



Special Interview

Associate Professor Yuki Tanaka,
Department of East Asian Studies

●Discovering Chinese Thought

- Professor Tanaka, your specialty is Chinese thought, and particularly musical thought.
How did you discover this field?

I first encountered music after joining the music club in my first year of junior high school. I enjoyed singing and dancing, and I loved theater. I considered joining the Shiki Theater Company, but in the end I applied for university and entered the University of Tokyo. I loved reading classical Chinese, so I decided to take a class on China at Komaba. I thought that nobody else would take such a class, and that was the class of Professor Takahiro Nakajima, the current Director of Tobunken. I learned Chinese grammar and pronunciation from scratch, while reading translations of Derrida's lectures on China.



- That surely sounds like a class that nobody would take! So, that's how you get into the world of Chinese thought.

When I started to seriously study Chinese thought in my senior years at Hongo, it was difficult because the other members were all graduate students. I had only one other classmate, I didn't know how to handle old books, and I was surrounded by graduate students. Anyway, I attended a class taught by Professor Hideki Kawahara on the history of science in East Asia. There, I read the Record of Music in the Book of Rites, and came across a passage that said: when people are happy, their hands and feet naturally move; they dance and they make sounds; and this is how music originated. I was surprised because this was the same feeling I had when I was performing. For my graduation thesis, I researched the Discourse on Music in Xunzi, which has some overlapping content with the Record of Music in the Book of Rites. Xunzi goes on to systematically connect the theories of human desire, human nature (the theory of human evil), and rituals. For my master's thesis, I studied the *Music Book* by Chen Yang (1094-1128) of the Northern Song Dynasty. While I was conducting this research, I began reading Zhu Zaiyu (1536-1611) of the Ming Dynasty.



Yuki Tanaka,
『中国の音楽思想』 (*The Philosophy of Chinese Music*)
The University of Tokyo Press,
2018 (received the 36th Hisao Tanabe Award)

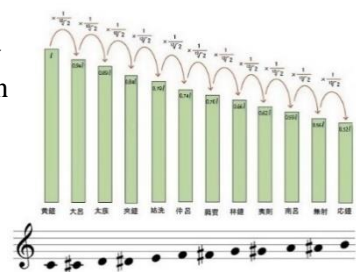
●Zhu Zaiyu and The Twelve-Tone Equal Temperament

- So this was the beginning of your doctoral research and your book *Chinese Musical Philosophy*.

My supervisor, Professor Kawahara, had always told me that I had to study tuning theory, and I finally got around to it after completing my Master's degree. In China, the Method of Thirds (the Pythagorean tuning system) was systematized in the Han dynasty and continued until the Ming dynasty. The Pythagorean tuning system is a theory that forms a scale by setting the first note to a certain pitch, determined by the length of the flute for example, then reducing it to two-thirds, then increasing to four-thirds the length, then reducing to two-thirds again... by repeating this process a scale of twelve tones is formed. However, for the original "do" tone and the "do" tone one octave higher to be the same note, the length of the flute needs to be exactly half; but this does not happen using the Method of Thirds. This discrepancy is referred to as "going but not returning". The calendar, the 64 hexagrams of the *I Ching*, and many other systems, elegantly return to their original positions after each cycle. In contrast, it was undesirable for the music tuning system to "go and not return", in relation to ideals of Confucianism.

- So it was Zhu Zaiyu who came up with a solution to the problem of "going but not returning"?

The Twelve-tone Equal Temperament system devised by Zhu Zaiyu uses a geometric progression rather than multiplication as in the Method of Thirds. By increasing the length by increments of the 12th root of 2, you can go all the way to do-re-mi-fa-so-la-si and then return to do, one octave higher. You can "go and return". Zhu Zaiyu described the Twelve-tone Equal Temperament in his 1584 book *New Theory of Musical Tuning* which was included in his compendium *Complete Book of Musical Tuning* (1607) along with 14 other works on astronomical calendars, dance theory, mathematics, and more.



Twelve-Tone equal temperament (Courtesy of AP. Tanaka)

- In the 17th century, equal temperament was invented in the West. Was there any exchange between the East and West?

During this period, missionaries came from the West, so there was some exchange between the East and West. However, Zhu Zaiyu lived in what is now Henan Province, and there is no evidence that he had any exchange with missionaries. Conversely, it is also not clear from the literature whether Zhu Zaiyu's theory of equal temperament was immediately transmitted to Europe at this time. Some say that equal temperament was transmitted from Europe, and others say that it was transmitted from China, but it seems more likely that it was invented independently, with only a slight time difference between the two. Rather than focusing on transmission, I think it is better to emphasize that it was invented in China as a way of solving the problem of "going but not returning" in the Method of Thirds, and that it was created in Europe and Japan according to different contexts.

