

10 Japanese-Korean brush-talk during the early Edo period, 1603–1711

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Introduction

In 1637, the Korean envoys dispatched to Japan returned to Korea. When King Injo 仁祖 (1595–1649; r. 1623–1649) asked them about the Japanese literati, the Chief Envoy Im Kwang 任統 (1579–1644) replied:

不成文理，詩則尤不好。

Lacking in literary flair, the quality of poetry is particularly poor.

Kim Se-ryōm (金世濂 1593–1646) (1637), the Vice-Envoy likewise answered:

沿路及江戶多有來問者。皆以理氣性情等語爲問。不可以蠻人而忽之。

Many people on the way to and from Edo came to ask questions about the *Principle, Force, Nature, and Emotion* [Neo-Confucianist philosophy] and the like. We should not neglect them and treat them as barbarians.

These two replies reflect the Japanese scholars' wish to visit the Koreans and exchange views with them on Neo-Confucianism; they also reveal the Korean envoys' rather condescending attitude toward the Japanese literati. Under what circumstances did the Korean envoys engage in intellectual and poetic exchange with their Japanese hosts? Why were the Japanese interested in Korean Neo-Confucianism?

Before the twentieth century, Literary Sinitic¹ (Kornicki 2018, hereafter Sinitic) was the written lingua franca in China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and Ryukyu (cf. 'scripta franca',² Denecke 2014: 209; Clements 2019: 308). Sinitic is different from spoken Chinese vernaculars such as Mandarin or Cantonese, because it is a fossilized written language that was spoken approximately 2,000 years ago but

¹ When reference is made to the use of Classical Chinese (*wényán* 文言) within the Sinosphere, the term 'Literary Sinitic' or 'Sinitic' is preferred.

² Some scholars contend that it is more appropriate to say 'scriptum francum', given that 'scriptum' in Latin is neutral by gender (Genus) (see Man 2002: 112).

had been used as a written language for over two millennia within the Sinographic cosmopolis in East Asia (Norman 1988: 109; Koh & King 2014). It is further distinct from other classical languages, such as Latin or Sanskrit, because it is written in Chinese characters, which is a morphographic, non-phonographic writing system. Thus, it allowed two speakers of different first-language backgrounds to communicate with each other through brush-assisted handwriting, even though they may pronounce each sinogram very differently. Such a mode of communication is comparable to two mathematicians with no shared spoken language exchanging mathematical ideas solely via mathematical formulae.

Sinitic was most commonly used in China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and Ryukyu, societies that until the end of the nineteenth century were known collectively as the Sinosphere 漢字文化圈. Typologically distinct languages were spoken in these five polities, such as Mandarin (Sino-Tibetan), Japanese (Japonic), Vietnamese (Austroasiatic), and Korean (Koreanic), to name a few. Sinitic thus served as the *scripta franca* for international communication, similar to the role of English today.

Sinitic was commonly used as a written language in Chosŏn Korea 朝鮮 (1392–1910) within its borders. Even after the invention of the Korean alphabet, *hangŭl* in 1443, Sinitic remained the written language for formal purposes until the end of the nineteenth century. The Chinese-based Korean writing technique ‘clerical writing’ (*Idu* 吏讀) was also used, but its usage was functionally complementary to the formal use of Sinitic (Kornicki 2018: 57; cf. Handel 2019).

In Japan, Classical Chinese was not used as extensively throughout the Edo period (1603–1867). Literary written Japanese, *Sorobun* 候文, was used instead. Sinitic was mainly used by Buddhist monks to access the Buddhist scriptures translated from Sanskrit into Chinese, which typically consisted of a mixture of (written) Classical as well as (spoken) Chinese vernacular elements depending on the translator (Mair 1994).

Prior to the Edo Period, there was little exchange between Japan and other countries that used Classical Chinese as the main written language. Japan had no formal diplomatic relations with China. Envoys from Chosŏn were also very irregular. In addition, diplomatic relations with Chosŏn were conducted via Tsushima 対馬, the Japanese island closest to the Korean peninsula. Tsushima was a barren island, and it maintained its economy through trade with Chosŏn. By accepting nominal government posts from the Chosŏn court, Tsushima received its right to conduct trading activities with Chosŏn; in other words, Tsushima was semi-subordinate to Chosŏn, if only in name (Chong 2010). Because many Tsushima islanders were fluent in Korean, they were in charge of interpreting for the Korean envoys.

