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Accepted manuscript PDF deposited in Coventry University's Repository

Chapter published in:
Modern Japanese Political Thought and International Relations, ISBN 9781786603678 (pub 2018)

Publisher: Rowman and Littlefield

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The Rise of Japanology

Japanese academia is currently experiencing the resurgence of *Nihongaku* with several major universities like Tohoku University, Hokkaido University, and Tokyo University of Foreign Studies establishing new degree programs and research networks. This resurgence reached a first apex in the establishment of a research network by Tokyo University's Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia in 2014. In fact, this prestigious institute, previously called the Institute of Oriental Culture, had already changed its name six years earlier to accommodate changes in its field of research, now including also Japan. Given that these new programs include the prefix "global", it can be concluded that in addition to the practicality of having to accommodate growing numbers of overseas students, these new programs are to be distinguished from traditional Japanese studies (*Nihon kenkyū*) and better understood as "Japanology". Like Oriental studies, the origin of Japanese Studies is in Anglo-American academia. Though Japanology takes the same origins, by restoring this older name in comparison to Japanese studies, they conversely intend to emphasize their own initiatives, offering new perspectives beyond Japanese academia.

In the context of IR, this move coincides with the rise of national schools in Asia. Compared to now well-known Chinese school contributions, lobbying for the introduction of Chinese concepts like *tian-xia* and *guanxi* (cf. Xinning 2001; Qin 2007, 2017; Zhang 2013), studies on Japanese thought in IR have been sparse (cf. Inoguchi 2007; Shimizu et al. 2008; Shimizu 2015; critical Chen 2012). This evidently affirms Takashi Shogimen's (2016: 336) observation that 'the Euro-American intellectual framework … is now an alter … ego for Japanese political thinking.' What he calls 'the hegemony of Euro-American categories' in Japanese academia is illustrated in an almost exclusive focus on Kyoto School philosophers to challenge the discipline's Eurocentrism (Ong 2004; Goto-Jones 2005; Inoguchi 2007; Shimizu et al. 2008; Shimizu 2015). Kyoto School contributions were equated with "Japanese philosophy" after World War II on the basis of a binary between the West and the East (Sakai 2007; also Tosa in this volume) and in this sense it proved useful for Western scholarship, as it can be drafted as distinctively Japanese (in terms of a Western standard) and therefore as the ultimate "other". However, Kyoto School scholars conducted philosophical inquiries in a Western sense, implying that 'in light of the current trend in the scholarship on cross-cultural political ideas … Japan has hardly anything to offer' in practice (Shogimen 2016: 341). Drafting Japan in this sense as the other and thereby understanding Global IR as a combination of distinctively national schools may, rather than globalizing it, further compartmentalize the discipline, as Barry Buzan (2016) is concerned. Hence, 'simply pluralizing' (Bhambra 2011: 655), as argued for by Amitav Acharya (2014, 2016), would be far from enough and would only further essentialize the binary between the West and the rest. But what does it mean to go global while simultaneously staying local?

With regard to Japan, the root cause of exceptionalism that the universities that established these new Japanology programs perceived in the moniker "Japanese studies" is obvious. The 1949 meeting of The Historical Science Society of Japan had as its theme "the general law of history". In this new discourse, Asia came to be depicted as "exceptional", in contrast to the wartime history in which Asia's particularity in terms of Western experience was emphasized (Tōyama 1966). After an immediate re-revisionist move was observed in the midst of the rise of non-Western nationalism in the early 1950s, in the 1960s when Japan experienced rapid economic growth, Japanese historians were influenced by modernization theory, in which Japan was seen as the first follower of the Western model of economic growth. Thus, throughout the history of social sciences and humanities since the late nineteenth century, European theories in Japan ultimately had come to be perceived as their theory. This is the case not only for scholars, but Japanese in general have been framing their self differently, as Asians *and* as part of the West, as unique at one point and as exceptional on the other (Watanabe in this volume). The revision of *sakoku* mentioned in the introduction, and even the recent conservative turn symbolized by the Abe administration, can be understood as part of this continuous oscillation (Mimaki in this volume). In this respect, the rise of Japanology and the perspectives they provide are to be understood as conscious excavations of the past with a particular focus on what was different in practice.

