

Chapter 3

EVALUATION AND NORMATIVE CONSIDERATIONS

Chapter one of this thesis had the tasks of setting out the theory of performative construction of identity and showing that it can be used to enhance our understanding of national identity construction. Chapter two's task was to illustrate how the main aspects of the theory can be understood in practice, using the example of Japan. I concluded chapter two by arguing that, at least in the case of Japan, the theory of performative construction of identity finds empirical confirmation and validation. Yet the theories in the social sciences should be scrutinized in a deeper way than logical or scientific explanation. For these reasons it is perhaps wise to extend the present analysis beyond the mere or simple use, illustration or confirmation of a theory. It is also important to make a value-judgment – not only in terms of evaluating the scope and sustainability of a theory, but in exploring the findings that the theory might lead to.

The main aim here is to analyze the theory developed by the combination of Butler and Anderson's work in a different sphere than in the previous chapters. By now the theoretical and practical validity of performative national identity construction should be clear. The next concern is the benefits and risks it implies. The first and second parts of this chapter analyze the benefits and disadvantages of the construction of national identity by means of performativity, again taking as example the Japanese case. The third part of the chapter argues that since the state project of identity construction began in Japan, the outcomes have been generally very positive. Here I will provide some contemporary

examples of the positive outcomes and how the state has attempted to ameliorate any negative effects of artificial identity construction.

I also use this chapter to reinforce the point that this thesis is not necessarily intended to promote the use of performative identity construction. It is rather to emphasize that the artificial construction of national identity via performativity is an empirical reality. It is something that is happening and has happened for many years. Yet it is also the case that individuals and communities are often unaware that it is happening, either to others or themselves. The point here seems to contain two facets that require discussion. First, if states, groups or individuals can and are using performativity to artificially construct, manipulate and re-direct identities for any reason, then it is crucial that they do so with responsible and justifiable motives. Second, if individuals and groups are susceptible to states artificially constructing their identity, then at the very least it seems prudent to argue that they should be made aware of this fact.

In the first instance, one might find arguments to suggest that a state with such an agenda ought to take responsibility for justifying that their identity-building program is not engaged for purely self-interested reasons, but for the common good. As I will show, there is some evidence that this has been the case in Japan. It cannot, however, be guaranteed. Who, for example, would arbitrate if disputes arose about the justification of reasons of so-called autonomous states' non-violent actions toward their own people? In the second instance, if a state with such an agenda cannot advance justifiable reasons for engaging in artificial identity construction, then it would seem to be one of the tasks any future academic works on performative national identity construction should attempt to fulfill. This general objective was Butler's main goal when she developed the theory of performative construction to be used by gender theory. I have outlined the ways in which a

version of her theory could be useful within a different discipline. I nevertheless feel it is important to attach a similar, if not stronger, rider that the moral implications of the practice should be brought fully into the academic field. The main argument and proposal of this chapter, and one of the general aims of this thesis is to do so by the use of a responsible development of academic work.

1. Benefits

The construction of national identity by the means of performativity can help states to become a 'nation state' and to develop their internal and external power. A strong sense of national identity, as I mentioned before, has been found to be key factor for stability and unity. Its construction can help to make a nation state work in a united way for the common good, develop more stable institutions and society, and in the long term become more successful than others. This section aims to explain the benefits of the construction of national identity by performativity in the case of Japan, in an attempt to make a fair evaluation of the process of performative construction of national identity. For this idea it is necessary to take into consideration the theories of Judith Butler and Benedict Anderson interconnected, which explains how an 'imagined community' can be replaced by a 'real community' by means of performativity. In this case, we have to consider aspects such as the invention of tradition and the promotion of a way toward Japaneseness by the use of printed word and the transformation of old communal traditions. These ideas can help us sort out the benefits of artificially constructing, manipulating and re-directing the Japanese, in a path for the common good.

The aspects of order, internal stability and external power produced by the consolidation of national identity, are without any doubt, a specific consequence of the way

order was created inside Japan, as a result of the force of identification. The next sections will explain the historical process to achieve such results, and some of the contemporary implications of such moves.

