



Some Observations on the Study of the History of Cultural Interactions in East Asia

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A traditional Chinese ink wash painting of a misty mountain landscape. The scene features tall, jagged mountains shrouded in mist, a wide river in the foreground, and several small boats. The style is characteristic of classical Chinese landscape art, emphasizing atmospheric perspective and natural beauty.

1. Introduction

**1:1 East Asian history of cultural interactions:
“regional history” between “global
history” and “national history”**

“National history” before the WWII:

**China: Qian Mu, *Outline of National
History***



Qian Mu (1895-1990)





**1:1 East Asian history of cultural interactions:
“regional history” between “global
history” and “national history”**

**“National history” before the end of
WWII:**

**Japan: from “national history” (国
のあゆみ) to “people’s history” (人民
の歴史)**

A traditional Chinese ink wash painting of a misty mountain landscape. The scene features tall, jagged mountains in the background, partially obscured by soft, white mist. In the foreground, a river flows through a valley, with several small boats on the water. The overall style is characteristic of classical Chinese landscape art, emphasizing natural beauty and atmospheric perspective.

2.

Some Methodological Considerations

2:1 East Asia as a “contact zone”

1. Before 20th century:

**World order framed by the
“tributary system”
centered upon the Chinese
Empire**



費正清 (John King
Fairbank, 1907-1991)

**Cf. John K. Fairbank ed., *The Chinese World Order*
(Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University
Press, 1968).**

2:1 East Asia as a “contact zone”



(Tang dynasty) Corps of Tribute

2:1 East Asia as a “contact zone”

2. First half of the 20th century:

- “Great East Asian Co-prosperity Circle” centered upon the imperial Japan
- Memories shared by East Asian countries of Japanese invasion

Chinese people shot
by Japanese soldiers



2:1 East Asia as a “contact zone”

3. Second half of the 20th century:

- **“Cold War order” built by the United States**
- **The rising of American hegemony**



“Kitty Hawk” of the United States Seventh Fleet

2:1 East Asia as a “contact zone”

4. 21st century:

The rising “Economic Circle of Greater China ”

- China joins the ASEAN 10+3
- Japanese concerns over “peripheral disturbances” (周边有事)



2:2 Focus on from “result” to “process”

《Iwanami Series on World History》 (1970-71)



Sadao Nishijima
(1919-1998)

- 
- 1. Founding of the Yellow-River Civilization**
 - 2. Formation of the Yin and Zhou States**
 - 3. Formation of Classics**
 - 4. Societies and States in the Spring-Autumn and Warring States China**
 - 5. On the Hundred Schools of Thoughts**
 - 6. The Establishment of Emperor Domination**
 - 7. Institution of the Han Dynasty**
 - 8. Transportation, measurement, and monopoly of salt and iron**
 - 9. Establishment of the Confucianism**
 - 10. Usurpation of Wang Mang**
 - 11. The Latter Han and the Nobles**
 - 12. The Han Empire and the Surrounding Races**

A traditional Chinese ink wash painting of a river scene. The painting features misty, layered mountains in the background, a river in the middle ground with several small boats, and a shoreline with trees and buildings in the foreground. The style is characteristic of classical Chinese landscape art, emphasizing atmosphere and natural beauty.

Comments:

- 1) Mosaic rather than “holistic” view of East Asia**
- 2) Emphasis on “result” over “process” because of “de-contextualization”**

2:2 Focus on from “result” to “process”

Change of methodology:

1) Static view → dynamic view:

4 indices: Chinese characters,
Confucianism, laws, Buddhism

∴ Structural →

developmental

Hegel

(G. W. F. Hegel, 1770-1831)

Lecture on History of Philosophy



2:2 Focus on from “result” to “process”

2) Center (holistic view) →

periphery (developmental view)

China is an unavoidable “other”

(Nobukuni Koyasu 子安宣邦)