Unique, but in What Sense?

Being interested in this neglected and forgotten thought, our collective aspiration was to excavate these differences in an effort to search for implications for today. The challenge as we understood it was how to explicate Japan as a state, framing it neither as “exceptional” nor “normal”. Thus, we treated Japan as singular: ‘Everyone is different, everyone is good’, as the Japanese poet Misuzu Kaneko (1984) wrote during the interwar period, ‘A bell, a bird, and me’, everyone sings but in a different way. Our question was not what Japan can offer but what we – fully acknowledging the danger to frame “we” in the international arena – can see through the experience of Japanese people as *one of us*.

In doing so, the chapters demonstrated that there is another way to contribute to Global IR. This is in line with Shogimen (2016: 342): ‘The Japanese intellectual tradition is Japanese … because of the way in which it reshapes ideas appropriated from other intellectual traditions.’ The singularity is better observed in terms of each historically constructed “way” to reshape ideas. Reshaping foreign ideas is common practice everywhere in the world, but, given its unique position in global intellectual history, Japan is one of the most important cases (Friedrichs and Kratochwil 2009: 716). Therefore, the purchase of investigating Japanese IR theories is less in offering unique local concepts and perspectives that sound novel for Western ears, but in the way different people understand concepts and the way they are being used differently, reflecting spatio-temporal differences (Hill 2013). This aspect is widely discussed in the discipline, but what is so far missing in this discourse is that this context does not simply reflect what is happening in a particular space-time intersection but, as Michael Tsang in his chapter has rightfully stressed, it is something that contains irreducible complexity and requires microscopic and multi-layered analyses in which local language(s), geography, and history are thoroughly taken into consideration. He claims, ‘when a “political thought” is so conceptual in nature, it can be malleably applied onto another socio-political context, but the particularities of the new context will mold and adapt the thought in uniquely different ways’ (Tsang in this volume).

To this more nuanced and deeper contextuality, modern Japanese experiences speak a lot. Some of the chapters investigated relations between concept and context. Eiji Oguma explicated how the idea of people, the seemingly essential notion of contemporary political life, has been foreign in Japan. Though political parties have tried to mobilize the term by interpreting various ways, any attempt, as seen in Oguma’s observation, was saluted by skepticism. By contrast, as Watanabe and Shangguan showed, the idea of the international was seemingly enthusiastically welcomed by Japanese people in the late nineteenth century, allowing for a quicker assimilation of international law than in China. However, this did not mean that Japanese people better comprehended the notion. Rather, the subtle conceptual difference let people imagine the international in a slightly different way, while still accepting the notion. These cases thus suggested that what happened historically in Japan was not a simple importation and localization of knowledge.

Such important political notions had no exact interpretation in Japan and intellectuals and political elites either forged new terms by combining Chinese characters or slightly changed existing terms. Because Chinese characters are ideograms, the translation itself automatically entailed how it was meant to be understood. In this sense, it was more a creation than translation.[1] Hence, any concepts' travel is the fruit of serendipity. The absence of a notion did not mean that the exact thing was absent. Rather, in the case of "international", it was absent because they saw the relations and entities that composed the ideas differently. For Japanese people, the space of the international was never anarchic. Watanabe's chapter demonstrated how states and therefore regions have been imagined differently, which, in comparison to Europe, led to a different history of the "international" in East Asia. For Meiji Japan to become a state, region had to be overcome. Seiko Mimaki's chapter on peace implies another example of such conceptual difference. The affirmative peace envisaged by Japanese members of the Institute of Pacific Relations reminds us of East Asian history which did not experience major conflicts between and within regional states for a long time before Japan launched its series of modern wars. Though not mentioned in Mimaki's chapter, the term *heiwa*, the Japanese translation of peace, was one of the newly forged terms in Meiji Japan. Again, this does not mean that the state of peace was unimportant in Asia. Rather, its absence indicates that Asians did not need the notion in their history until Europeans came into their own (international) society. From this follows that the traditional Asian state of peace did not fit to what is defined as "peace" in the European sense. Then, had the statement "international law attains regional peace" the same connotation among Asians and Europeans during the period? Our findings indicate that the answer must be negative.