●The Thought of Jiang Yong, From Neo-Confucianism to The Study of Old Documents

- Thank you. What kind of research are you currently working on?

I am studying the thought of Jiang Yong (1681-1762) of the Qing dynasty. Equal temperament was not widely accepted in the Qing dynasty, so much so that people returned to the Method of Thirds. Among them, Jiang Yong was the only one who recapitulated and thought that equal temperament was better. He evaluated equal temperament as more consistent with the ideals of *I Ching* and the calendar. I think Jiang Yong is an important figure in the history of Chinese thought, and was a key figure in the transition from Neo-Confucianism to the study of old documents.

Jiang Yong considered himself a Neo-Confucian scholar, but his adoption of equal temperament put him at odds with Zhu Xi. Also, there is a famous scholar of the Qing dynasty called Dai Zhen (1724-1777), who had a great respect for Jiang Yong's studies. My current research explores these developments.



AP. Tanaka explains the tuning theory using a guqin. Beautiful tones are played.

-So you're saying he was a key figure in the transition from Neo-Confucianism to Kaozheng studies.

Jiang Yong has a book called *Book of Rites*. Based on Zhu Xi's *Commentary on Transmitted Rites*, Jiang Yong arranged his book in his own way, quoting various scriptures related to rituals and adding annotations. Jiang Yong was influenced by Western learning, and also discussed astronomy, music, mathematics, weights and measures, phonology, and geography, but he considered all of these as the study of ritual. Going back to the previous discussion of Xunzi, rituals emerged from human desires, but they also maintain order in human society. I find the idea of incorporating stories related to science and technology into the questions of human society and what it means to be human very interesting. If I can systematically explain how technology and science were embedded in human ethics in ancient Chinese thought, I wonder whether we might discover something relevant for modern society.

●The Challenge of The East Asian Academy for New Liberal Arts (EAA)

-In addition to your own research, can you speak a little about the East Asian Academy for New Liberal Arts (EAA), which you are involved in running.

Oh, I have to promote EAA (laughs). The East Asian Academy for New Liberal Arts promotes East Asian Studies as a liberal art. However, the idea is expressed as *Geimon Shoin* (藝文書院). This is a reference to the *Yiwenzhi* (藝文志) of the *Book of Han*, which is the oldest surviving book catalogue in China, created during the Han dynasty. This bibliographic cataloging not only introduces the existence of books in this era, but includes the systematic organization of the academic pursuits of any given era. The Han Dynasty was established after the Qin book burning, and the books that remained were in disarray. Without the books, scholarship, ceremonies, and social systems could not function. The whole of society could have collapsed. Feeling a sense of crisis, father and son Liu Xiang and Liu Xin collated books, corrected typos, established tables of contents, decided on book titles, and compiled a bibliographic catalog. *Yiwenzhi* systematically organized academic studies and presented them as the academics of the time. By conducting scholarly pursuits within the tradition of East Asia (rather than simply doing regional studies on East Asia), the Academy opens up the academic field of this new era to the world. I believe that this is the meaning of our 'geimon' activities.

- The meaning of *Geimon* (藝文) makes sense. What about *Shoin* (書院)?

I once gave a presentation titled "Zhu Xi and the Shoin: the Academic Activities of His Disciples". Here, the *shoin* was a place for private discussion and research outside the public sphere, which was essential for spreading Zhu Xi's neo-Confucian philosophy to the general public. A characteristic of the intellectual history of the Southern Song Dynasty was that Zhu Xi's disciples gathered in various *shoin* around the country to discuss a broad range of subjects. For Zhu Xi, dialogue in these private places was important in the formation of his thought, and through dialogue he created a new trend in Confucianism. *Zhuziyulei* is a collection of answers that Zhu Xi gave to questions from his disciples, and I think that these interactions must have happened in *shoin*. The East Asian Academy for New Liberal Arts is also active at Komaba, where there are students and professors from a wide range of academic disciplines. I think *shoin* also sends a message that we should not confine ourselves to our own fields of specialization, but should rather create new academic fields through dialogue and with a variety of people.

- The EAA also hosted a symposium titled "The Universality of Writing Music" on 9 March 2025.

