

Ainu Women and Indigenous Modernity in Settler Colonial Japan

ann-elise lewallen

Abstract: In contemporary Japan Ainu women create spaces of cultural vitalization wherein they transit between Ainu identity determined by their natal relationships and actively negotiating with Ainu identity through their art. Engaging in self-craft through cloth arts has empowered Ainu women to imagine new expressions of self and to redefine their identities as Ainu or mixed ancestry, and thus reflects women’s lived realities and struggles. Women’s clothwork, as well as musical performance and other arts, has also been pivotal to the Ainu Indigenous rights movement and to cultural revitalization efforts. By carefully positioning heritage cloth, ritual regalia, and ancestral patterns as mouthpieces of Ainu indigeneity, Ainu women have leveraged traditional knowledge to claim Indigenous rights in UN forums and the Japanese Diet.

As such, Ainu women move between “being Ainu,” a racist label attached to Ainu bodies by settler society, to actively “becoming Ainu” and determining what this means on their own terms. The author synthesizes ethnographic field research, museum, and archival research, and participation in cultural-revival and rights-based organizing to show how women craft Ainu and Indigenous identities through clothwork and how they also fashion lived connections to ancestral values and lifestyles.

Keywords: Indigenous peoples, Gender, Art/Activism, Social Movements, Settler Colonialism, Japan

Indigenous Ainu women stitch together ancestral values and global Indigenous activism

to challenge bitter legacies of settler racism and colonial erasure. Instead of orchestrating this resistance in spectacular mass protest or violent clashes with the state, they invoke ancestral knowledge and inhabit ancestral spaces through clothwork as a silent yet politically potent resistance to these erasures. Ainu women’s expressions of Indigenous modernity in Japan, a nation which has long denied the presence of Indigenous peoples and its own history of settler colonialism, directly clash with narratives of Japan’s imagined homogeneity. By placing their ancestors at the heart of their resistance, Ainu women reinstate ancestral balance through gendered labor and gender complementarity, refusing the settler patriarchy imposed by the colonial state.



“Children playing in the kotan.” Tapestry by Ainu artist Katō Machiko. (Photo by author.)

Gender and Ainu Identity in Contemporary Japan

Indigenous modernity is one framework for understanding the rich diversity of contemporary Ainu negotiations with identity, through art, activism, and otherwise. It is also important to note that women are not the only ones espousing Indigenous modernity here. Men have engaged in their own expressions of Ainu ethnicity, by leading the majority of delegations to international forums such as the United Nations and serving as orators and activists. Yet, women's expressions of modernity as artists, as activists, as culture bearers and food revivalists, and as mothers and daughters - are vital expressions that have long provided a baseline for political and other forms of protest, most often led by men. Women have long been entrusted as the bearers of tradition, as the bodies that must carry traditional knowledge, reproduce the culture through birthing the next generation, and embody and craft ancestral cloth. Women also bear this legacy through their affective and somatic memories. Below I describe how the selective way that women now choose to bear this legacy is in itself an embrace of indigenous modernity. There is an intentionality and self-consciousness about women's efforts to pass certain elements of ancestral work, values, and identity onward to future generations that recognizes the threat posed by ongoing settler colonialism and the risks of state or majority silencing. In this way contemporary Ainu women are motivated by a different political sensibility than their elders or grandmothers.



Ainu Leaders demonstrating for Indigenous recognition in the heart of Japan's capital, Kasumigaseki, Tokyo, May 2008. (Photo by author.)



Bedecked in regalia learned from their grandmothers, Ainu women journeyed from Hokkaido in significant numbers to express their support for Indigenous recognition and rights, Tokyo, May 2008. (Photo by author.)

Under the settler state and through succeeding waves of harsh colonial policies, Ainu men were pressured to shed their ethnic subjectivity, Japanese, and eventually were conscripted in the Imperial Army. Earlier systems of cooperation between women and men were radically reorganized as women took on critical roles formerly occupied by men. This "gendering of ethnicity" gradually transformed Ainu society, placing immense pressure on women to become vessels of Ainu ethnicity and

pass this knowledge onward to future generations. In fact, many women reported that they were compelled by male relatives to take on men's labor as well as women's labor, including care for the *kamuy*. One elder who emerged as a central figure in the cultural revival movement, Orita Suteno, reported that she was not allowed to attend primary school, as her uncle feared that the pressure to learn Japanese would interfere with her ability to memorize Ainu men's prayers and oral literature. Women's embodiment of Ainu ethnic identity under settler colonialism thus positioned them centrally to pass this knowledge to their granddaughters and great granddaughters. In Japan's postwar era, as the Ainu cultural revival expanded, Ainu women drew upon these ancestral legacies to develop what became a thriving cultural revival in the 2000s. During the 1980s and 1990s, this cultural revival and the consequent pride in Ainu identity it occasioned, enabled Ainu political campaigns to leapfrog domestic politics and expand into the global Indigenous rights movement. Centering ancestral knowledge is key to understanding how women negotiate Ainu identity and craft self-expression that today positions them on the leading edge of Ainu political and cultural revitalization. Historically, Ainu society worked on the logic of gender complementarity: precolonial Ainu society was organized according to bilineal kin networks (matrilineal and patrilineal), and workgroups were based on a gendered division of labor rooted in these kin networks (Ohnuki-Tierney 1999; Segawa 1972; Watanabe 1973). As Ainu women explained to me, cultural practice was historically split into gendered spheres of complementary labor. Alongside producing textiles, women were entrusted with ancestral caregiving, child rearing, and all food gathering and production aside from procuring key sources of protein such as salmon, deer, and bear. The Ainu cultural sphere was completed by men's labor, including hunting, deep-sea fishing, all carving (tools, traps, ceremonial offerings, and looms),

and care for the *kamuy* (A. spirit beings) Both women and men helped educate and entertain the community through reciting oral literature as bards through the early 20th century, but their culturally-designated roles tended to be split according to gender until the impact of settler colonialism redefined these roles in the late 19th century. Men's labor served as a necessary counterpart to women's work, and gender complementarity enabled Ainu society to flourish.

Indigenous Modernity and its Discontents

In the following excerpt, I draw from the broader question of Indigenous modernity, that is how Indigenous people, and specifically Ainu, deal with the apparent contradiction of being Indigenous and thoroughly modern in their everyday lives. As Ainu have been effectively erased from settler Japanese society or at least from its cultural imaginary, the very existence of Ainu may be seen as an anomaly. Indeed, this very failure to see Ainu as viable members of contemporary Japan enabled a vicious wave of hate speech and Ainu denialism in response to a Sapporo politician's 2014 tweet that "Ainu no longer exist."¹ This rejection of Ainu also reflects a failure of academics and ethnographers, who have historically painted "real Ainu" in essentialist and colonialist terms, to communicate the complexity of lived Ainu lives. According to this formula, "real Ainu" must dwell in traditional thatched-roof homes, wear traditional regalia, speak Ainu language, grow long beards, and dine exclusively on wild game such as bear, deer, and salmon.

This 2014 cyber bullying was parlayed into flesh-and-blood hate through demonstrations on the streets, and quickly spread from Hokkaido to Tokyo and beyond. Conservative politicians had begun to target a range of government programs designed to combat inequality for minorities such as Korean and Chinese immigrant communities, labeling these programs "concessions for special interests"

(*riken*) and demanding that budgets be slashed. Influenced by organizations such as Zaitokukai², these leaders argued that such minority groups were usurping budgets that should have been allocated for *all Japanese citizens*, and that such programs to promote equality were therefore in violation of the Japanese Constitution. Although such arguments were rooted in questions of constitutionality and majority equality, under the influence of the Action Conservative Movement³ they quickly expanded their sweep, incorporating xenophobic and racist rhetoric, Japanese essentialism, and revisionist history to justify the exclusion of all minority communities, including Zainichi Koreans, Chinese, and Ainu. Critics like Kaneko Yasuyuki in Hokkaido began to scour budgets in order to dismantle special programs earmarked for Ainu, including programs designed to boost Ainu education and employment prospects toward greater parity with settler Japanese and those promoting Ainu ethnicity. Right-wing politicians employed colonial racism in depicting contemporary Ainu who benefitted from these programs as “Japanese of Ainu descent” or “modernized, urban, assimilated Ainu” who were simply performing Ainu identity in order to benefit from government largesse.

