

THE REPRESENTATION OF AINU CULTURE IN THE JAPANESE MUSEUM SYSTEM

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Abstract

Ainu culture has been the symbol of the “savage” and “uncivilized” for a long time. However, the International Year of the World's Indigenous People, 1993, and the establishment of the Foundation for Research and Promotion of Ainu Culture in 1997 changed the way the Ainu are represented culturally and also increased opportunities for the wider society to become aware of the Ainu. This paper considers how Ainu culture has been represented in the Japanese museum system since the nineteenth century, and explores how the way of cultural representation has changed, and what remain unsolved over the representation of Ainu culture.

Introduction

Ainu culture was the symbol of the “savage,” “uncivilized,” and “exotic” in the World Expositions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For several decades after World War II, the Ainu were considered to be “extinct” or “assimilated.” In the 1990s, however, there were some epoch-making events regarding Ainu cultural promotion. For example, the International Year of the World’s Indigenous People, 1993, and the establishment of the Foundation for Research and Promotion of Ainu Culture (FRPAC) in July 1997 based on the Ainu Culture Promotion Act, changed the way the Ainu are represented culturally and also increased opportunities for the wider society to become aware of the Ainu. The FRPAC has held Ainu craft traveling exhibitions every year since its establishment and the planning committees have tried to represent Ainu culture from “new” and “unique” perspectives. Despite these events, there is a strong stereotype that Ainu culture should be “traditional,” and most Ainu museums are lacking exhibition on contemporary Ainu culture. The purpose of this paper is to consider how Ainu culture has been represented in the Japanese museum system since the nineteenth century, and to explore how the way of cultural representation has changed and what remain unsolved over the representation of Ainu culture.

Special exhibitions are good opportunities for the museum and curators to realize a “new” style of exhibition or adopt a “new” concept (Phillips, 2001:85). The review and evaluation of special exhibitions would be the base of better exhibitions. By incorporating the result of special exhibitions, permanent exhibitions will also be improved. The review of special exhibitions is therefore meaningful. As far as I have investigated, however, there is no existing research on historical overview of Ainu cultural representation in the museum, or review of museum exhibitions on the Ainu, except some small introductions and reviews by curators on their own museum exhibition (e.g., Deriha, 2001). Exhibition catalogues are now published for many special exhibitions and most of them explain the concept of the exhibition or how exhibited artefacts were collected and how those artefacts are valuable. They also introduce the general history of the Ainu. Few of them, however, review the concept of past exhibitions and discuss what is improved or added in the new exhibition. The lack of the review of past exhibitions has often resulted in the repetition of similar exhibitions in different locations or the lack of communication among museums or curators. In the Japanese context, it is hard to say that curators have shared

information on cultural representation on the Ainu and have widely discussed what should be solved to represent Ainu culture more effectively in the contemporary society. This paper is the first trial to explore these issues based on the historical overview of special exhibitions, the review of permanent exhibitions, and the interviews with curators.

The Ainu are an aboriginal people of Japan, the majority of whom have lived in the northern island of Hokkaido, and in part, the Kurile Islands and southern Sakhalin. According to the *Survey of Living Condition of the Ainu* produced by the Hokkaido local government, the 1999 estimated population of the Ainu was 23,767, 0.02% of the total population of Japan (Ainu Affairs Office 2001: 20). The actual Ainu population is, however, estimated to be about 50,000 for several reasons. First, these statistics do not include Ainu who live outside Hokkaido since the Hokkaido local government does not conduct the survey outside Hokkaido. Second, these statistics represent the number of the Ainu who replied to the *Survey of Living Condition of the Ainu*. The Ainu who did not reply to the survey are therefore not included in these statistics. In addition, the Hokkaido Ainu Association has requested the Hokkaido local government not to send questionnaire forms to the Ainu who do not want to be known as Ainu for fear of discrimination.

Historically, the Ainu have experienced hardships and racism similar to what other aboriginal peoples in the world experienced: long-term colonization by the Japanese, the Government's policy of assimilation, the relocation of community, the spread of disease, a decreasing of population, and discrimination. The Ainu have not been widely recognized in the international literature on Native studies until relatively recently. In English-speaking countries, however, specialists on East Asian studies have often discussed the issues of the Ainu. Some research results in English, especially the history of the Ainu, are now becoming available (e.g., Siddle 1996; 1997a; 1997b; 2002; 2003; Cheung 1996; 2000; 2003; 2004; 2005; Fitzhugh and Dubreuil 1999; Walker 2001; Irimoto and Yamada 2004; Howell 2005). Among such works, Siddle's *Race, Resistance and the Ainu of Japan* (1996) is the best work on the general history of the Ainu I have ever read, including Japanese works.

Japanese and Ainu names in this paper are following the Japanese convention; family name first, followed by given name. Unfamiliar Japanese and Ainu words, except place names, are italicized. The Roman spelling of Ainu words is following Kayano's Ainu language dictionary (Kayano 2002). The character C is pronounced as [ch]. For exhibition titles, I only mention

English titles if the catalogue has one. If the catalogue does not have one, I mention Japanese titles and add my translation into English.

Methodology and Overview

As I mentioned, there is no existing research on this topic; therefore I first made a chronological list of all exhibitions which seem to relate to Ainu culture. To make the list, I collected as many exhibition catalogues as possible by visiting used book stores and museums which have Ainu collections. As I will mention later, not a few Ainu artefacts are owned by museums located outside Hokkaido, since Ainu researchers/collectors or their descendants often donated the artefacts to the nearest major museum. I checked out those museum websites, and occasionally visited such museums since some websites do not list past exhibitions or catalogue publications. In some museums, I could see Ainu artefacts as a permanent exhibition. Publication lists produced by used book store and curators (e.g., Sasaki and Sasakura, 1994; 1995; 1996; Sasakura, 1997; 1998) and the information on exhibitions in *Hakubutsukan Kenkyu* (Museum Studies) were also helpful. I have found nearly 200 exhibitions which seem to relate to Ainu culture. I count travelling exhibitions held in two or more different sites as separate exhibitions since the site is important in the Japanese context. I interviewed some curators who have experiences with planning committees of the exhibitions on the Ainu and asked which exhibitions interested them and why. Due to the limited time and budget, the number of curators I interviewed is not many. I do not think, however, that this is a major problem with this paper since some curators have implanted me with a profound thought.

Table 1 shows the number of exhibitions by years and regions (regarding regional divisions and place names of Japan mentioned in this paper, see Figures 1 and 2). Although I have come across nearly 200 exhibitions, from this table, with some exceptions, I excluded some small scale, short-term (less than one week) exhibitions held at sites other than museums, or one-day events such as the *Ainu Fesutibaru* (Ainu Festival) organized by the FRPAC because obviously I have not covered all information on them and I wanted to focus on large-scale exhibitions held in major museums. Meanwhile, this table includes the number of exhibitions whose main topic is not the Ainu but ones of which the Ainu are considered to be a major part, such as exhibitions on the biography of Ainu researchers/collectors or “Northern explorers,” or more general exhibitions on

“Northern peoples.” I am almost sure that I have covered all major exhibitions, but there is a possibility that I have missed some of them; the number in the table therefore may not be the “exact” one. Still this table and the exhibition list I made would be useful to review the trend of exhibitions on the Ainu.

