From Process to Politics

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Abstract: A standard criticism to processual approaches, however, is that they foreclose the constitutive dimension of power and, in consequence, shy away from engaging with the political. In order to show the political relevance of those more sociologically oriented approaches to the “international,” this paper will discuss two specific problems that are central to contemporary IR theories interested by the identity/alterity nexus: collective political identity formation and politics of representation. This will permit to show how a processual approach to the “international” can provide for a more politically comprehensive reading of certain phenomenon. In order to do so, I will discuss these two problems through some aspects of Mikhail Bakhtin’s work centred on the identity/alterity nexus. This will be done by questioning the limitations of the dichotomy between social and corporate identity in IR theories. Empirically, these limitations will be highlighted by discussing the variety of constellations of collective political identities that have informed questions regarding multiculturalism spanning from the Tokugawa (1603-1867) to the Taishō (1912-1926) eras in Japan. The political dimension behind processual approaches of the “international” will emerge precisely in discussing how complex “expression[s] of a particular structure of power relations” (Mouffe 2005: 18) have to be described through a framework that cannot be circumscribed to either the corporate or the social dimension of a social continuant’s identity.
Abstract: A standard criticism to processual approaches, however, is that they foreclose the constitutive dimension of power and, in consequence, shy away from engaging with the political. In order to show the political relevance of those more sociologically oriented approaches to the “international,” this paper will discuss two specific problems that are central to contemporary IR theories interested by the identity/alterity nexus: collective political identity formation and politics of representation. This will permit to show how a processual approach to the “international” can provide for a more politically comprehensive reading of certain phenomenon. In order to do so, I will discuss these two problems through some aspects of Mikhail Bakhtin’s work centred on the identity/alterity nexus. This will be done by questioning the limitations of the dichotomy between social and corporate identity in IR theories. Empirically, these limitations will be highlighted by discussing the variety of constellations of collective political identities that have informed questions regarding multiculturalism spanning from the Tokugawa (1603-1867) to the Taishō (1912-1926) eras in Japan. The political dimension behind processual approaches of the “international” will emerge precisely in discussing how complex “expression[s] of a particular structure of power relations” (Mouffe 2005: 18) have to be described through a framework that cannot be circumscribed to either the corporate or the social dimension of a social continuant’s identity.
From Process to Politics

Sciences of the spirit [i.e. the humanities]; their field of inquiry is not one but two ‘spirits’ (the studied and the person who studies, which must not be merged into one spirit). The real object of study is the interrelation and interaction of ‘spirits.’

Mikhail M. Bakhtin (1986 [1970-71]: 144)

While still remaining a marginal conceptualisation of the “international”, process-based approaches provide a fresh and promising heuristic to go beyond a spatial conceptualisation of the “international” and to focus our gaze on practices and the processes constituting it (Guillaume 2007, see as well Agnew 2005). Indeed, the key idea of a process-based approach basically lies in the prioritisation of process over substance, relation over separateness, and activity over passivity. A standard criticism to processual approaches, however, is that they foreclose the constitutive dimension of power and, in consequence, shy away from engaging with the political, with what Chantal Mouffe refers to as “the very way in which society is instituted” (2005: 9). In order to show the political relevance of those more sociologically oriented approaches to the “international,” this paper will discuss two specific problems that are central to contemporary IR theories interested by the identity/alterity nexus: collective political identity formation and politics of representation. This will permit to show how a processual approach to the “international” can provide for a more politically comprehensive reading of certain phenomenon. In order to do so, from a processual perspective, I will discuss these two problems through some aspects of Mikhail Bakhtin’s work centred on the identity/alterity nexus.

1 I would like to thank Charlotte Epstein, Matteo Gianni, Vivenne Jabri and Ces Moore and IPS’ anonymous reviewers, who commented on an earlier and radically different draft, for their remarks, engagements and encouragements.

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Naturally, Bakhtin’s work does not constitute the sole path to a process-based approach to the “international,” but is one among a vast array of possibilities. Thus, one is entitled to ask why Bakhtin is to be taken into account, at all, as an interlocutor for thinking about the political dimension of the “international.”

Indeed, Bakhtin’s work, by its variety and changing nature, its “unstable kind of unity” to use the felicitous term of Gary S. Morson and Caryl Emerson (1990: 2), proves to be a tricky and difficult body to cohere into what one would term a “Bakhtinian approach” to the “international”; the question of the relevance of his thought to think about the political dimension of the “international” is thus looming. A first answer is that what at best can be achieved seems to be a sound and issue specific transposition of some of his articulations or concepts where, in the case of this contribution, they might provide for a reflection about ways to approach the “international” along processual lines. A twofold justification of the use of Bakhtin in IR theory emerges from this.

First, from an ontological and epistemic perspective, Bakhtin’s work can be at least partially related to a processual, or one might say trans-actionist, approach of the relations between a “self” and an “other,” a framework that has a strong heuristic potential for the field of international relations (for an earlier treatment, see Guillaume 2002, 2006, 2007; Neumann 1996). Following Mustafa Emirbayer (1997: 287, Dewey & Bentley, 1991 [1949]: 101-102), one can say that trans-actionist approaches are approaches for which “the very terms or units involved in a transaction derive their meaning, significance, and identity from the (changing) functional roles they play within that transaction. The later, seen as a dynamic, unfolding process, becomes the primary unit of analysis rather than the constituent elements themselves.” Second, from a more practical and methodological perspective, some of Bakhtin’s key conceptual articulations are centred on the creation and articulation of boundaries between identity and alterity in their transgressient relations, thus resulting practically and, at times, ethically in a trans-action of viewpoints. This is a particularly heuristic

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2 On Bakhtin’s life, work and concepts in general one can refer to the work of Michael Brandist, Katerina Clark, Caryl Emerson, Michael Holquist, Gary Saul Morson, or Tzvetan Todorov (see Brandist 2002, Clark & Holquist, 1984; Emerson, 1997; Holquist, 1990; Morson & Emerson, 1990; Todorov, 1981).
theoretical ground to start thinking about the processual dimensions of the “international”.

This will be done by questioning, through the Bakhtinian notion of dialogue, the limitations of both the explicit and, often implicit, dichotomy between social and corporate identity in IR theories. These dimensions will be highlighted by discussing the variety of constellations of collective political identities that have informed questions regarding multiculturalism, here taken simply both as a social fact and as a policy, spanning from the Tokugawa (1603-1867) to the Taishō (1912-1926) eras in Japan. It will thus be shown that processual approaches are key to move beyond the corporate/social divide at the heart of most approaches to the identity/alterity nexus in IR and thus to refine, from the standpoint of political and social theory, our understanding of the mechanisms informing the trans-actions between identity and alterity. The political dimension behind processual approaches of the “international” will emerge precisely in discussing how complex "expression[s] of a particular structure of power relations” (Mouffe 2005: 18) have to be described through a framework that cannot be circumscribed to either the corporate or the social dimension of a social continuant’s identity³. Before doing so, however, I will begin this contribution by discussing the reasons why Bakhtin’s notion of dialogue is a relevant starting point to discuss the question of the political in IR.

