

One Asia Foundation International Lectures, Fall 2019 Semester
“Humanities General Education: The Asian Community:
The Construction and Transformation of East Asiaology” Lecture Series (12)
Title: Trend of *Zhouyi* studies in East Asia and Differences in Cultures

For the 12th lecture, we invite Professor CHENG Kat-Hung (Dennis) from the Education University of Hong Kong (EdUHK) to be our guest speaker. Professor Cheng received his Ph.D. from the Department of Chinese Literature at the National Taiwan University (NTU) and previously he had taught in the Department of Chinese Literature at NTU and served as Associate Vice President (Curriculum Development) at the EdUHK. Currently he is “Chair Professor of Cultural History” by the EdUHK. Professor Cheng’s specialties are Hermeneutics in Chinese and East Asian Classics, the history of Chinese thought, and the philosophy of *Zhouyi* (*I Ching, Yijing, The Book of Changes*). The summary of the lecture is as following:

Professor Cheng first mentioned that area studies are revitalizing in the world. As a part of area studies, East Asia is a current research hotspot, notably “East Asia in Transformation.” The Asian community discussed in this lecture series can be viewed as one of the concepts in area studies. In order to bring more multiple aspects, Professor Cheng added European and American views to interpret East Asia in this lecture. He reminded us of the long history of area studies and area studies revitalized again in recent ten years. “Area studies” formally becomes a research discipline among those defined by the United Kingdom in 2020 and it is estimated that it will become an important research discipline henceforth. In addition, Leiden University in Nederland established “the Leiden University Institute for Area Studies” (LIAS) in 2010.

Regarding the formation of Asian inner awareness, in the essay “Datsu-A Ron” (“Leaving Asia”) written in the late 19th century, Fukuzawa Yukichi already implied a modern view of East Asia. European and American academia inherited the “far east” view developed since 17th century and they had not developed a mature “East Asia” view until the mid-20th century after hundreds years of colonization and expansion. However, the “East Asia” views developed by East Asian countries and shaped by countries in other regions have very different background. In the formation of the region “East Asia,” we discover the trace of culture influence of *Zhouyi* in East Asian countries, including China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam.

Professor Cheng continued to explain what is *Zhouyi*. *Zhouyi* is an influential Chinese classic throughout the world and it was highly valued in Japan and Korea historically and traditionally. For example, many the Japanese era names were taken from

Zhouyi. There were 25 Japanese era names referred to *Zhouyi* before Reiwa.¹ The national flag of Korea includes a Taiji (太極, “great pole”) in its center and four trigrams (乾坤坎離 qian kun kan li) one toward each corner. These symbols referred to *Zhouyi*. As an philosophic and religious classic, the main structure of *Zhouyi* consists of the hexagram (卦 guà), horizontal lines (爻 yáo), text (經 *Ching*), and collection of commentaries (傳 zhuan). *Zhouyi* enlightens people with its holy, mysterious nature and its content related to nature science. Thus, it attracts attentions from and provides inspiration to people from different regions, histories, and cultures.

The research on *Zhouyi* in China are well-developed and cover both academic and folklore dimensions including divination, science, unearthed literature, numerology, philosophy, and image-number symbolism. It not only closely relates to daily life and culture but also has interdisciplinary advantages. Among those Chinese classics disseminated to Japan, particularly comparing to other Confucian classics, *Zhouyi* is the most popular one, because it can be used for divination and it relates to fate, life and death, misfortune and fortune, and philosophy. *Zhouyi* was disseminated to Japan before 6th century though which school of “*Zhouyi*” studies was disseminated to Japan has remained unknown. *Zhouyi* had not become a prominent subject until the Tokugawa period.

At last, professor Cheng concluded from a holistic view on the impact of *Zhouyi* in East Asia. First, the acceptance of *Zhouyi* in China, Japan, Korea are different and it faced different fates from early modern times to modern times. In the aspects of society, culture, and custom, *Zhouyi*, as a Chinese classic, are more influential in Mainland China and Taiwan. In Japan and Korea, although it continued the research on *Zhouyi* text and philosophy, the influence of *Zhouyi* on society and culture are limited in the dimensions of gender relationships and family ethics. Moreover, the usages of Yin Yang philosophy in China, Japan, Korea are also different. For example, the usages of Yin Yang philosophy in calendar are widely different in China and Japan.

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¹ (translator note) Reiwa is the current Japanese era name.