Order and Unity

To start this discussion, it is important to mention how in our days, the explanation of order and cohesion or unity of societies became a central concern of social theory. The question of order has been explained in various ways. Two of the main explanations are, first, order created by *conscience collective*, and second, order by structural integration.¹ The order by *conscience collective* means that the force of integration and setting of normal standards depends on the creation and maintenance of a kind of consciousness that produces a certain behavior in the population. The second case is more dependent on the need of a structure within society for that society to develop and function in the best possible way. In this case, I will try to merge both explanations. The reason for this conjunction is that the Japanese case shows a 'normative consciousness'² that has a direct dependence on the social structure of the country. This is concretely due to the links of a familial consciousness or the development of a familial state. Performative construction of identity directly relates to both these ideas, first by the means of normative subjectivity and representation, and second by the ritual and repetition of certain behaviors related to order. In other words, performativity is also an idea that puts together sentiments and patterns of order, in the sphere of construction of national identity.

A similar idea was given by Talcott Parsons as an extension of two previous theories. Parsons put together the Durkheimian emphasis on collective consciousness and

¹Kosaky Yoshino, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan: A sociological enquiry* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 87.

²Yoshino, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan*, 91.

the Weberian stress on ideas and values.³ Previously the separation of structure and values for integration was the original separation to distinguish industrial and pre-industrial societies.⁴ His case takes further both explanations to explain the industrial society order due to traditional realms of communal consciousness expanded to the total society. In the Japanese case ‘modernization’ is a process by which the bases of social order were common sentiment values which become the prototype of order in a broader sphere which includes the whole nation. In other words, Japan shows how the structural integration is given by the importance of sentiment and values of order.⁵ The more evident sentimental values related to order in the Japanese case are the ones that come from the family system of kinship in the pre-Meiji tribes of Japan.

The indigenous kinship institution that existed in pre-Meiji Japan was that of the ‘stem family’.⁶ In this, the eldest son married and stayed in the parents’ family to continue the main family branch, while younger sons split off to establish their own branch families.⁷ The main family and branches composed the *dozoku*, which literally means ‘the same lineage’. This type of family constituted the basic unit of social organization, bringing social order by means of lineage and a number of ways of cooperation in matters of everyday life.⁸

These values were later taken by the state during the Meiji Period to enforce, through performativity a sentiment of unity. The Meiji governments strengthened this system by law, using both samurai institutions as bases for the concept of family and the Confucian ethics of familism existing among the common people within the territory since

³ Yoshino, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan*, 88.

⁴ Talcott Parsons, *The Social System* (New York: Free Press, 1951).

⁵ Yoshino, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan*, 87.

⁶ Yoshino, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan*, 89.

⁷ Yoshino, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan*, 89.

⁸ Yoshino, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan*, 89.

the Tokugawa period.⁹ The concept of *ie* (pronounced *ee-ay*, meaning ‘family’) had great power due to the lineal continuity of the family and the centralized control of the income the family earned and its property.¹⁰ Fukutae Takashi describes this concept.

It was conceived as including the house and property, the resources for carrying on the family occupation, and the graves in which the ancestors were buried, as a unity stretching from the distant past to the present and occupying a certain position in the status system of the village or the town. The *ie* in that sense was far more important than the individuals who were at any one time living members of it, and it was seen as natural that the individual personalities of family members should be ignored and sacrificed if necessary for the good of the whole.¹¹

This notion of the *ie* can certainly explain how each family was perceived as holding a unique character just as an individual has his/her own personality. Furthermore, this uniqueness was eventually included in the notion of nation as a family as understood by the Japanese.¹² As we shall see, these values were adopted and taken further by the state to foster increased unity in terms of property, culture and ancestors – indeed, all the aspects of life that fall under the broad idea of the family. A repetition of the values, and their manipulation and re-direction, constructed a new society held together as a sole family. The Meiji Japan made a move using performativity to construct its uniqueness.

It is possible to say that the process of state-building in Japan was a process which included the expansion of familial ideas into the national sphere. The Meiji government built a state on the bases of a very liberal theory which included ideals of popular equality and freedom. The familial sense of organization could give to it a good sense of order and identification within these principles.¹³ “After the overthrow of the Tokugawa government

⁹ Yoshino, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan*, 91.

¹⁰ Tadashi Fukutake, *The Japanese Social Structure*, trans. Ronald P. Dore (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1982).

Kazuko Tsurumi, *Social Change and the Individual: Japan Before and After Defeat in World War II* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 106.

¹¹ Fukutake, *The Japanese Social Structure*, 28.

¹² Yoshino, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan*, 90.

¹³ Yoshino, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan*, 91.

in 1868, the Meiji elites perceived that the affective manipulation of the people was the most effective way to unify the country (then divided into 270 feudal domains) and to enhance nationalism.”¹⁴ This aim could be achieved by using an analogy of the state seen as a family.