**From dialogic to dialogical international relations: the place of the political**

To start this discussion, it is important I believe to distinguish between what one could term *dialogic* approaches and *dialogical* approaches to the “international”. Dialogic approaches refer to the idea of dialogue as an exchange between interlocutors and concentrates on the normative problem of reciprocity and recognition. Dialogical approaches focus rather on the characterization of the processes, the trans-actions at the heart of any forms of identity formation, performance or transformation, whatever the normative qualification these forms might take (see Guillaume 2002, 2007, Nielsen, 2002: 35, 214n11)⁴. While,

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³ On the notion of social continuant, see Guillaume 2007.
⁴ It is important to note that there naturally are normative issues and developments in Bakhtin’s work, both dialogic and dialogical moments are to be seen in his work; those have been at the
at first glance, it seems that the former logically includes the latter; it is not necessarily the case. Indeed, Charles Taylor notes when he discusses the notion of dialogue in Bakhtin that: “we need relationships to fulfil, but not to define, ourselves” (1994: 33), this pertains to a dialogic understanding of dialogue, if one can say, whereas a dialogical approach sees relations, in conjunction with contexts and expressions, as necessary to define ourselves (Guillaume 2002, 2007). This distinction is important because it opens up the question of the political in IR theory in those approaches interested in the identity/alterity nexus and the potential of a processual approach to the “international.”

For different authors within IR scholarship that have sought to address the normative questions behind the identity/alterity nexus, the dominant approaches to international relations, either through logical economism (Ashley 1983: 471-473) or a logical rationalism, have denied the complexity of questions at the core of the nexus and thus have affirmed the principle of uniformity, and its corollary of assimilation, over the variety and multiplicity of points of view existing or striving to be heard in the world. By negating the intersubjective quality of this variety of voices, these dominant approaches have, to a large extent, refused to recognise that notions such as identity or alterity represent a “field of possibilities” with political, cultural and sometimes vital implications (see Doty 1996: 340-341). To take but one example of this link between the political and alterity, David Campbell notes that the political, even more so by its “international” dimension, is marked by the “multiplicity of others” (Campbell 1999: 36); the social fact of this multiplicity and its normative underpinnings set alterity as the standard by which the ethical and the political have to be reconsidered most notably, in Campbell’s work, through the tool of deconstruction that reflects the “necessities of politics per se, necessities that can be contested and negotiated, but not escaped or transcended” (Campbell 1999: 51). The idea that the political cannot be “escaped or transcended” is one reason why some aspects of Bakhtin’s work might appeal to IR scholarship interested in bringing a more processual conception of the “international” in. Let’s now turn to this potential appeal.

heart of some contemporary reflections about social and political theory (see Hirschkop, 1999; Nielsen, 2002).
First, it is useful to typify the use of Bakhtin’s concepts and framework can be typified in roughly two categories within IR literature\textsuperscript{5}. There has been, first and primarily, a citatory and, often, cursory use of Bakhtin’s work and concepts. This has actually been the main criticism of Bakhtin’s uses in IR literature (see Holden, 2003: 243-251). One can therefore distinguish those who “cite Bakhtin,” however accurately, and those who actually are trying a way or another to formalize elements of his thought. Most notably among those who tend to rapidly cite Bakhtin there is the idea that he anticipated many features of poststructuralist or postmodernist theories, most notably that he was somehow “ahead of his time” in relation to what we now term “the linguistic turn” and a de-centred, contingent perspective on subjectivities. Those affinities with the “post” movement, however, cannot allow, far from it, his assimilation to poststructural or postmodernist theories (see Gardiner & Bell, 1998: 4-7). Moreover, Bakhtin pertains to a certain modern sense of alterity, a “humanism of alterity” to use Augusto Ponzio’s term. What characterizes Bakhtin’s take on alterity, alongside Emanuel Lévinas’s, for Ponzio is an “individuation of alterity in the sphere of the self,” which is not to say that alterity is assimilated to the self, but that alterity is “a constitutive obstacle to the closure, to the unity and integrity of the egologic sphere” (Ponzio, 1994: 79-88, my translation). This dimension of alterity actually ties in with the second major use of Bakhtin in IR theory.

Indeed, this second, and more substantial use of Bakhtinian thought is primarily focused on his “philosophical anthropology” (Todorov 1981: 145) and the preponderant place of the idea of dialogue within this framework. This impetus is naturally normative in its motivations whether it is directed at international relations as a field or as a discipline; it is concerned with what a dialogue between a self and difference is good for and what good it can attain (see, most notably, Der Derian 1993, Neumann 1996, 2003). This is what I characterised as the dialogic dimension. This relation is one in which to be a potential total and finite self is to be a being “which is unable not to participate in the event of co-

\textsuperscript{5} A thoughtful treatment of IR theory’s usages of literary theory, among others Bakhtin’s, and its shortcomings can be found in Gerard Holden’s (2003) article “World Literature and World Politics: In Search of a Research Agenda.”
being,” the fact of being thus presupposing plurality (Nikulin, 1998: 395-396, emphasis added). It is therefore impossible to conceive a finite being as a totality outside the dynamics of the relations linking it to difference. There is no self per se nor can there be a self in isolation as a self cannot be total and finite; it is always relative to its position in the world, a world that only allows the self a limited perception of itself. For Bakhtin, to reach a relationally finite and total self would mean that one has to integrate through dialogue the vision that a multitude of other selves (alterity) possess of the world (see Bakhtin, 1990 [1920-23]: 36). Most of the IR literature invested in bringing Bakhtin to the field and discipline considers that the only ethical way to talk of selves and difference is through the concept of a “dialogic” dialogue.

Naturally, within IR, the ethical concern with regard to difference and the normative potential of the concept of dialogue has been present before and beside a direct Bakhtinian influence6. It is, however, striking to note that one of the main impetuses of their use of the notion of dialogue is originating from Tzvetan Todorov’s work, “the first fully fledged application of the self/other problematique to a historical discursive sequence” (Neumann, 1999: 22). It is worth remembering that Todorov was deeply influenced by Bakhtin (see Todorov, 1981). His well-known La conquête de l’Amérique, directly following his book on Bakhtin, is an example of the impact of Bakhtinian thinking on the French-Bulgarian scholar (see Todorov, 1982). This “Todorov link” in IR literature can be traced, for instance, in David Blaney and Naeem Inayatullah’s work7. For them, Todorov’s idea of “nonviolent communication,” along with Ashis Nandy’s notion of “dialogue of visions,” are necessary elements to start seeing difference as a subject, thus going beyond the mostly western conception of the other-as-object (see Blaney & Inayatullah, 1994). Todorov is also the main source for Inayatullah and Blaney’s genealogy of the problem of difference by paralleling Todorov’s methods of analysing European travelogues as they themselves examine several travelogues or thinkers of the sixteenth and

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6 Such an example can be found in Thomas Risse’s (2000) adaptation of Jürgen Habermas’ communicative action framework to international relations.

