Handbook of Confucianism in Modern Japan

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The thirteen essays in *Handbook of Confucianism in Modern Japan* (hereafter, *Handbook*), edited by Shaun O'Dwyer, mark another step in an ongoing paradigm shift away from the old clichés about Confucianism as an inherently static feudal ideology fated to dissolution and collapse before the onslaught of modernity. The new interpretive line endorsed in *Handbook* recognizes, realistically, the enduring vitality of Confucianism in Meiji Japan (1868–1912) and beyond in helping communicate, via the semantic fertility of its millennia-deep discourses, a host of Western disciplines and ideas. At the same time *Handbook* recognizes the undeniable: Confucianism's leadership in ideological formulations in Taishō (1912–1926) and early-Shōwa Japan (1926–1989) propagandizing the interests of the militarized and expansionist imperial state. Along cautious yet positive lines, *Handbook* also sketches out ways in which Confucianism still offers, within strict parameters, potential relevance for contemporary Japan going forward, especially in the realm of liberal civil society.

Collectively, the essays, along with the helpful introduction to the anthology by O'Dwyer, effectively lay bare neglected dimensions by spotlighting the multiplicity and complexity of Confucianism and its historical interface with Japan's transformations from early modern to modern times and beyond. As O'Dwyer notes, the volume is precedented, especially in its conspicuously more global interpretive voices, and can be read as a "sequel" volume to an earlier anthology, *Dao Companion to Japanese Confucian Philosophy* (Springer, 2014), edited by Huang Chun-chieh and John A. Tucker, which, by comparison, is more focused on early-modern (1600–1868) Confucianism than that of the Meiji and twentieth century. Also shaping the theoretical landscape of O'Dwyer's anthology is Huang Chun-chieh's *East Asian Confucianisms: Texts in Contexts* (National Taiwan University, 2015), emphasizing the "contextual turns" taken by Confucian texts, ideas, and debates as they unfolded in China, Korea, Japan, and other parts of East Asia.

Equally influential as an interpretive forerunner is Watanabe Hiroshi's *Nihon seiji shisōshi* (University of Tokyo Press, 2010), translated into English by David Noble as *A History of Japanese Political Thought, 1601–1901* (International House of Japan, 2012). Contrary to the old "starting point" – Maruyama Masao's *Nihon seiji shisōshi kenkyū* (University of Tokyo Press, 1952), translated into English by Mikiso Hane as *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan* (Princeton University Press, 1974) – Watanabe explores Confucianism as, at least in part, a philosophically fecund and often salutary force in early-modern Japan, and then as a resilient one in the Meiji period wherein it not infrequently provided lexical options and philosophical imagery needed for rendering seemingly contrary but not incommensurable Western ideas in a more local, analogous idiom. More remotely, *Handbook* is cognizant of Warren Smith's *Confucianism in Modern Japan: A Study of Conservatism in Japanese Intellectual History* (Hokuseido Press, 1959), the first detailed study in English to explore the appropriation of Confucianism by Japanese ideologues working, officially and unofficially, on behalf of the expansionist and militaristic ends of the imperial state. At every turn, *Handbook* forthrightly comes to terms with this aspect of Confucianism in modern Japan.

O'Dwyer's introduction explains that *Handbook* seeks to correct the relative neglect of Confucianism at postwar Japanese universities by "showcasing studies which comprehend modern Japanese Confucianism under the categories of philosophy as well as thought or ideology" (p. xix). Another purpose of *Handbook*, in O'Dwyer's view, is to "facilitate contributions by scholars who

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would not normally write and publish in English" thereby forefronting "perspectives cultivated in non-English speaking research communities" that are otherwise "under-represented in Anglo-sphere academic research." All too often Confucianism is left out of Anglophone scholarship on modern Japanese philosophy and marginalized if not omitted from Western discussions of Confucianism in East Asia. *Handbook* tries to correct that. The volume is not doctrinaire or itself overtly ideological in orientation: it neither promotes Confucianism as a positive force, nor is it passionately determined to discredit it. If ideology is evident in the *Handbook* essays, it is of an epistemological sort, advancing an interpretive model of balanced scholarship promoting understandings from the historical vantage point primarily, regarding how Confucianism impacted and was impacted by Japan. The result is an anthology that fully confronts Confucianism's pro-imperial ideological past, especially in the first half of the twentieth century, and yet advances a vision of multiple Confucianisms rather than some monolithic, unchanging ideology that never existed.

