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In the Shadow of Japanese Identity

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Abstract

Japan is, as former Prime Minister Asō Tarō once put it, commonly described as being "one race, one civilization, one language and one culture."[1] This statement reflects a popular conception of Japan as a homogenous nation. However, the purpose of this paper, building on earlier research, is to assess what exactly Japanese identity is, how it is constructed/maintained, and who is and is not considered "Japanese." The impetus of this inquiry comes from my research of the *hisabetsu burakumin*, a Japanese social outcaste group, who have undergone significant changes throughout their long history as a socially-constructed "minority." This particular study of Japanese identity and its "Other" should help illuminate how ideology, discourse, and discrimination fuse with social institutions to create a means of self-identification and Other-identification. Using the particular cases of the *Zainichi* Koreans and the *hisabetsu burakumin*, I intend to analyze how different identities are incorporated into the larger social apparatus of Japanese society, which recognizes only one notion of "Japanese."

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[1] "Asō Says Japan Is Nation of 'one Race' | The Japan Times." *Japan Times RSS*. Accessed October 22, 2017.

The Conceptual Framework for Deconstructing Ideology

Identity is an integral part of human life, but it is an incredibly nuanced construct. The discourse concerning how individuals, communities, and nations construct identities involves a wide variety of facets including race/ethnicity, politics, philosophy, language, and culture. Given the breadth of the topic, I have narrowed in on the discourse concerning Japanese identity. What does it mean to be Japanese? How is the mainstream definition of Japanese identity produced/perpetuated by discourse and culture? In what way does this hegemonic identity relate to the identities of marginalized groups in Japan? Though there is an ever-present danger of ascribing either a monolithic or multicultural categorization or theory to Japanese society, I am not aiming to determine a definite explanation of Japanese identity or culture. Using the discourse of *Nihonjinron* and contemporary political and social theories, I will outline features of a mainstream Japanese identity to which I will relate the identities of various marginalized groups. To address these minority groups' identities, the historical, cultural, racial/ethnic, and political dimensions of each group will be explored. I aim to demonstrate how these different identities are subsumed within the larger social apparatus of Japanese society, which recognizes only one notion of "Japanese," but whose existence challenges Japanese cultural hegemony.

To investigate the matter of identity, we can begin by analyzing the related, but distinct, notion of Eric Hobsbawn's "invented tradition." The scholar Stephen Vlastos elaborates on Hobsbawn's idea by detailing how traditions, like identities, are social constructs, meaning that their existence is dependent upon the societies and people that reify them through actualization.[2] However, one should not confuse the term "invented" with something that is entirely fictitious,

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[2] Stephen Vlastos, "Tradition: Past/Present Culture and Modern Japanese History," in *Mirror of Modernity: Invented Traditions of Modern Japan*, ed. Stephen Vlastos, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 2.

without consequence, or without significance. Vlastos argues that scholars often frame the complexity of the term "tradition" itself within the timeframes to which they are relevant, created, and are used, as things opposite of modernity.[3] Additionally, tradition is conceptualized as marking "the continuous cultural transmission" of the past to the present, by both individuals and structures.[4] Yet, Hobsbawm outlines the term: "'invented tradition' is used in a broad, but not imprecise sense. It includes both 'traditions' actually invented, constructed and formally instituted and those emerging in a less easily traceable manner within a brief and dateable period…" which opposes the common conceptualizations of tradition by scholars.[5] Instead of conceiving tradition as fixed social rituals and beliefs, Hobsbawm argues that traditions should be understand as social constructs intentionally invented by nations and peoples to create a sense of historical continuity and norms.

Another concept relevant to the discussion of identity as a product of cultural and social discourse is Benedict Anderson's notion of "imagined communities." For Anderson, the "imagined political community" is imagined as "both inherently limited and sovereign."[6] A community marks a particular spatial entity and incorporates a sense of communion that connects all of its members.[7] Anything larger than a "primordial village" will fit the definition of "imagined community," for it is the socio-political imagining of nation or space that is both finite and free.[8] Lastly, it is a "community" because the nation is "always conceived as a deep,

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[3] Stephen Vlastos, "Tradition: Past/Present Culture and Modern Japanese History," in *Mirror of Modernity: Invented Traditions of Modern Japan*, ed. Stephen Vlastos, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 2.

[4] Stephen Vlastos, "Tradition: Past/Present Culture and Modern Japanese History," 2.

[5] Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 1.

[6] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, (New York: Verso, 2006), 5-6.

[7] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

[8] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, (New York: Verso, 2006), 7.

horizontal comradeship," a conceptualization that people are willing to die for.[9] Anderson's representation of social groups will map on well to the *Nihonjinron* discussion concerning national identity and culture. It is important to understand how the individual works that constitute the *Nihonjinron* discourse are indicative of a larger enterprise of imaging a national Japanese political entity.

The discourse of *Nihonjinron* requires particular analysis, for much of the scholarship concerning Japanese identity relates in some way to the body of work, both Japanese and foreign, commonly designated under the umbrella-term of "*Nihonjinron*."[10] Though national studies is not something unique to Japan or the Japanese, the *Nihonjinron* discourse is marked by scholars as a particular subset of nationalistic scholarship.[11] The history of the discourse is by no means inconsequential to the aim of this paper, for the discourse of *Nihonjinron* is not limited to academic circles or institutions but is instead a commonly engaged activity in mainstream Japanese society.[12] However, there is a noteworthy concern to raise when discussing the *Nihonjinron* discourse as it is in many ways a prime example of Hobsbawn's concept of "invented tradition."

In simply separating *Nihonjinron* from other national studies, one emphasizes a particular discourse peculiar only to Japan. Whether scholars, Japanese and non-Japanese, attempt to affirm or deny the various claims of the *Nihonjinron* discourse, their partaking in the conversation perpetuates its ideas as an existing discursive body.[13] This reification of *Nihonjinron* by even its

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[9] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7.
[10] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, trans. by David Slater, (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1-2.
[11] Peter N. Dale, *The Myth of Japanese Uniqueness*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), i-ii.
[12] Harumi Befu, Hegemony of Homogeneity: *An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 2-3.
[13] Peter N. Dale, *The Myth of Japanese Uniqueness*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), i-ii.

detractors creates an interesting dilemma when addressing the notion of Japanese identity. If we are to use a representation of Japanese identity derived from the *Nihonjinron* discourse, then are we affirming all or parts of this particularly troublesome body of work? However, we cannot begin to develop an idea of Japanese identity completely separate from the discourse of *Nihonjinron* given the prevalence and influence the discourse has had in the formation of perceptions of Japanese societal norms and ideology.

More complications arise when we consider that any essentialist perspective of Japanese identity requires a conscious disregard of actual human variance.[14] Using representations or attempting to articulate a representation of an entire people requires critical consideration, lest I present an egregiously inaccurate portrayal or engage in some sort of paternalistic, Orientalist, or racist scholarship. Therefore, even though I will employ models of identity for various groups living in Japan, I do not assert that these models constitute a kind of absolute "reality" or "truth." Edward Said, a postcolonial studies scholar and renowned public intellectual, presents an argument for why scholars ought to be careful when "representing others" in his book *Orientalism*:

> …the real issue is whether indeed there can be a true representation of anything, or whether any and all representations, because they are representations, are embedded first in the language and then in the culture, institutions, and political ambience of the presenter. If the latter alternative is the correct one (as I believe it is), then we must be prepared to accept the fact that a representation is eo ipso implicated, intertwined, embedded, interwoven with a great many other things besides the "truth," that is itself a representation.[15]

The purpose of representations in this paper is to analyze the cultural construction of identity by both mainstream Japanese society and various marginalized groups. Tradition, or culture, and

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[14] Peter N. Dale, *The Myth of Japanese Uniqueness*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), 222.
[15] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 272-273.

identity are tied in that even if they are invented or representations, they form a very tangible and very real basis for social-political structures and ideology.

An example par excellence of this is former Japanese Prime Minister, Asō Tarō's (name in Japanese order of [surname, given name]) image of Japan as "one race, one civilization, one language and one culture," a representation that has been left mainly unchallenged in both Japanese and Western popular discourse.[16] Furthermore, the Western conception of Japan as a xenophobic and homogenous nation, perpetuates a narrative of Japan that downplays, overgeneralizes, or completely ignores internal differences. Yet, Japan is, I argue with John Lie, a nation constituted of various peoples, civilizations, languages, and cultures. The Ainu of Hokkaido, the Ryūkyūan of Okinawa, the *Zainichi* Koreans, and the *hisabetsu burakumin*, among others, have a stake in Japan's national identity.

To elaborate on this particular representation, a homogenous society is a society that is uniform in structure and lacking or devoid of difference.[17] The Japan described by former Prime Minister Asō's statement portrays a unified, monolithic nation, which perpetuates a cultural hegemonic representation that subsumes differences. However, the issue is not that Japan claims to be homogenous when it is not, but the claim that "Japaneseness" is something devoid of difference and identified solely with mainstream society. To downplay group variance is to make invisible what society finds undesirable and enforces silence on marginalized communities, preventing them from expressing their differences in the foreground. This was the reality for the Ainu, native Okinawans, and various other marginalized groups, who were subjected to assimilatory polices and forced to adhere to a concept of "Japaneseness" that only alienated them

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[16] "Aso Says Japan Is Nation of 'one Race' | The Japan Times." *Japan Times RSS*. Accessed July 22, 2016.
[17] *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary*, s.v. "homogeneous."

further.[18] Ethnic and cultural minorities had to deal with the reality that to be "non-Japanese" meant to be peripheral, on the margins of society. The *hisabetsu burakumin*, the largest minority group in Japan, in particular have been delegated to the fringes of Japanese society constantly throughout Japanese history, though they are not "ethnically" different from other Japanese people.[19]

Since this paper discusses the issues of discrimination, the reader should note that discrimination itself is a complicated term and refers to a basic, universal human activity. To "discriminate" means to differentiate things, ideas, people, places, and so forth on the basis of available information.[20] For example, one can discriminate between types of fruit or herbs based on available or obtainable information that in turn is influenced by societal indoctrination, personal biases, and accessibility. However, this definition is not challenged per se in this paper, instead the ideology of social/racial discrimination and its connection to social structures, attitudes, and behaviors that separate and classify people into different categories of social positionality is. An ideology of discrimination is to be understood as an underlying and pervasive cultural lens of stratification/differentiation that affects the way people of a particular society or group behave and think without necessarily being aware of it. Ideology shapes how people engage with and understand cultural symbols, meanings, and values concerning people, objects, places, and ideas.[21] Relevant to this conceptual framework is the term "Other," which refers to a type of group classification that designates a collective as being alien or different, normally in

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[18] Joshua H. Roth, "Blackwell Reference Online." *CHAPTER 6. Political and Cultural Perspectives on "Insider" Minorities: A Companion to the Anthropology of Japan*, Accessed July 22, 2016, 74-76. Doi: 10.1111/b.9780631229551.2008.00006.x

[19] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 2011), 6-7.

[20] *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary*, s.v. "discriminate."

[21] *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary*, s.v. "ideology."

relation to a dominate group. All nations and cultures have their "Others," for they provide a means for creating collective identity and association, which entail a host of interconnected social consequences like social formation, accessibility of resources, and imposed societal values and meanings.[22]

Before analyzing the *Nihonjinron*, I want to bring up the discussion concerning the multicultural and multiethnic conceptions of Japan. The scholar Chris Burgess argues that critiques of Japan's "homogenous conception of Japan" and those who advocate a "multicultural image of Japan" fail to see how cultural variance does not equate to multiculturalism.[23] The cultural hegemony of a particular notion of "Japaneseness" subsumes any cultural variance and the lack of a cultural-equal to Japanese culture is indicative of this assured dominance.[24] Burgess argues that "…we can say that, on balance, Japan does not appear to be particularly multicultural in terms of either discourse (1.2.1), policy (1.2.2), or people (1.2.3)...This begs the question of whether those writing in the 'multicultural Japan' vein are not being descriptive but rather prescriptive: not saying what Japan *is* like but what it *should*, *ought to*, or *must* be like."[25] To engage the discourse of Japan in a prescriptive way betrays a scholar's ability to represent Japan as is, not as one wants to represent it as, which is an Orientalist activity. And I agree with Burgess' assessment of Japan, for despite the cultural variance in Japan, the hegemony of mainstream Japanese culture is irreconcilable with the principles of multiculturalism.

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[22] Edward W Said, *Orientalism*, (Vintage Books A Division of Random House: New York, 1978), 1-4.

[23] Chris Burgess, "Multicultural Japan? Discourse and the 'Myth' of Homogeneity," Asia-Pacific Journal 5 (March 2007), http://apjjf.org/-Chris-Burgess/2389/article.html (accessed April 23, 2018).

[24] Chris Burgess, "Multicultural Japan? Discourse and the 'Myth' of Homogeneity," Asia-Pacific Journal 5 (March 2007), http://apjjf.org/-Chris-Burgess/2389/article.html (accessed April 23, 2018).

[25] Chris Burgess, "Multicultural Japan? Discourse and the 'Myth' of Homogeneity," Asia-Pacific Journal 5 (March 2007), http://apjjf.org/-Chris-Burgess/2389/article.html (accessed April 23, 2018).

However, if Japan is neither a homogenous nor multicultural nation, then what description is more fitting? While I do not think that any concept fully encapsulate every nuance and facet of Japanese social structure and cultural dynamics, I agree with the sociologist John Lie in arguing that Japan is a multiethnic state.[26] For Lie, the monoethnic myth was created post-World War II by nationalistic historiographers and nationalists imposing a view of Japan as monoethnic from beginning to the present[27]. The political mobilization of ethnic minorities in recent years is not indicative of a shift from monoethnic to multiethnic, but, Lie argues, is a re-assertion of the "truth" that Japan has always been multiethnic.[28] While cultural hegemony still persists, minority social activism inherently challenges and deconstructs the perception of Japan as homogenous or monolithic, for rooting "the monoethnic ideology in Japan in national character or something deeper is not only contrary to historical fact; it does little to inform efforts to challenge it."[29] And these challenges shape the social landscape of the nation from one of homogeneity to heterogeneity, not because of multiculturalism but because of ethnic variance.

<div align="center">"Being Japanese:" Exploring Facets of Nihonjinron Discourse</div>

Japanese identity, like all national identities, entails interwoven facets of environmental, cultural, ethnic, and linguistic factors.[30] For this purpose, *Nihonjinron* "日本人論," despite its controversial status, provides a comprehensive body of work that presents invaluable reflections by various Japanese writers. Though there is a large amount of non-Japanese work concerning *Nihonjinron*, I will attempt to limit or contextualize those sources differently from how I will try

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[26] John Lie, *Multiethnic Japan*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 5.

[27] John Lie, *Multiethnic Japan*, 141.

[28] John Lie, *Multiethnic Japan*, 141.

[29] John Lie, *Multiethnic Japan*, 182-183.

[30] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, trans. by David Slater, (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 16.

to treat the Japanese sources. Rather than concern myself with which writers are more accurate or less prejudicial, I think it is important to create a conception of Japanese identity that is largely founded on Japanese perspectives as opposed to non-Japanese perspectives.

Outlining the identity of Japanese marginalized groups is equally difficult given the complexity of their respective histories. Therefore, I will narrow down my focus in this paper to examining the groups of the *Zainichi* Koreans and *hisabetsu burakumin*. How exactly are these groups distinguished from mainstream Japanese society? How have their identities been changed and fixed by the groups' relation to mainstream Japanese identity? Does the existence of these marginalized communities confirm or deny conceptualizing Japan as a homogenous state, a multicultural state, or a multiethnic state? And furthermore, from analyzing the current state of these marginalized groups, can we situate their future within Japanese society?

Identity is not a completely fixed construction, but an ever-changing, living construction.[31] The misconception of perceiving identity as something set in stone is the reason why neither the monolithic nor multicultural representation of Japan are accurate, though I will address this in further detail later. Societies, groups, and individuals construct their own identities, but they also adhere to and reflect the prevalent social constructs of their particular society and social groups.[32] For this reason, *Nihonjinron* should not be perceived as some fixed body of work, but an ever-expanding body of identity literature, a living discourse. And as the French philosopher Michel Foucault noted, a discourse cannot be easily separated from the social network of power that it is embedded into.[33]

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[31] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe Inc., 1998), 6.
[32] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 5-6.
[33] Alec McHoul and Wendy Grace, *A Foucault Primer: Discourse, Power, and the Subject*, (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 21.

Nihonjinron, as mentioned previously, is the categorization of a body of work comprising various "theories" relating to Japanese cultural and racial uniqueness.[34] The anthropologist Harumi Befu argues that it is difficult to translate *Nihonjinron* into English because even though the term "論" has various readings, the common de facto translation of "theory" implies an image of a well-researched, scholarly work.[35] For the purposes of this paper, the phrase "discourse" will be used as it provides a more comprehensive connotation and is less tied to scholarly implications. Befu notes that *Nihonjinron* writing has become something of a "pastime" in Japan and something to which many writers, academic and otherwise, contribute material.[36] Instead of distinguishing between what is and what is not academic writing, Befu argues that all work related to *Nihonjinron* comprise its body and engage a discourse often seen as exclusive to scholars.[37] Though Befu's argument increases the sheer volume of texts one might research, it also decreases the rigor or scholarly standards of said work, and his claim allows for an analysis of Japanese identity as perceived and constructed by Japanese people, not just scholars but non-scholars as well.

Peter Dale, another anthropologist, however, argues that analyzing the *Nihonjinron* discourse requires the separation of non-scholarly work from scholarly work.[38] Dale is concerned with addressing the "fictional mentality" that is *Nihonjinron*, which he claims was constructed by numerous thinkers and writers over an extended period of Japan's history.[39] Dale rejects the idea

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[34] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, trans. by David Slater, (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 2-3.

[35] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 2.

[36] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 3.

[37] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, trans. by David Slater, (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 2.

[38] Peter N. Dale, *The Myth of Japanese Uniqueness*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), i.

[39] Peter N. Dale, *The Myth of Japanese Uniqueness*, ii.

of *Nihonjinron* being a "national 'mentality'" or a way of thinking that is deeply connected to the complex and interwoven meld of social and economic institutions and mechanisms.[40] For Dale, an analysis of *Nihonjinron* means undertaking the task of unraveling the various perplexing aspects of *Nihonjinron*'s wide body of work.[41] One must struggle, Dale argues, with the paradox of a Japanese identity that asserts its own uniqueness while simultaneously denying the uniqueness of the people who call themselves "Japanese."[42]

Both of these scholars offer us a considerable amount of evidence to consider regarding the exact nature of the *Nihonjinron* discourse. However, whether we reject it as pure fiction or use it to assess a very real sense of Japanese identity depends on not only the works analyzed but a stance on the purpose of national studies in general. To this end, the Japanese government's Ministry of Education in 1937 published the first issue of a document titled *Kokutai no Hongi* "国体の本義" or "Cardinal Principles of the National Entity." This particular work is known for presenting a comprehensive view of Japanese identity that conformed every area of life into a single, cohesive national identity.[43] Given that this document was officially sanctioned by the Japanese government it provides a framework for understanding how the modern, pre-World War II Japanese state attempted to define the discourse of *Nihonjinron* and how Japanese academics assisted in the venture. It is important to note that the whole discourse is greater than any one document, but constructing and deconstructing Japanese identity requires first some model of how the identity is represented on a national scale. Following this, I will use Dale and

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[40] Peter N. Dale, *The Myth of Japanese Uniqueness*, ii.
[41] Peter N. Dale, *The Myth of Japanese Uniqueness*, iii.
[42] Peter N. Dale, *The Myth of Japanese Uniqueness*, 22.
[43] Robert K. Hall and John O, Gauntlett. *Kokutai No Hongi*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949), (excerpt).

