

Connecticut College

## Digital Commons @ Connecticut College

---

Slavic Studies Honors Papers

Slavic Studies Department

---

2021

### Museum Representations of Contested Spaces: The Kuril Islands

Emily Sandall

Connecticut College, [esandall@conncoll.edu](mailto:esandall@conncoll.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/slavichp>



Part of the [East Asian Languages and Societies Commons](#), [Museum Studies Commons](#), and the [Slavic Languages and Societies Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Sandall, Emily, "Museum Representations of Contested Spaces: The Kuril Islands" (2021). *Slavic Studies Honors Papers*. 5.

<https://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/slavichp/5>

This Honors Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Slavic Studies Department at Digital Commons @ Connecticut College. It has been accepted for inclusion in Slavic Studies Honors Papers by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Connecticut College. For more information, please contact [bpancier@conncoll.edu](mailto:bpancier@conncoll.edu).

The views expressed in this paper are solely those of the author.

Museum Representations of Contested Spaces: The Kuril Islands

Emily Sandall

2021

Honors Thesis

Slavic Studies Department, Connecticut College

Thesis Adviser: Petko Ivanov

Second Reader: Christopher Steiner

Third Reader: Yibing Huang

## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	2
Acknowledgements.....	3
Glossary of Toponyms and Note on Transliteration.....	5
Introduction.....	6
Chapter One: Ainu Culture and History.....	10
Origins of Ainu Culture.....	10
Ainu in Japan.....	13
Ainu in Russia.....	31
Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework.....	37
The Kuril Islands Dispute as a Great Powers Conflict.....	37
Literature Review.....	49
Museum Studies: Framing of Framing.....	58
Methods.....	68
Chapter Three: Museums Produced by Japanese Government Organizations.....	76
Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park.....	76
National Museum of Territory and Sovereignty.....	90
Chapter Four: Temporary Exhibitions in Russia.....	98
Russian Ethnographic Museum and “Island People – Ainu”.....	98
Omsk Oblast Museum of Fine Art, Named for M.A. Vrubel, and “Ainu: Mysterious World”.....	103
Chapter Five: Sites of Ainu Cultural Display.....	118
Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum.....	118
Ureshipa Shirarika.....	129
Conclusions.....	136
Appendix I: Chronology of Ainu History and the Northern Territories.....	142
Appendix II: Correspondence with a Curator for the Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum.....	147
Bibliography.....	149

## Abstract

Since the turn of the twenty-first century, a boom of museums focused on the Ainu cultural subject has emerged in both Russia and Japan. By conceptualizing museums as nonneutral and culturally embedded productions which attempt to convey knowledge of foreign spaces to home spaces, this thesis will analyze the ways in which various museum institutions in Russia and Japan, as well as those produced by Ainu activist groups, choose to tell certain stories about the disputed Kuril Island territories and the Ainu people, and to map those stories within the broader colonial framework of the Kuril Islands dispute and indigenous rights in Russia and Japan. The institutions discussed in this text are the Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park, Japanese National Museum of Territory and Sovereignty, Russian Ethnographic Museum, Omsk Oblast Museum of Fine Art, Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum, and Ureshipa Shirarika.

## Acknowledgements

*“Discipline doesn’t mean that you have breakfast at eight o’clock in the morning and you’re out of the house by half past eight. Discipline is if you conceive something, decide whether or not it’s worth following through, and if it is...you follow it through to its logical conclusion. To the best of your ability. That’s discipline.”*

– David Bowie

*“We are human. That is to say, we can do more than we think we can.”*

– Professor Petko Ivanov

The creation of his text would have been impossible without the trust and support of many. I would like to thank Professor Hisae Kobayashi for her advice regarding the translation of the Japanese texts used here and for her assistance in drafting correspondence to various museum institutions in Japan, as well as for her support for the content of this thesis in its early stages. Thank you to Andrew Lopez at the Connecticut College library for helping me to find sources in libraries all over the world, and for advising me in regard to format and citations.

I extend my deepest gratitude to the administration of Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park for providing me with in-depth information on the creation process behind the National Ainu Museum, and to the curator of the Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum with whom I corresponded and who graciously answered several questions about the institution. Thank you very much for providing the “exhibitor” perspective which this thesis would otherwise have lacked.

Thank you to the Slavic Studies department of Connecticut College, who unanimously agreed to allow me to continue writing this thesis despite a slow start. I am grateful for your trust, and I hope that the faith you put in me to successfully complete this thesis has not been unfounded.

I would like to give special thanks to my readers, Professor Christopher Steiner in the Museum Studies department and Professor Yibing Huang in the East Asian Studies department. Thank you both for your patience and willingness to take a look at my writing even down to the last few days and hours before the thesis deadline. Professor Steiner, you have pointed me to many useful sources in the field of museum studies and helped me to refine the museological analysis in this text; thank you for opening up the field to me and for your readiness to answer my questions on so many occasions. Professor Huang, I consider myself fortunate to have been able to take a class with you concurrent with writing my thesis: your emphasis on close reading in class has caused me to focus on even the smallest details in analyzing the museums in this text, and I have no doubt that my conclusions are more thorough thanks to your influence.

Thank you to my friends and classmates at Connecticut College, with whom I spent many a late night writing and commiserating, and to my parents for ferrying me back and forth between home and campus every time I needed a change of scenery.

Finally, I wish to thank my advisor Professor Petko Ivanov for his infinite patience and unwavering trust in me. There is not enough room in this document to express my gratitude for the help you've given me this past year and throughout my time at Connecticut College.

## Glossary of Toponyms

Note: Spaces left blank indicate that a given categorization is not acknowledged in that language.

<b>English</b>	<b>Russian</b>	<b>Japanese</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Kuril Islands	<i>Kuril'skie ostrova</i>	<i>Chishima</i>	
Northern Territories		<i>Hoppo ryoudo</i>	Iturup, Kunashir, Shikotan, Habomai
Shikotan	<i>Shikotan</i>	<i>Shikotan</i>	
Habomai	<i>Khabomai</i>	<i>Habomai</i>	
Kunashir	<i>Kunashir</i>	<i>Kunashiri</i>	
Iturup	<i>Iturup</i>	<i>Etorofu</i>	
Lesser Kuril Chain	<i>Malaya Kuril'skaya Griada</i>		Shikotan and Habomai
Southern Kurils		<i>Minami chishima</i>	Iturup & Kunashir
Sakhalin	<i>Sakhalinskaya oblast'</i>	<i>Saharin shou</i> <i>Karafuto</i> (old) <i>Kita Ezo</i> (old)	
Hokkaido	<i>Khokkaido</i>	<i>Hokkaido</i> <i>Ezo</i> (old)	

## Note on Transliteration

Russian words are transliterated using the Library of Congress system. Japanese words are written using the traditional Hepburn system with long vowels in the *waapuro* (word processor) style. Occasionally different transliteration styles, especially of the Ainu language which has no official written form, are used in the text: these variations reflect the transliterations used in the sources from which the text of the thesis borrows at that point.

## Introduction

With the term “museum effect,” the historian Svetlana Alpers attempted to quantify the cultural capital which display in a museum endows to the culture which it takes as its subject: “it is only recently that peoples or groups, nations, and even cities have felt that to be represented in a museum was to be given recognition as a culture.”<sup>1</sup> The museum as an institution is not merely an aggregator of objects but a projection of what objects are considered worthy of framing and viewing by an intended demographic. However, the perceived authority of the museum institution tends to obscure the reality that museums do not tell the truth – museums are necessarily non-neutral projects which, by the selection and organization of the objects within them, produce a particular narrative their subject, and they do so in systematic, quantifiable ways. Therefore museums must be regarded not as mere reflections, but also as participants in the social discourses which they display, and must be analyzed with the same scrutiny as any textual document. This is the principle underpinning the field of museum studies, and which this text uses as an entry point into the multipolar conflict which has continued for centuries over the sovereignty of the Kuril Islands between Russia, Japan, and the islands’ original inhabitants, the Ainu people.

The Kurils are a chain of islands in the Pacific Ocean which straddle the border between the contemporary states of Russia and Japan. The northern tip of the chain extends towards Russia’s Kamchatka peninsula, in the south it butts against Japan’s northernmost island of Hokkaido, and the entire chain cradles the island of Sakhalin against the Eurasian continent. For a millennium the Kuril Islands, as well as Hokkaido, Kamchatka, Sakhalin, and parts of Japan’s main island of Honshu were inhabited by the Ainu, a hunter-gatherer people whose linguistic and

---

<sup>1</sup> Alpers 1991, quoted in Sandra A. Niessen, “Representing the Ainu Reconsidered,” *Museum Anthropology* 20 no. 3 (1997): 139.

anthropological origins remain a source of debate among scholars. However, as Wajin (ethnic Japanese) encroached from the south and Russians moved east, the Ainu found themselves within the vice grip of two powerful empires, and indeed the narrative of Ainu history which pervaded until the late twentieth century was that they were completely swallowed up by assimilationist policies and forced relocations. This, of course, is not true. Meanwhile, the Kuril Islands themselves became the site of a great-powers contest between Russia and Japan, when during the final days of World War II Soviet troops occupied and claimed as Russian territory the four islands closest to Japan: Kunashiri, Etorofu, Shikotan, and the Habomai group.<sup>2</sup> These islands, which came to be referred to as the “Northern Territories” (“*hoppo ryoudo*”), became the center of a sweeping irridentist movement in Japan by the second half of the twentieth century, crystalizing into a national mission for the return of Japanese “inherent territory,” and as a result of the dispute, the Soviet Union and Japan restored diplomatic relations in 1956 but to this day have never officially signed a peace treaty ending World War II between them.

The discourse related to the Kuril Islands dispute began as strictly bipolar, but in recent decades this has started to change: Ainu living within the borders of both Russia and Japan, as well as a growing number of scholars, have raised the question of the stake Ainu people have in the territorial issue as the region’s original inhabitants (indeed, the etymology of the Islands finds its origin in the Ainu language). Such a stake, however, is predicated on whether or not the Ainu people are regarded on the Russian, Japanese, and international stage as a cultural-political entity with enough presence and agency to claim a voice in the dispute. It is at this crossroads where museum institutions become crucial as players in constructing and perpetuating certain discourses on the Ainu as a cultural subject which could serve either to validate or invalidate their voice and

---

<sup>2</sup> The Habomai island group is often referred to as a single entity, Habomai.

claim to their historical lands, and it is precisely the politics of representation in Ainu cultural museums that this thesis takes as the subject of its study.

The body of this text is organized into four main chapters. Chapter One provides a survey of Ainu history from its origins in the twelfth century through its colonial encounters with Russia and Japan, and finally to the recent movements towards Ainu cultural revitalization which continue to actively evolve. This information is presented first in order to provide a basis for comparison with the museum representations discussed later in the text. Chapter Two includes a concise overview of the Kuril Islands conflict as it has been incarnated in the discourse of international politics, and outlines the foundation for the Russian and Japanese claims to the territory; that section is followed by a literature review, an outline of certain topics in museum studies and postcolonial studies whose theoretical frameworks were used in analysis, and an explanation of the methodology used in conducting this research. Chapters Three through Five are case studies of a total of six museums: Chapter Three discusses two museums which exist under the direct auspices of the Japanese government; Chapter Four discusses two temporary exhibitions which were displayed in Russian museums, one an ethnographic museum and the other a museum of fine art; Chapter Five discusses two examples of modes of Ainu cultural self-display wherein the museum narrative stretches beyond the bounds of the museum walls to encompass entire towns.

Ultimately, this thesis arrives at the conclusion that there is not a direct connection between representations of Ainu culture within museums and the specific arguments used by Russia and Japan as a means to bolster their territorial claims. Nevertheless, this absence speaks volumes. The trajectory of discourse on Ainu representation in museum spaces has led to an idiom of display which focuses on cultural visibility in an idealized form rather than on the struggle between colonizer and colonized, with the result that issues of Ainu culture and Ainu territoriality are

handled as completely separate themes. It must be clarified that the purpose of this research is not to propose a political situation to the territorial issue, to pass judgements upon the validity of Japanese or Russian arguments in the dispute, or to assign “right” and “wrong.” Nor is this research intended to rhetorically impose Japanese or Russian nationality upon the Ainu people based on the connections drawn within individual museums, to assume to speak in place of the Ainu, or to identify certain forms of representation as “correct” and others as “conservative.” Rather, I seek to analyze the reproduction of cultural identity-mapping processes in museum institutions and how those processes come to bear on the discourse of the Kuril Islands dispute, through the juxtaposition of institutions in Russia, Japan, and those organized by the Ainu people themselves, and to add my conclusions to the growing body of work which addresses the Kuril Islands dispute as a postcolonial issue rather than a great-powers conflict. I hope that this thesis may become a voice among many to shed light on this crucial issue, and to help direct scholarly and international attention towards the voices of the Ainu themselves.

## Chapter One: Ainu Culture and History

### Origins of Ainu Culture

In her book *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Linda Tuhiwai Smith articulates the duty of any researcher pursuing indigenous cultural subjects: “the responsibility of researchers and academics is not simply to share surface information (pamphlet knowledge) but to share the theories and analyses which inform the way knowledge and information are constructed and represented.”<sup>3</sup> This section, and indeed this thesis, are not intended to be taken as informational treatises on Ainu culture or history; that is not my story to tell. Nevertheless, some background is necessary in order to understand the full extent of the impact of colonial assimilation policies on Ainu lifestyles described later in this section; it is impossible to understand the enormity of Japanese and Russian cultural suppression policies without discussing what was actually suppressed. The bulk of the information presented in this section is written in corroboration with the historical timelines and interpretations of the Hokkaido Ainu Association and Foundation for Ainu Culture, supplemented by public statements and literature produced by Ainu scholars, activists and politicians and some additional literature within the field of indigenous studies. The history presented in this section is necessarily oppositional to that included in the subsequent section, which focuses on the relationship between the great – imperial – powers of Russia and Japan. The most important understanding to be gained from this section is that Ainu ethnicity is not monolithic: Ainu history is marked by regional differences, tribal disputes and alliances, and material exchange, although that multiplicity tends to be ignored by scant archeological accounts and minimized by academic and political representations which maneuver Ainu cultural identity as a single object.

---

<sup>3</sup> Linda Tuwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Press, 2002), 16.

Archeological records locate the earliest evidence of Ainu material culture around the 12<sup>th</sup> century, C.E., a hypothesis which is corroborated by the Foundation for Ainu Culture and Hokkaido Ainu Association, which assert that Ainu ethnicity emerged from the Satsumon hunter-gatherer culture which existed from the seventh through twelfth centuries, C.E., as well as from the Okhotsk culture located along the coast of Ezo. The Foundation website also notes, however, that there is still a dearth of archeological research conducted regarding the early indigenous peoples who inhabited the territory now known as Hokkaido, the Kuril island chain, Sakhalin, and the Kamchatka peninsula,<sup>4</sup> and as such any overtly archeological interpretations making claims on the cultural origins of the Ainu, especially ones which locate them in racial terms, ought to be met with some skepticism. Linguistic accounts, meanwhile, reveal that names for places ranging from Hokkaido, Sakhalin, and the Kuril Islands south to the Tohoku region of Japan on its main island of Honshu are most likely derived from Ainu-language names, providing strong evidence for the size of the geographic space once controlled by the Ainu.<sup>5</sup> The spiritual and material qualities of Ainu culture center on lifestyles of hunting, fishing and gathering in the colder, coastal regions which they inhabit; traditional dishes include *ohau* (soups) and raw or grilled meat harvested from bears, seals, deer, fish and whales, and regional variations in the predominance of certain animals led to one species or another being revered more highly in certain areas over others.<sup>6</sup> Ainu hunters preserved fish and animal skins for clothes-making in supplement to fabrics woven from tree bark, but for hundreds of years Ainu participated actively in trade, especially of skins, with nearby ethnic groups, even building boats to sail between islands. The Foundation for Ainu Culture presents the

---

<sup>4</sup> "Ainu People – History and Culture," Foundation for Ainu Culture, accessed May 3, 2021, <https://www.ff-ainu.or.jp/web/english/index.html>.

<sup>5</sup> "Ainu People – History and Culture," Foundation for Ainu Culture, accessed May 3, 2021, <https://www.ff-ainu.or.jp/web/english/index.html>.

<sup>6</sup> "Ainu People – History and Culture," Foundation for Ainu Culture, accessed May 3, 2021, <https://www.ff-ainu.or.jp/web/english/index.html>.

similarities between Ainu hunting and fishing tools and techniques and embroidery patterns and those of nearby groups as evidence of trade relations: “this indicates that the Ainu built their own lives while coming into contact with and enjoying exchanges with surrounding peoples of other ethnicities.”<sup>7</sup> This interpretation is particularly notable for how it stands in opposition to archeological accounts which depict cultural similarities as evidence of origin and migration rather than exchange.

The primacy of hunting, fishing and gathering is also manifested in Ainu spiritual practices. Animals, trees, plants, natural phenomena, and even clothing and tools – almost anything in *ainu mosir* (the Ainu homeland) – is considered to be inhabited by a *ramat* (spirit), although variation in the hierarchy of animal deification exists due to differences in the natural environments of different Ainu groups.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the distinctive and regionally-dependent patterns which Ainu women embroider onto traditional clothing spring from the belief that “patterns on the cuffs and hems of clothes prevent evil spirits from entering through those openings.”<sup>9</sup> Just as most things in this world have a *ramat*, so to do they return to the world of the gods. The *iomante* (bear festival) is one of the most important religious rituals. After catching and usually raising a bear cub, members of a *kotan* (village) gather for a sacrificial ceremony which symbolizes the Ainu returning the spirit of the bear to the world of the gods after caring for it, hoping that the gods will be thankful and keep returning to *ainu mosir*.

---

<sup>7</sup> “Ainu People – History and Culture,” Foundation for Ainu Culture, accessed May 3, 2021, <https://www.ff-ainu.or.jp/web/english/index.html>.

<sup>8</sup> “Ainu People – History and Culture,” Foundation for Ainu Culture, accessed May 3, 2021, <https://www.ff-ainu.or.jp/web/english/index.html>.

<sup>9</sup> “Ainu People – History and Culture,” Foundation for Ainu Culture, accessed May 3, 2021, <https://www.ff-ainu.or.jp/web/english/index.html>.

## Ainu in Japan

The first documented encounter between the Ainu and Wajin (the Japanese name for Japanese ethnicity) who were exploring north from Honshu took place in 1356 (the document, according to the Hokkaido Ainu Association, explicitly acknowledges three distinct Ainu groups living on Ezo), and for a brief period during the fourteenth century Wajin participated in trade with Ainu alongside other groups on relatively equal footing.<sup>10</sup> The relationship between Ainu and Wajin settlers grew tense as the number of settlers continued to increase. In 1456 a Wajin blacksmith stabbed an Ainu man to death over a purchase dispute, triggering an uprising by the Ainu leader Koshamain – his forces managed to capture two Japanese forces before being rebuffed.<sup>11</sup> The next hundred years was marked by increasing conflict between Ainu and Wajin, until in 1550 the Ainu of Ezo and the Japanese Matsumae clan, who held increasing influence over the Ezo territory, came to an agreement wherein in exchange for the acceptance of continued Wajin settlement, the Ainu would receive a portion of taxes from all commercial ships travelling between Honshu and Ezo. The Ainu Association of Hokkaido makes special mention of the agreement in its historical account: “this can be interpreted as Wajin’s recognition of Ainu’s ‘quasi-rights’ to land and can be regarded as negotiations concluded between the Ainu and Wajin almost as equals.”<sup>12</sup> Although the tense relationship was temporarily mollified, the trend towards unequal trade status between Ainu and Wajin continued, and in 1604 the Japanese shogunate granted the Matsumae clan a monopoly on all trade between Japan and the Ainu. The conflict came to a head

---

<sup>10</sup> Zachary Browning, “A Comparative Analysis: Legal and Historical Analysis of Protecting Indigenous Cultural Rights Involving Land Disputes in Japan, New Zealand, and Hawaii,” *Washington Law Journal* 28 no. 1 (2019): 207-242.

<sup>11</sup> “Ainu Historical Events,” Ainu Association of Hokkaido, accessed May 3, 2021, <https://www.ainu-assn.or.jp/english/history.html>.

<sup>12</sup> “Ainu Historical Events,” Ainu Association of Hokkaido, accessed May 3, 2021, <https://www.ainu-assn.or.jp/english/history.html>.

in 1669, when the leader of the Shibechari Ainu group Shakushain “[led] Ainu all over Ezo as they [rose] in arms against the Japanese in response to a regional dispute over hunting and fishing rights. It was the largest conflict ever between the two people.”<sup>13</sup> The rebellion came to a tragic end when the Matsumae clan invited Shakushain and the Ainu to a reconciliation banquet, and which Matsumae men poisoned Shakushain and claimed victory. The Foundation for Ainu Culture’s historical account articulates how damaging this event was to the Ainu cultural psyche:

“Trade, which was indispensable to the Ainu livelihood, was not simply an act of exchanging goods, but rather a solemn ceremony for politely apologizing for the long period of silence. Therefore, when Wajin politely suggested reconciliation, the Ainu and their leaders, in particular, did not brush aside such suggestions and approached them in a dignified manner. When the formalities with their former foes were completed and the tense atmosphere was eased, the Ainu suffered surprise attacks.”<sup>14</sup>

The fallout of the Shakushain rebellion was a solidification of the abusive framework of wajin trade with and labor exploitation of the Ainu people. By the mid-eighteenth century, merchants who had previously traded with Ainu for fish began to establish their own large-scale fisheries which both outcompeted Ainu traders and relied on Ainu labor to survive, speeding along the already-underway colonial transition by which “the Ainu went from being producers and traders to living as laborers tied to the fishing grounds.”<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> “Ainu Historical Events,” Ainu Association of Hokkaido, accessed May 3, 2021, <https://www.ainu-assn.or.jp/english/history.html>.

<sup>14</sup> “Ainu People – History and Culture,” Foundation for Ainu Culture, accessed May 3, 2021, <https://www.ff-ainu.or.jp/web/english/index.html>.

<sup>15</sup> “Ainu People – History and Culture,” Foundation for Ainu Culture, accessed May 3, 2021, <https://www.ff-ainu.or.jp/web/english/index.html>.

The Ainu uprising on Kunashiri Island in 1789 is noted by the Foundation for Ainu Culture as “the last battle fought by the Ainu against Wajin,”<sup>16</sup> and whether due to its relative modernity, its decisiveness, or due to sheer whitewashing of wajin-Ainu colonial encounters, it is also usually the only Ainu-wajin conflict mentioned in many Japanese historical accounts. In response to exploitation by employers and traders at the Kunashiri trading post, members of the Menashi Ainu group took arms against Japanese colonizers in a military conflict that grew to encompass not only Kunashiri but the Ainu groups and lands of Ezo, as well before being put down by “punitive forces” from the Matsumae clan. After the Ainu defeat, the Matsumae clan executed thirty-seven Ainu leaders and, ultimately, seized undisputed control of the entirety of Ezo and its neighboring islands. Due to what was perceived by the Japanese shogunate as a mismanagement of trading posts, the shogunate in Edo (later Tokyo) claimed direct control over Ezo at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and embarked on a program of “fair trade with the Ainu so they would not be enticed by Russia’s offers of appeasement.”<sup>17</sup> Indeed it was around this time that the influence of Russian eastward expansion began to be felt along the Kuril Island chain, and although the only Russian colony on Urrupu (the next island northwards of Etorofu) was abandoned in 1805 the Japanese shogunate became increasingly concerned about the potential russification of Ainu inhabitants of the Kurils. Even before it had taken over the governing of Ezo from the Matsumae clan, the shogunate had instructed the Matsumae clan to “promote the education of the natives [Ainu] as a means of stemming the spread of Russian influence.”<sup>18</sup> Management of Ezo’s infrastructure proved to be too costly for the shogunate, however, and control was returned to the Matsumae clan in 1821, in

---

<sup>16</sup> “Ainu People – History and Culture,” Foundation for Ainu Culture, accessed May 3, 2021, <https://www.ff-ainu.or.jp/web/english/index.html>.

<sup>17</sup> “Ainu People – History and Culture,” Foundation for Ainu Culture, accessed May 3, 2021, <https://www.ff-ainu.or.jp/web/english/index.html>.

<sup>18</sup> Alexander Bukh, *Japan’s National Identity and Foreign Policy: Russia as Japan’s ‘Other’* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 63.

whose hands it remained until the shogunate again claimed direct control in 1855 (with the exception of the northern border between Japan and Russia, which remained defended by the Matsumae clan), again out of fear of Russian cultural influence. “Aiming to insist to Russia that the Ainu belonged to Japan and their places of residence were Japanese territories, the Tokugawa shogunate appeased the Ainu through trade and protection,” initiating a policy of forced assimilation of “hairstyles, clothes, names” and outlawing Ainu customs including “earrings, tattoos, and the ceremony to send back bear spirits.”<sup>19</sup> This historical moment marked a turn from attempts to control and appease the Ainu to outright cultural genocide. The necessity of the Shogunate to produce rulings enforcing these bans indicates in the perspective of the Foundation for Ainu Culture that “the customs and manners cultivated by the Ainu were deeply rooted in their daily lives and could not be easily changed – not even by force.”<sup>20</sup>

Only thirteen years later in 1868, the Tokugawa shogunate was overthrown, marking the beginning of the Meiji Restoration period and of the Japanese Empire<sup>21</sup>. The new Meiji government took immediate action towards the colonial incorporation of the Ainu and their territory: in 1869 the island of Ezo was renamed Hokkaido and placed, along with other nearby islands, under the jurisdiction of the Kaitakushi (Development Commission), which was essentially a colonial government. Under a new policy of forced Japanization, deer hunting and salmon fishing was banned as poaching and the Ainu language was outlawed.<sup>22</sup> The 1871 Census

---

<sup>19</sup> “Ainu People – History and Culture,” Foundation for Ainu Culture, accessed May 3, 2021, <https://www.ff-ainu.or.jp/web/english/index.html>.

<sup>20</sup> “Ainu People – History and Culture,” Foundation for Ainu Culture, accessed May 3, 2021, <https://www.ff-ainu.or.jp/web/english/index.html>.

<sup>21</sup> Note that the naming of Japanese historical periods is derived from the name of the emperor who ruled at the time; new historical periods are catalyzed by the ascendance of a new ruler. In this case, the fall of the shogunate led to the ascension of Emperor Meiji.

<sup>22</sup> “Ainu People – History and Culture,” Foundation for Ainu Culture, accessed May 3, 2021, <https://www.ff-ainu.or.jp/web/english/index.html>.

Registration Act forced Ainu to adopt Japanese last names, and an 1872 land regulation divided Ainu fishing, hunting and logging grounds into lots to be sold to private individuals. The Ainu Association of Hokkaido makes particular note of the drastic lifestyle changes which were forced upon the Ainu in the early 1870s: “the following Ainu customs are banned: burning a family's house and moving elsewhere after the death of a family member; women's tattoos; men's earrings. The Ainu are encouraged to engage in agriculture and learn the written and spoken language of the Wajin.”<sup>23</sup> In 1882 Hokkaido began to be administered as part of mainland Japan, and notably was included in the jurisdiction of the Meiji constitution – Japan’s first – which came into effect in 1889. The Hokkaido Ainu Association notably includes in its historical timeline, however, the fact that a 1910 law concerning land ownership by “aliens in Japan” exempted Hokkaido due to its “status as a colony;”<sup>24</sup> Alexander Bukh goes so far as to claim that Hokkaido maintained a “semi-colonial” status long after that abolition of the Kaitakushi due to “the ambiguous place that the ‘pioneering’ and ‘development’ of the Ainu territories in general occupied within the pre-1945 broader conception of Japan’s colonial expansion.”<sup>25</sup>

The most significant colonial assimilatory policy implemented upon the Ainu people is, undoubtedly, the *Kyuudojin* (Former Natives) Protection Act passed in 1899 and lasting with some revisions for the next century.<sup>26</sup> The sweeping law included land grants for Ainu people in order to facilitate their transition towards participation in agriculture. The Foundation for Ainu Culture criticizes the fairness and effectiveness of the policy, arguing that “some Ainu who were given

---

<sup>23</sup> “Ainu Historical Events,” Ainu Association of Hokkaido, accessed May 3, 2021, <https://www.ainu-assn.or.jp/english/history.html>.

<sup>24</sup> “Ainu Historical Events,” Ainu Association of Hokkaido, accessed May 3, 2021, <https://www.ainu-assn.or.jp/english/history.html>.

<sup>25</sup> Alexander Bukh, *Japan’s National Identity and Foreign Policy: Russia as Japan’s ‘Other’* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 52.

<sup>26</sup> “Ainu Historical Events,” Ainu Association of Hokkaido, accessed May 3, 2021, <https://www.ainu-assn.or.jp/english/history.html>.

land succeeded in farming, but many failed to convert their land to farmland, thereby resulting in forfeiture of that land, or were given land unsuitable for farming from the very beginning,” and noting that land grants stipulated by the 1899 law were “up to 15,000 tsubo per household” for Ainu in comparison to “100,000 tsubo per Wajin” as stipulated in the 1872 Regulations on Land Sales and Leasing in Hokkaido.<sup>27</sup> It also must be remembered that promotion of agriculture represents a forced shift in the basis of Ainu economy and self-sustainability practices, which for centuries prior were centered around hunting and fishing. “Although agriculture was encouraged, in many cases it was difficult to change lifestyles overnight. For this reason, the Ainu were mistakenly defined as being deficient in property management skills, resulting in restrictions on their rights to own land and other property.”<sup>28</sup>

This sweeping colonial policy took place against a backdrop of border negotiations between the Russian and Japanese empires, outlined in greater detail in the next section, which repeatedly pushed the border between the two powers back and forth across Ainu land. As a result of the 1875 Treaty for the Exchange of Sakhalin for the Kuril Islands, 841 Ainu from Sakhalin and the Kuril islands were forcibly transported to Hokkaido and the island of Shikotan in order to bring them back within the borders of the Japanese empire; in 1884 Ainu from Shumushu, the northernmost island on the Kuril chain, were forcibly transported to Shikotan “as the Meiji government did not trust the russified Ainu to reside at the northern gate of Empire’s northern frontier.”<sup>29</sup> Alexander Bukh argues that “the tragedy of the Shumushu Ainu, who, at the time of their forced relocation to Shikotan, were deeply russified in terms of culture, language and religion,

---

<sup>27</sup> “Ainu People – History and Culture,” Foundation for Ainu Culture, accessed May 3, 2021, <https://www.ff-ainu.or.jp/web/english/index.html>.

<sup>28</sup> “Ainu People – History and Culture,” Foundation for Ainu Culture, accessed May 3, 2021, <https://www.ff-ainu.or.jp/web/english/index.html>.

<sup>29</sup> Alexander Bukh, *Japan’s National Identity and Foreign Policy: Russia as Japan’s ‘Other’* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 51.

became an integral part of the suffering of the Ainu at the hands of the Japanese”<sup>30</sup> and indeed the legacy of forced relocations served to muddle Ainu cultural heterogeneity – which was contributed to by their relative proximities to Japanese and Russian culture – and to sever the connections between Ainu groups and their ancestral lands. According to the contemporary Ainu activist Aleksei Nakamura, who lives in Russia, the entirety of the population of what was once the Kuril Island Ainu has been transplanted to Russia. Ultimately, forced relocation combined with disastrous implementation of agricultural promotion policy had a lethal impact on the Ainu people: Ainu activist organizations and traditional scholarship agree that “continual expropriation of the land, the destruction of traditional ways of living and the introduction of diseases such as tuberculosis, to which the natives lacked immunity, as well as introduction of alcohol, together had an almost genocidal impact on the population, reducing its numbers greatly and making the Ainu a minority in their own land.”<sup>31</sup>

The early twentieth century saw some increase in Ainu protest, calls for independence, and participation in politics, most notably the 1934 Asahikawa City Former Native Land Protection Act resolving an issue of land ownership, which was lobbied for in Tokyo by Ainu representatives and eventually passed.<sup>32</sup> Nonetheless policies of Ainu assimilation coupled with social and administrative discrimination rendered Ainu culture invisible, if not erased, and ultimately a social stigma fell upon open display of Ainu identity; “apparently the Ainu themselves objected to being singled out in the 1920 census as distinct from the Japanese on the grounds that this was

---

<sup>30</sup> Alexander Bukh, *Japan’s National Identity and Foreign Policy: Russia as Japan’s ‘Other’* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 71.

<sup>31</sup> Alexander Bukh, *Japan’s National Identity and Foreign Policy: Russia as Japan’s ‘Other’* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 64.

<sup>32</sup> “Ainu People – History and Culture,” Foundation for Ainu Culture, accessed May 3, 2021, <https://www.ff-ainu.or.jp/web/english/index.html>.

discriminatory.”<sup>33</sup> It is from this perspective in which “the Ainu were considered a dying ethnic group, their culture a dying culture,” that the Foundation for Ainu Culture positions most scholarship on the Ainu, underscoring the deep cultural mistrust of being the subject of ethnographic research.<sup>34</sup> Alexander Buch takes the activities of the Hokkaido Ainu Association (established in 1946), which were “not directed at establishing a distinct Ainu identity in post-war Japan, but continued the prewar strategy of trying to achieve deeper Ainu assimilation into Japanese society in face of continuing social discrimination”<sup>35</sup> as a manifestation of this trend.

In step with global trends, the latter half of the twentieth century saw a renewed and increasingly vocal interest in indigenous rights in Japan and among the Ainu themselves. Protests of the treatment of Ainu by academic societies occurred in 1967 and continued with force until the Japanese Society of Ethnology organized a special committee for ethical issues in anthropological research in 1988; most notably, in 1972 a group of Japanese and Ainu trespassed on the joint annual meeting of the Japanese anthropological and ethnological societies to protest the hegemonic grasp of Japanese scholars over research on the Ainu people, the treatment of Ainu as mere specimens and means for academics to further their own ambitions, and the predominant representation of Ainu in research as “either entirely or nearly vanished.”<sup>36</sup> Likewise in the 1985-88 court case of Mieko Chikap, an Ainu woman who won her suit against the editor of the 1969 ethnographic book *Ainu Minzokushi* for including an image of her without permission, Chikap’s own statement to the court highlighted the issue of research on the Ainu conceiving of them as an

---

<sup>33</sup> Peng 1977, quoted in Sandra A. Niessen, “The Ainu in Mimpaku: A Representation of Japan’s Indigenous People at the National Museum of Ethnology,” *Museum Anthropology* 18 no. 3 (1994): 20.

<sup>34</sup> “Ainu People – History and Culture,” Foundation for Ainu Culture, accessed May 3, 2021, <https://www.ff-ainu.or.jp/web/english/index.html>.

<sup>35</sup> Alexander Bukh, *Japan’s National Identity and Foreign Policy: Russia as Japan’s ‘Other’* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 65.