As Table 1 shows, more than the half exhibitions were held in Hokkaido. This seems natural because the majority of the Ainu have lived in Hokkaido and there are many Ainu museums there. Especially, the Nibutani Ainu Culture Museum, Biratori, the Ainu Museum, Shiraoui, the Hokkaido Museum of Northern Peoples, Abashiri, and the Historical Museum of Hokkaido, Sapporo, have held special exhibitions on the Ainu on various topics on a regular basis (each museum has held 9, 8, 13, 24 exhibitions respectively since 1990). Meanwhile, quite a few have been held in western Japan, especially Chugoku, Shikoku, and Kyushu. It can be easily said that people who live in western Japan have had little opportunity to see Ainu culture in museums. Table 1 also shows that not so many exhibitions were held before the 1990s. This is partly because few museums were actively holding special exhibitions before the 1990s. Even in Hokkaido, it was not until the 1980s that major museums started to hold special exhibitions on the Ainu. The number of special exhibitions on the Ainu gradually increased after the Hokkaido Museum of Northern Peoples opened in 1991 and the Nibutani Ainu Culture Museum reopened in 1992.

The Origin of Museum in Japan and the Exhibits on the Ainu: The Nineteenth Century and Before

The exhibition on the Ainu in the nineteenth century reflected the then perspective toward the Ainu, in other words, the Ainu were considered to be an “inferior race” and sooner or later they should have been assimilated into Japanese society. Ainu artefacts were curios from the “Other world.” The concept and institution of the museum were imported to Japan in the nineteenth century, though Japan’s history of collection and exhibition goes back to the eighth century. The first museum in Japan is the Tokyo National Museum, whose origin is considered to be a *Hakurankai* (Exposition) held in Yushima, Tokyo in 1872. This Exposition tried to exhibit historical objects in addition to national products and aimed to form a synthetic collection of national products. After the Exposition, the collection became open to the public as a permanent exhibition of Japan’s first museum. Some objects from the 1872 Exposition, which included a few

Ainu and Uilta craft works, were also exhibited in the *Weltausstellung 1873 Wien* (Vienna World Exposition 1873). Since the objects attained a high reputation for their quality in Vienna, the government became eager to establish a universal survey museum to show national products. In 1882, as the successor to Japan's first museum in Yushima, a new museum was established in the present location, Ueno, Tokyo (Yoshida, 1999:74-86). In this new museum, Ainu objects were stored in a room of *Emishi Fuzoku* (Ainu folklore), as one of the ethnographic collections from around the world. As of 1977, the Tokyo National Museum had about 1,000 Ainu objects. 177 of them were collected for the *Weltausstellung 1873 Wien* and 618 were the donation from Tokugawa Yorisada in 1927 (ibid:92-95).

At this period, Japanese researchers were generally not interested in Ainu culture, and they also thought that Ainu artefacts were not worth preserving or exhibiting. Meanwhile, with the expansion of imperial power and colonialism, European countries started to collect artefacts overseas. Some Europeans were especially interested in the Ainu since the Ainu were considered to be part of White people. The European who came to Japan for research or business felt a familiarity with the Ainu. They collected Ainu artefacts as well as Japanese artefacts and brought them back to their home country. Such artefacts formed the collections of European museums. Table 2 shows the major collections of Ainu artefacts of European and North American museums. At this period, no Japanese institutions seemed eager to collect Ainu objects.

Rather, in the early twentieth century, scholars were more interested in the Ainu as a living people than in their objects. They were eager to verify "scientifically" how the Ainu and other people in Japan's colonies were "uncivilized," and how the Japanese were "civilized" to justify colonization. *Gakujutsu Jinruikan* (the Academic Anthropology House) at the fifth *Naikoku Hakurankai* (Domestic Exposition) in Osaka, 1903, is one example of a typical colonial perspective toward "uncivilized" people. The concept of *Gakujutsu Jinruikan* was adopted from the Japanese experience of the World Expositions and the organizers planned to exhibit living "Others" in Japan, such as Ainu, Koreans, Ryukyu, Chinese, etc. The organizers had to give up the exhibition of living people because of resistance on the part of those people, except the Ainu. A couple of Ainu were taken from Hokkaido and exhibited with a restored Ainu village at *Gakujutsu Jinruikan* (Yoshimi, 1992:214).

The Ainu also went to the World Expositions to "verify their savageness." In 1904 Louisiana

Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, the Department of Anthropology of the Exposition's organizational committee planned the "Olympics of 'savage' people" to demonstrate that they have an excellent athletic ability. Along with Cocopa from Mexico, Patagonian from South America, Sioux, Chipewa, Pueblo and Pawnee from the United States, Kwakiutl from Canada etc., four Ainu people participated in the Olympics, and won two medals. They were the first Japanese citizens who participated in the Olympics. At the Exposition, nine Ainu, including the four who participated in the Olympics, were "exhibited" with 240 objects and two houses purchased by the organizational committee (Uemura, 2001:28-34).

They Have "Beauty" but Are Still "Uncivilized": The 1940s, 1960s and 1970s

The first special exhibition on the Ainu held in Japanese museum is *Ainu Mingeiin Dai Tenkan (Overview of Ainu Folk Crafts)*, Japan Folk Crafts Museum, Tokyo in 1941. The Japan Folk Crafts Museum was established by a folk craft collector, Yanagi Muneyoshi. This exhibition displayed "Ainu folk crafts" collected by Yanagi, and another collector, Sugiyama Sueo from an "artistic" perspective. In the first half of the twentieth century, Ainu artefacts were considered to be the relics of the archaeological era, and useless things. In this social background, Yanagi, Sugiyama and some other Ainu researchers such as Kindaichi Kyosuke found "beauty" on Ainu folk crafts. Kindaichi and Sugiyama, who published a series of books *Ainu Geijutsu (Ainu Art)* over three years from 1941 to 1943, state:

Although the Ainu has a very long oral literature called *yukar*, their art and craft clearly shows the superiority of this ethnicity, not the inferiority as people think... We shall name them Ainu art, and publish three volumes on [their arts]; ornament, wooden craft, and metalworking. Ainu craft and art is not produced for someone or something... Artists can produce a masterpiece by immersing themselves into their own world and pursuing their own curiousness just like children... Such pursuit of beauty enables to create masterpieces, which have now been lost in the main islands of Japan. (Kindaichi and Sugiyama, 1993:n.p. author's translation)

They thought that "beauty" was still preserved in Ainu society, and tried to spread the "beauty" of Ainu crafts by the exhibition and publication.

It was not until 1960 that the second exhibition, *Ainu no Mingeiin (Ainu Folkcrafts)*, was

held in the Tenri University Sankokan Museum, Nara. It is notable, however, how this museum collected Ainu artefacts. The City of Tenri is a religious city where the *Tenri-kyo* organization is located, and many citizens are believers in *Tenri-kyo*. The Tenri University Sankokan Museum was planned by the second leader of *Tenri-kyo* and established in 1930. This leader thought that it was inevitable to understand peoples' way of life to propagate the religion and collect various artefacts. The believers went around East, Southeast, and South Asia, and Mexico and Guatemala, to propagate the religion and collected artefacts. Ainu artefacts were collected in this process. The museum collection is now one of the major Ainu collections among Japanese museums, and the museum displays Ainu artefacts as a permanent exhibition. The concept and the actual exhibits of *Ainu no Mingeihin* are unknown since I have not found any materials on it.

