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From Nurturing to Protection in Nineteenth-Century Japan

DAVID L. HOWELL

Japan became an empire in the nineteenth century. Exactly *when* in the century this imperial transformation occurred is a matter of debate with political as well as academic overtones. Discussions about Japan tend to link sovereignty and empire because threats to Japanese national sovereignty lay behind the impulse to build an empire in the first place. The empire grew as Japan forced sovereign states to cede to it territories like Taiwan and Karafuto (southern Sakhalin) and absorbed the previously sovereign Korea and nominally sovereign Ryukyu kingdom (now Okinawa Prefecture). This chapter focuses on an outlier region – Hokkaido, the northernmost of Japan’s main islands – and its indigenous Ainu people. Never sovereign and never under the suzerainty of any state other than Japan, Hokkaido does not fit easily into typical modes of discourse about empire in the Japanese context.

In addition to its discursive links to sovereignty, empire was part of the project of making Japan modern along western lines. It took control of its first colony *per se* – that is, the first one described as such at the time both within Japan and internationally – only in 1895, with the acquisition of Taiwan from Qing China after the Sino-Japanese War. However, one could reasonably date the birth of the Japanese empire to 1879, when the state completed the process of annexing and absorbing Ryukyu, or 1869, when the nascent Meiji regime asserted full sovereignty over Hokkaido. One could suggest still other dates, some even a bit before the Meiji Restoration of 1868, but in any event discussions of Japan’s emergence as an imperial power are almost always framed in terms of its engagement with, and longing for, western-style modernity.

I begin with this question of dating Japan’s emergence as an empire because setting a date inevitably doubles as a comment on the place of Okinawa and Hokkaido in the Japanese polity. Relying on the conventional starting point of 1895 implies that Okinawa and Hokkaido have always been Japanese territory,

whereas a choice between the other two dates represents a decision to privilege, or not, Ryukyu's lost status as a nominally independent state. Put another way, the choice of 1879 implicitly excludes Hokkaido and its indigenous Ainu inhabitants from a chronology of empire and leaves undetermined, at least at the level of scholarly discourse, the Ainu's status as Japanese or colonial subjects. (In strictly formal, legal terms, the Meiji state classified the Ainu as Japanese for most purposes, though officials in Hokkaido often went out of their way to differentiate Ainu from other subjects; in daily life, ordinary Japanese and Ainu distinguished themselves from one other.)

A few scholars and activists have begun to push back against the tendency to link empire and a longing for western-style modernity in their discussions of Hokkaido and the Ainu. They see Ezo, as the Japanese called Hokkaido before 1869, as a colony of the Tokugawa shogunate and the relationship between Wajin (majority Japanese) and Ainu as one of imperial domination. These writers do not, of course, treat the early modern Japanese empire as equivalent to its self-consciously modern Meiji counterpart, but they do see essential continuity from the shogunate's (and its proxies') domination of the Ainu in the early modern period to the Meiji state's domination of them after 1869.¹

Looking at the discourses of protection employed by the early modern and modern states provides insight into the changing position of the Ainu while sidestepping the politics that inevitably colour any discussion of the place of indigenous people in modern nation-states. Rather than treat the empire's nature as a settled fact from which all further arguments radiate, let us look for the character of the Japanese empire in the Ainu's relationship with the Japanese state across the divide of 1868 (and 1879 and 1895).

Perhaps this issue is particularly pressing in the Japanese case, where all discussions seem to proceed either from strong a priori assumptions about the identity of the Japanese nation with the Japanese archipelago or, conversely, equally strong a priori assumptions about the essential outsidership of islands like Hokkaido and Okinawa. Scholars literally inscribe such assumptions in research through their choices of ethnonyms and toponyms. My use of 'Wajin' and 'Hokkaido' sends a message from the opening paragraphs of this essay quite different from the one I might have sent by calling majority Japanese by the Ainu term *shamo* or simply Japanese and the island *Ainu moshir* or Ezo.² To be sure, ethnonyms and related terms of reference are a point of contestation in many contexts – 'Indians' or 'Native Americans' or 'First Nations'? upper-case 'Indigenous' or lower-case 'indigenous'? – but in the Japanese case it is not unusual to see thoughtful scholars nearly paralysed by the double meaning of 'Japanese' as ethnonym and nationality, for it seems to them that distinguishing between 'Ainu' and 'Japanese' suggests that Ainu in

contemporary Japan are not fully ‘Japanese’ citizens.³ Reading their work, one might not realise that many other modern nation-states bear the names of their predominant ethnic groups.

TWO KEYWORDS

Matsumae, the autonomous *daimyo* domain that served as the custodian of relations between Japan and the Ainu during the Tokugawa period (1603–1868), nominally legitimised its domination over the Ainu in terms of its caring for (*kaihō*) them.⁴ However, the first systematic attempts to nurture the Ainu as an explicit policy goal began only after Russia emerged as a threat around the end of the eighteenth century and the Tokugawa shogunate assumed direct control over most of Hokkaido. After the Meiji Restoration, the modern state replaced the language of nurturing with a discourse of protection (*hogo*). In the pages that follow, I examine Japanese policies that claimed to nurture and protect the Ainu in the context of the state’s attempts to situate itself in a world of nation-states and empires. I will look as well at the Ainu’s accommodation of, and resistance to, Japanese policies of nurturing and protection.

Let us begin with the keywords themselves. *Buiku*, which I have rendered here as ‘nurturing’, is not a word in the everyday vocabularies of Japanese people today. The authoritative Japanese dictionary, *Nihon kokugo daijiten*, defines it as attentive and loving care and cultivation, as that of a parent for a child, with a secondary sense of coddling or spoiling. In the Tokugawa period, officials occasionally used the term to name welfare institutions, in which case it suggested a meaning closer to ‘succour’, that is, to provide presumably temporary assistance to the weak and vulnerable.⁵ Incidentally, the term (pronounced *fuyu* in Chinese) appears often in Qing dynasty (1644–1911) records, but not in connection with policy toward non-Han peoples.⁶ *Hogo*, in contrast, is a common word in modern Japanese and ‘protection’ is a reasonably straightforward translation.