Later, the concept was asserted into the minds of the population and the life of the Japanese by scholars. The family state concept was often studied and clarified in different ways by the scholars of the Meiji era. For example, in the 1890 Imperial Rescript on Education, Inoue Tetsujiro’s analysis of the family state said that the loyalty to the emperor was identical with filial piety, as the emperor was the head of the family.¹⁵ Later on, these familial principles were incorporated into a different ideological base. The familial ideas of Confucianism were supplemented by those contained in Shinto. The Meiji government made Shinto the state religion. Shinto, an indigenous animistic worship, was transformed by the Meiji government to become a politicized nationalistic ideology based on emperor worship.¹⁶ “The Imperial Rescript on Education issued in 1890 taught that the emperor was divine because of the unbroken imperial lineage from time immemorial (from the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu). The emperor presided as the head of the main family, from which all Japanese Families have subsequently branched out.”¹⁷ A propagation of narrative of Emperor as a semi-divine successor to 2500 years of imperial tradition and the embodiment of the nation took place. These two things worked as shifts in conceptions of affiliation on

¹⁴ Yoshino, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan*, 91.

¹⁵ Takeyoshi Kawashima, *Ideorogii tashiteno kazokuseido: The Family System as an Ideology* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1957).

¹⁶ Kazuko Tsurumi, “Aspects of endogenous development in modern Japan, Part II: Religious Beliefs: State shintoism vs. folk belief,” *Research Paper Series A-37*, Institute of International Relations, Sophia.

¹⁷ Yoshino, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan*, 91.

behalf of the nation state in Japan.¹⁸ This idea is captured in the following explanations of the Japanese state, in relation to the unity and ordering by the means of familism and imperial timelessness.

Our country is one great family nation, and the Imperial House-hold is the head family of the subjects and the nucleus of national life. The subjects revere the Imperial Household, which is the head family, with the tender esteem [they have] for their ancestors; and the Emperor loves his subjects as his very own.¹⁹

The unbroken line of Emperors, receiving the Oracle of the Founder of the Nation, reign eternally over the Japanese Empire. This is our eternal and immutable national entity. Thus, founded on this great principle, all the people, united as one great family nation in heart and obeying the Imperial Will, enhanced indeed the beautiful virtues of loyalty and filial piety. This is the glory of our national entity. This national entity is the eternal and unchanging basis of our nation and shines resplendent throughout our history.²⁰

Through the given explanation and examples of the construction of unity in the case of Japan, we can understand that this unity was artificially created and contributed to the unification of national identity over groups of peoples who were racially, culturally and in other ways very different. This unification was not only a result of social and political policies, but also a positive tool for the future of Japan. This unification policy was positive and worked for the common good. This brings patterns of organization and a sense of belonging encouraged people to work for the common benefit in many different spheres of their existence. One of those spheres can be explained by the idea of internal stability discussed in the next section.

Internal stability

Internal stability came as a direct consequence of the logics of ordering of the new Japanese society that emerged in the Meiji era. For a Japanese person, brought up in a familial

¹⁸ Takeshi Sujitani, *Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

¹⁹ R.K. Hall, *Kokutai no Hongi: Cardinal Principles of the National Entity of Japan*, trans. J.O. Gauntlett (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1949), 89-90.

²⁰ Hall, *Kokutai no Hongi: Cardinal Principles of the National Entity of Japan*, 59.

atmosphere, the world beyond the family was a turbulent world. The only way to achieve security in that *ukiko* was to forge relationships outside the family which were also of a familial kind. The parent-child relationship, the axial relationship within the family itself, was strongly colored with accents of subordination, and it as this which cause such relationship to proliferate in Japanese society as a whole.²¹

Fukutake remarks upon the dependence that existed thanks to the new social ordering in the whole social and economical life of Japan. As in the family, relations were supported by affective ties rather than rational ones. Enterprises and the government worked in a paternalistic way.²² This notion of a paternalistic financial way emerged in the Meiji period throughout the Taisho period (1912-26) when the economy of Japan was rapidly growing.²³ As a consequence of the stability that sentimental unity gave to Japan, the economy became more prosperous and functional. Performativity again worked for the common good and for the economic development of the nation state.

Religious features also had a big impact on the internal stability of Japan. Shinto became a fusion of gods and people in terms of ancestor worship. The festivals, which as rituals and repetition are connected with the performative construction of identity theory, created a cyclical rhythm of life. "Festivals worked towards the affective integration of the community members and played a primary role in maintaining order and stability in the village. The religious features penetrated into the other spheres of village life, economic, social and political."²⁴ The order thus had as a consequence sentiments of affiliation,

²¹ Fukutake, *The Japanese Social Structure*, 49-50.