However, with the establishment of the Tokugawa shogunate and the beginning of the Edo Period in 1603, the use of Sinitic in Japan began to change. Neo-Confucianism, a new school of Confucianist ideology founded by the Song philosopher Zhu Xi 朱熹, rapidly gained support under Tokugawa Ieyasu 德川家康 (1542–1616) (Nosco 1984). The emerging new social class of Confucianists 儒者 consisted of intellectuals literate in Sinitic. Mainly employed by the feudal lords (*daimyōs* 大名), they played a role in acquiring knowledge in Sinitic

literature and imparting such knowledge to their lords. A cultural need arose after the end of the long *Warring States* period 戰國時代 (1467–1615) and the Confucianists were well placed to fulfill that need.

The emergence of a class of Confucianists facilitated the use of Classical Chinese as a *scripta franca* to communicate with the Koreans. Each time a new Shōgun came to the throne, Chosōn would dispatch envoys to the Tokugawa bakufu 幕府, totaling twelve times from 1607 to 1811 (see also WANG Yong, this volume). The envoys were dispatched on a fairly regular basis. A Chosōn mission consisted of nearly five hundred Koreans; they were guided by Tsushima islanders and travelled all the way to Edo (江戸, today's Tokyo). They would deliver the letter of credence 国書 from the Chosōn King to the bakufu, receive the reply letter, and return to Korea via the same route. The local daimyōs would provide room and board and order the Confucianists to serve the Koreans. Japanese Confucianists would routinely ask for the writings, drawings, or poems from the Koreans in part to satisfy the exotic tastes of their feudal lords.

Gradually the Confucianists came to realize that it would be much more practical to directly communicate with the Koreans via brush-talk rather than relying on the Tsushima islanders' interpretation. As mentioned, the status of written Chinese as a *scripta franca* and its morphographic nature made it possible for writing-mediated brush conversation to take place between the Japanese and Koreans who did not have a shared spoken language. Being more conversant than their Japanese counterparts in general, the Korean literati tended to feel that they were gifted with excellent skills in Sinitic. Moreover, since the Koreans considered themselves superior to the Japanese based on their skills in poetry writing and meaning-making through brush-talk, the Japanese found brush-talking with Korean visitors a good opportunity to prove their Sinitic skills. The number of Japanese Confucianists wishing to meet with the Koreans grew exponentially each time the Chosōn mission was received. Some well-versed Japanese literati were able to engage in extended poetic improvisation and long brush-talks with Koreans.

The Korean envoys and the Japanese literati also engaged in poetic exchange and socializing chanting (唱和, Jap: *shōwa*; Kor: *ch'anghwa*) consisting of improvising poems in Sinitic (Kwǒn 2010). While the brush-talk, poetic exchange, and exchange of personal letters were routinely collected, edited, and published by the Japanese hosts, the Korean delegates would record their own experiences in Japan in the form of diaries or travelogues.

The beginning of *t'ongsinsa* missions

The Korean envoys dispatched to Edo Japan in 1636 started brush-talking on diplomatic matters as ambassadors of cultural exchange between the two countries. The envoys were officially designated as *t'ongsinsa* 通信使, literally 'transmit-trust envoy'. Prior to this, the official Korean title of the first three missions to Edo Japan (1607, 1617, 1624) was called 'Respond cum Return Envoy' (*Hoetap kyōm Swaehwansa* 回答兼刷還使), because the envoys were dispatched to deliver the Korean reply to the Japanese demand and to bring the Korean captives in Japan

back home. In 1617 and 1624, the main duty of the Chosōn envoys was to find those Koreans stranded in Japan and to bring them home.

But the Edo bakufu kept demanding Chosōn to dispatch *t'ongsinsa* missions to Japan. Tsushima, as the diplomatic mediator, received pressure from the bakufu but was aware that Korea would not accept such a request. What Tsushima ended up doing was to alter the contents of the credentials presented by both countries. In effect, whereas Korea sent their 'Respond cum Return Envoys', the Japanese side was under the impression that they were sent in the name of *t'ongsinsa*. Thus, both sides operated with this misunderstanding during the three Chosōn missions to Edo Japan in 1607, 1617, and 1624.

In 1631, Yanagawa Shigeoki 柳川調興 (1603–1684), a Tsushima Elder 家老, exposed to the bakufu that Korea in fact had not sent any *t'ongsinsa*. Yanagawa performed well in Japanese-Korean diplomacy, as well as maintaining good relations with the bakufu. Being ambitious, Yanagawa aimed to exploit and control the Japanese-Korean relations and eventually rise from a retainer of Tsushima domain to a liege lord or vassal of the Tokugawa Shogunate, the center of state power. Thus, he exposed to the bakufu the manipulation of the credentials by Sō Yoshinari 宗義成, the daimyō of Tsushima. But the bakufu would not tolerate treason and ended up siding with Sō and sending Yanagawa into exile instead.