7 Another clear example of this influence is to be found in Richard Schapcott’s (2001) hermeneutical conception of communicative morality that shows a direct influence, among others, from Todorov.
seventeenth century (see Inayatullah & Blaney, 1996; 2004).

Their project is both political and ethical, actually both terms are often directly linked (see, for instance, Inayatullah and Blaney 2004: 15, 22, 120), as they stress the importance of “the recovery of recessive themes and voices” to undermine “the naturalness of the dominant conceptions or conclusions of political and ethical traditions” and thus “reveals alternative conceptions and conclusions that may be turned against dominant understandings” (ibid.: 15). This stance aims at breaking with the “double movement,” when “difference becomes inferiority and the possibility of a common humanity requires assimilation” (ibid.: 10), a concept first laid out by Todorov, and is essentially a political stance, one that echoes Campbell’s or William Connolly’s whose analysis of the western (modern) intellectual framework to think about difference owes also to Todorov (see, for instance, Connolly, 1989). Yet, the “dialogical” dialogue might also be a venue to reflect on the political. In that respect, one cannot limit Bakhtin’s thought to the sole realm of the normative. Neumann (1999: 11-14, 16, 21-22), for instance, considers that Bakhtin’s dialogism is “at least ... the best starting point for the study of collective identity formation” (1999: 14), but ultimately fails to further developing this intuition by concentrating almost primarily on the mechanism of othering or by situating dialogism essentially in the realm of the normative.

Others concur with the idea of a political relevance in Bakhtin’s conception of the human sciences (Bakhtin 1986 [1974]). Anthony Wall notes, in a review article on the links between Bakhtin and social sciences, that there is in Bakhtin’s writing a “rich social thinking that is both explicitly and implicitly present” (Wall, 2001: 196); further, Bakhtin’s conception of dialogue “is not always the fruit of peaceful coexistence” as Bakhtin “is not a philosopher of the ideal speech situation and [he] is not a philosopher of agreement” (Wall, 1998: 205). This is quite obvious in Bakhtin’s concepts of carnival and parody, essential in his doctoral dissertation published in English as *Rabelais and his World* (Bakhtin, 1984 [1965/1968]); this work not only shows an awareness of power relations existing between classes during the late Middle Ages and Renaissance, but also participate in Bakhtin account of contestational practices in societies and their
potential transformative power within either a society, in the form of “popular-festive culture of laughter” (Hirschkop, 1999: 275-276, 283-285), or in a literary genre, such as the Menippean satire\(^8\) (see, as well, Gardiner, 1999; LaCapra, 1999; Morson & Emerson, 1990: 433-470; Stallybrass & White, 1999).

If it is true that Bakhtin’s work on carnival should be taken with caution in regard to some of its empirical and analytical aspects (Edwards 2002; LaCapra 1999: 239), Bakhtin’s value, however, lies elsewhere. It lies in “his attempt to furnish a critical vision of society and culture in which the utopian dimension [of carnival] is a transfiguration of historical phenomena that keeps a viable connection with the requirements of institutionally structured social life” (ibid.: 244). Ken Hirschkop goes further; in analysing the idea of fear in Bakhtin’s work on popular-festive cultures, Hirschkop remarks that “Bakhtin’s implicit claim is that we fail to comprehend [fear’s] power, or that of any other political formation, until we grasp it as a kind of historical world, a framework in which events acquire a meaning and significance transcending their immediacy” (Hirschkop, 1999: 274). In the end, since Bakhtin underlines key elements of social and political theory – contextuality, relationality, expressivity – and integrates them into context, relations and expression of power whether present in an almost face-to-face everyday life or through social and political institutions; it then situates elements of his work as both tackling the processual dimensions of the social and, as a consequence, its political dimensions as well.

That is precisely what set the ideas of the dialogical process of identity formation as a heuristic instrument to identify the political dimension of the “international” taken as a process. To understand the political as an “expression of a particular structure of power relations” (Mouffe 2005: 18), is to comprehend it as a structuration, that is subject to challenging and conflicting utterances about what is the dominant “ordinary model of legitimacy” (Boltanski and Thévenot 1991: 86-87) that unfolds the requirements necessary to satisfy a superior common principle in order to support justification. The political is the realm where different political grammars are conflicting to emerge as the relevant one, for

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\(^8\) The Menippean satire is an antic “serio-comic genre which [according to Bakhtin] was one of the antecedents of the European novel, and which pioneered the novelistic parody of epic” (McGlathery, 2001: 119).
political grammars are “expressive vehicles for exemplary definitions of normalcy and deviance, recipes of duties and obligations, and syntaxes of self and other” (Brown 1987: 122). The political is reflective of a situation of heteroglossia (Bakhtin 1981 [1934-35]: 263, 270-275), where centripetal and centrifugal utterances are competing while living in “complex space-time configurations that are produced [...] by different actors and are only able to reach relative, incomplete and temporary adjustments; they therefore are unachieved and open historical systems” (Bayart 1985: 351-352, my translation).

Following Jean-François Bayart (1985: 354-355; see also Shapiro 1989: 81) in his article “Uttering the political”, one cannot but stress the quality of dialogism as a key concept allowing scholars to draw what are the differentiated and contending utterances over “the same institution, the same practice, the same narrative,” but to do so with an acute sense of the “historical situations and the clearly defined social field” in which these utterances are taking place. Political utterances are dialogically situated in a constellation of relations that are reflective of power relations (Foucault 2001 [1982]). These power relations, in turn, are fundamentally working through “the production and exchange of signs” (ibid.: 1055). Contentions and conflicts over particular issues or grammars are an indicator of the political because they allow drawing the constellation of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses participating in the formation, performance and transformation of a collective political identity. As such, they are the reflection of contending and conflicting interpretations over their significance, and thus of differentiated collective self-understandings and representations. Moreover, from the perspective of IR theory, the delimitation of a constellation and the determination of the dialogical character of the different poles constituting it should result in a reflection over the relevance of the social and corporate identity division that informs and is pervasive in most IR theories interested in the identity/alterity nexus as well as the spatial underpinnings dominating such division (see Guillaume 2006, 2007).