<sup>36</sup> Akitoshi Shimizu, “Cooperation, not Domination: A Rejoinder to Niessen on the Ainu Exhibition at Minpaku,” *Museum Anthropology* 20 no. 3 (1997): 122-123.

already extinct culture. The Ainu Association of Hokkaido, in a departure from its earlier assimilationist agenda, made its first demands to Hokkaido University regarding the Ainu human remains housed there, resulting in the initiation of the process of human remains repatriation which continues to this day; in 1984 Hokkaido University also constructed a shrine where the yet-unrepatriated Ainu remains could receive proper memorial services, which were to be conducted yearly by the Hokkaido Ainu Association.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, more militant factions appeared within the movement for indigenous rights in Japan: the East Asian Anti-Japan Armed Front (*higashi ajia hannichi buso sensen*), which did not ostensibly include any Ainu members, claimed responsibility for multiple bombings against a sculpture in the city of Asahikawa which “had been criticized as openly insulting the Ainu,” the humanities department of Hokkaido University, and the Hokkaido Government Hall, the last of which took place on the anniversary of the enactment of the Former Natives Protection Act, leading to several arrests in 1975.<sup>38</sup> Note that it was in this atmosphere of renewed protest and fear of violent retaliation that the Ainu exhibition in Japan’s Museum of Ethnology (Minpaku), which sparked the scholarly exchange presented in the literature review of this thesis, was curated and first opened to the public.<sup>39</sup>

1972 also marked the inaugural year of the Hokkaido prefectural government’s Hokkaido Ainu Living Conditions Survey. The survey, although limited in scope to Hokkaido (thus only representing a portion of Ainu experiences within a single country) and noted by both the Hokkaido Ainu Association and ethnic Ainu researcher Uzawa Kanako to be far from representative of the actual Ainu population in the region due to self-underreporting of Ainu

---

<sup>37</sup> Akitoshi Shimizu, “Cooperation, not Domination: A Rejoinder to Niessen on the Ainu Exhibition at Minpaku,” *Museum Anthropology* 20 no. 3 (1997): 123.

<sup>38</sup> Akitoshi Shimizu, “Cooperation, not Domination: A Rejoinder to Niessen on the Ainu Exhibition at Minpaku,” *Museum Anthropology* 20 no. 3 (1997): 123.

<sup>39</sup> Akitoshi Shimizu, “Cooperation, not Domination: A Rejoinder to Niessen on the Ainu Exhibition at Minpaku,” *Museum Anthropology* 20 no. 3 (1997): 124.

identity by respondents, has been conducted every seven years since its inception and provides a useful barometer for continuing socioeconomic inequality between ethnic Japanese and Ainu. The most recent survey, completed in 2013, indicated lingering discrepancies: approximately five times as many Ainu compared to ethnic Japanese in each Hokkaido municipality were employed in primary industry (e.g. agriculture, fisheries), while on the half the number of Ainu were employed in tertiary (business) industry, although these numbers had improved significantly since the surveys began (in 1972, 60% of Ainu by municipality were employed in primary industry and 15% in tertiary industry, compared to 36% and 40%, respectively, in 2013).<sup>40</sup> Throughout all the surveys percentages of Ainu attending high school and university falls below the regional average, while the percentage of Ainu receiving welfare is higher; additionally, more than 30% of respondents to the 2013 survey reported that they or someone they know had experienced ethnic discrimination, out of which 50% of incidents were reported to have been perpetrated “by Administrative office.”<sup>41</sup> The situation of institutional discrimination, as well as the disparities in employment type, are clear vestiges of the colonial policies which drove Ainu people to economic dependency on fishing and agricultural labor for Japanese business owners throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as the Japanese government’s legacy of denial of Ainu ethnic sovereignty for over a century.

Despite growing demand for to recognize Ainu as ethnically separate from Wajin, after ratifying the International Covenants on Human Rights in 1979 the Japanese government released the following statement: “Every citizen has the right to enjoy his culture, practice his religion, and

---

<sup>40</sup> “Actual Living Conditions of the Hokkaido Ainu,” Ainu Association of Hokkaido, accessed May 3, 2021, <https://www.ainu-assn.or.jp/english/life.html>.

<sup>41</sup> “Actual Living Conditions of the Hokkaido Ainu,” Ainu Association of Hokkaido, accessed May 3, 2021, <https://www.ainu-assn.or.jp/english/life.html>.

use his language guaranteed under the Japanese Constitution. However ethnic minority groups, as defined in this covenant, do not exist in Japan.”<sup>42</sup> The legal hurdle facing Ainu activists, then, was not simply the granting of reparations from the Japanese government for colonial mistreatment, but the very acknowledgement that the ethnic group still existed to which reparations might be made – that the Ainu were not a “vanished people” and that Japan was not, as it tended to view itself, a monoethnic state. This became the primary thrust of activist efforts until the end of the twentieth century – the Hokkaido Ainu Association sent repeated appeals to the Japanese government for formal recognition of the Ainu people as an ethnic minority and campaigned for the repeal and replacement of the Hokkaido Former Natives Protection Act.<sup>43</sup> In particular, the Ainu Association of Hokkaido proposed a sweeping Legislation Concerning the Ainu People in 1984; however, its momentum was halted when in 1986 Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro asserted that ““Japan is a racially homogeneous nation and there is no discrimination against ethnic minorities with Japanese citizenship.”<sup>44</sup> Beginning in 1987, Ainu interests were broadcast onto a global stage by the participation of Ainu representatives in the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations;<sup>45</sup> the former director of the Ainu Association of Hokkaido explicitly identified the Ainu within the international coalition of indigenous groups, noting specifically in a

---

<sup>42</sup> Hokkaido Ainu Association, 1987, quoted in Sandra A. Niessen, “Representing the Ainu Reconsidered,” *Museum Anthropology* 20 no. 3 (1997): 20.

<sup>43</sup> Sandra A. Niessen, “The Ainu in Mimpaku: A Representation of Japan’s Indigenous People at the National Museum of Ethnology,” *Museum Anthropology* 18 no. 3 (1994): 20.

“Ainu Historical Events,” Ainu Association of Hokkaido, accessed May 3, 2021, <https://www.ainu-assn.or.jp/english/history.html>.

<sup>44</sup> “Ainu People – History and Culture,” Foundation for Ainu Culture, accessed May 3, 2021, <https://www.ff-ainu.or.jp/web/english/index.html>.

<sup>45</sup> Remember that materials created for the 1993 *Ainu Mosir* exhibition at Minpaku were distributed within the Working Group as evidence of Ainu cultural vitality; museum representations, thus, cannot be analyzed in a framework divorced from the very real politics in which they participate.

1992 speech to the U.N. General Assembly that the History of the Ainu relationship with the government of Japan was “an experience common to indigenous peoples everywhere.”<sup>46</sup>

Ultimately the question of Ainu cultural identity in the eyes of the Japanese government played out in an unlikely arena: the Nibutani Dam court case, which was initiated in 1989 and decided in 1997. The Ainu plaintiffs in the case argued that the construction of a dam on the Saru River in Nibutani, Biratori town, Hokkaido, would “alter salmon migration – a source of sustenance that Ainu fishermen relied on,” “destroy traditional burial grounds as well as historical and sacred sites,” and “inundate land that Ainu property owners retained for farming since the Former Aboriginal Protection Act of 1899.”<sup>47</sup> The Sapporo District Court eventually ruled that the dam project was illegal on the grounds that it “failed to adequately consider the project’s effect on Ainu culture;”<sup>48</sup> however, by the time the final ruling was handed down in 1997 the dam’s construction was nearly complete and the Ainu sites in question had been completely flooded and destroyed, so the project itself was not forced to halt. Nevertheless, the logic used by the court to arrive at its verdict was crucial to the formal recognition of the Ainu people as an ethnic minority group in Japan.<sup>49</sup> Judges used Article 27 of the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)<sup>50</sup> and the clause from Article 13 of the Japanese Constitution which

---

<sup>46</sup> Giichi Nomura, “Inauguration Speech at the U.N. General Assembly,” Ainu Association of Hokkaido, 1992, <https://www.ainu-assn.or.jp/english/inaugu.html>.

<sup>47</sup> Zachary Browning, “A Comparative Analysis: Legal and Historical Analysis of Protecting Indigenous Cultural Rights Involving Land Disputes in Japan, New Zealand, and Hawaii,” *Washington Law Journal* 28 no. 1 (2019): 214-215.

<sup>48</sup> Zachary Browning, “A Comparative Analysis: Legal and Historical Analysis of Protecting Indigenous Cultural Rights Involving Land Disputes in Japan, New Zealand, and Hawaii,” *Washington Law Journal* 28 no. 1 (2019): 214.

<sup>49</sup> An analysis of the Nibutani Dam case by Robert Browning reminds us that the setting of judicial precedent does not have the same gravity in Japan as in common law countries such as the United States: in a “civil law” country such as Japan, precedent cannot be used as a basis for future legal decisions (Browning 2019: 240). Even so, the Nibutani Dam case legitimized the interpretation of Japanese law by which the Ainu could be seen as, and granted the rights of, an ethnic minority group and is thus cited as a turning point in many accounts of Ainu history.

<sup>50</sup> “In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to

“ ‘demands meaningful, not superficial’ respect for individuals and differences among people”<sup>51</sup> as mandates to protect tangible and intangible cultural property provided that the Ainu could be defined as an indigenous people. On the basis of the definition of “minority culture” as “a social group that historically ‘existed outside the state’s rule’ until their subjugation by the state,” which “must have had a culture and identity different from the majority and have ‘not since lost the unique culture and identity,’”<sup>52</sup> the court’s landmark decision was simply to affirm that the Ainu people fell within this categorization and were therefore subject to state protection.<sup>53</sup>

Additionally, scattered calls for recognition of the rights of the Ainu people to their historical lands arose as early as the 1992: an article from that year in *The Independent* reports of an Ainu man in traditional dress speaking out at a joint forum between the local governments of Sakhalin and Hokkaido for current Russian inhabitants of the Kuril Islands and former Japanese inhabitants who were forced to leave the islands after their acquisition by the Soviet Union in 1948. “The Kuriles are not Russian, and they are not Japanese either.... We were the first inhabitants of these islands, and lived there before this territorial problem even appeared,” the man, Akibe Tokuhei, asserted, “You [Russians and Japanese] should both remember the historical rights of the Ainu when you conduct your negotiations.”<sup>54</sup> Akibe’s sentiment was coldly received by forum

---

profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language.” (ICCPR Article 27, 1966, quoted in Browning 2019: 217)

<sup>51</sup> Zachary Browning, “A Comparative Analysis: Legal and Historical Analysis of Protecting Indigenous Cultural Rights Involving Land Disputes in Japan, New Zealand, and Hawaii,” *Washington Law Journal* 28 no. 1 (2019): 218.

<sup>52</sup> Zachary Browning, “A Comparative Analysis: Legal and Historical Analysis of Protecting Indigenous Cultural Rights Involving Land Disputes in Japan, New Zealand, and Hawaii,” *Washington Law Journal* 28 no. 1 (2019): 218.

<sup>53</sup> Browning notes that this is problematic because it implies that groups which have been “totally subsumed” within the Japanese state would have lost their right to protection. Thus the decision to recognize the Ainu as indigenous people simultaneously acknowledges the continued vitality of Ainu culture, another goal towards which Ainu activists have fought.

<sup>54</sup> Terry McCarthy, “Ainu people lay ancient claim to Kurile Islands: The hunters and fishers who lost their land to the Russians and Japanese are gaining the confidence to demand their rights, reports Terry McCarthy,” *The Independent*, September 21, 1992.

leaders and its relevance to the modern dispute overlooked: the Kuril Islands issue remains, according to the viewpoints of both the Japanese and Russian governments, bilateral. This notion will be discussed further in the following section on the Kuril Islands Dispute.

Finally in 1997 the 1899 Hokkaido Former Natives Protection Act was repealed and replaced with the Ainu Cultural Promotion Act (CPA), fully titled “Law for the Promotion of the Ainu Culture and for the Dissemination and Advocacy for the Traditions of the Ainu and the Ainu Culture.”<sup>55</sup> This act marks the official death of Japan’s assimilationist policy towards the Ainu people, but not necessarily a complete break from its colonial tradition – the title of the act itself reveals that the focus of Ainu policy has shifted from one of outright denial to one of acknowledgement and cultural “promotion,” signaling a change in official representation but not explicitly calling for reparations. As noted by the Ainu Association of Hokkaido on its website, the act’s definition of Ainu culture is limited to “the Ainu language and cultural properties such as music, dance, crafts, and other cultural properties which have been inherited by the Ainu people, and other cultural properties developed from these;” Japan’s national government and local governments are tasked with the responsibility to “implement measures for promotion of Ainu culture.... in accordance with the social situations of their respective areas.”<sup>56</sup> Legally, the actual land historically inhabited by Ainu people is not counted as an Ainu cultural property, and can only be included under the umbrella of protected assets if another culturally significant property – mythology, architecture, burial sites, etc. – are mapped over it. Indeed, the Hokkaido Prefectural government argued that no land assets could be legally returned to the Ainu since “its mandate as

---

<sup>55</sup> Kanako Uzawa, “What does Ainu Cultural Revitalization Mean to Ainu and Wajin Youth in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century? Case Study of Urespa as a Place to Learn Ainu Culture in the City of Sapporo, Japan,” *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples* 15 no. 2 (2019): 170.

<sup>56</sup> “Summary of the Act for the Promotion of the Ainu Culture,” Ainu Association of Hokkaido, accessed May 3, 2021, <https://www.ainu-assn.or.jp/english/summary.html>.

the trustee in the management of lands came to an end in 1952 and therefore the assets to be returned to Ainu through the procedure prescribed by the Ainu Culture Act are cash assets only.”<sup>57</sup> With few exceptions, Japan’s Ainu policy has continued in this new tradition of cultural promotion and avoidance of socioeconomic questions since 1997. This is not to say that these efforts are superficial – the recognition of the Ainu as a living ethnic minority and indigenous people of the Japanese territory is a crucial pivot from the conception of Japan as a monoethnic nation and a necessary logical step towards addressing territorial issues. Nonetheless, it is only that: a step.

In the double hurdle of legal recognition first as an ethnic minority and second as an indigenous people in Japan, the Ainu has surmounted the first in 1997, but the second did not come until 2008, when the Japanese Diet unanimously adopted the “Resolution to Recognize the Ainu as an Indigenous People” in a response to the September 2007 United Nations adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.<sup>58</sup> Note, however, that this resolution did not conform completely with the standards of international law stipulated by the United Nations by failing to recognize Ainu “collective right sand the right to self-determination.”<sup>59</sup> The government groups which were formed to clarify the repercussions of the new resolution (namely the Advisory Council for Future Ainu Policy and subsequent Council for Ainu Policy Promotion) and the documents issued by those groups (especially the 2009 final report of the Advisory Council) served to crystalize Japan’s new Ainu policy into a key project, the Symbolic Space for Ethnic Harmony, which was first opened to the public in 2020 and is discussed at length in chapter three of this

---

<sup>57</sup> Saeko Kawashima, “The Right to Effective Participation and the Ainu People,” *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* 11 no. 1/2 (2004): 44.

<sup>58</sup> Masaki Oita, “Comparative Issues: Recent Policy Developments to Promote and Protect Ainu Culture in Japan,” in *Indigenous Law Bulletin* 8 no. 5 (2013): 26.

<sup>59</sup> Kanako Uzawa, “What does Ainu Cultural Revitalization Mean to Ainu and Wajin Youth in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century? Case Study of Urespa as a Place to Learn Ainu Culture in the City of Sapporo, Japan,” *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples* 15 no. 2 (2019): 170.

text.<sup>60</sup> The Symbolic Space was conceived to be, in essence, a museum – it is a site for the display and promotion of Ainu culture to Ainu, Japanese, and international audiences whose significance lies in its iconization of Ainu cultural vitality within a single site.

Another large focus of Ainu cultural revitalization in recent years has been the practice and dissemination of the Ainu language. The line between language preservation and revitalization in the Ainu case is a thin one: very few people live who speak Ainu communicatively, and it is neither taught in schools (as a foreign language or language of instruction) or learned as a first language by children, and fears of its disappearance are underscored by extensive efforts to preserve the Ainu language via recordings of folktales and regular speech (many of which can be found on the website of the Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum, described in chapter 5). By some definitions, then, the Ainu language can be considered to be dead at the present time. But that doesn't preclude the possibility of its resurrection – and indeed, the revitalization and promotion of language as a critical facet of Ainu culture characterizes both state Ainu policy and grassroots movements for the past twenty years. Across Japan Ainu language radio programs, private language classes, and theatre performances have cropped up catering to both Ainu and Wajin audiences, in addition to revived Ainu religious ceremonies and dances which take place in cultural centers across the country which serve simultaneously as performances for outsiders and living cultural practice for participants.<sup>61</sup> One case study by Uzawa Kanako, an Ainu researcher who was raised in both Ainu and Japanese cultural practice, discusses the value of the Urespa<sup>62</sup> cultural club at Sapporo University, Hokkaido,

---

<sup>60</sup> Masaki Oita, "Comparative Issues: Recent Policy Developments to Promote and Protect Ainu Culture in Japan," in *Indigenous Law Bulletin* 8 no. 5 (2013): 26-27.

<sup>61</sup> Kaori Tahara, "The Saga of the Ainu Language," *The Unesco Courier*, UNESCO, 2019.

<sup>62</sup> This word is also seen in this thesis as *ureshipa*, although it is transliterated in Uzawa's article as *urespa*; both are valid ways of presenting in English the Japanese katakana ウレシバ (*ureshipa*, with the *shi* character written using the special small katakana *shi* for transcription of Ainu words).

as a “micropublic” in which the dynamics of Ainu cultural and linguistic revitalization with the participation of both Ainu and Wajin people has been effectively tested. Uzawa highlights three crucial components of Urespa: “the first ever scholarship for Ainu students” wherein “Urespa scholarship students are expected to take curriculum-based Ainu language and history courses in Sapporo University as well as Urespa evening activities;” the “‘Urespa company system’, whereby any private company representatives or individuals are invited to take part in the club’s group activities and to lend support by contributing a yearly membership fee;” and the “‘urespa movement’” which “aims at creating a multi-cultural social model in which anyone who is interested is invited into the Ainu culture.”<sup>63</sup> The club’s main premise is participation in living Ainu culture by both ethnic Ainu and wajin individuals – Uzawa maintains that this cross-ethnic cultural engagement is crucial to creating a model for a contemporary, urban form of indigenous living, a “*metroethnicity*,” applicable to the Ainu case as well as other extant indigenous groups, the dialogic space created by which “allows analytical attention to be drawn to the presence of both [colonizer and colonized] systems of thought and their history of entanglement and (con)fused practice.”<sup>64</sup> Learning in the club is self-directed, and the role of teacher is often fulfilled by the internet: Ainu and wajin students together seek out information on Ainu language and copy traditional dances from YouTube in a complete restructuring of the process of passing down cultural knowledge, and use Ainu language to socialize over text in a gesture of club solidarity. At least within the cross-cultural micropublic of Urespa, Ainu language is used not only as a ceremonial language as a language of everyday communication (albeit not as a first language) in

---

<sup>63</sup> Kanako Uzawa, “What does Ainu Cultural Revitalization Mean to Ainu and Wajin Youth in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century? Case Study of Urespa as a Place to Learn Ainu Culture in the City of Sapporo, Japan,” *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples* 15 no. 2 (2019): 171.

<sup>64</sup> Nakata 2012, quoted in Kanako Uzawa, “What does Ainu Cultural Revitalization Mean to Ainu and Wajin Youth in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century? Case Study of Urespa as a Place to Learn Ainu Culture in the City of Sapporo, Japan,” *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples* 15 no. 2 (2019): 176.

linguistic settings that predispose it to the forces of linguistic evolution which act upon all modern languages (particularly the genre of text speech); it is a quintessential example of learners of Ainu language crossing the line between linguistic preservation, which presupposes a dead or dying language, and linguistic revitalization, which implies new life.

The status of Ainu people in Japan has improved dramatically over the past half century, but the struggle towards cultural respect and socioeconomic equality are by no means over. Oita Masaki, the Deputy Director of the Comprehensive Ainu Policy office of the Cabinet Secretariat of Japan, noted several remaining issues as of 2013, including the lack of “an official ‘apology’ by the government for its past integration policies,” adherence to international standards in Japan’s implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and “restitution of the lands that Ainu people historically used.”<sup>65</sup> As of the time of writing this thesis, all of these projects are still incomplete, despite increased visibility of Ainu culture on the national stage which is epitomized by the 2020 opening of Upopoy, the Symbolic Space for Ethnic Harmony. To state that the history of Ainu rights in Japan is predicated on the semantics of representation rather than reparations for a colonial past is not to impugn the former as conservative or ineffectual, or to imply that the latter must follow the former. These two types of political struggle are often pitted against each other in literature regarding Ainu culture and cultural representations between Japanese and Ainu scholars, who tend to espouse the representative model, and international scholars, who criticize the absence of socioeconomic demands in contemporary discourse around the Ainu. The relative value of these two positions, and how they bear on the positioning and

---

<sup>65</sup> Masaki Oita, “Comparative Issues: Recent Policy Developments to Promote and Protect Ainu Culture in Japan,” in *Indigenous Law Bulletin* 8 no. 5 (2013): 28.

content of this thesis, will be explored more thoroughly in the Literature Review section of this chapter.

### Ainu In Russia

Until now this section has dealt primarily with Ainu in Hokkaido, Japan, and the historical dynamic between the Japanese government and Ainu people both inside and outside Japan's national borders. The geographic and historical space in which the Ainu people exist, however, exists in between and has been crossed by the great powers of both Japan and Russia.<sup>66</sup> The Japanese government devotes minimal research to the status of Ainu people outside of Hokkaido, to the extent that a 2013 Japanese government analysis of Ainu status states that "the population of Ainu people outside of Hokkaido is unknown."<sup>67</sup> The result is that the Ainu are widely conceived of, and have been recognized by the Japanese government, as a specifically Japanese ethnic minority whose extant population exists only in Japan, despite having inhabited areas outside its national borders in the distant past. The reality is quite different: the 2010 census of the Russian Federation identified 109 Ainu living throughout Russia, in cities from Moscow and St. Petersburg to the island of Sakhalin.<sup>68</sup> Ainu in Russia have faced similar struggles to their counterparts within the borders of Japan, including forced relocations and assimilatory ethnic policies. Ainu were denied Soviet citizenship during the Stalin era due to their identification as ethnically Japanese by the Soviet government, forcefully repatriated to Japan in 1946 after Russian

---

<sup>66</sup> Russia is used here as a shorthand to refer to the Russian Empire, Soviet Union, and the current Russian Federation which is recognized as the inheritor of the Soviet Union's international status.

<sup>67</sup> Masaki Oita, "Comparative Issues: Recent Policy Developments to Promote and Protect Ainu Culture in Japan," in *Indigenous Law Bulletin* 8 no. 5 (2013): 27.

<sup>68</sup> E.V. Gorian and Yu.Yu. Netrusov, "The recognition of Ainu as indigenous people by Russia as the factor of the resolution of the territorial dispute with Japan," *Territoria Novikh Vozmozhnostei* 39 no. 4 (2017): 138.

acquisition of South Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands, stricken from the list of Russian ethnic minorities in 1979, and for a time were considered to “no longer exist” in Russia, much in the same vein of the Japanese political characterization of the Ainu as a “vanished people.”<sup>69</sup> However, the albeit small number of Ainu in Russia have been vocal regarding their rights to territory and cultural practices, with the result that President Vladimir Putin voiced his support for the reintroduction of the Ainu to Russia’s register of ethnic minorities in 2018 (although the actualization of this process may take much longer).<sup>70</sup>

The Kamchatka Ainu Community (usually referred to as “*Aïnu Obshchina*” in Russian), approximately two hundred members strong, was active for several years in the twenty-first century as an advocate organization for Ainu rights, whose efforts and ultimate dissolution its former leader Aleksei Nakamura recalls in detail over two interviews for the independent “inter-ethnic” news site *National Accent* (*Natsional’nyĭ Aktsent* or *NatsAktsent*) in 2012 and 2016. Despite securing rights to fish in certain areas in 2008, the Ainu Community in Kamchatka was prohibited from fishing using traditional methods and branded as poachers by the Russian government (a move strikingly similar to the Japanese colonial policies towards the Ainu in the nineteenth century).<sup>71</sup> Because Ainu were not on the official register of Russian ethnic minorities at the time, the organization itself was declared illegal in 2013; Nakamura explains that the Ainu Community had voted to cease activities for three years beginning in 2013 due to government pressure, but this was never recognized by the Russian government and a court case proceeded

---

<sup>69</sup> Yekaterina Sinelschikova, “Who are the Ainu and why do authorities still deny their existence?” *Russia Beyond*, June 27, 2019.

<sup>70</sup> “*KMNS Kamchatki prosiat gubernatora i polpreda pomoch’ priznat’ Aïnov malochislennym narodom,*” *Natsional’nyĭ Aktsent*, June 4, 2020.

<sup>71</sup> Aseta Lieva, “Interviu: Alekseĭ Nakamura,” *Natsional’nyĭ Aktsent*, October 8, 2016, <https://nazaccent.ru/interview/95/>.

that year to disband the organization without its knowledge or participation.<sup>72</sup> Nakamura believes that the logic behind Russia's failure to recognize the Ainu people as an ethnic minority is due to the complications which would arise regarding access to natural resources on the Kamchatka peninsula: "there [on the peninsula] bioresources, hydrocarbons, gold and other minerals are concentrated. If there is no native people, then there nobody with whom they must reconcile their actions."<sup>73</sup>

Albeit with greater difficulty since the dissolution of the Ainu Community, Nakamura continues his work towards the revitalization of Ainu culture in Russia. In production are a dictionary of the Kamchatky-Kuril dialect of Ainu, which is different from the variation spoken in Hokkaido and thought to have no living native speakers, as well as dictionary resources on Ainu language in Russian; Nakamura feels that the accessibility of Ainu language information in largely Japanese and English exacerbates the misconception that Ainu do not exist in modern Russia, or that the Ainu are an exclusively Japanese ethnic minority rather than a cross-national ethnicity. Nakamura reports trouble forming a working relationship with Ainu organizations in Japan for this reason: since most institutions are government-sponsored, their ideological orientation likewise tends to overlook the existence of Ainu outside Japan's borders.<sup>74</sup> His efforts on the Kamchatka peninsula continue as well with plans to build a *kotan* near an Ainu excavation site on the shore of Kuril Lake, which he hopes will serve as a tourist attraction and potentially a living space as well; Nakamura has also cooperated with the Regional United Kamchatka Museum in the production of

---

<sup>72</sup> Aseta Lieva, "Interv'iu: Alekseĭ Nakamura," *Natsional'nyĭ Aktsent*, October 8, 2016, <https://nazaccent.ru/interview/95/>.

<sup>73</sup> Nakamura, quoted in Aseta Lieva, "Interv'iu: Alekseĭ Nakamura," *Natsional'nyĭ Aktsent*, October 8, 2016, <https://nazaccent.ru/interview/95/>.

<sup>74</sup> Marina Dolgikh, "Interv'iu: Alekseĭ Nakamura," *Natsional'nyĭ Aktsent*, January 7, 2012, <https://nazaccent.ru/interview/13/>.

an exhibition on the indigenous peoples of the Kamchatka region.<sup>75</sup> Meanwhile, Nakamura laments the lack of legal protections of the Ainu traditional lifestyle. In response to interviewer Aseta Lieva's question, "do [the Ainu] continue to live a traditional lifestyle?" he explained: "and how would we do this? They forbade us to fish, there is no official area to do so. And if we carry out our traditional lifestyle by ourselves – we will be poachers, they will put us in jail under Statute 256 (illegal extraction of aquatic bioresources)."<sup>76</sup> Again, this highlights the place of politics of representation in the negotiation of Ainu status: the recognition of the Ainu as an ethnic minority in Russia has not passed through the crucible of its national bureaucracy, and until it does that exclusion can be used as a legal basis for denying access to resources such as land, food, and ceremonial materials. However, it is difficult to tell whether simple cultural visibility and official recognition as an indigenous people will lead to significant improvement of Ainu conditions in Russia if such steps would counteract state economic interests. Particularly with issues of land use, it is likely that Ainu groups in both Russia and Japan will face significant pushback from their respective governments regarding rights to spaces, even with protected status as an indigenous people. This paradigm is clearly visible in American treatment of its own indigenous peoples – although the existence of indigenous peoples in the modern United States is officially acknowledged, calls for even partial return of historical tribal lands are unlikely to ever be answered by the federal government. Ainu in Japan have certainly argued that the paradigm represented in the United States is not applicable to the dynamic between Ainu and the Japanese government, but the efficacy of the politics of representation in Japan regarding concrete socioeconomic goals remains to be seen. There is no doubt as well that the effect of recognizing

---

<sup>75</sup> Aseta Lieva, "Interview: Alekseĭ Nakamura," *Natsional'nyi Aktsent*, October 8, 2016, <https://nazaccent.ru/interview/95/>.

<sup>76</sup> Nakamura, quoted in Aseta Lieva, "Interview: Alekseĭ Nakamura," *Natsional'nyi Aktsent*, October 8, 2016, <https://nazaccent.ru/interview/95/>.

Ainu rights to territories within the Russian Federation would have minimal economic or environment impact due to the extremely small size of the identified Ainu population – however, it is the implications of acknowledging territorial claims on a domestic level that could come to bear on international matters of territoriality regarding the Kuril Islands.

The albeit minority perspective of some Japanese Ainu towards the territoriality question has been mentioned, but within the Kamchatka Ainu Community the perspective that the Ainu should have some agency in the decision-making process of Russia and Japan is much more prominent. In 2012 Nakamura himself criticized the Japanese portrayal of the Ainu people as a Japanese minority group as an attempt to exclude them from the conversation regarding the disputed territories:

“It is very strange to say that there were never Ainu on the Kurils, Sakhalin, or Kamchatka, as the Japanese do now, believing that the Ainu live only on Hokkaido and only in Japan, and therefore, ostensibly, it is necessary to hand Japan the Kuril Islands. This is a lie. In Russia there are Ainu – a native people, also with the right to those islands. It is very strange that the [Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs] does not use this argument in order to remind [Japan] that the islands cannot belong only to Japanese Ainu, but rather to all Ainu.”<sup>77</sup>

While Nakamura’s argument is a clear repudiation of the Japanese irridentist cause, it does not fully support Russian sovereignty over the islands. Instead, he raises the possibility of joint economic activity between both countries with a prioritization of the interests of Ainu residing in both Russia and Japan.

---

<sup>77</sup> Nakamura, in Marina Dolgikh, “Interview: Alekseĭ Nakamura,” *Natsional’nyi Aktsent*, January 7, 2012, <https://nazaccent.ru/interview/13/>.

As it was centuries prior, the perspective of the Ainu people cannot be defined in a single broad sweep, nor can “Ainu culture” be understood as a monolithic institution. Due to forced relocation and assimilation policies undertaken by both Japan and Russia, the varied identities held by Ainu on Sakhalin, the Kuril Island chain, the Kamchatka peninsula, Hokkaido, and Honshu have been intertwined with Russian and Japanese national identities, traversing two separate paths after their shared cultural spaces were traversed by national borders. Nonetheless, the consciousness of cultural unity still pervades Ainu living in both countries, forming a transnational entity whose voice asserts itself increasingly in global discourse. In this context, the absence of the Ainu voice in the Kuril Islands Dispute stands in sharp relief – one must ask *why* and *how* the agency of the Ainu people regarding their historical homeland, *Ainu mosir*, has been detached from the evolution of the dispute. Whereas this section has presented an oppositional history of the Ainu people as a basis for understanding the territoriality issue, the next section will discuss the more conventional narrative of the Kuril Islands Dispute as a conflict between the two great powers of Russia and Japan.

## Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

### The Kuril Islands Dispute as a Great Powers Conflict

Although they had been inhabited for centuries prior, the stretch of islands which is now the center of contention between Russia and Japan did not figure into the territorial aims of either nation until the late 1700s: by that time Russian imperial explorations had begun to probe Siberia and the islands off Russia's eastern coast, while the Japanese shogunate expanded its influence northwards to the larger island known at the time as Ezo, which would be renamed Hokkaido over half a century later by Japan's imperial government. Thus, the Southern Kuril Islands became the location where the two burgeoning national interests would meet and clash for the first time. The Japanese shogunate claimed control of the Southern Kurils in 1799, and although Russian colonies had been established along the Kuril Island chain during the same time period, they were largely abandoned by the early 1800s. Japan's sovereignty over the Kurils appeared to be confirmed after the Golovnin Incident of 1811, wherein Russian ships were halted and their crewmen captured by the Japanese Matsumae clan on the island of Kunashiri.<sup>78</sup>

1855 marked the first significant bilateral territory demarcation treaty between the Russian Empire and Japanese shogunate, becoming first in a long succession of such documents. The 1855 Treaty of Shimoda defined the four Kuril Island groups closest to Japanese-controlled Hokkaido – Kunashiri, Etorofu, Shikotan, and the Habomai group – as part of Japan, thus locating the Russia-Japan border between the islands of Etorofu on the Japanese side and Uruppu on the Russian side. However, only thirteen years later the Japanese shogunate was overthrown and reorganized into a political oligarchy under Emperor Meiji, ushering in the Meiji Era which would last until the

---

<sup>78</sup> Kentarou Serita, *The Territory of Japan: Its History and Legal Basis*, trans. Alex Meyer (Tokyo: Japan Publishing Industry Foundation For Culture, 2018), 22.

Emperor's death in 1912. After this change in government, Hokkaido and its surrounding islands were placed under the jurisdiction of the Department of Pioneering (*Kaitakushi*) and managed as a separate entity from mainland Japan until being redefined under the new Japanese constitution of 1889. The last half of the nineteenth century saw two more demarcation treaties: in 1875, Japan ceded the island of Karafuto (named Sakhalin in Russian) to the Russian Empire in exchange for the entirety of the Kuril Island chain, and twenty years later in 1895 a Treaty on Commerce and Navigation between Russia and Japan reaffirmed the validity of the 1875 territorial borders opposed to those delineated in 1855.<sup>79</sup>

The beginning of the twentieth century, however, proved to be a period of fundamental change in the relationship between Meiji Japan and the Russian Empire. In an upset that shocked the Russian Empire to its core, Japan claimed victory in the 1904-1905 Russo-Japanese War, ending in the 1905 Portsmouth Peace Treaty which returned the southern half of Sakhalin to Japan only thirty years after it had been ceded.<sup>80</sup> This also meant that Japan and Russia now shared an albeit small land border on the island of Sakhalin. Barely more than a decade later in 1917, the Russian Empire underwent two revolutions, the first when the czar himself stepped down and the second when the socialist Bolshevik party overthrew the provisional government which had briefly taken control of the country in the emperor's place. The relationship between the newly-formed Soviet Union and Japan, then, became that of two empires, for Japan had established itself on the global stage as a formidable great power with its victory in the Russo-Japanese War, and although the Soviet Union was no longer imperial in name its territorial ambitions, especially with regard

---

<sup>79</sup> Kentarou Serita, *The Territory of Japan: Its History and Legal Basis*, trans. Alex Meyer (Tokyo: Japan Publishing Industry Foundation For Culture, 2018), 70.

