

The Otherness of the Method: Research on Koyasu Nobukuni's External Viewpoint

Wang Qian

School of Literature and Journalism, Sichuan University, Chengdu, Sichuan, China

Keywords: Koyasu Nobukuni; East Asia; External perspective; Community

Abstract: This paper organizes and analyzes the external viewpoints in Koyasu Nobukuni's research. The author believes that in the structure of "inside/outside" (community/otherness), Koyasu Nobukuni focuses on the following two groups of concepts, namely "East Asia" and "China", "National Japan" and "Countless victims". Through the intervention of such a critical external perspective, Koyasu Nobukuni unraveled the discourses of "nationalism" and "modernism" entangled in the history of modern Japanese thought, Revealing the essence of the modern Japanese state, and putting forward the concept of "historical community" and "Asian citizens" which have strong practical significance.

Koyasu Nobukuni is a famous intellectual history scholar in modern Japan. In an interview, he mentioned, "My topic of intellectual history is to re-examine the concept of 'modern Japan'(Liu, J.-H. ,2008, p.209)." In the history of modern Japanese thoughts, the concept of "modern Japan" has two views that argue with each other: one is the modernist discourse represented by Fukuzawa Yukichi and Maruyama Masao , which advocates learning from the West and gradually realizing Japan's modernization; another is an anti-modernist or nationalist discourse represented by Yasuda Yojulo and Takeuchi Yoshimi, emphasizing the inherentness of Japanese national culture and Asia's "Overcoming modernity". Under the influence of Michel Foucault, the discursments of Japanese archaeological exploration "East Asia," "the nation," and "Philosophy of World History" reveal the homogeneity of Japanese modernism and nationalism, in other words, they are discursments of modern Japan's quest for world self-actualization, and they propose a diverse approach to achieving an external perspective of community reconstruction. Koyasu Nobukuni explained the "external perspective" and "the other" as follows: "The so-called external is the other who is excluded from the 'community' that constitutes unity." (Liu, J.-H. ,2008, p.215-216) In the structure of "inner/outer" (community/the other), Koyasu Nobukuni focused on the following two sets of concepts, "East Asia" and "China", "Japanese state system" and "Countless victims", and through the intervention of this critical external perspective, the concept of "historical community" and "Asian citizens" is put forward, which has strong practical significance.

1. "East Asia" and "China"

"East Asia" and "China" are a pair of core concepts discussed by Koyasu Nobukuni. Taking "China" as an external perspective, he deconstructs the discourse of "East Asia" and discuss the essence of the modern Japanese state deeply.

1.1 What is "East Asia"

"East Asia" is not only a geographical concept in the history of modern Japanese thoughts, but also a developing cultural and political concept. Koyasu Nobukuni mainly discussed its three meanings: "Eastern world", "East Asian-style society" and "East Asian Consortium".

Firstly, regard East Asia as "Eastern world". This view is influenced by Hegel's philosophy of history and Karl Heinrich Marx's thoughts on the "Asiatic mode of production". Based on the concept of non-European region from the perspective of European Orientalism, this paper puts forward the "Rolon" theory

In "Philosophy of History", Hegel (2006) mentioned "The glory of the Eastern concept lies in the entity of the 'only individual', and everything belongs to it... The principle of their existence does not have to change, but their mutual status does not change. This history is largely ahistorical, because it only repeats the same solemn destruction that has always been the same. (p.97-98)" In "A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy", Marx (1971) mentioned in "The Asiatic, ancient, feudal and modern bourgeois production methods can be regarded as several eras of social and economic evolution(p.3)", regarding the "Asiatic mode of production as the lower stage before the birth of the capitalist production method. In short, both Hegel and Marx saw the East as a different and lower stage of society than the West.

