

Spring 1995

Response to Sakamoto

Yue-him Tam
Macalester College

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/macintl>

Recommended Citation

Tam, Yue-him (1995) "Response to Sakamoto," *Macalester International*: Vol. 1, Article 23.
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/macintl/vol1/iss1/23>

This Response is brought to you for free and open access by the Institute for Global Citizenship at DigitalCommons@Macalester College. It has been accepted for inclusion in Macalester International by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Macalester College. For more information, please contact scholarpub@macalester.edu.

Response

Yue-him Tam

I. The Modern Historical Change: A New Perspective

Professor Yoshikazu Sakamoto's paper is an insightful, distanced, thought-provoking account of the historical dynamics that are identified as "the engines of modern historical change." The paper also considers the problematiqués generated by these dynamics. Its suggestions for solution are thoughtful.

It is a well-researched, painstaking analysis of the complex constitution of the modern world, covering the major political and international issues in the post-Cold War era. According to Professor Sakamoto, there are four unprecedented yet fundamental developments in the post-Cold War world, namely (a) the unipolar world military order headed by the United States, (b) a single capitalist global market for the entire world after the collapse of the USSR and the socialist system, (c) the universalization of nationalism, and (d) the globalization of democracy. These developments are not the consequence of the Cold War, however; their origins can be traced to the latter half of the eighteenth century, when modern history began.

Professor Sakamoto identifies the fundamental contradictions on three dimensions, namely capitalism vs. socialism, state nationalism vs. internationalism, and democracy vs. authoritarianism, as well as their uneven development as the "complex dialectics of modern history." He elaborates his argument regarding the "uneven international structural change" and the "unending historical contradiction" by citing a few historical events. His analysis on the four "critical global problematiqués" (peace/disparity; development/democracy; human rights/culture/ population; and environment/democracy) shows a firm grasp of the major problems confronting the contemporary world from an acute angle.

Professor Sakamoto makes a brave attempt to develop a new perspective on world politics that is "quite different from the state-centric 'realist' paradigm." He assigns to himself the ambitious task of not only interpreting the global change under way but also changing the "conceptualization of historical change."

It is clear that Professor Sakamoto's reading of the historical change is original, being remarkably different from both Marxist and Weberian paradigms. He has succeeded in developing a new and neutral perspective on world politics free of state-centric realist excuses. In spite of his Japanese nationality, Professor Sakamoto is not speaking for Japan in his analysis. Here, we see the keen mind of a transnational political scientist at work. I am particularly impressed with Professor Sakamoto's concern with the direction—or the lack of it—of the post-Cold War world. Thanks to Professor Sakamoto's effort, we now have a clearer view of the trees as well as the forest in this complex world of ours.

II. Is Nationalism a Western Product?

While I have reservations about some of Professor Sakamoto's analyses of modern history and in fully endorsing his proposals to cope with the problems, I really cannot do justice to the breadth as well as depth of his fascinating paper in the space here. My disputes with Professor Sakamoto are essentially chronic quarrels between political scientists and historians, namely conflicts between generalization and particularism.

First of all, in spite of his cautious effort to avoid being Eurocentric, Professor Sakamoto seems to present us with a historic outlook that may be easily mistaken for West-centrism. Let us take nationalism as an example. Having been identified as one of the four "fundamental developments" in the post-Cold War world, the universalization of nationalism is given an important position in this paper. Some historians may take issue with Professor Sakamoto when he says that "it goes without saying that nationalism, which originated in the West of modern times, spread to non-Western Societies, taking the form of anti-Western nationalism, which culminated in the massive tricontinental decolonization and national liberation movements in the post-World War II period." Repeatedly, Professor Sakamoto states that nationalism "had historically prevailed in the West and then the Third World." In other words, to Professor Sakamoto, nationalism was originally a Western product and only later exported to the non-Western societies or the Third World.

