

アイヌ アイデンティティ、歴史的闘争、及び民族復活運動

Ainu's Identity, Historical Struggle, and Ethnic-Revitalization Movements

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アイヌ文化、先住民族、文化伝承、先住権、民族復活運動

Ainu culture, indigenous people, culture tradition, indigenous rights, ethnic-revitalization movements

ABSTRACT

日本は単一民族社会だと考えられてきたが、この数十年、論争が起こっている。人種、民族の純粋さを重視する日本の排他主義は、日本が島国であり、鎖国政策によって日本人特有の感覚が培われてきた為に生じた。アイヌは元来白系だとみなされ、他の日本人と異なる為、政府の同化政策によって抑圧されてきたが、事実、アイヌは民族文化を持つ日本の先住民族である。2007年の国連総会でアイヌが日本の先住民族であると承認され、翌年日本政府も事実を認めた。しかし、アイヌへの偏見差別、経済、社会、教育問題は未解決であり、アイヌに関する研究も少ない。本論文ではアイヌと日本人アイデンティティを比較し、経済不平等、階級差別へのアイヌの歴史的闘争を検証し、アイヌ民族復活運動を分析する。本研究により、教育者がアイヌアイデンティティ、文化伝承、歴史及びアイヌ民族復活運動の理解と知識を深め、積極的にアイヌの人権尊重に取り組むことを願う。

Japan is thought to be a racially and ethnically monolingual, homogeneous society. However, the notion of Japan's homogeneity has been controversial for decades. Japan's ethnocentrism derives from the fact that Japaneseness has been developed because Japan geographically is an island country and historically had closed the country to keep it secure. Thus the purity of Japaneseness relating to race and ethnicity became crucial. *Ainu* were said to be of Caucasian roots, now disproven with no racial affinity to the Japanese. In fact, *Ainu* are indigenous people of Japan and the *Ainu* culture was formed centuries ago. However, *Ainu* had

suffered from assimilation to the mainstream culture and oppressions due to their biological and ethnic differences from the rest of the Japanese. After their historical struggles, the United Nations finally affirmed in 2007 that the *Ainu* are indigenous people of Japan, followed by the approval of the Japanese government in 2008. However, today there still remain prejudice and discrimination against *Ainu* and economic, social, and educational issues. Little research has been conducted concerning human rights issues of *Ainu* within a global context. This paper will 1) compare *Ainu*'s identity with Japan's national identity in relation to Japaneseness; 2) examine *Ainu*'s historical struggle of economic inequality and social stratification; and 3) analyze *Ainu*'s ethnic-revitalization movements concerning human rights. Today people still lack of understanding of *Ainu*'s identity, cultural tradition, and history. Thus, this study will benefit educators providing them with knowledge of and positive attitudes toward the *Ainu* and their ethnic-vitalization movements.

1. Introduction

Japan is thought to be a racially and ethnically monolingual, homogeneous society. However, the notion of Japan's homogeneity has been controversial for decades. Today, due to the demographic and socio-economic shifts, Japan is becoming more diverse internally, while Japan is also facing the multilingual and multicultural world internationally. Consequently, "the contemporary Japanese society is caught between the contradictory forces of narrow ethnocentrism and open internationalization" (Sugimoto, 2014, p. 197). Japan's ethnocentrism derives from the fact that the unique sense of self, Japaneseness has been developed, because Japan geographically is an island country and had historically closed its ports. Sugimoto warns that Japanese society has internal racial and ethnic conflicts on what is meant to be 'Japanese'.

