

# The Kyoto School's Influence on Taiwanese Philosophy under Japanese Rule (1895-1945)

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***Abstract:** While Formosa has a robust Confucianism tradition dating back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, modern philosophy did not occur until the colonization of Japan in 1895. This paper aims to examine this less studied area of philosophy and its genealogical relation to the Kyoto School. To this end, we first offer a brief review of the early development of Taiwanese philosophy, followed by a survey of Japanese philosophers' influence on Formosan thinkers. The Taihoku Imperial University's (Taipei Imperial University) heritage stemming from the Kyoto School is also explored. Moreover, we carefully look into the theory of Hwang Chin-Sui (黃金穗 1915–1967), a Tanabe Hajime's supervisee, which serves as a window into the philosophical connection between Taiwan and Japan. We argue that the pre-war Taiwanese philosophy has a tight relationship to Japanese philosophy in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.*

## **1. Introduction: Taiwanese philosophy under Japan's rule**

If we define modern philosophy in Asia as a systematic methodology for reasoning and thinking that is imported from the West, then *philosophy in Taiwan* was a consequence of the modernization that occurred during Japanese rule (1895–1945). During that time, philosophy in Taiwan was impacted by both trends of Western thought (e.g., Marxism, pragmatism, and Heideggerian philosophy) and the international context (e.g., the October Revolution, the Korean independence movement, and Woodrow Wilson's self-determination). In tandem with the rise of Taiwanese identity and public opinion regarding the building of Taiwanese culture in the 1920s, *Taiwanese philosophy* gradually emerged through a creative transformation from European-American philosophy, becoming a local philosophical response to global issues, such as human existence, religious reform,

and the political philosophy of the colonized world. Taiwanese philosophy thus constituted a reflection on both Japanese and Chinese traditions (Hung & Gao 2018).

The first Taiwanese philosophers are those who received a modern education as established by the Meiji government and its Taiwan Sōtokufu (i.e., the office of the Governor General). Although Lí Tshun-sing (李春生, 1838–1924), a Presbyterian merchant in Taipei, had written several books reconciling the disputes between Christianity and Confucianism since the late 19th century, the first serious philosophical work was completed by Lin Mosei (林茂生, 1887–1947). Lin graduated from the Tokyo Imperial University and published “On Wang Yangming’s liang-zhi” (王陽明の良知説) in *East Asia Studies* (『東亜研究』) in 1916. In his paper, Lin compared the concept of liang-zhi with Descartes’ and Kant’s respective notions of rationality. This approach was first employed by Inoue Tetsujirō and Kanie Yoshimaru and also used by China’s New Confucianists after 1921 (Huang 2016). Due to Lin’s creative transformation of Wang Yangming’s thought in terms of Western philosophy, his paper has been widely recognized as the first work in Taiwanese philosophy.

Unlike Lin, who grew up in the era of the Qing Empire, many Taiwanese philosophers were born in the Japanese era. They were bilingual, speaking Hokkienese (or Hakka) and Japanese. They then learned German and English as academic languages. Many of them did not know how to speak Mandarin Chinese until the end of WWII. Mandarin thus was the fifth language of these first-generation philosophers. This complexity of language affected both their ways of thinking and research focus. At least 22 active philosophers have been identified. Thirteen of them were educated in universities in Japan, 8 studied in Europe and America and 4 received PhD degrees. Only 2 were female and they were extraordinary in that era. When categorizing the philosophers by their genealogical relation, they can be divided roughly into four groups (Hung 2016), namely, German philosophy, American pragmatism, Christian philosophy, and modern Sinology.<sup>1</sup>

The first and dominant field was Germany philosophy. Many works are about Hegel’s philosophy, including Yang Hsing-ting’s (楊杏庭, 1909–1987) “Infinite Negation and Creativity” (無限否定と創造性, 1934), Hung Yao-Hsün’s (洪耀勳, 1903–1986) “The Philosophy of Tragedy” (悲劇の哲学, 1934), and Chen Shao-Hsing’s (陳紹馨, 1906–1966) “On Hegel’s civil society” (ヘーゲルに於け

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<sup>1</sup> In fact, pre-war Taiwanese philosophy also involved a series of thought resistances of the 1920s and it was a systematic response to cultural and political crises during this period, known as the Sit-chün Movement (Hung, forthcoming).

る市民社会論の成立, 1935). After *Being and Time* was published in 1927, Heidegger's philosophy became popular; Tseng Tien-tsung's (曾天從, 1910–2007) *A Preliminary Study of the Existential Philosophy* (『現実学序説』, 1934) and Ng Chiong-hui's (黃彰輝, 1914–1988) “Disturbed Morality” (不安の倫理, 1935) were published. At that time, Marxism was also popular. Instead of absorbing that tradition indirectly through Japan, Liu Ming dian (劉明電, 1901–1978) studied at Heidelberg University and Humboldt University of Berlin and chose Marx's philosophy as the subject for his thesis. Liu later returned to Taiwan and helped peasants protest against Japan's agricultural policy. He was arrested, imprisoned, and released in 1935.

