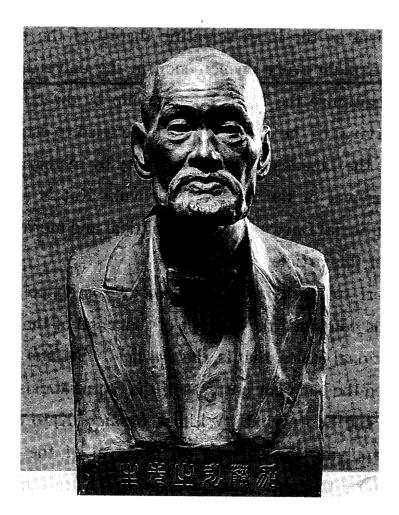
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# 〈論文〉

# Hiroyuki Kato: A Social Darwinist Approach to the Emperorship in Modern Japan

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Statue of Hiroyuki Kato made by Fumio Asakura, 1915 owned by the Gneral Library, The University of Tokyo photo by Akio Suzuki

#### Abstract

This article describes how a certain Japanese conservative scholar intellectually responded to the concept of "survival of the fittest", which is the main tenet of Social Darwinism, in the late 19th and the early 20th This conservative scholar was Hiroyuki Kato (1836–1916)<sup>1</sup>, centuries. the first president of the Tokyo Imperial University. As a governmentpatronized scholar, he had a duty to theoretically prove the political legitimacy of the Emperorship in Japan. He accepted this main tenet of Social Darwinism as the most scientific theory of the time, which he thought could explain every phenomenon in the universe. He tried to theoretically legitimize the Meiji Emperorship by directly applying the concept of "survival of the fittest." Then, he tried to establish an ideology to enhance the Japanese national morality by modifying the original concept of "survival of the fittest." Hiroyuki Kato's application and modification of Social Darwinism in his political and moral thought is the main content of this article.

In his effort to work out such ideology for supporting the Meiji Emperorship, he combined the concept of "survival of the fittest" with a Japanese traditional ethics, that is, the *Bushido*. *Bushido* is the morality which stipulated the behavior patterns of the Samurai class, the warrior-bureaucrats in the Edo period. Without *Bushido*, Kato could not have succeeded in applying the concept of "survival of the fittest" to his political and moral thought. Here, we can find Kato's intellectual creativity.

Kato also accepted the concept of "survival of the fittest" as a mechanism deciding the international struggle. But this acceptance included a certain contradiction, which may not be found in Western countries like Britain and the United States of America. When the concept of "survival of the fittest" was used in explaining the international struggles, it was almost always inseparably combined with racism, at least with "white man's supremacy." For Japanese people, the acceptance of this concept meant that they were inferior to Caucasians, and that they would be defeated some day by Caucasians. In spite of this antinationalistic result, Kato dared to accept it. I labelled it as the "acceptance as the weaker."

The "acceptance as the weaker" sounds paradoxical not only because it is anti-nationalistic in the receiving country, but also because the concept of "survival of the fittest" is generally said to be an ideology in favor of the strong. But it is a historical fact that Kato accepted this concept, and tried to transform Japan from the weaker to the stronger. Kato's achievement makes us reconsider the nature of Social Darwinism. It is not an ideology always in favor of the stronger.

Fundamentally speaking, Social Darwinism is one of the theories of social development. However universal a certain developmental theory may appear in its birthplace, it reveals the hidden partiality or contradiction when it is transferred and applied to other countries. To clarify such partiality or contradiction is the major motivation of my study on the reception of Social Darwinism in Japan. And I am planning to take the same stance in my future study of the reception of modernization theory in Japan.

Lastly, I would like to refer to the limits of the acceptance as the weaker.

# Definition and Typology of Social Darwinism

#### 1. Definition

Social Darwinism is a theory of social evolution. It asserts that social evolution is achieved by selecting the fitter in the struggle for existence among units (Unit can be set either on the level of individual or on the level of group)<sup>2</sup>.

#### 2. Typology

The table on Page 4 is an ideal or hypothetical typology of social evolution theories. First, I categorize social evolution theories in terms of the mechanism of evolution, namely, "struggle & selection" and "cooperation." Then, I divide the mechanism of "struggle & selection" into the two subcategories, namely, "natural selection" and "artificial selection." Lastly, I divide all the categories of evolutionary mechanism into two subcategories in terms of the unit in the process of struggle or cooperation. Although the method of my categorization is more or less arbitrary, it follows the formal logic. And we can get six types of social evolution theory as you can see in the table. I would like to name Type A for the upper left category, Type B for the lower left, Type C for the upper center and so on.