The ancient tale of *Utsubo Monogatari*, in which the traditional Chinese instrument *guqin* plays an important role, was scripted as a musical drama for modern times. It was performed in Kuala Lumpur in February and in Tokyo in March. Traditional Heian aristocratic costumes were also restored. The Kuala Lumpur performance was performed in Chinese, and the one in Japan was performed in Japanese, with kabuki actors also performing. An academic symposium was also held at the same time in Tokyo, but activities that straddle art and academia like this can be difficult to realize with regular research funds. This time, we received funding from the Rohm Music Foundation and the EAA's Ushioda Initiative of Arts. We conduct research with the support of donors, and I believe that it is important to encourage people to know about and to enjoy music research, including the studies I am conducting.

- Just as Mencius said: "Enjoying music together with the people". This was an immensely enjoyable interview. Not only did we have an interesting talk, but we also had the opportunity to listen to the *guqin* and look at some valuable Chinese books.

(Interviewers: Haruka Ueda, Photos: Masatsugu Nokubo)

At IASA, five divisions (Pan Asian, East Asian, South Asian, West Asian, and Pioneering Asian Studies) are advancing research in their respective fields. Various joint projects are carried out in collaboration with partners (inc. GAS and EAA).

【Professor Emeritus Haneda Masashi designated as a Person of Cultural Merit】



We congratulate Professor Emeritus Masashi Haneda on being selected as a Person of Cultural Merit for 2024. Professor Haneda was appointed to the Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia in 1989 and served as the director of the institute from 2009 to 2012. In the same year, he became vice-president of the University of Tokyo, and in 2016 was appointed executive vice-president. In 2019, he was appointed professor emeritus. He subsequently served as a specially appointed professor at Tokyo College, as director of Tokyo College, as an executive officer and again as vice-president of the university. After extensive work on the history of West Asia, with a focus on Iran, Professor Haneda published *The Creation of the Islamic World* (University of Tokyo Press) in 2005 and subsequently proposed the construction of a new world history that counters Eurocentrism. As an international leader in research on global history, he opened up new directions in world history research and education.

【Tobunken Library】

Establishment of the Asian Studies Library Branch, Embarking on a New Journey

A lecture was held on December 20, 2024 to commemorate the transformation of the Tobunken Library to become a branch of the Asian Studies Library from 2024 onward. The materials held by the Tobunken Library cover a wide range of fields, including politics, economics, history, literature, art, and religion of the Asian region, and is characterized by a variety of languages, including Chinese, Korean, Arabic, Persian, Thai, and Turkish, as well as Japanese and Western languages. In addition to monographs and periodicals, the collection also includes classical Chinese books, newspapers, archival materials, and microforms. In particular, the library has a large collection of classical Chinese books, many of which are difficult to collect today. Another unique feature of the library is its large collection of modern Chinese books and periodicals. The library also holds a wealth of materials related to South Asia and West Asia.

-Lecture program

- ◆ "Outline of the Tobunken Library", Professor Atsushi Kotera
- ◆ "The Tobunken Library as a sacred place: Buddhist scriptures, effigies and stupas", Professor Norihisa Baba
- ◆ "The Daiber Collection: Tobunken Arabic manuscripts and their digitization", Erina Ota (Project Assistant Professor for Asian Studies Library U-PARL) and Professor Kazuo Morimoto.
- ◆ "On the Chinese books formerly owned by the Ōkōchi family of the Takasaki Domain, held in the Sōkōdō Collection", Associate Professor Kyuichi Uehara



(Above) Professor Kotera giving a commemorative lecture
(Below) The Tobunken Library

【International Symposium】

Welcoming the 60th anniversary of the normalization of Japan-Korea relations

The 2024 Japan-Korean International Symposium was held at the University of Tokyo on December 4.

As 2025 marks the 60th anniversary of the normalization of Japan-Korea relations, the symposium, hosted by the Korea National Research Council of Economics, Humanities and Social Sciences and co-hosted by the Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia and others, was held under the theme of "building a foundation for sustainable cooperation between Japan and Korea". The content of the symposium covered a range of fields, including diplomacy, security, economic policy, civil society, and health. From the Institute, Director Takahiro Nakajima gave the opening address, and Professor Ryo Sahashi presented a report.



Director Nakajima giving his opening address

【Tobunken Seminar】

Thinking about long-term social transformation in Nepal

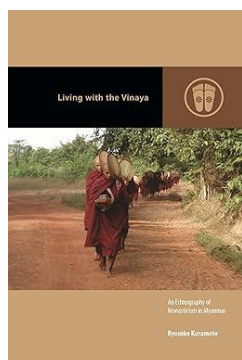
On March 18, 2025, the "International Workshop on Long-Term Social Transformations in Nepal" was held at Tobunken.

