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Founding Myths of the Japanese State: The Changing Perception of China and its Influence on Early Modern Japanese Identity

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Abstract

This presentation will focus on two founding myths of the Japanese state and their reception in the early modern period. The first of these founding myths centres on the Chinese prince Wu Taibo, who, according to a theory that was especially popular among Neo-Confucian scholars in the early sixteenth century, fled to Japan and became the ancestor of the imperial family. This myth allowed Confucian scholars to demonstrate the early transmission of Confucianism to Japan and thus claim Japan's membership in the sphere of the Central Civilization. However, after the "barbarian" Manchus took over the Chinese throne, many Japanese scholars started to question China's aptness to serve as a civilizational model for Japan. Japanese Confucians argued that Japan was the only remaining custodian of the Way. For them, the Wu Taibo myth was no longer tenable, since they regarded the numerous dynastic changes in China's history as a sign of Chinese emperors' unworthiness. In the eighteenth century, scholars of National Learning went one step further in condemning Confucian learning in its entirety and constructing an idealized image of Japan's pre-Confucian past based on the ancient myths – most importantly, the emperor's descent from the sun goddess. After the Meiji Restoration, this ideological construct served to legitimize the new government and its policies. Thus, the changing perception of China played a central role in the formation of modern Japanese identity.

On 11 February 1940, during the official celebrations of the alleged 2600th anniversary of the founding of the Japanese state, Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro 近衛文麿 (1891–1945) opened his speech with the following words:

"When our Imperial founder [the Sun Goddess Amaterasu, progenitor of the imperial line] established the country, began Her rule and made Her grandchild reign over the Eight Provinces, She gave him a divine rescript and the Three Sacred Treasures […]. The Imperial reign thus established was handed down to the Emperor Jimmu, who greatly developed the founder's work, established the capital at Kashihara, came to the Throne and ruled over the entire realm with virtue. Since then, all succeeding emperors have inherited the divine rule, consolidated its foundation and added to the great Imperial plan straight down to the present – the 2,600th year." (Cited in Ruoff 2010, 16)

If one thinks of a founding myth of the Japanese state, the above narrative usually comes to mind. However, in this paper I want to contrast this founding myth with a competing narrative that was in vogue especially among Confucian scholars in early modern Japan, namely the myth of Wu Taibo 呉太伯. By analysing these two narratives and their reception in early modern Japan I will sketch the development of a modern national identity. I will place particular emphasis on the role that changing perceptions of China played in this process.

Myth and Collective Identity: Some Theoretical Reflections

In this paper I view early modern and modern Japanese national identity through the lens of founding myths. Therefore, some remarks on the political function of myth and its relationship to the formation and maintenance of collective identity seem in order. Alan Dundes (1996, 147) defines a myth as "a sacred narrative explaining how the world and mankind came to be in their present form." As Bronislaw Malinowski (1926, 91) realized, myth "as a primeval reality which still lives in present-day life" offers a "justification by precedent" of the status quo. Myths, therefore "always have to be retold from the point of view of the present" in order to remain relevant (Bottici 2007, 129). Drawing on Karl Kerényi's insights, Chiara Bottici (2007, 123) argues that myths "tell what the origins of things are, and, thus, at the same time, where they are going. They provide a 'ground' but they do so by answering the question 'whence?' rather than 'why'." Thus, in a very real sense, myths provide foundations – in the context of the present paper, foundations of the Japanese state. However, these foundations also imply appropriate behaviour in the present. Myths "always state a precedent which constitutes an ideal and a warrant for its continuance" (Malinowski 1926, 33).

It thus signifies a major difference of a group's self-identity whether it seeks its origin in a Confucian founding myth from the continent or in a native myth that is not directly related to the wider outside world. As Jan Assmann (1999, 142) has pointed out, "Myths are concerned with identity, they provide answers to the questions of who 'we' are, where 'we' come from, and where 'we' are situated within the cosmos. They preserve the sacred traditions on which a group grounds

