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On 7th February, the seventh symposium held by Japanese Civilization Institute took place at Japan University of Economics in Shibuya, Tokyo under the theme, “A study on Edo period’s Innovation after ‘Naotora’—a look into the reformist’s family tree.” The discussion made between historian Michifumi Isoda and director of Japanese Civilization Institute Naoki Inose, revolved around various themes, including the chaotic Medieval Era in which Naotora Ii lived, the recovery of Japan from there, and the Edo Period (1603-1868) in which the economy developed. By looking back in time, we looked at the suggestions that could be made towards the future.

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## Greetings

**Ms. Kimiko Tsuzuki**—Chairperson of Japanese Civilization Institute

Tsuzuki Education Group has an exclusive academic partnership with both Oxford and Cambridge Universities of England, and we have deepened our relationship with them for over twenty years. During these years, we have learned a lot of things from the two leading universities, which hold a history and tradition of nearly 1000 years. One of them is the huge issue of globalization. It’s an issue that not only concerns universities, but also Japan and the rest of the world. From communicating with traditional universities of abroad, we have learned that the most important thing that’s needed when we think about globalization is national identity. However, there is hardly any chance for Japanese to realize their country today.

For example, it’s most likely that a majority of the younger Japanese generation is unaware of what National Foundation Day on Feb. 11 means. The younger Japanese generation grow up without learning about their country’s history. Having his background in mind, we thought this would be a good opportunity to think about this country’s education and history—which is no doubt what makes up the country’s origin.

We have invited Mr. Michifumi Isoda to talk about these kinds of things for our seventh symposium. As you all know, Professor Isoda is a leading historian today who specializes in unraveling Japanese history accurately using primarily ancient documents. We would like Mr. Isoda to introduce us to historical evidences that remain hidden, and enlighten us about these kinds of things from various angles.

# Edo Period innovation after 'Naotora'

## The family tree of Japanese reformists

**Michifumi Isoda**  
(historian)

vs.

**Naoki Inose**  
(director of Japanese  
Civilization Institute)

**From Naotora to Nobunaga and Ieyasu. What separates Japan's medieval era from the modern era is the concept of the "public."**

**Inose:** NHK television's big historical epic this year, its so-called "Taiga Drama," is "*Onna Joshu Naotora*" (The Lady Warlord Naotora), which is now showing on TV. I understand you were one of the people who suggested this theme?

**Isoda:** I don't know if NHK specifically adopted my recommendation, but they did come to me for some advice on historical figures that would be interesting to make a drama about. Naotora was one name in the list I gave them.

The reason NHK's "*asa-dora*" (morning drama) is so popular today is because people find it exciting to see the exploits of fictional women characters or women in Japanese history that they have never heard of before. That's why I suggested they do a taiga

drama on a woman in Japanese history that most people had never heard of. Other than Naotora herself, I listed four other women warriors and warlords who lived during the Sengoku Period (the age of warring states). For example, there is Gincho from the couple Tachibana Gincho and Muneshige from the Yanagigawa domain in Fukuoka Prefecture. Gincho was a strong warrior, so maybe a drama could be made about her in the future.

Since Naotora is so unknown, some say that she may actually be fictional, or perhaps that the real Naotora was actually a man, maybe a cousin of hers. There are also theories as to whether she actually regarded herself as the head of the family or not. However, it is true that there were women who really did live like that in those days. The historical documents prove that.

**Inose:** So it is at least apparent that the daughter of the lord of Iinoya Castle became a priest named Jirohoshi, and later became a feudal lord, but we're not certain for sure that she named herself Naotora, is that correct? Was the Ii family itself

descended from an estate steward who had ruled the territory?

**Isoda:** Yes. The Ii family appears to have been "*ji-zamura*" (lords of smaller rural domains in feudal Japan). They owned territory valued at about "*sanzen-goku*," in other words, capable of producing about 3,000 "*koku*" (bales of rice), so they were not that big or wealthy. Iinoya lies north of Lake Hamanako in near modern Hamamatsu. The feudal lord Imagawa Yoshimoto of the Ashikaga Shogunate used to live in the territory that is Shizuoka City today, not that far away. Yet Imagawa failed multiple times to eliminate the Ii family, and after he was killed in the Battle of Okehazama by the powerful warlord Oda Nobunaga, the Imagawa clan went into decline. The more power it lost, the more pressure it put on the Ii family.

