

Articles and writers

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1. Edward Said – Latent and Manifest Orientalism
2. Oguma Eiji – Studying Japan as the “other”

Week 2:

3. C. Wright Mills – “The Promise,” The Sociological Imagination
4. David Slater/Sara Ikebe – Social Distancing from the Problem of Japanese Homelessness
5. Tom Gill – Failed Manhood in the Streets of Urban Japan

Week 3:

6. Benedict Anderson – Imagined Communities
7. Timothy Amos – Burakumin
8. Stuart Hall – Race, a Floating Signifier (video)

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9. Lisa Yoneyama – Memory Matters: Hiroshima’s Korean Atom Bomb Memorial
10. David Chapman – Korean Japanese Women’s Voices

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11. Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels – Bourgeoisie and Proletarians
12. Koji Taira – Dialectics of Growth, national power and distributive struggles
13. Satsuki Uno/Robin O’Day – Japanese Freelance Workers Struggle during COVID

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Week 1: Orientalism and Japanese Studies

1. **Orientalism** = The western perception of eastern culture, which is often marginalised to accentuate western superiority, depicting eastern cultures as backward, inferior, exotic and in need of rescuing by the western world.
 - Scholarly discourse creating an image of the orient as if it were objective fact
 - It depicts an opposite; West vs East, Modern vs Traditional, masculine vs feminine
 - If you are aware, you can be critical about orientalism
 - Example: Travel advertisements geared towards westerners that show beautiful women, temples, and palm trees.*
 - a. **Latent Orientalism** = unconscious, stable
 - b. **Manifest Orientalism** = stated views, changing

2. **Japanese Studies**
 - a. **Domestic Studies**
 - o Study of “others” within society often resulted into domestic orientalism
 - o Monologues on the self; moral discourse and written for a domestic public
 - o Sometimes orientalism is embraced by Japan; self-orientalism
 - b. **Studies Abroad**
 - o Earliest Japanese studies by European missionaries (first history books)
 - o US soldiers posted in Japan during the Pacific war
 - o Ezra Vogel: Japan as No. 1; mentions Japan as a modern country with traditional morals, the salaryman as living orderly lives working for a company long-term, and their wives as women content to be housewives
 - o Idea that Japan was doing better couldn't be accepted by the west
 - c. **Oguma's Criticism**
 - Oguma is critical about the idea that Japanese studies in Japan can be ignored, if one only references texts recognised in English speaking countries and write to target those regions
 - Oguma hopes that both local Japanese scholars and their foreign counterparts can engage in a mutually respectful and understanding dialogue and share their ideas and opinions to help each other gain knowledge.

Week 2: The Sociological Imagination

1. **Sociological Imagination** = capability to relate personal problems to the environment (public issues); being able to critically differentiate between a personal problem and a public issue
 - Example: Tripping on a stair in a New York subway isn't just a personal trouble, because it affects (almost) everyone who walks on it, and so it is a public issue.*
 - a. **Social Structure**
 - Used to be determined by birth in feudal Japan; merchants on the bottom, money didn't matter.
 - Contemporary Japan money does matter; how hard you work can determine your class.

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b. **Personal Troubles vs. Public Issues**

- *Personal troubles* are problems that only affect you personally or are perceived as only being experienced by you personally.
 - *Example: I trip on a stair because I'm clumsy*
- *Public issues* are problems that go beyond the individual and has to do with social organisation and institutions (aka the systems at work in a society).
 - *Example: I trip on a stair because one of them is slightly higher*

2. **Homeless Men in Japan**

- Support system doesn't expect women (with children) to be self-sufficient, so far fewer homeless women. Furthermore, there are two systems specifically in place to help women: mother-and-child support and support for domestic violence victims.
- Men in need of help are likely to be seen as drunkards, gamblers or otherwise irresponsible.

a. **Self-reliance**

- According to the government: a house and a job, if unable, you can get assistance to get those things.
- According to the homeless: Collecting cans and selling them is self-reliance
- Men often ashamed to apply for welfare; discourse of manliness influences their decisions. Asking for help = weak, not a real man.

b. **Applying Sociological Imagination**: Is homelessness a choice?

