'Warmth in Human Society, Light in All Human Beings': Origins, Development, and Early Resistance of Burakumin in Early Modern and Modern Japan

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Despite a long cultural history, the formal study of Japan’s burakumin caste is relatively new. This paper outlines the origins of the burakumin class in early modern and modern Japan, and examines the burakumin problem as emerging from both official policy and cultural discourse. I discuss forms of historical discrimination against these people, and how representations of burakumin in popular literature and other forms of discourse perpetuated already-existing prejudices. I also look at the development of a collective consciousness of the burakumin as a cultural group, and early forms of resistance, which laid the foundation for large liberation movements.

The 40th Anniversary of E.W. Said's Orientalism - its real ideological roots and impact on the study of Japanese history

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Orientalism is a traditional scholarly [historical, linguistic and cultural] intellectual and artistic field focusing on Asia, which developed in universities in Western Europe and Russia [in the latter sponsored by the State]. Intellectual curiosity and admiration for Asian cultures and languages underpin the field.

I am a professional Orientalist. The year 2018 is the 40th anniversary of the publication of Edward W. Said's Orientalism, a meisaku [chef d’oeuvre] of sorts. Armed with aggressive ethnocentrism reinforced by the ignorant arrogance of the effendi [upper] class in his ancestral Middle Eastern culture, the misplaced idiotic adulation by self-hating Western academics, envious [of the West] and unscrupulous non-Europeans luminaries of all stripes, and cleverly profiting from the political correctness, cultural relativism, moral inversion and multiculturalism ravaging Western societies, Said would not hesitate to write historical howlers like: "Islam excepted, the Orient for Europe was until the 19th century a domain with a continuous history of unchallenged Western dominance. This is patently true of the British experience in India, the Portuguese experience in the East Indies, China and Japan. (except for) the occasional native intransigence to disturb the idyll, as when in 1638-39, Japanese Christians threw the Portuguese out of the area."

I consider Said, Columbia’s University Professor of English Literature, to have been strongly inspired in his crude anti-Orientalism by the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood’s chief postwar ideologue, Sayyid Qutb.

Said has gained a large audience in the democratic world, particularly in universities, among fellow practitioners of anti-Westernism, anti-Americanism and anti-Zionism [political
antisemitism] which have now become one. Prominent Saidists among the academic Left in Japan are Itagaki Yūzō, co-translator of Orientalism, retired Tōdai professor of Middle East studies, former president of JAMES (Japan Association of Middle East Studies) and past advisor to then Lower House Speaker Kōno Yōhei, Usuki Akira of the National Demographic Museum and Area Studies Center in Osaka, Nishitani Osamu of the Tokyo University of Foreign Languages, self-styled Middle East specialist Kurita Yoshiko, etc. On the nationalistic right, Said's "Orientalism" has inspired among others, Ushimura Kei in his Beyond the 'Judgment of Civilization'" who used Said's factually baseless definition of Orientalism as "a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient." On this side of the Pacific, Stefan Tanaka gave Japan’s history the “Said treatment” in his award-winning Japan’s Orient – Rendering Past into History.

I prefer as historically accurate the sweeping assessment of Japan’s civilizational evolution made exactly a century ago, in his Fifty Years of New Japan by Ōkuma Shigenobu, democrat, nationalistic statesman, educator and founder of Waseda University: "[T]he susceptibility of the Japanese to the influences of foreign civilizations (is coupled with) a strong retentive power which enables Japan to preserve and retain all that is good in and about herself. For twenty centuries the nation has drunk freely from the civilizations of Korea, China and India. The Japanese have then welcomed Occidental civilization while preserving their Oriental civilization."

Said’s tome is an obscurantist tirade against Middle East, Asian and area studies, an ode to ignorance. Its impact in Japan and other developed nations is undeniable though a sign not of the acceptability of Said’s positions but a symptom of the intellectual decrepitude of democratic societies, especially their institutions of higher learning, by-product of the Sinisterism [Leftism] which has been ravaging them since 1968. It is fundamental for this reality to be constantly presented not only to the dwellers of the “ivory towers” but more importantly to the public at large. In the short run, however, the most deleterious effect of Saidism, is on most Arab, Muslim and African societies, because it promotes the opposite attitude to the one those societies desperately need: self reflection as a precondition for self-criticism and leading to self improvement.

Forty Years After the 1978 China-Japan Treaty of Peace and Friendship: Reflections on Changing Economic and Commercial Relationships
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This presentation reflects on 40 years of Sino-Japan relations since the 1978 Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the two countries, with a particular emphasis on economic and commercial trends and milestones. The Treaty was signed based on the political insights at the time of leaders on both sides. Today, the Treaty can be seen as a prominent event regarding the transformation of the political map of the Indian and Pacific Ocean region.

The presentation is divided into four parts. The first covers the years leading up to the 1978 Treaty and reveals economic and commercial ties between Japan and China in the 1970s. The second part focuses on changes in the 1980s and 1990s and notes that the success of the
famous reforms carried out by Deng Xiao Ping in China was to a great extent the result of the financial and technical backing provided by Japan. Expediting the economic development of its huge partner, Japan received a gigantic market for selling the products of its industry, which at the time were mostly oriented towards exports. However, since China entered the World Trade Organization sells more goods to Japan than it buys from China. The third part highlights the role of Japanese direct foreign investment (DFI) with a case study of the electronics industry and the Panasonic Corporation. The conclusion section returns to the 40th Anniversary of the Treaty. Based in part on worsening relations with the USA, China has been the one to approach Japan about revisiting their economic alliance. Japanese investment remains a major factor in the Chinese economy. And if the U.S. closes its market to China, Japan will become an even more crucial economic ally.