

## Andrea Masey, reading #1

Reading the article I begun to understand a bit more about the *Nihonjinron*, before this class I had never heard of such a concept. There were several points in the article that I questioned and wondered how they could be true. To start off with this article explains that the *Nihonjinron* books were written to explain the uniqueness of Japanese culture and identify as its own from other cultures. These writings generalized Japan as a whole, rather than looking towards what the individuals of Japan believed or the “internal variations”. *Nihonjinron* itself, is a unique concept of Japan, and is not seen in any other culture according to the author. In my own opinion, I find that a bit hard to believe, while term is Japan’s own word and it doesn’t really translate into other languages well, the idea of showcasing one’s culture’s identity and its uniqueness I feel is a common practice. Maybe the term “patriotism” could be similar, seeing that this term is generally about be proud on one’s country, which in turn could lead to someone showing the uniqueness of their culture from other countries. So to me, the idea behind *Nihonjinron* is not so unique to Japan, but the term itself and how it is done are unique.

What I found that make the *Nihonjinron* unique was, according to the author, it is a type of theory (since *ron* can be translated to “theory”), but it is not the type that is “well-researched” and “scholarly” like the people would think when they hear the term theory. Instead it is more of a general concepts in regards to Japan’s culture, society, and people while comparing and contrasting them to mainly other Western countries, instead of boosting one’s personal opinions.

The second point that I found interesting in this article is; how relevant most of the *Nihonjinron* can be? The author states that the culture and society are constantly changing and adding new ideas and concepts. So I’m wondering how many of the *Nihonjinron* can be consider relative and useful in analyzing Japan’s sense of identification now at this point of time, and yet the author makes it seems like they could still be relevant. Although, the more popular books of *Nihonjinron*, seem to be found in many bookstores. These popular books are usually quick and easier to understand compared to 400 plus page books not found in many bookstores. I can understand how the light versions of these books can appeal to the general public as a quick and interesting read, but can they still be used as Japan’s identification now? Even using a book from the 1980’s, when the interest for this genre was at one of the highest, many things in culture, society and even how people view the world has changed since then. Although I can see where finding good *Nihonjinron* books can be difficult to find now, since publications may not be as frequent as before, but these older books, in my own opinion, maybe not be the best sources. The author even stated in the beginning of the article that as culture and society evolves then a new identity must be created as well.

Another point in this article that had caught my attention was when the author wrote that Japan “had no interest in involving Africa in its effort to create its identity.” There were practically no *Nihonjinron* books that author could find that compared Japan and Africa that sane way that Japan did with Western countries. Africa was most likely to be unimportant to Japan in this subject because of the lack of interaction politically and economically. I also found it interesting that Japan didn’t compare and contrast more with other Asian countries. I would think that it would be more important to show Japan’s uniqueness from other Asian counties in order to stand out more than comparing their culture and society to western cultures which are already very different. It was interesting to read that the similarities that Japan has with the Western countries and their “economic fate is heavily entangled in its relationship with the United States.” The author points out that if something had happened where Japan had become involved with another country instead of the US or Western countries than that would have been what the *Nihonjinron* would have been comparing to instead. In the end, this idea of behind *Nihonjinron* is very interesting, and it a unique way of creating an identity for a country and culture.