

## **CERS Working Paper 2015**

### **Racist discourse in Japan**

#### **Clio Tsivanidis**

In 2006, the UN Special Rapporteur, Diène (p.18), noted that the internet was littered with messages referring to the Buraku as 'non-humans' and calling for their death. In 2013, in Tsuruhashia, home to a large Korean population, a 14 year old girl ran into the streets with a loudspeaker, calling for the massacre of Koreans (The Economist, 2014) and, in July 2014, the UN Human Rights Committee expressed 'concern at the widespread racist discourse' and hostility towards Japan's minority populations, following a number of extremist demonstrations and the open display of 'Japanese only' signs in private establishments (Japan Times, 2014). Yet despite Japan's agreement in 1995 to a UN-designated anti-racism convention, the central government has yet to pass any specific legislation prohibiting racial discrimination or hate speech, suggesting a reluctance to tackle the issue head-on. Indeed, it seems that this reluctance, and the fact that Japan's minorities such as the Buraku, Ainu and Koreans, continue to suffer from racial discrimination, have much to do with the historical construction of a racialised homogeneous Japanese identity which has resulted in the exclusion of certain groups on the basis of assumed biological characteristics.

While in the 1960s and 1970s, scholars often used the prism of race to analyse the problems faced by minority groups, today most social scientists acknowledge that race is a social construct lacking any biological significance (Brown, 2012 p.3). Therefore, scholars use the term 'racialisation' to demonstrate that the classification of peoples into measurable categories is a human activity which takes place within certain types of society at specific stages of economic, political and social development (Weiner, 2009, xv). However, despite this progression, there remains the tendency to assume that racism is a product of plantation slavery or Western colonialism, or that racism can be understood simply in terms of 'the Colour Line' as advocated by Du Bois (1961, cited in Weiner, 2009, xiii). As Weiner (2009) correctly argues, such views are highly problematic. Indeed, a colonial model of racism allows non-Western countries to deny that racial discrimination exists within their borders, as racism is considered to be a Western phenomenon. This was certainly the case in 1985, when David Y.F. Ho asserted that racism, however defined, could not be found in Asian culture because it was a 'Western concept' and therefore could only occur in the West (Dikotter, 1997, p.2). This essay will demonstrate the existence of nativist discourses in Japan prior to her modernisation and contact with European imperial powers and show that, although the influence of Western racial 'science' had a strong impact on racism in Japan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it transformed ideas that already existed; Japanese ideologues did not simply borrow racism from the West. As Dikotter (2008, p.1482) argues, there is no one form of racism 'universal in its origins, causes and effects'; rather, as race is an adaptable and fluid social construct, its meanings are determined by specific historical contexts and local historical agents. Thus, an analysis of the political, social and ideological conditions in which the category of race was first conceptualised and mobilised in a specific country or region is key to understanding the enduring strength of racist ideologies today. This essay will therefore show the resilience of the narrative of a mono-ethnic homogeneous Japanese nation and the historical processes by which this identity was constructed. It appears that it was the construction of this homogeneous 'Self' that led to the development of racial theories and discourses, as it involved the construction of excluded 'Others' against whom notions of Japanese homogeneity and superiority could be measured (Armstrong, 1989, p.340). That

Japan's minorities today are still considered by some to be 'uncivilised' or 'backwards' reflects the resilience of these decades-old racial theories and discourses.

#### The Pure and Homogeneous Self: The Resilience of a Myth

In 1986, the then Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone sparked outrage among Japan's Ainu community when he dismissed their request for recognition as an indigenous people, arguing that all Ainu were already assimilated (Siddle, 2003, p.448). Almost two decades later, another political row was provoked among the Ainu when two politicians on the same day declared that Japan was a 'homogeneous nation' (Siddle, 2003, p.448). This reflects the resilience of the discourse on national identity, first developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, known today as Nihonjinron.