After the "Perry Expedition" in 1853, Japan was forced to open its doors, and Western orientalism entered Japan immediately. Fukuzawa Yukichi's (1982) "Theory of Civilization" was the product of its influence. Fukuzawa Yukichi divided the civilization of the world into civilized countries represented by European and American countries, semi-civilized countries represented by China, Japan and other Asian countries, and uncivilized countries represented by Australia, Africa and other countries. He believes that "A Westerner advocates lofty arguments and displays disproportionate brilliance, while an Oriental speaks foolish words and displays disproportionate clumsiness (p.69-70). "Therefore, Fukuzawa Yukichi (1982) advocated "taking European civilization as the goal, determining it as the standard for all discussions, and using this standard to measure the pros and cons of things (p.11) ." Koyasu Nobukuni (2019) regards it as "the design of Japanese civilization or modernization proposed in response to the urgent issues of the times(p.3)", and it has the significance of self-examination for Japan after 1945.

Secondly, regard East Asia as an "East Asian-style society". This view is influenced by Karl August Wittfogel's thought of "Oriental-style society", and refers to the theory of an oriental-style community represented by China that has the same stagnation characteristics in politics or economy. The difference from "Eastern world" is that this kind of statement is quietly inserted Japan, who is the guide for the reconstruction of the Oriental society, between the Western-style civilized society and the East Asian-style society. In short, it is the theory of Japanese Orientalism. Naitō Konan's "Township Groups Society" and Moritani Katsumi and Hirano Yoshitaro's "Village Community" all belong to this category.

Thirdly, regard East Asia as an "East Asian Consortium". This view is based on the "East Asian-style society" and regards East Asia as a "Regional Destiny Consortium" with world historical significance. Its purpose is to overcome the "modern world history" concept of Europe, and build new world order of East Asia. The theory of "Overcoming Modernity" was born from this. Theorists who hold the philosophy of world history include Iwao Takayama, Yoshihide Takeuchi, Yasuda and Shigero, etc^[1].

1.2 "China" as the Other

In the discussions of Hegel and Marx, China and India are often regarded as representatives of the Eastern world. However, in the concept of "East Asia" proposed by modern Japanese scholars, China

has consistently been positioned as the Other^[2].

Firstly, in Fukuzawa Yukichi's perspective of "the Orient", China is seen as an "anti-civilization country" and excluded from the process of civilization. In Fukuzawa Yukichi's "An Outline of a Theory of Civilization," he categorizes both Japan and China as semi-civilized societies, but he "views China as the Other of the theory of civilization, while Japan is included in the process of civilizational development, rather than being excluded from it." In other words, he believes that both China and Japan were non-civilized countries at that time, but Japan could achieve civilization through learning from the West, while China could not develop into a civilized country. Fukuzawa Yukichi claimed that "Chinese society is dominated by the Emperor's authoritarian rule and supported by the moralistic Confucianism... Such a system is anti-civilization and, at the same time, a society that rejects intellectualism." Thus, by deconstructing the traditional Confucian concept of "intelligence and virtue," Fukuzawa Yukichi put forward the idea that only "intelligence" is the knowledge of progress and civilization, effectively keeping China permanently outside the gates of modern civilization^[3].

Secondly, in the perspectives of Naitō Konan and Moritani Koko, China is almost synonymous with the "Orient," but at the same time, it becomes the Other of the reconstructed Orient. Naitō Konan (2020) points out that "if China is still capable of achieving internal and autonomous innovation, its driving force can only come from 'rural associations.' However, the self-reliant innovation achieved by China through rural associations can only be realized through thorough corruption or comprehensive upheaval resembling the collapse of the nation(p.48-49)." In other words, Naitō Konan believes that "rural associations" constitute a social characteristic of China, but China cannot achieve autonomy through the means of self-defense by rural associations. The entity of China that he constructs, which is unable to undergo modernizing reforms and remains stagnant, is a reproduction of the "stagnant empire" image in the European Orientalist perspective. Consequently, China becomes the object of external reform, and Japan, as an advanced civilized country, gains legitimacy to reform China. Moritani Koko and Hirano Yutaro also argue that the "East Asian society" is a distinct system that differentiates itself from Western society, and the important function of village-style control gives East Asian society its unique characteristics. This statement provides a basis for the discourse of the "East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere." Meanwhile, Japan's aggressive war against China also possesses a moral nature of assistance to the East Asian alliance. Koyasu Nobukuni (2020) suggests that "at this time, the 'Orient' placed in opposition to the 'West' is no longer an Orient described by despotism and stagnation, but an 'Orient' with its unique cultural values and aspirations for innovation(p.129)." In the context of the Eastern reforms guided by Japan, China's continued resistance to Japan makes it the Other of this "Orient."