	Struggle & Selection		Cooperation
Unit	Natural	Artificial	
Among individuals within a society	ing the fitter in- natural Competi-	Type C: society evolves by select- ing the fitter according to artifi- cial policies, insti- tutions, etc.	evolves by cooperation among individuals.

Among groups	Type B:the world	Type D: the world	Type F: the world
(nation-states,	evolves by select-	evolves by select-	evolves by cooper-
races, etc.)	ing the fitter in	ing the fitter	ation among
	natural competi-	according to artifi-	nation-states,
	tion among nation-	cial policies.	races, etc.
	states, races, etc.		

In this typology, Social Darwinism is expressed by the four types (A, B, C, and D) in the left and center. For example, laissez-faire economy belongs to Type A. Free trade belongs to Type B. Eugenics belongs to Type C. Type D is expressed by the racial policy of Nazi to annihilate the Jewish people. Type E is expressed by Peter Kropotkin's Mutual Aid. And Type F is expressed in the cooperative relations among different countries by international division of labor.

Although I cannot say that this typology has a highly analytical ability on the actual patterns of Social Darwinism, I think that it is very useful at least when we try to understand and summarize the findings in the previous studies of reception of Social Darwinism in different countries.

# Short Review of Previous Studies & A General Pattern of Reception

#### 1. Previous Studies

Though there is almost no comparative study on the reception among different countries, there are some monographs on the reception in respective countries such as Britain, the United States, Germany, France, Russia, China, and Japan<sup>3</sup>.

Richard Hofstadter (1955), for example, analyzed and wrote a classic monograph on the case of the United States. The title of his book is *Social Darwinism in American Thought*. According to his historical analysis, Social Darwinism was introduced into the United States after the Civil War. In the period from 1860s to the 1890s, the United States experienced the industrial revolution and the businessmen competed with one another for economic success in the laissez-faire economy. Successful businessmen such as John D Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie accepted Social Darwinism, and explained their success as follows. They succeeded in their business because the principle of "survival of the fittest" selected them in free economic competitions. Hofstadter named this interpretation as the "individualistic" type of Social Darwinism. It falls into Type A in my typology.

On the other hand, in the period from 1890s to World War I, when the United States started the imperialistic activities, expansionists, nationalists and racists applied Social Darwinism to the arena of international struggle. They advocated that the United States should survive the international struggle by cooperation among American people. Hofstadter named this type as the "collectivistic" Social Darwinism. It falls into Type B (including Type E) in my typology.

Ironically, however, when the United States entered World War I against Germany, the United States began to take an attitude of anti-Social Darwinism because Germany advocated Social Darwinism.

Hofstadter's analysis on the American case is clearly based on a two-stage model. The first stage is a period of the reception of Type A, and the second stage is a period of the reception of Type B (including Type E). Though critically, Hofstadter's two stage model has been used

in the later analyses on other countries.

Then, let's look at the previous studies on Japanese case. Japanese scholars, for example, analyzed a case of modern Japan as follows. Social Darwinism was introduced into this country about the late 1870s<sup>4</sup>. Japan in the period from the 1870s to the 1890s was in the midst of political modernization.

At the first stage, Japanese intellectuals of the time parted into the two wings and both wings applied Social Darwinism to the problem of the political system. They argued against each other on the problem of what type of political system was appropriate in Japan of the time. Liberal progressives claimed a kind of universal suffrage according to the egalitarian principle<sup>5</sup>. Hiroyuki Kato (1882), as a government-patronized theorist, denied the equality among people on the basis of one of the main tenets of Darwinism. As we know Darwinism presupposes random variation among individuals in a species. As long as there is variation in ability among people, they cannot be equal.

Then, Kato tried to justify the reign of the Imperial family over Japan according to the main tenet of Darwinism. He insisted that, because the Meiji Emperor was the fittest, it was a natural result of the principle of "survival of the fittest" that the Meiji Emperor was now ruling over Japan. But some of the liberal progressives began to criticize Kato's argumentation, depending upon the very same tenet of Darwinism<sup>6</sup>. One decisive criticism came from Masakazu Toyama (1855—1944)<sup>7</sup>, a Sociology professor at the Tokyo Imperial University, who asked Kato whether the reign of the Imperial family would end when there appeared a person who was fitter than the Meiji Emperor. In other words, he pointed out an vital weak point in Kato's argument. Kato

could not theorize the perpetual reign of the Imperial family over Japan. Kato almost lost in this controversy.

