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The Transfiguration of Karagokoro: the Reception of the Mito School Thought by National Learning in the Meiji Period

[*abstract]

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Abstract

It is well known that Motoori Norinaga, one of the most famous National Learning (Kokugaku) scholar in the Tokugawa period, criticized idealistic and moralistic thoughts, specifically Confucianism, as evil foreign mind, “karagokoro,” while admiring native pure mind in Japan, “yamatogokoro.” On the other hand, thinkers of the late Mito school criticized Norinaga for overstepping philology of classics with his theological thought and emphasized Confucianistic ethics derived from Japanese classics. However, National learning scholars in the Hirata school accepted the Mito school thought afterwards. Especially after Meiji restoration, National Learning scholars in the Meiji period adopted the thought explicitly. Religion policy at that time and other factors were related to that change.

In this presentation, I will take some examples of the reception of the Mito school thought by National Learning in the Meiji period, such as interpretations of Kokutai theory in “Seventeen Principles” (jū-shichi kendai) and the works of Ikebe (Konakamura) Yoshikata. After that, I will examine the reason why the evaluation of Confucianistic thought changed, in National Learning based on the historical context in the Meiji period.