Ainu Bunka-ten (Ainu culture exhibition) in 1963 was not a long-term exhibition, but this exhibition is also notable. The exhibition was held in two department stores in Tokyo and Osaka along with Hokkaido *Bussanten* (the exhibition and sale of Hokkaido products). The exhibition catalogue shows that this exhibition was the comprehensive introduction of Ainu culture based on anthropological research results at that time. For example, the editors and planning committee members were the then authoritative researchers on the Ainu, who also published a book of comprehensive survey of the Ainu, *Ainu Minzokushi (Ainu Ethnography)* in 1969 (Ainu Bunka Hozon Taisaku Kyogikai, 1969), however, no Ainu person was on the committee and the catalogue, which reflected the then general perspective toward the Ainu, depicted them as an “exotic” “uncivilized” people living in a traditional lifestyle. *Ainu Minzokushi* resulted in a lawsuit over Ainu portrait rights in the 1980s because of the use of a photograph of an Ainu woman without her permission and the editors' perspective that the Ainu would be extinct in the near future.

As far as I have investigated, three exhibitions were held in the 1970s. Among these three, I do not have any information on *Ainu no Mon'you (Ainu Motifs)* held in the Suntory Museum of Art, Tokyo, in 1972. This exhibition, however, may be the first exhibition on the Ainu held in Japanese art museum.

The Historical Museum of Hokkaido (hereafter the HMH) opened in 1971. Since the history of Hokkaido cannot ignore the existence of the Ainu, they exhibited Ainu culture as a permanent collection. Meanwhile they held the first special exhibition on the Ainu, *Ethnological Exhibition of the Ainu etc.* in 1972. This exhibition seems to be the first special exhibition on the Ainu held in

Hokkaido. The exhibition itself was a general introduction of Ainu culture, and the catalogue stated that the exhibition aimed to investigate the origin and history of the Ainu by comparing them with other ethnic groups. The exhibit included Japanese and Ainu skulls borrowed from Sapporo Medical University. Although the HMH may have held some other special exhibitions on the Ainu in the 1970s, I have not come across any information.

Ainu Bunka ten (Ainu Culture Exhibition) held in the Saitama Prefectural Museum in 1972 also had a comparative perspective. This exhibition was one of a series of exhibitions which aimed to introduce Japanese cultures of various regions to the local residents. In the catalogue, the director of the Museum states:

We have to learn culture of other regions to understand the history and art of Saitama accurately and clearly... [The series of these exhibitions] will clarify how cultural characteristics were produced. How do [other regions' cultures] connect to the culture of Saitama? We shall introduce [the culture of] Hokkaido to people in Saitama. (Yoshida, 1972:n.p., author's translation)

The reason why Ainu culture was introduced as the culture of Hokkaido may be because the museum had some Ainu artefacts donated by a collector Kiyono Kenji, and an authoritative Ainu researcher, Ohtsuka Kazuyoshi, was a curator there. The exhibition itself was a general introduction of Ainu culture.

One landmark event in the 1970s was the opening in 1977 of the National Museum of Ethnology at site of the 1970 Osaka World Exposition at Suita, Osaka. The Museum was the first one in Japan which exhibited ethnic cultures almost all over the world from a comparative perspective. The guidelines for the permanent exhibition were the display of the broad variety of ethnic cultures and the equality of cultural values. The exhibition tried to convey the message that "it is inappropriate to distinguish ethnic cultures as developed or underdeveloped, or as civilized or primitive" (Shimizu, 1997:122). While the exhibition emphasized ethnic traditions before Westernization and/or modernization and the exhibition basically looked nostalgic, they also displayed past cultures of China, Near East, Europe, and Japan themselves, which were "suited to the conventional notion of civilization," to avoid "hegemonic objectification of the Other" (ibid).

The permanent exhibition on the Ainu at the National Museum of Ethnology opened in 1979. As I discuss in the next paragraph, there was a fear of terrorist attack by activists then. The

exhibition was the results of a collaborative work between the Museum and the Ainu. Since the Museum did not have so many Ainu artefacts, most objects were newly produced. Not only a famous Ainu Kayano Shigeru and the other Ainu people from Nibutani, who constructed a *ci-set* (traditional Ainu house), and Kayano's wife Reiko, who made clothing and mats, but also many skilled Ainu from various areas participated in the production. In the process of fabrication, artefacts were celebrated by pertinent Ainu rituals (Shimizu, 1997:124). At that time, the law did not recognize the Ainu as an ethnic group and the national government saw Ainu culture as one of the local traditions in Japan. But the Museum decided to show Ainu culture as a distinct ethnic culture and gave the Ainu the status of ethnic minority in Japan. The exhibition on the Ainu was therefore separated from that of the Japanese (Ohtsuka, 1997:109). The collaboration with the Ainu, the recognition of Ainu culture as a distinct ethnic culture, and the giving of an equal status made a significant change of the direction of exhibition on the Ainu.

As Deriha states, however, in the 1960s and 1970s, the exhibition of Ainu culture was considered to be discrimination against the Ainu because the Hokkaido local government had an assimilation policy, and the Ainu themselves also tried to hide the fact that they have Ainu ethnicity for fear of discrimination. The exhibition of Ainu culture forced them to be aware of their Ainu ethnicity, and Ainu activists often objected to plans of Ainu exhibition. Most Ainu people were not interested in museum activities and their cultural promotion, except a few such as Kayanou, who was eagerly collecting Ainu artefacts then (Personal communication with the curator of the HMH, 2004; 2005). Anthropological research was also targeted by Ainu activists since most researchers shared the view that the Ainu and their culture had already become extinct, and artefacts were never valuable other than as samples for "scientific" research. The joint annual meeting of the Japanese physical anthropological and ethnological societies held at Sapporo Medical University in 1972 was intervened by Ainu and Japanese activists. They asked the panellists if they would "support the Ainu struggle for liberation [or play] the role of completing the Japanese policy of genocide. The panellists [completely ignored them] and continued with their own programs" (Shimizu, 1997:123).

In this situation, quite a few special exhibitions on the Ainu were held and each exhibition was held singly. Exhibitions were planned and organized by researchers based on anthropological research results. The general public had few opportunities to see Ainu culture other than at tourist

sites in Hokkaido. It can be therefore considered that even the exhibition of general introduction of Ainu culture may have been epoch-making at that time. Almost everything was a new trial in Japanese museums. While collaborative projects were developed, some exhibitions had a perspective that researchers should record and preserve Ainu culture and artefacts otherwise they would be permanently lost. The statement of a researcher in the Ainu portrait rights lawsuit reflects this situation. “The reason the Ainu get anthropologists to study them is because they do not have the ability to investigate themselves” (Chikappu, 1991:207).

Any Culture is Equal: The 1980s

The 1980s was a significant decade in terms of that the Ainu experienced international cultural exchange, and they became aware of that any culture should be considered to be equal and no culture is superior to any other culture. The public did not share the view, however. Some curators therefore started to think that they should exhibit Ainu culture more “accurately” and widely, and correct widely spread misconceptions. For example, the HMH exhibited Ainu culture only in terms of anthropology, and lacked exhibitions on contemporary Ainu. They often got questions from school teachers and students whether the Ainu had already been extinct after the nineteenth century. General visitors also asked if the Ainu still lived in a “traditional” lifestyle (Personal communication with the curator of the HMH, 2004; 2005). To get the public to know much about the Ainu, the Museum started to hold special exhibitions on the Ainu on a regular basis.

