

East Asian Confucianisms

Texts in Contexts



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Preface

Over the long span of history, Confucian texts travelled across every country and region in East Asia. The vitality and openness of Confucian texts inspired the curiosity of readers in each country and invited those readers to engage in creative dialogue with the texts. Through the continuing intellectual and spiritual conversation among Confucian scholars, a Confucian community was created. This volume tells the story of the importance of the Confucian traditions and why and how Confucian texts were reinterpreted within the different ambiances and contexts of East Asia. Therefore, we will discover that “East Asian Confucianisms” is an intellectual community that is transnational and multi-lingual. It evolved in interaction between Confucian “universal values” and the local conditions present in each East Asian country.

Some chapters in this volume are completely revised versions of articles that had been published elsewhere in simplified or altered forms. Therefore I would like to express my thanks to the respective publishers for making those texts available for the present publication. Chapter 1 was published as “Interpretations of the Confucian Classics and Political Power in East Asia,” *The Medieval History Journal* 11/1 (June 2008): pp. 101–21. Chapter 2 was published as “On the ‘Contextual Turn’ in the Tokugawa Japanese Interpretation of the Confucian Classics: Types and Problems,” *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 9/2 (June 2010): pp. 211–23. Chapter 3 was published as “East Asian Confucian Conceptions of the Public and Private Realms,” in Kam-Por Yu, Julia Tao, and Philip J. Ivanhoe, eds., *Taking Confucian Ethics Seriously: Contemporary Theories and Applications* (Albany, NY: University of New York Press, 2011), pp. 73–98. Chapter 4 was published as “The Role of Tasan Learning in the Making of East Asian Confucianisms,” *Taiwan Journal of East Asian Studies* 9/2 (December 2012): pp. 153–68. Chapter 7 was published as “The Confucian World of Thought in Eighteenth-Century East Asia: A Comparative Perspective,” in *East Asian Confucianisms: Interactions and Innovations. Proceedings of the Conference of May 1–2, 2009* (New Jersey: Confucius Institute at Rutgers University, 2010), pp. 1–25. Chapter 8 was published as “Itō Jinsai on the Analects,” *The Journal of*

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Prologue

The purpose of this book is not to repeat the cliché that Confucianism is the *sine qua non* of East Asian civilization, but rather to suggest that the paradigm of “East Asian Confucianisms” can open up a brand new vista for the study of Confucian traditions in East Asia. In this prologue, I will argue that we must finally leave the ghetto of “national learning,” with its practice of holding state-centrism as the basis of Confucianism. Instead, we must reconsider the development of Confucianism in a broader East Asian perspective. By contextualizing Confucianism in East Asian cultures and societies we find ourselves in a better position to appreciate the diversity and variety of East Asian Confucian traditions.

In this prologue I will discuss the legitimacy of studying “East Asian Confucianisms,” and the promise that this new field of study holds. I will engage with the twentieth-century Japanese scholar Tsuda Sōkichi (津田左右吉, 1873–1961), particularly his doubts on the validity of the concept of “East Asian Civilization.” I shall also confirm “East Asian Confucianisms” as a valid new field of study with a rich and distinct “unity in diversity.” Moreover, I shall suggest that seeing Confucianism in the wide, East Asian perspective opens up a novel vista for future investigations and leads us to new and as yet undiscovered questions.

1 The possibility

If we are to discuss the legitimacy of “East Asian Confucianisms” as a field of study, then we must begin with Tsuda Sōkichi’s objection to the idea of “East Asian civilization.” A guiding thread in Tsuda’s enormous scholarship is the idea of the absolute difference between Japanese and Chinese culture. If this were true, the concepts of “East Asian Civilization” and “East Asian Spirit” would exist only within our cultural imagination.

Tsuda insisted that the Japanese lifestyle differs completely from that of the Chinese, especially in clan and social organization, political style and customs.