Japanese society right before the start of the Edo Period was often referred to as a society of "*gekokujo*" (the low bringing down the mighty), in which retainers would overthrow their own lords. In historical term, we would call this state "the normal-



Michifumi Isoda

ization of violence.” Violence could take place anywhere, at anytime, and people fought just for their own greed and self-interest. The only principles apart from violence that still retained any force were nobility and the Buddhist and Shinto gods. The Ii family was an old family that had lived in Iinoya for approximately 600 years before the appearance of Naotora.

There are only a few families in Japan that have continued down across the generations. At the top of all of them, of course, is the Imperial Family, which is believed to be directly descended from Amaterasu Oomikami the sun goddess. Another is the Sen family, who have served as “*guji*” (priests) at the Izumo Taisha Shrine since those ancient times known as *kuni no miyatsuko* (the nation building period) and *kodai* (the ancient period). The same is true of the Oki family of Okinoshima, the Kiuji of Kii, and the Asoji of Kyushu. The Suwa family lands were invaded by the warlord Takeda Shingen, but Katsuyori from the Suwa family bloodline effectively took over the Takeda family, maintaining the continuity.

**Inose:** The Ii family tried to maintain their bloodline by subordinating themselves to Imagawa Yoshimoto. However, Kamenjojo, the cousin of the Ii’s 22nd leader and the fiancé of Jirohoshi, is entrapped in Imagawa’s plot. He is ousted from the family and his child nearly murdered.

**Isoda:** Many Sengoku Period samu-

rai were not able to die “in a tatami room,” as the saying goes, in other words, die a peaceful death. The four or five generations of the Ii family before Naotora either all died in battle, were poisoned, or murdered. Even the Tokugawa family itself was like that, up until the time of Tokugawa Ieyasu himself. Old documents of that time contain the unusual phrase, “to keep a poison,” which sounds strange to us when we hear it today. It’s most likely that they often used the poisons of insects and animals. There was even a vow exchanged during the Sengoku Period when a lord and a vassal made a contract that went: “We shall not poison each other.”

Religious customs and family status were highly valued, but in practice violence was routine. There is no possibility of achieving progress or economic growth in that kind of society.

So what actually does happen to the Imagawa family in the end? Yoshimoto is killed in the Battle of Okehazama and his son, Imagawa Uchizane, tries to seek revenge, but he is defeated time and again. In those days, “*bushi*” (samurai) who fought in wars paid their own expenses. They prepared their own military gear and even their own food. As a result, the bushi who were fighting for Uchizane began to wear out. When that happened, the “*shogun*” (general) had to issue what was called the “*Shakkin Bohiki no Tokuseirei*” (special government ordinance for canceling debts) just to maintain political power.

**Inose:** In order to rush to Imagawa’s side these bushi had borrowed money from merchants, temples and shrines. But as long as they continued to lose, they couldn’t pay back their debts.

**Isoda:** Neither the Imagawa family nor the Muromachi Bakufu, the shogunate of the time based in Kyoto, had any responsibility for the public economy. The feudal lords of Japan’s medieval era had family finances to attend to, but there was hardly any economic policy implemented by the state as we know it today. There were



Naoki Inose

even people who tried to win popularity by publicly refusing to repay their debts. And then there were others who demanded 10% of the money they owed just in exchange for agreeing to go along with the *Shakkin Bohiki no Tokuseirei* ordinance. We’re not talking about money that they had actually lent out themselves. It was the same as saying that if you had borrowed 10 million yen from the bank, and then paid the government a million yen back, you wouldn’t need to pay back the remaining 9 million. That is how chaotic Japanese society was at the time.

Under such a system, saving money, investing it, and generating wealth was much too risky, and modern economic development was simply out of the question.

On the other hand, there was room for religion—ideologies that made people wish for something better in the next life to come—to flourish.

**Inose:** There were powerful clans in every region of Japan during the medieval era, so basically it was a world in which the people with the capability and power to do so seized whatever they wanted, despite the Emperor and the Shogun existing as the supposed supreme leaders of the land. In time, however, powerful, unifying warlords like Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu arise, and the chaotic Sengoku Period comes to an end. I think the big difference between the modern era and

the medieval era of the Sengoku Period was the way that people perceived the notion of the “public.”

