



East
Asian
History

NUMBER 20 · DECEMBER 2000

Institute of Advanced Studies
Australian National University

Editor Geremie R. Barmé
Associate Editor Helen Lo
Editorial Board Mark Elvin (Convenor)
John Clark
Andrew Fraser
Helen Hardacre
Colin Jeffcott
W. J. F. Jenner
Lo Hui-min
Gavan McCormack
David Marr
Tessa Morris-Suzuki
Michael Underdown

Design and Production Helen Lo
Business Manager Marion Weeks
Printed by Goanna Print, Fyshwick, ACT



This is the twentieth issue of *East Asian History*
in the series previously entitled *Papers on Far Eastern History*.
The journal is published twice a year

Contributions to The Editor, *East Asian History*
Division of Pacific and Asian History
Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies
Australian National University
Canberra ACT 0200, Australia
Phone +61 2 6125 3140 Fax +61 2 6125 5525
email geremie@coombs.anu.edu.au

Subscription Enquiries to Subscriptions, *East Asian History*, at the above address, or to
marion@coombs.anu.edu.au

Annual Subscription Australia A\$45 Overseas US\$45 (for two issues)

史 CONTENTS

- 1 The Order of Birds in Guiyi Jun Dunhuang
Lewis Mayo
- 60 Zhou Lianggong and *Chidu Xinchao*: Genre and Political Marginalisation in the Ming–Qing Transition
David Pattinson
- 83 The Construction of “Modern Yōmeigaku” in Meiji Japan and its Impact in China
● *gyū Shigehiro*
—translated, with an introduction, by Barry D. Steben
- 121 Confucian Populism and Egalitarian Tendencies in Tonghak Thought
Mark Setton
- 145 On the Battlefield of Mabuni: Struggles over Peace and the Past in Contemporary Okinawa
Julia Yonetani
- 169 The Fate of an Enlightenment—Twenty Years in the Chinese Intellectual Sphere (1978–98)
Xu Jilin
—translated by Geremie R. Barmé, with Gloria Davies

Cover calligraphy Yan Zhenqing 顏真卿, Tang calligrapher and statesman

Cover illustration Okinawan *Seasar* (© photograph by Ken Yonetani 米谷建)

Lions have never been found on Okinawa, and the custom of revering them as 'king of the beasts' and symbols of protection is said to have originated in ancient Persia. By the time this custom reached Okinawa via China in the fourteenth or fifteenth century, the stone figures bore less and less resemblance to real lions. Early Chinese recordings of a stone 'lion-dog' figure placed within a shrine of the Ryukyu Kingdom (currently Okinawa) date back to 1683. From the late seventeenth century, influenced by Chinese conceptions of *feng shui* 風水, the lion-like symbols or 'seasar' (シーサー, also spelt *shiisaa* or *seesar*) became known for their powers of protection against fire, and could be found in front of the gates of temples or castles, at entrances to the tombs of noble families, and at the entrances of villages or sacred shrines. Today, seasars are placed to ward off any kind of evil spirit, and many different lion-like forms made not only from stone, but from clay, concrete and other materials, with varied colours and styles, may be seen on roofs, gates and at entrances to buildings across the Okinawan archipelago. (—*Julia Yonetani*)

THE CONSTRUCTION OF “MODERN YŌMEIGAKU” IN MEIJI JAPAN AND ITS IMPACT IN CHINA

史 Ogyū Shigehiro 荻生茂博

—translated, with an introduction, by Barry D. Steben

INTRODUCTION

Wang Yangming Learning as Both Transnational and National Discourse

In the middle of the Ming dynasty, the Nanjing-based examination supervisor, military governor, and suppressor of southern rebels, Wang Yangming 王陽明 (Wang Shouren 王守仁, 1472–1528; Jp. Ō Yōmei), worked out a unique form of Neo-Confucian philosophy founded on his famous enlightenment experience of 1508 at Longchang 龍場 in the south-western frontier region of Guizhou, where he had been banished for defending some officials imprisoned unjustly by the dictatorial eunuch Liu Chin 劉瑾. The core of his philosophical message was a call to men and women to awaken from their reveries, to become intensely aware that we only live in the present moment—a moment that is complete in itself, unsplittable, and brimming with creative potential, yet which must be seized before it slips away. “Our mind *itself* is principle” (*xin ji li* 心即理), he taught: Heavenly principle, the foundation of ethical action, and of the universe itself, is to be found entirely within our own capacity of discriminating awareness, not in anything external, not in anything fixed and immovable, whether classical books, classical institutions, or established systems of knowledge.¹ “Knowledge and action are a unity” (*zhi xing he yi* 知行合一): we do not truly *know* moral principles until we have struggled to realize them

¹ Needless to say, the fundamental moral principles of the five relationships do not change. It is not that the moral principles themselves are not fixed, but that their *mode of manifestation* is not fixed, changing in accord with the time, the place, and the rank or position of the individual persons involved without external coercion. Thus Zhu Xi’s 朱熹 emendation of the core principle of government in the *Great Learning* from “be intimate with the people” (*qin min* 親民) to “renew the people” (*xin min* 新民) must be rejected in favor of the ancient text. The strongest expression of this rejection of the cognition or imposition of moral norms through external structures of authority and convention is Wang’s late and controversial teaching that “the absence of good and evil is the substance of the mind.”

Figure 1

This spirited portrait of Wang Yangming was painted a few years ago by a well-known Chinese painter of historical portraits, Fan Zeng 范曾 (born 1938), at the behest of the International Foundation for Future Generations in Kyoto. Fan Zeng is a descendant of the great Song-dynasty statesman and writer, Fan Zhongyan 范仲淹 (989–1052), famous for his dictum that a person of learning should be the first to worry about the problems of the world and the last to enjoy its pleasures. This spirit of Confucian moral commitment was inherited and developed by Wang Yangming in his teaching “knowledge and action are one,” “temper oneself in the midst of activity,” “extend the innate knowledge of the good,” and “the humaneness that regards all things as one body”



² “The vacuity of Heaven-and-Earth connects to the Great Vacuity of Heaven, and the nothingness of the innate knowledge connects to the nothingness of the Great Vacuity All forms and appearances, all phenomena, manifest and circulate within the formlessness of the Great Vacuity The sage merely accords with this manifestation of the innate knowledge as it occurs, and that is all. [The manifestation and circulation of] Heaven-and-Earth and the ten thousand things are also within the manifestation and circulation of one’s own innate knowledge. There can be nothing that exists transcendentally outside of this innate knowledge and obstructs [its manifestation and circulation]” (*Chuanxi lu* B:69).

in moral decision-making in concrete situations. Therefore, one must “polish oneself in the conduct of practical affairs” (*shishang molian* 事上磨鍊). Accordingly, from age forty-eight, the core of Wang’s teaching became the activist admonition, “extend the innate knowledge of the good” (*zhi liangzhi* 致良知): resolutely rectify external affairs by relying on one’s inborn sense of good and evil as one’s infallible light and rudder. In this practice, the illusory split between the goal and the means, between the original substance (*benti* 本体) and moral effort (*gongfu* 功夫、工夫), between the inner and the outer worlds, between Heaven and man, disappears, so that practice itself becomes realization and the heart itself becomes Heaven.²

These teachings had great appeal in China in the Ming dynasty, and, as the scholarship of Mizoguchi Yūzō 溝口雄三 has emphasized, they became the voice of a social movement that advocated opening not only the portals of Confucian learning, but the gates of political decision-making as well, to lower-level, locally-rooted officials, village elders, and the lower social strata in general.³ The Confucian emphasis on self-reliance and on the moral

autonomy of the individual reached its peak of development in Wang's intuitionist philosophy,⁴ to the point that conservatives always felt that the teachings of Yangming and his followers—particularly those of the popular "existential realization" wing (*liangzhi xianchengpai* 良知現成派)—were a danger to the hierarchical social order. Criticism of the Yangming school and the antinomian excesses of some of its followers was particularly strong toward the end of the Ming and the early Qing, with some even blaming the fall of the Ming on its teachings. Accordingly, the school gained few followers during the Qing dynasty, only resurfacing amidst the reform movements toward the end of the dynasty. For this reason it has often been said that Wang Yangming's teachings were, at least in the long run, more popular in Japan than they were in China.⁵

Having entered Japan after its fall from grace in China, however, Yangming learning (Jp. *Yōmeigaku* 陽明学) never really established itself as a social movement, or even as a self-perpetuating master-to-disciple lineage of learning. Rather, its teachings were studied and propagated by a limited number of independent scholars whose indomitable personalities made such an impact on people around them that some of them came to be regarded as Japanese sages.⁶ The "Ōyōmei principle of action," in Tetsuo Najita's words, "held that at critical points in one's life (and by extension, of society's as well) conventional reason and perceptions may not be helpful guidelines to action and that in these moments, one must reach deeply into his spiritual self and commit himself decisively to a course of action because he believes that course to be right, not because it might be advantageous."⁷ The most famous of the figures who taught or were strongly influenced by Wang Yangming learning are Nakae Tōju 中江藤樹 (1608–48), his students Fuchi Kōzan 淵岡山 (1617–86) and especially Kumazawa Banzan 熊澤蕃山 (1619–91), Miwa Shissai 三輪執斎 (1669–1744), Satō Issai 佐藤一斎 (1772–1859), Ōshio Chūsai 大塩中齋 (Heihachirō 平八郎, 1793–1859), Saigō Takamori 西郷隆盛 (1827–77), Yoshida Shōin 吉田松陰 (1830–59), and Kusaka Genzui 久坂玄瑞 (1840–64). A second order of less well-known teachers includes Miyake Sekian 三宅石庵 (1665–1730), Yoshimura Shūyō 吉村秋陽 (1797–1866), Yamada Hōkoku 山田方谷 (1805–77), Hayashi Ryōsai 林良齋 (1807–49), Yokoi Shōnan 横井小楠 (1809–69), Kasuga Sen'an 春日潜庵 (1811–78), and Ikeda Sōan 池田草庵 (1813–78).

/to the breakdown of the *li-jia* 里甲 system of autocratic rule that occurred from the beginning of the Ming" due to a marked expansion of the class of privileged great landlords and a corresponding increase in interclass contradictions. Accordingly, there was a need for a new communal ideology fitted to the actual situation in the villages (the philosophy of "the humaneness of the ten thousand things as one body") that would extend the role of socio-political leadership and moral initiative to the lower classes.

⁴ "In study, what is most to be valued is acquiring it for oneself in one's own heart-mind. If one seeks the truth of a statement in one's heart and finds it to be wrong, then even if it was spoken by Confucius himself, one does not dare to take it as true. How much more if it was spoken by someone of lesser stature than Confucius. If one seeks the truth of a statement in one's heart and finds it to be true, then even if it was spoken by a person of no special talent, one does not dare take it to be false. How much more if it was spoken by Confucius himself." "Da Luo Zheng'an shaozai shu" [Letter in reply to Vice-Minister Luo Zheng'an 羅整庵 (Luo Qinshun 羅欽順)], *Wang Wencheng gong quanshu* 2: 117a. For an alternate translation, see Wing-tsit Chan, trans., *Instructions for Practical Living and other neo-Confucian writings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), p.159.

⁵ Ichikawa Hontarō's recent *Nihon Jukyōshi* [A history of Japanese Confucianism] (Tokyo: Kyūko Shoin, 1994), which strictly follows the categories of classification established at the turn of the century by Inoue Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎 (1855–1944), includes twenty-five major Edo thinkers under the category of "Yōmeigaku-ba."

⁶ While only Nakae Tōju, who came to be known as "the sage of Ōmi," actually carried the title, certainly Kumazawa Banzan and Ōshio Chūsai came to be regarded as sages in different ways by their followers and admirers, not to mention Yoshida Shōin and Saigō Takamori, the most renowned "national sages" of modern Japan.

⁷ Tetsuo Najita, *Japan: the intellectual foundations of modern Japanese politics* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1974), p.53.

³ See Togawa Yoshio, Hachiya Kunio, and Mizoguchi Yūzō, *Jukyōshi* [The history of Confucianism] (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 1987), pp.303–43; "Futatsu no Yōmeigaku" [Two Yōmeigaku traditions], in *Li Takugo: Ōdō o ayumu itan* [Li Zhuowu: a heresy that walks the royal road] (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 1985), pp. 221–39; "Futatsu no Yōmeigaku," *Risō* 572 (Jan. 1981): 68–80; and "Nihonteki Yōmeigaku wo megutte" [Concerning Japanese Yōmeigaku], *Gendai shisō*

/10–12, special issue, *Nihonjin no kokoro no rekishi* [The history of the Japanese spirit], Sept. 1982, pp.342–56. In the *Risō* article (pp.71–2), for instance, Mizoguchi argues that the reason Zhu Xi learning in the Ming lost its ability to deal with actual socio-political problems was because "between the middle and late Ming dynasty, some sort of rupture occurred in the old unified ideology of order that bound together the ruler and the bureaucracy, higher and lower officials, corresponding

⁸ Bitō Masahide, *Nihon hōken shisōshi kenkyū* [Studies in the history of Japanese feudal thought] (Tokyo: Aoki Shoten, 1961).

⁹ Ogyū Shigehiro, “Bakumatsu–Meiji no Yōmeigaku to Min–Shin shisōshi” [Bakumatsu–Meiji Wang Yangming learning and Ming–Qing intellectual history], in *Nit–Chū bunka kōryū–shi sōsho* [Series on the history of Japan–China cultural interchange], no.3, *Shisō* [Thought], ed. Minamoto Ryōen and Yan Shandang (Tokyo: Taishūkan Shoten, 1996); “Ōshio Chūsai—Hanransha no ningengaku” [Ōshio Chūsai: the human study of a rebel], in *Edo no Jugaku—Daigaku juyō no rekishi* [Edo Confucianism: the history of the reception of the *Great Learning*], ed. Minamoto Ryōen (Kyoto: Shibunkaku Shuppan, 1988), pp.199–220.

¹⁰ H. D. Harootunian, *Toward Restoration* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1970), pp.139–41. As Charles L. Yates notes in *Saigo Takamori: the man behind the myth* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1995), pp.56, 176, Saigō was not a thinker but a man of deep feeling and action. Nevertheless, he was much influenced by Yōmeigaku ideas, derived chiefly from his study of Satō Issai’s aphorisms. Issai served as head of the Hayashi college, the Shōheikō 昌平齋, from 1805. Men who became his students between 1830 and 1836 include many of the major scholars of the bakumatsu period, at least five of whom became known as followers of Yōmeigaku. Thus it is the influence of Issai (officially a scholar of Zhu Xi learning, but privately a strong sympathizer of Yōmeigaku) that is a major historical basis of the claim for the influence of Yōmeigaku on the Meiji Restoration, although the much more radical ideas of Ōshio Chūsai probably have more connection with the ideas that helped justify rebellion against the bakufu.

¹¹ *Komi bunkō*, “Go Shien” 己未文稿、語子遠, quoted in “Nihonteki Yōmeigaku wo megutte,” p.350.

¹² The major distorting prism, in Mizoguchi’s eyes, was the highly “Japanese” and “subjectivistic” Yōmeigaku of the late-Edo period. See “Futatsu no Yōmeigaku,” *Risō* 572: 74.

¹³ Ogyū Shigehiro, a ninth-generation descendant of the famous Edo Confucian thinker Ogyū Sorai 荻生徂徠 (1666–1728), has to date published twenty-eight academic artic-

None of these thinkers, with the possible exception of Miwa Shissai after his conversion from the “external seeking” of Satō Naokata’s 佐藤直方 version of Zhu Xi learning, were “pure” followers of Wang Yangming’s teachings, but were influenced also by other streams of Confucian learning and often, as in the case of Tōju, Chūsai, and Shōin, by later developments in the Ming dynasty Wang Yangming school. This fact has led to much scholarly controversy, with Bitō Masahide 尾藤正英, for instance, pointing out the vast differences between the thought of Tōju, Banzan, and Yangming respectively in order to argue that Japanese society was fundamentally unsuited to the adoption of Chinese Confucian teachings and practices,⁸ Ogyū Shigehiro arguing that Chūsai was more a follower of the Ming-dynasty Donglin school than of Yangming himself,⁹ and scholars like H. D. Harootunian pointing out the weakness of the evidence for identifying Yoshida and Saigō with Yōmeigaku.¹⁰ In view of Yangming’s emphasis on finding one’s own inborn light of ethical judgment within one’s own mind, as opposed to following some outside authority regarding the truth, such arguments sometimes seem a little overwrought. When Yoshida Shōin, for instance, writes in the year of his execution that “I am not exclusively a practitioner of Yōmeigaku; it is just that the truth in Yangming’s teachings often happens to coincide with my own truth,”¹¹ it may indicate a closer spiritual affinity with Yangming than that of a mere “follower.” But it is certainly true that the different cultural, social, and intellectual environment of Japan, as well as individual differences in life circumstances, led to considerably different emphases in Japanese Wang Yangming learning than we find in China. Some aspects of these differences have been explored by Mizoguchi Yūzō, as outlined below, but his main interest in doing so was to uncover for his Japanese audience the nature and significance of the Wang Yangming school within *Chinese* society in its historical context, undistorted by some three hundred and fifty years of distinctly Japanese interpretations and appropriations.¹² It took a scholar of *Japanese* intellectual history, however, working for years on the reexamination of the Yōmeigaku tradition in Japan,¹³ to discover that this discourse *about* Wang Yangming’s teachings, in the form in which it has come down to us, actually constitutes one of the core discourses regarding modernity through which not only Japan, but China and Korea as well, have conceptualized and promoted the “modernization” of their traditional Confucianist ethical systems. For the modern nature of this discourse to be clearly perceived, it was necessary to go through the methodological paradigm shift from regarding discourse as something that obscures reality to taking it seriously in its own right as something that constitutes and configures the “reality” that people cognize. This shift, which

/les, including four Chinese and two Korean translations of his articles. He has also co-edited two books with his mentor Minamoto

/Ryōen and personally compiled the complete works of Satō Issai (*Aijūsurō zenshū* [Tokyo: Perikansha, 1999]).

owes a great deal to the influence of Foucault and his followers in Japan,¹⁴ already begins to sound like the ground-shift that Wang Yangming himself brought about in Confucian ethical thought and practice by teaching that nothing exists outside of the mind and that cognition cannot be separated from moral decision-making. Thus the essay which follows this introduction does not attempt to recover the “real,” “original” nature of Yōmeigaku in either Ming China or Tokugawa Japan, but to expose to view, and thus to deconstruct and defuse, the particular conceptualization of modernity that has been constituted by a discourse that stands inexorably between us and the “original” teachings of Wang Yangming and his followers. Nevertheless, it will aid our understanding of the modern discourse *about* Yōmeigaku to have an idea just what it was that was taught by its most famous proponents in Tokugawa Japan.