This issue of Japaneseness is critical in historical transformations with a shift of nationalistic to a global point of view. "The definition of who is Japanese is essentially racial. The indigenous *Ainu*, not to mention other Asians, exist in special but essentially foreign categories as the Japanese identity is narrowly constructed" (DeVos, 2010, p. 182). *Ainu* were said to be of Caucasian roots with no racial affinity to the Japanese. However, in fact, *Ainu* existed in northern Japan more than 10,000

years ago and *Ainu* culture has been formed since that time. Historically, *Ainu* have fought Japanese domination for centuries due to their biological and ethnic differences. Consequently, the *Ainu*, one of "the minorities necessarily and continuously engage with and against majority cultures in a vertical relationship of assimilation and opposition" (Lionnet & Shi, 2005, abstract). The Japanese government hid the issue of *Ainu* and created a national myth of homogeneity. "At the level of common-sense understanding a master narrative of seamless national homogeneity denies the existence of the *Ainu* as an ethnic minority group; the *Ainu* are regarded as either totally assimilated or biologically extinct" (Siddle, 1997, p. 17).

After *Ainu*'s historical struggle, in 2007, the UN General Assembly passed the Declaration on *Ainu* as indigenous people, followed by the formal recognition of the Japanese government in 2008 (Maruyama, 2013). Thus, today one can recognize that Japan is no longer a homogeneous country and discrimination against *Ainu* must be eliminated. Yet, little research has been conducted concerning human rights issue of *Ainu* in Japan within a global context.

2. The Purpose of the Research

This paper will 1) compare *Ainu* identity with

Japan's national identity in relation to Japanese-ness; 2) examine *Ainu's* historical struggle of economic inequality and social stratification; and 3) analyze *Ainu's* ethnic-revitalization movements as human rights movements.

3. *Ainu's* Identity vs. Japan's National Identity

3.1 The Origin of *Ainu* and Their Identity

Today, *Ainu* are recognized as the indigenous people of northern Japan. *Ainu* are also defined as 'honorable human beings in relation to God' and *Ainu* land (*Ainu Moshir*) indicates the great tranquil land where honorable human beings reside with their own language.

Historically the geographic location of *Ainu* was not limited to southern Hokkaido, but spread out to the north, even further to Kuril and Sakhalin islands. Thus, it is thought that *Ainu* had been influenced by both northern and southern cultures. According to the Hokkaido Prefectural government (2006), *Ainu* population is approximately 24,000, mostly living in southern Hokkaido.

Ainu's distinct culture appears in fishing and farming, and formerly hunting-gathering due to the abundant resources in their land, and also in language, diet, and religion. Many of the *Ainu* land are strongly tied with their own language. Although the majority of the *Ainu* were relocated to southern Hokkaido, several places are named after *Ainu* language throughout Hokkaido.

In the *Ainu* culture, 'there is a complex spiritual relationship with the phenomena of the natural world (*kamui* = deities) on which the *Ainu* depended. "The main religious rite was the *Iyomante*, where the spirit of a deity was sent back to the land of the gods" (Siddle, 1997, p. 18). Their religious practice called 'soul sending' is similar to original Shinto practice that focuses on the relationship between the great nature as god and human beings. Although

these two cultural identities were formed separately, there might be a contact between the *Ainu* and the mainland Japanese.

3.2 Japan's National Identity

Japan has been globalizing and closing its country repetitively in historical transformations with its political expansion and security, economic benefits, and socio-cultural advancements such as diplomatic, economic and cultural ties with China and Korea, Japan's national seclusion, westernization, and globalization. This trend has made Japan distinctive and unique. Japan's practice of borrowing and adapting selectively from other cultures was a means to reach the nation's economic and military goals represented by the Meiji slogan, 'Rich Country and Strong Military'. Furthermore, this had been integrated into unique Japanese culture that resulted in its Japan's national identity.

Discourses of Japanese-ness have been discussed among the Japanologists since the Meiji Restoration when Japan dramatically shifted its society from feudalism to one based on the Western cultural values. Consequently, the analysis of discourses of Japanese-ness became more focused on Japan's society and culture from a rationalistic point of view. However, today, the meaning of Japanese culture and its values as seen in Japanese-ness are being discussed not in the characteristics of static society and culture, but from a psycho-social and anthropological point of view.