**Beyond the corporate/social divide: theoretical considerations**

A central feature is common to most contemporary IR theories interested in the
identity/alterity nexus. To be theoretically understood, “identity” has to be comprehended following two broad spatial categories – corporate and social identity – delineating, and reproducing, the inside/outside divide that is at the heart of most theorization of the “international” (Walker 1993). My contention is that a dialogical understanding of the identity/alterity nexus, as it has been laid out elsewhere (Guillaume 2002, 2006, 2007), allows to go beyond the limitations this dichotomy fosters. Corporate identities are usually seen as ‘self-organizing, homeostatic structures that make actors distinct entities’ (Wendt 1999: 224-225). Alexander Wendt’s definition coincides indeed nicely with most IR theories conception of what is an ‘identity;’ the latter is seen as homologous to fixed state identities which are determined by exogenous factors. Corporate identities are unitary; they are uncompound and uncomplex social continuants which properties or preferences are taken as exogenous, in the sense of an ontological assumption regarding an entity’s ‘essence’ (Clark 1998: 248; Clunan 2000: 97-98). This conception of corporate identity, therefore, is less analytical than categorial; it allows IR theorists to objectify certain social continuants as the conventional units of what now are categorially defined as international relations. They are analytically reified but as categories they are seen as interacting or, from a systemic point of view, as being positioned in a system that is precisely defined by this objectification. These units are constant through time, and might only differ between them by their properties and preferences that are taken exogenously from these monolithic units. Bluntly put, corporate identities are more or less black boxes, which reflect a rather static conception of what ‘constitute’ international relations.

Whereas corporate identity is generally taken as pre-social, reflecting either material capabilities or a certain Gestalt, the second analytical category, social identity, can either be seen as being meaningful through the type of interactions it leads to, whether one is a friend or a foe, a great power or a revisionist state, or by the fact that it is constituted socially through interactions, as it is proposed, for instance, in symbolic interactionism. Social identities can thus be defined as ‘sets of meanings that an actor attributes to itself while taking the perspective of others, that is, as a social object’ (Wendt 1994: 385). Within IR theory, social identity is generally considered the actual locus in/by which ‘identity’ can be
considered as an ‘independent variable’ that does the job or, differently put, as an explanans per se. Whatever the particular understanding of what is a social identity, the latter is usually seen as what is determining why and how a social continuant is acting in a certain expected way vis-à-vis others to fulfil the predicated behaviour its social identity entitled it to. Hence, social identities are conducive of normative behaviours; they are taken as explanans of a social continuant’s interactions with others. This dichotomy between social and corporate identities pertaining to a social continuant, while being a potentially good heuristic, is actually a rather incomplete characterization of the properties that are ontologically and epistemically defining what is and how is constituted this social continuant’s collective identity. I believe it is necessary to discuss whether a social continuant’s collective identity is an intrinsic or extrinsic property of the latter in order to underline the relevance of process-based approaches relatively to current theorizing of the identity/alterity nexus in IR theory.

‘Identity,’ whether corporate or social, is an intrinsic property of a social continuant if it possesses it regardless of anything outside itself. If one takes two social continuants that are perfect duplicates, say two states having the same material capabilities in a situation of anarchy, then they ‘necessarily share intrinsic properties’ (McKritick 2003: 158); they literally are the same (see Waltz 1979: 97-98, 127-128). In other words, to consider ‘identity’ as an intrinsic property is to consider ‘identity’ in an exogenous manner. Exogenity belongs to a form of reasoning unproblematising some social continuants as given, as assumptions or parameters (Cederman and Daase 2003: 6-7). In regard to corporate identity, it is to regard it as a self-organising and pre-social property of a social continuant; as mentioned this how IR theory generally tends to consider it. Intrinsicalness thus perpetuates the analytical assumption within IR theory of a ‘state of nature,’ a pre-social utopia demarcating a specific social continuant (generally the state) as an object situated outside any interactions with its environment. To say that a social identity is an intrinsic property of a social continuant is to assert that this social continuant will adopt certain behaviours or preferences in function of its inner characteristics and, in relation to its environment, in its interactions with other social continuants. While its
environment might prove crucial to determine which behaviour or preference is salient, it is *not* to say that its social identity is socially constituted. Such an argument, made explicitly by liberal and critical constructivists alike\(^9\), would consider social identity to be an extrinsic property.

Overall, intrinsicalness participates in what Norbert Elias warned us against some thirty years ago, the tendency to use a 'reifying mode of expression' which in turn takes us to naturalise and crystallise continuants that are processual and dynamic in ‘essence,’ to individuate continuants that are relational in their agency and structure, and, finally, to essentialise, to the point of anthropomorphism, a continuant over others (Elias 1978: 13-32). To consider a social continuant’s corporate or social identity to be an intrinsic property results, logically, in the denial of the political quality of its formation, performance, or transformation. Intrinsicalness precludes ontologically the social constitution of either corporate or social identities. Intrinsicalness thus ignores the inherent role played by power relations – and thus contention, resistance or conflict – in the processes by which hegemonic and counter-hegemonic political grammars constitute the political community. To actually be able to make sense of the political, as an essential component of the identity/alterity nexus, one has to turn to the second category determining how the relations existing between identity and alterity are conceptualised within IR theory: extrinsicalness.

An ‘identity’ is an extrinsic property of a social continuant if it is dependent ‘wholly or partly on something other than that thing’ (Weberman 1999: 140). Contrary to the previous situation, if one takes two social continuants that are perfect duplicates, they ‘can differ with respect to their extrinsic properties’ (McKritick 2003: 158). To take again the previous example of two perfect duplicates, two states having the same material capabilities in a situation of anarchy, they can be different; somehow, they *have to* be different as their relations to various other identities will differ from each other according to numerous factors (e.g. geography, history, political system, and so on) and,

\(^9\) I hereby adopt Richard Price and Christian Reus-Smit (1998) typology for its convenience in delineating two different ways to ‘endogenise’ constructivism in IR. I am naturally aware that as any typologies, Price and Reus-Smit’s has its limitations and either do injustice to some perspectives or actually reduce others for the sake of the typology.
simply, by the sheer number of possible and the complexity of trans-actions existing (Elias 1978: 14-15, 85, 100-103).

