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JAPAN’S MINORITIES: NATIONS WITHIN A NATION

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
History

by
Christopher William Shumard
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Accepted by:
Dr. Edwin Moise, Committee Chair
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ABSTRACT

This thesis concerns the modern history of Japan’s ethnic minorities. These are the Zainichi Koreans, the Okinawans or Ryukyuan People, and the Ainu. Analyzing the feelings expressed in their literature, the constitution of and shifting nature of each group’s identity is tracked. The central argument of this thesis is that there is something innate to the human adherence towards group identity. It is the goal of this work to prove this claim through Japan’s three ethnic minorities which demonstrated this shared tendency and desire for a solid group identity around which individuals clustered under dire circumstances. These circumstances originated with each group’s conquest, subjugation, and oppression by the modern Japanese state.

From 1868 onwards, the modern Japanese state’s nationalism and imperialist policies threatened the existence of the Ainu and Okinawan peoples. Under policies of forced assimilation, the Ainu and Okinawan peoples experienced the drastic loss of their cultures and languages. Despite these policies, they remained on the periphery of the Japanese nation, never truly considered Japanese. The Zainichi share a similar experience starting in the postwar era. Considered as unwanted non-citizens by Japan, Koreans who stayed in Japan after 1945 struggled for decades to receive recognition as citizens and as people who belonged in Japan.

Each group’s identity shifted over time depending on the context of different periods. However, what they each shared was a desire to adhere to a group identity for self-preservation. As the ascendant form of group identity in the modern era, national identity was and remains the main mode by which individuals of these groups identify with one another. The context of a highly nationalistic Japan and its minorities demonstrates how group identity is socially constructed but also rooted in innate human behaviors. It is the author's hope that groups of people can bond over this shared human trait and learn to coexist peacefully because of our similarities rather than compete because of our differences.

DEDICATION

For my mother, who was infinitely patient with me and from whom I received unceasing support.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Humans are social creatures. From our hunter-gatherer origins to social stratification and the beginnings of civilization, humans have long organized themselves into groups. That is, humans have long identified themselves with a particular group identity. Since the Industrial Revolution, national identity rose to become the ascendant form of group identity globally. By this, I mean most modern states are organized around a national identity. Nation-states have dominated politics, warfare, and economics for the past two hundred years. Most individuals are born into this apparatus of identity, the nation, and adhere to it without much question. Millions have perished in the name of the nation, individuals who might never meet one another share this invisible bond of national identity.

In this thesis, I will endeavor to answer questions surrounding the complexity of national identity. Particularly, why is national identity so important? Why do people become attached to and assign such importance to national identity? To be clear, I do not intend to discuss the origins of modern nationalism but rather the primary reason humans are attached to national identity. I posit that loneliness is the primary reason for the human propensity toward national identity. Humans, as social creatures, need a group of perceived alike individuals to belong to for survival and flourishing. Humans rely on and coalesce more firmly into groups to survive when faced with danger. This is especially true of humans that feel isolated by a threat and thus, in response to their loneliness, come together into a group. Thus, group identity is central to the human struggle to live and avoid death. As the ascendant form of group identity in the world, national identity presents a strong example of this propensity towards group identity and safety in the face of a perceived threat.

I will explore three specific examples of this phenomenon. Japan's three ethnic minorities: the Zainichi Koreans, Okinawans, and the Ainu are examples of the human desire for group identity, for a tribe to belong to. Their experience and history in Japan are largely one of oppression and subjugation by the more powerful Japanese. Especially in modern history, these three groups faced a powerful Japanese nation-state that emphasized Japanese racial superiority and unity. Even today, this idea continues to some extent. As recently as 2020, former prime minister Taro Aso said in a speech that Japan was the only country "'where a single race has spoken a single language at a single location and maintained a single dynasty with a single emperor for over 2,000 years.[1]'" This sentiment is not uncommon amongst Japanese politicians and is even more common amongst the general Japanese population. This is not to say that Japanese people believe in racial superiority, but it does demonstrate a belief in the racial purity and homogeneity of the Japanese nation.

This widespread belief ignores the existence of the Zainichi, Okinawans, and Ainu who each have their own unique language, culture, and identity separate from the Japanese. Yet, they also live within Japan and are considered part of the Japanese nation, so much so that their existence is often ignored in favor of nationalist sentiments such as the aforementioned statement by Taro Aso. This dual existence, of being Japanese and not, is a problem of identity that Japan's ethnic minorities have struggled with for decades. It is my contention that they have a shared experience of alienation and subjugation by Japan and their response, though unique to each group, was similarly a desire to construct a group identity. Namely, they sought to construct national identities that could preserve their language, culture, and people. Their identity, what it means to be Zainichi, Okinawan, or Ainu, has changed over time but what remains constant is the desire to belong to a group. By examining their literature my goal is to show how their feelings of isolation and loneliness, brought on by tension with the Japanese, led to their creation of national identities and how this, in turn, demonstrates the innate human propensity towards group identity.

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[1] Masahiro Kakihana. "Aso apologizes if 'single-race nation' remark misunderstood." *The Asahi Shimbun*, published January 14, 2020. Accessed March 18, 2023. https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/13033842.

Historiography about Japanese ethnic minorities, while still small, is increasingly gaining attention in Japan and abroad. John Lie is an important figure in the history of Japan's minorities. He emphasizes that "The fundamental forces of modern Japan – state-making, colonialism, and capitalist industrialization-engendered ethnic heterogeneity. The history of modern Japan is simultaneously the history of its multiethnic constitution."[2] His emphasis on state-making and colonialism as some of modern Japan's historical impulses provided the basis for my understanding of how Japan's ethnic minorities and how their identities were shaped by Japanese oppression. However, in the case of the Zainichi, David Chapman argues that it is important to avoid the dualistic urge to assign the labels ‘victim’ and ‘oppressor.’[3] Essentially, by labeling the Zainichi as simple victims of Japanese oppression one might miss the complexities of how they both participated in and resisted alienation from mainstream Japanese society. Steve Rabson makes a similar case with the Okinawans, arguing that they often police themselves and strictly attempt to hide their Okinawan ethnic origins to fit into mainstream Japanese culture.[4] This is not to say that these two groups are not victims of Japanese oppression but rather, to understand how they construct their identities one must understand the pressures on them that exist within the community too. For the Ainu, this pressure is mostly religious in nature. Sarah Strong argues that their religious chants, as part of old oral traditions, gave the Ainu a sense of identity and belonging to a historical world untouched by Japanese aggression.[5] Where I depart from these authors is my emphasis on the formation of ethnic national identity because of the innate human desire to belong to a group identity. While I agree that the concept of a ‘nation’ is a social construct, I also posit that there is something inherent to the desire to adhere to a group identity such as a nation. For me, Japan’s ethnic minorities are an example of this.

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[2] John Lie. *Multi-Ethnic Japan* (Harvard University Press, 2001), 84.

I must also mention my omission of the Burakumin from my analysis. While their experience in Japan shares much with the Zainichi, Okinawans, and Ainu, they are not an ethnic minority. Despite being ethnically Japanese they still experience much discrimination. Moreover, there is an absence of ethnic nationalism that is present in the other three groups. Their experience in Japan is not that of an ethnic minority but something else entirely. Thus, while they most certainly deserve more attention and research, I do not believe the framework I use in this thesis applies well to them.

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[3] David Chapman. Zainichi Korean Identity and Ethnicity. (Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2008), 11.
[4] Steve Rabson. *The Okinawan Diaspora in Japan: Crossing the Borders Within* (University of Hawai’i Press, 2012), 219.
[5] Sarah M. Strong. *Ainu Spirits Singing: The Living World of Chiri Yukie’s Ainu Shinyōshū*. (University of Hawai’i Press, 2011). 46-47.

Chapter one will cover the history of the Zainichi and their identity. Utilizing literary works written by Zainichi Koreans, I analyze how they conceived of themselves as Koreans in exile and how this conception shifted over time. Beginning with Imperial Japan in the first half of the 20th century, Korean authors who lived in Japan wrote about their experiences as a conquered people who tried their best to assimilate into the Japanese Empire. However, their treatment as second-class citizens despite nominal inclusion into Imperial Japanese society constantly reminded them of their Korean origins. Then, moving into the postwar period, Koreans who did not repatriate to the Korean peninsula found themselves as unwanted non-citizens in Japan. In response, they became very nationalistic, with rhetoric focusing on an eventual return to Korea. By the 1980s, and to the present, younger generations of Zainichi have taken a path towards assimilation or hybridity. In essence, Zainichi either embrace Japan as their home and center of identity or, some others call for acceptance of a hybrid Japanese-Korean identity that allows one to acknowledge their ties to Korea and Japan.

Chapter two will cover the modern history of the Okinawan people and their identity by analyzing Okinawan literature. Beginning with their annexation by Japan in the latter half of the 19th century, the Okinawan identity that was once Chinese-influenced came under attack by Japanese policies of cultural assimilation. Okinawa, and

Okinawans, became designated as backward in comparison to modern westernized Japan. Even as Okinawans adopted Japanese language and dress, they retained their status as backward people. This continued until the postwar period which brought new changes to Okinawan identity with American occupation. The war left Okinawa devastated and authors came to envision themselves and their people as victims of greater powers, such as Japan and America. This self-identification of victimhood became complicated by the beginning of the 21st century as authors began to grapple more with the complexity of Okinawan agency in the war, and more broadly, in maintaining the stereotype of a meek backward island people. Okinawan identity remains conflicted between the modern Okinawan that casts off traditional islander culture or the Okinawan that embraces an identity centered a poor but proud island culture.

Chapter three will analyze what exactly constitutes the modern Ainu identity by utilizing transcribed religious chants and the direct words of a few Ainu individuals. To understand the modern Ainu identity, which is one consumed with loss, I first analyze and explain the old Ainu religious worldview. The Ainu envisioned themselves, before annexation by Japan, as a peaceful people focused on maintaining a balanced relationship with nature to please the spirits and thank them for their generosity in providing for the Ainu. After establishing this worldview, I move on to modern Ainu authors that grappled with the loss of this world. They came to identify the Ainu as a dying people because their subjugation and forced assimilation by the Japanese severed them from their relationship with nature, and thus the spirits. By the 1960s however, the Ainu experienced an upsurge in nationalism and, to today, maintain great efforts to preserve and revitalize their culture. Their identity now, and in the past, is one centered on nostalgia for the peaceful world of their ancestors and the pain they endure due to their loss of it.

CHAPTER II

ZAINICHI KOREANS: LONELINESS AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

I

Introduction

In this chapter I will explore the shifting Zainichi Korean identity in response to nationalist pressures from Japan. Their experience in Japan is a demonstration of the human desire to survive and band together in a common identity in the face of a perceived threat. Living as Koreans in Japan, they faced the threat of living in a foreign environment full of people who perceived them as foreign trespassers. Met with prejudiced hostility, the Koreans turned inwards, eventually morphing their identity into the Zainichi. To be Zainichi was to acknowledge the loneliness and isolation one felt separated from the Korean homeland and excluded from mainstream Japanese culture. Embedded in their literature is the anxiety of being alone, exiled from one's home, and a desire to belong. Their shifting identity through decades and successive generations demonstrate the base human desire for belonging to and identifying with a group, and in this case, a nation. Conditions change, and identities shift, but the need to belong remains.

Study of the Zainichi in English is relatively new, or, at the very least, not much work was conducted until around twenty years ago. Published in 2001, John Lie's book, *Multi-Ethnic Japan*, explores the history of postwar Japanese nationalism. He proposes that the Japanese self-perception of a homogenous nation-state was simultaneously threatened and affirmed by the reality of multiethnicity in Japan.[6] Following up on his research into nationalism, he also published *Zainichi (Koreans in Japan): Diasporic Nationalism and Postcolonial Identity* in 2008. Here, he argues that Zainichi national identity was an expression of Korean and Japanese nationalism, an expression of the inherent difficulty of purely identifying with one or the other. His works provided me with a base to start my research, and his understanding of nationalism concerning Korea and Japan has largely informed my own understanding. *Zainichi Korean Identity and Ethnicity* and *Voices of the Korean Minority in Postwar Japan*, written by David Chapman and Erik Ropers, respectively, were extremely valuable to my research. Chapman primarily focuses on tracking the political history of the Zainichi and its connection with their shifting identity. Ropers proved incredibly insightful for pointing out Zainichi agency in Japan. Despite the narratives of victimhood, not that they are necessarily untrue, the Zainichi displayed a significant amount of agency in determining their own identity as Koreans, Japanese, or a hybrid Korean-Japanese. To this conversation, I intend to add an exploration of Zainichi identity beyond nationalism. I wish to explore the emotional reason why they coalesced into a national identity. The answer, I believe, lies in their feelings of loneliness and a need to belong.

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[6] John Lie. *Multi-Ethnic Japan*, 5.

It is essential to acknowledge the Zainichi voices I encountered in their vast array of literature. Thanks to John Lie, Melissa L. Wender, and various other researchers, I have benefited from reading two anthologies of translated literature written by Zainichi. From semi-autobiographical stories to poetry and romanticist fiction, Zainichi literature is a rich trove of their experiences in Japan as a minority. It is their stories, voices, and experiences that have primarily informed my research. Throughout their literature, across the decades, is an abject feeling of loneliness. Through analyzing their words, I hope to demonstrate how this human emotion, familiar to us all, informs our desire for group identity, a national identity.

In this chapter, I have divided the history of the Zainichi roughly into three sections. First, there are the colonial experiences of Koreans under the Japanese Empire. Then, there was a period of established Zainichi identity in the postwar years until the 1980s. After this, there is the period of hybrid Japanese-Korean identity or complete assimilation leading to the present day. I shall explore shifting Zainichi identity as a response to loneliness throughout these sections. First, I shall discuss the Koreans living under Imperial Japan. Literature written in this period reflects colonial attitudes and empire, but many of the experiences, attitudes, and ideas expressed are antecedents to the later Zainichi. Then, I shall discuss the postwar nationalism of Koreans living in Japan, eventually morphing into the Zainichi. Their experiences reflect a feeling of exile from their Korean homeland and the shift towards Zainichi identity as successive generations were born in Japan. Then, from around the 1980s onwards, I will discuss the issue of assimilation or a hybrid identity.

II

Colonial Multiethnicity

The Zainichi Koreans, also known as the Zainichi, are those of Korean descent living in Japan. They are descended from those who lived in Japan during its time as an empire and in the immediate post-war years. The burgeoning Japanese Empire annexed Korea in the early 20th century, incorporating it as a colony. Korea was linguistically and culturally different from Japan, possessing a long history of its own. In the early 20th century, Japanese nationalist ideology demanded pan-Asian unity with Japan as a sort of father nation. So, much 'Japanification' took place in colonies like Korea. In this colonial context, Koreans faced the decision to either resist by clinging to their Korean identity or assimilate into Japanese identity.[7]

Before the Zainichi were conceived of, there were simply Koreans living in Japan and the Japanese Empire. This period began with Korea's annexation in 1910 and ended in 1945 with the end of the Second World War. During this period, Koreans living in the peninsula and on the Japanese home islands were nominally viewed as members of the Japanese nation, albeit seen as lesser cousins in need of guidance by the emperor and

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[7] Kim Sa-Ryang, "Into the Light," in *Into the Light: An Anthology of Literature by Korean in Japan*, Translated with an introduction by Christopher D. Scott, Edited by Melissa L. Wender (University of Hawai'i Press. 2011), 14.

Japan. Theirs was a colonial experience, one in which nationalism was heightened by their subjugation and othering by their Japanese rulers despite attempts by many to assimilate. They experienced many antecedents to the later Zainichi anxieties surrounding national identity in a foreign land. Yet, they retained a homeland, and many returned to Korea at the war's end. It is their stories and experiences that I now turn to.

By 1939 Korea had been under Japan’s control for almost three decades. Japan’s expansionist nationalist ideology espoused pan-Asian unity against Western imperialism, with the Japanese as tutors to other Asian peoples. Indeed, as John Lie argues in his book *Multi-Ethnic Japan*, “the fundamental impulse of imperial Japan was to assert the multiethnic origins and constitution of Japan.”[8] Lie and other scholars point out that the Japanese Empire sought to incorporate various Asian ethnic groups into a larger national identity loyal to the nation and ultimately the emperor. Though, as Japan's colonial subjects would come to learn, this idealized unity was still very much pro-Japanese, and indeed, in the case of Koreans, "most Japanese people deemed Koreans to be inferior."[9] Many Koreans learned Japanese and lived in Japan for work opportunities in this colonial context. Under colonial rule, Koreans were legally considered Japanese nationals but were often looked down on by ethnic Japanese and suffered from unequal treatment.[10] Kim Sa-Ryang was one such Korean who moved to Japan for university and began publishing works of literature in Japanese.[11] His most famous work and one that served as a direct inspiration for later Zainichi writers was "Into the Light." The fictional story is about a Korean schoolteacher teaching Japanese children in Japan. He forms a special bond with a boy named Haruo, who is actually of Korean descent. The story tackles themes of nationalism, prejudice, and anxieties about national identity from the perspective of a Korean living under the Japanese empire.

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[8] Lie. *Multi-Ethnic Japan*, 122.

[9] Ibid, 123.

[10] Ibid, 123.

[11] Kim Sa-Ryang, “Into the Light,” in *Into the Light: An Anthology of Literature by Korean in Japan*, 13.

Published in 1939, The story begins with narration from the protagonist, a schoolteacher in Japan, who we soon find out is named Mr. Minami, as the children call him so. But Minami then reveals to the reader his real surname as Nam, a Korean name. He chose to be addressed as Minami for the sake of the Japanese schoolchildren he taught, to not offend them, but he confesses, "Of course, had there been a Korean child…I would have asked-no, demanded-to be called Nam."[12] This is an expression of Nam's nationalism and pride in his Korean heritage. This pride only manifests itself strongly when around other Koreans. Otherwise, Minami chooses to simply assimilate and go by a Japanese name. But if there were a Korean child in his class, Nam could not bear to leave him alone amongst the other Japanese children. Such an existence would be far too painful for the child. This develops a theme of comradery between him and the child because of their shared Korean heritage.