- From the individual perspective: yes, they choose not to apply for welfare and are content living this way and selling cans for money.
- From a public perspective: the support system is invasive, there is an extensive background check, younger men are more likely to be denied support and the men feel shame. Choice between retaining pride (feeling like a real man) or asking for help (and feeling like a failure).

Week 3: Race, Identity, and Nation

1. **Imagined Communities**

- a. **Nations**: Created and imagined communities; an imagined connection to a certain community.
 - Imagined as limited (finite borders), sovereign (autonomous power over territory) and as communities (deep sense of comradeship).
- b. **National Consciousness**: feeling like you belong to a certain community.
 - In the past: based on religion/dynasties; Bible was in Latin and was only read by a select few.
 - Now: local languages, printing of books in a local language, maps (to imagine the geology of an area), museums (national history = legitimisation of a nation through shared history).
 - Other examples: national holidays, sports events strengthen the sense of community.

2. **Race as a floating signifier**

- a. Race = assumptions people attach to a person based on looks (skin colour).

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- “Floating” because it is not based on biology and has no permanent meaning.
- Discourses create classifications and assumptions, which are presented as objective, self-evident and “fixed”.

Example: white people are superior to black people just because they are white

3. **The Burakumin**

- In the past did all the dirty jobs, so they were segregated; group of outcastes.
- Where they live (“Dowa Districts”) became a marker of assumption; now the people that are not historically related to the original Burakumin are also called Burakumin, or identify as Burakumin, and are therefore also being discriminated.
- The Burakumin don’t look any different from any other Japanese people but are treated as if they are genetically different/inferior!

a. Questions surrounding Burakumin

- Government intervention: Dowa Districts were built to help residents gain education and stable employment; it “created” the Buraku identity.
- Activists: “We are Burakumin, we deserve equality!” stressing that they are the subjects of oppression.
 - Resulted in the situation getting worse; calling attention to themselves meant even more discrimination.
- Questions about what the Burakumin need:
 - Liberation from outcast status?
 - Liberation from discrimination?
 - Liberation from certain prejudices?

b. Applying National Consciousness to Burakumin

The Burakumin aren’t people that have always been the exact same group, with the same origins or living in the same places; they are seen as the “other”, because of how the rest of the nation defines itself and them, which is something that has changed over time.

Example: Burakumin used to be defined by the jobs they did in the past, forced to live in outcaste communities. Although most modern Burakumin are likely not related to the historic Burakumin, now because of where they live, they are assumed to be, and thus face discrimination.

Week 4: History, Memory, and Intersectionality

- 1. Intersectionality** = the phenomenon in which multiple different identity aspects can make an issue or situation worse

Example: On top of being Korean and already being discriminated against, the Korean women were sexually exploited by the Japanese soldiers because of their gender as well.

- 2. Memorials**

Forms of national history-making, usually funded by the government (official status), which are traditionally tall structures, focussed on (male) heroism, not representative of every single victim of the event it memorialises.

a. **Hiroshima Atomic Bomb Memorial**

Originally located on the edge of the park but has since been moved. The article was written before the move and the points made may no longer be relevant.

- A few points of contention exist about the memorial:

- **Representation:** for “North” Koreans (the ones that currently identify as such) is lacking. The inscription mentions “Prince Yi Gi and 200.000 souls”.
- **Move it, or not:** if it doesn’t get moved, it would show that the Korean people are still considered as outsiders. If it does get moved, it would erase the part of the reality that the Koreans faced discrimination.
- **General monument:** a monument for all victims of the bomb already exists, uniting the memorials and erasing the historical inscription in the Korean monument can be seen as denying the past.