Befu's opposing views to further contextualize the nature of the discourse while also addressing several of the concerns both scholars raise regarding the analysis of *Nihonjinron*.

Does a government-sanctioned document provide an objective or comprehensive representation of Japanese identity? While it is important to recognize the potential biases inherent in such a representation, it does comprise but one of the many interpretations of how Japanese people have come to perceive themselves and understand their particular uniqueness in human history. Rather than conceptualize this, however, as a completely fictional account with no bearing on reality, like Dale, we should instead focus on how identity operates as a reified representation of selfhood and culture. Though I will illustrate later how the dismissive approach of Dale fails to recognize how identity operates within society and for individuals as well as how the issue of Orientalism has structured the discourse of *Nihonjinron* from the beginning.

In analyzing excerpts from the *Kokutai no Hongi*, one can recognize the propagandistic elements of the document that were intended to instill a sense of national cohesion as well as provide an explanation of what it means to be "Japanese."[44] Though this relation is tied to the nation-state and the emperor, who embodies the state, we see how Japanese identity is associated with participation in the Japanese political-military complex and loyalty to the agenda and programs of the Japanese Empire.[45] What occurs within the document itself is an investigation by its authors into how the "unrest" in the lives of the Japanese citizens is due to the nature of Occidental ideologies and a lack of understanding of the "true meaning" of the national polity.[46] Defining Japanese identity by characteristics such as patriotism and loyalty creates an image of a

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[44] Robert K. Hall and John O, Gauntlett. *Kokutai No Hongi*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949), (excerpt).
[45] Robert K. Hall and John O, Gauntlett. *Kokutai No Hongi*, ().
[46] Robert K. Hall and John O, Gauntlett. *Kokutai No Hongi*, ().

civic identity, something which connects one's personhood to a particular polity.[47] Opposing the "Occident" likewise invokes the image of an "East" versus "West" depiction of human history, in which two dissimilar, but ultimately linked, human spheres are in a state of constant contention due to irreconcilable differences in their nature.[48]

Said, however, would counter that the use of the fictional "East" and "West" dichotomy problematizes the actuality of Japan's history and its relation to the world, for despite its isolation, it was always connected to and engaged with said world.[49] The *Kokutai no Hongi* is a particularly useful document for analyzing how the Japanese state synthesized Japanese identity and constructed a cohesive, national narrative. However, Befu argues that the *Nihonjinron* discourse has been fairly accessible to a larger demographic than the *Kokutai no Hongi* might imply, especially since the decrease in government restrictions after World War II and the American occupation (1945-1952).[50] For Befu, Japanese identity, as constructed by writers of *Nihonjinron*, is a living, fluid process reflective of Japanese society and indicative of a reified cultural and self-understanding.[51] The difference between Dale's view and the notion presented by Hobsbawn is that the former does not recognize how social constructs represent or adhere to people's living experience and own self-understanding. Hobsbawn, however, grounds said reification as a common human activity that forms the basis of creating what we call cultural or national "tradition," and by extension identity.[52]

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[47] Robert K. Hall and John O, Gauntlett. *Kokutai No Hongi*, ().

[48] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 54.

[49] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 54.

[50] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, trans. by David Slater, (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1.

[51] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, trans. by David Slater, (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 3-4.

[52] Stephen Vlastos, "Tradition: Past/Present Culture and Modern Japanese History," in *Mirror of Modernity: Invented Traditions of Modern Japan*, ed. Stephen Vlastos, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 3.

What we are presented with is an argument between two perceptions of social constructs: 1) that constructs have no actual bearing on reality, but work only within a theoretical or abstract framework, thereby masking "truth"; 2) that constructs inform, reflect, and shape social and self-understanding and identity. While Dale holds that the discourse is a purely "fictional" body of literature, in his own engagement of the subject, Dale reifies it as something which can be addressed. Said notes that while we use representations of things, places, people, and so forth in shaping our particular understanding of said subject, we run the risk of substituting the representation for the actual, living subject.[53] When addressing the topic of *Nihonjinron* from an approach grounded in its own assurance of the subject's paradoxical and incoherent logical structure, we transform the subject of "Japanese identity" into an object, abstract from and devoid of its actual human components.[54] Analyzing the *Nihonjinron* discourse is not a matter of unraveling or unmasking the "myth of Japanese uniqueness," as Dale titled his text, in order to uncover a "true" Japanese identity nor is it a means for psychoanalyzing why a whole people believe in their own personal and national uniqueness.

The primary concern of this analysis is neither to conform to a notion that affirms particular views within the discourse nor denies the bearing that *Nihonjinron* has on Japanese identity and society. If we accept Said's premise, we must also recognize that the shaping of Japanese identity has occurred over the course of Japan's historical process and is thus a discourse related to Western imperialism and Orientalism, a discourse of disparate power dynamics.[55] While it might appear as if though Japanese people's insistence on Japanese uniqueness is easily refutable, we ought to recognize that *Nihonjinron* concerns only one

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[53] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 272-273.
[54] Peter N. Dale, *The Myth of Japanese Uniqueness*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), 22.
[55] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 40-41.

particular discourse and that national studies is a common activity of peoples in all nations. The

discourse of Japanese identity does not comprise only negations of "not being Western,"

Japanese identity has been affected by its own "self-Orientalization," or acceptance of Orientalist

thinking from non-Japanese and Japanese alike.[56] *Nihonjinron* presents how writers negotiate

identity within a national community and in relation to intercultural/international interactions.

While Dale's approach to *Nihonjinron* is dismissive of its ability to represent individual

and national identity, one should continue to consider Dale's argument of how national identity

can subsume individual uniqueness.[57] The *Kokutai no Hongi* frames Japanese identity within a

political context, but how is it constructed in relation to other factors? For the purposes of

illustrating how Japanese identity is constructed in relation to ecology, social structure, language,

culture and race/ethnicity, I will employ anthropologists Tessa Morris-Suzuki's *Re-Inventing

Japan: Time, Space, Nation* and Befu's *Hegemony of Homogeneity*. Both of these scholars

synthesize a variety of *Nihonjinron* texts to present how Japanese identity has been constructed

within the discourse.

The Japan of *Nihonjinron*: Ecology, Social Structure, Language, Culture, and Race

Part 1: Ecological *Nihonjinron*

How exactly is the environment connected to how groups and nations develop national

identity? Within the *Nihonjinron* discourse, Befu notes how the view of Japan as a "resource-

poor nation with frequent natural calamities" is a popular conception of Japan.[58] Such an image

is derived from a discourse formed by a variety of *Nihonjinron* writers who argue that there is an

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[56] Robert K. Hall and John O, Gauntlett. *Kokutai No Hongi*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949), (excerpt).
[57] Peter N. Dale, *The Myth of Japanese Uniqueness*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), 222.
[58] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, trans. by David Slater, (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 17.

"inextricable relationship between that geography and the cultural life of the Japanese."[59]
Watsuji Tetsurō's *Fūdo* is an example par excellence of this view and has been a rather
influential *Nihonjinron* text, often referenced by numerous other *Nihonjinron* writers.[60] Instead
of simply accounting for how the weather affects Japanese culture, Watsuji focuses on how the
environment is the cause or basis for aspects of Japanese culture.[61]

In his text, Watsuji classifies Eurasia into three ecological types: monsoon, desert, and
pastoral.[62] Of these three distinct types, Watsuji argues that Japan resides in the monsoon belt,
though its exact position also exposes it to the effects of the Artic air.[63] This specific
combination of warm and cold, wet and dry, climate facilitated "Japan's wet rice cultivation and
family structure to its national character, ethos, and esthetics."[64] Even Japan's open architecture
is conceptualized as reflective of the Japanese people's need to adapt to the climate of their
environment.[65] Working upon this notion, Watsuji continues to formulate how even the absence
of privacy, denial of individual rights, and promotion of collective orientation, derived from the
architecture, are linked to the environment.[66]

Befu notes how Watsuji's systemic approach to culture and environment was further
elaborated by other ecologically-oriented *Nihonjinron* writers such as Chikamatsu Yoshiyuki,
Kimata Tokou, and Tsukiyama Jisaburō. Another ecological writer, Kōyama Iwao, also argues

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[59] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 17.
[60] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 17.
[61] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 17.
[62] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 17.
[63] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 17.
[64] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 17-18.
[65] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 18.
[66] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, trans. by David Slater,
(Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 18.

that "Japanese sensitivity toward nature" is derived from the "physical conditions of Japan."[67] To Kōyama, the Japanese "love of miniature and miniaturization," manifested in such things as *haiku* poetry, fifteen syllable poems, and *bonsai* gardening, planting pot-sized landscapes and vegetation, is linked to the small size of Japan itself.[68] Additionally, in rural Japan, the corporate group structure is also linked to the wet-rice cultivation induced by the "closed nature" of the village environment.[69] Furthermore, Kōyama argues that the environment is responsible for "Japanese optimism, this-worldly character, fusion of art and life, and even patriotism."[70]

The link between Japan's environment and Japanese psychology is a topic elaborated by psychologist Miyagi Otoya. Miyagi notes that the "harsh, destructive environment" facilitated the formation of a particular mentality and certain personality types among Japanese people.[71] In contrast to the West's conquest of nature, Miyagi argues that the Japanese merely tried to adapt to their environment, which he sees as manifestations of sadism and masochism respectively.[72] This direct "environment-to-personality argument" was later changed by Miyagi to include a component detailing how personality is "mediated through living conditions ('food, shelter, and clothing')."[73] Befu clarifies that the particular argument presented by Kōyama and Miyagi, among others, is representative of a negative approach of *Nihonjinron*, for it emphasizes negative ecological conditions like "the smallness of the island nation and the cold and harsh climate."[74] In contrast, Chikamatsu characterizes Japan's climate as "'mild (*on'wa*),' 'subtle (*himyō*),' and

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[67] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 18.
[68] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 18.
[69] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 18.
[70] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 18.
[71] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 18.
[72] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, trans. by David Slater, (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 18.
[73] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 18.
[74] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 18-19.

'delicate (*sensai*).'"[75] This type of environment, Chikamatsu argues, creates a "unique literary

esthetic…with its distinct sense of seasonality" manifested excellently in *haiku* poetry.[76] This

"basically benign" image of Japan's environment is another part of the ecologically-oriented

Nihonjinron discourse.[77] Though determining which approach is more "truthful" is outside the

scope of this paper, Befu's analysis illustrates how writers derive and relate culture and identity

to their particular environment.

    Morris-Suzuki provides another analysis of how the environment is used for creating

specific narratives tying people to their environment and explaining cultural phenomena. Instead

of just mapping out the ecologically-oriented aspect of *Nihonjinron*, Morris-Suzuki concentrates

on how writers and peoples use discourse-derived imagery to form national boundaries and

identities.[78] The vision of a national landscape forms an integral basis for individual and national

identity, for example U.S. citizens conceive of their nation in geographical terms as illustrated by

the lyrics of the patriotic song "America the Beautiful."[79] The national images depicted in

cultural works such as songs, poetry, literature, and so forth produce a geographical space which

"houses" the nation.[80]

    As explored above, a variety of writers and scholars in Japan have outlined the

relationship between culture and environment, fashioning a geographical space known as

"Japan" in the process. Morris-Suzuki notes how the anthropologist Ishida Eiichirō defined "the

essence of Japanese culture in terms of a unique national feeling for nature."[81] This sentiment is

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[75] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 19.

[76] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 19.

[77] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 19.

[78] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe Inc., 1998), 35.

[79] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe Inc., 1998), 35.

[80] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 35.

[81] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 35.

echoed by the archaeologist Yasuda Yoshinori, who argued that "mountain forests" are a defining feature of Japanese culture.[82] For Yasuda, Europe represents a civilization oriented around deforestation while Japan is a civilization oriented around forests.[83] Both the policies and measures taken by the Japanese state and people to preserve natural landscapes as well as Shintō beliefs are evidence for Yasuda of a civilization that is intimately connected to its forest environment.[84] Yasuda argues that the coexistence between Japan and its environment can become a model for other nations to harmonize with their environment and move away from a conflict-orientated relationship with nature.[85]

The historian Lynn White also argues that Japan's relationship with nature is harmonious and different from Western attitudes.[86] White attributes Christian theology in the West with perpetuating a mentality of humanity versus nature.[87] In the Eastern religions/beliefs, such as Zen Buddhism, White sees humans as integrated as equals, and part of, a "wider natural order."[88] Japan became associated with an image of a society that exists in harmony with nature and any potential corruption of such an image is explained away by blaming Western influence.[89] Though Morris-Suzuki is skeptical of such an interpretation, seeing as Japan was able to adapt itself to industrialization processes introduced by Western nations without being tied to the ideological framework espoused by ecologically-oriented *Nihonjinron* writers.[90] Instead of focusing on the

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[82] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 35-36.
[83] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 36.
[84] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 36.
[85] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 36.
[86] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 36.
[87] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 36.
[88] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe Inc., 1998), 36.
[89] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 36.
[90] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 36.

conflict between actual historical processes and discursive processes, we can assess how national

narratives and identities are continually perpetuated in spite of such discrepancies.

To illustrate this point, Morris-Suzuki also analyzes Watsuji's *Fūdo* and the way in which

it framed the creation of Japanese cultural works as a byproduct of Japanese society's

relationship to nature. Just as Befu noted Watsuji's ecological classifications and his view of

Japan as a mixture of monsoon and Artic conditions, Morris-Suzuki argues that Watsuji

formulated a synthesis capable of incorporating the changing relation between Japanese culture

and the environment.[91] Not only did Watsuji argue that the climate of Japan created "a distinctive

and complex sensitivity to nature, vividly represented in Japanese art, architecture, and

literature," but he derived a Japanese character or mentality from the environment.[92]

The climate's components, Artic and monsoon, mentioned by both Befu and Morris-

Suzuki is the foundation of Watsuji's vision of Japanese human relationships.[93] Watsuji states:

> In these conditions of powerful sunlight and plentiful moisture, tropical plants flourish here in abundance. The summer landscape hardly differs from that of the tropics. Its outstanding representative is rice. On the other hand, the cold weather and lower moisture of winter means that the plants of the cold regions flourish in equal abundance. Their chief representative is wheat. So the wide earth is covered in winter with wheat and winter grasses, and in summer with rice and summer grasses. But those plants that do not change with the seasons must embody duality within their own forms. The sight of the tropical bamboo weighed down with snow is often cited as a symbol of the Japanese landscape, but the bamboo, which has learned to bear the weight of snow, is itself different from the tropical bamboo. It has turned into Japanese bamboo, which is flexible and can be drawn with a curved line.[94]

This is illustrative of how a geographical space is depicted and how characteristics identified

with a nation and people are derived. Watsuji characterizes the duality of Japan's climate, and

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[91] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 57.
[92] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1998), 57.
[93] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 58.
[94] Tetsurō Watsuji, "Fūdo," in *Gendai Nihon*, (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1963), 239.

likewise the Japanese people, as a mixture of "passion and calm, flexibility and strength."[95]

Japan is neither wholly monsoon climate nor Artic climate, it is instead a mixture that

incorporates both into a unique existence.[96] Just like the "tropical bamboo" becomes "Japanese

bamboo," so too are the elements of Japanese culture never simply native or foreign, they

become Japanese through their incorporation into Japanese culture.[97] Such is the connection

between being and space as depicted in Watsuji's *Fūdo,* a text which Morris-Suzuki argues still

exerts a notable appeal and influence since the eighteenth-century in Japanese perceptions of

Japan as a "spatial entity."[98]

The analysis of Japan's environmental conditions helps illustrate a notion of Japanese

identity that does not originate from the kind of historical-political context of the *Kokutai no*

Hongi. The ecological aspect of the *Nihonjinron* discourse provides an imagery and framework

capable of depicting a national identity and narrative. The "spatial entity" that is known as

"Japan" and Japanese culture itself are perceived as the products of their environmental

conditions. While the claim that Japanese culture reflects Japan's natural environment is

understandable, the formation of a national imagery depends upon the representation of the

human-nature relationship in culture as much as it does on the actual human-nature relationship.

Likewise, Morris-Suzuki's criticism of writers who overlook Japan's industrialization and

continued encroachment of natural spaces illustrates the tension between the discourse of

Nihonjinron and actual historical changes.[99]

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[95] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 58.
[96] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 58.
[97] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 58.
[98] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1998), 58.
[99] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 59.

Part 2: Japan's Social Structure in *Nihonjinron*

While the ecological approach to *Nihonjinron* provides us with an understanding of national identity that is linked to a geographical spaces, the formation of social structures provides another discursive approach for understanding Japanese identity. A component of the social structure *Nihonjinron* discourse is the role of Japan's "subsistence economy." Focusing on writers such as Sabata Toyoyuki, Tamaki Akira, and Tsukuba Hisaharu, Befu notes how these writers, among others, accept the truism that wet-rice cultivation necessitated the formation of Japan's "village corporacy."[100] According to Tamaki, the intensive agricultural activities of ancient Japan required cooperation and facilitated the creation of tightly-knit, perhaps even "oppressively tyrannical," communities which demanded "conformity, consensus, and cooperation" and did not allow members to express "individuality or assert their rights."[101] To belong to a village, oriented around wet-rice cultivation, meant being part of a greater collective around which one's identity was oriented, if not even founded upon.

To further elaborate this discussion, Befu analyzes another common point of comparison that writers use for contrasting Japan with "the West," the discussion of the "pastoral economy" versus the "agrarian economy."[102] According to this argument, the pastoral economy prevailed in the West and facilitated the roots of "individualism" by placing importance on the individual ownership of herds and grazing land.[103] This inversely impeded the formation of the "oppressive corporate community and corporate family structure" required for wet-rice cultivation.[104] In the

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[100] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, trans. by David Slater, (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 19.

[101] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 19.

[102] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 19.

[103] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 19.

[104] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 19.

more agriculturally-inclined farming communities of Japan, the corporate village fostered *amae*

"甘え" or the Japanese propensity for "psychological interdependence" and the "closely knit

kindship units of Japan."[105] Developing upon these theories, the Ishida Eiichirō argued that the

pastoral economy is responsible for the monotheism of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, which

all arose in a "pastoral context," and forms a fundamental component of the nature of European

civilization and the "core personality" of Europeans themselves.[106] Writers like Ishida, Araki,

and Iwasaki, argue that in contrast to Western individualism, derived from the pastoral economy,

the Japanese agrarian economy formed the basis of Japan's group-orientation.[107]

This particular aspect of Japanese culture, its supposed "group-orientation," is one of the

more popularly known images of Japanese society. Japan's "*groupism*," as Befu puts it or

"collectivism," has been used as a model by numerous scholars for studying topics such as

Japanese family structure, master-disciple relationships in martial arts, Japanese company

organization, and so forth.[108] The political scientist, Nobutaka Ike argued that to understand the

political processes of Japan requires a prior understanding of Japanese group-oriented

behavior.[109] Yet, while there are many Japanese scholars and writers who use this salient feature

of Japanese culture in their own works, the popular acceptance by Western scholars and publics

has had a role in perpetuating this particular social ideology.[110] Collectivism is translated as

shūdan shugi "集団主義" in Japanese, though it has a much more neutral connotation than the

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[105] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 19.
[106] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 19.
[107] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, trans. by David Slater, (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 19-20.
[108] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 20.
[109] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 20.
[110] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 20.