American pragmatism was another influential field. As Lin Mosei pursued his PhD studies at Columbia under John Dewey's supervision, he employed in his thesis a pragmatist view of education to criticize Japan's assimilation. Pragmatism later spread throughout Taiwan when Lin became a public figure and professor at Taihoku College of Commerce (1930) and at Tainan Technical College (1931). Likewise, Liao Wen Kwei (廖文奎, 1905–1952) studied in Chicago with pragmatist E. A. Burt (1892–1989) to explore the dispute among idealism, realism, and pragmatism in his MA thesis. Liao was then instructed by James Tufts (1862–1942) and G. H. Mead (1863–1931). In 1933, a London publisher (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd.) published his PhD thesis with a new title *Individual and the Community*, under the series of *International Library of Psychology, Philosophy and Scientific Method*, along with authors such as Russell, Wittgenstein, Jung, and Piaget. Likewise, Su Shiang-Yeu (蘇薌雨, 1902–1986) attended Peking University during Dewey's visit to China (1919–1921), and his views were affected by pragmatism sympathizers such as Hu Shih (胡適, 1891–1962) and Jin Yuelin (金岳霖, 1895–1984).

Christian philosophy, systematically introduced by Scottish Presbyterianism, was also popular in Taiwan at that time. In 1907, Lí Tshun-sing published *After Huxley's Evolution and Ethics* to criticize the widespread evolutionary view. Later, Taiwan's Presbyterian churches sponsored many youths studying theology and philosophy abroad. Starting from the 1910s, for example, Chou tsai chi (周再賜, 1888–1969) went to the University of Chicago; Kuo mashi (郭馬西, 1892–1966) went to Auburn Theological Seminary and Columbia University; and Tsai Ai Chih (蔡愛智, 1911–19??) went to Doshisha University and the University of Chicago. Among them, Wu CK's (吳振坤, 1913–1988) philosophical view of religion was also affected by Seiichi Hatano (波多野精一, 1877–1950). Wu attended Yale

University after studying philosophy at Kyoto Imperial University. Likewise, Ng Chiong-hui (黃彰輝, 1914–1988) majored in philosophy at Tokyo Imperial University and published several articles on Hegel. Ng then enrolled in Westminster College Cambridge in 1938 and taught Asian Languages at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in 1943. Ng was also an advocate of contextual theology (i.e., an approach to interpreting scripture in terms of cultural context), and later, he was a diaspora leader of the Taiwanese independence movement (台灣人民自決運動) in North America.

Finally, modern Sinology (including Confucianism and Chinese Buddhism) was also a favored field. Lin Qiu-wu (林秋梧, 1903–1934) published a series of articles discussing the problems of Buddhist theology and practice since the 1920s. Kuo Ming-kun (郭明坤, 1908–1943) and Chang Dong-fang (張冬芳, 1917–1968) majored in Asian philosophy at Waseda University and the University of Tokyo, respectively. Tiu Chhim-eh (張深切, 1904–1965) was an activist who was arrested for plotting a revolt against Japan in 1931. Tiu then studied Marxism and Confucianism while in prison. After Japan's surrender, Tiu published *A Study on Confucian Philosophy* (孔子哲學研究) exploring the causality between Confucianism and the decline of Chinese civilization. Due to its politically incorrect views, this book was later banned by Chiang's Chinese nationalist regime in 1954.

In short, these four areas constitute the main fields of philosophy in Taiwan under Japan's rule, and they also provide valuable input to Taiwanese philosophy to this day (Hung & Deng 2018).

## 2. Influence of Japanese philosophy and the Kyoto School

Although Taiwan has a long tradition of Confucianism dating back to the pre-Qing era, modern philosophical methodology was introduced to Taiwan through Japan's educational institutions. While many Taiwanese intellectuals studied either Eastern or Western philosophy at the old imperial university system in mainland Japan, genealogically, their philosophical approaches can often be traced back to certain Japanese philosophers (Hung & Deng, 2018).

For example, before Lin Mosei went to Columbia, his early thought was inspired by Inoue Tetsujirō (井上哲次郎) at Tokyo Imperial University. According to Huang (2016), Inoue's influence was two-fold. First, Inoue is one of the leading

scholars of Yōmeigaku (陽明学)<sup>2</sup> in the Meiji period, which rejected the ideology of Edo's Shushigaku (朱子学) and was viewed as a reformist that catalyzed a series of revolutions in the Bakumatsu period (幕末). Lin also chose Yōmeigaku as his dissertation topic and aimed to develop Taiwanese culture when he was inaugurated as the chair of the Taiwanese Student Union (東京高砂青年會) in 1915. As Inoue particularly admired Kant's philosophy, Kant's idea of rationality was also the focus of Lin's early study, although Lin criticized Kant's idea for being dogmatic when compared to the notion of ryōchi (良知) in Yōmeigaku.