**Isoda:** Up through the medieval era, the people of a domain in effect belonged to their lord. For example, when medieval era lords needed a lot of money they could, technically speaking, simply sell their people along with their houses. They could buy them back again when they had enough money to do so. But with the unification of Japan under the Tokugawa Shogunate and the start of the Edo Period, the people are suddenly granted a status of their very own. They are now: “farmers looking after the shogunate’s fields.”

But in the period leading up to the Edo Period, Nobunaga murdered vast numbers of people in his quest to unify and rule the country.

**Inose:** Nobunaga also decisively defeated religious power in Japan. I think that this was very big.

**Isoda:** It’s true. I think Nobunaga was the person who personally made the Japanese people non-religious. He thoroughly squashed the “*iko-ikki*” (an uprising by followers of the Jodo Shinshu sect of Buddhism), capturing every Jodo Shinshu priest and his followers and killing them quite savagely. He would set fire to them and burn them to death or use “*haritsuke*” (crucifixion) to kill them in order to demonstrate to the people that there was no heaven waiting for people who were brutally killed in this way. At the same time, he would show off his own luxurious and opulent lifestyle as an “*owari-bushi*” (a samurai from the Owari domain) to send the message that, “if you work for me, your family will prosper as samurai and continue for generations to come.” This is one of the reasons why the clothes and furniture of the Azuchi Momoyama Period when Nobunaga was at his height were so luxurious. In this way, he turned people’s concern away from the great religious centers of the day like Hongan-ji Temple and Enryaku-ji Temple. Japanese peoples’ brains

turned from the holy to the common.

## Edo Period agricultural society was one of the most meticulously developed societies in human history

**Inose:** So Nobunaga crushes religious power and the peoples’ belief in “*gokuraku jodo*” (the Land of Perfect Bliss). Then the Edo Shogunate under Tokugawa Ieyasu built an ideology that if people harvested the fields they would be able to form a stable life for themselves in the future. In short, without the end of Japan’s medieval era, Edo society could never have existed.

The Edo Shogunate began in 1603, and approximately 10 years later, with the end of the “*Osaka Fuyu no Jin*” (the Winter Siege of Osaka), thousands of “*ronin*” (masterless samurai) surged into Edo to search of work. For this reason, the Edo government was urged to create public work projects, and job fixers like Banzuiin Chobei, who is famous as a character in the kabuki play “*Kuchi Ireya*” (The employment agency) began to emerge.

**Isoda:** Exactly so. Then there were also the “*machi yakko*” gangs of working townsmen. The *kuchi ireya* would never have emerged unless there was a market for labor.

Yet on the other hand, I would guess that many Japanese today have an image that farmers in the Edo Period were stuck on their land, that the farmers were forever farmers the merchants forever merchants, and that they all had to follow the path they were born in to.

But in reality, that was not the case at all. The fact is, Edo Period people had more freedom to choose their jobs and relocate for work than in any other country of the world at the time. The post of “*Oban gashira*” (captain of the great guard), who protected Edo Castle as its military com-

mander, was hereditary, yet if they wished, even an Oban gashira could choose to become a samurai of lower rank and take a different position.

In fact, if you wanted to succeed in the Edo Shogunate, I would personally recommend trying to become an official at the Commissioner of Finance in the shogunate government. It was a low-status job, but it was performance based, so if you were accomplished you could climb up the ladder even if you were a farmer’s child.

If fiscal management had been hereditary, then the Edo Shogunate would not have continued. The Shogunate avoided collapsing precisely because they built a groundbreaking system to incorporate clever and competent people into the government bureaucracy, no matter if they had started out as townsmen or farmers.

**Inose:** So this is how the structure of Edo Shogunate was gradually arranged and the administration formed. Over the approximately 100 years from the start of the Edo Shogunate until the famous Raid of Akoroshi (a violent outbreak by lordless samurai from the Ako domain)—known for the phrase: “It’s Genroku 15 (1702)” —Edo experienced a period of rapid economic growth. There were no wars, so the population doubled from 16 million to 30 million. Once people realized that they could die peacefully at home on a tatami mat, they felt safe to have and raise children and to dedicate themselves to economic activity.