For liberal constructivists, a social identity is regarded as an extrinsic property of a social continuant. A social identity, such as being a civilised state, comes to be and takes signification only if others recognize it as such. While one's conception of being a civilised state might originate from one's own conception of oneself, it is only through interactions that such a conception will be established or rebuked. Thus, liberal constructivism understands, mostly informed by symbolic interactionism as developed by George Herbert Mead and more recently by Herbert Blumer, a social identity to be formed through the socialization a state undergoes in a certain social environment; the state will take the value, will 'mirror,' the 'identity' others see it actually has (Wendt 1999: 326-333). Within this perspective, however, whereas social identity is taken as an extrinsic property of the social continuant, corporate identity is still considered as an intrinsic one. While not denying boundary-drawing processes, as underlined by critical constructivists, liberal constructivists, however, locate this process,

'inside' the space around which the boundary will be drawn. What makes, say Germany 'Germany' is primarily the agency and discourse of those who call themselves Germans, not the agency and discourse of outsiders. The Spanish state was a self-organised, objective fact for the Aztecs, whether their discourse acknowledged this or not. (Wendt 1999: 74)

One can note here a conflation between boundary-drawing processes with an assumed requirement that these processes are dependent upon actual 'outsiders' (Rumelili 2004: 32-34). What is fundamentally missing here is the fact that alternative collective self-understandings/representations, both within and without a social continuant, are actually participating in the same general process of identity formation, performance and transformation (Guillaume 2002, 2006). To use the oft cited illustration about Spain and the Aztecs, to understand what was Spain as a corporate actor requires to understand how a Spanish self-understanding/representation was developed in the years of the Reconquista vis-à-vis 'outsiders' such as the Spanish Jews and the Moors (Kamen 1988a,
1988b; Root 1988). This is a first and necessary step to then understand how Spain’s ‘corporate identity’ interacted with the Aztecs through their ‘social identities,’ despite this event being often considered as a first encounter. Many constructivists are neglecting a fundamental dimension of symbolic interactionism, which are the actual possibility of contestation and the ongoing negotiation of social identities between social continuants (Rumelili 2002: 59; Aboulafia: 11). In other words, something must happen within the corporate identity for the process of socialization to succeed or fail. One might in effect resist the social identity that one’s generalized other sees one has.

This has been the case, for instance, of Tokugawa Japan’s resistance to the traditional East Asian tributary system centred on China, which would have determined the social identity of Tokugawa Japan as a tributary state. Instead, the Tokugawa regime sought to differentiate itself from this traditional conception of the East Asian system and, by resisting to this representation in its relations to China, Korea and the Ryūkyū (Okinawa), tried to provide an alternative and competing view through a series of domestic and international efforts to sustain this alternative self-understanding and representation (Toby 1991[1984]). The case of post-war Germany is also telling. While, in effect, the Germans were at the source of their post-war ‘corporate identity,’ the latter could only be understood by the intervention of ‘outsiders,’ such as the Allied countries. Thus, it seems evident that there is a process not only coming from the corporate identity to the social one, but also from the latter to the former. The impact of the past and memory on an identity, and the influence of ‘outsiders’ in this impact, as the German case clearly exemplifies, is also an important element to take into account (see Pommerin 1995).

To distinguish analytically between a corporate and social identity thus seems more and more artificial and categorial. In effect, if one is to consider ‘identity’ to be a process, then it calls into question the relevance, and underlines the artificiality, of the categorial division between corporate and social identities.

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10 This idea of a ‘first encounter’ as a time zero in a trans-action is a myth for there is no such things as a time zero in an encounter; there are always previous actual or imaginary conceptions of what difference is shaping this ‘first encounter’; on 'first encounter' as time zero (see Wendt 1992: 401, 404n47).
This artificiality stems principally from the distinction between two ‘variables’ that actually are participating in the same process. In effect, one can readily question the unstated assumption that no, or limited, influences exist between the corporate identity of a social continuant and its social identities; in effect, if a corporate identity is intrinsic to that continuant, then it is not, necessarily, influenced by its relations with other social continuants at the ‘corporate level.’ Following Norbert Elias (1978: 112-116), this distinction of an actual process into two distinct and individuated components can be called ‘process-reduction,’ by which the ‘possible separation of interrelated things into individual components – ‘variables’ or ‘factors’ – without any need to consider how such separate and isolated aspects of a comprehensive context are related to each other’ is made possible. Moreover, ‘[a]t all events, the relationship appears to be an afterthought, an addition, tacked on later to intrinsically unrelated and isolated objects’. Further, this distinction brackets as well the eventness of international relations. In other words, this distinction fails to integrate theoretically the relations between an inside and an outside; it artificially creates such boundaries.

This onto-epistemic denial of the processual character “all the way down” of identity formation, performance or transformation is also a denial of the political character of such phenomenon. Indeed, IR theories that concentrate on either social or corporate identity ultimately fail to identify the relevant constellations of utterances that are participating in the processual constitution of collective identities. They fail because they do not integrate, from an onto-epistemic perspective, the fundamentally multi-layered character of the processes of identity formation, performance or transformation into a non-exclusive and integrated framework that allows taking into account the heteroglossia at the core of such processes. As it will be shown bellow, corporate and social identities are so intertwined empirically in the process of utterances of different and contending collective self-understandings/representations that their categorial distinction can only at best truncate, at worst depoliticize, processes that are reflective of dynamic and evolving power relations. Extrinsicalness allows, for its

11 A more detailed discussion about intrinsic/extrinsic distinction is to be found in Guillaume 2006.
part, to consider the dialogical quality of the identity/alterity nexus for it takes into account and mediates between the potentially complex constellations of trans-actions existing. Most notably, it does so, through a dialogical framework, by considering the variety of utterances contending for dominance within a policy, by avoiding process-reduction and, finally, by considering how this variety might constitute a series of constellations of trans-actions, each defined by different contextuality, relationality and expressivity (see Guillaume 2002, 2006).

**Beyond the corporate/social divide: the Japanese political community**

With the emergence, around the late eighteenth century, of a horizontal conception of the political community, questions of cultural differences, understood broadly, became pro-eminent in Japan from the second half of the nineteenth century then on. Indeed, questions such as the possible integration of peripheral communities, deemed external to “Japan,” such as the Ainu or Ryūkyūan (Okinanwan), other pertaining to the historical foundation of the horizontal national community (such as the “outcasts,” the burakumin), or those linked to the colonial expansion of the Meiji regime were all informed at a level or another by the prolématique of multiculturalism. What is especially interesting to note in light of a dialogical understanding is the fact that most of these conceptions were generally informed by different understandings and representations of what a Japanese national identity was. In other words, by the second half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century, competing utterances about the Japanese political community were expressed and articulated offering a wide range of figurations of alterity. This situation of heteroglossia, whether directed within or without the polity, reflected alternative dialogical constitution of a Japanese self-understanding/representation not only vis-à-vis Asia but also vis-à-vis the west.