Another example is Chen Shao-Hsing (陳紹馨, 1906–1966), a pre-war social philosopher taught by sociologist Shinmei Masamichi (新明正道, 1898–1984) at Tohoku Imperial University. Chen's study centered on the concept of civil society, and he published reviews on Hegel's (ヘーゲルに於ける市民社会論の成立) and Adam Ferguson's (アダム・ファergusンの市民社会論) theories on civil society. Chen's research on social philosophy was stopped by the political atmosphere of post-war Chiang Kai-shek's autocracy. Chen later went to Princeton and then returned to Taiwan as a demographer. When Chen passed away in 1966, Shimame stated in a eulogy that if Chen had stayed and pursued his academic career in Japan, he would have been the forerunner of Japanese sociology along with Daidō Yasujirō (大道安次郎, 1903–1987) (Cheung 2016).

In addition, Lin Qiu-wu (林秋梧, 1903–1934), often called a “revolutionist monk”, evangelized Buddhist teachings in Korea, China, Japan and Taiwan. Lin was well known for his extension of Marx's criticism of Christianity to condemn the capitalization of Buddhist groups in Asia in the 1920s. However, few have known that his Buddhism was also influenced by Nukariya Kaiten (忽滑谷快天) during his study at Komazawa University. According to Yen (2016), Lin's holism view of Buddha (一仏) is the cornerstone of his philosophy, which was developed from Nukariya's monotheism-like view of believing in only one Buddha.

Additionally, some Taiwanese philosophers who graduated from Kyoto Imperial University maintained a close relationship to the scholars of the Kyoto School. For instance, Hwang Chin-Sui (黃金穗, 1915–1967), the pioneer of formal logic in post-war Taiwan, was Tanabe Hajime's student. Tanabe was a philosopher of mathematics and published *The Study of Mathematic Philosophy* (『数理哲学研究』) in 1925. Hwang also majored in both philosophy and mathematics. Although his philosophical view was closer to that of Nishida, Hwang's BA thesis was

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<sup>2</sup>Yōmeigaku is a Japanese philosophical school of Neo-Confucianism that emphasizes the role of mind in gaining supreme principles of knowledge.

supervised by Tanabe, which was later published as “About Everydayness: An essay on Phenomenology” (日常性について—現象学的試論) by the Philosophical Association of Kyoto in 1939. In this article, Hwang analyzed the basis of everydayness by employing Nishida's notions, such as place (場所), mediation (媒介者), and self-identity (自己同一).

Likewise, Cheng Fa-Yu (鄭發育, 1916–1996), one of the founders of experimental psychology in post-war Taiwan, was Nishida Kitarō's student. Cheng translated Nishida's *An Inquiry into the Good* (『善の研究』) into Chinese in 1984. Nishida's grandson, Nishida Ikuhiko (西田幾久彦), also wrote to Cheng concerning the world value of his grandfather's book in 1982. Additionally, Wu CK (吳振坤, 1913–1988), a Taiwanese reverend and theology professor, was influenced by Hatano Seiichi, although Wu had not been taught by Hatano during his study at Kyoto University. Wu also translated Hatano's *Philosophy of Religion* (『宗教哲學』) into Chinese in 1963. Tseng T'ien-ts'ung (曾天從, 1910–2007) was an esteemed professor of continental philosophy at the National Taiwan University. Tseng's thought was influenced by Kuwaki Genyoku (桑木嚴翼). Kuwaki not only endorsed Tseng's entry to the graduate school of Tokyo Imperial University but also wrote a recommendation preface to his seminal monograph *On the Theory of Truth* (『真理原理論』) published in Tokyo in 1937.

Another example of the connection between Taiwanese philosophers and scholars of the Kyoto School is Hung Yao-hsün (洪耀勳, 1903–1986). Hung is a key figure in the *Sit-chûn movement* of Taiwanese philosophy.<sup>3</sup> According to Liao (2016), Hung's thinking of the relationship between his theory of truth and existential philosophy (実存哲学) shared the same spirit with Miki Kiyoshi's (三木清) dialectic view between knowledge truth and existence truth. Additionally, Hung appealed to Watsuji Tetsurō's (和辻哲郎) philosophy to construct his own theory. Hung graduated from Tokyo Imperial University before Watsuji moved there in 1934. Although Hung had never been taught by Watsuji, his theory on cultural subjectivity was influenced by Watsuji's *Fudo*.

All these examples show that although Japan's colonization and assimilation were often their targets of criticism, Taiwanese philosophers were under the influence of Japanese philosophers, especially those from the Kyoto School.

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<sup>3</sup> The Sit-chûn movement is a philosophical trend that became a resistance in thought against assimilation, ending up as the building block of Taiwan's cultural subjectivity under Japanese rule (Hung 2016).