Thirdly, in the discourse of the "East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere" or the philosophical discourse of world history, China continues to be forcibly absent, which is particularly evident in the portrayal of the "September 18 Incident." On September 18, 1931, Japan launched an aggressive war against China, and on December 7, 1941, the Pacific War broke out between the United States, Japan, and other countries. In this period, Japan held the "Conference on the Standpoint of World History and Japan," the "Ethical and Historical Aspects of the East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere" conference, and the "Philosophy of Total War" conference on November 26, 1941, March 4, 1942, and November 2, 1942^[4], respectively. Representative participant Takeyama Iwao stated, "Due to the progress and expansion of the Greater East Asian War, the ambiguity of the 'China Incident' has been eliminated, and now we are finally on a very clear path(Koyasu Nobukuni ,2018, p.10)." He believed that "legitimizing the past Japan-China relationship is the ideology of the present Greater East Asian War(p.99)." In other words, philosophers like Takeyama, representing the "standpoint of world history," retrospectively viewed the Sino-Japanese War as a necessary preparation for Japan to confront Western modernist countries under the concept of the "East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere,"

with rationality and moral justification. However, Koyasu Nobukuni argued that the war that occurred on the Chinese mainland should not end with the conclusion of the "Pacific War," and the discourse of "world history" is actually a strong defense aimed at rationalizing the "Sino-Japanese War." Therefore, "China" and the wars involving China are effectively concealed and hidden as Others within the framework of the "East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere."

1.3 "East Asia" and Japan

In the context of "East Asia" and Japan, China as the "Other" represents an external viewpoint that Koyasu Nobukuni employs to deconstruct the discourse of "East Asia." Despite geographically being an intrinsic part of East Asia, China is often excluded from Japan's modern notion of "East Asia." The Sino-Japanese War is also concealed in the consciousness of the Japanese people. This suggests that the discourse of "East Asia" as common knowledge in Japanese society is not a natural formation but rather a result of Japan's political and academic pursuits in the modern era, aimed at masking Japan's true nature. In other words, it is not that Japan is inherently within "East Asia," but rather that "East Asia" is inherently within modern Japan^[5].

Major political events included the arrival of the "Black Ship" in Japan on July 8, 1853, to forcibly integrate Japan into the Western-centered capitalist world order; "Leaving Asia", published in March 1885, established the modernization road of "leaving Asia and entering Europe". In August 1894, the "First Sino-Japanese War" broke out, which Fukuzawa interpreted as a "civilization war"; In February 1904, Japan declared war on Russia. In 1915, China put forward "21 demands"; The outbreak of the "September 18 Incident" in 1931; The Second Sino-Japanese War broke out in July 1937. In November 1938, the Japanese government announced the "new order in East Asia". In July 1939, the U.S. government announced the termination of the Treaty of Amity and Trade between Japan and the United States, followed by the outbreak of World War II in September. The outbreak of the Pacific War in December 1941; The "Greater East Asia Conference" in November 1943; And the defeat of Japan in September 1945. Since Prime Minister Takeji's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine in 1975, Japanese leaders have continued to visit the shrine, damaging relations with China and failing to establish substantial good-neighborly relations with China until today.^[6]

