

**Eurasia Foundation International Lectures, Fall 2021 Semester**  
**“The Construction and Transformation of East Asiaology” Lecture Series (4)**  
**Title: Taiwan-Japan Relations in the Context of Modern East Asian History**

Our guest speaker of the fourth of the 2021 Eurasia Foundation International Lecture of the Chinese Culture University is Professor Yilin He, a well-known scholar in the field of Taiwan history and modern Japanese history, and the director of the Graduate School of Taiwanese Culture at National Taipei University of Education. Professor He laid out his 40-year journey from a student in the Department of Japanese Language and Literature to a researcher of Taiwanese history and used books on Taiwan studies to talk about today’s theme “Taiwan-Japan Relations in the Context of Modern East Asian History.”

First of all, Professor He pointed out that the well-known book on Japan studies, *Japan as Number One: Lessons for America* (the Chinese version is 《日本第一》) was published in 1979 and attracted worldwide attention. It was also this year that Taiwan opened tourist visas to Japan. Before that, Taiwanese people could not go abroad at will. In the 1980s, the economics developed rapidly, and the “Tangwai movements” and democratization emerged politically reflected the transformation of Taiwanese society. Such an atmosphere of open society has prompted the gradual awakening of research with Taiwan as the main body.

### **The Japanese Era for Taiwanese**

During the period under martial law, Taiwan history could not be included in textbooks, causing the problem that the general public in Taiwan do not know their own history. After the adjustment of the curriculum in recent years, Taiwan history has been included in the curriculum of schools at all levels, which made the invisible Taiwan history for decades become visible. Facing such a process, Professor He said that this is a kind of unzip memory of Taiwan’s historical memory, and this kind of unzip work is exactly the mission of a researcher of Taiwan history. In 2009, *History of Taiwan-Japan Relations* published by National Taiwan University was the first academic book to use “Taiwan-Japan Relations” as the object of analysis. In 2019, Professor He wrote *The Japanese Era for Taiwanese*, which discusses the history of Japanese colonial rule. As referring “the period of Japanese colonial rule,” the term “Japanese Occupation Period” was preferred by Ma Ying-jeou administration, while the term “Imperial Japanese

occupation” was preferred in South Korea. Professor He preferred to call this period as the “Japanese Era.” Professor He said that history is not just a matter of the past, but an ongoing debate over the narrative of restoring history.

### **From “Japan-China (Republic of China) Relations [Jihhua (日華)]” to “Japan-Taiwan Relations [JihTai (日台)]”**

Professor Ho said that while he was growing up, there was no Taiwan-Japan relations, only Japan-China relations. In the relations between Taiwan and Japan, there is no Taiwan-Japan relations with Taiwan as the main body, and Japan-China relations have always been discussed on the premise of the Republic of China. However, this relations began to change in the 1990s.

*Taiwan: Secession and Democratization*, published by Masahiro Wakabayashi in 1992, shocked many Taiwanese. Wakabayashi discusses Taiwan in the series of East Asian countries and societies. Through the perspective of this Japanese scholar, the tortuous process in Taiwan’s modern democratic transition is clearly outlined in front of people. In 1998, the Japanese academic community established the “The Japan Association for Taiwan Studies” and issued an academic journal. The establishment of the association symbolizes that the relationship between Japan and Taiwan has broken away from the past Japan-China relations and entered a stage where Taiwan is the main body. In 2008, Masahiro Wakabayashi published *Taiwan’s Politics: Postwar History of the Taiwanization of the Republic of China*. Professor He pointed out that the subheading of the book, “Taiwanization of the Republic of China,” is the best portrayal of the changes in Taiwan after the Second World War. Now that the Republic of China has been Taiwanized, the relations between Taiwan and Japan has naturally changed from Japan-China relations to Japan-Taiwan relations.

### **Sharing Thoughts from Conducting Taiwan History Research**

In ancient times, Taiwan was a land of no ownership. The Dutch ruled Taiwan in 1624, bringing Taiwan into the world history arena. Japan in the Edo period called Taiwan Island the “Takasago Koku.” When Westerners came to Taiwan in the Age of Discovery, there were Dutch, Japanese, Han, aborigines, etc. in the island of Taiwan. The *Rover* Incident in 1867 and the Japanese punitive expedition to Taiwan in 1874 were important turning points in changing Taiwan’s history. Taiwan has experienced the rule of many foreign regimes. It is a society constantly facing influx of migrant, and it has experienced

a variety of cultural conflicts and integration. Learn about Japan through the history of Taiwan, and understand the development context of world history. Looking back at the history of Taiwan-Japan relations over a hundred years in the context of modern East Asian history and world history can give us a clear view of the past of Taiwan, and through this we can also see how Taiwan should develop in the future.

(Web link: <https://eurasia.pccu.edu.tw/index.php>)

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