Meanwhile, the Ainu Museum, Shiraoi, which was originally a tourist site and established in 1976 as a social education facility to research Ainu culture, opened a museum in 1984. This museum also started to hold special exhibitions on regular basis. In the 1980s, about two-thirds of exhibitions were held in these two museums. Exhibition topics became specific, such as costume and ornaments, wooden carving, hunting material, and local history of the Ainu and their relations with other regions. Since the Ainu Museum had Ainu staff members, it is considered that Ainu perspectives became reflected in exhibitions to some extent in this period.

Outside Hokkaido, besides *Ainu no Fukushoku (Ainu Ornaments)*, Tenri University Sankokan Museum in 1983, Riccar Art Museum, Tokyo held *Exhibition of Customs of Ezo* in 1980. This notable exhibition displayed paintings of Ainu customs by Japanese painters during the eighteenth

and nineteenth centuries. The organizer states:

There have never been comprehensive exhibitions on paintings and woodcuts of *Emishi* due to their short history and rareness, and the lack of artistic element. As the one of persons concerned, I am really pleased that we can hold *Exhibition of Customs of Ezo*, which is the first exhibition on them in Japan. (Yanaga, 1980:n.p. author's translation)

I am not exactly sure to what extent this exhibition was recognized among museum communities in the 1980s and 1990s. In the catalogue of a similar travelling exhibition *Ainu Genre Paintings - From Teiryō Kodama to Byozan Hirasawa*, Hokkaido Museum of Modern Art and Asahikawa Museum of Art in 1992, the curator states that the exhibition is the first one which approaches paintings on Ainu customs in terms of art, and tries to introduce their attractiveness as painting (Shinmei, 1992:5).

By the way, Riccar Art Museum's exhibition symbolized the view of Japanese major art museums toward Ainu culture. Since the 1980s, only paintings of the Ainu customs by Japanese painters have been accepted as exhibit in Japanese major art museums. A few exceptions are art works by Sunazawa Bikky, and *The Seasons and Life of the Ainu: Tokachi Ainu and the Painter Byozan Hirasawa*, Hokkaido Obihiro Museum of Art in 1999, which exhibited some artefacts to provide comparative perspectives. Ainu artefacts have never been exhibited in such art museums, and even the perspective of beauty on Ainu folk crafts, which was seen in *Ainu Mingeihin Dai Tenkan* in 1941, is no longer seen in art museums.

Dubreuil claims that the reason why art museums do not accept Ainu craft works in their exhibitions is because Ainu culture is looked down upon. According to Dubreuil, "Japanese art historians and contemporary art specialists continue to classify all Ainu art in the ethnic or folk art genre. In part this is a result of Japanese colonial policies and social attitudes, which were marked by disrespect for all things Ainu, including their culture, literature, and art." As Dubreuil states, "centuries of discrimination do not disappear overnight" (Dubreuil, 1999:335).

Art museums should not be criticized for the exclusion of Ainu culture from their exhibits, however, because even Ainu museums do not exhibit contemporary Ainu craft works. The only exception is the Nibutani Ainu Culture Museum, which displays Ainu craft works by Nibutani craftspeople as permanent exhibition. Japanese art museums have mainly exhibited paintings, rather than carving or craft works. Meanwhile, there have been absolutely no paintings by the

Ainu, either historical or contemporary in the Japanese art world. This situation would also be a reason why Ainu craft works are not included in Japanese art museums.

Ainu Collections Coming from Europe, and the International Year of the World's Indigenous People, 1993: We Represent us by ourselves: The 1990s (1)

The first half of the 1990s was the turning period of museum exhibition on the Ainu in that the Ainu themselves became eager to represent their own culture, and that the national government started to support cultural promotion and representation of the Ainu. The International Year of the World's Indigenous People in 1993 significantly contributed to the increase of public interest.

In this period, the number of exhibitions drastically increased. In Hokkaido, the Nibutani Ainu Culture Museum and the Hokkaido Museum of Northern Peoples (re)opened and started to hold special exhibitions on the Ainu on a regular basis. Outside Hokkaido, museums which did not have Ainu collections started to hold special exhibitions on the Ainu by borrowing collection from other museums, especially from the Ainu Museum, Shiraoi and the Hakodate City Museum. Such examples are *Hoppou Bunka no Katachi: Ainu Bunka ten (The shape of northern culture: Ainu culture)*, Akita Prefectural Museum and *Kita no Bunka: Ainu no Kurashi to Inori (Northern culture: Life and belief of the Ainu)*, Tono Municipal Museum, Iwate, both in 1994. The donations of Ainu collections or joint project research on the Ainu also enabled establishment of new museums or mounting of special exhibitions on the Ainu. Such examples are Shizuoka City Serizawa Keisuke Art Museum, Serizawa Keisuke Art & Craft Museum, Sendai. Serizawa Keisuke is a dyeing artist, and also a student of Yanagi Muneyoshi. Like Yanagi, Serizawa thought that beauty can be found in artefacts. He donated his art works and collection to the City of Shizuoka where he is from. The Shizuoka City Serizawa Keisuke Art Museum opened in 1981 (Shizuoka City Serizawa Keisuke Art Museum, 2005). Meanwhile, his son had an opportunity to see the office members of Tohoku Fukushi University, Sendai and heard that they were planning to open an art museum on campus. He donated part of Serizawa's art works and collections, and the Serizawa Keisuke Art & Craft Museum opened in 1989 (Serizawa, 2005). They have held special exhibitions on the Ainu since the open. The Osaka Pref. Chikatsu Asuka Museum also accepted Kiyono Kenji collection. I do not review each exhibition respectively, but such exhibitions

increased the opportunity to see Ainu culture outside Hokkaido. Meanwhile, they were not more than the general introduction of Ainu culture.

In 1993, at least five special exhibitions on the Ainu were held to honour the International Year of the World's Indigenous People. Besides such exhibitions, there were some notable exhibitions in 1993 and 1994. The first one is *Ainu Mosir: Minzoku Mon'you kara mita Ainu no Sekai (Ainu Mosir: Ainu World viewing from patterns)*, National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka in 1993. Although this exhibition is a general introduction of Ainu culture, some Ainu participated in the planning committee at the direction of the national government and the foreword of the catalogue was published also in Ainu language, which was the first trial in major museums (Personal communication with the curator of the HMH, 2004; 2005).

The second one is *Ainu no Kogei (Ainu Crafts)*, Tokyo National Museum in 1993. This exhibition was sponsored by the Tokyo National Museum and the Agency for Cultural Affairs, supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. The exhibition displayed Ainu artefacts borrowed from two museums in Germany.

I already discussed that Ainu objects were eagerly collected by Europeans from the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. In the early 1980s, specialists on the Ainu, especially Ainu material culture, started to recognize that they should investigate Ainu collections in European and North American museums. Their investigation over 20 years clarified the value of the collections, and it became inevitable for specialists on Ainu material culture to investigate collections of European museums since Japanese museums collected little from the nineteenth century (Kotani, 2004). European collections also have reliable data, e.g. when and where collected. One of the specialists recently stated:

When I saw [European] collections for the first time, I was really shocked. I recognized I had not known anything about Ainu [material] culture. I was forced to reconsider what Ainu culture is all about. (Sasaki, 2005, author's translation)

Their investigation also enabled Japanese museums to borrow collections from European museums and hold special exhibitions. *Ainu no Kogei* was the first of such exhibitions. The other exhibitions on collections of European museums are: *Museum of Ethnography, Budapest: Barathosi Balogh Collection*, HMH and Obihiro Centennial City Museum, 1997, *Tek kar-pa, On'na no waza: Doitsu Korekushon kara (Tek kar-pa, Women's technique, from Germany Collections)*, Ainu Museum,

Shiraoui, 1999, *A Scottish Physician's View: Craft and Spirit of the Ainu from N.G. Munro Collection*, HMH and Kanagawa Prefectural Museum of Cultural History, 2002, and *The Exhibition of Ainu collection of Russian Ethnography Museum*, HMH and Kawasaki City Museum, 2005. I had an opportunity to see the exhibition of the Russian collection in 2005. I had never seen such artefacts as used children's underwear or toys in any Japanese museums.

