

# Translation of Nishi Amane's *Seisei Sakki*

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## Foreword

This paper is an annotated translation of *Seisei Sakki* (“Sundry Notes on the Physical and Spiritual”) found in *Nishi Amane Zenshū* (“The complete works of Nishi Amane”) (all four volumes Okubo Toshiaki (ed.), Munataka Shobō, 1960–1981). *Seisei Sakki* is not a translation as such but is Nishi Amane’s own work written in classical Chinese. Aside from this work, Nishi Amane also wrote *Seisei Hatsuum* (“The Relationship Between the Physical and the Spiritual”) (published in 1873), but this work is written in a mix of Chinese characters and Japanese syllabaries. In addition, there are many translated citations of Auguste Comte in *Seisei Hatsuum*, and this characteristic differentiates it greatly from the subject matter of this paper.

However, in regard to *Seisei* (the physical and the spiritual/physiology and psychology/life and nature), which are features in the titles of both works, Nishi Amane states: “The term *Seisei* is referenced from a phrase of Mencius, which reads, “Gaozi said, ‘The term nature simply means life’” (Notes for *Seisei Hatsuum* epigraph). Nishi Amane’s *Seisei* is linked to a subject of philosophical debate in East Asian intellectual history. The traditional philosophical debate concerning how to view the nature of man began with Mencius and has long since been executed as theories of nature and theories of the nature of mind. In view of this supplementation, it can be said that Nishi Amane sought to link the fibers of Western philosophy to traditional thought. In this sense, this work in which Nishi Amane expressed his own ideas as “sakki” (sundry notes) appears to indeed be one of his most interesting works.

As a published work, the *Collected philosophical works of Nishi Amane* by Aso Yoshiteru (ed.), (Iwanami Shoten, 1933) is the oldest work. In the “commentary” (p. 386), the characteristics of this work are clearly stated as follows:

*Seisei Sakki* is a treatise that adds Confucian and Buddhist thought to Western mental philosophy and, establishing an empirical foundation, expresses his psychological views. He asserts in this treatise the voluntarism. This treatise is not only limited to a somewhat systematic psychological theory, but it is an extensive work that he may well have poured his efforts into above and beyond all of his other treatises and should be referred to as his principle work. Nishi Amane drafted the writing around July 1872 and then revised it in 1884 but did not complete it. In July 1892, he secluded himself in his country residence in Oiso in order to recover from illness, and during this period also, he carried his writings with him in order to develop and complete them. It is unknown whether he wrote this sequential manuscript in Oiso. Even assuming he was developing his work, it is likely that on account of his illness there would only have been an extremely small amount completed. In view of how things went, for more than twenty years the desire to complete the treatise never left him, but the task was never accomplished. In terms of volume, the manuscript is no more than some tens of pages, but in view of the vast amount of effort he put in to it, this may be called his key work.

This is to say that *Seisei Sakki* is a work that can represent the thoughts of Nishi Amane himself and “expresses his psychological views.” However, as Okubo also pointed out, the date of the drafting is, according to Nishi Amane’s own notes (Completed works, p. 473), undoubtedly July 20, 1884<sup>(1)</sup>.

A brief outline of Nishi Amane's personal history is as follows<sup>(2)</sup>. Nishi Amane was born in 1829 in the Tsuwano Domain in Iwami Province (modern-day Tsuwano City, Shimane Prefecture) as the eldest son of a physician named Nishi Yoshitoki, who was in the clan's service. He studied Confucianism in the Tsuwano Domain, and in 1854, he left his clan to study the Dutch language. In 1856, he rose to the rank of assistant professor in Bansho Shirabesho ("Institute for the study of barbarian books"), and in 1862, he was ordered by the Tokugawa bakufu government to study in the Netherlands. Upon his return in 1866, he was appointed an immediate vassalage by the bakufu administration and became a professor in the Kaiseijo (school of foreign studies set up by the shogunate during the Edo period). He also worked as a political advisor to Tokugawa Yoshinobu, but after the Meiji Restoration of imperial rule, he became head of the Numazu Military Academy. He established the private school Ikueisha in 1872. After beginning service in the Ministry of the Military, he served as a bureaucrat in the Imperial Household Ministry, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of War. He participated in setting up Meirokusha in 1873. In 1882, he became a member of the Chamber of Elders. In 1885, the year after he drafted *Seisei Sakki*, he lost consciousness as a result of brain disease, which he subsequently recovered from. In 1890, he received an imperial nomination to the House of Peers and then resigned the following year. In 1892, he moved to his country residence in Oiso, where he began a period of convalescence until he passed away in 1897.

