Subverting Exclusion examines how caste, race and international borders shaped the attitudes of Japanese immigrants, diplomats and intellectuals on both sides of the Pacific. Men and women who left the island nation for the North American West in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century included people with ties to historical outcaste communities, formerly called *eta* and *hinin*, and more recently, *burakumin*. Geiger sheds light on this oft-neglected aspect of Japanese immigration. The central argument of the book is that the concept of outcaste continued to influence perceptions of what the author calls “Meiji(-era) Japanese immigrants”, a problematic label which neglects a substantial number of immigrants who left Japan after the end of the Meiji period in July 1912. The negative images attached to the concepts of *eta* and *hinin* shaped the ways in which immigrants dealt with a range of daily concerns such as occupational choices and marriage practices, as well as larger issues of exclusion and citizenship rights. This is despite both the Japanese Imperial Edict of Emancipation of Burakumin of 1871 that officially banned *mibunsei* or the class and status system and that affirmed the equal rights of former outcastes and despite their relocation across the Pacific.

The book is comprised of nine chapters. The first four chapters review the history of the Japanese class/status system of *shi no ko sho* (samurai, peasants, artisans and merchants) during the Edo period, the emigration policies of the Meiji Government, and a range of strategies that Japanese diplomats and immigrants used in an effort to counter adverse perceptions of Japanese migrants among North Americans. The next three chapters probe the racial politics that shaped the legal rights of immigrants: chapters five and six focus on the transit privilege across the Canadian and the Mexican borders; while chapter seven examines two well-known legal challenges brought against the restriction of citizenship rights in Canada (*Cunningham v. Homma*) and the United States (*Ozawa v. United States*). The final two chapters discuss the policing of marriages and the rhetoric of homogeneity. The book also contains a number of intriguing photographs and maps. Unfortunately, these sometimes lack any explanation, as is the case for example for the posing of the coal miners with their lunch pails (p.67) or the circumstances under which one so-called picture bride who landed in San Francisco in the early Taisho era (following the Meiji period) had her photo taken with the young daughter she was obliged to leave behind (p.170).

Nevertheless, *Subverting Exclusion* makes several important contributions, one of which is its treatment of the subject of outcastes among the immigrating population. In addressing the lingering silence that negates the presence of *burakumin* among Japanese immigrants as well as the absence of sources on basic facts, including the exact number of outcastes among immigrant populations and their geographic origin at the local and municipal levels, Geiger’s study offers a creative attempt at investigating the meanings and consequences of social distinctions. Further, the book sheds light on the agency of Issei and Nisei individuals in their fight against white racism. Chapter seven in particular offers a strong reminder of the extent to which Japanese exclusion and racism defined and distorted the judicial process and shaped the outcomes of court challenges in Canada and the United States.
Despite these strengths, *Subverting Exclusion* also has a number of weaknesses. First, there is a need for greater clarity on the history of outcastes in Japan. Although opinions diverge on the origin of *eta*, the scholarly consensus is that the creation of the category of outcastes predates by far the Edo period. As Takahashi Sadaki states, the derogatory designation of *eta* came into use as early as the Heian period (9th-12th centuries) and the outcaste category of *eta* solidified during the feudal period of Muromachi (14th-16th centuries). Further, while the four-tier status/caste system of *shi no ko sho* with the accompanying lowest orders of *eta* and *hinin* was institutionalized in the Edo period, in practice it was somewhat flexible and there were many exceptions to ordered class distinctions. However, Geiger reduces the history of these underclasses to a “product of the Tokugawa status system” (p. 194) and the reference to Hayashida’s work (p. 206, nt5) aside, her narrative tends to ignore a much longer history of myths, taboos and reality surrounding the outcastes in Japan before the seventeenth century.