In the academic field, from Fukuzawa Yuichi's deconstruction of the Confucian thought of wisdom and virtue to Konan Naito and Tsuda Saomaru's critical interpretation of ancient Chinese literature; From Takeuchi to Yoshimi and Saburo to the necessity of alternate rule in East Asia based on the differences between hieroglyphics and phonics; From Yano's Vipassana's limited "folklore study" to Tezuka's modern national ethics; From Maki Toki's discussion of "national language" and "Japanese" to the establishment of modern Japan's self-identity, he denied China's position as the "dominant player in East Asia" and positioned Japan as the center of East Asian civilization. On the other hand, modern Japan has constructed a discourse of "superiority." From Takeyama Iwao's "world history revolution" to Yositaka Takenouchi's "permanent revolution," from Teitaro Hodai and Jujiro's "denial of 'modernity'" to Masao Maruyama's "incomplete construction of modern society," from Yusaburo Oguchi's "longing for China" to Koichi Kaga's "continuous resistance in Asia," Japan has never had a perspective for self-reflection but has fabricated a structure of "conflict between East and West civilizations," making strong arguments for its continued political aggression.

It is worth noting that even during the Edo period, there were pursuits of self-identity and the construction of a negative image of China as the Other. For example, the Sakimon School advocated the mastery of the "dominance of the mind," emphasizing the subjectivity of the Japanese people; Ogyu Sorai's "ritual and music theory" inspired the establishment of the concept of national sovereignty; Motoori Norinaga regarded the moral teachings of sages as deceptive discourse hiding power consciousness; and Kamiya Mabuchi attributed the hypocrisy in contemporary waka poetry to

the influence of "Han ideas" that needed to be eliminated. Therefore, Japan's demand for independence during the Meiji era and the construction of its own civilization history during the Showa period are consistent with the traditions of the Edo period. In other words, the Sino-Japanese War is, on the one hand, the result of the consistent construction of the heterogeneous and negative image of China since the Edo period, with its negativity eventually manifested in the form of war. On the other hand, it is also the result of Japan's pursuit of self-realization in the world in the modern era. The so-called discourse of Japanese modernism and nationalism is actually the product of Japanese nationalism, and this logic of nationalism is homogeneous with the logic of modernist aggression in Western countries. This is the essence of the discourse of "East Asia" that Koyasu Nobukuni sees through the critical external viewpoint of "China," and it is also the essence of the modern Japanese state.

2. "National Japan" and "Countless victims"

"National Japan" and "Countless victims" are another pair of core concepts discussed by Koyasu Nobukuni. He uses "Countless victims" as an external perspective to reveal the internal closure of "national country Japan".

2.1 The formation and consolidation of the "nation-state Japan"

Koyasu Nobukuni (2022) once mentioned in "Archaeology of Modern Knowledge" that, "The relatively backward nation-state construction in Japan is based on what Benedict Richard O'Gorman Anderson calls the 'official nationalism' of the Prussian model, where the empire, through its policies of limitless expansion, defines the masses as citizens and thereby creates the nation-state(p.163)." The so-called "official nationalism" refers to "a means of combining assimilation and the preservation of dynastic power, especially their means of ruling over vast multilingual territories... It is a means of stretching the nation's short and tight skin to cover the enormous body of the empire(Benedict Anderson, 2016, p.83)." In other words, Yasubumi believes that the modern nation-state of Japan was formed and consolidated through the implementation of unified national cultural policies. The discovery of "Primitive Japan," the issue of "Kokugo" (national language) and "Nihongo" (Japanese language), the reconstruction of ethical concepts, and the management of historical memory in modern Japanese history all fall under this category of "national cultural policies."