As I discuss in the book, the centerpiece of the Japanese government’s Ainu policy and one of Japan’s first multicultural laws, the Ainu Cultural Promotion Act (Ainu CPA) of 1997, poses two significant obstacles to Ainu identity and Ainu expression of Indigenous modernity. That is, the Ainu CPA mandates promotion of “traditional Ainu culture.” As such, the CPA hamstring the many Ainu who seek to articulate a range of identities as well as cultural and other expressions that don’t fit neatly under the measure’s recipe for “tradition.” At the same time, the law stymies contemporary Ainu because it is prescriptive. It sets out legal parameters for the types of Ainu cultural practices and expression that may be

recognized as legitimate, and by default, hems all “real Ainu” into a constricting set of categories. By definition, then, those who do not morph seamlessly into these prescriptive classes may come to be seen as ersatz Ainu. Whether or not they apply for government funding becomes immaterial. The lived reality of Ainu diversity and contemporary complexity is at odds with the prescriptive nature of the law. In this sense, the government’s Ainu policy and the law itself have created conditions ripe for exploitation by right-wing cyber bullies and hate speech groups, which are reflected in the vitriol of attacks in recent years.

In contrast to this portrait, as I present below, Ainu are far more complex than these two-dimensional caricatures might suggest. Above all, contemporary Ainu are survivors, and in surviving Japan’s settler colonialism and the brutal racism that it occasioned, they have always been moderns. In this excerpt, I introduce a brief sample of Ainu women’s expressions of Indigenous modernity; there are more in the book. Extending from the gendered legacy of settler colonialism, Ainu women’s expressions of Ainu identity vitally intervene in and interrupt the muting of Ainu existence in the Japanese imagination.

In appropriating the framework of “modernity” I am aware of the discursive and colonial freight burdening this term. I recognize that “modernity” has long been a tool of the settler state’s architecture, as shorthand for Japanese civilization and Japanized standards of development. Colonial authorities frequently employed the term as a euphemism for assimilation and even elimination. Here I am actively seeking to liberate discussions of contemporary Ainu lives from the prison of a settler state-defined “modernity.” Below I shed light on how Ainu have defined and wrestled with Indigenous modernity on their own terms. By introducing Ainu women’s diverse expressions of identity and their exercise of self-determination in embracing Ainu identities

as survivors and indeed, as moderns, I seek to disrupt and interrupt the steady parade of negations of Ainu ethnicity and claims that Ainu do not, and cannot exist, that they cannot be coevals with 21st century Japan, nor indeed, with the world.

Global Indigenities: Locating an Indigenous Present

For the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of early cultural revivalists, “becoming” Ainu has been a process of merging an ancestral inheritance with a contemporary sensibility to forge Ainu spaces in the everyday. Below we meet several Ainu women who have forged their senses of self as “Indigenous” through transnational Indigenous encounters, as Sakai Mina recalled of the watershed moment in her high school-era exchange with a Canadian Aboriginal community:

Strong dancing. A secure sense of identity. Bold expressions of pride in their ethnic identity. I was shocked. Next to them, I looked like a weak and tiny person. We Ainu, so full of shame at being Ainu, that we might be able to feel pride—this shifted my thinking 180 degrees. . . . [Two years later when we invited them to Hokkaido] we sang songs around the campfire and the me in that space was filled with a sense of deep contentment. This was the original me, I realized. To live openly as Ainu, this was the path for me. (Sakai 2008, 13)



Cultural exchange in process. Several Ainu travelled to Seattle, Washington to participate in the annual Tribal Journey traditional canoe revival hosted by the Makah Nation in 2010. Here the Ainu group joins fellow Indigenous communities at the closing ceremony after safe arrival in Neah Bay, WA (July 2010, Photo by Jack Storms.)

This moment of stark “awakening,” as I described these occasions earlier, triggers a heightened sense of self-awareness and consciousness of one’s belonging not only to the Ainu community but to the Indigenous community as well. Not least, they invoke a realization that claiming an Ainu ancestry and, in turn, asserting an Ainu identity are not isolated acts, limited to Hokkaido or to the Japanese context. Rather, these transnational encounters become the impetus for a radical shift in consciousness and a gradual acceptance of family and ethnic ancestry for those who had rejected this, chosen silence, and “passed” as Wajin. Likewise, for those ethnic Wajin adopted into and raised in Ainu families, such encounters occasion their adoption of an Ainu cultural identity.

The theme that surfaced in conversations with younger-generation artists was their insistence on sculpting Ainu expressions and an everyday Ainu mode of being, a mode of being not envisioned for memorials, special rites, harvest feasting, or heritage dance. Young Ainu artists urge that appeals launched through the global vernacular of hip-hop or roots music, modern and hybrid dance, and multimodal

performances recruit greater empathy than political sloganeering or the recitation of the dark history of Hokkaido colonization and Ainu dispossession. Increasingly, Ainu youth are raising their voices to collectively reject the discrimination-ridden rite-of-passage narratives familiarly invoked by their elders. The group of multiethnic youth who organized the Apkas walk⁴ in 2008 drew inspiration from a similar desire to move beyond the confrontational politics of earlier eras and celebrate Ainu identities by reclaiming the design motifs, music, and art of their ancestors through adapting these to new mediums and diverse technologies.



"Iresu Fuci," a tapestry by Ainu artist Rayoci. (Photo by artist.)



Pirka Kewtum Apkas, a 400-km walk to commemorate the forced relocation of Sakhalin Ainu from southern Sakhalin to northern Hokkaido and eventually Tsuishikari, north of Sapporo. Several dozen multi-ethnic youth, including Ainu, Wajin (ethnic Japanese), and non-Japanese, joined together to walk in honor of the traumatic forced removal of Sakhalin Ainu to Japan in 1875, through this peace walk, held in June 2008. (Photo by Nakamura Ayumi.)

Other young artists sought to create a cosmopolitan Ainuness that would be infused in the urban and disconnected spaces of everyday life and reflected in the built environment. Several Ainu artists expressed frustration with the apparent absence of Ainu or metonymic representations of Ainu from urban contexts such as Hokkaido's capital, Sapporo, or the island's international airport, in Chitose. One artist, Nupkina, insisted that an urban capital like Sapporo in the heart of ancestral Ainu territory absent any allusions to Ainu culture, history, or materials was inconceivable. On the contrary, I would argue this absence inscribes settler colonialism on the landscape of Hokkaido and the careful camouflaging of any historical memory that might threaten the legitimacy of Wajin presence and infrastructure in ultramodern hubs such as airports, train

stations, and state-curated architecture.

For Nupkina, traces of the Ainu influence, both historical and continuing, abound in Hokkaido, and her work to design new approaches toward reflecting these in the built environment is “completely normal.” Nupkina explained that her “designs draw inspiration from both Japanese and Ainu influences. In every pattern and color composition there is a history and a usage practice we should learn, to deepen these roots in our daily usage.” She continued, “I don’t want to have to compromise my own color. I plan to release my own brand in the world.” Raised in Nibutani, a southern Hokkaido community and Ainu tourist town with one of the most densely concentrated Ainu populations in Japan, after graduating high school Nupkina was restless to leave rural Hokkaido for a metropolitan space but did not have the academic record to enter university. Enrolling in design school in Sapporo, she felt stymied.