²² Yoshino, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan*, 93.

²³ Yoshino, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan*, 93.

²⁴ Yoshino, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan*, 96.

making Japanese work harder for their national family, obey the laws and giving a reason for social, political and economic prosperity beyond individual desires.

Ordering in the familistic system of Meiji Japan therefore strongly influenced the economic development of the country, as well as the social life of its inhabitants. Performativity brought next to these developments a new outcome in the life of the Japanese, a positive cohesion that gave advantages to the state and made it work towards development and power. Stability was artificially created by the state, and it was and is performatively constructed. Such stability can be seen as a positive thing, especially when contrasted with the instabilities of other countries mentioned at the beginning of the introduction to the thesis. In the case of Japan, it can be seen as an important part of the common peaceful, safe and less violent way of life of Japanese society.

2. *Disadvantages*

Exclusion of minorities

It is also necessary to take into consideration the problems that policies of identity construction can bring to any case. As acknowledged by Butler during her studies of gender, any movement toward identification is *per se* a movement of discrimination. The same institutions that are built to represent or protect the national subject have the legitimacy of materialized in policies of exclusion.²⁵ Making performativity work for the common good has an implicit cost of excluding those who are not considered as part of it.

This process in Japan targeted the Okinawans, Ainu and Koreans. The constructed 'racial' and social homogeneity had as a result a model for representation, as I explained in

²⁵ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 34.

the first chapter. In other words, ‘the standard Japanese’ came to be viewed as a holder of a certain type of culture and vision towards life. This culture was another symbol of Japanese uniqueness which can be directly related to a racial conception of themselves. Japanese understand themselves as ‘intrinsically different’.²⁶

Unlike in America where any people – Italians, Japanese, Hispanics, blacks - could become Americans and appreciate the American way of life, you have to be born Japanese in order to understand nihinjin no kokoro (the Japanese heart).²⁷

This quotation exemplifies a perception by Kosaku Yoshino in *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan*. It is one clear example of how the notion of unique Japanese culture is closely related to the notion of racial identity. This race, as mentioned before, has no real biological foundation being a socially constructed difference.²⁸ Even though today Japanese people see themselves as a part of a unique, single racial group, reality and even simple phenotypical differences between the people of the regions show how the idea of a single racial group was created and developed by a social perception more than on the basis of a biological difference.

We can also say that the difference went further than any phenotypical perception. Those phenotypically indistinguishable could still be imagined as genotypically different.²⁹ This was the case of Koreans and Chinese living in Japan.

Although Chinese and Japanese look alike, we have very different customs and mentalities... We Japanese have more delicate feelings. It is important to know our differences for the sake of a better mutual understanding. No matter how long they live here, I think they will remain Chinese or Koreans. After all, we are different minsoku (ethnic/racial group).³⁰

Race became then, another piece of the distinctiveness of the Japanese. The notion of ‘Japanese Blood’ became important for this reason. Race as a symbol of national identity in Japan came with a number of psychological responses, closely related in Japan with feelings and cultural

²⁶ Yoshino, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan*, 115.

²⁷ Yoshino, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan*, 115.

²⁸ Yoshino, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan*, 116.

²⁹ Yoshino, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan*, 118.

³⁰ Yoshino, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan*, 119.

and social factors of the Japanese life.³¹ Race promotes the idea of a distinctive kinship or kin lineage... This idea promotes also a great psychological distance between ‘us’ and ‘them’ and a need for continuing the homogeneity of the Japanese group.³²

Beyond these examples, which stress a difference between Japanese and foreigners, the case of Japan brought its exclusion process inside its own territory and population in its very nation state building. For example, the newly acquired lands like Ezochi were transformed into an internal colony considered “empty land”.³³ Concepts of time and space became the means for discrimination in those cases, and people from Okinawa and Hokkaido were classified as part of the backward periphery.³⁴ Some areas and groups were censured using ideas that judged them as unsuccessful in the process of social evolution toward modernity, using time to understand the difference and translating Ainu ways of life into ancient behavior and backwardness. In other words, it is empirically true that the processes of inclusion, unity and assimilation have as one of their parts a process of separation and discrimination. These are, without a doubt, one of the most important disadvantages of the performative construction of identity process.