The discovery of "Primitive Japan" can be traced back to the Edo period, with representatives like Motoori Norinaga in the field of Kokugaku (National Learning). They emphasized the inherent nature of Japanese culture and attempted to eliminate any "Chinese influence" in it, constructing a "national origin history" and creating what Koyasu Nobukuni(2017) calls an "ideological discourse"(p.249) consistent with the sentiment of "Fusō no Yamato Kuni" (the sentiment of "Japan as a unique country"). Modern scholar Maruyama Masao, in his "Studies in the Intellectual History of Twentieth-Century Japan," attributes the transformation of Japanese political thought and social order during the modernization process to the dissolution of Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucianism by thinkers like Ogyū Sorai and Motoori Norinaga. However, Koyasu Nobukuni (2022) believes that Maruyama's work "is an attempt to construct the conceptual framework of 'modernity' or 'modern thought' using the ideas of Ogyū Sorai(p.124)," as he revives Sorai as a "constructor" of the framework. The so-called "constructor" refers to the sovereign authority of the state obtaining authorization through a contract and becoming a "deviser of a natural person, a legal personality acting on behalf of the individual as an agent." (Koyasu Nobukuni, 2017) In other words, the modernization initiated by Ogyū Sorai carries the characteristics of the imperial system, which also forms the entry point for Maruyama Masao's analysis of the structural pathology of modern Japanese nationalism in "The Logic and Psychology of Extreme Nationalism." Koyasu Nobukuni (2017) argues that Maruyama's notion of

the "Entity of Edo" is "just another modernity in opposition to the turn towards Western-style modernity in modern Japan, a narrative that reconstructs Tokugawa Japan(p.143)," tracing the emergence of "Japanese modernism"(p.8) back to the Edo period and emphasizing its inherent nature as a form of nationalism.

In addition, Kunio Yanagita's (2010) construction of "national folkloristics" is also a typical theory of discovering the "primitive Japan". He believed that folkloristics aimed to "help a country 'understand itself'(p.6)" through the study of commoner's lives. Koyasu Nobukuni (2022) pointed out that there is a privileged observation of the "internal" aspect of the nation-state in folkloristics, and that "what people see in narratives about commoners...are discourses narrated by politicians, scholars, and intellectuals who are separate from the commoners(p.21)." Therefore, the so-called "folkloristics" discovered from the lives of commoners are actually nationalist discourses driven by the demand for national political identity.

Secondly, the concepts of "Kokugo" (national language) and "Nihongo" (Japanese language) are actually products that demand differentiation and superiority of the Japanese ethnic group. Makoto Tokoro realized that Japan could not simply spread the "Kokugo" as the spiritual heritage of the Japanese people to other parts of East Asia. Therefore, he proposed a dimensional difference between the "Nihongo" as the ethnic language and the "Kokugo" as the national language, positioning the "Nihongo" on an equal status with the original languages of various regions in East Asia. On the surface, it appears to be a judgment of superiority between "Kokugo" and "Nihongo," but in reality, it is a judgment of the status between "Kokugo" and other East Asian languages such as "Korean," with the aim of emphasizing the superiority of the Japanese ethnicity. Koyasu Nobukuni (2022) pointed out that "the differentiation of language based on political superiority obstructs the perspective of observing the national language from the standpoint of different linguistic ethnic groups, and as a result, the 'Kokugo' is enclosed within the 'nation' and never meets the perspective from outside(p.81)."

Thirdly, "Japanese Ethics" is a concept that underwent reconstruction in modern Japanese history. Prior to the modern era, Japanese ethics mainly referred to Confucian ethics. However, during the Meiji period, influenced by the ideas of modernization, traditional Confucian thought was deconstructed, and Japanese society experienced a "moral void." Among the various discourses on the restoration and revival of morality, the most significant was the concept of "Ethics as the Study of Humanity" proposed by Tetsuro Watsuji during the Showa period. However, Watsuji's ethics differed from traditional ethics in that he viewed ethics as the "way of humanity," referring to the social order of human communities, and he believed that the "nation is the ultimate form of the human community realized on the earth(Koyasu Nobukuni, 2022, p.189)." In other words, Watsuji's ethics can be understood as an ethics of the nation-state, a concept formed to strengthen the cohesion of the national community.