The third notable exhibition in 1993 was *Gendai ni Ikiru Ainu Bunka (Ainu Culture Living in the Present)*, HMH. It exhibited contemporary Ainu craftworks produced by Ainu craftspeople, and the Ainu names for the works and their producer's names were displayed. This exhibition aimed to convey that Ainu culture had been inherited until the present. By exhibiting past craft works beside contemporary ones, it also tried to show how craft skills had been transmitted and what was needed to pass down Ainu culture (Personal communication with the curator of the HMH, 2004; 2005).

Ainu Moshiri: Minzoku Mon'you kara mita Ainu no Sekai, National Museum of Ethnology impressed Nomura Giichi, the then Secretary General of the Hokkaido Ainu Association, and he became eager to hold such a exhibition also in Hokkaido (Personal communication with the curator of the HMH, 2004; 2005; the curator of the Nibutani Ainu Culture Museum, 2004). Based on *Ainu Moshir*, in 1993, the HMH and the Hokkaido Ainu Association co-organized *Pirika-noka: Ainu mon'yo kara mita minzoku no kokoro (Pirika-noka: ethnic spirit viewing from Ainu motifs)*. The chairperson of the committee was an Ainu activist and craftsman, Akibe Tokuhei, and he became the first Ainu chairperson of an exhibition committee. The exhibit explanation was in both Japanese and Ainu language to show that Ainu language is also usable to communicate in contemporary Japanese society, and that Ainu have a different language (Personal communication with the curator of the HMH, 2004; 2005).

In the 1990s, historians also expanded their scope to the Japan "North," and they started eagerly to research the history of the medieval and modern era (between the thirteenth and nineteenth century) of northern Japan. Archaeologists also started to investigate the connection between Ainu culture and Japanese *Jomon* culture (20,000BC-2,000AD). There are some exhibitions which exhibit these research results.

The Establishment of the FRPAC and Annual Ainu Craft Travelling Exhibition,

“New” Trial or “Stereotypical” Anthropological Taxonomy?: The 1990s (2) and the 2000s

The establishment of the Foundation for Research and Promotion of Ainu Culture (hereafter the FRPAC) in July 1997, based on the Ainu Culture Promotion Act, is highly significant over cultural representation of the Ainu. The FRPAC started an annual Ainu craft traveling exhibition (*kogei ten*). The planning committees have tried to represent Ainu culture from “new,” “unique” perspectives, and the FRPAC has had a policy to send the exhibition outside Hokkaido. This policy realized exhibitions on the Ainu held in Chubu (Nagoya City Museum in 2000), Chugoku (Hiroshima-PREF, History & Folklore Museum in 2000), and Shikoku (Tokushima Prefectural Museum in 2003), where few or no exhibitions on the Ainu had been held. In 2006, the travelling exhibition was sent to Kyushu for the first time (Kitakyushu Municipal Museum of Art). The travelling exhibition aims to spread Ainu history and culture through craft exhibitions. Each exhibition is planned by the organizational committee, and generally travels to one museum in Hokkaido, and one or two museums outside Hokkaido. An exhibition on the collections of museums overseas is held once every three years (Personal communication with the staff member of the FRPAC, 2004; 2005).

One of “new” trials is *A Scottish Physician’s View: Craft and Spirit of the Ainu from N.G. Munro Collection*, HMH and Kanagawa Prefectural Museum of Cultural History, 2002. As a member of the planning committee, Deriha created the concept of “the understanding of a different culture” for the exhibition. To show how Munro saw Ainu culture, the planning committee members and seven Ainu craftspeople who sympathized with the concept went to Scotland and tried to understand Munro’s cultural background and his view toward Ainu culture. The exhibit was divided into two sections. The first section displayed Munro’s collection of the early period and the second section displayed the ones of the late period. These two sections tried to show the change of Munro’s preference for Ainu artefacts and his view toward Ainu culture. Meanwhile, the seven Ainu craftspeople saw Munro’s collection in Scotland from “craftspeople’s perspective,” and their interview was also incorporated into the exhibition. The interviewer was also an Ainu curator (Personal communication with the curator of the HMH, 2004; 2005).

Message from the Ainu: Craft and Spirit, Tokushima Prefectural Museum, Asahikawa City Museum, and National Museum of Ethnology, in 2003 and 2004, was the first special exhibition

whose primary purpose was to allow contemporary Ainu craftspeople to display their own craft works in museums. The clearly represented concept underlying the exhibition was that any craft works produced by the Ainu should be accepted as being part of Ainu culture. Although the main organizer of this exhibition was the FRPAC, a series of processes “from creating the concept for the exhibition to selecting exhibits was carried out by [Ainu members of the planning committee] who sympathized with the exhibition and agreed to participate in the project. Many ordinary Ainu also made recommendations regarding objects to be exhibited” (Yoshida, 2003:154). Yoshida also states:

Though four curators, including myself, form the sites of this traveling exhibition, i.e. the Tokushima Prefectural Museum and the National Museum of Ethnology, joined the planning committee as representatives of the host museums, our roles went no further than planning spatial arrangement for the exhibits while taking account of how visitors accept exhibits at each venue. After lengthy discussion, the concept of the exhibition became firm; it should focus on “Ainu history directly leading up to the present” and bring “people” rather than objects to the fore. It was the planners’ intention to create an exhibition that, instead of concentrating on timeless traditions, actually described Ainu people as those living in the present while continuing to inherit their ancestors’ cultural traditions. Both the title “Message from the Ainu – Craft and Spirit” and the formation of the zones entitled “Contemporary forms,” “Heritage” and “Explorations” were directly derived from the above-mentioned intention. The event, when it comes to full fruition, will be the nation’s first traveling exhibition which Ainu people represent Ainu culture on their own. (ibid: 154)

Kaizawa Toru, an Ainu craftspeople in Nibutani, who went to Scotland and saw Munro’s collection, positively evaluates *A Scottish Physician’s View*. Since he had thought that researchers and craftspeople did not share the same perspective toward Ainu artefacts, and he wanted to have an opportunity to see the collections of foreign museums, he applied to go to Scotland when the FRPAC invited a couple of Ainu craftspeople. He states:

In Scotland, I was really impressed with Munro’s collection. Craft works were beautiful, and the skills to carve detailed patterns with the then limited tools were excellent. The curator allowed us to touch them, and I could sketch and photograph them. Such

beautiful craft works encouraged me to improve my craft skills much more. I have been carving copies of Munro's collection based on the sketches and photographs... I want to tell a lot of people that Munro stayed in Nibutani and helped the local residents. *A Scottish Physician's View* provided Ainu craftspeople an opportunity to see collections of foreign museums. That exhibition was really good. (Personal communication with Kaizawa, 2005, author's translation)

He also joined the planning committee of *Message from the Ainu*, and displayed his craft works in the exhibition. He states that the concept was good and Ainu craftspeople took a major role to organize the exhibition. Contemporary Ainu craftspeople also got an opportunity to appeal their works. "Without this exhibition, museum exhibits of Ainu culture must have been only 'traditional old' things" (ibid).