Sō, however, had to prove to the bakufu that he could serve as a mediator in Japanese-Korean diplomatic relations in the absence of Yanagawa. To do so, he had to persuade Korea to send a real *t'ongsinsa* mission. At that time, the Later Jin 後金 (Manchurian: *Aisin Gurun*, 'golden state', 1616–1636) khanate was expanding its power in the north of Chosōn Korea. To alleviate the threat from the north and step up with defense, Korea desperately wanted peace with its southern neighbor. To do so, Korea judged that it was in their best interest not to jeopardize their amicable relations with the Sō clan. Thus, they decided to dispatch *t'ongsinsa* envoys at Sō's request. On the other hand, many of the Korean captives were already brought back home, while others were reluctant to return to Korea because they had already been accustomed to life in Japan.

The dispatch of *t'ongsinsa* missions was not only important diplomatically but also in terms of cultural exchange between Japan and Korea. In 1636, a small group of 'talents on horse' 馬上才 were dispatched together with the envoys, gaining much popularity in Japan. This shows how the *t'ongsinsa* mission started morphing into a kind of cultural event. The earliest Korean envoys were preoccupied with negotiating for the repatriation of Korean prisoners of war and tried to dodge writing poems during their mission. At that time, Korean *t'ongsinsa* envoys regarded writing poems as merely an idle activity to kill time. The early envoys were trying to avoid being criticized for wasting time on poetry-writing rather than focusing on their primary duty of negotiating for the repatriation of Korean war captives. But as the mission was formally retitled as *t'ongsinsa*, the poetic exchange came to be seen as an important means to ascertain and sustain amicable diplomatic relations between the two countries.

The first Japanese-Chosŏn brush-talks

Fujiwara Seika

The oldest Japanese-Chosŏn brush-talk record could be traced to Fujiwara Seika 藤原惺窓 (1561–1619). Fujiwara was the founder of the Japanese school of Classical Chinese literature. One of his works contained brush-talk with Kang Hang 姜沆 (1567–1618) and other war captives from Chosŏn. Being a Confucianist, Kang had exerted tremendous influence on Fujiwara. During the second Japanese invasion of the six-year Imjin war 丁酉再亂 (1597–1598), Kang fought back against the Japanese army by transporting military provisions and raising an army. He was subsequently captured and transported to Japan. After he was sent to the Fushimi castle 伏見城, he met with Fujiwara, who was patronized by Akamatsu Hiromichi 赤松広通 (1562–1600), the castellan of Tatsuno 龍野, Harima 播磨. The encounter with Fujiwara led Kang to participate in the Japanese translation of the ‘Four Books and Five Classics’ 四書五經 and the publication of other Confucian works. Since the Japanese translations of the ‘Four Books and Five Classics’ were used as textbooks for early Confucianist education in Japan, Kang exerted tremendous influence on the formation of Japanese Confucianism.

Fujiwara had already encountered Koreans when he was a monk, although no brush-talk records by him survived. In 1590, when a Korean mission was dispatched to meet with Toyotomi Hideyoshi 豊臣秀吉 (1537–1598) in Edo Japan, Fujiwara visited the envoys at their residence and exchanged brush-talk and poems with them. Hō Sōng 許箇 (1548–1612), the Third-Envoy (*sōchanggwan* 書狀官), wrote ‘About the name Sairitsushi’ 柴立子說. *Sairitsushi*, literally ‘standing old tree’, was Fujiwara’s pen name. That meeting with Kang Hang left a deep impression on Fujiwara, who eventually abandoned monkhood to become a Confucianist (Kwak 2010).

Hayashi Razan

Fujiwara, having grown into the first Japanese Confucianist, turned down the invitation of the bakufu to serve as an official and recommended his disciple Hayashi Razan 林羅山 (1583–1657) instead. Hayashi then became the first ‘Confucian official’ 儒官 of Edo Japan. In 1607, he taught the classics to the second Shōgun Tokugawa Hidetada 德川秀忠. He also took charge of finding foreign books or doing research for the bakufu and the first Shōgun Tokugawa Ieyasu, who retreated to Sunpu 駿府 (today’s Shizuoka 静岡県).