**Isoda:** I’m sure that many people remember Taichi Sakaiya’s novel “*Toge no Gunzo*,” which was also made into an NHK Taiga drama some years ago. You could say that in 1700, Japan was at its “*toge*” (the peak of the mountain). The world population at the time is estimated to have been some 600 million. Japan’s population of 30 million accounted for 5% of the entire world population. In other words, one in 20 people on the planet were Japanese. Today Japan’s population accounts for only 2%. In 2200, when our children are in their

eighties, it is said this number will have fallen to 0.5%.

**Inose:** At the time, Europe was still in the middle of The Hundred Years' War, still trapped in an age of constant conflict. In contrast, the economic system starts to settle into place in Japan from the Genroku period (1688-1704) to the Bunka/Bunsei period (1804-1829), and various art forms begin to flourish. Yet from 1700 until 1867~68, when the Edo Period final comes to an end, Japan's GDP rises only a little and the country enters a period of zero economic growth. Populations in the Kanto and Tohoku regions actually begin to decline.

Doesn't that situation strike you as similar to Japan today? So how should we survive these times?

I personally believe we can learn a lot from Ninomiya Kinjiro, the Japanese agricultural leader, philosopher, moralist and economist. I'm presently writing a book titled, "Ninomiya Kinjiro wa naze takigi o seotte iru no ka? (Why Ninomiya Kinjiro Carries Firewood on His Back)." A lot of people relate to Kinjiro as a model of hard labor and diligence, but in fact they have the story all wrong. Kinjiro is not about that kind of "where there's a will, there's a way" ideology at all. Kinjiro cuts wood, carries it on his back as seen in the popular pictures and statues, and takes it to the town of Odawara to sell it. But in fact, it's a high profit business with production and distribution all in his own hands.

The Edo Period did see the rise of a market economy, although it wasn't accompanied by an industrial revolution as in the West. Kinjiro was pursuing an energy business at a time when there was no coal or oil. Moreover, Kinjiro was reading "*Shisho gokyo*" (The Four Books and Five Classics of Confucianism, the Nine Chinese Classics)." I think we need to transform Ninomiya's image from the popular version of the hard-working woodcutter into the smart and

savvy man who gathered market information about where the best place to sell firewood was, and what kind of goods were selling well where.

**Isoda:** Edo Period Japan was a society that achieved very high labor productivity. Yet the precondition for that, I believe, was the high rate of literacy. When we compare Japan's literacy rate around the end of the Edo Period with other countries, the countries with the highest literacy rates of 80-90% were England, Germany, France and the Scandinavian countries. In Japan, however, it is said that about 40% of grown women and men could read, which is still very high for the time. The rate differed by region. It's said that Shiga Prefecture's literacy rate for both women and men was over 60%.

**Inose:** Behind that was the existence of the "*terakoya*" (private elementary schools) system. The *terakoya* taught "*yomi kaki soroban*" ("reading, writing and abacus"), so it wasn't all about writing. They students had to be able to do math as well.

**Isoda:** Also, in Japan's case, learning was connected directly to work. Craftsmen read textbooks like the Road to Peasants and Road to Carpenters to become good craftsmen, while merchants read Road to Trade and farmers read Road to Agriculture. In China and Korea, the elites studied extremely hard to pass the Chinese higher civil service examination and become government officials called *kakyo*, but in Japan, too, people other than government officials also received very practical education, resulting in high productivity.

Edo Japan may have lacked steam engines and the Industrial Revolution, but other aspects of the economy —like the division of labor and futures trading— were more advanced than anything in Europe.

You know, one thing I like to do when I visit rural towns is to look through their telephone books. I think that the more finely differentiated the occupations are, the more

advanced an economic society is. Considered in that way, Edo was astonishing! There were even women specializing in making ear picks and other people specializing in cutting cigarettes.

One of the examples that amazed me the most was that there was a special brush with which you could draw several "*kimpaku*" (gold gilt) lines in just a tiny space 1 mm across, which was used for making "*Wajimura-nuri*" (Wajimura lacquerware) and other lacquer products.

In order to make this brush, there were people who caught mice that lived inside a grain carrier running across Lake Biwako northeast of Kyoto. These particular mice had hair that is distinctively strong, you see. Then there were other special craftsmen who plucked the unbroken hairs from the armpits of these mice, and twisted them to make special "*nejifude*" brushes. Using these brushes, craftsmen who specialized in applying gold lacquer added several thin lines in a space of just 1mm to make gold gilded lacquer for feudal lords.