I do not want to put too much weight on policymakers’ word choices, especially when the reality of their policies rendered the words euphemisms at best and bitter ironies at worst. Still, it is worth pausing at least briefly to consider them, for they reflect, at the very least, the state’s ambitions toward the Ainu. As noted above, *buiku* and *hogo* both refer to the strong taking care of the weak or defenceless, but *buiku* shares with the English ‘nurturing’ a suggestion of looking toward the future. (The character for *bu* 撫 means to ‘pet’ or ‘stroke’, as a cat or a beard, while *iku* 育 means to ‘raise’ or ‘cultivate’.) The term *buiku* thus suggests a future self-sufficiency for the dependent once

the requisite period of loving attention is done. *Hogo* is a more static idea: the object of protection need not be animate, much less in the process of growing or developing. Protection could be a temporary or permanent state; the term itself suggests nothing either way.

THE AINU IN EARLY MODERN JAPAN

Unlike the indigenous peoples absorbed into states founded by settler colonists in North America, Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere, the Ainu never lived in a precontact state before encountering the Wajin, or majority Japanese. The Ainu and Wajin share Neolithic ancestors and have been in contact with one another throughout recorded history. Indeed, Ainu culture, at least as defined by archaeologists, emerged out of preceding Neolithic cultures around the thirteenth century as a result of regular ties of trade and exchange with Wajin.⁷ Key dates in the Ainu's relations with the Japanese state include Koshamain's Rebellion of 1457, which secured Wajin pre-eminence in southern Hokkaido; 1590, when the Kakizaki (later Matsumae) house submitted to the authority of the Japanese hegemon Toyotomi Hideyoshi and thereby made southernmost Hokkaido securely a part of the emergent early modern polity; and, above all, 1669, when an alliance of regional Ainu chieftains under Shakushain rose unsuccessfully against Matsumae's blocking of their direct access to trading partners in Honshu.

The failure of Shakushain's Rebellion led immediately to the loss of the Ainu's vestigial political and economic autonomy. Their opportunities to trade for Japanese commodities such as rice, cloth, sake, tobacco, lacquerware and ironware were limited to coastal trading stations established under the authority of leading Matsumae retainers. These stations evolved by the early eighteenth century into fisheries contracted to merchants, who used a mixture of Ainu and seasonal Wajin labour to harvest herring, salmon, kelp and other marine products for export to Honshu markets. Generally speaking, the degree of the Ainu's dependency appears to have correlated with proximity to areas of Wajin economic activity: that is, Ainu living near the rich herring fisheries of the Japan Sea coast of western Hokkaido or kelp and salmon fisheries on the Pacific Coast of southeastern Hokkaido relied more on fishery labour than those in remote areas in the far east and north. Nevertheless, by the end of the eighteenth century, few if any Ainu anywhere in Hokkaido remained aloof from the world of the contract fisheries. Even those who did not work at fisheries depended on the commodities that flowed through them.⁸

It is important to note that, even after Shakushain's Rebellion, the Matsumae domain did not rule directly over most of Hokkaido or its Ainu inhabitants.

The domain's home territory in the Oshima peninsula in southernmost Hokkaido was politically and institutionally fully part of Japan, albeit with a few quirks owing to its location. For our purposes, the principal quirk was that the domain legitimised its existence to the shogunate by asserting its status as the sole custodian of trade and other relations between the Ainu and Japan. Shakushain's Rebellion had challenged the domain's monopoly over contact from the Ainu side. To maintain it on the other side, Matsumae followed a policy of separation and dissimilation. It prohibited Wajin fishers from moving permanently beyond the domain's borders in southern Hokkaido and policed the ethnic boundary between Wajin and Ainu by insisting that Ainu not learn Japanese or adopt Japanese clothing, hairstyles or names. No doubt the ethnic boundary was often breached in real life, particularly in the realm of language, but the domain steadfastly maintained the façade of absolute separation.⁹

Dependence on Japanese commodities and the labour required to acquire them had profound and deleterious effects on Ainu culture and society. Diseases like smallpox and measles, endemic in Honshu, decimated the population during epidemics that struck every generation or so. ann-elise lewallen has demonstrated that for women, the constant threat of sexual assault or outright appropriation by Wajin men imperilled families and destabilised Ainu society more generally.¹⁰ Notwithstanding the vulnerability engendered by dependence, however, the Ainu did not experience deculturation during the Tokugawa period. On the contrary, there is plenty of evidence of creative and vital adaptation to the reality of subordination to Wajin and the Japanese state that stood behind them.¹¹

As fishery labourers, Ainu workers faced harsh treatment, though this image has been tempered recently by evidence that male workers enjoyed a surprising degree of agency and even authority at some herring fisheries in Hokkaido.¹² Whatever the actual conditions, which no doubt varied, little documentary evidence survives of collective flight or resistance among workers at the well-established fisheries along the Japan Sea coast of Hokkaido.

The only moment of resistance significant enough to draw the shogunate's attention occurred in 1789 at two sites that had only recently been integrated into the contract-fishery system. The incident occurred at fisheries in Menashi, on the Shiretoko Peninsula of Hokkaido, and Kunashiri Island, which lies opposite Menashi across the Nemuro Strait in the southern Kuril Islands. Managers working for Hidaya Kyūbei, an influential merchant who had just taken over the fisheries, began badly by ignoring ritual protocols governing trade, which no doubt cost them the goodwill of the local Ainu community. They then squeezed the Ainu by raising the price of rice and other trade goods while turning a blind eye to the egregious abuse of fishery workers.