**∴ History of cultural interaction =
the process of constructing cultural
subjectivities of Korea and Japan**

2) Texts → ambiance, environment

∴ text → context

2:3 Interrelation between “national history,” “global history” and “regional history”

1. “Regional history” **within** the context of
“national histories”

→ **“Within” rather than “above”**

2. “Regional history” intertwined with
“global history”

1) **“Regional history” as
part of “global history”**

2) **“Global history” as
“trans-regional history”**



William Hardy McNeill
(1917-)



2:4 “Contextual turn” in the study of “regional history”

- 1. All the “cultural product,” (Roger Chartier) including classics and values, are products of specific cultural contexts**
- 2. Temporality and spatiality**
- 3. Certain “contextual turns” are required for the transmission of cultural products to foreign countries.**

a. Example:

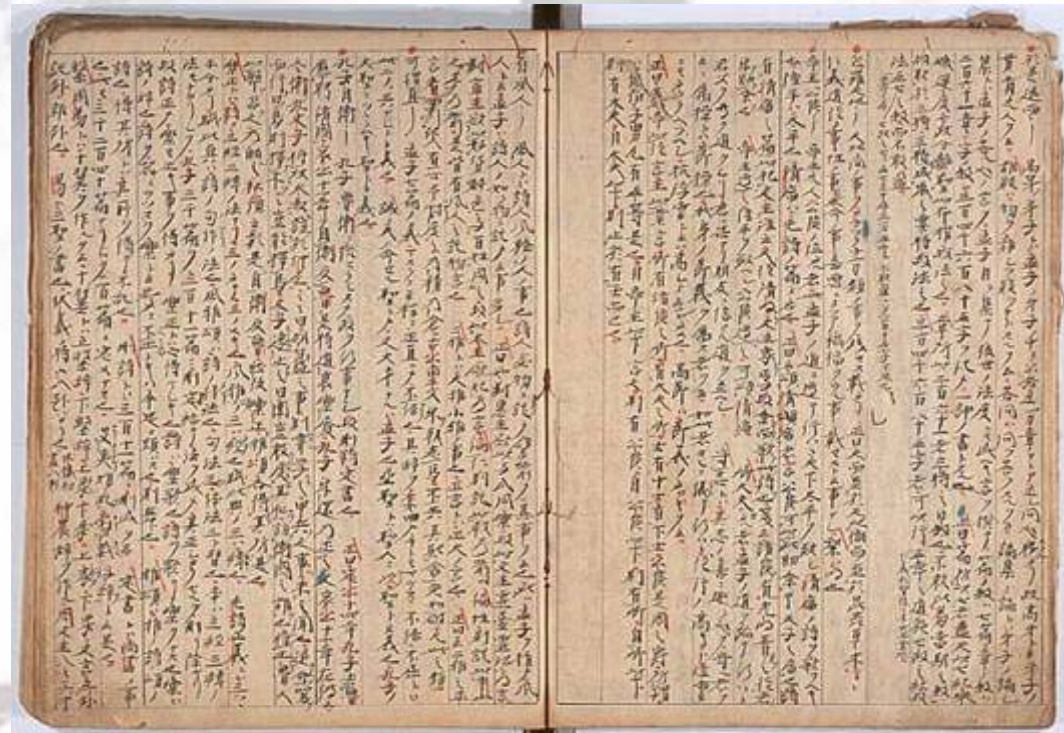
- 1) **Yi Hwang 李滉** (Toegye, 1502-1571):
edits *Outline and Explanations of the Works of Zhu Xi* (《朱子書節要》) (1556)

Due to the contextual differences between China and Korea, the works of Zhu Xi must be “trimmed” to be accommodated in Korea


Portrait of Yi Hwang on the Korean note



2) Japanese imperial lecturer Kiyohara Nobukata 清原宣賢 (1475-1550) marks “banned from His Highest’s reading” on *Mencius*



Source: Kyoto University Library (<http://edb.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/exhibit/s130/s130cont.html>)