<sup>80</sup> Kentarou Serita, *The Territory of Japan: Its History and Legal Basis*, trans. Alex Meyer (Tokyo: Japan Publishing Industry Foundation For Culture, 2018), 70.

to its eastern borders, did not wane. In 1925 the two powers solidified their relationship with the Convention on Fundamental Principles for Relations between Japan in the USSR, in which both parties agreed to uphold the border delineated by the Portsmouth Peace Treaty of 1905.<sup>81</sup>

Japanese imperial ambition on the Asian continent, however, chilled the relationship between Japan and the USSR. In the 1930s Japan extended its control to northern China, expanding its practical border with the Soviet Union and leading to a series of escalating skirmishes that peaked after Japan's full-out military invasion of China in 1937. Although the Soviet military fared considerably better against Japan than it had in the past, the German invasion of Poland in 1939 drew the Soviet Union's attention away from its eastern front, and in 1941 the two countries signed the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact, which was designed to protect against direct military conflict between Japan and the Soviet Union even as they fought against each other's allies in World War II. Such an armistice, however, was not to last.

World War II is the most crucial turning point in the legal arguments of the Kuril Islands issue, because the entire case for Russian sovereignty over the four disputed islands hinges on the Soviet military's invasion and seizure of those territories during the final days of the war. The timeline of international agreements in 1945 upon which both the Japanese and Russian arguments are predicated is both complex and rhetorically contested by both sides. From the perspective of the Soviet Union, the order of events occurred as such: on February 11<sup>th</sup>, 1945, the Soviet Union entered into the Yalta agreement with the other Allied Powers on the stipulation that "the Kurile Islands shall be handed over to the Soviet Union" for its participation in the war against Japan. On April 5<sup>th</sup> of that year the Soviet Union announced its intention to leave the Soviet-Japanese

---

<sup>81</sup> Kentarou Serita, *The Territory of Japan: Its History and Legal Basis*, trans. Alex Meyer (Tokyo: Japan Publishing Industry Foundation For Culture, 2018), 72.

Neutrality Pact, and on August 9<sup>th</sup> declared war against Japan (the same day the second atomic bomb from the United States hit Japan). The Japanese ceasefire and unconditional surrender under the Potsdam Declaration took place five days later on August 14<sup>th</sup>. Two days after that on August 16<sup>th</sup>, the Soviet Union sent troops to attack Shumshu, one of the northern Kuril Islands, and completed occupation of the entire Kuril Island chain by September 3<sup>rd</sup>; in February of the following year the Council of People's Commissars retroactively incorporated the seized territory into the Soviet Union, setting the date of territorial admittance at September 20, 1945.<sup>82</sup> The Soviet Union had only occupied the territory promised by the Yalta agreement and therefore, in the state's own perspective, it had the valid claim to legal sovereignty over the territory.

The Japanese account of the end of World War II paints a completely different picture regarding the legality of the Soviet occupation. The first date Japanese politicians tend to cite is the 1943 Cairo Declaration made by the United States, China, and Britain, and to which the Soviet Union agreed on August 8<sup>th</sup>, 1945 – the day before declaring war against Japan. According to the declaration, the Allied countries would “covet no gains for themselves and have no thought of territorial expansion” and share the goal of stripping Japan of “the territories which she has taken by violence and greed.”<sup>83</sup> The wording of these statements has been taken quite literally by successive generations of Japanese politicians to mean that the Allied powers had withdrawn any legal right to seize any Japanese possessions which had not been acquired during the process of imperial expansion – and of course, the Southern Kuril Islands had been acquired fifteen years before the official beginning of the Japanese empire. Japan, meanwhile, was not party to the Yalta

---

<sup>82</sup> Kentarou Serita, *The Territory of Japan: Its History and Legal Basis*, trans. Alex Meyer (Tokyo: Japan Publishing Industry Foundation For Culture, 2018), 54.

<sup>83</sup> Kentarou Serita, *The Territory of Japan: Its History and Legal Basis*, trans. Alex Meyer (Tokyo: Japan Publishing Industry Foundation For Culture, 2018), 100.

Agreement, which had taken place six months prior to the Soviet Union's acceptance of the Cairo Declaration – a fact which Japan invoked to argue that the prerogative by which the Soviet Union seized the Kuril Islands was not binding on the Japanese side.<sup>84</sup> The Japanese argument also notes that although the Soviet Union stated its intention to exit the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact on April 5<sup>th</sup>, 1945, its terms dictated that it remain valid for a year following the announcement by any party of its intention to disband, and thus the Soviet Union acted in violation of the Pact.<sup>85</sup>

The San Francisco Peace Treaty officially ending the war between Japan and the Allied Powers was signed on September 8<sup>th</sup>, 1951. Amongst the stipulations regarding Japanese territorial cessions, Article 2(c) dealt with the Kuril Islands:

“Japan renounces all right, title and claim to the Kurile Islands, and to that portion of Sakhalin and the islands adjacent to it over which Japan acquired sovereignty as a consequence of the Treaty of Portsmouth of September 5, 1905.”<sup>86</sup>

It was on this treaty that the Soviet and Japanese perspective diverged significantly. The wording of the article itself became the baseline of the entire Japanese argument of territorial sovereignty, which would pervade bilateral diplomacy for more than half a century – the specific scope of the Kuril Islands was never articulated in the treaty, allowing for the possibility that by using the preexisting nomenclature which differentiated the “Kuril Islands” from the “Southern Kuril Islands” of Etorofu, Kunashiri, Shikotan, and Habomai, Japan could argue that the later subcategory were

---

<sup>84</sup> Kentarou Serita, *The Territory of Japan: Its History and Legal Basis*, trans. Alex Meyer (Tokyo: Japan Publishing Industry Foundation For Culture, 2018), 72.

<sup>85</sup> Kentarou Serita, *The Territory of Japan: Its History and Legal Basis*, trans. Alex Meyer (Tokyo: Japan Publishing Industry Foundation For Culture, 2018), 55.

<sup>86</sup> “Treaty of Peace with Japan (with two declarations). Signed at San Francisco, on 8 September 1951” (San Francisco, 1951).

simply not included in the articles against Japan.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, the Soviet Union itself failed to ratify the San Francisco Peace Treaty, rendering Japan “unable to confer any rights, titles, or benefits to it.”<sup>88</sup> Serita Kentaro notes that the Soviet Union had proposed a revision to the treaty “whereby Japan would recognize the complete sovereignty of the Soviet union over these territories and renounce all right, title, and claim to them,”<sup>89</sup> which was not accepted.

In fact, the Soviet Union and Japan did not bilaterally assent to any document until 1956, when the Japan-Soviet Union Joint Declaration normalized diplomatic relations between the two countries and resolved most issues left over from World War II, allowing even for the transfer to Japan of Shikotan and Habomai (the two islands closest to Japan) upon the completion of a peace treaty at some point in the future. According to Togo Kazuhiko, the former director-general of Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs European and Oceanic Affairs Bureau who also wrote extensively on the topic of the Kuril Islands dispute, the reversion of two out of four of the Southern Kuril Islands was seen not as an end goal but as a step along a process of complete reclamation by Japan; the hard line driven by Japan regarding this territorial issue is what prevented the issue from being completely settled in 1956.<sup>90</sup> It was also in 1956 that the first use of the term “Northern Territories” in reference to the four Southern Kuril Islands was used within the Japanese government, appearing in the context of the argument that the reversion of all four

---

<sup>87</sup> Kazuhiko Togo, “The Inside Story of the Negotiations on the Northern Territories: Five Lost Windows of Opportunity,” *Japan Forum* 23 no. 1 (2011): 124.

<sup>88</sup> Kentarou Serita, *The Territory of Japan: Its History and Legal Basis*, trans. Alex Meyer (Tokyo: Japan Publishing Industry Foundation For Culture, 2018), 53.

<sup>89</sup> Kentarou Serita, *The Territory of Japan: Its History and Legal Basis*, trans. Alex Meyer (Tokyo: Japan Publishing Industry Foundation For Culture, 2018), 54.

<sup>90</sup> Kazuhiko Togo, “The Inside Story of the Negotiations on the Northern Territories: Five Lost Windows of Opportunity,” *Japan Forum* 23 no. 1 (2011): 123-145.

islands contained within the nomenclature would be consistent with the San Francisco Treaty; the term was officially adopted by the Japanese government in 1963.<sup>91</sup>

Alexander Bukh observes that the rhetoric surrounding the Japanese irridentist movement bore a strikingly different character before and after the 1956 Japan-Soviet negotiations, which he refers to as “two stages” of the issue’s evolution.<sup>92</sup> In the time period between the end of World War II and the normalization of bilateral relations between Japan and the Soviet Union, the only proponents of the irridentist cause were those who had been displaced to Hokkaido due to the changing sovereignty of the Kuril Islands, and those whose economic lives had been impacted by the lack of fishing access to the surrounding waters, namely the residents of Nemuro, Hokkaido.<sup>93</sup> The obscurity and lack of agreement within this early manifestation of the movement, Bukh argues, is due to the “almost negligible significance the islands occupied in the pre-1945 self-imagery of the Japanese homeland.”<sup>94</sup> That is, the islands had not yet taken on the greater nationalistic symbolism that they would in the coming decades. Indeed, a Hokkaido-based appeal for the return of the four islands of Khashiri, Etorofu, Shikotan and Habomai was dismissed by the Foreign Relations Committee of Japan’s House of Representatives in 1947.<sup>95</sup> It is also notable that the applicability to Japan of the Yalta agreement, which has become a major point in Japan’s contemporary argument on the legality of Russian possession of the Northern Territories, “is not questioned” in the 1949 book for young readers *Soren no Hanashi (The Story of the Soviet Union)*

---

<sup>91</sup> Kentarou Serita, *The Territory of Japan: Its History and Legal Basis*, trans. Alex Meyer (Tokyo: Japan Publishing Industry Foundation For Culture, 2018).

<sup>92</sup> Alexander Bukh, *Japan’s National Identity and Foreign Policy: Russia as Japan’s ‘Other’* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 56.

<sup>93</sup> Alexander Bukh, *Japan’s National Identity and Foreign Policy: Russia as Japan’s ‘Other’* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 57.

<sup>94</sup> Alexander Bukh, *Japan’s National Identity and Foreign Policy: Russia as Japan’s ‘Other’* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 58.

<sup>95</sup> Alexander Bukh, *Japan’s National Identity and Foreign Policy: Russia as Japan’s ‘Other’* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 55.

published by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs,<sup>96</sup> underscoring the significant shift which would take place in the second half of the twentieth century regarding Japan's relationship with the disputed territory.

The irridentist argument took on a more official form during the post-1956 "second stage" proposed by Bukh, culminating in the formation the Northern Territories Problem Countermeasures Association (*Hoppo Ryoudo mondai taisoku kyokai*) as the government's rhetorical voice on the "Northern Territories" issue.<sup>97</sup> In his article "Constructing Japan's 'Northern Territories': Domestic Actors, Interests, and the Symbolism of the Disputed Lands," Bukh lays out a convincing argument that although the irridentist movement began as a pragmatic economic question, by the late 1960s it had transformed into a national narrative within intra-conservative anti-communist rhetoric in Japan's government. This process could not have happened, though, without the intervention of the United States (indeed, it is difficult to discuss any matter of international politics without some mention of American meddling). The American occupation of Japan after World War II stood out as a threat to the Soviet Union, which declared that it would not follow through on its plan to return Shikotan and Habomai to Japan until American troops were withdrawn from the country.<sup>98</sup> Such a withdrawal, of course, did not materialize, and indeed in 1971 the Okinawa Reversion Agreement returned the US-occupied territory of Okinawa to Japan on the condition that the United States would be allowed to maintain military bases there.<sup>99</sup> The irridentist argument was taken up within Japan's conservative Liberal

---

<sup>96</sup> Alexander Bukh, *Japan's National Identity and Foreign Policy: Russia as Japan's 'Other'* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 55.

<sup>97</sup> Alexander Bukh, *Japan's National Identity and Foreign Policy: Russia as Japan's 'Other'* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 56.

<sup>98</sup> Kazuhiko Togo, "The Inside Story of the Negotiations on the Northern Territories: Five Lost Windows of Opportunity," *Japan Forum* 23 no. 1 (2011).

<sup>99</sup> Kentarou Serita, *The Territory of Japan: Its History and Legal Basis*, trans. Alex Meyer (Tokyo: Japan Publishing Industry Foundation For Culture, 2018).

Democratic Party specifically in response to the Socialist Party's opposition of the Okinawa reversion. Conservatives did not base their support for irridentism on the economic benefits associated with the islands, but because the dispute more broadly signified a crusade against the ideology of Soviet communism, which could be directed towards socialists in Japan. "The symbolic meaning of the "Northern Territories," Bukh notes, "resided mainly in their association with the Soviet Union and by default with the domestic progressive forces that included the socialists and the communists."<sup>100</sup> In is manner the discourse of the territorial dispute, specifically framed as an issue of national pride instead of economic necessity in order to sure up domestic arguments regarding the relationship between the United States and Japan, reached the consciousness of the Japanese public; and it is this articulation of irridentism as a national mission which continues to characterize Japanese domestic discourse on the issue.

Meanwhile, negotiations continued haphazardly between Japan and the Soviet Union. In 1973 the Soviet General Secretary Brezhnev and the Japanese Prime Minister Tanaka issued a joint communiqué agreeing to finally resolve remaining issues from World War II, but immediately afterwards the relationship between the two countries chilled and discussion of the territorial issue was tabled.<sup>101</sup> In the 1980s under Gorbachev, the Soviet Union prioritized foreign policy issues concerning the United States rather than its lingering issues with Japan, and later Gorbachev's own attention was consumed by domestic issues.<sup>102</sup> Togo cites the Gorbachev era as a period in which Japan missed many crucial opportunities to solve the territorial issue: because Japan drove a hard line on the territorial issue as a prerequisite for talks between Japan and the Soviet Union in 1989,

---

<sup>100</sup> Alexander Bukh, "Constructing Japan's 'Northern Territories': Domestic Actors, Interests, and the Symbolism of the Disputed Lands," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 12 (2012): 498-499.

<sup>101</sup> Kazuhiko Togo, "The Inside Story of the Negotiations on the Northern Territories: Five Lost Windows of Opportunity," *Japan Forum* 23 no. 1 (2011).

<sup>102</sup> Kazuhiko Togo, "The Inside Story of the Negotiations on the Northern Territories: Five Lost Windows of Opportunity," *Japan Forum* 23 no. 1 (2011): 126.

Gorbachev entered negotiations from an already unreceptive perspective, and the only result of the meeting was the establishment of a “balanced expansion” principle between the two countries wherein both sides would work towards building trust on all fronts instead of focusing on the Kuril Islands dispute.<sup>103</sup> It was only a few years later that the Soviet Union came to an end, and amidst this collapse Gorbachev “suggested to the Japanese side that the latter should propose the reversion of Habomai and Shikotan and the continuation of negotiations on Kunashiri and Etorofu,” but Japan rejected the proposal in favor of demanding the return of all four disputed islands, again putting a stopper in negotiations.<sup>104</sup>

With the establishment of the Russian Federation and ascension of President Boris Yeltsin, the two countries entered into a more friendly phase. The Tokyo Declaration of 1993 confirmed that “all treaties and international agreements between the Soviet Union and Japan would be applied between the Russian Federation and Japan,” and established that in bilateral negotiations the question of the sovereignty of all four disputed territories would be at stake on a basis of legal facts, agreed-upon documents, and the “principle of law and justice.”<sup>105</sup> Although President Yeltsin announced in a press conference that the 1956 Joint Declaration would be included in the category of “agreed-upon documents,” this fact was not confirmed until years later under President Putin during his 2001 Irkutsk meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Mori.<sup>106</sup> The talks leading up to the Irkutsk meeting also established the “two by two” doctrine of territorial negotiation, wherein

---

<sup>103</sup> Kazuhiko Togo, “The Inside Story of the Negotiations on the Northern Territories: Five Lost Windows of Opportunity,” *Japan Forum* 23 no. 1 (2011): 128.

<sup>104</sup> Kazuhiko Togo, “The Inside Story of the Negotiations on the Northern Territories: Five Lost Windows of Opportunity,” *Japan Forum* 23 no. 1 (2011): 131.

<sup>105</sup> Kazuhiko Togo, “The Inside Story of the Negotiations on the Northern Territories: Five Lost Windows of Opportunity,” *Japan Forum* 23 no. 1 (2011): 132.

<sup>106</sup> Kazuhiko Togo, “The Inside Story of the Negotiations on the Northern Territories: Five Lost Windows of Opportunity,” *Japan Forum* 23 no. 1 (2011): 136.

the sovereignty of the larger islands (Kunashiri and Etorofu) and the smaller islands (Shikotan and Habomai) would be decided separately.<sup>107</sup>

Japan's current official argument remains steadfastly dedicated to the reversion of all four disputed islands, based on the two premises that "The two islands of Kunashiri and Etorofu belong to the South Kurile (*Minami Chishima*) islands" and that "the "Kurile islands' do not include the Habomai archipelago and Shikotan, which... have historically been part of Hokkaido "rather than a part the Greater Kuril chain which was promised to the Soviet Union in the San Francisco Peace Treaty.<sup>108</sup> However, 2020 amendments to the Russian constitution proposed by President Putin have the potential to completely shut down bilateral negotiations for the near future. According to the newly-amended Statue 67 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, "actions (for the purpose of delimitation, demarcation, and redemarcation of the state border of the Russian Federation with neighboring states), directed towards the alienation of the territory of the Russian Federation, and likewise calls for such actions, are not allowed."<sup>109</sup> In essence, the act of turning over any territory held by the Russian Federation, including the four disputed islands, to another country has been made illegal. In a 2021 press conference, representative of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Maria Zakharova explicitly stated that return of the Kurils to Japan was now "in no way permissible. Even discussing the topic is in no way permissible because we have the Constitution."<sup>110</sup> The enshrinement of the territorial issue in such a foundational document is a much greater blow to bilateral negotiations than the capitulations which both countries have tossed

---

<sup>107</sup> Kazuhiko Togo, "The Inside Story of the Negotiations on the Northern Territories: Five Lost Windows of Opportunity," *Japan Forum* 23 no. 1 (2011): 136-137.

<sup>108</sup> Alexander Bukh, *Japan's National Identity and Foreign Policy: Russia as Japan's 'Other'* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 57.

<sup>109</sup> "Noviyĭ tekst Konstitutsii RF c popravkami 2020," Gosudarstvennaĭa Duma, 2020, <http://duma.gov.ru/news/48953/>.

<sup>110</sup> "Zakharova otvetila na zaiavleniia Iaponii o Kurilakh," RIA Novosti, February 28, 2021, <https://ria.ru/20210218/kurily-1598095045.html>.

back and forth since 1945, and at this point it is unlikely that any resolution will be reached in the near future.

Within this discourse, little rhetorical space has been left for the Ainu people as either subjects or agents. Nevertheless, Ainu culture was temporarily foregrounded in the rhetoric of Japanese nationalism in the late twentieth century and used to bolster national pride regarding the “inherent Japanese” nature of the Northern Territories. Bukh notes that the political rhetoric of the latter twentieth century temporarily identified Ainu within broader Japanese nationality: “Ainu came to represent the ‘original’ Japanese culture, they were elevated from the inferior position of backward people to the status of superior carriers of the ‘foundation of Japanese culture.’”<sup>111</sup> This fascination with the Ainu as a symbol of strength and harmony with nature within Japanese history, an aesthetic favored not only by conservative nationalists in conjunction with rhetoric of Japan as a monoethnic state but also by the progressive Ainu movements of the time, was taken to such an extreme that the first Director-General of the government-affiliated International Research center for Japanese Studies wrote an article asserting that “any imputation of ethnic difference between the Japanese and the Ainu is a recent and mistaken invention.”<sup>112</sup> Only the changes to Japan’s recognition of Ainu ethnic status which took place after 1997 were able to “[interrupt] the discourse on Japanese ethnic homogeneity and officially [elevate] the Ainu... to the status of an equal ethnic entity,” setting the stage for Ainu agency to potentially undermine the conception of the irridentist cause as a “national mission.”<sup>113</sup> With the territorial issue at stake, the

---

<sup>111</sup> Umehara 1984, quoted in Alexander Bukh, *Japan’s National Identity and Foreign Policy: Russia as Japan’s ‘Other’* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 69.

<sup>112</sup> Alexander Bukh, *Japan’s National Identity and Foreign Policy: Russia as Japan’s ‘Other’* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 68.

<sup>113</sup> Alexander Bukh, *Japan’s National Identity and Foreign Policy: Russia as Japan’s ‘Other’* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 71.

representations of Ainu culture which come to bear on their perceived relationship to the disputed islands becomes a critical focus.

## Literature Review

There exists a wealth of literature on the topics of the Kuril Islands dispute, on Ainu history, and on ethnographic museum studies in isolation; however, there is a dearth of scholarship which considers all three subjects at once. Information regarding the Kuril Islands dispute has been pulled mainly from original political documents, but also from the writings of politicians involved in the dispute, most notably Togo Kazuhiko who served various positions in the Japanese government between 1968 and 2002 including on Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Japanese embassy to the Soviet Union and later to the Russian Federation, and as Director of Japan's European Affairs Bureau.<sup>114</sup> Alexander Bukh also has written several papers connecting the issue of the Kuril Islands with notions of Japanese and Russian national identity, and indeed includes a chapter in his book *Japan's National Identity and Foreign Policy* on the process by which the repossession of the Northern Territories became a 'national mission,' and how the identity construction underpinning that transformation forced Ainu voices regarding the debate into relative obscurity. Bukh's perspective is especially useful as a Russian scholar, working in Japan and writing in English – his analysis is uniquely grounded in literature from all three languages. Issues of Ainu history and modernity have been sourced primarily from official Ainu activist organizations including the Ainu Association of Hokkaido the Foundation for Ainu Culture, as well as the works of ethnic Ainu activists and researchers such as Uzawa Kanako and Kayano Shigeru, the first Ainu

---

<sup>114</sup> "Profile," Kazuhiko Togo, 2017, <https://kazuhiko-togo.com/profile-en>.

to serve as a member of the Japanese Diet; official Japanese perspectives on Ainu policy have been taken from the writings of Oita Masaki, the Deputy Director for the Comprehensive Ainu Policy Office of the Cabinet Secretariat of Japan.<sup>115</sup> Museum analysis draws mainly from the frameworks laid out in Karp and Levine's 1991 book *Exhibiting Cultures: The Politics and Poetics of Museum Display*, as well as from the case study examples of exhibitions on indigenous North American peoples by James Clifford presented in *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Twentieth Century*.

Actual literature on museum representations of Ainu culture are very few, and even fewer exist which are accessible outside of Japan. The most compelling basis on which to build an understanding of this subject matter comes from a four-article exchange, the first piece of which was written by Sandra Niessen for the journal *Museum Anthropology* in 1994; in her original article, she presented her perspective as a foreign (North American) visitor to Japan's National Ethnographical Museum (also called Minpaku<sup>116</sup>) of its permanent exhibition on Ainu culture, as well as on its temporary exhibition which was produced in honor of the United Nations' declaration of 1993 as the "Year of Indigenous Peoples." In 1997 the same journal published two rejoinders to her original article written by staff members of Minpaku, Ohtsuka Kazuyoshi and Shimizu Akitoshi and translated into English, followed by a response from Niessen. The discourse created by these four articles produces a firm launching point from which to continue an analysis of museum representations of the Ainu cultural subject, with the awareness that applying Western paradigms museum analysis to non-Western institutions must be handled with care. Note that these papers were published, and the exhibits discussed were created, before the Nibutani dam decision

---

<sup>115</sup> Masaki Oita, "Comparative Issues: Recent Policy Developments to Promote and Protect Ainu Culture in Japan," in *Indigenous Law Bulletin* 8 no. 5 (2013): 28.

<sup>116</sup> Note on transliteration: "minpaku" and "mimpaku" are both acceptable transliterations for the Japanese name, but Niessen uses the former in her 1994 article.

which first concretely established Ainu ethnicity as legally valid in Japan, before the century-old “Former Natives” assimilatory legislation was repealed, and over a decade before the Japanese government officially declared the Ainu to be an indigenous people; these changes have significantly shifted the historical framework upon which arguments for certain representational idioms in museum displays of Ainu culture, which figures strongly into especially Shimizu’s argumentation.

Neissen’s original article, “The Ainu in Mimpaku: A Representation of Japan’s Indigenous People at the National Museum of Ethnology,” functions as first as an identification of Mimpaku’s permanent and 1993 temporary Ainu exhibitions with the “traditional” interpretive idiom wherein the cultural images are presented through a lens of ethnic purity and stasis. Deriving her “North American” perspective on the exhibit from her academic background in the indigenous conflicts of western Canada, she criticizes the “idyllic” representation of Ainu culture in these exhibits as “a fundamental denial, rather than promotion, of Ainu identity;” “in North America, the same kind of exhibition is criticized for its absence of history, its suspension of the Other in a timeless Never-never Land falsely interpreting the realities of the past, doing no justice to the realities of the present, and precluding the possibility of a future.”<sup>117</sup> Based on interviews with museum staff and analysis of biographical materials of Kayano Shigeru, a lifelong Ainu cultural activist and close collaborator with Mimpaku, Niessen formulates the Japanese interpretation of museum nostalgia in the context of Japan’s history of Ainu assimilation policies and assertions of monoethnic national identity: “in Japan it may be argued, however, that the roots of Ainu culture have been so eroded that icons of Ainu cultural purity and integrity have become an inspiration for cultural

---

<sup>117</sup> Sandra A. Niessen, “The Ainu in Mimpaku: A Representation of Japan’s Indigenous People at the National Museum of Ethnology,” *Museum Anthropology* 18 no. 3 (1994): 23.

renewal and power. In modern Japan, this idyllic Ainu image is even politically subversive.”<sup>118</sup> Nevertheless, if the discourse of Minpaku’s representation of the Ainu cultural subject were to be put onto a “global” scale (which she believes it should, according to the conclusion of her article), then such a conservative type of representation would not sufficiently address the issue of Ainu ethnicity in Japan due to its glossing over of extant political conflict between Ainu and Japan.

In the first rejoinder to Niessen’s 1994 article Ohtsuka Kazuyoshi, the curator of the special exhibition which Niessen had criticized, argues that her interpretation of the contents of the museum is limited both by a lack of attention to literature published by the museum and by her inadequate background in the historical dynamic of conflict between Ainu and Japan, which history resulted in the preponderance of museum representation based on the uniqueness of Ainu culture from Japanese culture, rather than on “political struggle against the Japanese.”<sup>119</sup> Indeed, Ohtsuka identifies Niessen’s desire to see political struggle played out in a museum setting as the result of her lack of Japanese-language background in particular, which led to her projection of North American notions of museum representation onto a Japanese institution. Ohtsuka also notes that in the case of Minpaku, the task of the museum is not simply to represent its subject to visitors, but to participate in dialogue with members of the subject culture in order to cultivate a mutually agreeable representation, and to use that representation as means to further the socioeconomic goals of the oppressed culture: Ohtsuka cites examples of how the exhibit was used as evidence in a successful petition to a local forestry office to allow Ainu to strip bark from *ohyou* trees for traditional weaving, how the catalogue of the exhibit was brought by the Ainu Association of

---

<sup>118</sup> Sandra A. Niessen, “The Ainu in Mimpaku: A Representation of Japan’s Indigenous People at the National Museum of Ethnology,” *Museum Anthropology* 18 no. 3 (1994): 23-24.

<sup>119</sup> Kazuyoshi Ohtsuka, “Exhibiting Ainu Culture at Minpaku: A Reply to Sandra A. Niessen,” *Museum Anthropology* 20 no. 3 (1997): 117.

Hokkaido to the UN Working Group on Indigenous Peoples, and how Kayano Shigeru's Ainu-language message at the beginning of the exhibit catalogue provided the basis of his speech to the Japanese Diet upon his election in 1994 as the first Ainu member.<sup>120</sup> He also makes the crucial distinction in his response that Minpaku exists not for an international audience exemplified by Niessen, but for a Japanese audience who would enter with a preexisting level of context of Ainu culture in Japan: "it is highly unlikely any Japanese visitor to the Ainu exhibition would think this exhibition represents 'objectively' the present life of the Ainu."<sup>121</sup> Ohtsuka criticizes Niessen's argument that the exhibit is ahistorical by asserting that a basic idea of Ainu history is assumed by Japanese visitors – a way of understanding to which Niessen as a North American is not privy. Indeed, he concludes his response by identifying the dearth of translated materials regarding Ainu museum representations in Japan as the cause of Niessen's fundamental misunderstanding.<sup>122</sup> Furthermore, the exhibit contents are not "ahistorical" simply for being presented detached from notions of political struggle, nor are they "idyllic" for being displayed without note to their relationship with Japanese assimilatory policy; rather, the exhibition of items in isolation from notions of assimilation, particularly items produced by contemporary Ainu artists, highlights that "the original heart of the culture was still beating, that its traditions were being maintained."<sup>123</sup> Ohtsuka notes that the reconstructed Ainu *cise* in the Minpaku permanent exhibition, which receives a ceremonial blessing yearly by Kayano Shigeru and to which Niessen devotes only a few sentences in her article, "is no pantomime resurrecting a moribund tradition but reflects common

---

<sup>120</sup> Kazuyoshi Ohtsuka, "Exhibiting Ainu Culture at Minpaku: A Reply to Sandra A. Niessen," *Museum Anthropology* 20 no. 3 (1997): 116.

<sup>121</sup> Kazuyoshi Ohtsuka, "Exhibiting Ainu Culture at Minpaku: A Reply to Sandra A. Niessen," *Museum Anthropology* 20 no. 3 (1997): 109.

<sup>122</sup> Kazuyoshi Ohtsuka, "Exhibiting Ainu Culture at Minpaku: A Reply to Sandra A. Niessen," *Museum Anthropology* 20 no. 3 (1997): 118.

<sup>123</sup> Kazuyoshi Ohtsuka, "Exhibiting Ainu Culture at Minpaku: A Reply to Sandra A. Niessen," *Museum Anthropology* 20 no. 3 (1997): 109.

modern Ainu practice and is necessary not because of the pedagogic role of the displays as reconstructions, but because these *are* Ainu objects!” (emphasis in the original).<sup>124</sup> Thus Ohtsuka eschews the very notion of Minpaku’s exhibits as static representations of Ainu culture, which conception forms the basis of Niessen’s analysis, and contends the validity of the “North American” ethnographic interpretation of museums outside North America – the nostalgic idiom which appears problematic in one context may be a source of power in another, provided it represents the wishes of the culture being exhibited.

The second criticism authored by Shimizu Akitoshi, a staff member at Minpaku whom Niessen had spoken with in the process of producing her original article, repeats many of Ohtsuka’s arguments, including that the Ainu artifacts contained in Minpaku are “living elements of a living culture”<sup>125</sup> and that the formation of the exhibit was predicated on close collaboration with Ainu people. The main criticism Shimizu levels against Niessen, however, regards her application of supposedly “North American” frameworks of understanding indigenous representation to museums around the globe: “her paper is a political text which has the effect of establishing the hegemony of the ‘North American’ standards of museums and anthropology over their counterparts in Japan.”<sup>126</sup> He contests Niessen’s framing of the discourse of Ainu representation in Minpaku as “global” by emphasizing the particularity of the case study of Native American protest against the *The Spirit Sings* exhibit, a Canadian exhibition on North American Indians using the nostalgic representative idiom which triggered protest started by Lubicon Cree people, as heavily dependent on the particulars of its situation, and not an accurate mirror for global

---

<sup>124</sup> Kazuyoshi Ohtsuka, “Exhibiting Ainu Culture at Minpaku: A Reply to Sandra A. Niessen,” *Museum Anthropology* 20 no. 3 (1997): 112.

<sup>125</sup> Akitoshi Shimizu, “Cooperation, not Domination: A Rejoinder to Niessen on the Ainu Exhibition at Minpaku,” *Museum Anthropology* 20 no. 3 (1997): 124.

<sup>126</sup> Akitoshi Shimizu, “Cooperation, not Domination: A Rejoinder to Niessen on the Ainu Exhibition at Minpaku,” *Museum Anthropology* 20 no. 3 (1997): 120.

analysis of what indigenous peoples “should” demand of museum institutions (Niessen had briefly mentioned the case of *The Spirit Sings* in her original article). The perspective of an outside anthropologist, Shimizu argues, should not have as much bearing on how the history of an indigenous people is represented as much as representatives of the people themselves, and indeed the Minpaku exhibit’s “idyllic” display represents Ainu cultural resistance in the very sense that it represents “the *reality* of a culture that had been taken from them. Contemporary Ainu lack this reality, so the contemporary situation must be denied and improved.”<sup>127</sup> This is not to say that Shimizu outright denies the applicability of Niessen’s understanding of indigenous resistance to museum representations; in the case of *The Spirit Sings*, it is perfectly acceptable. Rather, the analytical tools of accessing museum representations should not be based on an imagined universal standard but on the historical particulars of the culture doing the exhibiting in interaction with the culture being exhibited. Analysis of a Japanese exhibition taking the Ainu cultural subject, therefore, must be based in an understanding of certain historical particulars: the multiple bombings conducted during the 1970s (in the years directly preceding Minpaku’s opening) by groups claiming to represent Ainu interests, the disruption of 1972 joint annual meeting of Japanese anthropological and ethnological societies by Ainu cultural activists, the court statement of Mieko Chikap lambasting “hegemonic Ainu studies in which Ainu people and culture were depicted either entirely or nearly vanished,”<sup>128</sup> set against a background of complete lack of recognition by the Japanese government. Shimizu argues that the focus on visibility rather than struggle against the government manifested directly from these historical trends – in the case of the Ainu, visibility is *ipso facto* an act of resistance. Museums, then, are not a single unit which

---

<sup>127</sup> Akitoshi Shimizu, “Cooperation, not Domination: A Rejoinder to Niessen on the Ainu Exhibition at Minpaku,” *Museum Anthropology* 20 no. 3 (1997): 125.

<sup>128</sup> Chikap 1991, referenced in Akitoshi Shimizu, “Cooperation, not Domination: A Rejoinder to Niessen on the Ainu Exhibition at Minpaku,” *Museum Anthropology* 20 no. 3 (1997): 123.

can be analyzed with a universal framework, but are entirely dependent on the historical context in which they are produced and displayed.