That is true specialization. In this sense of the word, I believe the agricultural society of the Edo Period was one of the most meticulously organized societies in human history.

## Ninomiya Kinjiro used double-entry bookkeeping for his accounts

**Inose:** We have to remember that the so-called peasants of those days were not necessarily all producing crops, particularly in places where there was an active labor market. There were also people in the peasant caste who were blacksmiths, "*kakeya*" (craftsmen who fixed metal pots and pans), and oil dealers, who while classified as peasants were essentially executives of small businesses.

When I was a student, the history I was taught in school gave me the

impression that Edo Period peasants were desperately poor and always rising up in revolt.

There were reasons for this misperception. To begin with, there was so-called “*Satcho*” (Satsuma Han and Choshu Han) historiography, created to affirm the new “*han-batsu*” (han-centric) government that replaced the Edo Shogunate after the fall of the Tokugawa and devalue the accomplishments of their predecessors. Then in Taisho 6 (1917), the Russia Revolution brings Marxism to Japan, and Japanese Marxist ideologues attempt to equate the Russian serfs and the Edo Period peasantry. The result was a distorted retelling of history in which *Satcho* historiography overlapped with Marxism, and the Edo Shogunate was characterized as a society in which people were segmented into fixed classes such as warriors, farmers, artisans and tradesmen. Moreover, the peasants in particular were depicted as oppressed people constantly suffering from hunger.

**Isoda:** I once tried calculating the actual tax burden during the Edo Period. It turned out to be smaller than I had expected, although since the rate was fixed nationwide there is some variation depending on region, climate and environment. At the time, the land tax for “*omote-saku*” (first crop) rice was 40% of the overall production, but “*ura-saku*” (second crop) rice was tax-free. A massive eruption of the Asamayama volcano in the Edo Period made the soil of eastern Japan more acidic, and harvests there deteriorated. But the eruption left northern Kyushu, where the land is good for harvesting both rice and wheat, together with areas west of Kumamoto Prefecture more fertile than they had been before, and because of it populations there increased.

**Inose:** Among the people who earned a lot of money during the Edo Period were those who started financial businesses. Although there were limitations on legal interest rates, Edo was rife with people who made money from high interest rates in black-market lending.



On the other hand, however, there were people like Ninomiya who made a little money out of selling his firewood, and then used his financial business to help other people get by. He would help convert people stuck with high interest rate loans to lower interest rate loans. For example, if a person was carrying a loan of 10 “*ryo*” (the standard Edo Period gold coin), he would loan him the 10 ryo needed to settle the debt, then have him pay back just 2 ryo a year, so he could return the total amount over 5 years. For people in a better position to repay their debt, he might ask for an extra 2 ryo in the 6th year. Those 2 ryo were the cost of joining the Ninomiya Kinjiro Fund. A person who joined the fund could then borrow money from the fund again if he needed money in the future.

Kinjiro also reformed the finances of the household of the chief councilor of the Odawara domain. This attracted the attention of a feudal lord, and Kinjiro was subsequently appointed to reconstruct subsidiary domains and reform various regions around Japan, including the Soma domain of Mutsu Province and the villages of Nikko.

**Isoda:** I’m amazed to hear that Kinjiro was using something akin to double-entry bookkeeping for his accounting when he tackled financial reform. He leaves his rice fields to other people and keeps his wife at home, while he stays at the residence

of the chief councilor of the Odawara domain for 5 years. First he calculates the area of the residence’s roofs and walls and calculates how many years it will take for them to deteriorate and how much it might cost to repair them. He includes all the farming equipment, right down to a broom. He calculates in what way the fund will diminish over what period of time. In other words, depreciation.

**Inose:** He calculated the necessary expenses, and slapped a ceiling on what could be spent. He called this approach to financial reform “*bundo*.” It was capped so people wouldn’t use any extra money. The Kinjiro Fund spread widely in the Kanto region, and implemented government reforms similar to those of today’s Industrial Revitalization Corporation of Japan. In the end, Kinjiro becomes a government official in the Edo Shogunate, even though he had started life as a peasant. This ideology of his is passed down to Mikawa domain and then to the industrialist Toyoda Sakichi. So it’s no exaggeration to say that the ideology that Toyota the automobile maker later adopts is one that initially came from Ninomiya Kinjiro.