The Self in the Japanese Formula

Methods of excavation are nothing new in Japanese intellectual history. Forging their own ideas out of imported notions – first from China, and then from Europe and America – was what many Japanese intellectuals, including Nishida, who is considered to be *the* Japanese philosopher today, have been doing since the eighteenth century. This widened the gap between intellectuals and the wider public, making the latter skeptical and indifferent to political thought (Tsuda 1938). At the same time, this history inevitably induced a sense of estrangement among intellectuals, which led some of them to be critical about foreign learning, arguing that it never be superficial but had to be well-grounded in people's everyday (Nishida 1950; Maruyama 1961; Watsuji 1974; Tosaka 1977; Nakamura 1971; Takeuchi 2013).

This turned Japanese political thought dualistic. Some eighteenth century scholars thought that Chinese texts as a form of representation were borrowing and insisted that the true *Yamato* spirit should be excavated in text. The well-known pioneer of this attempt was Norinaga Motoori (1730-1801), one of the founders of *kokugaku*. With this archeological method, he tried to read Japan's oldest texts, dating from the seventh and eighth centuries and written in Chinese, as Japanese (*Yamato kotoba*), by eliminating the influence of Chinese language. It was a search for the *Yamato* self. However, paradoxically, they ended up relying on Chinese concepts and methods because these intellectuals were educated in the Confucian tradition (Koyasu 2005). As Motoori nonetheless tried to decenter Confucianism that had a rationalistic tendency, the *Yamato* soul he elaborated instead came to have a perceived feminine, irrational outlook.[2] As he tried to expose the ideological character of Confucianism, the truth he looked for turned out to be context-dependent. Importantly, since Motoori looked for the self in the other, his idea of the self was not analogous to 'the Western conception of the person as a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe' (Clifford Geertz in Neumann 1999: 2). At the same time, because Confucianism was the guiding principle in Tokugawa Japan, Motoori accepted that the self had been partly eroded by the other. Thus, the *Yamato* self, which for him ultimately had to be represented by the unbroken line of the imperial family, was only found in decentered China as the imagined other. This conception strongly related to Japan's geography, being located at the edge of the Eurasian Continent (Maruyama 2003; Uchida 2009).

Some might argue that such conception of the self is not unique at all. Certainly, as Tetsurō Watsuji (1974: 136; also Sevilla 2017) pointed out, Europeans used Latin in a similar manner as the Japanese used Chinese. What distinguished the Japanese experience from the European one, however, was that the Japanese used Japanized Chinese to interpret European thought. In this way, Japanese political thought has come to have poly-lingual, poly-contextual connotations.

Given the influence of Motoori's thought in later generations (Kobayashi 1977; Koyasu 2005), and the fact that similar criticisms of other scholars of that time have been published (Karube 2007: 39), it is not an overstatement to say that his thought signaled Japan's modern episteme, in a similar way as René Descartes' thought influenced Western modernity. Or more narrowly, to become a Japanese in the modern sense requires to accept this conception of self to be found in the other. The consequence of this self-searching is truly immense and has important implications for Japan's international relations and global intellectual history.