In her response, “Representing the Ainu Reconsidered,” Niessen attempts to answer the most crucial question posed in Shimizu’s text: “To what extent are the alleged ‘North American’ standards relevant for the Ainu exhibit at Minpaku?”<sup>129</sup> Shimizu himself postulated that such an imposition of a Western viewpoint on a Japanese institution was inappropriate; Ohtsuka had played down the validity of the nostalgic interpretive idiom in favor of espousing the role of the museum as a cooperator in the interests of the Ainu themselves. As a first reaction to the criticisms levelled against her, Niessen underscores the trend by which museums during the twentieth century are moving away from the role of what has been described as a “temple” playing a “timeless and universal function” to become a “forum of confrontation and debate;”<sup>130</sup> thus she welcomes the perspectives of Ohtsuka and Shimizu and confirms their validity, even citing passages from her first article which support their interpretations of the Minpaku exhibits. Nevertheless, their perspectives as exhibitors at Minpaku are not necessarily any more valid than her own as an international visitor: Niessen rests this argument on the notion of the “exhibit triad,” wherein “an exhibit has three elements ‘independently in play – makers of objects, exhibitors of made objects, and viewers of exhibited made objects.’”<sup>131</sup> As exhibitors, Ohtsuka and Shimizu had acted as mediators of the exhibitions’ messages in local context, but had not considered that potential visitor interpretations might receive those messages differently, especially those who were not part of the assumed target audience – like Niessen herself. Niessen takes a deep dive into the circumstances

---

<sup>129</sup> Akitoshi Shimizu, “Cooperation, not Domination: A Rejoinder to Niessen on the Ainu Exhibition at Minpaku,” *Museum Anthropology* 20 no. 3 (1997): 124.

<sup>130</sup> Sandra A. Niessen, “Representing the Ainu Reconsidered,” *Museum Anthropology* 20 no. 3 (1997):134.

<sup>131</sup> Baxandall 1991, quoted in Sandra A. Niessen, “Representing the Ainu Reconsidered,” *Museum Anthropology* 20 no. 3 (1997):134.

of Canada's *The Spirit Sings* exhibit to illustrate her point, highlighting that contention originated not in the exhibitors' intent in producing the exhibit, but in the circumstances of its reception: "the irony of using a display of North American Indian artifacts to attract people to the Winter Olympics being organized by interests who are still actively seeking to destroy Indian people seems painfully obvious;"<sup>132</sup> [the exhibit] *sparked* a global discourse that was *beyond the control of the museum*. To claim, like Shimizu, exclusion from this discourse is to be both short-sighted and naïve" (emphasis in original).<sup>133</sup> She criticizes Ohtsuka's rejection of her analysis as an "implicit wish to elicit the intended or 'correct' interpretation of the exhibit,"<sup>134</sup> not because the North American analysis is any more accurate or universal than the Japanese but because it represents the third pillar of the museum triad, the viewer, which Ohtsuka glosses over in his assumption that Japanese audiences will surely understand the historical circumstances underpinning the Ainu exhibits.<sup>135</sup>

The discourse of these four articles highlights several issues of museum analysis particular to the situation of the Ainu cultural subject as it is exhibited by Japanese and other colonizer countries. The tradition of using the nostalgic interpretive idiom to display Ainu cultural imagery to Japanese audiences, the contention over Ainu artifacts as living or dead cultural objects, the place of modern Ainu identity in the museum space, and the relevance of Ainu struggles against colonial powers to the broader Ainu cultural revitalization movement – all these factors are brought into consideration in the formation of analyses of the museums in this thesis. More importantly,

---

<sup>132</sup> *Calgary Herald*, 17 May 1986, quoted in Sandra A. Niessen, "Representing the Ainu Reconsidered," *Museum Anthropology* 20 no. 3 (1997):138.

<sup>133</sup> Sandra A. Niessen, "Representing the Ainu Reconsidered," *Museum Anthropology* 20 no. 3 (1997):138.

<sup>134</sup> Sandra A. Niessen, "Representing the Ainu Reconsidered," *Museum Anthropology* 20 no. 3 (1997):141.

<sup>135</sup> Note that in all four articles, the assumed position of Japan relative to the West went largely unconsidered – Shimizu's argument is predicated on the assumption of Japan as an insular, non-Western nation upon which Western frameworks cannot be accurately applied, despite the specific contentious history of Japan's relationship with Westernization. Denial of the applicability of Western frameworks of understanding to Japan is predicated on a certain self-conception of Japan as an Orientalized "other," which political construct has fallen in and out of vogue since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century in Japan.

these articles raise a crucial question upon which the validity of this thesis rests: within what semiotic categories should museums be analyzed? If a given museum is to be analyzed only as a production within a limiting set of sociohistorical circumstances, then comparing museums across time and space would be a fruitless pursuit; if a given museum is to be analyzed within the set of other museums, then universal tools for understanding museum display would prove more useful. The reality of museum studies, of course, is much more complex: both aspects must be given due consideration in order to accurately locate the perspectives of exhibited, exhibitor, and viewer, and to determine which interpretations hold more power in given circumstances. Thus, the most appropriate method of entry into any given museum begins with an analysis of its intended audience. If the dialogic space which exhibitors intend to create between exhibited cultures and viewing cultures can be identified, then the interpretations which would hold the most relevance within that space can be chosen.

### Museum Studies: Framing of Framing

The versions of history presented in museums, whether implied by the inclusion and arrangement of certain items or explicitly delineated with text, are necessarily non-neutral – a reality that cannot be overlooked considering the sheer power of the museum institution in two specific areas. First, museums hold significant cultural currency: the narratives made available to the public in museums are more likely to be viewed as factual, objective, and trustworthy: “because they draw on the authority of museums and the public’s goodwill towards museums, exhibitions have a greater legitimacy than forms of popular culture defined as less highbrow.”<sup>136</sup> Second, the

---

<sup>136</sup> Ivan Karp, “How Museums Define Other Cultures,” *American Art* 5 no. 1/2 (1991): 11.

concrete visual nature of the museum makes it all too easy for its subject matter to be interpreted as static and historical rather than modern and dynamic in a phenomenon which Paul Carter described as “ ‘diorama history,’ that ‘history where the past had been settled more effectively than the country.’”<sup>137</sup> In essence, museums represent to their audiences authority over both subject and narrative, despite the fact that the museum and museum exhibit are as much culturally-embedded productions as any method of storytelling. In order to understand the positionality of the museum as it is used in the context of this research, a combination of traditional museum studies and postcolonial and indigenous studies is necessary to understand: how museums function to convey knowledge of the foreign or colonized space to the home or metropolitan space; and by what specific processes museums render those spaces interpretable to their audience. I use “space” as a term referring not only to geographical space, but to cultural space as well as planes onto which material imagery and historical narratives are mapped.

To understand the processes by which museums reaffirm and reproduce frameworks of knowing foreign spaces, we must begin by considering the process by which imperial narratives are initially created and imposed upon those spaces. In his book analyzing the seminal texts of postcolonial theory, Bibhash Choudhury devotes a chapter to Paul Carter’s *The Road to Botany Bay* and its identification of the travel journal as the first medium through which the foreign colonial space is redefined and represented to the colonizing writer’s home audience, effectively setting a standard for interpretation of that space and its history that is perpetuated and reaffirmed by successive encounters. The process by which an explorer experiences a space that is foreign to them – then translates that experience into text for the consumption of a metropolitan, colonizer

---

<sup>137</sup> Bibhash Choudhury, “Paul Carter: The Road to Botany Bay. Land-marked: Space, Memory, Colonization,” in *Reading Postcolonial Theory: Key Texts in Context* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 123.

audience which will use that framework to process successive encounters of that foreign space – is one of “layering or carpeting by means of which a new spatial narrative takes over and through the act of visual repetition asserts the primacy of this new structure by situating it as the only way the land in question is to be known by,” of “flattening the encountered world and its landscape into a mimetically accessible format.”<sup>138</sup> In other words, the colonizing explorer named spaces and identified ways of understanding those spaces using frameworks that were comprehensible and productive from the perspective of the colonizing home culture, effectively superimposing upon those spaces an identity entirely distinct from and alien to that held by the land’s indigenous inhabitants: “a transformation of a place into a symbol imbued with its own history.”<sup>139</sup>

Note particularly Choudhury’s invocation of mimesis in describing the narrative formation process of travel journalism: travel writers who, entrenched within their own historical paradigms, were only ever capable of interpreting foreign spaces in comparison with their home (colonizer) cultures. This filter, according to Carter, excluded elements which the writers could not understand within the context of similarity to, difference from, or value to the colonizing culture – which did not in some way reflect the home culture. The paradigms of understanding foreign spaces produced in these initial texts became the framework for the next wave of travelers to come into dialogue with those spaces, resulting in the cyclical reproduction and reaffirmation of those frameworks wherein “gaps in narrative and peculiarities in topography were glossed over to draw pictures that entrenched the stories of recordists within recognizable formats.”<sup>140</sup>

---

<sup>138</sup> Bibhash Choudhury, “Paul Carter: The Road to Botany Bay. Land-marked: Space, Memory, Colonization,” in *Reading Postcolonial Theory: Key Texts in Context* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 118-119.

<sup>139</sup> Bibhash Choudhury, “Paul Carter: The Road to Botany Bay. Land-marked: Space, Memory, Colonization,” in *Reading Postcolonial Theory: Key Texts in Context* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 114.

<sup>140</sup> Bibhash Choudhury, “Paul Carter: The Road to Botany Bay. Land-marked: Space, Memory, Colonization,” in *Reading Postcolonial Theory: Key Texts in Context* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 128.

This is not to say that travel writing and museums serve the same function, or that museums are direct inheritors of the cycle of narrative production embodied by travel writing. However, three crucial components characterize both institutions: communication of the foreign space to the metropolitan audience; notions of sameness and difference from home culture as the point of access to difference; and the necessity of creating a static, tangible history. In this sense, museums rely on the same strategies to create a space for understanding the foreign in terms of the home or metropolitan, and for legitimizing colonizing narratives of spatial history over those of the colonized. I wish to apply Carter's framework of initial narrative production on museums in order to explore not creation itself, but how those preestablished narratives are reproduced and reaffirmed in a contemporary setting. Since the political ramifications of the subject I am researching involve mainly the cultural and national ownership of land, I intend to access the museums in question by discerning how their exhibitions and depictions of Ainu culture label the history of the disputed territory and situate in in a particular national historical context.

Ivan Karp presents an [elegantly simple] framework for understanding the processes by which museums create an adequate space for home or metropolitan audiences to interpret the foreign by dividing all museum productions into examples of assimilation or exoticization (that is, sameness or difference from the audience). The concept of exoticization is more familiar in the context of representing the Other, purely because forming dichotomic concepts of "us" and "them" is most readily established negatively through identification of difference. Karp extrapolates upon this notion to categorize identifications of difference in terms of presence and lack: "In exoticizing, the differences of the other are portrayed as an absence of qualities the dominant, often colonizing, cultural groups possess."<sup>141</sup> This necessarily sets up a power dynamic wherein the museum

---

<sup>141</sup> Ivan Karp, "How Museums Define Other Cultures," *American Art* 5 no. 1/2 (1991): 10.

audience may view the subject in an almost zoological sense, as something existing separate to and subordinate to the audience's own culture. On the contrary, assimilation is "used to assert that the people of other cultures are no different in principle than the producers and consumers of their images" such that "striking differences can then be interpreted as mere surface manifestations of underlying similarities."<sup>142</sup> Karp asserts that these processes are essential to the display of the Other in museums, as they are they only frameworks with which the unknown can be mapped: "If familiar devices were not used, the consumers of the image would have nothing onto which to graft cultural, racial, or ethnic differences."<sup>143</sup> Indeed, Choudhury argued the same point regarding the voice of the travel journal – explorers and travelers could only perceive foreign space using the terms brought from their own historical and cultural paradigms, thus overlaying those paradigms upon the space and forcing their perpetuation.

The problem with these categories, however, is that they necessarily divorce items from their original spatial and cultural contexts, fabricating a new context reliant upon the display of those items within the museum and their framing with regard to the relationship between the audience culture and cultural subject. "Considerations of content, such as iconography, or questions about intention and purpose, such as the religious role of an object, or even the examination of the contexts of production and use are omitted as possible factors that influence the final form of the object."<sup>144</sup> The manufactured nature of these distinctions becomes especially apparent when museums label objects from colonized cultures as artifact or art. Similar to the way Choudhury explains the impulse of the explorer to define landscapes as picturesque as an attempt

---

<sup>142</sup> Ivan Karp, "How Museums Define Other Cultures," *American Art* 5 no. 1/2 (1991): 11.

<sup>143</sup> Ivan Karp, "How Museums Define Other Cultures," *American Art* 5 no. 1/2 (1991): 11.

<sup>144</sup> Ivan Karp, "How Museums Define Other Cultures," *American Art* 5 no. 1/2 (1991): 12.

to possess that space and frame its value within imperial context,<sup>145</sup> Karp identifies the separation between art and artifact as part of the assimilating-exoticizing delimiting process: fine art, no matter where, by whom, or in what context it was produced, belongs within a transnational metropolitan canon of work whose aesthetic boundaries have been arbitrarily defined by Western colonizing powers. His analysis is echoed by James Clifford, who articulates that “Treatment of artifacts as fine art is currently one of the most effective ways to communicate cross-culturally a sense of quality, meaning, and importance.”<sup>146</sup> On the other hand, objects classified as artifacts are not assumed to bear this higher civilizational quality, and rather are endowed with anthropological, even archeological significance – culturally, they are evidence of particularity as opposed to universality. The making of such a distinction enables museums to position cultural subjects hierarchically in relation to the culture of the audience, which is usually either a colonizing home culture or an international metropolitan culture.

When referring to the audience demographic of a given museum, I have repeatedly used the terms “home” and “metropolitan,” and now I will add the term “local” to describe archetypal relationship structures between the cultural subject of a museum and its audience. “Home” refers to an audience of a generally homogenous cultural makeup which is observing a foreign cultural subject at a museum, whereas “metropolitan” describes a culturally heterogenous audience, cosmopolitan and international, usually the target audience of museums located in large cities with international significance such as London, New York, or Tokyo. The notion of a “metropolitan” orientation adds an additional layer of complexity to the negotiation of meaning via museum

---

<sup>145</sup> Bibhash Choudhury, “Paul Carter: The Road to Botany Bay. Land-marked: Space, Memory, Colonization,” in *Reading Postcolonial Theory: Key Texts in Context* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 134.

<sup>146</sup> James Clifford, “Four Northwest Coast Museums: Travel Reflections,” in *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 225.

display – in the concept of the “museum triad” where the three main actors in a museum setting are “makers of objects, exhibitors of made objects, and viewers of exhibited made objects,”<sup>147</sup> the metropolitan museum is the only case in which all three actors can be presumed to come from different cultural paradigms, forcing museum exhibitors to be cognizant not only of how exhibited items might be interpreted through their own cultural lens, but also those of myriad national lenses and the international lens which is, of course, Western-centric. On the contrary, “local” audiences are those who are participants in the same culture as the museum subject. This is the single scenario in which the cultural subject is not a foreign Other, but a reaffirmation of self. These demarcations are borrowed from James Clifford’s insightful analysis of ethnographical museums as presented in his essay “Four Northwest Coast Museums: Travel Reflections.” In the text, Clifford uses his personal experiences studying four different ethnographic museums focused on indigenous tribes of the northwestern coast of North America as a lens to present two theoretical axes upon which any ethnographic museum may be aligned. The first describes the spectrum between majority museum, which “[articulates] cosmopolitan culture, science, art, and humanism – often with a national slant,” and tribal museum, which “[expresses] local culture, oppositional politics, kinship, ethnicity, and tradition.”<sup>148</sup> Clifford’s numerated list of defining characteristics of majority and tribal museums is so crucial to the analytical aspect of this thesis that it must be mentioned in full.<sup>149</sup> The characteristics of majority museums are:

“(1) the search for the ‘best’ art or most ‘authentic cultural forms; (2) the interest in exemplary or representative objects; (3) the sense of owning a collection that is a treasure

---

<sup>147</sup> Baxandall 1991, quoted in Sandra A. Niessen, “Representing the Ainu Reconsidered,” *Museum Anthropology* 20 no. 3 (1997): 134.

<sup>148</sup> James Clifford, “Four Northwest Coast Museums: Travel Reflections,” in *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 225.

<sup>149</sup> Note that Clifford is not the only scholar to work with these categories, but the wording of his definitions have been most conducive for application to this thesis.

for the city, for national patrimony, and for humanity; and (4) the tendency to separate (fine) art from (ethnographic) culture.”<sup>150</sup>

In contrast, a tribal museum is defined by the following characteristics:

“(1) its stance is to some degree oppositional, with exhibits reflecting excluded experiences, colonial pasts, and current struggles; (2) the art/culture distinction is often irrelevant, or positively subverted; (3) the notion of a unified or linear History (whether of the nation, of humanity, or of art) is challenged by local, community histories; and (4) the collections do not aspire to be included in the patrimony (of the nation, of great art, etc.) but to be inscribed within different traditions and practices, free of national, cosmopolitan patrimonies.”<sup>151</sup>

These categorizations are not as much labels which are ascribed to museums and then supported by the content and arrangement of given exhibits, but rather are conclusions drawn from analysis of museums with the same cultural subject with relation to each other; the labels are an efficient shorthand for describing a delimited set of museological characteristics rather than categories to which various institutions conform.

Assumed within Clifford’s text but not explicitly included in his lists of museum characteristics are the typical audiences associated with different types of museum. This is not to say that any person may not visit any sort of museum, but geographical location, accessibility, and marketing all contribute to the average potential demographic of a given institution. For example, a museum in Tokyo would be expected to receive a dramatically different volume and type of

---

<sup>150</sup> James Clifford, “Four Northwest Coast Museums: Travel Reflections,” in *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 225.

<sup>151</sup> James Clifford, “Four Northwest Coast Museums: Travel Reflections,” in *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 225-226.

traffic than a museum in rural Hokkaido, even if their subject matter were comparable. Furthermore, a museum in Tokyo would be more likely to be oriented towards an international audience, therefore bearing the additional onus of national representation to a global audience, in comparison to a provincial museum which would not likely expect to cater to a non-local audience. It is here that the distinctions of home, metropolitan and local become crucial: the identification of audience speaks to the nature of the dialogue which museums attempt to open between viewer and exhibit. In the case of the local audience, the goal of the museum is to depict to a given culture itself as a cultural subject – in the case of this research, a museum with a local audience would be Ainu cultural centers that function as community hubs for living Ainu communities, leading it to fall easily into Clifford's category of tribal museum. The task of the museum with an assumed home audience, meanwhile, is to orient two cultural spaces in juxtaposition to each other, such as Russian and Ainu or wajin and Ainu, and will depict the foreign (Ainu) subject in ways most easily accessible to the home (colonizing) culture. Museums with a metropolitan audience demographic – those located in major cities such as Tokyo or St. Petersburg – bear the double burden of producing a space that is accessible to both the home colonizer culture and international viewers for whom the museum will not only depict the cultural subject but the national context in which it is embedded. These latter two categories may fall on various points within Clifford's spectrum spanning from tribal to majority museum, but in general metropolitan museums are the most likely to trend towards majority representation due to their national character.

Clifford introduces one more axis with which to examine ethnographic museums, whose opposite poles he labels as “historical” and “aesthetic.” While the former tends to situate artifacts within a historical timeline and also to historicize them in the sense of positioning them within a completed past rather than an evolving present, the latter is more likely to take objects out of their

cultural context and instead focus on end products rather than the circumstances under which they were produced. Both of these approaches can have the effect of assimilating or exoticizing, and participate within tribal or majority contexts, but it is crucial to note that Clifford assesses the historical-aesthetic axis as separate from tribal-majority much like an x and y axis, such that any museum can be defined at the intersection of those two characteristic spectra.

This research, then, will use the combined frameworks of Karp, Clifford, and Choudhury to analyze the content, arrangement, themes, and audience of a selection of museums in Russia and Japan which have as their cultural subject the Ainu people and/or the disputed Kuril Island territories. Note that the selection of museums is not intended to represent a comprehensive survey of museums within either country, and that their inclusion is largely due to their relative accessibility to me as a researcher, having conducted the bulk of my research during a global pandemic when in-person travel to these locations was impossible. Therefore it is necessary to introduce one more theoretical layer to the examination of these museums: museum presence to an internet and at-home audience. All of the museums featured in this study have substantial online resources or otherwise publications which intentionally expand the potential audiences for their content across countries, oceans, and languages. The nuances of how museum content is organized and displayed online, in what languages and formats certain information is available, and what additional information and resources are included online (or in one case, in print) but are absent from the physical exhibits, can and ought to be interpreted using the same frameworks as any other aspect of museums, especially considering their ever-increasing relevance as internet sources become vastly more accessible to broader global populations than on-site museums. The impulse to advertise and reproduce a museum in electronic or print form can also be considered a concession to a metropolitan audience, but is particularly noteworthy because alterations to online

content in order to accommodate for different audiences do not vicariously alter the in-person museum experience; thus internet representations may be thought of as an additional, separate audience complementary to the ones towards which physical museums are oriented.

## Methods

In formulating a methodology of collecting and analyzing information concerning topics of national, ethnic, and indigenous identity, I had three concrete goals. First, I do not want to impugn or vilify any individual, state or institutional actor as being “right” or “wrong” within the context either of the Kuril Islands dispute, or in their recognition and representation of indigenous cultural identity. Second, I wish to minimize where possible, and recognize where impossible, my identity as an American researcher, whose goal is to assimilate and extrapolate upon knowledge expropriated from non-Western and indigenous sources. Third, it is my duty as a researcher to ensure that I do not, by including the Ainu people as a subject of my research, perpetuate the long imperial cycle in which Ainu voices in Japanese, Russian, and international academic frameworks are ignored, suppressed, or otherwise misrepresented and positioned as objects of rather than as active participants in modernity. Thus my methodology must consider three dynamics: self and other, as I am writing about experiences of which I am not part; Occident and Orient, as I am a Western researcher making an intellectual incursion into a non-Western space; and colonizer and colonized, as my research includes the discussion of the historical and continuing dynamic of power difference between two great powers (Russia and Japan) and an indigenous people (the Ainu) whose agency has a legacy of minimization in academic context.

When I first began to conceptualize this project, I framed my research as an analysis of claims made by Russian and Japanese museums of respective national “ownership” over the cultural identity of the Ainu people in ways that served to legitimize each country’s own claim to the disputed Kuril Island territories which were historically inhabited by the Ainu. Promulgating frameworks of historical sameness in order to legitimize modern territorial aspirations is far from unheard of in modern international politics, and as such I thought to find my point of entry to my research from the perspective of great power relations. This initial framework proved unfeasible for many reasons, not the least of which was the vast differences in motivation between the museums I studied and the trends which I had hypothesized, necessitating the abandonment of the narrative of causative relationships between state policy and museum representations in favor of a more open-ended analytical approach. More importantly, however, I realized after gaining more experience within the discourses and theories of post-colonial and indigenous studies that the fundamental framing of my research was deeply problematic: I had formulated my line of inquiry such that it ended by inserting my own determination of the morality and legality of the Kuril Islands dispute, even though it is far from my prerogative or my place as an *American* researcher to take sides in a dispute between two foreign powers. Additionally, by positioning my research from the perspective of great power politics, I would have entirely neglected the voices and perspectives of the Ainu people, representing them only as objects to be interpreted as opposed to active participants in the territorial issue. To have continued along such a line of inquiry would have left me blind not only to the relevance of Ainu cultural centers in reproducing and reaffirming Ainu cultural identity, but also to the myriad individuals and groups whose efforts continue to inform national and international policy regarding Ainu status up to and including the very existence of some of the museums in this study. To borrow an apt insight from Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s

*Decolonizing Methodologies*, which addresses issues of indigenous representation and audience in academic writing: “Research is one of the ways in which the underlying code of imperialism and colonialism is both regulated and realized.... The different ways in which these [colonial] encounters happen and are managed are different realizations of the underlying rules and codes which frame in the broadest sense what is possible and what is impossible.”<sup>152</sup> To produce a thesis positioning the Russian and Japanese states as actors upon an indigenous non-state object would be to epistemologically perpetuate the very same framework of objectification which such a thesis hoped to illuminate. As such, I reconstructed my modes of inquiry away from explicit legal arguments and great power conflict, and away as well from the deeply flawed notion of national “ownership” over other cultures. That is not to say that legal and representational claims of the Ainu as “Japanese natives” or “Siberian natives” in museums and rhetoric ought to be glossed over, rather that the identification of those claims is not the end goal of the research but simply a small component, whose relevance is not mapped onto the Kuril Islands debate but rather analyzed in the more specific contexts in which they appear.

The conceptualization of this thesis, then, may be considered as such: an analysis of the ways in which museums and cultural centers produced by Ainu, Russian and Japanese actors represent the cultural and geographical space inhabited by the Ainu, and how those representations participate in broader national understandings of the Kuril Islands dispute.

The most crucial question in constructing my research methodology was, therefore, how best to include the voices and perspectives of the Ainu people not simply as objects but as actors.

---

<sup>152</sup> Linda Tuwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Press, 2002), 7-8.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith succinctly explains the pitfalls of conducting research regarding indigenous peoples from a “post-colonial” perspective:

“Post-colonial discussions have also stirred some indigenous resistance, not so much to the literary reimagining of culture as being centred in what were once conceived of as the colonial margins, but the idea that colonialism is over, finished business.... There is also, amongst indigenous academics, the sneaking suspicion that the fashion of post-colonialism has become a strategy for reinscribing or reauthorizing the privileges of non-indigenous academics because the field of ‘post-colonial’ discourse has been defined in ways which can still leave out indigenous peoples, our ways of knowing and current concerns.”<sup>153</sup>

The Ainu people are particularly inaccessible from a research perspective, since due to a long history of academic exploitation, particularly in the fields of archeology and anthropology, most communities are mistrustful of attempts at academic research even from other Ainu. In respect for this, I have based my historical account of Ainu culture, included in the first chapter of this thesis, on the historical timelines, accounts, and details presented on the official websites of the Hokkaido Ainu Association and Foundation for Ainu Culture, which have been made publicly available for study. The accounts created by these organizations represent narratives which are necessarily oppositional to those found in most literature produced on the Ainu from external perspectives, particularly because they present Ainu ethnicity as a historically continuous, non-monolithic entity with inter-group conflicts and geographically varied material cultures – an understanding which is otherwise minimized or even erased. This, of course, means that the “Ainu perspective” to which this research refers is limited to that of public activism; this thesis, however, was never intended

---

<sup>153</sup> Linda Tuwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Press, 2002), 24.

to generate an ethnographic chronicle of popular sentiment towards the Kuril Islands conflict from either Ainu, Russians, or Japanese, but simply a survey of institutional messages, and as such I believe that the activist perspective is appropriate.

It is also necessary to address was the matter of inclusion of Ainu perspectives in the core subject of the research – museums and cultural centers themselves. In formulating the scope of my research, I shifted from the bipolarity of Japanese and Russian museum representations to a multipolar landscape which acknowledged the presence and influence of Ainu tribal museums and cultural centers. The main research of this thesis is divided into three chapters, each one focusing on a specific perspective on the same cultural subject: Japanese, Russian, and Ainu. (Note that when dividing the Japan-based organizations into two chapters, the division was based on which organizations more closely resembled museums and which more closely resembled cultural centers according to Clifford’s museological framework. While this was done to create a more streamlined analytical process, it must be remembered that the institutions represented in the “Japan” chapter were not produced in isolation from Ainu guidance and consultation; in fact, the Nibutani Ainu Museum and Upopoy are both recommended as useful resources for understanding Ainu culture on the website of the Hokkaido Ainu Association.) The chapter on Ainu perspectives includes analysis of Ureshipa Shirarika, an organization created by and for the Ainu community in the town of Shiranuka, Hokkaido, centering around the Ureshipa Chise cultural center which contains an exhibition of Ainu material culture, a ceremony room, and kitchen and seminar rooms for classes, lectures, and ceremonial food preparation; the Hokkaido Ainu Association, which boasts a history of active participation in Japanese policy advancements regarding Ainu indigenous status and improvement of living conditions, as well as management of a free-admission Center containing an exhibition, reading material, and sites for training in Ainu cultural customs; and the Foundation

for Ainu Culture, a Sapporo-based organization which holds various events and competitions to promote and disseminate Ainu language, craftwork, music and other traditions to a broader Japanese audience. While the internet resources for all three organizations were plentiful to begin with, over the course of the year that this research was conducted – a year when many events were cancelled and museums closed to the public due to the coronavirus pandemic – a wealth of new resources including online tours, videos, and detailed exhibit descriptions have been published which have not only made available to me as a researcher but necessitated their inclusion and analysis as means of access to intended audience by those organizations, as I have discussed in the previous section.

By a similar token, the museums which I selected to include in the chapters on Japanese and Russian institutions are by no means intended to be representative samples of national sentiment any more than the selected Ainu activist groups can be considered to be representative of Ainu people as a whole; they must be treated as individual actors on their respective national and cultural stages. Inclusion of any museum in this study was based, first and foremost, on accessibility: because physical visits to any institution were made impossible by the time frame in which the research was conducted (that is, during a pandemic), I was limited to those museums whose internet or otherwise published materials were plentiful enough to allow for adequate analysis, and the number of institutions included in each chapter are not intended as indications of similar rates of occurrence within their given contexts, but simply to maintain a relative balance between chapters. Within the limits of feasibility, I have also selected museums which, when considered as a group, represent the Kuril Islands issue and Ainu cultural space from multiple vantage points: military history, ethnography, fine art, and cultural revival. During the research process I also reached out to a number of museums and curators inquiring about the possibility of

my asking some questions over email for the purpose of clarifying aspects of those museum exhibits which were not entirely clear from their online presences. I received approval to conduct limited interviews via e-mail with the Nibutani Ainu Museum, as well as extensive documentation from the Upopoy National Ainu Museum regarding its goals and messaging. From the remaining institutions I either was unable to locate contact information or did not receive a response to my preliminary inquiry.

Since the goal of my interviews were not to create a survey whose answers could be compared on an even analytical plane but simply to gather some additional information on specific aspects of individual museums, the questions I prepared were unique to each institution with which I established contact. However, some principles of ethicality were applied across the board: it was stated explicitly above the questionnaires I prepared that it was not necessary to answer any question(s) if the respondent did not wish to, and that the questions did not ask for the personal opinions of curators or staff, but for the public and official stances of the given institution which would have been accessible to in-person visitors. Additionally, I strived to ensure that all questions were as objective and open-ended as possible to avoid biased results, and upon sending the questionnaires to participating institutions asked again for explicit consent to use the contents of our contact in this thesis. The choice to conduct these interviews through email, as opposed to over voice or video call, was made to allow respondents ample time to formulate their responses. Because the purpose of the interviews is gathering supplemental museum details and not eliciting human memories or emotional responses, the framework of a synchronous, spoken interview would have been not only unnecessary but potentially misrepresentative of museum information. Selected portions of these conversations, translated into English from Japanese, are included in Appendix II of this document. As a final note on languages – contact with museums was conducted

in the language of the country in which each given institution was located. Because Ainu language is not used for the administration of any of the institutions I contacted, and more importantly because it does not exist in a written form that could be used for communication over the internet, only Japanese and Russian languages were used for contact and questioning.

### Chapter Three: Museums Sponsored by Japanese Government Organizations

#### Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park

The Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park represent the culmination of Japan's Ainu cultural promotion policy since 1997, when the Hokkaido Former Natives Protection Act was replaced after a century with the Ainu Cultural Promotion Act.<sup>154</sup> Ten years later in response to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the National Diet of Japan moved to officially acknowledge the Ainu as an indigenous people for the first time, and the Chief Cabinet Secretary of Japan formed the Advisory Council for Future Ainu Policy, whose final report was submitted in 2009. It was based on this report that the Council for Ainu Policy Promotion was formed with the goal of implementing the recommendations of the Advisory Council. The Council for Ainu Policy Promotion is a body composed of fourteen individuals, "among which five are Ainu representatives, five are scholars and experts on Ainu culture and human rights, and the remaining four are leaders of the national and local governments."<sup>155</sup> Of the various measures taken by the Council since its inception, the creation of a "Symbolic Space for Ethnic Harmony" – eventually Upopoy – stands as its flagship project: it was to be, according to the Deputy Directory of the Comprehensive Ainu Policy Office of the Cabinet Secretariat of Japan, "a national center for respecting and revitalizing the way of life and culture of Ainu people, as well as a national and international hub for education, research, and exhibition of Ainu culture."<sup>156</sup> A Master Plan for the Symbolic Space for Ethnic Harmony, including a plan for its location on the shore of Lake Poroto

---

<sup>154</sup> Kanako Uzawa, "What does Ainu Cultural Revitalization Mean to Ainu and Wajin Youth in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century? Case Study of Urespa as a Place to Learn Ainu Culture in the City of Sapporo, Japan," *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples* 15 no. 2 (2019): 170.

<sup>155</sup> Masaki Oita, "Comparative Issues: Recent Policy Developments to Promote and Protect Ainu Culture in Japan," in *Indigenous Law Bulletin* 8 no. 5 (2013): 27.

<sup>156</sup> Masaki Oita, "Comparative Issues: Recent Policy Developments to Promote and Protect Ainu Culture in Japan," in *Indigenous Law Bulletin* 8 no. 5 (2013): 27.

in Shiraoi, Hokkaido, was completed in 2012. In the following years some alterations to the plan were made, including the decision to hold Ainu human remains repatriated from universities in a facility near Upopoy.<sup>157</sup> In early 2018 the Ainu Cultural Promotion/Research Foundation and the Ainu Museum Foundation, which bodies had been charged with management of the Symbolic Space, merged to form the Foundation for Ainu Culture (the accomplishments of this organization outside of Upopoy are detailed in chapter 5 of this thesis); later that year the name “Upopoy” was selected for the Space based on the results of a national poll.<sup>158</sup> The museum and park were set to open on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic the opening was rescheduled to July 12, 2020 with some restrictions in place.

The Upopoy park complex is composed of several outbuildings spaced along the shore of Lake Poroto including a craft studio, workshop, performance hall, outdoor stage, and a model *kotan* (Ainu village), and a memorial site (*sinnurappa usi*) which serves as a location for memorial services and as a repository for repatriated remains of Ainu whose family lines could not be identified sits some distance away from the main campus. While the memorial service facility and monument are ticketed to the public, the cemetery itself can only be viewed from the outside.<sup>159</sup> Upon entering the park, visitors first pass through an art installation called “*Kankan*,” a walled path printed with scenes of flora and fauna significant to Ainu culture in order to introduce “the importance that Ainu culture places on coexisting with nature,”<sup>160</sup> before arriving at “*uwerankarap mintar*” (“the Gateway Square”). This open-air plaza includes ticketing booths for

---

<sup>157</sup> Masaki Oita, “Comparative Issues: Recent Policy Developments to Promote and Protect Ainu Culture in Japan,” in *Indigenous Law Bulletin* 8 no. 5 (2013): 27.

<sup>158</sup> “About Upopoy,” Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park, accessed May 4, 2021, <https://ainu-upopoy.jp/en/about/>.

<sup>159</sup> “Facility Information,” Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park, accessed May 4, 2021, <https://ainu-upopoy.jp/en/facility/>.