Nihonjinron is a highly problematic set of beliefs in the uniqueness of the Japanese people and culture. As Siddle (2003, p.460) argues, it is an inherently 'racialised' concept that prevents those who do not possess 'unique' Japanese culture and 'blood' from enjoying full citizenship rights. Comments such as Nakasone's reflect the fact that despite the 1946 constitution which established democracy and guaranteed political, civil and social rights to all Japanese nationals, these civic notions seem to be undermined by deep-rooted primordial sentiments contained in Nihonjinron (Siddle, 2003, p.448). Thus, although today the Japanese government concedes the existence of ethnic minorities, it appears that myths concerning a homogeneous Japanese race still serve to exclude and marginalize Japan's minorities, such as the Ainu.

Indeed, there remains a gap in the standards of living and levels of education between the Ainu and the rest of the population. For example, only 16.1 percent of the Ainu in the Hokkaido prefectural government who finish high school continue into higher education, as opposed to the local average of 34.5 percent (Diène, 2006, p.9). Moreover, the discrimination faced by Ainu children at school can be so intolerable that many are forced to drop out, sometimes causing the entire family to move to another region (Diène, 2006, p.9). Worryingly, Ainu children reported that, far from their schools assisting them to alleviate such taunts, many teachers continued to perpetuate the belief that the Ainu were unintelligent, by telling a class that Ainu children could only count up to ten (Diène, 2006, p.13). Finally Diène (2006) noted that the Ainu were likely to receive marriage refusals from other Japanese owing to beliefs in their inherent 'barbarism', first propagated by the Imperial government when the colonial order in Hokkaido was established.

Significantly, the long struggle of the Ainu to be recognized as an indigenous people reflects a reluctance on the part of some to forego the myth of homogeneity. Siddle (2003, p.447), for example, highlights the importance of the ability of internally colonised 'native' populations to redefine themselves as 'indigenous peoples' in an effort to reassert their identity after a legacy of oppression and domination. Indeed, following the wave of worldwide decolonisation after the Second World War, the Native Americans, Inuit and Maori did exactly this. Yet, despite the numerous parallels between the treatment of such groups and the assimilationist policies forced upon the Ainu from 1869 by Japan's 'Development Commission', and 'justified' by the innate inferiority of the 'natives', until 2008 the Japanese government repeatedly refused to recognise the Ainu as an 'indigenous people', reflecting the Nihonjinron master-narrative of national homogeneity, which regarded them as either completely assimilated or biologically extinct (Siddle, 2003, p.447).

It is true that in 1997, the 1899 law labeling the Ainu as 'former Aborigines' and which marginalised them as part of a 'dying race' in need of 'protection' was revoked (Siddle, 2002). Yet, the law that replaced it was not as epoch-making in terms of alleviating racial discrimination as the Japanese government made it out to be. Rather, the Ainu Cultural Protection Act (CPA) was drafted by non-Ainu Japanese bureaucrats within the very governmental structures of power which had oppressed the Ainu since 1899, illustrating the continuing influence of the state in Ainu lives (Siddle, 2002, p.407). Certainly, it was a step in the right direction as it represented official recognition of Ainu existence. However, the special state protection conceded by the CPA was extended only to 'Ainu cultural properties such as music, dance crafts' rather than to the Ainu people themselves as a distinct indigenous group (Siddle, 2003, p.457). Finally, although the government finally recognized the Ainu as an indigenous people in 2008, as noted by Hidekai Uemara (Japan Times, 2008), a specialist in indigenous peoples' rights, the resolution was still weak 'in the sense of recognising historical facts', as it did not acknowledge that the Ainu had been forced to become 'Japanese' in the first place.

Most significant, however, is the fact that despite such legislation, those in positions of authority in Japan still seem reluctant to abandon the myth of a homogeneous nation. For example, in November 2014, a full six years after the resolution was passed, Masaru Onodera, a member of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) stated that it is 'highly questionable' that the Ainu are an indigenous people of Northern Japan (Japan Times, 2014b). Alarming, this statement came only three months after Yasuyuku Kaneko (2014, cited in Japan Times, 2014b), another member of the LDP, wrote on his twitter account that the Ainu do not exist anymore and are 'taking advantage' of the administrative services provided to them.

Therefore, while certainly the situation may have improved for the Ainu, the fact that statements denying their identity, and thus sustaining their marginalization, are being expressed six years after the passing of legislation that acknowledged their existence as a distinct indigenous people, reflects the resilience of nihonjinron myths. Although it would be a mistake to assume that everyone in Japan abhors heterogeneity, these refusals to accept the Ainu as a distinct ethnic group are indicative of a society in which the acquisition of full citizenship requires the practice of the 'unique' Japanese culture and the possession of Japanese 'blood'. Thus, it is necessary to unpick the historical assumptions that constitute such myths, in order to understand their resilience and to challenge them.