No matter how much their thought differed from Wang Yangming, and no matter how great were the individual differences in their thought, all the Japanese “Yōmeigakusha” 陽明学者 seem to have regarded the essence of Yangming’s teachings as the practice of turning one’s attention back upon oneself to discover the light within one’s own *kokoro* 心—seen as an indwelling divine illumination equivalent to the ultimate source of both human life and the natural world. Nakae Tōju wrote, for instance, that “Within all human beings there is a spiritual treasure with which nothing in the world can compare, known as the supreme virtue and the essential Way. The most important thing in life is to make use of this treasure, keeping it in our hearts and practising it with our bodies. Above, this treasure flows into the Way of Heaven; below, its luminosity shines over the four seas.”¹⁵ Tōju interpreted Yangming’s “extend the innate knowledge” (*ryōchi wo itasu* 良知を致す) as “reach the innate knowledge” (*ryōchi ni itaru* 良知に至る), and the practice for achieving this as eliminating all self-rooted thoughts, desires and intentions from the mind to recover the original single, pure mind of *makoto* 誠 (sincerity). Similarly, he interpreted the “affairs” in Yangming’s “rectify affairs” (Ch. *gewu* 格物; Jp. *kakubutsu*) as one’s personal appearance, words, perceptions, and thinking. Later Japanese followers continued to regard Yōmeigaku chiefly as a method of training the mind toward the transcendence of self, the transcendence of life and death. Accordingly, Kumazawa Banzan wrote that “In both Japan and China, for three thousand years, people have been moved by the fear of birth and death. Few indeed

¹⁴ For an analysis of one of the major influences on the formation of Ogyū’s methodological approach, see my essay “Edo as method: an introduction to Koyasu Nobukuni’s [小安宣邦] recent scholarship,” in *Sino-Japanese Studies* 12.2 (April 2000): 29–40.

¹⁵ *Okina Mondō*, A1, in *Nakae Tōju, Nihon shisō taikai* [Compendium of Japanese thought] (hereafter *NST*), vol.29 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1974), p.22.

¹⁶ *Shūgi washo*, fascicle 15, in *Kumazawa Banzan, NST*, vol.30 (1971), p.299. While Banzan follows Tōju in claiming that Buddhism fails to truly overcome the fear of birth and death, the term “birth and death” is also the Sino-Japanese translation of the word *samsara*.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.300, 301.

Figure 2

Nakae Tōju



¹⁸ Ibid., fascicle 9, p.156.

¹⁹ *Shigenkyō kotogaki narabini uta* [An itemized explanation of the Four Maxims with a poem], in *Shissai zatchō* [Miscellaneous writings of Miwa Shissai], *Nihon no Yōmeigaku* [Wang Yangming learning in Japan], Uno Tetsujin and Yasuoka Masahiro, chief eds (part of *Yōmeigaku taikei* [A compendium of Wang Yangming learning] (Tokyo: Meitoku Shuppansha, 1972), vol.1, p.293; and Inoue Tetsujirō and Kanie Yoshimaru, eds., *Nihon rinri iben* [A classified compilation of Japanese ethical thought] (Tokyo: Ikuseikai, 1901), vol.2, pp.493–5.

²⁰ *Genshibanroku* [Late records of verbalizing my aspiration], 7, in *Satō Issai; Ōshio Chūsai, NST*, vol.46 (1980), p.109.

²¹ *Hōnō shoseki shūbatsu* [Collected afterwords to books presented (to the Ise Shrine libraries)] 2, in *Nihon no Yōmeigaku*, vol.1, pp.41●–11.

²² Wang's famous Four Maxims, taught in his late years, redefine the key terms of Neo-Confucian mental cultivation in the following terms: (1) The absence of good and evil is the substance of the mind; (2) The presence of good and evil is the movement of the intention; (3) The awareness of good and evil is the innate knowledge (Ch. *liangzhi* 良知; Jp. *ryōchī*); and (4) Doing good and eliminating evil is the rectification of affairs (Ch. *gewu*; Jp. *kakubutsu*).

²³ *Shigenkyō kōgi* [Lectures on the Four Maxims], in *Nihon rinri iben*, vol.2, p.409. While Confucius and Mencius taught that one should be ready to accept death if it comes, not swerving from one's moral commitment, Chinese Confucians did not teach that one should vow to die in the process of fulfilling one's moral commitment. This is evidently a fusion of traditional samurai morality with Wang Yangming's teachings, a fusion that has continued in modern Japan under the name of "Bushidō" 武士道.

²⁴ *Gensbiroku* [Verbalizing my aspiration] 2 and 32, in *Satō Issai; Ōshio Chūsai, NST*, vol.46 (1980), pp.10, 13.

²⁵ *Senshindō sakki* [Reading notes from the cave of mind-cleansing], A19, in *ibid.*, p.374.

²⁶ As Ogyū points out, however, sympathizers of Yōmeigaku since the Meiji period have often portrayed the role of Yōmeigaku in the thought movements leading up to the

are those who have awakened from the samsaric dream.¹⁶ "*Makoto* is the root [of human existence] because it is the Way of Heaven." "Heaven is without mind and without desire."¹⁷ "All actions should not be done from the self; rather, one should act on the basis of Heaven. To respond to affairs as if one has no choice in the matter, without personal likes and dislikes—that is called acting on the basis of Heaven."¹⁸ Miwa Shissai wrote that "Although there is a bifurcation into good and evil at the point where thoughts become active, the spiritual light of the original substance remains always luminous. When that spiritual brightness manifests itself from Nature without crossing over to human will and is capable of illuminating the good and evil that has arisen, it is called the innate knowledge. It is the light of the God of Heaven (or Divine Spirit, *Tenjin* 天神) If people can just turn back on themselves to this innate knowledge and allow its light to shine forth in the midst of their interaction (*kannō* 感應) with things and affairs, then the disordered movements of the mind will cease, and all interaction with things and affairs will become the functioning of the Original Mind itself."¹⁹ Satō Issai taught that "Everyone knows that the great blue expanse above them is Heaven, and that the still and yielding thing that spreads out below them is the earth. But they do not know that our own body, with all its hair, skin, and bones, is earth, and that the intelligent and luminous consciousness of their own minds is Heaven."²⁰ Attempting to synthesize this concept of Heaven with the Japanese cult of the Sun Goddess, ancestress of the imperial line, Ōshio Chūsai argued that "Lu Xiangshan [陸象山] wrote, 'If a sage appears in the Eastern Sea, this mind is the same, and this principle is the same.' Who is worthy of being called the Sage of the Eastern Sea if not the Great Kami Amaterasu herself? ... The spiritual radiance of the Great Goddess corresponds precisely to the 'inborn knowledge of the good' taught by Confucius, Mencius and Wang Yangming."²¹ To take up a great moral cause in the name of Amaterasu, accordingly, was the same as acting in the name of Heaven, the same as extending one's own innate knowledge, the same as "returning to the Great Vacuity" (*ki Taikyo* 歸太虛).

Such a tendency to moral activism was already evident in Banzan, and it was given clear philosophical expression by Miwa Shissai in the idea that *kokorozashi* 志—will, aspiration, or resolution—is both the foundation and the totality of the Way. In regard to the fourth of Wang's Four Maxims,²² "Doing good and eliminating evil, this is the rectification of affairs," Shissai wrote, "This maxim is the vow and the guideline by which one enters into the practice of the Way. One should receive and practice it only after purifying oneself mentally and physically. In becoming a disciple of Yao 堯 and Shun 舜, one must understand that the original aspiration (*honbō* 本望) is to relinquish one's body and one's life. One should make a personal vow to the Original Mind to this effect. By means of this vow one will be able to plant firmly the root of one's nature and establish an unwavering resolution."²³ Issai wrote, "The highest thing is to take Heaven as your teacher. The next is to take a person as your teacher. The next is to take the classics as your

teacher." "A person who has firmly established this resolution finds learning even in carrying firewood and fetching water, let alone in reading books and seeking for principles. A person who has not established such a resolution will be idly engaged even if he gives his whole day to reading. Thus in the pursuit of learning, nothing is more exalted than establishing one's resolution."²⁴ In reference to Confucius's statement in *Analects* 15:8 that "The resolute scholar (*shishi* 志士) and the humane person (*jinjin* 仁人) do not seek life at the expense of humaneness," Chūsai wrote that "Life is something that can be annihilated. Humaneness is the virtue of the Great Vacuity, and can never be annihilated. It is misguided to discard what can never be annihilated to protect what is annihilated. Accordingly, it is truly reasonable that the resolute scholar and the humane person choose the former and give up the latter. This is not something that is understood by the ordinary person."²⁵

By establishing and renewing in daily meditation a profound resolution to achieve the Way, petty thoughts, distractions and worries are swallowed up and a will independent of the fickle forces of the external world is established. Moreover, as the resolution itself, to be completely sincere, involves a readiness to give up one's physical life and a faith in the immortality of the spirit, it can give a person the courage to stand up against external forces of evil in the name of what one knows in one's heart is right. Such a teaching had much appeal in the context of samurai traditions of martial valor and resolute fearlessness, and it offered samurai frustrated by the Tokugawa policies of pacification and bureaucratization a way to redirect their aggressive energies from vengeance and violence toward Confucian ethical and political goals. Thus it is not surprising that many of the leading *shishi* patriots active in the radical loyalist movements of the 1850s and 1860s were influenced by Yōmeigaku teachings.²⁶

According to Uchimura Kanzō 内村鑑三, when Takasugi Shinsaku 高杉晋作 (1839–67)—a disciple of Yoshida Shōin who was to become one of the major radical strategists in Chōshū domain—first came in contact with the Christian Bible in Nagasaki, he exclaimed "This is similar to Yōmeigaku! The disintegration of our country (*wa ga kuni* 我が国) may begin with this!"²⁷ Uchimura also quotes Saigō Takamori's dictum that, "A person who does not need life, fame, rank, or money is difficult to keep under control. Only with such an intractable person can one share the hardships and carry through to completion the great work of the nation."²⁸ Uchimura (1861–1930), a nationalistic Christian who founded the "No Church" Japanese

/up to the Meiji Restoration that do not even mention Yōmeigaku—e.g. Albert Craig, *Chōshū in the Meiji Restoration* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961); W. G. Beasley, *The Meiji Restoration* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1972); George M. Wilson, *Patriots and redeemers in Japan: motives in the Meiji Restoration* [Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1992]), and Conrad Totman, *The collapse of the Tokugawa bakufu, 1862–1868* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1980). Others mention it only in passing—e.g., H. D. Harootunian, *Toward Restoration*, and Yoshie Yoda, *The foundations of Japan's modernization*, transl. Kurt W. Radke (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966). There is a great need for a new critical examination of the actual influence of Yōmeigaku ideas on bakumatsu thinkers and *shishi* activists, although it is admittedly a slippery subject.

²⁷ Uchimura Kanzō, *Representative men of Japan* (republished in "Bilingual Books" series by Kodansha International, 1999), pp. 27–8. Translation revised with reference to the Japanese original as quoted in Mizoguchi, *Li Takugo: Ōdō o ayumu itan*, p. 221. Uchimura translated the passage as, "... disintegration of the empire will begin with this." But Japan was not an "empire" at the time, and it is hard to imagine a radical patriot wishing for the "disintegration" (*bunkai* 分解) of the imperial realm. Moreover, "will" indicates certainty, while the *bajimaran* of the original indicates will, hope, and a desire to move people to bring about the anticipated result through action. All the same, it is clear from his explanatory statement that "Christianity was a force in the reconstruction of Japan" that Uchimura takes Takasugi's "disintegration" more or less as I do, i.e., in the sense of the disintegration of the *ancien régime* that Takasugi, as a "revolutionary," hoped to help achieve.

²⁸ From *Nanshū ikun* [The injunctions of Saigō Nanshū], item 30, in *Saigō Nanshū ikun kōwa* [Talks on the injunctions of Saigō Nanshū], ed. Saigo Shikano (Tokyo: Shigen-sha, 1990), p. 91. Quoted in Uchimura, *Representative men of Japan*, p. 65. Uchimura's translation reads, "A man that seeks neither life, nor name, nor rank, nor money, is the hardest man to manage. But only with such life's tribulations can be shared, and such only can bring great things to his country."

/Restoration in greatly magnified terms. In *Nihon ni okeru Yōmeigaku no keifu* [The lineage of Yōmeigaku in Japan] (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1971), for example, Andō Hideo begins his study with Ōshio Chūsai, continuing the line through Yoshida Shōin to Kawai Tsugunosuke 河井継之助 (1827–

/68), a disciple of Yamada Hōkoku, and Kumoi Tatsuo 雲井龍雄 (1844–70). His chart of the entire "lineage" of Yōmeigaku begins with Tōju and stretches to include a total of fifty-one individuals distributed under six sub-lineages. Some historians, on the other hand, have written histories of the movements leading

²⁹ Takehiko Okada, "Neo-Confucian thinkers in nineteenth century Japan," in *Confucianism and Tokugawa culture*, ed. Peter Nosco (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp.215–50.

³⁰ See "Meiji shisō kenkyū wa dō susumerarete kita ka" [How has research on Meiji thought been promoted?], in *Nagoya Daigaku bungakubu kenkyū ronshū* 36 (1964): pp.59–60. In 1900, the year before the publication of *Nihon rinri iben*, Inoue published *Nihon Yōmeigaku no tetsugaku* [The philosophy of the Japanese Yangming school] (Tokyo: Fūzambō). Only later, in 1902 and 1905, did he write similar volumes on what he labelled the "Ancient Learning" (*kogaku* 古学) school and, finally, the Zhu Xi school.

³¹ *Representative men of Japan*, p.27.

³² See *Li Takugo: Ōdō o ayumu itan*, pp.235–8.

Christian movement, felt that among all East Asian religio-philosophical teachings Yōmeigaku came closest to Christianity. This comparison is probably more instructive for the light it sheds on how Christianity appeared to Meiji intellectuals in the context of Japanese intellectual history than as an objective observation. However, for non-Japanese who are in the reverse situation of knowing more about Christian teachings than Yōmeigaku, the comparison can be useful. In view of Yōmeigaku's rejection of epistemological elitism, contemplationism, scholasticism, and institutional mediation between divinity and the individual, it is clear that the comparison applies much more in the case of Protestantism than Catholic Christianity.

While popular writings on Yōmeigaku since the war have tended to continue the Meiji lines of interpretation, academic scholarship has been less interested than Uchimura in asserting the revolutionary potential of this philosophy in Japanese society. Okada Takehiko, for instance, has emphasized that the radical activism of rebels such as Ōshio Chūsai and Yoshida Shōin was very untypical of Yōmeigaku followers in late Edo Japan, most of whom

Figure 3

This is a reproduction of a painting of Ōshio Chūsai by the famous Nihonga 日本画 painter Kikuchi Yōsai 菊池容齋 (1788–1878), who is known for his portraits of historical figures connected with imperial loyalist thought. Considering the fact that Chūsai taught that the heart-mind (*kokoro*) itself is Heaven, and that man returns to the Great Vacuity (= Heaven) at death, the fact that he is shown contemplating an armillary sphere (*Ch. huntianyi* 渾天儀; *Jp. kontengi*) which illustrates the movements of the heavenly bodies, is not without interest. The triangular instrument in the foreground is a quadrant (*Ch. sifenyi* 四分儀; *Jp. shibungi*), which is used for measuring altitude. One supposes it could also be used to measure how "high" one is on the Yōmeigaku philosophical scale of transcending life and death. This painting is owned by the donjon (*tenshukaku* 天守閣) of Osaka Castle



were conservatives who believed in the renewal of society through self-cultivation and the teaching of ethics and sharply criticized such resorts to violence and heroic action.²⁹ As Ogyū mentions, Yamashita Ryūji has emphasized the distinction within Japanese Yōmeigaku between the anti-authoritarian, individualistic, and religious version of men like Uchimura and the statist, Japanocentric, and ethical version represented by the prominent conservative philosopher, Inoue Tetsujirō.³⁰ However, even Uchimura wrote that Saigō Takamori's belief in Japan as a unified empire under the restored monarchy and his belief in Japan's mission to conquer East Asia were logical culminations of Yōmeigaku teachings.³¹ Mizoguchi Yūzō has emphasized instead the gulf between the rigorous, life-and-death transcending character of Japanese Yōmeigaku—whether before or after the Restoration—and the desire-affirming, naturalistic trends within the “left wing” existentialist wing of the Yangming school in late Ming China. He points out that the meaning of the word *kokoro* in Japanese differs from the meaning of the same character in Chinese, giving different connotations to Yangming's teaching that “the mind itself is principle.”³² This observation draws our attention to the importance of treating the Japanese thought tradition as an independent tradition from that of China, with its own organic unity and force of continuity which impose themselves on all newly imported systems of thought.³³ Along the same lines, it is useful to remember that the concept of *makoto*—the pure, single, and self-less condition of the *kokoro* so emphasized by Yōmeigaku teachers—also has a long and distinctive history in Japanese moral thought that is ultimately rooted in Shinto.