the awareness of its unity and uniqueness." It is a truism that "[s]omething is only the same if it distinguishes itself as other from others" (Waldenfels 2011, 72). This points to the importance of significant others for the formation of any group identity. In early modern Japan, the most significant other was clearly China. Although the Tokugawa bakufu 徳川幕府 (1603–1868) did not maintain diplomatic relations with the Ming 明 (1368–1644) or the Qing 清 (1644–1911), the teachings of Neo-Confucianism and the concept of Chinese civilization that represented their historical and cultural backdrop entered Japan via Chosŏn 朝鮮 Korea (1392–1897) in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century (Ha 2015, 323–30; Kang 1997, 2–3; Tucker 2013, 189–93). Chosŏn Korea regarded itself as a Neo-Confucian model state and attached great importance to its tributary relations with the Ming (Han 2015; Lee 2015, 128–29; Yamauchi 2003, 8–10). It is therefore unsurprising that early Japanese Neo-Confucians chose China rather than Korea as a civilizational model worth emulating (Harootunian 1980; Jansen 1992).

The Myth of Wu Taibo and its Reception in Japan

Wu Taibo is mentioned in several ancient Chinese texts as the uncle of King Wen 文, the founder of the Zhou 周 dynasty (c. 1046–256 BCE). Although he was the eldest son, when he realized that his father wanted his younger brother to succeed him, he gave up his legitimate rights of succession and fled to the south. There he adopted the customs of the southern barbarians, who realized his noble nature and made him their king. Confucius highly praised Taibo's conduct as an exemplar of virtuous action. Several dynastic chronicles dating from the Tang 唐 period (618–907) state that the Japanese regarded themselves as descendants of Wu Taibo (Hudson 1999, 25–27; Watanabe 2012, 279; Nakai 1980, 188).

In Japan, the Zen priest Chūgan Engetsu 中巖円月 (1300–1375) took up this theory of the imperial family's origin when he wrote a national history in the fourteenth century. However, from the fact that he had to burn his treatise by imperial order, we can infer the unacceptability of the theory at the time (Kracht 1986, 140, n. 151). It was only in the seventeenth century that a number of leading Confucian scholars advocated the Wu Taibo theory in order to demonstrate Japan's parity with or even superiority to China in following the Confucian Way (cf. Nakai 1980, 188–91).

Seventeenth Century: Wu Taibo as the Sage who Conveyed the Confucian Way to Japan

The most prominent proponent of the Wu Taibo thesis is probably Hayashi Razan 林羅山 (1583–1657), one of the pioneers of Neo-Confucian learning in Japan who served as tutor and advisor to the first four Tokugawa shoguns. In his *Jinmu tennō ron* 神武天皇論 or "Thoughts on Jinmu Tennō", written in 1618, he approvingly takes up Engetsu's theory. Razan attempted to reconcile the myth of Wu Taibo with the official myth-history of the *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 (720). For instance, he argues that a descendant of Taibo had arrived in Kyūshū where the local people regarded him as a deity – thus the myth of the heavenly descent of the sun goddess's grandchild as related in the Japanese chronicle was born (Hayashi 1930, 280; cf. Bary, Keene, and Tsunoda 1964, 349–50). Enthusiastically, he concludes:

"the Ji 姬 prince [= Wu Taibo] and his descendants, having already held sway for a hundred generations in succession, will continue their reign for ten thousand generations to come. Is it not glorious? [In China,] the once-powerful Wu 呉 state [11th century–473 BCE] may have been overcome by the Yue 越, but their reign in our country is coeval with heaven and earth. I am therefore more and more inclined to believe in the sovereign virtue of Taibo. If Engetsu could come back to life, I would like to ask him what he thought of this." (Hayashi 1930, 281)

He goes on to provide a Neo-Confucian interpretation of the Three Imperial Regalia, the mirror, the jewel, and the sword, which, he believed, had been brought to Japan by Taibo's descendant. According to Razan, the regalia were manifestations of the three cardinal virtues of the sage enlisted in the Confucian classic *Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhongyong* 中庸), namely wisdom (*zhi* 智), benevolence (*ren* 仁), and courage (*yong* 勇) (Hayashi 1930, 281; Bary, Keene, and Tsunoda 1964, 350–51; Bowring 2017, 66–67). Despite his thinly veiled enthusiasm for Engetsu's theory, Razan was more circumspect than the Zen monk had been. At the end of his treatise he emphasizes that this is nothing more than his personal opinion, which he would never dare to put forward in an official document (Hayashi 1930, 282; Nakai 1980, 192–93).