Recognizing that the main principle of Darwinism could not directly justify the Meiji Emperorship, Kato tried to argue that Japan should adopt a politically centralized system because it was appropriate to survive in the era of international struggle. In other words, Kato accepted the Type B (including Type E) of Social Darwinism in my typology, and tried to justify the Meiji Emperor system again. Furthermore, he introduced the concept of the "family state." It means that the earliest ancestor of the Imperial family was the father of Japanese tribe, and all the other Japanese were his descendants. Therefore, it was natural for the Imperial family to rule over Japan. Depending upon the concept of "family state," he directly justified the Meiji Emperorship. The previous studies explained Kato as if he gave up Type A Social Darwinism.

#### 2. A General Pattern of Reception in the Previous Studies

In this way, previous studies also described the Japanese case along with the two-stage model of Hofstadter. The first stage is Type A, and the second Type B (including Type E). Though there were some differences in the area to which Social Darwinism was applied, and though there were also some differences of emphasis in type of Social Darwinism, between the American and the Japanese cases, previous studies described Social Darwinism as if it was an intellectual virus reproducing the same kinds of syndromic controversies where it was accepted.

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## New Perspective in Analyzing the Japanese Case

It is true that we can find the two stages also in Japanese reception, but I have to point out at least two contradictions of the previous studies with the historical facts. And each of these contradictions will lead to new perspectives in reanalyzing the Japanese case. One is that Kato confessed in his memoir that he had kept on believing in Type A Social Darwinism since he knew it at 44. Therefore, we can expect that, after he had failed in his direct justification of the Meiji Emperorship, he tried to modify Social Darwinism so that it could be used to legitimize, or at least to support the Meiji Emperorship.

The other contradiction is that it was anti-nationalistic for Kato to accept the Type B Social Darwinism because it was inseparably combined with the "white man's supremacy." If Kato dared to accept it, Kato or some other scholar sooner or later had to theoretically prove that Japan would survive the struggles with white men's countries and someday could overcome the position of the weaker even though Japan was inferior to them. Here, we can expect a certain modified version of Type B Social Darwinism.

# From the Acceptance as the Weaker to Samurai Darwinism

### 1. The Acceptance as the Weaker

From the 1880s to the 1890s, there was a controversy on mixed residence within Japan. The Liberal progressives and Japanese Christians claimed that Japan should immediately start mixed residence

because it would promoted further westernization, and that further westernization would lead to the revision of unequal treaties.

But scholars in the Tokyo Imperial University such as Hiroyuki Kato and Tetsujiro Inoue (1855–1944)<sup>8</sup> were opposed to immediate start of mixed residence according to the Type B Social Darwinism. They explained that mixed residence became the actual arena of struggle between yellow and white races, and that the struggle would result in the white race's victory because, biologically speaking, the white race was superior to the yellow. In addition, they predicted that Japan would become extinct or at least colonized like India and other Asian countries by the white race if Japan immediately started mixed residence. They concluded that Japan should delay the start of mixed residence as long as possible and meanwhile Japanese people should make themselves stronger enough to compete equally with Caucasians<sup>9</sup>.

It is clear that Kato accepted the Type B Social Darwinism as the weaker. But the acceptance as the weaker was necessarily accompanied by exploring the way to transform the weaker into the stronger. In his exploring the way of transformation, we can expect that Kato depended upon the Type A Social Darwinism because he did not give it up until he died.

#### 2. Samurai Darwinism

Since his direct justification of the Meiji Emperorship became abortive, Kato began to limit his study to moral evolution. In other words, he gave up the study of biological evolution. He did so not only because he did not have much knowledge on biology, but also because, as long as Kato admitted the Japanese biological inferiority, nothing was left except

the moral area for Japanese to become stronger than white men.

Finally, Kato advocated "self-selection" in his book *Shizenkai no Mujun to Shinka* (Contradictions and Evolution in Nature, 1907). It meant that the morality of Japanese would evolve by people competing with one another for loyalty and patriotic activities to the Imperial Family. According to Kato, in the process of moral evolution, people do not compete for survival, but for loyalty and patriotic activities. And as loyalty is expressed in the best way by the form of martyrdom in war, people compete with one another for death in the extreme case. Kato thought that the survival of the Japanese state would be guaranteed more than before if he could implant Japanese soldiers with this blind fighting spirit.