He saw nothing in common between Japan and China, claiming that the two differ in ethnicity, language, and even species. Differences in regional conditions, and in geographic, climatic, and other causes also led to differences between the clothing, food, shelter and social psychology of these two peoples. Quoting Sakuma Shōzan (佐久間象山, 1811–1864), a nineteenth-century Japanese thinker and a scholar of military learning, he argues that the expression “East Asia” only gained general cultural currency during the nineteenth century. In fact, there was nothing substantial to the concept of “East Asia.”¹

Were we to survey all these points, we would find that certain features of Tsuda’s intellectual background inclined him to deny the idea of an encompassing East Asian Civilization. He was a strong supporter of the Meiji regime’s new culture, and openly disdained Chinese culture. His writings clearly conveyed this stance and repeatedly stressed the gap between these two cultures. However, as his contemporary Sinologist Masubuchi Tatsuo (増淵龍夫, 1916–1983) has pointed out, Tsuda’s critique of Chinese culture reflected an outsider’s perspective, without any sympathetic understanding of China.² Tsuda lived in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, a period when Japan was undergoing radical modernization and a progression toward militarism. It is hardly surprising that Tsuda was deeply influenced by the views of his time.

The renowned Sinologist Naitō Konan (内藤湖南, 1866–1934) affirmed that East Asian history had been formed and conditioned by Chinese culture. Yet he stressed only what he thought to be the advanced features of that culture.³ When he traveled to China, he often felt uncomfortable with its people and customs, even distressed by their apparent barbarism.⁴ Having embraced this sense of Japanese superiority, he felt very out of place when visiting the new Japanese colony of Taiwan and argued that the Taiwanese did not deserve equal rights under the Japanese Empire.⁵

Slightly earlier, Fukuzawa Yukichi (福澤諭吉, 1834–1901), a pivotal architect of modern Japan, stated in one of his influential works that the Western powers represented the epitome of progress. He believed the European powers and America were the most civilized, followed by the half-developed Asian Turkey,

1 Tsuda Sōkichi 津田左右吉, *Tsuda Sōkichi zenshū* 津田左右吉全集 [Complete Works of Tsuda Sōkichi] (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1965), vol. 20, p. 195, pp. 302–3.

2 Masubuchi Tatsuo 増淵龍夫, “Nihon no kindai shigakushi niokeru Chūgoku to Nihon: Tsuda Sōkichi no ba’ai 日本近代史学史における中国と日本：津田左右吉の場合 [China and Japan in the History of Historiography of Modern Japan],” in his *Rekishika no Dōjidaishi teki Kōsatsu ni tsuite* 歴史家の同時代史的考察について [A Historian’s Observation of Contemporary History] (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1983), pp. 3–48.

3 Naitō Konan 内藤湖南, *Naitō Konan zenshū* 内藤湖南全集 [Complete Works of Naitō Konan] (Tokyo: Chikuma shoten, 1944), vol. 1, p. 9.

4 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 75.

5 *Ibid.*, pp. 394–6.

China, and Japan, with the barbaric African and Australian nations last. In addition to this classification, he thought that China had regressed in the evolutionary stages of civilization.⁶

This predilection for worshiping the West and looking down on Asian cultures (especially Chinese) was characteristic of thought in a Japan that had just completed the Meiji modernization. By drawing a firm line between Japan and China, Tsuda not only exposed his scorn for China, but also reflected the zeitgeist of his age.

Nevertheless, Tsuda's critique of the concept of East Asian Civilization offers some methodological suggestions for the possibility of "East Asian Confucianisms" and hints at a kind of methodological individualism. For Tsuda, general "East Asian Confucianisms" do not exist. What does exist are particular entities with unique features, such as Chinese Confucianism, Japanese Confucianism, and Korean Confucianism. Thus, comprehensive "East Asian Confucianisms" exist only when we can see and examine Confucianism in each of these cultures.

2 The rationale

2.1 East Asian Confucianisms as a reality of history

The rationale for proposing East Asian Confucianisms as a field of study is twofold. On the one hand, "East Asian Confucianisms" embraces the Confucian traditions of China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan. On the other hand, the varied Confucian traditions in these cultures did not form a mechanical assemblage, but rather a comprehensive, developing, and systematic whole.