### 3. Taipei imperial University and the Kyoto school<sup>4</sup>

Taihoku Imperial University (TIU, 1928–1945)—the predecessor to today’s National Taiwan University—was the 2<sup>nd</sup> colonial imperial university founded in 1928 by the Empire of Japan.<sup>5</sup> In accord with the empire’s expanding policy, TIU was considered a research center for knowledge of Southeast Asia.<sup>6</sup>

The TIU contains five main colleges, including the *Faculty of Literature and Politics*, the *Faculty of Science*, the *Faculty of Engineering*, the *Faculty of Agriculture* and the *Faculty of Medicine*. Pre-university programs as well as graduate programs were also available to students.<sup>7</sup> Each college had various departments operating in the form of “lectures”. The members of a *lecture* consisted of a professor, assistant professors, assistants, instructors and office employees. Each *lecture* received independent research funding, offices and labs.<sup>8</sup>

Under the Faculty of Literature and Politics (文政学部), the *department of philosophy* consisted of five *lectures*. They are (1) lecture in philosophy and history of philosophy, (2) lecture in Eastern ethics and Western ethics, (3) lecture in Eastern philosophy, (4) lecture in psychology and (5) lecture in pedagogy and history of pedagogy. The above five *lectures* conducted major disciplines, including *Western philosophy*, *Ethics*, *Eastern philosophy*, *Psychology* and *Pedagogy*, respectively.<sup>9</sup>

Many prominent positions in the philosophy department were occupied by scholars of the Kyoto school. In 1928, the philosophy department opened with only

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<sup>4</sup> This particular section benefited greatly from our friend Gao Jun-He for sorting important leads out of numerous information regarding the history of the TIU.

<sup>5</sup> The first colonial imperial university was Keijō Imperial University (1924–1946) in Seoul, Korea.

<sup>6</sup> As the first Chief of TIU, Shidehara Hiroshi (幣原 坦, 1870–1953) declared: “The establishment of TIU aims at developing a research on South China and Southeast Asia centered on Taiwan by utilizing the geographical and human conditions of Taiwan”. Shidehara Hiroshi, “Academic Values of Taiwan”, *Taiwan Times* (1926, Dec). See also Li Dong-Hua, *A Study of the Early History of National Taiwan University, 1945–1950* (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2014): 1.

<sup>7</sup> TIU offered a three-year pre-university course for high school students beginning in 1941.

<sup>8</sup> Regarding the organization of TIU, see “Imperial university mandate no. 12”, (1919, Feb) in *An Overview of Taihoku Imperial University* (1928): 12–14. See also Matsumoto Takashi (松本 巍), Kuai Tong-Lin (蒯通林) trans., *History of Taihoku Imperial University* (Taipei: Kuai Tong-Lin, 1960)

<sup>9</sup> See “Taihoku university lecture mandate” and “Taihoku university gakubu regulations” in *An Overview of Taihoku Imperial University*: 20–22; 46–51.

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five faculty members, three of them were graduates from Kyoto Imperial University, namely, Mutai Risaku (務台 理作, 1890–1974), Sera Kazuo (世良 壽男, 1888–1973) and Danno Yasutarō (淡野 安太郎, 1902–1967). Mutai Risaku and Sera Kazuo were students of Nishida.<sup>10</sup> They were both professors, each conducting a *lecture* called “lecture on philosophy and history of philosophy” and “lecture on Eastern ethics and Western ethics”, respectively. Danno Yasutarō worked alongside Mutai as an instructor in Western philosophy and was promoted to assistant professor in 1930. Yanagida Kenjūrō (柳田 謙十郎, 1893–1983) and Okano Tomejirō (岡野 留次郎, 1891–1979) were recruited as assistant professor and professor, respectively.<sup>11</sup> They were also graduates from Kyoto Imperial University and both majored in philosophy. The former joined TIU in 1929 lecturing on ethics. The latter, a student of Nishida, filled the vacancy of a professor left by the transfer of Mutai in 1935. In short, these five faculty members were connected to Nishida directly or indirectly. A detailed list of departmental members from 1928 to 1945 is listed in Table 1.

Lecture	Name	Tenure / Job title	Remarks
Philosophy and history of philosophy	Mutai Risaku 務臺 理作	1928-1931 / Professor (Co-chair) 1932-1934 / Professor (Chair)	transferred to Tokyo Bunri University in 1935.
	Okano Tomejirō 岡野 留次郎	1935-1945 / Professor (Chair)	Dean of the Faculty of Literature and Politics (1942.3-1944)
	Danno Yasutarō 淡野 安太郎	1928-1929 / Lecturer 1930-1945 / Assistant Professor	
	Hung Yao-Hsün 洪 耀勳	1929-1932 / office employee 1933-1939 / Assistant	
Eastern ethics and Western ethics	Sera Kazuo 世良 壽男	1928-1945 / Professor (Chair)	Dean of the Faculty of Literature and Politics (1944-1945)
	Yanagida Kenjūrō 柳田 謙十郎	1929-1941 / Assistant Professor	retired in 1941.
	Tanaka Hiroshi	1942-1945 / Assistant Professor	Joined TIU after

<sup>10</sup> Mutai Risaku and Sera Kazuo helped with the revision process of the manuscript of *An Inquiry into the Good* (1921); Mutai also helped revising the manuscript of *Meditations and Experiences* (1922).

