Japanese Confucianism

For more than 1500 years Confucianism has played a major role in shaping Japan’s history – from the formation of the first Japanese states during the first millennium CE, to Japan’s modernization in the nineteenth century, to WWII and its still unresolved legacies across East Asia today. In an illuminating and provocative new study, Kiri Paramore analyzes the dynamic history of Japanese Confucianism, revealing its many cultural manifestations as religion and as political tool, as social capital and public discourse, as well as its role in international relations and statecraft. The book demonstrates the processes through which Confucianism was historically linked to other phenomenon, such as the rise of modern science and East Asian liberalism. In doing so it offers new perspectives on the sociology of Confucianism and its impact on society, culture, and politics across East Asia, past and present.

KIRI PARAMORE teaches History and Asian Studies at Leiden University.
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Japanese Confucianism

A Cultural History

Kiri Paramore

Leiden University, the Netherlands
Antiquity is constructed by us.

Liu Zhiji (661–721), Historian and Confucian, Tang China.
Kagawa Shūan (1683–1755), Confucian and Medical doctor, Tokugawa Japan.
Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835–1901), Liberal public intellectual and educator, Meiji Japan.
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This book tries to engage Confucianism not as dead tradition, but as history alive in the contemporary politics of East Asia. This approach is influenced by my time as a student at the University of Tokyo, where Confucianism was engaged in seminars on politics, history, philosophy and social studies taught by professors like Kurozumi Makoto, Mitani Hiroshi, Watanabe Hiroshi, Karube Tadashi, Kojima Yasunori, Kojima Tsuyoshi and Hiraishi Naoaki, in an intellectual environment which encouraged cross-disciplinary and socially engaged analysis. I thank them for creating that environment and my fellow graduate students who enriched it with a multi-cultural breadth of experience and opinion. Among fellow students, Lan Hung-Yueh, Ōta Hideaki, and Kōno Yūri have been steadfast comrades; Koh Heetak, Sekiguchi Sumiko, Nakada Yoshikazu, Han Dongyu, and many others inspiring examples. The book’s outlook has since been enriched by conversations with Milinda Banerjee, Benjamin Elman, Matsuda Köichirō, Sugawara Hikaru, Ōkubo Takeharu, Chen-Tao Shih, Barak Kushner, Hans Martin Krämer, Mark TEEUWEN, Fuyuko Matsukata, Patrick O’Brien, David Mervart, James McMullen, Hung-Yueh Lan, David Ambaras, Mark Driscoll, Morgan Pitelka, and Barbara Ambros. For invaluable criticism on late-stage drafts, I would particularly like to thank Bill Callahan, Barend ter Haar, Yuan-Kang Wang, and Hans van Leeuwen. I also thank Machi Senjuro and Karube Tadashi for important ideas as I was finishing the book. At Leiden I thank colleagues who discussed the project with me – Wim Boot, Marc Buijsters, Oliver Moore, Anna Yeadell, Alice de Jong, Daan Kok, Nadia Kreeft, Paul Wijsman and Jeroen Wiedenhof – others who even read sections – Ethan Mark and Ivo Smits – and particularly, Joep Smorenburg who drafted the maps and tables. Research for this book was assisted by the awarding of visiting fellowship grants from Academia Sinica, Taipei, and Rikkyo University, Tokyo. I thank both institutions and particularly Chen Weifen and Matsuda Köichirō. I also acknowledge the assistance of the Shibunkai in provision of access to Yushima Seidō and material for illustrations. The cover image of the book was supplied.
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Notes on the text

This book uses Pinyin for the Romanization of Chinese, the Hepburn system for Japanese, and McCune-Reischauer for Korean. Exceptions are made for readings established in English using other systems, or nowadays accepted as English words. For instance, Chiang Kai-shek stays as is, as does KMT, Choson, ronin, etc.

Chinese, Japanese, and Korean names are given with the surname first, except where the name is commonly established in another order in English. When using a single name to refer to an already established figure, the book universally gives the surname. This goes against a common practice of early modern Japanese history writing, both in Japanese and in English, where the go name rather than the myō surname is commonly used. Thus, in many publications Ogyū Sorai (1666–1728) is simply referred to as Sorai. But in this book he is referred to by his surname as Ogyū. This method of naming allows us to use the same standard system cross-period (into the modern period), conforming to general English usage, and also reflecting more up-to-date editorial guidelines of major journals in the field, notably the Journal of Japanese Studies.

References are given using name and date in in-text bracket citation, with full bibliographical references for each entry in a list at the end of the book. This means that many references to premodern primary sources in modern printed compilations will have a twentieth-century date, even though the actual text is much older. For instance, some quotes from the late eighteenth-century writings of Shibano Ritsuzan (1736–1807) appear referenced as “(Takimoto 1914),” giving the name of the editor who oversaw the modern printed compilation. The referencing system is thus designed primarily to facilitate a reader being able to find the source themselves in the commonly available modern compilations through a library catalog. Abbreviations are used for a number of large compendium series used extensively in the book. The key to abbreviations is at the beginning of the Bibliography.
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