"East Asian Confucianisms" displays a genetic developmental interconnectivity. It is well known that Confucianism originated in Shandong, China, two thousand years ago. By the sixteenth century it had spread to Japan across the vital bridge of Korea and taken up a major place in Japan's philosophical mainstream. During the Tokugawa period, the Japanese Zhu Xi (朱熹, Huian, 晦庵, 1130–1200) school of Confucianism began to take shape. This was largely due to the great influence of Zhu Xi studies in Joseon (1391–1910) Korea, especially in the writings of the Korean scholar Yi Toegye (李退溪, 1501–1570), most of whose works were also published in Japan. Later, a Ming (1368–1644) scholar Luo Qinshun (羅欽順, 1466–1547) revised Zhu Xi's philosophy in his *Kunzhiji* (困知記, *Knowledge Acquired through Adversity*). This book had a profound impact on

6 Fukuzawa Yukichi 福澤諭吉, *Bunmeiron no Gairyaku* 文明論の概略 [Introduction to the Theory of Civilizations] (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1997), pp. 25–55.

the Tokugawa world of thought. Luo's book was printed in Japan on the basis of the Korean version.⁷

Apart from journeying across the Korean peninsula, Chinese Confucian classics also reached Japan directly by sea. Chinese classics began to appear in Japan from the ninth century, and by the nineteenth century seventy to eighty percent of the Chinese classics could be found there. In addition to the classics, Japanese thought and culture were also greatly influenced by other Chinese publications such as histories and biographies, local gazettes and law books.⁸

In the historical development of East Asian Confucianisms, many classics and the ideas therein were transmitted from China to Korea and then Japan, like expanding ripples on a pond, creating developmental inter-connectedness.

By the same token, Confucianism throughout East Asia exhibits a similar structural pattern. Despite the fact that Confucianism in China, Korea, Japan, and Taiwan displays regional features, Confucians in these different places read the same Confucian classics, such as the *Analects*, the *Mencius*, the *Great Learning* and the *Doctrine of the Mean*. They all came to ponder the core ideas of the Confucian tradition, reflecting on what Confucius meant when he said "A single thread connects my Way" (*Analects* 4.15, 15.3) or "At fifty, I comprehended the mandate of Heaven" (*Analects* 2.4) etc. Yet Confucian scholars of different regions promoted their own site-specific interpretations of the Confucian traditions.

All such problems constitute a series of questions commonly shared by East Asian Confucians. Consequently, a Confucian system of thought with East Asian characteristics came to emerge and exhibit a set of "family resemblances," which can aptly be termed "East Asian Confucianisms." Such a Confucian family of ideas and problems conveys the sense that East Asian Confucianisms form a *system* of thought.

7 Abe Yoshio 阿部吉雄, *Nihon Shushigaku to Chōsen* 日本朱子学と朝鮮 [*Japanese Zhu Xi School of Neo-Confucianism and Korea*] (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku shuppankai, 1965, 1975), p. 19.

8 Yian Shaochang 嚴紹璁, ed., *Riben cang Songren wenji shanben gouchen* 日本藏宋人文集善本鈎沉 [*Selections of the Rare Editions of the Literary Works of Song Literati Preserved in Japan*] (Hangzhou: Hangzhou University Press, 1996), pp. 1–2; Ōba Ōsamu 大庭脩, Qi Yinping 戚印平, trans., *Jianghu shidai Zhongguo dianji liubo Riben zhi yanjiu* 江戸時代中國典籍流播日本之研究 [*A Study of the Dissemination of Chinese Texts in Tokugawa Japan*] (Hangzhou: Hangzhou University Press, 1998).

2.2 East Asian Confucianisms as the method of the humanities

To characterize the genetic progression of East Asian Confucianisms as the outward spread of ripples which led to a simultaneous developmental and systematic comprehensiveness would leave us under the impression that Chinese Confucianism is the core or center, and Confucian ideas in other places merely peripheral.

Koyasu Nobukuni (子安宣邦, 1933–) recently called into question this impression. He noted that such a view would propagate a political center–periphery dichotomy and cultural origin–reception tension. Such a view would amount to an intellectual version of pre-modern Chinese imperialism.⁹ The ripple effect is one that sends forth Chinese cultural chauvinism. And indeed Koyasu’s doubts are absolutely correct. The monistic approach which would take China’s Confucian tradition as the central culture would mean adopting as the basis of our developmental explanation the civilized–barbaric distinction embraced by the Chinese hegemony. It is little wonder that Tsuda despised China with his Japan-centrism and Japanese chauvinism in return.