<sup>11</sup> Yanagida Kenjūrō was strongly influenced by Nishida. Works of Yanagida include *Nishida's philosophy as the philosophy of practice* (實踐哲學としての西田哲學, Tokyo: Kobundō, 1939); *The system of Nishida's philosophy* (西田哲学体系, Tokyo: Tokyo Shuppansha, 1946–1949).

	田中熙		Yanagida Kenjūrō's retirement.
Pedagogy and history of pedagogy	Kondō Toshiji 近藤 壽治	1928-1934 / Professor (Co-chair, also co-chair of Lecture in philosophy and history of philosophy)	transferred in 1935.
	Itō Yūten 伊藤 猷典	1929-1936 / Professor (Co-chair) 1937-1945 / Professor (Chair)	
	Fukushima Shigeichi 福島 重一	1929-1945 / Assistant Professor	
	Okada Yuzuru 岡田 謙	1930-1942 / Lecturer	retired in 1942.
	Himeoka Tsutomu 姫岡 勤	1943-1945 / Lecturer	
	Wakatsuki Michitaka 若槻 道隆	1930 / Lecturer	
Eastern philosophy	Imamura Kandō 今村 完道	1929-1930 / Professor (Chair) 1931-1937 / Professor (Chair, also co-chair of Lecture in Eastern ethics and Western ethics) 1938-1945 / Professor (Chair)	Specialized in Buddhism. Dean of the Faculty of Literature and Politics (1934.6-1937.6)
	Gotō Toshimizu 後藤 俊瑞	1929-1945 / Assistant Professor	Specialized in Shushigaku.
Psychology	Linuma Ryūen 飯沼 龍遠	1929-1939 / Professor (Chair)	Retired in 1940.
	Rikimaru Ji-Yen 力丸 慈圓	1929-1939 / Assistant Professor 1940-1945 / Professor	
	Fujisawa Shigeru 藤澤 苜	1928-1940 / Assistant 1941-1945 / Assistant Professor	1941: promoted from assistant to assistant professor.

**Table 1** The staff members of the department of philosophy at the TIU (1928-1945)<sup>12</sup>

Taiwanese philosopher Hung Yao-Hsün was also a faculty member of TIU since 1929. Graduating from Tokyo Imperial University in 1928, Hung first joined the “lecture in philosophy and history of philosophy” as an office employee and was promoted to assistant in 1933.<sup>13</sup> He was the only Taiwanese scholar who got

<sup>12</sup> See *An Overview of Taihoku Imperial University*.

<sup>13</sup> See “List of Staff members” of 1929 and 1933 in *An Overview of Taihoku Imperial University*.

published in *tetsugakuka kenkyū nenpō* (『哲学科研究年報』).<sup>14</sup> However, while many Japanese graduates from the Tokyo Imperial University immediately became assistant professors at the TIU (e.g., 中村 哲 1912-2003), due to Hung's Taiwanese identity, Hung was never promoted during his service at the department (1929–1939). He later transferred to the Japanese occupied Peking University and Peking Normal University in China and taught there until the end of the war.

In 1946, TIU was renamed National Taiwan University (NTU). Taiwanese philosopher Hwang Chin-Sui graduated from Kyoto Imperial University in 1939 and joined the department of philosophy of NTU after WWII. Having his BA thesis completed under the supervision of Tanabe, having direct access to Nishida's lectures and having been deeply influenced by them, Huang was naturally considered the first successor of the Kyoto school in Taiwan.

In conclusion, scholars of the Kyoto School formed a crucial part of the philosophy department of TIU, suggesting the undeniable influence of the Kyoto School in the TIU.

#### 4. Hwang Chin-Sui's thought

In this section, we focus on Hwang Chin-Sui's thought to present the result of a Taiwanese scholar pursuing his philosophical queries under the influence of the Kyoto school.<sup>15</sup>

In “About Everydayness: An essay on Phenomenology”, Hwang (1939) strives to delineate a structure of the ordinary world in which we live and the ways in which people relate to the world around them.<sup>16</sup> He begins his paper by analyzing the phenomenon of “this one day”, an attempt that indicates his great concern regarding concrete human existence. For Huang, the ordinary world is real and transcendental in equal measure. It is real for we are able to move around and act; it

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<sup>14</sup> See *Taihoku Teikoku Daigaku bunsei gakubu tetsugakuka kenkyū nenpō*, no. 5 (1938): 193–337.