Incidentally, Nishi Amane is very well known for introducing concepts (using translated vocabulary) such as "philosophy" (*tetsugaku* 哲学), "concept" (*gainen* 概念), "subject" (*shukan* 主観), and "reason" (*risei* 理性), through his personal writings and translations, such as *Hyakuichi Shinron* ("One Hundred and One New Ideas"). Recent research into Nishi Amane uncovered works such as *The Quest for Civilization: Encounters with Dutch Jurisprudence, Economics and Statistics at the Dawn of Modern Japan* (Takeharu Okubo, University of Tokyo Press, 2010), which focus on the formation of Nishi's ideas during his studies abroad in the Netherlands. *The Political Thought of Nishi Amane* (Perikan-sha, 2009) was written by Hikaru Suganuma, an author who grappled with Nishi Amane's political thoughts, as Amane played a role in forming the modern nation state. Both works can be said to tackle areas unexplored by traditional studies of Nishi Amane in regard to the influence of his studies in the Netherlands and his aspect of a militarist.

On the other hand, in regard to Nishi Amane's thoughts based on *Seisei Sakki*, Takashi Koizumi discusses this thoroughly in *Nishi Amane's Encounter with Western Thought*, (Tokyo: Mitsumine Shobō, 1989). However, as I view it, there is nothing aside from this, and in spite of Aso offering high praise for Nishi Amane's thoughts, it appears to be the case that there has been a surprising lack of attention to this work. According to Koizumi's discussion, *Seisei Sakki* was influenced by figures whose works Nishi had read and translated, such as John Stuart Mill, Joseph Haven, Alexander Bain, and William Hamilton, as well as Sorai studies Nishi had leaned toward in the past. This point is highly suggestive in view of an understanding of the framework of Nishi's thoughts, and the accomplishments of this are by no means small. However, there is scarcely any attention given to the Chinese-derived concepts that can be found in *Seisei Sakki*. Therefore, this paper will focus on the ideological context behind the Chinese-derived concepts that Nishi Amane used and will attempt an annotated translation.

This paper is the product of the reading circle planned in the First Unit of the International Research Center for Philosophy. Based on the advocate's draft translation, Satoshi Shojiguchi, and Research Associate Shirai Masato, who is a member of the reading circle, offered their scrutiny of the paper. I would like to make clear that the English translation is only in the trial stage.

(1) Regarding the diaries of Nishi Amane, Nozomi Watanabe collected the preceding studies, in "Nishi Amane's Daily Life – from *Nishi Amane's Notes*" (*Nishi Amane and Japanese Modernity* Research Group on Nishi Amane, The University of Shimane (ed.) Perikan Sha, 2005).

(2) Two of the sources referred to for the brief history of Nishi Amane were the chronological records in the third volume of *Nishi Amane Zenshu* and *Nishi Amane*, Kato Hiroyuki (*Masterpieces of Japan 34* Chuo Koronsha, 1971), which is based on this.

## Explanatory notes

- 1) The reference text for this paper is the original text ed. by Okubo Toshiaki *Nishi Amane Zenshu*, Munataka Shobō, 1960–1981).
- 2) Each article is arranged in order of original manuscript, collation, Japanese readings of Chinese text, and trial translations. In the English edition, only the trial translations are provided.
- 3) The kana provided in the original text are indicated with [ ] only in the trial translation section. The notes inserted in the original manuscript are indicated with [ ]. With regard to the modern translations, in the areas where it is deemed necessary, the meaning is supplemented by appending ( ), as appropriate and simple notation is shown with [ ].
- 4) The notations include necessary explanations concerning translations and present Luo Zhu Feng's *Hanyu Da Cidian* as the reference for all of these concepts for which sources can be found. It should be noted, however, that it is not the purpose of this paper to clearly indicate accurate sources of Chinese-derived concepts but to explicitly state that these are not the terms invented by Nishi Amane. Quotations from *Hanyu Da Cidian* are used as criteria for this purpose. Please be aware that the notations in Japanese represent the personal study notes of the author.

## Translation

If we analyze mental elements, we will find three major elements: “chi” (intellect), “jo” (emotion), and “i” (will). Among these three, “i” (will) is the master (of the mind), and the self means nothing but this. Concerning the other two elements, there always remain certain parts we cannot control as we wish. As for “chi”(intellect), we can know a thing and realize the actual circumstances about it, but sometimes ambiguities remain. This is because the mechanism does not work well. If the mechanism works well, we should be able to analyze all reasons correctly. If the subject is based (on the mechanism of intellect) and sustain (the working of the mechanism), then no incoherent errors should occur. But just if I fail to be based (on the mechanism of intellect) and sustain (the working of the mechanism), then that will mean “to deceive myself” [*The Great Learning*, Chapter on sincerity]. As for “jo” (emotion), the subject will know the excessive working of one’s own emotion by one’s own consciousness. (However,) there may be some things that the subject cannot control even though the subject knows by oneself and tries to do so. Among emotions, such things as love or anger etc may be the best examples for understanding this point. You can see other emotions as well. For this reason, “chi” (intellect) and “jo” (emotion) can be regarded as the functions of the mind but they are not the master (of the mind). This is the first proof (of the fact that “i” [will] is the master).