#### Racism as a Western Concept? The case of the Buraku

Theo Goldberg (2009, p.1273) has argued that 'racism is [not] reducible only to some narrow connection to colonial subjection and repression' but that colonial outlooks and interests do 'set the tone' for those conceived as racially different. However, his 'relational' model of racism is stretched dangerously thin when applied to Japan. Japan's modernisation and interaction with Western notions of racial 'science' following the Meiji Restoration of 1868 were certainly pivotal in the development of racial discourse and propaganda. However, it is over-simplistic to regard the existence of racism in Japan as something that developed neatly in parallel with the development of the modern nation-state. Indeed, an awareness of the existence of nativist discourses before the birth of empire in Japan and the context in which they emerged highlight the 'practical adequacy' (Law, 2010, p.134) of racial theories, a key element in their enduring appeal.

Towards the end of the Tokugawa period (1615-1868), scholars such as Motoori Norinaga attempted to establish the inherent superiority of the Japanese people, thus foreshadowing the racial rhetoric that would dominate Japan's imperial project

(Weiner, 1994, p.13). Norinaga refuted early Tokugawan scholars such as Ito Jinsai who claimed that Chinese Confucianism was a well of civilisation that strengthened Japan. Rather, Norinaga asserted that it had in fact corrupted the ancient purity of the Divine Land (Japan), weakened the true Wakon (Japanese spirit) and in so doing, had deprived Japan of her rightful position of strength in the world order (Weiner, 1994, p.13). Significantly, these early attempts to establish the innate supremacy of the Japanese took place against the backdrop of intense socio-political anxiety; the educated elite were gaining an awareness of their vulnerability to foreign conquest as the hegemonic Tokugawa regime began to crumble (Weiner, 1994). Certainly, this is not to suggest that there existed widespread national consciousness among the general population of Tokugawa Japan. However, the circulation of pre-Restoration nativist discourses indicates that racial ideologies are not merely a consequence of imperialism, colonialism, or modernity.

Moreover, attributing the discrimination that currently afflicts the Buraku, another minority group who are victimised on internet forums by hate-speech, to Japan's modernisation ignores the long history of their discrimination. Indeed, the Buraku are evidence of Japanese attempts to construct a superior Self by denigrating an internal Other well before the establishment of empire; Brown (2013) has traced evidence of attempts to regularise Buraku status and exclude them from mainstream society in specific regions of Japan from as early as the seventh century. In the sixteenth century, however, an increasingly national and more formalised outcaste system developed which sought to racialise their status.

For instance, the Tokugawa regime issued strict decrees on the recognition and maintenance of four major castes in society in order to maintain social boundaries. The Buraku people were considered 'polluted' because, according to Shinto and Buddhist religious beliefs, the slaughter of animals and working with animal products constituted a 'polluted act' (Brown, 2013, p.8). Thus, because Buraku typically did jobs that were 'unclean', such as processing leather, they were branded 'unclean' people and placed in a fifth (out)caste group made up of 'senmin', or despised citizens (Brown, 2013, p.8). Crucially, in the period 1700-30, a series of edicts were issued by the central government in Edo that rigidified many aspects of the status system including the definitions of outcast status. In the past, the 'polluted' acts of a particular Buraku person were not associated with his or her lineage or transferred to their descendants. However, the edicts transformed the caste system by making Buraku status hereditary.

This constituted a defining moment of the state's 'racial project' (Omi and Winant, 1986, cited in Brown, 2013, p.4) to impose cross-generational minority status on the Buraku and, in so doing, maintain their exclusion. Moreover, literature which promoted the myth that the Buraku were of a distinct racial origin can also be traced to this period. For example, Law (2010, p.10) refers to an eighteenth-century document which alleges their alien racial origin by explaining that 'they are polluted due to being different in species origin'. Furthermore, the state's role in institutionalising discrimination against the Buraku is also evident in this period. Members of the Buraku 'race' were prohibited by law from marrying outside their caste and forced to live in strictly segregated districts, almost always located in undesirable areas such as mountain sides and forced to hang dead animal skins outside their homes to clearly indicate their outcaste status (Brown, 2013, p.9).