While giving the benefit of the doubt to a universal definition of “nationalism,” some historians would dispute that there had been no nationalism in non-Western societies until its importation from the West. They might also argue that the West was never an originator of the type of nationalism found in non-Western societies. The West had an important role to play, however, serving as a catalyst in rejuvenating nationalism in these societies in modern times. Modern nationalism in Japan is a case in point. As demonstrated by Maruyama Masao, a leading Japanese intellectual historian, the primary determinants of modern Japanese nationalism included “particular social organization, political structure, and cultural patterns”¹ throughout Japanese history that were clearly not imported from the West. Maruyama further contended that there was a certain “pattern of fluctuation” of this nationalism in Japan, reaching its climax in 1945. A “full cycle of nationalism” would include its “birth, maturity, and decline.”²

I have found some non-Western societies imbued with nationalism long before their contact with the West in modern times. For instance, the Japanese and the Chinese had a distinctive concept of nation-state in certain periods of their history, indicating that Japan and China might have already gone through a certain number of full cycles of nationalism before the Renaissance and Reformation periods when the Western type of nationalism began to emerge.

III. Nationalism in Japanese History

One may discern a certain type of nationalism in the mind of Japan’s Prince Shotoku (573–621) when he came to deal with the China of the Sui Dynasty (581 – 618) in an unfashionable yet highly diplomatic way. As the regent and leading reformer of Japan, the prince realized how much Japan needed to learn from China and how strongly desirable it was to cultivate good relations with her, yet he stood up to the great expectation of his countrymen to assert national equality with China. This nationalism was reflected in more than one letter sent to the Sui court by the prince in the name of the Japanese emperor. Two of these letters were recorded in the Chinese dynastic histories, bearing the following superscriptions: “The Son of Heaven of the Land

of the Rising Sun to the Son of Heaven of the Land of the Setting Sun" and "The Eastern Emperor Greets the Western Emperor," which clearly aimed at achieving national equality. Indeed, it would be difficult to deny a certain concept of the nation-state in these letters. It is no wonder that it was reported that the Sino-centric Chinese emperor was highly displeased to see the prince's letters.

Prince Shotoku was not alone in Japan. Many Japanese Confucianists, who were known for their Sinophile attitudes, maintained a distinctive concept of the nation-state, from which a certain type of nationalism was generated. A leading Confucianist in Tokugawa (1600–1868) Japan, Yamazaki Ansai (1618–82), demonstrated a type of nationalism in the dual allegiance to Chinese learning and to Japanese nationalism. On one occasion, his student posed an interesting hypothetical question to him: "What should a Japanese Confucianist do if China comes to attack Japan, with Confucius as general and Mencius as lieutenant-general?" Both Confucius and Mencius were respected as sage-founders of Confucianism. Ansai answered, "I would put on armor and take up a spear to fight and capture them alive in the service of my country. That is what Confucius and Mencius teach us to do."³ Ansai was right in that Confucianism did take nationalism seriously in spite of its cosmopolitan outlook. Confucius and Mencius would probably have applauded Ansai's decision to fight against them because Ansai was Japanese, not Chinese, and Japan and China were different nation-states.

I suspect that nationalism in traditional Japan appealed to not only the ruling class but also to people in many walks of life, particularly during crises of national defense. The splendid isolation of this island nation and the largely homogeneous culture combined with a unique imperial household that claimed unbroken lineage might have fostered a certain nationalism from time to time earlier than many of us are willing to admit.

It would be difficult to imagine that there was no nationalism in Japan during the Mongol invasions of 1274 and 1281 and during the postinvasion decades. Japan was confronting the most powerful aggressor the world had yet to see, which would go on to conquer a large part of Asia and Europe ranging from China to Hungary. Did the Japanese really sit back and count on the divine wind (*kamikaze*) to defeat the Mongol forces as popular

fictions claimed? Were the sword-waving Japanese *samurai* truly better fighters than the Mongol soldiers equipped with advanced firearms and machines flinging heavy missiles? Why was Japan so determined to resist the Mongol invasions? What secret weapons did the Japanese have to defeat the massive (30,000 troops in 1274 and 150,000 in 1281) fearful fighters from the Asian continent? Nationalism, among other things, may have been one of the weapons used.⁴

