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**Abstract:** Current scholarship on Tokugawa Japan tends to see China as either a model or the other. This study aims to provide a new perspective by suggesting that China also functioned as building blocks for Tokugawa intellectuals to forge Japan’s own thought and culture. They selectively introduced and then modified Chinese culture to make it fit into the Japanese tradition. Chinese culture was highly localized in Tokugawa Japan. Chinese terms and forms survived, but the substance and the spirit were turned into Japanese. Hence, Sino-Japanese cultural exchange in the early modern period should be perceived as the interplay of the Japanization of Chinese culture and the Sinicization of Japanese culture.

## The China Factor in Tokugawa Culture: Beyond Model and the Other

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### Introduction

Although the Edo *bakufu* did not establish formal political ties with Qing China and the China trade was restricted to the port of Nagasaki, the Tokugawa period (1603-1868) was the heyday of Sino-Japanese intellectual and cultural exchanges. Tokugawa scholars engaged in Chinese learning mainly through imported classical Chinese texts rather than direct person-to-person interaction.<sup>1</sup> To Tokugawa Japanese, China was a unique existence that played an important role in shaping Japanese thought and culture. Without China, Tokugawa intellectual life would not have been so flourishing and creative. Current scholarship on Tokugawa Japan tends to see China as either a model or the other. This study aims to provide a new perspective by suggesting that China also functioned as building blocks. In other words, the people of the Tokugawa period transformed and appropriated Chinese elements to forge Japan's own thought and culture. Chinese culture became highly localized and hybridized. The three perceptions of China reflect different attitudes of Tokugawa intellectuals towards Chinese culture. These images of China could coexist in the same individual or intellectual school, serving as a reminder of the diversity and ambiguity in Tokugawa thought.

### 1. China as Model

Sinophilia was by no means a minor intellectual current among Tokugawa intellectuals, embraced not only by Confucians and Sinologists, but was prevalent in different schools of thought and culture.<sup>2</sup> Travelling to China was almost impossible and Tokugawa Confucians and Sinologists could only visit China in their dreams. China became a nostalgic and blissful cultural homeland and utopian imaginary. Fujiwara Seika 藤原惺窩 (1561-1619) yearned to make a cultural pilgrimage to China, but the long distance and the rough sea made the journey impossible. He wrote: "I always admire

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<sup>1</sup> Wang Yong 王勇 has advocated the concept of "book road" that allegedly existed between China and Japan in ancient times. See Wang Yong, "Sichouzhilu yu shujizhilu," 絲綢之路與書籍之路 (Silk Road and Book Road), *Zhejiang daxue xuebao (renwen shehui kexueban)* 浙江大學學報(人文社會科學版) 33:5 (September 2013): 5-12. I think the "book road" became a "book highway" in the Tokugawa period. See Ōba Osamu 大庭修, *Edo jidai ni okeru Tōsen mochiwatarisho no kenkyū* 江戸時代における唐船持渡書の研究 (A Study of the Importation of Books by Chinese Ships in the Tokugawa Period) (Suita: Kansai daigaku tōzai gakujutsu kenkyūjo, 1967).

<sup>2</sup> See Benjamin A. Elman, "Sinophiles and Sinophobes in Tokugawa Japan: Politics, Classicism and Medicine during the Eighteenth Century," in *Eastern Asian Science, Technology and Society: An International Journal*, 2:1 (2008): 93-121.

Chinese culture and I want to see its cultural relics myself.”<sup>3</sup> In 1600, he paid a visit to Tokugawa Ieyasu 徳川家康 (1543-1616) wearing his homemade Confucian-scholar costume. Kumazawa Banzan 熊沢蕃山 (1619-1691) and Kaibara Ekken 貝原益軒 (1630-1714) praised China as the “teacher-nation” (*shi-kuni* 師国), being very grateful to China for enlightening different aspects of Japan. Banzan stressed that the impact of Chinese culture on Japan was all-round and far-reaching:

China is the teacher-nation for the four seas and has contributed tremendously to Japan. Rites, music, books, mathematics, architecture, costume, transportation, agricultural tools, weapons, medicine, acupuncture, officialdom, ranking, military codes, the way of archery and riding, and miscellaneous skills and technologies were all imported from China.<sup>4</sup>

Ekken also acknowledged Japan’s indebtedness to China for introducing morality and etiquette:

Japan is pure and awesome in social customs and is indeed a very fine nation. It is appropriate to refer to it as the Nation of the Gentlemen. However, in uncivilized antiquity, Japan had neither etiquette nor law. There was no dress code either. Wearing the hair down, folding the clothes to the left, and marrying one’s own sisters or nephews were very common. In the middle ages, Japan communicated frequently with China, learning from it and changing our customs. One can refer to the national histories to understand this. Although Japan has never been subordinated to China, it has been extensively adopting Chinese customs and teachings. Hence, China can be called the teacher-nation. We must not forget the foundation of China and should not look down upon it.<sup>5</sup>

Ogyū Sorai 荻生徂徠 (1666-1728) expressed his passion for all things Chinese as follows: “I have been indulging in the study of the Chinese classics and admiring Chinese civilization ever since I was a child.”<sup>6</sup> The Chinese civilization that he admired refers to

<sup>3</sup> Hayashi Razan 林羅山, *Seika sensei gyōjō* 惺窩先生行狀 (Life of Master Seika), in *Hayashi Razan bunshū* 林羅山文集 (Collected Essays of Hayashi Razan), ed. Kyōto shisekikai 京都史跡會, vol. 40 (Osaka: Kyōto shisekikai, 1930), p. 463.

<sup>4</sup> Kumazawa Banzan, *Shūgi gaisho* 集義外書 (Collected Essays on Public Matters), in Masamune Atsuo 正宗敦夫, ed., *Banzan zenshū* 蕃山全集 (Collected Works of Banzan), vol. 2 (Tokyo: Meicho shuppan, 1978), p. 25.