Simply speaking, Kato changed Type A Social Darwinism from "struggle for existence" to "competition for loyalty" and from "survival of the fittest" to "martyrdom of the fittest."

What made it possible for Kato to modify Type A Social Darwinism in this way?

I think there are two factors which enabled Kato's modification. One lies in the Japanese translation for the phrase of "survival of the fittest." It is said that Kato translated it into Japanese as "Yuushou-Reppai" (the superior's winning and the inferior's losing). In the meaning of this Japanese phrase, it does not always matter whether people can survive a struggle or not, but it does matter whether people can win or defeat. I think that the adoption of such translation is one condition which enabled Kato"s modification.

But there is a more important factor. Immediately before the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5), Bushido was revived by the Government

advertisement in order to encourage militarism in Japan. Kato himself declared that Japanese people should maintain the Bushido ethics and the esteem for ancestors. The Bushido ethics required samurai to complete for the loyalty to their lord at the risk of their lives. Samurai could not become a perfect winner in the loyalty competition until he finished it in the form martyrdom. It gave samurai a great honor: it made samurai loyal to their lord, filially pious to their parents, and brave as warrior. I think that Kato's modification of Type A Social Darwinism was created in the interaction between Bushido and Social Darwinism. I label Kato's "self-selection" as Samurai Darwinism¹o.

#### 3. The Meaning of Samurai Darwinism

First, Kato introduced the principle of competition without any contradiction to the reign of Meiji Emperorship. The competition of loyalty was not only harmonious to the Emperorship but also conducive to the survival of the state in the arena of international struggle.

Second, the introduction of the principle of competition gave Japan a driving force of moral evolution. Since Japan was the "family state" and all the Japanese were in kinship relation, the frequency and strength of competition was historically weaker in Japan<sup>11</sup>. But Samurai Darwinism could reinforce this weak point in the "family state."

Third, Samurai Darwinism does not fit into any category of my typology on Social Darwinism, and it is a new type. In this sense Kato's combination of Social Darwinism with Bushido can be regarded as intellectually creative, even though the final product of his thought was the belligerent ideology to mobilize people for the pursuit of selfish national interests.

### Conclusion

#### 1. Intellectual Creativity or Just a Distortion

Most of present scholars on the Japanese Intellectual History think that Kato's application of Social Darwinism to the legitimacy of the Meiji Emperorship was just a distortion of the original concept. Japanese scholars, past and present, have been very sensitive about the problem of distortion or misunderstanding of the scientific theories imported from Europe, and they have been almost instinctively inclined to compete one another in the degree of precise comprehension on the imported theories since the beginning of Modern Era. It is true that this adherence to precision played a great part in Japan's development into one of the most advanced countries. In the field of reception study, however, this same adherence sometimes may become an obstacle, which makes us blind at intellectually creative activities, which apparently seem to be distortions.

#### 2. The Intellectual Counter-Attack of the Weaker against the Strong

Kato created Samurai Darwinism depending upon the Type A Social Darwinism. But Kato did not complete the final work. Once he accepted the Type B as the weaker, he had to theoretically prove why Samurai Darwinism becomes the way to transform Japan from the weaker to the stronger.

Instead of Kato, Asajiro Oka (1868—1944) explained the meaning of Kato's effort to accept and modify Social Darwinism. He was the biologist who made a great contribution in spreading Darwinism among ordinary people in Japan. In his short essay of "The Cost and Benefit of

the Inferior Race" (1919), after referring to the latecomers' effect in the process of modernization, Oka defined the most promising race in the world at that time. According to him, the most promising country was one which exceeds other countries in material progress but goes behind others in the development of democracy. Unfortunately, one race cannot have both of these characters at the same time because these two characters do not go along with each other. Therefore, it is very fortunate for a race to have enough ability to imitate the civilization of advanced countries and to be still uncivilized in democracy. It is clear that Asajiro Oka implicitly described Japan as a fortunate race like this.

I do not know whether Oka tried to explain the meaning of Kato's work. Kato explored and established the ideology, that is Samurai Darwinism, to derive more obedience from Japanese people and tried to slow down the development of democracy. Oka tried to explain that, because Japan was less advanced in this area of democracy, Japan can be more promising than advanced countries. This way of thinking is a kind of counter attack from the weaker side against the stronger, that is, an intellectual counter attack from Japan to Western countries who threatened Japan both by scientific theories of the strong and by actual military power.