Indeed, as Nam later discovers, a child in his class named Haruo is actually the son of a Japanese man and a Korean woman. Although legally Japanese, via his father's racial status, the boy had been bullied by children in the past for his Korean ancestry and came to be a solitary figure. Nam senses some kinship with Haruo, even before he concretely discovers his heritage. Upon discovering his mixed heritage, he muses, “I imagined a young boy, of both mainland Japanese and Korean blood, and the tragic estrangement of those two diametrically opposed elements within him.”[13] Haruo, in fact, had been the most prejudiced of all the children. He regularly made jokes and derogatory comments about Koreans. And yet, he was only doing this to compensate for his Korean blood, to appear more Japanese. Essentially, Haruo could only choose to be Japanese or Korean, even though he was of mixed heritage. Because Koreans were disdained, he naturally sided with his father's lineage. As Nam comments, this decision tore at the young boy and gave him much anxiety because he still "seemed to have a soft spot for his mother after all."[14] In this case, his literal Korean mother and perhaps his Korean motherland too. Therefore, Nam encourages the boy to reconnect with his mother, even as his father abuses the woman regularly. Nam, feeling kinship with the boy, encourages him not to feel ashamed of his mother and national heritage.

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[12] Kim Sa-Ryang, "Into the Light," in *Into the Light: An Anthology of Literature by Korean in Japan*, 16.

Later, when Haruo’s mother is in the hospital after a particularly bad beating, Nam visits her to discuss Haruo. He recalls a small stint he once did in prison where he shared a cell with man named Hanbei. He realizes, before meeting with Haruo’s mother, that this man must be the boy’s father. This is because of their physical similarities but also because the man was violent, especially towards Koreans, and he even told Nam that he forcibly married a Korean woman by threatening to burn down the restaurant she worked at. Nam hopes that Haruo's mother hates Hanbei, the father, stating that "As a fellow Korean, I wanted to revel in her righteous indignation."[15] He was angry towards Hanbei not only for Haruo's sake, but also because of the shared pain he felt with the mother who was a fellow Korea. The mother asks Nam to stay away from her son because she fears he will interfere. She asserts, "'Haruo izz mainland Japanese…Haruo feels that way…he gets it from his father.'"[16] Nam, as a Korean, presents a threat to the homogenous Japanese identity Haruo has fashioned for himself. Although, as Nam knows, the boy was actually struggling to resolve the differences between his Japanese and Korean heritage. Haruo finally resolves this conflict by the end of the story when he finally calls Minami by his real Korean name, seemingly embracing his own Korean heritage. Nam also felt that "[his] feet so light they nearly fell out from under me" and express a sense of liberation from the boy's words.[17] As it turns out, Nam was also lonely and desired kinship with another Korean. Simply being called by his real name, in his native tongue, was a relief to the anxiety he also felt as a Korean living underneath the Japanese.

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[13] Ibid, 25.
[14] Ibid, 25.

This story carries the themes and experiences of what it was to be a Korean living under the Japanese empire. The pride they felt in their group, how one identified with their native language, and the loneliness of being forced between a Korean or Japanese identity were all things Koreans experienced at the time. While ostensibly a loyal Japanese subject, Nam is fiercely proud of his Korean heritage. After all, he would have demanded he be called by his Korean name if around a Korean child. He also feels an innate kinship with Haruo and takes the boy under his wing when he discovers his lineage. He did this out of concern for the boy's isolation amongst the Japanese as much as he did for his own desire to escape isolation too. Haruo himself is an expression of the binary choice those of mixed heritage faced at the time. Either be Japanese or Korean, there was no middle ground. Nam and Haruo responded to the pressures of the Japanese nation, its prejudice, and subjugation of Koreans by binding together more. Of course, Haruo was experiencing an identity crisis before he met Nam, but the teacher guided him back towards his heritage, towards identifying with his mother and Korea. In this way, the story demonstrates how Koreans in colonial Japan bound together more strongly as a nation, as a shared identity, to face the Japanese. They did this in response to the loneliness one feels amongst others of a different group when one cannot use their native language or real name. Their attempts to assimilate by hiding their names or heritage belied their true feeling of belonging to Korea. These feelings were only made stronger in the face of Japanese discrimination.

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[15] Ibid, 31.
[16] Ibid, 32.
[17] Ibid, 38.

Indeed, as Kim Sa-Ryang more directly writes in his 1940 non-fiction piece, "Koreans and Peninsulars," he is tired of Japan's hypocrisy towards Koreans. He writes, "I am of course technically an imperial subject of Japan…I am also a Chōsenjin. I do not feel inferior because of this, and on the contrary even feel rather proud."[18] On the surface,

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[18] Kim Sa-Ryang, "Letter to Mother and Colonial Koreans and Peninsulars," in *Zainichi Literature: Japanese Writings by Ethnic Koreans*, Translated with an introduction by Nayoung Aimee Kwon, Edited by John Lie (Institute of East Asian Studies Publications. 2018), 31.

Japan's multiethnic empire espoused egalitarian ideals of unity between all Asian peoples, but was actually a Japanese-centric empire that mistreated other ethnicities not 'purely' Japanese. In reference to an incident of discrimination, while he traveled on a ferry to Japan from Korea, Kim writes, "In these times…when the Naisen ittai slogan of Japan becoming one with Korea has become a political and ethical necessity, we most certainly want to put an end to this type of scenario altogether."[19] Naisen ittai (Japan and Korea as one) was Japan's slogan for unifying Japan and Korea into one political and national body. In this context, Koreans such as Kim were forced to subscribe to such an idea despite the continued discrimination from Japan. Others resisted and embraced Korean nationalism, even Kim, who ostensibly subscribed to the notion of Naisen ittai, still held onto his Korean identity fiercely. Interestingly, to avoid the danger of being alone against Western imperialism, Kim and others found solace in a pan-Asian identity under Japan. Yet, Kim also found comfort in his Korean identity in opposition to Japan. As Nam and Haruo did, Kim found safety with a group identity. To be alone, to feel lonely, was a dangerous thing on the stage of geopolitics and a personal level.

However, it is important to remember that Koreans, despite feeling unease under imperial Japan, still took advantage of it and held agency in their own decision-making. One story with such themes, written by Kim Tal-Su in 1942, "Trash," explores the fictional experiences of a Korean garbage collector in Japan. The trash collector, P'algil, decided to immigrate to Japan because "In his village, he might slave all day and only make a mere forty or fifty sen, but in Japan he could make twice that."[20]. Like P'algil in the story, Koreans made such decisions in real life, reflecting a certain amount of agency despite being forcibly incorporated into the empire as colonial subjects. Indeed, P'algil later endures the attack of a mob that recognizes his Korean accent. Following the attack, "for the first time, he was struck with a feeling of homesickness."[21] Again, this demonstrates how humans turn towards a group identity in dire circumstances. He felt lonely in the face of hostility from another group of hostile people, the Japanese. Loneliness precipitates and causes a desire to belong to a group of like individuals. For P'algil, this home was Korea and his home village. However, the stout trash collector carries on and eventually becomes decently successful. By the story's end, after narrowly avoiding a hostile takeover of his barge by a Japanese competitor, he is told by another Korean man in reference to the competitor, "'He says he won't ever come back here, so let's concentrate on working hard and returning home.'"[22] P'algil was never intent upon staying in Japan. His work in Japan as a trash collector was merely an avenue to earn more money and eventually return to Korea. While not as explicitly nationalistic as Kim Sa-Ryang's works, this story too demonstrates Korean nationalism. To Koreans living under the Japanese empire, Korea was still their home. They may have experienced bouts of loneliness while living in Japan, but there was always the comfort of returning to Korea.

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[19] Kim Sa-Ryang, "Letter to Mother and Colonial Koreans and Peninsulars," in *Zainichi Literature: Japanese Writings by Ethnic Koreans*, 33.

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[20] Kim Tal-Su, "Trash," in *Zainichi Literature: Japanese Writings by Ethnic Koreans,* Translated with an introduction by Christina Yi, Edited by John Lie (Institute of East Asian Studies Publications. 2018), 36.

[21] Kim Tal-Su, "Trash," in *Zainichi Literature: Japanese Writings by Ethnic Koreans*, 43.

[22] Ibid. 53.

Japan's multiethnic empire was not kind to its Korean subjects. Under the pressure of subjugation, discrimination, and the othering of their people, Koreans coalesced more firmly into a nation. Ironically, due to the hypocrisy within Japan's pan-Asian unity, Koreans were more alienated rather than united with the Japanese. They were made more aware of their national identity in opposition to the Japanese. Ultimately, this desire for a national identity originated in their feelings of loneliness and isolation. Individuals in stories such as Kim, Haruo, and P'algil came together and thought of homeland when confronted with the loneliness of being an undesirable in Japan. Korean authors reflected this loneliness in their stories and the tendency towards safety in one's national identity as a response to this isolation. This was the experience of Koreans in Japan as colonial subjects.

III

Postwar Nationalism

The Zainichi first came into being during the postwar years. Around 600,000 Koreans chose to stay in Japan for either pragmatic reasons or inability to return to Korea.[23] These Koreans quickly coalesced into a unique Zainichi identity. However, their self-conception was one of Korean nationals exiled from the homeland. The word

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[23] *Zainichi Literature: Japanese Writings by Ethnic Koreans*. Edited by John Lie, (Institute of East Asian Studies Publications. 2018), 24.

Zainichi itself roughly translates to "temporary resident" and only became popular by the 1960s.[24] Despite their strong conviction, the experiences and literature written by Zainichi during this period betray anxiety about the binary decision of living as Korean or Japanese. Intensely nationalistic, the first and second-generation Zainichi possessed living memories of Korea or the stories of their parents. They spoke Korean as a native language or learned it at special Korean-language schools in Japan. Their ultimate goal was the eventual end of their perceived exile in Japan. In the wake of the Japanese empire's collapse, a new nationalism led to Japan's self-conceived cultural and ethnic homogeneity. As John Lie says, "regional diversity and status hierarchy, dissipated substantially. The sense of belonging to the Japanese nation…became paramount."[25] Undergoing significant change from a traditional agrarian society to a modern urban society, the Japanese coalesced strongly together in cities through mass media technology such as radios, newspapers, and television. In this context, the Zainichi were viewed as interlopers who offended Japan's self-image of homogeneity. They were merely 'temporary residents,' and the Zainichi, othered by the Japanese, also came to believe this narrative. Indeed, the conflict between North and South Korea also affected the Zainichi community. Loyalties were split, and the North particularly espoused the narrative of Zainichi as Korean exiles abroad, even claiming them as citizens.[26] Empowering Zainichi nationalism was an abject sense of loneliness in their perceived temporary exile amongst the Japanese. It is their stories and feelings that I now turn to.

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[24] *Zainichi Literature: Japanese Writings by Ethnic Koreans*, 6.

[25] Lie, *Multi-Ethnic Japan*, 126.

[26] David Chapman. *Zainichi Korean Identity and Ethnicity*, 31.

One story that tackles the discrimination Zainichi faced in the postwar years, and their response to it, is “In the Shadow of Mount Fuji.” Written by Kim Tal-Su in 1951, the story centers around a Zainichi man and his Burakumin friend’s trip to visit the latter’s family. The author interestingly takes these two minority groups, both suffering discrimination from the Japanese, and compares their similar yet different experiences. Both groups, and individuals in the story, were othered by mainstream Japanese society. They both experienced loneliness in this othering and thus found some common ground. Indeed, Iwamura, the Burakumin friend, invited the main character and other Zainichi authors of literature to visit with his family due to their shared pain. As the protagonist muses, “the painful empathy between us…They were Japanese and we were Koreans, but the essence of it was the same. We had faced disdain and persecution and were kindred spirits!”[27] Regardless of their ethnic differences, they shared the loneliness of othering. However, the protagonist did not agree entirely with Iwamura's lifestyle, or at least, he acknowledged the cultural differences between the Zainichi Koreans and the Japanese Burakumin. Iwamura voluntarily joined the military in the Second World War and even tutored under a conservative Japanese author who essentially cut ties upon discovering his Burakumin identity. The protagonist empathizes with his friend’s actions but explains them as “the typical attempt by the oppressed to curry favor with the powerful in order to escape oppression and discrimination: the slave mentality of those who suffer oppression.”[28] Bluntly, the protagonist decries cooperating with the Japanese, the 'oppressor.' He implies that to attempt to cooperate or assimilate with the Japanese was useless because it meant shackling yourself to the perceived enemy rather than reaching true peace or understanding. Indeed, it is implied that, while understandable, the oppressed Zainichi and Burakumin should not even attempt to reach out to the Japanese. Here, nationalism rears its head. The Japanese were the oppressors, the enemy, and should not be parleyed with. Any attempt to do so, as Iwamura tried, was naïve. Instead, the implication is that one should resist and come closer together with their fellow Zainichi, Burakumin, and others oppressed by the Japanese.

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[27] Kim Tal-Su, “In the Shadow of Mount Fuji,” in *Into the Light: An Anthology of Literature by Korean in Japan,* Translated with an introduction by Sharalyn Orbaugh, Edited by Melissa L (Wender, University of Hawai’i Press. 2011), 54.

However, as the story continues, it becomes clear that Iwamura is not so sure of himself either. Iwamura introduced the protagonist to his wife and daughter earlier in the story. His wife was a normal Japanese woman, an individual not of Burakumin heritage. This marriage struck the protagonist as odd. Indeed Iwamura seemed unconfident around his wife as his stepmother essentially ignored him due to his status. He regained his confidence later when he met with his siblings and parents at his home village, but this was quickly lost when his younger brother brought up the issue of inheritance. Indeed, Iwamura was now 'outside' of the family and the Burakumin community for marrying a normal Japanese woman. Even as the eldest son, because he lived separately with his wife and stepmother, he could no longer inherit their parents' property. The protagonist mused to himself about Iwamura, "the thing that he considered of greater importance than inheriting the family headship was not at all something that I would ever consider of great importance."[29] It was not the loss of inheritance that stung Iwamura most, but rather the loneliness of no longer belonging to his family, to the Burakumin. In marrying a normal Japanese person, he chose to enter their 'normal' world and leave the world of his Burakumin family. The Zainichi protagonist did even worry about this thing belonging to his native people because he was quite nationalistic. As a Zainichi, he was still very much a Korean nationalist whose chance of intermarriage with a Japanese person was much lower than that of a Burakumin. He pitied his friend Iwamura who was now alone at both his homes, disdained by his stepmother and wife, and estranged from his family. Marrying into a normal Japanese woman's family and currying favor with his stepmother was implied to be the naïve 'slave mentality' of the oppressed.

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[28] Kim Tal-Su, “In the Shadow of Mount Fuji,” in *Into the Light: An Anthology of Literature by Korean in Japan*, 56.

After this awkward conversation about inheritance, Iwamura's sister asked for autographs from the protagonist and the other Zainichi men, originally introduced only as famous authors. Writing their names would reveal their identity as Zainichi. Still, they grimly wrote their true names, and instantly the family's formerly kind disposition towards them hardened. It was clear that Iwamura alone thought of the Zainichi as allies or comrades. Rather than sign his name, the protagonist cheekily wrote,"'Those who are always treated with contempt become contemptuous of others. But it is those who made it so who truly deserve contempt."[30] Despite their commonalities, Iwamura’s family shared the same disdain for Zainichi that their Japanese oppressors did. And yet, the protagonist blames the Japanese for this discrimination. Responding to the othering of himself, the Burakumin, and the Zainichi, he looks to the force ultimately responsible for it. It was Japanese nationalism that forcibly exiled the Burakumin and Zainichi from mainstream society. The Burakumin, in their loneliness, turn inwards and, as Iwamura experienced, become quite exclusive themselves. Through this comparison of Zainichi and Burakumin, the author implies that resistance is the right path. Both groups are exiled and seemingly alone in Japan and regrettably become exclusionary. Yet, they should avoid the 'slave mentality' of cooperation with the Japanese and remember that they all live in their shadow. They should remember that Mount Fuji’s, the Japanese’s, shadow is ultimately responsible for their dark isolation. Korean nationalism and resistance were the proper response to Japanese nationalism and prejudice.

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[29] Ibid, 61.

There are also stories and literature discussing earnest, but challenging, attempts to assimilate into Japanese society and the feelings of loneliness and chagrin Zainichi experienced. Rather than resist and cling further to their Korean identity, some Zainichi chose to assimilate or attempt to. In the semi-autobiographical piece "Foreign Husband," published in 1958, Noguchi Kakuchū, born Chang Hyŏk-Chu, writes about the experiences of a Korean man who married a Japanese woman. The story chronicles his struggle to fully assimilate into Japanese culture, gain acceptance from Japanese people, his inability to shed his Korean heritage, and the loneliness he experienced as someone not fully assimilated. The story opens with an argument between the protagonist and his wife, who seemingly has decided to leave him because he is a poor and failed author. During their argument, she brings up his Korean race. She blames his race's lack of cultural manners for various other incidents in the past, such as their inability to attend a family funeral. The protagonist becomes extremely angry that his wife would make such comments based on his race, knowing his past struggles with discrimination in Japan. When he calms down, he thinks, “I was left frustrated at the dregs of racial pride still remaining within me. Realizing this no matter how I flattered myself that I had become fully assimilated only compounded my fury.”[31] In his efforts to assimilate he married a Japanese woman, took a Japanese name, and authored literature in Japanese. And yet, even his wife still flung racial insults at him in times of anger. This, of course, angered him. However, more striking is his frustration with the fact that racial insults anger him. After all, if he was fully assimilated, he should not feel any offense at racial insults targeted toward Koreans. Here, at the beginning of the story, is the protagonist’s admission that he cannot entirely shed his Korean heritage. There was something innate to his identity as a Korean, something that remained even when he identified as Japanese. His wife leaves him after this argument, causing him to reflect on their life together up until that point.

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[30] Ibid. 64.

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[31] Kakuchū, Noguchi. “Foreign Husband,” in *Into the Light: An Anthology of Literature by Korean in Japan,* Translated with an introduction by Nayoung Aimee Kwon, Edited by Melissa L. Wender (University of Hawai’i Press. 2011), 69.