The conflict's immediate trigger was the death of an Ainu leader after consuming some rice or sake, which other Ainu attributed to poisoning. According to the standard interpretation of the uprising, this death stoked fears of a mass poisoning and led 130 Ainu workers to attack Wajin at the two fisheries, killing seventy-one of them. Domain officials, with the assistance of influential Ainu chieftains in northeastern Hokkaido, negotiated the rebels' surrender. The domain eventually executed thirty-seven Ainu and, to forestall further resistance, stripped Hidayu of his contracting rights and took measures to alleviate material hardship at fisheries in the area. The Tokugawa shogunate itself stepped in to conduct what it called 'relief' (*osukui*) trade at fisheries in the far northeast of Hokkaido.¹³

Iwasaki Naoko cautions against seeing Kunashiri and Menashi as representative of the abusive working conditions at contract fisheries. Indeed, she expresses scepticism about abuse per se as a cause of the conflict because, at that time, Ainu in far northeastern Hokkaido, in contrast to those further south, were not yet deeply integrated into the Japanese fishing economy and therefore not dependent for their subsistence on labour; presumably, they could have abandoned the fisheries and returned to self-sufficient hunting and gathering if working conditions were truly intolerable. Iwasaki argues that the conflict was, most likely, the result of failed negotiations for compensation (*tsugunai*) after the leader's death rather than the lashing out of people driven to material or physical desperation.¹⁴ Iwasaki's carefully researched critique of the dominant narrative is compelling, especially because she endows her Ainu subjects with a degree of agency missing from other accounts. Yet both the Matsumae domain and the shogunate reacted as if the standard account were correct, that is, that mismanagement and mistreatment caused the uprising rather than deeper issues of Ainu agency and autonomy.

Perhaps the uprising at Kunashiri and Menashi drew the shogunate's attention not so much as a result of its unprecedented violence but rather because of the fisheries' proximity to areas of Russian activity. Russian overtures for trade and diplomacy began in the 1780s and continued regularly, despite adamant Japanese refusals, until the rise of Napoleon drew Russian attention away from the east. The shogunate, hearing reports of Russian beneficence toward the Ainu in Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands, worried that the persistent maltreatment of indigenous workers at contract fisheries would eventually turn the Ainu into an Orthodox Christian fifth column ready to assist in a Russian takeover of the entirety of the Ezochi, that is, all territories inhabited by Ainu, including the Kurils, southern Sakhalin and all but southernmost Hokkaido.

The combination of fear of Russian aggression and a lack of confidence in the Matsumae domain's ability to serve as custodian of relations between

Japan and the Ainu led to a shogunal takeover of Hokkaido, beginning with eastern Hokkaido in 1799 and expanding to the entire island in 1807 after a series of Russian attacks on fisheries in northern Hokkaido and Sakhalin. (Two lieutenants of Nikolai Rezanov, apparently acting on their own, carried out the attacks in retribution for what they perceived as the injustice of the shogunate's refusal of Rezanov's requests for diplomacy and trade.) Ruling through magistrates posted in southern Hokkaido, the shogunate administered the island until 1821, when the Russian threat seemed to have receded enough to restore Matsumae to its former position.

Habuto Masayoshi, the magistrate sent to oversee shogunal policy in Hokkaido until 1807, wrote that 'nurturing' the Ainu was a necessary response to the Russians' 'devious method' of subjugation, already successful in 'many lands', in which they eschewed attacks and battles in favour of displays of 'fleeting benevolence' and 'false charity'. The Ainu, resentful of their long suffering at the hands of the Matsumae domain and its merchant proxies, were susceptible to these tricks. And since Hokkaido's vast size made it impossible to defend through military means alone, Habuto argued that the 'the state's benevolence' simply had to be extended to the Ainu 'by generously nurturing them'. 'We have no alternative', he insisted, 'but to teach them to join their hearts as one and resist the foreigners' overtures'. The way to go about nurturing the Ainu was for the government to take over the trade and thereby ensure that past misdeeds, such as giving the Ainu spoiled goods or short-changing them in exchange, were not repeated. The government should also provide Ainu fishers with nets and other gear and offer them fair returns for their catches.¹⁵

Shogunal officials described nurturing as the use of trade to win over the Ainu. In Nagasaki, Habuto pointed out, the shogunate allowed Chinese and Dutch merchants to trade but had no interest in caring for them. By contrast, nurturing the Ainu was the entire point of trade in Hokkaido. There was no need for the exchange to be profitable.¹⁶ An order from the finance magistrate, which oversaw the shogunate's economic policies, reinforced this point. It called for the suspension of the usual rules of supply and demand, and asserted that the losses the shogunate might suffer in trade would actually be cause to rejoice. The Ainu should be encouraged to harvest as many fish or other trade goods as possible. The robust rewards they earned would not just discourage them from falling into indolent habits but would spur them to work hard and happily, 'thus ensuring the greater prosperity of the Ezochi [Hokkaido] and fulfilling the fundamental goal of the [shogun's] august nurturing (*gobuiku*) policy'.¹⁷ Along the same lines, a subsequent order to the Hakodate magistrate charged officials in Hokkaido with nurturing the Ainu as a way to prevent the decline of industry in the island.¹⁸

Habuto and his colleagues in the shogunate's administration of Hokkaido were undoubtedly sincere in their desire to nurture the Ainu through trade and thereby secure Japanese claims to Hokkaido. In practice, however, the policy was short-lived and limited to just a few fisheries in the northeast that the shogunate administered directly. Before long, nurturing the Ainu devolved into the provision of outright grants of goods (*kudasaremono*) to mark important events such as officials' inspection tours, holidays, or ceremonies. In many respects, this represented a return to the ritual relationship that already existed between Ainu leaders and Matsumae domain officials (and the domain's proxies, the contract-fishery operators), with the important exception that the premise of reciprocity had been stripped away in favour of the one-way provision of welfare.