<sup>160</sup> “Facility Information,” Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park, accessed May 4, 2021, <https://ainu-upopoy.jp/en/facility/>.

the rest of the park, as well as several restaurants serving a mix of Ainu and Japanese-style food, souvenir shops and a pastry shop which uses ingredients locally sourced from Hokkaido.<sup>161</sup> The souvenir shops are advertised on the website to carry myriad items emblazoned with traditional Ainu textile patterns and dolls of the park mascot TureppoN the giant lily bulb (note that the English transliteration includes the capitalized *N* to indicate the appending of the Japanese suffix *N* denoting “cuteness” to the Ainu word *turep* for giant lily bulb and the affix *po* meaning “female”).<sup>162</sup> From the Gateway Square, visitors have the option to either walk across a small bridge into the greater park area or head directly into the National Ainu Museum.

All information regarding the layout of the park is easily accessible on Upopoy’s webpage, which features a sophisticated front end and is accessible in Japanese, English, Chinese (traditional and simplified), Korean, Thai, and Russian with titles and key vocabulary items in transliterated Ainu (since the Ainu language has no official written form). Compared to other museums in this study, this quality of cross-linguistic similarity of the webpage’s front end is unique to Upopoy and a clear indicator of its metropolitan orientation – although it is located away from Japan’s international urban centers, the museum clearly expects an international demographic and, as evidenced by the presence of so many restaurants and shops in addition to cultural spaces, a necessarily tourist audience. The language support available online is reflected by the language resources in the park and museum complex itself: the visitor information page of the website details the features which have been put in place for support in all the listed languages including: signage, audio guides, “guidance equipment for performances,” pamphlets, and written

---

<sup>161</sup> “Facility Information,” Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park, accessed May 4, 2021, <https://ainu-upopoy.jp/en/facility/>.

<sup>162</sup> “TureppoN,” Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park, accessed May 4, 2021. <https://ainu-upopoy.jp/en/character/outline/>.

descriptions in the museum, although the rental of audio guides from the museum has been suspended during the pandemic.<sup>163</sup> Indeed, the initial plan for the National Ainu Museum called for all written descriptions to be produced in Japanese, Chinese (traditional and simplified), English, Ainu (transliterated into Japanese katakana characters), audio and braille, and specified that all captions be played low enough to be viewed by both children and visitors in wheelchairs; the language of the descriptions is also specifically formulated to be comprehensible to all ages.<sup>164</sup> While the Ainu-language titles of museum facilities are included on the website and in the museum itself (in detail down to campus maps and the location of bathroom facilities), the Ainu language does not seem to be included for practical communication with a potential Ainu-speaking audience but are themselves a part of the museum display.

In the process of my research I have accessed the Upopoy website periodically for more than a year spanning the time period before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, and during that time I have observed many changes to the website explicitly designed to make the contents of the museum and park accessible to a purely internet-based audience. This means not only an expansion of language-specific resources, but also galleries and videos, a page providing additional background information on Ainu language and culture, and even a complete 3D digital tour of the park (but not the museum) that allows viewers to move about the park space and click on augmented-reality descriptions of various features. Additionally, the homepage of the website links to a separate website specifically regarding the National Ainu Museum, which is formatted in the same manner as Upopoy's main page but goes into slightly more detail regarding the museum exhibits (although, the deeper one digs into the website, the more the information

---

<sup>163</sup> "Visitor Information," Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park, accessed May 4, 2021, <https://ainu-upopoy.jp/en/guide/>.

<sup>164</sup> "Kokuritsu Ainu minzoku hakubutsukan tenji keikaku" (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japan, May 28, 2016), 3.

becomes accessible only in Japanese; this is a trend for every multilingual website used in this study). For the purpose of this thesis, information regarding Upopoy and the National Ainu Museum were gathered from the information contained on these two websites including the recently-added digital tour; I was also graciously granted access to the National Ainu Museum's exhibition plan ("*kokuritsu ainu minzoku hakubutsukan tenji keikaku*") which was published in Japanese in June, 2016, and some supplementary documents regarding Ainu culture which were sent to me over email from the museum administration. Finally this subsection includes some journalistic documentation of the reactions of Ainu people to this and similar museum institutions which have sprung up in Japan since the categorization of the Ainu as an indigenous people in 2008; the most significant shortcoming of this thesis is that it accesses museum representations primarily through the lens of *official intent* rather than *popular interpretation*, meaning that the receptive half of the dialogic process which the museum space attempts to instigate is overlooked. This is due to my limitations as a researcher in access to museumgoers during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the fact that my goal is not to produce my own ethnography but rather to comparatively analyze ones which have been created in specific contexts by these museum institutions. Nevertheless the perspective of Ainu people regarding these museums, which is not included in the official discourses presented by even Ainu activist organizations who often have been agents in formulating the museum spaces, must be acknowledged.

The official narrative of the National Ainu Museum presented in its exhibition plan centers on the passing on of knowledge. The four main goals of the museum are: to promote "correct" ("*tadashii*") knowledge and understanding of Ainu culture and spirituality; to cultivate a new generation of museum experts on Ainu culture and history; to conduct research on Ainu topics; and to act as the base of an information network of museums concerning the Ainu cultural

subject.<sup>165</sup> Regarding target demographic, the plan specifies its orientation towards an “international, diverse” audience and asserts the aim of creating an “exhibit capable of communicating to a world with an internationalized point of view” (“*kokusaitekina shiten wo motte sekai ni hasshin suru tenji*”),<sup>166</sup> which statement provides official confirmation of its metropolitan orientation (creating a dialogic space between an assumed heterogenous audience and a foreign subject) if not of its placement on the axis from majority to oppositional museological narrative. The exhibit is also intended to be accessed by all ages – it features a hands-on children’s section, although that area has not been put into operation yet due to the pandemic. The museum space itself is composed of a main section encompassing the permanent exhibition, a theater for audiovisual displays, and a space for temporary themed exhibits, and a secondary, subdividable special exhibition section which hosts travelling exhibits from other museums regarding the Ainu and other global indigenous peoples. The material composition of the exhibits are broad in scope, including archeological and historical artifacts, “tribal materials” (“*minzoku shiryō*”), paintings, modern art and craftwork, and written documents as well as, where applicable, audiovisual materials and recordings of Ainu language which range from the paleolithic to modern era and are sourced primarily from Sakhalin, Chishima, Hokkaido, and the Tohoku region of Japan’s main island, Honshu.<sup>167</sup> The museum also makes frequent use of graphic displays in order to draw the cultural subject more clearly into dialogue with the audience: the section of the permanent exhibit focused on Ainu livelihood, for example, features standing silhouettes of Ainu people occupying various professions including (written in Japanese and larger in English on each stand) forester,

---

<sup>165</sup> “*Kokuritsu Ainu minzoku hakubutsukan tenji keikaku*” (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japan, May 28, 2016), 1.

<sup>166</sup> “*Kokuritsu Ainu minzoku hakubutsukan tenji keikaku*” (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japan, May 28, 2016), 1.

<sup>167</sup> “*Kokuritsu Ainu minzoku hakubutsukan tenji keikaku*” (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japan, May 28, 2016), 3.

surveyor, Ainu chef, actor, and office worker; meanwhile the section focused on history is presided over by a wall painted with a cloud of important years to Ainu history.<sup>168</sup>

The permanent exhibition is contained entirely in one large room measuring 1,250 square meters (approximately 4,100 square feet) and is organized into six thematic sections radiating out from the center to the walls of the space, all of whose titles are formatted as possessions in English and Japanese: “Our Universe,” “Our Lives,” “Our Work,” “Our Exchange,” “Our Language,” and “Our History,” where the possessors are Ainu people.<sup>169</sup> It is notable, however, that the Ainu language translations of these titles do not carry the same connotation of ownership, perhaps because the use of the language itself stakes a similar claim of agency in relation to the subject matter. At the center of the room is the section titled in Ainu “Itak” (“Our Language,” “*watashitachi no kotoba*”<sup>170</sup>), which covers not only basic Ainu vocabulary and sentence structure, but also Ainu oral folkloric tradition and the history of the use of Ainu language, including recent efforts towards its “revival” (“*fukkou*”).<sup>171</sup> The 2016 plan for the museum layout had placed this section on the outskirts of the plaza space and described it as the last and least of the six broad themes, selecting instead the section “Inomi” (“Our Universe,” “*watashitachi no sekai*”) as the central thematic item, but in the actual museum language has been chosen as the central theme of the permanent exhibit – a home base, and the perspective from which the rest of the sections may be interpreted by the audience. The foregrounding of language instead of the material trappings of Ainu spirituality in “Our Universe” assists in the exhibit’s stated goal of locating Ainu people as the storytellers of the exhibit, and in doing so slightly shifts the location of the Ainu cultural space

---

<sup>168</sup> “Exhibition,” National Ainu Museum, accessed May 4, 2021, <https://nam.go.jp/en/exhibition/floor1/>.

<sup>169</sup> *Kokuritsu Ainu minzoku hakubutsukan tenji keikaku* (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japan, May 28, 2016), 2, 5.

<sup>170</sup> In the case of the exhibit section titles, the English translations are those used on the English version of Upopoy’s website; the Japanese has been taken from the National Ainu Museum Exhibition Plan.

<sup>171</sup> *Kokuritsu Ainu minzoku hakubutsukan tenji keikaku* (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japan, May 28, 2016), 13-14.

relative to the museum from the object to a sharer in the agency of telling its own story. Additionally, the central location of the language section is designed with benches surrounding a central console in order to bear physical resemblance to the hearth at the center of an Ainu home (*cise*) as a place of conversation and above all communication, a microcosm of the “symbolic space for ethnic harmony” which Upopoy as a whole is intended to represent.

The other five thematic sections line the outside of the plaza, which itself is shaped like a circle in order to avoid trapping the audience into a linear narrative, and to encourage viewers to pass by each section multiple times, each successive time bearing in mind the context gathered from the rest of the exhibit. In this sense the only real directionality in the exhibit is that of language being the access point of the Ainu cultural space. This stands in contrast to most other museums in this study, where the point of access is imagery and material – clothing items, patterns, tools, paintings – as opposed to intangible cultural properties. The 2016 Exhibition Plan outlines explicitly the composition of each section, framed within the “story” (“*tenji sutorii*”) each section is intended to tell. “Our Universe” was envisioned in the Plan as a window into the Ainu worldview through the lens of spirituality, honing in on material items used in religious ceremonies which best represented the “animist” spirituality of the Ainu people as well as physical representations of Ainu *kamuy* (gods) and mythology.<sup>172</sup> The central piece of the section is a taxidermy bear cub, which is shown in the digital museum tour decorated with *inau* (shaved wooden sticks used in various ceremonies) and unadorned in other photos on the website (it is likely that its current state is decorated, since the digital tour was published more recently than other pages on the website). The bear is posed at the foot of a large wooden pole used in the *iomante* ritual, which according to the online description was used to hold bears for sacrifice specifically among Sakhalin Ainu – the

---

<sup>172</sup> *Kokuritsu Ainu minzoku hakubutsukan tenji keikaku* (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japan, May 28, 2016), 7-8.

cultural background section of the website, meanwhile, provides a more general definition of *iomante* as “a ceremony where hospitality is extended to the *ramat* (spirits) of *kamuy* before they are sent back to the world from which they came”<sup>173</sup> which encompasses the sending-back of spirits of animals other than the bear among Ainu groups in other regions. It is notable (and unique among the institutions in this study) that the “story” of Ainu spirituality in this museum includes regional differences and the 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century influence of Buddhism and Russian Orthodoxy on Ainu spirituality, and indeed modern attempts to carry out Ainu spiritual practices; the inclusion of this oppositional narrative at the same time presents Ainu culture as something extant and mutable, rather than generalizing it as something which can be analyzed as static by virtue of its temporal location firmly in the past and not the present.

Directly to the right of “Our Universe,” the section on daily life “Urespa” (“Our Lives,” “*watashitachi no kurashi*”) similarly attempts to connect the historical, historicized image of Ainu culture with a living, modern one, employing the phrase “attire that breathes into the present” (“*ima ni ikidzuku yosooi*”) (c). Using the framework of life stages, the section highlights material and intangible aspects of Ainu culture which unite the circumstances (“*seikatsu kuukan*”) of ancestral and modern Ainu, including ornamentation (clothes, jewelry, tattoos), *kotan* (village) landscapes, festival and everyday foods, ceremonies and games, dances, songs and instruments, making special note of regional variations within these themes.<sup>174</sup> The section is dominated by a display of a loom for textile production, and on the wall above the exhibit are projected videos of Ainu traditional dance performances (“Virtual Upopoy 360”). Similarly, the section on livelihood “Nepki” (“Our Work,” “*watashitachi no shigoto*”) carefully spans a thousand years of traditional

---

<sup>173</sup> “Ainu Culture,” Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park, accessed May 4, 2021, <https://ainu-upopoy.jp/en/ainu-culture/>.

<sup>174</sup> *Kokuritsu Ainu minzoku hakubutsukan tenji keikaku* (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japan, May 28, 2016), 10.

occupations as well as those which resulted from Japanese territorial incursions and cultural assimilation. The 2016 plan presents a tripartite scheme for presenting the materials in this section, the first part comprising a representative selection of tools used by Ainu people from their cultural origins until the late Edo period, the second part spanning the Meiji through Showa periods (1868-1989), and the third part beginning with the start of the Heisei period (1989) and extending into an imagined future (“*mirai no shigoto*”). The emphases of these sections are divided primarily based on perceived Japanese cultural influence: whereas the first section highlights hunter-gatherer and fishing practices with some reference to fishery labor to which many Ainu were relegated during the colonial period of Hokkaido, the second foregrounds a more diverse spectrum of labor including agriculture, forestry, white-collar work, and indeed participation in the Japanese tourism industry. The third section expands its scope to compare the typical livelihoods of domestic and overseas Ainu “neighbors” (“*tonariau hitobito*”), and to imagine a future of revival of Ainu traditional occupations.<sup>175</sup> However, in the final version of the exhibit these three thematic parts were collapsed into two, with the beginning of the Meiji era serving as the chronological division point between “ancestral” (“*senzo no*”) and modern (“*gendai*”) while glossing over the intermediate period of colonial “upheaval” (“*gekidou*”) which were presented in the initial plan.<sup>176</sup> While the plan presents a potentially more nuanced and oppositional perspective on the historical dynamic of Ainu and colonizing cultures (both Japanese and Russian), both the planned and final models are predicated on the assertion of the beginning of the Meiji era as the most important turning point in Ainu-Wajin relations –the transition from independence to assimilation – despite the wealth of encounters and conflicts which had been occurring for centuries prior. Thus the overall narrative of the section necessarily reflects a Japanese perspective of historical chronology,

---

<sup>175</sup> *Kokuritsu Ainu minzoku hakubutsukan tenji keikaku* (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japan, May 28, 2016), 11.

<sup>176</sup> “Exhibition,” National Ainu Museum, accessed May 4, 2021, <https://nam.go.jp/en/exhibition/floor1/>.

punctuated by turning points in its imperial structure and in respect to which earlier conflicts with Ainu people were merely peripheral.

Although each section of the exhibit is framed in historical terms, the two sections on cultural exchange “Ukoapkas” (“Our Exchange,” “*watashitachi no kouryuu*”) and history “Upaskuma” (“Our History,” “*watashitachi no rekishi*”) are the only ones whose explicit subject includes the historiographical. Even the theme of “Our Work,” which is organized onto a chronological axis, is expressed by means of juxtaposing material items such as tools and crafts, whereas these two sections rely on the juxtaposition of the contents as well as the images of written documents. Of the four sub-sections to the “Our Exchange” section described in the 2016 Plan, the first two focus on trade goods as evidence of cultural exchange: between Ainu and neighboring indigenous tribes such as the Nivkh, Itelmen, Wilta and Aleut, and between Ainu and Wajin from their very first encounters in the 1300s, especially those Japanese manufactured goods such as cotton and silk textiles and other items which became incorporated into Ainu religious ceremonies.<sup>177</sup> The second two sections, meanwhile, address written and artistic representations of the Ainu people throughout the history of their contact with foreign cultures. The exhibit juxtaposes images and documents produced by Edo and Meiji-era “Japanese and Western officials and scholars” for “purposes of cultural exchange and exploration,” with traditional and modern artistic and literary representations created by Ainu people of themselves in order to produce a broad overview of “the reflections of Ainu culture in the gaze of different countries, regions, and indigenous peoples.”<sup>178</sup> The “Our Exchange” section of the Plan also makes mention of cultural exchange by means of travel and migration; little information on the topic is discussed in the Plan

---

<sup>177</sup> *Kokuritsu Ainu minzoku hakubutsukan tenji keikaku* (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japan, May 28, 2016), 12.

<sup>178</sup> *Kokuritsu Ainu minzoku hakubutsukan tenji keikaku* (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japan, May 28, 2016), 12.

itself beyond a bullet point mentioning “travel” (“*tabi*”) and “means of transportation” (“*idou shudan*”).<sup>179</sup> This seems like a potential space to introduce how the forced relocations of Ainu people perpetrated by the Japanese and Russian governments influenced the dynamics of cultural exchange, but in both the plan and all online reference to the exhibit such information is absent – rather, the museum website foregrounds the remains of an “*itomachip*” (“ocean-faring boat”) used by Ainu travelers as the “most striking part of the exhibition,”<sup>180</sup> underscoring the section as focusing on instances of exchange in which the Ainu people were agents. This focus on the *itomachip* as an index of the trade and travel independence of the Ainu people runs parallel to that of the 1993 special exhibition on Ainu culture *Ainu Moshir* produced by the Minpaku (the discourse surrounding this exhibit is included in the literature review of this thesis). The exhibit curator Ohtsuka Kazuyoshi explains, “on entry, visitors first saw the huge wooden boat. This symbolized how Ainu society had once featured dynamic and extensive independent trading activities.... It is this boat which above all transformed the popular image of Ainu society as closed and subsistent.”<sup>181</sup>

Similarly, “Our History” features a chronological orientation along which the earlier historical periods lean heavily on material artifacts, some dating back to the paleolithic era, turning later to written historical documents in order to sequence historical events relevant to the Ainu people – indeed, the visual aspect of the section as seen from the digital tour is dominated by glass cases filled with paper documents.<sup>182</sup> The Exhibition Plan devotes a subsection to literary (“*bunkenkaku*”) representations of Ainu-Sisam relations (“*sisam*” is the Ainu word for non-Ainu

---

<sup>179</sup> *Kokuritsu Ainu minzoku hakubutsukan tenji keikaku* (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japan, May 28, 2016), 12.

<sup>180</sup> “Exhibition,” National Ainu Museum, accessed May 4, 2021, <https://nam.go.jp/en/exhibition/floor1/>.

<sup>181</sup> Kazuyoshi Ohtsuka, “Exhibiting Ainu Culture at Minpaku: A Reply to Sandra A. Niessen,” *Museum Anthropology* 20 no. 3 (1997): 115.

<sup>182</sup> “Virtual Upopoy 360,” Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park, accessed May 4, 2021, <https://ainu-upopoy.jp/en/virtual360/>.

people) including interactions with the Matsumae domain, the transition to colonial government in Hokkaido, and land privatization policies, and two subsections to policy documents spanning from the beginning of the Meiji period to the present.<sup>183</sup> the Plan describes colonization practices of the late 1800s, the effect of the border demarcation between Russia and Japan after the Russo-Japanese War, the Former Natives Protection Act, and the forces of Japanese modernization as “definitively [having] had a large impact on the modern Ainu people” (“*gendaiteki no ainu ni, ketteiteki toitte yoiookina eikyou wo ataeta*”) and characterizes the entire period between the Meiji restoration and 1930 as a “great shock” (“*ookina shougeki*”) to the Ainu people.<sup>184</sup> The time period after 1930 is categorized by the Exhibit Plan as the beginning of “modernity” (“*ima*”); documentary items in the exhibit section reference the Ainu people in relation to the Pacific War, the postwar economic miracle, and the movement for Ainu rights of the latter half of the twentieth century. The final note of this section of the exhibit stages a head-on confrontation of the present Ainu situation which the Plan refers to as “the present face to face with us” (“*watashitachi ga mukakiau ima*”) and acknowledges the existence of a future involving cooperation between Japanese and Ainu an era which stretches into the “future we want to make together” (“*tomo ni tsukuritai mirai*”).

Although the thrust of political interaction seems to be portrayed as unidirectional from the Japanese government onto the Ainu people until very recent history, the very acknowledgement of systemic oppression enacted by Japan is revolutionary within the context of displaying the Ainu cultural subject. Remember that the discourse surrounding the 1993 *Ainu Moshir* exhibit in Japan’s National Ethnographical Museum centered on the miscommunication resulting from a “North

---

<sup>183</sup> *Kokuritsu Ainu minzoku hakubutsukan tenji keikaku*” (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japan, May 28, 2016), 15.

<sup>184</sup> *Kokuritsu Ainu minzoku hakubutsukan tenji keikaku*” (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japan, May 28, 2016), 15.

American” interpretation of the nostalgic idiom of displaying Ainu culture (i.e. selection of items representing a sense of timeless cultural purity) as a denial of Ainu identity as living and oppositional to a colonial regime, which ran in contradiction to the “Japanese” interpretation of the idiom within the particular context of Ainu-Japan relations as an act of resistance via assertion of existence. The inclusion of the element of political struggle in the National Ainu Museum, exhibited nearly thirty years later, could indicate that the “North American” hegemonic understanding of museum interpretation became so ubiquitous in understandings of indigenous representation that the nostalgic idiom became, as Niessen predicted in 1994, conservative; however, it could also indicate that this particular museum, more than any in this study, is oriented towards an international metropolitan audience. The “Our History” section of the National Ainu Museum is the only location in any of the museums presented in this thesis which is designed to highlight political conflict as central to understanding the Ainu cultural subject, and this particular museum is also the only one in this thesis whose physical and online materials cater to speakers of languages other than Japanese in a substantial way, and which orients the forms of its exhibition towards “universal design” in order to “implement an exhibit environment which is open to everyone” Japanese, Ainu, and foreign.<sup>185</sup> It is reasonable to expect a museum with an international demographic (an international “third element” to the museum triad) to make use of display idioms which are comprehensible to members of that demographic.

---

<sup>185</sup> *Kokuritsu Ainu minzoku hakubutsukan tenji keikaku* (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japan, May 28, 2016), 2.

## National Museum of Territory and Sovereignty

Upopoy represents the official stance of the Japanese government to the extent that it was created under the auspices of the Advisory Council for Future Ainu Policy and the Council for Ainu Policy Promotion, and acts as a state gesture of ethnic harmony towards Ainu people both inside and outside Japan's national borders. Meanwhile, the National Museum of Territory and Sovereignty ("*ryodo shuken tenjikan*") is a direct product of Japan's Office of Policy Planning and Coordination on Territory and Sovereignty, a government body which includes a Cabinet Office for Northern Territories Affairs Administration and which according to its website oversees the three "inherent territory" issues of the Northern Territories dispute with Russia, the Takeshima dispute with South Korea, and the Senkaku islands dispute with China,<sup>186</sup> and the copyright of the museum's website is held by the Cabinet Secretariat of Japan. The museum itself, which is free to enter, is located in Japan's capital city of Tokyo, although it boasts on its Japanese-language website to be the cornerstone of a network of fourteen museums all over Japan related to territorial issues and has held multiple travelling exhibitions which have toured Japan. It is necessary in this case to specify the language version of the museum website because, strikingly, the Japanese-version and English-version of the site are not only formatted completely differently but give completely different sets of information. Specifically, on the English-language page as well as on the Chinese-language and Korean-language pages (which, other than Japanese, constitute all the languages in which the site has been made available), there is absolutely no mention of the Northern Territories issue, whereas it dominates the homepage of the Japanese-language site.

---

<sup>186</sup> "Government Initiatives," Office of Policy Planning and Coordination on Territory and Sovereignty, accessed 4 May 2021, [https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/ryodo\\_eg/torikumi/torikumi.html](https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/ryodo_eg/torikumi/torikumi.html).

I myself cannot accurately account for this discrepancy: when I first began to access the webpage for my research, the formatting across all the language-versions of the site was uniform, and all three territorial issues which are managed by the Office of Policy Planning and Coordination on Territory and Sovereignty were mentioned both on the website and as part of the museum exhibit itself. Based on the dates at which I accessed the site for my research, it is likely that the removal of the Northern Territories issue from the English, Korean, and Chinese versions of the site, coupled with a reformatting of the Japanese-language site to a new design scheme, took place in February, 2021. While the news tab on the Japanese-language site includes bulletins as recent as March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021 (advertising a temporary exhibit which will be on display until June of this year), the news updates on the other versions of the site stop in mid-2018; additionally, the given address for the museum on the Japanese-language version of the page is different from the address given on all other versions. The most likely explanation for this is that the location of the museum itself was changed, although I could not find any news articles related to such a move. Due to the dating discrepancies in the news tabs of various site versions, as well as the fact that I have personally observed the Northern Territories section of the exhibit included on the English-language site previously, I find it most likely that the lack of information regarding the Northern Territories on the non-Japanese site versions is due to a technical error which may have occurred during the process of updating the Japanese version of the site, at which point the English, Korean, and Chinese versions ceased to be maintained (most of the websites included in this study have undergone significant update during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the updates to the Japanese-language site indicate that their goal is to make the museum more accessible to online, albeit Japanese-speaking, audiences). Indeed, access to the alternate language-versions of the site remain accessible only from the English, Korean, and Chinese website format, whereas on the Japanese

version of the site there are no language options. From this it is reasonable to conclude that despite its location in Japan's metropolitan capital, the museum is oriented towards a target audience of Japanese citizens, and seeks to create a dialogical space which cultivates Japanese national identity for its own consumption. All analysis of the Museum of Territory and Sovereignty, therefore, will be drawn from the Japanese-language version of the website.<sup>187</sup> Note as well that although the website and museum cover the three territorial issues of the Northern Territories, Takeshima, and the Senkaku islands in comparative depth, aside from questions of basic museum organization this study focuses primarily on the Northern Territories portion of the exhibit.

The top of the museum website's homepage is dominated by banner links: to supplementary video materials, to the webpage of the Office of Policy Planning and Coordination on Territory and Sovereignty, to the archive of brochures for the museum's past temporary exhibits, to the recently-added digital tour of the museum, and to a separate website targeted towards children. The children's site, "*ryodo shuken tenjikan FOR KIDS*" features three "image characters," one animal to represent each disputed territory. The ambassador character for the Northern Territories is a Hokkaido-native tufted puffin named "Erica," whose likeness also populates the adult website, museum pamphlets, and the physical exhibit itself in the form of a large statue outside the entrance to its Northern Territories section.<sup>188</sup> Indeed, she even "has" her own Twitter account which posts museum news and updates, as well as mini Russian language lessons. The ubiquity of *furigana* phonetic spell outs of kanji characters on the page indicates that the target age for the site is quite young – because kanji are learned by grade level in Japan, texts

---

<sup>187</sup> There is no contact information, phone or email, available on the website other than that email address used to inquire about tour scheduling.

<sup>188</sup> "Digital tenjikan," National Museum of Territory and Sovereignty, accessed May 4, 2021, <https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/ryodo/tenjikan/digital.html>.

for younger audiences tend to have more *furigana* explanation.<sup>189</sup> The children’s site also contains short readings regarding each territorial issue, followed by a small quiz delivered by Erica the puffin – one of whose questions is “the Northern territories are the territory of which country?” (“*hoppo ryoudo ha, dochira no kuni no ryoudo ka na?*”), to which the correct answer is “Japan.” Selecting “Russia” will reroute the quiz-taker back to the reading in order to re-start the quiz, after displaying a small message from Erica the puffin that the quiz-taker has made a mistake.

As was mentioned earlier, the website also contains a map on its homepage which enumerates “regional collaborative institutions and touring exhibitions” (“*chihou no renkei shisetsu to chihou junkaiten*”) which take as their subject one of the three territorial disputes – out of the fourteen institutions listed, eight take the Northern Territories as their subject.<sup>190</sup> Additionally, the homepage has a bulletin of news updates from the museum, the most recent of which announces the museum’s current temporary exhibition, which is planned to run from March 16<sup>th</sup> through May, 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021. The exhibit, titled “The Unknown Four Northern Islands: History, Culture, Nature” (“*shirarezaru hoppo yon tou: rekishi, bunka, shizen*”), presents the Northern Territories from a largely archeological and natural historical vantage; imagery of native animal species including orca whales, tufted puffins, and sea otters dominate the exhibit flyer, and despite references to “culture” no specific details of which culture is depicted are included in the flyer or bulletin. This assumption is corroborated by images posted on Erica the puffin’s twitter page commemorating Minister of Foreign Affairs Kouno Taro’s visit to the exhibit in late March: the Minister is shown in front of a wall of photos of native animals looking at whale vertebrae,

---

<sup>189</sup> “*Hoppo ryoudo mondai nit suite,*” Ryoudo shuken tenjikan FOR KIDS, accessed May 4, 2021, <https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/ryodo/kids/index.html>.

<sup>190</sup> One of these is the Nemuro City Northern Territories Museum (“*Nemuro-cho hoppo ryoudo shiryokan*”), a museum which is particularly notable due to its location in Nemuro, which is one of the earliest sites of origin of the irridentist movement. Unfortunately due to COVID-19 travel restrictions and a paucity of online resources, it could not be included in this study.

taxidermy animals.<sup>191</sup> The political positioning of the temporary exhibit is explicitly stated, with the flyer noting that Etorofu, Kunashiri, Shikotan, and the Habomai island group “have never been the territory of another country and are Japan’s inherent territory” (“*ichidou mo takoku no ryoudo to natta koto ga nai nihon koyuu no ryoudo desu*”), and in the same small paragraph asserting the goal of the exhibit to “show the idea that the four northern islands are our [Japan’s] inherent territory,” (“*hoppo yontou ga waga kuni koyuu no ryoudo de aru koto wo shimeshite ikimasu*”).<sup>192</sup>

The museum itself is composed of three rooms branching off from a main walkway (one panel in the hallway contains a replica of the map of associated institutions on the website), all three of which share the characteristic of a timeline describing the respective territorial issue that wraps around the wall of the section, embellished with maps and photographs mainly of high political meetings. These timelines are reflected in abridged form on the museum pamphlet which is downloadable from the website;<sup>193</sup> like the rest of the museum, each section of the pamphlet is headed with the “image character” of its respective territorial dispute. In the case of the Northern Territories, Erica the puffin says as an introduction to the timeline, “Why are the Northern Territories in a state of occupation by Russia?” (“*doushite hoppo ryoudo ha roshia ni senkyosareta mama nandarou?*”).<sup>194</sup> The pamphlet itself offers as crucial turning points in the territorial issue including the designation of the islands of Kunashiri and Etorofu by the Kuriezu commercial code in 1644 as the earliest historical moment, the 1855 Treaty of Shimoda, the 1875 Treaty for the Exchange of Karafuto for Chishima, the 1905 Portsmouth Treaty, the 1951 San Francisco Peace

---

<sup>191</sup> *Hoppo ryoudo erika-chan* (hoppou\_erika), “Kono Kitagata daijin ga Toykyou Toranomom no ryoudo ...” Twitter, March 31, 2021, [https://twitter.com/hoppou\\_erika/status/1377161184869150721](https://twitter.com/hoppou_erika/status/1377161184869150721).

<sup>192</sup> “Kikaku-ten [shirarezaru hoppo yon tou: rekishi, bunka, shizen],” National Museum of Territory and Sovereignty, accessed May 4, 2021, [https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/ryodo/tenjikan/event/hoppou\\_210316.html](https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/ryodo/tenjikan/event/hoppou_210316.html).

<sup>193</sup> The English translation of the museum pamphlet is “Japanese territory and people’s hopes, connecting to the next generation.”

<sup>194</sup> “Tsugi no sedai e tsunagu, nihon no ryoudo to hitobito no omoi,” National Museum of Territory and Sovereignty, accessed April 7, 2021.

Treaty, the 1956 Japan-Soviet Joint Declaration, the 1993 Tokyo Declaration, and the 2001 Irkutsk Statement. Additionally, within the complicated chronology of 1945 the pamphlet locates the Japanese surrender and acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration prior to the Soviet Union's occupation of the "northern four islands," and makes particular mention that by engaging in war against Japan the Soviet Union was in violation of the Japan-Soviet Neutrality Pact. Remember that, in light of the information presented in the earlier background section of this thesis, such statements are taking an explicit political stance for Japan's irridentist cause and its victimization by the Soviet Union, since the validity of the Japan-Soviet Neutrality Pact at the time of the Soviet Union's entry into the Pacific war remains disputed. Another crucial date mentioned by the pamphlet is the establishment in 1981 of every seventh of February as "Northern Territories Day" in Japan.<sup>195</sup> Ultimately the timeline presents the predictable thesis that any Russian claim to the four northern islands, whether established by its military occupation (which was unlawful) the San Francisco Peace Treaty (which the Soviet Union did not sign) are invalid, and that Japan's ultimate goal is the return of all four islands based on their categorization as part of the Japanese territory on the basis of the Japan-Soviet Joint Declaration and Tokyo Declaration. This position is, notably, more radical than the one currently promulgated by the Japanese government on the international stage, which advocates for the "two plus two" strategy of first acquiring Shikotan and the Habomai chain in accordance with the Joint Declaration before debating the attribution of Kunashiri and Etorofu.

While the sections of the exhibit covering Takeshima and the Senkaku islands are composed primarily of written documents as the material complements to their respective

---

<sup>195</sup> "Tsugi no sedai e tsunagu, nihon no ryoudo to hitobito no omoi," National Museum of Territory and Sovereignty, accessed April 7, 2021.

timelines and digital displays, the section on the Northern Territories also includes a small shelf of artifacts taken from the four northern islands. The small collection includes wooden furniture, porcelain cups, metal clothes irons and kettles, a gas lamp, a pair of *geta* (wooden sandals), each piece accompanied by a one-line display card; behind the items is a screen playing footage taken on the islands. In the digital exhibit, the image visible on the screen is black and white footage of seaweed-processing labor on Shikotan.<sup>196</sup> Each section of the museum is also supplemented with an audiovisual display which narrates the chronology of each conflict with the help of animated maps. In the Northern Territories section, the display is projected onto the floor of a large box set into the exhibit wall, with a map of the Northern Territories painted onto the back panel. The video which projects, along with other supplementary materials, are available to watch on YouTube and are linked to their respective areas along the path of the digital tour. This particular video is notable for two reasons: first, it makes the conceptual distinction between “Chishima,” usually used as the Japanese translation for the Kuril Island chain, and the “Northern Territories,” which include the four islands of Kunashiri, Etorofu, Shikotan, and the Habomai group, setting the boundary between the Northern Territories and Chishima between Kunashiri and Urrupu, which corroborates with the border delineated in the 1855 Treaty of Shimoda. Second, it represents the Russian occupation of Chishima and the Northern Territories in 1945 through a particularly antagonistic lens: whereas throughout the first half of the video the territorial distinction is designated with orange for Japanese territories and green for Russian, the occupation process is depicted as a wave of red flooding over the islands, overlaid with images of battleships and explosions and underscored by lugubrious musical accompaniment.<sup>197</sup> Compared to the image of the museum associated with

---

<sup>196</sup> “Digital tenjikan,” National Museum of Territory and Sovereignty, accessed May 4, 2021, <https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/ryodo/tenjikan/digital.html>.

