

Neo-Confucianism and its influence in Song Dynasty

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Abstract:

Confucianism, embodying the finest aspects of traditional Chinese culture, has its roots in the pre-Qin period and has evolved over thousands of years, influencing every Chinese. It represents the internalized value system and externalized behavioral standards of the Chinese people. During the Song Dynasty, Confucianism entered a new phase, known as Neo-Confucianism, which was disseminated to Japan alongside Buddhism during the Song-Japanese exchanges. Japan was also undergoing a transition from the Heian period to the Kamakura period, necessitating the establishment of a new culture to solidify its rule. Lin Luoshan, recognizing the political potential of Neo-Confucianism, transformed it into an ideological tool to safeguard the regime, significantly elevating its status in Japan and establishing it as an “official school”. Post-Meiji Restoration, Confucianism seemingly disappeared from Japanese society, yet in reality, it was gradually integrated into the value systems and moral codes of the Japanese people. The reach of Confucianism’s influence is vast and profound, with all East Asian countries being influenced, to varying degrees, by Confucianism in their history. A “Confucian cultural circle” has thus formed in East Asia, with China at its core, and extending to the surrounding regions. Currently, by examining the value of the recognition of Confucianism in East Asian countries, we can establish a “Confucian cultural circle” in modern East Asia and foster the cooperation, development, and integration of a region where “each country has its unique beauty”.

Keywords: Song Dynasty, Neo-Confucianism, Sino-Japanese cultural exchange, Confucianism, Confucian culture circle

1. Introduction

Chinese culture has a long history and embodies the wisdom and elegance of the Chinese people over 5,000 years ago. Among them, Confucianism is undoubtedly the most typically visiting card of Chinese culture. Confucianism originated in the pre-Qin period and was founded by Confucius. After thousands of years of development and changes, Confucianism has gradually formed a complete ideological system, which has a profound impact on Chinese culture. With the gradually frequent exchanges of culture between China and Japan, Confucianism has also exerted a great influence on Japan.

The Song Dynasty was a period of rapid and diversified development of Chinese culture. At the same time, Japan also experienced the transition period from Heian Period to Kamakura Period. The change of regime required the establishment of a new culture to consolidate the rule, which also caused the need for Japan to study culture from China. In the Song Dynasty, Confucianism entered a new stage of development -- Neo-Confucianism, which was introduced into Japan along with the exchange of Buddhism

between China and Japan in the Song Dynasty. However, regarding the exchanges between China and Japan, the academic circles mainly focused on the Sui, Tang, Ming and Qing dynasties, and paid little attention to and studied the exchanges between China and Japan in the Song Dynasty, while the studies on the cultural exchanges between China and Japan in the Song Dynasty also focused on Buddhism (Zen), with little exploration of Neo-Confucianism. Therefore, compared with previous studies, this study focuses on the spread of Neo-Confucianism to Japan in the Song Dynasty. On the basis of the previous studies, the process of the spread of Neo-Confucianism to Japan in Song Dynasty is divided into more detailed stages. It also analyzes and studies the relationship between Zen and Confucianism in the course of Japanese dissemination. On this basis, the influence of the introduction of Neo-Confucianism to Japan in Song Dynasty is discussed.

This study mainly uses the literature research method, interdisciplinary research method and descriptive research method. Through reading a large number of domestic and foreign documents and historical materials, to form the understanding of the exchange of Neo-Confucianism

between China and Japan in the Song Dynasty. Through the understanding of the viewpoints and achievements of previous studies, I can enrich and supplement my own arguments. Neo-Confucianism belongs to the category of philosophy, so you not only need to read a lot of related professional literature, but also need to understand and digest philosophical views. Through the understanding of the previous research results, dialectically and critically use the research results of the predecessors to enrich their own views. And then enrich the contents of the research on the spread and influence of Confucianism, the cultural exchanges between China and Japan in Song Dynasty, the cultural exchanges between China and Japan and the "Confucian cultural circle" in East Asia.