In design school we weren’t able to copy other people’s designs, and so we had to come up with originals. Because Ainu livelihood is sustained by the natural world . . . we have few material goods. . . . And I wanted to find a way to render Ainu designs in a contemporary way. My head was full of Ainu patterns absorbed from Ainu language classes, regalia, museums, and just from being in Nibutani. I realized I could extract from these to come up with my own original Ainu motifs [as graphic designs]. But until I took on the textile vocational training, I detested sewing. As I learned, and then had my technique praised by one of our elders as being polished, I began to really work at embroidery. (Nupkina, interview,

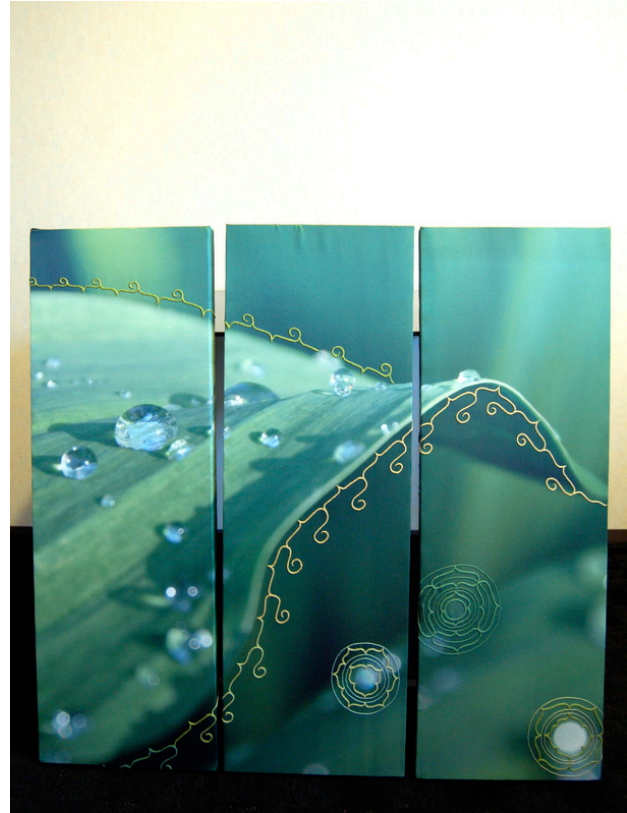
July 13, 2005)

More than a decade later, Nupkina’s work as a professional designer extends across multiple contexts: interior design, silver jewelry, pocket handkerchiefs and silk scarves, printed T-shirts, floor lamps, and hotel-issue *yukata* (J: cotton Japanese robes) for spa guests. She aspires toward the global designer market in London and Paris and anticipates eventually touring her designs there.

Young artists like Nupkina imagine an urban context where Ainu patterns are so ubiquitous as to appear banal. Keeping heritage aesthetic conventions as an anchoring device, these up-and-coming designers and artists propose to craft an all-encompassing environment in metropolitan spaces. In the decade since my conversation with Nupkina, this urban environment had begun to transform, including clothwork and woodwork. These artists, however, shared the perspective that no matter how avant-garde their innovation or how dramatic their application of artistic license, their own artistic process should be rooted in an Ainupuri⁵ aesthetic culled from ancestral values. In other words, some mode of ancestral authority must operate to validate Ainu conventions. Collective Ainu ancestors are now invoked as legitimating agents in cultural-revival and Indigenous-rights campaigns to anchor the moral urgency of Ainu claims, an urgency now backed by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. And thus in unexpected ways, their approaches resonate with the experiences and affective posture of their grandmothers’ generation.



Sky tapestry by Ainu artist Kaizawa Tamami. (Photo by artist.)



Dewdrop tapestry by Ainu artist Kaizawa Tamami. (Photo by artist.)

The “Situation Called Ainu”

The labor of imagining selves anew as Ainu is burdened with the conundrum of modern Ainu subjectivity in Japan. In mainstream Japanese society, Ainu subjectivities are seen as incommensurable with modernity and defy the imaginations of contemporary Japanese. As such, the problem resides with Wajin more so than with Ainu. I describe this as a conundrum because of the strictures and points of debate against which Ainu have to position themselves. Being or becoming Ainu is not paradoxical, but asserting an Ainu identity today is challenging because of the limits in the settler imagination. In Japan, the equation of “Ainu” with “modern” has been popularly dismissed as untenable. Until quite recently, Ainu have been treated as fully assimilated. In the Japanese imagination, Ainu do not exist, aside from the handful who

inhabit tourist landscapes. This kind of rhetoric frequently occurs alongside references to Japan as a *tan'itsu minzoku* (homogeneous nation). “Modernity” here, as both an analytical tool and a theoretical category, interacts with ethnic difference as a historical bookmark. It constricts and cements the production of Ainu ethnicity within the premodern era and simultaneously places those with Ainu ancestry now stripped of a living Ainu ethnicity in the postmodern present. “The situation called ‘Ainu,’” as Ainu writer Sasaki Masao termed it, is truncated by the shift to a Japanese modernity during the early Meiji period (Winchester 2012, 3). Ainu ethnicity and the possibility of enacting Ainu livelihood is thereby consigned to the premodern era, and in this depiction, the fate of Ainu is inevitably assimilation (*ibid.*, 4). Indeed, in its 2009 roadmap for future Ainu policy, a government-advisory council painted Ainu colonization with the euphemism “being dealt a severe blow by modernity”—a euphemism that grants impunity to the Japanese state and normalizes Ainu suffering under colonialism as the natural and inevitable progression of modernity (Ainu Seisaku no Arikata ni Kan suru Yūshikisha Kondankai 2009, 10).

Well into the twentieth century, Ainu ethnicity and heritage arts continued to be partnered with the primitive. Ainu arts were adopted as prized traditional heritage within Japan’s *minzoku geijutsu* (J: popular arts), or *Mingei* movement, an arts-revival movement celebrating the preindustrial artifacts of everyday life, artifacts and technical knowledge that movement founder Yanagi Muneyoshi feared were threatened by modernity. Yanagi wrote that Ainu traditional arts were based on techniques that had not “departed the era of earliest tools” and that the relationship between Ainu cultural practice and technology figured centrally in ranking Ainu in the cultural hierarchy of modernity as “early primitives” (1980, 503). Generations later, elders would explain to me that confronted by racism and

discrimination, they had grown to understand that being Ainu meant developmental dysfunction and incapacity for achieving modernity. As Sasaki described it in the first edition of *Anutari Ainu*, the independent newspaper he edited with a group of young Ainu in the 1970s:

What we are facing now is not the “Ainu” as a *jinshu* (J: race), or the “Ainu” as a *minzoku* (J: people), but the “Ainu” as a *jōkyō* (J: condition, a set of circumstances)—by situation I mean that when people call us “Ainu,” the meaning of that “Ainu” comes to restrict our lives. We are being compelled by this force; this condition of being “Ainu” itself is the problem. (M. Sasaki 1973, 8)



Cover page of the 1970s era Ainu newspaper, *Anutari Aynu*. This first edition featured the editorial commentary from one of the editors, Sasaki Masao. (Photo by author.)

At times, being Ainu meant never quite arriving at the place called “modernity,” as historian Mark Winchester argues (2012). Under state policies mandating the erasure of their ethnic difference, Ainu were relegated to a category of not-quite-thereness. Much as they sought to be accepted as Wajin, they could not escape the nonexistent ethnic space of Other. As Sasaki observed, the realm of possible ethnic identities had been constrained; Ainu was either a premodern form or nonexistent. When they were mentioned at all, Ainu were always already not-quite- or not-yet-modern.