English term.[111] While Japan is conceptualized as a "collectivist" nation, the West is seen as a

predominantly "individualistic" sphere. The term for individualism in Japanese is *kojin shugi* "個

人主義" which strongly implies "selfishness and egotism at the expense of others."[112] Yet, while

the English term "collectivism" denotes an Orientalist conceptualization of Japan, which

likewise fuels self-Orientalization by *Nihonjinron* writers who uncritically accept Western ideas,

the Japanese term *kojin shugi* is a by-product of the similar process of Japan being defined and

defining itself as the opposite of the West.[113]

Whether one derives Japan's "collectivism" from the environment, subsistence economy,

or from rural origins, Befu notes that one is engaging in a popular exercise among *Nihonjinron*

writers.[114] Watsuji Tetsurō likewise writes in regards to Japanese social structure, though not

identically to writers like Iwasaki Takaharu, Kenmochi Takehiko, or Tamaki Akira who derive

collectivism as explained above. Watsuji does not derive, as Befu puts it "in a casual sense," the

corporate community from wet-rice cultivation, but he does consider Japan's kinship system of

ie "家," or family/household, to be "monsoonish" in nature.[115] Watsuji relates the ecological

aspect of *Nihonjinron* to the socio-political dimension of the discourse, for Watsuji connects the

ie to the state by arguing how filial piety in the former is akin to national loyalty in the latter.

Extending this further, one is a member of the *ie*, the most immediate totality, and the state, the

ultimate totality, represented by the emperor, to whom one owes loyalty.[116] Thus, society is

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[111] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 20.

[112] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 21.

[113] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, trans. by David Slater, (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 20-21.

[114] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 21.

[115] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 21.

[116] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 21.

"structured" like a family and all the subjects of the nation must ultimately be loyal to the emperor, who is the head of the nation. Though this particular line of argumentation adheres more to Anderson's conception of "imagined community" than it does to the collectivism discourse.

What Watsuji's approach demonstrates is that the approach to topics by *Nihonjinron* writers are as varied as the people writing, for Befu notes how other writers like Inuta Mitsuru, Kawamoto Akira, and Maniwa Mitsuyuki do not derive Japan's group-orientation from Japan's rural background either.[117] Among these other writers, Nakane Chie is known for her work *Japanese Society* which sets down the defining criteria of Japanese groups, which Befu summarizes as:

> (1) the notion of 'frame,' which she defines as 'a criterion that sets a boundary and gives a common basis to a set of individuals who are allocated to or involved in it, (2) the predominance of vertical relationships, (3) exclusivity of membership, that is, one belongs to one and only one group, and (4) hostility toward outsiders.[118]

From this set of criteria, one is intended to conceptualize Japanese social groups as rigid, defined, and localized. Inuta contrasts group-oriented societies and individualistic societies, noting how the latter emphasizes "individual rights, duties, and conscience" while the former is absent of these characteristics.[119] To be a member of a group in Japanese society is to continuously impose upon each other, for this is what defines one's identity and membership to a "desinty-sharing corporate community" or *unmei kyōdōutai* "運命共同体."[120]

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[117] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, trans. by David Slater, (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 21.
[118] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 21.
[119] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 22.
[120] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 22.

In order to further elaborate how membership is actualized within the discourse of Japanese society, Befu analyzes the psychological interdependence of Japanese hierarchically-organized groups through the concept of *amae*. According to Befu, within an organization, the "paternalistic leader" of an organization serves to "satisfy both the affective and the instrumental needs of the organization's members."[121] Subordinates seek "emotional satisfaction by prevailing and depending upon their social superiors" and the reverse of superior to subordinate dependence constitute the dynamics of the vertical organization of Japanese social groups.[122] *Amae* itself is etiologically connected back to the mother-child relationship, which is seen as the core of the socialization process in Japan.[123] When discussing the normative practices of Japanese social relations, it is important to discuss the concepts of *on* "恩" and *giri* "義理" which respectively translate to "indebtedness" and "duty."[124] Within the dynamics of superior-subordinate, the "instrumental and expressive provision" given by a superior becomes a sense of *on* for the subordinate.[125] This then creates a "normative obligation" that is a moral imperative of repaying one's debt or fulfilling one's *giri*, often expressed by a subordinate through loyal service to a superior.[126]

As a consequence of the relationship dynamic explored above, Japanese social virtues emphasizes harmony, cooperation, and conformity while traits and behaviors relating to open-conflict and competition are taboo.[127] Social ritual and behavior are oriented around reducing, if

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[121] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 22.
[122] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 22.
[123] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 22.
[124] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, trans. by David Slater, (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 22.
[125] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 22.
[126] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 22.
[127] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 22.

not fully eliminating, open-conflict and embarrassment. Actions and characteristics adversely

affecting the total mutual affective satisfaction among members are sanctioned via ostracism,

shame, and other means.[128] The ideal form of social groups then is having all members selflessly

oriented around the goals of the group with virtuous superiors and devoted subordinates. While

there might be many commonalities between this ideal and other cultures' ideals, this particular

notion arises from the context of the *Nihonjinron* discourse.

The notion of collectivism or *shūdan shugi*, however, is not completely unchallenged in

the Japanese *Nihonjinron* discourse, for sociologist Hamaguchi Eshun focuses on a concept

called "contextualism" or *kanjin shugi* "肝心主義" or *aidagara shugi* "間柄主義."[129] This

conceptualizes the individual in manner that emphasizes their "total situation" as a basic unit of

society rather than stripping a person down to their individual self.[130] Thus, the methodology for

analyzing Japan through either an individualistic or collectivist approach is already marred with

"methodological individualism" which distorts people's understanding of Japan's social

structure.[131]

The issue for Hamaguchi is that *shūdan shugi* assumes that the individual and the

collective are pitted against each other and marks the prioritization of the group over the

individual. Returning to the discourse of corporate social structure, Hamaguchi advocates a

notion of "corporativism" or *kyōdō dantai shugi* "共同団体主義" which, for Hamaguchi, is

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[128] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 22.

[129] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, trans. by David Slater, (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 23.

[130] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 23.

[131] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 23.

uniquely Japanese.[132] Instead of conceptualizing the individual and the collective as antithetical, Hamaguchi notes that the Japanese individual ties their selfhood in unity, or *ittaika* "一体化," to the group such that the goals of the group are the goals of the individual member.[133] This aspect of working in unity, as opposed to subordinating oneself to the demands of the group, is radical in that it challenges the predominately Western-influenced writers of *Nihonjinron*, who have traditionally conceptualized the individual in manner marred by Western ideology. Though there are aspects of both Hamaguchi and various other writers' representations of Japanese social structure which overlap, Hamaguchi's argument attempts to shift the discourse away from Western conceptualizations and seeks to present an image of societal structure that is "uniquely" Japanese.

<center>Part 3: The Language of *Nihonjinron*</center>

Language plays a central role in ethnic identity, for it is the means through which one gains access to the worldview and thought processes of those who speak it.[134] This old argumentation is one which, Befu notes, has been invoked commonly in anthropology and other disciplines.[135] The *Nihonjinron* writers, linguists and non-linguists alike, argue similarly with regards to the Japanese language. Though some of the claims regarding the Japanese language fit within a larger discourse concerning all languages, Befu notes how *Nihonjinron* writers consider Japanese uniqueness something which can only be expressed in Japanese as another affirmation of their claims.[136] Language is "at the core of *Nihonjinron*," Befu argues, for the uniqueness of

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[132] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 23.

[133] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 23.

[134] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, trans. by David Slater, (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 34.

[135] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 35.

[136] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 35.

Japanese culture and character, and thus ultimately identity, can only be properly expressed in the Japanese language.[137] For linguist and non-linguist writers, the Japanese language is only natively spoken in Japan and all Japanese people in Japan can speak Japanese natively. [138] This forms the foundation of an identity rooted in language.

Kindaichi Haruhiko argues that "Japanese is an isolated language" and is not related to any other language group, noting how dissimilar it is from "Ainu, Korean, Tibeto-Burmese, Ural-Altaic, and Malayo-Polynesian."[139] For Kindaichi, the lack of affiliation and proper linguistic consensus only further affirms how Japanese is a unique language in its own right.[140] Befu adds that since there is a supposedly "perfect isomorphism" between Japanese language speakers and bearers of Japanese culture, then the uniqueness of the language is also reflected and shaped by the uniqueness of the culture and people. [141]

Given that the "one-to-one correspondence" of Japanese is not replicated in other linguistic contexts, then one should not think it possible to derive unique characteristics about the people or culture from other languages.[142] To expand on this linguistic determinism of Japan's cultural uniqueness, Tsunoda Tadanobu, a medical doctor, found differences in the way the hemispheres of the brain related to speech functioned in native Japanese speakers and native Western language speakers.[143] What Tsunoda derived from the study he conducted is that the section of the brain dealing with "logos" and "pathos" were integrated in the Japanese thought

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[137] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 35.
[138] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 35.
[139] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 35.
[140] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 35.
[141] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, trans. by David Slater, (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 35.
[142] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 35.
[143] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 36.

process while they were contrasted or opposite in the European thought process.[144] Though this

study has not been accepted by the wider medical community, since it used a rather small sample

size and its methodology and execution have been called into question.[145] However, despite its

flaws, Tsunoda's research gained publicity as it marked a form of scientific verification of

Nihonjinron views related to the Japanese language's uniqueness.

The linguistic *Nihonjinron* writers focus on deriving characteristics from the Japanese

language that are then connected to Japanese culture and the Japanese people themselves. As

mentioned above, the very thought processes of the Japanese mind are considered unique given

the way the mind is structured. Less controversial aspects of this discourse entail how language

reflects social structure, for Kindaichi notes how a variety of terms related to Japanese kinship

groups connote unique social meanings.[146] Citing the way in which terms such as older brother

or *onii-san* "お兄さん" and older sister or *onee-san* "お姉さん" as well as younger brother or

otōto "弟" and younger sister or *imōto* "妹" denote social status.[147] While it is common to use a

person's proper name in English, even among siblings, for the Japanese, older siblings will refer

to younger siblings by first name as a means of denoting their superior status while younger

siblings will default to using the term *onii-san*, *onee-san,* or one of their variants in deference.[148]

For Kindaichi, language and culture mirror each other and what we see in the former is reflected

in the latter and vice versa.

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[144] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 36.

[145] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 36.

[146] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, trans. by David Slater, (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 37.

[147] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 37.

[148] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 37.

While there are other aspects of the discourse to consider, such as locality and its function in Japanese language, the logical structure of the language, and the communication patterns of nonverbal communication, I have given language a brief overlook in order to set up a larger discussion on culture. Though I have analyzed particular aspects of the *Nihonjinron* discourse, which all inherently relate to culture, an analysis of Japanese culture itself reveals just how intimately Japanese identity is tied to culture. While cultural variance from prefecture to prefecture exists, the prevailing ideology of "Japaneseness" constitutes the core of Japan's cultural hegemony under which variance is subsumed. As noted with the linguistic discourse, controversy does not inhibit writers from asserting various, even conflicting, claims with others who are engaged in the same topic. It seems that so long as a writer is working within the parameters of nebulously defined framework of consensus, then their work is to some extent affirmed by the larger discursive enterprise as valid or worth considering.

Part 4: Culture as Identity

Morris-Suzuki notes that the "very idea of 'culture' itself" is quite modern, being an intellectual ferment of European enlightenment, and only making its way into Japanese in the second half of the nineteenth century.[149] While this does not mean that culture was not discussed or relevant to pre-Meiji Japanese intellectuals, the sociologist Shmuel Eisenstadt notes that there was no "obvious sense of a sharp diving line between 'nature' and 'culture.'"[150] In regards to the discussion of Japanese culture or *Nihon bunka* "日本文化," how are we to analyze Japanese conceptions of culture that pre-date the introduction of Western discourses and ideology? To

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[149] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1998), 60.
[150] Shmuel Eisenstadt, "The Japanese Attitude to Nature: A Framework of Basic Ontological Conceptions," in *Asian Perceptions of Nature: A Critical Approach*, ed. O. Bruun and A. Kalland, (London: Curzon Press, 1994), 189-214.

trace the discourse that developed in pre-Meiji era Japan requires an understanding of the influence China exerted as a center of culture and religion on its neighbors Korea and Japan. These two regions, different political entities in various regards from the modern nation-states, were connected to each other in regards to migration movements and cultural/ideological diffusion.

This particular relationship, between Korea and Japan, however, is not emphasized as much in the larger *Nihonjinron* discourse. Befu notes how Japanese archeologists were not emphasizing the similarities between the Yayoi and Tomb periods (2300 B.C.E. to 1400 B.C.E.), despite both Korean and Japanese cultures expressing many of the same cultural elements of the time.[151] However, for Korean prehistorians and cultural historians, the commonalities between Korean culture and Japanese culture has advanced a view of marking Japan as "a mere appendage to Korea."[152] Though this particular outlook is expressive of Korean nationalism and is unlikely to have much sway with *Nihonjinron* writers.

That Chinese culture, religion, and language affected Japan, however, is less controversial given that China was the regional hegemon before Western nations encroached into the "Far East."[153] The early Japanese socio-political structure was influenced by Chinese concepts such as *bunka* and *bunmei* "文明," which are dichotomous terms denoting "culture" and "civilization" respectively.[154] Politics and society were structured around *bun* "文" and *bu*

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[151] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, trans. by David Slater, (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 43.

[152] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, trans. by David Slater, (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 43.

[153] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1998), 63.

[154] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 63.

"武," or the scholarly arts and martial arts. And though the intricacies of Japanese socio-political

structuring and ideology are important for understanding key aspects of this research, an even

more elaborate analysis of Japanese political history is outside the scope of this paper. What is of

particular interest is how the phrase, and ideology, of *bunmei* evolved into the phrase *bunmei*

kaika "文明開化" or "civilization and enlightenment" during the Meiji period.[155] This phrase,

Morris-Suzuki notes, was coined by Japan's "Westernizers" to describe the series of social

reforms and policies that were being enacted in order to transform Japanese society.[156]

During the Meiji Restoration (1869 to 1912), Western ideology and discourses were

being imported into the country by the nation's scholars, such as Fukuzawa Yukichi who

introduced a Westernized notion of *bunmei* into use.[157] The European discourse on culture and

civilization introduced into Meiji-era Japan is worth considering, for scholars were divided over

the definition and connotations of the terms "culture" and "civilization." Morris-Suzuki provides

a brief glimpse into the discourse by looking at how the scholar Wilhelm von Humboldt saw

culture as "the control of nature by science and technology" and civilization as "the improvement

of human customs and manners."[158] Other scholars of the time, however, argued that culture is

the "intangible world of social values and ideals" and that civilization is "the tangible

achievements of human science and technology."[159] The distinction being raised by European

scholars did not only concern "nonmaterial values and material systems," but also involved the

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[155] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 64.
[156] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 64.
[157] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 64.
[158] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1998), 64.
[159] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 64.

"spatial and temporal visions of difference."[160] According to Morris-Suzuki, this discourse

outlined the distinction as:

> Culture, in other words, was the realm of spatial difference—a world divided by the
> differing social mores of distinct communities—while civilization was the realm of
> time—a universal trajectory toward which different societies moved at different
> speeds.[161]

It was this particular discourse and ideology that shaped the meaning of the phrase *bunmei kaika*

and which influenced Fukuzawa's writings on *bunmei*.[162]

While one might question why I have not examined the particulars of what we

"traditionally" associate with culture, such as ritual beliefs, sports, literature, or the like, it is

because taking these manifestations of cultural expression as representative of Japanese culture

begets the question of "what makes it Japanese?" From the center of cultural hegemony, the

periphery becomes the alienated, it becomes "Othered." In the case of Meiji Japan, the centers of

modernization became the preferred image of Japan while the outer-lying regions of Japan

became cites of backwardness.[163] The rise of nationalism would eventually propel the discourse

on culture forward and could be seen in the works of the philosopher Nishida Kitarō, whose

work detailed the relationship of environment and subject.[164] For Nishida, Japanese

consciousness emerged from the relationship of the Japanese people and the territory that they

occupied.[165] At the core of this Japanese consciousness was the abstract figure of the emperor,

who transcended the "contradictions of selfhood" and who represented the "now" which entailed

both past and future.[166]And though Nishida was against transforming Japan into an "an

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[160] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 64.
[161] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 64.
[162] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 64.
[163] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1998), 67.
[164] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 67.
[165] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 67.
[166] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 67.

unreflective 'subject' of a drama of imperialism," he emphasized the "destiny of Japanese culture in a new world order."[167] This echoes the prevailing socio-political ideology that took root during the increased militarization and imperialism of Japan during the 1930s and 1940s.

While there are many facets of the *Nihonjinron* discourse concerning culture, one should note how the meta-narrative of cultural supremacy and cultural identity were begin formulated in various social institutions. While the Japanese intelligentsia and military of the Meiji-era, Taishō (1912 to 1926), and early Shōwa (1926 to 1989) focused on reforming Japanese society at all levels in order to assert Japan in the international arena, they also became involved with the production of national identity.[168] Returning to Hobsbawm's concept of "invented tradition," the creation of tradition was part of Japanese institutions and intellectuals' attempts to define not only themselves in relation to the Western powers, but also to define for Japanese people what it meant to be "Japanese".[169] The ethnographer Yanagita Kunio redefined how "culture" was understood in a Japanese discourse that had long been influenced and shaped by Western ideology and Orientalism.[170] For Yanagita, culture was "the existing state of harmony of many elements both old and new" and Japanese culture, in particular, is "dynamic and adaptive."[171]

Yanagita, however, also fused nationalism with culture studies, for he saw the attachment certain regions of Japan had with "local culture" as inhibiting the development of Japan into a proper nation.[172] Indeed, the production of culture and national tradition, embodying a

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[167] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 67.
[168] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 68-69.
[169] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 68-69.
[170] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1998), 69.
[171] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 69.
[172] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 70.

hegemonic sense of "Japaneseness" was even a necessary activity, which Morris-Suzuki sums up

as:

> "Culture," in short, *must* be something national, because defining it in any other way would erode social harmony; so the definition slips quietly from being a description of actual social belief s and practices in all their dynamic complexity, to being a description of *the beliefs and practices which must be created*: a utopian goal symbolized, for Yanagita, by the traditional festival (*matsuri*) in which all social division dissolves in the ecstasy of communal celebration.[173]

The focus on embodying a central essence of "Japaneseness" is important for scholars like

Yanagita, who believed that Japan could only "progress" with a clear image of what Japan ought

to be like. That the whole of *Nihonjinron* discourse is both national studies and a reaction to

Western imperialism and Orientalism is made more evident by a continued insistence by

Nihonjinron writers to define the parameters of a Japanese uniqueness true of all Japanese people

and culture. The creation of a national identity, then must supersede local identity and must

subsume or subjugate any variance that deviates from the established norm. However, the

concern over forming a national identity is in relation to the "imagined community" to whom

that identity would have meaning. Thus, to understand yet another dimension of *Nihonjinron*

discourse, and therefore how Japanese identity is constructed, one should analyze how writers

and institutions transpose cultural uniqueness onto the people themselves.

