A Study on the Changing Trends in the Publication of Chinese Philosophy-Related Works in Postwar Japan (1945–2023)

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Abstract

In today's world, the state of a country's publishing industry can, to a certain extent, reflect its conditions across various sectors, including economy and culture. Chinese philosophical thought has long served as one of the foundational elements of Japanese culture. In early and premodern history, Japanese Confucianism and Kokugaku—both constructed on the basis of Chinese philosophy—formed the basis for understanding modern Japanese national character. The exchange of ideas in the universal and profound field of philosophy reflects not only the intellectual dialogue among academic elites in both countries but also the cultural and ideological interactions at the grassroots level. This study examines the publications related to Chinese philosophy in Japan from 1945 to 2023. It systematically collects and organizes relevant publication data, employing statistical methods for data cleaning, verification, and analysis. The overall research is divided into five stages, through which the changing trends and influencing factors in the publication of Chinese philosophy-related works in postwar Japan are elaborated and analyzed.

Keywords: Japan; publishing; philosophy

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1. Definition of "Philosophy"

The term "philosophy" (originally *philosophy* in Western languages) was first introduced into Japanese by the philosopher Nishi Amane, who also standardized its translation. Subsequent curricular reforms at the University of Tokyo linked "philosophy" with Eastern traditions, incorporating pre-Qin schools of thought such as Confucianism and Daoism into the philosophy curriculum. As a result, conceptual frameworks such as "Eastern philosophy" and "Shina philosophy" (an old term for Chinese philosophy) began to take shape. Clearly, the notion of "philosophy" at that point had already absorbed aspects of "Chinese thought."

Later, through the influence of prominent scholars such as Liang Qichao, Cai Yuanpei, Wang Guowei, and Huang Zunxian, the term "philosophy" gradually entered China as well, where various traditional schools of thought were subsumed under the newly adopted concept. Professor Hayashibe Shigeru has also noted: "The situation in Chinese academia is somewhat different from that in Japan, but most scholars have an even vaguer understanding of the distinction between 'philosophy' and 'thought.' Literature on ideas (including works on literature, art, and historical sources) is often treated as textual evidence for philosophical inquiry."

It is thus evident that the meaning of "philosophy" has broadened over time, no longer limited to Confucianism but extending to religious traditions such as Buddhism and Daoism. Therefore, in this study, the term "Chinese philosophy" is defined as *Chinese philosophical thought*. The scope of Chinese philosophy-related publications examined includes: Confucian thought, Daoist thought, Buddhist thought, modern and contemporary Chinese thought, Ming–Qing intellectual traditions, Neo-Confucianism of the Song–Ming period, and pre-Qin philosophy.

2. General Study on the Number of Chinese Philosophy-Related Publications in Postwar Japan

This study selects Chinese philosophy-related publications in Japan from 1945 to 2023 as the object of investigation, based on data retrieved from the National Diet Library of Japan. The publication data during this period was systematically collected and organized. The dataset covers annual publication volumes, publication types, publishing institutions, and other relevant information, forming a relatively complete time series for analysis.

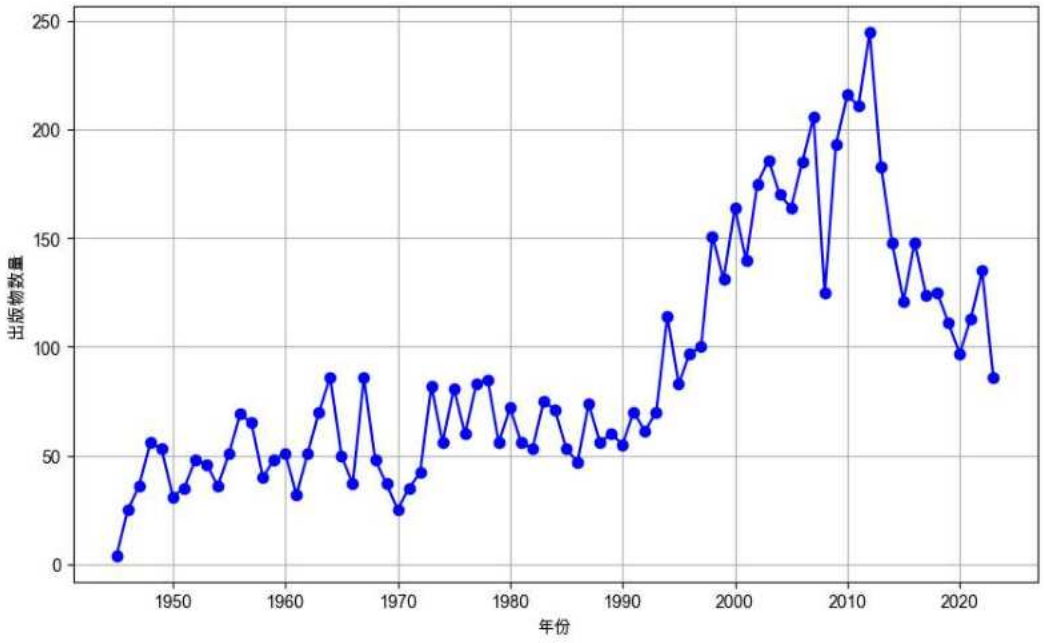


Figure 1. Number of Publications on Chinese Philosophy in Japan

Figure 1 illustrates the annual number of Chinese philosophy-related publications in Japan from 1945 to 2023. The data was collected from academic databases and aggregated by year to construct a time series. A line chart was employed to visually represent the fluctuations in the original data. This figure presents the interannual trends in publication volume over the specified period. Overall, the data reveals a distinct pattern of initial growth followed by decline, indicating clear phase-based shifts.