A recent path breaking analysis has shown that these evolving hegemonic self-understandings/representations were the result of several factors such as the more competing and insecure international environment, the intellectual

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12 Amino Yoshihiko (1992) has provided us with an extensive discussion of the contexts and circumstances through which the term “Japan” has taken pre-eminence while being at heart a very contingent notion.
environment of late Tokugawa and Meiji eras, the increasing perception by political and intellectual elites of the existence of a "Japanese" population and of the necessity to think of it as a society and as a nation, the sense of a moving periphery within and around the main isles (the Ainu, the Ryūkyūan, the Taiwanese, as well as the Korean and Chinese), as well as the development of an imperialist ideology paralleling the development of Japan as a regional power in the late nineteenth century (see Oguma 2002 (1995)). All of these factors are pertaining both to the corporate (e.g. the shift from a vertical to a horizontal sense of the community) and social (e.g. Japan as an imperial and civilized power) identities of Japan. However, from the "corporate" level, it is difficult, on the one hand, to ignore the impact of external influences to the Japanese drive to reach a social identity as a civilised power, in order to be recognised by the western power as fully part of the international system, on utterances about the shape and scope of the Japanese political community. On the other hand, from the "social" level, it is difficult to dissociate Japan’s civilisational and imperial drive behind its imperial expansion from discourses and policies at home about the form of the collective political identity. By discussing the contexts, expressions and relationalities that were at the core of two key contending articulations of this political community and identity, I hope to show that such a corporate/social divide is in effect a form of process-reduction decried by Elias.

To follow Oguma Eiji’s work (Oguma 2002[1995], see as well Askew 2001), one can identify, from the mid-nineteenth to the end of the Second World War, two key articulations of the Japanese political community: either as a “mixed nation,” the fruit of the encounter of an original population living on the isles and a conqueror coming from the continent, or as an ethnically homogeneous nation from primeval times. Despite their different understandings and representations of the Japanese political community, both sides agreed on the multicultural character of the Japanese polity; the fact that there were populations which were not “ethnically” Japanese (Ainu, Ryūkyūan, Korean, Taiwanese) yet part of the empire or the mere existence of culturally differentiated groups whether through their religious loyalties (Shintoists, Buddhists, Christians) or through their social ones (peasants, and especially the “outcasts”) was recognised by both sides. This point, the acknowledgement and
recognition of the heterogeneous character of the Japanese polity at that time, is crucial as it rebukes the stereotypical view that the dominant vision articulated in Japan was already that of an homogeneous population.

This recognition can be said to be partially the fruit of the colonial development of the Meiji regime in eastern Asia and the burgeoning of schools of thought in the nineteenth century. Interestingly, this "external" phenomenon, colonial expansion, was matched both with external and internal figurations of alterity, participating more generally in politics of alterity, that were oriented either toward an assimilationist position or an anti-assimilationist one. The assimilationist position, usually informed by proponents of the "mixed nation" theory, held a position which can be roughly epitomized as mission civilisatrice, pleading for the assimilation of peripheral and external populations to the Japanese polity, while the anti-assimilationist position, usually informed by proponents of the "homogeneous nation" theory, held a position of strict compartmentalization of each populations. While directed to the "orient," to subverted and subjected Asian populations, these figurations and politics of alterity, participated fully in a dialogical relation with the west. Indeed, one can note a subtle dialogue vis-à-vis the west in both the assimilationist and anti-assimilationist discourses. Moreover, the adopted Japanese colonial policies implemented, ruthlessly, both an assimilationist and an anti-assimilationist stance to the subverted populations.

What were the contexts surrounding these utterances? In regard to the question of the formation and performance of a "national" identity, it is clear that they revolved around the question of multiculturalism; that is to say to which extent is the Japanese polity made of, or should recognised being made of, several cultural entities and to which extent this is a good or a bad thing (see, for instance, Denoon et al. 1996; Clammer 2001; Oguma 2002 [1995]). It is clear that most modern societies are multicultural, in the sense of a social fact of the presence and interactions within a bounded polity of culturally differentiated groups. The (non/mis)recognition of this social fact can result in very different policies and different articulations of a hegemonic discourse about identity.
which, along a normative continuum, can be either inclusive or exclusive of difference.

The Japanese case is particularly interesting in that it has often been represented, and understood, as a monocultural, homogenous and harmonious society. Strikingly, this form of representation and understanding has been recurrent in Japan and outside. However, whether socially, culturally, or ethnically, Japan was and still is diverse, multiform, and conflictual (see Krauss et al. 1984; Lie 2001). Socially, for instance, few major issues can be singled out here. One was the political and social protests, and popular unrests, during the Tokugawa era. The mere existence of these “peasant protests,” according to James W. White (1995: 6-7), “belie the old stereotype of a uniquely harmonious Japanese society.” A major factor in such social (especially) and political unrests have been the economical transformations of Tokugawa’s Japan into a more commercial and protoindustrial society as well as the problems related to a very loose form of governance that was characterized by “the fragmentation of jurisdictions and inconsistency of administrative practice and capability across jurisdictions” (White 1995: 29).

From a cultural point of view, it is interesting to pinpoint first to the place of Christianity in Japanese history. Christianity has been a major force in determining many key features of the Tokugawa institutions such as the Danka system, a system of affiliation of temples and households at the heart of the Tokugawa regime control of the population (Hur 2007; Marcure 1985). Even in contemporary Japan, while it remains a marginal element within Japanese society, Christianity “has had a profound, but ambiguous impact on Japanese politics, education, literature and even on the organization and practices of the indigenous religions themselves” (Clammer 2001: 164). Buddhism itself, while being a fundamental element within Japanese history, has fluctuated in its positioning, during the late Tokugawa and early Meiji periods, as a core element of a hegemonic discourse about Japanese self-understanding/representation. As James E. Ketelaar (1990) has shown, during the early years of the Meiji era, Buddhism was cast as an “external” and “backward” force to Japan’s development as a modern nation and was fiercely and ruthlessly fought for a
while. Naturally, modernity itself became a sensitive discussion from the late Tokugawa to the early Shōwa periods (see, for instance, Minichiello 1998; Harootunian 2000).

Ethnically, finally, modern and contemporary Japan can be described as having faced or facing multicultural issues and tensions. Among the most known issues is the one faced by the Japanese polity as an empire. Whatever the questions that can be asked about the monoethnic character of the “Japanese”, Japan’s expansion to the north and the south during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries made it to include, respectively, Ainu and Ryūkyūan to its realm; moreover, the forceful integration of Taiwan and Korea made Japan a *de facto* multicultural polity by the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century (see, for instance, Ching 2001; Lie 2001; Oguma 2002(1995)).