3) **“Contextual turn” of the term “China”:**

“China” in the Chinese classics:

“Cultural identity” = “political identity”

“China” in the Japanese classics:

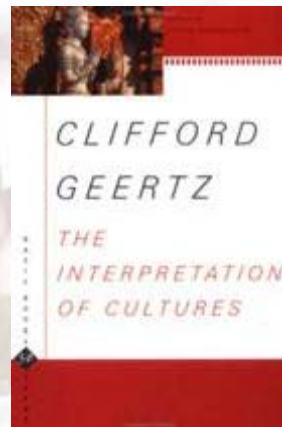
“Cultural identity” ≠ “political identity”

“China” in modern Taiwan:

“Cultural China,” “political China”

b. “Thick description:

Clifford Geertz (1926-2006)



“Web of meaning”

A traditional Chinese ink wash painting of a misty mountain landscape. The scene features tall, jagged mountains shrouded in mist, a river in the foreground with several small boats, and a small village on the right bank. The style is characteristic of the literati painting tradition, emphasizing atmospheric perspective and naturalistic detail.

3. Problematiques

3:1 Interactions between “self” and “other” in East Asia

- The awakening of “self” occurs in the interaction with “other”
- Four types of tension in the East Asian “contact zone”:
 - a. “Political self” vs. “cultural self”
 - b. “Cultural self” vs. “cultural other”
 - c. “Political self” vs. “political other”
 - d. “Cultural other” vs. “political other”

A. Tension type 1:

“Political self” vs. “cultural self”

Yamazaki Ansai 山崎闇齋 (1618-1682):

China → Japan

Confucius

Mencius



A traditional Japanese ink wash painting (suiboku-ga) depicting a river scene. In the foreground, two wooden boats are moored on the left bank. The river flows towards the background, where a small settlement with white buildings is visible on the right bank. The background is dominated by tall, misty mountains, with a prominent peak in the center. The overall style is soft and atmospheric, with a focus on natural elements and a sense of depth.

B. Tension type 2:

“Cultural self” vs. “cultural other”

Itō Jinsai 伊藤仁齋 (1627-1705):

“China” = Japan



C. Tension type 3:

“Political self” vs. “political other”

Zhu Shunshui 朱舜水 (1600-1682):

“Since our great country was subdued by the barbarian...I am self-exiled to foreign states for 13 years...The King of Vietnam ordered my presence, who is talented but somewhat wronged by biased knowledge. The flatterers were sowing discord between king and me, and the high officials shut their mouths. I was all alone against the slanderers...”

The background of the slide is a traditional Chinese ink wash painting. It depicts a misty river scene with towering, craggy mountains in the distance. In the foreground, a small boat with a thatched roof is on the water. The style is soft and atmospheric, with a focus on natural elements and a sense of depth.

D. Tension type 4:

“Cultural other” vs. “political other”

Double structure of the Japanese view of China:

“Cultural China” vs. “political China”

Cultural China — China as ideal

Political China — China as reality



3:2 Power and culture in East Asia

3:2:1 The Chinese case:

- 1. Ruling power in close connection with culture**
- 2. Terms in classics redefined by political power**
- 3. Classical texts filtrated by authority**

The background of the slide is a traditional Chinese ink wash painting. It depicts a serene landscape with misty, layered mountains in the distance. In the foreground, a river flows from the left towards the right. Several traditional Chinese boats with masts are on the water. The banks are lined with trees and some small buildings, all rendered in a soft, atmospheric style characteristic of classical Chinese art.

Terms in classics redefined by political power:

“Yong could be given the seat facing south”
(Analects 6/1)

Liu Xiang 劉向 (77 B.C.- 6 A.D.)

Bao Xian 包咸 (6B.C.-65A.D.)

Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127-200)

He Yan 何晏 (? -245)

A traditional Chinese ink wash painting of a river scene. In the foreground, a small boat with a thatched roof is on the water. The middle ground shows a river flowing through a landscape with trees and a small building. In the background, misty mountains rise against a light sky. The overall style is soft and atmospheric.