China’s cultural egocentrism has been deep-rooted. Its imperial rulers thought they were the center of the world and they looked down on the peoples of the surrounding “barbarian” lands. According to Wang Ermin (王爾敏, 1927–), the term *Zhongguo* (中國, central state or middle kingdom) was used in several senses in the pre-Qin classics, usually involving a center–border outlook, thus suggesting that the Chinese monistic cultural outlook was formed very early indeed.¹⁰ However, as I shall argue in chapter 10, some Japanese intellectuals of the seventeenth century took *Zhongguo* to refer to their own homeland, Japan, since they felt Japan had been imbued with the Way of Confucius and the authentic spirit of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* more adequately than had China. Moreover, the concept of *Zhongguo* in the contemporary Taiwanese worldview can be divided into a cultural China and political China. While these two elements are not completely cut off from one another, there is a degree of tension and struggle between them.

9 Koyasu Nobukuni 子安宣邦, *Ajia wa dō katararete kita ka – Kindai Nihon no orientarizumu* 「アジア」はどう語られてきたか – 近代日本のオリエンタリズム [How can Asia be discussed? Orientalism in Modern Japan] (Tokyo: Fujiwara shoten, 2003), pp. 171–98.

10 Wang Ermin 王爾敏, “‘Zhongguo’ mingcheng suoyuan jiqi jindai quanshi 「中國」名稱溯源及其近代詮釋 [The Origin of ‘China’ and its Interpretation in Modern Times],” in *Zhongguo jindai sixiang shilun* 中國近代思想史論 [Essays on Modern Chinese Intellectual History] (Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1977), pp. 441–80. Cf. Michael Loewe, “The Heritage Left to the Empires,” in Michael Loewe, Edward I. Shaughnessy, eds., *The Cambridge History of Ancient China: From the Origins of Civilization to 221 B.C.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 992–5.

This monistic, Sino-centric, political-cultural solipsism¹¹ should have collapsed together with the downfall of the Qing Empire (1644–1911). After all, the new cultural-political orders of the twenty-first century were formed with the strong affirmation of cultural pluralism, on which “East Asian Confucianisms” is espoused in Taiwan today. Acknowledging the varied Confucian traditions in East Asia – as manifested in China, Korea, Japan and Taiwan – we see that Confucianism in each place expresses its own particular strengths, weaknesses, and its rich multi-faceted contents.

Nevertheless, while each regional version of Confucianism responds to the specific features and requirements of that locale, there is a clear commonality within their visible diversities. That is, Confucians of different places still pay the same respect to Confucius (551–479 BCE) and Mencius (371–289 BCE) as did their spiritual forebears. Their specific needs and requirements respond to the classics, thereby opening up a new vista of Confucian interpretation, constructing localized Confucianism reflective of their region’s specific ethos. In short, the significant commonality of East Asian Confucianisms is this “plurality.” Thus the common framework of the Confucian traditions need not foster cultural monism but can provide a prism that highlights the rich diversity of East Asian cultures.

Viewing “East Asian Confucianisms” in this way makes the study of this field an example of the “method”¹² used in studying the humanities. When studying “East Asian Confucianisms” as a historical reality, we must avoid the trap of taking China to be the center. Rather we should see the concept of “East Asian Confucianisms” as a “method” that illuminates concrete processes whereby the so-called peripheries form their own respective versions of Confucianism.

Interpreted in this sense, Confucianism becomes a parameter for the formation of the *subjectivities* of each and every East Asian region. What is important to observe here is the *process* by which such specific subjectivity is constructed, be it in Japan or Korea, *not* the “authenticity” or “orthodoxy” of a specific regional Confucianism. “East Asian Confucianisms” are not something ready-cast, nor a frame of thought that exists above the concrete process of the development of Confucianisms in Korea, Japan and Taiwan. Rather it exists only in the interactive formations among East Asian regions, including China, Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and Vietnam.

11 John K. Fairbank, ed., *The Chinese World Order* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 1; Lien-sheng Yang, “Historical Notes on the Chinese World Order,” in Fairbank, ed., *The Chinese World Order*, p. 20.