Until recently, no place existed in the Japanese imagination to accommodate a cosmopolitan Ainu identity (see Appiah 2006; Clifford 1997;

Forte 2010; Rapport 2007; Watson 2014). As with their Indigenous brothers and sisters in other settler-colonial societies, Ainu identity is not presented exclusively through public performances or limited to the visible register. That is, Ainu have largely embraced contemporary Japanese lifestyles to suit their needs, and thus they rarely don heritage regalia or carry out specifically “Ainu” activities, as depicted in tourist postcards and tourist sites. The rubric of “modern” in this triangulated relationship of modern + Ainu + subjectivity speaks to Ainu coevalness with ethnic Japanese (Wajin) and others in contemporary Japanese society. It underscores the centrality of choice, agency, and, most centrally, self-determination as components of Ainu modernity for the Ainu individuals negotiating this domain today.

In the contemporary era, popular visions of Ainu ethnicity in Japan tend to exaggerate phenotypical appearance and, by extension, biological difference, cultural fluency and ritual knowledge, and, to some extent, linguistic capability, thus reinforcing expectations that being Ainu is incommensurable with Japanese modernity. Since 1997, the state’s investment in subsidizing a narrowly defined model of traditional culture has bolstered discourses of authenticity, with funds distributed exclusively to those initiatives deemed “authentic” under the purview of the Ainu CPA. Formulas coupling certain Ainu phenotypes with public performance of cultural fluency have been paralyzing for Ainu who embrace a contrasting notion of identity. This “ethnic paralysis” has meant that they are unable to publicly self-identify as Ainu or share their insecurity with others because of anxiety that their lack of cultural fluency, or an outward appearance that is not markedly an Ainu phenotype, will expose them as inauthentic or as ersatz Ainu (see Miranda 2013).

“Modern Ainu Identity” as *Mosaku*

Reckoning Ainu ethnicity and belonging is complex: at present there is no official Ainu- or state-approved definition for Ainu belonging, and the community has not addressed this question in any comprehensive manner. The default convention for assessing Ainu ethnicity rests on self-identification outside of Hokkaido and/or historical affiliation with an Ainu organization, and within Hokkaido belonging is vetted either by the AAH through local community recognition or through historical membership in an Ainu cultural or political organization.⁶ Physical fragmentation of Ainu communities under assimilation policies between 1799 and the present mean that contemporary interpretations of Ainupuri have been colored by colonialism, assimilation, and the ongoing structural racism of a settler state.⁷ Ainu subjectivity is irreducible to biology or phenotype. Nonbiological adopted and affinal relations—or those who have been adopted into or who have married into Ainu families—have historically been embraced as fellow Ainu and included in matrilineal and patrilineal families and inheritance practices (Baba 1980; Peng and Geiser 1977; Segawa 1972).

In the experience of most Ainu, living relations have suppressed personal memories and stifled Ainu identities in an effort to overcome their ethnicity and pass as full-fledged Wajin. In the settler imagination, Ainu ethnicity evokes a premodern era and with it a truncated state of human development, or *rettō minzoku* (Ueno Sada, interview, July 2000). Expressions of Ainu ethnicity in material culture have been seen as tokens of the past in the present, as metonyms of a lifestyle and worldview that must be overcome to acquire “modernity,” which is shorthand for Japanese civilization and Japanized standards of development. When ethnicity is filtered through a racial metric, Ainuness becomes an indelible quality in the blood. But modernity was also seen to offer the possibility and the promise of transformation, and this is the language that Ainu elders used

to describe to me their perceptions of being Ainu.

During the pro-assimilation era (from the 1900s onward), family life was colored by efforts to erase Ainu cultural difference, with no Ainu language, no open ritual or public display of prayer, and with textiles and other markers of ethnicity being packed away or sold to antique collectors. Both women and men report experiencing a long period of confusion and “fumbling for identity” as they struggled to make sense of what it means to be Ainu. The language women use evokes the struggle and sometimes pain that accompanies this undertaking. *Mosaku*, or “to fumble,” is synonymous with *tesaguri* (J: searching by hand), both terms that index sightless foraging in dark places and being guided or propelled forward by one’s hands. In Ainu self-craft, the hands and the fingertips are the threshold for engaging a new bodily self and encountering unfamiliar psychologies of self. There is no adequate translation for *mosaku* in English, and thus I have chosen to leave the term in Japanese to connote the sensory palpability of this process and its intense focus on the realm of touch. These tactile domains are also said to spark contact with memory, the past, heritage praxis, and the ancestral vision women describe as *Ainu no seishin* (J: Ainu intention or Ainu spirit). Textile making through *teshigoto* (J: labor with one’s hands or handwork) aids women in negotiating how to reclaim practices that have been obscured by the naturalization of colonialist values and habituation to Japanese society.

At present, cultural-revival mobilization is oriented toward the past as an attempt to reconstruct practices that were stripped from Ainu communities under colonization. But the “past” being invoked here is irreducible to a temporal setting on a continuum between the past and future, or a reading that reflects a modernist notion of linear time, of time as progression. Rather, the “past” invoked in Ainu

tradition, heritage, and cultural action might more appropriately be rendered as an “ancestral space,” as a parallel but temporally simultaneous universe in which the ancestors dwell. Older Ainu may reference this space through the language of Ainupuri. For those reared with the bodily sensation of ancestral presence and fear of retribution for improper ritual form, the importance of abiding by cultural protocols is keenly felt. Ainupuri thus becomes an idiom for engaging with this ancestral space by conveying sentiments of longing and respect toward the ancestors and communicating with these ancestors in the vernacular language that they passed onward to offspring and descendants. In a nod to her deference toward Ainu ancestors, culture bearer Orita Suteno once explained that keeping Ainupuri was not a matter of choice. For her, abiding by protocol was essential to avoiding humiliation before ancestors and the spirit world (Keira 1999). Ancestral agency over living Ainu is in this sense palpable: it is manifest in ceremony and in everyday material expressions and bodily comportment.

Ainu may access this ancestral space through embodied practices of textile making, plant gathering, performing *upopo* (songs), making food, or through performing ritual as a means for those who identify as Ainu to consolidate affective ties with other Ainu and, in an embodied sense, to construct a community of Ainu. While the ancestral space toward which Ainu gesture in forging an Ainu self may be located anywhere and everywhere, there are certain contexts that trigger individuals to engage with this space or that prod unexpected encounters. This is felt in response to certain locales where *nusa* (A: altars) dedicated to ancestors or *kamuy* have formerly been located or places where ceremonies such as *kamuynomi* (A: ritual prayer) or *iyomante* (A: bear or owl spirit-sending ceremony) have been held. Others may experience an uncanny, even intuitive, sensation of the memory of place, often in response to places they have never

physically visited before. This may occur as an unexpected emotional or even physical reaction to the presence of *kamuy* or ancestors, or a strong, intuitive sensation of their presence, similar to what many Ainu have described to me as the sensation of *chi ga sawagu* (J: blood would clamor, or boil). In other words, Ainu begin to *feel* Ainu, or to “experience a pre-reflective feeling or emotional response,” through engaging in this ancestral space, as anthropologist Mark Watson described in his reading of ritual practice as an impetus for encountering an Ainu self (Watson 2014, 143). Such experiences of feeling Ainu may extend from “a visceral physical experience or unexpected awakening often prompted by a ceremonial event” (ibid.). In other words, an emotional, spiritual, or embodied sensation of contact with this ancestral space becomes pivotal in experiencing a feeling of belonging and a sense of oneself as Ainu.

Today, however, the structures of settler society and the linguistic limitations of Japanese have constrained the conceptual parameters for how this ancestral space may be imagined. What I describe as the cultural-revival movement is, for Ainu cultural revivalists, an attempt to recuperate this ancestral space, linking it with their everyday worlds, envisioning it as a means of cultural expression, and using it for political leverage.

