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The Ainu, Meiji Era Politics, and Its Lasting Impacts: A Historical Analysis of Racialization, Colonization, and the Creation of State and Identity in Relation to Ainu-Japanese History

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The Ainu, Meiji Era Politics, and Its Lasting Impacts:

A Historical Analysis of Racialization, Colonization, and the Creation of State and Identity in Relation to Ainu-Japanese History

There is a widely accepted belief in the narrative that Japan exists as a largely monoethnic state and has existed as such since its conception. Voices pleading for the recognition of the forgotten and oftentimes hidden minorities of Japan became drowned out by this narrative, pushed aside and placed within a box with little nuance and labeled simply as Japanese. The Ainu are one of these many silenced minorities of Japan, but what marks them as different from any other group is their place within the historical narrative of Japan. As a group, the Ainu have historically existed as an indigenous minority living within Japan's northernmost island Hokkaido, but due to a systematic effort from the Japanese government they would be effectively wiped from the official history. With this erasure, the Ainu have been essentially wiped from the global conversation on indigenous rights and awareness. As modern scholars and historians begin to tackle the full extent of historical silences and the destruction of indigenous ways of life, the Ainu cannot be forgotten once again and left to be remembered as mere living fossils from an age long since passed.

On March 2nd, 1899, the Meiji government of Japan passed the Hokkaido Former Natives Protection Act. At its core, the act stripped the Ainu of their indigenous identity, labeling the group as 'former aborigines' and forcing every member into Japanese citizenship. In an instant, the Ainu became erased in an official capacity from the consciousness of the state and its people, a condition that would last well over 109 years when in 2008 the Japanese state finally acknowledged the Ainu as an indigenous group. What is often not acknowledged is that the implementation and subsequent enforcement of the Protection Act didn't emerge out of thin air and exist without creating profoundly impactful consequences. There was historical precedent to justify its enactment spanning well over a hundred years prior, these same justifications also finding use another hundred years after. Through processes of racialization, colonization, and the desire to solidify the Self and Nation, the Ainu became the focal point not just within Hokkaido politics but also the wider Japanese state attempting to create and define what it means and who can be Japanese. Through deliberate or even accidental actions, the Japanese state effectively

defined who it was in relation to who it wasn't, oftentimes directly looking at the Ainu as a deliberate Other to compare themselves to solidify their own identity. And once the Ainu effectively became indistinguishable from the wider Japanese society due to assimilationist policies, the state and its people came up with new ways to morph what it meant to be Ainu to continue the othering process. What brings everything together is the link they all share with Meiji era (1868-1912) politics and culture, a period through which many of the attitudes of the time would become systematically ingrained into Japanese society and permeate well into the modern era. But to fully understand the lasting consequences of policies like the Former Natives Protection Act, one must examine the wider historical narrative that created and justified the policies that would be implemented. With this examination, I hope to provide the historical context necessary to bring things together to examine where the Ainu are now as a people and what impact this history has had on a community largely ignored both domestically and internationally.

I. Pre-Meiji History: Barbarians, the Matsumae, and Shakushain's War:

The Ainu and the Matsumae

To begin, one must first understand who the Ainu and their Japanese counterpart, the Matsumae, are. The Ainu are an indigenous people who historically and currently reside within the Hokkaido prefecture, the northern most island of the archipelago. Fig. 1 depicts Japan and its northernmost island Hokkaido, providing the historical borders separating the Ainu from the Matsumae pre-colonization. In recent years, the Ainu have gained official recognition as an ethnic minority both domestically and abroad. As of 2017 the number of Ainu currently living in Ainu communities and self-identify as such is around thirteen thousand.¹ Many believe these numbers to be higher however, due to assimilation policies there are many in Japan who might be completely unaware of their own Ainu ancestry. During the late Tokugawa Era, also known as the Edo period (1603-1867), and throughout the Meiji era (1868-1912), systematic attempts to incorporate the Ainu into the wider Japanese world order were frequent and oftentimes aggressive in their implementation. Prior to the Meiji era, the Ainu were known as the

¹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1049706/japan-number-ainu-people-hokkaido/>

Ezo/Emishi, which translates to ‘foreigner’ or ‘barbarian’, in official documents.² Their home came to be identified as Ezochi, which meant ‘barbarian lands’, until 1869 when it was officially classified as an official part of Japan and renamed Hokkaido. For many historians and anthropologists, the Ainu are considered descendants of the original inhabitants of Japan, the Jōmon people, who lived in during Japan’s neolithic era (c. 14,000 to 300 BCE). In modern classifications, the Ainu are classified as Japan’s only indigenous minority.

² Brett L. Walker, “The Conquest of Ainu Lands,” University of California Press, accessed June 28, 2022, <https://www.ucpress.edu/book/9780520248342/the-conquest-of-ainu-lands>, p.1.



Figure 1 Walker, Brett, 'Japan' (Map) In: Brett L. Walker, *A Concise History of Japan* (Vancouver, B.C.: Langara College, 2017), p.2.

The Ainu have a long and complicated history with the Japanese people and state, especially in regard to the Matsumae lords who reigned over Ezoichi prior to the Meiji era. Originally known as the Kakizaki clan prior to the Tokugawa shogunates establishment (1603-1867), they were a vassal family to the Andō clan, the original lords over the northernmost part of Japanese territory at the time during. The Matsumae family quickly rose in power and favor during the Tokugawa period and firmly cementing themselves into the political core of the early

modern state. It was due to this power and influence that the Matsumae family quickly came to control the economic and eventual political power over Ezochi. The Matsumae family created some of the first systematic uses of racialization and othering against the Ainu, using policies and prohibitions to control Ainu freedoms and autonomy and controlled Ezochi until the Meiji government formed and dismantled the feudal order that gave the Matsumae family their legitimacy over their northern territories. The Matsumae resided and conducted a majority of their affairs within Matsumae Castle, also known to some as Fukuyama Castle. It was within this castle that the Matsumae regularly conducted key Ainu affairs and rituals in order to assert their power over the area, both for the eyes of the Ainu and their southern counterparts at the capital.

The Creation of the Matsumae

The history of the Ainu-Wajin relations is intrinsically entwined with the history of the Matsumae family. Wajin means ‘ancient people’, and the term is typically known to be used when describing the Japanese people, who were also identified using the term Yamato Japanese. Originally known under the name Kakizaki, a vassal family to the powerful Andō clan who controlled the northeast territory. The Andō family were a high-ranking samurai clan who ruled northern Honshu, the main island of the Japanese archipelago, during the Kamakura period (1185–1333) and into the Tokugawa era (1603–1867) until ultimately losing favor to the Kakizaki family in the late 16th century. The Kakizaki family first began their rise to power and political prominence in Ezo during the Era of the Warring States (1467-1568). The family began to gain notoriety having fought in Koshamain’s War, an Ainu-Wajin conflict in 1457 where their general Takeda Nobuhiro, according to legend, killed Koshamain. Koshamain is documented as being a legendary Ainu leader who led his people in a revolt against the Japanese allegedly over a sword. Due to increasing encroachment of the Japanese and the increased dependency of Japanese items obtained via trade, this conflict highlighted the urgency of some chiefs to defend claims to their homeland, rights to the animals and fish residing within, and the unrestricted rights to trade.³ Matsumae lords in later years would go on to claim Nobuhiro (1534 –1582) as

³ Kaiho, *Ezo no rekishi*, 18-9, 140-1.

their family's founder.⁴ Despite emerging as a regional player early on in the 16th century, the Kakizaki family wouldn't see true power to control the north until the unification efforts of Oda Nobunaga, also known as the great unifier. After years of forming personal ties within the Kyoto core and once Nobunaga was murdered in 1582 by Akechi Mitsuhide, a disgruntled vassal, the political void left behind would be filled by Toyotomi Hideyoshi. This shift of power would result in the overpowering of the Andō family and the Kakizaki family going from vassal to lord of Wajinchi.⁵

Under Hideyoshi's rule and his push for wider political, commercial, and diplomatic control to domanical lords, the Kakizaki family and many other domanical households gained the privileges to oversee shipping in Ezo. But due to pushback, bitter infighting, and the Sōbuji orders (a demand to end all fighting in the realm) being ignored by the Andō family, Hideyoshi sent powerful surveyors up north from the political center and breeched the lands in order to tighten his grip over a defiant northeast.⁶ It was during a trip to Kyoto for an audience with Hideoyoshi in 1593, Yoshihiro Kakizaki along with the new Andō lord, thirteen year-old Sanesue, that Yoshihiro was announced as "lord of Ezo Island" for the first time.⁷

During a second meeting, domestic reunification wasn't the topic at hand that Hideyoshi had in mind. It was during this meeting that a significant focus was spent on what Ezo could produce for the political core. Hideyoshi was of the belief that Japan had the divine right to rule the world and wanted to force Ming China and Korea into accepting this as fact. It was during this meeting Yoshihiro and Hideyoshi made plans to make a northern route though Ezo that would connect Japan to Korea. It was believed during this time that Ezo was connected to mainland Eurasia and in early maps, Ezo was draw believing that it was connected to the mainland, primarily Manchuria.⁸ With such a close alliance with the Kakizaki family and the desire to utilize Ezo, Hideyoshi sought to recognize the family's legitimacy as a possible way to expand his influence and solidify a barrier against conflict that might come and spill into Ezo.⁹ In 1593, Hideyoshi, after the suggestion of his advisor Kinoshita Yoshimasa that Yoshihiro be

⁴ Brett L. Walker, "*The Conquest of Ainu Lands*," University of California Press, accessed June 28, 2022, <https://www.ucpress.edu/book/9780520248342/the-conquest-of-ainu-lands>, p.27.

⁵ Asao, *Taikei Nihon no rekishi*, 309-10.

⁶ Matsumae Kagehiro, *Shinra no kiroku* [1646]. In SHS, 7:41

⁷ Matsumae Kagehiro, *Shinra no kiroku* [1646]. In SHS, 7:41-2

⁸ Kaiho, *Kinsei Ezochi seiritsushi no kenkyū*, 182-5.

⁹ Kamiya, "Japanese Control of Ezochi and the Role of Northern Koryō", 55.

given formal authority to levy shipping duties on all trade in Ezo, granted Yoshihiro a vermilion-seal order. The highest form of documentary authority, the seal granted Yoshihiro the local authority but subsequently also recognized the Kakizaki family as leading public authority in Ezo.¹⁰

After the death of Hideyoshi in 1598 and Tokugawa Ieyasu began to become a dominant military and political figure, Yoshihiro and his son, Tsuguhiro, travelled to Osaka castle to meet the powerful commander in 1599. To keep their political and commercial monopoly over Ezo, Yoshihiro demonstrated acts of submission by providing gifts and surrendering the Kakizaki family name to be changed to Matsumae.¹¹ It was this act of submission that would allow the newly formed Matsumae family to become vassals of the Tokugawa house.

What this all meant for the Ainu can be best summarized by *Shinra no kiroku*, which documented that upon his return from his meeting with Hideyoshi in 1593, Yoshihiro gathered every Ainu he could and read to them the vermilion-seal order. Yoshihiro warned that if the Ainu failed to observe directives, Hideyoshi would send military forces of 100,000 warriors to crush any offender.¹² Worse yet, during a meeting in 1604 with commander Honda Masanobu, Yoshihiro was presented reports of gold mines in the hills of Ezo, and how many Japanese merchants wished to exploit these “mountains of gold”. Upon hearing this, Ieyasu suggested that Yoshihiro be placed in charge of managing these potential future gold mines.¹³ The position of the Matsumae, at least in southern Ezo, would be formally guaranteed that same month when Masanobu presented the family with a black-seal order. This seal would grant the family exclusive rights to trade with the Ainu and would remain in place until 1799. The order read as so:

[1] It shall be unlawful for people from outside provinces to enter or exit Matsumae to trade with the Ainu without the consent of Matsumae Shima-no-kami.

[2] It shall be unlawful for [Japanese] people to cross freely into Ezo for trade, [but] Ainu should be considered free to go where they please.

¹⁰ Matsumae Kagehiro, *Shinra no kiroku* [1646]. In SHS, 7:43-4.

¹¹ Kaiho, *Kinsei Ezochi seiritsushi no kenkyū*, 185.