O'Dwyer suggests that the essays in *Handbook* explore three dimensions: (1) Confucianism's tacit and sometimes subordinate role in modernizing Japan, especially as the educational background of many modern Japanese intellectuals, (2) the institutional basis for Confucianism's efflorescence in tandem with government patronage of nationalist, "Imperial Way" constructs of the 1930s, and (3) the legacy and intellectual pathways of Confucianism in Japan after 1945. These categories could have been well used in organizing the anthology's contents rather than simply as an insightful schema for the introduction. That aside, a summary of *Handbook*'s innovative chapters, following their numeric order, well reveals the diversity of scholarship included. It should be noted first that seven chapters – those by Song Qi (Ch. 1), Han Shuting (Ch. 2), Mizuno Hirota (Ch. 4), Yamamura Shō (Ch. 5), Chang Kun-chiang (Ch. 7), Kang Haesoo (Ch. 8), and Park Junhyun (Ch. 9) – were ably translated by Ruth and John McCreery of The Word Works, making accessible the views of those Chinese, Japanese, and Korean scholars that might otherwise have had more limited recognition in Anglosphere scholarship.

Explicit ties between Confucianism and modernity are examined in the anthology's opening chapter, Song Qi's "Reinterpreting Matsumiya Kanzan: On the Interval between State Shintō and the Idea of the Three Religions." Song suggests that Kanzan's Shintō thinking, often an expression of his views on the three religions of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Shintō, was part of a Confucian eclecticism that later inspired, in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, state theorists as they constructed ideological and quasi-philosophical foundations for national morality and emperor worship. Nevertheless, Song claims that Kanzan's views were less an expression of Confucianism as such than a variant of Shintō fundamentalism and its essential claims of spiritual superiority. Without absolving Confucianism from complicity, Song implies that twentieth-century ideological and historical excesses reside with, in part, Shintō. Also suggested is that the relative silence in scholarship on Kanzan has been due not to an avoidance of Confucianism so much as a reluctance to address the extent to which Shintō fundamentalism was itself a source of State Shintō.

In Chapter 2, "The Confucian Classics in the Political Thought of Sakuma Shōzan," Han Shuting examines how Shōzan's advocacy of the introduction of western firearms and western learning generally drew upon his early education in Neo-Confucian thinking and his continued respect for its emphases on "the close study of nature" (*kyūri*) and "paying due respect" to the subject being studied (*kyokei*). For example, Han shows that Shōzan advocated publication of the Doeff-Halma Dutch–Japanese language dictionary by appeal to Neo-Confucian thinking about virtuous rule. In defending Yoshida Shōin's attempted stowaway aboard Commodore Perry's ship, Shōzan similarly appealed to Confucian texts. Han's conclusion is that the rhetorical and philosophical structure of Shōzan's advocacy of Western learning had at its foundations Confucian and Neo-Confucian theoretical content and logic, making the latter an important facilitator – though often overlooked or discounted in earlier studies – of Japan's modernization.

Chapter 3, Lee Yu-Ting's "The Confucian Traits Featured in the *Meiroku Zasshi*," explores the extent to which terminology with a Confucian pedigree surfaced in the *Meiroku Magazine* (*Meiroku zasshi*), the main publication of a group of early-Meiji intellectuals. Lee shows that while

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Confucianism was not itself a topic of significance in the *Meiroku Magazine*, allusions to Confucian sages and Confucianism surfaced regularly as Meiroku thinkers explored Western ideas and their possible roles in Japan. In the *Meiroku Magazine*, for example, Confucius is mentioned more times than any other figure. Lee adds that the Japanese translation of "enlightenment" (*bunmei*) which Meiroku thinkers advocated, derived originally from Confucian discourse. Thus, even as new ideas seemingly challenged those of Confucianism, it was from the Confucian lexicon that so many key terms in discussions advocating them were drawn. In showing that Confucianism helped mediate Westernization of the Meiji intellectual world, Lee's analysis is consistent, as he notes, with that of Watanabe Hiroshi's scholarship.

Chapter 4, Mizuno Hirota's "The Invention of 'Chinese Philosophy': How Did the Classics Take Root in Japan's First Modern University?" suggests that Inoue Tetsujirō's early work at Tokyo Imperial University possibly influenced and certainly foreshadowed a call by Tōdai president, Katō Hiroyuki, for "true scholarship" on the Chinese classics that was comparative, historical, and experimental in nature. Rather than criticize Inoue for his later writings that were more nationalistic, imperialistic, and ideological in nature (as has so often been done), Mizuno notes that Inoue's *History of Oriental Philosophy* (*Tōyō tetsugaku shi*) ultimately "had a huge impact" on the establishment of Chinese philosophy (*Shina tetsugaku*) as an academic field in Japan and East Asia.