<p align="center">Part 5: The Idea of Yamato Minzoku "大和民族"</p>

If the grouping of culture and race strikes any reader as odd, then it would be because the

old method for conceptualizing one's racial and cultural identity were not as distinguished in the

past as they are in contemporary times. While one might argue that one's race or ethnicity does

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[173] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 70.

not determine their cultural participation, understanding, or identity, Japanese discourses concerning nationalism, *Nihonjinron*, and identity often conflate the two or regard them as inextricably linked. Race and racism, as contemporary Western readers and scholars understand them, are incredibly complicated and intricate mechanisms and ideologies of social stratification founded upon phenotypic differences/markers and the superior-inferior group characteristics, values, and stereotypes derived and imposed upon bodies from said differences. While this is a simplified definition of racism and race, we require some model for proceeding with this analysis. The racial discourse of the West, its role in social formation and pervasive influence over all aspects of Western ideology, ground it, not exclusively in a Western context, but within the historical processes of the West. And while we are able to trace the advancement and diffusion of these mechanisms and ideologies to other regions of the world subjected to Western colonialism and imperialism, we cannot transpose the Western discourse of race, with all its intricacies and peculiarities, onto non-Western countries. If we are to understand how racial discourse evolved in Japan it is crucial to know what the discourse was prior to the importation of Western ideology and then to understand how the changing Western discourse influenced the Japanese discourse.

The scholar Timon Screech argues that "Japan has always considered itself ethnically pure, and in this it draws a distinction with China and Korea, held to be racially diverse."[174] Though this appears to return to the discourse on homogeneity detailed earlier in the paper, it is important to note that the social stratification of Japanese society prior to the Meiji Restoration emphasized locality in relation to the "center" represented by the emperor and the Shogunate

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[174] Timon Screech, "Race and Gender? Human Categorisation in Japan," in *Disrupted Borders: An Intervention in Definitions of Boundaries*, ed. Sunil Gupta, (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1995).

(government ruled by Shogun). Morris-Suzuki conceptualizes this as "an inherently unequal social order where everyone theoretically occupied a place in an intricate galaxy of status spiraling outward from a center."[175] This social stratification is reflected in the dynamics of center-periphery ideology, the more peripheral one is, the more marginal and "Othered" one becomes. Pre-Meiji Japan heavily emphasized the virtue and order of the center in relation to which the marginal members of society, such as social outcastes and foreigners, and outer peoples, like the Ainu of northeastern Japan and Hokkaidō and the Ryūkyūans of the Ryūkyū Islands, were seen as subversive and un-Japanese.[176]

The socio-political orientation of pre-Meiji Japanese society did not incorporate the concept of distinct political rights and did not exclude people from having those rights on the basis of race.[177] Morris-Suzuki instead prompts us to understand the concept of political ordering as "an infinite set of social gradation defined in terms of ideas of social function, order, propriety, and political submission." [178] And though there is a particular social group, the *hisabetsu burakumin*, who challenge this assertion of there being no racial discrimination in Pre-Meiji Japan, this topic will be addressed later in the paper. Given that the structure of social stratification in Pre-Meiji Japan did not rely on concepts of race or present us with a definite, albeit Western, example of racism, Japanese racial discourse was either incorporated into an even more encompassing social ideology or only became prevalent during the Meiji Restoration.

The Meiji government sought to pursue policies of "Westernization" in order to assert Japan's self-determination as a nation and prevent its own colonization by Western powers

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[175] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1998), 83.
[176] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 83.
[177] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 83.
[178] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 83.

during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The old feudal institutions and policies of the

preceding Tokugawa government, with its sumptuary laws, internal immigration policies, and

ban on Christianity, were abolished.[179] The Edict Abolishing Ignoble Classes or *Senmin*

Haishirei "賤民廃止令, also known as the Emancipation Edict or *Kaihōrei* "解放令," was

passed in 1871 and granted equal status as "Japanese" to all social groups and outcastes. Morris-

Suzuki, however, argues that this entailed being a member of "a clearly bounded nation-state to

which all owed an equal duty of loyalty" and in which the "equality of allegiance" did not confer

to "equality of rights."[180] The socio-political structure of Meiji Japan, while democratizing to an

extent, never intended to adopt any full egalitarian social ideology, for Japan's leaders gravitated

toward a view of the nation as a family, expressed as *ie* or *kazoku* "家族."[181] This model allowed

the government and leaders to justify the new societal changes, since like a family, all people

were members of a single community, but, just like a family, the members have different rights

and duties.[182] Extending this model to the nation-state itself asserted the emperor as the apex of

Japanese society and redefined them as the "father of the nation" or the head of the "family-

state" or *kazoku kokka* "家族国家."[183]

In regards to the discourse on race, the Meiji intelligentsia began adapting the imported

Western ideologies concerning race or *jinshu* "人種" and then later those concerning the

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[179] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1998), 84.
[180] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 84.
[181] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 84.
[182] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 84.
[183] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 84-85.

concepts of *volk*, ethnic groups, or *minzoku* "民族."[184] Westernizers such as Fukuzawa Yukichi

popularized these Western racial ideas in Japan, employing not he terms of *jinshu* and *bunmei*

together.[185] The discourse on culture and civilization was likewise marked by what Morris-

Suzuki calls "two axes for the definition of difference" of which the first entailed "geographical

space."[186] The ideology of national solidarity and national superiority allowed "ideologues" to

perpetuate concepts which linked people either by "blood bonds of common origin," race, or

"common language or traditions," ethnicity.[187]

The second axis was "time," embodied in the discourse of "progress" in which all of

humanity was proceeding upon a single, universal trajectory.[188] The ideology of social

Darwinism would further complicate these two interwoven axes by promoting the concept that

different races were representative of different stages in the march toward "civilization."[189] This

particularly shifted the perspective of Japanese people toward peripheral groups within Japan's

boundaries, like the Ainu, who were no longer perceived as "foreign" but instead as

"backward."[190] Furthermore, the rise of Japanese imperialism in the surrounding regions of

Taiwan, Korea, and Manchuria required ideological justification in order to legitimize Japan's

expansion.[191] Though the discourse incorporated a number of arguments, three main forms of

ideology emerged: the first emphasizing the racial superiority of the Japanese in relation to the

conquered subjects; the second stressing the racial or cultural commonalities of the colonized

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[184] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1998), 85.
[185] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 85.
[186] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 85.
[187] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 85.
[188] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 85-86.
[189] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 86.
[190] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 86.
[191] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 86.

and the colonizers; the third asserting Japanese society as embodying a more advanced form of modern civilization.[192] Though the term used in this discourse is "race," it refers to *minzoku*, which was nebulous enough to be used in all three different contexts as race, ethnicity, or nation.

The first racial ideology advocated a conceptualization of Japan and the Japanese people as racially pure and homogenous. Nationalist *Nihonjinron* writers like Hozumi Yatsuka argued that the national body/entity or *kokutai* "国体" is linked by blood to the imperial family, who themselves are descendants of the ancient divine spirits or *kami* "神" of Japanese *Shintō* "神 道."[193] And this particular line of argumentation not only created a sense of national identity oriented around the imperial family, but assert the Japanese people's superiority to other peoples and nations. This ideology of purity and superiority also gave Japan a sense of a "divine mission" to liberate other parts of Asia from Western imperialism and colonialism.[194] However well the proponents, who were co-opting pre-existing notions of Japanese cultural beliefs, advocated this view, it did not work to reconcile Japan with its colonial subjects.[195]

An alternate racial view of Japan, advocated by historian Sadakichi Kita and others, was that Japan was originally inhabited by a variety of different racial groups who were assimilated by a single ethnic group.[196] Though the subjugating group was, as Morris-Suzuki puts it, "somewhat ill-defined," Japanese scholars considered them the ancient relatives of the Koreans. By assimilating the distinct racial groups living in Japan, and likewise later absorbing migrants

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[192] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1998), 86-87.
[193] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 88.
[194] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 90.
[195] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 90.
[196] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 91.

from Korea and China, this group lead to the emergence of the *Yamato minzoku*, an archaic term

Kita used for referring to the inhabitants of Japan.[197] While this theory rejects the notion of racial

purity, Kita still emphasized the role of the emperor as the descendant of the people who unified

Japan into a single cultural and political entity.[198] Thus, the emperor was the metaphorical head

of the national family, not the literal blood relative like the racial purity advocates argued.[199]

Likewise, the uniqueness of the Japanese did not lie in their racial purity, but instead in their

ability to mold disparate elements into a unified whole, which fit the Social Darwinian concept

of group/culture struggle.[200]

This particular theory of racial amalgamation allowed Japan to not only preserve its own

sense of cultural superiority, with the emperor as representative of the nation-state, but promoted

an idea that all colonial subjects could successfully integrate into Japanese society. Others were

conceptualized as "*incomplete* Japanese" who simply needed to be assimilated into the larger

Japanese socio-political apparatus.[201] Colonial subjects abroad and at home were subjected to

policies of assimilation and were tasked with adopting the Japanese language and Japanese

culture.[202] This ideology also supported the notion that Japan had a mission to rescue other Asian

nations not only from Western powers, but their own cultural backwardness. The later military

government of early Shōwa Japan would embody this in their imperialistic policy of *hakkō ichiu*

"八紘一宇" or "the eight directions of the world under one roof."[203] With the *Yamato minzoku* at

the head of these other Asian countries and Japanese culture as the center, continuously

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[197] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1998), 91.
[198] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 91.
[199] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 91.
[200] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 91-92.
[201] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 92.
[202] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 92.
[203] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 93.

absorbing, consuming, and transforming difference, Japan would establish a homogenous cultural hegemony.[204]

However, race itself did not need to play a central role in the imperialistic ideology of Japan nor in its colonial rule, for the third strain of this discourse focused on Japan's advanced civilization and culture alone.[205] Scholars of the post-World War II era have noted how even though the racial and cultural perspectives were often times conflated and interwoven, it is clear that racial exclusion and subordination need not rely on concepts of "racial" superiority alone.[206] Placing social groups on a continuum from cultural backwardness to cultural progressiveness propelled the Meiji, Taishō, and Shōwa era Japanese intelligentsia and leaders to justify social stratification, colonialism, and militarization.[207] Culture, race, and nation are heavily interwoven and often used interchangeably when discussing groups of people, which is why the nebulousness of the term *minzoku* works well within the *Nihonjinron* discourse. As we have analyzed, there have been many writers and works within, and outside of, Japanese society and throughout Japanese history that sought to define Japanese identity in terms of ecology, social structure, language, culture, and race/ethnicity.

The Shadow Japanese Identity Casts

Nihonjinron writers and scholars like Befu, Morris-Suzuki, Dale, and others have provided us not only with the content, but analyses of and methodologies for studying what has/is being said about the Japanese cultural production of identity. And though it is important to provide a meta-analysis of what I have done, it is important to reiterate that my aim is not to

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[204] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1998), 95.
[205] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 108.
[206] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 108.
[207] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 106-107.

endorse the discourse nor its elements. While it is possible that some features of *Nihonjinron* might be more valid than others, one should focus on the complexity and interwoven nature of these various cultural components of identity. To derive some essence of "Japaneseness" would be to engage in the sort of essentialist, Orientalism that Said warns is indicative of Western imperialism and renders my focus on elaborating the parameters of Japanese identity mute. Then, one might ask again, what does it "mean" to be Japanese? Or for something to be Japanese? The answer does not lie in a definition nor in a universally, identifiable essence, but in an understanding of how Japanese identity is formed by interwoven cultural and historical processes and discourse.

The image of Japan as homogenous nation is one that is fabricated, but reified in the interconnectedness of numerous cultural elements and institutions which construct and perpetuate the notion of Japanese homogeneity. As argued by Hobsbawm, Yanagita, and others, nations and peoples engage in the process of constructing their own national identity and sense of historical continuity. The methodology employed here to analyze the *Nihonjinron* discourse could very well be applied to other national studies. However, this understanding of Japanese identity, its components and relation to cultural institutions and discourse, allows us to compare how minority identity is created. The two groups that I will be focusing on for the remainder of this paper will be the *Zainichi* Koreans and the *hisabetsu burakumin*. Upon analyzing these two groups' particular histories and identities, I will re-address Japan's status as either a homogenous, multicultural, or multiethnic nation.

While it is possible to approach the topic of identity from a variety of methodologies, I want to emphasize the relational dimension of mainstream identity to marginalized identity. Incorporated within this particular discourse are strains of minority self-determination and

identity construction, though these elements will be contextualized within the larger apparatus of Japanese society. Having presented these considerations, I will attempt to replicate a similar analysis for these minority groups as I did for Japanese identity, avoiding essentialism and acknowledging the potential biases of my approach.

<p style="text-align:center">Colonization, War, and Resistance: Koreans and Zainichi Koreans in the Japanese Cultural Landscape</p>

The *Zainichi* Koreans or Resident Koreans "在日韓国人" are by various measures, one of Japan's oldest minority groups. While the term "*Zainichi* Korean" is useful for describing the ethnic Korean population of Japan, it can denote either a Japanese citizen or permanent resident, who arrived in Japan prior to 1945 or who is a descendant of said Korean population. Yet, the relationship between Korea and Japan, as indicated by the previous exploration of *Nihonjinron*, is far from benign or harmonious. Japan has long attempted to exert political, economic, and cultural control over its neighbor.[208] Korea's status as an independent region, let alone as a self-determined nation, has long been conceptually contested by pre-World War II Japanese leaders and scholars.[209] Yet, how has Korea-Japan relations changed over time? What prompted the image shift of Korea in the Japanese cultural landscape? What aspects of Japanese social structure and ideology help us understand how Korean identity is shaped by Japanese discourse? What does it mean to be *Zainichi* Korean in contemporary Japan? These are some of the questions that will guide my analysis of this particular inquiry into Korea-Japan relations and Korean identity in relation to Japanese cultural hegemony.

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[208] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 28.
[209] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 48.

The scholar Jeffrey Bayliss explores the relationship between Korea and Japan from the rise of the Meiji government until after World War II in his work *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*. Bayliss is concerned with a similar analysis of the Korean and *hisabetsu burakumin* communities in Japan, their struggles for liberation, their experiences with discrimination, and the ideology and discourses creating and perpetuating mechanisms of oppressions.[210] Furthermore, Bayliss is concerned with the proximity of these two groups and their commonalities and differences as Japanese minority groups.[211] Given that the two groups often shared the same space and experienced nearly identical forms of discrimination, a narrative of solidarity would naturally develop.[212] However, it is this precise assumption, which some scholars take, that Bayliss is concerned with critiquing. Noting how scholars of the minority groups often exclude the other group when recounting one of the group's narrative, Bayliss asserts that scholars are failing to account for the influences these two marginalized people have had on each other.[213] Scholars who speak about the *hisabetsu burakumin* or Koreans also conflate particular sub-sections of the groups as representative of the whole, ignoring that in challenging Japanese homogeneity, they construct homogenous representations of the minority groups.[214]

However, with these considerations in mind, Bayliss examines the intricacies of discrimination and the Japanese discourse that perpetuated ideologies that "Othered" these two groups. To elaborate on the particulars of Korean identity and its relation to the narratives and ideologies created, maintained, and perpetuated by Japan, we can begin with an analysis of the

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[210] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, (London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013), 1-2.

[211] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 19.

[212] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 19.

[213] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 19-20.

[214] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 10.

Japanese cultural imagination of Korea. There are many aspects of Bayliss's analysis and methodology that provide valuable insight and directions for understanding the role of Korea in Japan and the discourses that arose in both communities. While it is possible to perpetuate problematic representations of peoples and nations when deconstructing ideological tenets, it is important to recognize that facets of argumentations or discourse are not representative of some "absolute truth" regarding either the Koreans or the Japanese.

<div align="center">Korean-Japanese History: Subordination through Discourse and Culture</div>

While Bayliss only briefly mentions the mythological subjugation of the Three Korean Kingdoms by Japan's Empress Jingū (169 C.E. to 269 C.E.) within the larger context of Japanese scholars associating the outcaste *eta* with Korea, he notes it follows a trend in Japanese discourse.[215] Though I will analyze this larger discourse later, one should note how interwoven Korea is with "otherness" for the Japanese intelligentsia. The fact that within the Japanese cultural landscape there exists a connection, of subjugator to subjugated, between Japan and Korea is central to this analysis. The veracity of the account is not as important as the meaning that it has for Japanese people who consider it part of their cultural worldview. It is indicative of a mode of conceptualizing Korea as subordinate to Japan or which marks Korea as a former possession, and the Korean people former subjects, of Japan.[216]

The history of Japan and Korea dates back millennia and incorporates a number of historical processes such as population movements from the latter to the former, cultural and religious diffusion from Korea to Japan, and Korea connecting Japan to the rest of Asia.[217]

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[215] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, (London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013), 28.

[216] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 49-50.

[217] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 49.

However, proximity has also been a source of conflict and following the unification of the

disparate Japanese feudal domains by Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537 to 1598), Korea was involved

in Hideyoshi's attempted incursion into Ming China. The Joseon government, a Chinese ally,

refused to allow Japanese troops to land on Korean soil and would not grant Hideyoshi's army

free-passage into China. This defiance prompted Hideyoshi to initiate an invasion of Korea

(1592 to 1598). The invasions, however, ended in failure and the Toyotomi Clan lost much of its

political power and influence following the costly venture and the death of Hideyoshi.

Afterwards, Bayliss notes a shift in political relations between Japan and Korea during

the Tokugawa period, as the Tokugawa government sought to normalize relations with the

country.[218] Given that Korea was a heavily Confucian state, the Neo-Confucian Tokugawa

government and Japanese scholars held Korean culture and intellectual achievements in high

regard.[219] However, the ideological conception of Korea as subordinate to Japan also morphed,

for the Tokugawa government was interested in getting Korea to send embassies to Japan. The

government hoped to portray the diplomatic missions as paying homage to the Shogun, thereby

promoting the legitimacy of the government and projecting Japan as superior to Korea.[220]

Though the government took measures to mask any sense of Japanese arrogance, socio-political

ideology began to change with the rise of the national learning or *kokugaku* "国学" school of

thought.[221]

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[218] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, (London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013), 28.

[219] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 28.

[220] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 28.

[221] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 28.

