tsuda were recalled to government service under the Meiji leaders, and they took advantage of this opportunity. Though some, like Katsu Kaishu, remained loyal to the Tokugawa family, they were in a minority and their refusal to serve the new Meiji government was often seen as a display of *yase-gaman* (“spitting in their stomachs to save their faces”).¹³⁸ Though there were those like Fukuzawa who objected to government service in principle, for many scholars it did not seem like a difficult choice to choose to serve in the new government.

2. Conflict Between Confucian and *Kokugaku* Factions

The early Meiji years brought further changes. It is interesting to note that in the early Meiji years, the conflict between *yōgaku* and the Confucian academy was overshadowed by

¹³⁸ G.B. Samsom, *The Western World and Japan: A study in the Interaction of European and Asiatic Cultures*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1965, 314.

the confrontation between the Confucian establishment and the Japanese nativist or *kokugaku* (Shinto) scholars who had supported the restoration of the Emperor. Originally the Meiji leadership planned to divide the university (*daigaku*) between Kyoto and Tokyo, but when the Emperor Meiji moved his residence to Tokyo, they changed their plans. In 1869, the government organized a University (*Daigaku*) “structure” that designated the *Shōhei Gakkō* as the Main University College (*Daigaku Honkō*) and the South College, (*Daigaku Nankō*) and the East College or *Igakkō*/Medical School (*Daigaku Tōkō*) merely as branch campuses.¹³⁹ However, in the regulations for the *Daigaku*, the government gave precedence to the Shinto scriptures and the native classics over Chinese learning (*kangaku*), and they abolished the shrine to Confucius and instead enshrined the Shinto gods of learning. One reason for this change is that the Office of Shinto Affairs was at the head of the government at this time, and the *Daigaku* was closed while the schedule of classes was being worked out. When the school reopened in August, the animosity between the Shinto and Confucian scholars and their respective students at the *Honkō* was so severe that

¹³⁹ Richard Rubinger, in *Japan in Transition*, 201-204.

the dormitory prefect resigned. Attacks on the Chinese learning faction increased and learning became difficult, if not impossible. Finally, in January 1870, the school reopened, though no new students were admitted to the dormitories. This was actually an attempt by the *yōgaku* sympathizers in the government to reduce the size of the *Honkō* campus, and to move the focus of education away from the main campus in order to focus on the institutions of Western learning, the *Daigaku Nankō* and the *Igakko* (Medical School). Thus, by 1870, the government considered these latter schools not merely as branch campuses, but important schools with their own faculties. Soon after this the Grand Council of State (*Dajōkan*) ordered the Main College (*Honkō*) to “weed out teachers of Shinto, Kokugaku, and Chinese studies by a student vote.” Now both Nativist and Chinese scholars criticized the *Dajōkan*’s “University Regulations” and were joined by their students. Finally, as a result of all these problems, the *Dajōkan*, in July 1870, announced that the Main College would be “temporarily closed for purposes of reform.” All the institution’s employees were discharged and the students were told to leave the

dormitories.¹⁴⁰ This was a great blessing for *yōgaku*, which had not participated in the conflict between the Shinto and Chinese scholars (except as observers), and now were able to take advantage of their competitors' demise. In 1877, this victory was complete, when the *Kaisei Gakkō* (*Daigaku Nankō*) joined with the *Igakkō* (*Daigaku Tōkō*, the Medical School) to form Tokyo University, the first Westernized university in Japan. I doubt anyone at the *Bansho Shirabesho*--whose system was, as Kato repeatedly admits, modeled after the Confucian *Shōheikō*--would have predicted such an abrupt turnaround in national priorities.

3. Further Changes up to the Creation of Tokyo University

In 1870, the Meiji government ordered every domain to select promising “men of talent”—students to whom scholarships were granted to study at the *Daigaku Nankō*. The government also established a translation center at the *Daigaku Nankō* in 1869 that translated useful and practical foreign books and published them in the name of the government, since there were few private publishers functioning at the time. In 1871, the

¹⁴⁰ Motoyama, 131-139.