12 For reflections on Asia as “method,” see Takeuchi Yoshimi 竹内好, “Hōhō toshite no Ajia 方法としてのアジア [Asia as Method],” in *Takeuchi Yoshimi zenshū* 竹内好全集 [Complete Works of Takeuchi Yoshimi] (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1981), vol. 5, esp. 114–15.

3 The aspects and configurations of the problem

The view that East Asian Confucianisms reflect the diversity of regional characteristics, and that its comprehensive integrity is not a mechanical assemblage of regional Confucian traditions but rather some overall family resemblances in thinking, leads us to face certain challenges. Let us look here at the legitimized field of “East Asian Confucianisms,” and the new inquiries and points of significance that it raises.

One repercussion of the novel view mentioned above regards Chinese Confucianism itself. If we were to consider the study of Confucianism only in the context of Chinese history (even going to the effort of detailing all the changes and differences among the various dynasties and movements, such as Han Confucianism, Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism, Qing Confucianism, etc.), then our view would still be filtered through the official system of examination and its related educational channels. “Chinese Confucianism” would have remained closely tied to the Chinese imperial order, which functioned as the principal platform for its dissemination.

Under Chinese imperial order, such Confucian values could not have produced any tensions between political and cultural identity. And in fact traditionally China strongly promulgated sociopolitical monism, to the extent that the orientations of that value themselves exhibited a high degree of uniformity.¹³ The influence of an overall imperial monism ensured that political and cultural identity remained tightly fused across two thousand years of Chinese imperial dynasties.

Even exiled Chinese Confucians have displayed such a unity of political and cultural identity. Zhu Shunshui (朱舜水, 1600 – 1682), an exiled Confucian of the late-Ming and early-Qing, is a prime example. In 1659, just after the fall of the Ming (1368 – 1644) and rise of the Qing (1644 – 1912) empires, Zhu left for Japan, where he sought military support to restore the Ming dynasty. Recognizing the Ming reign as the political identity, Zhu supposed that political authority was rooted in culture. He wrote to a Japanese friend, lamenting that “recently the Chinese empire fell because it had abandoned the teachings of the sages and rushed to open the competitive road of profit.”¹⁴ Staying in Japan for twenty-two

13 Cf. Donald W. Tregold, *The West in Russia and China: Religious and Secular Thought in Modern Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), vol. 1, xxii.

14 Zhu Shunshui 朱舜水, *Zhu Shunshui ji* 朱舜水集 [Collected Essays of Zhu Shunshui] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), vol. 7, p. 182. Cf. my “Lun dongya yimin ruzhe de liangge liangnanshi lun 東亞遺民儒者的兩個兩難式 [On the Two Predicaments in Confucianism as Formulated by the Leftover Subjects in East Asia],” *Taiwan Journal of East Asian Studies* 3/1 (June, 2006): pp. 61–80, and my *Humanism in East Asian Confucian Contexts* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2010), pp. 62–3.

years, his political and cultural identities remained fused as one, and he often lamented that “the only place for Confucius and Yan Hui was China: Yao and Shun were not born in remote lands”¹⁵; “China was the cultural center and Japan a border region; and, the Japanese have never seen a Yao or Shun because they did not cultivate the Way.”¹⁶ In this, Zhu was not an exception but an example of a common Chinese attitude displayed throughout Chinese history.

However, once we expand our vision to the whole of East Asia beyond China proper, our studies of Confucianism will be liberated from Chinese regionalism, and infused with the new vitality that comes with greater breadth and diversity. Set in the larger context of East Asia, the study of Confucianism gives rise to many new topics. It is up to us to explore the terrain and choose the most promising ones, and to find new wine for the renovated bottles of time-honored Confucianism. Among all the new themes, two merit our study the most.

3.1 Tensions and fusions between Chinese Confucian values and the specific characteristics of other regions in East Asia

Appearing in the Shandong peninsula of China over two millennia ago, Confucianism was originally merely a local wisdom. Yet as it developed over the centuries, Confucianism molded a value system which was eventually accepted all over East Asia. In the eyes of East Asian Confucians outside China, “China” was a great and inevitable “Other.” When examining the overall historical rise and development of Confucianism, we come across many Confucian notions – such as the distinction between the Chinese and barbarians (*huayi zhibian* 華夷之辨), *zhong* (忠, loyalty, doing one’s best), and *xiao* (孝, filial piety) – that all strongly reflect specific features of Chinese culture and are deeply rooted and colored by that culture’s agrarian economy, clan society, and authoritarian order.