Classical texts filtrated by authority:

- 1) **Soft filtering: guiding the classics reading through official exams**

Of 46 questions tested about *Mencius* in the Palace Exams of the Ming dynasty, most of them were about inner personal cultivation, rather than outer political program.

2) Hard filtering: abridging the classical texts directly

- a. Zhu Yuanzhang (1368-98), first emperor of Ming, ordered Liu Sanwu 劉三吾 (1312-99) to censor chapters of the *Mencius* that were deemed slanderous of imperial rule, and to produce a new edition, titled *Abridged Texts of the Book of Mencius*.





3:2 Power and culture in East Asia

3:2:2 Taking cultural interactions as perspective:

- 1. Influence on each country by the shift of center of power of East Asia**
- 2. What is the influence on culture in the power relations?**

A traditional Chinese ink wash painting of a misty mountain landscape. The scene features tall, jagged mountains shrouded in mist, a river in the foreground with several small boats, and a small village on the right bank. The style is characteristic of classical Chinese landscape art, emphasizing atmospheric perspective and natural beauty.

4.

Subjects of Study

4:1 Interaction of personages

Yang Liansheng

楊聯陞（1914-1990）：

“Professional
intermediate agents”



4:1 Interaction of personages

- **Economically:** businessmen, entrepreneurs, brokers, agencies...
- **Socially:** matchmakers, go-betweens...
- **Legally:** lawyers
- **Diplomatically:** diplomats
- **Religiously:** missionaries, priests, wizards
- **Culturally:** teachers, translators, interpreters...

関西大学アジア文化交流研究叢刊 第2輯

近代日中関係人物史研究の 新しい地平

関西大学アジア文化交流研究センター

陶 徳民・藤田高夫 編



雄松堂出版

4:2 Interaction of things, esp. books

“Books Road” in East Asian cultural zone:

1. Chinese classics exported to Japan:

- 1) Estimated 1568 titles of Chinese texts were exported to Japan in the 9th century**
- 2) 70-80% of Chinese books were reproduced in Japan before the 19th century**
- 3) Enormous impact of *Analects*, *Mencius***