¹² Matsumae Kagehiro, *Shinra no kiroku* [1646]. In SHS, 7:46.

¹³ Matsumae Kagehiro, *Shinra no kiroku* [1646]. In SHS, 7:47.

[3] It is strictly prohibited for [Japanese] people to inflict injustices or crimes upon the Ainu.

If people act contrary [to these edicts], [they] shall be punished rigorously. Carefully observe the above [edicts].¹⁴

The black-seal order was both a blessing and a curse for the Matsumae family, making them fundamentally reliant on trade to hold power in the Tokugawa polity. David Howell argues best that the Matsumae “domain’s reliance on the Ainu trade and its consequent lack of an agricultural base meant that its institutions were founded upon a set of mutual dependence on Japanese commodities; its own dependence on the Ainu trade; and the merchants’ dependence on the domain from protection and privileges”. Howell ends noting, “Matsumae institutions were thus not only highly conducive to commercialization, they were predicated upon it”.¹⁵ In order to not show weakness within the early-modern state, the Matsumae had to figure out ways to subvert this. The Matsumae family would go on to act in a way that resembled the colonizing charter companies of Europe, frequently contracting Japanese merchants to trade and develop commercial ventures (in Matsumae’s case, fisheries) in colonized territories and be driven by commercial investments and market growth. Not only that, but there was also a common theme of being unable to fully assert the borders of colonized lands, often resulting in Ezochi being considered wholly foreign while at the same time still revolving within Japanese economic and cultural interests. Popular books like *Wakan sansai zue* for example, a Japanese-Chinese encyclopedia compiled in 1713 by Terashima Ryōan, described Ezo as such.

Fukuyama Castle, built for the Matsumae on the southern tip of Ezochi, marked the border between civilization and “barbarian land”. But even within the Japanese elite political circles, the castle and family were still considered to be outside the cultural boundaries of Japan. As one alleged incidence shows in 1593, before returning to the north, Yoshihiro received a piece of calligraphy from his mentor Satomura Shōha. Within the box, Satomura inscribed a message stating how it moved his heard that Yoshihiro ‘desired to cultivate his heart with Japanese refinement’ considering how far away Ezo was from the political center.¹⁶ Despite his

¹⁴ Matsumae Hironaga, Fukuyama hifu [1780], in SSHS, 5:80

¹⁵ David L. Howell, *Capitalism from Within: Economy, Society, and the State in a Japanese Fishery* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 27-8.

¹⁶ Matsumae Kagehiro, Shinra no kiroku [1646]. In SHS, 7:45.

clear connection to the mainland, Matsumae lords were still viewed as existing on the cusp of cultural ‘barbarianism’. The Matsumae weren’t ashamed of their isolation, some even reveled in it. According to Portuguese missionary Jeronimo de Angelis in 1618, after a meeting with Hideyoshi and Ieyasu, Yoshihiro spent a great deal of time boasting that Matsumae was “not part of Japan”.¹⁷ This line of thought changed little two centuries later. During a discussion with Ōhara Sakingo, Michihiro, the eighth lord of the Matsumae family, explained the area of Wajinchi should not be considered a domain in the traditional sense. Michihiro states his domain had been carved out by the hard work of his ancestors through their pacification of the Ainu, and therefore should be seen as “similar to foreign lands.”¹⁸

According to Brett Walker, the “extension of Matsumae political influence inside Ezochi spearheaded the process of placing Ainu lands “under the reigns” of the early-modern state.”¹⁹ As time went on and as the commercial demands of trade increased within Ezochi, the border continued to move upward as the absorption of Ainu lands/people created an increase in desire for Japanese settlement. In 1699, the border between Wajinchi and Ezochi stretched between Kumaishi and Shinori, in the east near Ono Mountains. Posts were well guarded, and travel became increasingly difficult for both Ainu and Japanese alike. Borders began to tighten further when in 1691, Matsumae officials ordered a crackdown directing guards at those posts to stop illicit trade like within the Kumaishi post. Officials even ordered that if Ainu came to purchase essential goods like rice they were to be turned away.²⁰ Incidents like these allowed the Matsumae family to further tighten the reigns over Ezochi. This can be most evidently seen in trading post records from 1739 showing all 53 trade fiefs²¹ held by Matsumae vassals were located in Ezochi rather than Wajinchi, a clear violation of previously established border and political agreements.²² To further highlight the permeability of the Wajin-Ezo borders could be, an official surveyor Kondō Jūzo, went to Ezo to create detailed maps of the entire western and northern coasts. In towns like Fukuyama stretching all the way to Kumaishi, areas supposedly identified as being within Wajinchi, Kondō noted that Ainu lands were within the range of Wajin

¹⁷ Jeronimo de Angelis, “*Carta de algumas novas de Japam*” [1618], in *Hoppō tankenki: Genna nenkan ni okeru gaikokujin no Ezo hōkokusho*, ed. Hubert Cieslik (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1963), 6, 53.

¹⁸ Ōhara Sakingo, *Chihoku gūdan* [1797], in HMSS, 3.

¹⁹ Brett L. Walker, “The Conquest of Ainu Lands,” University of California Press, accessed June 28, 2022, <https://www.ucpress.edu/book/9780520248342/the-conquest-of-ainu-lands>, p.41.

²⁰ Matsumae Hironaga, *Fukuyama hifu* [1780], in SSHS, 5:432, 1111.

²¹ An estate of land, especially one held on condition of feudal service.

²² *Ezo shōko kiki-gaki* [1739], in MCS, 3:5-12

villagers, thus in the range of production and so it was in their rights of ecological and cultural range to be controlled by the Wajin. This meant that 41 percent of villages in western Wajinchi were dependent on crossing into Ezochi to exploit the resources.²³

The Ainu could do little to fight against Japanese encroachment and mistreat. The key ways in which the Ainu and the Japanese interacted prior to the 1700s was their largest weakness. Due to the extent of reliance on Japanese goods, oftentimes central to key religious ceremonies or as simple as diet, the Ainu could do little but accept they were at the mercy of Japanese merchants and the Matsumae. Due to economic incentives that came with prosperous trade with the Japanese, the Ainu were stretching their resources too thinly to keep up with Japanese demand for products only the Ainu could provide. Their prior hunting and gathering practices couldn't be sustained with such demands, which oftentimes forced the Ainu into buying their food straight from Japanese merchants or face starvation.²⁴ It was through this exploitative trade wherein the Japanese created a dependency on the part of the Ainu for goods for their ceremonies and for their very survival.

It was due to the porousness between the boundaries marking Ezochi and Wajinchi that tensions would explode, resulting in a conflict that would mark the end of a semi-autonomous life in Ezo and usher in an age of colonization and exploitation. This conflict would go down to be known as Shakushain's Revolt.

Shakushain's Revolt: The End of an Era and Its Implications

Shakushain's Revolt was a turning point in Ainu-Wajin relations, becoming the culmination of a last-ditch effort to form a pan-Ainu alliance to expel Japanese settlers and military forces from Ezochi. In 1669, the regional leader Shakushain attacked Japanese trading and gold-mining settlements, expressing grievances for loss of land and resources that had begun to crop up as a result of both inter-tribal conflict and Japanese involvement in such matters.²⁵ One tribe in particular, the Hae Ainu, had strong ties to the Matsumae family and the mining camps. Keen on calling on the Matsumae to intervene for the Hae when dealing with conflicts

²³ Kondō Jūzo, *Nishi Ezochi bunken* [1786], RCNS.

²⁴ Tsugaru ittōshi, bk.10 [1731], in SHS, 186.

²⁵ Tessa Morris-Suzuki, "CREATING THE FRONTIER: BORDER, IDENTITY AND HISTORY IN JAPAN'S FAR NORTH," accessed June 30, 2022, http://eastasianhistory.org/sites/default/files/article-content/07/EAH07_03.pdf, p. 8.

with other tribes, the Hae Ainu did just so when faced with fiercely contested resources in the area. This inter-tribal conflict is believed to be the start of the revolt, but once it dragged on and the Japanese became involved, there was a distinct shift from a solely economic conflict into an ethnic strife between invaders and native peoples.

The language used to describe the conflict is anything but inflammatory. It is reported that before departing for eastern Ezo, Kakizaki Hiroshige told Ainu loyal to Fukuyama Castle that Matsumae Yasuhiro had come from Edo to lead Matsumae armies because the shogunate sought to “destroy all the Ainu”. Once Matsumae troops subjugated Ezo, Hiroshige added, the shogunate would introduce peasants to Wajinchi and encourage the development of agriculture, fisheries, and organized hunting. Asserted that if all Ainu were murdered, “Matsumae vassals and townspeople would not have to worry about them anymore”.²⁶ In essence, a call to genocide was made as the solution to this conflict. No longer was this conflict just a mere fight between tribes of Ainu forced to more aggressively compete for valuable resources to use in ceremonies and trade, but rather a distinct line was drawn between factions with both sides believing neither could lose sight the fact they were fighting foreigners, but for the Ainu it was more than that. The Ainu were desperately trying to save a way of life that had, up until that point, slowly been stolen away by invading forces.

Reports of Shakushain having “pillaged Japanese territory” quickly spread throughout Japan.²⁷ In response, Edo sent the Hirosaki army to intervene if necessary. The shogun also dispatched Matsumae Yasuhiro to command the Matsumae armies against Shakushain. The *Tokugawa jikki* [True chronicles of the Tokugawa] explains the situation as so:

1669.7.20: On this day, *koshōgumi* Matsumae Hachizaemon Yasuhiro was given liege to proceed to Ezo. This [has to do with the evens of the] eighteenth day [and the] Ainu chief named Shakushain. Factions bound together and rebelled. Nineteen merchant ships were plundered. Moreover, 273 Matsumae samurai, merchants, and so forth were murdered. In response, we have received information that lord *hyōgo* [Matsumae] Norihiro dispatched a punitive force of about one thousand domain warriors. We intend to assist [this punitive

²⁶ Matsumae Yasuhiro, *Ezo hōki gairyakuki* [1669-72], in NSSSS, 4:643-4.

²⁷ Umenai Yūkun, *Bunrō iji* [1822], in *Nanbu sōsho*, ed. Nanbu sōsho Kankōkai (Mirioka: Nanbu Sōsho Kankōkai, 1927), 2:491

force]. Orders have also been given to the Tsugaru [of Hirosaki domain] to mobilize reinforcements.

1669.9.28: For subduing the barbarians [Ezo seibatsu no koto], Matsumae *hyōgo* Norihiro was graciously lent three thousand bales of rice. These are to meet military expenses.

1669.10.11: Again, last month, on both the twenty-third and twenty-fourth days, fifty-five Ainu were arrested and incarcerated. This is information from Matsumae...

1672.2.8: Matsumae Hachizaemon Yasuhiro. [He was] dispatched to Matsumae because the lord of the main house, Norihiro, is just a youth.²⁸

Yasuhiro was put in charge of “subduing the barbarians” and a reignited fear of the Ainu forming contacts and alliances with groups on continental Asia led to the Shogun taking direct action to crush this revolt. This is best documented by Hayashi Shunsai, an advisor to the shogunate, writing:

“I have heard rumors that merchants from Matsumae went to Ezo to buy falcons, whereupon the Ezo rose en masse and killed thirty people from Matsumae. Some say that [the Ezo are intent on] attacking Matsumae, and consequently Matsumae is preparing for this. Others say that the Ezo are considering whether to seek the assistance of the Tartars [Orankai], and therefore the senior councilors gave orders to the Tsugaru family that in case of an untoward turn of events at Matsumae they were to help them out; the Tsugaru will shortly return to their domain, prepare their forces and wait.”²⁹

With fears of “barbarian hoards” crossing over from Asia with an open invitation, the shogunate undertaking these suppression campaigns can be viewed in the light of performing the imperial task of “barbarian-subduing generalissimo” (the formal imperial title of the shogun) in order to protect the realm from forces who could undo the work of reunification and sow havoc upon mainland Japan. With these fears and sense of duty in mind, it should come as no surprise that drastic, and normally shameful, actions were taken to ensure this submission. By the tenth month 1699, Ainu in the east, including Shakushain, had surrendered to Matsumae armies after exchanging gifts. After months of armed conflict against the Matsumae and Shogunate armies

²⁸ Tokugawa jikki [1809-43], in Bakusei shiryō to Ezochi, ed. Kaiho Mineo (Tokyo: Miyama Shobō, 1980), 109.