Hayashi’s list of works included the brush-talk he had with the Koreans, allowing us to discern the types of people he encountered. His first brush-talk record was a brush conversation with Sa’myōngdang 四溟堂 (1544–1610). Hayashi, aged 23, visited Sa’myōngdang in the second lunar month of 1605 when the latter was staying at Fushimi. Sa’myōngdang was not only a monk well versed in Sinitic but also a leader of warrior monks who gained many victories against the Japanese army during the Imjin war. He was dispatched to Japan under the

title ‘envoy to probe the enemy’ (*t’amjōksa* 探敵使) in 1604, in response to the Tokugawa bakufu’s proposed restoration of diplomatic relations, a peace initiative mediated by Tsushima. The Chosōn court purposely included a monk among the envoys based on the fact that Japan was a Buddhist country. His brush-talk with Hayashi was very brief, with Sa’myōngdang asking Hayashi about his knowledge of Confucianism and Hayashi’s short responses. At the end of the brush-talk, Sa’myōngdang complimented Hayashi on his talent. The fact that Hayashi met with Sa’myōngdang to inquire about Confucianism even though he was a monk suggests that Hayashi viewed Chosōn as a country where Confucianism was more developed.

After he was employed by the bakufu, Hayashi met Chosōn envoys more actively, but it was only in 1636 that he began engaging in brush-talk with them in earnest. The bakufu, in order to prevent the recurrence of the manipulation of credence letters, adopted the policy of *Iteian* Rotation 以酌庵輪番制. *Iteian* was the name of a temple in Tsushima where diplomatic documents between Japan and Chosōn were handled. Under the policy of *Iteian* Rotation, the bakufu would send monks from Kyoto to *Iteian* on a rotating basis, the purpose being to inspect the diplomatic documents so that the bakufu could have better control over Japanese-Chosōn diplomacy (Hong 2013). At the same time, the bakufu started to write the Japanese credentials on their own in place of seeking Tsushima’s assistance. As the first Confucianist official of the bakufu, Hayashi had to attend to one of the important tasks: the writing of the credentials. But the bakufu was familiar with neither the style of diplomatic documents nor the official terminologies, unlike Tsushima interpreters who were familiar with the conventions in Korea. This led to frequent complaints from the Chosōn envoys. In order to prevent further blunders, it became customary for the person in charge of the Japanese credentials to consult the Korean envoys beforehand. This gave Hayashi plenty of opportunities to visit the Korean envoys and to engage in brush conversation with them.

What kinds of topics did Hayashi ‘talk’ about with the Korean envoys in 1636? What they discussed may be discerned by reading *Record of sea travel* 海槎錄, a journal written by Kim Se-ryōm, the Vice-Envoy on that mission. According to Kim’s journal records, on 12:13, 1636, Hayashi came and asked him about certain Chinese characters used in Confucian classics. Kim was impressed by Hayashi’s knowledge of Sinitic and answered his questions thoroughly. From this example, we can infer that Hayashi and Kim not only met for official purposes, but also exchanged information on matters of personal interest.

While discussing Confucianism and Confucianists in Chosōn, Hayashi inquired about Chosōn’s landscape, customs, and products. He also asked about ‘the method of raising hawks’ (*yang’üngbang* 養鷹方). Thereupon Kim reprimanded Hayashi for asking trivial questions like raising hawks and dogs when he was expecting more serious questions. To Kim’s rebuke, Hayashi apologized. Kim then let Kwōn Ch’ik 權拭 (1599–1667), a ‘teacher of formal diplomatic writing’ 吏文學官, answer Hayashi’s questions. Hayashi’s writings do not contain brush-talk with Kim, but there are some records of brush-talk with Kwōn and the

secretary Mun Hongjōk 文弘續. Content-wise, most of the brush-talks are concerned with the national administration, culture, and products of Chosōn. Kim's attitude to Hayashi's question provides a striking contrast between what it meant to be a Confucianist in Chosōn and in Japan. Kim had won first place in the national civil service examination. He was an elite bureaucrat who served important roles, such as lecturing on Chinese classics to the prince. For elite bureaucrats like him, studying the classics was first and foremost to study political philosophy regarding how to participate in state administration. They were not interested in books providing technical or practical knowledge such as medicine, interpretation, the raising of hawks, and the like.