From “Being Ainu” to “Becoming Ainu”

Unlike *being Ainu*—a notion of ascribed identity based on blood ancestry—the process of retooling oneself, of *becoming Ainu*, is said to be therapeutic and liberating; it enables women to reclaim formerly stigmatized markers of Ainu belonging. Based on their active choice to self-identify as Ainu, women describe how the process of self-craft and forging an Ainu subjectivity triggers healing mechanisms. During the period of *mosaku*, women report that in order to recover a sense of self as Ainu, or to remake themselves as Ainu, they feel

summoned to do memory work. This refers to the labor of recovering an individual or communal past through ancestral anecdotes, elders' recollections, or the fibers of heirloom garments. That work is rooted in elderwomen's knowledge, oral histories, and in the material legacy that survives in museum collections.⁸

For Ainu, the link between memory work and self-craft delineates how individual recollections are cobbled together from disparate histories to weave a collective narrative of Ainu pasts and re-member the Ainu community as a sovereign collective. As many Japanese language sources argue, Ainu are not known to have possessed a written language, in the conventional sense, or history in the sense of written text. This assumption stems from a text-centric understanding of written expression as superior to the exclusion of other forms and the critical importance of material culture, orality, and other modes of remembering (lewallen 2014). As Ainu women explained to me, the primary sources for the project of remembering are not archives; instead, revivalists depend on the material-culture record combined with embodied knowledge of the technologies that produced it. Knowledge keepers' passing down of these skill sets is critical for crafting a pan-Ainu heritage and for the accompanying process of self-discovery. This labor draws from the memories of individual ancestors and collective ancestral knowledge—bodies of knowledge that do not readily coalesce. In precolonial eras, Ainu communities were scattered across Ezo; residents of these distinct regions spoke different languages, used a range of motifs, and did not understand themselves as belonging to a unified ethnic community, much less a sovereign state. Communities tended to coalesce regionally, and they sometimes waged battles over resource access. Today, women's efforts in memory work seek to trace both individual fibers of continuity and shared pasts, and by integrating these into a comprehensive fabric of Ainuness, they suture a new history of

nation from this collective heritage. As such, this symbolic labor in material domains like textile production evinces a weighty political resonance.

To gain access to the ancestral space and craft a sense of self as Ainu, women engage in various cultural activities, specifically in the material realm. Clothwork and handwork provide points of entrée for women who previously rejected their Ainu ancestry and passed as Wajin or who have come to understand themselves as Ainu in adulthood. One such woman, Topeni, now an accomplished artist and instructor of Ainu embroidery, described her experience coming to terms with being Ainu.

Even though I was born Ainu and raised in Shiraoi [a center of Ainu tourism], I didn't really know anything about *being Ainu* except that I had Ainu blood from my father's side. . . . He didn't learn anything about culture from Grandpa because of assimilation. So I was raised without even knowing what being Ainu means. Only when I moved to Tokyo after junior high school did I notice people's stares and start to think something was different, that I was Ainu. It was at this time that I started to ask myself: "What is Ainu? What am I?" The long years of painful *mosaku* began. (Topeni, interview, July 12, 2001)



Nationwide map of craftwork officially designated as “heritage craft” across Japan. Nibutani Ainu elmbark weaving and woodcarving were first recognized in 2013. This designation, however, is strictly limited to woodcarving and weaving from Nibutani, a region in southern Hokkaido.

Topeni’s narrative underscores the distinction between *being* Ainu and *becoming* Ainu. Until recently, “being Ainu” as a self-ascribed identity stemmed primarily from ancestry or nonbiological kinship such as adoption or marriage into an Ainu family. Alternately, some Ainu report that they have been assigned identities, or made to “be Ainu,” based on perceived phenotypical differences from ethnic Japanese. In contrast, “becoming Ainu” points toward embodying one’s Ainu identity as a lived connection to ancestral values and culling from Ainupuri in an attempt to syncretize ancestral practice with contemporary Japanese society and with idealized visions of modernity, locally

defined.

My use of the phrase “becoming Ainu” is drawn from Ainu women’s own language, as Kotori Sawa described a choice to embrace her Ainu identity, after initial attempts to reject her Ainu ancestry, by speaking “Shisamu words” (A: good-neighbor, or ethnic-Japanese, language) to avoid bullying at school. Sawa described the tension between her identity in “being Ainu” and the conscious choice to “become Ainu”: “Hatred toward Ainu was so severe that we Ainu, we put great effort into *not becoming Ainu*” (Sawa quoted in Ekashi to Fuci Henshū-iinkai, 1983, 251, emphasis added). Yet, gathering to hear the *sakorpe* (A: oral literature) recited by the hearthside and being surrounded by Ainu language, Sawa felt her blood clamor (A: *chi ga sawagu*) and devoted her energy to choosing to become Ainu, in part because of the generosity of spirit she saw in her aunts and uncles, a way of being in the world she connected with an Ainu ethos (ibid., 252).

Memory work, or the labor of recovering an individual or communal past through ancestral anecdotes, elders’ recollections, or the fibers of heirloom garments, now helps contemporary Ainu women to move beyond the haunting memories of cultural genocide. Most contemporary Ainu do not have direct personal experiences or memories of the heritage they invoke—these experiences are often one or two generations removed, as in Sawa’s recollections. People living in an advanced state of settler colonialism, like the Ainu, while often in their home terrain, can never quite go home. Instead, they seek to interact with an ancestral space in the present. To this end the material inheritance rediscovered by Ainu knowledge keepers from the postwar through the present has proven to be restorative, buoying revivalists of all ages toward negotiating an Ainu modernity.

Indigenous Modernity

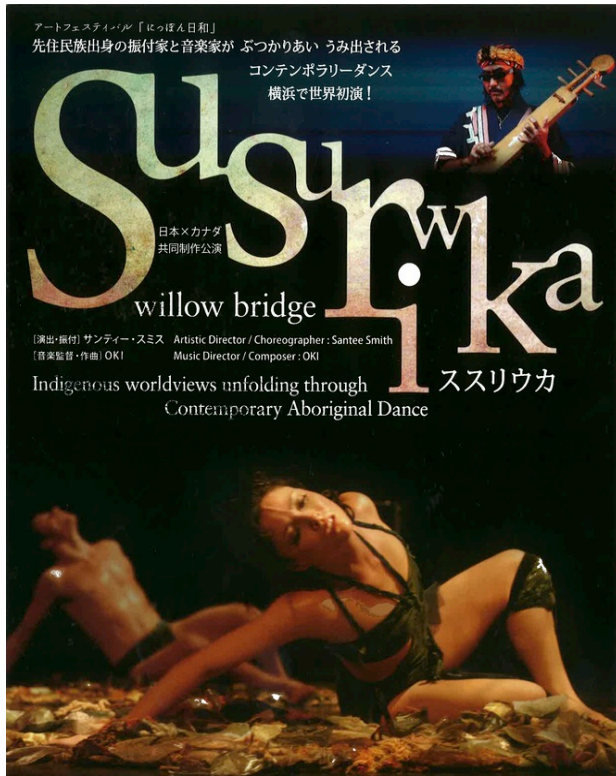
Among those with Ainu ancestry who have chosen to embrace an Ainu identity, many continue to be haunted by anxiety about their cultural fluency, their physical authenticity, or whether their expressions of Ainupuri will offend or be lauded by an ancestral pantheon. These anxieties are incited, in part, by the dissolution of Ainu communities and the taboos that long prohibited inheritance of this knowledge and partly by the government's support for a heritage economy with the Ainu Culture Foundation at its center, policing the boundaries of heritage culture and how it may be interpreted, which further exacerbates existing apprehension. And these concerns are not unfounded. Even if unspoken, funding decisions, representation for heritage projects, and regulation of cultural activities are all affected by appraisal of these factors. To fully engage with and comprehend Ainu women's efforts to suture new sensibilities to modern-day lifestyles as Indigenous Ainu requires that essentialist paradigms be suspended inside, as well as outside, the community. That is, conceptions of indigeneity bound by geographical determinism, mandating an authentic, traditional cultural familiarity and fluency, phenotypical "purity," and assuming a premodern sensibility are untenable. Such conceptions discount the actual circumstances of the majority of the world's Indigenous peoples, two-thirds of whom now dwell in urban diasporas and contend with the challenges of maintaining ancestral ties. To articulate compelling political claims against colonizing nations, Indigenous groups have staked strong claims to ancestral land and often have elected to mask the more fluid character of their relations to place. Many have felt the need to exaggerate the stability of these relations in order to gain purchase on their claims of sovereignty and to counter the authority claimed by nation-states to grant or withhold recognition and legal rights. These frameworks that map legitimacy by delineating a "valid" Indigenous status have been produced through global Indigenous struggle and taken

shape in international forums.⁹ But the historical process of colonization from which models of indigeneity have been cast was forged from the detritus of European empire and Japanized interpretations of this global model.