There were many bouts of conflict between the protagonist and his wife before the final argument. On one such occasion, he accompanied his wife to a Buddhist temple where worshippers sit with their legs folded under themselves in the traditional Japanese fashion. As someone who grew up in Korea, he decided it was too uncomfortable to sit in such a fashion and switched to a cross-legged position. After the worship, his wife berated him for sitting in a manner different from the traditional Japanese method stating, "'Customs are certainly frightening. No matter what, we'll always be different.'"[32] This greatly angered him. He thought to himself, "I felt my Koreanness boiling up from deep inside my belly. I asked myself if it was really a good thing for me to always give in."[33] The protagonist wanted, sincerely, to believe he was Japanese and fully assimilated. And yet, situations like this were common in their marriage. Something as simple as how a person sat while meditating marked him different from other Japanese. To hear his wife discard his attempts at assimilation as essentially futile was painful. It was painful because it left him alone and unsure of his identity. After all, he no longer believed himself to be Korean. And yet, even his own wife would not fully accept him as Japanese. Moreover, he could never escape the innate feeling of being Korean in these situations. He questioned himself and his lack of resistance to his wife's racial comments. But he always endured such remarks and attempted to look past them.

Later in their marriage, the protagonist is hounded by North Korean and South Korean supporters amongst the Zainichi. In the wake of the Korean War, the Zainichi community was split between loyalties to the North and South. Still, both were extremely hateful towards those Koreans they perceived as collaborators with the Japanese. The protagonist was targeted and harassed because he published extensively in Japanese and was married to a Japanese woman. However, to the protagonist, “Japan was language, and it was literature. After all this time I hadn’t an iota of desire to return to being Korean.”[34] The protagonist felt Japanese, or at the very least, he was no longer Korean. Japanese was his language. Of course, this did not mean he was a Japanese nationalist or a supporter of the old empire. Unfortunately for him, the binary world of nationalism condemned him and boxed him into an arbitrary category. A Zainichi was either fully Korean or was a collaborator with the Japanese. Here was the difficulty of the binary choice between being Korean or Japanese. The protagonist felt Japanese and had not lived as a Korean since he was a child. Yet, he also felt an innate ‘Koreanness’ when his wife or others insulted him based on race. There was no middle ground for him, and thus he felt conflicted between his innate feelings of race and his attachment to the Japanese language.

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[32] Noguchi Kakuchū, "Foreign Husband," in *Into the Light: An Anthology of Literature by Korean in Japan*, (University of Hawai'i Press. 2011), 79.
[33] Ibid, 79.

Sadly, he is literally alone by the story’s end. After his wife leaves him at the story's beginning, she eventually returns to decide more permanently what their future should be. Although they choose not to divorce, they decide to separate, and their children will go with her. After all, they only speak Japanese and were raised completely in their mother's tradition. His wife amicably separates from him, though she admits, "'It's impossible to become 100 percent assimilated, and even if it were…There are so many Japanese writers already, so what's the use in writing just like them?'"[35] He reflects on this comment; after all, perhaps it was a waste to discard his Korean identity for Japan when he could never truly become Japanese. Perhaps all that he had done was ruin what made himself and his literature unique. Still, he felt that his wife was always "the enemy in my own house, so to speak," so he gave in; "With cold eyes, I watched my wife and children leave."[36] Now he was truly alone, without a wife and family. He was neither accepted by the Japanese nor by the Zainichi Koreans. This story reflects the difficulty of assimilating into Japan, or rather, its impossibility. Individuals who attempted to do so were rejected by the Japanese and Zainichi. For the first generation, theirs was a binary choice, and most chose Korean nationalism over assimilation, which many viewed as traitorous. Those who did attempt to assimilate knew the pain of not really fitting into any group. It was a lonely existence.

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[34] Ibid, 86.

Other authors also wrote about this feeling of loneliness. Kim Hak-Yŏng's 1966 "Frozen Mouth" deals with the bodily experience of loneliness as Zainichi. The main character has a debilitating stutter that, compounded with his minority status as a Korean, makes communication with those around him extremely difficult. Thinking about his stutter, the protagonist explains, "To be unable to communicate your thoughts as they occur is to never be seen for who you really are by another human being…If this isn't heartbreaking, what is it?"[37] The stutter acts as an allegory for the Zainichi's inability to express themselves publicly. After all, should a Japanese person discover their real Korean name, they would immediately stereotype them. Instead, a Zainichi might use their public Japanese name and refrain from using any Korean. This is a lonely experience, though. The inability to communicate your own thoughts and express yourself to another person distances you from the other. The Zainichi had to keep their real selves hidden while in public. They were essentially isolated while in public, unable to communicate and interact with others as just themselves properly. As the story's protagonist comments, it is painful to be apart or separated from those around you. Just as the protagonist struggled to speak and connect with others through his frozen mouth, Zainichi struggled to express themselves through the mask they wore in public as respectable Japanese. Left alone, unable to connect with most of Japanese society, it is no wonder why many Zainichi turned inwards towards each other to cope.

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[35] Ibid, 90.
[36] Ibid, 91.

Written in 1978 by Yang Sŏgil, "In Shinjuku" explores the nighttime adventure of two Zainichi men in Japan's infamously seedy red-light district of Shinjuku. As the younger of the two, the protagonist is a second-generation Zainichi who never lived in Korea. He looks up to the somewhat older Han Sŏnghyŏng, a former communist organizer, as a mentor of sorts. Han remembers living in Korea and is a passionate Korean nationalist. The younger protagonist summarized his mentor's ideology as "We

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[37] Kim Hak-Yŏng, "Frozen Mouth," in *Into the Light: An Anthology of Literature by Korean in Japan*, Translated with an introduction by Elise Foxworth, Edited by Melissa L. Wender (University of Hawai'i Press. 2011), 102.

Zainichi…we had to band together as a group, each of us doing whatever he could," and only then could they build "'a golden castle with iron-clad walls.'"[38] Han's ideology epitomized Zainichi and Korean nationalism. Rather than attempt to assimilate or shamelessly hide oneself as a Japanese person, he advocates for a strong group identity. Here, we see the masculinity associated with nationalism. After all, it was 'whatever he could do' rather than 'whatever they could do' for the community. Han invokes the masculinity of brotherhood and coming together to resist the Japanese. As a response to their perceived enemy, the Japanese, Korean men had to come together and form a brotherly union. Only then could they build a 'fortress' capable of withstanding the assaults of their enemy. Indeed, later that night, Han demonstrates his open resistance to the Japanese. Following a bar fight between the two Zainichi men and some Japanese men, the police arrive and only take away Han and the protagonist. At the police station, they are blamed for the incident due to their race. Han quickly goes into a rant against Japanese imperialism, racism, and the oppression of his people. The protagonist recalls, "As Han Sŏnghyŏng spoke, he held his fist raised into the air, foam flying from the corners of his mouth. It was reminiscent of the fervid orations he'd once delivered as a former organizer."[39] Han is described here as a fervent madman. He is completely absorbed in the politics, race issues, and nationalism of the Zainichi versus the Japanese.

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[38] Yang Sŏgil, "In Shinjuku," in *Zainichi Literature: Japanese Writings by Ethnic Koreans*, Translated with an introduction by Samuel Perry, Edited by John Lie (Institute of East Asian Studies Publications. 2018), 58-59.

[39] Yang Sŏgil, "In Shinjuku," in *Zainichi Literature: Japanese Writings by Ethnic Koreans*, 65.

His portrayal is not a kind one. While he respects Han, the protagonist sees him as feverish and completely obsessed with politics. While the police are forced to listen to Han's long rant, it does little to stop them from locking the two men for a night in jail. Resisting the Japanese, becoming so obsessed with politics and race, is here depicted in a negative light. It is depicted as a masculine and nationalistic struggle completely self-obsessed. While seemingly radical, this was many Zainichi's response to discrimination from the Japanese. After all, to a Zainichi man, it was an attractive ideology and central to their identity. A brave resistance against evil oppressors with a brotherhood of men was a popular narrative. It was a militant answer to the loneliness they experienced.

There were other, less militant tendencies towards nationalism within Zainichi literature and the community. One of the first popular female Zainichi authors, Chong Ch'u-Wŏl, wrote the short essay "The Korean Women I Love" in 1974 and published various poems later. In this short essay, she expresses a paradoxical acceptance and separation from Japan couched in motherhood. Rather than focusing on the self, she extolls motherhood and the connection it allows a woman to establish with previous generations of Korean mothers who also loved their children. Also, she does not achieve this solidarity with her ancestors by emphasizing her separation from Japan; instead, "precisely because this is Japan, I am aware of the path of Korean womanhood I have been able to follow, the maternal love, as an unrivaled Korean woman."[40] Opposite of the masculine nationalism of male authors and their characters, Chong expresses Zainichi nationalism in a positive light. After all, it is not in spite of Japan that she comes to this solidarity of maternal love but rather because of Japan that she realizes it. The separation between her as a Zainichi and mainstream Japanese society makes her feel more strongly like a Zainichi Korean mother. Rather than respond to her loneliness with militant and masculine nationalism, she makes a maternal plea that emphasizes differences in a positive light. Indeed, as she writes in a poem,

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[40] Chong Ch'u-Wŏl, "The Korean Women I Love," in *Into the Light: An Anthology of Literature by Korean in Japan*, Translated with an introduction by Melissa L. Wender, Edited by Melissa L. Wender (University of Hawai'i Press. 2011), 114.

> I possess no difference that should be preserved
> in the form of my movements my Japanese my hometown speech
> just being isn't enough to make it a proud difference.[41]

Here she comments on the masculine nationalism expected of Zainichi that she does not adhere to. Zainichi Korean men emphasize the differences and separation between themselves and the Japanese. Chong instead says here that there really is no significant difference between her language and physicality compared to a Japanese person. Indeed, it is not a 'proud difference.' Zainichi men might take pride in their differences and then bond together more closely, but Chong instead emphasizes the lack of differences or at least their insignificance of them. Even as second-generation Zainichi grew to have their own children, as Chong did, the men continued to insist upon their innate differences from the Japanese. Here, Chong represents the beginning of a shift in the minds of Zainichi. Rather than focusing on their differences with the Japanese, perhaps they could focus on the similarities. Perhaps the Zainichi can find a place to belong together with the Japanese rather than apart from them.

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[41] Chong Ch'u-Wŏl, "The Korean Women I Love," in *Into the Light: An Anthology of Literature by Korean in Japan*, 130.

The postwar period was a turbulent time for the Zainichi. Indeed, they began the period primarily as exiles from their Korean homeland. Zainichi were ostracized by the Japanese and felt the loneliness of living in a country where most people viewed them as foreign interlopers, further enhancing the narrative of exile by separating them from mainstream Japanese society. Their literature expressed this feeling of ostracization. Just as their ancestors felt under Imperial Japan, they were not accepted into Japanese society and were looked down on as inferior. The difference now was the Zainichi's relative inability to return to Korea. As John Lie points out, the political turmoil in Korea in the immediate postwar years, and the eventual Korean War, slowed repatriation efforts and convinced some to remain in Japan where economic opportunities were much better.[42] They lost their 'homeland.' So, as a response to their loneliness and exile, they fashioned a homeland for themselves. Nationalism grew amongst the community, especially amongst the men, and was a natural response to the pressure they felt from living in Japan. Some attempted to assimilate, only to meet with disdain from both Zainichi and Japanese. In their loneliness, the inability to be themselves in public, some openly resisted the Japanese and proudly trumpeted their Korean identity. Others, especially women, began to feel a closeness to Japan that emphasized similarities rather than differences. This postwar period was marked by nationalism and the difficult binary choice of being other Korean or Japanese with no middle ground. From the literature is a clear expression of Korean nationalism as a response to the loneliness forced onto them. Although not always comfortable with it, Zainichi felt forced to come together for safety, prosperity, and defense against the Japanese. Deprived of a place to belong to, they built their own castle to sojourn in until their apparently inevitable return from exile.

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[42] John Lie. *Multi-Ethnic Japan*, 107.

IV

Assimilation and Hybridity

By the 1980s, things were changing for the Zainichi. By this point, second and third-generation Zainichi were born in Japan and lived their entire lives there. While many still retained fluency in Korean, it took on localized dialects, and Japanese became ever more common as a native language. The third generation lacked the physical, cultural, or linguistic connections to Korea that their parents and especially grandparents retained. Physically, many never had the experience of even visiting Korea, their theoretical homeland. Culturally, they were largely indistinguishable from the Japanese. Due to changes in the law, they began choosing to become naturalized Japanese citizens, and intermarriage rates continued to rise. This trend continues until the present, when the Zainichi are naturalizing at a rate of around 10,000 per year.[43] For some, this was a betrayal of the Korean nationalism so prevalent amongst the first generation. Replacing the discourse of nationalism versus assimilation was also a 'third way,' an acceptance of a unique Zainichi identity that is neither purely Japanese nor Korean but also advocates for citizenship. For the second, third, and now fourth generation Japan is a permanent home, and exile is no longer a concern for the community. Thus, the Zainichi stand at a crossroads between assimilation and hybridity. The literature of this period, until the present, departs from the nationalistic rhetoric of exile that previous generations wrote about. Of course, there is still much trepidation over language, identity, and home, but there is now more acceptance or acknowledgment of Japan as their culture and home. Though, as previous generations also experienced, this places the Zainichi in a difficult spot where one is not quite Korean enough to be proper Zainichi nor Japanese enough to be considered normal. They contend with the complicated feelings of having assimilated, for the most part, into Japanese society while struggling with discrimination from the Japanese and the expectations of their elders. Ironically, the Zainichi responded to their loneliness by bonding closer together into a group identity based on nationalistic pride. But this response only furthered their loneliness and confusion as the reality of hybridity, or of feeling more Japanese than Korean, stung them.

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[43] Chapman. *Zainichi Korean Identity and Ethnicity*, 131.

Published in 1989, Yi Yang-Ji's "Koku" follows the one-day experience of a young Zainichi woman studying Korean language and music in South Korea. The short story deals with the uncomfortable expectations imposed on a culturally Japanese person who does not adhere to the nationalism and politics of Korea versus Japan. The narrative opens with the protagonist sitting in her room. It is full of books, instruments, and motivational posters geared toward learning Korean. However, throughout the narrative, she expresses a longing for Japan and an affinity for Japanese language rather than Korean. While writing a letter to her sensei (teacher) in Japan, she says, "One of the posters in the hall at school says, "Dream in Korean!" To tell you the truth, I don't. I still dream in Japanese."[44] Japanese is her native tongue. It is the language through which she thinks, communicates, and even dreams. Despite being of Korean descent, she does not feel some innate connection to her Korean heredity. Instead, she feels an innate connection to Japanese. After all, she cannot help but dream in Japanese rather than the Korean she is studying. She is studying Korean, not exactly because she wishes to reconnect with her heritage, but because it is the nationalist and political narrative forced onto her by her Zainichi parents. Near the end of the story, she flips through the pages of a book titled *Korean Ethics* and reads, "Soviet Union-instigator-North Korea-gunpowder magazine-fervent devotion to the nation-national consciousness-pride."[45] She tosses the book aside rather than continue reading it. Strongly, she rejects the nationalist rhetoric of war and devotion to a Zainichi national consciousness. Also, she seemingly rejects the pride inherent in this nationalism. That is, the pride of 'Koreanness,' pride in language, culture, and race. Instead, she misses "the soft, moist Japanese air" and longs for the place that she feels is her actual home.[46] Rather than feeling some revitalization or connection with learning Korean, she feels alienated by it. She embraces her identity as a Japanese person, perhaps one with Korean heritage, but ultimately she is someone who speaks Japanese, dreams Japanese, and thinks of Japan as home. This story demonstrates the anxiety Zainichi still felt about their identity. Korean nationalism, rather than providing a safe-haven for Zainichi became restraining by forcing them into a strict Korean identity. Now that they considered Japan as home, they found isolation rather than comfort in an identity forced onto them. Older generations attempted to force a binary nationalistic narrative onto them, but, as the story's protagonist demonstrates, there was more open acknowledgment of their feeling of belonging to Japan.

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[44] Yi Yang-Ji, "Koku," in *Into the Light: An Anthology of Literature by Korean in Japan*, Translated with an introduction by Ann Sherif, Edited by Melissa L. Wender (University of Hawai'i Press. 2011), 138.

[45] Yi Yang-Ji, "Koku," in *Into the Light: An Anthology of Literature by Korean in Japan*, 140.

[46] Ibid, 138.

Published in 1991, *Eternal Traveler* is a collection of poems written by Zainichi author Lee Jungja. The poems often express the anxiety of Zainichi hybrid identity suppressed by Korean and Japanese nationalistic rhetoric. It is also important to note that the author, as a woman, often wrote her poems from the perspective of a Zainichi woman caught up in nationalistic politics that are identified as mostly masculine. Zainichi, despite feeling distinctly Japanese and Korean, are discredited or disowned by both groups. Thus, they are left alone with no real home or concrete identity. The poem "Between the Tides" expresses this feeling of being stuck between Japan and Korea.

homeland lies on
the other end of the sea
although birds may fly free
back and forth
homeland is divided into two
unable to root myself
in the embrace of a
korean man

the body is pulled under
into an eddy of colliding currents
japan, the country
unable to fully love
i bind myself
to you of that country
with dried tears[47]

This poem expresses the feeling of division that Zainichi felt between Korea and Japan. It is a distance likened to the sea. It is a distance that cannot be bridged because the Zainichi, unlike birds, are not free to do so. Instead, they live a divided life with a divided identity. From the perspective of the poem's narrator, their homeland was divided in two. On one hand, as a woman, the narrator attempts to ground herself to Korea via marriage to a Zainichi Korean man. But this fails and instead the narrator only feels dragged down into a conflict between the different currents of Japan and Korea. Then, the narrator describes Japan as a country unable to lover her and the Zainichi. Despite this, she is bound to Japan via her marriage to a Zainichi man who is 'of that country.' In doing so, the narrator emphasizes the Japanese origin and identity of the Zainichi despite their apparent attachment to Korea. The poem ends with the narrator's tears, displaying a final sad emotion of loneliness, of being caught between Japan and Korea. This poem demonstrates the struggle that Zainichi felt towards their identity. As expressed, the question of whether they were Japanese or Korean plagued them. This poem especially deals with the plight of Zainichi women who struggled to find an anchor for their identity in Korea or Japan. Marriage to a Zainichi man was not enough to attach them to a Korean identity as, after all, the man was also of Japan. Japan, and the Japanese, were unwilling to love and accept Zainichi and so they could not anchor themselves there either. Zainichi were left adrift without a homeland to strongly attach their identity to.

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[47] Lee Jungja, "Selected Poems from *Eternal Traveler*," in *Zainichi Literature: Japanese Writings by Ethnic Koreans*, Translated with an introduction by Haeng-ja Chung, Edited by John Lie (Institute of East Asian Studies Publications. 2018), 70.