Gordon and LeTandre (2010) describe Japanese-ness in relation to the notions of "essentialism and purity that have superficially bound together those who view themselves as 'Japanese'" (p. 202). They admit that Japan is a hidden multicultural nation, analyzing purity of Japanese-ness based on narrow ethnocentrism in "the historical legacy resulting from the stigmatization of 'the other' as those who 'do not fit'" (p. 202). Thus, the meaning of Japanese culture can be the base to

examine the difference and commonality of self-identity between *Ainu* and mainland Japanese. Their critiques strongly relate to the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed that had occurred in the colonial periods. The Japanese government legitimated the vertical relationship by eliminating Korean and *Ainu* identity externally and internally during the colonial periods. This notion of political force can also be explained as the notion of in/out group (*uchi/soto*) derived from Japanese narrow ethnocentrism.

From an anthropological point of view, Befu (2001) analyzes the discourses of Japan's national identity in a shift from a positive to negative self-identity since the Meiji period. Befu determines *Ainu* as internal racial and ethnic conflicts in the formation of Japan's pure national identity. Here one can see hidden diversity, the existence of *Ainu* as inconvenient racial and ethnic identity.

4. *Ainu's* Historical Struggle

4.1 *Ainu's* Historical Background

Historically, Hokkaido called '*Ezochi*' had been an uncultivated land separated from the main islands of Japan. Yet, *Ainu* development in southern Hokkaido represents a distinctive ethnic identity. While legally Japanese citizens, the *Ainu* were excluded from the racialized national community as an internalized native population.

Thus, it is significant to examine *Ainu's* social structure and economic trade with the *Wajin* (the Japanese from the mainland of Japan) in the initial contact situation to find out why and how the vertical dominant-minority group relations formed around the 14th century and developed over several centuries.

4.2 *Ainu's* Social Structure and Their Economic Lives

The *Ainu's* "social organization was based on kin-

groups with clearly demarcated distinction in status. Communities were ruled by a leader (*kotankorokur*), selected on the basis of both inheritance and ability, who took a leading role in trade and mediated disputes based on customary law" (Siddle, 1997, pp. 18-19). The Satsumon culture had been developed as the post-Jomon culture in southern Hokkaido during the 7th and the 13th centuries. This has proven that the *Ainu* had been hunters-gatherers. Because of that, one can recognize that *Ainu's* social organization was unlike the *Uji-Kabane* system in the mainland Japan in the Yayoi period in which the rich and poor relations were developed due to the foundation of social order. The *Ohotsuku* culture along the coast line of northern Hokkaido had been also developed during the 9th through 13th century as almost parallel to the *Satsumon* culture. Thus, the culture of Northern Territories also seemed to influence *Ainu's* cultural identity during that time.

The *Ainu* land was rich in natural resources such as salmon and deer. Because of that, open trade between *Wajin* and *Ainu* that had started in the 14th century went well. However, the unequal trade and limitation of open trade gradually built up the vertical dominant-minority relations in the trade completion.

4.3 The Vertical Dominant-Minority Group Relations in the Contact Situation

The *Koshamine* battle in 1457 was the *Ainu's* first revolt to express their struggle against subordination by the *Kakizaki* domain (*han*), the dominant group who entered the *Ainu* land to open trade with them. Consequently, the lord *Kakizaki* oppressed the *Ainu* and relocated his castle from the northern part of Honshu to *Matsumae*, the southern part of Hokkaido. Another significant battle was the *Shakushine* revolt in 1669 led by *Shakushine*, *Ainu* vice Chief. This was triggered by the inequality of production exchanges and limitation of free trade. As a result, *Shakushine* was killed and the *Ainu* were further

oppressed under the new Matsumae-han that obtained direct control with monopoly rights on trade approved by the *Tokugawa* government during the 18th and the 19th century. Thus, the *Matsumae-han*'s victory marked the completion of the vertical dominant-minority relations.