Nationalism was used by the emperor and the Shogun as the rallying force for national solidarity. Of course, it was too early to see a middle class or bourgeoisie active at mass assemblies, parades, or demonstrations on the street in support of the government decision to fight the resistance war in thirteenth-century Japan, but the level of national solidarity was remarkably comparable to modern nationalistic movements. In order to show its determination to fight, the imperial court agreed to place the tax revenue due to the crown from the manors (*shoen*) at the disposal of the armed forces in the 1280s. In one of the proclamations calling upon his vassals to support the national struggle, the regent Tokimune stressed that “to harbour private grievances in disregard to the *national peril* is highly treasonable conduct. Let all warriors, from the [Shogun’s] housemen downwards, obey the orders of the constables [emphasis added].”⁵ The same regent is said to have used his own blood to copy the sacred Shinto documents, demonstrating his sincerest appeal to the Shinto gods for help for the endangered nation. Many warriors, including female and elderly vassals of all ranks, responded to the solidarity call with remarkable patriotic zeal by generously offering themselves, their family members, their revenues, lands, men, bows and arrows and other weapons, and horses for the service of their country. Of course, there were many *samurai* who participated in the national defense in order to gain materialistic rewards from the lords. There were also some *samurai* trying to evade their military responsibilities, but, generally speaking, nationalism was effectively at work. George Sansom referred to it as “a brave spirit” when he stated: “It is no doubt that in the years just following the first Mongol invasion a brave spirit was abroad, especially among the men of Kyushu, who bore the brunt of these attacks.”⁶

The ruling class aside, the Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines throughout the country were engaged in religious exercises and repeated their prayers for mercy and national protection. "Services were continued day and night. . . . In the monasteries of the great sects, the chief abbots and the monks intoned continuously their most revered sutras and recited the incantations called *darani*, while the shrines of Hachiman, the War God, were thronged with worshippers of all conditions and all beliefs."⁷

The life and thought of the revolutionary founder of the Hokke or Lotus Sect of Buddhism, Nichiren (1222–82), exemplified a certain nationalism in thirteenth-century Japan. Unlike the leaders of the established sects who preached in their temples to the upper class, Nichiren appealed more to commoners, preaching to crowds in the streets and public places. He was called "a political as well as a religious reformer, inspired by a strong sense of nationality."⁸ As early as 1260, more than ten years prior to the first Mongol invasion, he warned that if the nation did not follow his teaching, many disasters would follow, especially a foreign invasion. "In his writings he constantly uses such phrases as 'the prosperity of the nation' . . . 'I will be the pillar of Japan. I will be the eyes of Japan. I will be the great vessel of Japan.'" Thus, nationalism became explicit in Nichiren's teaching.

Although more difficult to document, we should not overlook the tacit nationalism in the silent majority of the country — the commoners, including peasants and craftsmen — who contributed greatly to the defeat of the Mongols. The speedy construction of various sections of a stone wall (*ishitsuiji* or *borui*) in Hakata Bay was a case in point. In order to enhance the coastal defense, it was vital to build a wall to hinder the enemy's landing and massed formation after landing. In spite of the technical problems, a huge stone wall totaling 20 kilometers (front height, 2.6 meters; rear height, 1.45 meters; top width, 2.5 meters; and bottom width, 3.1 meters) starting from Kashii and ending in Bishamondake, the spots most vulnerable to Mongol landing, was completed in only one year. There were similar constructions for coastal defense completed in Chomon and other places, the likely locations for landing of the enemy, also at remarkable

speed.¹⁰ It is difficult to deny a grassroots nationalism attested to by these speedy and useful constructions.