3. **Koreans in Japan**

Korea used to be a Japanese colony and were brought to Japan as forced labourers. Some tried to return to Korea after the Korean war, but the aftermath had left the country in ruins, so many decided to return later, but many ended up staying.

a. **Discrimination**

A few examples of Korean discrimination:

- They weren’t allowed as much education as the Japanese, to restrict their access to higher positions.
- A big earthquake turned into an excuse to massacre Korean groups in Tokyo
- Received far less help after the atomic bomb impact after they had been unable to leave Hiroshima due to segregation
- Only Korean men got voting rights, and only after 1928

To avoid further discrimination, some Koreans adopted “Japanese identities” (e.g., changing their name)

4. **Korean Women and Intersectionality**

Being a Korean woman had its own, very specific downsides in a society that was already discriminatory against Korean people.

a. **“Comfort” women**

Women were sexually extorted by the Japanese soldiers. As a result:

- They became extremely traumatised.
- They mourned their lost chastity.
- They felt a deep sense of shame.
- This rape was not considered a war crime back then!!

b. **Korean Family system**

These women could not speak out about their experiences, because of the Confucian and patriarchal nature of Korean society, and therefore kept silent for years. Korean women were expected to be pure, virgin, strong and resilient.

c. Applying Imagined Communities to the Koreans

The Korean memorial and remembering the past are both examples of history-making, which creates a sense of community for the Koreans in Japan. To the Japanese, who only want to remember their own side of the story, as being the victims, while forgetting their own wrongdoings, this is a thorn in their side. The (former) location outside the park further creates a sense of separation for the Korean community, which led to controversy.

Week 5: Social Mobility and Social Class

1. Communist Manifest

- Karl Marx believed that communal control of assets in society would create a more egalitarian society, instead of having a capitalist system in which the rich rule the poor.
- Humans will always make/produce things. How this happens depends on the means of production, which results in a mode of production dependent on the means available.
Example: a means could be the land on which rice is produced, which makes the mode agricultural.

a. Bourgeoisie vs Proletariat

- o Bourgeoisie: Former merchant class that now owns the means of production.
- o Proletariat: Working class that don't own any means and are thus dependent on selling their labour to the bourgeoisie.

b. Marx' views on Capitalism

- o Marx viewed capitalism as a system that:
 - Needs constant expansion (even crossing national borders, aka globalisation)
 - Needs to continuously create new wants (so people keep buying)
 - Needs to always upgrade the means of production (more efficiency = cheaper production)
 - This causes the global economy to become interdependent (countries depending on each other, e.g., we are dependent on India to produce our paracetamol)
- o Marx thought that, because the bourgeoisie would keep creating better and more efficient means of production that required fewer and fewer people to operate, the proletariat, whose population would gradually increase in number, and with having nothing to lose, would revolt against them and eventually overthrow the bourgeoisie.
- o The ones who make it in life are the ones that own the means of production. Marx predicted that the Proletariat would collectively seize the means of production and that, eventually, classes would no longer exist.

2. Japan's rapid economic growth

In trying to mimic the United States, who claimed their focus on the GNP was instrumental in their victory, Japan's attempts at doing the same things resulted in chaos.

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a. Focus on GNP

- In an attempt to increase their GNP (= gross national product (national production minus government spending)) Japan adopted the “GNP-first” policy in the 1960s.
- Ten years later, it became clear that this policy came at a cost to the quality of life and the environment.

b. Effects on the country

- The main problems that arose were:
 - Unregulated building of factories (government backed large corporations)
 - Housing shortages (lack of investment)
 - Traffic congestion
 - Environmental pollution (no regulation on chemical waste disposal, etc.)
- The social cost (how people perceive the impact) was extremely high and the people were suffering. Standards of living were kept to the bare minimum; pollution was making people sick and public assistance was hard to find.
- As a result, people began to protest the government policy, which forced the government to stop.
- In short: the high GNP made it seem as if Japan was doing great, but the people and environment were actually suffering for it. (= dialectic (paradox) of growth)
Example: the fishing town Minamata got in deep trouble when their main source of employment, the factory upstream, dumped chemical waste into the water and polluted the fish that most people ate. The town banded together to buy a share in the company, going to the shareholder meetings to protest, even bringing their deformed children to the ministries, after which the company could no longer deny their mistake and were forced to compensate the town.