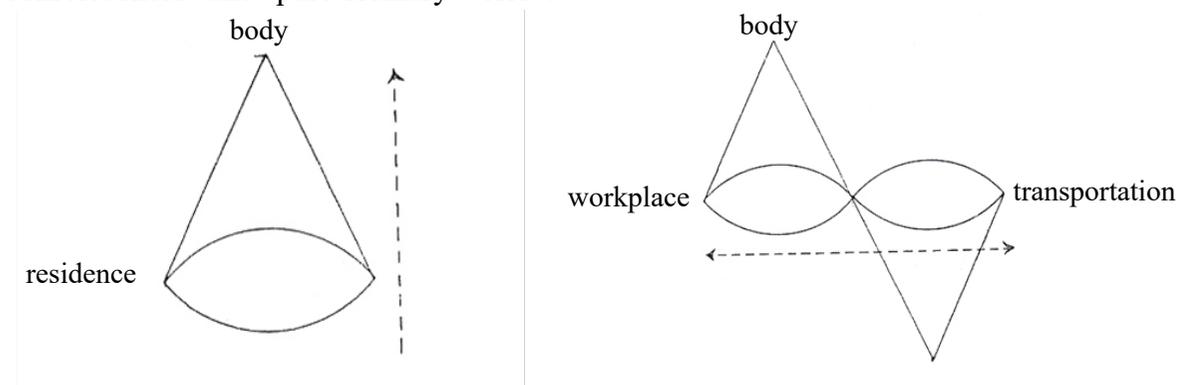
<sup>15</sup> After his BA thesis, Hwang set off his academic journey focusing on logic instead of phenomenology. See Hwang, “Protological Operations”, *Bulletin of the College of Liberal Arts, National Taiwan University*, vol. 13 (Dec., 1964): 443–462; “Formal Structure”, *Bulletin of the College of Liberal Arts, National Taiwan University*, vol. 14 (Nov., 1965): 471–490; “Theses on ‘Logical Manifold’”, *Bulletin of the College of Liberal Arts, National Taiwan University*, vol. 15 (Aug., 1966): 469–491.

<sup>16</sup> This paper was a part of Hwang's long lost BA thesis. See *Tetsugaku Kenkyū (Journal of Philosophical Studies)*, no. 279 (1939): 1–32.

is transcendental for there is an underlying absolute substratum. He explores individual existence in terms of self-consciousness and sustainability. The former fulfills the need of a philosopher; the latter meets the need of an ordinary man. Hwang proposes the idea of the deep night world as the substratum of everything including “ordinary intelligence”. The deep night world refers to a state of deep sleep of all conscious beings that manifests a halt of human ordinary activities. We further explain Hwang’s thoughts in terms of the role of the body (Section 4.1), implications of the deep night world (4.2), and the unity of absolute contradictory ideas (4.3).

#### 4.1 The role of the body

The body was brought in to mediate the world of consciousness and the deep night world. Hwang (1939) uses the idea of the body to build a prototype of the ordinary world in which the body itself is mediated within a system of household and a system of transportation and workplace. Generally, temporal and spatial characters are ascribed to mind and body respectively. Hwang depicts the body temporally by connecting various events of a discontinuous household system—the recurrence of a body in the household system constitutes a temporal process. As shown below, the body connects a person to different aspects of the ordinary world. Hwang further theorizes the projection of the body to different places as “pure ordinary self-consciousness” and “pure ordinary world”.



**Fig.** Hwang’s (1939) scope of the pure ordinary self (left) and that of the pure ordinary world (right).

Hwang's intent of building a formal structure of ordinary world centered on the body leads us to conclude that the irrational underlies human existence. Moreover, the body connects the ordinary world to the deep night world. During daytime, a person moves around through his or her body; during nighttime, a person sleeps through their body. Mobility and restfulness/stillness are characteristics of the ordinary world and the deep night world.<sup>17</sup> We have seen to what extent the body functions as a mediation; at this point, we need to explicate what Hwang meant by body in his paper. First, a body is a constituent of pure ordinary self—by living in a house—that subsumes everything possessed by the person, including clothing and makeup. Hwang describes the pure ordinary self as “a small galaxy of personal possessions”; body is not only one of them but the core of the galaxy as well.

When heard of ordinary self, we shall not think of the body directly. The image of self is not naked. Not only the body is a private possession of mine, so as things that surrounded me. Therefore, I named it the basis of the ordinary self, meaning a small galaxy of personal possessions centred the body. This is a small galaxy that corresponds to the prototype of the body, [the former] subsuming and accompanying it [the latter]. (Hwang: p. 7)

By the attachment to personal possessions, the idea of the body is individualized. The individualized body is further contextualized into the transportation system and workplace. Hwang's idea of the body indicates his recognition of individual diversity as well as social context. Second, the body is a dynamic unified whole (*Gestalt*) of human existence that encompasses the mind.<sup>18</sup> The mind is bound to ignorance of itself due to its unavoidable involvement into a subject-object relation.

