
New Confucianism in Modern Japan

Introduction

From what perspective did Japanese sinology and especially the Japanese scholars of Chinese philosophy discuss the Chinese Confucians who were their contemporaries? This humungous question cannot be discussed thoroughly here, but I would like to introduce some important themes.

I would first like to discuss Hattori Unokichi (1867–1939) and his study of Confucianism. He saw his contemporary Kang Youwei (1858–1927) promote a movement to make Confucianism into a religion and he also advocated the Confucian Teaching (*kōshikyō*), not as a religion, but as a moral doctrine. He sought to create a Confucianism that was not a “doctrine of the Chinese nation” but a “cosmopolitan doctrine.” In the context of Japan at the time, this was one wing of the scholars who tried to give a stable foundation to National Entity (*kokutai*).

Postwar Japanese sinology began by reflecting on the prewar understanding of Confucianism. The postwar sinologists tried as far as possible to be confronted with the real China. That is, they sought to leave behind a romanticized image of China and obtain a perspective that saw China as China. In this context, the efforts of Mizoguchi Yūzō (1932–2010) and Shimada Kenji (1917–2000) are especially noteworthy. Through his “China as Method,” Mizoguchi discarded the “China studies without China” of the prewar period and attempted to discover China as an “alternative modernity” which would criticize taking

Western modernity as a universal standard. However, ironically, there are ways in which he also fell into the trap of developing the “China studies without China.” Against this, Shimada based his studies on a recognition of the modernity of Chinese Confucian thought and attempted to understand the emergence of New Confucianism after the initial modernity of pre-modern Confucianism suffered a “setback” (in the Qing dynasty). Presupposing a positive evaluation of Western modernity, he tried to examine the possibilities within the Confucian studies of his Chinese contemporaries. Shimada’s studies sparkle in a context where most Japanese sinologists did not pay sufficient attention to then-contemporary Chinese thinkers. Moreover, he also criticized the strict distinction between modern and pre-modern China and based on an acceptance of Western modernity, he attempted to grasp China as a whole.

That said, Shimada’s attempt was not adequately continued by later scholars. In particular, there are only a few studies of New Confucianism. In this context, I would like to touch on the contributions of Azuma Jūji and Sakamoto Hiroko. Azuma is originally a scholar of Song Neo-Confucianism and like Shimada, he looks at modern New Confucianism in the context of pre-modern Chinese scholarship. Against this, Sakamoto critically scrutinizes New Confucianism from the perspective of feminism. By making clear the special characteristics of these two understandings of New Confucianism, I would like to show some possible directions that Chinese studies in Japan could take in the future.

1. Hattori Unokichi and Confucian Teaching

Hattori Unokichi was not only a professor of Chinese philosophy in the Tokyo Imperial University, he also played a key ideological role in the Association of Our Culture (*Shibunkai*),¹ which took as its goal the revitalization of Confucianism. At the center of his ideological activities

1. The Association of Our Culture was established in 1918, but there was a predecessor with the same meaning (*Shibun Gakkai*) established in 1880.

was the doctrine of Confucian Teaching.

The characters for Hattori's Confucian Teaching (*kōshikyō*) are the same as those for Kang Youwei's Confucianism as a religion (*kongzijiao* or *kongjiao*) and so we can see that he based himself on Kang's ideas. However, Kang's Confucian religion took Christianity as a model and aimed to create a modern religion based on a religious founder and a religious sect. Against this, Hattori wanted to develop a non-religious body of moral and political thought.

At the end of the Qing, among the revolutionary party in China, there were those who wanted to see the Confucian Teaching as a religion. They had introduced foreign culture in order to reform the Chinese system. The revolutionary party believed that Confucius' teachings were the greatest hindrance to introducing foreign thought, culture and scholarship. (...) At this point, after much deliberation, they decided to exalt the Confucian Teaching as a religion and make it into a religion just like Western Christianity. In this way, it would have no relation to scholarship, politics, culture or institutions. So, Confucianism would not be able to say anything pertinent to their activities. Thus they saw the Confucian Teaching as a religion because they wanted to introduce new scholarship and thought. (Hattori 1939, 6)