4.4 Assimilation and Opposition Policies by the Japanese Government

In order to maintain the vertical relations, the Japanese government utilized assimilation and opposition policies over the three periods: 1) the Meiji period; 2) post WWII, and 3) modern Japan since the 1990s. It is critical to analyze the shift of the Japanese society toward modernization in each era in relation to assimilation and opposition policies on the *Ainu*.

4.4.1 The Meiji Period

“With the Meiji Restoration of 1868 and the establishment of the Colonization Commission in 1869, Ezochi was renamed Hokkaido and transformed into an internal colony of the new Japanese state, strategic ‘empty land’ to be settled by immigration and developed along capitalist lines” (Siddle, 1997, p. 23). This was legitimated by the Land Regulation Ordinance. Furthermore, with the enactment of the Protection Act in 1899, the *Ainu* were considered as a primitive race and inferior to the Wajin who had invaded the *Ainu* land. Hence, there was a struggle for subjectivity of *Ainu* identity against Japan’s national identity in the contact situation when Japan opened its ports and adopted Western civilization at the beginning of the Meiji period.

4.4.2 Post WWII

Post WWII, Japan was forced to shift from the imperial, militaristic state to a democratic nation. The Japanese government legalized *Ainu*'s economic disadvantage and social stratification and

discrimination by limiting *Ainu* land and jobs. Moreover, the Japanese government cut the *Ainu* language programs at school and forced the *Ainu* to assimilate to the mainland Japanese. This assimilation policy caused a loss of *Ainu*'s distinctive ethnic culture and traditions deeply rooted in their language.

4.4.3 Modern Japan since the 1990s

Bukh (2010) describes that “contemporary identity of the *Ainu* became the first subject of modernizing Japan’s expansion in the second half of the 19th century” (p. 35). Bukh further explains that “the challenge that the emergence of *Ainu* subjectivity posed Japan’s policies, mainly in the context of the Northern Territories’ dispute” (p. 35). The *Ainu*'s identity, ‘self’ became the first subject of colonialism of Japan under the power struggle between the modern state of Japan and Russian Empire. This hierarchical relationship among three groups created by the Russian threat and led to Japanese government’s assimilation and oppression policies against the *Ainu* and the Russians to protect Japan from Russian Empire’s threat. Bukh identifies a simplified hierarchical construction of the self and the two ‘others’, stating that “Russia and Japan occupied relatively equal status in terms of their cultural values, while the *Ainu*, who were seen as potentially subjected to enlightenment by either Russia or Japan, were at the lowest step of this cultural hierarchy” (p. 36). Bukh points out that the struggle over Japan’s identity was because of the emergence of *Ainu* subjectivity caused by the power of Russian ‘other’. Thus, one can understand why the historical and political struggle in the territorial disputes of Kuril Islands between Japan and Russia are still unresolved in our global age.

5. *Ainu*'s Ethnic-Revitalization Movements

Assimilation and opposition in the contact situation that have affected the status of the *Ainu* are continuously discussed around the human rights issues of the indigenous *Ainu*.

5.1 Initiation of Ethnic-Revitalization Movements

Initiation of *Ainu*'s ethnic-revitalization movements occurred in 1946 when *Ainu* Association of Hokkaido was established. Kaizawa (2010) outlines three purposes of the *Ainu* Association; 1) to retain the lands given to them under the post-war Agricultural Land Act; 2) to attain the return to the *Ainu* of expropriated land in *Niikappu* that the government had taken for the establishment of an imperial farm for the Emperor and 3) to reestablish control of land promised to the *Ainu* in Asahikawa (pp. 91-93). Even though the *Ainu* Association of Hokkaido strived to restore their rights, only one purpose, the restoration to their lands in *Niikappu*, was attained. The *Ainu* leaders started to take action to disseminate information of indigenous *Ainu* and their own culture. Furthermore, the Hokkaido *Utari* Association was established in 1961, aiming at preserving and advancing *Ainu*'s cultural traditions. Finally, the General Assembly of the *Utari* Association was held in 1984. They made a proposal for legislation on the *Ainu* as indigenous people of Hokkaido.