Deriha also positively evaluates *Message from the Ainu*.

It can be considered that *Message from the Ainu* is an epoch-making event in that museum and aboriginal people co-worked to make an exhibition. I was impressed with the pictures of contemporary Ainu's daily activities, such as office work and hobbies, which cannot be seen in traditional Ainu lifestyle. I would like to appreciate that the FRPAC decided to hold such an exhibition. (Personal communication with the curator of the HMH, 2004, author's translation)

Nonetheless Akino, a staff member of the FRPAC, is a little critical of these new styles of exhibition. Although he agrees that he enjoyed the concept and exhibition itself of *A Scottish Physician's View*, he thinks that the craft works should have been displayed not by Munro's view but by an anthropological taxonomy (Personal communication with the staff member of the FRPAC, 2004; 2005). The primary purpose of the Ainu craft travelling exhibition as an FRPAC project is to spread Ainu culture and history through exhibits. Even "stereotypical" anthropological taxonomy would be useful to get people who do not know well who the Ainu people are to know how they lived. Akino thinks that "beautiful" craft works should be displayed by an anthropological taxonomy, rather than trying to convey "difficult" stories or concepts by exhibits. He emphasizes the role of the FRPAC to tell people who the Ainu are. Telling it to people is the starting point, especially outside Hokkaido.

This conflict continued with *The Exhibition of Ainu collection of Russian Ethnography*

Museum, 2005. This exhibition divided craft works into three sections: male works, female works, and works for children. Deriha states:

I always consider what story I can tell visitors with objects. This time, I wanted to tell how the [Russian] collector Vasilyev viewed [Ainu culture] with the exhibits, but the FRPAC wanted to display “beautiful” craft works. I wanted Ainu committee members to select craft works to exhibit, but only specialists went to Sankt Petersburg and they selected 200 “beautiful” craft works. I want to stress that “stereotypical” anthropological taxonomy is also someone’s view. I don’t think there is so much difference between anthropological taxonomy and [Vasilyev or] Munro’s view toward the Ainu. First, [they] didn’t know much about the Ainu, but as [they] collected [artefacts], [they] became able to understand who the Ainu are and what the Ainu think. I would like the FRPAC to adopt such views in their exhibitions. (Personal communication with the curator of the HMH, 2005, author’s translation)

Although the framework of *The Exhibition of Ainu collection of Russian Ethnography Museum* is closer to an anthropological taxonomy than Vasilyev’s view, Akino is still a little critical. He thinks while the exhibition itself was not bad, the catalogue was difficult, especially for people who live outside Hokkaido and are unfamiliar with Ainu culture. He states that the catalogue should have mentioned that how these craft works were used based on anthropological research results. He appreciates that the committee added small panels which generally introduce traditional Ainu culture at the Kawasaki City Museum, the exhibition site outside Hokkaido of that year (Personal communication with the staff member of the FRPAC, 2005).

It has been a difficult issue to consider how museums should exhibit Ainu culture and convey messages to visitors. *Message from the Ainu*, 2003 was the first special exhibition on the Ainu in Shikoku (Tokushima Prefectural Museum). Since I have not interviewed the curators of the museum, I do not know the reason why the museum offered to hold this traveling exhibition. It can be said, however, that the attempt of the museum to hold a special exhibition of the Ainu people must have been quite adventurous especially since it was unknown how visitors would accept the exhibition. Because most Japanese are not sure whether the Ainu people still exist in contemporary Japanese society, the museum may have failed to convey to visitors what the exhibition was intended to do. Kaizawa, who joined the committee, states:

Since *Message from the Ainu* was the first special exhibition on the Ainu in Shikoku, I think we should have displayed traditional Ainu craft works as well. The curators [of the museum] would have been uncertain [how they should exhibit contemporary Ainu craft works], I, too, am still unsure how visitors saw that exhibition. (Personal communication with Kaizawa, 2005, author's translation)

Since the 1990s, the number of special exhibitions on the Ainu has dramatically increased. The International Year of the World's Indigenous People, 1993, encouraged the national government to support museums to hold exhibitions on the Ainu. The establishment of the FRPAC made possible annual Ainu craft exhibitions all over Japan, and curators started to organize exhibitions from "new," "unique" perspectives. Ainu craftspeople also gained opportunities to join the processes of organization. Meanwhile, there is a conflict over what concepts should be adopted and how craft works should be exhibited, especially when special exhibitions on the Ainu are held outside Hokkaido. It has not been investigated how visitors react to each exhibition.

Opportunities for the Ainu to participate in the organization process of the special exhibitions have also been increasing. Special exhibitions on the Ainu are, however, planned and organized overwhelmingly by Japanese specialists. *A Scottish Physician's View* and *Message from the Ainu* provided Ainu craftspeople opportunities to join the projects, but the main organizers are Japanese specialists and they got the Ainu craftspeople to join the projects "to reflect their views to craft works." These exhibitions were not spontaneously organized by Ainu craftspeople. They have never been spontaneously planned and organized special exhibitions in museum to promote and spread their own culture. Muraki, the curator of the Ainu Museum, Shiraoi, is therefore critical of some exhibition concepts. She states:

Like the concept of *Message from the Ainu*, the phrase that "in this exhibition, the Ainu did this for the first time" is a kind of Japanese specialists' performance. They seem to want to show that they have reflected Ainu perspectives when they research or exhibit Ainu culture. Probably they don't want to be criticized for the lack of Ainu perspectives. I'm often invited to give a lecture etc. They seem to want me to provide an "Ainu female" perspective, rather than my own perspective. (Personal communication with Muraki, 2004, author's translation)

The reason why Ainu craftspeople, or more generally, ordinary Ainu people, do not plan such

exhibitions is partly because they do not have had opportunities to learn about their own culture and the ways it might be represented. She continues:

Opportunities to study Ainu culture should be given not by FRPAC exhibition project but by the establishment of a national Ainu research centre, etc. (ibid)

Meanwhile, Kaizawa is eager to hold the second exhibition on contemporary Ainu craft works.

I hope we can have *Message from the Ainu* again. It helps to inherit contemporary Ainu craft works to the future, to upraise Ainu spirituality, and encourage young craftspeople. There are a lot of merits. It will also provide a space for self-representation. I also want art museums to accept our craft works as exhibit. Of course, we should improve our craft skills. (Personal communication with Kaizawa, 2005, author's translation)

Despite the conflict over exhibition concepts and some negative aspects, it cannot be doubted that cultural representation of the Ainu in the museum has reached to a new stage. At least around the FRPAC, not nation-wide though, opportunities to discuss the way the Ainu are represented culturally are increasing. Ainu craftspeople are also eager to join and create exhibitions once they are invited.

“We Have Come Here to See ‘Authentic’ Ainu, Where are They”?: The Permanent Exhibition on the Ainu and Curators’ Struggle

There are some problems which remain unsolved. One is that permanent exhibitions on the Ainu have not effectively incorporated the results of special exhibitions. By the previous section, I have mainly discussed special exhibitions. Phillips argues that “[m]useums welcome major anniversaries and events as opportunities to mount projects that would normally be beyond their scope” (Phillips, 2001: 85). Compared to relatively “static and unchanging” permanent exhibition, special exhibition often reflects such events to the exhibit and exhibition scale is far beyond normal levels of institutional and governmental funding (ibid). Special exhibitions on the Ainu have not been an exception. But the important is to take results and experience of special exhibitions into relatively “static” permanent exhibition and reflect “new” perspectives. Without these changes, static permanent exhibition will remain “permanently static.”