<sup>197</sup> “Digital tenjikan,” National Museum of Territory and Sovereignty, accessed May 4, 2021, <https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/ryodo/tenjikan/digital.html>.

Erica the puffin, this contrast is quite stark and therefore especially effective at driving home the message of wrongful and villainous occupation.

Throughout the exhibit, one aspect is noticeably absent: the actual inhabitants of the islands. The Japanese citizens who were displaced due to Russian occupation of the Northern Territories are mentioned only nominally in the video timeline and depicted only in black-and-white, half-transparent images which overlay the main video; the Ainu people seem to be entirely unrepresented. At this point it bears noting that this study initially included a complete analysis of the Military-Historical Museum of the Pacific Fleet in Vladivostok, Russia, which presents a Russian militarist counterpoint to Japan's territorial argument: the Kuril Islands operation represented the final act of the Pacific War, affirming Russian victory.<sup>198</sup> Ultimately, its relevance to this study lies in the similarity of its depiction of territory to that of Japan's National Museum of Territory and Sovereignty. In both cases (albeit to a much grander extent in the National Museum of Territory and Sovereignty), the subject of territoriality, of the land itself, is handled completely separately from the subject of its inhabitants. The fact that this distinction appears from both Russian and Japanese museological perspectives cannot go overlooked – despite the small sample size, this indicates a potential pattern of representation in museums that deal with issues of national boundaries, in contrast with museums that take culture as their specific subject. At the next chapters show, this trend of disjunction continues to be visible in Russian museums which focus on the Ainu cultural subject.

---

<sup>198</sup> "Zal No. 6," Voenno-istoricheskii Muzei Tikhookeanskovo Flota, June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2011, <https://museumtof.ru/index.php/expo/zal6>.

## Chapter Four: Temporary Exhibitions in Russia

### Russian Ethnographic Museum and “Island People – Ainu”

Of all the museums explored within this study, the Russian Ethnographic Museum (*Rossiiskii Etnograficheskii Muzei*)<sup>199</sup> in St. Petersburg represents the clearest example of a purely ethnographic museum, with its displayed items framed first and foremost as “artifact” as opposed to “art” in the language of Karp’s analysis, or as “historical” rather than “aesthetic” using Clifford’s configurational axis. Regarding accessibility, the museum offers audio guides to its exhibits in both Russian and English through the website [izi.Travel](http://izi.travel), and the entire contents of its site are available in both Russian and English. The audience of this institution, then, is decidedly “metropolitan” – its goal is to create a dialogic space of understanding foreign culture for both a domestic Russian and international demographic (English being the lingua franca of international communication), which orientation alone suggests that any items displayed will be filtered in terms of their relationship to global conceptions of those cultures in addition to domestically viable conceptions. Thus, the other cultural groups to which the given cultural subject – in this case Ainu culture – are assimilated and alongside which they are depicted is revealing of a thesis of supernational categorization and not merely of how that cultural group relates specifically to a single state and majority national culture. The act of producing an museological ethnography, particularly one which is juxtaposed with displays of other cultures and taxonomized into larger groups, is most likely a majority exhibition in Clifford’s analysis, purely because it inherently seeks representative rather than oppositional images of a given culture.

---

<sup>199</sup> Literal translations of titles are included in this section immediately after their English translations, but any other information is given in English translation only, with relevant translation notes if necessary.

Details of the contents of the collection of Ainu cultural artifacts housed at the Russian Ethnographic Museum, as well as the temporary exhibit “Island People – The Ainu” (*Ostrovnyye Liudi – Ainy*) which was displayed from November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019 through February 23, 2020, have been taken from the official website of the museum as well as from an article about the temporary exhibition published by *culture.ru*, which also contains a limited gallery of the exhibit. Although audio tours of selected exhibits are published on *izi.Travel* in both English and Russian, the focus of those audio tours seems to be on artifacts of Russian ethnicity (*russkiĭ* as opposed to *rossiĭskiĭ* as in citizenship to the Russian state), and as such neither this particular exhibit nor the standing Far Eastern Cultures section of the museum (which, incidentally, is currently under reconstruction) have been made available. The museum website itself has recently added more features for online exploration of the museum including a virtual tour of the standing exhibit, a limited selection of online exhibits, and a much more encompassing gallery of museum pieces sorted by the exhibits in which they have been featured, including “Island People – The Ainu,” to which are attributed fifty-two gallery images. Note, however, that the deeper one delves into the Russian Ethnographic Museum website, the less likely it is that the site itself provides an English-language translation of its contents; the virtual tour and online galleries are accessible only in Russian at the present time.<sup>200</sup>

The Russian Ethnographic Museum’s standing collection of Ainu artifacts, numbering approximately three thousand individual pieces, is claimed on the museum’s website to be the largest collection of its kind in the world.<sup>201</sup> Approximately 2,500 of those pieces comprised the

---

<sup>200</sup> Additionally, I reached out to the museum head of the Department of Ethnography of the Peoples of Siberia and the Far East Valentina Vladimirovna Gorbacheva through her secretary, but I did not receive a response.

<sup>201</sup> “Kollektsii po kul’ture Aĭnov, ĭapontsev, Kitaitsev, i Mongolov,” Rossiiskiy Etnograficheskiy Muzej, 2020.

initial collection, which was collected during a special expedition in Sakhalin during the early twentieth century (the time in which the Japanese Meiji government controlled the island's southern half as a result of the Russo-Japanese War) and included mainly of hunting and fishing materials, utensils, and clothing; 235 pieces were given to the Russian Ethnographic Museum in 1948 by the Museum of Peoples of the Soviet Union, which themselves had been collected by government officials in Sakhalin and Japan. As a collection, it is categorized in the museum website alongside its collections on Japanese, Chinese, Korean and Mongolian cultures as opposed to under the topic "Cultures of Siberia and the Far East," which distinction alone is indicative of the fact that Ainu culture is positioned by the museum to exist within the sphere not only of the cultural "other" but the national "other" as well, separate from people which fall within the aegis of the Russian state. Out of the specific items of "particular interest" (*"osoby interes"*) in the Ainu collection, the vast majority are related to bears: a bear skin, a cage for baby bears being raised for sacrifice, a pole used during the sacrificial ritual on "the bear holiday" (*"medvezhny prazdnik"*), with the second most frequently mentioned groups of items being those of spiritual significance.<sup>202</sup> Indeed, one significant difference between Russian and Japanese museum depictions of Ainu culture, as will become visible, is the consistent emphasis by Russian museums of the "cult of the bear" as a "representative" aspect of Ainu culture compared to its positioning in Japanese and Ainu-perspective museums alongside other equally important cultural institutions. Whether this trend indicates an attempt to create an assimilatory dialogic space between Russian and Ainu culture using the image of the bear or an attempt to orient Ainu cultural heritage closer to the

---

<sup>202</sup> "Kollektsii po kul'ture Aĭnov, ĭapontsev, Kitaitsev, Koreĭtsev, i Mongolov," Rossiiskiy Etnograficheskiy Muzei, 2020.

Eurasian than East Asian pole, it is one of the few consistent differences that emerges between museum representations at the national level and as such must not be overlooked.

In contrast to the standing collection of Ainu artifacts, the temporary exhibit “Island People – The Ainu” contained a larger proportion of “art” or otherwise imagery detached from material substance. Of course the exhibit included several pieces from the Russian Ethnographic Museum’s collection – based on the gallery provided on the museum website, these were mostly clothing items, tableware, jewelry and ceremonial items – but also featured a series of watercolor paintings by the relatively unknown Japanese artist Hirasawa Byouzan which were lent from the Omsk Oblast Museum of Fine Art (this series will be covered in greater detail in the next section, which focuses on the Omsk Oblast Museum of Fine Art itself), called “Life and Customs of the Ainu” (“*Zhizn’ i Obychaiĭ Aĭnov*”) and a twelve-piece series of ink drawings completed in 1790 by the Matsumae clan artist Kakizaki Hakyou titled “Series of Depictions of the Chiefs of Eos (Hokkaido)” (“*Seriya izobrazhenniĭ ěssoskikh (khokaĭdskikh) vozhdēĭ*”). Additionally, the exhibit featured video materials of contemporary Ainu craftsmanship and animations of Ainu folklore which were contributed by the Ainu Culture Fund in Japan, as well as some black-and-white photography of Ainu people taken in the early twentieth century. From a chronological standpoint, the contents of this exhibit are illustrative of a tension between representation of the Ainu cultural space as historical and contemporary. On one hand, the centuries-old paintings, material items from the early twentieth century, and black-and-white photography (which Clifford notes is a common tool in presenting the photographed subject as belonging to the past rather than the present) paint a picture of a primitive, non-extant culture. On the other hand, the video materials provided by the Japanese Ainu culture fund, especially the animations which by virtue of the medium itself bring Ainu stories into modern relief, present the notion of a culture which is still reproducing itself. The

ways in which the exhibit is characterized in the exhibit's description on the museum website, however, are revealing of its grounding in a more historical, majority museological representation type and not in the oppositional type. According to the web description, the exhibit centers on "that period of time, when this people to a significant degree maintained their uniqueness (*samobytnost'*)," after which period (the late nineteenth through early twentieth centuries) Ainu culture "largely lost its ethnic specificity" such that "contemporary Ainu culture barely differs from Japanese culture, and only museum collections give the possibility to familiarize oneself with the vivid, unique culture of this people."<sup>203</sup> Geographically the Ainu cultural space is located primarily within the "Japanese archipelago – Honshu, Hokkaido, South Sakhalin, the Kuril Islands, the lower Amur and southern Kamchatka regions," a delimitation which is notably wide and in line with the assertions of official Ainu organizations such as the Hokkaido Ainu Association and Foundation for Ainu Culture; geographical categorization is supplemented by racialized biological taxonomy, however, with the claim that Ainu bodies and faces "combined Mongoloid (*mongoloidnye*) and Aboriginal (*avstraloidnye*) characteristics" used as evidence to support the notion that the Ainu represent a particularly ancient race of people which existed prior to the divergence of people into those two racial orders.<sup>204</sup> The labels of "mongoloid" and "aboriginal" notably are part of the racial classification system used especially by Western scholars since the Enlightenment era to classify non-European people and insert them into a temporally-defined axis of civilizational progress, and therefore the invocation of such terminology whether by intention or convention must be recognized as a perpetuation of that Orientalist framework as well as a positioning of Ainu culture as backwards, primitive, and most of all confined to history.

---

<sup>203</sup> I.A. Karapetova, "Ostrovnye Liudi – Ainy," Rossiiskiy Etnograficheskiy Muzei, October 24, 2019.

<sup>204</sup> I.A. Karapetova, "Ostrovnye Liudi – Ainy," Rossiiskiy Etnograficheskiy Muzei, October 24, 2019.

Omsk Oblast Museum of Fine Art, Named for M.A. Vrubel, and “Ainu: Mysterious World”

There are two fundamental differences between the Russian Ethnographic Museum and the Omsk Oblast Museum of Fine Art, named for M.A. Vrubel, as they relate to this thesis. While geographically the former is located in St. Petersburg, one of Russia’s “twin capitals” and its most Europeanized city, the Vrubel is located in Omsk, a city in south-central Russia located near the Kazakhstan border. As such, Omsk institutions expect and receive much less domestic and international tourism than those in St. Petersburg, and are therefore oriented linguistically and schematically towards a predominantly domestic, Russian-speaking audience. To use Clifford’s analytical schemata, this means that the Vrubel falls into the dual category of “home” institution as opposed to “metropolitan” or (as I have added) “local,” meaning that the space created within the museum for the audience to process the cultural subject must be accessible within the historical paradigm understood by the mostly homogenous audience who are necessarily non-participants in the subject culture. In terms of museum genre, the names of these two institutions say all that is needed. The Russian Ethnographic Museum, *ipso facto*, represents images of the Ainu people in cultural terms, juxtaposed against the cultural aesthetics of other ethnic groups, whereas the Vrubel is explicitly a fine art institution – M.A. Vrubel after whom the museum is named, in fact, was a Symbolist painter born in Omsk in 1856. Although this situates both institutions on the “majority” rather than “tribal” end of Clifford’s axis of representational types, one must only remember Karp’s distinction between representing art and artifact to conceptualize the potential differences in framing that would exist even between the same type of content – and indeed, both museums include the watercolor paintings of Hirasawa Byouzan, albeit functioning either as vehicles to depict Ainu material culture and cultural exchange or as works of art in themselves. Note that at this point, the labels of “majority” and “home,” as well as the assessment of artistic representation,

have only been applied based on a cursory survey of the Vrubel; the content and organization of the exhibit itself, as this section illustrates, supports those categorizations.

The focus of this study, however, is not on the Vrubel as a whole but on its temporary exhibit “Ainu: Mysterious World: Byouzan Hirasawa – Damir Muratov” (*Aĩny: zagadochny mir: Bėdzan Khirasava – Damir Muratov*). The exhibit was first displayed in 2008 alongside the publication of a supplemental book, *Omsk Sensation (Omskaĩa sensatsĩĩa)*, which was one in a series of museum books published as part of the “Museum Rarities” project; the exhibit was displayed again in celebration of the 10-year anniversary of *Omsk Sensation*’s publication. The accessibility of the exhibit on the internet is paltry: the official website of the Vrubel maintains descriptions only of its current exhibits, and in early 2021 removed its archive of news articles regarding past exhibits, including “Ainu: Mysterious World.” Furthermore, the website is only available in Russian and Russian for vision-impaired individuals. A comprehensive gallery and captioned audio tour of the museum, also only in Russian, was contributed by museum to the museum tour aggregate website *izi.Travel*; it is from this tour and the supplemental text that analysis of the exhibit is drawn.<sup>205</sup>

“Ainu: Mysterious World” is composed of three sections: the first, titled “Life and Customs of the Ainu” (*Zhizn’ i Obychaĩ Aĩnov*) is a collection of twelve watercolors by Japanese painter Hirasawa Byouzan, who lived with Ainu in Hokkaido for approximately forty years during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. His subject was the daily lives of the Ainu as well as their ceremonially-structured interactions with Wajin officials who had recently claimed the Hokkaido as a colonial possession of Japan. Out of the twelve paintings five depict Ainu hunting or fishing

---

<sup>205</sup> Although contact information is listed on the website, I did not receive a response from the Vrubel regarding my request for additional information from the exhibit’s curator Galina Sevostyanova.

practices, four depict interactions with Wajin, and two depict Ainu spiritual ceremonies. Five pieces include a body of water; three contain bears. One piece finished in 1868 depicts the execution of a samurai in the Matsumae clan (which, as we remember, had a monopoly on trade with Hokkaido Ainu during the Meiji period). The audio guide notes that this particular painting “has no relationship” thematically with the rest of the watercolors in the section, merely representing more of Hirasawa’s work.<sup>206</sup> While such an anomaly might stand out in an ethnographic context, since this exhibit is being presented through the framework of fine art, its primary focus (despite its title) does not always center on the Ainu cultural subject, but includes the artist himself as another subject in the display.

Since the collection itself is so small (despite being touted by the Vrubel as the largest collection of Hirasawa’s works in the world), it is crucial to pay close attention to the descriptions which have been appended to each piece as part of the audio tour – their role is to direct the attention of the audience to specific aspects of each piece as part of a dialogue separate from that of aesthetic appreciation. These descriptions rarely if ever refer to Hirasawa’s techniques or intentions, but focus on how each painting is illustrative of an aspect of Ainu culture and history and often provide additional historical details completely superfluous to the paintings themselves. For example, the description of a painting showing an Ainu signal fire to greet Japanese officials goes on to include details of the interaction which might have followed – village elders in “traditional costumes” greeting the officials with “submissiveness and loyalty,” the necessity of Ainu to greet Wajin with “humble bows” and “fulfil their wishes.”<sup>207</sup> The audio tour editorializes in significant ways regarding especially in relating images within Hirasawa’s paintings with other

---

<sup>206</sup> “Vystavka Aĭny – Zagadochnyĭ Mir. Bėdzan Hirasava – Damir Muratov,” Izi.Travel, accessed May 5, 2021.

<sup>207</sup> “Vystavka Aĭny – Zagadochnyĭ Mir. Bėdzan Hirasava – Damir Muratov,” Izi.Travel, accessed May 5, 2021.

historical traditions: a painting of Ainu men hunting is appended with the statement, “it is thought that winter clothing was borrowed by the Ainu from the peoples of Siberia,”<sup>208</sup> and a depiction of a sending-off ceremony for a bear is noted as “existing in the traditions of the peoples of Eurasia, the Amur region, and Sakhalin.”<sup>209</sup> In the case of clothing description, the agency of the sentence is left ambiguous by the word “*schitaiŭtsiā*” “it is thought” such that the claim of Ainu “borrowing” traditions of Siberian peoples – whether by cultural exchange or due to shared heritage – is presented as assumed fact rather than as a claim attributable to an individual. In Russian, the bear sending-off ceremony is called simply “*medvezhnyĭ prazdnik*” (note that a phonetic translation of the Ainu word for the ceremony *iomante* is never given in the audio tour, whereas some other Ainu words are given phonetically). Wherever bears are present in Hirasawa’s paintings, the corresponding audio description emphasizes the importance of the bear not only to Ainu culture but to nearby cultures not only within the historical range of Ainu groups but on the Eurasian continent as well, implying a shared spiritual heritage. Using parallel imagery, such as that of the bear, to draw connections between cultures is a powerful assimilatory tool to imbed a given culture in a certain context: in this case, the evocation of clothing similarities and the presence of the bear between Ainu culture and continental Siberian cultures implies that they ought to be regarded as members of the same broader cultural tradition, related closer to the Russian than to the Japanese cultural sphere (the stark contrast and even hostility between Wajin and Ainu is heavily implied in the descriptions of paintings with Japanese subjects, although the history of colonization Japan – or any Russian interactions with Ainu – are not explicitly mentioned in the historical addenda contained in the audio tour).

---

<sup>208</sup> “Vystavka Aĭny – Zagadochnyĭ Mir. Bėdzan Hirasava – Damir Muratov,” Izi.Travel, accessed May 5, 2021.

<sup>209</sup> “Vystavka Aĭny – Zagadochnyĭ Mir. Bėdzan Hirasava – Damir Muratov,” Izi.Travel, accessed May 5, 2021.

The second section of the exhibit is particularly remarkable because it contains no actual artifacts from or artistic depictions of Ainu culture. Titled “Ainu Traces in Siberia” (“*Aĩnskiĩ sled v sibirii*”), the section features metal belt buckles, pendants, and other small objects dated from the 5<sup>th</sup> through 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, unearthed from the gravesites of Siberian indigenous peoples in the Omsk Oblast. The section is prefaced in the audio tour with reference to the fact that the historical origins of Ainu culture are not agreed upon by anthropologists (although official Ainu organizations make specific claims which ought to be heeded, as the next chapter will detail) and have been hypothesized to find root in continental Asia, North America, the Philippines and New Guinea; however “the majority of cultural parallels point to a connection between [the Ainu] people and ancient Siberia”<sup>210</sup> including the Nivkh, Nanai, Khanty, Mansi, Ude, Oroch and Ob-Ugrian peoples, which cultural parallels are centered primarily around the cult of the bear. This parallel is spotlighted on the basis that “in ancient societies mythology was the foundation of understanding the world,”<sup>211</sup> and therefore parallels in mythological imagery are indicative of parallel cultural foundations. This collection of items from ancient Omsk, as the audio tour explains, are “indirectly supporting the hypothesis, which agrees that in ancient history the Ainu had cultural contact with inhabitants of the mainland, or even themselves migrated to the islands from the territory of Eurasia.”<sup>212</sup> This hypothesis is also supported on a basis of racial essentialism in the introduction of the audio tour: “the Ainu differ strikingly from other peoples of the Far East,” the introduction notes. “They have big, blue eyes, straight facial features, a wealth of hair, and the men have full beards.”<sup>213</sup>

---

<sup>210</sup> “Vystava Aĩny – Zagadochnyi Mir. Bėdzan Hirasava – Damir Muratov,” Izi.Travel, accessed May 5, 2021.

<sup>211</sup> “Vystavka Aĩny – Zagadochnyi Mir. Bėdzan Hirasava – Damir Muratov,” Izi.Travel, accessed May 5, 2021.

<sup>212</sup> “Vystavka Aĩny – Zagadochnyi Mir. Bėdzan Hirasava – Damir Muratov,” Izi.Travel, accessed May 5, 2021.

<sup>213</sup> “Vystavka Aĩny – Zagadochnyi Mir. Bėdzan Hirasava – Damir Muratov,” Izi.Travel, accessed May 5, 2021.

The choice of which items have been included in this section is explained to represent “the most common images, characteristic of the peoples of Siberia, and of the Ainu,” namely “the bear, eagle and snake.”<sup>214</sup> Of the items displayed in the online gallery, eight pieces depict (or are presumed to depict) bears, three depict eagles, and two depict snakes. In the descriptions of both pieces depicting snakes, the parallel between Siberian and Ainu culture is drawn not based upon the specific mythological function of the snake but on its presence in certain situations – for example, its relevance to notions of the underworld that manifested in Siberian cultures as ghosts of the dead appearing with limbs made of snakes but in Ainu culture as a god of the underworld.<sup>215</sup> This could be seen as more coincidental due to the ground habitat of the snake than evidential of descendancy (particularly since official Ainu organizations represent their own mythology quite differently), and indeed the audio tour acknowledges that similar occurrences of animist mythological imagery are present all over the world without necessarily indicating common origin,<sup>216</sup> but the explicit connection between Ainu and Siberian mythological imagery is purported nonetheless within the exhibit. In the case of the bear, descriptions of artifacts depicting (or assumed to depict) bears include detailed accounts of the role of the bear in the mythology of various Siberian tribes but rarely if at all allude to the animal’s significance in Ainu mythology aside from the classic example of the “bear festival” (“*medvezhnyĭ prazdnik*”),<sup>217</sup> used in the context of the exhibit to refer to any ritual sacrifice of a bear (although the Ainu ritual *iomante* could refer, depending upon region, to the sacrifice of other animals). This section of the exhibit is functionally similar to the “Our Exchange” portion of the permanent exhibit at the National Ainu Museum in that it attempts to highlight similarities between Ainu culture and the cultures of

---

<sup>214</sup> “Vystavka Aĭny – Zagadochnyĭ Mir. Bėdzan Hirasava – Damir Muratov,” Izi.Travel, accessed May 5, 2021.

<sup>215</sup> “Vystavka Aĭny – Zagadochnyĭ Mir. Bėdzan Hirasava – Damir Muratov,” Izi.Travel, accessed May 5, 2021.

<sup>216</sup> “Vystavka Aĭny – Zagadochnyĭ Mir. Bėdzan Hirasava – Damir Muratov,” Izi.Travel, accessed May 5, 2021.

<sup>217</sup> “Vystavka Aĭny – Zagadochnyĭ Mir. Bėdzan Hirasava – Damir Muratov,” Izi.Travel, accessed May 5, 2021.

neighboring indigenous peoples; however, instead of being predicated on mutual exchange it depicts a unidirectional flow of cultural imagery from the Eurasian continent to the islands to its east. Moreover, the imagery represented in “Ainu Traces in Siberia” shows in concrete items only one side of the cultural transaction – the supposed reception of these cultural characteristics by the Ainu people are only referenced in the captions of the exhibit.

The third and final section of “Ainu: Mysterious World” is a collection of paintings by Damir Muratov, a modern Russian artist who was educated at the Omsk State Pedagogical University and whose works are housed in museums throughout Russia. The series of twelve paintings, completed in 2008 and titled “OkeAin” or “Footsteps in the Ocean” (“*OkeAin, ili sledy v okeane*”) – note that “OkeAin” is a portmanteau of the words *ocean* and *Ainu* in Russian – is based directly on the twelve respective watercolors of Hirasawa Byouzan that constitute the first section of the exhibit. The image of feet and footsteps stand out as the most prominent theme across Muratov’s paintings; when viewed as a series, the effect is one of a trail winding through the paintings and through history itself through the sense of the footstep as an index of an individual’s impact on a broader space, and indeed this interpretation is recommended by the introductory description of the exhibit and by Muratov himself, a quote from whom is included in that same introduction.<sup>218</sup> Throughout the series, images of human feet are interwoven with the feet of animals, especially bears and fish, and represent different relationships between social groups: for example, the painting “Meeting” (“*Vstrecha*”) shows the foot of a bear and a white foot with a red circle (the Japanese flag) curled around each other like the yin and yang symbol, against a blue background representing the ocean, as symbolic of contact between Wajin society and Ainu Society (note that the Ainu element is represented as inhuman and specifically through

---

<sup>218</sup> “Vystavka Ainy – Zagadochnyĭ Mir. Bėdzan Hirasava – Damir Muratov,” Izi.Travel, accessed May 5, 2021.

the vehicle of the bear). This painting is based off Hirasawa’s “Uimamu – Ritual Meeting with the [Matsumae] Lords” (“*Uimamu – ritual’naïa vstrecha s knîazem*”), which depicts a line of Ainu elders with their heads bowed, posed in front of a curtain emblazoned with the Matsumae crest (“*gerb*”).<sup>219</sup>



“Meeting,” Damir Muratov, & “Uimamu – Ritual Meeting with the Lords,” Hirasawa Byouzan.

The use of animal and other natural imagery to signify the Ainu cultural space is a common motif among Muratov’s paintings, clearly visible not only in “Meeting” but also in “Forest” (“*Les*”) based on Hirasawa’s “Fishing for the Trumpeter<sup>220</sup> at Hiru” (“*Lovliâ trubacha v KHiru*”) where human feet are attached to bodies made of trees and plants, and in “Kuril Islands” (“*Kuril’skie ostrova*”) based on Hirasawa’s “Waiting for the Arrival of Boats with Japanese” (“*Ozhidanie pribytiâ lodki s îapontsamî*”), where the volcanic mountain in the background of Hirasawa’s painting is reinterpreted as the bodies of Ainu men smoking pipes, whose long hair and beards mimic the texture of the mountain rock and whose pipe-smoke mirrors the smoke rising from the mountain itself.<sup>221</sup> “Kuril Islands” is notably the only occasion on which the Kuril Island

<sup>219</sup> “Vystavka Aïny – Zagadochnyï Mir. Bëdzan Hirasava – Damir Muratov,” Izi.Travel, accessed May 5, 2021.

<sup>220</sup> According to the description of the painting, a “trumpeter” is a type of edible mollusk (“5”).

<sup>221</sup> “Vystavka Aïny – Zagadochnyï Mir. Bëdzan Hirasava – Damir Muratov,” Izi.Travel, accessed May 5, 2021.

territories are referenced in the exhibit. Muratov, however, has not chosen the Kuril Islands as the geographical locus of Ainu culture, but the ocean itself: this claim is most visible in the painting “Footsteps in the Ocean” (“*Sledy v okeane*”), which depicts four different feet with mixed animal and human characteristics against a blue ocean background.



*“Footsteps in the Ocean,” Damir Muratov.*

According to the description of the painting, the feet as spaces in contrast to the ocean represent islands, the bear claws represent “savagery” (“*dikost*”), the patterns drawn onto the feet (resembling traditional Ainu embroidery) represent humanity an culture, and the fur on the feet represents “the beast” (“*zver*”).<sup>222</sup> More than any other painting in the series (especially because it bears the same title as the series itself) this piece is illustrative of Muratov’s relationship with the Ainu cultural space, filtered through the works of Hirasawa and embellished with notions of indigenous cultures as closer to the natural world; his presentation of the Ainu cultural space is grounded in cultural relationship with certain animals as food and objects of worship (fish and bears), and the color blue as a sign of both the life-sustaining ocean and of the aesthetic of traditional Ainu clothing and embroidery. Muratov has said (in the quote which is included in the

<sup>222</sup> “Vystavka Ainy – Zagadochnyĭ Mir. Bėdzan Hirasava – Damir Muratov,” Izi.Travel, accessed May 5, 2021.

exhibit section’s introduction) that he did not intend to “go deep into ethnography” of the Ainu people (“*vdavat’siâ vglub’ étnografii*”) and rather focused on “the slivers which floated on the surface” (“*shchepki, kotorye plavali po poverkhnosti*”), referring to the most easily accessible images of Ainu culture including “clothing, hunting, fishing, family, daily life and holidays” (“*odezhda, okhota, rybolovstvo, sem’iâ, budni i prazdniki*”).<sup>223</sup> His paintings are, therefore, not representations but *representations of representations*: they highlight the elements of Ainu culture which stood out to him from Hirasawa’s works, which were themselves secondary accounts of Ainu culture. As one would expect from an art museum, the representation of Ainu culture through Muratov’s work is purely aesthetic – such a representation, however, no matter detached it is intended to be from realities of Ainu culture, produces an essentialized version of the Ainu cultural space that is deprived of agency and converted simply into images for museum display.

“Ainu – Mysterious World” is a unique case study in this thesis because it is the only exhibit supplemented not only by online resources but also by a printed text. As part of the project called “First Publication: Museum Rarities” (“*Pervaia publikatsiia: muzeinye raritety*”) initiated by the publishing company Interros (*Interros*), the Ainu exhibit at the Omsk Oblast Museum of Fine Art (*Omsk Sensation*, 8) was chosen alongside other exhibits on unfamous and under-researched topics to be converted into a series of print books, out of which this particular book is titled *Omsk Sensation* (“*Omskaia sensatsiia*”).<sup>224</sup> The 92-page book is divided into seven main chapters, prefaced by a statement from the head of Interros Irina Ostarkova and appended by short descriptions of the Omsk Oblast and Russian Ethnographic museums, from both of which institutions the information presented in the book has been gathered. The first three chapters,

<sup>223</sup> “Vystavka Ainy – Zagadochnyi Mir. Bédzan Hirasava – Damir Muratov,” Izi.Travel, accessed May 5, 2021.

<sup>224</sup> *Omskaia Sensatsiia* (Izdatel’skaia Programma Interrosa, 2008), 8.

written by the Omsk exhibit curator Galina Sevostyanova, the director of the Omsk museum Boris Konikov, and Japanese “Ainu specialist” (“*aīnoved*”) Ogihara Shikio, contain an introduction to the Omsk museum exhibit but focus mainly on more in-depth exploration of the biography and art of Hirasawa Byouzan; those chapters are followed by full-page prints of each of Hirasawa’s twelve watercolors and descriptions for each, which notably differ from those in the audio tour of the exhibit by their increased specificity regarding Ainu language and custom and less emphasis on the aesthetic parallels between Ainu and other Siberian indigenous cultures. This is not to say that explicit comparing and contrasting is entirely absent from the text: the book’s description of the Ainu ceremonial dance *tapkal* notes that “this custom is common to the Ainu and to some peoples of Siberia (Japanese mass dances are organized differently)”<sup>225</sup> and other descriptions focus on the colonial relationship maintained by the Meiji government over the Ainu, most visibly in the descriptions of “*Uimamu* – Ritual Meeting of the [Matsumae] Lord” which describes the ceremonial process by which Ainu elders “paid tribute” (“*stali platit’ kniāziū dan*”) to the Matsumae clan,<sup>226</sup> and “Smallpox Vaccination,” which notes how in response to smallpox outbreaks among Hokkaido Ainu “the Japanese government, troubled by the situation, began to show concern in their subjects (*prodannykh*).”<sup>227</sup> Additionally, emphasis is drawn in the description of the painting “Bear Festival” to the relevance of “worship of the bear” to Ainu culture and to “the majority of the peoples of Eurasia.”<sup>228</sup>

The last three chapters turn to focus on Ainu culture itself; the chapter immediately following the watercolor prints and descriptions explicitly focuses on how Hirasawa’s work

---

<sup>225</sup> *Omskāiā Sensātsiā* (Izdatel’skāiā Programma Interrosa, 2008), 36.

<sup>226</sup> *Omskāiā Sensātsiā* (Izdatel’skāiā Programma Interrosa, 2008), 38.

<sup>227</sup> *Omskāiā Sensātsiā* (Izdatel’skāiā Programma Interrosa, 2008), 50.

<sup>228</sup> *Omskāiā Sensātsiā* (Izdatel’skāiā Programma Interrosa, 2008), 48.

highlights aspects of Ainu culture, and the last two chapters offer additional imagery on the Ainu cultural space sourced primarily from the material and black-and-white photography collections of the Russian Ethnographic Museum, with two pages of photographs from the Museum of Ainu Culture in Shiraoi, Hokkaido. The material items photographed for the book from the Russian Ethnographic Museum include clothing, jewelry and hunting tools accented with page-wide collages of close-up views of specific fabric patterns. The photographs selected are almost exclusively portraiture, foregrounding Ainu individuals in static poses, wearing traditional clothing and interacting with traditional environments – i.e. sitting around a bearskin during the “bear festival” or posing for the camera with the items they carried on full display. One photograph stands out not only because it has an entire page to itself, but because it depicts an Ainu man standing facing away from the camera so that the grass-woven pack on his back is fully visible; he is posed with his bow held far to the side of his body, also to ensure its visibility to the camera.<sup>229</sup> This photograph draws into sharp relief the objectification of the Ainu body and appearance as a facet of material culture as portrayed by this photoset. The goal of these photos is not necessarily to highlight the humanity of Ainu individuals but to exoticize and present them as specimens for ethnographic analysis alongside their nonliving cultural symbols, which representation is only exacerbated by the fact that the people in the photographs are identified only as “woman,” “man,” “hunter,” divorced from individual names and identities. The much smaller two-page spread of photos from the Museum of Ainu Culture in Shiraoi provide an alternate perspective: the subjects of the photographs are in motion and unposed – in other words, the photographs are candid – and show hunting and ceremonial tools in use rather than as static artifacts detached from everyday reality.<sup>230</sup> Although individual names are not identified in the captions of the Shiraoi photographs

---

<sup>229</sup> *Omskāia Sensatsiā* (Izdatel'skāia Programma Interrosa, 2008), 86.

<sup>230</sup> *Omskāia Sensatsiā* (Izdatel'skāia Programma Interrosa, 2008), 88-89.

either, the movement and expression of the photo subjects creates a stronger sense of human connection between the reader of *Omsk Sensation* and the Ainu cultural subject than do the photos from the Russian Ethnographic Museum.