Thus, clearly, attempts to draw lines between a superior Japanese 'Self' and a denigrated and excluded 'racial' 'Other' existed well before the modern period, the formulation of nationalist ideology or the influence of Western racial science. The case of the Buraku is, moreover, another key example of the 'practical adequacy' of

racisms. The Tokugawa period witnessed a number of peasant rebellions against the feudal lords who imposed heavy taxes on them. By creating a more visible racialised scapegoat and accusing him of polluting the morality of society with the 'polluted' jobs he performed, the ruling elites were able to fragment the peasantry politically (Brown, 2013, p.10). Indeed, as they intensified the formalised inequality of the Buraku, the peasantry became more concerned with excluding those 'polluted' people 'beneath' them than with confronting those 'above' them (Brown, 2013, p.10).

Today, the situation in terms of standards of living has improved since the early twentieth century owing to the Law on Special Measures (SML) for the Dowa Projects, passed in 1969 by the Japanese Diet following years of pressure from the Buraku Liberation League. Investment in infrastructure rapidly improved and expanded the housing in Buraku communities that were typically dilapidated and of poor quality. By the early 1990s, owing to the newly established housing-units that replaced the traditionally cramped ones, Brown (2013) found that Buraku housing was comparable to that of households of non-Buraku. 'On the ground' therefore, things have improved somewhat as the SML helped to close the gap between Buraku and non-Buraku people in terms of housing size and quality.

However, racist attitudes have proven harder to shift. For example, the construction of Buraku as 'non-human', propagated through references to them as 'four-legged animals' in the feudal period has had profound implications on racist attitudes today. In the 1980s, the Buraku Liberation Research Unit noted the existence of discriminatory graffiti such as 'kill the Buraku' and 'Buraku are even lower than worms' in men's toilets at various railway stations all over Japan (Degawa, 2001, p.29). Moreover, a government poll from 1997 found that less than half the general population would allow their children to marry a Buraku (Degawa, 2001, p.31). Finally, according to the Japan Times, as recently as 2009 on an online discussion forum, a human resources worker explained that his company would not employ someone 'if there is doubt about whether he or she comes from a Buraku' while another contributor admitted that it was 'normal' for small companies to refrain from employing people from Buraku areas (Priestley, 2009).

That said, it should also be acknowledged that ideas about alien racial origins and exclusionary practices were transformed by Japan's modernisation and solidified through the appropriation and adaption of racial theories from the West. Thus, it is necessary to analyse these processes and their contemporary implications.

#### Racialising the Nation-State: a kinship united by 'pure' blood

Perhaps one of the most worrying and prominent features of racism in Japan today is the existence of extremist nationalist groups, such as Zaitokukai. Diène (2006, p.2) noted that the 'deep and profound' racism in Japan was rising with the increase of nationalism in the political context of the time. Eight years later, extremist nationalist groups still have a severe impact on those considered to be 'non-Japanese', reflecting the pervasiveness of racist nationalist ideologies. Indeed, in July 2014, the Korean Residents' Union in Japan, referred to the existence of hate speech inciting racial discrimination as a 'societal epidemic'. In the same month, following a flurry of anti-Korean rallies in Tokyo, in which protesters yelled statements such as 'good or bad Koreans, kill them all!' the UN expressed concern at 'the widespread racist discourse' in Japan and urged the government to crack down on hate speech and propaganda advocating racial superiority (Japan Times, 2014a). Thus, if we are to understand this extreme version of nationalism that fans the flames of racial discrimination, it is necessary to examine the ideological context in which it developed.