Kumazawa Banzan 熊沢蕃山 (1619–1691), another Neo-Cofucian scholar and contemporary of Razan, mentions the Wu Taibo theory in his *Miwa monogatari* 三輪物語, a work written in the form of a conversation between individuals of differing background. One of the speakers in this book argues that the sun goddess mentioned in the Japanese myths was in fact Taibo. Before Taibo's arrival, the speaker claims, the inhabitants of Japan had lived in a state of savagery, lacking agriculture and all forms of civilized life. When Taibo arrived from China, he instructed the people in these arts, who were thus able to achieve a higher level of civilization than any other barbarian state. For this reason, the people started to revere him as a god (Nakai 1980, 190; McNally 2016, 164).

In order to understand why these scholars were so eager to trace back Japanese culture and the imperial family to a Chinese origin, we have to take the sinocentric ideology of *hua-yi* 華夷 into consideration, which regarded China as the Central Civilization surrounded on all sides by barbarians. This ideology was known in Japan from an earlier date, but with the introduction of Neo-Confucian teachings in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century it became a central component in discourses about Japan's position in the world. Subsequently Neo-Confucian scholars started to measure their own culture according to Confucian standards and advised their lords to follow Chinese examples as expounded in the Confucian classics in order to become sage rulers.

The Civilized-Barbarian Paradigm

In ancient China, the distinction between barbarians and (Chinese) civilization can be traced to pre-imperial times. Ancient texts clearly depict a sense of superiority that the dwellers of the Central States (*zhongguo* 中国) felt with regard to the "barbarians of the four corners" (*si yi* 四夷). Since Chinese often referred to themselves as *zhonghua* 中華 or the Central Flowering, this

paradigm is often described as the *hua-yi* dichotomy. The term *zhongguo* first appeared in oracle bone inscriptions dating from the Shang 商 period (c. 16th century–c.1046 BCE). In the earliest texts, the term mainly referred to the territory ruled by the legendary Xia 夏 people and their allies. Even before the unification of the Quin 秦 (221–206 BCE) and Han 漢 (202 BCE–220 CE) dynasties, this concept evolved gradually and in the Confucian classics came to comprise three different aspects, namely a geographical, a political, and a cultural aspect. Geographically, the term referred to China and its position at the centre of the world, surrounded by peripheral states. Politically, it referred to China as the area under direct imperial jurisdiction. Culturally, *zhongguo* denoted the civilized world. People living outside this sphere were regarded as southern, eastern, western, or northern barbarians (*man* 蛮, *yi* 夷, *zon* 戎, and *di* 狄). The term thus claimed geographical, political, and cultural centrality for China (Huang 2007, 408–405).

It was the cultural dimension that became more and more emphasized. In early Chinese texts, the barbarian peoples inhabiting the regions bordering on China were described as barely human. Their manner of living was frequently compared to that of beasts. However, as Yuri Pines (2005, 62) has demonstrated, being a civilized person in pre-Qin texts did not refer to ethnicity or race but rather to the adherence to the common ritual norms of the Zhou dynasty (1046–256 BCE). In other words, behavioural patterns decided over whether or not a person belonged to the Central Civilization. Pines (2005, 74) draws attention to an important aspect of the *hua-yi* dichotomy that was to become central in Korean and Japanese discourses in the seventeenth century, namely "the idea of the transformability of savageness into civilized behaviour." In other words, barbarians were able "to 'upgrade' their status by emulating the ritually correct behaviour of the Chinese." (Ibid.)

It was Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), one of the most influential Confucian scholars of the Song 宋 period (960–1279), who reformulated the *hua-yi* distinction along ethnic lines during the twelfth century. For him, the Han Chinese were inherently superior to barbarian peoples. He believed it impossible for barbarians to become civilized and therefore supported a confrontational course against the peoples at China's northern border, who threatened to conquer the Middle Kingdom. However, in the late thirteenth century, the Mongols succeeded in conquering China and establishing the Yuan 元 dynasty (1271–1368). Thus, Zhu Xi's Han sinocentric ideology only came into its own in the succeeding Ming period. During this period, the concepts of *zhongguo* and *zhonghua* came to be linked to Han ethnocentrism (Lee 2015, 121).

Neo-Confucians in Japan, unsurprisingly, adopted the older view of the *hua-yi* relationship and utilized the Wu Taibo myth to argue that the Confucian Way had reached Japan in an early historical period and transformed it from a barbarian state to a Confucian state on a par with China.