²⁹ Hayashi Shunsai, Honshō tsugan, cited in Kamiya Nobuyuki, “Japanese Control of Ezochi and the Role of Northern Koryō,” *Acta Asiatica* 67 (1994): 66-7.

possessing superior military supplies, a peace agreement was to be under way. It was on the twenty-second day however, that while celebrating the newly forged peace settlement in Biboku with sake to celebrate, Shakushain, Chimenha, Ueshirushi, and other Ainu generals were cut down by Matsumae warriors.³⁰ Then the men burned Shibuchari casi³¹ to the ground. Two years later, Kakizaki Hiroshige would lead his armies to disperse contentious Ainu but ultimately, by the time of Shakushain's killing, the war was over.

In the end, Shakushain's War highlights the deep rooted ethnic and economic divide between the Ainu and Matsumae Japanese. The efforts of the Japanese to crush any semblance of resistance and to justify it on the grounds of subduing barbarians speaks volumes to this fact. Many historians posit the main cause of Shakushain's War can be traced back to when the Japanese had begun to exploit Ainu with manipulative exchange rates, low-quality goods, and threats of violence, forcing such groups around Yoichi, into a state of poverty and near starvation.³² Officials knew of the Ainu's reliance on traded goods for survival and ceremonies and worked towards exploiting this reliance. During investigations conducted in 1670 by the Hirosaki clan, these exploits were uncovered via interviews with Ainu elders. When asked, one Yoichi Ainu discussed that rice bales that had once contained nearly 10 gallons now contained about 4. When describing problems with shellfish trade, the elder states, "if, for example, one string of shellfish is missing from the bundle, the Matsumae make us pay 20 strings of shellfish the next year in interest. If we do not pay, our children are taken instead."³³ As punishment for Shakushain's War, a trade embargo was forced upon Ezo which made life increasingly difficult for the Ainu of the north. The Sōya and Rishiri chiefs raised alarm bells and warned that if regular trading was not resumed, Ainu in the region would be in danger.³⁴ Even during the war, Matsumae commanders recognized Ainu trade dependencies. When Shakushain threatened the Ainu would never give up their struggle, Matsumae commanders countered believing the Ainu would be unable to subsist without goods from Japan. These commanders warned the Ainu that

³⁰ Matsumae Hironaga, Fukuyama hifu [1780], in SSHS, 5:36; and Matsumae Yasuhiro, Ezo hōki gairyakuki [1669-72], in NSSSS, 4:644.

³¹ An Ainu hilltop fortification

³² Brett L. Walker, "The Conquest of Ainu Lands," University of California Press, accessed June 28, 2022, <https://www.ucpress.edu/book/9780520248342/the-conquest-of-ainu-lands>, p.67.

³³ Tsugaru ittōshi, bk. 10 [1731], in SHS, 7:184.

³⁴ Tsugaru ittōshi, bk. 10 [1731], in SHS, 7:185.

“whether by military force or by trade embargo, the Matsumae troops would do as they please”.³⁵

Shakushain’s War and ultimately the desire for unrestricted trade itself showed the festering wound of just how dependent the Ainu had become on trade, something both the Japanese and Ainu could see plain as day. Due to the nature of this dependency and the punishments for such a revolt that resulted, Shakushain’s War stands as a testament of the Ainu’s last attempt at militarily holding off further encroachment into Ezo. While it ultimately failed and opened the doors to further colonization, one can’t lose sight of what this event means for Ainu living today. Shakushain spits in the face of the narrative of the “docile barbarian” the Ainu would go on to be painted as. The event shows that falsehood of believing the colonization of Hokkaido existed as a peaceful cooperation between two people: of uncivilized wielding to a civilized hand.

The Early Stages of Racialization: The Barbarian, Ritual, and the Creation of a State

When discussing the early history of Ainu-Wajin relations, a fundamental concept revolving around racialization and its link to the creation of state and national identity often gets sidelined due to the complicated nature of trade relations between the two. The Ainu didn’t merely exist in the wider Japanese worldview as mere foreigners and barbarians, they were created to be viewed under such racialized stereotypes. In classical Chinese terms, a barbarian is believed to be a group of hairy, non-human, flesh eating savages who dressed in skins and lived in holes.³⁶ These views weren’t just inhabiting the minds of Chinese scholars, they found a home in the minds of Japan’s elites and citizens too. In the *Nihonshoki*, which was compiled around AD 720 and contains some of the earliest descriptions of the inhabitants which resided east of Yamato, the Emishi (a group believed to be precursors to our modern Ainu) are described as so:

“Amongst these Eastern Savages the Yemishi are the most powerful, their men and women live together promiscuously, there is no distinction of father or child. In winter, they dwell in holes, in summer they live in nests. Their clothing consists of furs, and they drink blood... In ascending mountains they are like flying birds; in going through the grass they are like fleet quadrupeds... Sometimes they draw together their fellows and make inroads on the

³⁵ Matsumae Yasuhiro, , *Ezo hōki gairyakuki* [1669-72], in NSSSS, 4:643.

³⁶ F. Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), pp. 2-10.

frontier. At other times they take the opportunity of the harvest to plunder the people... ever since antiquity they have not been stepped in the kingly civilizing influences.”³⁷

Attitude and belief systems such as these are interesting, because at least in their original conception, barbarians didn't necessarily equate to people like the Ainu. Rather, anyone not Japanese was a barbarian. People from countries like Britain and France would have been considered as such. What allowed someone the link to the civilized community and creating the distinction necessary was be described as the person having written language and having the correct morals (prescribed via Confucianism), customs unlike the wider public were considered backwards. Most important in this distinction was the belief that barbarians were anyone not under the direct control of the central authorities were intrinsically outside of this moral order.³⁸ In other words, from their very first contact, the Ainu played a distinct role in being the Other to contrast and be used to reflect on the creation of Self. Their otherness being the foundation to justify their believed inferiority to the Japanese.

What becomes remarkably clear when viewing the creation of the barbarian is that this line of thinking only solidified as decades and centuries came to pass. The views within the *Nihonshoki* would go on to be developed and built upon in the coming centuries, as evident by the book *Ezo Dan Hikki* [A Narrative Tale of Ezo] written in 1710. The very attitudes seen in the *Nihonshoki* can be seen with little to no change, despite the near thousand-year gap between the two pieces of literature. Nearly an exact carbon copy of the *Nihonshoki*, one excerpt from *Ezo Dan Hikki* reads as so:

“They know not the moral way, so fathers and children marry indiscriminately. They do not have the five kinds of grain and eat the flesh of birds, beasts, and fish. They gallop around the hills and dive into the sea and are just like some kind of beast.”³⁹

³⁷ W.G Aston, *Nihongi: Chronicles of Japan from the Earliest Times to AD 697* (Rutland, Vt. And Tokyo: Tuttle, 1972) Vol. 1, p. 203.

³⁸ Emon, *Ainu no Rekishi*, p.9.

³⁹ Matsumiya Kanza, 'Ezo Dan Hikki' (Narratives of Ezo) [1710], Ns4, p.394.

Written documents weren't the only source through which regular Japanese were introduced to the Ainu. Ainu genre painting played a large role in introducing the mainland to highly stereotyped depictions of the northern inhabitants.



Figure 2 Ezojin omemie zu [Illustration of an Ainu Audience], Resource Collection for Northern Studies, Hokkaido University Library. In: Walker, Brett. "The Conquest of Ainu Lands", University of California Press, p.214.

As seen in figure 2, early paintings typically depict Ainu with enough body hair to rival primates, hunched over, and with faces and characteristic of Japanese depictions of demons. Within figure 2, a group of Ainu are being led hand-in-hand to have their audience with a Matsumae lord, the house's sigil looming within the background marking this land as Wajinchi. Being led by an armed Japanese guard dressed in traditional garbs, this group of Ainu share little in common with their Japanese escort aside from their sharing a physical location. It wasn't uncommon to see art like figure 2 depicting acts of submission from the Ainu or depicting daily Ainu life as one of fighting bears and people. Art played a large role in helping exaggerated tales come to life for Japanese readers and viewers. It aided in solidifying images and tales of savage barbarians that were already permeating throughout elite circles. With these images in mind,

these elites would go on to travel to Hokkaido with these biases deeply ingrained within their psyche. They would go on to continue the cycle of exaggerated depictions, reaffirming preconceived notions of the Ainu for future readers and travelers.

One traveler recorded in 1798 of his first Ainu sighting, remarking the encounter made him “feel sick, until my eyes got used to it”.⁴⁰ The perceived strangeness of Ainu customs to Japanese travelers were used as key evidence to justify their ‘barbarian’ label. Remarks like those of our 1798 traveler aren’t the only comments made from the time. Many documents made a point to mention earrings and female tattoos, and remarking that the eating of flesh, unkept hair, and clothing fashioned in unapproved ways coupled with a lack of a writing system made it impossible to not comment on the barbarian nature of the Ainu in the eyes of Japanese travelers. Many also commented on things like “When you walk past an Ezo, they are extremely smelly, to the point that you have to hold your nose”⁴¹, or “Their bodies are most hairy and their eyebrows a single line; some even grow body hair like bears.”⁴² During the early days of contact between the Ainu and Wajin, descriptions and documentation like those listed above were highly commonplace.

The creation of a racialized image was not the only method used to assert the Ainu as lesser than. As was seen in the Shakushain’s War, the Japanese consistently sought, expanded, and exploited the Ainu’s dependency of trade. One of the ways the Japanese solidified this relationship was to employ a number of policies to ensure this dependency, thus perpetrating the idea that the Ainu cannot/will not survive without the intervention of the Japanese. Richard White, while using the example of indigenous Americans, describes Dependency Theory as so:

“Dependency among the Native Americans meant that people “who had once been able to feed and clothe themselves with some security because unable to do so. Environments that had once easily sustained Native American populations underwent increasing degradation as familiar resources could not support the people who depended on them.”⁴³

⁴⁰ Mūto Kanzō, ‘Ezo Nikki’ (Ezo Diary) [1798], NS4, p.15.

⁴¹ Mūto, ‘Ezo Nikki’, NS4, p.16.

⁴² Kushiwara, ‘Igen Zokuwa’, NS4, p.488.

⁴³ Richard White, *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), xiv.

White concludes, explaining that the cultural and economic impacts of the market economy, more than any other single force, destroyed Native American subsistence systems and undermined their autonomy. He notes that indigenous systems geared towards subsistence rather than market, resulted in indigenous Americans overexerting hunting to meet market demands, and thus becoming on Europeans for survival. We can see this exact process happening for the Ainu throughout the course of the Tokugawa and Meiji eras. Policies and prohibitions sprung forth in response to the Matsumae gaining more territory and power in Ezochi, especially after Shakushain's War came to an end. These policies primarily revolved around controlling trade and ensuring a distinct ethnic and geographical boundary be upheld. Some of the major ways in which the Japanese and Matsumae lords used their growing power was through prohibitions of farming, banning the teaching and use of the Japanese language by the Ainu, and engaging in trade anywhere besides officially established trading posts which were conveniently cropping up along the borders between Ezochi and Wajinchi.⁴⁴

Another form of racialization was through the use of ritual, primarily seen in the Uimam and Umsa, which were integral to Ainu-Wajin relations and interactions in the early modern Japan. According to Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, these rituals can be considered an invented tradition, and were critical in fostering a manifesting a relationship between the Ainu and Matsumae.⁴⁵ The Matsumae lords would co-opt Ainu rituals and change what they traditionally meant in order to legitimate the unequal footing between the two groups as a response to their mutual dependency.⁴⁶ Conducted under the guise of trade and strengthening ties, the Uimam and Umsa rituals were more so focused on creating an atmosphere of submission among the Ainu as well as furthering their dependency. Attempts to manipulate the rituals can be seen as early as 1633, when domain officials had Ainu residents of Otobe and Kuroiwa, villages at the western and eastern controlled territories performed the Uimam for the benefit of shogunal inspectors.⁴⁷ However, it wasn't until the 18th century that the Japanese stressed trade as the main perception of these rituals, primarily believed to be as a result of changes in attitude occurring as

⁴⁴ Mogami Tokunai, *Ezokoku fūzoku ninjō no sata* [1791], in NSSSS, 4:444.