In the Republican period, among those who promoted the Confucian Teaching as a religion, some went a step further and started a movement to develop the essence of a pure religion. This is an oddity, but Chen Huanzhang (a disciple of Kang Youwei) who received a Ph.D from Columbia University in New York, organized a Chinese Organization for the Confucian Religion. In this organization's representative journal, he wrote an essay in which he made the following comments. "To see Confucius as a teacher, an ethicist or a politician is a great mistake. All such labels belittle Confucius. Confucius was a religious leader and it is through seeing him as a religious leader that his true greatness appears. Confucius' teachings are pure religion." From this perspective, he began a movement to make the Confucian Teaching as a national religion through the Constitution. In the end, this move-

ment was rejected because of Yuan Shikai. (8–9)

From this citation we can see that Hattori read about Kang Youwei and his disciples' promotion of the Confucian Teaching as a religion. However, Hattori did not intend to tailor Confucianism as a modern religion. He wanted to define Confucianism as a moral teaching. Therefore, he made the following distinction.

Confucianism (*rujiao*) grew through the experience of the development of the Chinese nation and its national characteristics are extremely clear. Hence it is impossible to extend it to other nations with different histories and different customs and sentiments. It is a so-called national teaching and not a cosmopolitan teaching. Confucius emerged in the Spring and Autumn period. He gathered the way of the ancient sages, which extended the great merits of the way of the ancient sages and changed the folk teachings into a cosmopolitan doctrine. That which was transmitted to the various countries in East Asia and now extends to Europe and America is actually the Confucian Teaching and not the so-called Confucianism. (Hattori 1938, 118)

In short, he claimed that Confucius transformed Confucianism, which was a “folk teachings” into the Confucian Teaching as a “cosmopolitan teaching.” He further noted that this cosmopolitan teaching extended to East Asia and then Europe and America. Of course, this Confucian Teaching is an adaptation of Kang Youwei's religion of Confucius. Then what is the difference between Confucianism and the Confucian Teaching? The difference lies in the difference between religion and morality.

Thought before Confucius had many religious elements, but after Confucius established his doctrine, it was based purely on principle and morality. Its religious character became negligible. (Hattori 1939, 32)

What made the Confucian Teaching into a “cosmopolitan teaching” was that it broke free from being a religion and turned into an ethics. Thus

he had to be extremely cautious about Kang Youwei and his disciples' attempt to make the Confucian Teaching into a religion once again.

But why did Hattori promote such an ideology? At this point we must look into Hattori's political agenda. That is, Hattori promoted the idea that because the Confucian Teaching as a morality was a "cosmopolitan teaching," the Japanese could be responsible for it and could even take greater responsibility for it than the Chinese.

Here we should examine Hattori's speech at the Great Conference on the Confucian Way in 1935. This was an international conference to commemorate the Yushima Shrine of Confucius which was destroyed by the Kantō Earthquake and finally reconstructed at last in 1935. A group representing the descendents of Confucius and Yan Yuan attended the conference along with representatives from Manchuria, Korea, and Taiwan.² But what is even more important is that before the Great Conference began on April 28, Puyi, the emperor of Manchukuo, came to the Yushima Shrine and paid his respects. The Great Conference on Confucianism was clearly bound up with the "international" recognition of Manchukuo. During his closing remarks for the conference, Hattori made the following comments.

The fever for East Asian Studies that was fomented by the World War made it such that as the Great War spread to each area, Oriental studies also followed. It goes without saying that when speaking of Oriental culture, its essence is Chinese culture and when this was introduced into our country it merged with already existing indigenous culture there. Moreover, it also goes without saying that Oriental culture has at its base the Confucian Way. From the time when the Confucian Way was introduced into our country long ago, it combined with our own great way of the Gods (*Shintō*) and laid the foundation for the Japanese spirit. Through this introduction, we fervently supported the great teachings of the various sages and it helped bring about three major events: the Taika reforms, the Kenmu Resto-

2. The Confucians from Korea created a Greater East Asian Association for Confucian Culture in the beginning of the 1930s on the initiative of the governor general's office. Tokugawa Iesato, Shibusawa Eiichi, Hattori Unokichi and Sakatani Yoshio were all advisors to the above association as well. See Smith 1958, 166–184.

ration and the Meiji Restoration. Now there may be some differences with respect to how the Confucian Way is seen, but when our country thinks about this history and the future of the world, the present conference is extremely important. Members of each country convene in the same hall, put the Confucian Way at the center and exchange opinions without reserve. In this way, they transcend political and economic problems and I believe that they make a huge contribution towards world peace. (Fukushima 1938, 68)