If we wish to identify the pivotal concept of Japanese ethico-religious thought, the nature of which affects the meaning of all other concepts in the system, it would be well to take a hint from Ōshio Chūsai and look toward the concept of “Heaven,” which again, if viewed in its full historical development, clearly carries very different connotations from the Chinese Confucian concept written with the same character. Mizoguchi, again, has made some important explorations in this direction, emphasizing that while in China the unity of Heaven and man was always conceived as mediated by *li* 理 (rational, universal principles equated with kinship-rooted social norms), with Heaven constituting the *a priori* basis of the will to life and the logic or method (*sujime* 筋目) whereby life is made complete. In Ōshio's concept of “the mind itself is Heaven,” by contrast, principle is not originally within man; rather, Heaven manifests itself (as principle) in and from the *kokoro* like a sort of divine “descent from Heaven” (*amakudari* 天下り) only when human desires and intentions are eliminated, leaving nothing but the pure heavenly heart of *makoto*. That is to say, it is not really that “the *kokoro* is itself principle,” but that the *kokoro* is itself Heaven, and Heaven is principle; not that the *kokoro* is made sincere to enable the manifestation of Heavenly principle, which ties people together objectively and horizontally, but that *makoto* itself—something subjective and internal knowable only by the individual—is the root of Heavenly principle.³⁴

³³ Mizoguchi has a high regard for Paul Cohen's critique of the Western-centered or America-centered nature of the paradigms that have dominated American scholarship on China and for the “China-centered” approach that Cohen advocates, which he feels confirms the core methodological principles developed in his own scholarship. See Cohen's *Discovering history in China: American historical writing on the recent Chinese past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), appropriately translated into Japanese as *Chi no teikokushugi: Orientarizumu to Chūgokuzō* [The imperialism of knowledge: orientalism and the image of China], transl. Satō Shin'ichi (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1988). As Prasenjit Duara points out, however, Cohen's approach gives insufficient attention to “the politics of narratives—whether these be the rhetorical schemas we deploy for our own understanding or those of the historical actors who give us their world. The first lesson we learn is that the history of China we confront has already been narrativized in the Enlightenment mode—and not simply by the Asian historical scholarship we read or through which we read our sources.” See *Rescuing history from the nation* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p.26.

³⁴ See “Futatsu no Yōmeigaku,” *Risō* 572: 75–7. See also “Tenjin gōitsu ni okeru Chūgokuteki doku-jisei” [The Sinitic distinctiveness of the unity of man and heaven], in *Saiō Issai, Ōshio Chūsai, NST*, vol.46 (1980), pp.739–53, and “Chūgoku no ‘ten’—Nihon to no hikaku” [The Chinese concept of ‘heaven’, in comparison with that of Japan], *Bungaku* (Dec. 1987): 194–212. Mizoguchi also worked in conjunction with Sagara Tōru 相良亨 to produce a series of studies on the core concepts that bridge traditions of Chinese and Japanese thought but have different connotations in each. Sagara's studies on the subject were collected in *Nihon no shisō: ri · shizen · dō · ten · shin · dentō* [Japanese thought: ‘principle’, ‘nature’, ‘the Way’, ‘Heaven’, the ‘heart-mind’, ‘tradition’] (Tokyo: Perikansha, 1989). See also Sagara's *Seijitsu to Nihonjin* [Sincerity and the Japanese] (Tokyo: Perikansha, 1980). In contrast to Sagara's endeavor to totalize the Japanese tradition, Ishige Tadashi 石毛忠 has explored the meanings of the concept of *ten* 天 in specific periods in the development of Japanese ethical thought. See /OVER

/Ishige, "Sengoku · Azuchi Momoyama jidai no rinri shisō: tentō shisō no tenkai" [The ethical thought of the Warring States and Momoyama periods: the development of the concept of *tentō* 天道], in *Nihon ni okeru rinri shisō no tenkai* [The unfolding of ethical thought in Japan] (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1965), pp.142-68, and "Edo jidai shoki ni okeru ten no shisō" [The concept of heaven in the early Edo period], in *Nihon shisōshi kenkyū* 2 (Feb. 1968): pp.23-52.

Interest in Yōmeigaku in postwar Japan, of course, has by no means been limited to scholars of Chinese philosophy such as Okada, Yamashita, and Mizoguchi.³⁵ One of its most prominent advocates both within and beyond academia was Yasuoka Masahiro 安岡正篤 (1898-1983), prolific scholar, advisor to several generations of Liberal Democratic Party prime ministers, and friend of Chiang Kai-shek 蔣介石.³⁶ Another influential proponent of Yōmeigaku beyond the 'academy' was the internationally famous novelist, playwright and aesthete, Mishima Yukio 三島由紀男 (1925-70), whose brilliant essay "Kakumei tetsugaku toshite no Yōmeigaku" (Wang Yangming

Learning as a Philosophy of Revolution), published in the magazine *Shokun!* 諸君! in September 1970 only about two months before his suicide by *seppuku* 切腹, makes a passionate appeal to young Japanese to return to the activist, self-sacrificing commitment to moral ideals represented in the Japanese tradition by Yōmeigaku, especially the rebel Ōshio Heihachirō. Mishima's suicide stimulated a surge of popular interest in Yōmeigaku, and while this soon subsided, popular-oriented books promoting Yōmeigaku ideas continue to be published every year. An international conference held in Kyoto in August, 1997, entitled "What does Wang Yangming learning mean to humanity and the earth in the 21st century?" (sponsored by the Institute for the Integrated Study of Future Generations) attracted fifty-four scholars of Yōmeigaku—thirty from Japan and twenty-four from abroad—as well as a larger number of Japanese professionals, writers, and creative leaders who in some way or other are interested in the practical application of Wang Yangming's teachings. The Yōmeigaku

Figure 4

Ming-dynasty portrait of Wang Yangming used as the frontispiece in Takase Takejirō's 420-page book *Yōmeigaku shinron* 陽明学新論 (New Theses on Wang Yangming Learning), published by Sakakibara Bunseidō, Tokyo, in 1906 (Meiji 39)



³⁵ Another leading contemporary scholar of Yōmeigaku who should be mentioned is Yoshida Kōhei 吉田公平 of Hiroshima University, a specialist in Chinese philosophy who has published extensively on both Chinese and Japanese Yangming learning. His writings are not mentioned in this introduction because they appear to have no important relationship to Ogyū's scholarship.

³⁶ Waseda University Library lists thirty-five books written by Yasuoka, plus the ten volumes of the *Complete works of Wang Yangming*, which he edited. He was also one of the two chief editors of the twelve-volume *Yōmeigaku taikai* [Compendium of Wang Yangming learning] (Tokyo: Meitoku Shuppansha, 1972). On Yasuoka's role as a prime ministerial advisor, see Shiota Ushio, *Shōwa no kyāso: Yasuoka Masahiro* [Yasuoka Masahiro: the founder of the Shōwa religion] (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 1991).

thought-and-practice tradition is both an important, though much neglected, part of the intellectual and social history of China and Japan and a powerful philosophy of life whose appeal transcends any particular cultural milieu or historical period. Almost uniquely within the vast scholarship on this tradition, the essay that follows explores the role and significance of the Yōmeigaku discourse within the national modernization rhetoric of both Japanese and Chinese intellectuals in the early twentieth century, when the nationalist discourse (and national-subject discourse) of both of these great East Asian nations first assumed the form that it has essentially retained until the present day. What this exploration points to is the possibility, indeed the necessity, of looking beyond the "imagined community" of the nation-state in writing modern intellectual history if we hope to understand the structure of the historiographical discourses that have constructed modernity.³⁷ Such an approach can not only enable us to offer a cogent alternative to the current revival of nationalistic historiography, but also, hopefully, to contribute to the healing of the deep historical scars that continue to divide the Japanese, Koreans, and Chinese people as a result of their intimately intertwined but also intensely individual experiences of Hegelian modernity.³⁸

/largely by way of Japanese. It was these new linguistic resources, both words and narratives, that secured the nation as the subject of History and transformed the perception not only of the past but also of the present meaning of the nation and the world." Duara's incorporation of India into his study can also help remind us that, if we consider pan-Asianist intellectuals like Okakura Tenshin 岡倉天心 (1862–1913), the field of Japanese nationalist discourse in the early twentieth century (itself developed under very strong European, especially German and Italian, influence) spreads out to encompass not only China and Korea, but even India as well. On this connection, see Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *The making of a new 'Indian' art: artists, aesthetics and nationalism in Bengal, c.1850–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

³⁸ Paraphrasing Hegel, Duara writes: "It is only nations in the fullness of (their) History that realize freedom. Those without History, those non-nations such as tribal polities, empires, and others have no claims or rights; even more, nations have the right to destroy non-nations and bring Enlightenment to them. Thus do nations become empires." (*Rescuing history from the nation*, p.20.)

³⁷ In *Rescuing history from the nation* (pp.4–5), Prasenjit Duara argues that "national history secures for the contested and contingent nation the false unity of a self-same, national subject evolving through time," noting that, "In this context, the early twentieth century in China is /of particular interest not only because modern nationalism took hold during this period, but because it is when the narrative of History and a new vocabulary associated with it—such as feudalism, self-consciousness, superstition, and revolution—entered the Chinese language,

For studies of Japanese Yōmeigaku in English, see:

- Uchimura Kanzō, "Saigō Takamori—a founder of new Japan" and "Nakae Tōju—a village teacher," in *Representative men of Japan* (originally published by Minyūsha in 1894 as *Japan and the Japanese*; reprint eds, Tokyo: Keiseisha Shoten, 1908, and Kodansha International [Bilingual Books], 1999)
- Tetsuo Najita, "Ōshio Heihachirō (1793–1837)," in *Personality in Japanese history*, ed. Albert Craig and Donald Shively (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1970)
- Yamashita Ryūji, "Nakae Tōju's religious thought and its relation to 'Jitsugaku'," in *Principle and practicality: essays in Neo-Confucianism and practical learning*, ed. Wm. T. de Bary and Irene Bloom (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), pp.307–35
- Julia Ching, "The idea of God in Nakae Tōju," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 11.4: 293–311
- ——— "Nakae Tōju as sage: a religion of filial piety," *Nachrichten* 136 (1984): 53–64
- Gregory J. Smits, "The sage's scale in Japan: Nakae Tōju and situational weighing," *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, Fourth Series, vol.6 (1991): 1–25

- Barry D. Steben, "Law enforcement and Confucian idealism in late Edo Japan: Ōshio Chūsai and the growth of his great aspiration," *Asian Cultural Studies* 22 (May 1996): 1–32
- ——— "Nakae Tōju and the birth of Wang Yangming learning in Japan," *Monumenta Serica* 46 (Dec. 1998): 249–94

For studies of the role of Yoshida Shōin, Kusaka Genzui, and/or Saigō Takamori in the Restoration movement (with little or no attention to their supposed connection with Yōmeigaku), see:

- H. Van Straelen, *Yoshida Shōin, forerunner of the Meiji Restoration* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1952)
- Albert M. Craig, *Chōshū in the Meiji Restoration* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961)
- H. D. Harootunian, *Toward Restoration, the growth of political consciousness in Tokugawa Japan* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1970)
- Thomas M. Huber, *The revolutionary origins of modern Japan* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1981)
- Charles L. Yates, *Saigo Takamori: the man behind the myth* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1995)

Translation

THE CONSTRUCTION OF “MODERN YŌMEIGAKU” IN MEIJI JAPAN AND ITS IMPACT IN CHINA

Preface: The Story of “The Disintegration of the Zhu Xi-School Mode of Thought”

¹ Recent studies in China include Wei Changhai, “Wangxue dui Mingzhi weixin de xiandao zuoyong” [The vanguard role of Wang Yangming learning in the Meiji Restoration], in *Beijing Daxue bao zhexue shehui kexue ban* 1986.1; Zhu Weizheng, “Yangming xue zai jindai” [Wang Yangming learning in the modern period], in *Ruxue goiji xueshu taolunhui lunwenji* [Proceedings of the international symposium on Confucianism], ed. Confucius Foundation of China and Singapore Institute of East-West Philosophy (Jinan, Shandong: Qi-Lu Shushe, 1987); Shen Shanhong and Wang Fengxian, “Lüe lun Yangmingxue dui Chaoxian, Riben weixin de yingxiang” [A brief examination of the influence of Wang Yangming learning on Korea and on Japan’s Restoration], *Shaoxing xuekan* (Summer 1989); Wang Jiahua, “Wenhua yu fazhan—Ruxue yu jindai de bai nian licheng” [Culture and development—Confucianism and the course of the last hundred years], in *Wenming de yunshi* [The fortunes of civilization], ed. Ye Tan and Zhao Guanyuan (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 1991); Li Suping, *Shengren yu wushi—Ri-Zhong chuandong wenhua yu xiandaihua zhi bijiao* [The sage and the samurai—a comparison of traditional culture and modernization in Japan and China] (Beijing: Zhongguo Renmin Daxue Chubanshe, 1992); Li Weizhou, “Ribei Yangmingxue de zhexue sixiang” [The philosophy of Japanese Wang Yangming learning], *Zhong-Ri zhexue sixiang lunji* [Essays on Sino-Japanese philosophy and thought] (Jinan, Shandong: Qi-Lu Shushe, 1992).

² See, for example, Araki Kengo, “Kinsei Jugaku no hatten—Shushigaku kara Yōmeigaku e” [The development of early modern Confucianism—from the Zhu Xi school to

For a long time the field of Edo intellectual history was carried away by the story of the “disintegration of the Zhu Xi-school mode of thought.” As is well known, Maruyama Masao 丸山真男 credited Ogyū Sorai (1666–1728) with this disintegration of Zhu Xi learning, which he portrayed as a medieval and feudalistic mode of thought. Actually, however, long before Maruyama this idea of the disintegration of the Zhu Xi-school mode of thought was accepted as a universal codeword for “modernization” within the Confucian cultural sphere of East Asia. How did the Wang Yangming school (Jp. *Yōmeigaku*), regarded as a heresy by the followers of orthodox Zhu Xi learning, fit into this picture?

In China, there has been some wavering in regard to the evaluation of the Wang Yangming school, but generally speaking this school (or its so-called “left wing”) has been seen as a Confucian reform movement that signaled the disintegration of the Zhu Xi-school mode of thought and pointed in the direction of modernization.¹ In the study of Chinese philosophy in Japan as well the point of view was more or less the same,² and the correspondence between the two served to support the apparent veracity of the story of the disintegration of the Zhu Xi school. In my own recent writings, I have argued that, in China, this view of the Wang Yangming school as a reform movement got its start at the end of the Qing dynasty in the context of a questioning of the Zhu Xi school as it existed at that time,³ as the established orthodoxy of the *ancien régime*, and that it has continued to the present day, through many twists and turns, in close connection with the modern political history of China. I have also pointed out that this view is closely intertwined with the view that late-Edo Wang Yangming learning in Japan contributed significantly to the Meiji Restoration, that is to say, to Japan’s modernization.⁴

[the Wang Yangming school], in *Sekai no meicho: Shushi* ● *Yōmei* [Great books of the world: Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming], ed. Araki Kengo (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1974).

³ At the end of the Qing dynasty it was particularly the thought of Lu Longqi 陸隴其 (1630–92) that was promoted as the orthodox

/learning of the Establishment.

⁴ See Ogyū Shigehiro, “Bakumatsu, Meiji no Yōmeigaku to Min-Shin shisōshi” [Wang Yangming learning in the bakumatsu and Meiji periods and Ming-Qing intellectual history], *Nit-Chū bunka kōryūshi sōsho* [Studies in the history of cultural interchange between

On the other hand, in Japanese academic circles since the Meiji period, there have been those who argue that Confucianism never played an essential role in the history of Japanese thought, and even some contemporary specialists in Japanese Confucian thought, such as Bitō Masahide and Watanabe Hiroshi 渡辺浩, have argued that, compared with the weight of the Confucian tradition in China, the idea that a Confucian tradition was built up in Japan from the beginning of the Edo period is more or less a construction of later historiography.⁵ If one takes the view that the influence of Confucianism in Japan was peripheral, then the argument I have referred to above loses much of its meaning, and it becomes debatable whether Japan can even be regarded as part of the Confucian cultural sphere. If this is true for the various schools of Zhu Xi learning and Ancient Learning, which were at least clearly constituted as schools perpetuating themselves through a clear master-disciple transmission, it must *a fortiori* be true of Wang Yangming learning, which never really succeeded in establishing itself as a school or lineage. Nevertheless, even today, the idea that Wang Yangming learning contributed to the Meiji Restoration is alive and well, especially in journalistic and popular writings.⁶ Did Confucianism—in this case, the Wang Yangming school—exist in Japan in a strong enough form to contribute significantly to the Meiji Restoration, or not? Actually, the very formulation of this question is already trapped within the story of the “disintegration of the Zhu Xi mode of thought.”