The case of Okinawans is interesting since their territory was not understood as one of the feudal territories of Japan before the Meiji Period. Okinawans are the inhabitants of what was known before as the Ryukyu Kingdom. This kingdom was during its history always between the power of Japan and China, paying tribute to both but always keeping their own culture safe. Japan recognized the Kingdom as ‘strange foreign land’ since the Edo Period, but always had an interest in incorporating it to the Japanese territory.³⁵ Again,

³¹ Yoshino, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan*, 119.

³² Yoshino, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan*, 119.

³³ Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Reinventing Japan*. (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), 23.

³⁴ Morris-Suzuki, *Reinventing Japan*. 23.

³⁵ Moriteru Arasaki, *Okinawa no sugao/ Profile of Okinawa* (Tokyo: Techno Marketing Center, 2000).

it was not until the Meiji Period that the Ryukyu territories were taken militarily and changed into the Okinawa Prefecture of Japan.³⁶

In 1880 the first teacher training school was established in Okinawa as part of an urgent effort to assimilate Okinawans into Japanese language and lifestyle. Primary and middle schools established a curriculum promoting Okinawan conversion to loyal subjects of the Emperor.³⁷ They were also forced to learn standard Japanese and adopt the lifestyle of the other Provinces. But ten years later, Japanese law deemed barbaric many Okinawan customs. The Lifestyle Reform Movement banned or discouraged things like women's tattoos and certain types of clothing called *yuta*, in an attempt to modernize the Okinawans and help them assimilate the new Japanese culture of progress.³⁸

In the postwar period, Okinawa became a territory occupied by the United States of America. It was not until 1972 that it was returned to Japanese sovereignty and became part of Japan again. But it is possible to say that after the Meiji policies of cultural standardization, Okinawans became Japanese. The process of culture absorption and internalization made of them Japanese, forgetting most of their cultural identity. Without a doubt we can say that such standardization, at least in the case of Okinawans was a case of what Butler calls normative violence. The performativity had a violent process of changing the previous culture and values to make them fit the standards of Japaneseness. This is a concrete disadvantage of the performative construction of national identity in Japan, the discrimination and coercion of groups with an already existent culture.

Since those who spoke the native language or used the clothing or customs of the Ryukyu were seen as barbarian, the policies changed from institutionally forced into

³⁶ Arasaki, *Okinawa no sugao/ Profile of Okinawa*.

³⁷ Arasaki, *Okinawa no sugao/ Profile of Okinawa*.

³⁸ Arasaki, *Okinawa no sugao/ Profile of Okinawa*.

socially forced. This process connects with one of the themes of the performative construction of identity theory. With normativity, the limits of existence were places and people with forces to repeat them and internalize them. With time, the performativity of certain acts became normal, and was socially repeated and accepted. The example shows us that performativity should be understood as more than just politically constructed. It is, perhaps, more successful if the state can make the transition from institutional enforcement to social enforcement. In Japan, *people* banned other people to go back to the past. Standardization was seen as an opportunity for progress.

Most of the population could reach a point of standardization that gave to them the sense of Japaneseness. Time made them forget their real origins and consider themselves as racially the same as any other Japanese. They became Shintoist, prayed to the Japanese ancestors and spoke only Japanese. Yet, until a very few years ago, Okinawans who remembered their past or were said to be Okinawans were often treated differently. The performative way of discrimination or identification remained the present, and is still enforced socially. Okinawans could obtain only lower positions in jobs and even the development of the Island was under the Japanese standard economically. The discrimination process enhanced by performativity was as successful as the one of unity and stability.

The Ainu, another minority in Japan, suffered almost the same type of discrimination. As the higher region to the north of the Japanese archipelago, the Ainu held a culture different than any other in the regions of Japan. Ainu people had a distinctive language and culture. They inhabited the regions of Hokkaido, Sakhalin and the Kuriles. They maintained, like the Okinawans, ethnic independence through resisting various

invasions from central Japan. During the Edo Period they were invaded and forced to become part of the territories of the Tokugawa clan.³⁹

Under the policies of assimilation and standardization of Meiji Period, Ainu people were victims of discrimination and prejudice.⁴⁰ As with the Okinawan case, Ainu culture was humiliated and determined as backward. The people of the Ainu were forced to speak standard Japanese and include themselves in a culture that was different not only in ways but also in needs other than the native one. With time, the Ainu became Japanese, forgetting or being forced to forget their origins and ways of life.⁴¹

The Okinawan and Ainu people were changed and incorporated into Japan. The process of performative construction of identity was violent in their cases, and since many of their ways could never change completely, the discrimination was constant from the Meiji until the present in Japan. They were thus forced inside the limits of the nation state, the same limits the performativity process established. Ainu and Okinawan territories belonged to Japan and were considered inside its frontiers. The difference in appearance was blinded by the policies of standardization, and with time they considered themselves as pure Japanese. The Meiji policies of assimilation were successful to include these drastically different groups within the limits of Japan. The only question is on how justifiable were the reasons of the Meiji Japan for engaging in artificial identity construction in the case of the above minority groups?