Here we clearly see the object of the Oriental Studies that emerged after the World War I, namely “The World War” was the fundament of Oriental Culture, which was “Chinese culture” and Japan’s “national spirit.” “Confucian Way” was a term that synthesized these two concepts. They hoped to contribute to “world peace” by placing “Confucian Way” at the center. Hattori’s logic here is that Confucian Way, that is the Confucian Teaching, which “fused” with the “way of the Gods (*Shintō*)” and formed the Japanese National Entity. However, this National Entity had a privileged universality. It is only from this universal perspective that one can understand the “Teachings of Confucius and Mencius” and promote “world peace.”³

Chen Weifang has made the following comments about Hattori’s perspective on Confucianism.

The Confucian Teaching that he [Hattori Unokichi] promoted during the Taisho and Showa periods was especially limited by political reality and it could not develop into a subtle and open system. Because he relied too much on an emperor-centered nationalism, the inflexibilities of his thought are all too apparent. (Chen 2001, 64)

In other words, Chen claims that Hattori’s Confucian Teaching forms a wing of the ideology of “Emperor-centered nationalism.” What

3. Shionoya On was a loyal supporter of this logic. Shionoya also played an important role in the Great Conference on Confucian Way. For example, “there is no one other than the Japanese who can promote the Confucian Teaching around the world and support world peace. This is a mission bestowed upon us by heaven.” (“The Way of Confucius and World Peace” in Fukushima 1938, 230).

made this possible was that he discarded what came before Confucius and what came after Confucius. He then made Confucius and his teaching into a privileged ideology and then could interpret Confucianism however he wanted. In short, he romanticized ancient China. In this case, China studies in postwar Japan had first to break with this perspective that romanticizes the Chinese past and looks down on contemporary China.

2. Mizoguchi Yūzō: “China Studies without China”

However, China studies in postwar Japan could not immediately become free from romanticizing China. In this case, there was a romanticism that proceeded in an opposite direction from the prewar period. Mizoguchi Yūzō explains this in the following manner:

China scholars such as we who were educated in wartime and the postwar periods could basically not develop a critical standpoint from which to study China. Rather in the past we were critical and even discriminated against China. Thus our starting point was to negatively criticize or exclude the modernism of those who like Tsuda Sōkichi who supported the invasion of China during the prewar and wartime periods.

An effective foundation for such a critique is the vision of China in Takeuchi Yoshimi's *Lu Xun* or in his “Chinese Modernity and Japanese Modernity.” This is a self-critique of Japan's so-called modern theory of leaving Asia (*datsua*) and a desire for what the future of Asia should be through China put in the opposite extreme of modernism. To put it bluntly, there existed this desire (*shōkei*) in our starting point for China studies. (Mizoguchi 1989, 5)

However, as Mizoguchi states, this “desire was not aimed at an objective China, but towards a subjectively imagined ‘China within oneself.’ Therefore, this China was completely produced as an antithesis of Japanese modernity and thus it was something that should be desired and was desired” (Ibid.). That is to say, with respect to postwar

Japanese sinology as well, what was desired was a “China within oneself.” In this way, they only inverted the Japanese sinologists’ image of China during the prewar period.

The above description also applies to Mizoguchi’s own image of China. Mizoguchi proposed to view “China as a Method” and become free from pre-war Japanese sinology (sinology without China), look at China objectively and through this to make relative the world that advocates universality. In other words, by stressing China’s particularity he planned to reevaluate Western modernity (131–140). However, in order to critically examine Western modernity by stressing China’s particularity, he was often lax with respect to his critique of China’s intellectual and philosophical legacies. As a result, he also created a convenient image of “China.”

For example, although Mizoguchi emphasizes particularity in his description of China, he almost never points out its limitations, contradictions or failures. Moreover, this particularity is something that continues from pre-modern times. China’s encounter with the west in modern time is reduced to a mere episode.

If we follow the facts, one says that Chinese modernity did not surpass that of Europe, nor was it left behind or late. Chinese modernity had a particular historical path that was different from Europe and Japan. It followed this path from the beginning and continues following it today. (12)

In short, we should not take Chinese modernity as the passive object of the so-called “Western impact,” such that “Chinese substance” becomes “Western Substance.” In other words, we should not take Chinese modernity as a process in which old China disintegrated. Rather, I would like to stress that we should understand Chinese modernity as a process in which old China shed its skin. Shedding skin is also a process of being reborn. From one perspective, shedding skin implies new life, but when a snake sheds its skin, it is not the case that it is no longer a snake.