In recent years, with the continuous advancement of the construction of socialism in all aspects and the increasing prosperity of China, the cultural exchanges and communication between China and other countries in the world have become increasingly close. Therefore, with the constantly closer communication, "cultural self-confidence" has been widely concerned by the society. Through the study of Neo-Confucianism and its influence in Song Dynasty, it is helpful to deepen the understanding of the cultural exchange between China and Japan and the influence of Confucianism. To build up national cultural self-confidence; Enhance the international influence and competitiveness of Chinese culture; and to promote the cultural communication and friendly exchanges between China and Japan today.

2. The background of Confucianism spread to Japan in Song Dynasty

The Northern Song Dynasty took on the chaotic times of the five dynasties, and the situation was turbulent. The Song Dynasty was in an important transition period in Chinese history and faced many new problems and challenges from within and around[1]the country -- the Song Dynasty was poor and weak, surrounded by strong enemies, and was not as powerful as the Han and Tang Dynasties. However, as Mr. Chen Yinke pointed out in his *Research on Official Records of the History of Song*, "The culture of the Chinese nation has evolved over thousands of years, and it was formed in the Zhao and Song Dynasties." The Song Dynasty was a period of diversified development of Chinese culture, during which Confucianism, history, philology, literature, science and technology, religion, art and other aspects all prospered. In the early period of the Northern Song Dynasty, traditional Confucianism declined, while Neo-Confucianism (Song studies) flourished. In the period of Renzong, Song Learning (Neo-Confucianism) had already formed. Before

and after Shenzong, Song learning (Neo-Confucianism) entered a prosperous stage, and there appeared many branches: Wang learning, Guan learning, Luo learning and Shu learning. In the early Southern Song Dynasty, many schools tended to decline, only the Luo school was more active, they gradually expanded their influence through lectures, books and other ways, the formation of "Neo-Confucianism". "Neo-Confucianism gradually became the authentic Confucianism and official philosophy in the late Southern Song Dynasty. Neo-Confucianism is the inheritance and development of the previous Confucianism, and it is a special historical period of the development of Confucianism in response to the crisis of the simultaneous development of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. The emergence of Neo-Confucianism indicates that Confucianism has entered the stage of theorization and the maturity of Confucianism.

In the same period, Japan experienced the era of "Seki" and "Wonsei". In 698, Fujiwara took power as a family member. Before the establishment of the Song Dynasty in 850, Fujiwara's successor, Fujiwara Kikei, adopted a closed-door policy, allowing only Chinese merchant ships to travel to and from Japan, but no Japanese to go abroad. After 1068, Emperor Sanji began a struggle to rid Japan of control, and Emperor Shirakawa inaugurated the Wonsei era in 1087. During this period, manors developed and local powers organized the Samurai in order to maintain their rules. The new class of samurai also gradually became the power and the mainly dependent strength that both Japanese court and the Regitseki family were fighting for. Among them, the two most powerful samurai groups were the Hei Group and the Kiyowa Group. During the Heiji Rebellion, Heikiyomori defeated Minamoto, leaving the Heiji clan in power. During this period, he reversed his conservative policy of seclusion and encouraged overseas trade. In 1185 Minamoto Yoshitomo, the son of Minamoto Yoshitomo, defeated the Hirai Clan. In 1192, he established a shogunate in Kamakura, known as the Kamakura Shogunate. The Kamakura shogunate period still followed the open-door policy, encouraging overseas trade and cultural exchanges.

3. The process and approach of the transmission of the Sun by Neo-Confucianism in Song Dynasty

About the transmission of Neo-Confucianism in Song Dynasty, even including many ideological and cultural transmission days in Song Dynasty, most of them are based on the communication of Zen monks between China and Japan. The Zen monks in Song Dynasty were the most important transmitters of Chinese culture to Japan,

and the cultural exchanges with monk exchanges as the core became an important part of the exchanges between China and Japan[2]. Therefore, the communication of Zen monks between China and Japan was also the carrier of Neo-Confucianism.