Thus, it is possible to see nationalism in thirteenth-century Japan working just as effectively as “modern nationalism” in terms of national solidarity. The trouble is that the same nationalistic movement declined gradually because of political and social reasons after the invasions. The seclusion policy from the 1640s to the 1850s virtually ruled out any need for nationalism because of the lack of official contact with the outside world. (The contact with the Dutch and Chinese in Nagasaki was not forceful enough to rekindle a nationalistic movement.)

IV. Nationalism in Chinese History

In Chinese history, too, nationalism seems to be neither an entirely modern product nor an imported ideology. It is true that during the periods when China was largely a united empire such as the Han (206 B.C. – A.D. 220) and T'ang (618 – 907) Dynasties, many Chinese regarded their country as *tien-hsia* (all the land under Heaven with themselves at the top of the world), leaving no room for politically defined nationalism. However, in the face of the breakup of the Chinese empire, in the post-T'ang times, particularly the invasion in China by the Khitan Liao in 926, the Tangut Hsi Hsia in 1044, and the Jurchen Chin in 1126, the Chinese became more conducive to an awareness of the notion of nation-state. Naito Konan, a leading Japanese historian, identified the Sung Dynasty (960 – 1126) as the first occasion for the Chinese to develop a consciousness of the state (*kokumin-teki jikaku*) and awareness of the nation (*kokka*).¹¹ Indeed, how could the Chinese in Sung China be insensitive to the notion of nation-state when they had to surrender many strategic areas along the borders in the northern and western parts of China, reducing their sovereign state to less than half of the former empire; when two of their emperors and many princes of royal blood were held hostage by the rival states; and when the yearly ransom, including women, gold, silver, silk, and other valuable items, was increasingly burdensome for as long as more than two centuries?

It seems to me that nationalism is intrinsic in all nations, but nationalism as a movement fluctuates from time to time

depending upon domestic as well as international situations. I have tried to show that nationalism is indeed intrinsic in Japan, a nation in the East, and was so long before its encounter with the West. I have also contended that nationalism as a movement completed a full cycle in China during the late T'ang and Sung Dynasties from the eighth century to the thirteenth century, and in Kamakura Japan in the thirteenth century. It is clear that nationalism emerges from within, never from without. An impact from outside, if powerful enough, can help rejuvenate the declined or inactive nationalism. This is exactly what the West did to non-Western societies in modern times.

I must admit that while I do not fully agree with Professor Sakamoto's trace of the origins of nationalism, I fully support his view that the nation-state is becoming increasingly ineffective in the face of the forces of universalization of nationalism in the post – Cold War world. Indeed, we are witnessing a new phase in the fluctuation of nationalism in the 1990s. Professor Sakamoto is right in saying, "For the first time in history, nationalism has been universally put into effect."

V. North-to-South "Cooperation": A One-Way Street?

Professor Sakamoto's paper seems to present a dark view of the South and an exceedingly benign view of the North. Citing the tragedies in the sub-Saharan African states as examples, Professor Sakamoto argues that there is a deeply rooted incapacity of the state to maintain order and authority in the South. He concludes that "thus, a greater role of the citizens of the North will be called for in reinforcing cooperation with the people in the South." Here, there seems to be an assumption that the North will always deal honestly and unselfishly with the South. Indeed, most Western commentary on the South and the East tend to agree with Professor Sakamoto at present, but is this assumption not somewhat unreflective and unself-conscious, perhaps to the same degree that it is also remarkably self-congratulatory? I have no doubt about the efforts of the people-to-people grassroots cooperation between the North and South, but I am not so sure the same effect could be achieved when governments get involved.

I may also add that Professor Sakamoto seems to have overlooked that the states in the South have been mutually helping each other and evaluating very highly the shared experience in the South-to-South cooperation. Taiwan's and the People's Republic of China's (PRC) foreign aid programs for the developing countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America since the 1950s are well known. These programs include not only monetary grants but also scientific and technical assistance and experience-sharing workshops. It is not difficult for us to appreciate the fact that, in certain ways, the peasants working on the petty rice fields in Asia, Africa, or Latin America would find the experience from Taiwan, the PRC, or Korea more relevant than the expertise imported from the United States, which is more useful for large-scale farming.