Of course, the “Western Impact” had its adequate mechanical effects and the Self-Strengthening movement and the 100 Days

Reform Movement were precisely responses to this impact. But if we examine these movements within a larger historical trajectory of 300 years, we can clearly see that they were basically continuing forms of “Old China.” (56–57)

If we reason in the above manner, the significance of modern China’s confrontation with the West at the level of thought is greatly reduced. This interpretation also risks losing the very perspective which gives modern Chinese thought its critical potential. This risk is especially evident in the manner in which Mizoguchi deals with New Confucianism.

In the face of the May 4th Movement, which represented Western Enlightenment in Chinese modernity, Mizoguchi portrays the New Confucianist Liang Shuming as exemplary of “another May 4th Movement.”

Up to now, conventional understanding asserts that it [Liang Shuming’s way] counters the movement to attack and overthrow the traditional thought based on the kinship system and Confucianism by transforming and continuing the kinship system and Confucianism. In other words, it must have been another path diametrically opposed and unflinchingly non-compromised by the anti-traditional movement.

Although in actuality, these positions were opposed on the question of whether classes existed in China, which was a key ideological point of the revolution, in New China, they were seen as intertwining parts of one vine. (Mizoguchi 2004, 192–3)

That is, he sees the Chinese history of “saving the nation and revolution” from May 4th to New China as the realization of “traditional thought based on the kinship system and Confucianism.” He then sees this as China’s particularity. Thus he enters into the following opposition with Li Zehou.

The idea of rule by ritual combined as the constituent parts of “saving the nation and revolution.” This unites us [Mizoguchi and Li

Zehou]. However, the conclusions we draw from this are diametrically opposed.

The difference lies in that according to Li Zehou, the “kinship system and the ritual system” were feudal remnants that were overcome by the “revolution.” Against this, in my opinion, for better or for worse the “kinship system and the ritual system” were internal determinants of the character of “Chinese style” socialism. If one looks at it from the standpoint of the compromising style of this revolution, we can see the kinship system and the ritual system as one of the reasons that the revolution succeeded. (193–194)

In this way, according to Mizoguchi, the struggles of modern Chinese thought are in the end none other than a new development of “traditional Confucian thought.” Following from this, the critique of “traditional Confucian thought” was only performed by the distortions created by those who were contaminated by Western thought and introduced Western thought to China. He already expressed this structure in his first book in the following manner:

It is useful to theorize Asian modernity proper as a historical result of Asian pre-modernity and revive it in the contemporary period. I think it is useful because this will make the world a real world and make each [region] return to its true self. (Mizoguchi 1980, i–ii)

However, the attitude from which one discovers an “alternative modernity” in the legacy of Chinese thought and philosophy without any criticism against the legacy clearly depends on a romantic image of China. He ends up underestimating the impact of modernity and avoids a fundamental critique of modernity. In this way, he simplifies tensions in modern Chinese thought and cannot avoid producing another “China study without China.”

3. Shimada Kenji and New Confucianism

Shimada Kenji is someone who develops an attitude similar to one that

tries to find an “alternative modernity” in China, but he attempts to develop this paradigm in a different direction. Shimada like Mizoguchi, but even earlier than Mizoguchi attempted to see the Ming dynasty as the source of Chinese modernity. However, this is not an alternative modernity, it is a modernity that is matched to Western modernity and also a modernity pervaded by the demand for universality.

My method is as follows. First is the intuition that China after the Song is parallel to the European Modern Age (This is a process that begins in the 14th and 15th centuries and is to be distinguished from the “modernity” itself idealized from the civilization of the 19th and 20th centuries). Following from this, because they are all human societies, China after the Song Dynasty is in a similar situation to that of the renaissance in Europe. By pursuing this point, one can understand the universal and particular points of Chinese history. As is already well known, for better or for worse, there is no other method for us in the present. Rather than conclude that the Chinese are unique from the outset, there is no alternative than to proceed initially by taking the various concepts maintained in Western style scholarship as an index. That is, we cannot avoid first reading Europe in China. The problem consists in the further step. What does one do when we confront an object to which this index does not apply? (Shimada 2003, 118)

It makes no difference that Shimada uses the term “early modernity” (*kinsei*) to name this modernity (*kindai*). Shimada asserts that “If someone asks whether what I call modern is in the final analysis not really modernity, I would reply that what I call modern is actually modern” (261). Until the end, he wants to understand “modern” China (especially the Ming dynasty) as modernity equal to the West. Of course, Shimada also thinks that China did not itself produce “modernity itself,” namely capitalism (it suffered a setback, [*zasetsu*]).