But being a Confucian official, Hayashi was not in a position to provide political advice or wield political authority. While he served as tutor of the Shōgun on Chinese classics, it was for the Shōgun's personal education and interests and not for promoting his own personal views of a particular school of political philosophy. It was thus more important for Hayashi to gain practical information from books written in Sinitic, such as cracking the complexity of certain Chinese characters but also the art of raising hawks effectively. Hawk hunting was the most luxurious hobby for a daimyō (as for Korean aristocrats as well), and hawks were among the gifts that the Korean king presented to the Shōgun.

Hayashi had the exceptional opportunity to engage in brush conversation with Vice-Envoy Kim upon the latter's invitation. Kim had a high regard for Hayashi's knowledge of Confucian classics. Even though there were Tsushima people fluent in Korean taking charge of interpretation, brush-talk was preferred probably because it was an opportunity for both sides to showcase their erudition as well as membership within the Sinosphere. In 1643, Hayashi entertained the Korean envoys for the second time, along with his own sons. The *t'ongsinsa* mission in 1655 was received by his son Hayashi Gahō 林鷺峰 (1618–1680), and the one in 1682 was received by his grandson Hayashi Hōkō 林鳳岡 (1644–1732). Up until 1811, the year of the last *t'ongsinsa* mission, all the descendants of the Hayashi clan entertained the Chosōn envoys in their capacity as the Confucianist official of the bakufu. After each mission, the brush-talks and the poetic exchange with the Korean envoys were edited and compiled for publication. These compilations, however, did not include Hayashi's questions for Kim Se-ryōm. It only included Hayashi's polite reception and the poems he improvised as the official host representing the bakufu.

The publication of brush-talk collections

'Collection of Chosōn brush-talk' 朝鮮筆談集

For generations, the Hayashi clan met with the Chosōn envoys, exchanged poems and engaged in brush conversation with them. But it is only in 1748 that the records of these encounters were published. The records had been kept in the form of bound volumes, perhaps because the Hayashi's, as a family of Confucian officials under the bakufu, needed them for internal purposes. The Hayashi's kept a diverse array

of brush-talk interactions and exchanged collections of poetry published by others. The ‘Annotation of the Asakusa library catalog’ 淺草文庫書目解題, compiled by Murayama Tokujun 村山徳淳 (1832–1893) in the Meiji era, allows us to estimate how many books the Hayashi clan actually possessed. The primary source of the Asakusa library was the collection of ‘Shōheizaka School’ 昌平坂學問所, which was previously the school of the Hayashi family during the late Edo period before it became a national school. Thus, the Asakusa library has its roots in the private collection of the Hayashi’s literary treasures. Included in Murayama’s list is a cluster of 42 documents classified as the ‘Cluster of brush-talks with Korean visitors’ 韓客筆談類. They were all commercially printed books, suggesting that they were probably among the most popular books of their time.

The first one of this cluster of 42 documents is the ‘Collection of Choson brush-talk’ 朝鮮筆談集 compiled by Ishikawa Jōzan 石川丈山 (1583–1672). Ishikawa was the first true Sinitic poet of the Edo Period. He formerly served Tokugawa Ieyasu as a samurai and fought for the Siege of Osaka. He lost his status of samurai after breaching a military command and became a monk. Having learned Confucianism from Fujiwara Seika, he built ‘the Hall of Poet-Muses’ (*Shisendō* 詩仙堂) in his later years and spent his time there writing poems in Sinitic. *Shisendō* also served as a forum for poetic exchange.

The Korean appearing in Ishikawa’s collection is Kwǒn Ch’ik who, as mentioned earlier, was a teacher of formal diplomatic writing 吏文學官 and had a brush conversation with Hayashi Razan at the order of Kim Se-ryōm. *Imun* 吏文 refers to various official documents to be sent abroad, which the *hakkwan* 學官 was responsible for. Kwǒn was well known for his writing skills and was recommended by Im Kwang to participate in the mission as the Chief-Envoy’s attendant. He was also famous for being the author of *Kangnojōn* 姜虜傳, a novel based on the Battle of Sarhū 薩爾滸之戰 (1619) between Later Jin and Ming-Choson allied forces, which he claimed to have participated in.³

In the first lunar month of 1637, the Korean envoys stayed in Honkoku Temple 本國寺 in Kyoto after their visit to Edo. Because he was curious about how well the Koreans wrote Sinitic poems, Ishikawa visited that temple, where he met Kwǒn. Having met for the first time, Kwǒn and Ishikawa learned about each other through brush-talk. The two had one thing in common: they were both talented in poetry writing. Ishikawa was also interested in Kwǒn’s several visits to China, where he wanted to visit as well. As soon as he met Kwǒn, Ishikawa gave him his book of poetry as a gift. During their brush conversation, he requested Kwǒn to take a look at his book, give comments, and make suggestions for revision.