It is not surprising then that as these ideas spread outside China to Korea and Japan, tensions appeared due to the differences in regional conditions. For example, Confucianism had to be adjusted to fit into Japan’s imperial feudal conditions; this assimilation of Confucianism aimed to localize Confucianism in Japanese soil.¹⁷

Such tensions caused a transformation in Confucian ideas, changing them into diverse versions of East Asian Confucianisms. We see this diversity particularly clearly in two examples.

15 Zhu Shunshui, *Zhu Shunshui ji*, p. 170.

16 Ibid.

17 Kate Wildman Nakai, “The Naturalization of Confucianism in Tokugawa Japan: The Problem of Sino-Centrism,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 40/1 (June 1980): pp. 157–99.

First, as Confucianism spread to Japan, changes were made to suit the local context, and some passages in the *Analects* were given new interpretations. In the *Analects* (9.14), Confucius considered settling among the “Nine Barbaric Tribes (*Jiuyi* 九夷) of the east”; Hayashi Razan (林羅山, 1583–1657), a Zhu Xi scholar of early Tokugawa Japan, thought *Jiuyi* referred even to Japan as Japan was the country of gentlemen.¹⁸ But Itō Jinsai (伊藤仁齋, 1627–1705) drew on the general meaning of the “Sage mind” and broke down the barrier erected by Confucius’ Chinese–barbarian distinction, broadening the meaning of this passage.¹⁹

In China, Confucius and Mencius were given equal prominence from the Song dynasty (960–1279). Mencius’ tablet was placed in the Confucius Temple as the “Second Sage.” But because Mencius’ revolutionary political thought clashed with Tokugawa feudalism, many Japanese Confucians attacked Mencius. As early as the seventeenth century, Ogyū Sorai (荻生徂徠, 1666–1728) proposed removing Mencius’ tablet.²⁰ Sorai’s follower Dazai Shundai (太宰春台, 1680–1747) wrote two tracts criticizing Mencius. The Sorai school’s excessive critique of Mencius compelled scholars of Itō Jinsai’s school to launch a counter-critique on such attacks against Mencius. The debate between the two schools continued into the nineteenth century.²¹ This debate illustrates the underlying tension between Mencius’ political thought and the sociopolitical circumstances in Tokugawa Japan.

Second, some ideas in Chinese Confucianism were newly interpreted when they reached Japan and Korea. The meaning of such core concepts as *gong* (公, public, fair), *si* (私, personal, private), and *xin* (心, mind-heart) went through radical changes in Japan. In Japan, *xin* came to mean “spontaneous,” “natural,” “unified,” and a “receptive medium,” while in China it had a “cosmic character,” an “empty,” “lively” entity full of ontological significance.²² This “cosmic character” itself refers to the heart-mind’s creative activity in and of the world,

18 Hayashi Razan 林羅山, *Hayashi Razan bunshū* 林羅山文集 [Literary Corpus of Hayashi Razan] (Tokyo: Perikan-sha, 1979), vol. 36, pp. 408–9.

19 Itō Jinsai 伊藤仁齋, *Rongo kogi* 論語古義 [Classical Meanings of the Analects], in Seki Giichirō 関儀一郎, ed., *Nihon meika shisho chūshaku zensho* 日本名家四書註釋全書 [Complete Works of the Annotations of the Renowned Japanese Scholars] (Tokyo: Otori Shuppan, 1973), vol. 3, p. 32.

20 Ogyū Sorai 荻生徂徠, *Kenen ippitsu* 護園一筆 [First Corpus of Kenen], *Nihon jurin sōsho* 日本儒林叢書 [Series on Japanese Confucianism] (Tokyo: Otori shuppan, 1978), vol. 1, pp. 1–3.