To begin with, this history of self-searching has directed modern Japan. It gives an explanation to not only why modern Japan promptly established the modern nation-state, but also why people willingly fought modern wars by relying on foreign knowledge, and ultimately accepted the US occupation after World War II. Given the findings in this book, it can be argued that this conception of the self that is found only in the other greatly contributed at least to Japan's acceptance of the notion of international law and accordingly the transition from Asian international relations to European international relations. Differently put, they accepted the idea that induced great changes because their way of thinking changed little. By contrast to China that had its own universe with no exteriority, Japan's relativist way of thinking allowed Japan to accept Western universalism (Watanabe and Shangguan; Watanabe in this volume). Attempts of self-searching ultimately led to the *genbun itchi* (言文一致) movement in the Meiji and Taisho periods, from which controversial "national heroes" like Ryōma Sakamoto and Shōin Yoshida emerged, the latter is often referred to in search for Japan-ness, as O'Reilly has demonstrated. These heroes further consolidated Japan's self-image. In this context, it is worth adding that Motoori's thought was, like Fukuzawa's *Datsu-A-Ron*, forgotten during the Meiji Period and was only popularized again at the beginning of the Shōwa Period when the government introduced his life story in elementary school textbooks (Koyasu 2005). The only difference between Motoori and later nationalistic thinkers in this context was that whereas for the former the other to be accused was China, it was the West (either America or Europe) for the latter. These days, the other is apparently China again, although the way of framing the other has significantly changed from Motoori's period.

Second, it follows that as this way of thinking has allowed Japanese people to be dominated by an imported intellectual framework, political confrontations to generate new ideas were perceived to exist mostly outside of the community, rather than inside of it. By referring to it as 'unstructured structure', Maruyama (1961; also Rösch and Watanabe 2017) has argued that, in Japan, it is difficult to structurally analyze the historical development of thought because the confrontations between different knowledge are rarely observed. This gave Japanese intellectual tradition an ambivalent character. As discussed above, whereas it is susceptible to foreign knowledge, the domestic structure tends to stay intact.

Third, Motoori's method focusing on language and history has been taken up by later thinkers such as Nishida, the 'innate constructivist', according to Takashi Inoguchi (2007). The civilizational pluralism of Mineichiro Adachi and the unique colonialism of Tadao Yanaiara were also products of this Japanese constructivism. In this respect, although Toyoda is right in claiming that the Japanese government, proposing the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere in which the Japanese were depicted as the leading Asian civilization, ended up supporting Eurocentrism, Adachi certainly saw the concept differently to his European counterparts. Kotaro Tanaka's conception of international cultures depicted by Kevin Doak is another example. Thus, it can be argued that the pluralism that characterized their conceptions was a modern Japanese invention.

One might wonder if this contradicts the Japanese wartime assertion of the pure *Yamato* race. However, as Oguma (1995) has demonstrated elsewhere, Japanese as the pure race was a myth largely constructed after World War II. At least until Japan came to acknowledge that the war could no longer be won, they believed in their superiority not because they were born superior but because they *became* superior in the history of Japan that had continued for more than two thousand years, a repository of Asiatic culture (Okakura 1920) and even beyond (Oguma 1995). As Adachi argued, Japan was the 'principal representative' of the Far Eastern civilization (and possibly beyond) because 'the Japanese system' (Toyoda in this volume) established by the Meiji government was the fruit of their efforts to seek knowledge from all over the world, as emperor Meiji claimed in the 1868 Charter Oath (Watanabe and Shangguan in this volume). It is safe to say that such constructivist-like views were in a sense buttressed by relativist thinking whose root can be found in Japan's own tradition. In this development, however, Chinese and Western thought were absolutely integral. For the Japanese because of their historical experiences, the world had to be relative and plural. Still paradoxically, they were happy to accept one hegemonic thought not because they were forced to obey, but because seeing Japanese self in the hegemonic other was what they had been doing historically.

Again, our intention is not to speak for Japanese exceptionalism or to maintain a different type of geographical determinism. This seemingly unique conception of "self in the other" is merely a way to see ubiquitous relations. Such a way can become unique only when it is adopted by a particular spatio-temporal condition. Moreover, ideas weaved by a particular way of thinking and a condition are never the same because both are incessantly and increasingly subject to change. Being reconsidered in this way, Japanese experiences can have useful implications that can appeal to wider audience. As Nakano, Shimizu, and Doak have demonstrated, some thinkers such as Yanaihara, Nitobe, Tanaka, and Tosaka tried to create a more pluralistic order despite the contextual limitations they were caught in. In the same vain, the idea of Adachi has lived on until today. Furthermore, as Matsuoka has demonstrated, a seemingly 'indigenous' concept in Japan that is difficult to translate in English can be exported to Western academia. Thus, the Japanese experience can offer some valuable insights in rethinking how plurality can be understood in contemporary world politics.