Another problem is that in the Japanese museum system, Ainu culture remains “traditional,” and contemporary Ainu culture has been rarely represented, in both special and permanent

exhibitions. Few museums tell visitors the Ainu in the twenty-first century. Why is not new style of exhibitions taken into permanent exhibition? What problems are caused by the lack of contemporary element? In this section, I review permanent exhibitions on Ainu culture of museums in Hokkaido and explore these questions.

In Hokkaido, there are about fifteen facilities which specifically focus on Ainu culture. Managing organizations are various from individual persons to local government, universities, foundations, and the Hokkaido Ainu Association. The Ainu Museum, Shiraoi, the largest facility in Hokkaido, has an interesting policy. Currently they can perform sixteen dances, but only three of them are performed for visitors. Rather, they inherit such immaterial culture for the staff themselves, in other words, to help the Ainu form a distinct Ainu identity and give the confidence to live as Ainu. Although rituals held in the museum are open to visitors, these activities are held not for visitors per se but rather for the staff in order to study Ainu culture. Meanwhile, the museum accepts anyone, regardless of ethnic background, who is interested in Ainu culture as staff. Currently the staff members consist not only of Ainu but also Japanese and Chinese (Ainu Museum, n.d.). Still the museum permanent exhibition lacks contemporary Ainu culture.

The exhibition of the Ainu Museum, like most other Ainu museums in Hokkaido, follows an orthodox anthropological taxonomy, such as lifestyle, spiritual culture, and agriculture and hunting. The exhibition includes traditional tools for hunting, fishing, weaving and cooking, small swords called *makiri*, clothing, utensils such as *inaw*, and *nima* (small wooden plates) with Ainu patterns to restore “traditional” Ainu lifestyle. Audiovisual equipment occasionally broadcasts traditional Ainu lyric *yukar*. Visitors can see some restored *ci-sets* outside the museum building. Since Shiraoi has developed as one of the major Ainu tourist sites, there is a gift shopping centre next to the museum, and commodified craftworks such as bear carvings, which are produced by contemporary craftspeople, are available. The shopping centre is strategically located in front of the museum, while the route to the museum itself runs directly through the shopping centre. As such, all visitors are required to pass through the shopping area. This situation impresses visitors with the difference between artefacts and commodified craftworks. The former should be in museums as exhibitions of “traditional authentic” culture, while the latter should be in gift shops as souvenirs which may remind them of their visit to an “exotic” place. Seeing the exhibit of these facilities critically, the exhibit fails to reflect contemporary Ainu lifestyle and constructs Ainu

society as “static,” “exotic,” and “Other.” Commodified artefacts never get the status of museum exhibit. Only the Nibutani Ainu Culture Museum displays some contemporary craftworks by Nibutani craftspeople.

Since Hokkaido had been the land exclusively occupied by the Ainu before the Japanese contact, most historical museums in Hokkaido have the exhibit on the Ainu. The largest historical museum is the Historical Museum of Hokkaido in Sapporo. The Historical Museum of Hokkaido was established in 1971 as one of the projects to commemorate the “centennial of Hokkaido” (Historical Museum of Hokkaido, nd). In the museum, the exhibition on the Ainu is exclusively organized by the department of anthropology, and incorporated into the second section of the entire exhibition. This section is denoted as the history of Hokkaido between the thirteenth and nineteenth centuries. There are few exhibitions on Ainu culture after the nineteenth century in the museum. Exhibitions depicting life after the nineteenth century focus strictly on the history of the Japanese colonization of Hokkaido. The existence of the Ainu is, therefore, almost wiped out. In addition, there are no exhibitions of contemporary Ainu culture, though the contemporary industrialized landscape of Hokkaido is exhibited. The Ainu culture is represented as a past culture, and located separate from the mainstream Japanese contemporary history.

Some museums such as the National Museum of Ethnology and the Osaka Human Rights Museum have developed collaborative projects with the Ainu to fabricate their exhibition. Even the results of such collaborative projects are sometimes the target of critique since they are not exhibiting contemporary Ainu culture (see the dispute over the exhibition on the Ainu at the National Museum of Ethnology, Niessen, 1994; Ohtsuka, 1997; Shimizu, 1997). The reason why the museum develops collaborative projects is because the museum intends to show visitors the inheritance of Ainu culture in the present by getting the Ainu to participate in the fabrication of exhibition. This message is hardly conveyed to visitors, however.

Even if museums realize exhibition on contemporary Ainu culture, some problems seem to remain unsolved. Yoshihara does not deny that the museum should exhibit contemporary Ainu culture more, but he has a little cynical perspective.

Not all museums exhibit contemporary culture, but you can't criticize their exhibition just because they don't exhibit contemporary culture. We are now discussing possibility to exhibit contemporary culture but it's really tough because most visitors expect to see

traditional Ainu culture here. The stereotype that Ainu culture should be traditional strongly exists in the contemporary Japanese society. This is a difficult issue, so not only museum but also school education and mass media should tackle with this problem. (Personal communication with the curator of the Nibutani Ainu Culture Museum, 2001, quoted in Nakamura, 2002, author's translation)

He thinks that they should develop their exhibition on traditional Ainu culture first. Meanwhile, he adds that "rock music composed and performed by the Japanese is recognized as Japanese culture. Similarly, I hope what the Ainu are concerned about will be recognized as Ainu culture" (ibid).

The Ainu Museum, Shiraoi, has discussed the possibility to exhibit Ainu history, including contemporary Ainu culture. They recognize that their permanent exhibit is only on the past, and sometimes organize special exhibitions on contemporary Ainu activities. They are dissatisfied with such special exhibitions because such exhibitions are not more than ones on biography, cultural promotion and festival, and the restoration of Ainu language. Those special exhibitions do not represent the majority of the contemporary Ainu, who are not engaging in Ainu cultural activities. They do not have a blueprint how they can effectively represent contemporary Ainu (Personal communication with the curator of the Ainu Museum, 2005).

Here, it would be necessary to define the terms "traditional" and "contemporary" and to provide Japanese social backgrounds. The term "tradition" can be replaced with "Ainu flavour." Anything contemporary, or anything which lacks "Ainu flavour" are not considered to be part of Ainu culture. In the popular Japanese imagination, Ainu culture should exist in the past. It can be said that this stereotype is systematically constructed in contemporary Japanese society. School education and mass media, for example, rarely mention that different ethnic groups live in contemporary Japan in the same lifestyle to the Japanese. Mass media now often report events to promote Ainu traditional culture such as ceremonies or culture schools, but they rarely report on their daily life. Such reports, in most cases, are shadowed by an ethnic umbrella. In attempting to promote a strong Japanese nationalism, rather, the discourses to attempt to forge the Japanese into one entity are often repeated. It is, therefore, not easy for the Japanese public to comprehend the existence of other ethnic groups in contemporary Japanese society. Most Japanese believe that the Ainu still live a traditional lifestyle – hunting, fishing and gathering – while many others believe that the Ainu have long been extinct. Some Japanese do not recognize even the existence of the

Ainu. People who are not Japanese are viewed as Others and they are popularly identified in the Japanese imagination as having unique lifestyles. Thus, the present-day Ainu who wear Western style clothing, watch TV, and use the internet and iPod like the Japanese tends to be considered “impure” or an “inauthentic” Ainu.