21 Cf. Zhang Kunjiang 張崑將, *Riben Dechuan shidai guxuepai zhi wangdao zhengzhi lun: yi Yiteng Renzhai, Disheng Culai wei zhongxin* 日本德川時代古學派之王道政治論：以伊藤仁齋、荻生徂徠為中心 [The Discourses of Kingly Governance of the Classical School in Tokugawa Japan: An Inquiry Focusing upon Itō Jinsai and Ogyū Sorai] (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2004), ch. 5.

22 Mizoguchi Yūzō 溝口雄三, *Chūgoku no kō to si* 中国の公と私 [The “Public” and the “Private” in China] (Tokyo: Kenbun shuppan, 1995).

producing and living together, feeling and responding to one another, and the interactive relations that give rise to natural law.

Zhong and *xiao*, two other basic concepts in Confucianism, also attracted entirely different interpretations in Japan. Zhang Kunjiang (張崑將, 1967–) recently researched the meaning given to *xiao* in the Wang Yangming (王陽明, 1472–1528) school, from Nakae Tōju (中江藤樹, 1608–1648) to Ōshio Hēhachirō (大塩平八郎, 1793–1837), and the connotations of *zhong* for the military school, from Yamaga Sokō (山鹿素行, 1622–1685) to Yoshida Shōin (吉田松陰, 1830–1859). Zhang argued that in Japan, *zhong* and *xiao* were both influenced by local Shintoism, the Japanese indigenous thought.²³

These examples serve to illustrate the diversity of the Confucianisms present in East Asia. Far from a uniform broadcast of Chinese Confucianism, East Asian Confucianisms exhibits a rich diversity rooted in the various local milieux and specific ethnic cultures of those regions.

3.2 East Asian Confucianisms exhibit a duality of cultural and political identity among non-Chinese Confucians

In China, all Confucians share the same values, and the Han people established an orthodox rule aimed at fusing political and cultural identities into one. Yet in the cases of other East Asian countries, Confucians admired Confucius and Mencius, absorbed Confucian values, adopted Confucianism into their cultural identity, *and yet* were subject to other political identities. For instance, in the sixteenth century, Zhu Xi's follower Hayashi Razan argued that “Japan’s flourishing culture can rival that of China.”²⁴ Yamaga Sokō, the early Tokugawa Confucian and scholar of military philosophy, compared Japan with China and asserted that the former was better.²⁵ Japanese Confucians considered Chinese rules foreign and never fused their Chinese cultural identity with Japanese political identity.

In sum, these two new areas in the study of East Asian Confucianisms show how the studies of East Asian Confucianisms can introduce new questions to illuminate traditional Chinese Confucianism, bring up new issues for inves-

23 Zhang Kunjiang 張崑將, *Dechuan Riben “Zhong” “Xiao” gainian de xingcheng yu fazhan* 徳川日本「忠」「孝」概念の形成與發展 [The Formation and Development of the Notions of “Loyalty” and “Filial Piety” in Tokugawa Japan] (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2005).

24 Hayashi Razan, *Hayashi Razan bunshū*, vol. 48, p. 560.

25 Yamaga Sokō 山鹿素行, *Chūchō jijitsu* 中朝事實 [Facts of Japan], in Hirose Yutaka 広瀬豊, ed., *Yamaga Sokō zenshū* 山鹿素行全集 [Complete Works of Yamaga Sokō] (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1942), vol. 13, p. 369.

tigation, and thereby pour new wine into old, renovated bottles, and generate new methods.

4 Conclusion

In conclusion, we have argued that studies of East Asian Confucianisms are a new field in the twenty-first century's new age of globalization. The purpose is not to find in Asia a "Reflexive Orientalism" to counteract Western studies, much less a self-absorbed and self-assertive so-called "national learning" or *guoxue* (國學). Instead, "East Asian Confucianisms" is a unique and self-formed systematic study. It is not just a mechanical piecemeal assemblage of regional versions of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese Confucianisms. Rather, as Confucians in each of these places recite and are immersed in the same classics, they aspire to become the sages in Confucian core values, transcending regional limitations. This common core of Confucianism forms a system of thought without the stigmas of center-border or means-end discriminations. "East Asian Confucianisms" is a field of study that rids us of the vestiges of boundaries and limitations that still remain in the present time and take in East Asia as a whole. In our present era of globalization, we find that in the various traditions of East Asian Confucianisms there exist important spiritual resources that could facilitate dialogues among world civilizations.