Chapter 5, Yamamura Shō's "Inoue Tetsujirō and Modern Yangming Learning in Japan" considers Inoue's synthesis of Shintō and Confucianism, especially his admiration for the ideas of the late-Tokugawa thinker, Ōshio Heihachirō (1793–1837), who "Japanified" Wang Yangming learning by including Shintō glorification of Amaterasu within it. Inoue introduced this very Japanese reinterpretation of Yangming thought within his "Imperial Way" teachings, drawing in part upon Wang Yangming's epistemological dictum affirming "the unity of knowledge and action" (*chikō gōitsu*). Inoue's grasp of Yangming learning meshed well with his opposition to Christianity, his emphasis on the need for loyalty and action, and his reverence for the imperial line. In many respects, as Yamamura notes, Inoue's views resonated with those of late-Tokugawa Mito school thinkers who formulated their ideas in response to foreign threats and their sense that activistic devotion to the nation was imperative.

Masako N. Racel's "*Kokumin Dōtoku* for Women: Shimoda Utako in the Taishō Era," Chapter 6, shows how Shimoda, a leading figure in women's education, expanded the strongly nationalistic discourse of *kokumin dōtoku* (Japan's national morality) to make it meaningful and suitable for women. In this, Shimoda – though not a doctrinaire Confucian – drew on the ideas of Wang Yangming, especially his emphasis on the unity of knowledge and action. Shimoda stressed that women not simply submit to the new nation-centered morality but act upon it forcefully as integral players within the modern Japanese "family-nation." Shimoda, certain that Zhu Xi-style Neo-Confucian teachings had further subordinated and even degraded Japanese women, held that the *ryōsai kenbo* ethic of "good wives and wise mothers" advocated in national morality teachings was a potentially empowering one for women. As an ideologue, Shimoda was the counterpart of Inoue in advancing a national morality meant to stabilize Japan in the face of radical philosophies from outside the fold. No doubt, in this she was also an opponent of the Bluestocking (*seitō*) movement and its advocates such as Hiratsuka Raichō, as well as the "New Women" movement.

Chapter 7, Chang Kun-chiang's "Modern Contextual Turns from 'The Kingly Way' to 'The Imperial Way,'" suggests that the Confucian, largely Mencian notion of the "Kingly Way" (*ōdō*) came to be incorporated in Shintō thinking during the Tokugawa period, and later contributed to the Meiji invention of the so-called "Imperial Way" (*kōdō*) justifying Japan's imperial militarism and expansionism. The Imperial Way was the more ideologically charged notion, resulting in the relative diminution of the Confucian Kingly Way in the balance even though it had earlier played an indispensable role in the development of the Imperial Way. Here, Chang aptly draws on the historical analyses of Huang Chun-chieh regarding "contextual turns" in developmental variations in Confucianism as it unfolded in varying East Asian circumstances.

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Kang Haesoo's "The Discourse on Imperial Way Confucian Thought: The Link between Daitō Bunka Gakuin and Chosŏn Gyunghakwon," Chapter 8, examines the ideological work of Korean graduates of Daitō Bunka Gakuin, Ahn In-sik, and Joo Byung-kŏn, in propagating a Japanese version of Confucianism in colonial Korea facilitating prevalence of Imperial Way and national polity thinking. While Ahn and Joo disavowed Imperial Way Confucianism after the defeat of Japan and concomitant liberation of Korea from colonial rule, they did not abandon Confucian moral principles as a basis for rule and instead cast them in more distinctively Korean contexts of state building. Kang suggests that the same occurred in Japan as well: while Imperial Way Confucianism was quickly abandoned as an ideological construct in postwar times, Confucian moral principles continued to be advanced in new packaging by Japanese proponents of morality and civil order.

Park Junhyun's "The Image of the Kingly Way during the War: Focusing on Takada Shinji's Imperial Way Discourse," Chapter 9, examines the work of Takada Shinji, a Tokyo Imperial University Chinese studies scholar, in developing nuanced readings of the Imperial Way vis-à-vis the Confucian concepts of "the mandate of heaven" and "the rectification of names." Readers familiar with those notions in the ancient Chinese Confucian texts might be surprised to learn that Takada explained the mandate of heaven as heaven's sanction, impregnable, for the Japanese imperial line. The latter's inviolability was linked to its intrinsic and unchanging virtue which made alterations of the mandate, as happened repeatedly in China, out of the question. Takada interpreted the rectification of names as something perfectly exemplified in Japan where the emperor ruled supreme, and ministers submitted. These Confucian notions were thus reinterpreted, no doubt as part of imperial Japan's contextual turning of them inside out, by Takada to mesh with Imperial Way discourse.

Kyle Shuttleworth's "Watsuji Tetsurō's Confucian Bonds: From Totalitarianism to New Confucianism," Chapter 10, offers a deep reading of editions, wartime and postwar, of Watsuji's *Ethics* (*Rinrigaku*), highlighting its philosophical and ideological shifts. Shuttleworth notes that while Watsuji was, despite his own criticisms of other ideologues, one himself, at least until the postwar period when his understandings of Confucian notions evolved in ways more consistent with couplings of Confucianism and sanctioned philosophical ideologies such as democracy. Even so, Shuttleworth asks whether Watsuji, in moving beyond the totalitarianism of the 1930s and early 1940s, went further, in his thinking about Confucianism, than the bounds of yet another postwar brand of conservatism. Shuttleworth does not provide a definite answer, leaving the question instead for future consideration.