Education Board that had been set up to oversee the schools was replaced by the Department of Education (*Mombusho*), which also moved its quarters from the *Shōheikō* to a building near the Kanda bridge. In addition, in April 1872 the government opened the Tokyo Public Library which at first contained only Chinese and Japanese books, but in 1875 a large number of foreign works were added. Prior to this, many of these books had been kept in the Temple of Confucius (*Seidō*), which belonged to the *Shōheikō*.¹⁴¹

In 1873 the Meiji government separated the *Daigaku Nankō* into two parts; the first was given the name, *Tokyo Kaisei Gakkō*, and it gave instruction in Law, Science and Engineering in English, Polytechnics and (in 1875) Physics in French, and Mining in German. These advanced students were separated from the rest and moved into a new building erected for them. The other section continued as the Foreign Language School and stayed in the old building, giving instruction in English, French, German, Russian, and Chinese. The conspicuous absence of the Dutch language shows how much in disuse that language had become in scholarly circles by the Meiji Period. In December, 1874, all

¹⁴¹ Japanese Department of Education, 116-128.

other foreign language schools (largely modeled after the one in Tokyo) throughout Japan were constituted as English language schools, and the one in Tokyo was divided into an English-language school and the other a foreign-language school for instruction in French, German, Russian, and Chinese. Around this time, the Emperor Meiji and other high officers of the government visited the *Tokyo Kaisei Gakkō*. By 1876 instruction at this school was simplified from the three languages of English, French and German to English alone, though in 1877 when it was combined with the Medical School to form Tokyo University, the Medical School continued to use German.¹⁴²

¹⁴² Japanese Department of Education, 120-128, 182-185.

VI. CONCLUSION

In the course of this work, I have traced the Tokugawa *bakufu*'s attempts at sponsoring Western translation, scholarship and censorship through the *Bansho Shirabesho*. Though the *bakufu* failed to remain in power, an examination of the *Bansho Shirabesho*, shows that the legacy of the *bakufu* was more complicated. It is a bit ironic that the same government that overthrew the *bakufu* with the slogan “*sonnō joi*” (“Revere the Emperor, Expel the Barbarians”) adopted an even more radical plan to learn from the West. This change was not accomplished overnight, but was the result of a gradual transition in thinking during the Bakumatsu and early Meiji years. The *Bansho Shirabesho* and its scholars played an important role in fostering this transition. The Meiji government inherited the *Kaiseijo* from the Tokugawa *bakufu*, and realized that they needed institutions like it to train scholars in the new Western ideas. The Meiji government, however, had the advantage of learning from the mistakes of the *bakufu*, and removed archaic notions such as distinctions of feudal rank and suspicions against certain subjects (though the proscription against Christianity remained in the early Meiji Period).

Then, why has the *Bansho Shirabesho* been relatively neglected by historians? One reason may be the lack of easily accessible works on the subject. In addition, perhaps it does not interest many historians of this era because the *Shirabesho* did not produce many of the key political figures in the Meiji Restoration—such as, Kido Kōin, Okubō Toshimichi, Itō Hirobumi, and Saigō Takamori. The *Shirabesho* may also fall “below the radar” of most historians and educators. It may not be political enough to capture the fascination of most historians writing about the dynamic political upheaval of this period, and it may seem of minor importance in its overall contribution to Tokugawa education and a bit archaic to be seen as part of Japan’s modern education. Still, any institution that has contributed to the formation of the modern Japanese educational system and was integral in the formation of the University of Tokyo deserves to be studied in greater detail. One historian, Marion William Steele wrote that, “in terms of library facilities and faculty...the *Bansho Shirabesho* was without equal or parallel.”¹⁴³ Anyone who wants to understand Japan’s modernization should know the importance of this crucial transitional institution.

¹⁴³ Steele, 54.

APPENDIX: Katō Hiroyuki's "*Bansho Shirabesho ni tsuite*," *Shigaku Zasshi*, 1909

Translated by James M. Hommes, 2004.