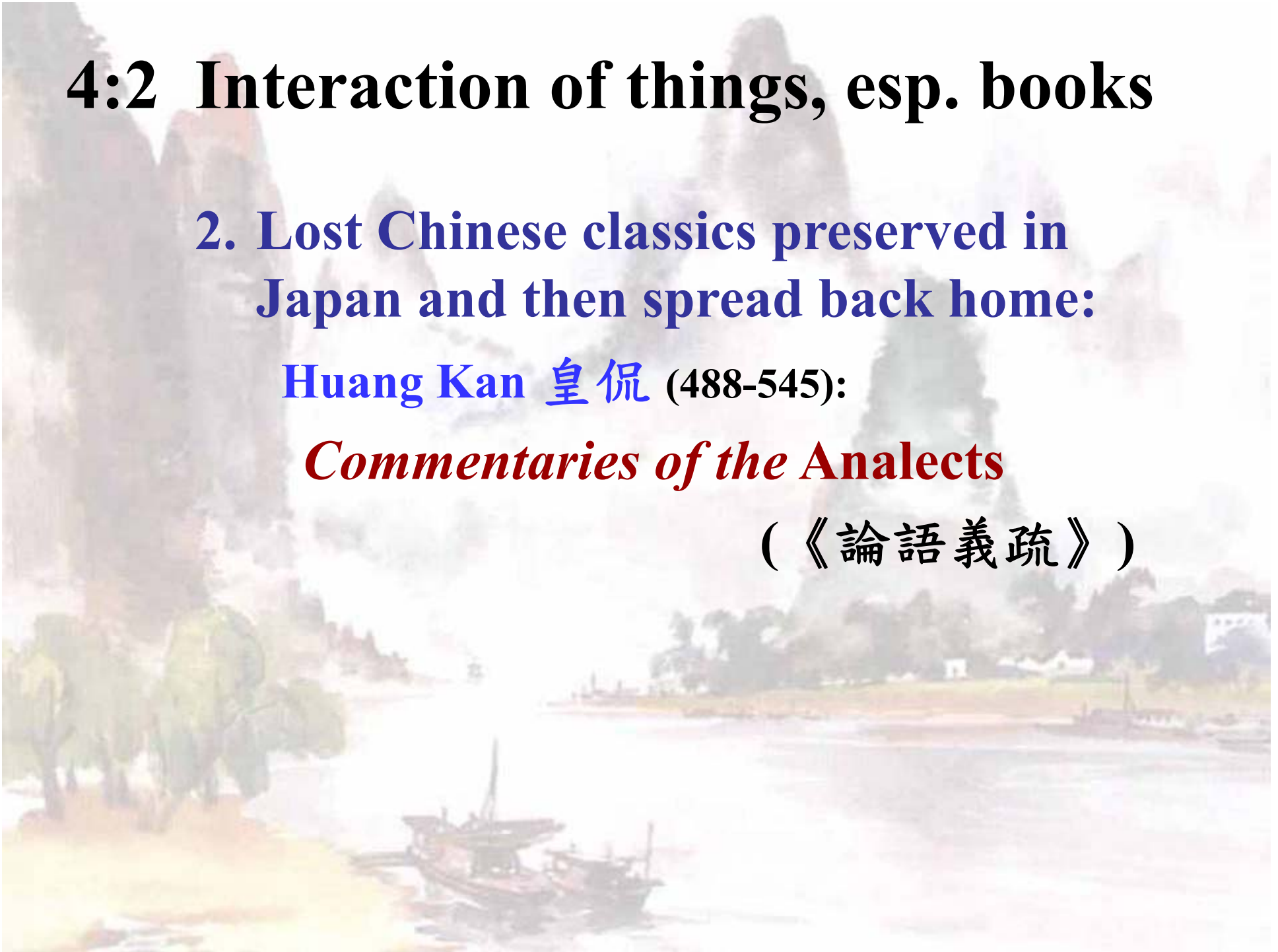
4:2 Interaction of things, esp. books

2. Lost Chinese classics preserved in Japan and then spread back home:

Huang Kan 皇侃 (488-545):