In considering this museum exhibit as a whole, it would be remiss not to pay particular attention to the naming of its various aspects. The official title of the exhibit is “Ainu: Mysterious World: Byouzan Hirasawa – Damir Muratov” (*Aĩny: zagadochnyĩ mir: Bėdzan Khirasava – Damir Muratov*), which is noteworthy for two reasons. First, the association of *zagadochnyĩ* meaning “mysterious, enigmatic, inscrutable” with the Ainu cultural space serves not only to exoticize that space to render it as an object of study which may become known through the museum space – an ultimately possessive act. Second, the subtitle connecting Hirasawa Byouzan and Damir Muratov not only delimits the scope of the exhibit chronologically to specific artistic representations of Ainu culture instead of Ainu culture itself (in other words, beginning in the 1860s, which is also the time period in which the Japanese Meiji government formed and began to exert significant colonial influence over Ainu people, and as such is the “starting point” of Ainu history from a colonial perspective) but also foregrounds two artists who are necessarily detached from the Ainu cultural space – one is Japanese, the other Russian and whose work only connects with the Ainu cultural space vicariously through the work of the Japanese artist – as the most important subjects within the museological context. Both of these aspects function to minimize the agency of the Ainu cultural voice in this particular museum representation. It is not clear whether the names of the individual watercolors by Hirasawa, whose titles are given only in Russian in both the exhibit audio tour and *Omsk Sensation*, were created by Hirasawa himself and translated into Russian or designated at a later date; the same ambiguity applies to the title of the series of watercolors in

Russian as “Life and Customs of the Ainu” (*“Zhizn’ i obychai’ aĭnov”*), which is also used as the title of the first section of the Omsk exhibit.

The title of the second section of the exhibit, translated here as “Ainu Traces in Siberia” makes particular use of the Russian word “sled” (“sled,” plural “sledy” which translates as either “trail, trace, sign” or more literally as “footstep,” the invocation of which word suggests a thematic parallel between the “sledy” of Ainu culture in Siberia and their “sledy” in the ocean as implied by the alternate title of Damir Muratov’s “OkeAin” painting series as “Footsteps in the Ocean” (*“Sledy v okeane”*). The titles of these last two sections (the last of which was created by Muratov but was nonetheless retained by the museum as the overall title of the section, and indeed was parroted in the naming of the second section) function in the context of this exhibit as locational identifiers of the Ainu cultural space both geographically and historically. Footsteps in the “ocean” centers Ainu cultural influence not on any specific land territory, but within the bodies of water that exist between them – liminal and primal spaces which existed before and continue to exist in detachment from national spheres of influence. In this case, even the association of Ainu culture with islands instead of ocean would have shifted its location to the island territories over which Russia and Japan have been vying for centuries, necessarily complicating the narrative both of those territories and of Ainu history, which would grate against the notion of Ainu culture as a “mysterious” Other world. Meanwhile “footsteps” in Siberia locates the historical lineage of Ainu culture on the Eurasian continent, an assertion which remains the most prominent thesis of the exhibit. This association of Siberian and Ainu culture via the aesthetic properties of archeological artifacts unearthed in Omsk, via biological essentialist arguments, and via interpretations of Hirasawa Byouzan’s paintings which depict Ainu and Japanese interaction as a locus of conflict rather than of convergence, serve to support this thesis. It is not likely, however, that this

representation of the Ainu is indicative of an attempt, or trend towards attempting, to locate the Ainu cultural space outside of the Japanese sphere or inside the Russian sphere for a political purpose: it is not explicitly correlated with the international issue of the Kuril Islands or the place of the Ainu people in that dispute (although lack of intentional correlation does not dismiss its potential implications regarding the dispute). A more compelling explanation is that location of the Ainu cultural space outside of Japan and inside Siberia gives this particular Omsk museum authority to tell this particular story. Hirasawa's watercolors are housed in Omsk; the artifacts in the second section of the exhibit were all collected from the Omsk Oblast; Damir Muratov is an Omsk artist who reinterpreted the themes of those Hirasawa paintings which have already been established as a component of Omsk's artistic history by being collected there. It is for that selfsame reason that the title of the supplementary book is *Omsk Sensation*: the "sensation" is not the Ainu cultural subject itself but its relationship to Omsk, and the qualification of the Omsk museum to portray that subject. If Clifford's definition of a majority museum includes the prerequisite of "the sense of owning a collection that is a treasure for the city, for national patrimony, and for humanity" (Clifford, 225), then the Omsk Oblast Museum of Fine Art firmly grounds itself within this categorization by presenting the paintings of Hirasawa and Muratov, as well as the cultural subject those paintings depict, as a property and prize of Omsk.

## Chapter Four: Sites of Ainu Cultural Display

### Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum

The last two case studies cannot be fully represented by the label of museum – they are comprised of entire towns which exist simultaneously as living spaces and artifacts for a tourist gaze, blurring the line between the museological and quotidian. Where Upopoy contrived to fabricate a space designed to function simultaneously as communal and museological, the liminality of the towns of Biratori and Shiranuka have been cultivated by decades of local history as towns with high population densities of self-identified Ainu (note that statistics on Ainu population are derived from the 2013 Hokkaido Survey on Ainu Living Conditions, since Ainu are not officially recognized by the Japanese census).<sup>231</sup> The town of Biratori, located in the Hidaka subprefecture of Hokkaido and whose population is comprised of thirty-eight percent self-identified Ainu, the highest density in the country, is also the birthplace of Kayano Shigeru, the first Ainu to be elected to the Diet of Japan and lifelong Ainu cultural activist, and is the site of the Nibutani dam project involved in the landmark court decision that Ainu tangible and intangible cultural property must be protected under Japanese law.<sup>232</sup> The Biratori Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum (*Biratori nibutani ainu bunka hakubutsukan*), the focus of this section, represents the largest collection of material artifacts housed in the town, but even by its own reckoning is merely a part of the larger project of preserving and perpetuating the culture of the Ainu native to Biratori's Sarugawa region.<sup>233</sup>

---

<sup>231</sup> "Actual Living Conditions of the Hokkaido Ainu," Ainu Association of Hokkaido, accessed May 3, 2021, <https://www.ainu-assn.or.jp/english/life.html>.

<sup>232</sup> Zachary Browning, "A Comparative Analysis: Legal and Historical Analysis of Protecting Indigenous Cultural Rights Involving Land Disputes in Japan, New Zealand, and Hawaii," *Washington Law Journal* 28 no. 1 (2019).

<sup>233</sup> "About Us," Biratori Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum, accessed May 5, 2021, <http://www.town.biratori.hokkaido.jp/biratori/nibutani/about/>.

Information related to this institution and the surrounding town has been sourced mainly from its extensive website, but also from the gracious responses by one of the museum's curators to some of my own questions. The complete text of this interview, translated from Japanese, is available in Appendix II. The website automatically displays most titles and texts in both Japanese and English, although the English translations are present more to the extent that an English-speaking site visitor would be able to navigate to important information on the page such as museum location and opening hours, basic exhibit layout, and the names of other tourist attractions in town; the site also boasts a large collection of recorded and written Ainu literature and commentaries, which are available in audio form in Ainu and Japanese, and in transcribed form in Japanese and Ainu transliterated into both katakana and Roman letters. The language accessibility of the physical museum is similar in its primary focus on Japanese as the language of display. Electronic resources (subtitles, QR codes) and pamphlets are also available in English, Korean, and Chinese (traditional and simplified), but text-to-voice capabilities are available only in Japanese and English, and Russian is noted to have minimal support in the museum.<sup>234</sup>

The organization of the museum's website reflects its self-positioning within the broader fabric of the town. Other than basic information regarding museum access and news bulletins, the website includes detailed information on the material composition of its exhibits, its own explanatory section on Ainu culture, information on its "experiential learning" classes, a sightseeing guide for local Ainu restaurants and shops, and a list of other "important cultural landscapes" in the region including other museums, monuments and memorials, facilities related to the Nibutani dam project, and natural landscapes which hold significance in local Ainu mythology. The site's structure, then, is comparable to that of Upopoy for its balance between

---

<sup>234</sup> Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum Curator, email message to author, March 24, 2021.

explicating the museum itself and situating the museum in the context of the surrounding cultural space (although Upopoy's cultural space is manufactured, while the cultural landscape of Biratori is organic). What the Nibutani Ainu Museum website has that Upopoy does not, however, is a vast repository of information on local Ainu culture: Nibutani is not under the same pressure to act as a representative of the entire Ainu ethnicity to Japan and the world at large, instead representing local culture to an audience that is at its widest scope domestic and at its smallest scope local. Because of this, the Nibutani Ainu Museum and the cultural sites in the vicinity can be best described as catering to a "local" audience (telling stories of self to self), since even for Japanese visitors the objects and sites on display are not so much representations of an "other" but of participants in the cultural fabric of the region.

The message from the Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum director to visitors, which is published on the museum website, invites tourists to visit the "street of artisans" ("*takumi no michi*"), established in 2011 as a tourist center and hub for the passing down of Ainu craft knowledge.<sup>235</sup> The "sightseeing guide" included on the museum website lists five shops which not only sell Ainu crafts such as woodcarvings, embroidery, and woven bark textiles ("*attus*"), but also provide crafting demonstrations and lessons to tourists for a fee.<sup>236</sup> Also listed are several restaurants which serve local food (but also tourist favorites like ramen and pizza); one restaurant's description advertises "traditional Ainu lunch sets" ("*dentoutekina ainu ryouri no bentou*") with seasonal ingredients, available by reservation only.<sup>237</sup> Additionally, visitors are invited to stay at the local *onsen* (hot springs hotel) featuring rooms decorated with Ainu crafts, or at the Nibutani

---

<sup>235</sup> "About Us," Biratori Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum, accessed May 5, 2021, <http://www.town.biratori.hokkaido.jp/biratori/nibutani/about/>.

<sup>236</sup> "Sightseeing Guide," Biratori Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum, accessed May 5, 2021, <http://www.town.biratori.hokkaido.jp/biratori/nibutani/sightseeing/>.

<sup>237</sup> "Sightseeing Guide," Biratori Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum, accessed May 5, 2021, <http://www.town.biratori.hokkaido.jp/biratori/nibutani/sightseeing/>.

Family Land campground and golf course.<sup>238</sup> These locations clearly serve a purpose that is as much entrepreneurial as cultural – like the shops and restaurants in Upopoy’s Gateway Square, they capitalize on the tourist aspect of the museum more than they participate in the project of cultural revitalization. The integration of Ainu cultural revitalization with the tourism industry can be considered problematic in the sense that cultural activity is given an external, financial incentive that drags it outside the sphere of agency of members of that culture; from an alternative perspective, the marketability of Ainu cultural imagery, especially that produced by Ainu people and not reproduced for museum gift shops around the world, can be a powerful step towards broader recognition and vitality in modern economic context.

Additionally, the website advertises “experiential learning” opportunities (“*taiken gakushuu*”) including lectures as well as workshops for woodcarving, embroidery, dance, and *mukkuri* performance.<sup>239</sup> While these are also commercial endeavors, they also provide economic incentive for Ainu to teach and in doing so retain and pass on cultural knowledge. Recall that the case study of Urespa cultural club in Sapporo conducted by Uzawa Kanako espoused the value of sharing Ainu culture not only among self-identifying ethnic Ainu but interested ethnic Japanese as well, not only as a production of cultural visibility and vitality in terms of politics of representation, but as a way to ensure the survival of Ainu cultural practices as the previous keepers of such knowledge – Ainu elders – die out. It is not fair, then, to dismiss any commercial venture which shares Ainu culture as merely the commodification of cultural properties, but an agent in cultural preservation and reproduction – a facet of modern life as much as it is a facet of the museum gift

---

<sup>238</sup> “Sightseeing Guide,” Biratori Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum, accessed May 5, 2021, <http://www.town.biratori.hokkaido.jp/biratori/nibutani/sightseeing/>.

<sup>239</sup> “Experiential Learning,” Biratori Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum, accessed May 5, 2021, <http://www.town.biratori.hokkaido.jp/biratori/nibutani/learning/>.

shop. Still, the museum website makes careful distinction between tourist attractions such as those listed above and sites with cultural relevance, which are listed under a separate tab titled “important cultural landscapes” (“*juuyou bunkateki keikan shoukai*”). The sites distinguished as such include museums, particularly the Kayano Shigeru Nibutani Ainu Museum and an outdoor model *kotan* located adjacent to the Nibutani Ainu Culture Museum, buildings related to the Nibutani dam project which featured in the 1997 landmark decision on Ainu cultural properties such as the dam management office and Saru River headworks (and the Historical Museum of the Saru River, which was opened the year after the dam’s completion and holds artifacts excavated from the area), and natural spaces – sections of river, rock formations, etc. – which bear significance in local Ainu mythology or continue to serve a ceremonial or utilitarian purpose. The largest of these spaces is a 210-hectare (approximately 518-acre) *iwor*, historical Ainu hunting grounds which are now preserved for hunting and gathering using traditional methods.

In another striking difference from the Upopoy website, the Nibutani site’s section “About Ainu Culture” (“*ainu bunka ni tsuite*”) is far from a basic overview of language, lifestyles, and faith. Instead, the page links to specific examples of tangible and intangible culture: descriptions of different types of Ainu folk literature with a vast catalogue of recorded examples, a list of restoration projects focused on the local *iwor* (Ainu territory, including hunting grounds and village areas), introductions to the two craft styles native to the region called “Nibutani-ita” (a wooden tray inlaid with specific patterns) and “Nibutani-attus” (a textile made from the bark of a tree native to the Nibutani region).<sup>240</sup> The section also includes information on those items and practices which have been designated Tangible or Intangible Folk-Cultural Property by the

---

<sup>240</sup> “About Ainu Culture,” Biratori Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum, accessed May 5, 2021, <http://www.town.biratori.hokkaido.jp/biratori/nibutani/culture/>.

Japanese government. The intangible property is comprised of regional Ainu folk dances, while the tangible property is made up of the 1,121 items collected by Kayano Shigeru from Nibutani and the surrounding areas, 919 of which are housed in the Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum and the other 202 of which are located at the nearby Kayano Shigeru Nibutani Ainu Museum.<sup>241</sup> These items are exhaustively catalogued in the Important Tangible Folk Property Database, accessible only in Japanese. Thus the narrative of Ainu history and culture presented by the Nibutani Ainu Museum corresponds more closely to Clifford's definition of the tribal museum than of a majority museum: by honing in on the particulars of the region rather than laying sweeping generalities of Ainu culture, "the notion of a unified or linear History (whether of the nation, of humanity, or of art) is challenged by local, community histories."<sup>242</sup> Furthermore, as evidenced by the previously mentioned linguistic accessibility of the website and museum as well as the restricted nature of the items displayed in the exhibit and surrounding area, the intended audience – both Ainu and Wajin – is local rather than national (or indeed, in the case of Upopoy, international). This version of locality stands in stark contrast with that of "Ainu – Mysterious World" in Omsk, Russia, which tells stories of self to self through the vehicle of the other, by representing a completely closed dialogic space of self *to* self *about* self. Unlike the "street of artisans" and their myriad Ainu-themed restaurants and attractions, these "important cultural landscapes" which dot the town and the tangible and intangible folk cultural properties exhibited in the museum and catalogued online serve a purpose which is primarily quotidian and local: the connections to these items and sites, despite their positioning as museum artifacts, remains intact for local Ainu, and so while the cultural subject may viewed as an artifact by the outsider, their significance as works of art,

---

<sup>241</sup> "Exhibitions," Biratori Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum, accessed May 5, 2021, <http://www.town.biratori.hokkaido.jp/biratori/nibutani/collection/>.

<sup>242</sup> James Clifford, "Four Northwest Coast Museums: Travel Reflections," in *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 225-226.

utilitarian tools, sites of memory and continued function is realized by the local Ainu population and the wajin with whom they coexist.

The Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum itself is divided into four main exhibition halls which branch from a central stage area used for oral literature performances;<sup>243</sup> the halls themselves are somewhat organized by spheres of life – home and daily life, means of production, religion, art – but one of the museum’s curators explained in email correspondence with me that the exhibit organization is designed to reflect “the life cycle of a person” (*hito no isshou*).<sup>244</sup> The first hall is titled “Ainu Zone: The Ainu Way of Life” (*Ainu: hitobito no kurashi*)<sup>245</sup>, and features “everyday items used in child rearing, eating, and other aspects of life;” the second hall is “Kamuy Zone: Dramas of the Gods” (*Kamuy: kamigami no roman*), which contains material components of Ainu religious ceremonies as well as audiovisual displays of “*yukar* (heroic epics), *kamuy yukar* (myths) and *uwepeker* (folktales),” some of which stories are preserved only within the museum.<sup>246</sup> Similar to the “Our Language” section of the National Ainu Museum at Upopoy, the layout of the “Kamuy Zone” is centered around a model hearth, emphasizing it as the locus of storytelling rather than of Ainu language as a whole. The third hall “Moshir Zone: Blessings of the Earth” (*Moshiri: daiichi no megumi*) aggregates the tools of the adult spheres of hunting, agriculture, and finally funeral ceremonies; this hall also features an Ainu canoe (at this point a clear staple in exhibitions

---

<sup>243</sup> “About Us,” Biratori Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum, accessed May 5, 2021, <http://www.town.biratori.hokkaido.jp/biratori/nibutani/about/>.

<sup>244</sup> Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum Curator, email message to author, March 24, 2021.

<sup>245</sup> Regarding the naming of these exhibit halls: the word “zone” is represented only in the website’s English versions of the hall titles. The English translations provided in this text are those used by the museum website, rather than direct translations of the site’s Japanese text.

<sup>246</sup> “About Us,” Biratori Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum, accessed May 5, 2021, <http://www.town.biratori.hokkaido.jp/biratori/nibutani/about/>.

on Ainu culture located in Japan) to iconize transport infrastructure, as well as contemporary works created by local Ainu craftsmen.<sup>247</sup>

The fourth and last hall of the main exhibit, however, stands out as unique to any of the thematic groupings chosen in Upopoy: it is “Moreu Zone: A Tradition of Figurative Art” (“*Moreu: zoukei no denshou*”). This hall explicitly positions Ainu *moreu* (traditional curved patterns) as art rather than artifact, emphasizing the beauty (“*bi*”) of the displayed pieces rather than their function by framing them within a completely separate hall from Ainu crafts with utilitarian purposes in the “Moshir Zone.”<sup>248</sup> The “Moreu Zone” in particular is framed not as an ethnographical exhibit but a fine art exhibit, wherein the aesthetic properties of the displayed items are framed in detachment from their cultural functions. This notion is heightened by the selection of photos included in the “Gallery” page of the museum website, which are primarily composed of highly detailed photographs of individual items taken from such a close angle that the identity and function of the items are often lost. These gallery images, then, act as metonymies of the displayed objects which foreground craftsmanship and artistry over cultural purpose. However, this is not to compare the framing of art in the “tribal” museum paradigm with that of the “majority” paradigm – it is crucial to note that while in a majority museum the framing of indigenous pieces as and alongside other “fine art” necessitates the removal of those pieces from their cultural context in order to place them into a transnational canon; the Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum, on the other hand, presents certain pieces through an artistic lens but surrounds those pieces with the cultural information necessary to understand them as unique cultural productions in addition to things of

---

<sup>247</sup> “About Us,” Biratori Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum, accessed May 5, 2021, <http://www.town.biratori.hokkaido.jp/biratori/nibutani/about/>.

<sup>248</sup> “About Us,” Biratori Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum, accessed May 5, 2021, <http://www.town.biratori.hokkaido.jp/biratori/nibutani/about/>.

beauty. There is, in effect, a double lens with which to view the contents of the fourth exhibit hall – or, more accurately, a third lens which eschews the perspectives of either. Crucial to Clifford’s definition of the tribal museum is that “the art/culture distinction is often irrelevant, or positively subverted,”<sup>249</sup> and indeed it is the subversion which exists within the liminality of the space created by the Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum (and by its surrounding sites) which distinguishes it from Upopoy, where that sense of liminality is a fiction manufactured into the fabric of the museum space rather than predicated upon the inherent contradiction of items which exist both for everyday and display.

Rather than charting the path of the life cycle as in the physical halls, the online gallery is broken down into narrow functional categories: clothing items, eating habits, production and subsistence, home life, “ethnic knowledge” (“*minzoku chishiki*”), transportation, social life, entertainment and play, life cycle, and finally faith.<sup>250</sup> The sets of 2-9 images within each category are labeled in Ainu language (transliterated into katakana) with additional explanations in Japanese. These thematic divisions are not notable in themselves – they resemble the categories used by many ethnographic museums including Upopoy and the Russian Ethnographic Museum, albeit with greater local specificity – but they bear mentioning not only because they differ from the organization of the physical museum but also for their overall deemphasis on Ainu spirituality in comparison to daily life. In depicting a foreign cultural subject, ethnographic museums tend to display items as icons of those cultural properties which are the most exotic with respect to the viewing culture (or, as may be remembered from Ivan Karp’s framework, the most similar, so that

---

<sup>249</sup> James Clifford, “Four Northwest Coast Museums: Travel Reflections,” in *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 225-226.

<sup>250</sup> “Exhibitions,” Biratori Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum, accessed May 5, 2021, <http://www.town.biratori.hokkaido.jp/biratori/nibutani/collection/>.

the audience can identify with the museum subject), and in the case of the Ainu cultural subject, spirituality is the topic most frequently highlighted for comparison as “exotic” in both the Japanese and Russian museums discussed in this text. However, the primacy of spirituality as the icon of Ainu cultural exoticism is noticeably absent in both the online exhibition organization and in the exhibit halls themselves. One of the four physical halls is, indeed, titled “Kamuy Zone,” but its focus is not so much material images of religion as it is on folktales and mythology – recall that the “Kamuy Zone” is organized around a model hearth, transforming the hall from a site of inspection to one of explicit conversation with the cultural subject. That is, the hall’s focus is not on spiritual materials as icons of the Other but on storytelling as a single facet within the domestic sphere of Ainu culture.

“We inherit Ainu culture and seek to create new traditions” (*“gendai ni Ainu bunka wo uketsugi, aratana dentou no souzou wo mezashimasu”*) is the tagline for the Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum’s website, and it is about this phrase that I was most curious in the formulation of questions which I was able to ask one of the museum’s curators. It is easy to approach the study of this museum, or any of the museums in this study, from the perspective of the “viewer” within the museum triad, but as was emphasized in the discourse over Ainu representation in Minpaku (see the Literature Review section of this thesis), the intent of the “exhibitor” in the museum triad plays a role just as crucial as audience interpretation in arriving at a respectful depiction of Ainu culture in museological context (as opposed to the interpretational paradigm of understanding ethnic representation espoused by Niessen). Besides questions regarding museum accessibility and intended audience, I asked the Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum curator about what makes this institution unique from others which display the Ainu cultural subject, and more broadly what purpose ethnographic museums displaying Ainu culture serve in modern Japan. Should an Ainu

cultural museum promote living culture or preserve historical culture (*Gendaitekina bunka wo sokushin suru no ka, rekishitekina bunka wo hozon suru no ka*)? According to the curator, living and historical culture ought to both be depicted in museum context, but the act of separating the two presents a logical fallacy: “the perspectives located within the history of Ainu culture have not ceased to exist, but are also inherited in the present and continue into the future.”<sup>251</sup> Conceiving of Ainu culture as existing within two distinct chronological spaces – past and present -- implies a disjunction between the two, a temporary cultural stasis or even death before “revitalization.” The goal of the Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum is to eschew the notion of discontinuity within the Ainu cultural space, presenting that space instead as something extant and, most importantly, evolving. The “Moshir Zone” exhibit hall is a perfect example: traditional Ainu materials initially curated by Kayano Shigeru are displayed alongside craftwork produced by modern Ainu, creating a narrative that is not dependent on chronological history as it is on continuity within a given cultural sphere. Similarly, upon being asked to explain the tagline for the museum website, the curator remarked on both the preservation efforts with which the museum cooperates (Nibutani-Ita and Nibutani-Attus, tree planting, the “cultural environment conservation measures survey involved with the Saru river comprehensive development project”) as well as its involvement with “regional Ainu-related policies and residential initiatives.”<sup>252</sup>

Thus, the museum is at its core an active participant in the cultural life of Biratori town as much as it is a space for display – and what it displays cannot be conceived of as part of the past, but the material icons of the culture in which it participates. If the intended message of the Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum is to “inherit Ainu culture and seek to create new traditions,” then the

---

<sup>251</sup> Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum Curator, email message to author, March 24, 2021.

<sup>252</sup> Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum Curator, email message to author, March 24, 2021.

objects displayed in the museum, the museum itself, and the surrounding town all exist at the crossroads of “inherit” and “create,” representing the space which connects the “past” and “future” of Ainu culture into a single evolutionary timeline. This is more than a reaffirmation of Ainu cultural specificity in its historical form using the nostalgic idiom of display; it does not present a cultural ideal towards which contemporary Ainu strive to return, but a constantly changing cultural identity. In the case of the Ainu cultural subject, acknowledging cultural vitality by means of change instead of stasis comprises the oppositional narrative of Ainu cultural history.

### Ureshipa Shirarika

The last institution in this study falls only loosely within the category of museum in the sense that it retains display of a cultural subject as an aspect of its function. “Ureshipa Shirarika” is not an official organization, but a concept uniting several institutional bodies within the town of Shiranuka, Hokkaido – the Shiranuka Ainu Association, the Shiranuka Ainu Culture Preservation Society, and the local government of Shiranuka Town – with a goal of “community development by uniting the townspeople under the Ainu concept of ‘ureshipa,’ meaning ‘to grow together.’”<sup>253</sup> The building which serves as the heart of Ainu culture in the town is Ureshipa Chise (“grow together – house” in Ainu language)<sup>254</sup>, and indeed it also bears the most resemblance to a traditional museum for the purposes of this thesis, but as with the case of the Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum in Biratori, the spaces which have been designated as sites of cultural display are spread throughout the town of Shiranuka and challenge the traditional museological boundary

---

<sup>253</sup> “Ureshipa Shirarika,” Hokkaido Shiranuka, accessed 5 May, 2021, <https://www.shiranuka-ainu.jp/english/index.html>.

<sup>254</sup> “Ureshipa” may also be written as “urespa.” “Ureshipa” is used in this section because it is the romanization chosen by the website in its English-language format.

which frames the museum subject in isolation from living realities. The town name “Shiranuka” means “near a rocky shore” in Ainu language, and the entire town is recognized by its local government as an *iwor* (Ainu livelihood zone); indeed, the town was originally inhabited only by Ainu, and the arrival of its first inhabitant has been mythologized into a folktale accessible on the Ureshipa Shirarika website. It tells of an old Ainu man who, after walking for days, sat on the shore of the sea near the Shirarikappu (Shiranuka) river and watched the waves arriving at the shore. As he watched, the waves crashed again and again but failed to sweep away a piece of driftwood sitting above the tide line, then at last the driftwood was caught by the waves and disappeared. If the ocean was capable of surpassing his own limits, then so too were people – and the man decided to live in that area, becoming the first resident of Shiranuka.<sup>255</sup> This serves to underscore the deep overlap between the Ainu cultural space and the space inhabited by the town in memory and modern life – even areas which are not directly reserves for traditional or ceremonial purposes are equally important in formation of the geographical and cultural whole of the town. However, the town, its residents, rituals, and sites do not exist unobserved: not only does Ureshipa Shirarika manufacture a gaze from self to self that allows Ainu and wajin residents to view their own life and space as an audience, but it deliberately opens that gaze to outside audiences as well.

The heart of Shiranuka is Ureshipa Chise, the building which acts as the central gathering place for the town’s Ainu for traditional cultural events. This is not to say that the acting out traditional practices ought to be categorized as a display, or that Ainu ceremonies in the modern day can only be performative; this is far from the case: it is on the occasions when these events are

---

<sup>255</sup> “Ureshipa Shirarika,” Hokkaido Shiranuka, accessed 5 May, 2021, <https://www.shiranuka-ainu.jp/english/index.html>.

structured for observation and participation by audience members from other cultural paradigms that Ureshipa Chise takes on a museological quality. The building is comprised of a ceremony room complete with the hearth that would be located in the center of an Ainu *cise* (house), as well as a kitchen, seminar room, and “exhibition corner” which all double as sites of cultural practice and display. The kitchen is used not only to prepare food for ceremonies, but also to conduct Ainu cooking classes, and the lecture room serves as the location for hands-on workshops including “embroidery, *rimse* (dance), or *mukkuri* (mouth harp) performances” for visitors.<sup>256</sup> Pictures and video on the Ureshipa Shirarika website show events for which a large stage is constructed outside the building’s entrance for dance performances, as well as instances of visitors from European countries participating in guided tours and workshops on Ainu culture held at the building.<sup>257</sup> Additionally, the site page for Ureshipa Chise advertises souvenirs – t-shirts, post cards, aprons printed with traditional Ainu embroidery patterns – for sale in the building; the bottom of the advertisement notes that Isobe Etsuko, vice-president of Shiranuka Ainu Association and president of Shiranuka Ainu Culture Preservation Society, hopes that the aprons might serve as a “promotion tool” for the town through their use both as souvenirs and as uniforms for the teachers of cooking classes in Ureshipa Chise’s kitchen.<sup>258</sup>

At this point we must consider the nature of exhibition: it is difficult to draw the line between different types of display, between the act of spectating an event and viewing theatre, between appreciating the memories which continue to live in a given space and touring that space like the hall of a museum. Indeed, cotemporary museums which feature performance art

---

<sup>256</sup> “Ureshipa Shirarika,” Hokkaido Shiranuka, accessed 5 May, 2021, <https://www.shiranuka-ainu.jp/english/index.html>.

<sup>257</sup> “Ureshipa Shirarika,” Hokkaido Shiranuka, accessed 5 May, 2021, <https://www.shiranuka-ainu.jp/english/index.html>.

<sup>258</sup> “Ureshipa Shirarika,” Hokkaido Shiranuka, accessed 5 May, 2021, <https://www.shiranuka-ainu.jp/english/index.html>.

installations, hands-on activities, and locations that differ wildly from the classical and authoritative image of the grand neo-classical museum hall (as Niessen notes, the museum has transformed from “temple” to “forum”<sup>259</sup>) challenge the very categories for understanding display which were described by Clifford and Karp and have been employed throughout this text. It is for this reason that the institutions discussed in this chapter have been grouped as such, and why the term I have used to describe them has not been “museum” but “site of display.” The Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum is undoubtedly a museum in the traditional sense, but the scope of its exhibition stretches outside the museum’s walls into the town through tourist attractions and preserved natural sites which assist in the narrative of local history told within the museum proper. The story of Shiranuka town, meanwhile, is played out across all of its spaces and by all of its people, which only qualifies as cultural display when and because it has been specifically identified and marketed through the Ureshipa Shirarika concept and website as a unifying framework. In this case, then, the “museological” element is the framing of objects, places, and events within the town as a narrative unit for consumption by various audience demographics. There is, of course, the “exhibition corner” of Ureshipa Chise, whose format matches that of a traditional museum: Ainu clothing and textiles, hunting tools, and ceremonial *inau* are mounted to the wall, displayed in well-lit glass cases and complemented by description cards written in Japanese.<sup>260</sup> Yet even these items do not exist only as artifacts, but are brought out to be used during rituals conducted in Ureshipa Chise. This is not the only case where displays of Ainu culture have broken the barrier between exhibited artifact and living tool – in Ohtsuka Kazuyoshi’s explication of the Ainu exhibit at Japan’s National Museum of Ethnology (discussed in the Literature Review section,” he refers

---

<sup>259</sup> Sandra A. Niessen, “Representing the Ainu Reconsidered,” *Museum Anthropology* 20 no. 3 (1997):134.

<sup>260</sup> “Ureshipa Shirarika,” Hokkaido Shiranuka, accessed 5 May, 2021, <https://www.shiranuka-ainu.jp/english/index.html>.

to a model *cise* which was constructed by Kayano Shigeru, for which Kayano subsequently conducted yearly *kamuynomi* (blessing) which would be performed for any *cise*. According to Ohtsuka, the ceremony in the museum “is no pantomime resurrecting a moribund tradition but reflects common modern Ainu practice and is necessary not because of the pedagogic role of the displays as reconstructions, but because these *are* Ainu objects!”<sup>261</sup> The simultaneous function of display and utility which characterizes the representational idiom of those Ainu cultural museums which fall within the category of “tribal” (oppositional) institution is merely extrapolated to its most extreme form in Shiranuka town.

As with Biratori town, Shiranuka is dotted with specific sites bearing significance in the context of local Ainu history and mythology. Parks throughout the town have been designated over the locations of the ruins of Ainu *chashi* (fortifications) which served for centuries as the location of the ceremonies and legal proceedings as well as an emergency fortress for Ainu *kotan* (villages), and documentation of the kinds of rituals performed at specific *chashi* in the region survive within the oral folklore which has been passed down to living town members, many of whose stories are included on the Ureshipa Shirarika website. For example, the *chinomi chashi* ruins near the Shoro River are known to have been a location for *iomante* (bear sending-off ceremonies), while a folktale told by Kusaka Yuki and recorded on the website tells of a legendary hole in the Shoro River containing a path to the “other world.”<sup>262</sup> The site of Ureshipa Chise is located in beside the ruins of *shirieto chashi*, where a monument to the Ainu people was erected marking the site for annual performances of *nusakonami* and *icharupa* dances which take place as part of Shiranuka’s

---

<sup>261</sup> Kazuyoshi Ohtsuka, “Exhibiting Ainu Culture at Minpaku: A Reply to Sandra A. Niessen,” *Museum Anthropology* 20 no. 3 (1997): 112.

<sup>262</sup> Kusaka, in “Ureshipa Shirarika,” Hokkaido Shiranuka, accessed 5 May, 2021, <https://www.shiranuka-ainu.jp/english/index.html>.

“Hometown Icharupa Festival.”<sup>263</sup> Pashikuru Park along the shore of the ocean houses a monument to the *humpe rimse* (whale dance): according to legend, the people of Shiranuka were so happy to find a whale beached on the shore of the Pashikuru swamp that they began to dance in thanks to the *kamuy* for so much food, and thus the *humpe rimse* was born.<sup>264</sup> These and other locations are not only sites of memory through the mythology and history that they bear, but continue to be used as sites of performance through cultural practices such as the Hometown Icharupa Festival, wherein “prayers are given for the safety of the people, and a vow is made to pass down the Ainu culture to the next generation” and the *shishamo festival* to “affirm the importance of living in harmony with nature and to thank the gods for the blessings they offer,” especially for bountiful fishing and the safety of fishermen.<sup>265</sup>

These three festivals – Hometown Icharupa Festival, Humpe Icharupa Festival, and Shishamo Festival – are not only actively celebrated by the Ainu themselves, but have become the subject for promotional videos for Shiranuka town, which are posted on YouTube and linked to the website.<sup>266</sup> Audiovisual materials are included in many of the museums discussed in this text, but most notably in Minpaku: in her initial criticism of the museum’s Ainu exhibit (see Literature Review), Niessen noted that during the production of video records of Ainu crafts, the video subject was situated in an Ainu *cise* without any trace of the modern world visible within the frame. “The film was creating the fictitious illusion of authenticity, and Mrs. Kayano, weaver and central character of the film, was, *as a person in today's world*, entirely left out of the picture,” Niessen

---

<sup>263</sup> “Ureshipa Shirarika,” Hokkaido Shiranuka, accessed 5 May, 2021, <https://www.shiranuka-ainu.jp/english/index.html>.

<sup>264</sup> “Ureshipa Shirarika,” Hokkaido Shiranuka, accessed 5 May, 2021, <https://www.shiranuka-ainu.jp/english/index.html>.

<sup>265</sup> “Ureshipa Shirarika,” Hokkaido Shiranuka, accessed 5 May, 2021, <https://www.shiranuka-ainu.jp/english/index.html>.

