

THE GLOBALIZATION & GOVERNANCE PROJECT, HOKKAIDO UNIVERSITY
WORKING PAPER SERIES

Recovering Ainu governance in the Shiretoko World Natural Heritage area in Japan
through education and training for the Development of Indigenous Ecotourism.

- 0 8

Yugo ONO, Hokkaido University, *et al.*

- * Paper for the Proceedings of the 7th World Indigenous Peoples' Conference on Education, 2005,11,26-12,1. Hamilton, NZ.
- * None of these papers should be cited without the author's permission.

Recovering Ainu governance in the Shiretoko World Natural Heritage area in Japan through education and training for the Development of Indigenous Ecotourism.

Theme:

The paper outlines the first attempt to develop and implement a program of indigenous ecotourism whereby Ainu people are able to recover access to and usage natural resources in Shiretoko World Natural Heritage area, Hokkaido, JAPAN.

Keywords: Governance, indigenous ecotourism, natural resources use, youth education, World Heritage, co-management, rights recovery.

Yugo ONO*, Masao UMEZAWA**, Ponpe ISHII**, Koji YUUKI**, Shigeo NISHIHARA and Tatsuya FUJISAKI (**affiliated to Ainu Association)

*corresponding author:

Graduate School of Environmental Science, Hokkaido University, 060-0810 Sapporo, JAPAN.
yugo@ees.hokudai.ac.jp

Introduction

The Ainu are an indigenous people living in Japan. According to 1993's census in Hokkaido, the total population was about 24,000. But we believe that the actual Ainu population may be more than ten times larger, because tremendous pressure to assimilate to majority Japanese.

Ainu previously inhabited a wider area in northeast Asia from Kamchatka and Sakhalin to Hokkaido and Tohoku (the northern part of mainland of Japan). Most of them are living now in Hokkaido (Ainu Mosir in Ainu language), the northernmost island of Japan. Anthropological studies have revealed similarities between the Ainu and the Neolithic peoples (called Jomon) in Japan. These findings support the idea that the Ainu are the most indigenous people on the Japanese Islands, while the modern Japanese of the main island share genetic stock with both Jomon and Yoyoi (migrants from the Asian continent since 400-300BC) peoples (Hanihara, 1991).

The culture of the Ainu people therefore originated from Neolithic Jomon culture in the northern area and based their subsistence activities on salmon fishing, hunting and plant gathering. This basic culture was modified by contact through trade and war with the Okhotsk people (migrants from Northern Sakhalin or Siberia in 7-10C.), Wajin (non-Ainu ethnic Japanese of main island), neighboring Northern peoples and the Chinese. Exporting natural resources such as fur, brown bear gallbladder and sea tangle, and the import of silk clothes and lacquerware were important to the livelihood of the Ainu people. The trade nourished the Ainu people and several different tribes of Ainu occupied different regions all over Hokkaido between 12th and 19th C.

However, the invasion of the Japanese people into Hokkaido, especially the establishment of the Matsumae Domainal Government on the southwestern margin of Hokkaido in 17th century, caused and increased conflict between the Ainu people and Wajin settlers populations. As a result of being several wars by the Matsumae Domain, the Ainu people began to lose their political and economic power. The rule of the Shogun enhanced this trend. But it was after 1868, when the Japanese Government colonized Hokkaido under the Meiji Emperor, that the Ainu completely lost their own governance. During the 30 years after the Meiji Restoration, the Ainu lost all of their rights without concluding any treaties, and in 1899 a discriminative law called "Hokkaido Old Aboriginal Protection Act" was established. After that, the Japanese Government adopted a strongly assimilative policy to destroy Ainu language and culture.

Although this law was abolished in 1997, a new law called "the Ainu Culture Promotion Act (precisely, An Act for the Promotion of Ainu Culture, the Spread of Knowledge relevant to Ainu Traditions, and an Education campaign)" does not acknowledge the indigeness nor the rights of Ainu natural resource use such as salmon fishing and wildlife hunting. In this context, it can be said that the Ainu people are still under the conditions of the 19th century Colonization Policy. (Ono, 1999b).

The Shiretoko Issue

Shiretoko is a peninsula which protrudes into the Sea of Okhotsk in Northeastern Hokkaido where the wilderness has been well-preserved. It was designated as Japan's 23rd National Park in 1964 and is visited by roughly 1.7million visitors annually. The nature of Shiretoko is characterized by a combination of steep mountains (volcanoes) covered by coniferous and deciduous forests, sea cliffs, torrential rivers and surrounded by the ocean. This natural environment in its full diversity offers an important habitat to many endangered species such as the brown bear, Blakiston's fish-owl, Steller's sea eagle and the white-tailed eagle. The Japanese Government nominated Shiretoko as a candidate for World Natural Heritage site in 2004, and the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) began evaluation work shortly after.

However, the Japanese Government completely neglected the Ainu in the process of promoting Shiretoko for the selection as a World Natural Heritage area. They tried to legitimate this attitude by emphasizing the fact that there are no Ainu inhabitants in the Heritage Area at present. But if we consider the reason why there are no Ainu inhabitants there, the legitimacy of the Government will be clearly denied. All place names of Shiretoko are derived from the Ainu language. This fact alone provides sufficient evidence of former Ainu habitation in the Shiretoko area.