Commentaries of the Analects

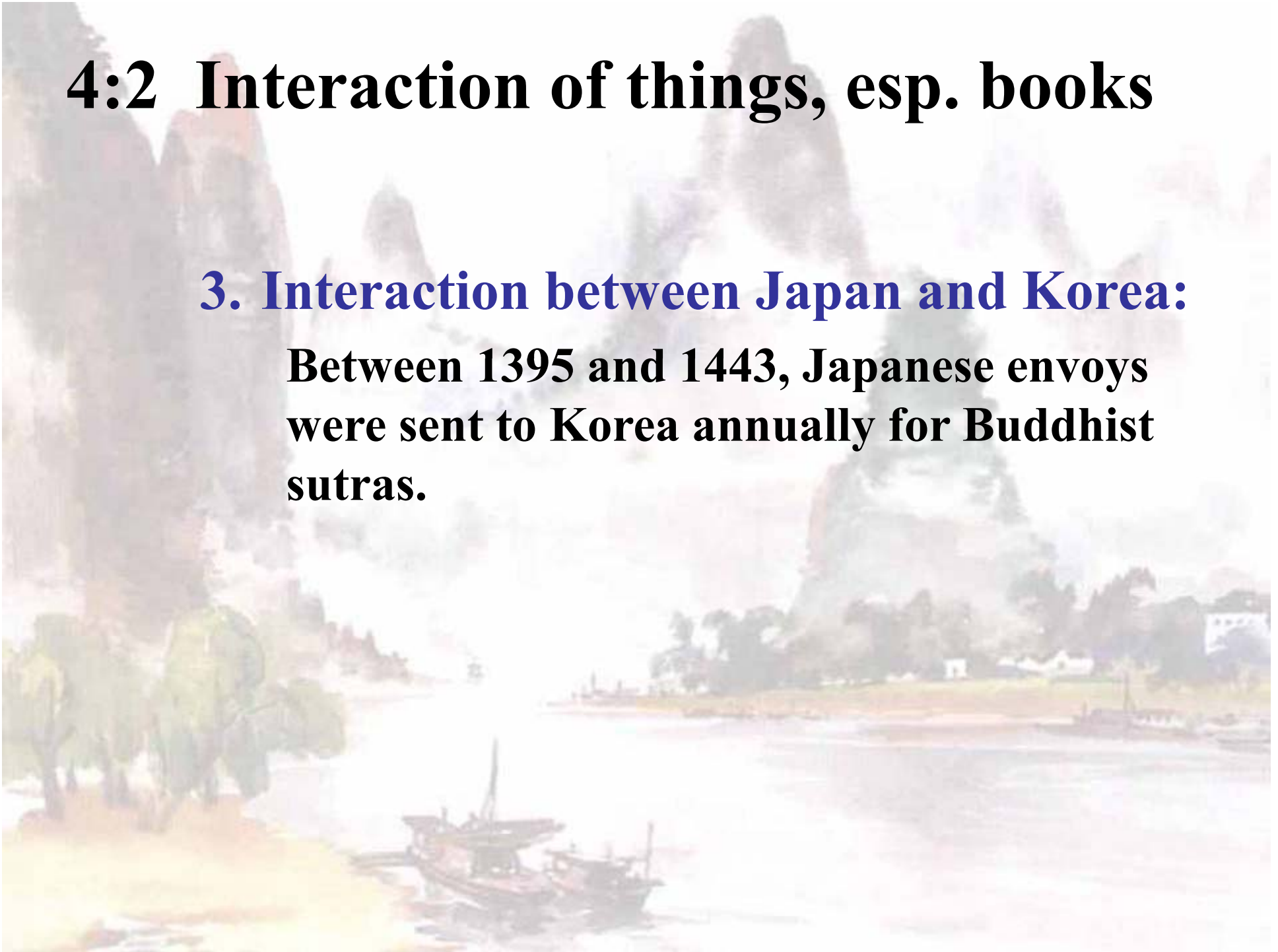
(《論語義疏》)



4:2 Interaction of things, esp. books

3. Interaction between Japan and Korea:

Between 1395 and 1443, Japanese envoys were sent to Korea annually for Buddhist sutras.



4:3 Interaction of thoughts

1. Mencius' theory of ostracizing despots:
→ Japan
2. “Cultural identity” in the East Asian interaction:

- Toteikan 藤貞幹 (1732-97):