Ishikawa wrote to Kwǒn very politely, referring to him as a *Professor of poetry* 詩學教授 and consistently addressing him as *scholar* 學士. Even though he was 15 years older, Ishikawa was willing to learn from Kwǒn. At first, Kwǒn politely declined Ishikawa’s request, saying that he was unable to concentrate because he was so tired after a long trip. But the interactional pattern of the brush-talk

³ According to Kwǒn (2019: 57–58), Kwǒn Ch’ik might not have participated in the Battle of Sarhū.

changed after Kwǒn asked Ishikawa specifically about literary figures and activities in Japan. This is in stark contrast with Kwǒn's brush-talks with other Japanese, probably because he was impressed by Ishikawa's academic talents after seeing his poems and their brush-talk interaction.

Kwǒn claimed that no Japanese writer could match Ishikawa's poetry. He described Ishikawa as the 'Li Bai and the Du Fu of Japan' 日東之李杜. Li Bai and Du Fu are historically the best-known poets of the 'Prosperous Tang' 盛唐 period, which was widely regarded as the pinnacle of creativity in Chinese poetry composition. Thus, Kwǒn was praising Ishikawa as the best poet in Japan. Kwǒn also wrote a foreword for Ishikawa's book of poetry, which says 'the metrics [of Ishikawa's poems] are close to the Prosperous Tang and the rhythm is a sequel to the "Major Court Hymns"', 律逼盛唐 韻賡大雅. Kwǒn's praise left a great impact on the Japanese world of poets of that epoch. According to Ishikawa's friend Noma Seiken 野間靜軒 (1608–1676), this event boosted Ishikawa's fame considerably as more and more people came to learn poetry from him. Noma also met Kwǒn, but only Ishikawa was praised as such. On 05:15, 1638, one and a half years after meeting Kwǒn, Ishikawa compiled his brush-talk with Kwǒn to show it to his friends visiting Shisendō. The printed copies accessible today were commercially published in 1682 and 1711, as public interest on *t'ongsinsa* envoys grew in each of the subsequent Chosǒn missions to Edo Japan.

The *Collection of Chosǒn brush-talk* illustrated Ishikawa's meeting with a Korean alone, with neither card nor letter showing his social status or ability. Kwǒn's praise of him as the best poet in Japan toward the end of their brush conversation may serve as a remarkable episode of a Japanese-Chosǒn encounter for the newly emerged class of Japanese Confucianists. The *Collection* must have been a popular commercial publication among the Confucianists, especially in the seventeenth century when the Japanese publication industry began to prosper (Clements 2015).

In 1695, Kwǒn's collection of 50 Chinese poems, the 'Must-reads for poets' 詩人要考集, was published in Kyoto by *Shōrindō* 書林堂. It consists of 50 poems, each with a portrait of its poet, and an appendix explaining the nuts and bolts of poetry writing in Sinitic. Its introduction states that Kwǒn selected the 50 poems from the 'Beads of poetic styles' 聯珠詩格 that he edited and took the manuscript with him to Japan. Someone in Japan got it from Kwǒn and kept it until the publisher *Shōrindō* obtained and published it. Although Kwǒn selected the poems, the poems themselves were all written by Chinese poets, with an appendix added by the Japanese publisher. Thus, the book has little to do with Chosǒn. Nevertheless, on its cover was written 'Selected by the Chosǒn scholar Kukhǒn' 朝鮮學士菊軒撰 (Kukhǒn being Kwǒn's pen name), suggesting how highly Chosǒn scholarship was respected and trusted by the Japanese literati during the early eighteenth century.

'Collection of Kyerim poetic exchange' 鷄林唱和集

The publication of the *Collection of Chosǒn brush-talk* in 1636 in Japan was rather an exceptional case, as no other similar collections were published following

the Chosōn missions of 1643 and 1655. The publication was made possible by Hayashi and Ishikawa, who were prominent intellectuals of their time. It was only in 1682 that collections of brush-talk and poetic exchange began to be published in large quantities in Japan. The publication process was so fast that the brush-talks held when the Korean envoys were heading to Edo were already published by the time they were returning home. This was clearly related to the rapid development of the Japanese publication industry and the growth of the Japanese readership of literature in Sinitic (Clements 2015).