Although it has been shown that nativist discourses existed before Japan's modernisation and interaction with the West, there can be no doubt that racial thinking was greatly transformed following the Meiji Restoration of 1868. Indeed, the articulation of a nationalist ideology can be traced back to the last two decades of the nineteenth century when the 250 year-old Tokugawa hegemony crumbled and its feudal system was replaced with a constitutional monarchy. Owing to a realization that if Japan was to avoid her neighbours' humiliating annexation by Western powers, she set out on a course of rapid modernisation. However, the building of a new industrial order was not a straightforward process and meant supplanting much of the old order with technologies and institutions borrowed from the West. Crucially, this led to an anxiety among the lower orders about a loss of a distinctive Japanese identity (Pyle, 1996). As described by one young writer in the early Meiji days: 'it was as if we were wandering in confusion through a deep fog, unable to find our way' (Pyle, 1996, p.125).

Thus, in order to counteract the political and social rupture and the peasant revolts resulting from such a radical overhaul of the Japanese political landscape, an ideology of nationalism was articulated. Fearing for the stability of the new imperial state, Meiji leaders decided to cultivate a sense of nation-hood among the population in order to act as the ideological glue that would hold together the new political structure while Japan sought to develop as an imperial power (Pyle, 1996). Crucially, the nationalism that developed in the Japanese context idealised cultural and racial homogeneity as the foundation of the nation state. Indeed, the central motif of this nationalist ideology was the notion of a 'family state', where every Japanese subject was propagated to be related by 'blood' under the leadership of the Emperor (Siddle, 2003, p.450). Rather than simply sharing a similar culture, the immutable national characteristics of this fictive kinship were said to be the product of a shared genetic base: the defining feature of the Yamato minzoku or Japanese 'race' (Weiner, 2009).

For example, ideologues drew on classical texts and adopted a mythical view of history, by emphasising the foundation of the Japanese state in 660 BC by Emperor Jimmu, the direct descendant of the Sun Goddess, with whom the Japanese shared a common racial ancestry (Dower, 1987, p.217). By drawing on a mythical past to 'demonstrate' that the Japanese line originated from the Gods, the Japanese identity was re-cast in an image of homogeneous purity, which no other nation could claim. This was different from a race defined in purely biological terms. Similar to the notion of a German 'volk', the concept of 'minzoku' encompassed not only blood relationships but broader cultural concerns, such as the language, religion and history of the Japanese people (Weiner, 1997). Ultimately, however, it was argued that blood was the adhesive bonding the family into a uniquely powerful organic Japanese collectivity.

As Weiner (2009) argues, it is important to acknowledge that this new mode of thinking did not emerge in a vacuum. Rather, this newly constructed Japanese identity interacted with and was 'legitimised' through the lens of scientific racism, through close contact with the West. For example, foreign academics at Tokyo Imperial University, such as Edward Morse, a founding member of the Tokyo Anthropological Society, first introduced Darwinian theories of natural selection in a series of lectures in 1877 (Dikotter, 1997, p.105). These were published in 1888 and thus disseminated to a wider audience. Moreover, the Imperial Rescript on Education (1890) which saw textbooks come under the control of the Ministry of Education resulted in theories of 'racial' differences being taught in schools and thus inculcated in the youth. Foreshadowing the rhetoric that was to be employed during

Japan's colonial project, *Bankoku chiri shoho* (Geography for beginners), for example, asserted that Native Americans had been subjugated by the Caucasian populations of the United States due to the 'primitive' nature of the former (Dikotter, 1997, p.107). Significantly, by drawing on the works of Arthur de Gobineau and others, Japanese ideologues conceived of the world's population as comprising three 'races' (Dikotter, 1997). Although the struggle to confront the muscular nationalism of the West and 'free' Asia from Western presence was articulated in terms of the conflict between the white and yellow 'races', paradoxically, racial discourse differentiated the 'pure' Yamato *minzoku* from the intellectually and culturally inferior Chinese and Koreans. It was this difference, 'legitimised' through racial 'science', that would justify the subjugation of Japan's colonial population, which will be explored below.

Fundamentally, by propagating the notion of a family-state through the education system from the 1880s onwards, state ideologues ensured that Japanese blood became the ultimate category of belonging (Siddle, 2003). This belief was still prevalent in some sections of society in 1997. For example, Yoshino (1997, p.203) carried out interviews in fairly well-educated sections of the Japanese population, who held the view that it would be entirely possible for Japanese-Americans born and raised in the US to integrate culturally in Japan owing to their possession of 'Japanese blood', meaning they could eventually learn to 'think and behave like us'. Foreigners, however, such as Koreans, could not behave and think like 'us' because, it was claimed, they do not have 'Japanese blood', reflecting the pervasiveness of the racialised nature of Japanese cultural identity: Japanese culture is the property of the imagined 'Japanese race' (Yoshino, 1997).

