

International Lecture of the Eurasia Foundation, Fall Semester 2022

Series Lectures (15): “Asian Community: The Construction and Transformation of East Asiaology”

Topic: Classics and Music in East Asia

For the 15th Eurasia Foundation International Lecture in the 111 academic year of the Chinese Culture University, we invited Professor Masashi Saito of the Department of Japanese Language and Literature at the Chinese Culture University to give a lecture entitled “Classics and Music in East Asia.” Professor Saito first explained the close relationship between East Asian classics and music, and then introduced specific Japanese classical literary works.

Professor Saito first surveyed the Chinese records about ancient Japan in *History of the Former Han*, *the History of the Later Han*, *Records of the Three Kingdoms*, and other ancient Chinese documents. Among them, the description of Queen Himiko in “Wajinden” of *the History of the Later Han*, *Records of the Three Kingdoms* is particularly famous. In addition, according to previous research, the envoys sent to the Tang Dynasty during the Yanli and Chenghe Era were sent for the purpose of learning Chinese music. Professor Saito then mentioned that among the emperors from the 1st generation to the 82nd generation, there were several emperors and female emperors who did not actually exist. Professor Saito also mentioned the relationship between the three moves of capital city, history book, and literature books, as well as various types of literature in each era. Professor Saito briefly mentioned the life of ancient nobles, and said that love in that era began with letters from men, and women could only response passively.

Based on previous research, Professor Saito described the lyre, which has been particularly favored by literati since Confucius. Previous studies have revealed painting of puppet playing lyre, excavated from tombs of the Sui and Tang Dynasties, showing that the lyre was a small musical instrument small enough to be carried on the knee. *Book of Rites* recorded that music was the product of harmony between heaven and earth, and “gold, stone, silk and bamboo” were instruments of music, that is, musical instruments. Previous research also pointed out that this was the basis of Confucian ritual and music thought. The Emperor of Japan inherited the ritual and music thought of ancient China, an example of which was the “Gosechi no ta mai (五節田舞 ごせち

のたまい).” It was a court dance performed by the 28-year-old Female Imperial Crown Princess Abe at the order of the 45th Emperor Shomu, and it was a concrete example of the idea of inheriting ritual music.

The 54th Emperor Ninmyō played the lyre to celebrate the 40th birthday of his father, Emperor Junna, and Prince Michiyasu, the crown prince of Emperor Ninmyō (later the 55th Emperor Montoku), also presented lyre in celebration of the 40th birthday of his father. According to previous studies, the purpose of the crown prince playing the lyre or presenting the lyre to his father was to assert that he was suitable for the next emperor.

The lyre interpreted the love story of Ssuma hsiangju and Cho wên-chün in *Records of the Grand Historian*. The ancient Japanese literature *Utsuho Monogatari*, which inherited this love story. Lyre was played by Toshikage’s daughter in the first volume “Toshikage.” The nobleman’s son was fascinated by her and spends the night together.

In *The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter* before *Utsuho Monogatari*, the adoptive father of the heroine Princess Kaguya (かぐや姫), advocated: “Even if Princess Kaguya is not human, since she is a woman, she should marry.” But the adopted daughter Princess Kaguya retorted, “You can’t marry a man who can’t confirm whether he really loves you.” Therefore, in order to confirm this, Princess Kaguya asked the five suitors a difficult question. As a result, all the suitors failed. The emperor also wanted to marry Princess Kaguya, but she disappeared without a trace in the dazzling light, and the emperor also lost. In the end, Princess Kaguya returned to the Moon Capital without getting married in the human world.

As mentioned above, in the real society of ancient aristocrats, women received letters from men, began to fall in love by replying letters, and finally get married. During the process, women could only respond passively. But in *The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter*, Princess Kaguya rejected her adoptive father’s claim and refused to marry according to her own claim and ability. In addition, unlike *Records of the Grand Historian*, *Utsuho Monogatari* was not played by men but by women, and the love of

one night was realized. That is, in fictional worlds, women dominate love. As mentioned earlier, the Imperial Crown Princess Abe danced the “Gosechi no ta mai” in order to inherit his father’s thoughts on rites and music. According to historical records, when she became the emperor for the second time, she wanted to give up the throne to Yuge no Dōkyō (弓削道鏡). Hence, women have the potential to exceed men, both in fiction and in historical fact.

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

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