The model of Indigenous modernity I have synthesized from Ainu approaches is articulated through modes of Indigenous and Ainu "becoming." These are processes that are actualized through self-craft. Ainu who are engaged in this process of "becoming" seek to "reclaim modernity" as a cultural category, pushing majority Wajin society to expand its conceptualization of the modern in contemporary Japan. An approach centered on becoming Indigenous allows for the requisite flexibility, including the "constant, selective, adaptive, and incorporative behavior [whereby] individuals and communities remake themselves" (Cairns 2001, 105). And in contrast to majority-Japanese or Western discourses of modernity, an ontological frame rooted in "becoming" is not constrained by a quantifiable metric of achievement or a historical dialectic between primitivity and modernity, whereupon progress may be evaluated. Recognition that one can learn to "become Ainu" helps to break down essentialist notions of identity as fixed or blood-borne and dispel the myth that a person born of Ainu ancestry (or who "possesses Ainu blood") is necessarily Ainu, rather than self-consciously forging that identity through active negotiation. Indeed, many with Ainu ancestry elect to ignore or seek to suppress this inheritance and to embrace an identity as Wajin or live with ambivalence about the chasm between this ancestral lineage and their sense of belonging as Wajin, whereas others, often influenced by what they experience as an ancestral "clamoring of the blood," choose to embrace their Ainu identity. As I discuss below, the varying tableaux of Indigenous modernity incorporate flexibility, recognizing Indigenous agency and the capacity to exercise self-

determination, the denial of which has long reinforced mental, spiritual, and emotional colonization (Waziyatawin and Yellow Bird 2012).

Tryptych montage of Ainu artist Kaizawa Tamami's three-dimensional embroidery. This piece is now a part of the permanent collection of the National Museum of Ethnology in Osaka, Japan. (Photo by author.)



Indigenous contemporary dance and music collaboration featuring Ainu musician/ composer Kanō Oki and Canadian Aboriginal choreographer/dancer Santee Smith and her dance team, Kahaw:hi. The collaboration, entitled *Susuriwka* (Willow Bridge), was performed in Japan in 2011.

Ainu silkscreen scarf by Ainu artist Kaizawa Tamami. (Photo courtesy of Foundation for Research and Promotion of Ainu Culture.)



This flexibility, for instance, was critical for members of the Ainu performance troupe Ainu Rebels, who infused urban hip-hop and rap in styling their contemporary Ainu music and performance. Such efforts are still messy and approximate, and the Ainu Rebels version of Ainu artistic expression did not represent all Ainu youth. Sakai Mari—a member of an Ainu traditional performance group in Hokkaido and childhood friends with Rebels founder Sakai Mina—struck a chord of wistful admiration when she noted, “The appearance [of Ainu

Rebels] being lauded by praise from young people is enviable. . . . [Yet] urban areas tuned in to fads are so different from our situation in Hokkaido. I feel that the weight of things that have been protected across the ages without changing will invariably speak to people. For myself, I am working very hard to polish and improve on the legacy of the Ainu songs and dancing we have now" (*Hokkaido Shimbun*, March 19, 2008). Sakai's carefully chosen words hint at the contested ground of attempts to reframe cultural expression. As contemporary Ainu roots musician and tonkori revivalist Kanō Oki succinctly puts it, "It is no longer possible to think of there being only one type of Ainu" (Kanō quoted in Watson 2014, 88). Oki, whose transit on the global music scene has enabled circulation of Ainu sonic expression far beyond Hokkaido or Japan, invokes an imagined Ainu public bound by neither its ancestral past nor its geographical margins. At the same time, Oki's comments underscore his recognition of the irreversible impact of Japanese colonization on Ainu senses of self and the ongoing difficulties many Ainu face in choosing between claiming or rejecting an Ainu identity on their own terms.



Ainu contemporary dance and music performance troupe, Ainu Rebels in 2009. (Screenshot from Ainu Rebels video.)

Can one be Indigenous and modern at the same time? Ainu negotiations toward this answer lie within contemporary cultural revival in the

context of Japan, specifically in light of the government's and society's ongoing attempts to assimilate and, indeed, to "civilize" Ainu. That is, the primary rationale for the government's 2008 recognition of Ainu as Indigenous peoples was that Ainu culture (rather than Ainu people themselves) was delivered a "devastating blow by the state's embrace of modernity," resulting in the destruction of Ainu culture. According to this discursive twist now codified in cabinet-level reports, Ainu heritage culture cannot coexist in the same temporal or geographic plane as Japanese modernity (Ainu Seisaku no Arikata ni Kan suru Yūshikisha Kondankai 2009). Secondly, since 1945 and the loss of its imperial possessions in Asia and the Pacific, Japan understands itself as having returned to its *de facto* state (circa 1895) as a homogeneous society. In recent decades some observers argue that spikes in immigration indicate the arrival of a newly multicultural society and further exaggerate arguments that an influx of early twentieth-century Korean and Chinese migrant laborers constitutes an immigration "anomaly" (Shin 2010). Such discourses thus reinforce narratives of Ainu as assimilated or, worse, vanished. That is to say, if contemporary Ainu were embraced in their diversity and complexity as living members of Japanese society, the Japanese government and Japanese public would be less likely to assert homogeneity as its default setting. In contrast, here we see how Ainu women have negotiated with and overcome such "discourses of erasure" by using clothwork to claim a politics of survival and visibility. Ainu struggles to assert contemporary selves as Indigenous *and* modern thus subvert the hegemony of such erasure narratives and target policy makers, rural rice farmers, urban housewives, and schoolteachers in equal measure as a means of claiming a viable contemporary Indigenous presence in twenty-first-century Japan.

Dakota Sioux historian Philip Deloria (2004) writes lucidly of the myriad ways that discursive practices have shaped mainstream

Americans' perceptions of "Indians + modernity" as historical anomaly. For example, Deloria urges readers to "distinguish between the anomalous, which reinforces expectations, and the unexpected, which resists categorization, and thereby questions expectations itself" (11). Indeed, Ainu have sought to utilize the "unexpected" to compel Japanese society to recognize the diverse and nonetheless valid modes of embracing Ainu modernity. One clear example is Ainu women's vocal group Marewrew and their long-term aspiration to break through Japan's pop music scene by performing in the nation's live broadcast music event, the annual New Year's Eve *Kōhaku-utagassen* (J: Red vs. White Battle of the Sexes Pop Music Competition), a dream they have yet to actualize (interview, November 18, 2015). But Japanese society has been much less willing to accept this flexibility and the fact of Ainu vitality today.