Another poem titled "Proof of Humans" explores the loneliness of being trapped between nations and identities.

> the sounds of the bones of a person
> who cannot return
> to the homeland
> the loneliness of the bones and
> the solitude of the person…
> the japanese winds sink deep into my bones
> sitting straight with my legs bent
> and listening to
> "the patriotic song"
> i noticed my tears were dropping onto my knees[48]

Zainichi, despite being raised in a nationalistic community, could not really return to Korea as a home. After all, Japan was their home now; it was imprinted deep into their identity. The poem expresses this feeling of belonging to Japan when it references 'the bones of a person' who cannot return home and the loneliness they feel. They are lonely because Zainichi cannot return to a place they do not consider home, yet their parents or grandparents fervently teach them to believe in that far-off homeland. They may call Korea the 'homeland' and they may listen along to patriotic Korean songs but their essence, their 'bones,' are Japanese . The nationalistic Korean identity taught by their parents, betrays their innate 'Japaneseness.' Thus, they are stuck between the identity their elders have forced onto them, that of Korean nationalism, and their feelings of belonging to Japan. Even listening to the 'patriotic song' or national anthem of South Korea did not elicit joy or pride in this poem. Rather, the poem expresses the anxiety, anguish, and loneliness the Zainichi felt as an existence between Korea and Japan. They were not allowed to embrace Japan fully and not able to embrace Korea fully.

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[48] Lee Jungja, "Selected Poems from *Eternal Traveler*," in *Zainichi Literature: Japanese Writings by Ethnic Koreans*, 88.

Another poem titled "Gentle Laws" deals more with the discriminatory laws of Japan and how they isolate Zainichi.

the people are sick
this country is unaware of the sickness
the light of spring fills
and flowers bloom
homeland illusion
at any day
i am a wanderer
even though the yellow of forsythia
sways the fields
opening my arms

i dream of
the gentle laws
that conceive of people
as people

This poem reflects the author's feeling of isolation as a Zainichi in Japan. The narrator starts the poem by describing Japan as sick and stating that the country, and presumably the people in it, are unaware of the sickness. This sickness is, of course, the prejudiced laws and unfair treatment of Zainichi Koreans. As the narrator goes on to describe, there is an illusion of Japan as home for the Koreans when, in reality, they are considered foreign 'at any day.' This reflects the widespread view of Japanese people that Zainichi Koreans are foreigners and Japan is not their home. And, as the narrator goes on to say, it reflects the codified laws that designate Zainichi Koreans as non-citizens despite their generational history of living in Japan. The narrator, and by extension author, ends the poem with a call towards treating the Zainichi not as foreigner or non-foreign but simply as humans. Seemingly, the author is calling for an escape from the conflict of national identity politics they were subject to and participants of.

These poems reflect the anxiety surrounding the future of the Zainichi community by the 1990s. If one naturalized and became a full-Japanese citizen, was this a betrayal of the Korean nation? Were they throwing away their identity and heritage? Zainichi were, in reality, more complicated than a binary national identity. As these poems express, anxiety and loneliness resulted from this binary identity forced a more complicated reality. As a response to loneliness, nationalism in its essentialist form only further alienated Zainichi who were just as deprived of their home and identity as the first generation was. The national identity that was supposed to endow comfort and community upon them only isolated them as it contradicted and fought with the reality of hybrid identity.

Over forty years after “Into the Light” was published, the short story "Lee Kun’s Blues” was released in 1987. The story, written by Won Soo-Il, purposely emulated "Into the Light" with a modern setting. Both contain a Korean schoolteacher who utilizes a Japanese name during their work. Just as the 1939 story explored, "Lee Kun’s Blues” explores hybrid identity, nationalism, and the loneliness of being a Korean in Japan. The protagonist is introduced as Mr. Yoshimoto. When becoming a teacher, he originally "thought that he would teach under his given name, Lee. Bus despite the legacy left behind by the pioneers that built this town, it was still a foreign land."[49] Mr. Yoshimoto is revealed to be a Zainichi, his real name, Lee, is hidden in favor of a Japanese name. Tellingly, he thought he might be able to use his Korean name in the modern period, but the town he teaches in still considers him foreign. The Japanese still consider him a foreigner despite the implied work his Korean ancestors did to build the town and, no doubt, the fact he spent his entire life in Japan. Unlike Nam in "Into the Light," Lee is less hesitant to use his Japanese name, reflecting a lifetime in Japan and his Zainichi background. The name is not so unnatural to him, but he still feels it is unacceptable for his name, and thus himself, to be considered foreign. The difference between him and

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[49] Won Soo-Il, “Lee-Kun’s Blues,” in *Zainichi Literature: Japanese Writings by Ethnic Koreans*, Translated with an introduction by Nathaniel Heneghan, Edited by John Lie (Institute of East Asian Studies Publications. 2018), 124.

Nam is the history he and the Zainichi Koreans have in Japan. After over forty years of living in Japan, the Zainichi naturally speak Japanese and feel an innate bond to the country, considering it as home. In contrast, Nam lived in an imperial context under which his home was still Korea.

Lee encounters racism and prejudice in his classroom, just as Nam did. Like Nam, Lee recognized a child in his class, Kinoshita Masaumi, as a Zainichi Korean. His mother's accent was immediately recognizable as from Cheju, a Korean island. Like Haruo, Masaumi was bullied extensively for his racial status as a Zainichi. On one such occasion, Lee attempted to explain to the bullies that all races were equal and none were inferior. A student simply replied, "'My dad says that the Japanese Yamato race is the best, '" to which Lee "felt the ghost of Japanese imperialism pass through him."[50] Lee was shocked. Even forty years after the end of the Japanese Empire, racial attitudes of superiority were still strong. He attempted to protect Masaumi but was instead embarrassed and flabbergasted by his student's candid racial attitude. Masaumi, who came to Lee's class after being bullied out of his previous one, was now alone and depressed. His classmates made racist jokes at his expense and, even when scolded by the teacher, openly flaunted their and their parent's superiority. Still, Lee kept his Zainichi identity hidden even as the boy suffered.

One night, the young boy ran away from home, and Lee tracked him down with his mother's assistance. Upon finding him, of course, Masaumi's mother yelled at him for running away into the night and scolded him for performing poorly in school. The boy replied with weak answers as to why he did not want to return to school, all avoiding the real problem of racial bullying. Then, in a resolute statement, he says, "'You can yell at me all you want. I'm gonna go to a place that's not Korea or Japan."[51] In a way, Masaumi was not talking about a physical place but rather a state of being. Constantly bullied for his Korean heritage, despite his Japanese name and fluency in Japanese as his native tongue, he desires to be something else. He desires to be someone not quite Japanese and not quite Korean. Indeed, as Lee recognized in the boy's mother, her accent was a localized Korean dialect. It was specific to a certain city district in Japan whose Zainichi inhabitants originated from the island of Cheju. His mother was already someone not exactly Korean or Japanese. The boy, of course, did not recognize this as he was stuck between the expectations of being Korean forced onto him by Zainichi identity and Japanese nationalism. Yet, his determination to choose neither Japan nor Korea demonstrates the feeling of loneliness, of not belonging to either one and also the desperation borne from this loneliness. This desperation to find something else, something outside of the binary nationalism of the past decades, was something the Zainichi community struggled with more as successive generations were born.

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[50] Won Soo-Il, "Lee-Kun's Blues," in *Zainichi Literature: Japanese Writings by Ethnic Koreans*, 132.

Masaumi's mother informs him that Lee is actually a Zainichi Korean, too, to the boy's surprise. Lee parts with Masaumi and his mother for the night with the reassurance that he will watch over him at school. The boy, seemingly attached to him as a father figure, accepts this. In response, "Lee-kun felt something hot in the core of his body. His care, having been idling for so long, appeared to rally…The headlights suddenly grew brighter, illuminating Masaumi's body to reveal a faint smile on his face."[52] Lee feels a kinship with the child, and indeed something innate within him enjoys this simple relationship. He, too, had doubts about hiding his Korean name and his inability to protect Masaumi by failing to harshly scold his other student's racism, but with the boy's smile he regained confidence. This moment between the two characters demonstrates a human desire for kinship and group identity. Masaumi was a Zainichi like him, and he would protect and guide him. Lee could face the other Japanese children in his class with a bit more confidence in the knowledge that he and Masaumi shared the special bond of identity. This short story, heavily inspired by its 1939 predecessor, demonstrates that the imperial attitudes of racial superiority were still very strong in the 1980s. Lee and Masaumi confronted many of the same issues that Nam and Haruo did. But the main difference was Masaumi's desire for a place, for an identity, beyond Korea or Japan. This desire, derived from the loneliness Zainichi were still experiencing as outcasts, was amplified as they now felt, often, quite Japanese. It represented the Zainichi 'third way' of acknowledging their Korean heritage while petitioning for Japanese citizenship and the right to participate in a society free of discrimination. Essentially, recognition of their hybrid identity. In a way, this desire for and acknowledgment of hybridity was the solution to the loneliness Zainichi now felt as Japanese people of Korean descent. In 1939, Koreans could more easily return to the homeland. But for the Zainichi in 1989,

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[51] Ibid, 136.

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[52] Ibid, 137.

Japan was home. Continued discrimination from the Japanese and Korean nationalism from older Zainichi isolated individuals. As much as Korean nationalism offered comfort to Zainichi via safety in a group identity, it also isolated them.

However, there was still fear that this ‘third way’ and naturalization would annihilate Zainichi Korean heritage and replace it with a complete Japanese one. Indeed, Yū Miri's 1997 "Full House" demonstrates that the Zainichi were very much assimilated into Japanese society. The story is about a young Korean woman and her father's obsession with putting their separated family back together. He wants a 'full house' again with the woman's mother, sister, and himself living together again. To this end, he buys a large house with loans and attempts to entice his daughters to live with him. The story lacks the same nationalistic themes or feelings of loneliness that previous works of Zainichi authors contained. Instead, it is the lack of these themes that previously so characterized the Zainichi experience in Japan that implies the extent to which some Zainichi became assimilated into Japanese society. Still, the author drops small details hinting at the character's Zainichi origins. The protagonist mentions that her father "managed a chain of pachinko parlors at more than ten locations.”[53] This refers to the stereotype that Zainichi ran pachinko parlors (a form of gambling) in rundown criminal districts. This small detail is brushed over and the story continues. The matter-of-factness with which this was stated reveals that this story is not about Zainichi necessarily. Rather, it is a story about a dysfunctional family living in Japan who just so happens to be

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[53] Yū Miri, “Full House,” in *Into the Light: An Anthology of Literature by Korean in Japan*, Translated with an introduction by Melissa L. Wender, Edited by Melissa L. Wender (University of Hawai’i Press. 2011), 176.

Zainichi. But this fact has little bearing on the story and is not the focus. Instead, the story pivots to the father's attempts to invite his wife and daughters to the new house. After failing to convince the protagonist’s mother or sister to live with him in the house, he suddenly invites a homeless family into the home. The protagonist lacks the bravery to broach the subject with her father, nor would she ask him the question her sister posed "‘Are you going to let them stay here indefinitely?’"[54] In his fervent desire for a whole family again, the father vicariously lived through the homeless family he brought into the house. They filled the void left by his own family's absence. Thus, the story has more to do with a father's delusional but understandable attempts to rebuild his family than it does with Zainichi identity.

These stories and pieces of literature, written up until the new millennium, represent a shift in Zainichi identity. While still struggling with the specter of nationalism in their lives, third and fourth-generation Zainichi were far more assimilated into Japanese society than their forebears. Japanese was their native language, and they viewed Japan as their home. They could not really sympathize with the nationalist rhetoric of Korean exile. Instead, they acknowledged the messy and hybrid identities of reality. The Zainichi were of Korean descent. Many possessed Korean names and spoke new dialects unique to Japan. Yet, they were inescapably Japanese too. By the new millennium, the literature reflects this shift. And while Zainichi literature may still draw on experiences of prejudice and othering, it has left behind the adherence to binary nationalism of the colonial and postwar periods. Instead, expressed in these stories was a desire to belong to a hybrid identity. Ironically enough, nationalism, as a response to the loneliness felt by Zainichi came to inspire loneliness too. In its essentialist and binary understanding of national identity, it othered younger Zainichi from their very real feelings of belonging to Japan, of being Japanese. It demanded that one be completely Korean or Japanese in spite of heavy assimilation and growing sense of hybridity.

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[54] Yū Miri, “Full House,” in *Into the Light: An Anthology of Literature by Korean in Japan*, 216.

V

Conclusion

The Zainichi Koreans stand now at a crossroads, with a long history of nationalism behind them. Under the Japanese Empire, Korean nationalism was awakened and indeed strengthened in the face of hypocritical policies of multi-ethnic unification. The postwar period resulted in a wave of radical nationalism when Koreans living in Japan created for themselves an intensely close-knit identity as a response to Japanese prejudices against them. Then, by the new millennium, Zainichi were still living under the influence of their parents' and grandparents' nationalism, but they also denied it. This nationalism, such an important characteristic of the Zainichi, was a response to their loneliness. Throughout the literature, when faced with the hostile actions of the Japanese, Zainichi bound together more strongly. Without acceptance and without assimilation, they did this to survive as a group. However, as laws have changed and the Zainichi naturalize more every year, what reason is there to stay exclusively Korean? Indeed, with the popularity of Korean Dramas and Korean Pop Music in Japan, there is a new wave of pro-Korean sentiment in modern Japan. With this acceptance from Japan comes the realization that Zainichi are more Japanese than they are Korean. It now seems that most Zainichi are choosing the 'third way' or perhaps a 'fourth way’ of hybridity. That is, acknowledging their complicated identity as Japanese-Korean or Korean-Japanese and attaining citizenship. Finally, generally speaking, accepted by their society, they may now fully accept their Japanese identity too.

Still, there is an anxiety over naturalizing to become a Japanese citizen and losing their Korean heritage. Just as the protagonist of “Foreign Husband” felt, many Zainichi fear the total loss of their Korean identity. It seems likely that whatever choice a Zainichi individual makes today, hybrid or not, their identity is already primarily Japanese. Japan is their home, their parents’ home, and their grandparents’ home. Japanese is their language, the food they eat is Japanese, and the people they associate with are also, mainly, Japanese. Perhaps then, Zainichi might become 'fully' Japanese via natural assimilation. Or they might endeavor to preserve their Korean identity too. Regardless, as we are learning in this still-young century, humans are willing to bound together in the face of crises. Especially if that crisis, that threat, is another group of people. Even if the reality of diversity, hybridity, or multiculturalism exists, humans will bound together. It is our inevitable response to loneliness and, by virtue of forging a strong group identity, attempts to minimize differences between individuals. This is the irony of national identity. In attempting to answer the feeling of loneliness, humans bond together in a strong group identity. In order to feel strongly alike, to feel together, differences between individuals in a group are then minimized. The more whole, alike, and united the group is then the stronger it will be to face whatever external threat forced it to coalesce together. However, in doing so, national identity isolates the individual. It minimizes all the little details that make up an individual. Those little details, as with the Zainichi today, reveal the complicated reality that makes up a person. A Zainichi cannot be, completely, a Korean or Japanese person. They have, in reality, a hybrid existence. This is not to say that they cannot lean towards one national identity or the other. Rather, nationalist discourses can acknowledge differences and uniqueness between people as a source of unity. But national identity, when essentialist, most often attempts to erase the individual. In doing so, ironically, individuals find themselves isolated, unable to express who they really are, complicated reality and all. What is isolation if not the inability to communicate or express oneself to others? Thus, national identity, while a response to loneliness, can also essentialize identity, minimize the individual and then isolate them for the purposes of uniformity. The Zainichi, like other minority groups in Japan, have long struggled with the issue of an essentialized identity. It is important to remember that just as nations, cultures, and groups can feel a collective loneliness that the individual too is left lonely in the struggle for group identity.

CHAPTER III

OKINAWANS: BACKWARD ISLANDS OR TRADITIONAL ISLANDER CULTURE

I

Introduction

In this chapter, I will explore how Okinawan identity has evolved over time from Okinawa’s becoming a Japanese prefecture in 1879 until the present. Having lived under Chinese, Japanese, and American influence at different times, Okinawans faced pressures from various outside forces. Whether it was Japanese pressure to eradicate native language and dress in favor of a ‘modern’ Japanese look or the American seizure of land for base construction, Okinawans had to navigate a complex modern world in which they never had political independence. Despite living in their own homeland, they felt the cultural shame of being the 'other', especially when compared to mainland Japanese people. Their literature contains feelings of loneliness resulting from their cultural alienation. Their response to that loneliness is their desire to belong to a shared group identity. Whether that group was Okinawan, Ryukyuan, or Japanese has shifted over time and remains contested today. There is no clearly constant national identity for Okinawans. Instead, even as their identity shifted over time, what remained constant was their adherence to the human desire for solidarity and identification with a group.

Okinawa is a subtropical set of islands comprising much of the Ryukyuan Island Chain that lies south of the Japanese island of Kyushu and curves towards Taiwan. It is on these islands that the Okinawan people have lived for thousands of years. They first heavily appear in the historical record as a newly united kingdom in the 15th century. This Ryukyu Kingdom remained extant for the next 400 years. During this time, the islands became a significant trading partner with Ming China as part of its tributary system. Chinese Confucianism, language, and even small numbers of immigrants flourished on the islands. The kingdom’s independence ended in 1609 when the Shimazu Clan of Japan invaded and subjugated the island kingdom. The kingdom became a puppet of the Shimazu, but it still retained tributary status with China too, and a high degree of autonomy. This changed following the Meiji Restoration in 1868. The new Japanese government forcefully transformed it into a Han, or province, until 1879 when it finally became Okinawa Prefecture.[55] This ended in 1945 with the U.S. invasion and the end of the Second World War. Okinawa was occupied by the United States and was subject to a heavy military presence in the context of the Cold War. In 1972 Okinawa was given back to Japan and once again became Okinawa Prefecture. Today, it is famous as Japan's subtropical island paradise. A prefecture for vacations, exotic foods, and sunny beaches.