Today, that Zaitokukai members wave Japan's Imperial flag in hate rallies in which they demand that Koreans 'leave' Japan as they do not 'belong', reflects that such views persist in an extreme form in limited sections of society (Korean Residents Union in Japan, 2014).

#### Colonial Context: Rearing the Infant Subjects

Finally, an analysis of racism in contemporary Japan would be incomplete without considering the implications of her colonial project in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Indeed, racial discourse played a key part as Japan expanded aggressively into north-east Asia, beginning in 1895 with the annexation of Taiwan, the colonisation of Korea in 1910 and culminating in the invasion of China in 1931. Far from being a simple matter of expanding Japan's geographical borders, the distinctly racial ideology of pan-Asianism informed this project. This was a belief trumpeted by imperial ideologues, whereby Japan's responsibility was to 'free' Asia from the shackles of Western imperialism or from the 'white peril' (Young, 1997). Crucially, this ideology was rooted in the belief of Japan's innate superiority vis-à-vis the other Asian 'races'. The fact that Japan was the only Asian country to avoid colonisation by the West was justified as being a result of her 'racial' purity and superiority and her divine descent from the Sun Goddess (Young, 1997). It was thus propagated that Japan had a 'duty' to adopt her inferior colonial subjects and guide them into civilisation. Therefore, this narrative of 'emancipation' from Western domination was to justify the subjugation of Japan's colonies, as her imperial project embodied a kind of 'civilising mission', couched in the language of paternalism. Indeed, Japan's colonies became the arena in which ideas built on racial science were put into practice. Significantly, the discourse of the 'backwardness' of her colonial subjects has implications today.

In the 1920s, intellectuals in the field of journalism, academia and the media drew on neo-Darwinian theories of 'racial superiority' to articulate the belief that certain races were innately suited to rule over other races who were biologically incapable of self-

government (Armstrong, 1989). The Japanese colonial project was thus racialised, as colonial polices drew on the biological characteristics of its subjects to show that they constituted the latter and Japan constituted the former. For example, colonial theorists in 1912 stated that while Japan's Korean subjects could be 'slowly and gradually led in the direction of progress, it is against all laws of sociology and biology to make them enter a new life at once...' (Armstrong, p.319). Drawing on Japan's industrialisation and modernity as an indicator of her civilisation, Korea's lack of material development was in contrast considered clear evidence of racial inferiority (Weiner, 2009). Therefore, it was argued that Koreans could only achieve a level of civilisation with the imposition of Japanese work habits that had produced a strong Japanese nation. As early as 1912, Nitobe Inez, professor of colonial studies at Tokyo Imperial University, stated that 'the very physiognomy and living of these people are so bland, unsophisticated and primitive, that they belong not to the twentieth or the tenth-nor indeed to the first century. They belong to a prehistoric age'... (Weiner, 2009, p.17). Their 'civilisation' was therefore to be supervised carefully under the 'paternal' guidance of the Japanese. In this way, the racial discourse that constructed Koreans as primitive wholly justified the colonial project: Japan took it upon herself to bring Korea and, eventually, the rest of east-Asia 'up to scratch'.