The tourist industry has also constructed stereotypical images of the Ainu. Since the nineteenth century, there has been “a growing trend to view the indigenous Ainu as an integral part of the scenery of Hokkaido as ‘frontier.’ ... [B]esides the natural splendour of Hokkaido, ‘the Ainu – a people still following primitive customs and manners’ – was another important rhetoric employed to promote ‘Ainu tourism’” (Ohtsuka, 2003: 138). In tourist sites, tourists “enjoy the staged ceremony of sending back the spirits of bears, performed by the Ainu who wear traditional costumes adorned with Ainu patterns. After watching these performances, the tourists believe that what they have just seen is how the Ainu actually live” (ibid).

In Shiraoui, where the site is tourist-oriented, cultural performance has had to attract tourists. Muraki argues that this situation is changing and now their policy addresses how they represent their own culture from their perspectives as a cultural institution, rather than as a tourist site with a mandate to attract tourists (Personal communication with the curator of the Ainu Museum, 2005). Still they are struggling to see the merit of cultural promotion for the contemporary Ainu, the other local residents, and the town of Shiraoui.

What is contemporary Ainu culture? Artefacts? Contemporary Art works, or tourist art? I’m really interested in what concept the Nibutani Ainu Culture Museum has to collect contemporary Ainu craft works. I agree culture changes. But I feel some contemporary Ainu art works tend to destroying Ainu spirituality. They should create new art works after they know tradition, to some extent. I don’t think any art works produced by the Ainu are Ainu art. What is Ainu art? Specialists have not discussed this issue very much. Frankly speaking, I do not understand well even art works by [a contemporary artists] Sunazawa Bikky. (Personal communication with the curator of the Ainu Museum, 2004, author’s translation)

The curators are falling into a trap. They want to tell visitors the existence of the Ainu as a different ethnic people in contemporary Japan. But if they stress cultural distinctiveness in their museum exhibition which represents traditional culture, most visitors see the exhibition as a

contemporary Ainu lifestyle. Meanwhile, if the curators tell visitors that the Ainu do not live in a traditional lifestyle any more, visitors wonder if there are still “authentic” Ainu somewhere, or they misunderstand that the Ainu has long been extinct. Due to the lack of information and the systematically constructed popular imagination, most Japanese believe that cultural distinctiveness represents different lifestyles in the same country in the present.

Muraki once told:

You know 007 series novels. When one of the novelists, Raymond Benson visited the museum in June 2001, he asked; “I want to write about contemporary Ainu in my novel, what do you think?” I asked to him how he is representing contemporary Ainu. He stated that there is no difference in lifestyle or else between other people and the Ainu he represents. He just wanted to have some characters who are of Ainu ethnicity in his novel. I wonder why it is so difficult for many Japanese to understand that there is no difference in lifestyle between ethnic minorities and the Japanese but there are other ethnic groups in the contemporary Japanese society. (Personal communication with the curator of the Ainu Museum, 2001, quoted in Nakamura, 2002, author’s translation)

Interviews to the staff members of the Nibutani Ainu Culture Museum clarified that they often get some ignorant questions from visitors because of the lack of information on history and contemporary condition of the Ainu. Visitors try to find out the location of “authentic” Ainu villages, ask if the Ainu still live in a *ci-set*, and ask staff to introduce “authentic” Ainu people. When a visitor asked a staff member where the “chief” lives, this staff member answered that there is no *shucho* (chief) here, but there is a *chocho* (mayor) of the town of Biratori. This staff member wonders if the visitor really understood what was said. For the moment, for the staff and most curators, cultural activity is a struggle and a battle with stereotypes on a daily basis. Of course, the issue of stereotypes has to be discussed and solved at the national level, which not only museums but also school education and mass media, for example, need to tackle. The fact is, however, that tourism and visiting Ainu museums is the largest opportunity to experience Ainu culture for the majority of the Japanese. Under this situation, it would be quite adventurous for Ainu museums to take “new” trials and perspectives from special exhibitions into their permanent exhibition. First of all, they have to tell visitors the existence of the Ainu and educate them.

Why Contemporary Culture? And for the Future: Conclusion

As the curator of the Nibutani Ainu Culture Museum states, there is a stereotype that Ainu culture should be “traditional,” and I do not argue that museum exhibitions on the Ainu always have to reflect contemporary Ainu culture. At the local level, however, the lack of contemporary elements from museum exhibits has not significantly attracted local residents, especially the younger generation, to engage in cultural activities. In Nibutani, for example, despite a long-term struggle by an Ainu, Kayano Shigeru, the inheritance of Ainu culture has not been successful. People who have traditional skills are becoming old, while few younger people have been interested in acquiring such skills. For the young Ainu, Ainu culture is not their concern. For them, the museum is also some kind of different world. Even some museum staff, either Ainu or Japanese, stated that they had never visited the museum before they started working at the museum. They have had an impression that the museum in general has only old historical objects. In addition, many local residents did not know until recently even what the Nibutani Ainu Culture Museum is doing. In Shiraoi, too, the curator of the Ainu Museum points out that the majority of the Ainu are now not engaging in cultural activities. For them, culture is not an important thing. Such people therefore do not visit the museum. People do not see a large connection between traditional culture and themselves who live in the contemporary society. Does traditional Ainu culture have no sense for the contemporary Ainu any more?

Muraki once told:

Our policy is to help the Ainu to form Ainu identity and give a confidence to live as an Ainu through museum activities such as restoring artefacts and performing traditional Ainu culture, ritual etc. The process of studying Ainu culture and tradition really helped me to form Ainu identity and now I believe that the Ainu are also equally humans like other people. Before I became a curator here and learned Ainu culture, I hated the fact that I have Ainu ethnicity. I was not considering the Ainu and myself as a human because the Ainu have experienced severe discrimination for a long time. (Personal communication with the curator of the Ainu Museum, 2001, quoted in Nakamura, 2002, my translation)

Learning a culture is a process in which it is important to confirm identity and gain the confidence to live as a person who belongs to the culture. The opportunities and sources of this

process are especially important for cultural minorities. It is therefore not meaningless for Ainu museums to include contemporary culture and attract younger Ainu to their activities. Currently, however, Japanese school education and mass media are far from contributing to Ainu cultural promotion and public education on the Ainu. Ainu museums are one of few institutions to attract people to cultural activities, while correcting stereotypes of the public and doing curatorial works and research.

Since the late 1990s, the environment surrounding museums and the Ainu has changed. Yoshihara (Yoneda), the curator of the Nibutani Ainu Culture Museum, believes that historians will positively evaluate the late twentieth and early twenty-first century as the beginning of cultural renaissance for the Ainu. Cultural activities of the Ainu are moving from being viewed as negative to being accepted as positive, from restraint to manifestation, from repression to progress, from discrimination to respect, and from resignation to hope (Yoneda 1999: 377). There remain many problems unsolved, but the major change is that there is now a space to discuss the way of how museums can more effectively represent Ainu culture, including contemporary culture, especially around the FRPAC. In this sense, the contribution of the FRPAC and the Ainu Culture Promotion Act is significant. A series of interviews to curators, however, gave me impression that curators are not familiar with what other museums are doing especially once leaving from FRPAC projects. It would be necessary to construct museum network or to develop collaborative projects among Ainu museums so that curators can share information and knowledge, which may bring an innovative change of permanent exhibitions. It seems that the curators' struggles will not be dissolved in the near future.

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