Yet seeing Ainu modernit(ies) as variegated, and as sites of ongoing negotiation, helps eliminate expectation for an authentic performance of Ainu identity. The rubric of "Indigenous modernity" for Ainu in Japan liberates them from the taxonomic constraints of forever being marked as primitive, anti-modern, insufficiently civilized, and/or vanishing, criteria deployed to justify Ainu exclusion from the broader civil society and certainly to bolster the rhetoric of settler colonialism as a civilizing project. Anthropologist Mark Watson, who focuses on urban Ainu in Tokyo and surrounding areas, argues compellingly for the importance of unbinding indigeneity from an authenticity tethered to ancestral lands. He calls for a new model of Indigenous modernity, one that is "shorn of the tensions between autochthony and Indigenousness, that is consistent with the current and future diasporic dimensions of Indigenous life" (Watson 2014, 32). As is common to claims of global Indigenous identity, Ainu attachment to ancestral land and histories of relations with the natural sphere have been

central to Indigenous self-craft.

Despite assertions of terrestrial fixity for political purposes, Ainu practices are in fact anchored in a pelagic mobility demonstrated by the vast trading networks commanded by Ainu leaders around the precolonial North Pacific (Kikuchi 1994; Walker 2001), and it is this mobility that is central to urban Ainu subjectivities. Still, the land was a defining feature of indigeneity as imagined by Ainu in the 1970s and 1980s; this was influenced in part by the shared identity of "mother earth" incorporated from exchanges with Indigenous peoples in North America (Siddle 2006). Like their Indigenous neighbors in Asia, Ainu in northeastern Japan experienced successive migrations of settlers from mainland Japan in the fifteenth century and again in the postwar era, when land was redistributed to Wajin repatriated from Asian colonies (Mock 1999). The influx of Japanese settler colonists reached its zenith after the Meiji state officially annexed Ezo as Hokkaido in 1869.

A fluid model of modernity helps to emancipate Ainu cultural practice and heritage from the stranglehold of an authenticating "tradition," which has long served to contain public discourse on modern Ainu identity. In today's Japan, Ainu feel a need to assert their singularity against conservative claims of cultural and ethnic isomorphism. In the wake of former parliamentarian Suzuki Muneo's 2001 claim that Japan is a "homogeneous nation," for example, nearly two hundred Ainu from across the nation gathered in protest at the foot of revolutionary hero Shakushain's memorial statue in Shizunai (*Asahi Shimbun*, July 13, 2001). As portrayed in the Ainu CPA, however, "Ainu culture," and to some extent Ainu identity, has been imagined as primarily a product of this "traditional culture," which is frozen in a pre- or early colonial era and largely delimited to the ancestral territory of Hokkaido, as elaborated in chapter 2.



Marewrew performing in front of traditional *cise* (thatched-roof house), screenshot from *Irankarapte* campaign video.

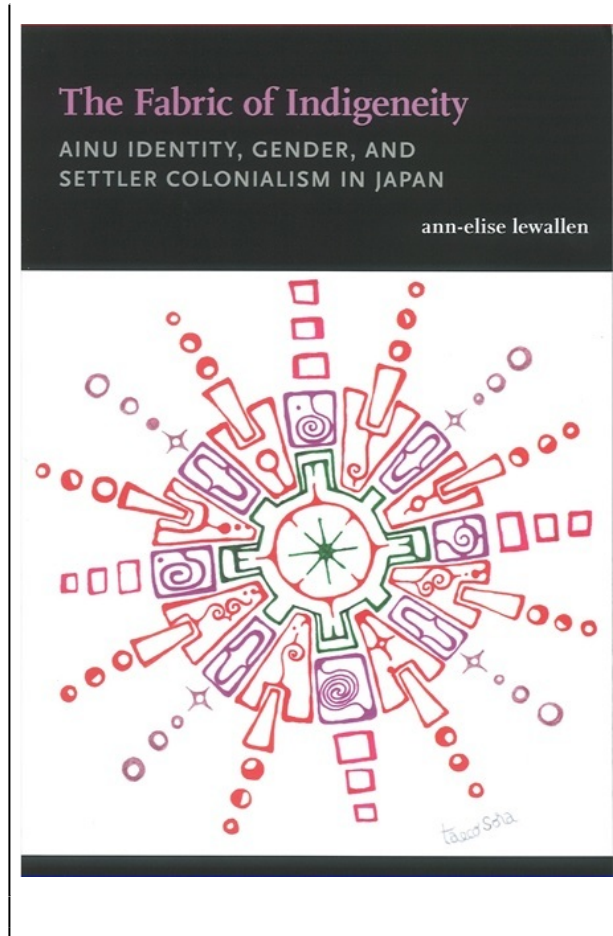


Heart-shaped Ainu motif logo for *Irankarapte* campaign, screenshot from *Irankarapte* campaign video.

This conservative, limiting notion of AINU cultural practice as frozen in time has proven to be a significant stumbling block for the CPA in serving the needs of a broader AINU public. A recent multicultural campaign underscores this point. In 2013, the Council for AINU Policy Promotion launched the Irankarapte (A: “Hello,” or literally, “Let me touch your heart softly”) Campaign to increase the visibility and recognition of AINU at Hokkaido’s Chitose International Airport and across Hokkaido, including an online promotional video.¹⁰ Despite its multicultural appeal to better understanding of AINU as a distinct culture within Hokkaido, the short video tends to reify AINU heritage practice in the “cultural heritage” mode rather than advocating a more diverse and complex portrait of contemporary AINU. Despite including a catchy campaign symbol that

morphs AINU motifs into a stylized heart design, ultimately it plays to the “Ainu as past” and thus “vanishing” view of AINU modernity.

In contrast to the CPA’s regressive model for cultural practice, this model of Indigenous modernity enables the possibility that AINU in each generation may redefine and reinvent the framework of AINU subjectivity. Thus the possibility arises that AINU youth who negotiate hybridized modern identities through the medium of hip-hop or roots music might be paired with elders who attempt to embed ancestral sensibilities in their muscle memory through painstakingly crafting replica garments. These seemingly disparate approaches toward crafting AINU subjectivities constitute dual modes of AINU modernity. Both assert modern AINU subjectivities and both define the terms of “becoming AINU” to meet individual needs. Both interact with ancestral materials such as cloth texts, music, language, or foodways to make selves anew. And each of these constitutes a valid mode of negotiating with an Indigenous present.



This article is excerpted, expanded, and adapted from ann-elise lewallen, 2016, The Fabric of Indigeneity: AINU Identity, Gender, and Settler Colonialism in Japan. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press and Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press. It was reproduced with the permission of the University of New Mexico Press and the School for Advanced Research Press. Buy the full book [here](#).

Works Cited

Ainu Seisaku no Arikata ni Kansuru Yūshikisha Kondankai (Advisory Council for Future Ainu Policy). 2009. “[Hōkokusho: Ainu Seisaku no Arikata ni Kansuru Yūshikisha Kondankai](#)” (Advisory Council for Future Ainu Policy Final Report). ([English version](#)).

Appiah, Anthony. 2006. *Cosmopolitanism:*

Ethics in a World of Strangers. New York: W. W. Norton.

Baba, Yūko. 1980. “A Study of Minority-Majority Relations: The Ainu and Japanese in Hokkaido.” *Japan Interpreter* 13 (1): 60-92.

Cairns, Alan C. 2001. *Citizens Plus: Aboriginal Peoples and the Canadian State*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.

Clifford, James. 1997. *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Deloria, Philip Joseph. 2004. *Indians in Unexpected Places*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.

Ekashi to Fuci Henshū-iinkai, ed. 1983. *Ekashi to Fuci: Kita no shima ni ikita hitobito no kiroku*. Sapporo: Sapporo Terebi Hōsō.

Forte, Maximilian. 2010. *Indigenous Cosmopolitans: Transnational and Transcultural Indigeneity in the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Peter Lang.