This intellectual movement sought to purge Japan of degenerative foreign influence, including Chinese and Korean Confucianism.[222] Thus, we return to scholars like Yamaguchi Kōjū and Aoyagi Tanenobu, who attempted to connect Korea with the lowly pariah of Japanese society.[223] The discourse concerning Korea would continue to change as the Tokugawa government lost power and the Meiji administration seized control of the nation. Following the pattern of social and political reform in Japan, the Meiji oligarchs redefined their position to Korea and promoted the ideology of "subjugating Korea" or *Seikanron* "征韓論."[224] In 1876, the Meiji government forced Korea to engage in trade and diplomacy via the Kanghwa Treaty and though Bayliss thinks it would be incorrect to see these events as indicative of a "fully developed imperialistic drive toward controlling Korea," he does see it as a dramatic departure from the Tokugawa rulers' policies towards Korea.[225]

Likewise, the political policies of the Meiji government coincided with the intellectual changes in Japanese discourse concerning Korea. The older Tokugawa *kokugaku* scholars' derision of Korea morphed into a full rejection of Korean traditional culture by Meiji-era scholars like Fukuzawa Yukichi.[226] Fukuzawa's emphasis on "civilization and enlightenment" or *bunmei kaika* facilitated his particularly negative assessment of Korea, which he characterized as a "small, barbaric country" that was far behind Japanese civilization.[227] For scholars like Fukuzawa, who were focused on the Westernization of Japan, anything that did not contribute to

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[222] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 28.

[223] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 41.

[224] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, (London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013), 40.

[225] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 40.

[226] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 41.

[227] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 41.

the national goal of obtaining power and asserting Japan's self-determination to Western imperialist powers was deemed a "harmful distraction."[228]

      With the continued rise of Japan's imperial powers and absorption of Western ideology, Korea's position within Japanese discourse was constantly changing. The introduction of social Darwinism in the 1870s fueled Japanese scholars in their attempts at defining and redefining both Japan's relation to the West, itself as a nation, and Japan's position to the rest of Asia.[229] The emphasis on group struggle and cultural struggle in social Darwinism was used by some scholars to promote notions of eugenics and race, such as Takahashi Yoshio's *On the Improvement of the Japanese Race*, which outlined the inherent degeneracy and unhygienic nature of the *hisabetsu burakumin*.[230] Scholars became more adamant about locating the *hisabetsu burakumin* as peripheral and foreign, equating them and Koreans as members of the same "racial stock."[231] For Japanese social Darwinists, the "backwardness" of the *hisabetsu burakumin* was indicative of the Korean's inability to self-rule and the cultural gap between Korea and Japan was indicative of the difference inherent in *hisabetsu burakumin* and their inability to self-improve.[232] The semi-egalitarian and humanistic rhetoric of the early Meiji period, which saw the abolishment of the *hisabetsu burakumin*'s outcaste status, became less prevalent as the negative qualities of the groups were blamed on the very victims of discrimination themselves.[233]

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[228] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 41.

[229] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 23.

[230] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, (London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013), 43.

[231] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 45.

[232] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 45.

[233] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 45-46.

The anthropologist Fujii Kansuke, writing in 1886, published a critical article about the *eta* and their connection to the Koreans.[234] While the connection being made was oriented around both groups' consumption of meat, Fujii once again emphasized the legend of Korean slaves and war prisoners as being the ancestors of the *eta*.[235] This continued framing of Korea as a traditionally subordinate entity to Japan perpetuated the idea of inherent Korean inferiority and inability to self-rule. As discussed earlier in the paper, Japanese scholars contrasted Japan's own racial and cultural identity with Korea's.[236] Anthropologists Oguma Eiji and Torii Ryūzō, like Sadakichi Kita, advocated the notion that the Japanese were a composite of different races.[237] Yet, how was the discourse concerning the Japanese as an amalgamation of "non-Japanese groups" related to the discourse disparaging *hisabetsu burakumin* for their supposed foreignness? Any inconsistency was resolved by emphasizing the uniqueness of the Japanese people's ability to blend and assimilate disparate racial groups, unlike the *hisabetsu burakumin* who retained their intrinsic foreignness.[238]

Bayliss argues that the concept of the "emperor-centered, homogenous Japanese nation-state: the *kokutai*" further ostracized peripheral groups like the *hisabetsu burakumin*.[239] This social structure, Bayliss continues, is not a "vertical hierarchy," but a "concentric map of racial purity" radiating from the emperor to the outermost fringes, inhabited by marginalized groups like the *hisabetsu burakumin*.[240] While Koreans were subjected to similar modes of social stratification and discrimination, the full-brunt of Japanese cultural hegemony would only be felt

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[234] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 46.
[235] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 46.
[236] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 46.
[237] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 46.
[238] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, (London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013), 47.
[239] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 47.
[240] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 47.

later when Japan made Korea a national concern.[241] Prior to the First Sino-Japanese War (1894

to 1895), Japanese scholars were frustrated by the seeming inability of the Korean court and

people to initiate their own "Meiji-style self-improvement program."[242] And following the

Russo-Japanese War (1904 to 1905), Japanese scholars began to propose the view of Korean

society as emblematic of "stagnation theory" or *teitairon* "停滞論."[243] Founded upon the social

Darwinist conception of social groups representing different stages of a continuum from

barbarity to civilization, Japanese scholars claimed that Korea was stalled at a point in

development that Japan had long surpassed.[244] However, following the annexation of Korea in

1905, a new conceptualization of Korea-Japan relations entered the discursive landscape as

proponents of Korean-Japanese affinity and kinship promoted the theory of common ancestry

between Japanese and Koreans or *nissen dōsoron* "日鮮同祖論."[245]

Although the proponents of *dōsoron* were more accommodating of Korea within Japan's

cultural landscape, emphasizing things such as racial kinship and cultural contributions and

service, they recognized the superior cultural and moral qualities of the race that militarily

subjugated the Japanese Isles.[246] Though scholars located the origins of the "heaven-descended"

race, or *amakudari* "天下り," outside of Japan, they did not locate the origins in the Korean

Peninsula in a way that elevated Koreans.[247] Rather, the imperial connection to Korea is

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[241] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 47.
[242] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 48.
[243] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 48.
[244] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, (London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013), 48.
[245] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 49.
[246] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 49.
[247] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 49.

reaffirmed in the supposed mythological conquest of the Korean Peninsula following the creation of a unified, political entity in Japan.[248] Yet, while Japan's cultural superiority and uniqueness were still affirmed by *dōsoron* scholars, Korean's racial and cultural inferiority were explained away by 1) Korean "racial stock" containing greater "inferior" elements, 2) Korea's geographic separation from Japan's nourishing cultural production, or 3) Korea's proximity to China and its subversive culture.[249] The only way for Korean's to actualize their full potential was for them to assimilate themselves into Japanese culture, a move advocated by many *dōsoron* scholars like Kita, who considered Korea to be like a "weak branch family [*buke*]" of Japan, the "affluent and stable main family [*honke*]."[250] For Kita, not only is the main family obligated to help the branch family, but the branch family would welcome their chance to assimilate themselves into the main family.[251] Japan would utilize its unique ability to assimilate other racial groups on the Koreans, and since the Koreans were not a totally different racial group, they would be able to blend into Japanese society easily. Bayliss notes that in the *dōsoron* discourse "race" equaled "culture."[252]

While *teitairon* and *dōsoron* appear as opposing socio-historical interpretations of Korea, their main difference lies in regards to the Korean people's ability to "smoothly and seamlessly" integrate into the Japanese Empire.[253] While the *dōsoron* scholars did not think it would be challenging, *teitairon* scholars argued that Koreans could only be elevated to the level of Japanese civilization with the proper guidance, though some were pessimistic about the time required for Koreans to do so.[254] With Korea's full annexation by the Japanese Empire in 1910,

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[248] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 49.
[249] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 50.
[250] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, (London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013), 50.
[251] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 50-51.
[252] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 51.
[253] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 51.
[254] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 51.

Japanese programs aimed at assimilating Koreans were enacted, though there had been no

discursive consensus on the most efficient and effective methods of assimilation.[255] In fact,

earlier discourses relating the Koreans and *burakumin* contradict the *dōsoron* view, for if the

burakumin were descendants of Koreans, then their inability to integrate fully into Japanese

society, despite their history in Japan and proximity to its cultural influence, would mean

Koreans would fail to integrate as well.[256] Though there were many discrepancies in the various

schools of thought, each implicated the Koreans as foreign or alien to the proper Japanese way of

life.

The build-up to the full annexation of Korea was marked by not only resistance

movements in Korea, but by increasing anti-Korean sentiments in Japan. The assassination of the

statesman Itō Hirobumi by the Korean nationalist An Chunggŭn in particular sparked a wave of

attacks against Korean migrants in Japan and increased Japanese public distrust of Koreans.[257]

The characterizations of Koreans as conniving, self-serving, and treacherous were perpetuated by

Japanese media further fueling negative stereotypes of the country and people.[258] In addition to

the previous traits of backward, degenerate, and criminal, Koreans were being imposed with all

sorts of negative value judgments on their bodies, not simply their attitudes or actions.[259] Though

there was push toward shifting public perception of Koreans to a more positive light following

the annexation of Korea, the new characterizations were simply more patronizing and

condescending in nature.[260]

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[255] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 51.
[256] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 52.
[257] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, (London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013) 68.
[258] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 77.
[259] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 77.
[260] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 70-71.

International concerns expressed in Japan's policy of improving its own national standing required that particular attention be given to the issue of minorities. The national discourse was still concerned with assimilating or subsuming any form of deviance or difference. Eventually the processes of socialization made minority groups internalize the discriminatory ideology they experienced and inspired some to adhere to national directives.[261] However, other groups sought to rectify the gross injustices they were subjected to and demanded that the government adhere to its own ideology of equal status among subjects.[262] Though these demands often met with little success, the *hisabetsu burakumin* were eventually able to assert themselves in certain regards.[263] However, the continued reliance on the officially-sanctioned narratives derived from Japanese discourse, which deemed Koreans and *hisabetsu burakumin* as inherently un-Japanese, rendered the groups helpless against an unsympathetic public and government.[264] Furthermore, without a solid sense of self-identity, both Koreans and *hisabetsu burakumin* were vulnerable to complying with social stereotypes and characterizations of their persons.[265] Contradictory characterizations of minority groups did not raise questions about inconsistency or ideological failures and no matter how much minorities tried to assimilate into Japanese society, minorities were seen as constantly affirming their own difference.[266]

Given the continued resistance of Japanese colonization, Koreans were subjected to acts of violence both in Korea and in Japan. Following the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923, anti-Korean sentiments sparked a series of attacks against Korean laborers and migrants, resulting in

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[261] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 109-110.

[262] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 96.

[263] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, (London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013), 98-99.

[264] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 107-108.

[265] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 78.

[266] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 78.

the persecution and deaths of more than 2000 Koreans.[267] However, Koreans would remain subject to the mechanisms of Japanese social ideology and discrimination from 1910 until 1945, though there were many groups and movements resisting its hegemony. It is quite telling that the ideological shifts of Japanese discourse which promoted equality between the Koreans and the Japanese or among Japanese subjects often failed to reflect social reality.[268] Korea has a long history of being conceived of as the opposite of Japan, as a source of "Otherness," and as a subversive subordinate. Though there were discourses concerning the genuine integration of Koreans into Japanese society, these outlooks not only assumed the superiority of Japanese culture, but also ostracized Koreans in the very process of assimilating them.

<div align="center">The Remnants of Colonialism: Zainchi Koreans in Contemporary Japan</div>

The discriminatory ideology developed during the Meiji era continued to fuel Japanese perceptions of Korea and other foreign groups until the end of World War II and beyond. Though there are changes to how Koreans are perceived given the rise of the two Korean nations, modern Korea-Japan relations are marred by the historical oppression of the former by the latter. While modern forms of discrimination have their roots in the ideologies of pre-war and wartime Japan, modern Korean-Japanese relations involve land disputes, Japanese government officials visiting Yasukuni Shrine, which memorizes the war dead including war criminals, the "comfort women" or sexual slavery of Korean and other women by the Japanese military during World War II, and the subversive activity of North Korea. While the ascension of North Korea

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[267] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1998), 105.
[268] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, (London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013), 56.

and South Korea requires us to distinguish new nuances to Korea-Japan relations, our focus is on the *Zainichi* Koreans living in Japan.

The Korean movements for social equality had their roots in the nationalistically-oriented Korean student movements of the Meiji era, who were reacting to discrimination in Japan and its colonial practices in Korea.[269] While this particularly vocal group of Koreans are often seen as representative of the entire Korean community in Japan, Bayliss cautions that there were great differences among various Korean organizations in terms of their politics and aims.[270] Furthermore, there is more variance than the term "Korean movement" or "Korean community" allow, for the Korean population in Japan is not a monolithic entity.[271] While minority groups' political activities were heavily suppressed during the war, Koreans, and other groups, were able to re-mobilize following the end of the war. The two prominent *Zainichi* Korean organizations in Japan are the South Korean-backed *Mindan* and the North Korean-backed *Chōsen Sōren*, which have carried out their own respective campaigns and programs for improving the welfare of the Japanese *Zainichi* communities.[272]

And what is the relation between contemporary *Zainichi* Korean communities and Japanese hegemony? While a deeper analysis of the group itself might reveal numerous intricacies and narrative variances, a cursory analysis of contemporary anti-Korean discrimination reveals that their access to equal employment, education, and marriage, among

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[269] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, (London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013), 110.
[270] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, 16-17.
[271] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, (London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013), 16-17.
[272] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1998), 190.

other things, is still challenged by prevailing cultural norms of "otherness."[273] The very term

itself "*Zainichi*" denotes a dimension of temporality that does not reflect the established

historical connection of the Korean group in Japan. Though they have permanent residency

status, *Zainichi* Koreans are regarded as visiting foreigners. The former colonial subjects, who

had gained some political rights, lost them following the end of World War II, for they were no

longer considered Japanese citizens.[274] For those living in Japan, the Nationality Act of 1950,

later revised in 1952 and 1984, continued to insist on the principle of *ius sanguinis*, or bloodline,

as the basis of citizenship.[275] Furthermore, subtle cultural coercion to adopt a "Japanese-

sounding name" as part of the naturalization process continues to perpetuate a sense of Japanese

cultural hegemony.[276] Yet, *Zainichi* Koreans are prompted by both the *Mindan* and *Chōsen

Sōren* organizations to retain their distinct Korean identities.[277] However, the loss of certain

assimilationist elements in the naturalization process have facilitated more people to adopt

Japanese citizenship.[278]

Morris-Suzuki advocates an understanding of identity that is not fixed, for younger

generations of *Zainichi* Koreans can speak Japanese, they have no "racially" identifiable

differences, and participate in the same cultural rituals as their Japanese peers.[279] The symbolic

identification with their Korean ethnicity comes in the form of retaining their "Korean" names,

though this becomes not solely a matter of self-identification since it is also reinforced by social

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[273] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, (London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013), 1-2.

[274] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1998), 190.

[275] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 190.

[276] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 190.

[277] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1998), 190.

[278] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 190.

[279] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 196.

ideology.[280] The issue concerning identity is not one about minorities becoming the same as the majority nor allowing the minority to retain their difference, but questioning how boundaries are "maintained, shifted, and reinterpreted in the process of struggles over the nature of the state."[281] Grounding one's identity in an essentialist conceptualization of ethnic minority is, according to the writer Chong Yong Hye, a means of validating the "existing stereotypes about the homogeneity and purity of the majority."[282] To identify oneself as "purely Korean" is to allow others to identify as "purely Japanese," therefore, Chong proposes that one identifies oneself as "*impurely* 'Japanese'" or *fujun Nihonjin* "不純日本人" and thereby implicate oneself as

"impurely 'Korean.'"[283]

In accordance with Morris-Suzuki's concern about boundaries, Chong proposes that each individual learn to coexist not only with difference external to oneself, but also within oneself.[284] In the case of marginalized people who are made peripheral by ideology and social structures, appropriating one's peripheral status is the first act of actualizing difference and challenging pervading social norms, ideology, and cultural hegemony.[285] The majority of the discourse analyzed has been concerned with the way in which dominate social discourses define not only the mainstream populace's identity but also how they define, subsume, or make invisible those peripheral to it. The early Meiji Korean student movements mobilized while depending on the narratives, justifying the subjugation of Korea and its treatment of the Korean people, offered by the state. Later social movements, however, engaged in the processes of community and identity

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[280] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 196.
[281] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 196-197.
[282] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 197.
[283] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 197.
[284] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1998), 197-198.
[285] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, 199-200.

creation.[286] To disrupt, challenge, and deconstruct cultural hegemony requires the existence of difference which is expressed through the creation of counter-cultural identity.

While contemporary *Zainichi* Korean identity is shaped by the continued pervasiveness of Japanese cultural hegemony and political disputes, understanding the mechanisms of "othering" and oppression that occur within Japan presents an opportunity for *Zainichi* Koreans to redefine their own identity. As Chong and Morris-Suzuki suggest, what is imperative is not "tolerance," but challenging the construction of "culture" (identity) as homogenous and harmonious.[287] It is not simply the recognition of the difference external to the self, but the reassertion of the difference subsumed within the category of "Japanese."[288] To engage in the discourse of *Nihonjinron*, culture, race, and so forth is to be "haunted by the ghosts of dead theories," which must be confronted in order to gradually redefine the parameters and foundations a nation stakes its claim of identity on.[289] And using the framework offered by both Bayliss and Morris-Suzuki, and others, for analyzing *Zainichi* Korean identity, I will proceed to analyze *hisabetsu burakumin* identity.

Japan's Invisible Social Minority: *Hisabetsu Burakumin* and the Struggle for Liberation

Hisabetsu burakumin "被差別部落民" translates to "discriminated against hamlet people" and refers to the group's historical spatial locality as well as their status as victims of discrimination. This is a name that various communities and organizations chose for themselves after having been imposed with names such as *tokushu buraku* "特殊部落" or "special hamlets,"

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[286] Jeffrey P. Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, (London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013), 19.

[287] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1998), 208.

[288] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1998), 208.

[289] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1998), 209.

eta "穢多" or "an abundance of filth," and other names designating their social status.[290] Their

re-appropriation of the term "*burakumin"* into *hisabetsu burakumin* carries a political

connotation and marks it as an important aspect of their struggle against being ignored and

discriminated against. However, the term "*hisabetsu*" is an unspecified form of discrimination

that this paper will attempt to clarify.

It is prudent to note that there are different forms of social differentiation that societies

facilitate. The most poignant examples of social differentiation are race, gender, and class. From

these categories, I think racial differentiation parallels well with how *hisabetsu burakumin* are

treated, represented, and identified. There are a variety of intricate factors that further complicate

the classification of *hisabetsu burakumin* since differentiation of people into categories is a

process of social construction. Since there is no "ethnic" difference between *hisabetsu*

burakumin and "normal" Japanese people, *hisabetsu burakumin* are not considered a "true"

ethnic minority.

However, the scholar Timothy Amos, in his work, *Embodying Difference: The Making of*

Burakumin in Modern Japan, uses the term "social minority" as a way of contextualizing the

type of category *hisabetsu burakumin* is.[291] As stated before, all types of social differentiation are

social constructs, and a "social" minority is a product of societal ideology reinforced by an

actualized reality. That is to say there were no pre-existing conditions that *hisabetsu burakumin*

were discriminated against, but that the conditions for discrimination were created resulting in

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[290] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 2011), 3-5.

[291] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 2011), 14.

the categorization of *hisabetsu burakumin*.[292] And examining how societies carry out this process is vital for understanding how societies utilize constructed groups, or "Others," to carry out specific functions, such as identity creation.