Foreign aid is never a monopoly of the North. Many states in the South have their own needs to be engaged in this type of international activity. Like the foreign aid provided by the nations in the North, many of these South-to-South aid programs are designed for specific political and economic reasons. South Korea's Economic Development Cooperation Fund, established in 1987 with the modest amount of \$200 million, is a case in point. The former Korean Foreign Minister, Mr. Kwang Soo Choi, stated, "Korea has an interest in promoting friendly, cooperative relations with Third World countries not only because it needs the understanding and support of these countries for Korea's policy of objective of peaceful reunification but also because it benefits from expanded trade and economic relationships, the cultivation of effective demand in developing countries, and the overall growth of the world economy."¹²

VI. Is Socialism Dead?

One more area seems to need clarification. I agree with Professor Sakamoto that the present world has entered a single capitalist market economy, but I would not rush to pronounce the total "collapse of the socialist system" as Professor Sakamoto has alleged. It is true that the disappearance of the USSR and the adoption of liberal measures in the economic policies in the PRC, North Korea, Vietnam, and Cuba have certainly signified important and far-reaching changes within the socialist system,

but state planning and state control in economic affairs in the remaining socialist countries still play a vital role. The PRC has insisted, for example, that it has no intention of practicing Western-style capitalism. Rather, it is engaged in the early stage of a socialism with Chinese characteristics to fit the Chinese environment. In spite of corruption and other problems, the 40-million-member-strong Chinese Communist Party is still in control in the most populous country in the world. Obviously, we are witnessing that communism or socialism is rapidly and fundamentally changing, transforming itself into a new, unknown format or system in the 1990s. Poverty, injustice, inequality, and, to use Professor Sakamoto's term, the "uneven developments" in society, all tend to encourage people to take some of the original ideals of communism or socialism seriously as possible sources for a new and workable system. Its various merits notwithstanding, capitalism does not seem to be an almighty solution for all ills in the human society. Some of our guests from the World Press Institute who attended the Macalester International Roundtable told me that many noted members of the collapsed communist parties in the countries of Eastern Europe are highly likely to reemerge on the political scene with somewhat mixed ideas of both old and new. It remains to be seen whether these reformed communist politicians are using a new bottle to hold old wine or vice versa. In any case, it may be too early to pronounce the death of socialism and to claim a complete and eternal triumph of capitalism.

VII. What to Do with the UN System?

Regarding who must act to make the times more amenable to viable human civilizations, I applaud Professor Sakamoto's proposals for cultivating a transnational citizenship and reforming the United Nations system, but I would hesitate to endorse democratization of the UN system as the top priority, as suggested in Professor Sakamoto's concluding remarks. Simply put, I think many leaders do not care if the UN is democratizing. Democracy does not necessarily mean efficiency. For one thing, the membership dues and other financial responsibilities in many UN organizations are assessed in such a way that the rich and powerful have a louder say in many issues. Unfortunately,

this is not going to change drastically. Will democratization of the UN system really make its organization more financially trouble-free and more administratively efficient?

I also think the volunteer military and civilian corps, as suggested by Professor Sakamoto, may not be realistic, even though I would like to support this lofty ideal. I realize the existence and efficiency of some of the volunteer corps throughout the world, but let us not blind ourselves by the outstanding achievements of these existing organizations. For one thing, their operation is on such a manageable scale that they can largely maintain financial independence and avoid government involvement and interference. Professor Sakamoto's volunteer corps, particularly military corps, would necessarily be of a larger scale and different calibre in order to serve the UN in a significant way by replacing the existing UN institutions. I cannot imagine that such a volunteer military corps could be established and function in a given country without the support and involvement of the government of that country. Public support would also be absolutely necessary. What would happen in this contentious country, now agog at the American pride, if federally funded corps had to be approved and commanded not in Washington, D.C., but in Bangkok, Moscow, or Havana? The constitutional controversy aside, would the Japanese general public be genuinely enthusiastic in supporting military actions abroad? And, most difficult of all, how could we make sure that these corps were equipped "with professional skills higher than those of present peace corps" and "with the same spirit of spontaneous dedication?" Could we avoid government involvement and interference all together for volunteer corps of such a calibre? How could we safeguard against the abused use of these corps for selfish gain?