Several Ainu groups, including our organization, sent an appeal to IUCN and UNESCO to ask that the Ainu be included in the management of the Shiretoko World Natural Heritage area. We emphasized that the involvement of the Ainu would be most easily realized through Ainu-organized eco-tourism, because Ainu needs access to the natural salmon migration, which has been effectively stopped by dams and intensive fishing activities under the administration of the Japanese. If we wish to realize Ainu-led eco-tourism in the World Heritage area, dam removal and partial recovery of the natural salmon migration should be the first target of our program. Our appeal to IUCN was successful, and in selecting Shiretoko for World Natural Heritage status at UNESCO Meeting in Durban, South Africa, in July 2005, the IUCN recommended to the Japanese Government that indigenous (Ainu) peoples be included in the management of the selected property through indigenous ecotourism activities. This is the first case in which the Ainu co-management (Brad, 2004) of a conservation area in Japan has been acknowledged internationally.

Current situation of Ainu youth education

The education of the Ainu youth has been fundamentally retarded by the assimilative policies of the Japanese government. The Ainu language is not taught through public education. The history and the culture of the Ainu have been also largely ignored. The number of the Ainu who can communicate to each other through the Ainu language is limited because of a long-lasting assimilation policy which resulted in almost total eradication of spoken Ainu language as a means of communication. There is no system for the linguistic education of the Ainu except for 14 Ainu language school scattered across Hokkaido, which meets only two to four times per month. The number of Ainu youth regularly studying the Ainu language is still few, although the number of Ainu language schools has increased after the establishment of the Ainu Culture Promotion Act (which now totals fourteen). This law tends to regard the Ainu culture as best celebrated in its least-threatening traditional form including traditional music, dancing, embroidery, and oral literature. This attitude has limited the activity of many Ainu persons, especially that of the youth, because any attempts aiming at the creation of new culture are seldom encouraged, whereas "authentic tradition" is privileged.

As a result of this situation, discrimination within the school system and the lack of incentives for educational achievement within the Ainu community, the percentage of Ainu students to enter university is still much lower (only 16,1%) than the non-Ainu Japanese (34,5%) in 1999's census.

We believe that the development of indigenous ecotourism in Shiretoko World Natural Heritage area will open possibilities for the Ainu youth to systematically study their language, history and culture. Not only in Shiretoko, but also all over Hokkaido, place names are based on the Ainu language. They indicate precisely the topography and sometimes the functions of land's history. Therefore the eco-tour guide should ideally understand the original meanings of Ainu place names, and be able to communicate them to the eco-tourists. Since 1998, Ono (1999a) initiated a movement with several Ainu to promote posting Ainu place name to correspond with Japanese place names in Hokkaido. The Ainu place names were changed into Japanese equivalents under assimilation policies. When these names were written in Chinese characters, either the pronunciation or the meaning were changed. In case of Bibaushi, the original Ainu land name was Biba-ush-i meaning "a place rich in shell". But since the Japanese used three Chinese letters; Bi (meaning beautiful), ba(horse) and ushi (cow), to emulate the pronunciation, people who take the current

name at face value understand the place to be rich in beautiful horses and cows through cattle farming. This is unquestionably a destruction of the Ainu culture. Equivalent sign-posting of Ainu place names are, therefore, not only important for realizing Ainu eco-tourism, but also to work toward equal treatment of the two different cultures, and remind Hokkaido residents and visitors of the cultural history of Ainu people in Hokkaido.

Establishment of Ainu ecotourism

If we provide the means for Ainu youth to become eco-tour guides and park rangers, there will be many more opportunities for them to study the Ainu language, history and culture. In April 2005, we organized the "Shiretoko Indigenous Peoples' Eco-Tourism Research Union" (SIPETRU) to educate and train Ainu youth to lead indigenous eco-tours in the World Heritage area. Indigenous ecotourism not only creates a new jobs (eco-tour guides and park rangers) for Ainu youth, but also enhances the possibility for recovering the rights of natural resource use among the Ainu, including salmon fishing (of critical importance to the livelihood and the culture of the Ainu). Co-management of the World Heritage area is the first step to restoring Ainu governance in Japan.

We propose the following five steps to create a system for Ainu ecotourism in Shiretoko World Heritage area:

1) Research on cultural resources

In the nomination process, only the natural resources were evaluated. But our research revealed that there are many cultural and archeological sites such as former fortresses (Chasi in the Ainu language) in the World Heritage area. However, some of them are not directly connected to the Ainu, but to the Okhotsk culture. Although all place names, originated from the Ainu language, the meanings of some place names are unknown.

2) Establishment of guidelines for indigenous eco-tourism

Former Chasi are archeological sites, but they are also a kind of sanctuary for some Ainu. The use of these sites in eco-tourism therefore require guidelines. Mass tourism can potentially destroy the sacredness of these sites. Recently the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (2004) published the "Akwe:Kon Guidelines" for conservation of sacred sites. We need to carefully consider establishing guidelines to protect the sacredness and cultural background of these areas.