When discussing *hisabetsu burakumin* status within a Japanese context, I will use the terms pariah, outcaste, and Other as a means of illustrating their social position. Each of these terms highlights a state of being that is outside the norm while at the same time indicating the reliance of this categorization on the society that constructs it. The interchangeability of these terms is useful for conveying the meaning of social alienation as well as showing how Japanese society contextualizes *hisabetsu burakumin* differently throughout time.

With a definition of discrimination and understanding of ideology in mind, French philosopher Michel Foucault's concept of "heterotopia" is also relevant to the issue of *hisabetsu burakumin* discrimination. Flavia Cangia, adopting the concept in her work *From Heterotopias to Cultural Landscapes: On Reconstructing Buraku Leather Towns into 'Japanese National Spaces,'* discusses the role *hisabetsu burakumin* communities have as centers of "ambivalent meanings."[293] To elaborate, Cangia notes the common theme of associating *hisabetsu burakumin* communities with dirtiness, isolation, disorder, and smelliness in discourses about them.[294] Additionally, Cangia, borrowing the author Kevin Hetherington's definition, describes heterotopias as:

> …sites in that all things displaced, marginal, rejected or ambivalent are engaged, and this engagement becomes the bases of an alternative mode of ordering.[295]

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[292] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, 5-14.

[293] Flavia Cangia, "From Heterotopias to Cultural Landscapes: On Reconstructing Buraku Leather Towns into 'Japanese National Spaces'," (*Urbanities*, May, 2013), 43-46.

[294] Flavia Cangia, "From Heterotopias to Cultural Landscapes: On Reconstructing Buraku Leather Towns into 'Japanese National Spaces'," 43-46.

[295] Ibid., 43-46.

This complex description carries a variety of meanings, but to help clarify some of the density of the definition, one should note how *hisabetsu burakumin* and their communities are perceived as essentially taboo. To a "homogenous" society, a heterotopia would function, undesirably, as a center of cultural and social difference. Simply by being, a *hisabetsu burakumin* community is outside the norm and becomes something that resists the homogenous ideology of the mainstream society. This existence of resistance forces mainstream society to engage with this "Otherness" and through this engagement, social structures and ideology are challenged and forced to change.

Furthermore, another important concept to consider when discussing the issues of discrimination against the *hisabetsu burakumin* is "untouchability." This term refers to a societal category that designates one group of people as being fundamentally inferior or "untouchable."[296] The imposition of values and meanings on people is something that occurs in all human societies and is another effect of societal ideology.[297] As discussed earlier, societies create means of differentiation, and the type of differentiation imposed on *hisabetsu burakumin* parallels with that of groups such as the *Dalit* of India, the *Paekchong* of Korea, and several others.[298] These groups are outcastes and are deemed to fall outside the classical social classes of their respective societies. They are associated with filth, impurity, and foreignness, despite their similarities, however, each group has its own unique history, challenges, and methods of resistance.[299] Understanding untouchability is key to analyzing how social minorities are constructed and oppressed, and the case of the *hisabetsu burakumin* will highlight how

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[296] Herbert Passin, "Untouchability in the Far East," (*Monumenta Nipponica* 11, no. 3 (1955)): 247-267. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2382914
[297] Paul C. Taylor, *Race: A Philosophical Introduction*, (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2004), 21-22.
[298] Herbert Passin, "Untouchability in the Far East," (*Monumenta Nipponica* 11, no. 3 (1955)): 247-267. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2382914
[299] Herbert Passin, "Untouchability in the Far East," 247-267.

complicated the consequences of constructed categorizations like untouchables and social

minorities are.

Another key concept that will be elaborated in-depth in this paper is French philosopher

Jean-François Lyotard's "grand narrative." Amos's *Embodying Difference* presents a

comprehensive sample and analysis of it, which he termed "master narrative," building on

Lyotard's concept which will serve as my main reference.[300] A "grand narrative" is a

representation and cultural justification describing how or why something is the way that it is.[301]

Though this definition is an oversimplification of an incredibly complex term, I think it provides

a cornerstone from which we can understand how grand narratives are employed by societies to

explain matters of behavior, law, tradition, social structure, and so forth. An explanation,

perspective, or world view is ingrained into the justification of whatever is being narrated and

with it a specific ideology is being perpetuated.[302] Thus, when we look at these narratives as

means of explaining contemporary phenomena, we are engaging a specific ideological

representation of a subject matter.

Having elaborated on this theoretical network, the issues of the *buraku mondai* ("hamlet

problem" as it is often referred to) will be explored through a process of exploration and question

raising.[303] How is *hisabetsu burakumin* identity formed and what does it mean to be *hisabetsu*

burakumin? What are the problems and benefits of using grand narratives to explain the *buraku*

mondai? What roles do or should *hisabetsu burakumin* communities serve in the fight against

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[300] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 2011), 2-5.

[301] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, 2-5.

[302] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, 14-22.

[303] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 2011), 2.

discrimination? How prevalent are the issues of *hisabetsu burakumin* discrimination? And what contemporary issues do *hisabetsu burakumin* liberation movements engage in? I do not expect to reach conclusions on each one of these points of inquiry, but raising these questions focuses the paper on various aspects of this comprehensive issue.

The *Hisabetsu Burakumin* Grand Narrative and its Critique

Hisabetsu burakumin are described as a people whose group identity and discrimination have a historical point of origin and continuity.[304] Additionally, *hisabetsu burakumin* live in or come from areas of villages, towns, or cities that have been part of a *buraku* "部落" or hamlet.

Though the urbanization of Japan and various historical events, such as war and natural catastrophes, have caused populations to move and shift around, *hisabetsu burakumin* are represented as having always kept their communities intact through such disasters.[305] To better understand this simplified description of who the *hisabetsu burakumin* are, a variation of Amos's "master narrative" will be explored in detail.

As Amos puts it in *Embodying Difference*, the historical narrative used for explaining the nature and reasons for the discrimination against *hisabetsu burakumin* is a product of mainstream societal interpretation.[306] This "master narrative," as he puts it, was and is used by *hisabetsu burakumin* communities and organizations, the different levels and regimes of Japanese government, and mainstream society as a means for explaining contemporary and historical issues pertaining to the group.[307] The narrative presents the issue of *hisabetsu burakumin*

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[304] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, 2-5.
[305] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, 5-14.
[306] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011), 26-28.
[307] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, 26-28.

discrimination as having arisen from both societal ideology and structuring from either pre-feudal or feudal Japan.[308] As a narrative of a people and struggle, the *hisabetsu burakumin* grand narrative focuses on the idea that the *hisabetsu burakumin* have always been a group constituted of Japan's social outcastes.[309] It is a category with a historical point of origin and whose issues can be understood via an exploration of the group's collective history.

Even though this narrative provides a useful mythology for explaining the origins of the pariah group and for illustrating the social ideology behind the discrimination, Amos argues that it fails to account for various modern and historical discrepancies.[310] The *hisabetsu burakumin* grand narrative purposefully portrays a carefully constructed representation of the struggle of the *hisabetsu burakumin* against societal and institutional discrimination. It relies on the binaries of institutional and individual, historical and political, and mainstream and pariah to convey a notion of the issue as being rather clear and simple. This narrative is meant to explain the current reasons for discrimination against *hisabetsu burakumin* as well as to justify the existence and actions of *hisabetsu burakumin* liberation organizations and movements. Yet, a representation with a political agenda that is used by both oppressor and oppressed will no doubt have its inconsistencies and fail to properly account for the actuality of contemporary *buraku* and *hisabetsu burakumin* issues.

Any representation of a group, and a master narrative is but one format of representation, cannot substitute the reality of their situation. As Edward Said put it in his famous work *Orientalism*, it is important to scrutinize our presentation of reality as a subjective understanding

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[308] Ibid., 26-28.
[309] Ibid., 26-28.
[310] Ibid., 26-28.

instead of taking it to be an objective truth.[311] Parsing the passage presented earlier in the paper

reveals that Said is challenging the usage of representations as a means for substituting the

reality of a situation. In the context of the *hisabetsu burakumin* grand narrative, the narrative

serves as an appeal to history that attempts to define contemporary issues of discrimination and

identity with a historical interpretation crafted by mainstream society. Given that history itself is

a human construct, our reliance on the history sanctioned by the society that perpetuates

hisabetsu burakumin oppression requires careful scrutiny. Even if the oppressed also rely on the

grand narrative to explain the existential question of their origin, it remains a fallible

interpretation of events.

Yet, what exactly is the master narrative and how is it reflective of mainstream societal

ideology? What are the particular faults with relying on it? And are Amos's critiques of it valid

and relevant to our understanding of contemporary *hisabetsu burakumin* discrimination and

identity? Without a grand narrative, how are *hisabetsu burakumin* supposed to understand the

actuality of their situation as victims of social and institutional discrimination?

Though there is no exact point of historical origin, pre-feudal and feudal outcaste groups

such as the *hinin* "非人" or "non-human" and *eta* are seen as the predecessors of the *hisabetsu*

burakumin.[312] The low status of these groups was due to societal ideology imposing a lower

value on their traditional occupations.[313] Their lack of ties to the land, as historically most

Japanese peasants were farmers, made them targets of discrimination.[314] However, even though

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[311] Edward W Said, *Orientalism*, (Vintage Books A Division of Random House: New York, 1978), 1-4.
[312] Herbert Passin, "Untouchability in the Far East," (*Monumenta Nipponica* 11, no. 3 (1955)): 252-253. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2382914
[313] Ian Neary, "Burakumin at the end of history," (New School for Social Research, Spring, 2003), 1.
[314] Flavia Cangia, "From Heterotopias to Cultural Landscapes: On Reconstructing Buraku Leather Towns into 'Japanese National Spaces'," (*Urbanities*, May, 2013), 46-48.

both groups were considered outcastes, the *eta* occupied a more rigid and despised social space than *hinin*, who had some social mobility.[315]

The *eta* were particularly known for working with dead animals, corpses, and leather, which were seen as especially impure trades.[316] Cultural nativist beliefs, such as *Shintō* and Buddhism, also had a role in codifying not only the trades of the *eta* but the *eta* themselves for what they did.[317] *Shintō* emphasized the importance of purity and there was nothing more defiling than death.[318] Likewise, Buddhist principles against the consumption of meat and its belief in the inheritance of sins from a previous life also condemned the *eta*.[319] Though it is often believed that religious beliefs were one of the main factors that initiated the discrimination against *eta*, it is more likely that a social ideology preceded these beliefs. As stated earlier, Japanese culture valued farm work as the most important trade for peasants to engage in and other occupations were looked down upon.[320]

Discrimination against the *eta* did not remain solely a social phenomenon, however, for discrimination was further institutionalized via sumptuary laws enacted by the Tokugawa government, after the *Sengoku* Period ("Warring States Period" 1467-1603).[321] These laws combined with the social stigma against the *eta* and *hinin* communities, codifying and ritualizing

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[315] Herbert Passin, "Untouchability in the Far East," (*Monumenta Nipponica* 11, no. 3 (1955)): 252-255. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2382914
[316] Herbert Passin, "Untouchability in the Far East," 252-255.
[317] Herbert Passin, "Untouchability in the Far East," 252-255.
[318] Ibid., 252-255.
[319] Herbert Passin, "Untouchability in the Far East," (*Monumenta Nipponica* 11, no. 3 (1955)): 252-255. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2382914
[320] Flavia Cangia, "From Heterotopias to Cultural Landscapes: On Reconstructing Buraku Leather Towns into 'Japanese National Spaces'," (*Urbanities*, May, 2013), z46-48.
[321] Ian Neary, "Burakumin at the end of history," (New School for Social Research, Spring, 2003), 1.

discrimination even more strongly into the culture. Traditions, social interactions, values, and occupations were fixed by the solidification of social classes.[322]

A mixture of ostracizing certain groups of people because of their trades and relegating disempowered people to functions deemed tainted perpetuated this system of social distinction. However, the stratification among the people was not limited to employment and social status but also occupied a material and metaphysical space. Outcastes were kept on the outskirts of villages, towns, and cities, living in communities that were adjacent to these traditional social centers.[323] These hamlets or *buraku* as they came to be called were ascribed the same values that the people living in them were attributed. Thus, the *eta* villagers came to be designated as "*burakumin*," though it was a category that extended beyond just the *eta* and included anyone living in or near such locales.[324]

To understand this particular relation between space and being, the ontological consequences of being *hisabetsu burakumin* as portrayed by the grand narrative will be explored. For, whether *hisabetsu burakumin* came about because of their historical trades or not, they are a group constituted of social outcastes, who were and are still discriminated against. This tradition of discrimination has its roots in a social and institutional discourse and ideology of separation based on societal function. Religious and cultural beliefs created a system of meaning for how first *eta*, among others, and then *hisabetsu burakumin* were perceived. Buddhist and *Shintō* beliefs, as cultural practices and as institutional doctrines, reinforced the notion that the work carried out by *hisabetsu burakumin*, and their predecessors, no matter how necessary, was

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[322] Ian Neary, "Burakumin at the end of history," (New School for Social Research, Spring, 2003), 1.

[323] Herbert Passin, "Untouchability in the Far East," (*Monumenta Nipponica* 11, no. 3 (1955)): 252-255. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2382914

[324] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 2011), 37-40.

fundamentally impure and defiled.[325] This ideology pervaded throughout the whole of Japanese society, such that social and religious institutions came to ascribe those characteristics, of impurity and defilement, not only to the trades of *hisabetsu burakumin*, but also to the *hisabetsu burakumin* themselves.

Discrimination against *hisabetsu burakumin* became normalized as a result of social and religious institutions reinforcing each other's impositions on *burakumin* and other outcaste groups like them. Yet, below all the physical and tangible expressions of discrimination, the ideological process of creating and marginalizing the "Other" was well underway. This is reflected in the way values placed on trades deemed defiled or subversive were ascribed to the *hisabetsu burakumin* and *hinin* themselves, marking specifically the former as being fundamentally impure and, by extension, un-Japanese.[326]

Reinforcement of social discrimination in the form of the social castes created by the Tokugawa government added a political element to the discrimination. The creation of the four main social divisions, as modeled on the Confucian structure of the Zhou dynasty of Ancient China, saw to the creation of the unique *eta/hisabetsu burakumin* caste, which lay outside the four main divisions.[327] *Hisabetsu burakumin* were bound to their caste and were avoided by mainstream society and any interaction with other classes required specific rituals to be performed to avoid non-*burakumin* classes/individuals/spaces from becoming tainted. Though social mobility, while limited, occurred during this period in Japanese history, it was even more

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[325] Herbert Passin, "Untouchability in the Far East," (*Monumenta Nipponica* 11, no. 3 (1955)): 252-255. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2382914

[326] Herbert Passin, "Untouchability in the Far East," (*Monumenta Nipponica* 11, no. 3 (1955)): 252-255. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2382914

[327] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011), 40-43.

restricted for *hisabetsu burakumin*.[328] Since, they were ascribed a sense of impurity no matter

how wealthy, prominent, or useful they were, it was highly challenging to move up the social

hierarchy, let alone escape pervasive social values.[329] The position and values ascribed to

hisabestu burakumin bodies became an imposed reality that marked the identity and experiences

of the *hisabestu burakumin* and their descendants.

Despite the discrimination that they experienced and the social and legal regulations that

required them to show subservience to any member of the other four social divisions, *hisabestu*

burakumin lived in an odd economic situation. The ideological perspective imposed upon their

traditional trades inadvertently granted *hisabestu burakumin* monopolies and this in turn allowed

some *hisabestu burakumin* to become economically successful.[330] And if they could hide their

background well, some *hisabestu burakumin* even escaped their station in life and ascended to a

higher social class.[331] It is important to note that these two advantages and practices are not

meant to downplay the discrimination suffered by *hisabetsu burakumin* nor to claim that this was

a common, accessible reality for all*,* but instead are meant to highlight the complexity of their

situation. Given that they were not ethnically or phenotypically different, *hisabetsu burakumin*

are not "visibly" discernable from non-*burakumin* Japanese. Thus, the Tokugawa government

attempted to establish "visible" markers through the sumptuary laws, but it was possible to work

around the regulations with sufficient economic power.[332]

Yet, despite the potential prosperity afforded to some by their status, *hisabestu*

burakumin remained a low-status position. It was completely acceptable, for example, for

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[328] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan,* 40-43.
[329] Ibid., 40-43.
[330] Ibid., 40-43.
[331] Ibid., 82-84.
[332] Ian Neary, "Burakumin at the end of history," (New School for Social Research, Spring, 2003), 1.

samurai to cut down *hisabestu burakumin* with impunity and without real cause.[333] It was

impermissible for *hisabestu burakumin* to physically touch non-*burakumin*, lest they pollute

them, and if contact was made, the non-*burakumin* would have to perform a ritual purification.[334]

Additionally, even if it was possible to hide one's background, if one were ever outed or

discovered, the consequences would be very severe. Likewise, the immense psychological and

emotional stress caused by hiding one's identity and fearing ever being discovered would

discourage most *hisabetsu burakumin* from doing so. The power of discriminatory ideology,

when enacted via mechanisms of the state and through social ritual, is perpetuated completely

when the discriminated begin to police themselves according to the rules of their oppressors.

However, with the fall of the Tokugawa government during the latter half of the

nineteenth century, the Meiji imperial government, influenced by global events, put effort into

restructuring the whole of Japanese government and society in an attempt to modernize and

Westernize it.[335] The government was prompted to "modernize" by Japan's vulnerability to

potential Western intervention and military power.[336] Along with the various reformation

projects, Western discourses were also explored further and influenced the creation of Meiji

Japan.[337] Philosophies and sociological theories about race, society, and nation allowed Japanese

scholars and government officials to reanalyze and reinterpret the *buraku mondai*.[338] In order to

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[333] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 2011), 40-43.

[334] Herbert Passin, "Untouchability in the Far East," (*Monumenta Nipponica* 11, no. 3 (1955)): 252-255. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2382914

[335] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 2011), 43-46.

[336] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 2011), 43-46.

[337] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 2011), 43-46.

[338] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 2011), 131-135.

compete successfully with Western powers, the Meiji government engaged the issue of *hisabetsu burakumin* discrimination in order to unite its citizenry and move past the archaic feudal structures of the Tokugawa Shogunate.[339]

In the year 1869, the Japanese feudal caste system officially ended, indicating the beginning of the Meiji government's new social policy.[340] In 1871, the new government passed the *Senmin Haishirei*, which sought to give outcastes equal living status.[341] In reality, this edict, more commonly known as the *Kaihōrei*, actually proved more harmful to *hisabetsu burakumin* communities than beneficial.[342] The lifting of past institutional and social restrictions meant that the monopolies over the traditional occupations *hisabetsu burakumin* were engaged in, were no longer in place and this led to a decline in living standards.[343] Coupled with this new economic reality, *hisabetsu burakumin* continued to experience discrimination as social norms of difference and ostracism persisted throughout society.[344] Thus, even if the law granted *hisabetsu burakumin* equal status, the social, economic, and institutional reality of the situation remained the same, as did the value impositions on *hisabetsu burakumin* bodies. These new reforms, fused with lack of substantial social change, created the conditions for *hisabetsu burakumin* communities to worsen, instead of improve, and *buraku* communities remained or regressed into slums.[345]

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[339] Ibid., 43-46.