"On the Bansho Shirabesho" May 1st, Meiji 42 (1909)

Honkai Taikai (Historical Society) Lecture

Baron Katō Hiroyuki, Ph. D. Law, Ph. D. Literature

Gentlemen, I have been asked to talk about the *Bansho Shirabesho* and I will try to talk simply about it.

The *Bansho Shirabesho* is something from a long time ago and so there are not many left who were there. In addition to me, there is Dr. Sugi Kōji and perhaps only twelve others remaining. Of those who were into Dutch Studies (*rangaku*) at the time and who are still alive, there are a few. Among those now over 80 years of age only the previously mentioned Sugi Kōji and Commander (Baron) Harada Kazumichi remain. Then there are those who are a little younger—people like Baron Ōtori and Baron Hosokawa come to mind. But Baron Harada had little involvement with the *Bansho Shirabesho* and afterwards he became an army man for the *bakufu*. Also, Ōtori was affiliated with Egawa Tarozaemon, and he too became an army man for the *bakufu*. In addition, Hosokawa had nothing to do with the *Bansho Shirabesho*. Therefore, of those who were involved with the *Bansho Shirabesho*, the only ones still living are Sugi Kōji and I. I had a rather long involvement with the *Bansho Shirabesho*, but it was at least 40 or 50 years ago—thus I have forgotten the finer details and will only be able to talk merely in general terms. Not only that, but it is difficult for me to remember the specific years and months—I can only remember something like how many years ago it was. For a more detailed account you should not look to me, but to Ōtsuki Shuji. He is much younger than I am and, although he wasn't involved in the *Bansho Shirabesho*, he is a detailed researcher and he has investigated the matters concerning the *Bansho Shirabesho* and other things related to

Western Studies (*yōgaku*) much better than I have. I think he would provide more information on specific dates and other finer points. Because I have only grasped the superficial, I think I am not of much value in providing a detailed understanding for you and will thus do no more than talk in general terms.

As I remarked previously, I cannot go into detail on the formation of the *Bansho Shirabesho*, which cannot have been more than 60 years ago. It was between 50 and 60 years ago—I think during the Ansei (1853-1860) years—so in the beginning I was not involved. When it began I was still a student of Dutch Studies (*rangaku*), or perhaps I was not yet a student. The *Bansho Shirabesho* thus began a very long time ago, but the first ones to propose to the *bakufu* to build the *Bansho Shirabesho* were the famed Baron Kawaji Saemon and Tsutsui [Masanori], the Governor of Hizen [Nagasaki], followed by Ōkubo [?], later known as Ōkubo Ichiō. Based on the proposals of such people, the *Bansho Shirabesho* was built. At first it was located on the estate of a *hatamoto* with 3000-4000 *koku* named Nishiki. At that time two people who were higher school instructors, Mitsukuri Gempō and Sugita Seikei were, I think, the first to be called professors (*kyōju*). This was a position of official rank, and below them were the assistant professors (*kyōjutetsudai*) who, though only called assistants, included many famous people. Under them were the reading instructors (*kutōshi*), who were supposed to help with reading practice, which I think was based on the system used by the *Shōheikō*. I don't know if it was exactly according to the *Shōheikō* or not, but the *Shōheikō*'s system seemed to be the one that it was modeled after. Then, because the *Bansho Shirabesho* was initially an institution for the *bakufu*'s retainers (*hatamoto/gokenin*), people from other domains were not allowed to enter the school, though later they were allowed. But, the boarding students were all *bakufu* retainers and the students from other domains were not allowed to board. In the *Shōheikō*, the people from other clans were allowed to board in the student dormitories, but in the *Bansho Shirabesho* they were not allowed to board. It was partly because the available space was also very limited, so it was not allowed. At the beginning, Dutch was the only language used for instruction, but it was soon followed by English, then French, German, and Russian were also studied; but the instructors were mainly Dutch