George H. Kerr summarizes Okinawan history as "essentially the story of a minor kingdom with few resources, and of an unwarlike people, forever seeking balance between powerful neighbor states."[56] While this description is not entirely false, it does contain some inaccurate premises. It is incorrect to assume that the Okinawan people are 'unwarlike' simply because they have not declared or fought major wars or rebellions in the modern era. Kerr assumes that because of their naturally "pliable and easygoing nature" Okinawans easily adapted to foreign subjugation or influence.[57] He does not seem to realize that perhaps it was Okinawa's domination by foreign powers that gives its people the appearance of being adaptable pacifists rather than their being pacifists that allows for their subjugation so easily. Working in the postwar context of 1958, Kerr attempted to explain how Okinawans adapted, apparently, so well to outside influence first by the Chinese, Japanese, and then the Americans.

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[55] Steve Rabson. The Okinawan Diaspora in Japan: Crossing the Borders Within, 25.
[56] George H. Kerr. Okinawa: The History of an Island People. Afterword by Mitsugu Sakihara. (Tuttle Publishing, 2000), 15.
[57] Kerr, Okinawa: The History of an Island People, 15.

While Kerr's book was the first monograph in English to cover Okinawan history to a wide extent, his history reflects the narrative of Okinawa as a sub-tropical paradise inhabited by peaceful people. Only by the early 2000s did the historiography turn towards different perspectives on how or why Okinawans seemingly adapted to their Japanese or American rulers. Naoki Sakai explains that it was the Japanese Empire's ideology of unity under the state, that allowed Okinawans to preserve some local identity while subsuming themselves to a larger Japanese identity under a government symbolically headed by the emperor.[58] One could be an Okinawan and, more importantly, still hold ultimate loyalty to the emperor as a Japanese subject. However, this did not mean Okinawans were equal to their Japanese overlords.

Indeed, as Kate Barclay argues, they were placed in a modern hierarchy of ‘civilized’ and ‘primitive’ like most peoples across the world were during the Age of Imperialism. In this hierarchy, Okinawans always ranked below the mainland Japanese in terms of civilizational or technological advancement, and, in some ways, this stereotype continues today.[59] Yet, Okinawa was an actual prefecture of Japan and technically belonged to the designated home islands of Japan. Considered the most exotic and backwater prefecture of the empire, Okinawa was neither a colony nor a proper home island. It occupied an ambiguous space and its people were thus ambiguously considered beneath mainland Japanese but above colonial peoples such as Koreans or Chinese. Davinder Bhowmik continues the trend of analyzing Okinawan identity and its ambiguities. She asserts that Okinawan literature and, by extension, Okinawan identity defy simple definition.[60] Okinawan literature does not simply adhere to nationalistic rhetoric by stirring up pro-Okinawan sentiment and anti-Japanese sentiment. In a more complex manner, various Okinawan authors through the decades have expressed resistance to and support of identifying with a larger Japanese identity. In a departure from Kerr, Bhowmik views them as a group made up of complex individuals with agency in their decision-making. Essentially, recent scholarship believes it is a mistake to mark Okinawan identity as a binary anti-Japanese or pro-Japanese. Instead, they believe it is more useful to recognize that Okinawan national identity was historically always changing due to internal desires and outside pressures that were themselves often influencing each other. Building on recent scholarship, I especially intend to explore how the specific internal desire to belong to a group identity remained constant even as pressures on Okinawan identity changed over time.

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[58] Naoki Sakai. “Subject and Substratum : On Japanese Imperial Nationalism.” *Cultural Studies* 14, no. 3/4 (July 2000): 506. doi:10.1080/09502380050130428.

[59] Kate Barclay. “Between Modernity and Primitivity: Okinawan Identity in Relation to Japan and the South Pacific.” *Nations & Nationalism* 12, no. 1 (January 2006): 134. doi:10.1111/j.1469-8129.2006.00233.x.

In this chapter, I will conduct a literary analysis of various pieces of Okinawan literature over time. I have organized the chapter into three sections roughly corresponding to the chronological order in which these pieces were written. Beginning with literature written during Okinawa's control by the Japanese Empire I examine the colonial feelings of Okinawans excluded as more ‘primitive’ than mainland Japanese while also attempting to modernize and conform to Japanese modernity. Moving to the postwar period after 1945, I will then analyze how Okinawans responded to the war’s destructiveness, the unwanted American occupation, and how the war came to be memorialized. Finally, moving to the end of the 20th century, I will examine how Okinawans in the near-present reconcile with their war memories and the apparent decay of their culture and identity. It is through their fictional literature that I will glean an understanding of how Okinawan identity has shifted over time, what pressures drove those shifts, and why Okinawans felt a strong desire to belong to a group identity.

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[60] Davinder L. Bhowmik. *Writing Okinawa: Narrative Acts of Identity and Resistance*. (Rutledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2008), 181.

II

Colonial Identity and Modern Hierarchy

First effectively ruled as a puppet state by the Shimazu Clan in 1609, by the time Okinawa was formally annexed as a prefecture in 1879 the islands already had a long history with Japan. While the colonization of Okinawa began with its annexation, from the Japanese pre-modern perspective, Okinawans already occupied a ‘barbaric’ place in a civilizational hierarchy centered on Tokyo. This concept, as Barclay explains, was further modified by the Meiji Restoration when imported European ideas of ‘modern’ and ‘primitive’ hierarchy joined Japan’s premodern conceptions of superiority to form a newer hierarchy based on the modern superiority of Japan compared to its neighbors.[61] By modern, I mean the European conception of modern dress, hygiene, and education that Japan imported during its modernization. One example was the premodern Okinawan propensity, in the heat of summer, for men to be shirtless, something the Meiji government viewed as backwards. Modern Japanese attitudes towards dress demanded that men be always clothed in public. So, with examples like this, despite its equal prefectural status, Okinawa occupied a lower place in the hierarchy of modernity when compared to the rest of Japan. Okinawans struggled with forced assimilation into Japanese culture that consistently reminded them of their backwardness despite great efforts made towards assimilation. The authors of this colonial period in Okinawa touch on themes of loneliness and exclusion from the Japanese nation despite attempts to assimilate or cooperate. Despite Japanese rhetoric of unity under the emperor and the state, Okinawans could not escape their new identity as the primitive juniors of the wiser Japanese.

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[61] Barclay. “Between Modernity and Primitivity: Okinawan Identity in Relation to Japan and the South Pacific,” 120.

Written in 1911, "The Kunebo Orange Trees" by Yamagusuku Seichū follows the lives of the Okinawan Matsuda family in the year 1894. Set in the backdrop of the First Sino-Japanese War, the Matsudas witness Japanese domination of Okinawa both physically and in terms of forcing a change in Okinawan identity. The garrisoning of Japanese soldiers in a local castle, most likely an allusion to the real-life Shuri Castle, demonstrates the colonial domination Japan long held over Okinawa. The castle, once home to Okinawan kings, is described as "already deteriorated quite a bit and had been given to the Kumamoto army detachment as barracks."[62] The army detachment from

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[62] Seichū Yamagusuku. "The Kunebo Orange Trees (1911)," in *Islands of Protest*: *Japanese Literature from Okinawa*, translated by Carolyn Morley, edited by Edited by Davinder L. Bhowmik and Steve Rabson (University of Hawai'i Press, 2016), 29.

Kumamoto staking the old castle as its barracks is a demonstration of power and domination over the natives. Yet, the castle seemingly retained some of its former luster as the "Chinese gabled buildings, and the old sculptures remained in fine condition."[63] Okinawa had a long history of trade and cultural exchange with China after all, so there is some small pride expressed in the endurance of Chinese art as an expression of Okinawan culture.

Later in the story, a split occurs between Okinawan supporters of China versus supporters of Japan. Older scholars of Confucianism and descendants of the old nobility support China while government officials and newly educated youth support Japan. Having received a modern Japanese education, the youth sang songs such as "'Shoot and Kill the Chinese Soldiers!'" and thus "the necessity for the war was drilled into the still-disbelieving heads of the people."[64] The Okinawan youth, unlike the older elites who associated with China, were educated in the nationalist rhetoric of Japan. In just one generation, respect for the Chinese aspects of Okinawan culture was stigmatized in the context of a nationalistic war. Sei, the young son of the Matsuda family, experiences this stigmatization when his principal remarks that he should cut his hair in a Japanese fashion instead of Chinese. Sei refuses and when his principal retorts that he will not be viewed as Japanese should he keep the hairstyle, Sei simply says "'I'm not Japanese!'"[65] This is a rare moment of an assertion of Okinawan identity in the narrative. Sei, quite unlike the other youth, demonstrates an attachment to the old Chinese-influenced Okinawan culture. He is not necessarily opposed to Japan so much as he is assertive that he is not Japanese in the first place. In the narrative though, Sei is a lonely voice, with the only other supporter of Chinese culture being an old Confucian scholar named Okushima. However, by the end of the story, Okushima is accused of luring young boys into his home with Kunebo Oranges and then forcing himself and his Chinese philosophy onto them. The story ends with an angry mob picketing outside his home. After all, he was "an enemy of the imperial throne" and accordingly a diverse crowd of Okinawans "with blue sun umbrellas, woven straw hats, island clogs… people from every walk of life swarmed and shouted angrily."[66] Significantly, the story ends with a group of diverse Okinawans united in their hatred of Okushima, their hatred of the old Chinese ways. Ironically, the crowd itself still bears the markers of Okinawan and Chinese culture with their island clogs and blue sun umbrellas but they, apparently, no longer identify those things as part of Okinawan culture. As loyal subjects of the emperor, they too denounce the barbaric Chinese, even if that means renouncing their cultural past too.

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[63] Yamagusuku. "The Kunebo Orange Trees (1911)," in *Islands of Protest*: *Japanese Literature from Okinawa*, 29.
[64] Ibid. 31.
[65] Ibid. 31

This story demonstrates how Japan's domination and colonization of Okinawa resulted in its vision of modernity being forced onto the native Okinawans. Moreover, it shows how Okinawan identity, once steeped in a fusion of Chinese and local culture, shifted towards Japanese nationalism. Owing to a modern Japanese education the youth especially took up the call to national pride in the context of war and shed their Chinese and Okinawan heritage. Old clothes, hairstyles, and even the old centers of Okinawan power were stigmatized and disrespected. By the end of the narrative, most Okinawans accepted the Japanese idea of modernity, whipped into nationalistic fury due to war. They too were Japanese and therefore superior to their Chinese enemies and were now above their barbaric past associated with Chinese culture. The crowd's anger towards the 'backwards' and 'barbaric' Okushima is ironic given the author's description of the crowd as quite diverse in retaining a Chinese style of clothing. Here is the author’s critique of the Japanese idea of national unity and modernity, and perhaps a critique of Okinawans too for accepting such ideas. The author is pointing out the contradictory hatred towards Chinese culture even as many still dressed themselves in that style. Even if Okinawans adhered to Japanese expectations and seemingly assimilated, they would remain the same ‘backwards’ Okinawans simply due to their cultural heritage that cannot be shed so easily.

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[66] Ibid. 39.

Indeed, the 1922 short story "Officer Ukuma" tackles similar themes of Okinawans’ exclusion from mainstream Japanese culture and their position somewhere between primitivity and modernity. Written by Sekihō Ikemiyagi the story follows a young man named Ukuma Hyaaku. A young Okinawan native, he is from a village descended from Chinese immigrants that have lived in Okinawa for generations. Hyaaku, in the beginning the narrative, decides to apply for police academy. When he is first accepted into police training, his family and fellow villagers are thrilled. The villagers celebrated with a festival, the men “stripped to their waists, sang, danced, and played the

Jabisen…" while the women gathered around to watch.[67] Amongst all the fanfare Hyaaku "looked odd…like some victorious general, wearing a uniform and cap and carrying a glistening sword."[68] Despite the celebration and the collective pride there was already a cultural distance between the newly anointed police officer and his people. While the village men dance shirtless and play the traditional Okinawan instrument, the Jabisen, Hyaaku coldly watches in a modern uniform. Quite unlike the Okinawans he is fully clothed, dressed sleek, and armed. The difference between the 'primitive' and modern is made distinctly clear. Hyaaku apparently assimilated into the Japanese modern style and, indeed, appeared in the modern colonial military style dress. Expecting perhaps increased government funding to their poor village via Hyaaku, the villagers were then surprised by a sudden change in his demeanor towards them. Not long after the celebration, he grew short-tempered with the villagers and finally made a pronouncement that the sewers had to be cleaned regularly, people must stay always fully clothed, and drinking loudly into the night was forbidden. He chastised them, saying, "I'm a policeman, too…we can't look the other way even if a member of our own families or a relative does something wrong or vulgar."[69] Hyaaku had certain modern expectations and rules to meet now that he was a policeman in service to Japan. He was not, just, a villager anymore. He was an enforcer of the law, Japanese cultural norms, and of modernity. From his perspective as a policeman, the once jubilant traditions of his village were now markers of vulgarity and primitivity.

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[67] Sekihō Ikemiyagi. "Officer Ukuma (1922)," in *Southern Exposure: Modern Japanese Literature from Okinawa*, translated by Davinder Bhowmik, Edited by Michael Molasky and Steve Rabson (University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), 60.

[68] Sekihō Ikemiyagi. "Officer Ukuma (1922)," in *Southern Exposure: Modern Japanese Literature from Okinawa*, 60.

[69] Ibid. 62

In response to Hyaaku's new role and demeanor, the villagers distanced themselves from him. Estranged from his home and people, Hyaaku sought comfort with his fellow policemen only to find "his fellow officers were making fun of him because he came from (that) village."[70] To mainland Japanese officers, Hyaaku was simply another country bumpkin. Yes, he was an officer, but he would always remain an Okinawan from a dirty vulgar village. His new identity as police officer, as a symbol of modern Japanese authority, left him lonely and without a group to identify with as he was estranged from his native people and the new modern culture that claimed to welcome him. Estranged from everyone, he sought comfort in the pleasure district where he met and fell in love with a woman. Her story was tragic, she was forced into prostitution because her brother had squandered the family’s wealth and sold their land to pay off the debt. He became quite intimate with this woman named Kamaru and left behind the loneliness he had experienced as an outcast of his village and the police force. However, near the end of the narrative, he encounters a thief whom he immediately apprehends and takes in for questioning. The pride of his first real crime bust turns to anger and frustration when realizes the man he arrested was Kamaru's brother. The police chief orders him to bring her in for questioning. In response, he, "began smoldering with the fear and rage of a wild beast fallen into a trap.”[71] Here lies the story’s final poignant message. Hyaaku, who had estranged himself from his village by identifying with and enforcing Japanese modern values, finally found comfort and love with a woman. Then, he rips this happiness from himself by arresting her brother and damning her to take on his debt once the police question her. As her brother’s closest living next-of-kin, she would be expected to pay his debt. By the end of the story, he finally realizes that he is trapped between his native Okinawan culture, people, traditions, and the Japanese culture of modernity. For just a moment he was proud to be a part of Japan’s civilizing mission in Okinawa only to then realize he would now have to punish someone he loved.

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[70] Ibid. 63

[71] Ibid. 71.

This story demonstrates the difficult decisions Okinawans faced under the Japanese Empire's hierarchy of modernity. Okinawans might feel joyful, at first, to participate and cooperate with Japan's modern culture if it meant the promise of wealth and prestige for themselves and their families. But, as Hyaaku realized, this came at the cost of one's traditional values and culture. One might become ostracized from one’s own home and people by subscribing to Japan's ideas. And yet, even if one fully embraced a modern Japanese identity, as Hyaaku did, one might still never be accepted by mainland Japanese. For Okinawans, navigating the dichotomy of a 'primitive' and 'modern' identity caused them much grief and loneliness. After all, just as Hyaaku felt lonely without his village, Okinawans no doubt felt the loneliness of their ambiguous identity pushed and pulled between two seeming opposites. Still, the desire to have a group identity or belong to a group, as shown in the narrative, often comes from this place of loneliness encourages and adherence to one group identity or another opposed to it. Just as Hyaaku did, Okinawans might seek to be more ‘modern’ out of shame and disgust for their traditions and jump at the chance to prove themselves a modern citizen. Or they might bound closer together as the villagers did in response to Hyaaku.

Published in 1932, *Memoirs of a Declining Ryukyuan Woman* by Fusako Kushi tells the story of an unnamed Okinawan woman and the difficult life Ryukyuan women led. Economic opportunity was scarce, and sons often leave behind their mothers, wives, and daughters to work on the mainland of Okinawa or the Japanese home islands. This is often due to the traditional tattoos many Okinawan women bore. Since tattoos were a cultural taboo for the Japanese, Okinawan men often avoided being seen in public with the women of their families. The female protagonist lamented that "Ryukyuan intellectuals are not nearly so bold as those Koreans or Taiwanese…While they openly maintain their customs and manners, we tend to form hidden clusters."[72] Unlike the other colonial subjects of Japan, the female protagonist felt that Okinawans were especially ashamed of their cultural heritage. There is an implication that Koreans and Taiwanese more fiercely maintained their traditions by banding together. On the other hand, Okinawans stayed isolated if they recognized one another in a place like Tokyo. Yet, they still shared a certain solidarity. As the protagonist describes, "Though individuals, we can't help but share the loneliness of being Ryukyuan, a loneliness that echoes in our hearts…Yet we never speak of this plaintive sound."[73] Despite sharing the same feelings of loneliness and isolation in a Japanese culture that excluded them, Okinawans kept their feelings hidden and thus never came together.

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[72] Fusako Kushi. "Memoirs of a Declining Ryukyuan Woman (1932)," in *Southern Exposure: Modern Japanese Literature from Okinawa*, translated by Kimiko Miyagi, Edited by Michael Molasky and Steve Rabson (University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), 74.

[73] Fusako Kushi. "Memoirs of a Declining Ryukyuan Woman (1932)," in *Southern Exposure: Modern Japanese Literature from Okinawa*, 74.

Exemplifying the worst of this impulse to keep Okinawan identity hidden was the protagonist's uncle. This uncle worked as a businessman in mainland Japan and was relatively successful. He was married there with a child and wife and has succeeded, thus far, in keeping his identity as an Okinawan hidden from society. After thirty years, he suddenly revisited home. In the interim, his parents, grandparents, and siblings had all died of disease or malnutrition except for his grandmother. His grandmother, and indeed, Okinawa lived in a largely squalid state. Yet, as the protagonist notes, "instead of sympathy for the miserable state of his homeland, my uncle seemed to feel only disgust."[74] In the interest of keeping his life in mainland Japan intact, he lied about his origins for thirty years and upon seeing the squalor that his one surviving grandmother lived in promptly returned to Japan. He lied to his friends, business partners, and even his wife about his original destination to Okinawa. Yet, the protagonist still feels sympathy for her uncle, "who had only finished elementary school and was struggling to keep up this pretense to protect the business he built with sweat and blood."[75] Even as her uncle displays shame in his Okinawan origins and then seemingly abandons it, she can sympathize with him because he too is still Okinawan. He is simply trying to eke out a living for himself and his family in Japan and if this requires the renunciation and hiding of his cultural origins, then that is understandable to the protagonist. Yet, this sympathy is mixed with a sort of pity. Indeed, the protagonist pities her uncle who lives a false life in Japan without being able to express pride in his true identity.