[340] Ibid., 40-43.

[341] Ibid., 117-119.

[342] Ibid., 43-46.

[343] Ibid., 43-46.

[344] Ian Neary, "Burakumin at the end of history," (New School for Social Research, Spring, 2003), 1.

[345] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011), 43-46.

During this time period, however, *hisabetsu burakumin* began to mobilize into movements and organizations that advocated for their rights, fought against discrimination, and challenged the government to address the issues their communities were facing.[346] Economic destitution, poor services in *hisabetsu burakumin* communities, international interests, and pressure from activist organizations pressured the Meiji government to act, but few substantial actions were taken.[347] With the changes to social structuring, industrialization, and political dynamics, *hisabetsu burakumin* communities were absorbed into the larger growing population centers of Japan. Even though their hamlets had historically been adjacent to town, city, and village centers, *hisabetsu burakumin* communities became harder to geographically isolate. This process of population integration began during the Meiji restoration and continued after the American occupation. Yet, even though *hisabetsu burakumin* communities became slightly less distinguishable, societal differentiation persisted as a result of social ideology, cultural codification of discrimination, and policies like the family registry.

Family registration is the documentation of one's genetic and ancestral history and was used by the government for the documentation of the populace as a whole for various other administrative functions.[348] The Meiji government initiated a comprehensive documentation of *hisabetsu burakumin* community numbers, functions, and populations in order to evaluate economic potential and labor resources.[349] Using family registry, one's ancestral homeland and genealogy were cemented, and since the information was a matter of public record, individuals and companies could use registries to determine whether or not someone was from a *buraku* or

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[346] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, 43-46.
[347] Ibid., 43-46.
[348] Ibid., 40-43.
[349] Ibid., 43-46.

was *hisabetsu burakumin*.[350] Despite the various changes occurring during the Meiji period, the societal ideology that constructed *hisabetsu burakumin* as being essentially different from "normal" Japanese citizens morphed discursively. These new, subtler forms of discrimination manifested as a response to the edicts ending the Tokugawa laws' "visible" differentiation.[351]

In response to the various socio-economic changes and continued discrimination, *hisabetus burakumin* communities began to organize themselves into movements and organizations that sought to improve their social lot.[352] The most vocal and powerful organization of the time, 1922-1942, was the *Zenkoku Suiheisha* "全国水平社" or "Levelers' Association of Japan."[353] Known for its denunciatory tactics and its strong anti-discrimination stance, the *Suiheisha* proved to be a powerful political and social entity for *hisabetsu burakumin* communities to assert their socio-political relevance.[354] Using various communities and wealthy individuals' collective power and resources, the *Suiheisha* continued to pressure the government into initiating more comprehensive projects aimed at destroying various areas of inequality.[355] The poor hygienic conditions of *hisabetsu burakumin* communities and access to economic and educational resources were the main areas of concern for the *Suiheisha*, in addition to their push for anti-discriminatory legislation.[356]

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[350] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 2011), 76-82.

[351] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, 76-82.

[352] Ian Neary, "Burakumin at the end of history," (New School for Social Research, Spring, 2003), 1.

[353] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 2011), 76-82.

[354] Ian Neary, "Burakumin at the end of history," (New School for Social Research, Spring, 2003), 1.

[355] Ian Neary, "Burakumin at the end of history," 1.

[356] Ian Neary, "Burakumin at the end of history," 1.

Though the *Suiheisha* experienced its share of setbacks, an interesting period of time for the organization came with the increased militarization of Japan. Given the rise of nationalism and militarism, the *Suiheisha* found itself in an odd position of fighting against ideology that sought to categorize its members as being non-Japanese, and therefore susceptible to discrimination, or appealing to anti-foreigner sentiments in order to solidify themselves as being members of Japanese society. While it is certain that members of the organization were divided as to what position they should take as a whole, *hisabetsu burakumin* continued to push for social progress. Though as a result of the national militarism, government control became more explicit and rigid, eventually leading to the *Suiheisha* ceasing its operations around the 1940s.

Following the end of World War II and during the American occupation, *hisabetsu burakumin* communities once more reorganized themselves to continue fighting against inequality. From the remnants of the *Suiheisha*, former members established the Burakumin Liberation League (*Buraku Kaihō Dōmei* and henceforth BLL), an organization that closely followed the activities and stances of the old *Suiheisha*.[357] However, due to conflicting politics and interests, some members were kicked out of the BLL or left of their own accord; these individuals formed a new organization known as the Buraku Liberation Alliance (*Zenkoku Buraku Kaihō Undō Rengōkai*, or *Zenkairen*).[358] Though both of these organizations set out to fight for the rights of *hisabetsu burakumin* communities and to eliminate social prejudice, they disagreed on the means to those ends. The BLL focused on accusatory tactics, denouncing

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[357] Ian Neary, "Burakumin at the end of history," (New School for Social Research, Spring, 2003), 1.
[358] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011), 160-162.

discriminators and were more militant in nature.[359] *Zenkairen*, on the other hand, adopted less

aggressive tactics and focused on assimilationist approaches.[360]

As the BLL and *Zenkairen* pushed for the advancement and rights of *hisabetsu*

burakumin communities and individuals, the Japanese federal government also enacted a series

of beneficial policies aimed at eliminating the levels of inequality found in *hisabetsu burakumin*

communities.[361] Beginning in 1969, the Special Measures Law for Assimilation Projects diverted

funding to impoverished communities in an effort to reduce illiteracy rates, increase access to

new public goods and services, as well as increase the welfare of the communities as a whole.[362]

These projects continued to be funded until 2002, when the Japanese federal government

declared that it had accomplished the goals it had laid out in the Special Measures Law.[363]

Though *hisabetsu burakumin* organizations, especially the BLL, requested that the Special

Measures Law be reauthorized, their request was denied.[364] Even though no more additional

funding was being provided for continuing the programs initiated in *hisabetsu burakumin*

communities, the BLL and other organizations recognized the positive impact that the Special

Measures Law had in reducing community concerns about education, employment, public

services, and so forth.[365]

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[359] Ian Neary, "Burakumin at the end of history," (New School for Social Research, Spring, 2003), 1.

[360] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011), 160-162.

[361] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011), 160-163.

[362] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, 160-163.

[363] Ibid., 160-163.

[364] Ibid., 160-163.

[365] Ibid., 160-163.

As a result of these projects, *Zenkairen* dissolved on March 3, 2004, after declaring that "the *buraku* issue has basically been resolved."[366] Although, the organization's members later formed the National Confederation of Human Rights Movements in The Community (*Zenkoku Chiiki Jinken Undō Sōrengō* or *Zenkoku Jinken Ren*) to continue fighting against all forms of discrimination.[367] The Burakumin Liberation League adopted a similar stance and continues to fight against discrimination and human rights injustices, though it does not see the *buraku mondai* as having been resolved.[368] The BLL continues to stress the importance of passing federal anti-discriminatory legislation.

<div align="center">A Fallacious Narrative and Hisabetsu Burakumin Identity Politics</div>

So, if the issue of discrimination is not over for *hisabetsu burakumin*, and I agree with the BLL that it is not, then there has to be something problematic with how the grand narrative appears to conclude with the government's projects ending the *buraku mondai*. In fact, the representation of the *buraku mondai* via the *hisabetsu burakumin* grand narrative fails to account for various intricate aspects of *hisabetsu burakumin* identity, resistance, societal reaction, and so forth. For example, why is the notion of historical continuity so assured, despite the wars and natural catastrophes that would have resulted in population shifts and movements? Also, how complex was the economic reality for *hisabetsu burakumin* during the period of time when they held monopolies over very important and necessary trades? Did the edicts of the Meiji government have any beneficial impact on *hisabetsu burakumin* communities? Furthermore,

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[366] Ibid., 160-163.

[367] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, 163-167.

[368] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 2011), 160-163.

what does it mean to be *hisabetsu burakumin* according to the grand narrative? What can be gained from understanding the *buraku mondai*?

To answer the question of population movements and shifts, Amos claims that *hisabetsu burakumin* communities and members were a lot more fluid and would often move from location to location.[369] This does not mean that *hisabetsu burakumin* were more nomadic or traditionally migratory, but that as a result of living conditions, discrimination, wars, and other external factors, whole communities were often forced or coaxed into moving.[370] Given that *hinin* and *eta* were both treated as outcastes and that any people living in or near an *eta* village were classified as being *eta* themselves, then it is not unreasonable to believe that the same phenomena occurred for *hisabetsu burakumin* communities later on. As city populations grew during the Edo period, *hisabetsu burakumin* communities and other undesirables were continuously pushed to poorer and poorer areas while their old communities were incorporated into the expanding city limits.[371] As a result, *Hisabetsu burakumin* communities, though located near traditional geographical landmarks like rivers or on poor land, have mainly been incorporated into the cities and towns that continually pushed them outward.[372]

After World War II, American officials introduced land reforms and distributed parcels of land to Japanese and *hisabetsu burakumin* alike, although the latter had historically limited involvement with farming as they were often forced to give up any arable land.[373] Given that Japan was also decimated by continuous American bombing campaigns, portions of the Japanese

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[369] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, 5-14.

[370] Ibid., 5-14.

[371] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011), 160-163.

[372] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, 56-67.

[373] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, 46-53.

populace moved around to avoid getting caught up in the destruction.[374] Even though new slums were created in the years that followed the war, traditional *hisabetsu burakumin* communities had to be re-established and they became populated by immigrants and other non-*burakumin* peoples, like the Koreans, as well.[375] The traditional concept of the *hisabetsu burakumin* as a monolithic group that has historical continuity is less than feasible with all these considerations in mind.

The notion of "passing," or submerging one's identity with another identity to escape unfavorable social positioning, was a viable tactic available to some *hisabetsu burakumin*.[376] Lack of ethnic and racial makers meant that certain limitations faced by other ethnic/racial minorities, did not prevent *hisabetsu burakumin* from blending into mainstream Japanese society. The socialized rituals and sumptuary laws of the Tokugawa period were repealed with the rise of the Meiji government and it became even more feasible to hide one's identity of being *hisabetsu burakumin* or coming from a *buraku*. As mentioned before, another factor that ties in with passing and that complicates the issue of *hisabetsu burakumin* disenfranchisement is their historical economic power.

With their historical trades being taboo and deemed impure, *hisabetsu burakumin* were able to secure certain monopolies on leatherworking, policing, sanitation, and various other undesirable occupations.[377] *Hisabetsu burakumin* were able to gain a degree of political power and were in fact important workers, due to leatherworking, during the Sengoku Period.[378]

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[374] Ibid., 46-63.
[375] Ibid., 46-63.
[376] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, 53-56.
[377] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011), 40-43.
[378] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, 40-43.

Competing *daimyō* (大名 "feudal warlords") employed leatherworkers to maintain their armies

and equip them with necessary tools and armaments for warfare.[379] *Hisabetsu burakumin*

communities noted for their leatherwork, were employed by powerful *daimyo* and gained status

as a vital asset to enlist for any army.[380] The end of the Sengoku Period, however, did mean that

less demand was placed on *hisabetsu burakumin* communities for producing artifacts of war. But

the Tokugawa government imposed and facilitated various functions for *hisabetsu burakumin*

communities to carry out in order to maintain social order.[381]

During the Edo period, the leader of the major *kantō hisabetsu burakumin* communities

was known as the *Danzaemon* and he (always male due to traditional patriarchal social

organization) was directly enlisted into the service of the Shogun.[382] The *Danzaemon* functioned

as a means for controlling and redirecting *hisabetsu burakumin* and other outcaste communities

into different works on behalf of the government.[383] They would often be tasked with jobs such

as catching criminals, acting as police and executioners, doing sanitation and fire prevention

work, in addition to their traditional trades.[384] Though these various functions gave the *hisabetsu*

burakumin a certain degree of political power, their association with impurity and the oppressive

aspects of the government only increased the resentment they experienced from other classes and

groups.[385] Despite the discrimination they experienced, however, *hisabetsu burakumin* who were

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[379] Ian Neary, "Burakumin at the end of history," (New School for Social Research, Spring, 2003), 1.
[380] Ian Neary, "Burakumin at the end of history," 1.
[381] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 2011), 40-43.
[382] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, 40-43.
[383] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 2011), 100-106.
[384]Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, 40-43.
[385] Ibid., 40-43.

able to accumulate influence, power, and wealth through this system were capable of escaping the bonds of being identified as *hisabetsu burakumin*.[386]

Another issue with the *hisabetsu burakumin* grand narrative is that the Meiji edicts that abolished class stratification were not able to resolve the issues of discrimination and impoverishment in their communities. As mentioned before, the unexpected backlash of such edicts was that *hisabetsu burakumin* communities began to decline with the loss of their economic monopolies.[387] Even though outsiders began engaging in trades that were deemed socially taboo, the main focus of discrimination and association with those trades, and their impurity, was still on the *hisabetsu burakumin*.[388] This is partly because the category of "new citizen" created by the edicts that was meant to liberate outcaste groups instead simply renamed the old feudal dynamic of the Edo period.[389] The phrase "new citizen" became a derogatory term and members of outcaste groups found themselves only a little better off under the new government than they had been under the Tokugawa regime. [390]

Even though the political reality for pariah groups like the *hisabetsu burakumin* had conceptually changed, the social structure of society remained relatively untouched even after social classes were made more open to social mobility.[391] Despite the enlightenment ideology the early Meiji government was perpetuating, the lack of substantial policy reform and funding of projects aimed at eliminating issues in *buraku* meant that *hisabetsu burakumin* were a vulnerable

[386] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, 100-106.
[387] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, 122-131.
[388] Flavia Cangia, "From Heterotopias to Cultural Landscapes: On Reconstructing Buraku Leather Towns into 'Japanese National Spaces'," (*Urbanities*, May, 2013), 43-46.
[389] Juichi Suginohara, *The Status Discrimination in Japan: Introduction to Buraku Problem*, (Kobe City, Japan: Hyogo Institute of Buraku Problem, 1982), 21-22.
[390] Juichi Suginohara, *The Status Discrimination in Japan: Introduction to Buraku Problem*, (Kobe City, Japan: Hyogo Institute of Buraku Problem, 1982), 18-22.
[391] Juichi Suginohara, *The Status Discrimination in Japan: Introduction to Buraku Problem*, 17-22.

demographic.[392] The Meiji edicts were more detrimental to the group since enlightenment

ideology and the edicts of liberation were used as counterarguments to any claims of

discrimination or disparate treatment.[393] The rise of nationalism also suppressed open-critique of

the government, since doing so was considered unpatriotic and un-Japanese.[394] Even the

Suiheisha had to adopt an unsavory stance supporting the nationalistic ideology of the

government and their foreign military expeditions.[395] The fear of being deemed a foreign element

was even more prevalent during the latter Meiji era given the widespread appeal of Western

eugenics and racial theory in Japanese discourses by scholars, who sought to justify military

expansions and imperialism.[396]

The fear of peripheral groups being deemed exclusively "Other" in the fullest sense

explains why *hisabetsu burakumin* individuals and communities strove to establish mythologies

of origin.[397] Using these mythologies, *hisabetsu burakumin* engaged in the process of creating

their own narratives for explaining and justifying their social and political reality.[398] Given the

rising nationalism, foreignness was one of the biggest markers for discrimination and so

hisabetsu burakumin communities rejected notions of being foreign and embraced the stance that

they, unlike other groups, were at least Japanese.[399] Meiji scholars were busy reanalyzing and

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[392] Ibid., 17-22.

[393] Juichi Suginohara, *The Status Discrimination in Japan: Introduction to Buraku Problem*, 22-25.

[394] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011), 43-46.

[395] Jeffrey Paul Bayliss, *On the Margins of Empire: Buraku and Korean Identity in Prewar and Wartime Japan*, (Cambridge (Massachusetts) and London: Harvard University Press, 2013), 1-9.

[396] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011), 131-138.

[397] Joshua H. Roth, "Blackwell Reference Online." *CHAPTER 6. Political and Cultural Perspectives on "Insider" Minorities: A Companion to the Anthropology of Japan*, Accessed July 22, 2016, 74-76. Doi: 10.1111/b.9780631229551.2008.00006.x

[398] Joshua H. Roth, *CHAPTER 6. Political and Cultural Perspectives on "Insider" Minorities: A Companion to the Anthropology of Japan*, 74-76.

[399] Ibid., 74-76.

reinterpreting the category of *hisabetsu burakumin* as a racial identity and explaining how the *hisabetsu burakumin* were sub-human.[400] These discourses were founded upon earlier Edo period thinking though they were infused with new Western and Japanese ideas. The reformulation of societal structure during the Edo and Meiji periods brought with it the need to redefine and reorient society's Others. Having pride in being *hisabetsu burakumin* was considered a direct insult, and one worthy of intense scrutiny, to the idea of Japanese identity, as the two were conceptualized as being diametrically opposed.[401] As I have argued, the socio-political reforms of the Edo and Meiji periods did little to change the *hisabetsu burakumin*'s association with impurity and defilement, regardless of their economic reality or supposed social liberation.

As I have demonstrated, the *hisabetsu burakumin* grand narrative fails to account for various complications and establishes a representation of *hisabetsu burakumin* that is tied to a notion of historical continuity and the discrimination they experienced. Thus, to be *hisabetsu burakumin* according to the grand narrative means: 1) you must have a genealogical or ancestral tie to the historical *eta* community; 2) your ancestors engaged in impure trades that affected their social positioning; 3) your liberation was achieved as a result of the *Kaihōrei* ("*Emancipation Edict"*) and Special Measures Law for Assimilation Projects; 4) you or your family currently reside in or have resided in a *hisabetsu burakumin* community. However, even while acknowledging the actuality of their discrimination and the affects that it has had on their communities and bodies, *hisabetsu burakumin* are an invented social category if their identity is based on the grand narrative. I have analyzed a variety a reasons for why this type of identity, multi-faceted as it might be, cannot possibly work as a foundation for *hisabetsu burakumin*

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[400] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011), 131-138.
[401] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, 194-196.

identity. To reiterate, I am not arguing that the *hisabetsu burakumin* identity does not have ontological consequences or that it has not affected the social reality of the people identified as *hisabetsu burakumin*, but that the grand narrative's representation renders *hisabetsu burakumin* identity as unrealistic.