<sup>5</sup> Kaibara Ekken, *Shinshiroku* 慎思錄 (Record of Careful Thoughts), in Ekikenkai 益軒會, ed., *Ekiken zenshū* 益軒全集 (Collected Works of Ekken), vol. 2 (Tokyo: Ekiken zenshū kankōbu, 1910), p. 49.

<sup>6</sup> Hiraishi Naoaki 平石直昭, ed., *Soraishū, Soraishū shūi* 徂徠集・徂徠集拾遺 (Collected Essays of Sorai and Supplement) (Tokyo: Perikansha, 1985), p. 314.

the way of the Sages of the Three Dynasties. He called China “*chūka*” 中華 (central efflorescence or central civilization) and “*chūgoku*” 中国 (central kingdom) and himself *Nihonkoku ijin* 日本国夷人 (the barbarian of the nation of Japan) and *tōi no hito* 東夷之人 (eastern barbarian). He regretted very much that he was not born in the land of the sages and “no sages were born in the Eastern Sea.”<sup>7</sup> Sorai was not alone with regard to his attitude towards Chinese culture. Basically Tokugawa intellectuals from different Confucian schools enthusiastically introduced Chinese morality and etiquette.<sup>8</sup> What Tokugawa Japanese admired was not the Qing dynasty ruled by the Manchus, but the Three Dynasties under the sage-kings and the great Han and Tang dynasties. Their tendency to emphasize the past and belittle the present was salient.<sup>9</sup> Tokugawa Sinophiles demonstrated a high level of confidence and nativist consciousness and some held the concept of *kai hentai* 華夷變態 (the transformation from civilized to barbarian and vice versa), seeing Japan as the new center of Confucian order in East Asia.

The Edo *bakufu* and some domains promoted Chinese learning.<sup>10</sup> The fifth Tokugawa shogun Tokugawa Tsunayoshi 徳川綱吉 (1646-1709) and the second *daimyō* of Mito, Tokugawa Mitsukuni 徳川光圀 (1628-1701), were representative Sinophiles. Tsunayoshi was engrossed in the study of the *Yijing* (Classic of Changes). For eight years, he had chaired the *Yijing* public lecture series for 240 times, asking courtiers, retainers, Confucians, Buddhist monks, Shinto priests, merchants, and commoners to attend.<sup>11</sup> Mitsukuni treated the Ming refugee scholar Zhu Shunshui 朱舜水 (1600–1682) with respect, following his advice to promote Confucian education, enact Ming court costumes, build a Confucian temple and construct the “West Lake

<sup>7</sup> Ogyū Sorai, *Bendō* 辨道 (Distinguishing the Way), in Yoshikawa Kōjirō, ed., *Nihon shisō taikō 36 Ogyū Sorai* 日本思想大系 36 荻生徂徠 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1973), p. 256. In addition, Sorai called Nagasaki “a land where Eastern barbarians meet the people of the Central Civilization.” See Olof G. Lidin, *The Life of Ogyū Sorai, a Tokugawa Confucian Philosopher* (Lund: Studentlitt, 1973), p. 120.

<sup>8</sup> See Tian Shimin 田世民, *Jinshi Riben ruli shijian de yanjiu* 近世日本儒禮實踐的研究 (A Study of the Implementation of Confucian Etiquette in Early Modern Japan) (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> The disdain that many Tokugawa Japanese had for Qing politics and scholarship was not always fair. The *Tō-fūsetsugaki* 唐風說書 (Reports of Rumors from the Chinese) that the Chinese captains submitted to *bakufu* officials in Nagasaki introduced regional rebellions and chaos rather than achievements of Qing China. Few Tokugawa scholars, perhaps with the exception of Yoshida Kōton 吉田篁墩 (1745-1798) and Ōta Kinjō 大田錦城 (1765-1825), took Qing culture seriously.

<sup>10</sup> For a large number of examples, see: Marius Jansen, *China in the Tokugawa World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), chapter 2, pp. 53-92; and Tsujimoto Masashi 辻本雅史, *Kinsei kyōiku shisō shi no kenkyū* 近世教育思想史の研究 (History of Educational Thought in the Early Modern Period) (Kyoto: Shibunkaku shuppan, 1990).

<sup>11</sup> Wai-ming Ng, *The I Ching in Tokugawa Thought and Culture* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2000), pp. 66-67.

embankment” in the Koshikawa Kōrakuen Garden in Edo.<sup>12</sup>

Tokugawa Confucians were confident in their ability to read Confucian classics, but they sought advice and recognition from Chinese scholars in Chinese poetry (*Kanshi* 漢詩), calligraphy and drawing. Composing Chinese poetry was a common pastime in the Edo period when the Japanese wrote more Chinese poems than Japanese poems. Arai Hakuseki 新井白石 (1657-1725), a *bakufu* advisor and historian, attempted to send his Chinese poems to China for suggestions on how to improve them. Most Tokugawa calligraphers preferred *karayō* 唐様 (Chinese style) to *wayō* 和様 (Japanese style) and model calligraphy inscriptions of the Tang and Song dynasties were most popular. Some went to Nagasaki to study calligraphy under Chinese monks or scholars. Works by Chinese Ōbaku Zen monks were highly esteemed.<sup>13</sup>

To most Tokugawa Japanese, China was unreachable. What they could contact were only Chinese migrants including monks, merchants, and Chinese interpreters (*Tōtsūji* 唐通事) in Nagasaki. Chen Yuanyun 陳元贊 (1587-1671), Yinyuan Longqi 隱元隆琦 (1592-1673), Zhu Shunshui, and Shen Nanping 沈南蘋 (b. 1682) were little known in Ming-Qing China, but etched their names in Japanese history. Chen Yuanyun was invited by Tokugawa Yoshinao 徳川義直 (1600-1650), the first lord of Owari, to move to Edo where he taught samurai martial arts. Yinyuan Longqi was the founder of the Ōbaku school of Zen Buddhism in Japan. The emperor, courtiers, *bakufu* retainers, *daimyo*, and merchants came to study Buddhism under him. Zhu Shunshui was an influential figure in Tokugawa Confucianism and historiography. Though not a man of letters, he was often asked by the Japanese scholars to comment on their Chinese poems. His “written dialogues” (*hitsudan* 筆談) include many discussions of Chinese poetry. Shen Nanping taught the Japanese bird-and-flower painting during his two-year sojourn in Nagasaki.