As Kikuchi Isao has argued, this arrangement in practice did nothing to encourage the Ainu's development as self-sufficient actors. Quite the contrary, the shogunate's intervention merely furthered the Ainu's dependence, occurring as it did after the erosion of Ainu society's integrity under the influence of the contract-fishing economy.¹⁹ Soon after the shogunate took over the entirety of Hokkaido, Habuto was gone, forced out of office on charges of mishandling the response to the Russian attacks. His successors abandoned all pretence of nurturing the Ainu by endowing them with economic agency. Instead, an order noted that the attackers' decision to spare Ainu and their property demonstrated yet again Russian designs on the native people's hearts and minds. Hence, it continued, it was imperative to nurture Ainu in western Hokkaido 'by granting to them sake, tobacco and other goods and thereby encourage them to submit sincerely' to Japanese control.²⁰

The shogunate's attention returned to Hokkaido after the beginning of diplomatic relations with the western powers. In 1855, the southern Hokkaido town of Hakodate opened to foreign shipping as one of Japan's first two treaty ports. The need to secure Hakodate, combined with renewed apprehension over Russian designs on Hokkaido, led the shogunate to resume direct administration over almost the entire island the same year.

Japanese notions of territorial sovereignty differed quite radically from those we accept as commonsensical in the post-Westphalian order of nation-states. Rather than clearly defined national boundaries, early modern Japan had 'ragged edges', as Kären Wigen has put it.²¹ The ambivalent status of Hokkaido, subject to Japan but not fully part of it, reveals this quite clearly. During the last decade and a half of Tokugawa rule, the shogunate began an accommodation to western rules of sovereignty that its successor regime, the Meiji state, would later complete. Officials in the late Tokugawa period understood western geopolitics surprisingly well and proved quite adept at negotiating

with imperialism when the need arose in the middle of the nineteenth century.²² Somehow, for instance, even in the midst of dealing with numerous ‘troubles at home and problems from abroad’ (*naiyū gaikan*), the shogunate in 1862 secured an internationally accepted claim to the Ogasawara (Bonin) Islands, despite the fact that none of the archipelago’s few dozen inhabitants were Japanese (the men were mostly American whalers and the women Hawaiians or other Polynesians).²³

In Hokkaido, officials took steps to secure sovereignty in ways that Russians and other westerners would understand, while at the same time fixing the island’s place in the polity in terms that made domestic sense as well. Anxiety about sovereignty had informed Japanese policy at the beginning of the nineteenth century, of course. Habuto described nurturing in part as a response to the Russians’ success at ‘taking possession of some twenty islands’ in the Kurils by winning over the Ainu there.²⁴ The shogunal officials who took charge of eastern Hokkaido in 1799 erected a stele on Etorofu Island in the southern Kurils that claimed it as Japanese territory, a claim that Russia honoured. The shogunate even effectively shared the administration of Sakhalin with Russia – neither country could make a persuasive claim to the island – from 1854 until the Sakhalin-Kuril Exchange of 1875.²⁵

The concern about specific encounters between Ainu and Russian traders or naval officers that had animated the nurturing policy during the first shogunal takeover of Hokkaido gave way to more general anxiety over Japanese national sovereignty in the face of the full force of western imperialism. Events like the Opium War and the Indian Mutiny demonstrated that Japanese control of the island could not depend on the goodwill of its Ainu inhabitants.

During the second period of direct shogunal rule, the focus of Japanese policy toward the Ainu shifted from nurturing to assimilation (*kizoku* – literally a ‘return’ to quotidian ‘customs’, a term usually used to refer to Buddhist monks and priests who had returned to lay life). A memorandum affirming the continuation of material aid stated that Ainu would henceforth be free to speak Japanese if they wished and that Ainu children should be encouraged to learn the language.²⁶ In the months that followed, the shogunate reversed the Matsumae domain’s other explicit policies of dissimilation in favour of a new set of measures that pushed Ainu men, and the community leaders among them in particular, to assume new identities as Japanese commoners.²⁷ They did this by providing material incentives in the form of grants of rice, sake and other commodities to those who took on the outward characteristics of Japanese peasant villagers: Japanese-style names, dutifully logged into a village population registry; clean-shaven faces; hair worn in a topknot with the pate

shaven; and kimono folded to the right. When positive incentives did not work, officials apparently pressured Ainu to comply, but they seem to have avoided outright physical coercion. In 1856, shogunal authorities stopped calling the Ainu 'Ezo' ('barbarians') and instead referred to them officially as *dojin*, or 'natives', a term that eventually took on the same pejorative overtones of the English word, but at the time simply meant the native people of any locale.²⁸

The assimilation policy, with its focus on outward 'customs' (*fūzoku*), did not really aim at changing anyone's ethnic identity, at least not in the way that concept is generally understood in the contemporary world. Rather, the point was symbolically to incorporate Hokkaido into Japan by endowing its Ainu inhabitants with the markers of civilisation. Made into commoners in the Tokugawa social-status order, the Ainu would no longer be alien 'barbarians' (Ezo) but the direct beneficiaries of the shogun's benevolent rule (*jinsei*). A concrete expression of the idea of benevolent rule was the vaccination of Ainu against smallpox at many of the same fisheries that had seen efforts at assimilation.²⁹ Whether Ainu themselves understood either assimilation efforts or vaccinations as benevolence – all evidence suggests they did not – is almost beside the point. They were the object of these policies, but not their real audience, which lay in Japan and, to some extent, Russia.