Through this interaction with difference, the Meiji state as well as its successors came to enact policies towards Korean, Chinese/Taiwanese, Ainu, or Ryūkyūan that reflected not only the hegemonic utterance of the time but also the contending utterances about the scope and shape of the Japanese political community. In effect, one can argue that in the process of identity formation different figurations of alterity might well exist but the figuration of inversion is the strongest, the one that has the deepest impact on this process. Non-othered forms of figurations are but normative moments requiring the emancipation of singular self-understanding/representation from the “structural temptation” of othering (see Connolly 1991: 8). Yet, the debates about and policies related to the Japanese imperial project show a much more complicated picture. First, we see an *evolution* of the figurations at play regarding the dominant self-understanding/representation in Japan; from a perception that is constructed as mainly monocultural one can perceive a shift to a more multicultural construction which then evolve again into a monocultural one (Oguma 2002 [1995]). Second, a striking feature of this evolution is the way this dominant self-understanding/representation was always in interaction with specific alternatives, often blurred into a mixture of imagined or actual presences, such as China or the west. Third, this evolution not only shows that there are different

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13 A critical account of the preponderance of the figure of inversion and of othering in IR theory cab be found in Guillaume forthcoming.
potentially dominant self-understanding/representation that are at struggle to becoming the defining hypergood but that once this position is attained it does not necessarily follow a secure and stable dominion over the alternative ones (see Guillaume 2006).

With the Meiji restoration came the impulse to compete with the west in order to regain the country’s independence lost by the signature of the unequal treaties which provided westerners with the ability to regulate Japanese trade and with extraterritoriality in Japan (see Cortazzi, 1999). To compete with the west meant for many at the time to be like the west, to become a civilisation and to become an enlightened country. Western experts were hired at great expanses to teach the Japanese western institutions, technologies and sciences, Japanese elites were send abroad to observe and learn directly from the west and efforts were made to westernise the country’s political institutions, economy, technology and social mores. The first decades of the Meiji regimes were defined under the slogan bunmei kaika [civilisation and enlightenment] and this period is crucial to understand the new conditions of possibility created in an articulation of the Japanese political community that was participating in a conscious dialogue with the west as a resource for creating and promoting a strong and wealthy Japanese polity capable of resisting the west, a civilized Japan but not necessarily a modern one.

Indeed, the Japanese “westernisers” were, in the words of Douglas R. Howland (2001: 2, my emphasis), “much more enthusiastic about translating political concepts [coming from the west] than they were about practicing them;” indeed, the “Japanese efforts to translate the West must be understood both as problems of language–the creation and circulation of new concepts–and as problems of action–the usage of new concepts in debates about the policies to be implemented in a westernising Japan.” These efforts were linked with the widely shared perceptions that to avoid what other Asian countries (especially China and India) were suffering from western aggressions it was necessary to come to par with the “civilized nations” of the west. Influential thinkers such as Fukuzawa Yukichi and Katō Hiroyuki were keen on adopting and adapting European conceptions of progress, most notably Herbert Spencer’s (see
Howland, 2000) and Charles Darwin’s (see Unoura, 1999), in order to promote a conception of Japan as detached from its Asian neighbours and as competing for attaining an equal status with its western competitors (see Tanaka, 1993: 37-38, 46-47). In the famous words of Fukuzawa in his 1885 essay *Datsu-A ron* [Dissociation from Asia]:

> We cannot wait for our neighbor countries to become so civilized that all may combine together to make Asia progress. We must rather break out of formation and behave in the same way as the civilized countries of the West are doing ... We would do better to treat China and Korea in the same way as do the Western nations. (as quoted in Miyoshi, 1994: 53)

While this can be seen as a strong affirmation for a Japanese imperial project, it is rather to be primarily seen as a form of rupture in a tentative and alternative articulation of a Japanese self-understanding/representation. Indeed, by envisioning the political community “horizontally,” the early Meiji scholars, inspired by western liberal thinkers, equally offered such a rupture by considering Japan’s polity in a temporally driven dynamic rather than in a spatially driven one. *Bunmei* [civilisation] replaced the Chinese notion of *ka* [civilised centre] in the Meiji era to come defining Japan’s place in the hierarchy of nations (Morris-Suzuki, 1998a: 24-25). This transition was impacting on Japan’s “corporate” and “social” identities. During the Tokugawa era, the regime tried to decentre itself from the Chinese *ka* to constitute its own spatially-centred sovereignty by creating a network of either equal or tributary relations with its neighbours (see Toby, 1991 [1984]). During the Meiji era, the “centre” was not only, and certainly not primarily, spatially defined but temporally so, indeed “Unlike *ka*, *bunmei* was a dynamic concept laden with overtones of progress. Its basis was not harmony and hierarchy but production: the ability to create material wealth which would release the human spirit from the bonds imposed on it by nature” (Morris-Suzuki, 1998a: 24).

Fukuzawa’s 1875 (1973 [1875]) *Outline of a Theory of Civilization* precisely illustrates what are the stages of developments a nation has to face in order to become a civilized one. The referent was not anymore China but the civilized west; the orient was cast as Japan’s other while (western) civilization was cast as its future (see Sakamoto, 2001: 142-152; Tanaka, 1993). Fukuzawa’s
refrain in his *Datsu-A ron* could not be more explicit: “leave Asia and enter Europe” (Howell, 2000: 115-116). For Fukuzawa, Japan had to become civilized because to attain this condition was the only secure way to preserve its independence for western powers would only consider Japan as an equal sovereign state if Japan was recognised as a civilised nation by them. Furthermore, Fukuzawa asserted, the adoption of western civilization was the only way to preserve not only Japan’s independence but also Japan’s *kokutai*, its national essence. This mimetic stance should not be simply taken as the act of un-critically copying another’s practices; in this context, mimesis should be seen as an “operator for putting in relations” the terms of a dialogue (see Ossman, 1998: 10). Indeed, if one takes the case of Taiwan’s colonisation in particular, or the issue of colonialism more generally, the key question to ask is not “whether Japanese colonial discourse is the same as or ‘different’ from Western colonial discourse,” but rather to ask the question of “the *enunciative position* in which that identity or difference is articulated and configured in reference to the instituted differences between ‘Japan’ and ‘others’” (Ching, 2001: 27, my emphasis; see as well Duus, 1995: 424-438).