³⁹ A Proposal for Legislation Concerning the Ainu People. *AMPO Japan-Asia Quarterly Review* Vol. 24 No. 3.

⁴⁰ A Proposal for Legislation Concerning the Ainu People.

⁴¹ A Proposal for Legislation Concerning the Ainu People.

Totalitarian implications

Of course, one of the most important questions about the use of performativity enforced by state policies to construct identity is related to the possibility of it as a tool for fascism. Through history a number of regimes used the sense of belonging as a tool to exclude and abuse of certain minorities or to promote the personal prejudices of those in power. Most of those examples never had a plan to re-include the abused into the commonality, but just to make them disappear or to abuse them. The common good then comes as a question of legitimacy, of who can decide who belongs to the common and how far should states go for the common good.

The holocaust, the racial wars in Africa, and many other examples of our close past and contemporary time give to us a horrifying outlook of the possibilities of manipulation of populations. As I mentioned in the introductory part of this thesis, many conflicts inside states and between different states are related to issues of identification. My task in this thesis is not to promote this use of construction of identity but to make it clear that its existence is a fact. Being aware provides the possibility to control the abuses and a better understanding of our own identity.

It becomes evident at this point of the discussion, that the construction of a fixed idea related to national identity can be used by politicians and lead to totalitarian proportions. In many cases, including at the beginning of the national identity construction process of Japan, identity has been used to maintain ownership of certain resources. The dichotomy of good and bad effects, to a certain extent, seems an unavoidable conclusion of any system based on an understanding of human nature as socially constructed and therefore politically malleable. Rousseau's theory, for example, has been famously hailed

as both a blueprint for modern democratic sovereignty⁴² and at the same time potentially totalitarian.⁴³ His belief that unity and stability are of primary political importance led to his argument that conforming to the General Will is paramount and that doing so outweighs any problems associated with *forcing* minorities to be included in the majority.⁴⁴ His view, and the whole direction of his argument that attempts to eradicate social inequality, is clearly related to my point.

Jiro Kamishima⁴⁵ worked on the topic of the Japanese social bases. *The Mental Structure of Modern Japan* works as an analysis of what he understands as the socially constructed bases of a type of fascism lived in Japan during the pre-war and war period.⁴⁶ I do not agree completely with determining such period of Japan as fascist, but he makes a good case for explaining how social organization made it possible for Japan to defend themselves from external threats, by mobilizing human and material resources.

Kamishima talks in his work about the principles of self sufficiency and collective organization established in Japan.⁴⁷ The existence of social inequality was balanced by a system of rich families aiding poor ones in case of famine.⁴⁸ The political realm was based on unanimous-consent decision-making, which again reinforces the parallel with Rousseau's General Will. The festivals held together the individual proposes to transform them into a collective. Festivals organized by the whole community, made the commitment

⁴² A.P. d'Entrèves, *The Notion of the State: An Introduction to Political Theory* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1967), 214.

⁴³ J.L. Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* (London, Secker and Warburg, 1955).

⁴⁴ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*, trans. G.D.H. Cole (London : Everyman's Library, 1973), 195.

⁴⁵ Jiro Kamishima, *Kindainihon no seishin kozo The Mental Structure of Modern Japan* (Tokyo, Iwanami Shoten, 1961).

⁴⁶ Kamishima, *The Mental Structure of Modern Japan*.

⁴⁷ Kamishima, *The Mental Structure of Modern Japan*, 24-28.

