

Essay on japanese movie swallowtail butterfly

[Sociology](#), [Racism](#)



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A homogeneous society is a society where most of the individuals within the society share the similar kind of culture, values, language, ethnicity, and spiritual system. Homogeneity comes to a society in a numbers of ways- ethnically (Japanese), religiously (many Arab nationals), culturally (Indians), politically (communism) etc. Research has revealed that the most important type of homogeneity is the racial one, where all the individuals have analogous type complexion and cultural background. Economic homogeneity also subsists in many countries, it was widespread in many communist countries, and this type of homogenous civilization is in decline. Cultural and Ethnic homogeneity is burly among many indigenous groups in USA, Latin countries and Africa.

Japanese frequently imagine themselves as a homogeneous society, with a well-fabricated sense of group and national identity and small or no ethnic or racial multiplicity. Conversely, such disparities exist in Japan, as in all societies, as Iwai Shunji puts it on perspective in his movie *Swallowtail Butterfly*. Shunji Iwai's *Swallowtail Butterfly* of 1996 is a movie about aliens mainly Chinese, although Europeans and Americans as well in Japan. Most of these foreigners communicate in English, which they understand better than they do Japanese. The major character, Ageha (*Butterfly*) is an adolescent girl, descendant of a deceased Chinese prostitute, however, who was born in Japan and only converses in Japanese and English. The movie is generally based in a place called Yen town. Yen town became a city when immigrants rushed into the area trying to earn money, which are called Yen in Japan. Yen town then became a place where people would rush to when they wanted to make money. They would journey there, make money, and go back home.

Yen town is a type of ghetto and resembles Tokyo, Japan. In the start of the movie, a 16-year-old girl called Ageha is standing before a cadaver. The establishment questions her if the deceased woman is her mother and Ageha utters "no". In all authenticity, the deceased woman was her mother. Ageha cannot afford to foot the funeral expenditures and recognizes that if no one claims the body, the country will sponsor the funeral. Ageha is then thrown out into the world with no one to care for her. She approaches her mother's friends and none of them seems to want her. She is passed from friend to friend until she ends up living with a prostitute named Glico. Glico takes her in out of pity and while she lives with her, Ageha has many experiences and learns about life from the immigrants that did not make their fortune in Yen town. Eventually Glico is discovered as a singer. She and her crew have the chance to make the money that they have forever desired. The money causes difficulties, though, and the connection that Glico, Ageha had formed finishes up being too delicate to last, and the two find themselves having to face their own fears and resolve their own setbacks.

In the path of the movie, we also meet up with Japanese-born offspring of Americans, white and black, but whose major verbal communication is Japanese, and who do not verbalize English very well, if at all. Consequently, the movie is multi-lingual and multi-ethnic giving the lie to the myth of Japanese homogeneity. It is extensively believed, particularly among Japanese people themselves, that Japan is a "homogeneous" society. The government itself has repeatedly declared that there is no problem with minorities in their country. This is not true, certainly, and never has been. In

many parts of Japan, there are still communities of Burakumin, the descendants of people defined as outcasts during the feudal middle Ages. The Ainu, a distinctively different ethnic group who inhabited Japan long before the formation of the Yamato Japanese who came to control the archipelago, are yet to be found, living mostly in Hokkaido and struggling to uphold their characteristic and long-concealed culture. The populace of Okinawa, previously the inhabitants of a self-governing Ryukyuan kingdom, were exposed to maltreatment by their Japanese conquerors until well into the post-war epoch. Even at present, the Japanese government's enthusiasm to permit a heavy concentration of US military facilities on the Okinawan (Tomiyama 45) islands surely reflects a discriminatory consciousness towards the Ryukyuan people (Takara 23). In addition to these facts, the movie also relates to and focuses on the immigrants in the town of Yen Town thus demonstrating that Japan is not homologous therefore it has its fair share of other ethnicities.

Another distinctive feature portrayed by the director Shunji Iwai that disregards and renders the myth of Japan being a homologous society redundant is the issue of language. In order for a society to be homologous, everyone in it must communicate in a single language. Japan claims to be a homologous society and yet it is Multi-lingual. The story line is about a Chinese girl who speaks both English and Japanese. The immigrants in Yen Town used mostly English to communicate to each other and yet the main language is Japanese. It then evident that, in terms of lingua, this particular society is not homologous.

The third distinctive feature that denounces the myth is the issue of racism and discrimination. As part of a homologous society, individuals are equivalent and identical. This means no discrimination or racism. In the movie, racism and discrimination is rampant as the immigrants encounter this on daily basis. Ageha, the main character is a victim of these phenomena as nobody wants to stay with her. This means that the myth is just but a myth and not true that Japan is a homologous society.

Work Cited

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