What’s more, there is another Edo innovation I would like to introduce here, which is included in the film “*Tono, risoku de gozaru!* (The Magnificent Nine),” which was distributed last year. This film is based on Mr. Isoda’s historical biography “*Mushi no*

*Nihonjin* (The Unselfish Japanese).” It is set in a countryside “*shukuba-machi*” (post town) in the Date domain. At the time, there was a form of forced labor at the shukuba inns in these post towns, which were located along the main travel routes across Japan. It was called “*tenmayaku*,” and the individual shukuba were required to take care of the horses that carried messengers and commodities when samurai were passing through town free of charge. It cost about 100 ryo a year, which was shared among the 200 shukuba in the town. If one shukuba couldn’t pay its share for some reason, then the remaining 199 shukuba had to pick up the burden. As more and more shukuba went bankrupt, the town’s finances weakened. Seeing this dismal state of affairs, one sake dealer in the town decides to put his foot down, and find a way out of his community’s dilemma.

**Isoda:** Exactly. He tries to raise enough money that they can create a post-town that will last.

**Inose:** In the end, what they decided to do was to save up 1,000 ryo together, by eating simply, stopping going to the barber, even stopping using the “*sentō*” (public bath). Understand that 1,000 ryo back then was the equivalent of about 300 million yen today. They then entrusted that money with a lord who was in debt. In return, they asked for an interest payment from the lord of 100 ryo a year. The town actually did receive its 100 ryo yearly, and succeeded in paying the money it needed to continue to provide the *tenmayaku* forced labor service.

This particular post-town avoided closing down and lasted until late into the Edo Shogunate. And it is all based on a true story.

**Isoda:** What is most different about this story, actually, is that compared to what the feudal lords of the medieval era would have done, this the lord actually did pay the town the interest he owed.

**Inose:** The story has a happy ending,

but the people themselves must have suffered cruelly during the three to four years they had to wait until the decision regarding the settlement was finally approved by the government. That 1,000 ryo was money that poor people gathered with all their might. Government offices can be very cruel in that respect.

**Isoda:** For better or worse, Japan’s bureaucracy is well organized. When we look back in time, there’s Ishida Mitsunari, from the period of Toyotomi Hideyoshi. He managed to mobilized 480,000 soldiers from across the country for the invasion what was then Chosen (today’s Korea). In the end, he had close to 150,000 men make the crossing. Consider that Japan’s population at the time was between 12 and 15 million. Half that number—about 6 million to 7.5 million—would have been women and children. In other words, Ishida succeeded in mobilizing 1 in 6 of Japan’s adult males—whose number was only some 3 million—for the campaign.

In comparison, the number of people mobilized for the Sino-Japanese War was 480,000. Back in Hideyoshi’s Momoyama Period, when Ishida accomplished what he did, Japan’s population was only about a sixth of what it was during Meiji. So you can see how splendid his logistics were.

Mechanisms created like this went on to become the central mechanisms for other domains as well, and in peaceful times resulted in the rotating system of *ringi-sei* (group-centered decision making system). I think that the cumbersome decision-making of many Japanese companies comes today from basing their management too closely on the bushi organizations of the Edo Period. For example, back in Edo, those who stayed in an organization the longest had the best chance of reaching the higher ranks, so there was an emphasis on seniority and staying in one job. Likewise, the tight regulation of employee’s side jobs and outside work that still takes

place in Japanese companies today can also be said to be bushi-like in its samurai-esque demand of total fealty to your employer. I think it is time we finally unlocked some of these restrictions .

## Thanks to improved distribution and transportation networks, Edo Period Japanese could travel more safely than in any other country in the world.

**Inose:** The bureaucrats were slow at settling accounts, though, weren’t they?

**Isoda:** They dispersed responsibility. They served in monthly shifts, and even members of the “*roju*” (the shogun’s council of elders and most senior advisors) had to go out on patrol like any other samurai. The one domain that didn’t work that way was the Kumamoto domain in Kyushu. Normally, decision-making in the Edo Period, was done by the feudal lord or the *roju*, but in Kumamoto a *bugyo* (magistrate) was able to make his own decisions. Their roles were subdivided, however. For example, other domains had trials at the magistrate’s office, but the Kumamoto domain had an organization specializing only in trials called the “*kuiikata*,” so other *bugyo* could tackle matters such as industrial development. They built aqueducts, dug irrigation canals and issued loans for industrial funds. This approach was a success, and the domain did very well. In fact, those former samurai who succeeded best after the Meiji Restoration were the ones who learned from the Kumamoto domain’s speedy administration system.