Before moving on to a discussion of Meiji protection policies, let us briefly take stock of the early modern Japanese state's engagement with the Ainu, particularly as it pertains to a consideration of the imperial character of the Tokugawa state. The Matsumae domain, acting as custodian of Japanese-Ainu relations, formally pursued policies of dissimilation while encouraging, through trade, ritual and labour, Ainu dependence on Japanese commodities. Hokkaido (other than the Wajin homeland in the far south) was considered to be outside the boundaries of the Japanese state, yet tied to it through Matsumae's relations with the Ainu. This was a form of indirect imperial control along lines not unfamiliar elsewhere in East Asia, particularly if one sees it, as Matsumae did, as an essentially tributary relationship. The Ainu themselves expressed their ties to Japan as those of free agents pursuing trade, even though they surely understood that material dependence, backed by violence or the threat of it, undermined their freedom of action in actual practice. Although their options were limited, as individuals they deployed various 'weapons of the weak', including flight; in at least one case, in Sakhalin in 1862, this took the form of an appeal to Russian protection. The Russians indeed protected the man, Tokonbe, saying that since the Ainu had no 'king' they were free to work for the Japanese or Russians as they pleased, just as they were free to accept nurturing from either side as they chose.³⁰

The notion that Hokkaido lay beyond Japan's borders obtained even during the first period of direct shogunal administration in Hokkaido. Direct administration meant government operation of some fisheries and official oversight over the others, but except for a small number of nominally assimilated Ainu in Etorofu – the border island in the southern Kurils – the authorities never assumed direct rule over Ainu communities.³¹ Nurturing policies rested on the fiction that the Ainu were free agents who, with the proper support and encouragement, could be persuaded to cast their lot with Japan rather than Russia. Advantageous trade arrangements and even the outright granting of goods as gifts served imperial purposes, both deepening Ainu dependence on Japan and helping to secure Japanese claims to Hokkaido in the face of Russian encroachment, but they did not alter pre-existing institutional structures of Ainu control.

The assimilation efforts of the second period of direct rule touched only a minority of Ainu, and even they were affected only fleetingly. Yet they are significant in their assertion of a mechanism by which Ainu could lose their erstwhile 'barbarian' status and become full-fledged Japanese commoners, and their homeland, presumably, an integral part of Japan. (The shogunate never formally absorbed Hokkaido into its core territories, but it did take an important first step by allowing year-round Wajin residence, beginning in 1855.) These policies certainly represent an imperial expansion of the Japanese state into the Ainu homeland. However, their central ambition to erase formally the distinction between Ainu and other Japanese subjects through the manipulation of mostly somatic markers of male identity sets the early modern empire as decisively apart from its modern counterpart.

THE AINU IN MEIJI JAPAN

With the collapse of the Tokugawa shogunate in 1868, the succeeding Meiji regime immediately assumed control over Hokkaido. The announcement to the Ainu of the 'restoration of monarchical rule' (*ōsei fukko*) began with an explanation of the emperor's divine ancestry and superiority over the samurai who had hitherto administered Hokkaido. It followed an expression of regret for the failures of past policies to nurture them with a list of modest quantities of rice, tobacco and sake to be granted to every Ainu woman, man and child.³²

Although the Meiji state is known for its aggressive engagement with western-style modernity, in fact it came into power with a promise to restore Japan to the institutions of the ancient past, including imperial rule. Two of its earliest policies in Hokkaido – renaming the island from Ezo to Hokkaidō (literally, 'northern sea circuit') and dividing it and the Kurils (but not

Sakhalin) into eleven provinces – had the symbolic effect not only of incorporating Hokkaido fully into Japan but to suggest it had *always* been part of Japan because circuits and provinces dated to the seventh century. The gesture was purely symbolic, too, since neither had functioned as administrative units for centuries and would not do so, even nominally, in the Meiji era.

Thus, in a formal, institutional sense, the nascent Meiji regime declared as clearly as it could that Hokkaido was not an external colony of Japan but an integral part of it. This holds even though the state's actual administration of the island highlighted its differences from the rest of the archipelago. The Development Agency (Kaitakushi), which governed Hokkaido from 1869 to 1882, was charged with building infrastructure, developing industry and encouraging agricultural immigration to the island in the hope of exploiting the productive potential of its interior. Insofar as Meiji Hokkaido became a settler colony, the tendency of some writers to see its development as the beginning of Japan's modern empire is neither surprising nor unreasonable.³³

In the early years of Meiji, the state devoted little attention to Ainu affairs per se.³⁴ Indeed, it is safe to say that the government had no systematic Ainu policy at all. Most Ainu continued their lives as seasonal fishery labourers, eligible for the first few years of Meiji to receive goods under pre-existing nurturing policies, but otherwise generally ignored. Between 1871 and 1876, the Development Agency prohibited a number of Ainu customs, including the tattooing of women's faces and hands, the burning of houses after the death of a family member and various traditional hunting methods. Many Anglophone scholars – particularly those more concerned with exposing the Meiji state's many sins than engaging with Ainu history per se – make much of these prohibitions, incorrectly assuming that the Development Agency tried systematically to enforce them.³⁵ These were all core practices, so if the prohibitions had been enforced the violence to Ainu culture would have been incalculable. Even as statements of state aspirations they are significant. However, it is also important to note that the prohibitions coincided with, and indeed ought to be seen as a continuation of, government-sponsored campaigns throughout the archipelago against 'backward' and 'barbarous' customs, including ubiquitous popular religious practices like dancing during the annual summer *bon* festival to honour the spirits of dead ancestors.³⁶

In the late 1870s and early 1880s the Meiji state finally turned its attention to the Ainu. The overriding goal of its policy was to make the Ainu into ordinary Japanese subjects. In an early memorandum along these lines, a Development Agency official argued in 1875 that the only way to 'enlighten' (*kyōka*) the Ainu and get them to abandon of their own volition their 'evil customs' (*heishū*) was to treat them the same as Wajin, albeit with some provisions

to shield them from employers' mistreatment.³⁷ Assimilation – now *dōka* ('to make the same', a neologism coined in 1872) rather than *kizoku* – was certainly the ideal, but so far as I can tell it was never stated explicitly as such. In practice, officials worked to render the Ainu as nearly invisible as a distinct population as possible. Ainu were not supposed to be distinguished from other subjects in household registrations or other official documents, but when it was necessary to single Ainu out the state mandated the use of the neologism *kyūdojin*, or 'former aborigine'.³⁸