When Tokugawa Japanese could not find Chinese sojourners in Nagasaki, they knocked at the door of Chinese interpreters who were descendants of Chinese immigrants. For example, Ogyū Sorai learned modern colloquial Chinese from Okajima Kanzan 岡島冠山 (1674-1728).<sup>14</sup> Kumashiro Yūhi 熊代熊斐 (1712-1773), the most important

<sup>12</sup> The West Lake became a symbol of nostalgic imagination in Tokugawa thinking. See Kim Munkyoung 金文京, “Xihu zai Zhong Ri Han,” 西湖在中日韓 (West Lake in China, Japan, and Korea), in Shi Shouqian 石守謙 and Liao Zhaocheng 廖肇亨, eds., *Dong-Ya wenhua yixiang zhi xingsu* 東亞文化意象之形塑 (The Making of Cultural Images of East Asian Culture) (Taipei: Yunchen wenhua shiye, 2011), pp. 141-66.

<sup>13</sup> Wong Tin 黃天, “Hanmo qingyuan liangdeqian: Jindai Riben xiang Hua xueshu shuyao,” 翰墨情緣兩地牽：近代日本向華學書述要 (Connecting the Two Nations by Calligraphy: An Outline of Japanese Going to China to Learn Calligraphy in the Modern Period), in Wai-ming Ng 吳偉明, ed., *Zai Riben xunzhao Zhongguo: xiandaixing ji shenfen rentong de Zhong-Ri hudong* 在日本尋找中國：現代性及身份認同的中日互動 (Searching for Japan in China: Modernity and Identity in Sino-Japanese Interactions) (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2013), pp. 4-7.

<sup>14</sup> Ishizaki Matazō 石崎又造, *Kinsei Nihon ni okeru Shina zokugo bungaku shi* 近世日本に於ける支那俗語文学史 (A History of Chinese Vernacular Literature in Early Modern Japan)

disciple of Shen Nanping in Nagasaki, became a leading figure and influential teacher in painting. The calligraphy of Hayashi Dōei 林道栄 (1640-1708) and the seven-stringed zither of Ga Chōshin 何兆晉 (1628-1686) also attracted students.<sup>15</sup> Although Chinese interpreters were low-ranking officials, they were respected as the spokesmen of Chinese culture.

The interest in China among Tokugawa intellectuals was genuine and ardent. Chinese culture continued to inspire the Japanese in all walks of life. In particular, many Tokugawa Confucians regarded the Chinese as their mentors, proudly sharing common identity with the Chinese as members of the Confucian tradition in East Asia.

## 2. China as the Other

China meant different things to different people in the Tokugawa period, regarded as a model by Sinophiles and condemned as the other by nativists. The attitudes of the Tokugawa Japanese towards China were often complicated and ambivalent. Confucians worshipped the way of the ancient Chinese sages, but looked down upon the Qing dynasty under the Manchus. Many believed that Confucian traditions were faithfully implemented in Tokugawa Japan whereas they were forgotten in Qing China. According to the concept of *kai hentai*, Japan replaced China as the center of Confucian civilization. Yamaga Sokō 山鹿素行 (1622-1685), a Confucian and strategist, pointed out that Japan surpassed China in geography, political morality, religion, literacy, and military arts, and thus only Japan would deserve to be called *chūka* and *chūgoku*. He explained:

Regarding the movement of heaven and earth and the four seasons, if these reach a balance, wind and rain and cold and heat will not disappear. The soil will turn fertile and the people will become clever. One may then speak of a “Central Kingdom” [*chūgoku*]. In the whole world, only our nation [*honchō*] and the alien nation [*gaichō*, i.e. China] have achieved this balance. In the Age of the Gods, Ame-no-minaka-nushi-no-kami [天御中主尊, i.e., the God of Creation] and the two divinities of creation [Izanami 伊邪那美命 and Izanagi 伊邪那岐命] shaped our nation in the [area of the] central pillar. Hence, it is natural to call our nation the “Central Kingdom.” This is why our nation has the divine and unbroken lineage of the imperial family and enjoys superiority in literacy and military arts.<sup>16</sup>

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(Tokyo: Kōbundō shobō, 1940), pp. 56-60.

<sup>15</sup> Hayashi Rokurō 林陸朗, *Nagasaki tōtsūji: Daitsūji Hayashi Dōei to sono shūhen* 長崎唐通事: 大通事林道栄とその周辺 (Chinese Interpreters in Nagasaki: The Great Interpreter Hayashi Dōei and His Surroundings) (Nagasaki: Nagasaki bunkensha, 2010), p. 6.

<sup>16</sup> Yamaga Sokō, *Chūchō jijitsu* 中朝事實 (True Facts Concerning the Middle Kingdom), in Hirose Yutaka 広瀬豊, ed., *Yamaga Sokō zenshū: Shisōhen 13* 山鹿素行全集・思想篇第13巻 (Complete Works of Yamaga Sokō: His Thought, vol. 13) (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1940), p.