⁴⁸ Kamishima, *The Mental Structure of Modern Japan*, 41-58.

to the collectivity and the cohesion possible.⁴⁹ The same process gave the Japanese government the power to organize the community in many realms. From the Meiji period, the communal solidarity among the state members was present. For this reason the management of the irrigation system to cultivate rice was possible. Resources were always in the hands of the government which initially organized the population and showed them the value of solidarity.⁵⁰

With the same strength that the Japanese government had to organize the Japanese in the daily activities needed for survival, it could move the people to fight in the name of the emperor. One of the most shocking examples of this is the one of the newly assimilated Okinawans at the time of the Pacific War.⁵¹ During the process of standardization, the Okinawans were often denied employment and lodging.⁵² They were the example of a culture of retrograde customs, and part of those minority groups were often considered retrograde when they used the Ryukyuan language to communicate.⁵³ Many Okinawans moved to the mainland in search of better jobs and opportunities, but there they were only target of worse discriminative forms.⁵⁴

After the process of assimilation, the Okinawans were the strongest force against the American invasion in the Pacific War. Diaries written just before the battle of Okinawa by teenagers of the local defense corps express joy to demonstrate their Japanese spirit and to honor the Emperor by repulsing Americans.⁵⁵ The identification, just as in fascism, gave Japan an immense power over resources of all kinds inside the Japanese territory.

⁴⁹ Kamishima, *The Mental Structure of Modern Japan*, 41-58

⁵⁰ Yoshino, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan*, 96.

⁵¹ Steve Rabson, "Assimilation Policy in Okinawa: Promotion, Resistance, and 'Reconstruction'," in *Okinawa Cold War Island*, ed. Chalmers Johnson (San Diego Japan Policy Research Institute, 1999), 133-148.

⁵² Rabson, "Assimilation Policy in Okinawa," 143.

⁵³ Rabson, "Assimilation Policy in Okinawa," 141.

⁵⁴ Rabson, "Assimilation Policy in Okinawa," 141.

⁵⁵ Rabson, "Assimilation Policy in Okinawa," 144.

Japaneseness gave organization to those resources, and the sense of belonging and will to honor the Emperor, gave to the military a unique force.

3. *Positive outcome*

Notwithstanding the negative side of performativity, it is possible to say that since the state project of identity construction began in Japan, the outcomes have been generally very positive. Without a doubt, we can say that unlike fascism, the process of performative construction of national identity is a process in which exclusion is not the main force. On the contrary, the performative construction of identity is a process in which inclusion is the most important force. Fascism has as a central point exalting the difference between a certain racial group and others. The process of performative construction of national identity as in the case of Japan, had as a central aim the inclusion of many ethnic groups and the disappearing of all the differences between them to build a common identity. Among the different groups within the territory, performativity constructs a sense of national distinctiveness.

It is evident that any process of identification tends to create a boundary of difference. This boundary exists for the sake of perpetuating the distinctive culture and the group itself.⁵⁶ But at least in the case of Japan, once the internal unity and power needed to become a functional and successful nation state was achieved, the institutions started a new movement of integration of those that were left behind before. Such an outcome has a lot to do with the awareness and responsibility of the Japanese state, and maybe also to the need to extend the common good to include the complete population that the territory

⁵⁶ Yoshino, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan*, 72.

contains. The reasons for such a move of new integration are hard to decipher, but the evidence of the positive outcome is hard to ignore.

Today's programs to integrate the excluded groups

In 1997, Japan started a stronger and more compelling group of policies in order to reinclude the discriminated groups. Such groups include the Ainu, Okinawans and also Koreans living in Japan. Before, the Japanese government had very strong policies that separated those with 'pure' Japanese blood and the rest of the population. It also separated in location the people considered 'contaminated', better known in Japan as the outcast *Burakumin*. Minorities in Japan over a very long time have experienced discrimination and hostility, which was initially enforced by the state and later adopted by the population. Fortunately, many of the steps taken by the Japanese government are currently helping most minority groups in some realm. First, the government had made an attempt to recognize some of those groups as a minority or indigenous group. Second, the government has implemented measures to rebuild dignity and help such groups develop. Third, those measures have as a task the promotion of the study of the indigenous group's culture, language, traditional ways of living and understanding.⁵⁷

Regarding the Ainu, one of the most important documents to prove the efforts of the Japanese government to include the minority group is the 1997 Ainu Cultural Promotion Law and the 1997 decision by the Sapporo district court on the Nibutani Dam. Both can be considered as key elements of recent state efforts regarding the Ainu.