Studies (*rangaku*) teachers. At first the students were not worth much and so the reading instructors that I mentioned previously, taught mainly by rote reading and writing without reference to meaning (*kutō*). Then, when they progressed up to a point, they had some short lectures. Or, the students might gather together in a discussion group [seminar] and several times a month on certain set days they would also have lectures from fairly high ranking instructors, such as the assistant-professors. I think this was also modeled after the Shōheikō's system. Then, gradually the situation began to change and, naturally, people came to see the importance of Western Learning; therefore, the Shōheikō gradually became less of a hindrance. At first the *Bansho Shirabesho* used such an offensive [Chinese] character as *ban* ["barbarian"], but because foreign emissaries were arriving in Japan, the use of the *ban* character was very sharply debated, and again the importance of Western Learning was gradually accepted. Therefore, because the hindrance of the Shōheikō began to lessen, the name formally became *Yōsho Shirabesho*, with the character *ban* changed to *yō* ["Western"]. There was no controversy concerning using the character *yō*, but it was still not much of a name for a school, with the designation of *Shirabesho* [Office of Investigation]. Up to that point, the *Bansho Shirabesho* had no choice but to consist of small houses, and gradually the students began to pile up; so it moved to the outskirts of Hitotsubashi, namely, the place where today the Higher Vocational School is located. That land which we were given was not the remains of a bakufu retainer's (*hatamoto*) old estate. It consisted of fields in which the *bakufu*'s prayer temple, the Gojiin, was located—a place called Gojiingahara. There we put up new buildings, and this time it was much more spacious so, naturally, Western learning progressed and began to flourish with this change. But, a name like *Yōsho Shirabesho* seemed strange, so, together with the new construction, the name was changed to *Kaiseijo*. That still didn't sound like a name for a school, but it was better than the previous names, having been taken from part of the *I-ching*. That probably happened about four or five years before the [Meiji] Restoration.

In light of the fact that the dispute [regarding the existence of the *Bansho Shirabesho*] had changed, the *bakufu* thought it would be good if Hayashi Daigaku-no-kami might as well have jurisdiction over both the Shōheikō and the *Kaiseijo*. Thus, Hayashi

became the headmaster, and below him was the president, or the principal [of the *Kaiseijo*]. We were sort of treated like a step-child, but the opposition from the scholars of the Shōheikō lessened greatly. They had begun to realize the importance of Western learning and in order to promote it, they thought it would be best to have Hayashi Daigaku-no-kami supervise the institution. Therefore, even though Hayashi Daigaku-no-kami did not come every day, he would keep an eye on us by honoring us with a visit several times a month. Also, before that, because Koga had been somewhat disparaged, he was transferred by the late Katsu [Kaishu] and others who were involved in the matter. The position of the president, or the principal, changed several times, and later there was not just one person as the principal, but five or six people. In addition to the principals, there was the position of assistant principal. Politically speaking, there are a variety of explanations for why various people filled these positions, but the fact that five or six people filled them might have been good because it kept people from just doing whatever they wanted. On the other hand, these positions might have been filled merely with political favorites. At the top [of the school] was Hayashi Daigaku-no-kami, and there was also Hayashi Shikibu [?]. Later on, though it scarcely benefitted the school, certain daimyo began to be placed above them. There were some that were the head of both the Shōheikō and the *Kaiseijo*—there was someone called Akitsuki and also one called Yanagisawa. Akitsuki's name was also Shuju, and he was a Chinese studies (*kangaku*) scholar. He was the commissioner (*bugyō*) of the Gakumonjo and Hayashi Daigaku-no-kami and Hayashi Shikibu [?] were put below him. Thus, there were many officials, but they knew almost nothing about Western studies. And, what may seem shocking about the *Bansho Shirabesho* from today's perspective—though it was the same at the Shōheikō, whose example we followed—when the principal visited the school, namely, when Koga Kin'ichiro arrived at the school, the school and the staff, when we met him, were to bow, prostrating themselves with their heads down. On his part, Koga only had to stand and tilt his head in greeting. There was such a disparity between the principal and the staff, with one side standing and the other side having to bow their heads down low. This state of affairs was the one followed at the Shōheikō and so they just based it on what they did there. If such was the case with the principal, it was all the more so with Hayashi Daigaku-no-kami. When he came to the