Nomenclature aside, the keystone of Ainu policy was the encouragement of agriculture, which officials assumed to be essential to the Ainu's prospects for stable livelihoods. This assumption reflected their deep suspicion of hunting and fishing as occupations, whether practised independently or for wages at commercial fisheries. Imagining Japan as a nation of farmers, they sought to have the Ainu blend into that nation as farmers themselves. Thus, the early 1880s saw a number of schemes to assign Ainu in various localities with land and tools to make a go at agriculture. They all failed, most almost as soon as they were launched. The most ambitious among them was Nemuro Prefecture's plan to assign every one of the 825 Ainu households in its jurisdiction a plot of land. The plan was doomed from the start. Even aside from the Ainu's lack of experience or interest in farming, the prefecture assigned each household ridiculously small plots of just 1.2 to 2.5 acres each, on which they were to grow potatoes, *daikon* radishes and other hardy crops suited to the region's short summers and long, bitterly cold winters. The novice cultivators were to receive training and material assistance (such as grants of seed and loans of tools) during their first season, but by the second year they were to be completely self-sufficient. Of course no one succeeded.³⁹

Despite their lack of success, policies like Nemuro's became the model for the Meiji state's most thorough effort to protect the Ainu. The Hokkaido Former Aborigine Protection Act (*Hokkaidō kyūdojin hogohō*) was enacted by the Japanese Diet in 1899 and remained in force in amended form until 1997. Under the law, Ainu households were eligible to receive grants of up to about 12.25 acres of agricultural land, subject to various restrictions. The law was an ill-conceived and ill-fated effort to turn the Ainu into small farmers and thereby protect them from their inclinations to follow unsettled or unstable livelihoods. By becoming farmers, the Ainu could over time blend into Japanese society and in that way make Hokkaido fully part of Japan once and for all. In practice, very few Ainu established themselves as independent farmers under the protection law. Many, perhaps most, recipients of land grants eventually lost their small holdings to Wajin, despite elaborate provisions to prevent that from happening.⁴⁰

In addition to its centrepiece goal of turning the Ainu into farmers, the protection law included provisions to support Ainu education and hygiene; these measures assaulted the integrity of Ainu culture in the name of humanitarianism. As Ogawa Masahito notes, the law's immediate intellectual roots lay in a discourse on the 'Ainu problem' in the 1890s, in which doctors, officials and journalists lamented what they saw as the Ainu's unsettled livelihoods, poor health and inability to make their way in a Hokkaido that was changing rapidly in response to a dramatic influx of immigrants from the Japanese mainland.⁴¹

Hokkaido Ainu could generally avoid the state's efforts to protect them with inadequate grants of marginal farmland by remaining in the fishing economy or seeking other work as wage labourers. Much more tragic was the fate of two groups of Ainu, one a party from Sakhalin relocated to central Hokkaido after the Sakhalin-Kuril Exchange in 1875, the other a group from the far northern end of the Kuril Island chain, who were moved in 1884 to Shikotan, one of the southernmost Kurils.⁴² The Sakhalin Ainu had experience with the Japanese commercial fishing economy, and over time many disappeared into the fisheries of Hokkaido. The officials who moved them to Hokkaido, however, tried to get them to take up farming in the vicinity of Sapporo. As was the case elsewhere, that scheme failed utterly, but not before cholera and smallpox epidemics had cut the Ainu population by about half. The ninety-odd Kuril Ainu were sea-mammal hunters, not farmers or even fishers, but when they were forcibly moved to Shikotan in 1884 they had no choice but to rely on fishing and small-scale agriculture because the sea-otters and pinnipeds on which they had previously relied did not live in local waters. Even fishing was difficult, and in the end the Kuril Ainu were virtually wards of the state, dependent on grants of food to survive.

The keyword of Japanese policy toward the Ainu in the Meiji era was protection. The word appears most prominently in the title of the Hokkaido Former Aborigine Protection Act of 1899 and the proposals that preceded it. Its other major use came in the mid-1890s, when the government set aside tracts of 'protected lands' (*hogochi*), nominally (in practice only imperfectly) reserved for Ainu squeezed out of their homelands by mass immigration from the mainland. Despite the ubiquity of 'protection' in the titles of these measures, the term appears only incidentally, if at all, in their texts.⁴³ That is, policymakers took for granted the protective function of agriculture, education and hygiene.

In the Hokkaido prefectural archives, the oldest references to 'protection' refer not to Ainu subjects but to groups of disfranchised samurai who immigrated as agricultural settlers despite lacking experience in farming.⁴⁴ The only

documents regarding the Ainu that routinely invoke ‘protection’ relate, in fact, to the first stages of the scheme that would eventually result in the relocation of the northern Kuril Ainu to Shikotan. The official who drafted most of the documents, Orita Heinai, emphasised the need to ‘protect’ the islanders so that they would not ‘regret’ their decision to relocate, and argued that ‘only by absorbing the beneficent influence (*kunka o itadaki*) of this country’ would the Ainu come to ‘accept Japan’s protection’.⁴⁵

Note that even when the Japanese state pushed Ainu to relocate to farmland, there was never any thought given to establishing Ainu ‘reservations’ along the lines of those created in the United States. This was not for a want of knowledge. The Development Agency hired a number of prominent American educators and officials, including even a former Secretary of Agriculture, Horace Capron, to advise the government on developing Hokkaido’s agricultural and mineral resources. However, the idea of segregating the Ainu into reservations would not have made sense to Japanese officials, for it would have committed the state to a policy that acknowledged essential and permanent difference between the Ainu and other Japanese subjects. It might even have required a recognition of the Ainu as a sovereign people, if only nominally. In that event, ‘protection’ would have suggested a desire to shield the Ainu from the effects of a rapidly modernising economy, when in fact the state sought only to protect them from their own culture.