Another key example of the racialisation of the imperial project is the discourse that informed Japan's colonial policies in Manchuria, later named Manchukuo upon becoming a Japanese puppet-state, in which colonisation literature solidified ideas of a natural hierarchy of race and power in Asia (Young, 1997). Manchukuo was established as a 'pan-Asian baby', where Japan and other Asians were to work and live side by side in 'racial' harmony. Crucially, though, owing to the 'racial superiority' of the 'Yamato people', the Japanese declared themselves to be the 'heart' of the 'five races' (Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Manchurian and Mongolian) and adopted the 'guiding role' in the civilisation of their backward subjects (Young, 1997, p.173). For example, in Japan, the government called on its citizens to emigrate to Manchukuo in order to disseminate superior Japanese farming methods to improve the 'appalling' conditions of Manchurian farm villages, because 'no matter how many times things are explained to them [Chinese farmers] they do not understand'(Young, 1997, p.174). Thus, propagandists called on a 'superior race well-trained in agricultural techniques [the Japanese] to re-settle in Manchukuo and 'guide these backward Chinese farmers in the field', therefore ingraining the backwardness of non-Japanese Asians (Young, 1997, p.174). Moreover, replicating the colonial rhetoric employed in Korea, the perception of a technological backwardness of Japan's colonial subjects in Manchukuo became a key indicator of 'racial' difference between a modern Japan and her backward colonial subjects. For example, following a visit to the home of a Chinese landlord, one Japanese writer noted that the home was decorated with empty glass bottles, whereas in Japan, he had 'heard' that glass products were highly esteemed over a century previously when Japan was first exposed to Western culture (Young, 1997, p.174). Thus, in his eyes, it was clear that the Chinese were 'about a hundred years behind' the Japanese.

Significantly, the residue of such beliefs can be observed in contemporary Japan. For example, Diène (2006) noted that there was a strong presence of discriminatory material towards Koreans and Chinese within certain sections of Japanese media. In 2006, comic books such as 'Hating the Korean wave' and 'Introduction to China' reflect these decade-old constructions of the Korean and Chinese as uncivilised 'races'. For example, they mention that 'there is nothing at all in Korean culture to be proud of' and portray Chinese as obsessed with cannibalism and prostitution ( Diène, 2006, p.19). At the extreme end of the spectrum, nationalists such as Kanji Nishio argue bluntly that Japan should fully disassociate itself from backward China and



Korea, declaring in 2006 that "they haven't grown up at all", a clear reflection of the infantilizing rhetoric employed in the twentieth century (Onishi, 2005).

To conclude, it has been shown that Japan is a key example of the importance of recognizing that racism is not simply a product of the West, or that, even drawing on Goldberg's (2009, p.1273) more nuanced 'relational' model, local exclusionary expressions are not always tied to 'extra- and trans-territorial conceptions and expressions, those that circulate in wider circles of meaning and practice'. Rather, the case of the Buraku illustrates that institutional racialised exclusionary practices were established centuries before significant contact with the West and the influence of their 'scientific' racial theories. To be sure, racial 'science' greatly influenced Japan's racial discourses following her modernisation and were adapted and appropriated to justify her colonial 'mission'. However, the imposition of a hereditary minority status on the Buraku at the beginning of the eighteenth century, for example, illustrates that those in positions of power all over the globe are inclined to construct 'racialised' scapegoats at times of socio-political anxiety in order to fend off threats to their power.

Yet, it was the construction of a nationalist ideology by Meiji ideologues in order to garner support for Japan's imperial aims that has the most profound implications today. As it has been shown, the modality of nationalism and the new language of 'Japaneseness' that developed was one which idealized the notion of racial, ethnic and cultural homogeneity in order to construct one strong and united Japanese identity as Japan sought to ward off the 'White Peril' of Western imperialism. The Ainu's struggle to gain recognition as a distinct indigenous group reflects a reluctance by some in positions of power to abandon this myth of homogeneity. Finally, the construction and propagation of Japan's colonial populations as inherently inferior by nationalist Meiji ideologues, still remains an issue for Japan's former colonial subjects such as the Koreans and Chinese. Indeed, the rhetoric employed by extreme nationalists in hate rallies referring to such people as 'cockroaches' who do not 'belong' in Japan reflects the residue of the historical constructions of these 'inferior' 'races' in need of civilizing by the Japanese. It is therefore imperative that the Japanese government give heed to the UN's 2014 recommendation that they adopt a law prohibiting hate speech in order to protect vulnerable minority groups (Japan Times, 2014a). However, most importantly, as the discrimination is of a profoundly historical nature, education concerning Japan's wartime past and the racist propaganda that informed it must be institutionalized. As Weiner (1997) has shown, unlike Japan's wartime ally Germany Japan has yet to incorporate an examination of the racial theories that informed her war of aggression and the subjugation of her colonial populations into the school curriculum. In fact, post-war governments have gone to great lengths to suppress information concerning her violent military past (Weiner, 1997). Thus, education in schools could prove instrumental in combating racism from the bottom-up, by showing that the racial propaganda that informed Japan's imperial project, and is employed in extremist hate-rallies today, was and is, based on nothing but myths.