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[74] Ibid. 79.
[75] Ibid. 79.

This story reflects the difficulty Okinawan identity faced as assimilation with Japan continued. In particular, it reflects a self-awareness that Okinawans purposely suppressed their own culture to better assimilate and fit into Japanese culture. Okinawan culture was shunned, shamed, and hidden to gain acceptance into mainstream Japanese culture. This was particularly true of Okinawans living and working on the home islands of Japan. The author, Fusako Kushi, received critique from male leaders of Okinawan student organizations at a university and responded with a defense of her short story. They accused of her falsely representing Okinawa in a poor light and also, of equating Okinawan racial status with other minorities such as the Ainu or Koreans. In response she says, "I have no sympathy for their efforts to construct racial hierarchies of Ainu, Korean, and so-called "pure Japanese," or for their desire to feel some kind of superiority by placing themselves in the “highest” category.”[76] She points out a large problem with Okinawan identity. That is, by adhering to Imperial Japan’s racial hierarchy, in which Japanese were at the top, Okinawans merely assisted in oppressing themselves. Rather than opposing the hierarchy itself they were content with adopting a favorable position in it, even if they were below the Japanese. In their view of the empire's hierarchy, many Okinawans viewed themselves simply as Japanese, or at the very least above the other minorities of Japan. The student leaders took particular exception to Kushi’s use of the word people when talking about Okinawan ‘people,’ Korean ‘people,’ and Ainu ‘people.’ They objected to being categorized with them as the Japanese word for ‘people’ was associated with minorities rather than proper Japanese.[77] Therefore, the equating of Okinawans to the other minority groups offended so much as the mere comparison itself implied that Okinawans were equal with rather than superior to Taiwanese and Koreans. After all, Okinawa was a proper prefecture while Taiwan and Korea were administered as colonies.

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[76] Fusako Kushi. " In Defense of "Memoirs of a Declining Ryukyuan Woman (1932)," in *Southern Exposure: Modern Japanese Literature from Okinawa*, translated by Kimiko Miyagi, Edited by Michael Molasky and Steve Rabson (University of Hawai’i Press, 2000), 81.

Still, she is not unsympathetic to why Okinawans felt ashamed of their identity and attempted to hide it. She too felt the loneliness of being Okinawan and the desire to hide one’s identity but she also explains, “the futility of this effort, for the constant fear of exposure leads to the loss of dignity…we no longer need to demean ourselves by pandering to those who are ignorant about us.”[78] In a strong statement, she recognizes the self-defeating and depressing effect that the Okinawan tendency to hide or suppress their identity has. She calls out the Japanese and fellow Okinawans for their ignorance in applying stereotypes and adhering to them. Rather than feeling lonely and isolated, as many Okinawans did, she appeals to a sense of pride in one's own identity rather than adhering to the modern Japanese racial hierarchies. This story and author represent the feelings of abject loneliness Okinawans felt in abandoning their identity for another, only to then live a hidden life with an ambiguous identity. Perhaps it was all the more painful because Okinawans often imposed the suppression of their own culture and identity on themselves so that they could succeed in Imperial Japan. That is why her story functions as a critique, especially, of Okinawan men who looked to the mainland for success but in doing so often left behind their women and culture.

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[77] Fusako Kushi. " In Defense of "Memoirs of a Declining Ryukyuan Woman (1932)," in *Southern Exposure: Modern Japanese Literature from Okinawa*, 82.

[78] Ibid. 82.

These stories have demonstrated the evolution of Okinawan identity under the Japanese Empire and the ambiguities it faced as a result of pressure from Japan. That pressure, mainly, was the racial and ethnic hierarchies imposed on the Okinawans from both a pre-modern and modern perspective. This modern hierarchy of 'modern peoples' and 'primitive peoples’ plagued the Okinawans from the outset of their annexation by Japan. Forced into a modern Japanese education and propaganda, Okinawans adhered to Japanese nationalistic narratives in the First Sino-Chinese War. What resulted was the separation of Okinawans from their cultural past which was quite infused with Chinese influences. The suppression of their culture and assimilation into Japanese culture continued into the early 20th century. Okinawans were often faced with the decision to embrace Japanese customs for the chance of prosperity. But a growing sense of disillusionment and shame in their native culture grew as they adhered more strongly to Japan's modern culture. By the 1930s, Okinawans had assimilated even more but now there was a pervasive sense of shame in Okinawan identity. To succeed, Okinawans presented themselves as 'normal' Japanese people and suppressed their island identity. What is common in all these stories is the sense of loneliness that Okinawans felt when confronted with the decision to identify further with Japan at the expense of their native identity. Despite their efforts to assimilate, they were still never quite accepted as truly Japanese. This left many Okinawans adrift with an ambiguous identity that was not fully

Okinawan nor fully Japanese. In the modern hierarchy of the Japanese Empire, Okinawans were forced to assimilate but often chose to suppress and police themselves too. This, perhaps, heightened the feelings of loneliness, pain, and alienation.

III

Post-War Identity as Victims

The Japanese Empire officially ended in 1945 with the unconditional surrender to the United States. The peace that was finally established meant little to the Okinawan people who had just survived one of the most brutal and destructive battles of the Second World War. Up to one-fourth of the island's prewar population died and the land itself was torn apart by gunfire, shelling, and air raids.[79] Nearly all Okinawans over the age of fourteen were conscripted for the battle and served in some fashion. The infamous Himeyuritai (Princess Lily Corps) consisted of high school girls who served as battlefield nurses. Indoctrinated by Japanese propaganda, many feared rape, or worse, if they were captured and instead threw themselves off cliffs or used grenades to commit suicide.[80] The staggering loss of life, land, and culture remains a permanent scar for the Okinawan people even today. Embodying this memory is the destruction of Okinawa's historical Shuri Castle which was occupied by Japanese forces as their headquarters and destroyed by relentless American naval bombardment. As Michael Molasky and Steve Rabson explain, many Okinawans view the occupation and destruction of Shuri Castle by Japanese and American forces "as symbolizing a recurring theme in Ryukyuan history-namely, that of Okinawans trapped between two outside powers, as pawns."[81] This theme reoccurs throughout Okinawan postwar literature, especially in the context of the American occupation of Okinawa that lasted until 1972. With the literal destruction of their ancient past and the death they faced in the war from both the Japanese and Americans, Okinawan identity was shaken. Facing their war trauma, postwar Okinawan literature effaces themes of loneliness, powerlessness, and the feeling of being adrift in the face of greater powers. Thus, postwar Okinawan literature is fascinated with identifying Okinawans as victims dominated by foreign powers. It is this identity as victims that evolves and changes during America’s occupation until Okinawa’s eventual return to Japan and even until the present.

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[79] *Southern Exposure: Modern Japanese Literature from Okinawa*. Edited by Michael Molasky and Steve Rabson (University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), 20.

[80] *Southern Exposure: Modern Japanese Literature from Okinawa*. Edited by Michael Molasky and Steve Rabson, 20.

Tatsuhiro Ōshiro's 1966 "Turtleback Tombs" follows a small Okinawan family's experiences during the Battle of Okinawa and taps into the collective memory of the war's destructive trauma. And yet, it also seeks to highlight the solidarity rather than the isolation that Okinawans might feel with each other due to their shared cultural history, even in the face of greater powers.

The narrative begins with two elderly grandparents, Zentoku and Ushi, peacefully tending their crops when the sudden sound of American naval bombardment begins. In a rush, the elderly couple gathers their family together to seek shelter in their ancestral family tomb. Yet not all was well with the family. Zentoku and his wife, Ushi, took care to bring along his absent son's two children. However, Zentoku's daughter, Take, was another matter because she, a widow due to the war, had recently taken up with another man, a one-armed veteran of the war. Zentoku absolutely opposed allowing his daughter and her lover to join them. For Zentoku this was a matter of honoring his deceased stepson and of preventing Eitaro, his daughter's lover, from trespassing onto his family's sacred tomb. But, as Ushi felt during their flight to the tomb, "things unreal and disconnected…seemed to be driving the people in her family apart. Yet at the same time, Ushi felt that they were all clinging desperately to each other."[82] Zentoku ultimately relented, partially out of love for his granddaughter Take, but as Ushi also points out the chaos of the war that still seemed unreal had forced them together. Even with their family drama, they bounded together for safety and security in the extraordinary circumstances of war.

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[81] Ibid, 21.

The tomb that holds Zentoku's ancestor's ashes is an imposing stone structure built into a hillside. Okinawans commonly had ancestral tombs in which many generations of their family's ashes were interred. Having finally reached the tomb, Zentoku begrudgingly allows Eitaro to assist him in moving the massive stone slab that served as a doorway. For Zentoku the tomb, "greeted the ancestor's descendants serenely, as if it knew the incantation that brings eternal life. The deep spiritual exhilaration

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[82] Tatsuhiro Ōshiro. "Turtleback Tombs (1966)," in *Southern Exposure: Modern Japanese Literature from Okinawa*, translated by Steve Rabson, Edited by Michael Molasky and Steve Rabson (University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), 120.

Zentoku felt in its presence even made the thundering seem to stop for a moment."[83] It was here, in the family tomb, that Zentoku and his family sought both literal and spiritual shelter from the war. The sounds of the naval guns, a constant reminder of the war, were for a moment forgotten in the presence of his ancestor's ashes. Indeed, the ancestors had a more spiritual presence too as they watched eternally from the afterlife. Even after many decades of cultural assimilation campaigns, Zentoku still held on to this very tangible piece of Okinawan culture and history. Zentoku's wife, Ushi, also felt a certain amount of comfort and safety in the tomb of her husband's ancestors. Indeed, despite her being a second wife with no blood relation to any of his progeny or ancestors, she felt grateful in the first place that she too would be interred with his ancestors. Of course, she did not expect to be staying in the tomb while still living but she believed that this was the ancestor's will. Even if "she felt she might die (there), this feeling was in no way at odds with her belief that these ancestors would save the lives of the family. For her, both came from her desire for "peace of mind.""[84] Ushi, despite her non-blood relations to Zentoku and his family also came to see herself as truly part of his family and took comfort in knowing that the ancestors watched her over them. Even in the case of her death, it did not feel wrong that she may perish in the place a sacred place where her family's ancestors were interned and spiritually present. Combatting the loneliness of Ushi's position as second wife and technical outsider to the family, was faith in her identity as grandmother to the family and beneficiary to the guidance of her new family's ancestors.

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[83] Tatsuhiro Ōshiro. "Turtleback Tombs (1966)," in *Southern Exposure: Modern Japanese Literature from Okinawa*, translated by Steve Rabson, Edited by Michael Molasky and Steve Rabson, 123.
[84] Ibid. 131.

The family stayed in the tomb for several days, enduring the constant sound of bombardment and then the growing sounds of gunfire. Owing to the family's tense relations, there was much arguing and bad feelings between Zentoku and Eitaro especially. However, one night the two men agreed to make a brave sojourn to nearby potato fields to harvest food. During this journey, they bonded together as two men doing their best to protect their family. Unfortunately, Zentoku was hit by shrapnel from a nearby shell and died of his injuries. Eitaro, with only one arm, faced the decision to abandon the man who had so insistently harassed and shamed him during their time together or attempt to haul the body back by himself. Eitaro was, to Zentoku, an interloper and an outsider to the family and its tomb. Yet, he would not abandon Zentoku's body and instead made the grueling journey back up the hill to the tomb while carrying the body. Upon reaching the tomb and delivering the body he felt pleasure "from the powerful solidarity he felt with Ushi, Take, and the children as they grieved…before the bones of their ancestors in that cramped, narrow tomb."[85] Eitaro, despite being an outsider to the family, felt sympathy and solidarity with them. Even if this tomb was not his and did not contain his ancestor's bones, much like Ushi, he now felt secure in his role as the unofficial patriarch of the family. In a way, he overcame the boundaries and identity forced onto him by both Okinawan and Japanese cultures. He was not just a crippled war veteran and adulterer forcing himself onto another family, he was now an integral leader in the family with Zentoku's death. The war forced him together with a family led by Zentoku that ostracized him, and now the war had brought him even closer with family, defying norms. He then took responsibility for the family's safety, intent upon fulfilling his newfound role as unofficial patriarch.

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[85] Ibid. 148.

This story demonstrates how Okinawans remembered the war’s chaos that drove them from their homes. And yet, the war also had the effect of bonding Okinawans firmly together. At least, that is the message the author wishes to convey. Published two decades after the war, the story conveys a sense of pride and solidarity with Okinawan traditions and culture. The tombs are the physical embodiment of their culture. In a time of chaos, the tombs provided a literal and spiritual place of refuge for Okinawans. Okinawans, forced into such close proximity with their past ancestors, were reminded of the deep cultural roots Okinawa possessed. Despite being at the mercy of American guns, this complicated family of Okinawans came together to survive. They reasserted their identity as wife, grandmother, patriarch, and most importantly their shared pain as victims of the same tragedy. This shared trauma of the war becomes a defining feature of Okinawan identity.

Themes of postwar trauma and the uncertainty of Okinawan identity are tackled by Baku Yamanokuchi in his poems “Shell-Shocked Island” and “Okinawa! Where Will You Go Now?” both published in 1964. “Shell-Shocked Island” is written from the perspective of an Okinawan returning to the islands after the war.

The moment I set foot on the island soil
and greeted them *Ganjuy*
Very well, thank you
the island people replied in Japanese
My nostalgia at a bit of a loss
I muttered
Uchi nahguchi madhin muru
Ikusani sattaru basui
to which the island people feigned a smile
but remarked how well I spoke the Okinawa dialect[86]

In this poem, there is an expression of bewilderment on the part of the narrator. The narrator, presumably Okinawan, returns after the war expecting to use his native dialect. Instead, the narrator is met with perfect Japanese from the natives. The word *Ganjuy* translates to 'how have you been' in the native Okinawan dialect and yet, much to the narrator's disappointment, he only received a response in Japanese. Frustrated, the narrator’s muttering translates to ‘Was even your dialect destroyed by the war?’ Perhaps masking some discomfort with the inability or unwillingness to speak native Okinawan, the other Okinawans simply smile and compliment the narrator. Demonstrated in this poem are the scars of war left on Okinawans, as a result of the war. A more negative message than “Turtleback Tombs” this poem does not suggest solidarity or a coming together despite loss. Rather, it suggests the loss of Okinawan language, and thus identity. The implication is that Okinawans were shell-shocked into the loss of their identity and reverted to the standardized and mainstream Japanese cultural identity.

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[86] Baku Yamanokuchi. “Shell-Shocked Island (1964),” in *Southern Exposure: Modern Japanese Literature from Okinawa*, translated by Rie Takagi, Edited by Michael Molasky and Steve Rabson (University of Hawai’i Press, 2000), 49.

Another poem by Yamanokuchi, "Okinawa! Where Will You Go Now?" explores the ambiguous Okinawan identity and its especially difficult relationship with Japanese identity after the war. First describing Okinawa's history as the Chinese-influenced Ryukyuan Kingdom that was conquered by Japan, the poem moves to discuss how Okinawan identity adheres strongly to Japan.

As Okinawa Prefecture, you came to
walk the Japanese path
Come to think of it, since Okinawa abolished
its kingdom to become a prefecture
you have walked all these seventy-plus years
and thanks to you, even a person such as
myself
feels the Japanese language in every aspect
of my daily life[87]

Expressed here is an acknowledgment of the depth to which Okinawans have become Japanese. Indeed, the language they speak daily is Japanese. The author, an avowed supporter of Okinawan tradition, admits here that Okinawan identity is inextricably linked with Japan now. So much so, that even someone so skilled in the

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[87] Baku Yamanokuchi. "Okinawa! Where Will You Go Now? (1964)," in *Islands of Protest*: *Japanese Literature from Okinawa,* translated by Jon Holt, edited by Edited by Davinder L. Bhowmik and Steve Rabson (University of Hawai'i Press, 2016), 228.

Okinawan native dialect, as the author is, still feels the Japanese language in his daily life. Seemingly contradicting the title of the poem, this passage suggests that Okinawa has already taken the path to become Japanese. That despite its former path with the Chinese as Ryukyu, Okinawa is now permanently set into the path of Japan. However, while the poem acknowledges Okinawa's current adherence to Japan and Japanese identity through language, it ends with an appeal to a hybrid identity.

Islands of sanshin guitar
Islands of awamori liquor
My Okinawa
I know you have wounds that are deep yet
you will feel strong again and come home
You will come home to Japan
and its Japanese language
without forgetting your liquor
without forgetting your guitar[88]

This ending to the poem suggests an acceptance of Okinawan identity as one very closely tied to Japan and the Japanese language. Despite the trauma Okinawans suffered during the war, partially at the hands of the Japanese, the implication is that Okinawa will rejoin Japan without forgetting their unique Okinawan traditions. These traditions famously include the native Sanshin guitar and the native Awamori alcohol. Meaning, Okinawans can walk the Japanese path, as they already had done for seventy years, without completely renouncing their Okinawan culture, language, and identity. This is the poem's answer to the question posed in the title. When this poem was published in the 1960's Japan was still controlled by the United States despite strong Okinawan political movements to rejoin Japan as a prefecture. This poem reflects the sentiment that Okinawa, while a victim of a terrible war, did not need to renounce either its Japanese or traditionally Okinawan heritage.

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[88] Baku Yamanokuchi. "Okinawa! Where Will You Go Now? (1964)," in *Islands of Protest*: *Japanese Literature from Okinawa,* translated by Jon Holt, edited by Edited by Davinder L. Bhowmik and Steve Rabson, 228.