**Inose:** The Meiji Restoration government is commonly said to have been dominated by the powerful “*han*” (domains). Yet actually, perhaps it was because most of the for-

mer shogunate officials simply remained in their posts as before that a rotating system like the ringi-sei system still exists to this day.

**Isoda:** Bureaucratic practices work well when it comes to routine work like collecting land taxes and keeping population statistics. But when Commodore Matthew Perry's Black Ships arrived in 1853, suddenly these bureaucrats were ordered to create a navy.

This kind of work, something that needs to be done from scratch, is unfit for bureaucratic personalities to handle. In these circumstances, it's more effective to add a new organization on to the old one, like an outer layer. It's better if you create a new, small Western-style army alongside your old existing army that still looks more like a samurai procession. If the new army works well, you can make it bigger. For Japanese people, who are better at following than they are at innovating, I think it might be more effective to create a second division alongside the pre-existing one, and develop it from there. Think of it as something akin to the business "subsidiary" model. That could be one first step toward reform. It does require having two different sets of parallel structures coexisting side by side, however, so it costs more.

**Inose:** Like Kokudaya Juzaburo in your book "*Mushi no Nihonjin*," there's always someone who leads the way. I think the same can be said of Ninomiya Kinjiro. Japanese people are good at following, but can they become the first person to start something new? It doesn't matter how small the innovation might be; it's great if a person can be that very first one to blaze a new path.

A market economy was established during the Edo Period and a money exchange system put into place as well. In the humorous travel journal, "*Tokai Dochu Hizakurige*" (a picaresque adventure story of two men who travel the Tokaido highway between Edo and Osaka), the protagonists Yaji and Kita are commoners

from Edo. Yet they are able to do the Ise Jingu Pilgrimage with traveler's checks, even though they had no cash of their own. The great poet Matsuo Basho was able to travel the "*Oku no Hosomichi*," "the narrow road to the deep north" of his famous book because there were village headmen who were highly cultured, who understood haiku, and treated him as their guest in their homes. The ukiyo-e painter Hokusai, too, would travel 200 kilometers to Obuse in Shinshu at the age of 87 and stay there for a month, drawing pictures, and then return. There were shukuba in every important location. River traffic was so highly developed in Obuse that cargo reached the area in abundance ultimately producing rich merchants who were more than happy to take Hokusai into their homes.

**Isoda:** I think the people of the Edo Period were able to travel more safely than people in any other country in the world. If an elderly man fell ill on the street or lost his travel expenses, so long as he had a checkpoint passage license he would be carried on a stretcher from village to village until he reached his home. The villages he past through paid for the cost. If it had been the medieval era, he would have been robbed of everything he owned. "*Ochimusha*" (surviving soldiers from a defeated army) were known to be worth about 30 million yen if you succeed in stripping them of all their fighting gear, so there were people who were more than ready to rob them during the medieval era (laughs). I think the fact that Japan's society transformed itself from that kind of society into one in which sick, elderly people were taken home for free was revolutionary.

**Inose:** Flood prevention work was carried out on a very large scale during the Edo Period, and both distribution and tourism via sea and river saw extensive development. A particular example was the flood prevention work done to change course of the Tonegawa River which flowed

into Edo from the north, which resulted in a transportation network of waterways which served much like the expressways of today. Direct the flow into the outer moat of Edo Castle, and it plays the role of today's Shuto Expressway. Unload the cargo at Kagurazaka, and a longshoreman will transport it, resulting in a river port in Nihonbashi. This is the way distribution developed.

Soon, when trains make their appearance, the Tsukiji fish market—the same one that is currently at the center of a dispute over relocating it to Toyosu—opens for business in Showa 10 (1935), and is now linked to the expressway.

