

**Eurasia Foundation International Lectures, Fall 2021 Semester**  
**The Construction and Transformation of East Asiaology” Lecture Series (13)**  
**Title: The History of Thought from the Perspective of East Asia**

For the 13th week of the Eurasia Foundation International Lecture, we invited the Honorary Professor of Masashi Tsujimoto at Kyoto University to give a lecture on “The History of Thought from the Perspective of East Asia.” Professor Tsujimoto used to teach at National Taiwan University for 5 years and he was originally looking forward to coming to Taiwan again through this lecture. However, due to the epidemic, he could not do so, but take the form of online lecture.

Professor Tsujimoto explained the topic of this lecture from the beginning. Facing globalization nowadays, it is important to explain the uncovered history of one’s own country since ancient times, which is to overcome the concept of national history after modern times. Moreover, the “story” changes depending on who explains it and for whom, and thus, it should be recognized that there is no such thing as “objective” history. From the above viewpoints, Professor Tsujimoto explained how the history of Japanese thought and East Asia evolved.

**The Chinese Dynasty and Japan: Closeness**

First of all, Professor Tsujimoto briefly described the relationship between Chinese dynasties and Japan. From the prehistoric era, the Yin and Shang era to the Qing Dynasty, politicians and intellectuals of various eras in Japan have accepted many studies and cultures from the mainland China.

**Ancient Times: Accepted Mainland Culture**

Ironware and rice cultivation were introduced from the Qin and Han dynasties during the Yayoi period. Chinese characters were introduced during the Nanboku-chō period in the 5th century, and Confucianism and Buddhism (through Korea) were introduced later. The influence of Buddhism was particularly great, resulting in ideas such as Prince Shotoku, Asuka Culture (Horyuji Temple), Hakuho Culture (Yakushi Temple), Tenpyo Culture (Todai Temple, Toshodai Temple) and so on. Esoteric Buddhism also came from China.

**The Ancient Ritsuryo System Country (the second half of the 7th century): The Introduction of the Tang System**

Hiragana and Katakana evolved from Chinese characters and can express Japanese’s thoughts in words. At the same time, the nobles learned the culture of *Ondo* (音道, study of pronunciation of Chinese language), Confucianism, and Buddhism. Japan was connected to the High Tang (= the world) through Japanese missions to Sui and Tang. Japan’s “globality” can also be seen through Japanese-Song Trade (Song Economic Zone) by Song dynasty coins.

**Medieval Japan and Kamakura Period (late 12th to early 14th century): Song and Yuan Dynasty**

Zen Buddhism is the center of thoughts in this era, and foreign monks and monks studying abroad are active. The representative heritages and figures are Kenchō Temple

(建長寺), Engaku Temple (円覚寺), Myōan Eisai (榮西), and Dōgen Zenji(道元). On the other hand, Kamakura Buddhism with Japanese characteristics also appeared.

### **Nanboku-chō Period ~ Muromachi Period (early 14th to 15th century): Ming Empire**

In the period of transition from Yuan to Ming Dynasty, Japan also entered a period of social transformation, the Nanboku-chō period. In the Muromachi era, Japan entered the Ming Dynasty international order = the tributary system of China. The Ryukyu trade and Japanese pirates are also a manifestation of this international order. Many foreign monks came to Japan and brought “literature of the Five Mountains” and ink wash painting.

### **The Establishment of the Early Modern Period ~ The Azuchi-Momoyama Period: the Period of the Collapse of Ming-centered International Order**

During the collapse of the Ming-centered international order, Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi established a unified government in Japan. Toyotomi Hideyoshi sent troops to Korea and Ming, with the goal of replacing Ming as the hegemon of East Asia. This era created unique Japanese culture such as *Noh*, tea ceremony and *Ikebana*.

### **Sakoku System in Edo Period: From the Ming to Qing Dynasties**

The mainland changed from Ming Dynasty to Qing Dynasty, and a Sakoku System was established in Japan. *Sakoku* System is a “Japanese-style Chinese-barbarian order system in the sense of an international order centered on Japan. However, even under the Sakoku system, it is connected to the outside world through Nagasaki, Tsushima, Satsuma, and Matsumae.

### **Viewing the History of Modern Thoughts from East Asia**

After the early modern period, Confucianism replaced Zen as a kind of knowledge resource. Confucian classics became the common textbook of East Asia. Training Kundoku (reading in Japanese) and Sodoku (reading the four books and five classics out loud repeatedly in Chinese to internalize the textbook).

### **Japanese Confucianism**

The Japanese Confucian scholars in the 17th century studied Confucianism with Chinese books, imported from China and their main work was to add Kuntan (訓點, guiding marks for rendering Chinese into Japanese) to textbooks. Japan is located in the academic circle of the four books of the Song and Ming dynasties covering East Asia. Scholars like Yamazaki Ansai (山崎闇齋), Kaibara Ekken (貝原益軒), Itō Jinsai (伊藤仁齋, studies of ancient meaning),<sup>1</sup> Ogyū Sorai (荻生徂徠, studies of the Ancient Rhetoric (*kobunji* 古文辭)) created their own Confucianism in a way that resisted Confucianism.

### **Kokugaku (nativist) Thoughts**

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<sup>1</sup> Itō advocated that the studies of Confucianism should trace back to its original meaning written by Confucius and Mencius.

Motoori Norinaga rebelled against Chinese-text style thinking and began to explore the original Japan before the Chinese text came. He tried to retrieve the correct Japanese language world to reconstruct the original Japan.

***Bakumatsu* (the final years of the Edo period) ~ Modern Period**

The so-called modernization is generally the absorption of western modern knowledge, but this is achieved through Chinese translation. Therefore, the cultural circle of Chinese characters that shares Sinological thinking was actually a mechanism contributing to Western academic dissemination. In this way, the history of Japan and East Asia blended, sharing knowledge and information.

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

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