The idea that the Wang Yangming school was a major force behind the Meiji Restoration was put forward originally by the Japanese nationalists of the late 1880s and the 1890s, who are the real founders of the nationalist discourse that has continued in postwar Japan and is undergoing a significant revival today. Therefore, the key to understanding this discourse lies not in an analysis of the Wang Yangming learning of the Edo period, but in an analysis of the history of *modern* thought in Japan and East Asia, with a particular focus on the Meiji period.

Yōmeigaku, it is true, did enjoy a period of relative popularity in Japan in the late-Edo period. However, it is actually in the modern period that it enjoyed its greatest popularity. And between the late-Edo and the modern periods, there was the great hiatus of the Restoration, which fundamentally transformed the parameters of Japanese intellectual discourse. After the Restoration, the new government promoted a state-directed Western-style modernization under the slogan of “civilization and enlightenment” (*bunmei kaika* 文明開化), leading to the rapid importation of Western culture and institutions. In the restructuring of education carried out in 1872, France and the United States were taken as models for the new education system, and Confucianism was seen as a relic of the past. Thus, for a while, Confucianism was eliminated at least from the surface levels of culture and education in Japan.

In the present essay, I will discuss the contours of the “modern Confucianism” that reemerged in Japan in the middle Meiji period, with a

/Japan and China], no.3, *Sbisō* [Thought], ed. Minamoto Ryōen and Yan Shaochang (Tokyo: Taishūkan Shoten, 1996); “Kindai ni okeru Yōmeigaku kenkyū to Ishizaki Tōgoku no Ōsaka Yōmeigakkai” [Modern Wang Yangming studies and the Osaka Yangming Studies Society of Ishizaki Tōgoku], in *Nihon sbisōshi ni okeru fuben to tokushu* [The universal and the particular in Japanese intellectual history], ed. Tamagake Hiroyuki (Tokyo: Perikansha, 1997). These studies were published simultaneously in Chinese, the first by Zhejiang Renmin Chubanshe and the second in *Yawen* 2, published by Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe.

⁵ Bitō Masahide, *Nihon bōken sbisōshi kenkyū* [Studies in the history of Japanese feudal thought] (Tokyo: Aoki Shoten, 1961), and Watanabe Hiroshi, *Kinsei Nihon shakai to sōgaku* [Early modern Japanese society and Song learning] (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1985).

⁶ Among the recent books that continue to propagate this view are Andō Hideo, *Nihon ni okeru Yōmeigaku no keifu* [The lineage of Yōmeigaku in Japan] (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1971); Hayashida Akio, “*Sbinsetsu Yōmeigaku*” *nyūmon* [An introduction to the true interpretation of Yōmeigaku] (Tokyo: Sangokan, 1994); Ōhashi Kenji, *Nihon Yōmeigaku kiseki no keifu* [The lineage of the wonder of Japanese Yōmeigaku] (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1995); and Ichikawa Hontarō, *Nihon Jukyō-shi*, 4: *Kinsei ben* [History of Japanese Confucianism, vol.4: Early modern section] (Tokyo: Tōa Gakujutsu Kenkyūkai, 1994). (Tr.)

focus on Wang Yangming learning, and then demonstrate that this conception of Confucianism rested upon a common understanding within the intellectual community stretching across the East Asian region.

The keynote of the political thought of the Meiji period was the opposition between *kan* 官 (official) and *min* 民 (popular; i.e., opposition parties plus intellectuals without government affiliation). Both camps were involved in the endeavor to reconstitute Confucianism and make it a part of Japan's modern thought, and their efforts gave rise respectively to an official stream and a non-official stream of modern Japanese Confucianism. The depiction of Zhu Xi learning as conservative "official learning" and Wang Yangming learning as "reformist" non-official learning is based more on this Meiji configuration of political forces than on the actual history of Edo thought. That is to say, the conception of a dualistic opposition between Zhu Xi learning and Yōmeigaku is essentially a modern construction.

The Imperial Rescript on Education and the National Discourse School

⁷ Motoda's affinity with later Mito learning is shown in the fact that, while he held that all political and religious virtue was concentrated in the emperor, he found the source of this virtue in the idea that the ancestral *kami* 神 of the imperial house inherited the will of Heaven and thus laid down the norms for human society, and in the fact that the continuity of this imperial line had never been broken. These concepts laid the foundations for the later "Imperial Way Confucianism." Motoda was also in the lineage of Yokoi Shōnan's 横井小楠 (1809–69) "practical learning," with which Tokutomi Sohō and the Kumamoto-band Christians also had connections.

Beginning from about ten years after the Restoration, Confucianism reappeared in of Japanese intellectual discourse, through the initiative of the *kan* (official) side. The first sign of this can be found in a document entitled *Kyōiku seishi* 教育聖旨 (The Imperial Will on Education) drafted by Motoda Eifu 元田永孚 (1818–91) in 1879. Motoda claimed that the Western-style education promoted in the *bunmei kaika* 文明開化 period would break down the hierarchical order of society and bring about "disorder in the realm." What he advocated in its place was the establishment of the teaching of loyalty, filial piety, benevolence and rectitude (*chūkō jingi* 忠孝仁義) as the "national religion" (*kokkyō* 国教). Motoda may be called a Confucian traditionalist, although his Confucianism actually had a closer affinity with the Mito 水戸 learning of the late-Edo period than with the traditional Confucianism of the Edo period.⁷

Motoda's belief that political and social problems could be attributed to the loss of Confucian ethics and his belief that the imperial court, as the seat of virtue, is above the realm of government and politics, were not shared by those government officials who had been deeply exposed to Western ideas, but such officials did share his perception that the situation in which values had become fluid and no new authority had yet been established was a serious problem. In particular, the upsurge of the anti-government freedom and popular rights movement in the 1880s not only led the bureaucrats to turn toward the Prussian idea of an emperor-granted constitution, but also made them willing to compromise with Motoda's idea of Confucianism as a "national religion." All of this culminated in the promulgation of the Imperial Rescript on Education (*Kyōiku chokugo* 教育勅語) in 1890, the year after the promulgation of the Imperial Constitution.

In 1882, Inoue Kowashi 井上毅 (1843–95) formulated a five-point plan for pacifying the anti-government movement that had flared up nationwide.⁸ The first article proposed the founding of a government-affiliated newspaper. The second advocated an alliance with the former samurai class, which included many of the prominent personages in every region. The third advocated the elimination of Western-style education in the middle schools (the liberalistic education system had already been revised in the previous year in favor of Motoda’s Confucianistic concept of education). The fifth article, entitled “Promote German Learning,” advocated the exclusion of courses in English and French from the university curriculum in favor of German and the cultivation of a “somewhat conservative ethos” (*yaya hoshu no kifū* やや保守の気風). As for the fourth article, entitled “Encourage Sinitic Learning,” I will quote it in full below:

Since the beginning of the Meiji period, English and French education has been flourishing, and a revolutionary spirit has begun to germinate in our country for the first time. Basically, for teaching the way of loyalty, love, respectfulness, and obedience, there is nothing as direct and poignant as Chinese learning (*Kangaku* 漢学). If we revive this learning now, just as it is about to be discarded, this can also be the basis of maintaining a balance between the two.

In this short passage it is apparent that the revival of “official” Confucianism was being advocated as an “anti-revolutionary” measure against the freedom and popular rights movement, which was under the influence of Western political thought, especially French revolutionary thought. We should note here the use of the term “*Kangaku*,” which literally means Han learning, that is, Chinese classical learning. In modern Japan, *Kangaku* was the term used for this sort of “official” Confucianism.⁹

The culmination of this attempt by the official side to keep a lid on the energies of the popular movement was the enactment of the Imperial Constitution in 1889 (Meiji 22), which transformed Japan into a constitutional monarchy. From this point on, the opposition between *kan* and *min* continued on the common premise of this constitutional monarchy system. However, the logic of the “official” side itself had a dual nature. On the one hand, it ostensibly promoted modernization–Westernization based on German learning, the most politically conservative form of Western thought. On the other hand, toward the populace at large, while it promoted a system of compulsory universal education, it also worked to suppress the burgeoning “consciousness of liberation” that characterized the popular political movements. It was in the context of this second motivation that Confucian ethics were instituted in a modified form in the Imperial Rescript on Education. In response to the resulting imbalance in favor of the “official” side, a new popular movement arose in the 1880s to replace the movement for freedom and popular rights. This new movement was constituted both by the “plebianism” (*beimin shugi* 平民主義) of Tokutomi Sohō 徳富蘇峰

⁸ Ōkubo Toshiaki, “Meiji jūyōnen no seihen” [The coup of 1881], in *Meiji kokka no keisei* [The formation of the Meiji state] (Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1986), pp.376–9.

⁹ The character *kan* 官 (Ch. *guan*) that means “official” has no relation to the character *Kan* 漢 (Ch. *Han*) that refers to classical China and its culture. (Tr.)

¹⁰ Shiga Shigetaka 滋賀重昂 (1863–1927), a colleague of Miyake in the founding of the Seikyōsha 政教社 in 1888, was one of the first to use the word *kokusui*. While he declared that the most important task of the Japanese nation was to preserve and develop the national character (*kokusui*) that had been transmitted and matured over thousands of years, he sharply distinguished his conception of *kokusui* from the *Kokugaku* (National Learning) ideas of national superiority and divine descent. He also emphasized that the preservation of the *kokusui* in the future centered on the incorporation and assimilation of Western civilization (*kaika* 開化). See “‘Nihonjin’ ga kaihosuru tokoro no shigi o kokuhaku suru” [Confessing the central idea embraced by (our magazine) *Nihonjin*], in *Nihonjin* 2 (1888), and “Nihon zento no kokuze wa ‘kokusui hozon shigi’ ni sentei sezarū bekarazu” [The national policy for Japan’s future must be selected based on ‘the essential consideration of preserving the national character’], in *Nihonjin* 3 (1888).

¹¹ Tokutomi was much influenced in his youth by Herbert Spencer, who coined the phrase “survival of the fittest.” (Tr.)

(1863–1957), and by the “nationalism” (*kokumin shugi* 国民主義) of Kuga Katsunan 陸羯南 (1857–1907) and the “national essence-ism” (*kokusui shugi* 国粹主義) of Miyake Setsurei 三宅雪嶺 (1860–1945).

The word *kokusui* (literally “national essence”), in Miyake’s usage, does not carry the same connotations that it normally does today, that is, of a reactionary and xenophobic form of statism usually translated as “ultra-nationalism.” Rather, the word was devised to translate the Western concept of “nationality” in the sense of national character.¹⁰ Similarly, *kokumin shugi* was a translation of the Western concept of “nationalism.” There was a close relationship between Kuga’s camp and Miyake’s camp, and the two were referred to together as the “national discourse school” (*kokuminronba* 国民論派). When the followers of this school spoke of *min*, it was with an emphasis on giving full development to the inherent ability of each individual national citizen. Their concept of *kokusui* integrated the concepts of the individuality of the nation and the autonomy of the nation (*kokumin no kosei to jiritsu* 国民の個性と自立), and it expressed their belief that each nation, including Japan, should establish itself independently in the world on the basis of its own national individuality.

Tokutomi began his career as a liberal (*jiyū shugisba* 自由主義者), but later came to regard himself as an “emperorist” imperialist (*temmō shugi no teikoku shugisba* 天皇主義の帝国主義者). However, running through all the periods of his thought was his view of the modern world as a racial war in which Western “civilization” would violently swallow up the Eastern “barbarism,” a “survival of the fittest” conflict in which the superior nations would win and the inferior ones would be defeated.¹¹

The liberal economic thought that Tokutomi followed in his early period was that of the Manchester school of Great Britain. He believed that the completion of the formation of an industrialized “commoners’ society” (*heimin shakai* 平民社会) would lead to a sublation of the war of the races and bring happiness and peace to mankind. His *heimin shugi* was based on a belief that the only way Japan could survive this historical movement was through developing its productive forces to the same degree as that achieved by the West. As it involved the idea of a total Europeanization of the people’s life style and livelihood, it was opposed in conception to the government’s effort to Europeanize society on the surface only. *Heimin shugi* was further characterized by a critique of the earlier struggle between *kan* and *min*—including the freedom and popular rights movement—as nothing but a continuation of political authoritarianism that did not really break away from the old ways. What it sought to establish instead was a civic consciousness (*sbiminteki ishiki* 市民的意識) that preceded such a split between official and popular.

The advocates of “national essence-ism” (*kokusui shugi*) and “plebianism” (*heimin shugi*) greeted the promulgation of the Imperial Constitution as the commencement of Japan’s history as a nation-state. At the same time, they believed it was necessary for the people (*kokumin* 国民) themselves to

nurture this constitutional political system and make it into a concrete flesh-and-blood reality.¹² Since from the government’s point of view, however, the constitution was a device for ruling the people as “subjects” (*shinmin* 臣民), they criticized the government as having promulgated it only for appearances, arguing that it did not really contain the substance necessary for Japan to be recognized by international society as a modern state.

The total Europeanization conception of *heimin shugi* stood opposed to the nationalistic ideals of *kokusui shugi*, but both shared the view that, in a world in which so many different countries were pitted against one another, Japan must be built into a modern nation-state truly founded on the “people.” In the period from the implementation of the Imperial Constitution through the Sino-Japanese War, the discourses of *kokusui shugi* and *heimin shugi* operated through the medium of journalism to implant the concept of the “nation” (*kokumin*) among the young people who were the recipients of the new education.

It was from within these *kokusui shugi* and *heimin shugi* movements that the Yōmeigaku of modern Japan got its start, as the form of Confucianism promoted by the “popular” side in the contest between *kan* and *min*. This Yōmeigaku was a political discourse of a modern nature that incorporated contemporary claims and contentions into its construction. Similarly, the idea that Wang Yangming learning contributed to the Meiji Restoration was a thesis created by modern nationalists through the projection onto history of their own present ideals. For this reason, I believe, this Yōmeigaku—which I suggest we call “modern Yōmeigaku”—should be distinguished from the Yōmeigaku that existed before the Meiji Restoration.¹³

In 1893 (Meiji 26), Miyake Setsurei published a book called *Ō Yōmei* (Wang Yangming), and Tokutomi Sohō published a book called *Yoshida Shōin*. These books mark the beginning of what I have referred to as “modern Yōmeigaku.”

Miyake Setsurei’s Ō Yōmei

Miyake Setsurei’s *Ō Yōmei* takes up both the life and thought of Wang Yangming, laying down in both dimensions the style of “modern Yōmeigaku.”¹⁴ One of the salient characteristics of modern Yōmeigaku is an emphasis on Wang Yangming’s turbulent life as a seeker of truth, a critic of government autocracy, a successful military leader, a teacher, and a sage, which establishes his image as an activist devoted to ethical practice in the political sphere as opposed to a scholar devoted to books and classroom teaching. The core theses of Wang’s philosophical epistemology—such as “the oneness of knowledge and practice” (Ch. *zhixing heyi* 知行合一; Jp. *chikō gōitsu*) and “tempering oneself in the midst of action and struggle” (Ch. *shishang molian* 事上磨鍊; Jp. *jijō maren*)—translate in modern Yōmeigaku

¹² “The establishment of a national assembly does not mean that our nation has already arrived in the hometown of freedom. It is the day when, wishing to travel to that town, we begin the journey.” Tokutomi Sohō, *Meiji nijūsan nen go no seijika no shikaku o ronzu* [On the qualifications of politicians after 1890], 1884.

¹³ Maruyama, on the other hand, regarded the ideas of the Wang Yangming school and other Confucian ethical ideas put forth in modern Japan as survivals of pre-modern feudalism that stood in the way of the development of a modern type of nationalism in Japan, which must be based, he believed, on the “internalization of morality.” See Ivan Morris, trans., “Theory and psychology of ultra-nationalism,” in *Thought and behaviour in modern Japanese politics* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp.1–24. (Tr.)

¹⁴ See Yamashita Ryūji, “Ō Yōmei kenkyū no genkei—Miyake Yūjirō Ō Yōmei wo megutte” [The prototype of research on Wang Yangming—about *Ō Yōmei* by Miyake Setsurei (Yūjirō 雄二郎)], in *Yōmeigaku* (Nishō Gakusha Daigaku Yōmeigaku Kenkyūjo) 1 (1989).

into the principle of practice first. As Inoue Tetsujirō put it in his influential *Nihon Yōmeigaku no tetsugaku* (The Philosophy of Japanese Wang Yangming Learning, 1900), “Zhu Xi emphasized academic principles, while Yangming revered practical action (*jikkō* 実行).”