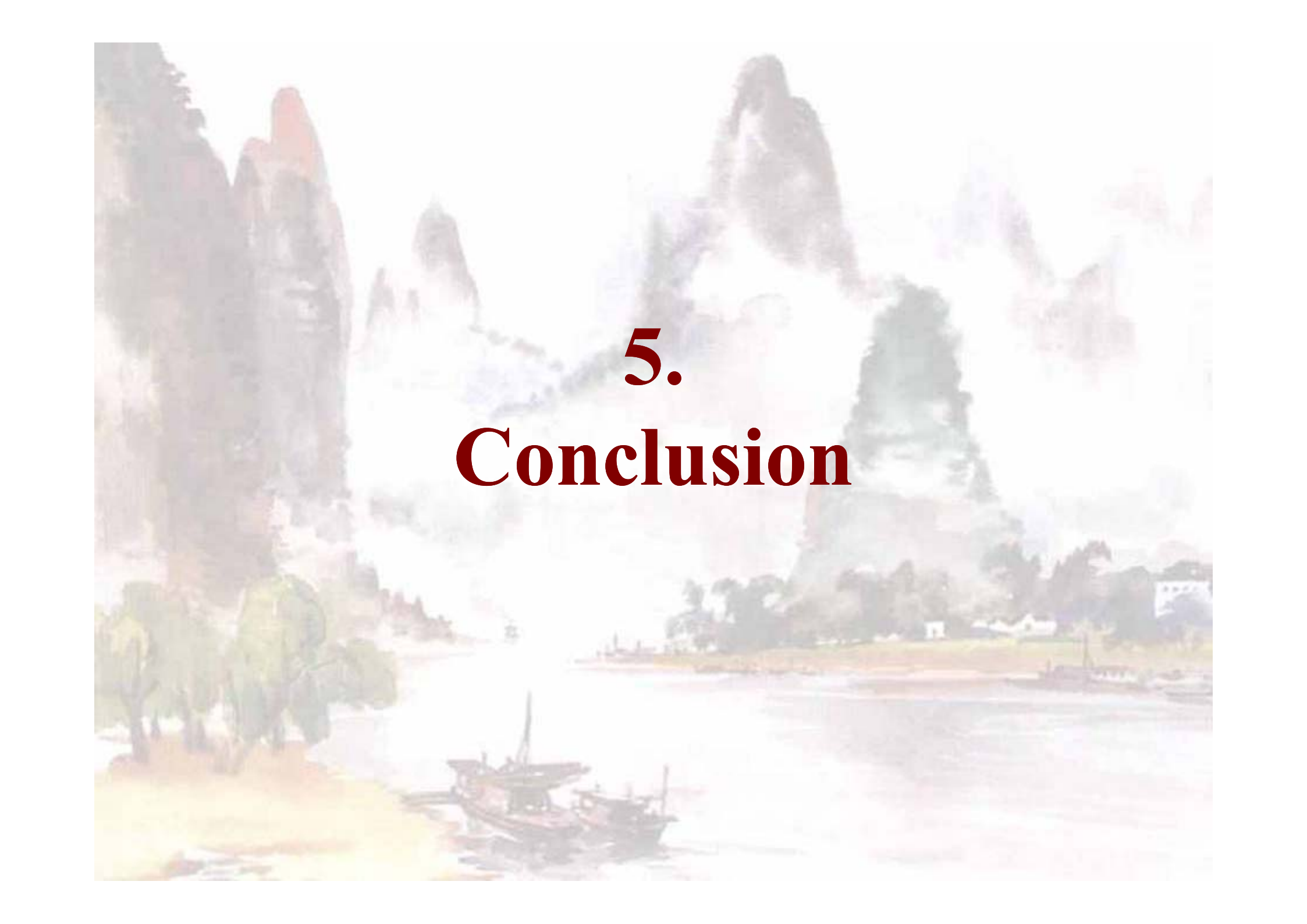
Shōkōhatsu (《衝口發》)

vs.

- Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1732-1801):

Kenkyōjin (《鉗狂人》)

“The Problem of Korea” (韓の問題)

A traditional Chinese ink wash painting of a misty mountain landscape. The scene features tall, jagged mountains partially obscured by thick, white mist. In the foreground, a river flows through the landscape, with several small boats moored along the banks. The overall atmosphere is serene and ethereal, characteristic of classical Chinese landscape art.

5. Conclusion



1. From “state-centrism” to the pan-East Asian perspective:

- 1) Japan: “Center of Excellence” program.
- 2) “Brain of Korea in the 21st Century” project
→ HK Project
- 3) Programs in the Institute for Advanced Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences, National Taiwan University.

➡ **transnational, multi-lingual, border-crossing**

2. **Ying-shih Yu** (1930-)



Yu receiving the degree of honorary doctor of Kansai University

- 1) **“Turn of new cultural history”**
- 2) **Each and every society is worth studying not because of its being part of a wider context, but of its inner value**
- 3) **Revisit the Asian traditions**
 - ∴ New horizons in the study of East Asian cultural interaction**