Alexandra Mustățea's "Thinking about Confucianism and Modernity in the Early Postwar Period: Watsuji Tetsurō's *The History of Ethical Thought in Japan*," Chapter 11, questions common postwar assessments of Confucianism as a "negative, feudalistic influence in Japan's modernization," suggesting, as with Watsuji's postwar text, that Confucianism was "a creative, innovative influence in the Edo-Meiji transition" as a "philosophy of ethics" in search of universal ethical principles. Mustățea develops her analysis by juxtaposing Watsuji's *History of Ethical Thought in Japan* (*Nihon rinri shisōshi*), published in 1952, with Maruyama Masao's *Studies of the History of Japanese Political Thought* (*Nihon seiji shisōshi kenkyū*), published the same year. Mustățea acknowledges Maruyama's book as the more influential, noting how Watsuji's ended up being badly overlooked. Yet she sees in the latter a more nuanced, historically penetrating analysis of the roles of Confucianism in Japan's modern transformation, one allowing for traditionalistic expressions and more creative ones as well. Mustățea suggests that Confucianism retains this role due to its normative, universalizing ethical potential which potentially goes well beyond culturally particular ethical ways of thinking. Mustățea thus seeks a new approach to assessing Confucianism's legacy in postwar Japan that goes "beyond the simplistic and oft-repeated trope of its irrelevance or incompatibility with modernity."

Eddy Dufourmont's "Yasuoka Masahiro and the Survival of Confucianism in Postwar Japan, 1945–1983," Chapter 12, recounts how Yasuoka, one of Inoue Tetsujirō's junior ideologues in promoting Confucianism for the imperial state, maneuvered in postwar Japan to popularize Confucianism among senior politicians and business executives in opposition to the perceived threats of

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Communism and excessive Westernization, recycling his earlier Confucian publications, slightly revised and under new titles. Considered in this light, Dufourmont observes, "the role of Confucianism in postwar Japan was not so different from its role in the prewar era: Confucianism was above all a tool for political elites to forge national identity" (p. 178). Yet with Yasuoka's passing in 1983, his efforts – driven by his celebrity as postwar Japan's grand Confucianist and his longstanding and deeply rooted networking with the political and business elite, diminished significantly.

The anthology's final chapter, Jiang Dongxian and Shaun O'Dwyer's "Universalizing Kingly Way Confucianism: A Japanese Legacy and Chinese Future?" first explores how the Kingly Way and Imperial Way as advanced by the Shibunkai affirmed particularistic national values as part of an ideological mission seeking to propagate them universally for the benefit of all. High-minded though this may seem, this sort of "exemplary nationalism" contributed to, in practice, Japanese imperialism and militarism. Jiang and O'Dwyer caution that something similar might be in the making in contemporary China with the recent revival of Confucianism and state efforts to promote it as part of Chinese culture. They conclude their study, noting political dangers evident in "Japan's past and potentially in China's future," and instead calling for a "conscientious Confucianism … uncoupled from nationalist and 'national mission' ideologies." In their view, "conscientious Confucianism" disallows Confucianism from being coopted "for state aggrandizement of national values," by staking out "a space for Confucian values reconfigured within a protected domain of conscience, belief, and associational life, guaranteed by basic liberties and freedoms of association." In proposing this approach to a universalizing and yet "anti-statist" conscientious Confucianism, Jiang and O'Dwyer note precedents in the lives of many literati in dynastic China and throughout East Asia who rather than pursue state bureaucratic service, "found alternative avenues for moral and spiritual self-cultivation in family, literary, intellectual, ritual, and artistic life" (pp. 197–99). Their conscientious Confucianism surely appears "heretical" when compared with that espoused by "advocates of a Confucianism subordinated to an exemplary nationalism or ultra-nationalism, with its exclusive claims to moral values as national values." For Jiang and O'Dwyer, the latter perhaps historically orthodox strategies for Confucianism ought to have no place in the future.

In summary, *Handbook of Confucianism in Modern Japan* unquestionably stands as the newest must-read for those seriously interested in more than the old clichés about Confucianism being at best irrelevant for and at worst, antithetical to Japanese modernity. The essays presented, erudite and innovative, collectively advance a decidedly new wave in scholarship on Japanese Confucianism. Hopefully the multiple voices raised in *Handbook* will continue to contribute to well-balanced discussions regarding the multifaceted legacies of Confucianism in modern Japan and beyond.

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