

Reading 6: Review of W.E. Griffis, *The Mikado's Empire*: Worksheet

Reading 6. [A.H. Guernsey], "The Mikado's Empire", *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 53 (September 1876) pp. 496-514.

I. General Questions

1. What is the date, venue, and main subject of the article? What pictures from Griffis' volume are selected to illustrate the review? What do you imagine might be the sources of these pictures?
2. What are the two parts into which Griffis' book is divided? Does the reviewer give equal attention to these two parts? Does the reviewer expressive negative criticism of Griffis's book at any point?
3. Does the article contain any obvious mistakes or misunderstandings concerning the ancient and recent history of Japan?
4. What position/attitude does the article take towards the system of Japanese government, and towards Japanese culture and society more generally?
5. What position/attitude does the author take towards Western relations with Japan?
6. Does the article reflect the modes of thought that we have termed Social Darwinism and Orientalism? If so, where and how?

II. Specific Questions

1. What do you think W.E. Griffis means in the following passages quoted in the review?
 - a. "It is time that a writer treated Japan as something else than an Oriental puzzle, a nation of recluses, a land of fabulous wealth, of universal licentiousness or of Edenic purity, the fastness of a treacherous and fickle crew, a Paradise of guileless children, ..."
(p. 498).
 - b. "They made friends with the men they once thought were beasts; and now many of the very men who once wished the ports closed and the foreigners expelled, and who considered all aliens as only a few degrees above the level of beasts, are now members of the Mikado's Government, the exponents of advanced ideas, the defenders and executors of Western civilization."
(p. 508-9).
 - c. "Can an Asiatic despotism, based on paganism, and propped on a fiction, regenerate itself? Can Japan go on in the race she has begun? Will the mighty reforms now attempted be completed and made permanent? Can a nation appropriate the fruits of Christian civilization without its root? I believe not. I can not but think that unless the modern enlightened ideas of government, law, society, and the rights of the individual be adopted to a far greater extent than they have been, the people be thoroughly educated, and a mightier spiritual force replace Shinto and Buddhism, little will be gained but a glittering veneer of material civilization and the corroding foreign vices, under which, in the presence of the superior aggressive nations of the West, Dai Nippon must fall like the doomed races of America."
(p. 514).