## References

- Armstrong, B. 1989. Racialisation and nationalist ideology: The Japanese case. *International Sociology*. 4(3), pp.329-343
- Brown, E. 2013. Racialization in a 'homogeneous' society? The case of Buraku people in Japan. *Asian Ethnicity*. 14(1), pp. 1-28
- Degawa, M. 2001. *Racism Without Race? : the Case of Japan's Invisible Group*. [Online]. [Accessed 20 March 2015] Available from: <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/obj/s4/f2/dsk3/ftp04/MQ59373.pdf>
- Diène, D. 2006. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, Mission to Japan*. [online]. [Accessed 9 February 2015]. Available from: <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G06/103/96/PDF/G0610396.pdf?OpenElement>
- Dikotter, F. ed. 1997. *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan*. London: Hurst & Company.
- Dikotter, F. 2008. The racialization of the globe: an interactive interpretation. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. 31(8), pp. 1478-1496
- Goldberg, D, T. 2009. Racial comparisons, relational racisms: some thoughts on method. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. 32(7), pp. 1271-1282
- Japan Times. 2008. *Diet officially declares Ainu indigeneous*. [Online]. [Accessed 3 March 2015]. Available from: <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2008/06/07/national/diet-officially-declares-ainu-indigenous/#.VWBjqVVVikp>
- Japan Times. 2014a. *U.N. rights panel urges Japan to crack down on hate speech*. [Online]. [Accessed 1 April 2015]. Available from: <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/07/25/national/u-n-rights-panel-urges-japan-crack-hate-speech/#.VWBZ8FVVikp>
- Japan Times, 2014b. *A shameful statement on Ainu*. [Online]. [Accessed 26 March 2015] Available from: <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2014/11/17/editorials/a-shameful-statement-on-ainu/#.VWBkxVVVikp>
- Korean Residents Union in Japan, 2014. *Report on the issue of Racism and Hate Speech in Japan*. [Online] [Accessed 22 March 2015] Available from: [http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CERD/Shared%20Documents/JPN/INT\\_CERD\\_NGO\\_JPN\\_17699\\_E.pdf](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CERD/Shared%20Documents/JPN/INT_CERD_NGO_JPN_17699_E.pdf)
- Law, I. 2010. *Racism and ethnicity: global debates, dilemmas, directions*. Harlow:Longman.
- Onishi, N. 2005. *Ugly Images of Asian Rivals Become Best Sellers in Japan*. [Online]. [Accessed 23 March 2015] Available from: [http://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/19/international/asia/19comics.html?pagewanted=print&\\_r=2&](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/19/international/asia/19comics.html?pagewanted=print&_r=2&)

Priestley, I. 2009. *Breaking the silence on burakumin: Minority community has plenty to offer*. [Online]. [Accessed 21 March 2015] Available from: <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2009/01/20/issues/breaking-the-silence-on-burakumin-2/#.VWBn8FVvikp>

Pyle, K. 1996. *The Making of Modern Japan*. Hampshire: Cengage Learning

Siddle, R. 2002. An epoch-making event? The 1997 Ainu Cultural Promotion Act and its impact. *Japan Forum*. **14**(3), pp. 405-432.

Siddle, R. 2003. The limits to citizenship in Japan: multiculturalism, indigenous rights and the Ainu. *Citizenship Studies*. **7**(4), pp.447-462

The Economist. 2014. *Hate Speech in Japan: Spin and Substance, a troubling rise in xenophobic vitriol*. [Online]. [Accessed 12 March 2015]. Available from: <http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21620252-troubling-rise-xenophobic-vitriol-spin-and-substance>

Weiner, M. 1994. *Race and Migration in Imperial Japan*. London:Routledge

Weiner, M. ed. 2009. *Japan's Minorities: The illusion of homogeneity*. New York: Routledge .

Yoshino, K, 1997. Citations in the text. In: Dikotter, F. ed. *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan*. London: Hurst & Company, pp.199-211

Young, L, 1997. Citations in the text. In: Dikotter, F. ed. *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan*. London: Hurst & Company, pp.158-176