As is clear in the writings of key figures of the early Meiji era such as Fukuzawa, the discourse of “civilization,” of the west, was omnipresent in Japan (for an overview see Sansom, 1977 [1950]: chapters 14 and 15). Moreover, “The West was necessarily a part of the future [Japanese people] imagined ... The world the Western powers were then creating—the world of industry and imperialism, trade and technology—*was* the future, whether the Japanese liked it or not” (Howell, 2000: 86, original emphasis). The “process of civilization” and the idea of progress evolved from a discourse originating in and derived from the west to a “naturalized” discourse as “First, [civilization] acquired the adjectives ‘new’ or ‘Japanese’ before it, and then it shed even those. By the end of the [Meiji] period, ‘civilization’ appeared as an indigenous fact of social life that possessed the same descriptive transparency as any unmodified common noun” (Gluck, 1985: 254). “Civilization” was internalised as participating in figurations of alterity inasmuch as it was used to determine alternative self-understandings/representations through this prism.
Internationally, the Japanese self-understanding/representation promoted by the Meiji regime tended to put forward the idea that it participated in, or had to seek, the status of “civilized nation” in order to exit its condition of a subaltern country, following the signature of the unequal treaties, and be recognised as fully part of the international system. Furthermore, this dominant self-understanding/representation was set aside from what was considered as the “un-civilized” and “barbaric” Asians. This process of dissociation, illustrated by Fukuzawa’s *Datsu-A ron*, was paralleled with the construction of the east, the orient (*tōyō*) as Japan’s past and the west as its future (see Tanaka, 1993). This dialogical definition of a national community turned to the outside was paralleled domestically by efforts to westernise the country and the population as well as the articulation of “ideological fictions like *kunmin ikka* [the ruler and the people as one family] and *kazoku kokka* [the family-state]” (Irokawa, 1985 [1970]: 259); these efforts and articulations were all participating in a growing attempt to normalise the Japanese polity and society, an attempts that peaked in the 1920s and 1930s.

This redefinition of what it meant to be “Japanese” impacted on the relationship with populations, which were thought, in the Tokugawa era, to be outside or foreign from Japan. Indeed, Ainu and Ryūkyūan came to be thought as Japanese of a kind, the question raised being that of their integration to the dominant self-understanding/representation in light of their differences to it. This question of multiculturalism was furthermore present in the mind of Japanese at the turn of the nineteenth century as they faced the prospect of the integration of foreign populations located in colonies into a formal Japanese empire (see Morris-Suzuki, 1998a, 1998b; Oguma, 2002 [1995]). As the first instance of an “external colonisation,” Taiwan was a showcase in Japanese trans-action with the west in term of its emerging self-understanding/representation as a modern/civilised political community as well as in the politics to alterity *vis-à-vis* a difference deemed both close and distant from this emerging collective identity (see Matsuda, 2003). Indeed, the Taiwanese difference, as a colonial subject, made even more crucial the question of Japanese relations to multiculturalism in the context of its empire. What were the relations between this modern and civilised polity and its subordinated populations? What made
Japan (di)similar from other modern and civilised polities? What did it mean to be Japanese in regards to populations that were integrated in this polity? What was their place in the polity? Were their nationhood Japanese (minzoku)? Were they participating in the Japanese polity (kokumin, i.e. as citizens) for they might adopt Japanese culture thus defining themselves as Japanese?

The imperialist project as well as the actual acquisition of colonies by the Meiji state led to a very simple problematic for Japanese scholars and intellectuals: what was making the Japanese nation? The question was to know what was the place of the colonized in the Japanese empire. Interestingly, this question was echoing and came to be intertwined with an earlier debate among those who were perceiving that in order to reach its goal of maintaining its fragile independence and modernising as well as strengthening its state, the Meiji regime had not only to achieve its civic (formal) definition, somewhat achieved with the adoption of the Meiji constitution and the opening of the Diet by the end of the 1880’s, but as well its national (substantial) definition. What was feared, to use Carol Gluck’s (1985: 21-26) term, was that the Meiji’s subjects were lacking a “sense of nation.”

These questions were made even more acute as the population that started to be aggregated to the Japanese polity were geographically, culturally and historically contiguous to the Japanese frontiers. To take but one of the best example of this would be the incorporation of the Ryūkyūan kingdom into the Japanese polity. The Kingdom of Ryūkyū was participating in the Chinese tributary system since at least the fourteenth century and had contacts with the Satsuma clan in Southern Kyushu. The latter invaded parts of the kingdom in 1609 and thus began for the kingdom “Ryūkyū’s period of ‘dual subordination’ to Satsuma and the Bakufu, on the one hand, and Qing (after 1644) China on the other” (Siddle 1998: 118). The kingdom was indeed integrated, at least partially, in the Tokugawa bakufu’s world order, despite being a possession of the Satsuma clan, for in integrating Ryūkyū into that system the Tokugawa regime tried to depict the kingdom as a vassal state to its own tributary system, thus legitimising its newly acquired political authority by constructing and promoting, both
international and domestically, the vision of such a world order centred on Japan (see Toby 1991 [1984]: 45-52).

With the Meiji restoration came the full integration of Ryūkyū as Okinawa in 1879, as a prefecture of the Japanese territory. Despite its status as a prefecture, Okinawa was treated differently than other prefectures as it was more or less treated as a protectorate by the Meiji state (see Siddle 1998: 121-123). Moreover, the status of Okinawan became a problem of its own as the question of their status as “nationals” came to the fore. Indeed, as noted by Julia Yonetani (2000: 30), “Contentious over divergent and often ambiguous constructions of ‘sameness’ reflected ambivalent fluctuations between articulations of Japanese nation and empire, and over Okinawa’s place within a protean Japan.” In facing these new imperial citizens, the Japanese polity was confronted with a dilemma. Indeed, “The ruling state’s urge to exalt and spread the values of its own ‘civilisation’ contended with its desire to maintain the differences that justified unequal access to power” (Morris-Suzuki 1998: 161). How this dilemma was considered depended upon the either nativist or multiculturalist framework that was adopted to understand this “new” reality for the Japanese polity. Interestingly, each of these framework adopted specific figurations of alterity in order to convey what they sought was the best way to achieve the “national polity,” the kokutai (see Guillaume 2003).

Conclusion

Discourses and practices about the kokutai, as an “external” and “internal” Weltanschauung, participate in a heteroglossia pertaining to the shape and scope of the national political community. Different and contending collective self-understandings/representations of this community impacted on the ways both policies at home and abroad were shaped and conducted, whether toward a more “internal” alterity, such as the Ainu or the Ryūkyūan, or a more “external” alterity, such as the Taiwanese and the Koreans (see Guillaume 2006 for a synthetic view). One of the key political grammars that were used by all participating in this “production and exchange of signs” (Foucault 2001 [1982]: 1055) about the kokutai was that of civilization. The omnipresence of this political grammar, both in “internal” and “external” discourses and practices, and
the genealogy of its use by different and contending collective self-
understandings/representations illustrates concretely the process-reduction
fallacy that would characterise any attempts to divide an analysis of a Japanese
identity formation, performance and transformation into either a corporate
perspective or a social perspective. Moreover, the essentially extrinsic quality of
this phenomenon furthers the case for privileging process-based because of its
capability to comprehend how the political is working in such phenomenon by
stressing the “unachieved and open” (Bayart 1985: 355) character of the trans-
actions among utterances that are at the core of the understanding, expression
and representation of a collective political community.

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