The 'Collection of Kyerim poetic exchange' 鶴林唱和集 (Jap: *Keirin shōwashū*; Kor: *Kyerim changhwajip*, Seo 1711), is perhaps the largest collection of Japanese-Korean brush-talk and poetic exchange to date, consisting of works from 115 literati. Together with its sequel 'Collection of the poetic exchange of seven poets' 七家唱和集 (Jap: *Shichika shōwashū*; Kor: *Chilga changhwajip*), the *Kyerim* collection comprises most of the brush-talk and poetic exchange produced and collected in 1711.

The brush conversations in the *Kyerim* collection afford us a glimpse into the Literary Sinitic world in Japan during the early eighteenth century. The Japanese monks, who were experts in Classical Chinese literature, only had brief conversations with the Korean envoys because the two groups could not find common topics to talk about. But the newly emerged class of Japanese Confucianists made an effort to engage in extended brush conversations with the Korean literati. The Japanese Confucianists, skilled in Sinitic, could freely converse with the Korean scholars and had the privilege to meet with them on different occasions. They were at the forefront of the Sinitic-based literature in Japan.

The difference in sociocultural status between Japanese and Korean scholars

When the Confucianists, employees of the daimyōs, met the Korean literati, they called themselves 'serving tutors' 侍講 or 'historian ministers' 史臣. This is because their main job was to tutor their lords on Chinese classics or write documents for them. After the *han* schools 藩校 were established, they used their titles such as 'chief teacher' 學頭, 'writer' 文學, or 'secretary' 書記. Although they rarely gave political advice, they were principally experts in Sinitic-based literature in charge of Chinese books or written documents. Their Sinitic literacy was crucial in deciphering the Chinese books delivered by Chinese merchants, which contained the most advanced knowledge of their time. Thus, the questions posed by the Confucianists in 1711 were similar to those posed by Hayashi Razan in 1636: They were mainly about Korea, the Confucian classics, and other books in Chinese. The Confucianists wanted to verify and expand their knowledge of Korea through their exchange with the envoys, as well as proving their ability by winning recognition from the Koreans. On the other hand, the Korean literati were bureaucrats(-to-be), selected through national civil service examinations. Because all the envoys were bureaucrats, they behaved like bureaucrats with diplomatic missions even when engaged in brush-talking privately, which helps explain why

they would never express anything that might be critical or tarnish the reputation of their own country.

The Korean envoys were interested in the politics of Japan and other countries. Okajima Kanzan 岡島冠山 (1674–1728), who wrote Mandarin textbooks and translated Mandarin into Japanese, met Chōng Ch'ang-ju 鄭昌周 (1652–?), a Korean-Chinese interpreter among the Korean envoys on the 1711 mission. Chosōn included Japanese interpreters in their missions to China and Chinese interpreters in their missions to Japan, in the hope of establishing contact with foreigners in China or Japan so as to obtain valuable information from third parties. Even though Okajima and Chōng could have talked about their shared interest in learning Mandarin, Chōng rather showed interest in Okajima's hometown Nagasaki, questioning the number of Chinese merchant ships entering Nagasaki and their relationship with Japan. This is one example showing that the envoys, including the interpreters, were devoted to their duty of collecting information or intelligence about the political situation of other countries.

In sum, there was a gap between the interests and the attitudes of Korean envoys and diplomatic bureaucrats on one hand and Japanese literati and intellectuals on the other. This led to a divergence of the 1711 Japanese-Korean brush-talks into two types: One being poetic exchange between the Korean poets and the Japanese literati, the other being medical exchange between Japanese and Korean medical doctors.

As mentioned earlier, despite being positioned as 'Confucian officials' 儒官, the Japanese literati were closer to a class of scholars than that of bureaucrats in accordance with a hierarchy of national ranks and files, unlike their Chosōn counterparts. Apart from becoming experts of Confucian classics and other literary works from China, they were also expected to familiarize themselves with specialized technical knowledge of foreign origin, especially from China as printed in Chinese books. This is clearly illustrated by the Japanese term 'Confucian doctor' 儒医, which literally combines two areas of expertise in one and the same person, namely medical doctor with a good command of medical knowledge, but also a scholar of Confucian classics. What these two areas of knowledge have in common is that both required a high level of reading skills in written Chinese. Such a status or practice being unknown in Chosōn Korea, of particular interest are a number of 'knowledge gaps' that are discernible in several brush-talk records in the *Collection of Kyerim poetic exchange*.