Before the spread of Zen, Buddhism had the greatest influence on Japanese thought. However, Zen is a school of Buddhism, which does not advocate ascetic practice and advocates “enlightenment” to become Buddha. Such ideas were more adapted to the cultural level and psychology of the samurai, and more convenient for the samurai to practice, so they were more easily accepted. In addition, with the rise of the samurai class during the Kamakura period, there was an urgent need for a new ideology to fight against the aristocratic Buddhism, which was closely related to the previous dynasty, and consolidate its rule. Therefore, the idea of Zen rose rapidly during the Kamakura period. At this time, Neo-Confucianism was introduced into Japan along with Zen in the following four ways:

3.1 .The classics of Neo-Confucianism brought back by Japanese monks when they practiced Zen in Song Dynasty

In the process of exchanges between Chinese and Japanese Zen monks, the Japanese monks brought back not only Buddhist classics, but also some Confucian classics “Xinyi” written by the Song Dynasty. For example, in the first year of Yongxi Reign of Emperor Taizong in the Northern Song Dynasty, Japanese monk DiaoRan and five or six of his disciples brought bronze wares, orders from Japanese staff and the Emperor’s age into the Song Dynasty. Diao Ran was the first Japanese monk to visit the Song Dynasty since its establishment. Taizong summoned Ren Ran and treated him kindly. “I grant purple garments to be housed in Taiping Xingguo Temple” and the gift of DiaoRan[3]. In addition, according to the Source of Sinology (Volume 3) recorded: “Song books into the state, the first Yi Jun Reng, most of the purchase of Confucian books back to the Song.” In the two years of Duanping, Li Zong in the Southern Song Dynasty, there were many sutras. Among them were the Classic of Filial Piety written by Zheng Xuan and the New Yi of the Classic of Filial Piety written by Ren Xigu . After that, Japanese monk Yuan Er came to the Song Dynasty. During the six years of the Song Dynasty, he was deeply influenced by the Zen masters Bei Jian and Chi Ju, who advocated the combination of Zen and Confucianism[4].In 1241, when he returned to Japan, he brought with him thousands of books, including Confucian books, poems and medical books, in addition to Buddhist classics. Among them, Zhu Xi’s works such as “Tangan University or Wen”, “Tangan Zhongyong or

Wen”, “Essence of the Analects of Confucius”, “Essence of Mencius” and “Quotations of the Five[4]Masters”. He hid these books in Pumen Yuan and compiled the Catalogue of Classics of the Three Religions by himself. After his return to China, Yuan Er Bianyuan also taught Beitiao Shilai the Dharma Daming Record of Jushikuitang in the Southern Song Dynasty, introduced the thoughts of Ercheng and Zhu Xi, and advocated the unity of Confucianism and Buddhism. After Yuan Er, there were other Japanese monks Tianyou and Jingyun who traveled across the ocean to study Zen in Song Dynasty. After returning to China, they spread Zen Buddhism and Song learning.

3.2 .Japanese monks propagated Zen by using Neo-Confucianism to “assist the way”

In the Song Dynasty, especially in the Southern Song Dynasty, Neo-Confucianism had extensive influence and its status was even more prosperous. In order to recover the decline of Zen, Zen also began to boast “the consistency of Zen and Confucianism”, so most of the Zen monks after the Southern Song Dynasty also practiced Neo-Confucianism. Therefore, when explaining the principles and concepts, it is inevitable that there are some special terms of Neo-Confucianism. In order to better study the thoughts of Zen, Japanese Zen monks began to learn Neo-Confucianism. After the Japanese monks returned to Japan, in order to further promote Zen, they often used Neo-Confucianism to “help the way” -- the Japanese monks would first explain the interconnections between Neo-Confucianism and Zen, take advantage of the extensive influence of Confucianism in Japanese society at that time, so that the believers would accept Zen, and then say that Zen is more intelligent than Neo-Confucianism, and finally convert the believers to Zen. For example, the Zen Monk Yi Tang first persuaded Ashikaga Yoshimitsu to learn Neo-Confucianism, and finally gradually guided Ashikaga Yoshimitsu to advocate Zen. In this regard, Yi Tang once said: “Where the books of Confucius and Mencius, in my Buddhism, is the division of man and heaven, the book is also, do not have to be specialized, Gu is one of the ears to help the way.”[5]