5.2 Legal Recognition of *Ainu*'s Ethnic Revitalization Movements

Initial recognition of and respect and appreciation for *Ainu* as indigenous people was made by the United Nations in 1996 and Japanese Government in 1997. This was the significant step to affirm *Ainu*'s ethnic-revitalization movements and to legalize their human rights as the indigenous ethnic

minority of Japan. "The New *Ainu* Law took effect on May 8, 1997 with passage by the Lower House to preserve *Ainu* culture and guarantee their human rights" (Japan Times, 1997). The law is Japan's first legislation acknowledging the existence of ethnic minority in Japan. Thus, one has proven that *Ainu*'s ethnic revitalization movements were successful, because *Ainu*'s existence as indigenous people and their indigenous rights were legalized.

However, Maruyama (2013) points out that "one of the problems with the New *Ainu* Law is that 'culture' is limited to cultural products such as music, dance and handicraft. More seriously, the law does not recognize any indigenous rights of the *Ainu*" (p. 205). His points are well taken, because the law does not focus on how to promote *Ainu* identity and cultural values, or their human rights as indigenous rights of Japan.

Concerning the problem of the New *Ainu* Law, Stamatopoulou (2012) warns that the neglect of cultural rights has hidden one of the most disgraceful and violent parts of human history: that of states knowingly and deliberately oppressing and even annihilating communities" (p. 1171). Furthermore, Stamatopoulou continues to emphasize that "all customs and traditions through which individuals and communities express their humanity and build their world view. Culture shapes and mirrors the values of well-being and the economic, social, and political life of individuals, groups of individuals, and communities" (p. 1182). Her statements summarize the true meaning of culture and emphasize the importance of gaining cultural rights of indigenous minorities who struggle for the expression of identity, both personal and political.

5.3 *Ainu*'s Human Rights as Collective Cultural Rights

Today, there are two important advancements of *Ainu* culture. First is the establishment of National *Ainu* Museum located in *Shiraoi*, the southern part

of Hokkaido on July 11, 2020. The New museum called ‘Upopoi’ (= a Community Center where all the ethnic groups of people are gathering) aims at the restoration and advancements of *Ainu* culture. The establishment of *Upopoi* was derived from the idea of “revitalization of traditional living space called *Iwor* and promotion of Japanese understanding of *Ainu* persons and culture” (Maruyama, 2013, p. 205). The second advancement of *Ainu* culture is the planet called ‘*Chura*’ orbiting around the sun. This *Ainu* word also is symbolical, because the Japan’s proposal for the contest for naming the new planet won the prize in the campaign led by the International Atomic Union. Thus, these two *Ainu* words marked recognition of the existence of *Ainu* culture and people to the world as the symbols of *Ainu*.

Despite these efforts on the advancement of *Ainu*’s cultural identity, one should also recognize that *Ainu*’s indigenous rights are determined based on the individual rights acknowledged by the United Nations and the Japanese Constitution. “Article 3 of the Declaration recognizes that indigenous peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of this right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development” (Stamatopoulou, 2012, p. 1184). The Japanese constitution declares that the fundamental human rights are guaranteed forever. In fact, human rights of *Ainu* and other underrepresented ethnic minorities are determined as collective culture rights. Because of that, there still is a discrepancy in the concepts of human rights between group and individual concerning the meaning of culture.

6. Needs of Future Study

Today people still lack of understanding of *Ainu* identity, cultural traditions, and history. One should admit that the *Ainu* are the indigenous people who are under representative ethnic minority group of Japan. Thus, there is a need for not only better

understanding of *Ainu* culture, traditions, and history, but also there is a need to eliminate prejudice and discrimination of minorities in Japan. We need to continuously seek for the meaning of culture as collective culture and human rights.

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