One instructive example may be found in the brush-talk record produced by Inō Jakusui 稲生若水 (1655–1715). When he met the Chosōn *chesulgwan* (製述官, 'official in charge of writing') and other secretaries 書記, Inō indicated that he was compiling a 'list of plants and animals' 庶物類纂 under the auspices of Maeda Tsunanori 前田綱紀 (1643–1724), lord of the Kaga Han 加賀藩. Functionally it was meant to be an encyclopedic introduction to about 3,590 species of animals and plants, a monumental undertaking that was only brought to completion in 1738 by his disciple Niwa Shōhaku 丹羽正伯 (1691–1756). In this brush conversation, therefore, Inō's interest focused exclusively on animals and plants. For instance, Inō took the trouble of showing real fish and, after

explaining their habits in great detail, asked whether they existed in Chosōn and what they were called.

Compared with the very detailed question raised by Inō, Chosōn literati's answers were simplistic and uninformative to say the least, as none of them possessed the expert knowledge needed to provide an enlightening response. Inō also had a brush conversation with the 'good doctor' (*yangui* 良醫) Ki Tu-mun 奇斗文. He brought along plant specimens and asked Ki rather specific questions one after another. Ki was able to give sensible responses based on his knowledge of herbal medicine. In terms of intellectual competence, Inō seemed to come closer to being a good doctor than a *chesulgwan*. This trend can also be seen in the brush-talk of Takeda Shun'an 竹田春庵 (1661–1745), who was also a Confucian scholar and medical doctor from Fukuoka. He sent a long list of questions to *chesulgwan* Yi Hyōn 李顥 and *yangui* Ki Tu-mun, respectively. Takeda's questions in both lists showed remarkable similarity between his attitudes toward Confucian classics and books on medicine. There was hardly any difference between the way he treated scholarly questions concerning Confucian classics and those concerning Chinese drugs. What they had in common was his determination to fill unknown knowledge gaps, be they questions related to Confucian canons or Chinese medicine.

Korean and Japanese literati had rather different views toward Neo-Confucianism. For the Koreans, it was the foundation of Chosōn society, whereas, for the Japanese, it was simply a part or branch of technical knowledge in Sinitic literature. To interpret Confucian classics was a question of ideology for the Koreans, but for the Japanese, it was simply a matter of deciphering technical know-how in Chinese. This is probably why exchange between the Korean envoys and Japanese Confucianists gradually changed topically from scholarly discussions to poetic exchange out of concern for courtesy and amity.

The medical doctors on both sides, on the other hand, did not have any ideological taboos between them. They were thus able to engage in discussion and exchange of medical knowledge freely. Starting from 1711 and throughout the eighteenth century, various records of Japan-Chosōn brush-talk related to medicine were published in Japan (Hur 2010). This was because, as mentioned earlier, cultural exchange had become an important part of the *t'ongsinsa* mission, including exchange of medical knowledge, not least because by the eighteenth century, Chosōn Korea's stature in the study of medicine was highly respected and well acknowledged by Japan as well as China (Ham et al. 2007).

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have illustrated how the newly emerged class of Japanese Confucianists were engaged in brush conversation and exchanged poetry with the Korean envoys during the early Edo period. The Korean envoys were the only national envoys dispatched to Japan, unlike the Dutch envoys dispatched by the Dutch East India Company or the Ryukyuan envoys who followed the Satsuma domain's instruction. Because Chosōn was a country bordering on and exchanging

envoys periodically with China, she was able to trade with and observe China directly, unlike Japan, where Chinese books and goods could only be brought in through imports via merchant ships. The Japanese Confucianists, admiring China, were eager to meet and talk with Korean envoys, whose evaluation of their literary performance had great authority and impact among the Japanese literati. As the Japanese Confucianists grew in numbers, the types of Japanese literati the Korean envoys met diversified, which is reflected in the *Collections of Kyerim poetic exchange*.

However, whereas the Confucianists in Korea were bureaucrats selected via national civil service examinations, the Confucianists in Japan had inherently different social statuses given that political power rested with hereditary warrior lords. Thus, both sides entered into transcultural brush conversations with rather different objectives and expectations: The Korean diplomats were bureaucrats who wanted to maintain good diplomatic relations with the Japanese literati through writing while not forgetting to fulfill their duty of gathering information and intelligence. On the other hand, the Japanese literati were experts on technical knowledge, expecting intellectually rich discussions with and enlightening teachings by the Korean literati. The Japanese-Korean brush-talks during the early Edo period allow us to observe how the two groups of Confucianists, despite their linguistic and sociocultural differences, exchanged lingua-cultural and technical knowledge through the *scripta franca* that they shared, namely Classical Chinese or Literary Sinitic (Kornicki 2018).

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