3.3 .Chinese Zen monks went to Japan to spread Zen and propagated Neo-Confucianism

The cultural exchange between China and Japan in the Song Dynasty was not one-way. There were also Chinese monks who went to Japan to spread Zen ideas. At the same time, under the influence of the trend of “harmony between Zen and Confucianism”, Zen monks also propagated Neo-Confucianism. One of the most famous was Lanxi Daolong, a Zen monk from Xishu. In 1246, Lanxidorong and his disciples went to Japan to spread

Zen Buddhism. In 1252, Lanxi Doritryu was invited by Hojo Shirei to explain the path of enlightenment to him. Lanxi Doryu spread Zen Buddhism in Japan for 32 years. He was the abbot of Kainchang Temple, and he wrote the Great Jue Zen Master's Sayings. He also advocated the "consistency of Zen and Confucianism". In 1278, Lanxi Doryu died in Japan and was posthumously named "Dajue Zen Master". After his death, the Zen monk Takashi Takashi was appointed as the second abbot of Kenchangji Temple by Hojo Shizong. After Wu An Puning, Yang Qi, Linji Zong of the Southern Song Dynasty, sent the Zen monk Daxiu Zhengnian as the third abbot. These two Zen monks advocated "harmony between Zen and Confucianism" and promoted the development of Neo-Confucianism in Japan while propagating Zen methods.

3.4 .Chinese Confucians went to Japan to propagate Neo-Confucianism

The main body of cultural exchanges between China and Japan in Song Dynasty was not only Zen monks, but also Confucians. According to Jiulong Zhenyi's Record of the Dongguan Survivors of Song Dynasty, volume 11, Biography of Li Yong, he "floated to Japan in 1276 and taught poetry. The Japanese are often referred to as "Master Zi"[6]. However, due to the small number of Confucians who went to Japan to spread Neo-Confucianism, Neo-Confucianism was not valued by the samurai class at that time, so it did not have a great influence.

Scholar Zhu Qianzhi divided the introduction of Neo-Confucianism into two periods. The first period was from the Kamakura to Muromachi periods, when samurai adopted the Song School (Neo-Confucianism) because they liked Zen. The second period was the Tokugawa period, during which Neo-Confucianism, especially Zhuzi, became the official philosophy for the need of shogunate rule[7]. The Song Dynasty was in the first period, when Neo-Confucianism was actually an appendage of the spread of Zen in Japan, and it was not until the Tokugawa period that Fujiwara Seiyuo removed Neo-Confucianism from its subordinate position as Buddhism.

To sum up, the main carriers of Neo-Confucianism in the Song Dynasty were the Zen monks in China and Japan. At that time, the influence of Neo-Confucianism in Japan was far less than that in the Song Dynasty. It was only a "joint" accessory and did not gain independent development. Japanese scholar Hiroshi Nagata also pointed out in his "History of Japanese Philosophy" that at the beginning of the introduction of Neo-Confucianism, "it failed to show independent development"[8]. It was "contained within and subordinate to the Buddhist upbringing" and was not "accepted as the only world view"[8].

4. Influence of Neo-Confucianism in Song Dynasty

Because Neo-Confucianism did not gain much attention when it was first introduced into Japan, it did not develop independently, and had no great influence except for "assisting the way" of Zen Buddhism. It was not until the Tokugawa period that Neo-Confucianism got rid of its subordinate position to Buddhism. It was elevated from a philosophical thought to an ideological weapon for rulers to consolidate their rules by Lin Luoshan, making Neo-Confucianism an official school. The so-called ideological weapon of Neo-Confucianism to consolidate the rule is especially manifested in Neo-Confucianism, especially in Zhu Xi's thought of governing history. Zhu Xi's Compendium of Tongjian still followed the "writing method of the Spring and Autumn Period" to emphasize praise and criticism on recording events and reveal great meaning in sublime words. He wrote "orthodox" imperial era titles in large characters and "unorthodox" in small characters in "Tongjian Compendium Sequence". In Zhu Xi's opinion, the "orthodoxy" of The Three Kingdoms was based on the perspective of maintaining the legitimacy of the Southern Song Dynasty, and the "Shuhan orthodoxy" was divided into proper names. This emphasis on "orthodoxy" and the feudal identity system played a role in promoting the emergence and development of "respecting the Emperor" in Japan to a certain extent.