Now we're in the 21st Century where commodities you order on the internet reach you the following day, but if you look back in time, you can see that it all began in the Edo Period. **Isoda:** Because Ninomiya Kinjiro left home to live with a feudal lord for five years to help him with his reform, his wife left him. But thinking of how she would live after they separated, he gave her a loom so she could make quick money by weaving fabric. "If people have wisdom and the will to work, they can get along no matter what. So make a vow to live with all your skill." This is the philosophy that Kinjiro strongly believed in. I think this kind of philosophy is what has made it possible for Japan to work shoulder to shoulder with the rest of the world.

Another thing that Kinjiro passed down is the philosophy that you should also "provide" if you ever earned money. Nowadays, we see many countries that only think about themselves. But instead, we should think of the world as a giant *tarai* (a traditional wooden wash tub). If you try to gather the water to you in a circular tarai, it will only swirl away. But if you push the water away from you, the things that are floating on it will wash back to you. After passing through many hands, it finally returns to you and becomes your profit.

At a time when the world econ-

omy is globalizing and the world is becoming one, it may no longer work to think only about ourselves. We could be making a huge mistake.

Kinjiro tried to create an economy that would last. I think we should learn from his ideology that teaches us that we humans have a mission to use our labor and wisdom to earn, and to provide to others if we ever earn a lot.

**Inose:** It's all about philosophy, isn't it? Philosophy is not just an impulse. I think it's something that's consistent throughout life.

**Isoda:** Philosophy is often regarded as something unpractical, like fog. But I personally believe that you have to have philosophy at the center of making any reforms in politics, the military, or economics. Philosophy is what makes the impossi-

ble possible and creates something from nothing. It's what creates an economy and saves people.

The people of Edo valued philosophy and morals and worked hard to convey ideas and ways to live. I feel that today we think too much about making money and creating economic growth, and too little about the ideas and ideology behind creating economic growth, which I think should be the basic starting point. As a historian who is always looking at the lessons of the past, I think that changing the way we think is the first step toward creating innovation.

By now I've read the equivalent of a hundred thousand old documents relating to family lines, and I know that in those family lines which included a person who read books, lis-

tened to other people, and attempted to change their own way of thinking, that person influenced the line for generations to come. Custom and ideology is passed down from parent to child, from child to grandchild, and in so many cases, it becomes the strength that helps them live their lives.

**Inose:** Simply put, a writer's job is to create ideology and vision, and a politician's job is to put that into action. I hope that I, too, can continue to create visions for the future to come. (reprinted from "Shukan Dokushojin", 14th April, 2017, No. 3185)

## The panelists

### Michifumi Isoda

Associate Professor at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies.

Born in Okayama Prefecture in 1970. He acquired his Ph.D. at the Graduate School of Letters, Keio University, and is a professor of history. He previously was Associate Professor at the College of Humanities, Ibaraki University, becoming Associate Professor, Faculty of Cultural Policy and Management, Shizuoka University of Art and Culture, in 2012. He was made a full professor at the same university in 2014 before assuming his present post. He has written numerous books, including "*Bushi no kakeibo*" (Abacus and Sword)," which won the Shincho Document Award and was made into a movie in 2010 by film director Yoshimitsu Morita. In 2010 the film won the 15th NHK Chiiki Hoso Bunka Award for "explaining history—in which he specializes—to the audience in a simple manner, and contributing to regional revitalization and the improvement of broadcasting culture." In 2015, he won the 63rd Japanese Essayist Club Award for his book, "*Tensai kara Nihonshi o yominaosu* (Rereading Japanese History From the Perspective of Natural Disasters)."

### Naoki Inose

Author. Born in 1946. In 1986, he received the Souichi Ooya Nonfiction Award for his book "*Mikado no Shozo* (Portrait of the Emperor)." In 1996, he received the Bungeishunju Readers' Award for his book "*Nipponkoku no Kenkyu* (A Report on Japan)." Since then, he has actively worked to abolish and privatize government-affiliated corporations. In June 2002, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi appointed him to the Promotion Committee for the Privatization of the Four Highway-Related Public Corporations. He included the story of his battle to achieve this in his books, "*Doro no Kenryoku* (Authority of the Road)" from Bunshunbunko and "*Doro no Ketchaku* (Settlement of the Road)," also from Bunshunbunko. In October, 2006, Inose was appointed Research Professor at the Tokyo Institute of Technology and from June, 2012, served as Vice Governor of Tokyo. He served as Tokyo Governor from December 2012 to December 2013.

Translation: Ayako Karino