Lastly, the management of historical memory by a nation-state, including how historical representations are constructed, is an important issue in solidifying the national community. Koyasu Nobukuni argues that the historical memory of the Japanese nation is always in a fragmented state, which is particularly evident in the construction of "war memorials." On the one hand, these memorials serve as a reminder to "never repeat past mistakes," while on the other hand, as carriers of collective national memory, they bear the responsibility of reconstructing the collective identity of the Japanese nation, demanding successive generations of new citizens to reenact the sacrifices represented by the memorials. The use of memorials and commemorative museums to bear the burden of "negative heritage" is itself an act by the nation-state to symbolize and revise history in order to deepen the sense of collective identity. Furthermore, in the issue of textbooks, the nation-state directly engages in distortion and reinterpretation of the "negative heritage," as evidenced by the "Nanjing Massacre denial" discourse. From this perspective, Koyasu Nobukuni emphasizes the need to pay

attention to the "concealment" and "forgetting" within the postwar consciousness. They are not knowledge that can be unquestioningly accepted, but rather products of postwar Japan's reshaping of national collective identity, implanted historical consciousness by the nation-state to establish self-identity within people's consciousness.

2.2 "Countless victims" outside the country

Koyasu Nobukuni once said, "I didn't actually deconstruct things; instead, I tried to struggle alongside countless dead in the space of memory... The important thing is not to assimilate the dead into the nation(Liu, J.-H. ,2008, p.215)." The so-called "countless dead" refers to those who are excluded from the national system, who have not experienced the nation-state's reprocessing of historical memory, and who preserve the "past memories" before the symbolic representation of history^[8]. In modern Japanese history, these "past memories" mainly involve the "mass deaths and sacrifices" from China(Koyasu Nobukuni, 2022, p.145). In contrast, there are the "counted dead," who are written into textbooks, enshrined in memorial halls, and unified under the demands of national identity, unable to express themselves. Koyasu Nobukuni, taking the perspective of the "countless dead" outside the nation-state, recognizes that what is prayed for before the memorial is not a pledge of "never repeating," but a continuation of the aspirations of the deceased who have become the foundation of the nation and a pledge to reenact their sacrifices(Koyasu Nobukuni, 2022, p.151). In other words, the construction of "war memorials" in modern Japan is consistent with the ultimate proposition of nationalist ideology, where the nation-state "transforms all private existence on the earth into 'public ownership'," including the individual's freedom of existence. This reveals the conflict between the nation-state of Japan and the existence of individual citizens^[7].

The transformation of modern Japan^[9] on the issue of nationalism best exemplifies its transition from self-reliance as a weak nation to self-importance as an empire in its modern history. Fukuzawa Yukichi opposed the notion of "kokutai" (national essence) and advocated for the people as the main actors of the nation. He believed that the driving force behind a nation's history is the power of the people and the result of their spiritual endeavors. On the other hand, in the philosophical framework of Hajime Tanabe, people were seen as destined to "die for the nation," denying individual freedom of the citizens. Later, Kagami Mitsuyuki viewed the "masses" as the "resistant subjects" against Europe in Asia. In the post-war era, various war memorials and books that disregarded historical truths forcefully implanted the will of the nation-state into the minds of the citizens. From self-reliance as a weak nation to self-importance as an empire, modern Japan has traversed a path where the citizens gradually lost their individuality, leaving behind nothing but nationalist discourse locked within its borders.

By adopting the perspective of the "countless dead" outside the nation-state, Koyasu Nobukuni recognizes that various Japanese nationalist discourses, such as "folklore studies," wrapped within the framework of "overcoming theory," are in fact the discourse of modern Japanese nation-building, which is homogenous with Western modernization. The post-war discourse on the "counted victims" is a product aimed at consolidating and reconstructing post-war national identity. Intellectuals must strive to expose the historical memory that has been symbolically constructed by the nation-state and maintain a critical interpretation of post-war Japanese nationalism. Koyasu Nobukuni (2022, p.154) further proposes that this reexamination of history will fundamentally overturn the historical tendencies that discuss the past and collective boundaries together, thus providing an opportunity to construct a "shared historical body," "Asian citizens," and achieve true diversity^[10].