3. Freelancers in Japan during COVID pandemic

- Although we have an impression of Japan as being mostly “salarymen” to work at big companies, this is actually the minority of workers.
- About 85% of freelancers in one survey had their work reduced and suffered substantial income loss.
- They were forced to seek part-time employment to compensate for loss of income, but in Japan, part-time work has no guarantee for long-term work. It is an hourly wage and doesn’t have career opportunities (think working at a konbini).
- They were ineligible for subsidies or unemployment insurance.

a. Marx’ views on the struggles

- Note: these are personal views, but I tried my best to reason from Marx’ perspective*
- Marx may criticise the exploitation of the freelance workers by the system; the ones who mainly benefit are the companies, who don’t have to pay benefits or taxes for these workers. If a freelancer is too expensive, a company looks for a cheaper worker to take the job. And while freelancers can decide their own working hours, nothing is stopping a company from replacing them, making freelancers dependent on the companies in a way, more so than the other way around.
 - Marx may be critical of the flaws in the system that treats freelancers unequally compared to their full-time counterparts, as if they are of lesser value, thus creating class distinction. He would be glad to see that their protests, on social media and on the streets, did eventually have an impact on how they were treated.

b. Applying Sociological Imagination

- While the freelancers are happy, it may not mean that the support system isn't inherently flawed. These flaws were already there, but only come to light once the freelancers get in trouble.
- A freelancer accepting the risks that come with being a freelancer ("self-responsibility") may therefore seem like a personal problem, but the flaw in the system that did support other workers, but not the freelancers, makes it into a public issue.

Week 6: Gender and the Workplace

1. Gender

Sex = biological and physical difference between man and woman

Gender = socially constructed meanings ascribed to differences between men and women

2. Women in the workplace

Women are often assumed to not have the necessary qualities to work as hard as, or be as successful as, men in the workplace. Those that did were often labelled as cold and unwomanly ("Iron Lady").

a. Agricultural Japan

Regardless of gender, everybody worked on the farm (80 – 90%). Children were mostly raised by their grandmothers or fathers since "mothers were too emotional to raise them".

b. Industrial Japan

Factories were unsafe to bring children into, so women would work when they were young and then stopped working, got married and had children.

c. Post-War Japan

When they got married and had children, women (mostly) stopped working. The modern, middle-class woman (in the US) didn't have to work, so it became a status symbol. Companies began investing in educating the wives on how to be a good housewife, so they could exploit their husbands to work even harder and longer. Once the children grew up, some women would pick up (part-time) work again.

Nowadays there is still an image that Japanese women with children don't work, but roughly 70% of them do, relying on the availability of parental help, parental leave and day care centres, because both incomes are needed to afford life's necessities. The ideal of becoming a housewife is not really the expected outcome anymore.

3. Workplace as a Masculinity Contest

- The market- and workplace has a gender; masculinity has become the norm. These norms (not showing weakness, work before family, etc.) drive workplace cultures and become an identity that men strive to achieve by beating the "lesser men" in manhood contests.

a. Why are the men competing?

- If they don't conform to the standards, they feel like a lesser man; it might challenge their gender identity. If they do conform, they can thrive in the workplace,

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which keeps the competition in place; trying to outdo the other men. And so the workplace becomes a proving ground for masculinity as workers try to show their competence.

- Challenges to a man's gender identity can result in harassment of others (e.g., working women that are perceived as a threat) and these contest cultures breed toxic leadership.

4. Overtime in the Workplace

- Workers are expected to not let family life interfere with their work. A company does not typically expect a worker to have care tasks at home.
- Working longer hours and sacrificing personal time shows commitment, competitiveness, endurance and strength, and strengthens a worker's masculine identity.
- There is an assumption that it's a virtue to work long hours. It is thought that working longer hours equals better performance (but in truth the longer people work, the less sleep they get and the more workplace accidents etc. happen).

a. Gendered System

Women are left with the impossible task of trying to balance their work life with family life. Many choose to either conform to workplace masculinity and not have children, or they quit working and focus on family life.

b. What needs to change?

- Employers need to come to expect that their employees may also have care tasks, such as taking care of children or even their elderly parents, since the workforce is mixed gender.
- Companies also need to realise that it is healthy to have a life outside of work; this promotes better mental, as well as physical health.
- Building more day care centres that are open until later would only reinforce the idea that children are in the way of the real work.