Precisely because of this argument, although Shimada positively evaluates Confucianism as a legacy of the Chinese tradition, he does not claim that this is China’s particularity. Rather, he claims that the legacy of Confucianism is also part of the development of “modern

thought.” His interpretation of the studies of Wang Yangming is as follows:

With respect to the studies of Zhu Xi, the internalism towards which Song studies strove could not fully realize its aim. It was still at a level in which the internalism had to recognize the “external.” It was Wang Yangming who pushed internalism to the extreme and absorbed the authority of the “external” in the “internal.” (Shimada 1967, 126–127)

Yangming studies established a modern type of “interiority” in China. Through this interiority, the “awareness of a ‘modern self’” (Shimada 2003, 118) became possible.

In this case, from Shimada’s perspective New Confucianism which was “another May 4th” was not an expression of Chinese particularity, but a symbol of Chinese modernity. Shimada differs from Mizoguchi because Shimada does not provide us with the example of Liang Shuming, who as Mizoguchi referred to is from “the so-called School of Metaphysics (*xuanxue*), that is, a traditional school or the national essence school” (Shimada 1987, 127). Rather, Shimada presents Xiong Shili. In so doing, he makes the following comments:

In the final analysis, his philosophy synthetically revived the traditional thought and this was clearly an attempt to create a new philosophy. (128)

However, his work is especially important because it showed the extent it was possible for Confucian thought to incorporate contemporary thought. This was clearly not pure Confucian thought. Xiong’s thought is reflexively penetrated by Buddhism. Not only that, one must not deny that his conception is also greatly influenced by Bergson. However, one can definitely see in Xiong’s philosophical project the form of a developmental continuation of tradition. Even if there is an anachronism here, it is a stimulating anachronism. I think that it is definitely a contribution to humanity. (132)

In other words, because Xiong Shili's philosophy passes through Buddhism and makes Confucian thought philosophical and modern, "it makes a great contribution to humanity."

That said, Shimada is not a simple modernist. On the contrary, given that "modernity" is already formed in East Asia, "there is no alternative but to read Europe in China." In this way, he configured his own perspective and on this basis he understood Chinese particularity to be contained in those areas that did not get caught up in the "concepts of Western style scholarship." One can say that he was trying to save the philosophical possibilities of Chinese philosophy. In this respect, Shimada differs from Mizoguchi who sought an "alternative modernity" in China and tried to rethink the world's universality from Chinese particularity. Shimada's standpoint is clearly different from Mizoguchi's relativistic vision, which posits a condition in which there are a number of discrete cultures.

4. Critical Chinese Studies

Nonetheless, these two postwar Japanese scholars of Chinese philosophy represent a common limitation. That is, they cannot carry out a thorough critique of Western modernity from its principles even though Mizoguchi attempted to do this. His critique was premised on an understanding of the West, which did not attain the level of Shimada and to this extent, Mizoguchi could not adequately develop his critique. Although the two devoted their efforts to elevating the Confucian thought on which they depended (not only Ming dynasty thought but also New Confucianism), because they could not develop this fundamental critique of Western modernity, they lacked a philosophical critique of Confucian thought. Even if one acknowledges a certain legitimacy in Mizoguchi's application of a multi-culturalist framework onto China to describe China as particularistic, this can easily fall into a cultural essentialism and so it cannot offer resistance to the oppressive power of Western modernity. On the other hand, even if it is possible to read modernity in Chinese thought and ask universal questions about it, if one does not first develop a critique of

both Western modernity and combine this with a critique of Chinese modernity, in the end, one ends up with nothing but to an approval of the *status quo*.

Sakamoto Hiroku expresses these apprehensions in a different manner. She does this in her book-review of Shimada Kenji's *On New Confucianist Philosophy—Xiong Shili's Philosophy*.