# 3. A Possible Influence of Samurai Darwinism on Other Asian Countries

The Japanese victory in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5 is a turning point of the acceptance of Type B Social Darwinism as a mechanism determining the international struggles. The Japanese victory shuffled the racial hierarchy of the 19th century and partly separated

Type B Social Darwinism from "white man's supremacy." I think that it opened the rout for the concept to be accepted into the intellectuals of other Asian nations, who previously refused it as anti-nationalistic.

#### 4. Reconsideration of the Nature of Social Darwinism

Kato's intellectual creativity proved that the principle is not always in favor of the strong. I do not think that Social Darwinism is either in favor of the strong or the weak. The strong cannot help having the feeling of fear because Social Darwinism threatens the position of the strong. The weak cannot ignore the actual power who advocates the principle, even if they deny it. Rather, Social Darwinism is a theory in favor of the fighter who tries to transform himself from the weaker to the stronger through struggle.

Originally, the concept of "survival of the fittest" was born in the Victorian England, where laissez-faire economy was a predominant atmosphere of the society. The principle of laissez-faire economy was completely different from, or completely opposed to the moral ideology for supporting the Meiji Emperorship. Kato's modification of Social Darwinism showed that it is a developmental theory which cannot decide the goal of development by itself. In other words, the goal can be arbitrarily decided by those who utilize this theory.

#### 5. The Limits of the Acceptance as the Weaker

It is true that there were some scholars who warned that science had progressed so much that the naive age of Bushido, loyalty, and patriotism would end, and advocated that Japan should take the policy of biological improvement of her people into a serious consideration. Koutoku Unno

(1879—1955), a pioneer of eugenics in Japan, was a typical one who advocated such scientific policy in his book: A Theory on Improvement of Japanese Race (1910). But this line of policy never became a mainstream of Japanese modernization. Rather, the emphasis on Bushido, loyalty, and patriotism continued to be predominant until Japan was defeated in World War II. It is very ironical that, although Kato had started from the most scientific theory of the time, he established the ideology which led Japan to proceed in the opposite direction of science.

#### NOTES

- "Samurai from Tajima, now Hyogo Prefecture, Kato studied Western learning and military science and in 1860 was sent by the Bakufu to the Bansho Torishirabejo, where he studied German...... Kato joined the government after the Restoration and was a member of the Meirokusha. Well known as a political philosopher, he was early on a strong supporter of natural rights, but he increasingly moved toward a less radical position...... From 1881—1893 Kato was president of Tokyo University. He became a member of the Genroin, as well as sitting in the House of Peers, and was a member of the Privy Council 1906—1916. He was a advisor to the emperor...." (Hunter 1984: 88)
- 2 As for the definition of Social Darwinism, see Bellomy (1984), Bowler (1984), and Moore (1986).
- 3 See Bannister (1979), Clark (1984), Glick, ed.(1988), Hofstadter (1955), Kelly (1981), Kohn, ed.(1985), Pusey (1983), and Murakami (1964).
- 4 Darwin's theory was mainly introduced by foreign scholars employed by the Government. Among them was the American, Edward Sylvester Morse (1838—1925), a Harvard graduate in biology. Morse was the first professor of zoology at the Tokyo Imperial University, teaching there between 1877—79.

Writings by Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer were translated into Japanese from the late 1870s. Masao Watanabe's work on these translation suggests that evolutionary theory was accepted more as a social theory than as a biological one

- (Watanabe, ed., 1984: 197).
- 5 It is called *Jiyu Minken Undo*, a political movement of liberal thinkers, campaigned hard to establish a national congress based on principles of universal suffrage. Their slogan was called *Tempu-Jinken-setsu* (All men are equal by nature).
- 6 See Baba (1883), Ueki (1883), and Yano (1882).
- 7 See Toyama (1883).
- 8 "The son of a physician in Fukuoka, Inoue graduated in Oriental Philosophy from the Tokyo Imperial University in 1880. After studying in Germany, he became the university's first professor of philosophy and taught there until 1923...... His political ideology was strongly pro-establishment; he stressed the need for loyalty to the emperor and love for Japan as the essentials of national morality......" (Hunter 1984:71)
- 9 See Inoue (1892) and Kato (1893).
- 10 See Unoura (1991)
- 11 See Kato (1907: 252).

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