VIII. Regional and Cultural Cooperation as Top Priority

In conclusion, I venture to suggest an alternative. Perhaps top priority should be given to development of regional and cultural cooperation with the UN as a coordinating agency. In fact, some of the organizations of regional or cultural cooperation have been working effectively. On the economic and political fronts, the important functions of such regional bodies as the EC,

ASEAN, and the Pacific Rim organizations are so obvious that they need no elaboration here. On the cultural front, for instance, international conferences on Confucianism and modernization have been sponsored by academic and government agencies in Singapore, Taiwan, the PRC, Japan, and South Korea. It is well known that the former premier of Singapore, Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, and many contemporary Japanese entrepreneurs such as Mr. Matsushita Konosuke, father of electronic appliances in Japan, have given personal support to the study of the meanings of Confucianism as a positive, forceful system of thought to promote modernization and progress in the modern human society. I have a dream for the UN: coordinated international or worldwide confederations for each of the major faiths and philosophies such as Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, and Confucianism across the national or regional line. We badly need the input from these faiths and philosophies for possible guidelines for our own personal cultivation and in reestablishing the values of family, state, environment, and gender equality in a context of agreed-upon socioeconomic ends. After all, we are living in a world of diversity. In addition to the erosion of state's sovereignty and authority, which Professor Sakamoto has tackled, there has been a steady decline of the major faiths and other civilizational institutions throughout the world, including the West.¹³ We can no longer afford to ignore the strengths of other faiths and civilizations.

I admit that this regional and cultural cooperation is the residue of an old-fashioned notion of geographical or cultural proximity as the most reliable source of the spirit of spontaneous dedication. This also results from an endorsement of the notion of the UN as an important global institution having bearing on worldwide events. Finally, I must emphasize that more fundamental to this regional and cultural cooperation is the cultivation of a "transnational citizenry" of which Professor Sakamoto spoke for and about from a fresh perspective.

Notes

1. Masao Maruyama, *Thought and Behaviour in Modern Japanese Politics*, Expanded ed., ed. Ivan Morris (New York: 1969), 136.
2. *Ibid.*, 137

3. For an account in English, see Ryusaku Tsunoda et al., eds., *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, (New York: 1959), 369–70.
4. For standard accounts of the Mongol invasions, see Aida Jiro, *Moko shurai no kenkyu* (Tokyo: 1958); Amino Yoshihiko, *Moko shurai* (*Nihon no rekishi*, vol. 10) (Tody: Shogakkan, 1974), 190–94; G. B. Sansom, *Japan: A Short Cultural History*, rev. ed. (New York: 1962), 309 ff. For the economic and political impact of the invasions on Japan, see Kyotsu Hori, “The Economic and Political Effects of the Mongol Wars,” in *Medieval Japan: Essays in Institutional History*, ed. John W. Hall and Jeffrey P. Mass (Stanford: 1974), 185–98.
5. Sansom, 318.
6. *Ibid.*, 316.
7. *Ibid.*, 319.
8. *Ibid.*, 332.
9. *Ibid.*, 332.
10. Amino Yoshihiko, *Moko shurai*, 190–94.
11. Yue-him Tam, “An Intellectual’s Response to Western Intrusion: Naito Konan’s View of Republican China,” in *The Chinese and the Japanese: Essays in Political and Cultural Interactions*, ed. Akir Iriye (Princeton: 1980), 162–63.
12. Kwang Soo Choi, “Korea’s Foreign Policy in the 1990s,” *Korea and World Affairs: A Quarterly Review*, vol. 8, no. 2 (Summer 1989), 261.
13. Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*. 1918–22. Also, Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, 10 vols., 1934–54.