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<sup>17</sup> The body not only has a mobility that suggests it is more than just an object but it also projects itself into a private residential world and a public occupational world. The body is a mediation that endows things in a world with meaning.

<sup>18</sup> *Gestalt* was originally a psychological term from Gestalt theory that developed in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Gestaltists opposed the reduction of mental life to atomic sensation. They then proposed the idea of “wholes” and “structures”, and claimed that these “wholes” or “Gestalts” contained a figure/ground structure. Therefore, the whole/Gestalt could not be broken down into elements. The figure-ground concept is central to Maurice Merleau-Ponty in explaining everything, as is form/matter to Aristotle and the conception of the *a priori* to Kant. The ground in the figure-ground relationship reminds us of the place in Nishida's logic of place. Though the resemblance between ground and place is worth exploring, it is beyond the scope of this chapter. See George J. Marshall, *A Guide to Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception*. Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 2008: 234–237.

In contrast, the body has direct access upon its own activities. One acts through one's body to cook, eat, rest and interact with others; it is the performer of life and the source of living. Despite a dialectical analysis of consciousness as "ordinary intelligence" in order to afford the mind an absolute accessibility to knowledge, Hwang's focus on the notion of deep night indicates the body subsumes and mediates activities of the mind.<sup>19</sup>

## 4.2 Implications of the deep night world

Hwang (1939) proposed a pure matter world of deep night that is absolutely devoid of mental activities. The theme of the deep night world is *sleeping*, wherein consciousness is suspended.<sup>20</sup> Hwang maintains that sleeping is essential to living and to philosophical discourse, he says,

I could not agree that discourses on sleeping are not philosophical for we reason philosophy as a result of absolute consciousness. We discuss the rhythm of life, why not sleeping? Sleeping is the immediate root of the rhythm of life. (Hwang, p. 22)

Conscious being restores its energy and invigorates its dynamic wholeness in a process of sleeping, which constitutes the deep night world. The deep night world is basically static and still, yet it envelopes a flow of energy within it. Hwang describes the deep night world as a big circle that contains numerous circles that are connected by the flow that fill the gaps in between these circles. The static circle refers to the shutdown of consciousness of the ordinary self; the flow of energy refers to the romantic and erotic self that is emancipated from the ordinary self.<sup>21</sup> Hwang named the latter *the world of gap*, which is where absolute freedom happens. Absolute freedom becomes possible with the absence of the constrained ordinary

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<sup>19</sup> See Gao Jun-He, Chang Feng-Bin, "A Meditator of Pure Forms: the Phenomenology of Everydayness and Taiwanese localization movement of Hwang Chin-Sui" in Hung, T. -W. (ed.) (2016). *Existential Engagement: Philosophy in Taiwan, the Japanese Era*. Academia Sinica & Linking Publishing: 292–295.

<sup>20</sup> Hwang declares "sleeping is the complete absolute subject of the deep night world". His idea of subjectifying sleeping is based on a painting by Spanish surrealist artist Salvador Dali, titled "Sleep".

<sup>21</sup> Though only mentioned once in his paper, "sexuality" stands out as an essential element that represents the irrational.

self. In other words, absolute freedom is related to the body. The world of gap serves as a bridge between ordinary selves. Therefore, every conscious being is essentially supported by the same energetic source and is not an isolated mind.

The tension between mind/body remains in the deep night world at some point. The mind is intrinsically urged to think, the body naturally falls into deep sleep. In a world that prohibits consciousness, the residues of consciousness eventually vanish in the comforting rhythm of sleeping. If this is not the case, the restless mind ends up in a mental extremization that is destructive to the energy restoring process. Hwang concludes his incredibly sophisticated discussion about “this one day” —the present—in a relatively simple phrase: (a better way of living) is to preserve our energies and spirit for the future. This can be construed as the present in which we live intertwined with the past while forming the future. The reflective power conflicts with the sustaining power. The deep night world serves the purpose of preserving a person's sustaining power by putting consciousness on hold, thereby allowing the dynamic self-reinvigorating process to function effectively.

### 4.3 The unity of absolute contradictory ideas

Hwang (1939) appeals to several philosophical ideas from Nishida, Robert Louis Stevenson, Arthur Rimbaud, Bergson and Hegel. A Hegelian dialectic is ubiquitous in the works of Nishida and Tanabe, as well as Hwang. In what follows, we focus on the accessibility of Hwang's Hegelian dialectical account of self-consciousness and the deep night world. According to Hwang, self-consciousness is both aware and unaware of the ordinary world; the deep night world is both static and dynamic. Huang analyses four different level of self-consciousness in a dialectical way to finally achieve a self that is real and transcendental. As in the case of the deep night world, it is a world that serves as the absolute substratum of the ordinary world. In its stillness encompasses a live sustaining sleeping process that at a certain point bears an awakening activity of the self-consciousness that contradicts the law of the deep night world (which prohibits everything and at the same time defines everything). To illustrate the accessibility of Huang's account of the unity of contradictory ideas, in what follows this section introduces the Mobius band. Let us consider a pair of contradictory ideas as the opposite spheres of a strip of paper—the sole connection of the opposite spheres is that they are on the back of the other (which means they are literally opposite). Now hold one end of the strip of paper