In 1904, Takase Takejirō 高瀬武次郎 (1869–1950), a successor to Inoue’s interpretation of Yōmeigaku, published a book called *Ō Yōmei sbōden* 王陽明詳傳 (A Detailed Biography of Wang Yangming). In it he explains that he wrote the book because of the power of Yangming’s life to inspire people—particularly the young—spiritually. At this time there was a boom in Japan in the publication of biographies of national heroes who had

Figure 5
Miyake Setsurei



led in the building of modern nations in the West. Minyūsha 民友社, Tokutomi Sohō's publishing house, for instance, published a series of biographies for young people (*Shōnen denki sōsho* 少年傳記叢書), and its book *Itaria kenkoku sanketsu* 伊太利建国三傑 (Three Great Men in the Building of the Italian Nation) went through many reprints.¹⁵ Sohō's *Yoshida Shōin* includes a chapter called “Shōin and Mazzini.”¹⁶ Similarly, Miyake Setsurei wrote an essay in which he depicts Saigō Takamori by contrasting him with Garibaldi (1807–82), the unifier of the Italian nation. It was under the influence of the heroes of nation-building in the West that both Saigō and Yoshida came to be constructed as representative followers of Japanese Wang Yangming learning and as Japanese national heroes.

From the point of view of the history of Edo Confucian thought, the idea that Saigō Takamori and Yoshida Shōin were representative followers of Japanese Yōmeigaku has little grounding. Even the portrayal of them as representative *shishi* (radical patriots) of the late-Edo period represents a particular, ideologically motivated view of history. By bringing back to life, in the service of their own modern political ideals, these intrepid leaders who had given their lives to the cause of the Restoration, scholars like Setsurei and Sohō appealed to their readers to complete what they conceived as the uncompleted task of the Restoration—the task of building Japan as a nation-state and a constitutional monarchy. This was a different conception of the proper form of the new Japanese state than the one that was being promoted by the government oligarchy and the government bureaucrats.

In his book *Ō Yōmei*, when Miyake takes up Wang Yangming learning in Japan, he mentions Ōshio Chūsai (1793–1837), Kasuga Sen'an (1811–78), Saigō Takamori (1827–77), and Takasugi Shinsaku (1839–67), proclaiming that, “Of those who stood up before the Restoration and threw themselves courageously into the struggle, many had studied Yangming's teaching of the inborn knowledge of good and evil.” Here, Miyake portrays Confucianism as a genuine philosophical tradition on the same level as Western philosophy, which, like Western philosophy, had developed through a spirit of “independence” and “creativity” in the pursuit of truth. He presents Wang Yangming's teachings as the culmination of this tradition, emphasizing their progressive nature.

Miyake was a member of the intellectual élite, having graduated from Tokyo University in philosophy in 1883. Like most of the other advocates of *kokusui shugi*, he was a member of the first wave of graduates from Japan's new universities. Because of the government's promotion of “practical learning” (*jitsugaku* 実学), out of forty-seven graduates from Tokyo University's Faculty of Letters from 1877 to 1886 (the year the name was changed to Tokyo Imperial University), only three majored in philosophy and only two in Chinese and Japanese literature. Of these five, three (two from the first major and one from the second) were involved in the establishment of the Seikyōsha 政教社 (Society for Political Education) in 1878, that is to say, in the founding of the *kokusui* movement.¹⁷

¹⁵ This was a translation of a work in English, *The makers of modern Italy* (by Mariotto), which was included in the Encyclopedia Britannica. It was translated by Hirata Hisashi 平田久 (1871–1923), a reporter and a member of the Minyūsha.

¹⁶ Giuseppe Mazzini (1805–72) was a patriot and revolutionary who assisted Garibaldi in working for the unification and independence of the Italian nation. (Tr.)

¹⁷ See Nakanome Tōru, *Seikyōsha no kenkyū* [Studies of the Seikyōsha] (Kyoto: Shibunkaku, 1993), p.41.

¹⁸ *Ajia* (1 Dec. 1893.)

Li Zhi (Li Zhuowu 李卓吾) was a late-Ming scholar who at fifty-four retired from his post and entered a monastery to devote himself undisturbed to reading and writing. Under the influence of the radical ideas of the “existential wing” of the Wang Yangming school, he ridiculed conventional morality and the orthodox Confucian view of history, denied the absoluteness of the authority of the classics, and affirmed the value of private desires such as the will to survive and the desire for material things. Sent to prison due to charges of heresy, he committed suicide at the age of seventy-six. See Hok-lam Chan, *Li Chih, 1527–1602*, in *Contemporary Chinese historiography* (White Plains, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1980). (Tr.)

The core professors at Tokyo University at this time were Westerners, and until 1884 lectures were given in Western languages and on the basis of Western textbooks. In 1877, when Tokyo University was inaugurated, in this great center of Western learning one lonely department of Japanese and Chinese Literature was established within the Faculty of Letters. Even in this department, however, it was thought that the study of Japanese and Chinese alone would be too old-fashioned, so courses in Western languages, philosophy, and history were also made compulsory. In 1881, a course in “Indian and Chinese philosophy” was initiated within the departments of Philosophy and Japanese and Chinese Literature, and in the following year its name was changed to “Oriental Philosophy” (*tōyō tetsugaku* 東洋哲学). However, the perceived importance of this subject paled in comparison to Western philosophy, which was what was understood as the meaning of the word “philosophy” without any modifier. There was almost no one who had any interest in Confucianism. In such a situation, looking at the “Orient” from the point of view of his major, Western philosophy, Miyake Setsurei “discovered” the philosophical nature of Confucian thought. During this same period, Ernest Fenellosa was lecturing at Tokyo University on the history of philosophy from a social Darwinist point of view, and the view of history as a competitive developmental process was the order of the day.

Miyake absorbed this climate of thought, and in his book *Ō Yōmei* he turned it into an assertion of the reformist nature of Wang Yangming’s philosophy.

In the scholarship on “Chinese philosophy” in Japan before the war, there were frequent attempts to explicate Confucianism in the terms of Western philosophy, and it is within this endeavor that we find the genesis of the claim of the progressive and modern nature of Yōmeigaku as compared with Zhu Xi learning.

Miyake regarded Yangming’s political theory as “extremely similar to socialism.” Kuga Katsunan contributed an afterword to his book in which he honors the late-Ming iconoclastic thinker Li Zhi 李贄 (1527–1602) as the representative of a “freedom of thought” that is “not attached to precedents.”¹⁸ In China, Li Zhi was “discovered” during the May Fourth Movement, in the movement to “overthrow the Confucian family shop,” and he continued to be

Figure 6

Tokutomi Sobō



extolled in Maoist China for the same purpose. Yet the pioneer in this exaltation of Li Zhi as iconoclast was none other than Kuga Katsunan.

Tokutomi Sohō's Yoshida Shōin

In *Yoshida Shōin*, Tokutomi Sohō portrays the Meiji Restoration as a revolution of national unification based on “the idea of Japan” and “the spirit of the nation,” a revolution that had taken form in the crisis caused by the threat of foreign imperialism. Shōin is portrayed as the patriotic revolutionary of this “restoration/revolution.” The following are some of the phrases he uses to describe Shōin:

“Without considering the perils of the moment, without asking whether the task was easy or difficult, he endeavored to put his ideals immediately into action.” “He had a tremendous faith in himself, ... and a spirit that would march ahead even if there were ten million men arrayed against him.” He was “subjective, not objective,” “long on feeling and sentiment but short on cold rationality.” “When he saw something [that his conscience affirmed as good], he immediately wanted to put it into practice.” “He saw that there was something more important than death, and did not flinch even from death in order to realize it.” He was “a man of perfect sincerity (*shisei* 至誠),” “a fine specimen of a Japanese male.” “Although he was the ringleader of the destroyers of feudalism, in his person he still kept himself under the shadow of the bushi ethic of former times.” In a situation where the “great enterprise of the Restoration,” brought about through the self-sacrifice of men like Yoshida, was being smothered by bureaucratic and oligarchic government, Sohō hoped to inspire the young generation to rise up and become “a second Yoshida Shōin” to carry out “a second Restoration.”

In the book, Sohō does not clearly identify Shōin’s learning as Yōmeigaku, but rather as an unsystematic learning that

Figure 7

Yoshida Shōin



¹⁹ “Futatsu no Yōmeigaku” [Two Yōmeigaku traditions], *Risō* 572 (Jan. 1981), and “Nihon-teki Yōmeigaku wo megutte” [Concerning Japanese Yōmeigaku], *Gendai shisō*, special issue, Sept. 1982, pp. 342–56.

belonged to no particular school. However, this idea of unsystematicness itself is one of the characteristics of “modern Yōmeigaku,” as are Sohō’s descriptions of Yoshida’s learning as “not a bookish sort of learning, but a learning centered on actual practice,” a “living learning.”

Mizoguchi Yūzō, a specialist in late-imperial Chinese philosophy, has emphasized the difference in character between Chinese Wang Yangming learning and Japanese Yōmeigaku, arguing that the former lies firmly within the tradition of Chinese thought, with its interest in objective principles, while Japanese thought has always shown more interest in the purity of the subjective heart. This difference, he argues, is especially apparent in the tradition of Wang Yangming learning, which in Japan became a kind of ethic of feeling and intuition that deliberately rejects concern with objective principles.¹⁹ What Mizoguchi refers to as “Japanese Yōmeigaku” corresponds well with Sohō’s depiction of Yoshida Shōin. However, I prefer to refer to this as “modern Yōmeigaku” because it is a discourse devised primarily to support the building of a modern nation-state and because this discourse, along with the idea of Yōmeigaku’s contribution to the Meiji Restoration, spread also to Korea and China to become a common conception of the educated classes throughout the East Asian region.

Incidentally, *Yoshida Shōin* is said to represent Sohō’s intellectual turn from liberalism and the advocacy of plebianist Europeanization to an aggressive, imperialist ideology centered on the myths surrounding the imperial house. From the point of view of the modern history of East Asia, this is quite a momentous, not to say ominous, change of intellectual commitment. Since I have proposed looking at “modern Yōmeigaku” on the East Asian stage as a whole, it is necessary to confirm the position of this book in the development of Sohō’s thought.

Before *Yoshida Shōin*, Sohō was an anti-Confucianist. In his book *Jiyū, dōtoku oyobi Jukyō shugi* 自由、道德及び儒教主義 (Freedom, Morality and Confucianism, 1884), he criticizes the official revival of Confucianism from the position of a total acceptance of Western liberalism. In *Shin Nihon no seimen* 新日本の青年 (The Youth of the New Japan, 1887), he proclaims that the ambivalence of the official forces is conservative in essence. Like Inoue Kowashi, Sohō felt there was a lack of morality in the Japan of his time. However, he believed that the solution lay not in the revival of Confucianism, but in the transplantation of Western liberal ethics right down to the bottom of society. The slogan he promoted in *Shin Nihon no seimen* was “the second revolution in the intellectual world.” Yet we should note that he regards the content of liberal morality to be guileless action based on genuine feeling (*chokujō keikō* 直情径行), the spirit of free inquiry in the pursuit of truth, as well as self-regard, self-confidence, self-respect, and self-control. In contrast, he sees Confucianism as representing an hidebound orientation to the past, habits of stagnation and immobility, and heteronomous morality. In his book *Yoshida Shōin*, the Western-style morality of plebianistic “progress” is identified with Yoshida Shōin. Here, as in his previous writings, what he advocates for

the new youth of Meiji Japan is a spirit of self-regard, self-confidence, self-respect, and self-control. But where he had previously found the source of these progressive values in the West, in Yoshida Shōin he discovers them in the Japanese. The morality of self-confidence and self-respect that Sohō attributed to Shōin was here only implicitly associated with Wang Yangming learning, but this association was given explicit form in Miyake Setsurei's *Ō Yōmei*. From this point on we see the rise of a dualistic opposition between a conservative or regressive Confucianism, known as “Sinology” (*Kangaku*), “official learning” (*kangaku*), “leisure learning” or “*Shushigaku* 朱子学,” and an enlightened Confucianism, referred to as “popular learning” (*mingaku* 民学), “living learning” (*katsugaku* 活学), or “Yōmeigaku.”

In 1894, the year after *Yoshida Shōin* was published and the first year of the Sino-Japanese War, Sohō wrote a book called *Dai-Nihon bōchōron* 大日本膨張論 (On the Expansion of Greater Japan),²⁰ in which he argued that the true purpose of the Meiji Restoration was the overseas expansion of Japan, that with the Sino-Japanese War this had now entered the stage of actualization, and that this was precisely what Yoshida Shōin had wanted to accomplish. From the end of the Russo-Japanese War until Japan's defeat in 1945, Sohō continued to argue that that all Japan's wars of invasion, up to and including the “Great East Asian War” (*dai tōa sensō* 大東亞戦争), were continuations of the Meiji Restoration. During the Shōwa period, he was one of the advocates of a “Shōwa Restoration” that would bring about a fascist restructuring of the state. If that is the case, can his 1893 book *Yoshida Shōin* be said to represent the prototype of Sohō as an expansionist imperialist? In my view, while there is a definite continuity between *Yoshida Shōin* and *Dai-Nihon bōchōron*, this should be distinguished from the post-Russo-Japanese War stage of Sohō's imperialism.

Dai-Nihon bōchōron was written in support of the Sino-Japanese War, but the slogan it promotes is “fight for the power of self-confidence!” The greatest fruit of victory in the war, Sohō writes, will be “the spiritual opening of the country,” that is, the acquisition by the Japanese people—kept in a servile position since the opening of the country by the refusal of the Western nations to grant her equal status as an independent state—of “the power of self-confidence” as a nation. The core concern of *Dai-Nihon bōchōron* is not the expansion of the state *per se*, but the expansion of the spirit of each individual member of the nation.

Sohō's promotion of “freedom” in his early period arose from his awareness of the national resentment over the West's condescending attitude toward Asian peoples and its actions against the right of independence of Asian states, and from his perception that this was because Asians possessed only a servile morality appropriate to such an inferior status. The ideal that runs through his “plebianism” is the creation of a nation with “the power of self-confidence.” In *Yoshida Shōin*, he sets up Shōin as the model for this power of self-confidence, and calls upon the youth to make themselves into “a second Yoshida Shōin.” Sohō's praise of the Sino-Japanese War in *Dai-*

²⁰ Published by Minyūsha, Tokyo, in 1894.

²¹ For a study of Sohō's thought focusing on his later career, see Sinh Vinh, "The achievement of a nationalist historian: Tokutomi Sohō (1863–1957)," in *History in the service of the Japanese nation*, ed. J. S. Brownlee (Toronto, Ont.: Joint Centre on Modern East Asia, 1983), pp.121–64. See also John D. Pierson, *Tokutomi Sohō, 1863–1957: a journalist for modern Japan* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), and Vinh Sinh's translation of Sohō's *The future Japan* (Edmonton, Alberta: University of Alberta Press, 1989). (Tr.)

Nihon bōchōron as "a great victory for plebianism" was a logical working out of this position. And in fact, it is as a result of the Sino-Japanese War that real progress was finally made toward the revision of the unequal treaties signed at the time of the opening of the country.

In *Dai-Nihon bōchōron*, in speaking of the direction of the nation after the war, Sohō puts emphasis on the development of the national productive capacity that is the basis of military strength, rather than on military strength *per se*. Further, he maintains support for a *laissez-faire* policy, saying that "the activities of the individual are the foundation, while the expansion of the state is the result." *Yoshida Shōin* can be said to represent the brief period of time when Sohō had turned from the ideal of Europeanization to a concern with national identity and the creation of a nation-state, but had still not become a hard-core imperialist—a period when he had not yet lost the non-government standpoint appropriate to a representative of "the Meiji youth." In other words, the work represents the point in time when the course of development of Sohō's thought happened to coincide with the views of the advocates of *kokusui shugi*.

Sohō's conversion to expansionism occurred as a result of the Triple Intervention that followed the end of the Sino-Japanese War in 1895. The demand of the European powers that Japan return the Liaodong Peninsula threw cold water on what he called "the power of self-confidence of the greater Japanese nation." Regarding this event as "the baptism into the gospel of power," Sohō went over to the "official" side, after which he referred to himself as belonging to "the radical vanguard of imperialism" (*teikoku shugi no kyū-senpō* 帝國主義の急先鋒).

In regard to the Triple Intervention, Sohō put forth the slogan of "lying on firewood and tasting bile" (Ch. *woxin chang dan* 臥薪嘗胆; Jp. *gashin-shōtan*)—that is, bearing with great hardship day after day to harden one's determination to take eventual vengeance on one's enemy. Through this slogan, he helped to whip up the popular hostility toward Russia and to propel Japanese nationalism in the direction of militarism. And Sohō was to continue in the forefront of this movement right through to the end of the Pacific War.²¹

The Victory of the "Official" and the Submergence of the "Popular"

Yamashita Ryūji 山下龍二 has written that there were "two streams of Yōmeigaku," but in quite a different sense than Mizoguchi Yūzō. He distinguishes between the Yōmeigaku that became "the foundation of the self-cultivation of those with an opposition-party spirit" in the Meiji period, represented by the "No Church" Christian movement of Uchimura Kanzō (1861–1930), and the Yōmeigaku that rid itself of "the anti-authoritarian and

anti-Sinological tendencies inherent to Yōmeigaku,” represented by Inoue Tetsujirō (1855–1944). Yamashita characterizes the former stream as “religious, individualistic, and transnational,” and the latter as “ethical, statist, and Japanocentric.” He argues that the conflict of March 1892 between Uchimura and Inoue over the Imperial Rescript on Education can also be seen as an opposition over the interpretation of Yōmeigaku, and that in the end it was Inoue’s version that went on to become the mainstream.²² This incident is usually seen as an expression of the conflict between Christianity and statism. However, on the premise that both positions represented “modern Yōmeigaku,” advocated as the basis of a national morality (*kokumin dōtoku* 国民道徳), I agree with Yamashita’s analysis. Uchimura, it will be remembered, advocated a joint reverence for “the two Js”: “Jesus” on the one hand and “Japan” on the other.