⁴⁵ Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions", in Eric Hobsbawm Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1

⁴⁶ David L. Howell, "Ainu Ethnicity and the Boundaries of the Early Modern Japanese State," *Past and Present* 142, no. 1 (1994): pp. 69-93, <https://doi.org/10.1093/past/142.1.69>, p. 80.

⁴⁷ David L. Howell, "Ainu Ethnicity and the Boundaries of the Early Modern Japanese State," *Past and Present* 142, no. 1 (1994): pp. 69-93, <https://doi.org/10.1093/past/142.1.69>, p. 81.

commercial fishing began to overtake the main export of Ezochi, supplanting Ainu exports as the main economic powerhouse of the region.⁴⁸ Fukuyama Castle rested at the center of Matsumae's authority over the region, a cornerstone of conducting official domain business and dealings with the Ainu communities scattered across Ezochi. Resting on the oftentimes fluid border between Wajinchi and Ezochi, the castle was also host to a number of rituals meant to highlight and exacerbate Ainu dependency on trade. A perfect example of such a ritual can be seen in an Uimam ritual conducted around 1700 at the castle, where Ainu chieftains visiting were seated near the domain lord during the audience, an indication that little social distance separated the participants in the ritual. There was yet an intrinsic attempt at creating physical boundaries between the two parties. In contrast, their successors a century later were made to kneel on straw mats in the garden.⁴⁹

As Figure 2, below shows, the Uimam ritual was highly racialized both in setup and in depiction. Ainu visitors are shown hunched over, bowing in seeming reverence and trying to crowd closer to their elders and Matsumae lords seated in the middle. What marks this crowd as distinctly Ainu are the prominent characteristics often thought of to be uniquely Ainu. Protruding, misshapen heads, hunched figures, and a hairiness often written about as the first notable characteristic of the Ainu, these figures couldn't represent anything but. There is a clear divide representing this gathering, one seeped in ritualized othering meant to show off supposed inferiority of those visiting. To further highlight this separation, the Ainu leaders visiting were expected to wear uniforms picked out by Matsumae leaders, particularly formal jittoku (Qing uniforms acquired from the Manchurian trade) over their silk garments. This forced wearing of "exotic" clothing was seen as a way to physical distinguish the two groups and solidify a Japanese identity for the Matsumae family.⁵⁰ These can be seen as a necessary evil the Ainu had to undergo. Not only did the rituals provide valuable opportunities to acquire ritual items and other goods, they also came to represent one of the only legitimate ways in which Ainu chieftains could gain legitimacy, both within their community and with the Japanese. These chieftains were expected to attend these Uimam rituals upon their succession and for other more

⁴⁸ Takakura, *Ainu seisakushi*, pp. 77-85, 172.

⁴⁹ Inagaki, "Kinsei Ezochi ni okeru girei shihai no tokushitsu", p. 115.

⁵⁰ Kikuchi Isao, *Hopposhi no naka no kinsei Nihon* (Tokyo:Azekura Shobo, 1991), 23.

notable chieftains, they were expected to regularly attend and celebrate occasions like Japanese New Years.⁵¹



Figure 3 Byōzan, Hirasawa, 'Omusha ceremony' (1876), National Museums Scotland.

The use of the Usma ritual was far more common than the Uimam ritual, and one of the only rituals to survive the Meiji assimilationist policies. The main reason for this policy seems to trace to the Meiji state having little use for the rituals, as it was seen as an obstacle to Ainu assimilation into Japanese society.⁵² Originally a considered a greeting within Ainu culture and meant to take place between two friends after a long separation and embrace/exchange gifts, the Usma was a far less formal affair compared to its other manipulated counterpart. Embraced by Japanese merchants and other officials, the Usma still retained much of its original intent but still transformed into a more systematic ritual to engage in trade. The ritual was transformed by these Japanese merchants and officials, turning it into a quasi-celebration to signal the end of fishing or trading seasons. The Usma ritual also served as an opportunity to read domain laws and other prohibitions to the gathered Ainu.⁵³ Due to restrictions on who the Ainu could trade with and how, informal ritual gatherings like these were important in order to get traded goods the Ainu

⁵¹ Ainu seisakushi, pp. 223-6.

⁵² Inagaki, "Kinsei Ezochi ni okeru girei shihai no tokushitsu", pp. 123-4.

⁵³ Takakura, Ainu seisakushi, pp. 219-23.

could not get on their own that had become integral to everyday life. This often meant the Ainu had little choice but to engage with oftentimes degrading acts in order to gain necessary goods, whether material or power related. This reliance however created key issues seen in both the Uimam and Umsa that only exacerbated the issues already present with trade and the reliance to participate in these rituals. Out of the supposed gifts presented to the Ainu, tobacco and sake were typically the only goods of real value. The rest the Ainu were essentially forced to pay for with animal skins and labor from the fisheries. It was a cycle, because oftentimes debt was acquired when the Ainu couldn't afford these goods they desperately needed. Thus, the Ainu had to work hard at fisheries quickly emerging across the borders from Wajinchi, all so they could pay back the debt they'd acquired from the previous year's celebration, creating an endless cycle of debt.⁵⁴

It was not just the Ainu who were reliant on these rituals to gain necessary goods and items, the Japanese were also beholden to what the Ainu could bring forth to the Matsumae lords and merchants in order to hold and justify their own legitimacy. Despite the clear influence held over these rituals, the Japanese were adamant in portraying these rituals as Ainu rather than Japanese in origin, despite the fact that by the end of the eighteenth century the form they retained looked more like Japanese bureaucratic protocol than an Ainu tradition. This can be explained as an attempt by the Japanese to ground their domination of the Ainu in history and the "timeless" traditions of Ainu culture.⁵⁵ This can almost be seen as understandable due to the shogunate stepping in twice (1799-1821 and 1855-8) to assume control over most of Hokkaido in response to a perceived threat from Russia.⁵⁶ In the eyes of the Ainu, it can be gathered that they held a relatively positive outlook with these ritual events and linked them to positive opportunities for trade and the ability for their local leaders to bring back valuable items to their communities.⁵⁷ However, the Ainu still held suspicions, and if they weren't careful the Japanese merchants and lords would gladly cheat them out of traded goods if the opportunity presented itself.⁵⁸ This often meant that in cases where the Ainu encountered mistreatment, there wasn't

⁵⁴ Ezo Matsumae kenbunki [1798], RCNS.

⁵⁵ David L. Howell, "Ainu Ethnicity and the Boundaries of the Early Modern Japanese State," *Past and Present* 142, no. 1 (1994): pp. 69-93, <https://doi.org/10.1093/past/142.1.69>, p. 83.

⁵⁶ David L. Howell, "Ainu Ethnicity and the Boundaries of the Early Modern Japanese State," *Past and Present* 142, no. 1 (1994): pp. 69-93, <https://doi.org/10.1093/past/142.1.69>, p. 83.

⁵⁷ 29Mogami, "Ezo no kuni fizoku ninjo no sata", pp. 450-1.

⁵⁸ Mogami, "Ezo no kuni fuzoku ninjo no sata", p. 451.

any guarantee that their own elders would protect their interests. One notable case of this comes in 1789, when badly mistreated fishery workers rose up in rebellion to demand better conditions, one Ainu chieftain, Tsukinoe of Kunashiri, not only took the initiative in notifying the Matsumae domain authorities of the uprising, but also persuaded his own son, an organizer of the rebellion, to surrender to the Japanese.⁵⁹ What can be viewed as these elders making the best out of a bad situation, their submission to rituals like the Uimam and Umsa paved the way towards further subjugation and mistreatment.

The Japanese couldn't risk assimilating the Ainu, otherwise the Matsumae house had no reason to exist. One of the main ways in which to keep this from happening was to enshrine separation as a corner stone of domanical law. One major way the Matsumae did this was by establishing rules such as Japanese citizens could make seasonal trading or fishing excursions into the Ainu territory, but they could not settle there permanently. Ainu were similarly prohibited from travelling outside their own areas except to perform the Uimam at Fukuyama Castle. The Ainu were also barred from speaking Japanese. As Mogami Tokunai noted:

"If [the Ainu] should happen to speak Japanese, the interpreters rebuke them, saying that they have committed an unforgivable offence, and demand an indemnity in recompense; likewise if they should wear straw raincoats, straw sandals, or leggings. In all matters the policy of not allowing the Ezo to adopt Japanese customs is the law of the Matsumae house."⁶⁰

This separation ultimately became unsustainable, because by the end of the seventeenth century the Ainu's dependence on Japanese commodities was so intertwined that the culture could not function without them. To make matters even more complicated, the increasing presence of commercial fishing in the eighteenth century accelerated these problems, due to Ainu workers making up the bulk of the labor force. It wasn't just the Ainu encountering a different way of life, because at the same time, Japanese fishery workers from northeastern Honshu began wearing Ainu clothing with such enthusiasm that officials of the Nanbu domain issued repeated

⁵⁹ Kikuchi Isao, *Hopposhi no naka no kinsei Nihon* [Early Modern Japan in the History of the North] (Tokyo, 1991), pp. 303-13.

⁶⁰ 5 Mogami, "Ezo no kuni ninj6 fuzoku no sata", p. 460, as cited by Kikuchi, *Bakuhan taisei to Ezochi*, p. 155

prohibitions of their use.⁶¹ Matsumae authorities were quite concerned with regulating visual identifiers than more abstract concepts like religion and household organization. David Howell addresses this with the belief stating:

“Formal intrusion into the deeper levels of culture would have revealed the fundamental contradiction that lay at the heart of Matsumae's relationship with the Ainu. On the one hand, the domain's legitimacy was founded upon the Ainu's non-Japanese ethnic identity; on the other hand, however, its ability to control the native people hinged upon their continued reliance on Japanese commodities, a reliance that entailed the incorporation of Japanese elements into Ainu.”⁶²

This is explained by the Matsumae readily attempting to control aspects like clothing, hairstyle, and other physical identifiers rather than confront more economically entwined aspects of the Matsumae-Ainu relationship. Not only that, but hairstyle played a major role in indicating status within Japanese society, so the Ainu with their loose and ‘unkept’ hair played more of a role in signifying their social status as ‘barbarian’ and an ethnically distinct people separate from the Japanese.⁶³ Thus, Matsumae's policy of regulating Ainu hairstyles represented an attempt to preserve the Ainu's alien ethnicity while simultaneously attempting to incorporate that alien ethnicity into the Japanese social-status hierarchy. There was even a widely held belief that the Ainu were intrinsically connected to the wider Tokugawa outcastes, people who were believed to be outside of “Japanization”, such as anymore dealing in death or anything as simple as traveling entertainers. The outcaste system wasn’t established in an official capacity until the 1660s.⁶⁴ The belief was that the Ainu were the origin of the Outcastes and there were discussions and attempted at ‘reuniting’ the two groups by forcible resettling outcastes into becoming agricultural

⁶¹ 1 Murabayashi Gensuke, "Genshi manpitsu fudo nenpyo" [Original Essays and a Chronological Account of Local Customs] (1804-18), in Michinoku sosho [The Michinoku Series], ed. Aomori Ken Bunkazai Hogo Kyokai, repr. edn., 22 vols. (Tokyo, 1960; repr. 1982), vi, pp. 138, 150, 24

⁶² David L. Howell, “Ainu Ethnicity and the Boundaries of the Early Modern Japanese State,” *Past and Present* 142, no. 1 (1994): pp. 69-93, <https://doi.org/10.1093/past/142.1.69>, p. 87.

⁶³ 3 Kikuchi, Bakuhan taisei to Ezochi, pp. 153-76; Kikuchi Isao, "Kinsei ni okeru Ezo-kan to 'Nihon fuzoku'" [Early Modern Views of the Ezo and "Japanese Customs"], in Hokkaido-Tohoku Shi Kenkyukai (ed.), *Kita kara no Nihonshi*, pp. 206-29.