For example, the wintering hole of the brown bear is an interesting subject for scientific eco-tourism. But for the Ainu people, it is a sacred site, since the brown bear is one of their most important Kamuy (Gods). Guidelines for understanding the cultural values of the indigenous peoples are urgently required.

3) Development of Eco-tour programs

An actual eco-tourism program should be developed to not only to realize the tour efficiently, but also to educate and prepare the Ainu youth for assignments as eco-tour guides.

The Hokkaido Government established an authorization system for Environmental (Outdoor) Tour guides in 2002, in which the candidates were certified as Environmental (Outdoor) Tour guides after passing the exams (written and actual field exams). We are planning to create a similar set of criteria and evaluation procedure specifically for indigenous eco-tourism in Hokkaido in order to educate and train Ainu tour guides.

4) Creation of an Ainu cultural center

In the Shiretoko World heritage area, currently the visitor center, which specializes in resources on the natural environment, is the only source of information for visitors. There is no cultural center which enables visitors to meet Ainu people to communicate with one another. It is most unfortunate that the Shiretoko World Heritage site has no such facilities at the moment. With the establishment of a cultural center, programs enabling Ainu youth to teach, not only eco-tourism, but also various traditional arts such as woodcarving, embroidery, music and dancing, could be developed.

5) Education and Employment of Ainu youth

Cultural transfer between the older generations and the younger generations is urgently needed. Our Research Union is assisted by a collaboration of older and younger Ainu. Development an eco-tourism program through our

research union is ideal for enabling cultural transmission and education between the generations, because younger Ainu have little life experience in the field and lack basic knowledge on the natural resource usage in the mountains and forests.

In Summer of 2005, we attempted three experimental ecotours around Utoro in Shiretoko World Natural Heritage area. The program is as follows:

Welcoming speeches, performance of Ainu musical instruments, Kamuy –nomi (A prayer to ask permission from the Kamuy to enter into the sacred site), explanation of former.

A visit to the Fortress (Chasi) , introduction of the traditional houses and lifestyle of the Ainu, a musical performance with all participants, the explanation of various trees and herbs which were traditionally used as medicines by the Ainu, sampling the herbal tea (served by a pot),

Performance of Kamuy-nomi at the Chasi, Kamuy-nomi at the end of the tour to express gratitude.

The number of the participants was limited to ten persons at the maximum for one tour guide.

The tour program required 3-4 hours time.

This was perhaps the first attempt to carry out Ainu eco-tourism in Japan. We wish to improve upon these initial attempts by studying Maori eco-tourism program in Aotearoa, and other indigenous ecotourism programs in other parts of the world.

Acknowledgements

We wish to express our sincere gratitude to the organizer of WIPCE to allow us a chance to present our paper.

Our attempts of Ainu eco-tourism in Shiretoko World Natural Heritage area was realized by both direct and indirect supports of many people; notably, David Shepard, IUCN, Tadashi Kato, the president of Utari (Ainu) Association of Hokkaido, Yupo Abe, head of Uhanokka Society, Sanae Ogawa, head of Etekeknba Society, Toru Shimuzu, leader of Ethnic Minorities Society. Thanks should be extended to Profs. Brad Coombes, Elizabeth Rankin, M.N.Clout and Maj De Poorter, University of Auckland who gave us many useful suggestions during the first joint symposium between Hokkaido University and University of Auckland on Shiretoko issue. Isaac Bishara and Sonya Low, PSTO in Wellington, helped us to communicate directly to Maori youth. We also thank to Mauriora Kingi, director of Maori Issues, Rotorua, Maurice and Heather Manawatu, Maroitour in Kaikoura, Glenn and Tania Gribben, Waka Tours in Abel Tasman and Koro Carman, Footprints –Waipoua who taught us on Maori eco-tourism. Finally we thank to Ann- Elise Lewallen who kindly corrected English. Research Expenses were funded by A Grant-in-Aid for Creative Scientific Research, The Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture (MEXT): Research Project Number: 14GS0103 Project Name: Comparative Research Concerning the Changes of Governance in the Age of Globalization; Research Director: Jiro Yamaguchi, Professor, Graduate School of Public Policy, Hokkaido University.

References

- Brad, C.(2004) Will co-management resolve the contestation of state conservation practices in New Zealand ? (abstract) Hokkaido University-Auckland University Joint Symposium, (Shari and Sapporo).
- Hanihara, K.(1991) Dual structure model for population history of the Japanese. Japan Review, 2, pp.1-33.
- Ono, Y.(1999a) Ainu-go Chimei wo heikisuru. Kotoba to Shakai, 1, pp. 78-86.
- Ono, Y.(1999b) Ainu homelands: natural history from ice age to modern times.
- In “Ainu, spirit of a Northern People” Fitzhugh, W.W. and Dubreuil, Ch. O. (eds.) National Museum of Natural History Smithsonian Institution. pp.32-38.
- Secretariat of the Conservation on Biological Diversity (2004) “Akwe:Kon Guidelines”, 25p.