Moving back about a decade, Jun Kishaba's 1955 "Dark Flowers" follows a poor Okinawan woman named Nobuko who, to make money for herself and her family, prostitutes herself to American soldiers stationed in Okinawa. Set during the Korean War, Okinawa was abuzz with military activity that Okinawans both took advantage of and, conversely, were taken advantage of. This story explores how Okinawans felt dominated and victimized by America. It further explores the loneliness of a woman shunned by both her native people, and the greater occupying power, marking similarities to an Okinawa previously under Japanese control. But, despite these troubles, the story ends on a defiant note of acknowledging an identity as victims that continue to survive and endure under oppressive powers.

Nobuko begins the story lying in bed with an African American soldier named Joe. She is his regular girl paid around 2000 yen compared to her friend Michiko who gets paid 5000 yen with white soldiers. From Joe, she learned much about Mississippi and the struggles of African Americans there. When listening to him hum a song she "heard the sadness of people who were resigned to hardship but determined to endure it…a sadness that refused to succumb to despair."[89] Nobuko recognizes this song's meaning or feeling because her people too, the Okinawans, experience the same difficulties. Especially the lack of economic opportunity and thus poverty. Thus, in a moment of identification with the struggles of African Americans, she identifies Okinawans too as victims. Yet, despite the challenges they face, both African Americans and Okinawans such as herself continue to survive. She too only sells herself to American soldiers to provide her family at home with money for food and for her younger brother's education.

Later in the narrative, while watching a classic Western movie at the theater with Joe she thinks about the plight of the Indians in the film. The movie plot consisted of a white settler dueling another man to the death, taking his woman, and then leading an expedition west that ends in the massacre and conquest of an Indian tribe's land. After the movie ends, she remembers "the faces of men and women huddled together, trembling with rage. They had just been dragged outside the barbed-wire fence that now surrounded their land…everything these people owned was being taken from them."[90] At this moment, Nobuko, just as she identified with Joe and African Americans, identifies with the similar experiences of Native Americans and their subjugation by America. Like the natives in the film, Okinawans had their land taken from them by white men with guns. For Okinawan farmers, their land meant everything to them for money and subsistence farming. For Okinawans in general, the war and American occupation devasted their island and resulted in the appropriation of much of their land for the construction of bases. As Steve Rabson explains, while Okinawans were compensated, at first, with lump sums of cash and later with regular payments, there was and remains much contention over the fairness of the money paid and the ethical repercussions of seizing land at gunpoint.[91] Nobuko's identification with the Indians as fellow victims is important because it demonstrates how powerless she felt towards the American. Just as the natives were unable to defend their land, Okinawans lost their land too. Driven by a shared sense of powerlessness, she identified with other minority groups oppressed by a greater power.

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[89] Jun Kishaba. "Dark Flowers (1955)," in *Southern Exposure: Modern Japanese Literature from Okinawa*, translated by Steve Rabson, Edited by Michael Molasky and Steve Rabson (University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), 100.

[90] Jun Kishaba. "Dark Flowers (1955)," in *Southern Exposure: Modern Japanese Literature from Okinawa*, translated by Steve Rabson, Edited by Michael Molasky and Steve Rabson, 106.

Later in the story, Nobuko reflects on her life. Despite her financially supporting her family her mother ostracizes her for the work she does, and this makes Nobuko feel like an outcast in her own family. However, the story ends on a somewhat defiant and hopeful note. Despite the hardships she endures, the loneliness too, "She wanted to weep, to cry out loud" but instead she resolved to "fight what was hateful to her with everything she had, and, like Joe, to celebrate what made her happy."[92] For Nobuko, she and Okinawans might be victims of American oppression, but she could choose not to give in to despair. Instead, as Joe's song at the beginning of the narrative demonstrated the strong will of African Americans, she too resolved to struggle and survive in the face of adversity. By enjoying the small things in her life, like financially supporting her younger brother's education, she might live and focus on the personal things that mattered to her rather than become overwhelmed by the sadness, and indeed, the loneliness of working as a prostitute for American soldiers.

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[91] *Southern Exposure: Modern Japanese Literature from Okinawa*. Edited by Michael Molasky and Steve Rabson, 25.

[92] Jun Kishaba. "Dark Flowers (1955)," in *Southern Exposure: Modern Japanese Literature from Okinawa*, translated by Steve Rabson, Edited by Michael Molasky and Steve Rabson, 111.

This story communicates the difficulty of living under the American occupation. Indeed, the plight of Okinawans is likened to that of African Americans or Native Americans. Bereft of economic opportunity and, often, at the mercy of white Americans, they were all victims of American power. Yet, the story indicates a dogged resistance by Okinawans to simply resolve to survive and to preserve that which they cherish most, family. Despite their powerlessness, this story demonstrates the Okinawan resolve to resist and survive in the face of overwhelming American power, just as other groups had and continue to do. Nobuko’s identification with these other groups demonstrates a desire to bind together with perhaps those who share similar experiences as the Okinawans. Perhaps, by identifying with and taking lessons from Joe and African Americans, the author implies that Nobuko and Okinawans might learn to sympathize with others who suffer under the same power. In doing so, Okinawans might take some comfort that the pain they all suffer together unites them and binds them closer than it does divide them, as Joe and Nobuko’s relationship demonstrates.

In these stories and poems, themes of Okinawan loss due to the war and of the powerlessness of Okinawans between greater powers are expressed. The destruction that the war wrought upon Okinawans left a collective scar on them. Dealing with immediate postwar memories of the battle, authors demonstrated how Okinawans lamented the apparent loss of their language and identity to the war. The ambiguity of whether

Okinawans were Japanese or Ryukyuan in the postwar seemed to plague the minds of these authors. There is a profound sense of loneliness in these stories at the idea that one's culture, history, traditions, and identity could be lost in the tumult of warfare and cultural domination by Japan and the United States. And yet, embedded in all the stories, was also a hope for solidarity between Okinawans and their past traditions. Moving into the future, there is hope that Okinawans might resolve to walk the path of a hybrid Okinawan-Japanese identity or perhaps identify more strongly with traditional religion and transcend the cultural norms that were so easily broken during the war. In the literature, was an expressed desire to identify with each other as Okinawan, to recognize each other's struggles, and even those of other people's suffering under American power. Okinawan identity in the postwar period marked itself as a victim of war and oppression by greater powers but still resolved to bind closer together for the future, despite the ambiguities in language, culture, and identity. In doing so, Okinawans resolved to stick closely to an identity that emphasized unity in the face of oppression and domination by greater powers. The feelings of helplessness, of not being in control of one’s own destiny, created a feeling of loneliness that pervades the literature. Driven by a desire to combat this loneliness, Okinawan authors advocated for coming together in an identity united by the victimization by Japan and America, and identity that could transcend traditions.

IV

A Modern Reckoning with the Past and Preserving Okinawan Identity

In the year 1972 Okinawa was finally returned to Japan as Okinawa Prefecture. This was welcomed by most of the Okinawan population, the majority of whom supported reversion to prefecture status within Japan, ending American rule.[93] However, reunification came with its own set of problems. Economically, even after reunification, Okinawa remained poor when compared to the rest of Japan and there was little economic opportunity on the smaller islands of the archipelago. Thus, many young Okinawans sought work on the mainland or, at the very least, settled for jobs on the largest Okinawan Island. However, according to Steve Rabson, many young people return to Okinawa, even today, due to feelings of isolation, discomfort, and discrimination.[94] While not as sharply worded as in the past during the Japanese Empire, many Okinawans expressed discomfort at the stereotypes the Japanese assumed. Mainland Japanese often assumed that Okinawans spoke perfect English, owing to their occupation by America, or asked questions about whether Okinawa had electricity and why the Okinawan accent was so different.[95] In a way, this was a continuation of previous ideas of Okinawan primitivity when compared to mainland Japanese superior technology and civilization. Thus, there was, and remains, an uneasy discomfort in Okinawan identity, now once again recognized as the tropical, but backward, paradise of Japan. This view of Okinawa belies its violent past under imperial Japan and the war trauma it suffered. In this context, authors of the 1990s and going into the 2000s wrote literature that reflected themes of reckoning with Okinawa's past in the empire and Second World War and how, instead of only being victims, Okinawans often adhered to and enforced ideas of primitivity onto themselves. By this, I mean that author recognized that, as much as the Japanese oppressed Okinawan culture, Okinawans themselves were their own harshest police. As earlier literature demonstrated, Okinawans went through great effort in the imperial era to downplay their island accents and culture to fit into mainstream Japanese culture. There is an expressed desire to reconnect with, remember, and preserve the culture and identity of Okinawa so long recognized as ‘primitive.’ Though this preservation can be ambiguous because the traditions of Okinawa serve as both a marker of shame, something that traps Okinawans on their islands, and something that also serves as a source of pride in an Okinawan identity.

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[93] *Southern Exposure: Modern Japanese Literature from Okinawa*. Edited by Michael Molasky and Steve Rabson, 4.
[94] Steve Rabson. *The Okinawan Diaspora in Japan: Crossing the Borders Within*, 202-203.
[95] Ibid. 203.

The 1997 "Droplets" by Shun Medoruma, explores Okinawa's war memories. It is a reckoning with how Okinawans and Japanese have remembered the war, often, in an overly romantic sense that belies the brutality, death, and participation of Okinawans in the battle. The story begins with the main character, an old man named Tokusho, suddenly struck with paralysis and forced to convalesce in bed. A noticeable symptom of his paralysis was that his leg had swollen to the size of a gourd melon, a common vegetable in Okinawa. Tokusho watches helplessly as his wife attempts to nurse him back to health while waiting on the results from his bloodwork. The one thing his wife, Ushi, was able to accomplish was to relieve some of the pressure on his swollen leg by pricking his toe. Out of this toe came steady droplets of water, though the swelling did not really go down. One night, while Tokusho lies awake in his paralyzed state he spots the figures of Japanese soldiers, seemingly appearing from nowhere, standing in a line leading to his toe. Silently and quietly they, one by one, proceed to suck on his toe to parch their thirst. They are both mainland Japanese and Okinawans, he finally recognizes one of the figures as his long-lost friend, Ishimine. Tokusho notes that he and Ishimine served in the Defense Force as messengers and transporters during the Battle of Okinawa and became close friends. However, after a deadly firefight "Ishimine was hit in the stomach with shrapnel…they got separated at the southern tip of the island."[96] To Tokusho, it seemed as if Ishimine recognized him but simply pretended not to. Like all the other soldiers he took his turn sucking the droplets from Tokusho's toe, saluted, and left through a wall just before dawn broke.

The story continues and Tokusho endures a few more nightly visits from the soldiers. Though, the ghostly soldiers had begun to grow livelier than before. Talking to each other in loud conversation, their only form of acknowledging Tokusho was their salute after sucking on his toe. Forced to see the dead soldiers, many of whom he now realized he had seen during his service, Tokusho began to recount his experiences of the war. However, he first recalls that he always tried to forget about the war only to eventually, many decades after, assent to give a speech to some schoolchildren about his experiences. The children were moved by his speech and Tokusho became a local sensation. Other schools, news stations, and researchers from the mainland interviewed him too and asked for more speeches. At the beginning of his fame, he "spoke with blind intensity, but eventually he began to grasp what his audience wanted to hear and learned not to appear too glib."[97] Despite the slight sense of shame, he felt in pleasing his audience with a tailored story, he enjoyed the money he received for these talks and, most importantly, the kindness of the children towards him. There was a certain contentment he felt to receive awards, prizes, and the admiration of children for retelling his war experiences. Haunted, perhaps, by a small sense of guilt for twisting his past for the children he had done this for years up until his recent paralysis.

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[96] Shun Medoruma. "Droplets (1997)," in *Southern Exposure: Modern Japanese Literature from Okinawa*, translated by Michael Molasky, Edited by Michael Molasky and Steve Rabson (University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), 265.

Near the end of the narrative, Tokusho is now in agony. Not physical agony but instead the emotional agony of being "face-to-face with those memories he had repressed for over fifty years."[98] Facing the soldiers he had served with, and most importantly, his friend Ishimine, nightly had taken its toll on Tokusho. Through recent fever dreams, Tokusho was vividly reminded of his abandonment of a weakened Ishimine and how, rather than give the last droplets of water in a canteen to the dying man he instead drank it for himself and ran away. On this night, once again Ishimine was the final soldier in line and proceeded to suck on Tokusho's toe again. Forced to face his friend, and the reality of his past, he burst into anger at Ishimine's ghost '"Don't you know how much I've suffered these past fifty years?"' to which Ishimine spoke for the first time '"Thank you. At last the thirst is gone.”’[99] With these first, and final words, Ishimine’s figure disappeared along with the other soldiers into the wall. As dawn broke, Tokusho cried loudly having finally, literally, faced the ghosts of his past. Tokusho, repressed his memories of the war his entire life. Partially because of its brutality, but mostly because of his guilt and shame. Rather than tell the true and difficult, story of his friend's death he repressed that memory. Also, when he finally opened up to the public about his story, he told a sanitized version that made him out as a simple victim separated from his friend. Having finally earned his friend’s forgiveness, by quenching his thirst and confronting the past, Tokusho was freed from his paralysis and could face the future.

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[97] Shun Medoruma. "Droplets (1997)," in *Southern Exposure: Modern Japanese Literature from Okinawa*, translated by Michael Molasky, Edited by Michael Molasky and Steve Rabson (University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), 271.

[98] Ibid. 281.

This story is a reckoning with the way Okinawans remembered the war. Largely, Okinawans viewed themselves as simply victims of greater powers, as individuals without agency in a horrific war. However, as Tokusho experiences, Okinawans refused to openly engage with the ugly truth of the war. Through Tokusho, the author argues that Okinawans experienced a sort of paralysis. Awake and conscious of the war but unwilling to fully confront it. Instead, memories of the war were often repressed and sanitized for newer generations and a Japan that was not, and arguably, still unwilling to confront the ugly truths of war in the past. Beyond a critique, the story does offer some hope for the future. Tokusho was forced to confront his past in the war via the ghost soldiers, especially Ishimine. He was finally able to quench their thirst, a form of apology after years of guilt, shame, and purposeful concealing of the truth. The droplets of water he took for himself were finally returned, in a way, to Ishimine. By viewing themselves as simply victims, the story suggests that Okinawans cannot properly move on because they refuse to engage with the past. By engaging with the past in an honest manner, the author suggests that Okinawans might properly move on and reclaim a more hopeful Okinawan identity. An Okinawan identity that moves beyond simple victimhood, that acknowledges the role Okinawans held in repressing the ugly truth of the past, may perhaps finally move beyond the trauma of the war.

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[99] Ibid. 281.

The 2000 story “Tree of Butterflies,” also written by Medoruma Shun, displays similar themes of modern Okinawan inability to fully reckon with their violent history. It also highlights the sadness of the passing of elderly Okinawans and thus the loss of their memories of the past. The two main characters of the story are a young Okinawan man named Yoshiaki and an elderly woman named Gozei. The story begins with Yoshiaki visiting his hometown, coincidentally, during an annual celebration of traditional Okinawan culture.

During the celebration, the festivities are interrupted twice by Gozei who is outcasted by the townspeople as an apparently ugly, senile, and smelly old woman. She interrupts the event because she incorrectly believes Yoshiaki is her long lost lover, Shousei, who died many years ago during the Second World War. Loudly, she screams Shousei’s name and attempts to make her way towards Yoshiaki only to be dragged away by the police. At first, Yoshiaki is dismissive of the old woman, but he also feels a strange connection and curiosity towards her despite not having any relations with her or with Shousei. He decides to investigate her past and tries to meet with older townspeople who might know something about her and Shousei.

At times, the story shifts its focus from Yoshiaki in the modern era to Gozei in the past. It is revealed that Gozei was a young Okinawan woman forced into working at a brothel by Japanese soldiers. During this time, she fell in love with a local man named Shousei who could not fight in the war on account of a permanent injury. The two often met at their chosen spot, under a Yuna Tree, for their romantic rendezvous. During the Battle of Okinawa, she and other local villagers become trapped in caves along with Shousei and some Japanese soldiers. The soldiers were becoming restless with rumors of traitors amongst them, and they began killing ethnic Okinawans out of paranoia and anger. Rather than be with Shousei, Gozei stayed with the Japanese soldiers to secure the rations they shared with her. She noticed that Shousei stood out amongst the villagers as the only young man and was naturally a target of suspicion, moreover, his eyes betrayed a sharp anger towards the Japanese soldiers and a determination to rescue her from their control. However, when Shousei was picked out for elimination, she said nothing. In this moment she felt, "She had betrayed not only the villagers but even Shousei."[100] Shousei was executed by Japanese soldiers along with other villagers, though Gozei did not witness his death directly. Out of self-preservation she did not resist the killings, nor did she help her lover.

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[100] Medoruma, Shun. "Tree of Butterflies (2000)," in *Southern Exposure: Modern Japanese Literature from Okinawa*, translated by Michael Molasky, Edited by Michael Molasky and Steve Rabson (University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), 102.

This decision haunted her and was the motivation for her to stay in the village after the war, despite not being a local. Her guilt was so strong that she even chose to work at the same brothel again, but this time for American soldiers, on the condition that the owner build her a small house near the tree she used to meet with Shousei at. Still, she felt ashamed and thought "Shousei would have given up on her, a woman who'd not only sold herself to the Japanese but was now being used by American soldiers."[101] Despite these mixed feelings, she undertook such work because she could not help but yearn for the nostalgic times she spent with him underneath the tree next to which her house now sat.

Later, the story shifts back to Yoshiaki in the present who is pursuing leads about Gozei's past. In his pursuit, he finally meets with an older man named Uchima who recalls Gozei's past forced prostitution and her relationship with Shousei. While showing Yoshiaki the old village registry of families he says, "This kind of thing isn't in the book, and when I die there won't be anyone left who knows. That's why I'm telling you now."[102] Uchima makes this remark in a somewhat sad manner, glad to have been visited by a young person so interested in the past but also sad that this story will die with him and Gozei. Moreover, there is a sense of guilt from the older man that the villagers ostracized Gozei because her work. The telling of her past, in some small way, makes amends for her treatment.

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[101] Medoruma, Shun. "Tree of Butterflies (2000)," in *Southern Exposure: Modern Japanese Literature from Okinawa*, translated by Michael Molasky, Edited by Michael Molasky and Steve Rabson, 94.
[102] Ibid. 105.