From the 1950s to the 1970s, the number of publications generally showed a fluctuating upward trend. During this period, annual publication output typically ranged from approximately 50 to 90 titles, with noticeable year-to-year variation but an overall increasing trajectory. In the 1980s, the output gradually stabilized and began to grow significantly in the mid-1990s. As shown in the figure, the publication volume peaked around 2010, reaching nearly 250 titles in a single year. However, after 2010, a marked downward trend emerged. Notably, between 2010 and 2020, the number of publications declined sharply from the peak to around 100 titles per year.

To assess the stationarity of the data, this study employed the Augmented Dickey–Fuller (ADF) unit root test to analyze the annual publication figures of Chinese philosophy-related works in Japan from 1945 to 2023. The test results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. ADF Test Results

Test Stage	ADF Statistic	p-value

Level (No Differencing)	-1.814	0.374
First Difference	-12.064	<0.01

The ADF test statistic for the original (non-differenced) time series is –1.814, with a corresponding *p*-value of 0.374, which is well above the conventional significance levels. This indicates that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected, suggesting the presence of a unit root and implying that the series is non-stationary, exhibiting a clear trend or structural volatility.

After performing a first-order differencing, the ADF test statistic improves significantly to –12.064, with a *p*-value less than 0.01. At the 1% significance level, the null hypothesis can be rejected, indicating that the differenced series is stationary—that is, its mean and variance remain relatively stable over time.

In addition, this study applied first-order differencing to the original time series data and conducted a change-point detection analysis to identify potential structural breaks. Using an algorithm that minimizes a cost function, and setting the significance threshold at $p < 0.05$, a total of 12 change-points were identified (1955, 1965, 1970, 1975, 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010, 2015, and 2023). These are marked with red dashed lines in Figure 2.

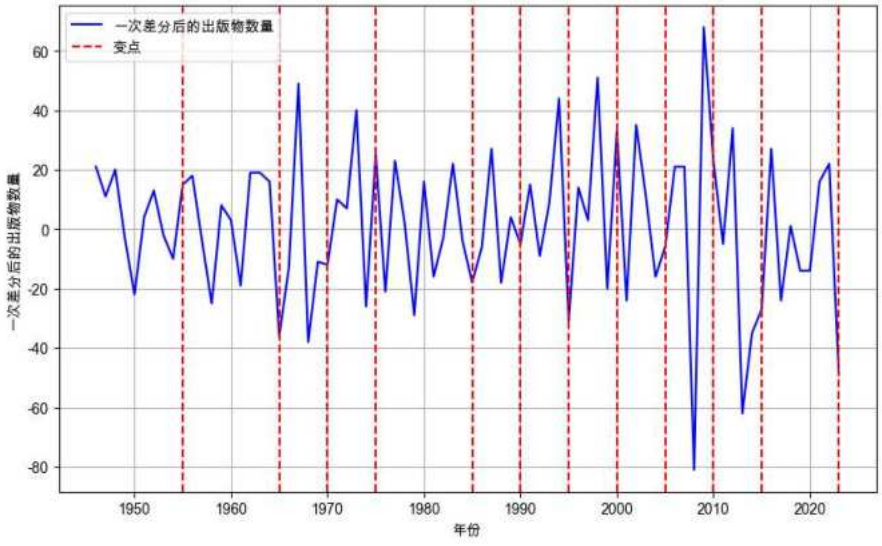


Figure 2. Change-Point Detection

The figure reveals pronounced fluctuations in the annual number of publications, with some years showing significantly greater variation than others. This suggests that major internal or external influencing factors may have emerged at those specific time points. The 12 significant change-points identified by the algorithm clearly indicate structural turning points in the publication trend, allowing the entire timeline to be divided into 12 segments.

Referring to the periodization proposed by Professors Mitsuyuki Kagami and Tomohisa Ikeda regarding the history of Chinese philosophy studies in Japan—and incorporating the results of the change-point detection—this study ultimately categorizes the postwar development of Chinese philosophy-related publications in Japan into five main stages: 1945–1965, 1966–1975, 1976–1995, 1996–2010, and 2011–2023. The segmented trends and possible influencing factors corresponding to each stage will be discussed and analyzed in detail in the following sections.