The conviction that China represented the civilizational model which other cultures should follow was questioned, once and for all, in the mid-seventeenth century, when the Qing, who, according to the traditional Confucian worldview, belonged to the category of northern barbarians, managed to usurp the throne in China. After this political development, scholars emerged in both Japan and Korea who claimed the status of Central Civilization for their own country (McNally

2016, 151–52, 167–70). The Confucian standards for measuring culture were by then internalized to such an extent that they were basically beyond questioning. Japanese and Korean scholars rather challenged the idea that the China of the day could still serve as an exemplar for the fulfilment of these standards.

Yamaga Sokō: Japan as Central Civilization

In Japan, this stance can be observed in the work of Yamaga Sokō 山鹿素行 (1622–1685), who claimed the position of Central Civilization for his own country. As a proponent of Ancient Learning (*kogaku* 古学), Sokō was highly critical of Neo-Confucian teachings, which in his opinion misrepresented the Confucian classics and were not applicable to everyday matters. He argued that the way of the sages had been lost in China and one had to read the ancient classics rather than Zhu Xi's commentaries thereof in order to understand the Way. These controversial views led to Sokō's exile from Edo in 1666 (Leinss 1989, 4–5, 8).

During his ten years in exile, Sokō wrote his most famous work, *Chūchō jijitsu* 中朝事実 (True Facts about the Central Court). From this time on, he consistently referred to Japan as Central Flowering (*chūka* 中華), Central Realm (*chūgoku* 中国), or Central Court (*chūchō* 中朝) (Earl 1964, 38–40; McNally 2016, 159–60). Sokō bases his argument for Japanese superiority on the aforementioned three Confucian virtues of wisdom, benevolence, and courage. Through a historical analysis he tries to demonstrate that only Japan fulfils all three conditions. He argues that it was due to the Japanese emperors' *benevolence* that there had never been a dynastic change in Japanese history, whereas Chinese and Korean history were characterized by incessant internal strife. The establishment and preservation of government and administration as well as the regulation of the lives of the populace, according to Sokō, was proof of the superior *wisdom* of Japanese rulers. With regard to *courage*, Sokō emphasizes that Japan's martial valour was unequalled since – in contrast to China and Korea – it had never been conquered by another state, and in antiquity had even conquered Korea and turned it into a vassal state.[1] For Sokō, Ming's defeat at the hands of the Qing clearly showed its unworthiness (Earl 1964, 44–51; Uenaka 1977, 147–48; Bowring 2017, 120; Jansen 1992, 79–80; McNally 2016, 158; Harootunian 1980, 14–16; Toby 1984, 222–26). Like Razan, he saw the three cardinal virtues symbolized in the imperial regalia: "The jewel represents the virtue of warm benevolence; the mirror represents supreme wisdom; the sword represents decisive courage. What they symbolize and give form to, is in each case the sincerity and virtue of the heavenly gods." (Yamaga 1940, 253).

However, in contrast to Razan, Sokō was highly critical of the Taibo thesis. He reaffirmed the imperial family's descent from the sun goddess as related in the ancient Japanese sources and went

[1] This refers to Empress Jingū's 神功 legendary conquest of the Korean peninsula and the alleged establishment of a Japanese colony with the name Mimana in southern Korea. The historicity of both events, which are mentioned in the *Kojiki*, the *Nihon shoki*, and the fifth-century Kwanggaet'o 廣開土 stele, is contested. Cf. Batten 1986, 212–13; Mohan 2004; Pai 2000, 26–27, 431.

so far as to question Taibo's virtue, by arguing that by fleeing to the south Taibo had deserted his home country. "How can this be seen as the way of humanity? To not only not understand this but through forced analogies declare one's own country to be that of another is the act of a traitor, a rebellious child." (Yamaga 1940, 366)

Some of Sokō's points, especially the emphasis he placed on Japan's uninterrupted imperial dynasty and its military prowess were taken up by proponents of various schools of learning in the latter half of the Tokugawa period, such as National Learning (*kokugaku* 国学) and the Mito school (*Mitogaku* 水戸学). Arano Yasunori (1988, x) described this line of reasoning as a "Japanese-style civilized/barbarian consciousness" (*Nihon-gata kai ishiki* 日本型華夷意識) that stressed military prestige and the presence of the emperor as criteria for Japan's cultural superiority In this regard, Sokō can be seen as a precursor of the modern Tennō 天皇 ideology.