⁶⁴ Amino Yoshihiko, *Nihon ron no shiza* [Perspectives on the Study of Japan] (Tokyo, 1990), pp. 75-85.

colonists within Hokkaido. Due to their outward appearance, both groups were signaled out to justify the discrimination placed against them.⁶⁵

The only times this policy could be seen changing was when the central Tokugawa government took control and attempted to assimilate Ainu populations during periods where perceived threats from Russia justified this change. The idea being such policies being that if the area was occupied by Japanese citizens on the international stage, then the government could hold territorial control over the area. Ideas such as these were carried over into the Meiji era. During an official visit in 1856, Kasahara Gengo, an official posted to the village of Shiraoi, persuaded local elders to promise to stop wearing earrings and tattooing women's faces and hands. According to these officials, the Ainu also vowed to wear their kimono folded to the right (typically was worn to the left, and in Japanese culture this practice was reserved for the clothing of the dead), take Japanese names and learn to speak Japanese. Officials dispatched throughout Hokkaido similarly advocated assimilation to locals.⁶⁶ The responses were actually quite mixed, with local elders and leaders generally being quicker to incorporating these aspects to keep up economic ties with the Japanese than regular Ainu citizens. Those who were more reluctant were met with material pressures to assimilate. At Shiraoi, for example Kasahara Gengo distributed brown rice to each of the fourteen or fifteen Ainu who volunteered to be registered into an official population record and take the first steps towards being incorporated as peasants within the official hierarchy.⁶⁷ Although reporting 70 percent or so of some of these local Ainu populations agreeing to these policies of assimilation, it was often the case to see men outright refuse to cut their beards and hair or those who did so immediately returning to their outward symbols of their Ainuness once they received their payments from officials who had to move on.⁶⁸

What becomes even more apparent is that even during these early days of the assimilationist movement, rituals like the Uimam and Umsa were still conducted. While still being a mode through which trade could still be controlled, these rituals now took on a distinctive purpose of

⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 208-16; Kikuchi, *Bakuhau taisei to Ezochi*, pp. 166-8.

⁶⁶ Hokkaido University Library, Sapporo, Resource Collection for Northern Studies, MS. 107, Kasahara Gengo, "Ezoin fuzoku no gi moshiokuri sho" [Report on Ezo Customs] (1856).

⁶⁷ Kasahara, "Ezoin fuzoku no gi moshiokuri sho".

⁶⁸ Takakura, *Ainu seisakushi*, pp. 382-3.

becoming a means to encourage assimilation during the time of shogunate control. This can be seen in the officials who were tasked to preserve these rituals in order to ‘impress’ the Ainu with the material wealth and to promote assimilation by giving "assimilated" Ainu markedly better treatment during the ceremonies and more valuable gifts afterwards.⁶⁹

THE MEIJI ERA: ASSIMILATION, ‘AINO STUDIES’, AND THE DENIAL OF IDENTITY

Early Meiji Perceptions and the Introduction of Assimilationist Policies:

By the time the Tokugawa shogunate came tumbling down in 1868, the idea of the Ainu as barbarians had already long been cemented into the Japanese world order and considered part of its consciousness. Having long been subjected to Matsumae rule for well over two centuries, the Ainu were familiar with governmental bodies controlling and watching their community’s ever move. However, the Tokugawa/ Matsumae way of policing the Ainu was remarkably different than what the Meiji government had in mind. What marks the Meiji era as decidedly different in this regard can be traced back to the core tenets that came with the new administrative order. When the Meiji order rose in power in 1868, the political core’s primary objectives were to restore the emperor back to a place of power after centuries of politics being run by domain lords and military leaders, to modernize the state to rival other developing European states, and most importantly, to solidify Japanese identity in order to resist European colonization of Japan. This meant, more often than not, the state creating a standardized Japanese identity based off of what the Meiji government wished to have out of its citizens, essentially molding what the ideal Japanese citizen should look like while still retaining a sense of uniqueness not seen anywhere else. The Ainu occupied a unique position within this context, being both the historical other through which the early Japanese state used to contrast themselves with, but also a roadblock to a complete monoethnic state the Meiji government wished to convey to the world. Ezochi, or rather Hokkaido, as it would be quickly renamed in 1869 once the Meiji government solidified itself, severed as a unique place in its own right too.

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 375-6. For a contemporary account of a uimam held during the period of shogunal control, see "Dojin omemie ni tsuki nikki" [Diary of the Native Audience] (1859), in Saisen kai shiryō [Documents of the Saisen kai], ed. Takakura Shin'ichiro (Sapporo, 1982), pp. 99-125.

For many in 19th century Japan, Hokkaido existed as a sort of final frontier, often referring to the colonization as a wider narrative of the 'development' and settlement of an untamed wilderness. The renaming of Ezochi to Hokkaido and the creation of the Kaitakushi (Colonization Commission, 1869-82) serve as a testament to the shifting perceptions of how the Ainu and Ezochi could serve Japanese interests. No longer was Ezochi merely 'Ainu-lands', a distant entity entirely foreign by its nature due to cultural and linguistic differences. Now, Hokkaido and the Ainu by extension, created a physical symbolic representation of the 'taming' of foreign lands as a part of the Meiji nation-building project.⁷⁰ The Kaitakushi used this exact argument when trying to justify its presence, using them same 'virgin lands' argument that many other colonizing entities have used before. The Kaitakushi argued that 'for several hundred years [Hokkaido] had been in a state of undisturbed nature with only fishing operations being conducted'.⁷¹ To add weight to this claim, the Kaitakushi hired Horace Capron to advise the economic development of the region. Capron was the former US Commissioner of Agriculture hired to at great cost to aid in developing Hokkaido into source for food and other natural resources. There was heavy emphasis placed on agriculture, but Capron also suggested industrial development should take place. Immigration of Japanese settlers into Hokkaido was highly encouraged for both development and defense, as heavy manpower was needed since at the time a majority of those living in Hokkaido were either Ainu working in dangerous conditions within fisheries or farmers sent to colonize the area in years past.⁷² In order to encourage resettlement, Capron urged the Kaitakushi to introduce regulations to sell and grant land to potential Japanese settlers. Capron's insistence private ownership of land was permitted (Regulation for the Lease and Sale of Hokkaido Land and Land Regulation Ordinance of 1872). Article 7 of the Land Regulation Ordinance goes on to state:

"The mountains, forests, rivers, and streams where formerly the natives fished, hunted and gathered wood shall be partitioned and be converted to private (jinushi) or collective (murauke) ownership".⁷³

⁷⁰ Richard Siddle, "Former Natives," in *Race, Resistance and the Ainu of Japan* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), p. 53.

⁷¹ Kaitakushi proclamation of 1869. Reproduced in M. Kōno (ed.), 'Ainu Sōshi: 5' (Collected Documents Relating to the Ainu: 5), *Ainu Shi Shiryō Shū: Abe Masami Bunkō Hen 3* (Collected Materials on Ainu History, Archives of Abe Masami 3) Series 2, Vol. 6 (Sapporo: Hokkaido Shuppan Kikaku Senta, 1985), p. 23.

⁷² Richard Siddle, "Former Natives," in *Race, Resistance and the Ainu of Japan* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), p. 56.

⁷³ ASH, p. 37.

It became clear with this ordinance that indigenous land was clearly not considered or recognized as belonging to indigenous peoples. Despite this clear denial of the Ainu and their historical ties to the land in Hokkaido, much of what came to be known of the land was facilitated by Ainu labor in surveying, which served as a much more enjoyable avenue of labor than intensive agriculture the Ainu were often forced into.⁷⁴ Despite all this, Ainu attitudes were often negative during this time, even if they were more often being called natives rather than barbarians. Still, for many Japanese who had been spoon-fed a stereotyped and manufactured image of who the Ainu were, modernization did little to regulate and squash out pre-Meiji perceptions. John Batchelor, an English missionary who spent much of his life recording the life, culture, and language of the Ainu, noted in 1877 the comments by some Japanese friends:

“Of a barbarous and fierce savage people living among the mountains and by the seashores of Hokkaido. They said they were not quite human because they had a common cur to their father and a woman to their mother. And they were very hairy people because of this.”⁷⁵

Batchelor wasn't the only Japanese outsider to note the oftentimes hostile opinions of the Ainu they often encountered. Other western travelers often wrote about their journeys traveling through Japan and into Hokkaido. One notable traveler who wrote extensively on her travels throughout Hokkaido and the various Ainu communities she encountered was a European woman named Isabella Bird. Much like Batchelor, she often remarks throughout her travels the various remarks of both total strangers and her traveling companion, Ito, in response to the mention of the Ainu or possible encounters with the communities. From Bird's first mention of the Ainu, she makes a particular effort to describe them as a 'harmless people without the instinct of progress'.⁷⁶ Throughout her travels to the different prominent Ainu villages, she puts heavy emphasis on reiterating these characteristics, often likening the Ainu as helpless children or gentle savages not knowing the harshness that can come from civilized life.⁷⁷ What becomes most notable is that her guide and servant Ito often mocks Bird for her desires to treat the Ainu with alleged kindness and courtesy. In one particular instance, Bird requested for a fellow

⁷⁴ M. Ogawa, 'Ainu Gakkō no Settchi to Hokkaido Kyūdojin Hogohō- Kyūdojin Jidō Kyōiku Kitei no Seiritsu' (The Establishment of Ainu schools and the Hokkaido Former Natives Protection Act- Regulations for the Education of Former Native Children), Hokkaido Daigaku Kyōikugakubu Kiyō, No. 55 (1991), p.294.

⁷⁵ J. Bachira (J. Batchelor), 'Nihon Zaijū Rokujūnin no Kansō' (Findings After 62 Years in Japan), Hokkaido Shakai Jigyō, No.80 (Jan. 1939), p.32.

⁷⁶ Isabella Bird, *Unbeaten Tracks*, pg.307.

⁷⁷ Examples of such can be found in Bird, *Unbeaten Tracks*, pp.319 or 321.

traveler to translate to Ito in Japanese about the importance of being kind and courteous to the Ainu whose hospitality she will receive, to which Ito responded:

“Treat Ainos politely!” he says; “They’re just dogs, not men”.⁷⁸

Comments such as these are common throughout Bird’s traveling notes, as was throughout major works about the Ainu at the time. Heavy emphasis was placed on just how ‘different’ the Ainu appeared to be and act. Scholars like Arai Hakuseki, author of one of the earliest compilations of information on Ainu society, throughout his work described the Ainu as "knowing neither rites nor justice" and living like wild animals."⁷⁹ In both scholarly and layman perceptions, a connection had already long been made between the Ainu and wild animals, a connection that wouldn’t just dissolve once Hokkaido was absorbed into Japanese statehood and the Ainu turned into citizens.

Even scholars who held a sense of pity and sometimes even praised the Ainu for their ‘simple’ way of life, nonetheless, only bothered to understand the Ainu in relation to their perceived disconnection to civilization. Sakakura Genjiro was one of these more sympathetic scholars but didn’t hesitate to become of the first advocates for the assimilation of the Ainu into Japanese society. Genjiro heavily argued that the Ainu should be encouraged to take up rice-farming and become grain-eaters, believing, "they should be turned into people of our country". To prove that this was possible, he cited the case of the Ainu populations of Tsugaru and Nanbu in northern Honshu that had gradually been assimilated into Japanese society.⁸⁰ Sakakura’s comments marks an interesting shift in the perceptions of what it meant to be Japanese. At least according to Sakakura, to be Japanese wasn’t so much a matter of blood and being born into the state, but something which could be created- a concept which seems to be reflected in Meiji era politics.

As previously discussed, up until the Meiji takeover, the Matsumae lords had a vested interest in ensuring the Ainu remained a distinct and alien other from the Japanese populace. By ensuring this otherness, the Matsumae could most easily maintain their monopoly when they lived in a world where Ainu were visibly different from Japanese. This controlled otherness over

⁷⁸ Bird, *Unbeaten Tracks*, p.308.

⁷⁹ Arai Hakuseki, *Ezo shi* [Chronicles of Ezo] (1720), in *Hoppō mikōkai kobunsho Shūsei*, Vol. 1, p.50.