3. Periodic Analysis of the Number of Chinese Philosophy-Related Publications in Postwar Japan

3.1 1945–1965

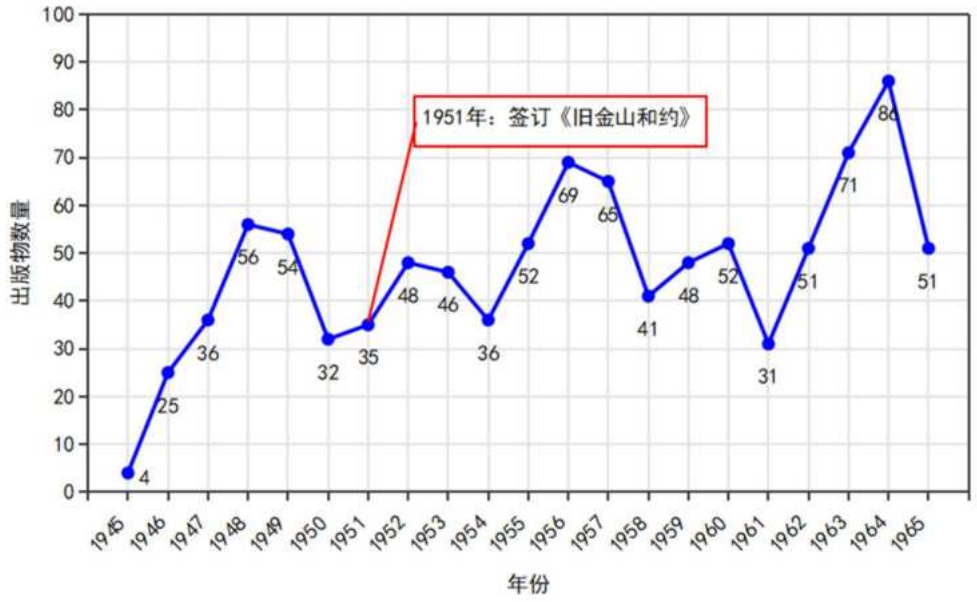


Figure 3. Annual Variation in the Number of Chinese Philosophy-Related Publications in Postwar Japan (1945–1965)

As shown in Figure 3, the number of Chinese philosophy-related publications in Japan exhibited a

markedly fluctuating upward trend between 1945 and 1965. This period corresponds to Japan's postwar reconstruction and social transformation, during which political, economic, and cultural shifts significantly influenced the publication landscape in this field.

Following World War II, Japanese society gradually emerged from trauma, and the academic environment began to improve. The General Headquarters (GHQ) of the Allied Occupation relaxed restrictions on academic publishing, and publishers such as Iwanami Shoten resumed operations, releasing new translations of classics like the *Analects* and *Laozi*. These accessible editions fostered public interest in classical texts. At the same time, Japanese intellectuals, reflecting on militarism, sought renewed cultural direction through East Asian traditions. The resumption of Chinese philosophy research by scholars such as Nishida Kitarō contributed to a rise in academic publications. Moreover, with the onset of the Cold War, Japanese academia increasingly regarded Chinese philosophy as an intellectual bridge to understand its neighboring country, further fueling publication growth.

However, this trend was disrupted after the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Influenced by U.S. occupation policy, the Japanese government reinforced anti-communist measures. Certain publishers suspended projects related to Chinese philosophy due to political risks. The Cold War climate, China's diplomatic isolation, and Japan's "separation of politics and economics" policy (seikei bunri) together brought academic exchanges between the two countries to a halt. Japanese scholars had limited access to research materials from mainland China, which constrained the production of related publications.

After the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty in 1951, universities such as the University of Tokyo reinstated courses in Chinese philosophy, leading to an increase in course offerings. The institutional development of academic programs during this period laid a foundation for continued research and publishing. In 1952, Japanese Diet member Takakura Tomi and others visited China, facilitating the signing of the first Japan–China civil trade agreement. Cultural and economic exchanges gradually resumed, and book exchanges increased. By 1956, Japan saw a significant rise in imports of academic books from China. The revival of grassroots cultural exchange played a direct role in boosting the publication of related works.

In the late 1950s, internal developments in China—including the Anti-Rightist Movement, the Great Leap Forward, and the subsequent three years of natural disasters—negatively impacted China's domestic publishing industry. In 1958, the Nagasaki Flag Incident escalated diplomatic tensions, resulting in the suspension of cultural and economic exchanges with Japan. At the same time, Western philosophy, particularly the works of Heidegger and other European thinkers, gained prominence in Japan. This intellectual shift drew academic attention and reader interest away from Chinese philosophy, affecting both scholarly investment and publishing output.

Entering the 1960s, Japan–China academic exchanges gradually increased. After 1962, the "LT

Trade Agreement" facilitated bilateral economic interaction and created favorable conditions for academic cooperation. With Japan's rapid economic development and the expansion of higher education, universities such as Kyoto University demonstrated renewed interest in Chinese philosophical studies.

However, by 1965, renewed Cold War tensions and Japan's pro-U.S. foreign alignment led to further restrictions on China-related academic activities. Domestically, Japan was undergoing a phase of high-speed economic growth, and government investment was heavily skewed toward economic development, at the expense of the humanities and social sciences. Simultaneously, Japanese academia experienced a surge of interest in Marxist and Western philosophical traditions, diverting scholarly resources away from Chinese philosophy.

It is worth noting that in 1961, publication output dropped sharply to just 31 titles. This decline can be attributed to a reallocation of research funding, with reduced support for the humanities and social sciences. Furthermore, Japan's focus on modernization and Western intellectual currents during its period of rapid growth contributed to declining interest in traditional studies. In 1960, the nationwide protests against the renewal of the U.S.–Japan Security Treaty (the Anpo protests) dominated public discourse, possibly affecting the allocation of publishing resources. At the same time, Chinese philosophy research in Japan was undergoing methodological adjustments, as some scholars began to critically reassess the prewar paradigm of "Eastern philosophy," leading to a temporary reduction in publication initiatives. After 1962, as academic institutions adapted to these new research directions, publication output began to recover.

In summary, the 1945–1965 period was characterized by fluctuating growth in the number of Chinese philosophy-related publications, averaging around 50 to 90 titles per year. Postwar reconstruction, the recovery of the academic environment, and the resumption of cultural exchanges between Japan and China fostered increased publishing activity. However, Cold War tensions, anti-communist policies following the founding of the PRC, and incidents such as the Nagasaki Flag Incident imposed significant constraints. The rise of Western philosophical interests and Japan's economic-first policy diverted scholarly attention, resulting in an unstable publishing trend during this period.