Kokugaku and *Mitogaku*

Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1730–1801), one of the pioneers of National Learning, went one step further than Sokō insofar as he did not only criticize contemporary China but even the China of the Age of the Sages. He bemoaned the detrimental effect the introduction of Confucianism and Buddhism from China allegedly had on Japanese culture. For him a civilizational model worth emulating could only be found in the pre-sinicized Japan depicted in the oldest chronicles, especially the *Kojiki* 古事記 (712). The emperor, "as a successor and representative of the sun goddess Amaterasu", played a central role in Norinaga's thought (Antoni 2016, 133). His self-declared disciple Hirata Atsutane 平田篤胤 (1776–1843) extended the idea of the imperial family's divinity to the Japanese people as a whole and thus layed the foundation for both the family state ideology and the concept of Japan as a divine country (ibid., 151). *Kokugaku* scholars thus succeeded in expressing Japanese cultural superiority without taking recourse to the Confucian *hua-yi* dichotomy.

It was a Confucian scholar, however, who formulated a concrete proposal for the political implementation of this Tennō-centred ideology. In his famous *New Theses* (*Shinron* 新論) of 1825, Aizawa Seishisai 会沢正志斎 (1782–1863), arguably the most influential proponent of *Mitogaku*, argued: "When the people are taught simply to revere Amaterasu and Her Divine Imperial Line, their allegiances are undivided and they are blind to all heresies." (Wakabayashi 1986, 158; cf. Aizawa 1941, 13) Beneath this statement lies the idea of the unity of ritual and government. Faced with repeated Western encroachments into Japanese waters and internal disorder, the most pressing issue for Aizawa was to create spiritual unity among the Japanese populace. The symbol of this unity and the subject of people's loyalty, he believed, could only be the sun goddess and her representative, the Japanese emperor. Thus, he writes in a passage strikingly similar to the speech Konoe was to give more than a century later: "Our Divine Realm is where the sun emerges. […] Our Emperors, descendents of the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu, have acceded to the Imperial Throne in each and every generation, a unique fact that will never change. Our Divine Realm rightly constitutes the head and shoulders of the world and controls all nations." (Wakabayashi 1986, 149; cf. Aizawa 1941, 2) It is even more interesting,

how this passage continues: “It is only proper that our Divine Realm illuminates the entire universe and that our dynasty’s sphere of moral suasion (*kōka* 皇化) knows no bounds.” (Ibid.) “Moral suasion” is an important concept in the Chinese *hua-yi* dichotomy. It refers to the civilizing effect the Central Flowering is supposed to exert on barbarians that come into contact with it (Ha 2008, 25–26). Apart from the name Divine Realm (*shinshū* 神州), Aizawa also uses the term *chūgoku*, that is Central Realm, to refer to Japan. His work thus presents a synthesis of *kokugaku* thought and Confucianism. It goes without saying that Aizawa’s call for *jōi* 攘夷, “expelling the barbarians” also has its foundation in the Confucian *hua-yi* dichotomy (Kang 1997, 191–92; Wakabayashi 1986, 8–11).

The Opium War and World Renewal

As shown above, the Manchu overthrow of the Ming presented a turning point in Japanese Confucians’ perception of China. One would expect that the Opium War of 1839 to 1842 had a similar effect. This does not seem to be the case, however. Japanese intellectuals could have interpreted China’s defeat as proof that Japan was indeed the only country worthy of the title “Central Civilization”. Instead most Bakumatsu 幕末 thinkers feared that the same fate would await Japan if it did not succeed in reforming its government and national defence (McNally 2016, 92; Wakabayashi 1992, 1; Masuda 1990a, 37, 1990b). Implicit in this way of thinking was a sense of cultural commonality with China in the face of Western imperialism. While some Japanese scholars called for a colonization of China and other Asian countries, others proposed a cooperation with China in order to drive the Westerners out of East Asia (Kim 1980, 78–100). As a rule, scholars during this period were preoccupied with practical questions of political and military reform and devoted little time to discussions of historical matters or founding myths.