NOTES

- 1 The most thoughtful proponent of this position is ann-elise lewallen. See her *The Fabric of Indigeneity: Contemporary Ainu Identity and Gender in Colonial Japan*, School for Advanced Research Press, Santa Fe, NM, 2016.
- 2 By using ‘Wajin’ and ‘Hokkaido’, I follow the predominant academic practice in Japan, which includes Hokkaido and the Ainu within ‘Japan’, though not without some consciousness of the violence this does to an autonomous ‘Ainu history’. Most Anglophone scholars prefer ‘Ezo’ to refer to the island before 1869, even though (among other problems) it does not, strictly speaking, refer solely to the island of Hokkaido. *Shamo* has a vaguely derogatory nuance, not unlike the term *haole*, used to refer to Caucasians in Hawai‘i; like ‘Ezo’, ‘*Ainu moshir*’, ‘the land of humans’, does not refer only to Hokkaido, but rather includes places like southern Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands, which once had Ainu populations.
- 3 Sasaki Toshikazu, ‘Ainushi wa seiritsu suru darō ka’, in Hokkaidō-Tōhoku Shi Kenkyūkai (ed.), *Kita kara no Nihonshi*, Sanseidō, Tokyo, 1988; Ogawa Masato, *Kindai Ainu kyōiku seidoshi kenkyū*, Hokkaidō Daigaku Toshō Kankōkai, Sapporo, 1997, pp. 4–5 note 1.

- 4 Takakura Shinichirō, 'The Ainu of Northern Japan: A Study in Conquest and Acculturation', translated and annotated by John A. Harrison, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, new series, vol. 50, no. 4, 1960, pp. 27–28. This work is a partial translation of Takakura Shin'ichirō, *Ainu seisakushi*, Nihon Hyōronsha, Tokyo, 1943. The term *kaihō* is very close in meaning to *buiku* (discussed below) and was used throughout the Tokugawa period.
- 5 The Chōshū domain's 'assistance bureau' (*buikukata*), established in 1762, served as a general fund for extraordinary expenditures, including the provision of emergency grain during famines, but it also lent funds for economic development schemes, including agricultural land development. In 1836, the Nakatsu domain in Kyushu set up an 'assistance exchange' (*buiku kaisho*) to assist samurai retainers and townspeople in distress. See *Kokushi daijiten*, svv. 'Buikukata' and 'Buiku kaisho'.
- 6 Mark Elliott, personal communication, 29 September 2016.
- 7 Archaeologists trace Ainu culture to an amalgam of Satsumon culture, which thrived in northernmost Honshu and Hokkaido from the eighth until the thirteenth centuries, with elements of Okhotsk culture, which flourished in Sakhalin, the Kuril Islands and northern Hokkaido from the third to thirteenth centuries. Aside from the incorporation of Okhotsk elements into it, the key marker of the transition is that the bearers of Satsumon culture entirely abandoned pottery-making, presumably because they enjoyed ready access to ironware and pottery received in trade with Wajin. In English, see Mark J. Hudson, *Ruins of Identity: Ethnogenesis in the Japanese Islands*, University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu, 1999. In Japanese, perhaps the strongest statement of the Ainu's long history of interaction with Wajin is Segawa Takurō, *Ainugaku nyūmon*, Kōdansha, Tokyo, 2015.
- 8 On the fishing economy, see David L. Howell, *Capitalism from Within: Economy, Society, and the State in a Japanese Fishery*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1995. On the Ainu's economic dependence on Wajin more generally, see David L. Howell, *Geographies of Identity in Nineteenth-Century Japan*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2005, pp. 110–30. Brett L. Walker, *The Conquest of Ainu Lands: Ecology and Culture in Japanese Expansion, 1500–1800*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2001, examines both Ainu agency in trade and their subjugation to Wajin dominance, mostly outside of the context of the fishing economy.
- 9 See David L. Howell, 'Ainu Ethnicity and the Boundaries of the Early Modern Japanese State', *Past and Present*, no. 142, 1994, pp. 69–93.
- 10 See ann-elise lewallen, "'Intimate Frontiers": Disciplining Ethnicity and Ainu Women's Sexual Subjectivity in Imperial Ezo', in Christopher P. Hanscom and Dennis Washburn (eds), *The Affect of Difference: Representations of Race in East Asian Empire*, University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu, 2016, pp. 19–37; Brett L. Walker, 'The Early Modern Japanese State and Ainu Vaccinations: Redefining the Body Politic 1799–1868', *Past and Present*, no. 163, 1999, pp. 121–60.