3.2 1966-1975

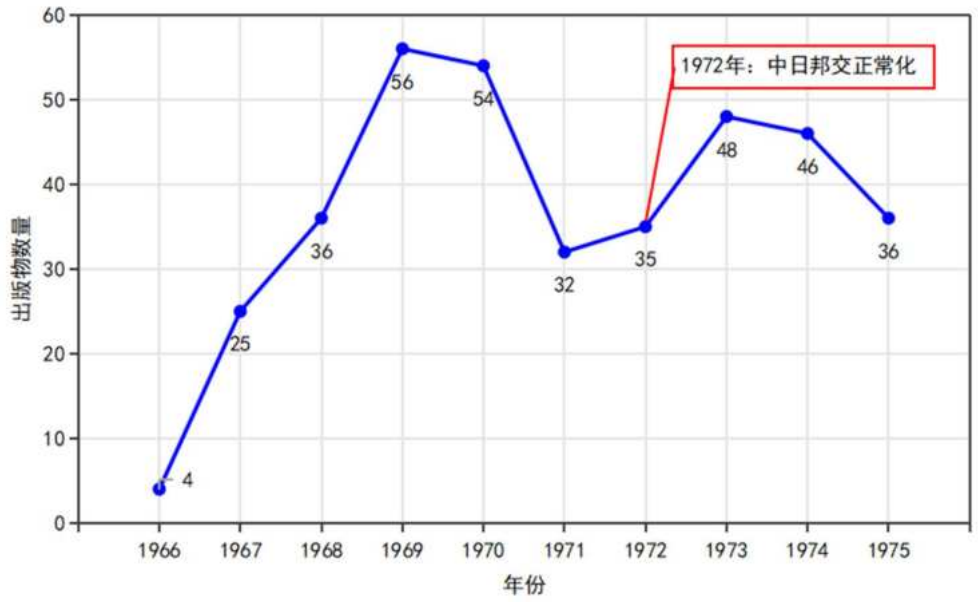


Figure 4. Annual Variation in the Number of Chinese Philosophy-Related Publications in Postwar Japan (1966–1975)

Building upon the developments of the 1945–1965 period, the years from 1966 to 1975 saw renewed growth in the number of Chinese philosophy-related publications in Japan, albeit marked by significant fluctuations.

Following the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, Japanese academia maintained its interest in traditional Chinese culture. Major publishers such as Iwanami Shoten and Heibonsha reissued popular editions of classic texts like the *Analects* and the *Daodejing*. The Japanese translation of *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung* (the "Little Red Book") garnered widespread attention, reflecting Japanese society's intensified curiosity about Chinese political and intellectual thought. During Japan's student movement in the late 1960s, some academic groups attempted to relate traditional Chinese philosophy to contemporary social movements, resulting in a sharp increase in the number of relevant publications, particularly in 1967.

Toward the end of the 1960s, student protests and leftist discourse reached a peak in Japan. Academic interest shifted toward critiques of capitalism, Marxist theory, and debates over Japan's postwar democratization. Traditional Chinese philosophy, viewed by some as antiquated, became marginalized. Additionally, due to the impact of the Cultural Revolution, scholarly focus partially shifted from classical Chinese thought to contemporary Chinese politics and social transformation. The publishing industry also faced economic uncertainty and

market volatility, leading to a contraction in academic publishing, particularly in resource-intensive areas like the editing and annotation of Chinese philosophical classics. Consequently, the number of publications significantly declined between 1968 and 1970.

It was not until the mid-1970s that, with Japan's economic recovery and deepening cultural introspection, Chinese philosophy research began returning to the academic mainstream, accompanied by a gradual increase in publication output.

The normalization of diplomatic relations between China and Japan in 1972, along with the signing of the Cultural Exchange Agreement, greatly facilitated bilateral cultural exchange. Japan's publishing sector responded actively, leading to an uptick in related publications. In 1973, a global wave of interest in Eastern philosophy further fueled demand, with some Japanese popular editions of Chinese classics exceeding 200,000 copies in circulation. New interpretations of Daoist thought also prompted reprint waves of previously published works. In 1974, Waseda University intensified its Sino-Japanese philosophical collaboration by establishing a research group, which produced 12 monographs in that year alone—accounting for 15% of the national total output.

The publication low point in 1970 is attributable to multiple factors. Domestically, political unrest, such as the Zengakuren-led All-Campus Joint Struggles (Zenkyōtō) movement, led publishers to avoid politically sensitive academic subjects. At the same time, the Japanese publishing industry was transitioning from rapid expansion to structural adjustment. Rising paper costs and financial pressure caused several publishers to scale back academic book production. Additionally, the political uncertainty preceding normalization of relations with China negatively affected the import and publication of China-related content. However, beginning in 1971, this decline reversed. As bilateral relations improved and Japan's economy stabilized, publication volumes began to recover.

In 1973 and 1975, the number of Chinese philosophy-related publications saw two notable peaks, producing a "double-top" pattern. The 1973 surge was driven by critical reflection within Japanese academia on Eurocentrism. As Japan experienced rapid economic growth and the rise of the "Four Asian Tigers," Japanese scholars began to emphasize the unique trajectory of Chinese thought. Thinkers like Yūzō Moguchi proposed that China had followed its own path to modernity, while scholars such as Takehiko Okada explored the contemporary relevance of Confucianism, resulting in increased publication activity. The second peak in 1975 was linked to the ongoing improvement in Sino-Japanese relations and the growing "China boom." Following normalization in 1972, the signing of the Sino-Japanese Civil Aviation Agreement in 1974 and the initiation of negotiations for the Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1975 further deepened bilateral engagement. The Japanese publishing industry responded by issuing numerous translations and studies on Chinese philosophy, catering to heightened interest in the "China model."