⁸⁰ Sakakura, *Ezo zuihitsu*, *ibid.*, p.77.

the Ainu also enhanced the Matsumae's prestige and reputation in relation to the shogunate and other domain lords. Therefore- regulations were often introduced prohibiting Ainu from wearing such Japanese items of dress or other physical signifiers which might allow them to be perceived as anyone but Ainu.⁸¹

This justification was ultimately lost when the Matsumae were overpowered by the Meiji government's interests in ensuring national cohesion and recognizability in the face of European colonization and continued tension with Russia to their north. The Ainu ultimately played the role of solidifying the boundaries between Japan and the outside world via their ability to be considered and molded into proper citizens. Ironically, it was the Matsumae incorporating the Ainu's 'alien' identity and building perceptions off of its supposed uncivilized nature to fit within the Tokugawa social hierarchy that ultimately allowed for the Meiji government to steam roll and deny any value to Ainu ethnicity entirely.

This can be best seen within the first decade of Meiji control, with the new government banning visible markers of Ainu ethnicity, such as earrings and tattoos, and also forbidding the Ainu to practice their religion or to hunt in ancestral hunting grounds.⁸² It wasn't just the Ainu Matsumae policies impacted once the Meiji government took control, but also Hokkaido itself. Due to the nature of the Meiji era itself, with high ambitions of reforming an entire nation, Hokkaido played a vital role in defining Japan. With turmoil over what this new Japan should look and ultimately what this new identity should reflect, Hokkaido became an essential building block to this new vision, being the only major area of land left on the archipelago that had little to no settlement from the mainland. Thus, Hokkaido could become the stage through which this new Japan could show the world what it was capable of. Though rousing some debate over how this should be achieved, the message was clearly understood; Hokkaido could and would become the centerpiece for a new era of modernization.⁸³

⁸¹ Hokkaido Cho, ed., *Hokkaido shi* [A history of Hokkaido], 7 vols (Sapporo, Hokkaido Cho, 1937). See also David Howell, "Ainu ethnicity and the boundaries of the modern Japanese state," *Past and Present* 142 (1994): 85-6.

⁸² Kaiho, *Bakuhansai kokka to Hokkaido*, p. 245.

⁸³ Tessa Morris-Suzuki, "CREATING THE FRONTIER: BORDER, IDENTITY AND HISTORY IN JAPAN'S FAR NORTH," accessed June 30, 2022, http://eastasianhistory.org/sites/default/files/article-content/07/EAH07_03.pdf, p.14.

The Ainu Problem and the Hunt for a Solution:

With this new national vision in mind, the Japanese state would logically need to acknowledge the original inhabitants of the land the government wished to use for their benefit. One historian notoriously noted on this supposed problem, stating, “their character had always been submissive, so it was not necessary to use armed force in the way, for example, that Europeans had used it against Indians in the settlement of America. However, the fact that they continued to hold on to their primitive way of life did create many problems for the establishment of means by which they could be treated equally as citizens.”⁸⁴ The Ainu’s traditional lifestyle ran in direct conflict with the goals of the Meiji government and despite the abolition of the prior caste system that relied on creating and identifying difference, creating a cohesive national image relied on Ainu conformity, which was lacking at the time.⁸⁵

There were heavy economic incentives for the Meiji government if they could achieve the type of national development defined within the nineteenth-century Western concept of 'civilization', which included economic development, alongside the creation of wealth and power. Western concepts and definitions such as these were flowing in abundance into Japan once the Meiji government repealed the Tokugawa policy of closed-door economics, which, at least in an official capacity, shut down the country to Western trade of both material and abstract goods. With new incentives, the Ainu problem could no longer just exist within the material world, but rather had to encompass a wider concept of where the Ainu fit within the world of work, production and economy. In order to capitalize on the potential economic gain, the Ainu could bring to Japan, a campaign of turning the Ainu into ‘useful citizens’ became the main mode of assimilation while still retaining economic control over a group that still largely remained alien. Farming was heavily pushed as the only labor Ainu communities could truly undertake, an act that was supposed to reward the Ainu for submitting to Japanese assimilation. With these incentives, we see the introduction of policies that began to chip away at Ainu independence, or what was left of it by the time the Meiji government came into power. For instance, Ainu land was stolen, and small plots were returned with the express purpose of farming. With traditional

⁸⁴ Ibid., p.670.

⁸⁵ Tessa Morris-Suzuki, “CREATING THE FRONTIER: BORDER, IDENTITY AND HISTORY IN JAPAN'S FAR NORTH,” accessed June 30, 2022, http://eastasianhistory.org/sites/default/files/article-content/07/EAH07_03.pdf, p.14.

hunting practices banned in order to allow Japanese manufacturers to capitalize on exporting deer meat and hides to the mainland, the Ainu were left with little option but to adhere to the government's plans, lest they face starvation and burial beneath the waves of Japanese settlers who could readily take the community's place.⁸⁶

The most significant piece of legislation to emerge during the early years of the Meiji government came in November 1878, which resulted in the state stripping the Ainu of their ethnicity in legal terms by renaming them "former aborigines" (*kya dojin*). The creation of this policy also meant that the Ainu became subject to taxation, civil and criminal law, and conscription under the same conditions as any other Japanese citizen. With this new label, all Ainu, no matter the regional or community loyalties, were regarded as a single homogeneous people, and under administrative purposes, put under a single category.⁸⁷ Further policies were introduced to force the Ainu communities into behaving like 'proper' Japanese. After the 1883 prohibition on fishing in the Tokachi area, widespread starvation was reported in the Ainu community the following year, although some relief was attempted, it still centered on forced agricultural labor and productivity.⁸⁸

Furthermore, provisions in the Hokkaido Jiken Hakko Jorei (Ordinance for Issuing Hokkaido Land) of 1877 put Ainu residential land under bureaucratic control after officials noticed that land originally allotted to Ainu families had been taken over by their Japanese neighbors. With this new ordinance, Ainu were given small plots to cultivate, but by 1881 only 724 households, mostly around Sapporo, possessed an average of 1/10th of a hectare.⁸⁹ It wasn't uncommon, however, for officials to be highly resistant to solving issues plaguing the Ainu communities across Hokkaido. As recorded in an official communication to central ministries, Nemuro prefecture blamed Ainu destitution as a fault of the Ainu, not on the government's policies, stating:

"They have brought this difficulty upon themselves since they lack the spirit of activity and progress. In their society in the past there was nothing they needed to record through

⁸⁶ S. Takakura, *Ainu Seisaku Shi: Shinpan* (A History of Ainu Policy: New Edition) (Tokyo: Sanichi Shobō, 1972), pp. 408-09.

⁸⁷ Kaitakushi Regulation No.22, 4 November 1878. ASH, pp.49-50.

⁸⁸ Takakura, *Ainu Seisaku Shi*, p. 471.

⁸⁹ Emori, *Ainu no Rekishi*, p.111.

writing, no stimulus to develop their knowledge through learning; when thirsty they drank, when hungry they ate. They are a purely primitive people".⁹⁰

Drink and an inherent inferiority believed to be associated with the very fabric of Ainu existence was often the only thing needed to justify the ‘Ainu Problem’. It was not due to policy in the eyes of Meiji officials, but rather part of an inherent characteristic that had to come with being a lesser race. Despite official desire for the Ainu to become part of a wider modernizing society, policies continuously worked against this stance, and in the name of agriculture and industrialization of Hokkaido, mainland Japanese citizens were always prioritized to be benefactors. Land was often redistributed from Ainu communities and given for free to Japanese settlers, often resulting in forced scatterings of Ainu communities further and further into marshy lands unfit for agriculture. These relocations often resulted in even more distinct segregation between Japanese settlers and the Ainu, which further widened the psychological and physical divide between two groups who, in all official capacities, were to be classified as the same.⁹¹

An example of this relocation can be seen in 1885, when the Ainu in Kushiro, a settlement on the eastern coast of Hokkaido, were moved upstream out of town limits. Authorities released four reasons for committing to such a plan. Firstly, they argued that the goal of creating ‘welfare through agriculture’ could not be met within the area. They next argued that they were unclear if the Wajin and Ainu communities could even coexist together. Third they attempted to argue that any money made by the Ainu within this town would be spent only on food and alcohol with little consideration for the future. Their final point was that once all this money was spent on food and booze, the Ainu would seek out day labor instead of farming like they were expected to. The justification behind these excuses was pointed out, with officials stating “the natives tend to dislike naichijin (Japanese) and move away to avoid them”, and that “even in America, mixed residence with natives never actually occurs and the natives move to the depths of the mountains.”⁹² Instances seen in Kushiro were not uncommon to see throughout Hokkaido at the time, with more and more Ainu being forced out of their homes and lifestyles, forced to either become farmers or overworked seasonal labors in order to survive. Ultimately,

⁹⁰ Nemuro Prefecture to Naimushō and Nōshōshō, 21 November 1882.

⁹¹ Richard Siddle, “Former Natives,” in *Race, Resistance and the Ainu of Japan* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), p. 65.

⁹² ‘Kushiro Dojin Iten no Riyū’ (Reasons for Relocating the Kushiro Natives), reproduced in *Kushiro-shi, Shin Kushiro-shi Shi* (New History of Kushiro City) (Kushiro: Kushiro-shi, 1974), pp.600-602.

the Ainu's fate would be sealed in 1899 with the Former Hokkaido Aborigines Protection Act (*Hokkaido Kya Dojin Hogoho*), which "protected" the Ainu by forcing them to become farmers on marginal land to teach them how to become useful citizens.⁹³ This law wouldn't be repealed until 1997, leaving almost an entire century of justification to wipe Ainu culture and history from the Earth.

The Era of Race Science and the Creation of the Dying Race:

Despite Meiji insistence on creating a unified Japanese front in the face of European colonization, there was little hesitation to embrace the supposed superiority of the Japanese race and civilization among the Japanese. With the importation of European works on Darwinian theory and other social sciences into the academic minds of Japan, many were quick to look to the Ainu as being tailor-made to test and observe these new theories in practice. Most Europeans at the time traveling into Japan during this era were quick to echo sentiments already held by the Japanese populace but adding a uniquely European outlook to the Ainu. The previous mentions of Western travelers like Bird illustrate this, with heavy emphasis on stereotypes of the 'noble savage'. For these travelers, the Ainu fit perfectly into hierarchical classification of humanity where they inhabited its lowest rung. The Ainu were every bit savage and disconnected from the other races in the eyes of European travelers that it made perfect sense to openly describe them as a different species entirely. To many, the Ainu lacked progress and were the physical embodiment of what humanity must strive away from: Romyn Hitchcock, author of *The Ainos of Yezo, Japan*, stated that "after a century of contact with the Japanese, they have learned no arts, adopted no improvements".⁹⁴ Additionally, Basil Hall Chamberlain, a professor of Japanese at Tokyo Imperial University, stated that "so little have they profited from the opportunities offered to them during the last thousand or two thousand years, that there is no longer room for them in the world".⁹⁵ In another example, Arnold Savage Landor, a painter and anthropologist, wrote that the Ainu were "incapable of improving themselves". Landor went on to state that "like monkeys'

⁹³ Kaiho, *Bakuhansei kokka to Hokkaido*, p. 245.

⁹⁴ R. Hitchcock, 'The Ainos of Yezo, Japan', in *Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution, Showing the Operations, Expenditures and Conditions of the Institution for the Year Ending June 30, 1890*. Report of the U.S National Museum (Washington: Smithsonian, 1891), pp.433,442.

⁹⁵ B. H. Chamberlain, *the Language, Mythology, and Geographical Nomenclature of Japan, Viewed in the Light of Aino Studies* (Tokyo: Tokyo Imperial University, 1887), p. 43.

the Ainu cannot concentrate their attention, and they are easily wearied".⁹⁶ Finally, Isabella Bird, whose opinions were far more tame relative to other European writers' opinions, nonetheless wrote of the Ainu that it was "nonsense to write of the religious ideas of people who have none, and of beliefs among people who are merely adult children".⁹⁷

These writers also agreed in another area when discussing the Ainu, that of their inherent destiny to die out as a race, barreling towards extinction with wild abandon. Landor believed "the race is rapidly dying out, destroyed by consumption, lunacy, and poverty of blood".⁹⁸ Hitchcock similarly described the event as being "doomed to extinction from the face of the Earth".⁹⁹ Bird notes when observing the severity of Ainu poverty in the region as "descending to the vast tomb of conquered and unknown races which has opened to receive so many of them before".¹⁰⁰ Chamberlain refused to mourn this perceived extinction event, celebrating for the "the probable speedy extinction of the race" since "the existence of this race has been as aimless, as fruitless, as in the perpetual dashing of the breakers on the shore of Horobetsu".¹⁰¹ Isabella Bird, despite her supposed admiration for the Ainu's 'simple' way of life, shares a similar sentiment, stating:

"They have no history, their traditions are scarcely worthy the name, they claim descent from a dog, their houses and persons swarm with vermin, they are sunk in the grossest ignorance, they have no letters or any numbers above a thousand, they are clothed in the bark of trees and the untanned skins of beasts, they worship the bear, the sun, the moon, fire, water, and I know not what, they are uncivilisable and altogether irreclaimable savages..."¹⁰²

Many traces and references to Darwinian social theory can be found throughout these writings. In his writings, Landor noted that his readers 'might have noticed certain facts that strongly support Darwin's theory of evolution, and the hairy arboreal ancestors with pointed ears

⁹⁶ A.H.S Landor, *Alone with the Hairy Ainu* (London: John Murray, 1893), pp268, 269, 271, 274.