and do a 180 degree rotation to the other end and joint both ends, a Mobius band with a single sphere is thereby completed. By turning a strip of paper into a Mobius band, the clear-cut opposite spheres blend into one—two independent spheres that is absolutely separated as in the shape of a strip get to meet each other and form a circular whole by means of a simple twist. The Mobius band illustrates the accessibility of Hwang’s dialectical discussion that aims to transcend the boundary of contradictory ideas.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to the application of a dialectical method, Hwang’s pure ordinary self-consciousness resembles Nishida’s *jikaku*, which refers to “self-awareness” or “self-consciousness” and is the essence of Nishida’s philosophy. Nishida uses the term *place* (*basho*) as a new philosophical terminology to elaborate where physical objects and mental acts occur. Though enveloping both physical objects and mental acts, Nishida understands *place* as a special type of consciousness that is beyond the polar dichotomy of mind and matter. The logic of place explains that consciousness constitutes an ultimate living reality without resorting to any particular individual. The place of *absolute nothingness* is nothing yet it encompasses everything.<sup>23</sup> The contradiction we found here is supposed to be dissolved given Nishida’s Asian-based cultural insight into seeing “the form of the formless”.<sup>24</sup>

Despite its mutually implicating nature of mind and matter, the logic of place is not immune to Tanabe’s opposition to the idea of a derivative world.<sup>25</sup> The natural world and the individuals who inhabit it are not products of consciousness. Considering Hwang account of the deep night world, we could say that Hwang departs from Nishida and is in agreement with Tanabe on this point.

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<sup>22</sup> Only with a rotation of 180 degree will the original front and back sphere join and form a new single sphere that consists of the two. In other words, if we form a circle with the strip of paper without the twist, the opposition of the front and back sphere remains. The latter resembles a strict deductive way of constructing an argument, the former resembles a dialectical way of developing an argument in which the conclusion is bound to mean more than the premises do—new meaning is thereby created.

<sup>23</sup> See Nishida, “Basho”, *Complete works of Nishida* vol. 4 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2003).

<sup>24</sup> See Nishida, “A preface to from the actor to the seer”, [*Hataraku mono kara miru mono e*] *Complete works of Nishida* vol. 3 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2003): 253.

<sup>25</sup> Aside from the issue of ending up in a derivative world, Tanabe also criticizes Nishida’s account of absolute nothingness as consciousness for consciousness would not be nothingness but rather being, thereby deprived of a dialectical conversion where the death and resurrection of the self happens. See Tanabe, “Clarifying the Meaning of the Logic of Species”, [*Shu no ronri no imi o akiraka ni su*] *Collected works of Tanabe Hajime* vol. 6 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 1963).

In conclusion, Hwang's thought is significantly influenced by the Kyoto School as well as German idealism. His work is intertwined with philosophical dialectics and poetic imaginations that are somewhat difficult to decipher. However, as a 24-year-old he clearly expresses his attempt to answer the question of "how should we live?" by contemplating the ordinary world in which we live in, using philosophical terminologies he learnt from Nishida and Tanabe to delineate a highly abstract structure of the world. Contrast to the complexity of his discussion, the answer he proposed—to preserve our energies and spirit for the future – is rather obvious yet insightful.

### 5. Conclusions and further questions

To summarize, this paper aims to clarify the less studied area of Taiwanese Philosophy under Japanese rule and its genealogical relation to the Kyoto School. Section 1 contains a brief review of the early philosophical development under Japan's rule. Section 2 explores the influence of Japanese philosophy on Formosan thinkers and Section 3 explains Taihoku Imperial University's heritage stemming from the Kyoto School. Moreover, Section 4 carefully examines Hwang Chin-Sui's thought, serving as a window into the philosophical connection between Taiwan and Japan.

To conclude, while Formosa has a robust Confucianism tradition dating back to the 17th century, modern philosophy did not begin until the colonization of Japan in 1895. Although Japan's cultural assimilation (i.e., Japanization) in tandem with its modernization were often the criticizing targets of Taiwanese intellectuals, Taiwanese philosophers were under the influence of Japanese philosophers, especially those from the Kyoto School. However, later, as the pressure of Japanization increased, the inhabitants' awareness of self/other emerged, finally leading to the Sit-chün movement of Taiwanese philosophy (台湾哲学の実存運動).—a rebellion in thought against, as well as a creative transformation of, Japanese and Chinese philosophies (Hung 2016). In other words, while Taiwan inherits a dual tradition from China and Japan, philosophers in the 1920s seek to find a third way out. Thus, we may say that it was Japanization which gave birth to the Taiwanization of philosophy in the 1920s.

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