In summary, this period exhibited a trend of post-disruption recovery, with noticeable fluctuations.

The 1967 increase was stimulated by heightened attention to Cultural Revolution-era publications, while the 1970 decline was influenced by domestic political turbulence and structural adjustments in publishing. The normalization of diplomatic relations in 1972 and the signing of the Cultural Exchange Agreement spurred renewed publishing activity. Although economic instability and structural shifts in the publishing sector imposed constraints, the broader improvement in Sino-Japanese relations and rising cultural interest in China supported a rebound in Chinese philosophy-related academic output.

3.3 1976-1995

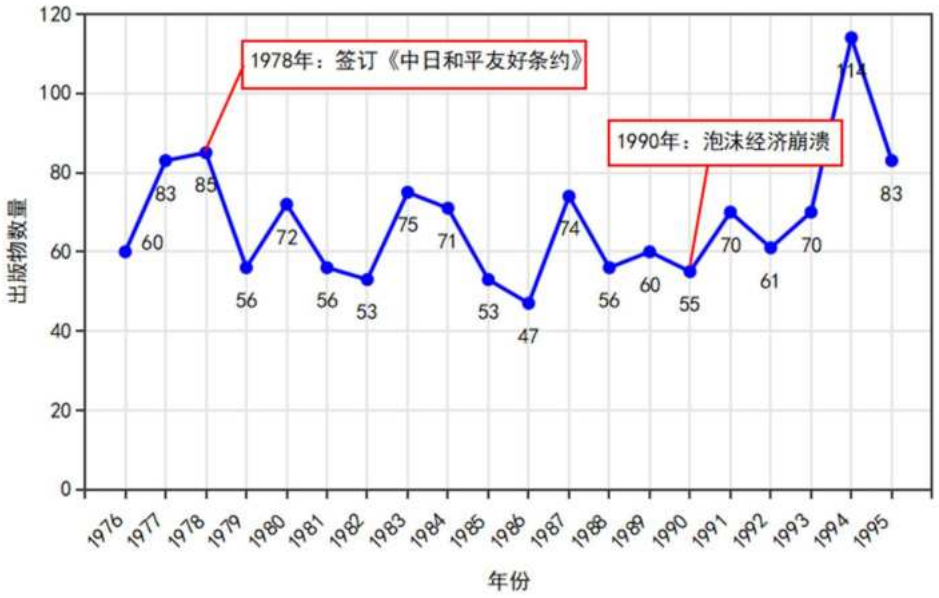


Figure 5. Annual Variation in the Number of Chinese Philosophy-Related Publications in Postwar Japan (1976–1995)

As illustrated in Figure 5, the period from 1976 to 1995 demonstrates a generally steady increase in the number of Chinese philosophy-related publications in Japan, despite occasional year-to-year declines. According to the change-point detection shown in Figure 2, three structural breaks are identified during this phase: in 1985, 1990, and 1995.

In terms of bilateral relations, the signing of the Sino-Japanese Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1978 marked a turning point, as Chinese studies in Japan were no longer directly constrained by political factors. In 1979, Japan resumed the dispatch of students and researchers to China. Concurrently, China's policy of Reform and Opening-up made available a wealth of previously

inaccessible resources, allowing Japanese scholars to access up-to-date information on Chinese society. This new era fostered a growing intellectual desire in Japan to understand modern China, thereby stimulating rapid development in Chinese studies and the publication of numerous scholarly outputs. According to the *Catalogue of Oriental Materials*, compiled by the Center for Oriental Manuscripts at Kyoto University's Institute for the Humanities, the number of periodicals (including those from Hong Kong and Taiwan) related to China increased from 43 titles in 1977 to 310 by 1982—over a sevenfold growth in six years. In this research boom, scholars across disciplines emphasized dialogue with their Chinese counterparts. Notably, Western philosophy specialists—who had previously favored academic exchanges with Europe and the United States—began to engage actively with Chinese scholars. Notable figures such as Kato Hisatake, Nitta Yoshihiro, and even Nakamura Yūjirō made multiple visits to China, fostering deepened academic ties. These developments contributed to the steady rise in publication volume from 1976 to 1985.

From an economic perspective, although the postwar period of rapid economic growth (1955–1975) had slowed, Japan maintained stable economic expansion between 1976 and 1985. Rising standards of cultural consumption supported sustained growth in the publishing sector. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, Japan entered the peak and eventual collapse of its asset-price bubble economy, which had profound effects on the publishing industry. Publication numbers surged in 1987, not only due to China's further economic liberalization and increasing academic exchanges in philosophy, but also because economic prosperity and a bullish stock market enhanced consumers' capacity to purchase books and other cultural products. This created a "golden period" for the Japanese publishing industry.

However, with the stock market crash of January 1990 and the ensuing collapse of the real estate market, Japan entered a prolonged economic downturn. The recession significantly reduced consumer purchasing power, leading to a sharp decline in book sales. The bubble economy had also cultivated a restless and speculative social atmosphere, obscuring deeper cultural and spiritual concerns. The Nikkei Index reached a historic peak of 38,915 in 1989, and housing prices soared. In this climate, both corporations and individuals engaged in speculative activity, with even housewives joining the frenzy of real estate and stock speculation. The obsession with material gains and short-term profits temporarily diverted public interest away from philosophical and cultural publications, suppressing demand for works in Chinese philosophy.