The general population – at least in the big cities – of Japan was rather well informed about the events of the Opium War. A number of popular novels and plays addressed the topic and conveyed a reasonably realistic impression of the scope of China’s defeat (Masuda 1990b; Wakabayashi 1992). In all likelihood, the news from the continent added to the diffuse sense of crisis that engulfed Japan in the Bakumatsu period. As is well known, this sense of crisis engendered popular calls for *yonaoshi* 世直し, that is world renewal. In a recent study, Chiba Kei (2011, 42–56) has shown that most of the popular movements associated with *yonaoshi* used Amaterasu as their figurehead. The forces that brought down the Tokugawa bakufu did not lose any time in monopolizing this political symbol in order to legitimize their own political agenda. Already in the decisive battle of Toba-Fushimi in January 1868, the troops of Satsuma and Chōshū carried banners showing a golden sun or Amaterasu’s name (Zöllner 2013, 181–82); and in the spring of the same year, the fledgling Meiji 明治 government started drawing up public notices that explained the emperor’s link to the sun goddess (Fujitani 1996, 10). Chiba (2011, 13–14, 57–61) convincingly argues that the Meiji oligarchs consciously embraced Amaterasu and emphasized her relationship to the emperor in order to create a direct link between the emperor and the populace. We have seen the most elaborated form of this state ideology in Konoe’s speech quoted at the outset of this paper.

Concluding Remarks

Let me come to my conclusion. The changing reception of the Wu Taibo myth in Japan can only be understood in the context of an emerging cultural identity. In the early seventeenth century the discourse was dominated by Neo-Confucian scholars who accepted the sinocentric *hua-yi* dichotomy rather uncritically. They argued that Japan was the most advanced non-Chinese state. However, they did not question China's cultural centrality; they accepted that China was the homeland of the Confucian Way and that Japan had received this teaching at a later date. The theory of the Japanese imperial family's descent from Wu Taibo played a critical role in their endeavours to depict Japan as a part of the Central Civilization represented by China.

After the Qing takeover, however, scholars like Sokō argued that China could no longer serve as a civilizational model for Japan. For him, Japan was now the only remaining custodian of the Confucian way and should thus be called the Central Flowering. While acknowledging the validity of the Confucian classics and their Chinese origin, he depicted China's history as one of decline. For him, the Neo-Confucian teachings were proof that the Chinese no longer understood the ancient classics. Only the ancient China depicted in these classics could serve as a model for Japan. He was especially critical of the many dynastic changes in Chinese history and thus preferred an imperial genealogy that was not connected to China. At this point, the myth of Wu Taibo stopped playing a useful role in the construction of a Japanese collective identity. However, like Razan and other early Neo-Confucians, Sokō was convinced that the level of a civilization could only be measured according to Confucian standards.

Motoori Norinaga and other scholars of National Learning, in contrast, rejected the validity of Confucianism as such and bemoaned its corrupting influence on Japan. For them, a model for Japan's future could only be found in the ancient *Japanese* sources. In their view, all Chinese influence on Japanese culture had to be eradicated. Amaterasu, the progenitor of the imperial line, played a central role in their conception of Japan.

Finally, the Mito scholar Aizawa Seishisai succeeded in synthesizing *kokugaku* and Confucian thought and was thus able to make the exaltation of Amaterasu as the central symbol of the Japanese state acceptable to Confucian scholars as well. The fledgling Meiji government did not lose any time to utilize this potent political symbol to legitimize its rule and to establish a link between the imperial institution and the common people, who had chosen Amaterasu as the figurehead in their uprisings for world renewal during the Bakumatsu period. Konoe's speech quoted at the outset of this paper attests to the success of their strategy.

With China's defeat in the Opium War and the arrival of Commodore Perry's (1794–1858) "Black Ships" in Edo Bay, the West replaced China as Japan's civilizational model and significant other. This new constellation is most clearly expressed in the catchphrase *Wakon Yōsai* 和魂洋才 (Japanese Spirit and Western Learning), that was coined in the Meiji period to allay fears of a hollowing out of Japanese identity through excessive emulation of Western models. This term is in fact an adaptation of the older slogan *Wakon Kansai* 和魂漢才 (Japanese Spirit and Chinese Learning), which had from the late Edo period on been employed by followers of the Hirata School of National Learning to counter

what they saw as the excessive Sinification of Japanese culture (Hirakawa 1971, 33–36; Katō 1987, 387–92, 426–37). The two slogans thus not only reveal Japan's cultural reorientation away from Asia and toward Europe that started in the mid-nineteenth century, they also express Japanese thinkers' heightened awareness and veneration of their own culture. As this paper attempted to show, this process ran parallel to a devaluation of the once admired Chinese civilization.

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