Finally, this conception of the self and the other supports constructivist (including poststructuralist) IR theories, particularly those regarding collective identity formations and foreign policy as well as the English School tradition (e.g. Wæver 1996; Campbell 1998; Neumann 1999; Hansen 2006; Suzuki 2009). At the same time, however, it compels theorists to rethink the theorization in terms of how the world has been connected through dissemination of knowledge from the Western self to the non-West as the other.

In Lieu of Conclusion: A Dialogue without Boundary

Recent contributions to IR try to understand the interconnections among different histories without undermining each singularity by focusing on relationality. The common ground of such attempts is to admit the 'mutually constitutive character of world politics' (Barkawi and Laffey 2006: 348). As seen in Gurminder Bhambra's (2010: 128) call for 'a "connected histories" approach within a decentered conception of "totality"', and Shogimen's (2016) proposition, such attempts require to envisage boundaries between the self and the other in a different way from that of conventional critical scholarship. From this follows that difference must be reconceived. Bhambra (2010: 137) argues that in IR and historical sociology, '"culture" is posited as something that can accommodate (self-produced) "difference"', it is often assumed that 'there are common structural institutions, which emerged in Europe and then were culturally inflects as they were diffused around the globe'. Such perspectives, trying to transcend Eurocentrism, have failed, as they see 'resolving the tension between structure and agency as a solution'. However, for her, it is the embodiment of it. Thus, another resolution has to be pursued.

Our endeavor to decolonize the idea of dialogue is in line with Bhambra's claim. Let us briefly review how constructivist theorists have investigated identity formation in world politics. They argue that the use of the other is 'a general practice of European identity formation' (Neumann 1999: 207). Some claim that the Western self is contested because it has been defined by various actors, including others outside of the West like Japan (Browning and Lehti 2010). But in any case, 'the constitution of identity is achieved through the inscription of boundaries that serve to demarcate an "inside" from "outside", a "self" from the "other", a "domestic" from a "foreign" (Campbell 1998: 9). By contrast, the Japanese self does not fit these claims. In Motoori's discourse, the self is to be found in the other. For the thinkers we have investigated, ideas like civilization, international, colonialism, Catholicism, and even Asia were foreign. Still, they tried identify their Japanese "self" in this *foreignness*, simultaneously re-inscribing their own "tradition" in it. Hence, in this conception of the self and the other, both are mutually embedded.

It is not to claim that this Japanese conception explains contemporary world politics better. Because, it is not just to ease the tension of the structure-agent issue to rectify Eurocentrism, but what is difference and what the same that have to be carefully analyzed. Again, ideas how to frame such binary relations of political practices are abundant everywhere and the Japanese way is only one variant. In this respect, we conclude that there is no such thing as Japanese IR theory. Rather, we suggest that there is a variety of ways of thinking relations between the self and the other, the West and the East, peace and war, the region and the state, private and public, the egg and the wall, local and global. They become political only when interpreted in a particular space-time intersection. This is what we call singularity. Only by acknowledging this hidden amorphousness of binary and subtlety of our differences, we can make borders that separate us less salient and ensure that we are different and simultaneously the same.

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[1] This changed in Japan since the Showa Period as *katakana*, a phonogram, is commonly used for words adopted from foreign languages.

[2] *Yamatokotoba* was considered to be for female. The earliest invocation of *Yamatodamashii* (Yamato soul) is to be found in the work of Murasaki Shikibu (978-1016), the author of *The Tale of Genji*. Also Shimizu in this volume.