Nonetheless, from 1990 to 1995, the number of related publications rebounded swiftly. This recovery was largely driven by shifts in the global political landscape and the deepening of Sino-Japanese cultural exchange. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc in the early 1990s, the Cold War order dissolved, and China's further opening-up allowed for freer academic exchanges. Japanese researchers gained more opportunities to access primary Chinese texts, sparking renewed momentum in Chinese studies. During this time,

several bilateral academic symposia were held. Notably, the Institute of Philosophy at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences organized a series of "Sino-Japanese Philosophical Dialogues" in the 1990s. The first meeting in August 1994 addressed the theme "Philosophy: Integration of Eastern and Western Thought"; the second, held in August 1996, focused on "Modern Reconstruction of Eastern Philosophy"; and the third, in late August 1999, examined "Philosophy and the Tasks of the Era." These face-to-face dialogues and collaborative research efforts brought substantial benefits to scholars from both nations.

Additionally, in the aftermath of the bubble's collapse, Japanese society experienced a profound shift from material affluence to spiritual uncertainty. Amid this crisis of meaning, there emerged a cultural turn toward traditional Eastern thought. Daoist ideas such as *wu wei* (non-action) and Zen Buddhist concepts like "eternity in the present moment" gained renewed relevance. Corporate circles also began to question the limitations of Western management theory, increasingly drawing upon Eastern wisdom. As a result, Chinese philosophy research entered a new phase of popularity in Japan.

In summary, this period is marked by a generally stable upward trend in publication volume. The 1978 Sino-Japanese Treaty of Peace and Friendship and China's Reform and Opening-up policy provided Japanese scholars with unprecedented access to materials and opportunities for academic exchange, stimulating growth in scholarly output. Steady economic expansion in Japan enhanced cultural consumption capacity. Although the 1990s recession caused a temporary downturn, the end of the Cold War and the intensification of Sino-Japanese philosophical dialogue helped restore growth. Renewed social interest in Eastern thought and increased academic investment were key driving forces behind the continued rise in publications on Chinese philosophy.

3.4 1996-2010

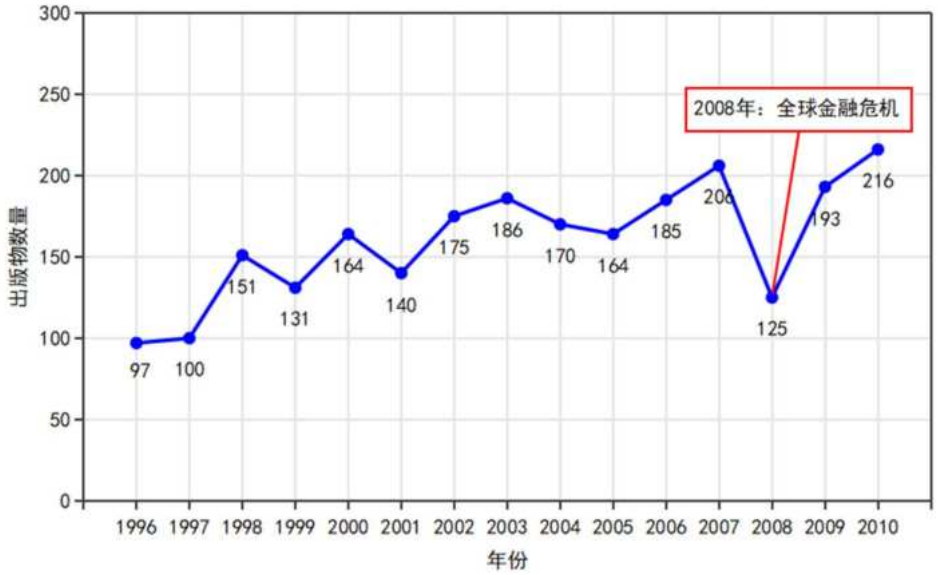


Figure 6. Annual Variation in the Number of Chinese Philosophy-Related Publications in Postwar Japan (1996–2010)

As shown in Figure 6, the number of Chinese philosophy-related publications in Japan increased steadily from 1996 to 2010, despite some fluctuations. This period was marked by Japan's publishing industry grappling with prolonged stagnation and simultaneously seeking new growth points, while China underwent significant social transformation driven by rapid economic development. The rising interest in Chinese philosophical works during this time reflects the dynamic interaction between cultural publishing and the broader socio-political and economic environment.

Change-point detection indicates that certain years exhibited significantly greater fluctuations than others, suggesting the presence of key influencing factors. This study focuses on publication trends around the years 1998, 2004, 2008, and 2010.

In the late 1990s, following the collapse of the bubble economy, Japan's publishing sector entered a period of negative growth, beginning what would become a "lost decade." Nevertheless, Chinese philosophy-related publications maintained a stable upward trajectory. Several factors contributed to this resilience: to offset losses, publishers actively sought new revenue streams, including the import and localization of foreign titles; meanwhile, Chinese philosophy—long familiar to Japanese readers—offered intellectual insight and cultural continuity. The 1994–1995 curriculum reform in the Faculty of Letters at the University of Tokyo expanded the academic scope of Chinese philosophy, increasing institutional attention and encouraging growth in related publications. In addition, ethnic

Chinese publishing ventures established during this period further diversified distribution channels. The year 1998 marked a notable inflection point, with a sharp increase in publication output. Although the following year saw a decline, the overall trend remained consistent with broader market conditions.