For Uchimura as well, the Sino-Japanese War was a “righteous war of civilization.”²³ Although he later reversed that stance and became an opponent of the Russo-Japanese War, at this time his understanding of Yōmeigaku and his views of the Restoration and of the Sino-Japanese War were of the same tenor as those of Tokutomi Sohō.²⁴

In contrast, Inoue Tetsujirō, a philosophy major and a member of the first class of students to enter Tokyo University (Tōdai 東大), turned to an interest in Confucianism after a long study of Western philosophy. In the year that he became an assistant professor at that university, he was put in charge of a new course in the history of Asian philosophy (*Tōyō tetsugaku shi* 東洋哲学史 in which Miyake Setsurei was a student. From this point on, he went on to develop himself into a leading figure in the world of “official learning.” In 1891, after completing six years of study in Germany, he authored an official commentary on the Imperial Rescript on Education called *Chokugo engi* 敕語衍義 (An Amplification of the Imperial Rescript). In this period even the civic nationalists (*kokuminronja* 国民論者) still had high hopes for the Imperial Constitution, and in the interpretation of the Constitution there was room for the advocates of various political theories, including what later became known as the organ theory of the emperor (*tennō kikan setsu* 天皇機関説).²⁵ In regard to the Rescript, as well, a wide variety of private interpretations were published. That is to say, at this time there was lively debate in the country regarding the conception of the nation-

/and independence have a natural affinity with a son of a samurai like myself. By the same token, I have a natural dislike of trickery, deception, and insincerity.” In a chapter entitled “Saigō Takamori and New Japan,” he argues: “Whence came the two dominant ideas of life, which were (1) the united Empire, and (2) the reduction [i.e. conquest] of Eastern Asia? That the Yang Ming [sic] philosophy if logically followed out would lead to some such ideas is not difficult to surmise. So unlike the conservative Chu [朱] philosophy fostered by the old government for its own preservation, it [the Yang Ming philosophy] is progressive, prospective, and promissive. Its similarity to Christianity has been recognized more than once, and it was practically interdicted in the country on that and other accounts.” (*Uchimura Kanzō zenshū* [The complete works of Uchimura Kanzō] [Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1980], vol.3, p.187). “He tried to rebuild his nation upon a sound moral basis, in which work he partially succeeded. As we said, he was the last and greatest of Samurai.” (p.207). “To him the war did not end, as it did to others of his countrymen. Great social reforms that were yet to be introduced into the country needed force, as also for that other purpose [the reduction of Eastern Asia] for which in his eye the united empire was only a step.” (p.197).

²⁵ The theory associated particularly with Minobe Tatsukichi (美濃部達吉) (1873–1948) that sovereignty resides in the state, not in the emperor, and that the emperor is nothing more than the highest of the organs that represent the state. Based on the application to the interpretation of the Imperial Constitution of the German theory of the state as a corporation.

²⁶ In these books, Inoue argued that Japan’s development since the Restoration (and especially the victories in the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars) was due to bushidō, the innate morality of Japan. After beginning with a collection of edicts of ancient Japanese emperors, most of the text consists of writings of Edo Confucian scholars expressing respect for the martial way. Beginning in 1943, Inoue further published a twelve-volume collection of writings on bushidō called *Bushidōzensho* [The complete collection of writings on bushidō].

²² “Meiji shisō kenkyū wa dō susumerarete kita ka” [How has research on Meiji thought been promoted?], in *Nagoya Daigaku bungakubu kenkyū ronshū* 36 (1964).

²³ See Uchimura’s “Justification for the Korean War,” in *The Japan Weekly Mail*, 11 August 1894, and its Japanese translation, “Nisshin sensō no gi” [The righteousness of the Sino-Japanese War], in *Kokumin no tomo* 234.

/Kokumin no tomo, incidentally, was the magazine of Sohō’s Minyūsha.

²⁴ In 1894, during the Sino-Japanese War, Uchimura wrote the book *Japan and the Japanese* in English to introduce and justify Japan to the West (the book was renamed *Representative men of Japan* in the revised version of 1908). In the preface to the German edition of 1907, he wrote, “Truly, self-respect

²⁷ See his preface to Kurihara Tensen, ● *Yōmei kenkyū* [Studies on Wang Yangming] (Tokyo: Teikokudō, 1917). In his work *Meiji ishin to Yōmeigaku* [The Meiji Restoration and Wang Yangming learning], included in this book, Kurihara strongly promoted the idea that Yōmeigaku was the motive force of the Restoration.

state. However, Inoue's *Chokugo engi* functioned to quell that debate from the official side and establish a fixed structure and ideology around the Rescript on Education.

In 1897, Inoue became the director of the liberal arts program at Tokyo Imperial University, a position he held until 1904. In this capacity, while he worked to firmly establish the study of German philosophy in Japan, he also worked to propagate a national morality based on the emperor-centered concept of the national polity (*kokutai* 国体). In addition to writing a series of three books on bushidō ethics (*Bushidō sōsho* 武士道叢書),²⁶ he compiled *Nihon rinri iben* 日本倫理彙編 (A Classified Compendium of Japanese Ethics, 1901), a nine-volume compilation of Edo Confucian writings that is still in use today. After publishing *Nihon Yōmeigakuha no tetsugaku* 日本陽明学派の哲学 (The Philosophy of the Japanese Wang Yangming School) in 1900, Inoue went on to publish similar volumes on Edo-period Ancient Learning (1902) and Zhu Xi Learning (1905). When we speak of “Japanese Confucianism,” “Japanese Yōmeigaku,” “Japanese Ancient Learning,” and so on, we are using concepts that were originally formulated by Inoue.

I stated above that “modern Yōmeigaku” was established as the “revolutionary” thought of the popular side in the *kan-min* opposition. This was a form of thought that endeavored to arouse the spirit of self-respect and independence among the Japanese people (*kokumin*), so that the nation might come to see itself as an equal with the nations of the West. Once Japan had achieved a certain degree of military and political modernization as a result of the Sino-Japanese War, however, the concept of “self-respect” was absorbed into the official side without being cleared of the inferiority complex it encompassed *vis-à-vis* the white races of the West, making it easy for it to be transmogrified into a spirit of self-infatuation (*unubore* 己惚れ). Such a process of displacement was probably difficult for Inoue's contemporaries to detect, but if we look back at it from our present-day perspective, it is clear that the period during which “modern Yōmeigaku” shone forth as a “reformist” and “popular” form of thought did not exceed something like a mere ten years.

Miyake Setsurei wrote in 1917 that, “Wang Yangming lives more in Japan than in China. He opposed the fossilization of Zhu Xi learning, and his critique remains alive and relevant even today. In another day, he should be introduced to the whole world.”²⁷ This sort of claim for the superiority of Japanese Confucianism was actually directed more at China and Korea, the “original home” of Confucianism, than at the West, as a discourse accompanying the political and military pressure that Japan was exerting on these fellow East Asian countries.

After full-scale war between China and Japan broke out in 1937, Inoue Tetsujirō wrote that the true spirit of Confucianism had developed and survived only in Japan, and that this spirit was equivalent to the Imperial Way (*kōdō* 皇道) anchored in the unchanging lineage of the imperial house, a

Way within which revolution was impossible. The “new order of East Asia,” he continued, meant spreading Japanese Confucianism in the form of this Imperial Way to the rest of East Asia.²⁸ This Japanese Confucianism, clearly distinguished from Chinese Confucianism, became a weapon of rule and repression for the Government-General (*sōtokufu* 総督府) of colonial Korea. Takahashi Tōru 高橋亨 (1878–1967), a professor at Keijō Imperial University and vice-president of the Korean Confucianist Society, wrote an essay entitled *Ōdō Jugaku yori Kōdō Jugaku e* 王道儒学より皇道儒学へ (From Kingly-Way Confucianism to Imperial-Way Confucianism) in which he wrote, “It must be nothing other than Imperial-Way Confucianism, which in serving to cultivate the national spirit and national morality has fully assimilated itself to the national essence of Japan.”²⁹

As for the domestic political scene, modern Yōmeigaku, once regarded as something similar to socialism, came in the Shōwa period to be used for the purpose of countering leftist tendencies among young students. The theory mentioned at the beginning of this essay that Confucianism was not essential to Japanese culture was actually formulated as a resistance discourse against a “Japanese Confucianism” that had been turned into an ideology of imperialism. However, this does not mean that the lineage of “popular” Confucianism completely disappeared; it did survive as a submerged undercurrent in the intellectual world. In his book *Ruxue sixiang yu Riben dexiandaibua* 儒学思想与日本的现代化 (Confucian Thought and Japan’s Modernization),³⁰ the Chinese scholar Wang Jiahua 王家驊 shows that “popular” Confucianism did continue to function effectively among reformist Japanese intellectuals from the days of the movement for freedom and popular rights through the pre-war socialist movement. The book *Nihon tetsugaku shisōshi* 日本哲学思想史 (The History of Japanese Philosophy and Thought),³¹ by the Marxist scholar Nagata Hiroshi 永田広志, constitutes a late work in this lineage. The fact that the book was republished in 1948 and 1967 shows the continuity of the materialist view of history that became dominant after the war with pre-war intellectual currents. In this work also, Yōmeigaku is said to be superior because it promotes an attitude of throwing oneself positively into action on the basis on one’s convictions, as opposed to the cautious rationality of Zhu Xi learning. If the chief intellectual conflict from the Meiji period through the Taishō period was between “official” and “popular,” from the Taishō period through the Shōwa period it becomes the conflict between “left” and “right.” The movement of “two streams of Yōmeigaku” in Japan, which ended in the victory of the “official” stream, continued as the right-wing Yōmeigaku movement of the imperialist period, but with Japan’s defeat in the war, there was a rebirth of the left-wing view. This left-wing understanding of Yōmeigaku also, however, inherited the basic character of the “modern Yōmeigaku” of the Meiji period.

²⁸ *Tōyō bunka to Shina no shōrai* [Oriental culture and the future of China] (Tokyo: Risōsha, 1939).

²⁹ *Chōsen* 295 (published by the Government-General of Korea, 1939), p.295.

³⁰ Zhejiang Renmin Chubanshe, 1995. Wang has recently published a book on this subject in Japanese, *Nihon no kindaika to Jugaku* [Japan’s modernization and Confucianism] (Tokyo: Nōzan Gyoson Bunka Kyōkai, 1998). On pp.90–8 he defends the idea of the connection between *Yōmeigaku* and the Meiji Restoration from some of my earlier critiques by demonstrating again that Ōshio Chūsai, Yoshida Shōin and Saigō Takamori were significantly influenced by Wang Yangming learning. It is clear from his book’s title and from his method of counter-argument that he is still viewing *Yōmeigaku* (and Japanese Confucianism as a whole) solely within the old paradigm of “modernization,” which itself is the methodology that I have been problematizing. See my “Ōshio Chūsai no shisōteki ichi—‘shōkyō’ hihan oyobi Shu-Ō no kankei o megutte” [The philosophical position of Ōshio Chūsai: concerning the critique of ‘wild fury’ and the relationship between Xhu Xi learning and Yangming learning thought], in *Nihon shisōshi kenkyū* 17 (1985); “Ōshio Chūsai no ningenkan” [Ōshio Chūsai’s view of man], in *Bunka* 49.12 (1985); and “Ōshio Chūsai—hanransha no ningengaku” [Ōshio Chūsai—the human study of a rebel], in *Edo no Jugaku—Daigaku juyō no rekishi* [Edo Confucianism—the history of the reception of the *Great Learning*], ed. Minamoto Ryōen (Kyoto: Shibunkaku, 1988), pp.199–220.

³¹ Published by Mikasa Shōbō, Tokyo, in 1938.

³² “On freedom.”

³³ Sohō's *Yoshida Shōin* was also published in China in a translation by Wang Chun 王純 in 1903 in both Shanghai (Dongya Shuju) and Nanjing (Mingda Shuzhuang). Wang Chun's translation of Sohō's *Tantō chokun'yū roku* [No beating around the bush] was also published by the same Shanghai publisher, under the Chinese title of *Tiexue zhu yi* [The doctrine of iron and blood]. See *Sohō jiden* [The autobiography of Tokutomi Sohō] (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1935), p.10, and *Tokutomi Sohō shū* [A collection of Tokutomi Sohō's writings] (Tokyo: Tsukuma Shobō, 1974), p.417.

³⁴ See his essay “Wuming zhi yingxiang” [The nameless heroes] in *Ziyou shu*.

³⁵ “Shan bian zhi haojie, Jiabuer yu Zhuge Kongming” [Heroes skilled at adapting themselves: Cavour and Zhuge Liang], in *Zuyou shu*. Camillo Benso di Cavour (1810–61) was leader of the unification of Italy and Prime Minister from 1852–59 and 1860–61.

The Reception of “Modern Yōmeigaku” in China

After the Sino-Japanese War, the Qing government adopted a modernization policy modelled after Japan's Meiji Restoration, and Chinese students started to go to Japan to study in large numbers. Japan became a great base for the Chinese reform movement, centering on refugees like Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929), Zhang Binglin 章炳麟 (1868–1936), and Sun Yat-sen 孫逸仙 (1866–1925). The *Qingyi bao* 清議報 (1898–1901) and the *Xinmin congbao* 新民叢報 (1902–07) of the constitutional reform faction (Liang Qichao), and the *Min bao* 民報 (1905) of the revolutionary faction (Zhang and Sun) were launched one after another in Japan, becoming conduits of information from Japan to China. And, needless to say, this information included the idea that Wang Yangming learning had been in the vanguard in the Meiji Restoration.

The influence of the Wang Yangming school on Liang Qichao's thought can be traced back to his teacher, Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858–1927), and to Kang's teacher, Zhu Ciqi 朱次琦. In the *Xinmin shuo* 新民說 (New People's Doctrine), published serially in the *Xinmin congbao* 新民叢報, we read that, “The leading thinkers and actors who carried out Japan's Restoration campaign were either under the influence of Wang Yangming learning or under the influence of Zen.”³² Liang recognized Yoshida Shōin as “the most important person among the leading forces in Japan's Restoration,” and in Shanghai in 1905 he published a collection of Yoshida's writings called *Songyin wenchao* 松陰文抄 (Extracts from Shōin's Writings). *Ziyou shu* 自由書 (The Book of Freedom), his memos written while he was a refugee in Japan, begins with a series of homilies to Yoshida Shōin, and from their content it appears that his image of Shōin was formed by reading Sohō's book.³³ Evidently, Liang Qichao superimposed the “modern Yōmeigaku” he had come in contact with in Japan on his own previously-formed conception of Wang Yangming learning, and re-imported this back to China as a guiding philosophy for the modernization of China.

It is a fact that, during his period as a refugee in Japan, Liang put much energy into the introduction of Western ideas to China. Nevertheless, we should not overlook the influence of Tokutomi Sohō. Liang's so-called “new people's style” of writing, which exerted great influence on the Chinese youth of the time, was devised on the basis of Sohō's style. Moreover, Liang was a strong admirer of Sohō's theory of the hero,³⁴ and in 1902 he published a book called *Three Great Men in the Founding of the Italian State* that was based on the Minyūsha translation of the same name. In *Yoshida Shōin*, Sohō had compared Shōin with Garibaldi, but here Liang compares him with Cavour, and then further compares Cavour with the great Chinese hero of the Three Kingdoms period, Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮 (181–234).³⁵

In this period, Liang Qichao also published his translation of a Japanese translation of a biography of Madame Roland (1754–93), a leader of the

Girondins republican faction in the French revolution,³⁶ as well as biographies of the Hungarian patriot Lajos Kossuth (1802–94), the British parliamentarian Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658), and a series of biographies of Chinese heroes. This technique of promoting nationalist activism by introducing heroes of nation building in the modern West and then showing that there have also been comparable heroes in the history of one’s own country was the same as that being used in Meiji Japan.

Song Jiaoren 宋教仁 (1882–1913) was a leading cadre within Sun Yat-sen’s Revolutionary Alliance (Tongmenghui 同盟會). After the 1911 Revolution, in August 1912, he organized the Nationalist Party (Guomindang 國民黨), and he won a seat in China’s first parliamentary election in February 1913. In March, however, he was assassinated on the orders of Yuan Shikai 袁世凱 (1859–1916), who was afraid that Song would become prime minister. Song had spent the period from 1904 to 1911 as a political refugee in Japan. In that period, he revered the biography of Wang Yangming as his guide to life, and immersed himself in reading the biographies of men like Washington, Napoleon, Bismarck, and Gladstone, as well as Liang Qichao’s *Three Great Men in the Building of the Italian State*. He wrote to his comrades during this period: “One should study the teachings of the sages of former times and the actions of heroes and great men. This includes Wang Yangming’s teaching of “extending the inborn knowledge” (*liangzhi* 良知; Jp. *ryōchi*), Liu Zongzhou’s 劉宗周 (1578–1645) teaching of “watchfulness in solitude” (*shendu* 慎獨; Jp. *shindoku*), and Cheng Hao’s 程顥 (1032–85) teaching of “making reverence the lord” (*zhujiing* 主敬; Jp. *shukei*), as well as Washington’s self-control, Napoleon’s indefatigable spirit, Mazzini’s perfect sincerity, and Saigō Takamori’s guilelessness.³⁷ This is another illustration of how the discourse of “modern Yōmeigaku” and the popularity of biographies of great men in Japan exerted direct influence on the leaders of the political reform movement in China.