Keira, Tomoko. 1999. “The Heart Fuci Conveyed.” In *Ainu: Spirit of a Northern People*, edited by William W. Fitzhugh and Chisato O. Dubreuil, 379-81. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution.

Kikuchi Isao. 1994. *Ainu minzoku to Nihonjin: Higashi Ajia no naka no Ezochi*. Tokyo: Asahi Sensho.

lewallen, ann-elise. 2014. “En-gendering Praxis: Ainu Women’s Interventions in the Contemporary Cultural Revival Movement.” In *Beyond Ainu Studies: Changing Academic and Public Perspectives*, edited by Mark Hudson, ann-elise lewallen, and Mark Watson. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press.

Miranda, Deborah A. 2013. *Bad Indians: A Tribal Memoir*. Berkeley, CA: Heyday.

- Mock, John. 1999. Culture, Community and Change in a Sapporo Neighborhood, 1925-1988. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press.
- Ohnuki-Tierney, Emiko. 1999. "Ainu Sociality." In *Ainu: Spirit of a Northern People*, edited by William W. Fitzhugh and Chisato O. Dubreuil. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution.
- Peng, Fred C. C., and Peter Geiser. 1977. *The Ainu: The Past in the Present*. Hiroshima: Bunka Hyōron.
- Rapport, Nigel. 2007. "An Outline for Cosmopolitan Study: Reclaiming the Human through Introspection." *Current Anthropology* 48 (2): 257-83.
- Sakai, Mina. 2008. "Ainu no Hokori." *DAYS Japan* 5 (2): 10-17.
- Sasaki Masao. 1973. Editor's note. *Anutari Ainu* 1: 8.
- Segawa, Kiyoko. 1972. *Ainu no kon'in*. Tokyo: Miraisha.
- Shin, Hwaji. 2010. "Colonial Legacy of Ethno-racial Inequality in Japan." *Theory and Society* 29: 327-42.
- Siddle, Richard. 2006. "The Making of Ainu Moshiri: Japan's Indigenous Nationalism and Its Cultural Fictions." In *Nationalisms in Japan*, edited by Naoko Shimazu, 110-30. New York: Routledge.
- Watanabe, Hitoshi. 1973. *The Ainu Ecosystem: Environment and Group Structure*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Watson, Mark. 2014. *Japan's Ainu Minority in Tokyo: Diasporic Indigeneity and Urban Politics*. London: Routledge.
- Walker, Brett L. 2001. *The Conquest of Ainu Lands: Ecology and Culture in Japanese Expansion, 1590-1800*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Waziyatawin, and Michael Yellow Bird, eds. 2012. *For Indigenous Minds Only: A Decolonization Handbook*. Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research Press.
- Winchester, Mark. 2012. "'To Be the Antithesis of All That Is Called Human': Sasaki Masao and Political Redemption in Contemporary Ainu Thought." *Japan Forum* 48: 1-25.
- Yamaguchi, Tomomi. 2013. "Xenophobia in Action: Ultrationalism, Hate Speech, and the Internet in Japan." *Radical History Review* 117 (Fall): 98-118.

ann-elise lewallen is Associate Professor of East Asian Languages and Cultural Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Her research and activism focuses on critical indigenous studies, gender studies, multiculturalism, and environmental justice in the context of contemporary Japan and in Japan's transnational relations. She is the author of *The Fabric of Indigeneity: Ainu Identity and Gender in Settler Colonial Japan* (University of New Mexico Press and School for Advanced Research Press, 2016) and co-editor of *Beyond Ainu Studies: Changing Academic and Public Perspectives* (Univ. of Hawai'i Press, 2014).

Notes

¹ On August 11, 2014, Sapporo City Assemblyman Kaneko Yasuyuki tweeted that “Ainu people, of course they no longer exist now. At most, Japanese of Ainu ancestry is what they are, crazily using up concessions, it’s unconscionable! How do I explain this [excess] to taxpayers?” In response, Ainu citizen groups staged protests and demanded apologies, and counter-racist groups organized online petition drives urging the Sapporo City Legislature to call for his resignation, which they did on September 22. His tweets sparked outrage but also fanned outward to other ultranationalist groups, and the discourse of Ainu “non-existence” resurfaced for several years afterward.

² Zaitokukai is the abbreviated name for “Zainichi Tokken wo Yurusanai Shimin no Kai” (Citizens Against Special Rights for Zainichi Koreans), a civil society organization initiated in January 2007 with the self-proclaimed objective of “solving the Zainichi problem” in part by removing legal concessions, specifically the relaxed immigration restrictions under the Zainichi Special Immigration Law for ethnic Koreans living in Japan.

³ The Action Conservative Movement (alternately *Kodo-suru Undo* or *Kōdō-suru Hoshū*) emerged in the mid-2000s as a new right-wing, nationalist, racist, and xenophobic movement which took to Japan’s streets to spew hate speech against foreigners, ethnic minority groups, and nations believed to threaten Japanese sovereignty (Yamaguchi 2013, 98). As anthropologist Tomomi Yamaguchi has described, this new right-wing movement has enlisted the Internet as a key tool for spreading its xenophobic rhetoric, and frequently livestreams hate protests online, which are then followed by many thousands of people, even if those attending the rallies are few in number (Ibid).

⁴ The Apkasko walk, or Pirka Kewtum Apkasko (A: Walk with Beautiful Heart, or Walk across Hokkaido), was a 399-kilometer walk along the Sea of Japan in western Hokkaido that took place during the month of June 2008. The Ainu and multiethnic youth that envisioned Apkasko designed it to commemorate the forced removal of the Sakhalin Ainu to Hokkaido under the 1875 treaty that transferred Southern Sakhalin from Japanese to Russian control (Iwano 2016, ix-xii, 213-219.)

⁵ I employ the vernacular Ainupuri to discuss ideas about culture as praxis based on the expressions Ainu themselves used. The term Ainupuri can be broken into Ainu, or “human being,” and puri, or “way, custom, method.” Puri is based on a loan word from Japanese, furi, meaning “pretense, show, or appearance.”

⁶ The standards of Ainu belonging I outline here are based on Sapporo University’s Urespa Purojekuto criteria for awarding fellowships to Ainu youth and drawn from an interview with the original director, Honda Yūko. As the Ainu diaspora has increasingly expanded into non-Hokkaido areas of Japan, and now extends as an overseas diaspora including Asia, Europe, Africa, and North America, the AAH standards for membership are no longer adequate to determine Ainu ethnicity (Honda Yūko, interview, September 9, 2015).

⁷ The assimilation policies I mention here include the 1871 Prohibition on Ainu Customs, including women’s tattooing, men’s earrings, and funerary rituals for women involving house burning. Other discriminatory policies that proved debilitating include the 1899 Former Aborigines Protection Act, which mandated that Ainu convert to agriculture, based on redistribution of land expropriated from Ainu during colonization.

⁸ My use of memory as a labor of production, or “work,” is inspired by Mary Hancock’s reading of how public and private forms of memory are appropriated in postcolonial statecraft to commemorate a national history and claim particular landmarks as sites of the nation (2008, 1–16). Hancock is concerned with how memory is interpellated in postcolonial statecraft and embedded in state monuments, museums, and sites of cultural remembering, as well as within individual claims on the past that are articulated within and against these public discourses of heritage and cultural patrimony (ibid., 2–3). She invokes Halbwachs’s notion of “social memory,” or the “common landmarks that constitute a shared framework for individual recollection” (Halbwachs 1992), arguing that the state injects political authority into sites of national history and the collective identities that become associated with these spaces.

⁹ Such forums where the framework of Indigenous rights has been developed include the International Labour Organization and later the United Nations, the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations, and, more recently, the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

¹⁰ Detailed information on the Irankarapte Campaign may be found [here](#).