Likewise, Tokugawa Mitsukuni also maintained that the Japanese political tradition of maintaining the unbroken lineage of the imperial family reigning over the nation was superior to Chinese political tradition of revolution and therefore only Japan would deserve to be called *chūka*. He said: “According to *Morokoshi* [毛呂己志, China], the Chinese call their nation *chūka*. We Japanese should not follow that. We should call the capital of Japan *chūka*. Why do we call the foreign nation *chūka*?”<sup>17</sup>

While Edo Confucians were torn in their views of China between seeing it as a model and the other, scholars from *kokugaku* 国學 (national learning), Shinto, the Kimon school 崎門学派 and the late Mito school often saw China in a negative light. By condemning China as the other, they constructed their own nativist consciousness. Unlike Edo Confucians who remained respectful of ancient Chinese sages, they denied the entire cultural heritage from the Three Dynasties to the Ming and Qing. For example, the *kokugaku* scholar Kamo Mabuchi 賀茂真淵 (1697-1769) demonized China to underline the supreme quality of Japan:

China is the land of evil intentions. Education can make it look good on the surface, but it remains evil inside. Social unrest is unavoidable. Japan is a simple nation. Although our people receive little education, they are obedient. Following the principle of heaven and earth, our people can do without education.<sup>18</sup>

The *kokugaku* master Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1730-1801) condemned the ancient Chinese sages for establishing Confucian morality and profound philosophy to fool the people and to rule over them. In his comparison of the political traditions in Japan and China, China was “the other” to underscore the superiority and uniqueness of Japan’s nationality. For instance, he pointed out that the unbroken lineage of the imperial family brought peace and stability to Japan, whereas revolution caused chaos and social unrest in China. He compared Shinto in Japan and *shendao* 神道 in China as follows:

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225.

<sup>17</sup> Tokugawa Mitsukuni, *Seizankō zuihitsu* 西山公随筆 (Discursive Writings of Mitsukuni), in Uemura Katsuya 上村勝彌, ed., *Dai Nihon shisō zenshū 18* 大日本思想全集 18 (Complete Collection on Japanese Thought, vol. 18) (Tokyo: Dai Nihon shisō zenshū kankōkai, 1933), p. 357.

<sup>18</sup> Kamo Mabuchi, *Kokuikō* 国意考 (Reflections on the Meaning of Our Nation), in *Kinsei Shintō ron zenki kokugaku* 近世神道論・前期国学 (Shinto and Early *Kokugaku* in the Early Modern Period), ed. Taira Shigemichi 平重道 and Abe Akio 阿部秋生, *Nihon shisō taikai* 日本思想大系 (Book Series on Japanese Thought), vol. 39 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1972), p. 383.

A book of the Tang [*Yijing*] reads: “The sages established Shinto [*shendao*].” Some people thus believe that our nation borrowed the name “Shinto” from it. These people do not have a mind to understand the principles of things. The meaning of our deities has been different from that nation from the beginning. In that nation, people apply the concept of *yin* and *yang* to explain deities, spirits, and the universe. Their discussion is only empty theory without substance. Deities in our imperial nation were the ancestors of the current imperial emperor and thus [Japanese Shinto] is by no means empty theory.<sup>19</sup>

Sasaki Takanari 佐々木高成 (fl. 1737), a scholar of the Kimon school, referred to China as an inferior nation (*kakoku* 下国): “The customs of the Western Land (*seido* 西土) are radical and dirty. It has been a land of beasts since its founding. Our nation is a land of deities, having moral standards and a good balance between *yin* and *yang*.”<sup>20</sup>

Fukagawa Yūei 深河猷栄 (1695-1768), a Shinto priest, looked down upon the Chinese, calling them “Han barbarians” (*Han'i* 漢夷) because they did not implement the way of loyalty and filial piety. He held that only Japan was entitled to the name *chūgoku* or *chūka*:

That nation calls itself the Central Civilization (*chūka*) and our imperial nation a barbarian [nation]. Indeed, only our nation deserves to be called *chūka* or *chūgoku*. That nation is nothing but barbaric.... We should uphold the dignity of our imperial nation. However, many Confucians nowadays call the nation of the Han barbarians [*Han'i* 漢夷] *chūka*, *chūgoku*, or a nation of sages and gentlemen, but refer to our imperial nation as a nation of barbarians without manners and principles.<sup>21</sup>

It is interesting to note that in Tokugawa discourse, China was a loose and fuzzy concept, being an imaginary model to Tokugawa Sinophiles and a metaphor of otherness in the eyes of the nativists.<sup>22</sup> Throughout Tokugawa history, China was gradually

<sup>19</sup> Motoori Norinaga, *Naobi no mitama* 直毘靈 (The Rectifying Spirit), in Umezawa Isezō 梅沢伊勢三 and Takahashi Miyuki 高橋美由紀, annot., *Shintō taikai: Ronsetsuhen* 25, *fukko Shintō* 3 神道大系: 論説篇 25 復古神道下 (Book Series on Shinto: Theories 25 Fukko Shinto 3) (Tokyo: Shintō taikai hensankai, 1982), pp. 17-18.

<sup>20</sup> Sasaki Takanari, *Ben bendōsho* 辯辯道書 (Debating *Bendōsho*, 1736), in Saeki Ariyoshi 佐伯有義, annot., *Dai Nihon bunko Shintō hen: Suika shintō* 3 大日本文庫神道篇: 垂加神道下卷 (Collection of Books on Great Japan: Shinto, Suika Shinto 3) (Tokyo: Shunyōdō shoten, 1937), p. 299.