Liang Qichao’s introduction of Yoshida Shōin to Chinese readers is also a part of the same stream. But it is worth noting that while Liang was a refugee in Japan he was also picking up the militaristic elements that were part of the Japanese nationalism of the time. When Liang saw a banner—“Pray for the War Dead”—at a troop recruitment and send-off gathering, he sighed: “In the national customs of Japan and China there is one great point of difference: in Japan, they exalt martial prowess, while in China we revere the literary arts.” What made the Meiji Restoration possible, he wrote, was the “Japanese soul” (*Riben hun* 日本魂), that is, bushidō, and what China needed in this time was “the military spirit,” which

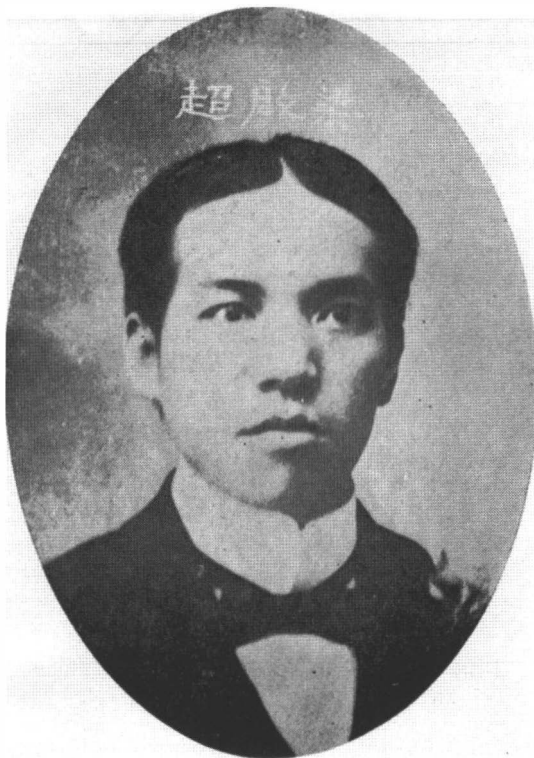
³⁶ The Japanese translation was by Tsubouchi Shōyō 坪内逍遙 (1859–1935), a pioneer in the Meiji literary reform movement who graduated from Tokyo University in the same class as Miyake Setsurei.

³⁷ *Wo de riji* [My diary], 13–14 Feb. 1906.

³⁸ “Qi zhansi, Zhongguo hun an zai” [Pray for the war dead; where is the soul of China?], in ibid.

Figure 8

Taken around 1900, when he was about twenty-seven years old, this picture of Liang Qichao reflects well the youthful idealism, determination and strength of spirit appropriate to a follower of Wang Yangming learning



³⁹ For a fascinating study of Liang Qichao's role in the further development of "National Learning" in China beyond the period covered in the present study, see Sang Bing, "Japan and Liang Qichao's research in the field of National Learning," trans. Minghui Hu, in *Sino-Japanese Studies* 12.1 (Nov. 1999). See also Hazama Naoki, ed., *Kyōdō kenkyū: "Ryō Keichō—sei'yō kindai shisō to Meiji Nihon* [Joint research on Liang Qichao: the reception of modern thought and Meiji Japan] (Tokyo: Misuzu Shobō, 1999) (based on joint Sino-Japanese research done at the Center for Humanistic Studies at Kyoto University). (Tr.)

⁴⁰ Yang Zhu was the founder of an ancient school of thought influential in the time of Mencius, a proto-Daoist school that taught self-preservation and cultivation of the life force and accordingly rejected the idea of self-sacrifice for political causes. Mencius defined the Confucian Way as a middle path between the two heretical extremes represented by the excessive "self-love" of Yang Zhu and the excessive egalitarian self-sacrificing of Mozi 墨子, which latter conflicted with the filial piety ethic. (Tr.)

itself was "the soul of a nation."³⁸ What he was seeking was "soldiers of the nation," as opposed to the old style of "soldiers who rob the people." He believed that "the soul of a nation" and the "military spirit" are born from the recognition by the people that the state is their own, and that for that reason there must be a "restoration" in China before there could be the building of a nation-state. However, what Liang witnessed in Japan that influenced the formation of his thought was the "glorious" aspect of Japan which, due to the smoldering resentment over the Triple Intervention, was in the process of being transformed into imperialism. In this period, Tokutomi Sohō went on to advocate "sleeping on firewood and tasting bile" (*gashin sbōtan*), leaning toward a form of statist nationalism that would pit Japan against the Western powers. Yet for Liang Qichao, with his social Darwinist conception of the victory of the superior races and his hope for a "restoration" to save China, Sohō's incomplete statism of the period before he became a full-fledged imperialist seems to have been quite an appropriate fit.³⁹

In 1904, Liang wrote a book called *Zhongguo zhi wushidao* 中國之武士道 (The Bushidō of China), intended for use as a textbook in primary and secondary schools. The preface, written by one Yang Du 楊度, declares that, "What to the Japanese is known to everyone through everyday proverbs—the Way of Confucius—is not practised in China, but in Japan. People say that in China the name is revered, but in Japan the real thing is practised. This is no exaggeration." According to the preface, the bushidō of Japan developed on the basis of Confucian teachings transmitted from China, supplemented in Japan by the Buddhist view of life and death and the Wang Yangming school's exaltation of resolute practical action. Moreover, it was on the basis of this bushidō that modern Japan had carried out the Meiji Restoration and become both "a first-grade nation in the world" and the hegemonic power of East Asia. In contrast, in China, even though "regarding death lightly and revering the chivalrous spirit" was the original nature of the people, since the Han dynasty, with the degeneration of Confucianism into a handmaiden of political power—into a system of "techniques for deceiving others and deceiving oneself"—this original bushidō of China disappeared without a trace. As a result, the Chinese became incapable domestically of resisting autocratic government, and in their foreign relations they were repeatedly overrun by alien peoples. However, the Confucianism that had so enfeebled and emasculated the Chinese people, he argues, was really the teachings of *Yang Zhu* 楊朱 in the guise of Confucianism.⁴⁰ The practical realism of Confucius, therefore, had never actually been put into practice in the history of imperial China.

Here the essence of Confucianism is tied to the martial spirit expressed in the bushidō of Japan, implicitly giving historical precedence to the idea of "Imperial-Way Confucianism" referred to in the quotation above by Takahashi Tōru. Needless to say, this was written in an effort to arouse nationalism among the Chinese people. It is interesting to see, however, that the hard

reality that Japan had been the victor and China the loser in the military contest between them was enough to lead the Chinese reformers to accept the arbitrary logic of the modern Japanese version of the Confucian Way. In effect, the discourse of “modern Confucianism” was reimported from Japan back to China, along with the new element it had acquired known as the “martial spirit.”

It was in 1905 that Inoue Tetsujirō’s series on bushidō was published. Liang’s *Zhongguo zhi wushidao* preceded it, but both works can be said to have been written amidst the militaristic climate in Japan engendered by the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars.⁴¹ An even closer connection between Liang’s and Inoue’s thought is shown in the fact that, in 1904, Liang published *Jieben Ming-Ru xue’an* 節本明儒學案 (A Digest of The Records of Ming Scholars) in Yokohama, under the inspiration of Inoue’s *Nibon Yōmeigakuha no tetsugaku*.⁴²

It is not really accurate to say that Liang Qichao’s acceptance of statist elements in the modern Confucianism of Sohō and Inoue represents his “conservative” side. In 1905, Chinese students in Tokyo staged a gathering to welcome Sun Yat-sen to Japan. According to the article about this gathering that appeared in the inaugural issue of *Min bao*, the guest speaker for the Japanese side gave the following address:

My friends, if one looks only at the surface, it appears that because education in our country at present is so devoted to learning from the West, we do not know how to pursue Chinese learning. Yet the imperial loyalists who overthrew the bakufu were all deeply versed in Wang Yangming learning, and not necessarily highly knowledgeable regarding Western methods. If it were not for these indomitable predecessors overthrowing the bakufu and laying down the basic principles of our national policy, who can say that Japan would have achieved the prosperity we know today? Accordingly, my friends, if all of you as well will only give full play to your own national learning and firmly establish the foundations of your own nation, and then use Western methods as a supplement, it will not be difficult to become as rich and strong as our country. Who is to say that you will not even surpass us?⁴³

The main task of the Meiji Restoration, he continued, was to overthrow the Tokugawa feudal system, and accordingly the proper form of government for Japan is a constitutional monarchy. But as the main task in China today is the liberation of the nation from alien rule, the appropriate form of government is that of a republic. The guest speaker concluded with the words, “My friends, exert yourselves! Plant firm the three-colored flag, and sound the bell of freedom! This aspiration that has taken its start with Mr. Sun and all of you will one day grow into a great East Asian alliance. Could it not be that the beginning of its realization lies right here with today’s assembly?”

These comments followed Sun Yat-sen’s speech, in which he had said, “I can see, my friends, that the purpose for which you have come to Japan

⁴¹ The Christian internationalist Nitobe Inazō 新渡戸稲造 (1862–1933) wrote his famous book *Bushido: the soul of Japan* in English in 1899. However, Nitobe conceived bushidō as something comparable to the chivalry of medieval Europe, based on the spirit of Japanese aristocratic culture. This was quite different from Inoue’s conception of bushidō.

⁴² The *Ming-ju xue’an*, written by Huang Zongxi 黄宗羲 (1610–95) in the early Qing dynasty, was a history of Ming Confucianism that revolves around Wang Yangming’s philosophy. It had been out of print for sixty years from 1821, and could not have had a very wide circulation at the beginning of the twentieth century. Huang’s writings, particularly his famous *Ming yi daifang lu* [Waiting for the dawn: a plan for the Prince] (1662), were promoted by Liang because of their bold critique of Chinese despotism and their advocacy of political reform. See Zheng Shiqu, *Guocui, guoxue, guobun* [National essence, national learning, and national soul] (Taipei: Wenjin Chubanshe, 1992), and Julia Ching, ed., *The records of Ming scholars* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987).

⁴³ According to Song Jiaoren’s *Wo de riji* [My diary], the guest speaker was either Miyazaki Tōten 宮崎滔天 (1871–1922), a friend of Sun Yat-sen and one of the core founders of the Chinese Revolutionary Alliance in 1905, or Suenaga Setsu 末永節.

⁴⁴ “Zhongguo ying jianshe gongheguo” [China should establish a republic], in *Guofu quanji* 8 (Taipei, 1965): 1.

⁴⁵ Satō Shin’ichi, “Jukyō to nashonarizumu” [Confucianism and nationalism], in *Chūgoku: shakai to bunka* 4 (1989).

⁴⁶ “Da Tie Zheng” [Reply to Tie Zheng], in *Min Bao* 14 (1907).

is to absorb her civilization. However, Japan’s civilization is not something indigenous, but something that was taken first from China, and then later supplemented by learning from the West. If China takes her own indigenous civilization and really puts it to use, then we will overtake Japan without doubt.” The following is the text of Sun’s address as given in *Guofu quanji* 國父全集 (The Complete Works of the Father of the Country):

There are two differences between Japan and China. The first is that the old civilization of Japan was all imported from China. Fifty years ago, the intrepid heroes (*baojie* 豪傑) of the Restoration were intoxicated with the theory of the unity of knowledge and action put forth by the great Chinese philosopher Wang Yangming. Accordingly, all of them had a spirit of independence and respect for martial strength, with which they accomplished the great feat of saving forty-five million people from a great calamity. We Chinese, on the other hand, just used the abilities we gained through learning to play sycophant to a foreign race! Thus it is that China ended up falling behind Japan ...⁴⁴

This assembly of 1905 provided an occasion for an exchange of messages of solidarity between Japanese “ultranationalists” and Chinese revolutionaries—an exchange of messages between two “nations” that transcended the boundaries of the state. In the address of the guest speaker for the Japanese side, the ideals of a nationalism (*kokusui shugi*) transcending ethnocentrism are expressed very straightforwardly. And that which provided the medium for this exchange was the “progressive” ideology of modern Yōmeigaku which stood on the *min* or popular side of the political spectrum. Along with the idea that Wang Yangming learning played a leading role in the Meiji Restoration, however, Sun Yat-sen also accepted the idea that Wang Yangming learning stood for a spirit of autonomy and respect for military power.

1905 was also the year in which the Society for the Preservation of National Learning (*Guoxue baocun hui* 國學保存會) and the *Guocui xuebao* 國粹學報 (Bulletin of National Essence Studies) were founded in Shanghai. Zhang Binglin, the leader of this movement, served long as the chief writer of *Min bao* after becoming an exile in Japan in 1906. His “national learning” inherited the lineage of evidential learning (*kaozhengxue* 考證學), and it stood in the opposite camp from official Confucianism. Chinese “ultranationalism,” established under the influence of Japanese ultranationalism, also took “an open attitude toward outsiders based paradoxically on a thorough devotion to the cultural particularity of the nation,”⁴⁵ and *Min bao* promoted the idea of national solidarity between China and Japan.

Zhang Binglin also claimed that “Japan’s Restoration as well was pioneered by Wang [Yangming] learning.”⁴⁶ Those engaged in a revolutionary struggle that has little chance of victory against superior forces, he believed, need to have a spiritual power that transcends self-interest and transcends life

and death, and he saw Wang Yangming learning, because of its power to nourish self-esteem and fearlessness, as providing such a philosophy of revolution.

Liang Qichao, in a 1903 essay entitled “Lun zongjiaojia yu zhexuejia zhi changduan tezhi” 論宗教家與哲學家之長短特質 (On the Strengths and Weaknesses and the Distinctive Qualities of Religious Teachers and Philosophers), wrote that:

The Wang learning of our country is an idealist school of thought. If a person studies this and gets something from it, he will certainly gain a strong power of will and become more courageous in his undertakings. This is evident from the intrepidity and integrity shown by Confucianists at the end of the Ming dynasty. In the two hundred-some years of our present dynasty, this school has languished. However, some of its derivative streams crossed the eastern seas to become the basis of the new political order established through Japan's Restoration. Thus did the learning of the heart demonstrate its practical utility Regardless of whether this is a correct or a misguided teaching, if one has already believed in it one must be perfectly sincere. A person of perfect sincerity can take on a heavy task and devote himself to a distant ideal. He can move people, and he can move things.

This concept of perfect sincerity (Ch. *zhicheng* 至誠; Jp. *shisei*) is a direct expression of what Mizoguchi Yūzō has called the “subjectivism” or “mind-centeredness” (*shinpon shugi* 心本主義) of Japanese Yōmeigaku, as opposed to the “objectivism” or “principle-centeredness” (*ribon shugi* 理本主義) of Chinese Neo-Confucianism.⁴⁷ In his *Xinminlun* 新民論 (The Theory for Renewing the People),⁴⁸ Liang preached a new morality for the nation based upon Wang Yangming's concept of “pulling up the root and blocking the source” (Ch. *baben sai yuan* 拔本塞源; Jp. *bappon saigen*).⁴⁹ In 1905 he also wrote a book based on Wang Yangming philosophy called *Deyu jian* 德育鑑 (The Mirror of Moral Education).

The Chinese reformers, whether of the reform faction or the revolutionary faction, were all seeking to build China into a nation-state, which called for the cultivation of national self-esteem and bold patriotic action. This is what drew their attention to the Wang Yangming school of learning.

Since the teachings of the Wang Yangming school originated in China, the idea that they had helped prepare the way for Japan's rise to great power status was gratifying to the self-esteem of Chinese intellectuals. Moreover, the Wang Yangming philosophy preached in Japan was a teaching that called for national self-esteem and national autonomy based on such self-esteem, a mode of nationalism founded on a “national morality” that demanded the sort of individual self-reliance so emphasized in Yōmeigaku teachings. Although this concept of national self-esteem expressed itself as political antagonism between China and Japan when the two nations were at war, the ideas promoted in the “modern Yōmeigaku” discourse were able to establish themselves in modern China in the form of “national morality” and “revolutionary

⁴⁷ The perennial tendency in the Japanese tradition to revere heroic men of action for the purity of their intentions and the totalness of their commitment, even if (or precisely because) they were unsuccessful in achieving an objective goal and lost their lives in the attempt, reached perhaps its highest intensity in the Yōmeigaku tradition, as expressed classically in Mishima Yukio's reverence for Ōshio Heihachirō. (This tradition is skilfully examined in Ivan Morris, *The nobility of failure: tragic heroes in the history of Japan* [London: Secker & Warburg, 1975]—Tr.)

⁴⁸ “*Xinmin*” is a famous concept from Zhu Xi's emended version of the *Da xue* [Great learning], “to renew the people.” But the title of Liang's book can also be read as “doctrine of the new people” or “new doctrine of the people.” Most likely all these meanings were intended in Liang's new conception of the Chinese people as a nation. (Tr.)

⁴⁹ Meaning, in the disposition of affairs in an official capacity, to remove the fundamental cause of the problem. The phrase comes originally from the *Zuo zhuan* 左傳.