Moreover, with respect to the problem of whether Confucianism is reactionary/feudal, is it permissible to ignore that from the birth of Confucian thought, Confucians probably played a “reactionary” role with respect to discriminations based on a strong *jus sanguinis* (emphasis on bloodline—*kettōshugi*) or “feudal” characteristics? Although this point is unclear, this reviewer just cannot understand references to some type of “people’s Confucianism” (I introduce this in a footnote to this essay) or a simply democratic Confucianism. Does this position not carry with it shades of Confucian romanticism? China’s Confucianism at the level of the “people” today seems incessantly to valorize ceremonies related to marriage and coming of age or support infamous practices such as female infanticide. In addition, if one develops a feminist study of Confucianism, then Confucian culture would be covered with blemishes and would not be able to escape criticisms. (Sakamoto 2009, 244)

What is necessary is critical power. Sakamoto rejects all that has “shades of romanticism” towards China and points out the bankruptcy, limits and contradictions of Chinese thought and especially Confucianism. At the same time, she attempts to seek out the philosophical possibilities that are left. The generation following Mizoguchi Yūzō and Shimada Kenji were faced with this task.

5. Azuma Jūji and Sakamoto Hiroko: An “Understanding Sympathy” of New Confucianism and a Feminist Critique

So what is the state of recent studies of New Confucianism?

First one must note Azuma Jūji’s translation of basic New Con-

fucian documents and his introductions to these documents. He translated the first volume of Feng Youlan's *History of Chinese Philosophy* and published it as *A History of Chinese Philosophy: The Volume on its Establishment*. Then he translated Xiong Shili's *New Treatise on Consciousness-Only* and Feng Youlan's *San Songtang's Authorial Preface* which was published as *Feng Youlan's Autobiography Volumes One and Two*. It goes without mentioning that these works themselves are great contributions to Japanese academia.

On top of all of these translations, Azuma published his reflections on New Confucianism. Summarizing New Confucianism, he wrote "Non-Marxist Philosophy in China: On 'Neo-Confucianism,'" an essay on Feng Youlan's thought during the Republican period, namely "The Formation of 'the New Study of Principles': Feng Youlan's New Substantialism" and an essay on Xiong Shili, namely "'Philosophy' and 'Metaphysics' during the Republican Period: On the Scope of Xiong Shili's philosophy." These are all adequate summaries of New Confucianism and his essays make the philosophical significance of New Confucianism clear.

So what is the special characteristic of Azuma's reading? The following lines symbolically express his position.

I believe that one cannot understand sufficiently an object for which one has lost empathy. I study primarily Confucianism, with a particular emphasis on the study of Zhu Xi, but I am sympathetic to Confucianism. I feel empathy to the *Analects*, to the *Mencius* and to Zhu Xi. This feeling is different from that of worship as I also have sympathy for many non-Confucian philosophers, whom I also find interesting. I believe that Zhuangzi, Daoism and Zen Buddhism are all also interesting. There is also a standpoint that studies Confucianism in order to criticize it, but at least from my perspective, I have a fundamental empathy with Chinese Confucianism." (Azuma 2008, 100)

This is none other than the "sympathetic understanding" that Chen Yinke expressed in his examination report on Feng Youlan's *History of Chinese Philosophy*.

On the other hand, we have Sakamoto Hiroko's discussion, which

we have touched on earlier. Her discussion does not stop at the organization and introduction of New Confucianism; she criticizes the framework for discussing New Confucianism. First, Sakamoto retreats from the framework that conceives of the Confucian revival in response to modern Western thought and emphasizes the importance of Buddhism for New Confucian thought.

Although Liang Shuming, Xiong Shili and Zhang Binglin each had their respective struggles with one another, there are still extremely interesting point of convergence, which all of them express. They all in their own way were committed to the Republican Revolution, and aimed to construct a Chinese national philosophy. Moreover, as they selectively incorporated Western philosophy, they also relied on Yogācāra Buddhism of the Chinese Institute for Internal Studies in Nanjing. In addition, they all reflexively accomplished a “return to Confucianism from Buddhism.”

Here if one thinks about the above-mentioned genealogy, first they faced the question of how to deal with modern Chinese Buddhism when they “promoted a new genealogy of the continuity of Confucius-Mencius, Cheng-Zhu, Lu-Wang.” (Sakamoto 2009, 250)

This perspective attempts directly to revise Li Zehou’s definition of New Confucianism, which does not touch on Buddhism (249). In this way, she points to Buddhism as a “media that forms a network” (271–272). However, in the background of these remarks lies Sakamoto’s critique of Confucianism from the standpoint of “feminist studies.”