<sup>21</sup> Fukagawa Yūei, *Seidōron* 正道論 (Discourse on the Right Way, 1776), in Arima Sukemasa 有馬祐政, ed., *Kinnō bunko* 2 勤王文庫第二編 (Collection of Books on Royalism 2) (Tokyo: Dai Nihon meidōkai, 1919), p. 409.

<sup>22</sup> Harry Harootunian, “The Functions of China in Tokugawa Thought,” in Akira Iriye, ed., *The Chinese and the Japanese: Essays in Political and Cultural Interactions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 9-36.



marginalized in the worldview of the Japanese.<sup>23</sup> In the last decades of the Tokugawa period, Qing China became a negative example for Japan. China and the Chinese were called *Shina* 支那 (derogatory term for China) and *chankoro* 清国奴 (derogatory term for the Chinese) with disdain respectively. De-Confucianization and de-Sinicization were in full swing, smoothing the way for the rise of the notion of escaping from Asia (*datsu-Aron* 脱亞論) in modern Japan.<sup>24</sup>

### 3. China as Building Blocks

Seeing China as the model and the other were two major Tokugawa perceptions of China. Regarding the role of China in the making of Tokugawa thought and culture, China served as building blocks. Rather than copying faithfully from the Chinese, Tokugawa Japanese used Chinese elements to build and enrich their own thought and culture. Naitō Konan 内藤湖南 (1866-1934), a leading Sinologist in prewar Japan, used the making of tofu as a metaphor to describe how Chinese elements (soya bean milk) and Japanese elements (coagulant) were mixed to forge Japanese culture (tofu):

Japanese scholars use a tree to explain the birth of Japanese culture. The seed has been there for a long time. Chinese culture provides the nutrients for the tree to grow. I would like to compare it to making tofu. The bean liquid is there, but it requires something to condense. Chinese culture is the coagulant that can make it firm.<sup>25</sup>

Konan argued that many things have existed in Japan for a long time but they do not have a name or concept, and thus the Japanese use Chinese terms and ideas to explain Japan's indigenous culture. He used loyalty and filial piety as an example:

Undoubtedly "loyalty" (*chū* 忠) and "filial piety" (*kō* 孝) are terms imported from China, but Japan has possessed the virtues of loyalty and filial piety. There is a tendency [for the Japanese] to use imported Chinese terms to explain what Japan already has.<sup>26</sup>

Takeuchi Yoshio 武内義雄 (1886-1966), a disciple of Konan, expressed a similar view

<sup>23</sup> Peter Nosco, "The Place of China in the Construction of Japan's Early Modern World View," *Taiwan Journal of East Asian Studies*, 4:1 (June 2007): 27-48.

<sup>24</sup> Han Dongyu 韓東育, *Cong "tuoru" dao "tuo-Ya": Riben jinshi yilai "qu Zhong xin hua" zhi sixiang guocheng yanjiu* 從“脫儒”到“脫亞”：日本近世以來“去中心化”之思想過程 (From De-Confucianism to Escaping from Asia: The Intellectual Process of De-Sinicization in Japan since Early Modern Times) (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2009), pp. 339-84.

<sup>25</sup> Naitō Konan, "Nippon bunka to wa nan zoya," 日本文化とは何ぞや (What is Japanese Culture?), in *Naitō Konan zenshū* 内藤湖南全集 (Complete Works of Naitō Konan), vol. 9 (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1969), p. 14.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

in his discussion of the nature and function of Confucianism in Japan. He suggested that Confucianism provided a platform for Tokugawa scholars to explain and elaborate Japanese values.<sup>27</sup> For example, the Tokugawa Japanese placed emphasis on the virtue of sincerity (誠 *cheng*) because it was in accordance with the spirit of Shinto. Bitō Masahide 尾藤正英 (1923-2013), a scholar of Edo intellectual history, pointed out that Tokugawa Confucianism was Japanized Confucianism that used imported Chinese terms to promote indigenous thought.<sup>28</sup>

Besides cultural appropriation, another form of using Chinese culture as building blocks was hybridization. Inoue Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎 (1856-1944), a semi-official philosopher who published Tokugawa Confucian writings to promote traditional values, identified early Tokugawa Confucianism as an eclectic synthesis that fused the Cheng-Zhu school, the Lu-Wang school, Confucian classics, history, literature, Buddhism, Shinto, Daoism, and Japanese learning (*wagaku* 和學) together.<sup>29</sup> Kurozumi Makoto 黒住真, a specialist in Tokugawa intellectual history, also highlights eclecticism as the major feature of Tokugawa thought, seeing the history of Tokugawa thought as the process of fusing Chinese, Shinto, Buddhist and Western elements.<sup>30</sup>

In the process of cultural appropriation and hybridization, Chinese culture, together with Western, Indian, and indigenous cultures, provided Tokugawa Japanese building blocks to construct their own thought and culture. The same Chinese term could mean different things in China and Tokugawa Japan. This can be seen from how the Tokugawa Japanese reinterpreted Chinese historical figures, classics, and historical terms.

#### (a) Historical figures as building blocks

Wu Taibo 吳太伯, Xu Fu 徐福, and Yang Guifei 楊貴妃 (719-756) were household names in Japan. Their images and legends in Japan were uniquely different from their prototypes in China, showing the rise of nativist consciousness among the Tokugawa Japanese.

Wu Taibo was transformed from a Chinese sage into the ancestor of the Japanese imperial family. This idea was supported by Fujiwara Seika, Hayashi Razan 林羅山 (1583-1657) and Nakae Tōju 中江藤樹 (1608—1648). Hayashi Gahō 林鷺峰 (1618-1680) praised Taibo for preserving the way of the sages in Japan as the imperial

<sup>27</sup> Takeuchi Yoshio, “Nihon no jukyō,” 日本の儒教 (Japanese Confucianism), in *Takeuchi Yoshio zenshū* 武内義雄全集 (Complete Works of Takeuchi Yoshio), vol. 4 (Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 1979), p. 246.