The book also reveals some weaknesses in its argumentation. Without clear distinctions between “low(er) class(es)” on the one hand, and “*eta,*” “*hinin,*” and “outcastes” on the other, Geiger’s discussion at times tends to conflate all four. For example, in the section on the Japanese picture marriage, the author describes Ambassador Ishi Kikujirô’s attempt to defend this practice as a tradition common to Japanese of “mid-level status categories” while equating North American customs with the practices of “low-status group(s)” of Japanese (p. 173). No evidence is presented to show that the ambassador’s reference to “low-status groups” did not include classes other than outcastes. Rather, his reference seems to have reflected his sense of class distinction between a small number of elite Japanese, such as intellectuals and diplomats like himself, and the majority of largely rural and illiterate peasants, fishermen, and labourers as well as outcastes. Such social divisions, as Mitziko Sawada has noted, rested on a combination of factors that ranged from education and economic status to class background as well as, I would add, rural/urban divides. However, Geiger equates Ishii’s discourse to “cultural perceptions associated with outcast status.” There is no denying that class/caste distinctions were on the ambassador’s mind, but that alone does not seem to explain the extent to which Ishii and many other elite Japanese desperately tried to convince the exclusionists of the suitability of selected Japanese immigration to North America.

Finally, there is a lack of consistency in the endnotes. A number of references to Subject Correspondence, a U.S. federal immigration record, are without file number or p. 217, nt1, for example). Occasionally, some notes appear with file numbers, followed immediately by a note without it (p. 243, nts 38 and 39, for example). Some notes could be more straightforward. For example, note 4 attached to a quote on page 230 refers the reader to Geiger’s doctoral thesis. In her dissertation, the footnote to exactly the same quotation more appropriately cites its author (Osada Shohei) and his book (*Brothels of Canada*). There are disconcerting errors in translation from Japanese to English, especially when they involve key subjects such as *Suiheisha*, translated poorly as “Water Levelers Association” (p. 183). Curiously, existing studies pertinent to the book receive no mention. The section on the role of steamship companies (pp. 113-14) closely resembles discussions that I presented at a 2009 conference on a panel with Geiger and in a publication of mine (2009) that Geiger has commented on elsewhere, but no mention of this appears in the footnotes. Geiger would have benefited from Toake Endoh’s work in
which he discusses at length emigration from southwestern Japan that included a high proportion of burakumin. His analysis (2009) has shown that this emigration, albeit Latin American-bound, was a Japanese state-promoted solution to political, economic and social problems surrounding the former outcastes and radicals in Japan. Endoh further argues that burakumin in the mining sector in Japan assumed multiple social identities such as “peasant[s], worker[s] and social outcast[s]”. Endoh’s arguments would have fundamentally deepened Geiger’s discussion, particularly in the section on coalmine workers (pp. 66-9).

With its many strengths and weaknesses, this book is altogether a welcome addition to the expanding field of Japanese migration and transnational American Studies. The book invites readers to think more critically across the national borders and class boundaries that have tended to confine the fields of our study until recently.

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European feudalism grew out of European circumstances, and when transplanted across the Atlantic was recontextualized in settings quite unlike those in which it had flourished in Europe. The press of people on land was absent; the relative value of land fell dramatically, the value of labour rose, and in new circumstances the relationship with authority could not be what it had been. The seigneurial system, the feudal system implanted in Canada at the beginning of French settlement, was built around hierarchical relationships between people and with land. A basic question is how these relationships worked themselves out in the non-French circumstances they encountered along the lower St. Lawrence. The question is central: land in early Canada was granted and held in seignuries, and different types of landholding entailed different socio-economic obligations, responsibilities, and powers.

In Brève histoire du régime seigneurial, Benoît Grenier offers a synopsis of the large literature on the seigneurial system in Canada and of his own writing and thinking about it. His analysis lies somewhere between the two most common interpretative poles. If he cannot accept Aubert de Gaspé’s (or, for that matter, Marcel Trudel’s) paternalistic vision of beneficent seigneurs and appreciative censitaires, he does not deny that, here and there, such relationships existed. If he is uneasy with a Marxist emphasis on the seigneurs’ exploitation of their censitaires catching the sum of Canadian seigneurialism, he is well aware that seigneurial charges could be burdensome. He knows too, and insists repeatedly on the point, that feudalism is fundamentally hierarchical and inegalitarian. More broadly and like most writers on the subject, he considers the seigneurial system central to the history of early Canada.

Everything is interesting and relevant and much is excellent in this short, well-informed and well-argued book. The chapter on the European origins of the seigneurie is as fine a short summary of this complex topic as one will find. The chapter on the