⁵⁷ "History of the Foundation's Establishment" *Foundation for Research and Promotion Ainu Culture* [15 September 2004]: available from : http://www.frpac.or.jp/english/zaidan/e_setsuritsu_f.html

While some, like Richard Siddle, write critically against both documents, it is a fact that the effort is being made.⁵⁸ According to Siddle, the biggest concrete outcome of the Act was the establishment of the Foundation for Research and Promotion of Ainu Culture. Yet Siddle considers that the act was insufficient practically: not enough after so much time of discrimination.⁵⁹ The truth is that the Nibutani Dam decision was groundbreaking in its recognition of the Ainu as indigenous people, and in its findings related to the history of exploitation and deprivation of the Ainu by the Japanese and the Japanese state. The first issue the Court raised in its decision was the recognition of the Ainu people as an indigenous minority group of Japan. The government denied for long time the status of an indigenous people. But during the Dam dispute, the Court gave the definition of that term and applied it to the Ainu people, noting that they,

had inhabited mainly Hokkaido and maintained their distinct culture and identity before Japan extended its rule over them, and they still form a social group with a distinct culture and identity even after suffering social and economic damage caused by policies carried out by the majority Japanese who incorporated the Ainu into Japan.⁶⁰

As for the Okinawans, they are not recognized by the state as a minority group, as the Ainu have been. The issue there, as far as ‘integration’, concerns the disproportionate burden Okinawa has been forced to take on with regard to hosting US military bases. This is a continuing issue.

Another related issue is that of historical memory, as the Okinawan version of the Battle of Okinawa diverges from ‘official’ state-endorsed versions, as regards both broader

⁵⁸Richard Siddle, "An Epoch-making Event? The 1997 Ainu Cultural Promotion Act and Its Impact," in *Japan Forum* 14, no. 3 (2002): 405-423.

⁵⁹ Siddle, "An Epoch-making Event? 417.

⁶⁰Richard Siddle, "An Epoch-making Event? The 1997 Ainu Cultural Promotion Act and Its Impact," in *Japan Forum* 14, no. 3 (2002): 415.

intentions of the State in continuing to fight after a loss was all but assured.⁶¹ In other words, Okinawans tend to think that Okinawa was strategically sacrificed during war. Also regarding the official history, there exists an issue related to the behavior of Japanese soldiers toward the local Okinawan population. Scholars question if locals commit ‘suicide’ for the Emperor, or they were killed by the coercion of other militaries.⁶² Yet, the state has also implemented programs to encourage knowledge of Okinawan culture and past. Probably, with time, the official history of Japan will change and admit the abuses against those groups that were considered different.

In our day, most of the ways of the minorities are lost. The Japanese government is trying to bring back the values of those different cultures that coexisted in Japan for a long time. At least today, is not unusual anymore to listen to Okinawan music anywhere in Japan, or to travel to Hokkaido, the land of the Ainu, to take part in their winter festival. These recent policies do suggest that Rousseau’s characterization of Hobbes argument that, “the human species is divided into so many herds of cattle, each with its ruler, who keeps guard over them for the purpose of devouring them,”⁶³ seems not to apply to the Japanese case. It is difficult to know the real intentions of those in power, but it is usually the case that those intentions will be reflected in policies sooner or later. At the moment at least, the policies for re-inclusion suggest that the state is genuinely interested in the common good and the good of those who were previously excluded.

⁶¹ Chalmers Johnson, ed. *Okinawa: Cold War Island* (Cardiff, California: Japan Policy Research Institute, 1999).

⁶² Glenn Hook and Richard Siddle, eds. *Japan and Okinawa: Structure and Subjectivity* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

⁶³ Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 183.

4. *Conclusions*

In the case of Japan, the process of performative national identity construction has an outcome in which, on balance, the benefits outweigh the disadvantages. It is possible to affirm, that such a process in relation to its continuity, has the possibility of overcoming the discriminatory side. Japan became a powerful and stable nation state thanks to the process of performative construction of identity. It turned itself into a state family and held together most of the population for the common good. Time gave to Japan the chance to change the imminent discrimination and bring back the values of other cultures that coexisted with those determined Japanese. And at present, Japan can be considered a nation state, well organized and identified, but also responsible for its minorities.

Beyond such conclusions, this chapter had the task to bring to our mind a more aware idea of the reality. It is our job as academics to ensure that the performative construction of identity is recognized and understood. As Susanne Kappeler mentions:

The development of a political awareness of identity ... is a first step in the politicisation of the resistance of oppressed groups ... Awareness of identity is a result and a means of liberatory politics, identity a (temporarily) term of struggle: a response to discrimination and the view of the norm. Identity in this sense means awareness of a common history of exploitation and oppression.⁶⁴

A deeper understanding of national identity is not only a task for academics to explore. It is also a way of empowerment on both a personal and a collective level. Being aware that the construction is artificial rather than natural is a step towards that goal.

⁶⁴ Susanne Kappeler, "Redefinition of Identity: first step of empowerment," in *Kofra 61*, (December 1992/January 1993), 126.