<sup>28</sup> Bitō Masahide, *Nihon bunka no rekishi* 日本文化の歴史 (History of Japanese Culture) (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2000), Chapter 11.

<sup>29</sup> Inoue Tetsujirō, *Nihon Shushi gakuha no tetsugaku* 日本朱子学派の哲学 (The Philosophy of the Zhu Xi School in Japan) (Tokyo: Fuzanbō, 1909), pp. 29-30.

<sup>30</sup> Kurozumi Makoto, *Fukusūsei no Nihon shisō* 複数性の日本思想 (Plurality in Japanese Thought) (Tokyo: Perikansha, 2006), pp. 255-68.

ancestor. Kumazawa Banzan speculated that Taibo was the Sun Goddess Amaterasu-ōmikami 天照大神, the most important Shinto deity and the divine ancestor of the imperial family.

Descended from Zhou, Japan is thus named the nation of Ji in the Eastern Sea [*Tōkai himeshi no kuni* 東海姫氏国]. It is the name for females, and in Japan we call females *hime*. *Hime* is the honorific term for women and the surname of Zhou. Amaterasu was Taibo. The statue of Uhōdōji 雨寶童子 [rainmaking boy] was made in the image of Amaterasu, reflecting the image of Taibo and the haircutting custom of Wu. Japanese clothing is called *gofuku* [吳服] and utensils are *goki* [吳器]. They are all related to the state of Wu [go in Japanese].<sup>31</sup>

The advocates of Wu Taibo as the imperial ancestor sought to give Japan a respectable place in the Confucian order, as the Japanese were no longer the eastern barbarians but the descendants of an ancient Chinese sage and the preservers of the way of the sages. Associating Taibo with Shinto legend was an expression of the syncretism of Shinto and Confucianism in the Tokugawa period.

The legend of Xu Fu reached its apex in the Tokugawa period. More than twenty places in Japan claimed to have legacies of Xu Fu and many Tokugawa writings mentioned Xu. Xu was merely a Qin sorcerer in the eyes of the Chinese. The Tokugawa Japanese regarded him either as the transmitter of Chinese culture or political refugee. These two views apparently represented the competition between Sinophiles and nativists, but they were indeed different expressions of Japanese identity. Hayashi Razan, Kumazawa Banzan, and Arai Hakuseki saw Xu as the transmitter of ancient Chinese culture, praising him for bringing pre-Qin texts, morality, and advance technologies to Japan. Banzan remarked: “Xu Fu introduced Confucian morality, public manners, and various institutions. He found refuge in Japan and settled down here with thousands of followers. Although some Chinese classics disappeared in China, they survived overseas.”<sup>32</sup> Matsushita Kenrin 松下見林 (1637-1703), Ono Takakiyo 小野高潔 (1747-1817) and Satō Setsudō 齋藤拙堂 (1797-1865) portrayed Xu as a political refugee who found his ideal nation in Japan. Kenrin wrote: “Xu Fu saw the national glory of Japan and came to settle down there. He escaped from the Qin, the land of tigers and leopards, and died in Japan as a deity.”<sup>33</sup> Using Xu Fu to glorify Japan was a very

<sup>31</sup> Kumazawa Banzan, *Miwa monogatari* 三輪物語 (The Tale of Miwa), in Saigusa Hiroto 三枝博音, ed., *Nihon tetsugaku zensho* 日本哲学全書 (Anthology of Writings on Japanese Philosophy), vol. 4: *Shintōhen, Jukyōhen* 神道編、儒教編 (Section on Shinto, Section on Confucianism) (Tokyo: Daiichi shobō, 1936), p. 155.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 144-45.

<sup>33</sup> Matsushita Kenrin, *Ishō Nihonden* 異稱日本伝 (An Alternative Edition of Japanese History),

original idea and a good example of the localization of Chinese culture. The Xu Fu legend was mixed with Japanese Shinto mythology and folklore in Tokugawa writings.

The Chinese beauty Yang Guifei was seen as the manifestation of a Shinto deity. According to some medieval and early modern Japanese texts, Shinto deities sent Atsuta Myōjin 熱田明神 to take the form of Yang Guifei to infatuate Emperor Xuanzong of Tang 唐玄宗 (685-762) so that he forgot his plan to invade Japan. When Yang died, the spirit of Atsuta Myōjin returned to Atsuta Shrine. The *jōruri* play, *Yōkihi monogatari* 楊貴妃物語 (1663), fabricated a dialogue between Emperor Xuanzong and the great poet Bai Juyi 白居易 (772-846). Bai blamed the emperor as follows:

Your Majesty, you are the cause of this misfortune. Your obsession with Yang Guifei's beauty caused all the chaos. There is a country called Japan in the East. Yang Guifei was its Atsuta Myōjin. She was born in our nation as a woman provisionally to create troubles. Shame on her!<sup>34</sup>

Kanō school painter Kanō Einō 狩野永納 (1631-1697) further added that many evil characters in Tang China were indeed Japanese deities who transformed into Chinese in order to save Japan from invasion. He wrote:

It is said that, in the Tang era, Japan frequently paid tribute to China. When the gifts were few, the Chinese killed Japanese envoys. Xuanzong sought to annihilate Japan. Atsuta Myōjin was Yamato-Takeru-no-Mikoto 日本武尊. This deity transformed into Yang Guifei, Sumiyoshi Myōjin 住吉明神 turned into An Lushan 安祿山, and Kumano-no-Ōkami 熊野大神 turned into Yang Guozhong 楊國忠. They went to Tang China to destroy Xuanzong.<sup>35</sup>

Yang Guifei as the manifestation of a Shinto deity was the Shinto version of the doctrine of *honji suijaku* 本地垂迹 (Japanese deities were manifestations of the Buddha or bodhisattva) and an expression of *gokoku* 護国 (the protection and prosperity of the state). Yang was considered an evil beauty in the eyes of the Chinese, but was respected by some Japanese as a guardian deity or protector of Japan.