Part I
New Perspectives on East Asian Confucianisms

Introduction

The vitality of East Asian Confucianisms stems from the desire of Confucian thinkers to interpret the core values of the Confucian classics in line with changes in their own times and location. Although all the interpretations that were advanced in China, Korea and Japan were specific to their own era and country, they do still share some themes in common. The most outstanding of these phenomena is the intimate interaction we witness between interpretations of the Confucian classics and political power in East Asia. The East Asian Confucians aimed at statecraft through careers in scholarship and education. They strived not only to interpret the world but also to change it. Therefore, we readily observe the inseparability of power and Confucianisms in East Asia, as well as the tension between them. Moreover, in order to make Chinese-rooted Confucian values more congenial to the sociopolitical and cultural soil of Korea and Japan, the Korean and Japanese Confucians practiced a form of “contextual turn” in their reinterpretations of Chinese Confucianism. In Chapters 1 and 2, I will examine this “praxis hermeneutics” and “contextual turn” in the history of East Asian Confucianisms.

This focus by East Asian Confucians on statecraft showed the extent to which Confucianism transcended the simple sphere of personal or private life. The power of Confucian ideals may have shaped the course of one’s individual life and the private relationships of filiality. But these ideals also extended beyond the private into the shared and very public social world of the political sphere. Yet is there a conflict between these ideals in each sphere, a tension between the demands of private relationships and filiality, and the public demands of loyalty to the state? Chapter 3 analyzes the way in which Confucians in each of the East Asian contexts wrestled with this question in their own particular ways.

The ancient, eastward arc of development in East Asian Confucianisms carries us from China toward Japan. Yet in this development Korea played an essential role, acting as a bridge for the movement of Chinese Confucian thought into Japan. Yet that bridge was far from just a neutral or passive link. Chapter 4 argues that Confucianism on the Korean Peninsula grew within its own particular cul-

tural and political environment, and adopted its own characteristics, shaping the form of Confucianism that would later develop in Japan. Yet its insights and influence would extend far beyond the ancient world. In Korean Confucianism we also glimpse the guiding principles that will direct the continuing transformation of Confucianism and East Asian societies into the twenty-first century.

Overall, Part I of this volume offers an arc from the pre-modern period into the struggles of the modern era and beyond, beginning with the hermeneutical challenges of pre-modern East Asian Confucians, and ending with an examination of the sociopolitical uncertainties facing the progression of Confucianism and its contexts in the twenty-first century.

Chapter One:

On the Relationship between Interpretations of the Confucian Classics and Political Power in East Asia: An Inquiry into the *Analects* and *Mencius*

1 Introduction

The most important feature of the hermeneutic tradition of Confucian classics in East Asia lies in the intimate interaction between the interpretations of those classics and political power. The interpreters themselves wished to give new meanings to the classics in order to tame royal power, and thus benefit the people, bring order to the state, and protection to the world. For this reason, the interpreters entered the intellectual world of the classics from a political standpoint. Moreover, we find that differences among various interpreters typically sprang from debates in the political sphere. However, when we look at the interactive structure linking interpretations of the classics and political power, we find that the latter tended to dominate – texts were given different interpretations in different political contexts, and readers perceived different significances at different times.¹ Under adverse political conditions, the ruling class, particularly in imperial China, forced interpreters to impose distorted readings on the classical texts. In dialogue with interpreters of various ages, the classics invite interpreters, through their own “existential structure,”² to provide new meanings for the classical texts. In this sense, we can say that the classics indeed have an “existential” character.

The main reason for the subtle and complex relation between interpretations of the Confucian classics and political power in East Asia was that the scholars who commented on the classics in East Asia not only interpreted the classics but also aimed at managing the world around them. East Asian scholars in particular regarded the task of ordering the state in accordance with the classics as their

1 Eric Donald Hirsch, Jr. distinguishes between “meaning” and “significance.” The former refers to a text’s apparent basic meaning while the latter indicates the different “significances” a text produces in the minds of the readers in different times and places. See his *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 8.

2 See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Colin Smith trans., *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), xix, pp. 87 f., 158, 172, 448 f.