She expresses this most clearly in her fierce criticism of Liang Shuming’s consciousness of women. Sakamoto discusses Liang Shuming’s 1936 lecture entitled “Women as Human Beings” in the following manner.

As we can understand from the above summary, when he [Liang Shuming] thinks of men and women as human beings in a biological world, he takes the problem of women as a part of Chinese society and culture. Rather than recognizing this problem as a part, there is an attitude which expresses the logic that it is “merely” one part.

Stemming from this attitude, such problems are not taken seriously and neither discussed nor grappled with....

He develops the idea that one cannot separate oneself from the “awareness of an itch” in one’s body, but in the end, just as those who historically have opposed equality between the sexes, there is the idea that overlooks individual particularity and that the idea of equality is based on the substitution of particularity with a logic that eradicates sexual difference. There is no idea to advocate equality, even if there is a bodily difference. At the foundations, there are of course similarities with classical Western philosophy. However, this foundation is none other than the frequent use of the Confucian male-centric and fatalistic vision of “nature.” Confucianism then uses differences such as those based on race and develops a gender consciousness based on sexism stemming from pseudo-scientific biology. (Sakamoto 2009, 286)

Sakamoto’s feminist critique is perhaps only a beginning. If this critique extends to an attack on modern Buddhism and to a criticism of Western modernity, it fully expresses its power. If one retraces from this point, one could perhaps complete a reconstruction or deconstruction of New Confucianism. I wait with keen interest for more work in this direction.

Conclusion

To recapitulate, what is necessary for Japanese studies of New Confucianism is a critical power. The generation following Mizoguchi Yūzō and Shimada Kenji should develop this theme. However, now, on the one hand, as represented in the work of Azuma, we definitely need a proper introduction to New Confucianism. With respect to such introductions, Tsuchiya Masaaki’s study of Liang Shuming in “‘The Rational State’ and the Cultural Revolution: The Transfiguration of Confucianism in Liang Shuming’s Thought” and Nakamura Shunya’s study of Tu Wei-ming *On New Confucianism: A Study of Tu Wei-ming* fill an important gap.

That said, if one stops here, then one just follows in the wake of

Chinese, English and French studies of New Confucianism. One definitely needs to revive the critical power of Japanese studies of China. In order to take on this burden, I published an essay, namely, "New Confucianism and Buddhism: Liang Shuming, Xiong Shili, and Mou Zongsan." In this essay, I stressed that by using Buddhism, New Confucianists re-invented Confucianism as a modern form of scholarship by using Buddhism, but the Buddhism that they used is none other than a "philosophized Buddhism," so the New Confucianism denuded it of its critical power. I cite below the conclusion to my essay.

In this case, the Buddhism of New Confucianism is Buddhism as philosophy. It is not fundamentally incompatible with philosophy, nor what philosophy cannot manipulate. This is an important aspect of the conclusion of development from "Buddhism" to "Buddhist Studies," namely the movement from Buddhism to the study of Buddhism. To put it boldly, from the perspective of New Confucianism as a philosophical movement, Buddhism (including the Buddhism studies of "New Buddhism") was an appropriate springboard from which to connect with Western philosophy and then surpass it.

Still, Buddhism tears itself away from philosophy (especially culture) and fundamentally extinguishes its possibility to question radically philosophy. This possibility is folded like a wrinkle in the writings of New Confucianism. When the tip of this question is exposed, it could simultaneously attack the collusive relations between philosophy and "anti-philosophy" and revive once again the practice of Buddhism. But this idea of Buddhist practice must question the notion of "practice" that we have been familiar with up to now. One cannot simply return to practice.

Through making Buddhism philosophy, New Confucianism examined the modern limits and possibilities of Buddhism. However, what one must wait for is a Buddhist questionings that resist a New Confucian style of philosophization. (Nakajima 2007, 100)

If I were to add to this now, in order to criticize New Confucianism, we must not only revive the critical power of Buddhism but also the critical power of Confucianism. Along with a "critical Buddhism" one

needs a “critical Confucianism.”⁴ Today, when there is a great revival of Confucianism, this theme is especially relevant.

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4. With respect to “critical Confucianism” see, Nakajima 2009.

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