Furthermore, “chi” (intellect) is not fully developed when one is young, but if one lives into the middle age, one can acquire it though training, and if one lives into the old age, the momentum of its growth will gradually fade. The same is true for “jo” (emotion). In the middle age, the mind functions freely filled with much energy, but in the old age, the functions of the mind easily get tired and the energy fades. However, “i” (will) remains unchanged through all ages from youth to the old age, without a difference (by age). This is the second proof.

Young babies exhibit neither intellect nor emotion, but only cry when they are hungry and suck only when they are given milk. A newborn baby bird or animal cannot even open its eyes, has no emotion to fear anything but only wants milk. From this, (we can know) we are equipped with “i” (will) from the moment of birth but the other two grow in us only gradually. This is the third proof. Therefore, we can say “i” (will) is the primary part of the mind while “intellect” (intellect) and “jo” (emotion) have a function to aid (this will).

Since “i” (will) is the primary part of human mind, it is the master of a castle called the mind. While the job of “chi” (intellect) is to receive [or otherwise, report], the job of “jo”(emotion) is to deliver and convey: the receiver controls acceptance and the deliverer controls expression. They are both in a castle called mind to aid the monarch called mind and runs a government in a country called body. By the function of the receiver, five things are supervised: ears, eyes, nose, mouth (tongue), and sense over the whole body (skin). They mean what are called the five senses. By the function of delivery and conveyance, also five things are supervised: hands, legs, organs for language, expressions, and the channels of water and blood (the organs to send bodily fluids such as blood vessels and sweat glands). However, within the country called body, they are not concerned with the circulation of blood, fluids (saliva, tear, nasal mucus, sweat, etc.), respiration, digestion, discharge, and

the functions of internal and other organs. They are under a different authority outside the orders of the monarch called mind. This is called the administration governing internal affairs. Nevertheless, as they are called channels of water and blood (the organs to send bodily fluids such as blood vessels and sweat glands), the circulation of blood and other bodily fluids are originally the same things. Because of this, when (the monarch called the mind is ) moved greatly, these organs are affected.

Although the administration is not subject to direct orders from the monarch called mind, it is also within the jurisdiction of the monarch called mind. Unless it is properly protected or allowed to rest, the country called body will suffer an internal trouble or invasion from outside. And if the monarch called mind behaves in a selfish manner doing anything it wants, this function will not be able to receive orders it should essentially receive. All situations in these are discussed precisely by health care specialists and in details by medicine, but they are not within the scope of a neo-Confucianism philosophy. Yet the administration may sometimes follow an order immediately from the monarch called mind . But this happens only for a moment, and never lasts for long. For example, one can delay excretion (by self-control), but this should be discussed as an issue of manners.

In the first place, “i” (will) is the monarch and the position of a monarch is called “consciousness.” The English word “consciousness” means that it covers all occasions.

A person interpreting this said as follows: “consciousness” refers to the state of mind recognizing what is here at the moment. He goes on to say as follows: human mind has double-layer knowledge. Firstly, the subject knows a thing. Secondly, the subject knows oneself that knows a thing. The former may be called “knowledge” and the latter “consciousness.” When you come to know a particular incident, even if you pretend to others that you don’t know about it, as long as it actually happened, you know that you know it in your mind. In short, “i” (will) is the primary part of mind and it is “the self.” Even though you can deceive about the matters outside yourself (the owner of the mind), you cannot deceive yourself. These theories can be said about the past. For this reason, we can say that we have a consciousness called memory. (However,) we cannot say immediately from this that it is that “consciousness.” I think the “consciousness” exists no other time but now, at the moment a particular thing comes to your mind, and when the thing (in the outside world) changes, the “consciousness” changes accordingly, and our thought goes neither back to the past nor to the future. And when our thoughts go back to the past, they belong to the memory: if they go to the future, they belong to the reason. Only what is outside these two (that is, memory and reason) can be called “consciousness.”

However, remembering past incidents and recalling them in our mind means that we have a “consciousness” that we remember past incidents. Thinking about the future means that we have a “consciousness” that we think about the future. This, in the end, means nothing but that the power of the monarch to witness the scene in person never ceases even for a moment.

Only while in a dream, we notice that this power is suspended: we will notice that only by guessing after awaking. For this, a dream is a mere reproduction of our memories and it refers to the state outside the power of composition by “consciousness”.

For this, (in a dream) orders are in confusion, ever-changing and never fixed, but once the “consciousness” awakes, then both reason and memory begin to function actively. This is because one can remember unrealistic incidents from a dream and doubt them after awaking [This means that one can remember unrealistic incidents from a dream and doubt them after awaking].

(margin) In French, “consciousness” is the same thing as “intuition.” It is called the intimate sense [sens intime]. It is the sixth sense after the five senses. It is just like a kind of function of “thought” in Confucianism. The double consciousness (I mentioned above) is classified into three parts. Knowing entails a consciousness of knowing. Thinking entails a consciousness of thinking. Feeling entails a consciousness of feeling. And even when we attempt to classify the consciousness into three parts, we have a consciousness of that. Remembering a thing entails a consciousness of remembering. When we wish to wish, we have a consciousness of wishing. All mean this same thing.