3. "Historical Community" and "Asian Citizens"

The theory of Koyasu Nobukuni is not only deconstructive but also constructive. On the one hand,

his analytical approach is heavily influenced by Michel Foucault's "Archaeology of Knowledge." He critically deconstructs and reassesses various aspects of Japanese modern political history, language history, and intellectual history, considering the "Archaeology of Modern Knowledge" as the "methodological prologue" to all of his works. Through the process of knowledge archaeology, Koyasu Nobukuni realizes that the problem of modern Japan lies in the lack of a self-reflective perspective. Philosophical discourses from the standpoint of "world history,"^[11] Kiyoshi Takeuchi's assertion that "Japan is nothing," and Masaaki Maruyama's analysis of the "structural pathology of modern Japan" all lack a questioning perspective on "what exactly is modern Japan." Therefore, Koyasu Nobukuni introduces the perspective of the Other, using China outside of East Asia and the "countless dead" beyond the nation-state as his method. He recognizes that various forms of knowledge in modern Japan are products of the nationalist demands for self-unity, unraveling the entangled discourses of nationalism and modernism and revealing the essence of the modern Japanese state. On the other hand, Koyasu Nobukuni attempts to construct a pluralistic East Asia that relies on the self-transformation of each country, forming a "Historical Community."^[12]

Firstly, the construction of a pluralistic East Asia requires the restructuring of nations rather than their confrontation. Koyasu Nobukuni presents several examples of "confrontation" in his works. For instance, Kiyoshi Takeuchi contrasts China and Japan to highlight a "resistant, autonomous, and genuine" modern China, juxtaposing it with a "submissive, heteronomous, and false" modern Japan. However, Koyasu Nobukuni argues that Takeuchi's depiction of modern China is actually a fabricated Other created by Japan's self-denial. Similarly, Yuzo Kawaguchi proposes using China as a method to counter Europe's monolithic worldview, but Koyasu Nobukuni points out that this construction does not lead to a pluralistic world; rather, it creates an antagonistic Chinese-style monolithic world. Furthermore, Shozo Honma's work "Journey to China" portrays Chinese victims, revealing the dark side of Japan's war against China and aiming to "accuse" the nation of concealing its wartime actions. However, this "accusatory" narrative provokes a "defensive" discourse in response, leading to a "closed movement of antagonistic discourse" in Japan's post-war discursive space. As a result, it fails to construct a "pluralistic East Asia."

In contrast, Koyasu Nobukuni considers the period of Sino-Japanese relations during the Revolution of 1911 as a "restructuring-oriented" model that can be referenced for the construction of a pluralistic East Asia. He stated, "For us Japanese today, commemorating the Revolution of 1911 is crucial for restoring the essential relationship that has been lost with China." There are two main reasons for this perspective: 1) Japanese individuals who were involved in the Revolution of 1911, represented by Hokumei Kitahori, held a stance that resonated with Chinese nationalism and stood on the ground of "Asianism" from a nationalistic perspective. Unlike individuals like Konan Naitō, who disregarded Chinese nationalist aspirations^[13], these Japanese individuals viewed the Meiji Restoration in Japan as the beginning of Asian transformation. They believed that China's national transformation could be connected to Japan's thinking and were "Japanese individuals who sought to establish an essential relationship with China." Similarly, Tomo Mikan also approached the Chinese revolution with a sense of camaraderie as a "comrade of East Asian modern people" ; 2) the Japanese individuals involved in the Revolution of 1911 were able to sense the atmosphere of China's revolution as a force that compelled Japan to change its continental policies. In other words, they attempted to reflect on and change themselves through the Chinese revolution. This non-confrontational approach, which allows for a collaborative and reflective engagement with the Other, is seen as a feasible path towards achieving true pluralism^[14].