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in Kondō Heijō 近藤瓶城, ed., *Shiseki shūran* 史籍集覽 (Collection of Historical Sources), vol. 20 (Tokyo: Kondō shuppanbu, 1926), p. 9.

<sup>34</sup> Yokoyama Shigeru 横山重, annot., *Ko jōruri shōhonshū* 古浄瑠璃正本集 (Original Scripts of Old Jōruri), vol. 3 (Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 1964), Play 4, Part 4, pp. 312-13.

<sup>35</sup> Quoted in Kondō Haruo 近藤春雄, *Chōgonka Biwagyō no kenkyū* 長恨歌・琵琶行の研究 (A Study of *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* and *The Pipa Tune*) (Tokyo: Meiji shoin, 1981), p. 162.

## (b) Confucian classics as building blocks

Confucian classics were popular readings among Tokugawa scholars from different schools of thought and religion. In order to accommodate Confucian values into the Tokugawa system and Japanese tradition, Tokugawa Japanese interpreted Confucian classics in their own ways to promote Japanese indigenous values rather than original Chinese teachings.

The *Mengzi* 孟子 (The Sayings of Mencius) was not highly rated among Tokugawa scholars as its ideas were not always in agreement with Japanese political tradition and the Tokugawa system. In particular, the notions of revolution and regicide were considered incompatible, dangerous, and disloyal. The Kimon school, the Sorai school, *kokugaku*, and the early Mito school were critical of the text. Although the Mencius contains many relatively liberal political ideas, it was used by Yoshida Shōin 吉田松陰 (1830-1859) to advocate conservative political ideology. For instance, he reinterpreted *tenmei* 天命 (mandate of heaven) as “the order of the *tennō*” (emperor). Receiving the mandate of heaven meant being appointed by the imperial family to be the shogun and this mandate could be taken away by the emperor if the shogun failed to carry out his duties. He gave the Edo *bakufu* the most serious warning: “Posts like that of shogun are appointed by the imperial court only for those who can carry out the duties of those posts. If the shogun shirks his duties like the Ashikaga house did, he should be sacked immediately.”<sup>36</sup>

The *Xiaojing* 孝經 (Classic of Filial Piety) is a book about filial piety, but it was used to promote loyalty in Tokugawa Japan. Tokugawa samurai ethics puts loyalty before filial piety. The *bakufu* preferred the old-script edition (*guwen* 古文) of the *Xiaojing* which underlines the absolute authority of the ruler. Hayashi Razan, in his *Kobun kōkyō genkai* 古文孝經諺解 (Colloquial Explanation of the *Xiao Jing* in the Old-Script Text), restated the famous saying in the preface by Kong Anguo 孔安國: “Even if the emperor does not behave like an emperor, his minister cannot be disloyal. Even if the father does not behave like a father, his son cannot be unfilial.” In terms of the order of the five constant relations (*wulun* 五倫 or *wujiao* 五教), the Mencius places father and son ahead of emperor and minister. However, in Tokugawa Japan, many Zhu Xi school scholars and Mito school scholars put the ruler-subject relation prior to that of the father-son relation.<sup>37</sup>

The *Yijing* 易經 (Classic of Changes) was localized in Tokugawa Japan, used by nativists to expound Shinto ideas. The Shintoist Watarai Nobuyoshi 度会延佳

<sup>36</sup> Yoshida Shōin, *Kō-Mō yowa* 講孟余話 (Additional Notes in Explanation of the *Mencius*) (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1943), p. 47.

<sup>37</sup> See Martin Collcutt, “The Legacy of Confucianism in Japan,” in Gilbert Rozman, ed., *The East Asian Region: Confucian Heritage and Its Modern Adaptation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 133-34.

(1615-1690) explained the history of the Age of the Gods and Shinto thought in terms of *Yijing*-related concepts such as *taiji* 太極 (Supreme Ultimate), *yinyang wuxing* 陰陽五行 (two primal forces and five phases), *sancai* 三才 (three spheres of nature), and the hexagrams. The *kokugaku* thinker Hirata Atsutane 平田篤胤 (1776-1843) and his disciples turned the *Yijing* from a Confucian classic into a Shinto text, maintaining that Fu Xi 伏羲, according to tradition the creator of the eight trigrams, was the manifestation of the Shinto deity Ōmono-nushi-no-kami 大物主神 who went to China in antiquity to cultivate the Chinese:

Paoxishi 庖犧氏 is also called Taihao Fu Xi shi 太昊伏羲氏. He was actually Ōmono-nushi-no-kami, a deity of our divine nation of Fusō 扶桑. He went to ancient China to exploit its land and became the emperor. He taught its foolish people the ways of heaven, earth, and humanity. By observing the changes of the universe and everything, he created the trigrams.<sup>38</sup>

Atsutane saw the *Zhouyi* as a corrupt edition of the *Yijing*, condemning King Wen for distorting the text and changing the order of the sixty-four hexagrams and the number of yarrow stalks to justify the revolution that overthrew the Shang dynasty. His academic mission was to restore the original *Yijing*. Regarding the *Yijing* as a Shinto text, scholars of the Hirata school used its related ideas to explicate Shinto and divination for agriculture.

### (c) Historical terms as building blocks

The appropriation of Chinese concepts and terms was very common in Tokugawa Japan. Many imported Chinese terms were interpreted and used differently. Names for China, *bakufu*, and *shogun*, as well as the discussion of legitimacy in Tokugawa historiography are examples of how meanings of Chinese terms can be twisted to express Japanese values and feelings.