In the early 21st century, deepening Sino-Japanese relations and enhanced bilateral cultural exchange policies facilitated further growth. China's accession to the WTO in 2001 and its commitment to the TRIPS Agreement created new international publishing opportunities. In 2004, China launched a national program to promote its publications abroad, providing funding for foreign publishers. Japanese publishers maintained strong interest in Chinese classical culture and favored the publication of canonical works by Confucius, Mencius, Laozi, and Zhuangzi to meet steady market demand. Collaboration between Chinese and Japanese publishers contributed to sustained increases in Chinese philosophy-related titles.

After a decade of industry-wide stagnation, the Japanese publishing sector experienced a brief recovery in 2004. As shown in Figure 6, data rose steadily before 2004, peaking in 2003. Although 2004 saw a slight decline, the number of publications remained high overall.

The period from 2007 to 2009 witnessed notable volatility in publication volume, due in part to strategic shifts in the publishing sector. The 2007 Japanese edition of *Yu Dan's Reflections on the Analects* gained wide attention and inspired numerous publishers to release similar titles in the field of Chinese philosophy. Frequent international academic exchanges brought further visibility to the discipline. As a core component of East Asian cultural heritage, Japan's publication of such works also reinforced its position in the international academic landscape.

However, the 2008 global financial crisis suppressed consumer spending and accelerated the decline of print media, which was already under pressure from digital transformation. The rapid rise of internet-based platforms diminished demand for traditional books. Japan's aging population and generational shift further contributed to the contraction of the print readership. Under these pressures, publishers adopted more conservative strategies, seeking to stabilize operations and avoid market oversaturation. This resulted in stricter control over the number of newly printed titles in areas such as Chinese philosophy.

In response to this downturn, the establishment of China Publications Trading Co., Ltd. Japan Branch in 2010—a joint venture specializing in Japanese-language books on Chinese topics—marked a turning point. This move helped drive a rapid rebound in publication numbers following the 2008 trough, contributing to renewed growth in 2009.

Simultaneously, Sino-Japanese academic exchange continued to deepen between 2008 and 2010, with increased Japanese scholarly engagement in Chinese philosophical research. Japan's long tradition of Chinese classics scholarship, combined with unique academic approaches—such as studies on the dissemination of the *Zuo zhuan* (Commentary of Zuo)—enriched bilateral dialogue through mechanisms of cultural

return. Although the mass market for printed books remained sluggish, specialized academic and educational publishing remained relatively robust, and Chinese philosophy titles continued to fulfill the needs of a small but stable readership.

Overall, this period saw a consistent increase in publication output, culminating in a peak in 2010. China's economic rise, its accession to the WTO in 2001, and the deepening of Sino-Japanese cultural exchange all contributed to this growth. In Japan, the search for new intellectual growth points in the wake of prolonged economic stagnation, combined with the expansion of Chinese philosophy in academic institutions, provided additional momentum. Supportive government policies, the development of international academic networks, and Japan's renewed engagement with East Asian cultural heritage created favorable conditions for the sustained dissemination of Chinese philosophy in the Japanese publishing landscape.

3.5 2011-2023



Figure 7. Annual Variation in the Number of Chinese Philosophy-Related Publications in Postwar Japan (2011–2023)

As illustrated in Figure 7, the annual number of Chinese philosophy-related publications in Japan shows a pronounced downward trend from 2011 to 2023. According to the change-point detection algorithm, two significant structural breaks are identified during this period: in 2015 and 2023. Between 2011 and 2015, publication numbers declined rapidly after peaking in 2012, with a

cumulative drop of nearly 50% over five years. Although the overall trend continued downward from 2016 to 2023, the rate of decline slowed, with occasional fluctuations and short-lived rebounds. Notable anomalies are observed in the years 2012, 2016, and 2021–2022.

A major factor in this decline is the deterioration of Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations and its effect on publication strategy. In 2010, the Democratic Party of Japan's Hatoyama administration, which had aimed to recalibrate Japan's foreign policy away from a U.S.-centered stance, collapsed. Its successor, the Kan administration, adopted a markedly pro-U.S. and anti-China orientation. In 2011, then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton published an article in *Foreign Policy* articulating "America's Pacific Century," indicating a U.S. strategic pivot to Asia and intensifying regional tensions. In response, Japan began positioning China as a "potential threat," leading to a rapid deterioration in bilateral relations.

In early 2012, the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands dispute triggered a major diplomatic crisis, freezing official dialogue and intensifying public hostility. As political tensions escalated, publishers grew increasingly cautious, reducing the number of titles on sensitive topics. Consequently, after peaking in 2012, the number of Chinese philosophy-related publications dropped sharply.

From late 2014, however, relations between the two countries began to show signs of cautious improvement, characterized by parallel processes of cooperation and competition. In November 2014, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visited Beijing to attend the APEC summit. Public interactions between the two governments resumed, and Abe's official visit to China in October 2018 marked the 40th anniversary of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship. He publicly expressed a desire to usher in a "new stage" of bilateral relations. This diplomatic thaw contributed to a partial stabilization of Chinese philosophy-related publishing. However, Abe and his successor, Fumio Kishida, maintained a fundamentally pro-U.S. policy orientation, which continued to suppress the growth of China-related publications after 2012.