In order to construct a pluralistic East Asia, the "Other" must be approached as a method rather than an entity. The term "entity" refers to a politically defined regional world, while "method" refers to a standpoint that allows for self-reflection through the perspective of the Other. The purpose of the former is to foster confrontations between closed communities, while the purpose of the latter is to break the closed communities and keep them in a state of continuous reconfiguration and movement. While communities have an inherent sense of entity, a commonality has a methodological nature.

Koyasu Nobukuni argues that only by adopting the viewpoint of the Other can we identify

problems within the community. However, this external Other cannot be objectified because if it were an objectified external Other, it would form a separate "community of confrontation." (Liu Jihui, 2008, p.216) The examples mentioned earlier, such as Takeshi Konoe, Yuzo Koga, and Shoho Honda's depictions of China, are examples of "communities of confrontation" in relation to the Japanese nation-state. They are entities rather than methods, and as such, they cannot achieve true pluralism. On the contrary, such a perspective rationalizes confrontations. For instance, the civilization theory, as exemplified by Samuel Huntington, creates multiple entity-based "civilizations" and portrays historical political opposition as an inherent clash between predetermined civilizations, thus legitimizing war.

4. Conclusion

Indeed, we are still facing global crises, and the discourse of East-West cultural confrontation and the concept of an East Asian community continue to be reproduced in the contemporary context. It has been over ninety years since the last world war, yet the lingering issues from that war remain unresolved. Many countries advocate for a diverse world, but some attempt to establish an imperial world guided by extreme nationalism. In this backdrop, Koyasu Nobukuni's perspective of using the Other as a method points us towards a true path to achieve pluralism. By adopting an outward gaze towards the Other, we can continuously reflect upon, deconstruct, and reconfigure our previously closed selves.

References

- [1] Anderson, B. (2016). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. (Translation by Ruirán Wu). Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House.
- [2] Fukuzawa, Y. (1982). *An Outline of Civilization*. (Translation by the Beijing Compilation and Translation Society). Beijing: Commercial Press.
- [3] Hegel, G. W. F. (2006). *Philosophy of History*. (Translation by Zhaoshi Wang). Shanghai: Shanghai Bookstore Publishing House.
- [4] Koyasu, N. (2004). *East Asian Discourse: Critique of Modern Japanese Thought*. (Translation by Jinghua Zhao). Jilin: Jilin People's Publishing House.
- [5] Koyasu, N. (2017). *Lectures on Edo Intellectual History*. (Translation by Guoqi Ding). Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company.
- [6] Koyasu, N. (2018). *What is "Modern Overcoming"?*. (Translation by Bingyue Dong). Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company.
- [7] Koyasu, N. (2019). *In-depth Study of Fukuzawa's "An Outline of Civilization"*. (Translation by Weifen Chen). Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company.
- [8] Koyasu, N. (2020). *Modern Japan's Perspective on China*. (Translation by Shengyuan Wang). Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company.
- [9] Koyasu, N. (2022). *Archaeology of Modern Knowledge: Nation, War, and Intellectuals*. (Translation by Jinghua Zhao). Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company.
- [10] Liu, J. (2008). *Other Perspectives and Approaches: A Profound Interview with Professor Koyasu Nobukuni*. *Culture Studies*, 2008.
- [11] Marx, K. (1971). *Preface and Introduction to "Critique of Political Economy"*. (Translation by the Compilation and Translation Bureau of the Works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China). Beijing: People's Publishing House.
- [12] Yanagita, K. (2010). *Folklore Studies and Research Methods on Local Life*. (Translation by Xiaokui Wang, Jing Wang, and Bin He). Beijing: Xuanyuan Publishing House.
- [13] Marx, K. (1971). *Preface and Introduction to "Critique of Political Economy"*. (Translation by the Compilation and Translation Bureau of the Works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China). Beijing: People's Publishing House. (Original work published 1971)
- [14] Yanagita, K. (2010). *Folklore Studies and Research Methods on Local Life*. (Translation by Xiaokui Wang, Jing Wang, and Bin He). Beijing: Xuanyuan Publishing House.