Professor Katsuo Nawa from Tobunken gave a presentation on the transformation of the political sphere over the past 75 years in Chhangru, a village in far-western Nepal, near the borders of India and China. Participants engaged in lively discussions that went beyond the scheduled time, and the event was a great success.

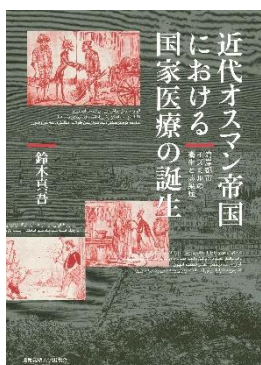


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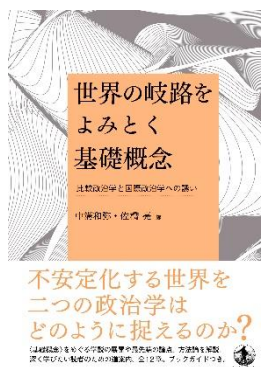
Below are the latest books written by IASA faculty members.



Ryoosuke Kuramoto,
Living with the Vinaya: An Ethnography of Monasticism in Myanmar,
University of Hawai'i Press, 2024.



Shingo Suzuki,
『近代オスマン帝国における国家医療の誕生』,
Keio University Press, 2024.



Kazuya Nakamizo, Ryo Sahashi (eds.)
『世界の岐路をよみとく 基礎概念』,
Iwanami Shoten, 2024.



Yutaka Suga,
『江戸饗養録』
(Chinese translated version)
Zhejiang University Press, 2024.

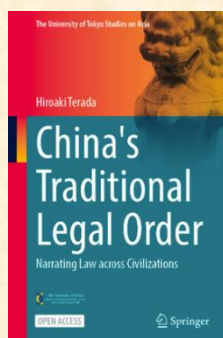
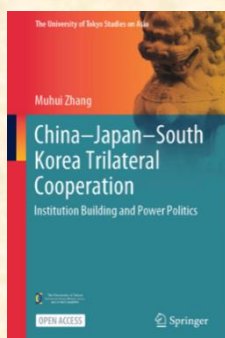
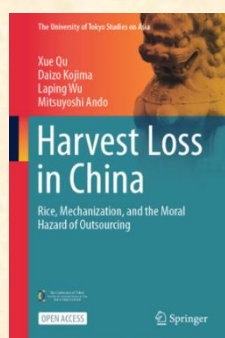


Haruka Ueda,
『食の豊かさ 食の貧困』,
The University of Nagoya Press, 2024.

【The University of Tokyo Studies on Asia Book Series】

From Asian knowledge to global knowledge!

The University of Tokyo Studies on Asia book series, led by Professor Yasuhiro Matsuda, disseminates excellent studies on Asia to researchers and students around the world. Following on from volume 1, *The Semantics of Development in Asia*, and volume 2, *Asia Rising*, introduced in the previous Newsletter, volumes 3 to 5 have now been published as open access by Springer.



volume 3, Published December 2024
Xue Qu, Daizo Kojima, Laping Wu, Mitsuyoshi Ando (eds.)
Harvest Loss in China

volume 4, Published January 2025
Muhui Zhang (ed.)
China-Japan-South Korea Trilateral Cooperation

volume 5, Published May 2025 (scheduled)
Hiroaki Terada (ed.)
China's Traditional Legal Order



<https://www.springer.com/series/17024>

Call for Contribution to the IASA Fund

Today, the population of Asia accounts for more than 60% of the world's total population and majority of the global resource consumption. With a torrent of crises threatening the existence of the human race, it is a societal demand of the modern world to systematize and universalize the Asian wisdom rooted in Asian experience of responding to uncertainty and to share with the world such wisdom transcending beyond Western-centric concepts. IASA will further enhance its functions as an international research hub by developing the world's top-level environment for Asian studies and opening it to the world. We have established the IASA Fund to promote new knowledge creation through advanced Asian studies and contribute to the achievement of SDGs by fostering researchers of Asian studies with an international perspective. We deeply appreciate your warm support and cooperation.

How to donate to the IASA Fund

- * Benefits for both the IASA Fund and UTokyo Foundation will be applied to donations to the IASA Fund. Please refer to our website for further details
- * Please note that shipment of gifts of appreciation will be limited to locations within Japan.

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<https://utf.u-tokyo.ac.jp/project/pjt180>



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Director of IASA

T. Nakajima

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