- 11 For examples of Ainu cultural vitality, see Howell, 'Ainu Ethnicity'; Utagawa Hiroshi, *Iomante no kōkogaku*, Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, Tokyo, 1989; Sasaki Toshikazu, 'Iomante-kō: Shamo ni yoru Ainu bunka rikai no kōsatsu', *Rekishigaku kenkyū*, no. 613, 1990, pp. 111–20. On deculturation, see James F. Eder, *On the Road to Tribal Extinction: Depopulation, Deculturation, and Adaptive Well-Being among the Batak of the Philippines*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1987.
- 12 Tajima Yoshiya, *Kinsei Hokkaidō gyogyō to kaisanbutsu ryūtsū*, Seibundō, Osaka, 2014, pp. 336–60.
- 13 The most detailed account of the Kunashiri-Menashi Rebellion in English is Takakura, pp. 44–47.
- 14 Iwasaki Naoko, *Nihon kinsei no Ainu shakai*, Azekura Shobō, Tokyo, 1998, pp. 169–201. Kikuchi Isao, *Ainu minzoku to Nihonjin: Higashi Ajia no naka no Ezochi*, Asahi Shinbunsha, Tokyo, 1994, p. 126, notes as well that far north-eastern Hokkaido was brought under Matsumae's control only after Shakushain's Rebellion and was thus relatively autonomous at the time of the contract fisheries' creation.
- 15 Habuto Masayoshi, 'Kyūmei kōki' (1807), in Kokusho Kankōkai (ed.), *Zokuzoku gunsho ruijū*, 16 vols., Kokusho Kankōkai, Tokyo, 1912; repr. *Zoku gunsho ruijū Kanseikai*, Tokyo, 1978, vol. 4, p. 504.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 562.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 571.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 587.
- 19 Kikuchi Isao, *Hoppōshi no naka no kinsei Nihon*, Azekura Shobō, Tokyo, 1991, p. 111.
- 20 Habuto, p. 639.
- 21 Kären Wigen, *A Malleable Map: Geographies of Restoration in Central Japan, 1600–1912*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2010, p. 122.
- 22 Michael Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism: The Unequal Treaties and the Culture of Japanese Diplomacy*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2004.
- 23 David Chapman, *The Bonin Islanders 1830 to the Present: Narrating Japanese Nationality*, Lexington Books, Lanham, MD, 2016.
- 24 Habuto, p. 504.
- 25 See John J. Stephan, *Sakhalin: A History*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1971.
- 26 'Tōzai shimajima jikishihai ni tsuki dojin buikukata, wago shiyō sono hoka mōshi-watashi no ken', 1856/6, item 11 in 'Kitaezochi goyōdome', *bosho* 10, Archives of Hokkaido (hereafter AH), Sapporo.
- 27 Howell, *Geographies of Identity*, pp. 142–48.
- 28 Kikuchi Isao, *Bakuhan taisei to Ezochi*, Yūzankaku, Tokyo, 1984, pp. 158–60.
- 29 Walker, 'The Early Modern Japanese State'.
- 30 James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 1985; Kikuchi, *Hoppōshi no naka*, pp. 294–95.

- The Tokonbe case occurred during the period of the Russo-Japanese condominium in Sakhalin and the Matsumae domain had no authority over him or the Japanese fishery at which he worked, but production at the fishery occurred under conditions very similar to those that had prevailed at contract fisheries established in Hokkaido and southern Sakhalin under Matsumae's auspices.
- 31 On Etorofu, see Kikuchi Isao, *Etorofu-tō*, Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, Tokyo, 1999.
 - 32 The Archives of Hokkaido includes several versions of the announcement, among them 'Ōsei fukko ni yoru tennō shihai tō fukoku no ken', ca. 1868/8, item 1 in 'Kisoku kakidome', A4/330, AH.
 - 33 The classic English-language study of Hokkaido history, John A. Harrison, *Japan's Northern Frontier: A Preliminary Study in Colonization and Expansion, With Special Reference to the Relations of Japan and Russia*, University of Florida Press, Gainesville, 1953, takes this approach, as its sub-title suggests. For more recent scholarship, see Michele M. Mason, *Dominant Narratives of Colonial Hokkaido and Imperial Japan: Envisioning the Periphery and the Modern Nation-State*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2012, and the essays collected in Michele M. Mason and Helen J.S. Lee (eds), *Reading Colonial Japan: Text, Context, and Critique*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA, 2012, which treat Hokkaido and Okinawa, along with continental imperial acquisitions, as 'colonial Japan'.
 - 34 The following account of Ainu policies in the Meiji period is drawn from Howell, *Geographies of Identity*, pp. 172–85.
 - 35 Komori Yōichi, 'Rule in the Name of "Protection": The Vocabulary of Colonialism', translated by Michele M. Mason, in Mason and Lee, p. 66; Katsuya Hirano, 'Thanatopolitics in the Making of Japan's Hokkaido: Settler Colonialism and Primitive Accumulation', *Critical Historical Studies*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2015, p. 211.
 - 36 See Oku Takenori, *Bunmei kaika to minshū: Nihon kindai seishinshi danshō*, Shinhyōron, Tokyo, 1993, pp. 23–25, for examples.
 - 37 'Hokkaidō dojin kyōka, buiku no ken', 18 May 1875, item 37 in 'Kaitakushi kōbunroku (Honchō), boshō 5815, AH.
 - 38 Kaitakushi notice (*tasshi*) no. 20, 4 November 1878, in Kōno Motomichi (ed.), *Tai-Ainu seisaku hōki ruishū*, Hokkaidō Shuppan Kikaku Sentā, Sapporo, 1976, p. 49.
 - 39 The key documents related to Nemuro Prefecture's scheme have been reprinted in Ogawa Masahito and Yamada Shin'ichi (eds), *Ainu kindai no kiroku*, Sōfūkan, Tokyo, 1998, pp. 433–37.
 - 40 For a discussion of the law and its aftermath, see David L. Howell, 'Making "Useful Citizens" of Ainu Subjects in Early Twentieth-Century Japan', *Journal of Asian Studies* vol. 63, no. 1, 2004, pp. 5–29.
 - 41 Ogawa, pp. 99–108. Major examples of this literature include Dohi Katsumi, *Ainu mondai*, n.p., 1895, and Sekiba Fujihiko, *Ainu ijidan*, Sekiba Fujihiko, Sapporo, 1896.
 - 42 For a fuller account, see Howell, *Geographies of Identity*, pp. 186–93.

- 43 Kōno, pp. 113–26, reprints the texts of various proposed and amended versions of the protection law and, p. 226, the text of an 1894 prefectural law establishing ‘protected lands’ in the Chitose area.
- 44 See, for example, Kitagaki to Hiromoto, 15 July 1873, item 6 in ‘Meiji rokunen burui shōroku’, A4/425, AH, regarding samurai from the Inada domain on Awaji Island.
- 45 ‘Shumushu-tō dojin Uruppu-tō e tenseki no ken’, 30 October 1878, item 82 in ‘Chōkan ukagairoku’, *boshō* 2567, AH.