school, the staff was required to bow with their heads on the floor (*tatami*), and Daigaku-no-kami merely stood and slightly nodded his head. Truly he possessed great dignity. Some time after that, even before the *bakufu* fell, I was promoted to about the same rank as Hayashi so I jokingly talked to him about that and he laughed about it. Hayashi Daigaku-no-kami was a good person, who was suitable for learning and was well aware of all things, but it seemed like this practice [of showing deference] had become merely a customary ritual for the *bakufu*. And the *Bansho Shirabesho* was different than the Shōheikō; the higher school's staff members, such people as Mitsukuri *sensei*, and Sugita *sensei*, were all rear vassals [*bainin*], and weren't direct retainers, so they were held in contempt by the Shōheikō. Though for my part I wasn't afraid of Hayashi as headmaster, to be treated with that kind of contempt wasn't particularly surprising to me. Later, because the *bakufu*'s lower retainers were able to become full professors, naturally, this practice ended.

When the Meiji Restoration occurred, the school stayed where it was, but the name changed from *Kaiseijo* to *Kaisei Gakkō*—the word “school” was used for the first time. That's all I can say about that matter. If you think of it from today's perspective, it may seem surprising that we had to bow with our heads on the *tatami* while the other side just haughtily nodded in greeting, but I don't think it was particularly surprising. It was just something one expected. In addition, the work situation of the professors could be discussed. As I said previously, at this time the students were “green” and therefore the reading instructors (*kutōshi*) gave instruction in rote reading. And those who advanced a little attended short lectures and also formed discussion groups with their fellow students; they read and discussed but there were still no specialized departments. It was regular learning, and it was a low level of learning so all of the teaching staff generally emphasized the translation work, with the people who taught doing translation work on the side. The ones who mainly did the teaching were the lower-ranked staff, and the higher-ranked staff primarily did translation work and from time to time gave lectures. I think this was modeled after the Shōheikō. I have one more comment regarding the translation work: it consisted of Dutch-Japanese scientific/technological works and also miscellaneous matters

from a variety of magazines which were partially translated and were published two or three times a year. Some of them that were published—entitled *Tamaishi Gokuseki Shirin*—were similar to today’s magazines. I think these translations may still survive somewhere. At that time, in the *bakufu* there was also an Office of Foreign Affairs, or the Foreign Ministry. But, translators were still very scarce, and the *bakufu* was receiving written documents from various foreign emissaries. At those times they had to translate them one-by-one, and show them to the *wakatoshiyori* of the Council of Elders, the Minister in those days. These documents for translation were also continually entrusted to the *Bansho Shirabesho*. There were a few official interpreters who worked under the Commissioner of Foreign Affairs (*gaikoku bugyō*) and so they could do the translation work, but if they had important material or a lot of documents to translate at one time or something, they could not complete the work solely with the interpreters associated with the Office of Foreign Affairs—so they ordered the *Bansho Shirabesho* to translate them. Thus, when they were in such a rush, the staff would stay up all night in order to complete the translations. The documents were usually in Dutch, and even those that were in English, French, and German, when they were officially recorded, had to be translated into Dutch. As for documents from Japan, we sent them in Japanese, if they were from the English ambassador they were in English, and if they were from the French ambassador, in French—and they all included an attached Dutch translation, which was considered the official copy of the documents. Also, Japan would receive documents that had been translated into Dutch from various countries and Japanese government would translate the documents here [in Edo] and show them to the Councilor’s *wakatoshiyori*. For the documents that were sent from Japan, the Japanese text was the official text, and the Dutch translations of the texts were attached and sent along with it. Now, there were times when many of the translations from Dutch to Japanese were about important matters or had to be done quickly, and since the interpreters in the Office of Foreign Affairs couldn’t do it, we at the *Bansho Shirabesho* were told to help them finish the Dutch translations. So, even though it was called a “school,” in addition to teaching we had to translate documents from foreign countries, and we were also given the task of translating letters relating to diplomacy and such. On that note, when the British warships attacked Kagoshima, it wasn’t

like today—it was a time when we had no telephone or telegraph—and to send something by the fastest delivery (*sōtsuibin*) took over ten days so that it was much faster to hear the news from the British ships that arrived in Yokohama. Then, they soon began publishing Dutch newspapers in Yokohama so the government ordered the *Bansho Shirabesho* to translate them in order to find out the situation of the war in Kagoshima. The late Baron Kanda Kōhei and I were assigned to this and it took us two full days and nights to complete it. From today’s perspective, this situation seems unbelievable.