⁹⁷ Bird, *Unbeaten Tracks*, p.231, 274, 280.

⁹⁸ A.H.S Landor, *Alone with the Hairy Ainu* (London: John Murray, 1893), pp.295-96.

⁹⁹ R. Hitchcock, 'The Ainos of Yezo, Japan', in *Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution, Showing the Operations, Expenditures and Conditions of the Institution for the Year Ending June 30, 1890. Report of the U.S National Museum* (Washington: Smithsonian, 1891), p.443.

¹⁰⁰ Bird, *Unbeaten Tracks*, p.307.

¹⁰¹ B. H. Chamberlain, *the Language, Mythology, and Geographical Nomenclature of Japan, Viewed in the Light of Aino Studies* (Tokyo: Tokyo Imperial University, 1887), pp.74-75.

¹⁰² Bird, *Unbeaten Tracks*, p.255.

from which the races of men are descended'.¹⁰³ Writings like those of Bird, Landor, and Chamberlain directly influenced the first generation of Japanese scholars during the Meiji era; scholars who would be trained using western scientific and social theory directly in spaces like the Tokyo Imperial University in the 1880s. For instance, Edward Morse, an American who many consider to be the 'Father of Japanese Archeology', was also instrumental in introducing Japanese academics to the ideas of Darwin and his counterparts. Morse helped establish the Tokyo Anthropological Society in November 1884, which would go on to publish a journal entitled the *Tokyo Jinruigakakkai Zasshi*.¹⁰⁴ Chamberlain also held a similar role within the university. Another Western scholar named Ludwig Riess was active in the university setting, establishing the Historical Society in 1889 which published *Shigakkai Zasshi*.

With flourishing development of anthropology and history in the realm of academics, many students and western professors alike began to question the supposed 'racial origins' of the Japanese. Japanese students in particular understood this question in relation to the desire for establishing an identity, grounded in history and science. There was much debate about how the Ainu played into the Japanese origin story, and specifically about whether the Ainu could be classified as part of this wider historical narrative linking the Japanese back to their first ancestors. From these debates Ainu studies emerged in the late 1800s, especially among the students of Sapporo Agricultural College in Hokkaido. These students would form the Sapporo Historical Society in 1892 and the Hokkaido Anthropological Society in 1895. The topics of interest that emerged from these societies focused on presenting Ainu funerals, Karafuto Ainu skulls, and Landor's *Alone with the Hairy Ainu* which had been published in 1893.¹⁰⁵

Because the literacy rate rose dramatically due to Meiji education initiatives, books and pamphlets like Landor, *Tokyo Jinruigakakkai Zasshi*, and translated Darwinian theory began to be disseminated throughout the wider populace, with wider use of race science and debates over Japanese origins becoming quite popular. With these works, a greatly solidified image of what the Ainu 'race' looked like, often taking the form of an ignorant, primitive savage.

¹⁰³ Landor, *Alone with the Hairy AINU*, P.280.

¹⁰⁴ Fujimoto, *Ainugaku e no Ayumi*, pp.31-40.

¹⁰⁵ Hokkaido Mainichi Shinbun, 20 February, 1897.



Figure 4 Sakhalin Ainu and Hokkaido Development Commissioners who emigrated to Hokkaido [1876] (Meiji Taisho period Hokkaido photo catalog (Meiji Taisho period Hokkaido catalog edition)). Hokkaido University: Northern Studies Collection.

Figure 4 above encapsulates every stereotype and perception built around the Ainu and the Japanese. Depicting the gathering of the Sakhalin Ainu immigrants and Meiji officials, the same atmosphere is captured that can be seen in Figure 2- an aura of submission and a physical boundary created between those on unequal footing. The officials depicted pose with a sense of pride while standing tall, while their Ainu counterparts sit slouched on the ground. What is remarkable about drawing similarities between Figure 2 and Figure 4 is that while the Japanese subjects depicted show a clear divide in time, the Ainu do not. While the Japanese subjects dress in both their respective Tokugawa and Meiji attire as one would expect for the time they are meant to represent, the Ainu look identical in both depictions. Images like Figure 4 likely reinforced the perception of the Ainu lacking progress, trapped in time in a bygone era slouched next to their modernized Meiji counterparts.

What was once concept strictly defined by the outward concept of what a barbarian should look like, at least in the eyes of Tokugawa society, had now transformed into a being believed to be engrained within supposed scientific proof itself. Race itself as a concept became integral to further justify colonization from Japanese historians and other academics, this especially can be seen in discussions with other communities impacted by a budding Japanese empire. The same excuses used for the Ainu were also seen when discussing Taiwan, with a notable book on the subject called *The Japanese Nation* (1912) by Nitobe Inazo, who was a professor at the University of Tokyo, using them same basis of race and alleged Japanese superiority to justify their presence across an ocean.¹⁰⁶

With heavy emphasis on race, scholars slowly shifted their perceptions towards the narrative of the Ainu existing as a dying race doomed for extinction. Most felt there was no need to attempt to stop the supposed course of nature, justifying lack of action upon the theory of survival of the fittest. With research methods and attitudes were largely inherited by their western teachers, these scholars began to follow the same history their western anthropological teachers followed. The desecration of Ainu graves began at the village of Mori in 1865, with similar excavations following by archaeologists and anthropologists from some of Japan's newly established universities.¹⁰⁷ Respect was often not rewarded to the graves these anthropologists plundered, oftentimes locals experienced equal harassment into providing data for the researchers stealing their ancestors' bones.¹⁰⁸ In a reflective report written in 1935, Koganei Yoshikiyo giddily discussed his early days of Ainu studies in Hokkaido in the 1880s. He eagerly described secretly excavating graves at night to avoid discovery while joking about ghosts to his laborers. When he was confronted by locals extremely distraught over his actions, Koganei proceed to build a makeshift altar and go through the motions of appeasing the dead. He reflected that at one site that had recently buried, describing how the bodies were washed clean of any flesh left in the local river. Not just satisfied with the bodies of deceased Ainu, Koganei lied to the locals to gain physical measurements of their skulls and bodies, claiming he was there as a doctor attempting to help cure the many diseases plaguing the local communities, diseases

¹⁰⁶ I. Nitobe, *The Japanese Nation: Its Land, Its People, Its Life; With Special Consideration to Its Relations with the United States* (New York and London: G. Putnam's Sons, 1912), pp. 86-87, 248-253.

¹⁰⁷ J.E Hoare, 'Mr. Enslie's Grievances: The Consul, the Ainu and the Bones'. *Japan Society of London Bulletin*, No.78, pp.14-19.

¹⁰⁸

which were introduced via contact with mainland Japanese. Many believed his words, giving him many thanks and some even offered to pay him money for his help.¹⁰⁹

The work of these early scholars helped popularize a new national narrative of progress and what proper civilization could look like and achieve, with the Ainu and Hokkaido playing an integral role in being evidence for what the Meiji government was capable of accomplishing. Early anthropologists and historians aided these plans by providing a historical and scientific basis to legitimize the colonization of Hokkaido and the subordination of the Ainu. Any action, no matter how dehumanizing it might be, could be justified in the name of science and helping to achieve progress. Manufactured images of who the Ainu were in the eyes of the Japanese would be further disseminated through school textbooks and expositions that began to crop up around the late Meiji era. The more the public learned about the Ainu the more awareness was created towards this narrative of a supposed backwards race that was on the cusp of dying out. Part of this narrative consisted of painting the Japanese as the Ainu's saviors, the people who could ease their painful transition as they died out. This can be seen in official histories produced around this time, with Hokkaido's first history edited by noted Ainu scholar Kono Tsunekichi and published in 1918, claiming that the responsibility of colonization of Hokkaido had fallen to the Japanese as 'no other superior race was in contact with the Ainu'.¹¹⁰

A major trend Japanese scholars would pick up from their western counterparts was the embracing of pseudo-sciences like eugenics and serology, which were mobilized in the search for Japanese origins during the 1920s and 30s. Research into blood type in the 1920s was conducted by Furuhashi Tanemoto and Furukawa Takeji, who heavily argued that one could determine the "fundamental basis of racial temperament by analyzing the distribution of the blood types across races".¹¹¹ Studies on earwax, hairiness, and the 'unpleasant' and 'unbearable' body odor of the Ainu were also undertaken during this time, with hopes of linking the Ainu with the 'white race', who as a race were believed to "possess a strong body odor".¹¹² These investigations show a general trend towards attempt to disconnect the Ainu from the Japanese; it

¹⁰⁹ Y. Koganei, 'Ainu no Jinshugakuteki Chōsa no Omoide' (Recollections of Ethnographical Investigations of the Ainu), *Dolmen*, Vol.4, No.7 (1935), pp.54-65.

¹¹⁰ M. Kaiho, *Shiryō to Kataru Hokkaido no Rekishi* (The History of Hokkaido as Related by Historical Records) (Sapporo:Hokkaido Shuppan Kikaku Senta, 1985), p.13.

¹¹¹ Hayashida, 'Blood Ideology of Japan', pp. 144-159.

¹¹² Kodama, *Ainu*, p.82.

seemed easier to digest that the Ainu were precursors to the white race rather than sharing Japanese ancestry.

Despite the passing of the Protection Act in 1899 ending the official recognition of the Ainu as ‘former natives’, many in positions of power still categorized the Ainu as a wholly alien entity. Many acknowledged the severity of issues facing Ainu communities in Hokkaido, from mass poverty to diseases running rampant, and while there were debates over the Protection Act once it was introduced, the exploitation and suffering was only occasionally discussed. Many argued that these situations could be seen as a result of the 'laws of nature' and that the Ainu were really to blame.¹¹³ When the discussions for implementing the Protection Act were first under way in 1893, one official named Kato Masanosuke was noted to have commented on the matter, stating:

"The survival of the fittest is a natural feature of this world. The Ainu race is an inferior race, while our Japanese race is a superior race. The superior race say that the inferior Ainu race will naturally die out... and that there is no need to protect them."¹¹⁴

Other officials argued against the Protection Act on the basis of being worried that “they [the Ainu] are innately stupid they will spend any money they are given on alcohol and other things,” or they believed the Ainu would eat the seeds given to them rather than plant them.¹¹⁵ This first attempt was a failure, but in 1896 another attempt was made to pass the act. In his opening statement, government spokesman Matsudaira Masanao argued for the need of this legislation, stating:

“The natives of Hokkaido, that is to say, the Ainu race have been from olden times part of the people of the Japanese Empire, but as a result of the survival of the fittest the race is in decline. They have no means of livelihood, no way to protect property. As for making a living, most are tending to fall into extreme destitution... From the standpoint that it is the duty of the government to protect them we have proposed this bill. Since we

¹¹³ Richard Siddle, “Former Natives,” in *Race, Resistance and the Ainu of Japan* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), p. 88.