<sup>266</sup> “Ureshipa Shirarika,” Hokkaido Shiranuka, accessed 5 May, 2021, <https://www.shiranuka-ainu.jp/english/index.html>.

interpreted.<sup>267</sup> However, in the videos produced for promotional use in Shiranuka town, participants in ceremonies are shown not only in traditional Ainu clothes but in Western dress, sitting on plastic mats and even miming those parts of the ceremonies which are not legal – for instance, in the *humpe rimse*, dancers circle an Ainu woman lying on a blanket on the beach to symbolize the whale which is being honored.<sup>268</sup> It is impossible to observe instances such as this without a full awareness of the place of these traditions within modern realities, and thus the nostalgic idiom which dominates in so many museological depictions of the Ainu cultural subject is completely overturned. It is precisely because online displays of Ainu culture, epitomized by Ureshipa Shirarika, are able to more quickly evolve with changing politics of representation regarding Ainu culture, and also because the online format delivers display to an entirely new, international audience (especially during the COVID-19 pandemic), that websites are considered within the context of this thesis, and why museum websites in general deserve more analytical attention within the field of museum studies in the future.

---

<sup>267</sup> Sandra A. Niessen, "The Ainu in Mimpaku: A Representation of Japan's Indigenous People at the National Museum of Ethnology," *Museum Anthropology* 18 no. 3 (1994): 23.

<sup>268</sup> "Ureshipa Shirarika," Hokkaido Shiranuka, accessed 5 May, 2021, <https://www.shiranuka-ainu.jp/english/index.html>.

## Conclusions

I began my research expecting to find an explicit trend of museum depictions of Ainu culture which bolstered Russian and Japanese national arguments regarding the ownership of the disputed Kuril Islands/Northern Territories. In my initial hypothesis, I expected to see museological narratives which located the Ainu cultural space within broader Japanese national or Russian national culture and history as a means to validate the lands which the Ainu historically inhabited as rightful pieces of either nation-state. Preliminary research into the Kuril Islands dispute revealed fallacies in my prediction: first of all, the Russian argument for its possession of Kunashiri, Shikotan, Etorofu, and the Habomai group is predicated on its military victory over Japan in World War II and several international agreements which ostensibly set aside the islands for Soviet possession. Nationalism has only seeped into the Russian argument for possession of the Kuril Islands to the extent that they represent Soviet victory in World War II, a symbol whose use as the uniting crux of the Russian people remains extremely powerful. It seems more reasonable to imagine that the Ainu might play into Japan's irridentist narrative, which centers on the notion of the Northern Territories as "inherent territory" of Japan based on historical connections. Despite the fact that the earliest calls for the return of the islands to Japan came from residents of northern Hokkaido on grounds of economic codependence with the islands, the crystallization of the irridentist movement as a national goal emerged decades later in the 1960s and '70s as an intra-conservative talking point. It would have been impossible for the Ainu historical argument to enter nationalist irridentist discourse at its inception because the Ainu would not be recognized as an extant ethnic minority in Japan for another twenty years, and even upon its recognition the trajectory of Ainu rights movements in Japan has only ever touched upon land-based arguments at its periphery. To claim political association between the contemporary Ainu

and the lands they once inhabited on the international stage presupposes a respect of Ainu rights to their historical lands on the domestic stage, a rhetorical step which has not yet been taken by any major bodies in Japan. This is not to say that the movement for Ainu rights has remained conservative, but rather that its focus has been on representation and visibility rather than socioeconomic reparations from the government, a choice which makes sense in the context of Japanese assimilationist policies which worked to erase the existence of Ainu culture within a “monoethnic” Japan until 1997.

Nonetheless, museums as representations of past narratives through a non-objective, contemporary lens might have opened the possibility for displaying the Ainu cultural subject in terms of the Kuril Islands dispute, or alternately the dispute in terms of its relationship to Ainu culture. As the case studies in this thesis have shown, this is far from the case: although certain museums do make historical claims of closeness to or relationships with Ainu culture using the language of assimilation described by Ivan Karp (for example, the comparison of Ainu mythology with artifacts from Siberian peoples excavated around Omsk, Russia), none stake concrete territorial claims which are not relegated to the historical (as in, the Ainu occupied certain territories in a past which has ceased to exist) or the local (as in, a particular town or land feature merits special recognition or preservation for its relevance to Ainu culture). Meanwhile Japan’s National Museum of Territory and Sovereignty addresses the Northern Territories dispute as an issue of international politics and national pride, exhibiting only minimal reference to the inhabitants of the islands in either historical or modern context. Such a decisive trend of thematic isolation between two subjects of culture and territoriality which, at least using the framework of postcolonial studies, have such bearing on each other, begs an explanation, and that is precisely what this thesis has sought.

The Ainu cultural museums located in Japan which have been discussed in this thesis – the Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park, Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum, and Ureshipa Shirarika (to the extent that it falls under the umbrella of museum) – are the products of a more complex web of institutional agency than their counterparts in Russia, and more so also than the National Museum of Territory and Sovereignty with its unilateral sponsorship by Japan’s Office of Policy Planning and Coordination on Territory and Sovereignty. Upopoy is the direct result of national policy regarding Ainu status in Japan, but the details of its structure have been managed by various smaller steering councils and Ainu organizations, most notably the Foundation for Ainu Culture; Nibutani and Ureshipa Shirarika represent not only institutions of cultural display but entire towns wherein the museological aspect cooperates with local governments and populations in the project of cultural preservation and revitalization. Due to this, the representational idioms in those institutions are directly influenced by the thrust of both government Ainu policy and the movements which triggered those government responses. In the debate over Ainu representation in Minpaku that was discussed in the Literature Review, Minpaku staff member Shimizu Akitoshi argued that the decision to represent Ainu culture as an idealized, untainted subject sprung from the desire of Ainu people to see their own culture as valid distinct from the cultures of the colonial powers which tried to erase it from living memory. The goals of Upopoy are the promotion of “correct” understanding of Ainu culture and the cultivation of a museological knowledge base capable of passing down that understanding as a means of Ainu cultural revitalization; the Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum’s aim is to “inherit Ainu culture and seek to create new traditions” by using museum representation to span the gap between the historicized and contemporary, evolving images of Ainu culture; Ureshipa Shirarika embodies the concept of Ainu culture and Japanese culture within the town of Shiranuka “growing together” as equally vital forces. All of these goals

are grounded in undermining the notion of Ainu culture as vanished or vanishing – in other words, they attempt to fulfil the objective of cultural visibility held by the late twentieth century movements for Ainu rights in Japan, which was taken up in 1997 by the Japanese government after its replacement of assimilationist policies. With the united focus of both activism and national policy underpinning them, it is to be expected that these institutions of cultural display reflect politics of representation and not a territorial debate which has been virtually nonexistent in Japanese discourse regarding the Ainu people.

In Russia, meanwhile, the lack of interaction between Ainu activist groups and institutions of cultural display explains the trends in cultural representation seen in the temporary exhibitions discussed in this thesis. In the case of the temporary exhibit “Ainu – Mysterious World” at the Omsk Oblast Museum of Fine Art, the Ainu cultural subject was reflected through works created by the nineteenth-century Japanese painter Hirasawa Byouzan, ancient Siberian tribespeople, and a contemporary Omsk painter Damir Muratov who based his works upon Hirasawa’s. The goal of the exhibition was not to make an explicit statement about Ainu culture, but to exoticize Omsk for its own consumption by associating it with a “mysterious people” (which, in itself, must be recognized for the statement that it is – a relegation of Ainu culture to primitivity and antiquity). The “Island People – Ainu” temporary exhibit hosted by the Russian Ethnographic Museum in St. Petersburg featured some materials illustrating contemporary Ainu culture contributed by the Ainu Culture Fund in Japan, but its primary messaging was purely ethnographic in nature, creating an image of the Ainu cultural space which focused on sameness and difference in comparison with Russian and other East Asian cultures and relegated the Ainu cultural space to a static past. Note as well that its only images of modern Ainu culture were drawn from Japan despite the presence of Ainu revitalization efforts within Russia’s borders: despite the recent readmission of the Ainu

into Russia's register of ethnic minorities, calls for ethnic pride from Ainu activists in Russia have gone unanswered by the Russian government whose agenda of cultivating pan-Russian culture would be undermined by giving significant recognition to the cultural uniqueness or territorial claims of Ainu people.

It is clear why the Ainu cultural subject was not incorporated into the Russian or Japanese territorial arguments initially, and why notions of territoriality and the Ainu cultural subject are handled separately in museum representations by both Russian, Japanese, and Ainu-run institutions. The final question, then, is why the National Museum of Territory and Sovereignty in Japan, and by extension the Japanese and Russian governments, have not retroactively applied the narrative of Ainu rights to the disputed Kuril Islands territories to bolster their respective national claims – why the voice of the Ainu people remains ignored in the dispute. Certainly the initial argument for Russian possession of the Kuril Islands was based on Russia's occupation of the islands at the end of World War II – the existence of a people who inhabited the territory before Japanese colonization would undermine the Japanese assertion of the islands as “inherent Japanese territory,” and even the former Kamchatka Ainu Community leader Aleksei Nakamura acknowledged that the Russian government could benefit from invoking Ainu territorial rights: “it's very strange that the Russian [Ministry of International Affairs] does not use this argument in order to remind [Japan] that the islands cannot belong only to Japanese Ainu, but rather to all Ainu” (Nakamura, in Dolgikh 2012).<sup>269</sup> And yet, in Nakamura's own logic lies the reason why Ainu agency in the territorial issue has been undermined so consistently in bilateral relations between Russia and Japan: the Ainu represent a third party, dwelling within the borders of both countries but with a stake in the Kuril Islands that does not align completely with either country's agenda.

---

<sup>269</sup> Also quoted in Chapter 2.

The Ainu people have already been acknowledged in Japan as an ethnic minority and indigenous people of territory including the disputed islands, and the continued existence of an Ainu population in Russia is gaining increased recognition; indeed, the most consistent representation of the Ainu cultural space across all the museums in this study is its historical location which crosses or otherwise exists outside current national borders. Neither country can pretend that Ainu people no longer exist in the other. Japanese acknowledgement of the historical rights of the Ainu within its own borders to the disputed territory necessarily extends those rights to the Ainu people in Russia, and vice versa, in sharp contradiction to the notion that the islands are “inherent territory” or fairly won in war. Such a complication of nationalist narratives could not serve to advance either country’s argument. Most crucially, using the Ainu people as a debate tool is predicated upon rhetorical validation of the Ainu claim to their own historical lands – the greatest threat to both Russia and Japan’s claims on the Northern Territories, then, is not each other, but the territory’s indigenous people whose claim to the islands could prove more valid than that of either great power.

## Appendix I: Chronology of the Ainu and the Northern Territories

Note: The sources used to compile this timeline are the same as those used in the historical background sections in chapters One and Two of this text. The most frequently referenced sources in this section are Oita, Uzawa, Togo, Serita, and the websites of the Ainu Association of Hokkaido and Foundation for Ainu Culture.

### Chronology

**1308:** Ainu become subjects of the Chinese Yuan Dynasty and remain so until the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

**1336:** The first documented encounter between the Ainu and wajin occurs. As Wajin settle Hokkaido, a pattern of unequal trade, conflict, and colonialism emerges between wajin and Ainu.

**1456:** The years 1456-1525 are marked by a series of Ainu-wajin conflicts in Hokkaido.

**1457:** The Ainu leader Koshamain captures two Japanese forts.

**1550:** The Matsumae clan and Ainu leaders reach an agreement, where in exchange for accepting Wajin settlement the Ainu shall receive a portion of taxes from ships travelling from Honshu to Ezo.

**1604:** The Japanese shogunate grants the Matsumae clan a monopoly on trade with the Ainu in Ezo.

**1669:** Shakushain, leader of the Shibechari Ainu, leads the largest-ever rebellion against the Japanese Ezo in response to a dispute over hunting and fishing rights. Shakushain is poisoned by the Matsumae clan during a banquet for peace negotiations, ending the uprising.

**1789:** Kunashiri Menashi Ainu rebel over poor forced labor conditions at wajin fisheries; this results in the execution of 37 Ainu leaders by Matsumae troops.

**1799:** The Kuril Islands are brought under the control of the Japanese shogunate.

**1805:** The Russian colony on Urrupu is abandoned. Russia had been tentatively expanding into the Kurile chain since the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, but never found a significant foothold in the four islands closest to Japan.

**1811:** The Golovnin Incident confirms Japanese control of the Southern Kurils – a Russian survey of the Southern Kurils was halted on Kunashiri by the Matsumae clan.

**1854:** After passing back and forth between the hands of the Tokugawa shogunate and Matsumae clan for decades, Ezo is put under the direct governance of the shogunate, which trades Ainu non-assimilation policy for one of education, protection, and assimilation.

**1855:** The Treaty of Commerce, Navigation, and Delimitation (Treaty of Shimoda) categorizes the islands of Shikotan, Habomai, Etorofu, Kunashiri as part of Japan, setting the Russian-Japanese border south of Uruppu.

**1868:** The Japanese shogunate is overthrown, beginning the Meiji Period. This is the beginning of the Japanese Empire.

### 1869

- Ezo is renamed Hokkaido by the Meiji government, who take control of the territory. *Kita Ezo* (“north Ezo”) is renamed Karafuto.
- The Development Commission (*Kaitakushi*) is established to govern Hokkaido as a colony.
- Ainu language and lifestyle are outlawed under policy of forced Japanization; salmon fishing and deer hunting are banned.
- Ainu land is converted into national property and sold to private entities.

### 1871

- The Census Registration Act (Japan) forces Ainu to adopt Japanese last names.
- Hokkaido and nearby islands managed by the *Kaitakushi* through 1882.
- Ainu customs including the burning of a house after the death of a family member, women’s tattoos, and men’s earrings are banned. Ainu are encouraged to adopt the Japanese language and Japanese forms of agriculture.

**1872:** Land Regulation Article 7 (Japan) divides Ainu fishing, hunting, and logging grounds into private lots.

### 1875

- In Treaty for the Exchange of Sakhalin for the Kurile Islands (Treaty of St Petersburg), the rest of the Kurile chain is ceded by Russia to Japan in exchange for the cession of Sakhalin to Russia. 841 Sakhalin and Kuril Ainu are forcibly transported to Hokkaido and Shikotan as a result of the treaty.

**1877:** All forests and wilderness in Hokkaido are come under the ownership of the Meiji government.

**1878:** the administrative term “former natives” (*“kyuudojin”*) is first applied to the Ainu by the *Kaitakushi*.

**1882:** Hokkaido begins to be administered as part of mainland Japan.

**1884:** The Meiji government conducts forced relocation of Ainu from Shumushu to Shikotan due to fears of russified Ainu living near the northern border of the Japanese empire.

**1889:** Japan’s first constitution includes Hokkaido in its jurisdiction.

### 1895

- The Treaty on Commerce and Navigation between Japan and Russia invalidates the Treaty of 1855 and reaffirms the validity of the Treaty of 1875.
- A bill for protection of Hokkaido Ainu land is submitted at the 8<sup>th</sup> session of the Imperial Diet, but is not passed.

**1899:** The assimilatory “Former Natives (“*kyuudojin*”) Protection Act” is introduced. It is repealed a century later after undergoing many revisions over the years (1919, 1937, 1946, 1947, and 1968).

**1901:** The Regulation for the Education of Former Aborigines’ Children to control primary education of Ainu children is promulgated; it would remain in effect until 1936.

**1905:** In Portsmouth Peace Treaty, southern Sakhalin and adjacent islands are ceded to Japan after its victory in the Russo-Japanese War.

**1910:** New domestic laws allow for land ownership by aliens in Japan, but Hokkaido, like Taiwan and Sakhalin, counted as a colony and thus exempted from these laws.

**1925:** At the Convention on Fundamental Principles for Relations between Japan and the USSR, the Soviet Union and Japan agree to uphold the Portsmouth Treaty.

**1943:** The Cairo Declaration of the United States, UK, and China, is acceded to by the Soviet Union on August 8<sup>th</sup>, 1945. The Declaration asserts that the “Allies covet no gains for themselves and have no thought of territorial expansion;” and identifies the goal of removing from Japan “the territories which she has taken by violence and greed.”

**1945:**

- **February 11:** The Yalta Agreement stipulates that the Kuril Islands will be handed over to the Soviet Union as a condition for its participation in the war against Japan. Japan’s position is that since it was not party to this agreement, it is not binding for Japan.
- **April 5:** The Soviet Union announces its intention to exit the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact, which sets the Pact to become invalid on April 25, 1946.
- **July 26:** The Potsdam Declaration calling for unconditional Japanese surrender is issued by the United States, United Kingdom, and China.
- **August 9:** The Soviet Union declares war against Japan.
- **August 14:** Japan accepts the Potsdam Declaration and orders a ceasefire.
- **August 16:** Soviet troops attack Shumshu Island, part of the Kuril chain.
- **September 3:** Soviet Troops complete occupation of the Southern Kuril Islands.

**1946:** Ainu Association of Hokkaido (*Hokkaido Ainu Kyoukai*) is established. It is renamed in 1961 as the Hokkaido Utari Kyoukai, but changed back in 2009.

**1951:** The San Francisco Peace Treaty is signed on September 8<sup>th</sup>, but is not ratified by the Soviet Union.

**1956:**

- **March:** the term “northern territories” is first used within Japanese government in arguing that the return of all four islands would be consistent with san Francisco treaty. The term is officially adopted in 1963.
- **October 19:** The Japan-Soviet Union Joint Declaration restores diplomatic relations between the two states and resolves all issues save the territorial one. The USSR proposes the return of the lower 2 islands, but Japan ultimately refuses this offer.

**1960:** Japan and the United States conclude new security treaty. The Soviet Union declares that it will not transfer Shikotan and Habomai to Japan until American troops are withdrawn.

**1971:** The Okinawa Reversion Agreement returns Okinawa to Japan on the condition that the United States is allowed to maintain military bases there.

**1972:** The first Hokkaido Ainu Living Conditions Survey is conducted. It has been conducted every 7 years since.

**1973:** Japan and the Soviet Union issue a Joint Communiqué agreeing to resolve unresolved issues from WWII. This is followed by a long period of chilled relations.

**1979:** Japan ratifies the International Covenants on Human Rights, but declares that “ethnic minority groups, as defined in this Covenant, do not exist in Japan.”

**1981:** The Japanese Cabinet designates February 7 as Northern Territories Day.

**1982:** The Ainu Association of Hokkaido asserts Ainu rights in the Northern Territories and Hokkaido, and adopts a resolution to call for the repeal and replacement of the Former Natives Protection Act.

**1984:** Hokkaido Ainu Association drafts and proposes the broad-scope Legislation Concerning the Ainu People. The legislation loses momentum in 1986 when Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone asserts that “Japan is a racially homogeneous nation and there is no discrimination against ethnic minorities with Japanese citizenship.”

**1987:** The Hokkaido Ainu Association participates for the first time in the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations.

### 1993

- The United Nations declares 1993 to be the “International Year of Indigenous People.”
- **October 13:** The Tokyo Declaration confirms that the question of the sovereignty of all four islands is at stake, with a basis of historical and legal facts, agreed upon documents, and the principle of law and justice, and confirms the Russian Federation as the inheritor of the Soviet Union’s treaties and international agreements.

### 1997:

- The Nibutani Dam decision is handed down by the Sapporo District Court.

- Ainu Cultural Promotion Act (CPA) (fully titled “Law for the Promotion of the Ainu Culture and for the Dissemination and Advocacy for the Traditions of the Ainu and the Ainu Culture”) replaces 1899 law.

**2000:**

- National Round-Table on Measures to Promote Ainu Culture and Other Matters is established, focusing on issues including the recreation of *iwor* (traditional Ainu living spaces and territory).
- **November 15:** The “two versus two” principle is established at a meeting between President Putin and Prime Minister Mori, wherein the sovereignty of the larger islands (Kunashiri and Etorofu) and the smaller islands (Shikotan and Habomai) would be decided separately.

**2001:** The Irkutsk meeting between Putin and Mori establishes the 1956 Joint Declaration as the starting point in the negotiation process for the disputed islands.

**2007:** The United Nations General Assembly adopts Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, in which most Ainu-related policy in Japan has since found its basis.

**2008:**

- **June 6:** The Japanese Diet unanimously adopts the “Resolution to Recognize the Ainu as an Indigenous People.”
- **July:** The Advisory Council for Future Ainu Policy is called together by the Chief Cabinet Secretary of Japan.

**2009:**

- **July:** The final report of the Advisory Council for Future Ainu Policy is submitted.
- **December:** The Council for Ainu Policy Promotion is established on the basis of 2009 Advisory Council report in order to identify policy priorities with reference to the United Nations Declaration.
- The Comprehensive Ainu Policy Office is established within Cabinet Secretariat of Japan.

**2012:** The Master Plan for the Symbolic Space of Ethnic Harmony is compiled by national government of Japan.

**2016:** One public school in Nibutani, Hokkaido, becomes the first to add Ainu language to its regular school curriculum.

**2019:** A new bill is proposed in the Japanese Diet to replace the CPA titled “Resolution for Promoting Measures for the Actualization of the Ethnic Pride of the Ainu People,” containing provisions for the gathering of natural resources for cultural purposes and the establishment of subsidies for local development of Ainu culture.

**2020:** Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park opens in Shiraoi, Hokkaido, after a delay due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Appendix II: Email Correspondence with a Curator of the Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum

The following correspondence was received on March 24, 2021 in response to seven questions from the author and has been translated from Japanese. The curator's participation in the correspondence was based on the following stipulations: answering or not answering any question was voluntary; questions were to be answered from the official perspective of the museum rather than the personal perspective of the curator; no personal information from the respondent would be used in the final text of the thesis. I extend my deepest gratitude to the curator for their cooperation.

1. Who is the intended audience for the exhibition?
  - a. toddler – general
2. Does the museum have resources for speakers of other languages? If so, what resources do you have?
  - a. guidance video material subtitles (English, Korean, Chinese (traditional, simplified))
  - b. exhibit room QR code (explanatory texts) installations (English, Korean, Chinese (traditional, simplified))
  - c. exhibit room QR code (voice) installations (Japanese, English)
  - d. pamphlets (Japanese, English, Korean, Chinese (traditional, simplified))
  - e. Russian data only
3. What understanding do you hope visitors to the museum will gain?

- a. the wisdom of the Ainu who have survived the harsh environment of Hokkaido; their beliefs, trade, and rich culture nurtured within Ainu daily life
4. How is this museum different from other museums about Ainu culture?
  - a. that the organization of the exhibit follows the life cycle of a person
5. What do you feel is the role of modern-day museums about Ainu culture: to promote living culture or preserve historical culture?
  - a. I believe both are important. The perspectives located within the history of Ainu culture have not ceased to exist, but are also inherited in the present and continue into the future.
6. In the modern day, what special importance does this museum carry?
  - a. the contents of this museum are mainly composed of items which Kayano Shigeru, a member of the Ainu who came from the Nibutani district of Biratori town, collected and restored
  - b. everyday tools from various spheres of life have been exhaustively assembled
7. “We inherit Ainu culture and seek to create new traditions” is written in the “About Us” section of the museum webpage. Could you explain this phrase in more detail?
  - a. to cooperate with regional Ainu-related policies and residential initiatives, and to inherit Ainu culture in new forms while holding dear old forms (spread the traditional arts of Nibutani-Ita and Nibutani-Attus, the cultural environment conservation measures survey involved with the Saru river comprehensive development project, planting *ohyou* trees)

## Bibliography

- “About Ainu Culture.” Biratori Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum, accessed May 5, 2021.  
<http://www.town.biratori.hokkaido.jp/biratori/nibutani/culture/>.
- “About Upopoy.” Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park, accessed May 4, 2021.  
<https://ainu-upopoy.jp/en/about/>.
- “About Us.” Biratori Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum, accessed May 5, 2021.  
<http://www.town.biratori.hokkaido.jp/biratori/nibutani/about/>.
- “Actual Living Conditions of the Hokkaido Ainu.” Ainu Association of Hokkaido, accessed May 3, 2021. <https://www.ainu-assn.or.jp/english/life.html>.
- “Ainu Culture.” Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park, accessed May 4, 2021.  
<https://ainu-upopoy.jp/en/ainu-culture/>.
- “Ainu Historical Events.” Ainu Association of Hokkaido, accessed May 3, 2021.  
<https://www.ainu-assn.or.jp/english/history.html>.
- “Ainu People – History and Culture.” Foundation for Ainu Culture, accessed May 3, 2021.  
<https://www.ff-ainu.or.jp/web/english/index.html>.
- “*Brifing ofit̄sial’ novo predstavitel̄ia MID Rossii M.V. Zakharovoĭ, Moskva, 9 apreliã 2021 goda.*” Ministerstvo Inostrannikh Del Rossiĭskoĭ Federatsii, April 9, 2021.  
[https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign\\_policy/news/-/asset\\_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/4675227](https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/4675227).
- Browning, Zachary. “A Comparative Analysis: Legal and Historical Analysis of Protecting Indigenous Cultural Rights Involving Land Disputes in Japan, New Zealand, and Hawaii.” *Washington Law Journal* 28, no. 1 (2019): 207-242.
- Bukh, Alexander. “Constructing Japan’s ‘Northern Territories’: Domestic Actors, Interests, and the Symbolism of the Disputed Lands.” *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 12 (2012): 483-509.
- Bukh, Alexander. *Japan’s National Identity and Foreign Policy: Russia as Japan’s ‘Other’*. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- Choudhury, Bibhash. “Paul Carter: The Road to Botany Bay. Land-marked: Space, Memory,

- Colonization.” In *Reading Postcolonial Theory: Key Texts in Context*, 117-137. New York: Routledge, 2016.
- Clifford, James. “Four Northwest Coast Museums: Travel Reflections.” In *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, 107-146. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- “Digital tenjikan.” National Museum of Territory and Sovereignty, accessed May 4, 2021.  
<https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/ryodo/tenjikan/digital.html>.
- Dolgikh, Marina. “Interv’iu: Alekseĭ Nakamura.” *Natsional’nyi Aktsent*, January 7, 2012.  
<https://nazaccent.ru/interview/13/>.
- “Exhibition.” National Ainu Museum, accessed May 4, 2021.  
<https://nam.go.jp/en/exhibition/floor1/>.
- “Exhibitions.” Biratori Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum, accessed May 5, 2021.  
<http://www.town.biratori.hokkaido.jp/biratori/nibutani/collection/>.
- “Experiential Learning.” Biratori Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum, accessed May 5, 2021.  
<http://www.town.biratori.hokkaido.jp/biratori/nibutani/learning/>.
- Facility Information.” Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park, accessed May 4, 2021.  
<https://ainu-upopoy.jp/en/facility/>.
- Gorian, E.V. and Netrusov, Yu.Yu. “The recognition of Ainu as indigenous people by Russia as the factor of the resolution of the territorial dispute with Japan.” *Territoriia Novikh Vozmozhnostei* 39 no. 4 (2017): 135-149.
- “Government Initiatives.” Office of Policy Planning and Coordination on Territory and Sovereignty, accessed 4 May 2021.  
[https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/ryodo\\_eg/torikumi/torikumi.html](https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/ryodo_eg/torikumi/torikumi.html).
- Hoppo ryoudo erika-chan (hoppou\_erika). “Kono Kitagata daijin ga Toykyou Toranomom no ryoudo...” Twitter, March 31, 2021.  
[https://twitter.com/hoppou\\_erika/status/1377161184869150721](https://twitter.com/hoppou_erika/status/1377161184869150721).
- “Hoppo ryoudo mondai ni tsuite.” Ryoudo shuken tenjikan FOR KIDS, accessed May 4, 2021.  
<https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/ryodo/kids/index.html>.
- “International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.” United Nations General Assembly, 1966.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>

“Joint Compendium of Documents on the History of the Territorial Issue between Japan and Russia.” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Tokyo. September 1992.

<https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/europe/russia/territory/edition92/index.html>

Karapetova, I.A. “Ostrovnye Liudi – Ainy.” Rossiiskiy Etnograficheskiy Muzei, October 24, 2019.

<https://collection.ethnomuseum.ru/entity/ALBUM/1068005?query=%D0%B0%D0%B9%D0%BD%D1%8B&index=0>.

Karp, Ivan. “How Museums Define Other Cultures.” *American Art* 5 no. 1/2 (1991): 10-15.

Kawashima, Saeko. “The Right to Effective Participation and the Ainu People.” *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* 11 no. 1/2 (2004): 21-74.

“Kikaku-ten [shirarezaru hoppo yon tou: rekishi, bunka, shizen].” National Museum of Territory and Sovereignty, accessed May 4, 2021.

[https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/ryodo/tenjikan/event/hoppou\\_210316.html](https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/ryodo/tenjikan/event/hoppou_210316.html).

“KMNS Kamchatki prosiat gubernatora i polpreda pomoch’ priznat’ Ainov malochislennym narodom.” Natsional’nyi Aktsent, June 4, 2020.

“Kokuritsu Ainu minzoku hakubutsukan tenji keikaku.” Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japan. May 28, 2016.

“Kolleksii po kul’ture Ainov, Iapontsev, Kitaitsev, Koreitsev, i Mongolov.” Rossiiskiy Etnograficheskiy Muzei, 2020.

<https://ethnomuseum.ru/kollekcii/obzor-kollekcij/kollekcii-po-kulture-ajnov-yaponcev-kitajcev-korejcev-mongolov/>.

Lieva, Aseta. “Interv’iu: Alekseï Nakamura.” *Национальный Акцент*. October 8, 2016.

<https://nazaccent.ru/interview/95/>.

McCarthy, Terry. “Ainu people lay ancient claim to Kurile Islands: The hunters and fishers who lost their land to the Russians and Japanese are gaining the confidence to demand their rights, reports Terry McCarthy.” *The Independent*, September 21, 1992.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/ainu-people-lay-ancient-claim-to-kurile-islands-the-hunters-and-fishers-who-lost-their-land-to-the-russians-and-japanese-are-gaining-the-confidence-to-demand-their-rights-reports-terry-mccarthy-1552879.html>

- Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum Curator, email message to author, March 24, 2021.
- Niessen, Sandra A. "The Ainu in Mimpaku: A Representation of Japan's Indigenous People at the National Museum of Ethnology." *Museum Anthropology* 18 no. 3 (1994): 18-25.
- Niessen, Sandra A. "Representing the Ainu Reconsidered." *Museum Anthropology* 20 no. 3 (1997): 132-144.
- Nomura, Giichi. "Inaguration Speech at the U.N. General Assembly." Ainu Association of Hokkaido, 1992. <https://www.ainu-assn.or.jp/english/inaugu.html>.
- "Northern Territories." Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Tokyo. April 4, 2014. <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/europe/russia/territory/index.html>
- "Noviyĭ tekst Konstitutsii RF c popravkami 2020." Gosudarstvennaĭa Duma, 2020. <http://duma.gov.ru/news/48953/>.
- Ohtsuka, Kazuyoshi. "Exhibiting Ainu Culture at Minpaku: A Reply to Sandra A. Niessen." *Museum Anthropology* 20 no. 3 (1997): 108-119.
- Oita, Masaki. "Comparative Issues: Recent Policy Developments to Promote and Protect Ainu Culture in Japan." In *Indigenous Law Bulletin* 8 no. 5 (2013): 26-28.
- Omskaĭa Sensatsĭia*. Izdatel'skaĭa Programma Interrosa. 2008.
- "Profile." Kazuhiko Togo. 2017. <https://kazuhiko-togo.com/profile-en>.
- Serita, Kentarou. *The Territory of Japan: Its History and Legal Basis*. Translated by Alex Meyer. Tokyo: Japan Publishing Industry Foundation For Culture, 2018.
- Shimizu, Akitoshi. "Cooperation, not Domination: A Rejoinder to Niessen on the Ainu Exhibition at Minpaku." *Museum Anthropology* 20 no. 3 (1997): 120-131.
- "Sightseeing Guide." Biratori Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum, accessed May 5, 2021. <http://www.town.biratori.hokkaido.jp/biratori/nibutani/sightseeing/>.
- Sinelschikova, Yekaterina. "Who are the Ainu and why do authorities still deny their existence?" *Russia Beyond*, 27 June 2019. <https://www.rbth.com/lifestyle/330576-who-are-ainu-people>.
- Smith, Linda Tuwai. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed Press, 2002.

- “Summary of the Act for the Promotion of the Ainu Culture.” Ainu Association of Hokkaido, accessed May 3, 2021. <https://www.ainu-assn.or.jp/english/summary.html>.
- Tahara, Kaori. “The Saga of the Ainu Language.” *The Unesco Courier*. UNESCO, 2019. <https://en.unesco.org/courier/numero-especial-octubre-2009/saga-ainu-language>.
- Tanaka, Takayuki. “Russian Ainu Leader Calls for Greater Respect.” *Nikkei Asia*. March 3, 2017. <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Russian-Ainu-leader-calls-for-greater-respect2>.
- Togo, Kazuhiko. “The Inside Story of the Negotiations on the Northern Territories: Five Lost Windows of Opportunity.” *Japan Forum* 23 no. 1 (2011): 123-145.
- “Treaty of Peace with Japan (with two declarations). Signed at San Francisco, on 8 September 1951.” San Francisco, 1951.
- “*Tsugi no sedai e tsunagu, nihon no ryoudo to hitobito no omoi*.” National Museum of Territory and Sovereignty, accessed April 7, 2021.
- “TureppoN.” Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park. Accessed May 4, 2021. <https://ainu-upopoy.jp/en/character/outline/>.
- “Ureshipa Shirarika.” Hokkaido Shiranuka, accessed 5 May, 2021. <https://www.shiranuka-ainu.jp/english/index.html>.
- Uzawa, Kanako. “What does Ainu Cultural Revitalization Mean to Ainu and Wajin Youth in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century? Case Study of Urespa as a Place to Learn Ainu Culture in the City of Sapporo, Japan.” *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples* 15 no. 2 (2019): 168-179.
- “Virtual Upopoy 360.” Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park. accessed May 4, 2021. <https://ainu-upopoy.jp/en/virtual360/>.
- “Visitor Information.” Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park. Accessed May 4, 2021. <https://ainu-upopoy.jp/en/guide/>.
- “*V Rossii snova poyavilis’ ainy – samyĭ zagadochnyĭ narod Dal’nevo Vostoka*.” 5-TV.ru, March 22, 2011. <https://www.5-tv.ru/news/37800/>.
- “*Vystavka Ainy – Zagadochnyĭ Mir. Bėdzan Hirasava – Damir Muratov*.” Izi.Travel, accessed

May 5, 2021. <https://izi.travel/ru/900a-vystavka-ayny-zagadochnyy-mir-byodzan-hirasava-damir-muratov/ru>.

“Zakharova otvetila na zaiavleniia Īaponii o Kurilakh.” RIA Novosti, February 28, 2021.

<https://ria.ru/20210218/kurily-1598095045.html>.

“Zal No. 6.” Voenno-istoricheskiĭ Muzeĭ Tikhookeanskovo Flota, June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

<https://museumtof.ru/index.php/expo/zal6>.