At that time, one matter which was difficult for us was the use of the Japanese titles “imperial majesty” (*heika*) and “majesty” (*denka*) because if we addressed the heads of the various Western states as “imperial majesty” (*heika*), then in order for the Japanese Shogun to be considered their equal, he would also have to be called “his imperial majesty” (*heika*). However, [considering the Japanese Emperor] this would not do. At that point to call the shogun “majesty” (*denka*) meant we would merely have to address the other heads of state as “majesty” (*denka*), but if we did that it might not be seen as appropriate by the other countries. What was the best thing to do? This was not just a concern of the *Bansho Shirabesho*, but it was also a difficult matter for the government. It seems very strange now, but we could not write “his imperial majesty” (*heika*) for the Japanese Shogun, so we addressed him and all the other countries’ monarchs as “majesty” (*denka*). The British Queen [Victoria]’s was translated as “her majesty” (*denka*), the Dutch King [William II] was “his majesty” (*denka*). Because the difference in titles was only a matter of different Japanese words, the foreign countries did not make a fuss and the matter ended there. Now, if this great debate had later become more widespread, it might have become more boisterous, but at that time the *bakufu* collapsed so there was no longer any need to worry about such distinctions. This matter [of the addressing of heads of state] was not merely a concern for the *Bansho Shirabesho*’s staff members—the government also had to worry about such things—but because we were doing translation work, this was a particularly critical debate for us.

I do not think I have anything else really important to say, and, as I said before, I cannot give you detailed facts about the dates either because I have generally forgotten

them or because my memory is faulty at times and I get confused and am not able to talk about some of the things. I think it would be good for the Historical Society (*Shigakkai*) if they would ask Ōtsuki Shuji because he has thoroughly investigated these matters.

I would like to add one more story about the telegraph. When the Prussian ambassador came to conclude a treaty, he presented the *bakufu* with Japan's very first telegraph machine. Then, in order to teach others how to use it, Ichikawa Saigu and I were ordered to learn about it. We went to the ambassador's place—there was no embassy yet, so we went to the ambassador's quarters and learned about it. That telegraph machine was much different than today's telegraph machines. For today's telegraph machines, you hit the button and a sound is heard, but our machine was one that spun like a dial of a watch. You turned the hands to align with the letters on the face—"a, b, c's" were on there, and if you wanted "a" you turned it to "a," if "b" you turned it to "b"—and when it reached the other line their dial would spin and point to the same letter. That was how they would understand the message; it was not instantaneous like today's telegraphs. No matter how fast you did it, you still had to turn the dial, so it wasn't just a matter of hitting the button to make the sound. But Europe's telegraph machines were the same type of machines. From today's perspective it seems very slow, but such was the case when Ichikawa and I went to the "red-plumed" Prussian ambassador's quarters to learn how to use the very first telegraph machine in Japan. That was about 5-6 years before the Restoration, close to 50 years ago.

And, as I said previously, I think the Historical Society (*Shigakkai*) should ask Ōtsuki Shuji about these matters and compare what I have talked about today and should publish it in the *Shigakkai* journal. As I said before, there are none left who had any deep connection to the *Bansho Shirabesho*, except for Sugi Kōji and me. There are maybe twelve younger people who remember things, but I don't think they know about the really old matters. I hope that you will ask Sugi Kōji—even if it is not to deliver a lecture, but just to talk about these things—because he might remember some of the things that I did not talk about today. If the people who know about the *Bansho Shirabesho* die, that will be it, so my hope is that the Historical Society (*Shigakkai*) will investigate these matters while there is

still time.

Editorial note: A few minor changes to the original speech have been made regarding a few mistaken or omitted items.

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