¹¹⁴ First reading of the Hokkaido Former Natives Protection Act, House of Representatives, 29 November 1893. *Teikoku Gikai Gijiroku* (Transcripts of Imperial Diet Proceedings), in *Hokkaido Utari Kyōkai Ainu Shi Henshū linkai* (ed.), *Ainushi Shiryō Hen 3. Kingendai Shiryō 1* (Collected Materials on Ainu History 3: Modern and Contemporary Materials 1) (Sapporo: Hokkaido Utari Kyōkai, 1990), pp.32-33 (Shortened to ASS3)

¹¹⁵ ASS3, pp. 32,44, 47.

have proposed the protection of the Hokkaido natives for the above reasons and from a spirit of universal benevolence, we request your cooperation and understanding.”¹¹⁶

Even those who supported the motion towards providing aid and protection for the Ainu couched their sympathies within the realm of the dying race narrative. Policies were argued not on the basis of rectifying past mistakes but rather on the belief it was the duty of the Japanese race to give their sympathies to a lesser race ‘stuck in the past’. Many, however, believed in letting the Ainu fend for themselves. Former governor of Karafuto, Hiraoka Sadataro argued this very thing:

“The world is a stage upon which the strong devour the weak... As Darwin wrote in Origin of Species, the so-called idea of the survival of the fittest is a principle that rules the whole world of nature. From the phrase 'survival of the fittest' it follows that those unadapted for life are oppressed. The Ainu are unadapted members of humanity... The Ainu today have nothing to contribute to the happiness of humanity, consequently their survival or extinction should be left to nature. In particular, artificial preservation through human agency is unnecessary, and moreover, is said to be impossible. Another view [for letting the Ainu die out] argues from the standpoint of the Yamato race. Our country is proud of the purity of our ancient race, and the long-term preservation of this racial purity is our nationalism... If interbreeding with Ainu introduces Ainu blood into Japanese it will violate the movement to preserve our national essence.”¹¹⁷

Hiraoka argued for a policy of segregation, calling for the Ainu to live within prescribed areas under Japanese jurisdiction, making a living from agriculture or livestock but not allowed to work for Japanese. He believed the Ainu should be exempted from military conscription but could be civilized through programs of agriculturalization. He did however argue that the Ainu should be forbidden to intermarry with, or be adopted by, Japanese.¹¹⁸

Not every official agreed with Hiraoka’s outlook on how to incorporate the Ainu into the wider society. A large movement formed in the 1930s and up until 1945 that called for the fusion

¹¹⁶ First reading of the Hokkaido Former Natives Protection Act, House of Representatives, 6 December 1898, ASS3, p.76.

¹¹⁷ S. Hiraoka, ‘Ainu Jinshu Shobun Ron’, (On the Disposal of the Ainu Race), appendix in T. Aoyama, *Kyokuhoku no Bettenchi* (The Different World of the Extreme North) (Tokyo: Nippon Seinen Tsushinsha, 1918), pp.1-17.

¹¹⁸ Hiraoka, ‘Ainu Jinshu Shobun Ron’, pp.4-6.

and mixing of Japanese and Ainu blood. Officials like Kita Masaaki, who was involved in Ainu welfare believed that with eugenics, Ainu blood can be diluted out of existence if mixed with Japanese. Kita argued that the child resulting from this fusion would take on the appearance and temperament of the ‘superior’ race and be born Japanese.¹¹⁹ Governor of Hokkaido, Ikeda Kiyoshi, also agreed with Kita’s sentiments, believing that the fusion of Ainu into the Yamato bloodline was the ideal so that the protection act can become extinct.¹²⁰ Kita comments on this fusion, stating:

"The natives are being gradually Japanised. Assimilation and intermarriage- for those two reasons the natives are gradually losing their primitive appearance. The volume of their blood is swiftly fusing into the Yamato race and increasing... As time goes by the Hokkaido natives are assimilating. Assimilation, that is, the transformation of customs and appearance, is not the so-called extinction that people believe, rather, we can say that they are a race that is developing and progressing, uniting and fusing with the Yamato race."¹²¹

With more and more officials and scholars propagating a narrative of inevitable death for the Ainu and their culture, many began to call for efforts not in preventing or easing this supposed extinction but rather for the preservation of whatever Ainu culture could be ‘saved’. As writer Iwano Homei noted on a tour around Hokkaido in the presence of prefectural officials and legislators in 1910:

"Generally, our nation has a mistaken policy towards the Ainu. In particular, the plans of those directly concerned with the Ainu, the Docho, are mistaken. Since the Ainu are living creatures it is natural to give them some land and a means of livelihood, but after all, their fate is to die out. Are they not inferior race begging for extinction? What is the point of educating them? Even if, for instance, a handful of men or women advance they will produce mixed-blood children with shame which is nothing to be thankful for. In my opinion, it is enough to give them welfare to keep them alive as living creatures. Instead, we should preserve the things that the once flourishing Ainu race leave behind before they disappear. What should be left are not just rotten bear skins and utensils but the language

¹¹⁹ Kita Kōyō (M. Kita), ‘Dojin Hogo no Enkaku to Hogohō no Seishin’ (A History of Native Welfare and the Spirit of the Protection Act), Hokkaido Shakai Jigyō, No.15 (July 1933), p.27.

¹²⁰ 70th Imperial Diet, Special Committee on Interim Revision of Military Relief Law, House of Representatives, 26 February 1937, ASS3, pp.456,458, 473.

¹²¹ Kita, ‘Dojin Hogo no Enkaku to Hogohō no Seishin’, p.28.

and literature of the race. Although Greece and Rome perished, their literature survives permanently. The Ainu have a literature that should be preserved. Perhaps the central government and the Docho have not so far spent any money on the preservation and study of this."¹²²

Part of this desire to preserve often revolved around preserving the manufactured image of the Ainu the Japanese created. One of the many methods used was through exhibitions put up for museum guests or at colonial expositions. One famous example of this can be seen at the colonial exposition of 1912 in Tokyo, where the image of the Ainu being primitive, subordinate colonial subjects was reinforced by their display. The main staple of this exposition was a 'native village' to display the 'natives of the new territories'. Ainu were paid to dress in traditional dress and take on the appearance of 'savage' for the entertainment of thousands of curious onlookers. Photographs of the event often feature unhappy Ainu being ogled by cheerful crowds.¹²³

Textbooks played a similar role in introducing the public to the ideas being developed behind the doors of academia. Schools played a vital role in indoctrinating the populace into a world where racial hierarchies and Darwinian theory were central in understanding it. No matter the subject, discussion of the Ainu, or lack thereof, could be found in nearly every book across Japan. One example can be found in early geography textbooks (like Fukuzawa Yukichi's *Sekai Kunizukushi* or Uchida Masao's *Yochi Shiryaku*), which grouped countries into the evolutionary categories of barbarian, semi-civilized, and civilized. Fukuzawa in particular must be noted due to the million plus copies sold during its lifetime.¹²⁴ In 1890, after the promulgation of the Imperial Rescript on Education, heavier emphasis was placed on national consciousness within geography lessons. Again, despite supposedly categorizing the Ainu as Japanese, great focus was placed on painting them as anything but. In an 1887 textbook, the Ainu were introduced to school children as the Ezo or Aino, 'natives who have lived in Hokkaido from ancient times', describing the group via their hair, tattoos, and how they lived off the flesh of fish and beasts. The textbook concludes on the subject of the Ainu, stating that "although they used to be a wild

¹²² H. Iwano, 'Ryōchū Inshō Zakki' (Record of Impressions During my Journey), No.14, Hokkai Taimuzu, 30 October 1909.

¹²³ Meiji Kinenkai (ed.), *Takushoku Hakurankai Kinen Shashin Chō* (Commemorative Photographs of the Colonial Exposition) (Tokyo: Meiji Kinenkai, 1912). Quote above comes from a caption via the photos within.

¹²⁴ K. Takeuchi, 'How Japan Learned About the Outside World: The Views of Other Countries Incorporated in Japanese School Textbooks, 1868-1986', *Hitotsubashi Journal of Social Studies*, No.19 (1987), pp.5-9.

people, they now have a gentle character and are well mixed in with mainlanders”.¹²⁵ In another textbook written in 1892, the authors followed the same justification of occupation of Hokkaido that scholars used before based on the supposed racial inferiority of the Ainu, however, they deleted a section about Ainu character and instead added that they are “partial to alcohol”.¹²⁶ Every book described tended to include illustrations of the Ainu in traditional dress beside their traditional houses, despite many of the practices depicted as being part of the Ainu community having been banned years prior.

There was little to be done to combat these stereotyped images being produced on the Ainu. Most Ainu and Japanese remained mostly segregated from one another, due to most Ainu in the late 19th century being confined to native villages and reservations. Any knowledge about the Ainu came largely from books and press sections within newspapers. In 1919, John Batchelor pointed out that the Japanese tended to be polite among themselves and to Westerners but treated the Ainu as “outside of the brotherhood of man”.¹²⁷ The continued persistence of narratives surrounded supposed beast hood of the Ainu was only solidified after decades of racial science were added to the image of Ainu ‘barbarianism’. To some, the Ainu couldn’t even be considered human. An example of such can be seen with comments like those from a fisherman in Karafuto in 1928, who was recorded stating, “So what if the Karafuto Ainu have no registration, they are not counted as human, so it makes no difference if you kill one or two of the animals”.¹²⁸

By the end of the Meiji era and the resulting years that followed, the outlook for the Ainu looked grim. Stuck in a tug-of-war game between two competing narratives, one end determined to completely erase any evidence the Ainu once existed alongside the Japanese, the other focused on preserving the image of the Tokugawa barbarian.

CONCLUSION: THE MODERN AINU AND THE SHIFT WITHIN THE DYING RACE

¹²⁵ S. Akiyama, *Nihon Chiri Shōshi* (Outline of Japanese Geography) (Tokyo: Chūōdō, 1887), Vol. 2.

¹²⁶ Gakkai Shihōsha, *Nihon Chiri Shōhō* (First Step in Japanese Geography) (Tokyo: Shūōdō, 1892).

¹²⁷ ‘Ainu ni taisuru Nihonjin no Jinshuteki Sabetsu Taigū (Racially Discriminatory Treatment of the Ainu by Japanese), Hokkai Taimuzu, 25 October 1919.

¹²⁸ Recorded in the diary of Ega Torazō, October 1928. In T. Umeki (ed.), *Ainu Dendōsha no Shōgai: Ega Torazō Ikō* (The Life of an Ainu Missionary: The Posthumous Writings of Ega Torazō) (Sapporo: Hokkaido Shuppan Kikaku Senta, 1986), p.169.

Time has often not been kind to the Ainu, both as a people and culture. As seen with other colonizing forces, there has been a deliberate effort in the decades that followed the post-WWII era to forget the empire's actions and past misdeeds. Many remaining Ainu were keen on attempting to separate themselves from their past within the now defunct empire, either by continuing the encouragement of assimilationist ideals or just by existing in Hokkaido, away from the prying eyes of the government and making do with what was left of traditional Ainu society and attempting to rebuild the foundations. It wasn't until 1997 that this reality could be fully realized, when the Hokkaido Former Aborigines Protection Act would be repealed and replaced with the Act on the Promotion of Ainu Culture and Dissemination and Enlightenment of Knowledge About Ainu Tradition which aimed to alleviate the near century of destruction brought to the Ainu communities of Hokkaido.¹²⁹ However, due to centuries of racialization, colonization, and the desire to solidify the Self and Nation, the Ainu no longer looked like their pre-Meiji counterparts and likely never will again. A large rift still exists between the Ainu community and the surrounding Japanese populace- a rift that only raised further questions about the nature of how Japan can begin moving forward with the Ainu community at its side. When the Japanese finally acknowledged the Ainu as Japan's indigenous inhabitants in an official capacity in 2019, the recent development of 'aboriginality' became the backbone of discussions of what it means to be 'racialized'. As Edward Said comments on the subject, "to accept nativism is to accept the consequences of imperialism, the racial, religious, and political divisions imposed by imperialism itself. To leave the historical world for the metaphysics of essences like negritude, Irishness, Islam, or Catholicism is to abandon history for essentialization that has the power to turn human beings against each other." [2] For groups like the Ainu to accept their status as indigenous would mean they'd have to accept culture roots that have historically been used to dehumanize them, a process made exceptionally harder when faced with a lifetime of being told to feel shame in their identity. With recent developments of recognition and policies moving forward to provide aid, there is hope that the Ainu can escape the confines of the 'Dying Race' narrative thrust upon their shoulders and replant their roots and create a new future within Hokkaido

¹²⁹ "Japan: New Ainu Law Becomes Effective," The Library of Congress, accessed July 20, 2022, <https://www.loc.gov/item/global-legal-monitor/2019-08-05/japan-new-ainu-law-becomes-effective/>.