It is worth noting that after Neo-Confucianism was introduced into Japan and became an official school, it did not completely copy and imitate the Chinese Neo-Confucianism. In Confucianism and Japanese Culture, Wang Jiahua put forward: "Japanese Confucianism was influenced by Japanese culture and transformed by Japanese culture. The deformed product of Chinese Confucianism is the product of the collision between Japanese culture and Chinese culture.[9]" Historical materialism points out that "social existence affects social consciousness". After the introduction of Confucianism into Japan, in order to enable Japan to continue to spread and develop, Confucianism made changes that better fits the Japanese national consciousness. For example, Chinese Confucianism attaches great importance to "ren" -- the monarch should practice benevolent governance and the people should have a heart of benevolence. Japanese Confucianism, on the other hand, amplified "loyalty" and was widely accepted by samurai. This is the manifestation of Japanese Confucianism as the ideological weapon of the ruling class to maintain its rule. In modern times, this kind of "loyalty" evolved into a militaristic ideology emphasizing absolute loyalty, bravery and obedience, which caused the people of East and Southeast Asian countries to suffer from wars.

After the Meiji Restoration, under the impact of “civilization”, the influence of Confucianism in Japan gradually declined -- it was no longer included in the contents of school education, and Confucian classics were no longer used as textbooks. But nowadays, Confucianism has long been integrated into Japanese society, and has become the moral code and value of the Japanese people “daily without realizing it”.

Of course, the existence of Confucianism is an international phenomenon, at least a historical phenomenon shared by East Asian countries[9]. According to the scholar John Fairbank, the Chinese tributary system is a concentric circle: the first is the circle of Chinese characters, which consists of the nearest neighboring and culturally identical vassal states..... The second is the Inner Asian circle, which consists of the vassal states and dependent tribes such as the nomadic or semi-nomadic people in the interior of Asia..... The third is the outer circle, which is generally made up of the “outer Yi” which are blocked by the Guan Mountains and separated by oceans [10].Japan was within the “outer circle” and even briefly within the “inner circle” of the tributary system. Although the tributary system no longer exists, East Asian countries have developed into different independent sovereign states, and their ideas and values have changed. However, all of these countries were also influenced by Confucianism, and this influence constitutes the “Confucian cultural circle” which is mainly distributed in East Asia today. In an era of rapid development and change, there is a growing call for East Asian cooperation and development. And shared ideologies and cultures are the bonds that bind East Asia to friendly cooperation. To this end, we should dig deeper into the contemporary value of Confucianism, the ideology and culture shared by East Asian countries, and “seeks common ground while shelving differences” to build a value concept of “universal harmony” that can be applied to contemporary East Asia. So as to promote the cooperation and exchanges among the countries in the “Confucian cultural circle” for common development.

5. Conclusion

Although Neo-Confucianism was initially introduced to Japan as a vassal of Zen, it was not until Fujiwara Seiyuo that Neo-Confucianism was removed from its subordinate

position as Buddhism. After the introduction of Neo-Confucianism into Japan, it was reformed to better meet the social demands of Japan. Lin Luoshan fully explored the political function of Neo-Confucianism and transformed it into an ideological weapon to safeguard the rule, greatly elevating its status in Japan and becoming the “official school” of Japan. After the Meiji Restoration in modern times, Neo-Confucianism, or Confucianism, faded out of Japanese society on the surface, but in fact, Neo-Confucianism had already gradually integrated into the value rules and moral codes of Japanese people. The influence of Confucianism is extensive and far-reaching, and all East Asian countries have been influenced and influenced by Confucianism to varying degrees in history. In East Asia, a “Confucian cultural circle” has been formed, with China as the center and radiating to the surrounding areas. At present, through exploring the value of the recognition of Confucianism in East Asian countries, the modern East Asian “Confucian cultural circle” is constructed, and the cooperation development and integration of “each with its own beauty” in modern East Asia is promoted.

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