⁵⁰ 1905 was the last year in which the two streams of Yōmeigaku in Japan were not yet completely separated, and it was the year of the founding of ultranationalism in China. Symbolically speaking, therefore, it was both the first and the last year that the “modern Yōmeigaku” discourses of Japan and China could interact on an equal footing.

⁵¹ The word here translated as “Neo-Confucian Anthologies” is *xue'an*; the appended explanation notes that this refers to *Song-Ming xue'an*, i.e., to the *Song-Yuan xue'an* and the *Ming ru xue'an*. However, *Song-Yuan xue'an* was also written by Huang Zongxi, so also reflects a view of the development of Neo-Confucianism much influenced by the Wang Yangming school. As W. T. de Bary writes, “Huang Tsung-hsi’s candidates for canonization were heroic leaders—men of action—not sitting sages.” See “Neo-Confucian cultivation and the seventeenth-century ‘enlightenment,’” in *The unfolding of Neo-Confucianism*, ed. W. T. de Bary (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), p.203. (Tr.)

⁵² *Teding xuewu gangyao* [An outline of the specific tasks of learning], in Taga Shūgorō, *Kindai Chūgoku kyōikushi sbiryō* [Sources on the history of modern Chinese education] (Nihon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai, 1973), Minkoku hen, vol.1.

morality.” To put it more precisely, the “modern Yōmeigaku” that was brought into China from Japan along with the idea of Yōmeigaku’s vanguard role in the Meiji Restoration was principally the “modern Yōmeigaku” constructed in the first decade of the twentieth century, while Japan was in the process of establishing itself as an imperialist nation.⁵⁰

Jiaoyu yaoyan 教育要言 (The Essentials of Education), part of a directive issued by the new republican government in China in 1914, declared that, “Elementary and middle school teachers should look into the question of human nature and principle (*xingli* 性理), revere and practise the teachings of the Lu-Wang school, and instruct their students regarding the importance of practice. Textbooks should include passages from the Neo-Confucian Anthologies, in order to illuminate the origins of reverence for Confucius and Mencius.”⁵¹ The appended explanation stated that, “In Japan, Wang learning has flourished more than anywhere else. Admiral Tōgō said that he derived strength from Wang learning all his life. Truly these are not empty words. From this one can see that Wang learning definitely has value and is worthy of our admiration and respect. Even if elementary and middle school teachers cannot speak about the subtleties of Neo-Confucian learning, since they are engaged in general education they must be able to say something about the teaching of the oneness of knowledge and action in order to guide the nation’s youth and encourage them toward practice.”⁵² Here, Admiral Tōgō Heihachirō 東郷平八郎 (1847–1934), who sank the Russian fleet in the Russo-Japanese War, is cited as an example to demonstrate the practice-centered nature of Wang Yangming learning and its fittingness to serve as the national morality. A document called *Jiaoyu zongzhi* 教育宗旨 (The Aims of Education) that was issued at the same time was organized under the headings “love one’s country,” “respect military power,” “revere actual practice,” “model oneself after Confucius and Mencius,” “esteem autonomy,” “guard against covetousness and strife,” and “guard against impatience and impetuosity.” Although this Confucianist vision of education became a target of attack in the May Fourth Movement of 1919, it is sufficient to show that the “modern Yōmeigaku” discourse constructed originally in Japan had penetrated even to the level of official educational policy in the early years of the Republic.

Conclusion: The Outlook for the History of East Asian Thought

At the opening of this essay, I stated that there has been some wavering in China in regard to the historical evaluation of the Wang Yangming school. This wavering has resulted in part from the adoption in China of Andrei Zhdanov’s (1896–1948) view of the history of philosophy as a struggle between materialism and idealism, but it also reflects the fact that the Yōmeigaku ideas adopted at the end of the Qing as part of the philosophy

of political reform became involved in the political struggles of the republican period, being used particularly by Chiang Kai-shek's regime as part of a program of national education based on the principle of anti-Communism.⁵³ Nevertheless, the Wang Yangming philosophy that both the Nationalists and the Communists alternately vilified and extolled was none other than what I have called “modern Yōmeigaku.”

Zhu Qianzhi's 朱謙之 book *Riben deguxueji Yangmingxue* 日本の古學陽明學 (Japanese Ancient Learning and Yangming Learning) was published in 1962, but it is regarded in mainland China as a classic in the study of Japanese Confucianism and still exerts a powerful influence on research in the field. On the basis of Marxist theory, Zhu depicts the Wang Yangming school as fundamentally a “reactionary” mode of thought, as shown by Wang Yangming's involvement in the suppression of “peasant rebellions,” and claims that the school retained this reactionary character through its later development in China. In Japanese Yōmeigaku, however, he sees the development of the “left-wing Wang learning,” to which he attributes a reformist and revolutionary character. In the late-Edo period, which he depicts as “the embryonic period of the capitalist mode of production,” this Yōmeigaku became an expression of the consciousness of lower-ranking samurai and urban commoners, thus becoming one of the motive forces of the revolutionary movement of the Restoration.⁵⁴

Zhu Qianzhi takes the majority of his material on the history of Japanese Yōmeigaku from Inoue Tetsujirō's *Nihon Yōmeigakuba no tetsugaku*. This may represent an unavoidable limitation in the secondary resources available when his research was done, but it is interesting to compare his theory of the distinction between Chinese and Japanese Wang Yangming learning with the following passage from a book published in 1898 by Takase Takejirō called *Nihon no Yōmeigaku* (Japanese Wang Yangming Learning):

Generally speaking, it seems that Wang Yangming learning contains two essential elements. One is its activist (*jigyōteki* 事業的) orientation, and the other is its similarity to withered-tree Zen.⁵⁵ If one takes hold of the withered-tree Zen element, it can lead to the loss of the country. If one takes hold of the activist element, it is capable of reviving the country. Now the followers of Wang Yangming learning in China and Japan each got hold of one of these elements, and they left us many examples of what this actually meant in practice.

In the same book, Takase also wrote that, “Among all the ten thousand countries, there is none that has been established in such an ideal and splendid form as the Japanese state. The Yamato nation has developed and become a great Empire, joining the ranks of the leading countries of the world. That the Yamato nation possesses such a great momentum to flourish is because it possesses a very deep foundation.” This “very deep foundation” refers of course to the fictitious fabrication of the emperor system, which was held up by a self-righteous and ethnocentric national mythology.

⁵³ For instance, in *Dangdai Zhongguo zhexue* [Contemporary Chinese philosophy] (Nanjing: Shengli Chuban Gongsi, 1947), He Lin writes, “The father of our country, Mr. Sun Yat-sen, and the present chairman of our government, Mr. Chiang, are both great representatives of the application of Wang Yangming learning.” In *Zhongguo sixiang tongshi* [A comprehensive history of Chinese thought] (Beijing: Reijing Renmin Chubanshe, 1960), book 4, vol.2, Hou Wailu refers to this directly in his criticism of Wang Yangming learning.

⁵⁴ For example, regarding Satō Issai, the most influential teacher of Yōmeigaku in the late Edo period, Zhu writes, “On the surface [his thought] was close to that of Wang Yangming, but actually it came close to an elementary form of materialism” (p.302). A university textbook on Japanese philosophy published in 1989 seconds this view, on the basis of the fact that Issai's monism of material force (which was dialectical in nature) emphasized that the innate goodness of human nature cannot be manifested or acted out without the existence of the physical body. The implied argument is that this is a proposition that Yangming himself, with his tenet that “there are no ‘things’ outside of the mind,” would not have agreed with. See Wang Shouhua and Bian Chongdao, *Riben zhexueshi jiaocheng* [A course in the history of Japanese philosophy] (Jinan: Shandong Daxue Chubanshe, 1989), p.116. (Tr.)

⁵⁵ A traditional code word for an inward-looking Zen practice without any social conscience or active involvement with the world. (Tr.)

⁵⁶ Published by Hubei Renmin Chubanshe, Wuhan, in 1956.

⁵⁷ *Jinbu* 9,3 (1916). See also *Wu Yu wenlu* [A record of Wu Yu's writings], first ed. (Shanghai: Yadong Tushuguan, 1921), and *Wu Yu ji* [A collection of Wu Yu's writings] (Chengdu: Sichuan Renmin Chubanshe, 1985), pp.75–89. (Tr.)

⁵⁸ Published by Chikuma Shobō, Tokyo, 1949.

Zhu Qianzhi was also the author of a book called *Li Zhi: Shiliu shiji Zhongguo fan fengjian sixiang de xianquzhe* 李贽：十六世紀中國反封建思想的先驅者 (Li Zhi: A Pioneer of Anti-Feudal Thought in Sixteenth-Century China).⁵⁶ The discourse regarding “left-wing Wang learning” portrayed the later followers of the Wang Yangming school, as represented by Li Zhi, as a “revolutionary movement” within Confucianism based in a strata of commoners backed by commercial capital, whose thought emphasized “freedom, liberation, utilitarianism, and a critical spirit.” The pioneer in the creation of this discourse was a scholar named Wu Yu 吳虞 (1871–1949), who studied in Japan from 1906, and who became a major intellectual leader in the May Fourth movement. In 1915, Wu wrote an essay entitled “Ming Li Zhuowu biezhuàn” 明李卓吾別傳 (An Unorthodox Biography of Li Zhi of the Ming Dynasty).⁵⁷ In post-war China, in spite of (or perhaps because of) the hegemony of Marxist historiography, this evaluation of Li Zhi was maintained, necessitating a clear separation between the Wang Yangming school proper and the “left-wing Wang school.” In his book on Japanese Confucianism, Zhu Qianzhi applied this Chinese version of “two streams of Yōmeigaku” to the task of distinguishing between Chinese and Japanese Wang Yangming learning in a context where Japan had been “successful” at modernization while China had fallen into a semi-colonial status. If we examine Zhu’s argument, however, it is clear that his depiction of the stagnant nature of Chinese Confucianism versus the reformist nature of Japanese Confucianism does not differ in any substantial way from Takase’s depiction of 1898.

We have seen that, in Japan, Takase’s discourse fed into the discourse of “Imperial-Way Confucianism.” In China, however, it appears that the “modern Yōmeigaku” discourse established in the Meiji period, along with the idea that Yōmeigaku was a motive force of the Meiji Restoration, ended up determining the parameters of the evaluation of Wang Yangming learning right up to the contemporary period, and indeed it is still being defended by writers such as Wang Jiahua. Nor was the situation fundamentally different within the field of the study of Chinese philosophy in Japan. For instance, Shimada Kenji’s 島田虔次 *Chūgoku ni okeru kindaiteki shii no zasetsu* 中国における近代的思惟の挫折 (The Frustration of Modern Thought in China),⁵⁸ which laid the foundations for post-war research in the field, relies upon the discourse of “left-wing Wang learning” to portray the suicide of Li Zhi as the great setback for emergent modern thought in China. As mentioned earlier, the exaltation of Li Zhi as a “proto-modern” thinker can be traced back to Kuga Katsunan in the Meiji period. This discourse of Yōmeigaku is not just a matter of the evaluation of the Wang Yangming school within scholarly circles; it is something that goes right to the core of the national culture of East Asia as a whole.

Patriots in Korea also drew directly from the discourse of “modern Yōmeigaku” in constructing a nationalism they could use in their struggle against

the Japanese Empire. The most prominent example is Park Eun-sik (1859–1925), who was a leading spokesman for national enlightenment and independence from 1889, and who served as the second president of the provisional government in Shanghai after the Japanese annexation in 1910.⁵⁹ In books written between 1904 and 1911, Park criticized traditional Korean Confucianism (the Zhu Xi-school orthodoxy) as standing only on the side of the monarch and lacking any impulse toward popularization, seeing this as one of the reasons for the eventual loss of national sovereignty. Influenced by the thought of Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, Park looked to the populist Wang Yangming school to provide a “new learning” that could further the development of “popular rights” and “popular wisdom.” Like Liang, he advocated taking advantage of Japanese translations of Western works to promote the dissemination of reformist and revolutionary political ideas in Korea, spoke of the “national soul” and the “national essence,” promoted reverence for the martial spirit and national history, published biographies of national heroes, exalted Wang Yangming for rebelling against the conservative orthodoxy of Zhu Xi learning, and idealized Yoshida Shōin as the rebel who gave up his life to establish the foundations of the modern Japanese nation.

Why is it that no such hot-blooded young man has arisen in Korea, and we have been unable to carry out either political or academic reform? If we are living in an age where the evolution of heaven and earth dictates that the new must replace the old, then unless it is by the blood of heroic men who are filled with resoluteness and self-confidence, truly there is no way we can change the fate of our country and create happiness for the people.⁶⁰

Whether these ideas came chiefly from Japanese books or from Liang Qichao is not clear, but there is no doubt that the conceptual vocabulary is rooted in the discourse of modern Yōmeigaku, particularly as formulated by Tokutomi Sohō. In 1910, the year before he wrote this article, Park had published a book called *The Veritable Records of Wang Yangming*, based on Wang’s *Chuanxi lu* 傳習錄 (Record of Transmission and Practice), the *Ming ru xue’an* 明儒學案, and Takase Takejirō’s biography of Wang Yangming.

In recent years the Japanese government has been criticized by East Asian countries, particularly Korea, regarding the words used in school textbooks to describe Japan’s invasion of the Asian mainland. However, these textbooks were produced through the government-initiated revision of manuscripts drafted by representatives of mainstream postwar historiography, and the textbook controversy itself has given birth to a movement from the “right” that rejects this entire postwar historiography as promoting a “masochistic view of history” (*jigyaku shikan* 自虐史觀), affirming the legitimacy of Japan’s history of expansionism beginning from the Meiji period.⁶¹ The fact that the representatives of post-war historiography have not been able to argue effectively against these attacks may be because they are not fully aware that, in spite of their claim to represent scientific materialism, they themselves exist within the conceptual discourse of the modern Japanese nation, and in that

⁵⁹ Wang Yangming learning in Korea was also promoted in this period by two other “enlightenment” scholars, Choi Nam-sun and Jeong In-bo. For a further examination of Yōmeigaku in Korea in this period, see my article “Japanese modernity and Yōmeigaku,” in *Nam-Myong Studies* 8 (Institute of Nam-Myong Studies, Gyeongsang National University, Chinju, Korea, 1998).

⁶⁰ “I paid a visit to the First Emperor of the Jin dynasty in a dream,” in *Park Eun-sik chonso* [The complete works of Park Eun-sik] (Seoul: Institute of Oriental Studies, Dankook University, 1975), vol.2, p.262. Park regarded the Jurchen people who had ruled northern China between 1115 and 1234 as of the same lineage as the Koreans and is here expressing his reverence.

⁶¹ See, for instance, the booklet *The restoration of a national history*, published in 1998 by the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform (founded 1996), which claimed 6,782 members as of August 1998. See also the best-selling new history of Japan produced by a founding member of this group, Nishio Kanji, *Kokumin no rekishi* [The history of the nation] (Tokyo: Sankei Shinbunsha, 1999). (Tr.)

sense come out of the same nationalism as the spokesmen for the “right-wing” point of view.

Through a path stained by violence and conflict, the modern age made the world into one world, but it also reconstituted it in the form of “nations.” The discourse of “modern Yōmeigaku,” put forward as a “national morality” and as the idea of “the disintegration of the Zhu Xi-school mode of thought,” was the sign of this reconstitution of the world in the realm of intellectual history. The idea of “the disintegration of the Zhu Xi-school mode of thought” was a common illusion of twentieth-century East Asia created by the modern history of the region and transcending the political opposition between states, an illusion whose construction began in Meiji Japan. The fact that it did not become a problem in Japan until now was because the basic framework of thought regarding the “modern nation-state” was treated as something so self-evident that it was not necessary to actually look at it and subject it to critical examination.

My intention in the present essay has not been to take sides with the campaign of the “right” and make claims about the contributions of Japanese nationalism to the awakening of Asia. Nor, on the other hand, has it been to expose the ideological nature of such claims. I just feel that, as we enter a new century and a new millennium, it is necessary to step outside of the story of the disintegration of the Zhu Xi-school mode of thought that so persistently reproduced itself within the discourse of East Asian intellectual history through the whole of the twentieth century, all the more so if we consider what the ideology of the Japanese nation-state with which it is tied up led to. For this reason, I have portrayed this discourse as an unending cycle wherein the story became established in Japan as an Asian version of the Western model of modernization, spread from there through East Asian historical and national discourse, and then was fed back repeatedly into Japanese intellectual discourse.

Ogyū Shigehiro

Yonezawa Women's College
of Yamagata Prefecture
6-15-1 Tori-machi, Yonezawa-shi
Yamagata-ken 992-0025, Japan
ogyu@yone.ac.jp

Barry B. Steben

Department of Japanese Studies
National University of Singapore
BLK AS4, 9 Asia Link
Singapore 117570
Republic of Singapore
jpsbs@nus.edu.sg

The story of the disintegration of the Zhu Xi-school mode of thought can only disintegrate itself through a reconstruction of the overall image of the modern history of Japan and East Asia in a way that transcends the history of any one country. And it is in the common elements within the discourses that accompanied the formation of the nation-state in the various countries of Asia, such as the discourse of “modern Yōmeigaku,” that I believe we can find the key to such a reconstruction. At the same time, however, we must also become aware of the paradox that, because the nations established were “ethnic nations,” even where the abstract discourses that constructed them were common discourses, concepts like “the soul of the nation” call up very different and mutually-opposed emotions in Japan, China, and Korea respectively.