Following the rise of the theory of *kai hentai* and the Japanese version of the Sinocentric world order, some Tokugawa Japanese applied honorific names originally reserved for China to Japan. Yamaga Sokō, in his last years, referred to Japan as *chūka*. He remarked: “How foolish I was! Born in the Central Kingdom (*chūka*, i.e., Japan), but failing to understand its beauty, I was absorbed in the classics of the foreign dynasty (*gaichō* 外朝, i.e., China) and admired its people. How absent-minded I was! How lost I was!”<sup>39</sup> The historian Rai Sanyō 頼山陽 (1781-1832) called Japan *chūgoku* and *chūchō*

<sup>38</sup> Hirata Atsutane, *San'eki yuraiki* 三易由來記 (The Origins of the Three Versions of the *Yijing*) (Tokyo: Ibukinoya), in the National Diet Library of Japan (Request number: 848-173), vol. 1, pp. 1-2.

<sup>39</sup> Yamaga Sokō, *Chūchō jujitsu*, in *Yamaga Sokō zenshū: Shisōhen* 13, p. 225.

中朝 (Central Dynasty) in the *Shinsaku* 新策 (New Thesis). The Mito scholar, Aizawa Seishisai 會沢正志齋 (1781-1863), referred to Japan as the Central Kingdom (*chūgoku*) and the Divine Land (*shinshū* 神州) in the *Shinron* 新論 (New Thesis, 1825).

Honorific titles for the Edo *bakufu* and *shōgun* (such as *kōgi* 公儀, *kubō* 公方, *chōtei* 朝廷, *taikun* 大君, *denka* 殿下 and *kinchū* 禁中) were mostly imported Chinese terms that at first applied to the Kyoto court and emperor. In the last decades of the Tokugawa period, many titles that the *bakufu* and *shōgun* had acquired from the court were restored to their original meanings and usage. The Mito scholar Fujita Tōko 藤田東湖 (1806-1855) insisted that titles for the imperial court should not be applied to the Edo *bakufu*: “The innocent people refer to the *bakufu* as the central court government (*chōtei*), and some even as the king (*ō*).”<sup>40</sup>

Tokugawa historians created their own concepts of legitimacy (such as the theories of imperial regalia) and redefined imported Chinese concepts (such as heaven’s mandate) to rationalize the Tokugawa political realities. The *Dai Nihon shi* 大日本史 (History of Great Japan, 1657-1906) claimed legitimacy for the Southern Court because it was the holder of the three imperial regalia. The regalia theory had a very strong impact on the Kimon school and the Mito school. Tokugawa Harutoshi 徳川治紀 (1773-1816), the seventh *daimyō* of Mito, argued: “The conflict between the East and West, the civil war between the North and South, and the legitimacy of the imperial line can all be settled by the regalia.”<sup>41</sup> Besides, the mandate of heaven, in Tokugawa historical writings, was used primarily to discuss the right to govern and deny a Chinese-style “revolution” and dynastic change. This Japanese version of heaven’s mandate became an ideological tool to legitimize the *bakufu* as the de facto central government. Ironically, the same theory was applied to challenge the legitimacy of the *bakufu* in the *bakumatsu* 幕末 period (late Tokugawa era, 1853-1867). Yoshida Shōin warned: “The descendants of the Sun Goddess in our heavenly dynasty shine on the universe. If the *bakufu* does not follow the order of the heavenly dynasty and does not carry out its duty to repel the barbarians, the situation is called ‘using the state of Yan to fight against the state of Yan.’”<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Fujita Tōko, *Kōdōkanki jutsugi* 弘道館記述義 (A Record of Lectures at the Academy of Teaching the Way), Imai Usaburō 今井宇三郎, et al., ed., *Nihon shisō taikēi*, vol. 53, *Mitogaku* 水戸学 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1973), p. 298.

<sup>41</sup> Tokugawa Harutoshi, *Shin Dai Nihon shi hyō* 進大日本史表 (The Memorial on the Great History of Japan), quoted in Yamazaki Tōkichi 山崎藤吉 and Horie Hideo 堀江秀雄, *Nanbokuchō seijun ronsan* 南北朝正閏論纂 (Discourse on the Southern and Northern Courts Controversy over Legitimacy) (Tokyo: Kōtenkōkyūjo Kokugakuin daigaku shuppan tosho hanbaijo, 1911), p. 158.

<sup>42</sup> *Kōmō yowa*, p. 279.

#### 4. Concluding Remarks

China in the Tokugawa imagination was complicated and multifaceted. In understanding the China factor in Tokugawa culture, we should think beyond the traditional dialectical framework of model and the other. China also functioned as building blocks to construct Tokugawa culture. The tripartite conceptual framework helps to achieve a holistic understanding of the nature of Tokugawa culture. Sino-Japanese cultural exchange in the early modern period should be perceived as the interplay of the Japanization of Chinese culture and the Sinicization of Japanese culture. The Tokugawa Japanese selectively introduced and then modified Chinese culture to make it fit into the Japanese tradition. Used largely as building blocks to construct Japanese culture, Chinese culture was highly localized and hybridized in Tokugawa Japan. In the name of *Wakon Kansai* 和魂漢才 (Japanese spirit and Chinese scholarship), Chinese terms and forms survived, but the substance and the spirit became Japanese. Hence, it is simplistic and even misleading to see Tokugawa Confucianism or Chinese learning as an overseas branch of Chinese culture. Characterized by eclecticism and pragmatism, Chinese scholarship in Tokugawa Japan was different from Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism or Qing textual criticism. The China factor was influential in Tokugawa thought and culture in the sense that it was used extensively by the Japanese to express and reinforce Japanese ideas and values.