First, the notion that one's ancestry or genealogical history can be determined empirically is not possible even with the extensive documentation of the family registry dating from the Meiji period. This is because populations shift as a result of migration, war, natural disasters, or a host of other potential reasons. Passing further complicates this idea since there is no phenotypic distinction to give "visible" markers of difference. Social matters, like family genealogy or homeland, could be forged and hidden with sufficient wealth and social power, which some *hisabetsu burakumin* had. And even though there had historically been a distinction between the *hinin* and *eta* groups, the close proximity between these two pariah groups often led to common association and conflation. Since the political and social systems neglected outcastes until the Meiji era, there was no real, sustained effort by the government to carefully track and record who was what in outcaste communities across Japanese history. This became even more problematic following World War II, when *hisabetsu burakumin* communities became populated by immigrants and other non-*burakumin* individuals, who were of the same socioeconomic standing. Even if one were not originally from a *buraku* community as soon as one begins to live there, then one is associated with being *hisabetsu burakumin* and is regarded as such.[402]

Since *hisabetsu burakumin* communities still engage in historical trades as well as newer occupations of similar social standing, it seems more reasonable to assume that this aspect of

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[402] Flavia Cangia, "From Heterotopias to Cultural Landscapes: On Reconstructing Buraku Leather Towns into 'Japanese National Spaces'," (*Urbanities*, May, 2013), 50-53.

hisabetsu burakumin identity remains consistent. However, there are non-*burakumin* Japanese and foreigners who engage in the exact same lines of work and who also experience similar levels of discrimination as the *hisabetsu burakumin*.[403] The issue is that spatial meaning is assigned to locations near or related to *hisabetsu burakumin* communities. The notion of filth and impurity is no longer simply associated with the trade, but with the location in which the work takes place. Aside from the actual geographical space and the assumptions that such places are filthy and smelly, the workers in those areas occupy a virtual space, thereby imbibing in the same imposed values.[404] Discrimination against any work/trade deemed filthy or impure is not a remnant of ancient social ideology, but is an ingrained and adapting cultural code. Religious notions in Japan have always been a mixture of cultural beliefs, ritual behavior, and reflect, rather than create, social ideology. It is not because of the *Shintō* belief concerning purity and impurity or the Buddhist condemnation of killing life and eating meat or its concept of sin that *hisabetsu burakumin* discrimination persists.

Ideology is pervasive and it is difficult, if not impossible, to eliminate in its entirety from a society. The cultural codification of discrimination against *hisabetsu burakumin* means that even if the "historical" markers, i.e. sumptuary laws, occupation, and living space, are no longer existent or as tangible, the values imposed on their very bodies have not changed. Even the seemingly "radical" transformation of society during the Meiji Restoration failed to eliminate the social values marking *hisabetsu burakumin* individuals and communities as impure and inherently un-Japanese. If the newer institutions and societal structures simply repurposed the old value systems, reorienting them slightly toward new aims, then it follows that the ideology

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[403] Flavia Cangia, "From Heterotopias to Cultural Landscapes: On Reconstructing Buraku Leather Towns into 'Japanese National Spaces'," 50-53.
[404] Ibid., 50-53.

for differentiating members of society has remained more or less intact. New discourses do not necessarily negate or eliminate preceding ideologies, thus a society conceptualizing itself as enlightened might at the same time ascribe to a notion of racial hierarchy or social ordering based on perceived social positioning.

In regards to the economic reality and the living conditions of the *hisabetsu burakumin* communities after the American occupation, the elimination of material barriers did not equate to an elimination of metaphysical barriers. Despite the benefits that *hisabetsu burakumin* organizations and communities received as a result of the Special Measures Law, the issue of discrimination did not disappear along with the material issues of illiteracy, poor education, poor public services, and inefficient and hazardous community planning.[405] Instead the elimination of these issues masked the more important discourse of ending discrimination against *hisabetsu burakumin*. If one were to conceptualize the issue of *hisabetsu burakumin* as being grounded in their economic conditions, i.e. historical occupation or unequal living conditions, then it would not be irrational to conclude that the elimination of these obstacles would result in the end of discrimination. The grand narrative itself is oriented around this outlook, for the solution to these issues is increasing material resources available to *hisabetsu burakumin* communities.[406] Yet, despite the material improvements to *hisabetsu burakumin* communities, and they are now distinguishable because of their high living quality, the reality of the situation is that the *buraku mondai* is far from resolved.

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[405] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011), 157-163.

[406] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011), 14-22.

As discussed earlier, living in a *buraku* community, a community designated as being historically a *hisabetsu burakumin* community or populated highly by *hisabetsu burakumin,* itself is a marker for being identified as *hisabetsu burakumin*. But since we know that population shifts and immigration have led to non-*burakumin* peoples moving into *hisabetsu burakumin* communities, this notion is likewise fallacious. Given the process urbanization and as a consequence of the Special Measures Law, *hisabetsu burakumin* have greater mobility, allowing them to move from locations traditionally associated with them to all parts of Japan.[407] Without the easily accessible means to "out" individuals, and because they have no visible signifiers of difference, would it be accurate to say that individuals who have no markers of being social minorities can still identify as *hisabetsu burakumin*? Without the grand narrative, the framework entailing the contemporary, post- American occupation, collective experience of the group must serve as the foundation for *hisabetsu burakumin* identity. To compound the complexity of this identity, the grand narrative only described a generalized historical continuity for *hisabetsu burakumin* communities of the Kansai and Kanto regions of Japan. Certain *hisabetsu burakumin* communities located further west or northeast of these regions had different experiences and some experienced little to no discrimination at all.[408] Therefore, a new framework for understanding contemporary *hisabetsu burakumin* identity must be analyzed in order to properly outline the nuances and distinguishing features of this social minority.

However, this critique is aimed at deconstructing the identity formulated by the grand narrative and is not a criticism that regards *hisabetsu burakumin* discrimination as negligible or fictitious. I intend to open the discussion as to what constitutes *hisabetsu burakumin* identity as I

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[407] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, 160-162.
[408] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011), 5-14.

can only speculate that changes in social ideology and the efforts of *hisabetsu burakumin* organizations have made some changes to how society depicts and understands *hisabetsu burakumin*. Currently, *hisabetsu burakumin* organizations like the BLL are having difficulty attracting younger members into their ranks as social activists, despite their policy expansions and outreach programs.[409] This potentially indicates that younger generations are not as worried about issues of discrimination as older generations, that they are ignorant of societal discrimination, that they no longer experience significant discrimination which would prompt them to become members, or organizations simply do not adhere to the concerns of younger generations. This generational gap also means that *hisabetsu burakumin* identity is construed differently by younger generations.

In the case of older generations, they might remember the times when they had to fight for the improvement of their communities and the rights they enjoy today. Since younger generations are removed from those experiences and struggles, they become less engaged with the reality and tradition of struggle. To them, being *hisabetsu burakumin* no longer carries the same connotation that it once did and it might even be seen as a burden or unneeded add-on to their own personal identity. Given that traditional social impositions are harder to pin as populations and landscapes change, younger generations might be able to escape the labels and difficulties that come with being identified *hisabetsu burkaumin*. Even during the height of *hisabetsu burakumin* activism, *hisabetsu burakumin* liberation movements were divided over the ultimate end of their organizations.[410] Should *hisabetsu burakumin* become an obsolete category

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[409] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, 197-203.

[410] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011), 163-173.

that no longer describes people outside of a historical context or discourse? Or is being *hisabetsu burakumin* something that should be embraced and asserted to resist cultural hegemony?

Hisabetsu burakumin culture is a numinous topic that various authors, such as Amos and Cangia, alluded to but never truly define. *Hisabetsu burakumin* communities, such as the ones in Osaka, link their culture to the historical works *hisabetsu burakumin* were known for, such as leatherworking and specifically *taiko* drum making.[411] However, an appeal to history is a problematic basis for a diverse group like the *hisabetsu burakumin*, who carried out a wide variety of functions and trades. The difficulty of encompassing a group of people as varied as the *hisabetsu burakumin* is further complicated by the fact that even issues of common struggle varied from location to location. Marginalized people are not monoliths. However, could the tradition of resistance provide some foundation for *hisabetsu burakumin* identity? This neither ties the identity to the historical grand narrative nor to the disparate discrimination experienced by communities, but rather to a tradition (not rooted in history but of modern conception) of struggle against discrimination. While this offers us only a rudimentary framework for understanding *hisabetsu burakumin* identity, it shifts away from the representation created by the historical narrative that appeals to continuity, uniformity, and resolution. The continued resistance by *hisabetsu burakumin*, and their national, regional, and local associations, to codified social rituals, discrimination, and cultural hegemony is what constitutes a feature of the social minority's identity.

This type of identity requires an understanding of changes to cultural context that are not accounted for by appeals to history. And I speculate this only to be the barest of outlining

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[411] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, 181-185.

distinctions for what it means to be *hisabetsu burakumin*. It is possible that re-appropriated features of *hisabetsu burakumin* culture, while recognizing community variance, can also add to a sense of identity? Though it is difficult to see specific traditions, behaviors, and ideas constituting a major feature of a collective identity, for that is the process of national/hegemonic identity making, things are not so bleak. If collective identity is constructed on a foundation of internal variance, and not as monolithic, then it is quite possible that being *hisabetsu burakumin* might entail more than universal traditions or characteristics. Yet, how are *hisabetsu burakumin* who are not explicitly engaged in struggles against discrimination able to identify as *hisabetsu burakumin*?

Since, the above framework for *hisabetsu burakumin* identity rests upon the tradition of resistance, then those who are beneficiaries of resistance to discrimination, i.e. younger generations, are also identifiable as *hisabetsu burakumin*. Though this seemingly identifies any person who joins the resistance against discrimination as *hisabetsu burakumin*, the very fact said person had the choice to join, a privilege normally reserved only for out-group members, indicates that they are not *hisabetsu burakumin*. Likewise, regardless of one's personal commitment to the struggle for liberation, someone who is not a child and/or hides/rejects their identity as *hisabetsu burakumin* will continue to be so, for social impositions do not always align with personal self-identification.

However, if one identifies as *hisabetsu burakumin*, then it means one recognizes the tradition of resistance that has been, and is being, engaged against societal ideology and structures which relegate people to pariah status. Regarding oneself as *hisabetsu burakumin* is neither obsolete nor equivalent to holding onto an archaic notion, rather, younger generations should actively identify themselves with the struggle against discrimination that continues to

affect their lives and shape their cultural context. Though one might consider the possibility of eliminating the need to identify as *hisabetsu burakumin* as the means for younger generations to think that the last vestiges of discriminatory ideology will be overcome. Despite the controversy, the idea that the ultimate aim of social movements is to establish societies in which difference no longer determines one's social, political, or economic reality, though possibly naïve, is a legitimate notion individuals and organizations mobilize for nonetheless.

Assessing current social conditions, however, demonstrates that such a post-discrimination society is still a far-distant ideal. *Hisabetsu burakumin* are still discriminated against in areas such as employment and marriage, since concerned employers or families use illegal address books or private detective agencies to investigate the backgrounds of potential employees or spouses/in-laws.[412] Even if a *hisabetsu burakumin* individual lives in a non-*buraku* community or does not even engage in a "traditional" occupation, the values of impurity, filth, and foreignness are still ascribed to their very body. Though these practices were more common during the Meiji period, and up until family registries were closed to public access, they resurface since the demand for the information persists. A famous incident relating to this type of discrimination involved a notorious address book known as "A Comprehensive List of Buraku Area Names" (*Tokushu Buraku Chimei Sōkan*).[413] An Osaka-based firm secretly compiled a book listing all the names and locations of *hisabetsu burakumin* settlements and showing how to compare them to people's addresses so one could determine if a person is/was *hisabetsu*

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[412] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011), 161-163.

[413] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, 161-163.

burakumin or a *buraku* resident. Though the book was eventually banned from publication, it continues to be printed illegally and can still be found circulating in underground markets.[414]

Another notable instance anti-*hisabetsu burakumin* discrimination discussed by Amos is an experience Uramoto Yoshifumi had, known as the "Mass Discriminatory Postcard Affair."[415] This incident involved a perpetrator who believed in the *hisabetsu burakumin* grand narrative and who considered *hisabetsu burakumin* to be a polluted and subversive element affecting Japanese society.[416] Over 400 individuals and groups, including the Tokyo Meat Market (a company unaffiliated with *hisabetsu burakumin*) and Uramoto, were sent threatening and demeaning postcards.[417] Though the Tokyo police was able to find and apprehend the suspect, who was charged with fines and a prison sentence, the hate crime shows how discriminatory ideology still persists in Japanese society. Despite the size of such incidents, large discrimination cases are rare and most minor cases are undocumented or are much more subtle in nature. And I highlight these two larger cases not to argue that discrimination against *hisabetsu burakumin* normally occurs on such a scale, but that discriminatory ideology rooted in traditional discourses has not disappeared, despite popular belief and the attitudes of younger generations.

The Creation of Heterotopias and Assertion of *Hisabetsu Burakumin* Identity

It for the reasons explored above that *hisabetsu burakumin* communities and museums of human rights, established by their organizations and other anti-discrimination social movements, serve an important function as centers of resistance. *Hisabetsu burakumin* communities and these museums are the heterotopias Cangia outlined in her work "From Heterotopias to Cultural

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[414] Ibid., 161-163.
[415] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, 191-194.
[416] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, 194-196.
[417] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, 191-194.

Landscapes: On Reconstructing Buraku Leather Towns into 'Japanese National Spaces'."[418]

Since heterotopias are sites of "Otherness" and aspects societies often overlook or ignore, they

function as the means for forcing the greater society to engage in discourses of social

difference.[419] When human rights become a prominent discourse in Japan, *hisabetsu burakumin*

organizations took the opportunity to seize its language and international attention to bring light

to the *buraku mondai* and other liberation struggles.[420] With the Japanese federal government

wanting to gain influence within the United Nations and thanks to the pressure brought by

international attention, resistance organizations were able to promote the enactment of a series of

programs aimed at educating mainstream Japanese citizens about issues of discrimination.[421]

However, the government had its own programs that often conflicted with the messages

conveyed by *hisabetsu burakumin* organizations, for the government was trying to portray the

solution to human rights violations and discrimination as solely depending on people adopting

attitudes of understanding and tolerance.[422] However, *hisabetsu burakumin* organizations and

other resistance movements argued that a degree of government intervention, in the form of

legislation and social structuring, was required to resolve the discrimination issues and

injustices.[423]

    One of the most famous centers of resistance and human rights education is Liberty

Osaka, which has heavy ties with the Osaka Burakumin Liberation League chapter and is located

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[418] Flavia Cangia, "From Heterotopias to Cultural Landscapes: On Reconstructing Buraku Leather Towns into 'Japanese National Spaces'," (*Urbanities*, May, 2013), 43-46.

[419] Flavia Cangia, "From Heterotopias to Cultural Landscapes: On Reconstructing Buraku Leather Towns into 'Japanese National Spaces'," 56-57.

[420] Ibid., 56-57.

[421] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011), 173-188.

[422] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011), 185-188.

[423] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, 177-181.

in a *hisabetsu burakumin* community.[424] The museum displays a series of different exhibitions

visitors can engage detailing various social struggles and injustices that have occurred

throughout Japanese history, including women's rights, the "comfort women" issue,

discrimination against victims of the atomic bombings, a *hisabetsu burakumin* exhibit, and much

more.[425] Locations like this continue to challenge societal norms and narratives concerning

discrimination and injustices while assisting activist movements in educating fellow citizens

about contemporary social issues.

The struggle for ending discrimination against *hisabetsu burakumin* is far from over,

even if it appears as if though the discrimination against them gradually diminishes over time, it

will only come about because of the efforts made by people to destroy and resist discriminatory

social practices and ideas. Social change does not occur without reason and the reason for the

continued fight against a seemingly "resolved" problem is that it was never truly solved. I do not

think that social issues for untouchables can simply be fixed with the dissipation of the

discrimination against them nor through their integration into the society that marginalizes them.

Only through the creation of an independent collective identity and system of values and

society's recognition of a group's struggle can the process for moral repair begin. I will offer no

concrete conclusion or framework for moral repair, a complex concept that I have only begun to

explore. Though I do speculate that continued efforts by marginalized peoples and heterotopias

will continue to make strides toward challenging social ideologies and cultural hegemony.

However, it rests upon a newly motivated generation to take up the tradition of resistance for

change to become a reality.

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[424] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, 181-185.
[425] Timothy D. Amos, *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan*, 181-185.

While untouchability appears like a domestic issue, the struggles for human rights and social liberation affect people everywhere around the world. I am aware of my appeal to a universal humanistic perspective here, however, I find it a moral imperative to be invested in the liberation of oppressed and marginalized peoples around the world. How exactly can international scholars and activists become engaged in the movement? What are the ethics that scholars should abide by when analyzing and establishing representations of groups? And how can our understanding of untouchability as a societal process of "Othering" assist in fighting against cultural hegemony in Japan and elsewhere? While these are questions to consider further for the study of marginalized communities in Japan and elsewhere, I will not explore them in-depth in this paper though I find them worth intense consideration.

Without an essentialist characteristic, common experience of discrimination, genealogical bond, unifying political ideology, or historical continuity, how is the modern *hisabetsu burakumin* community supposed to define itself? Though the answer to this question is far from simple and requires serious consideration in its own right, I think it is possible to suggest a conceptualization similar to our previous analysis of Japanese and *Zainichi* Korean identity. Understanding the context that facilitated the creation of a common "invented tradition" or "imagined community" is crucial for recognizing how *hisabetsu burakumin* identity is formed. While the restrictions of the grand narrative appear to give a more definite explanation of *hisabetsu burakumin* identity, I think it is the duty of individuals who identify themselves as *hisabetsu burakumin* to question the traditionally imposed values and parameters of identity. Accepting the grand narrative is tantamount to perpetuating Japanese cultural hegemony and the very mechanisms of oppression marginalized groups are subjected to. To reiterate Morris-

Suzuki, an individual who engages the traditional discourses of identity must wrestle with the ghosts of dead theories.[426]

The assertion of a newly "invented" notion of identity is not disingenuous and is potentially less problematic. Individuals will continue to define the parameters of their identity and associate themselves with various facets of their culture and society. The recognition of marginalized peoples' struggles for self-determination and liberation is necessary for deconstructing cultural and social hegemony. To transform not only physical and geographic spaces into sites of difference, but to embody difference as individuals is to resist internalized-colonization and engage in the creation of a new discourse of identity politics.

<div align="center">Scholarship and Identity: A Future Outlook</div>

Having explored the relation between Japan's hegemonic concept of identity and marginalized identity, I will briefly expand the discourse of this paper to the ethics of scholarship. What exactly are the duties of scholars? How are we to assess the proper ethical framework for engaging in the representation of other cultures and peoples? Through what means, and to what extent, can we recognize and mitigate our own biases and assumptions? And what is the role of the scholar in challenging cultural hegemony?

I think it is important for all scholars to recognize the potential biases and assumptions we express in our research of other groups and cultures. And though I do not want to conclude this paper with empty moralizing or the assertion of some grandiose standard of ethical scholarship, I am concerned with making sure that the identities and cultures of others are represented respectfully and as truthfully as possible. It is for this particular reason that I agree

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[426] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*, (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1998), 209.

with Lie in asserting that Japan is a multiethnic nation, for conceptualizing it as such recognizes and reifies the struggles and identities of the marginalized peoples who live in the shadow of Japanese hegemony. The mechanisms of oppression that silence and transform groups into peripheral minorities operate in all parts of the world. Understanding the nuances of different cultural forms of stratification and discrimination can assist scholars and activists alike in resisting oppressive and subversive ideologies and social structures. The research and analysis that I have carried out these past few years have not culminated in a concise conclusion nor have they offered me definitive answers to the questions I have raised throughout this paper or during the course of my research. I have encountered many more intricacies and nuances that have prompted even more questions, though I will pursue those lines of inquiry in future projects. For now, I only hope that the struggles and identities of the *hisabetsu burakumin* and *Zainichi* Koreans will become more prominent in public discourses in Japan and elsewhere, thereby stepping out of the shadow of a monolithic Japanese identity.

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