The signing of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) in 2020 by 15 countries, including China and Japan, created a new platform for mutual interest and limited cooperation, though its cultural impact was modest.

Another structural factor was Japan's deepening research and higher education crisis. Japan's academic research funding comes from two main sources: (1) operating subsidies from the national budget and (2) competitive research grants, which require extensive application procedures and project evaluations. After the 2004 incorporation reform of national universities, competitive funding increased significantly, adding pressure on researchers. The application process consumed valuable research time, and amid broader economic stagnation and social insecurity, fewer young people pursued research careers. Statistics from Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) show a decline in graduate school enrollment and a marked reduction in full-time researchers under the age of 39 at Japan's top universities between 2013 and 2019.

Moreover, postwar Japan developed a longstanding preference for research with practical utility, shaped by its economic reconstruction priorities. This utilitarian approach has persisted into the present. The 2011 revision of the *Fourth Basic Plan for Science and Technology* emphasized results-oriented innovation and economic return on research investments. Such trends deprioritized fields like philosophy, resulting in reduced funding and output in the humanities.

Despite these structural pressures, the Japanese government has introduced several initiatives in recent years to improve the academic climate. In June 2020, a significant amendment was made to the 1996 *Science and Technology Basic Law* to formally include the humanities and social sciences. Programs such as the "Comprehensive Strategy for Enhancing Research Capabilities and Supporting Young Researchers" (2020), the "SPRING" initiative (2021), and the “University Fellowships for the Creation of Innovation” aim to attract and retain young talent. These measures contributed to a slight uptick in scholarly output between 2020 and 2021.

The COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2023) also had a marked impact. Restrictions on in-person academic exchange and mobility disrupted collaborative research. At the same time, social isolation and psychological stress increased demand for spiritual and philosophical resources. According to Microsoft’s *2021 Work Trend Index*, 35% of Japanese workers reported feeling lonely at work, with 48% feeling exhausted and 45% experiencing significant stress—well above global averages. In such a context, traditional Chinese philosophical concepts offered a means of emotional and existential solace, generating a modest but noticeable rebound in related publications during this time.

In summary, this period saw a substantial decline in Chinese philosophy-related publications, with a sharp drop after 2012 and a cumulative decline of 50% over five years. The Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands dispute and the subsequent deterioration in diplomatic relations significantly suppressed publishing activity on Chinese topics. Although the COVID-19 pandemic created new spiritual needs and briefly stimulated interest in traditional thought, long-term trends—including political tensions, research funding constraints, and Japan’s utilitarian academic culture—continued to limit the production of philosophical scholarship. The interplay of diplomacy, economic uncertainty, and shifting cultural demand defines this final stage of the postwar publishing trajectory.

4. Conclusion

This study systematically collected data on Chinese philosophy-related publications in Japan and, using change-point detection methods, divided the postwar development into five distinct stages. The analysis focused on the interplay of political, economic, and cultural factors influencing publication trends.

First, the data clearly show that publication volumes increased steadily from 1945 to 1995—encompassing the first three stages. Between 1996 and 2010, a rapid growth phase emerged, reaching a

peak around 2012 at the beginning of the fifth stage. Thereafter, publication numbers declined sharply. Overall, the trajectory reveals a general trend from growth to decline.

Second, changes in the number of Chinese philosophy-related publications reflect a complex interaction between political, economic, and cultural dynamics. Politically, during the Cold War (1945–1978), Japan, as a U.S. ally, adopted a cautious stance toward Chinese philosophy due to ideological tensions. Government screening restricted publication output. After the normalization of diplomatic relations in 1972, and particularly after the signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1978, improved bilateral relations removed institutional barriers to academic exchange, leading to steady publication growth. However, since 2012, Japan's increasingly pro-U.S. and anti-China policy orientation—coupled with maritime disputes in the East China Sea—has strained Sino-Japanese relations. Research funding has shifted toward Euro-American topics, contributing to the contraction of the Chinese philosophy publishing market.

Economically, Japan's postwar reconstruction prioritized applied fields such as science and economics, leaving limited resources for humanities research. As a result, Chinese philosophy publications grew slowly due to lack of funding. In the early 21st century, China's rapid economic rise enhanced its cultural soft power. Japanese publishers responded to market demand by importing low-cost Chinese philosophy titles, contributing to a publishing peak between 2000 and 2012. Yet post-2012, Japan's prolonged economic stagnation led to tightened publishing budgets. Combined with the rise of e-books, niche fields like Chinese philosophy were among the first to suffer reductions in output.

Culturally, during the Cold War era, Chinese philosophy was confined to a small group of sinologists with limited public recognition. After China's Reform and Opening-up, its expanding academic output and growing participation in international dialogue improved visibility. In the early 2000s, China's "Going Global" cultural strategy, including government-funded translation programs, briefly stimulated interest in Chinese philosophical works in Japan. However, the recent decline in younger Japanese scholars and graduate students has created a vacuum in the field, exacerbating the decline in both quantity and quality of publications.

Lastly, while this study focused on quantitative trends in Chinese philosophy-related publications in Japan and offered a preliminary interpretation of the underlying causes, the large timespan and volume of data limited the depth of analysis. Explanatory factors were mainly approached from political, economic, and cultural perspectives, and the interpretations remain basic and general. Future studies may benefit from more refined, interdisciplinary analyses that disaggregate the data by subject category, publication type, or institutional affiliation, thereby producing more nuanced insights.

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