By the story's end, Gozei is hospitalized and near death. She remains out of touch and continues to believe that Yoshiaki is Shousei returned. Yoshiaki, after learning of her past, still decides to visit and comfort her. Their past connection is also revealed in a shared memory of theirs. Years earlier, Gozei found a lost young boy wandering the roads. Concerned for his safety, she put him in a cart of hers and began to wheel him home. Eventually, a car pulled up beside them and out came the boy's family who loudly yelled for the boy's return. The boy's grandfather said to Gozei "“A woman like you! Don't drag our grandson around in your rotten cart!”"[103] They accused of her taking the boy against his will, but rather than explain, she simply apologized many times. In the present, Yoshiaki remembered "The guilt and shame he felt at that moment were something he could not forget, even thirty years later."[104] At the time, his parents made him feel as if he really had been kidnapped by Gozei and so he felt ashamed to have been around the village outcast, a 'dirty' woman. For Gozei, the brief moment she had of helping the young boy was a joyful but painful reminder of the future she could have had with Shousei.

The story ends with Gozei's passing, with Yoshiaki at her side. This story, much like Medoruma's previous story, deals with how the violent war past of Okinawa is remembered and treated. Gozei, in many ways, was similar to Tokusho. She was an unwilling participant in war, a victim of Japanese and American violence, and she also did not act to save someone precious to her. Yet, the difference in their treatment after the war is stark. Gozei was designated as the village outcast and stereotyped as a ‘dirty’ woman due to her work at the brothel for the Japanese and Americans. She represents the violent past of Okinawan that the people have yet to fully grapple with. Through Gozei, the author seems to suggest that Okinawans have not yet fully grappled with their involvement in the war and suppression of its memories that came after. In this particular case, it is the plight of a young woman victimized by war and then victimized by fellow Okinawans who refused to accept her and the ‘dirty’ past she represented. But, Medoruma offers some hope via Yoshiaki who shows interest in learning about the past and eventually honors Gozei. Though the theme of loss and sadness associated with the death of elderly Okinawans carries heavily in the narrative, there is a suggestion that young people like Yoshiaki can still learn about these memories, that are so important to Okinawan culture. There is an implication that Okinawans, rather than be ashamed of the past, should confront it and come to terms with it.

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[103] Ibid. 99.
[104] Ibid. 100.

The 1990 story “Island Confinement” by Tami Sakiyama, tackles different themes of economic and generational hopelessness and a conflicting desire to separate oneself from traditional Okinawan culture or to preserve it. The story follows a woman slightly over thirty-years-old named Takako. It takes place on a fictional island off the coast of Okinawa, though it is no doubt based on the real-life smaller islands located close to the largest island. She begins the story by visiting one of these smaller Okinawan islands by ferry. There, she makes her way to the home of her ex-fiancé's mother’s home. Out of a sense of nostalgia, after she quit her previous menial job on the main island, she decided to pay a small visit to the mother of her ex-fiancé because she had especially bonded with her eight years earlier right before her relationship with her fiancé broke down. Takako finds the mother, named Toki, in a somewhat sad state. Living alone, she graciously welcomes Takako into her home and the two reminisce over the past. Takako stays the night with her and the next day she sets out to explore the island on foot, nostalgically recalling her visit eight years before. Nearing sundown, she is picked up by another islander in a truck whom Toki sent out of concern. The two converse and the islander informs her that five years earlier Toki's husband and his mother perished in the same year. Toki was left alone as her son, Hideo, left the island even before their tragic deaths and never visits. Hideo lives in the city on the main island with his wife and children. Takako noted the islander's anger that seemed a "criticism of a son who would leave his aging mother on an island all by herself, while enjoying his own life in the city. Or maybe he was disgusted with himself for having been left behind on a lifeless island."[105] Takako recognizes the sad situation that the islanders, and Toki, find themselves in. Toki, like the island itself, is old and abandoned by young people. These young people, much like Takako herself, seek work on the main island or even in mainland Japan where there is economic opportunity. The difference between the city and the rural island Toki lives on is stark. Without young people, the island is seemingly lifeless and without a future.

Despite the island's hopelessness, Takako could relate to life on the small isolated island with its traditions and customs separated from the busier and more successful cities of the mainland. She too was from a small island, not too far away from Toki's. She grew up hating the traditional festivals of her island because her grandmother had, in the eyes of the islanders, lost her mind and constantly ranted about pleasing the spirits at every festival. Thus, she only embarrassed the young Takako and caused her to associate islander traditions with superstitions that, along with a lack of economic opportunity, did not appeal to younger people. Despite her hatred for the festivals, she felt that "a feeling of emptiness descended over the entire community" every time they ended.[106] Despite the loneliness and emptiness in the absence of the traditional festivals, Takako still could not shake her hatred for them. So much so that she broke up with Hideo because, as Hideo's future wife on the island, she would have been expected to perform a special dance at the yearly festival. A dance that reminded her much of her grandmother and her own island's primitive traditions. Not wanting to be trapped on an island and forced to perform such traditions she suddenly broke off her relationship with Hideo years ago. Yet, she still carried great respect for Toki and the dance she had performed. She had respected Toki's skill and resolve even eight years earlier when she first came to the island with Hideo because of Toki's enduring loyalty to the island's tradition. There was something noble in Toki's insistent preservation of culture, even as young people shirked it.

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[105] Sakiyama, Tami. "Island Confinement (1990)," in *Islands of Protest*: *Japanese Literature from Okinawa*, translated by Takuma Sminkey, edited by Edited by Davinder L. Bhowmik and Steve Rabson (University of Hawai'i Press, 2016), 122.

In the present, having stayed with Toki for a few days she realized that Toki's physical health had greatly deteriorated. The islanders figured it was because she, left alone, had lost the will to live. Takako too, came to blame herself, thinking that if only she had married Hideo, then Toki would not have been left alone. Hideo might have remained on the island with Takako. Instead, Toki's "deep loneliness of living on her own had caused her to lose the will to live."[107] Toki embodies the loneliness of island life. Old and alone, she and the island had no future without young people to continue it. Takako, in guilt, believes she denied Toki her future by suddenly leaving the island and Hideo. She did not wish to live as Toki had, seemingly shackled to an island and its traditions. However, it was these very traditions that still gave Toki hope and life. Even now, despite the visible pain she was in from her deteriorated health, she intended to attend this year's festival and fulfill her role as a dancer. Takako, while washing the costume worn during this ceremony decided to try it on, as it would have been the costume she wore if she had married Hideo. Toki found her dressed in the outfit and convinced her to learn the dance. After hours of instruction from Toki, Takako slowly improved while listening to a recording of the music that would play at the festival. The music's rhythm "awoke in" Takako "a strong desire to make the dance, which up to now I had only admired from afar, my own."[108] Displaying a moment of pride in the traditional dance of the island, Takako pushed aside her previous doubts about island culture. At least for the moment, she was determined to learn the dance to satisfy Toki. However, this passion was marred by Toki's sudden collapse soon after. Taken to the main island for treatment, Toki announced that Takako was to take her place at the festival this year. Takako reluctantly agreed to fulfill this role, but such a role reminded her of why she feared her own home island so much. She thought that it was due to her "unconscious belief that the island and I were one. The island dialect. The undulating waves. The salty smell of the ocean… my true identity lurking behind the oppressive gloom."[109] For Takako, she feared that the essence of her identity was tied to the islands. That she was doomed to be an islander who spent her life trapped and isolated on a dying island. An island where traditions both alienated her and brought her pride. She respected a woman like Toki, whom she greatly identified with, for enduring the island life and loyally performing her traditional dance every year. In some ways, Takako regrets not marrying Hideo and staying on the island to emulate Toki. However, she also feels trapped by the gloominess and loneliness of island culture. She left Hideo, Toki, and the island eight years ago in defiance of her island identity. Having returned and reunited with Toki, she felt conflicted. The story ambiguously ends with Takako facing the ornamental costume for the festival, unsure whether or not she will don it.

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[106] Sakiyama, Tami. "Island Confinement (1990)," in *Islands of Protest*: *Japanese Literature from Okinawa*, translated by Takuma Sminkey, edited by Edited by Davinder L. Bhowmik and Steve Rabson, 124.

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[107] Ibid. 142.
[108] Ibid. 146.

This story demonstrates the hopelessness and loneliness of island life in Okinawa. It is interesting that, even within Okinawa, the smaller islands are considered remote and isolated when compared to the larger central island. This same dichotomy then applies to Okinawa when compared with mainland Japan. Takako's story continues a trend demonstrated in earlier literature of how Okinawan women were often abandoned by their men for success elsewhere, especially the mainland. As before, young people left the smaller islands of Okinawa for work and a better life somewhere else. As a result, the small islands' populations shrunk and, as in the story, only the elderly remained. Toki represents the elderly who graciously accepted their isolated and perhaps doomed lives on the islands. Embracing their island identity, bereft of the economic or cultural value of city life, they resolve to live a lonely existence. Here, Takako represents the younger generation. She too tried to leave behind the island identity and its old traditions in pursuit of life in the city. Although, as she discovers with Toki, there is pride and passion to be found in the humble traditions of island culture. Even if island life is isolated and without the same freedoms or opportunities as city life, it contains a certain intimacy for her. By the end of the story, she grew to respect island culture though it is ambiguous whether she fully accepted it.

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[109] Ibid. 157.

These stories demonstrate how, in modern times, Okinawan identity became concerned with addressing and reconciling with the island's violent past and its dying culture. Even fifty years after the war, the memory looms large in Okinawan minds even if they did not want to openly acknowledge it. Through his story “Droplets” Medoruma suggests a reckoning and confrontation with the war is necessary rather than remembering it in sanitized or romanticized ways. The implication is that Okinawan identity as simple victims of greater powers allows them to hide from the ugly truth that Okinawans themselves have participated in hiding or repressing memories of the war. That Okinawans did participate in the fighting, voluntarily and involuntarily. By avoiding these uncomfortable truths, Okinawans profit off a comfortable lie, as Tokusho did. These themes carry over into “Tree of Butterflies” where the character of Gozei directly experiences the isolation and suppression of herself by Okinawans too afraid to confront the past she represents. Then, as "Island Confinement" suggested, Okinawans have an ambiguous identity that feels ashamed of their island culture. This is because island life and culture contain outdated traditions and are without the promise of economic opportunity or, really, a future. Just as their ancestors felt under the Japanese Empire years ago, Okinawans felt the shame of 'primitive' island culture that only seemed to engender loneliness and hopelessness while city life offered opportunity and vibrance. However, there is also the implication that island culture, that traditions, are an inescapable and integral part of Okinawan identity. Even if that identity may seem to trap people, it can also bring out the passion and pride that people have for their traditions. Okinawa, even in the present, remains ambiguously torn between the modern successes of Japan or an island identity that, despite its gloominess, inevitably retains its people.

V

Conclusion

The history of Okinawa is that of an island people bullied by greater powers and adaptable to the changes they brought with them. This was the normative narrative that I began this chapter with. It should be clear that such a narrative of Okinawan history belies the greater complexities of Okinawan identity. Okinawans did not so easily 'adapt' to Chinese, Japanese, or American ideas. They were not simply victims of complete subjugation. Rather, Okinawan identity changed and evolved over many years. Often, the identity imposed upon them was self-imposed. The ideas of primitivity and modernity introduced by the Japanese Empire were adopted by the Okinawans. Even today, they struggle to resolve their ambiguous desire to be seen as 'modern' people heavily influenced by the Japanese language and economy or as an island people with a rich history and distinct traditions reaching back thousands of years. Also, looming large in Okinawan identity was the Second World War and its disastrous effects on the island. Okinawans first recognized themselves as victims of the United States and Japan, and with the American occupation found themselves also victims of the same racial discrimination others suffered. After reunification with Japan, some of these ideas persisted, even as authors expressed a desire to confront the ugly truth of the war and shatter the overly simplistic identity of victimhood.

What remains common throughout the years, the evolutions and ambiguities in Okinawan identity is an expressed desire to identify strongly with a group for fear of loneliness. Authors under the Japanese Empire expressed that Okinawans found themselves stuck between the identity of primitivity and modernity. Despite earnest attempts to modernize and adapt to Japan they still found themselves excluded only to then feel discomfort with their native cultures having adopted a modern form. In the postwar, Okinawans envisioned themselves as lonely victims of greater powers. Still bereft of independence and, indeed, experiencing a gradual loss of native language and culture authors advocated for an Okinawan identity that acknowledged Japanese ties and native roots. Beyond the powerlessness and loneliness of victimhood, they envisioned Okinawans that persevered and endured together. More modern authors expanded upon the victim identity and identity as more backward islanders. The loneliness and sadness of repressed war memories and repressed island culture haunted the characters in these stories. It was their loneliness caused by these two things that also led them to seek out community by confronting the fallen dead and reconnecting with island culture. Though confronting past war trauma has a clearer resolution, the ambiguity of Okinawa’s traditional islander identity remains both a source of and solution to loneliness. However, what is clear is that ignoring the complicated past or reality of Okinawan identity belies the true anxieties and complexities of the Okinawan experience and history. Going into the future, not only Okinawans, but Japanese too must understand the loneliness and pain present in Okinawan history. By confronting it and addressing it, perhaps there is some hope for greater unity and solidarity amongst humans rather than division amongst differing identities.

CHAPTER IV

AINU IDENTITY: A PEOPLE WHO LIVE WITH NATURE AND ITS SPIRITS

I

Introduction

> *The Ainu have not intentionally forgotten their culture and their language. It is the modern Japanese state that, from the Meiji era on, usurped our land, destroyed our culture, and deprived us of our language under the euphemism of assimilation. In the space of a mere 100 years, they nearly decimated the Ainu*

> *culture and language that had taken tens of thousands of years to come into being on this earth.*[110]
>
> -Kayano Shigeru, *Our Land Was a Forest*

In this chapter, I will explore the Ainu people's religious worldview and how, until the present, it remains a vital part of their cultural, ethnic, and national identity. The modern history of the Ainu is one of decline, a result of assimilation forced by the Japanese state. As the important Ainu leader, Kayano Shigeru, expressed, the Ainu culture was nearly destroyed after years of concerted efforts by the Japanese government. Forced off their land, forbidden to use their native language, and re-educated as proper citizens of the Japanese nation, the Ainu lost a sense of their cultural and ethnic identity. I contend that to understand the enormity of this loss, one must understand the central importance of nature to the Ainu way of life and religion. Through their words and literature, it is clear that Ainu existence was defined by their relationship with nature. Their world was full of spirits and their life was centered on forging a harmonious relationship with the spirits that inhabited nature. To live a good and prosperous life, one had to respect the spirits. When Japanese industrialization resulted in mass deforestation and the overhunting of many animal species, the Ainu's relationship with nature was shattered. Bereft of their former homelands, food, language, and spiritual relationship with nature, the Ainu felt the loss of their world to the Japanese modern world. Expressed especially by modern Ainu, the loneliness they felt as a declining people can only be understood by the loss of connection they felt with the world around them. Yet, it is this same feeling of loss and loneliness that propels the eventual revival of modern Ainu identity. Marginalized to the periphery of the Japanese nation, Ainu today seek to recreate and preserve at least some of the world in which their ancestors lived. They, like other minority groups in Japan, seek an identity to belong to, one which might ward off the loneliness they feel as a subjugated people.

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[110] Kayano Shigeru, *Our Land Was a Forest*. Translated by Kyoko Selden and Lili Selden. (Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), 153.

Geographically speaking, the Ainu are the native people living on the islands north of mainland Japan. These include the larger islands of Hokkaido, Sakhalin, and the Kuril Islands. The largest population of Ainu lived on Hokkaido, historically called Ezo. The Ainu were not a uniform people, they were split into different tribes that lived by rivers or the coast, often interacting with one another. Although they did share culture and a common language, these similarities were accented by regional differences in language, religion, and other practices. For this chapter, I will mostly be referring to the modern history of the Ainu on the island of Hokkaido. I place the start of this period in 1869, the year in which Hokkaido was officially annexed by the modern Japanese state. Still, it is important to note the pre-modern history of the Ainu as well.

Hokkaido is geographically located north of Honshu, the largest island of Japan, and south of Sakhalin, a smaller island off the coast of the Transamur region of Russia or Siberia. Dating back to the Medieval Period of Japan, the Ainu had significant contact with people living in mainland Asia in the Transamur and also the Japanese living to their south. Particularly beginning in the 16th century, trade flowed between the Ainu and Japanese settlers living on the southern coast of Hokkaido. Still, there were disputes between the Ainu and the Japanese that occasionally evolved into deadly warfare.[111] Though a hunter-gatherer people, the Ainu were certainly able and willing to fight Japanese settlers and their samurai Daimyo lords. Although there were a few more bouts of resistance going into the 18th century, eventually, the Japanese Matsumae Clan that ruled a small portion of the island's southernmost peninsula came to dominate the Ainu. Formal resistance in terms of warfare ceased and instead of bartering for Ainu products, the Japanese began to exploit the Ainu themselves for labor at fisheries.[112] This represented a major shift in the relationship between the Ainu and the Japanese and began the process of subjugating the Ainu by first incorporating them into the Japanese economic system. It is also important to note that while the Ainu did distinguish themselves from the Japanese, they did not have a conception of themselves as a nation. They still possessed a group identity, but it was not quite the modern national identity that would evolve out of their experiences with the modern Japanese state later.

The annexation of Hokkaido in 1869 represented another major shift. Over the next few decades, the Ainu were formally incorporated as citizens of Japan and came under policies of assimilation. Along with these policies, modern game, and hunting laws, as well as the forced relocation of Ainu communities, meant that the Ainu hunter-gatherer lifestyle came to an end. Japanese policies of forced assimilation were extremely detrimental to the Ainu who, by the early 20th century, fell into poverty and experienced prejudice from the new majority of Japanese settlers living in Hokkaido. Native speakers of Ainu dwindled, and it can be said that nobody lived a traditional Ainu lifestyle by the end of the Second World War in 1945. Yet, assimilation was not necessarily complete nor was the Ainu way of life entirely forgotten. Ainu politics and identity saw a revitalization in the postwar period. Ainu as a national identity was created and nurtured from the 1970s until the present when, only three years ago, the Ainu were finally recognized by the Japanese government as an indigenous people. The small but resilient Ainu community, today, focuses on preserving and restoring the language and culture of their people. Ainu language classes, the construction of older Ainu clothing and tools, and the effort to involve young people in traditional religious rituals all represent the efforts of a people to preserve themselves.

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[111] Richard Siddle, "Ainu History: An Overview," in *Ainu: Spirits of a Northern People*, Edited by William W. Fitzhugh and Chisato O. Dubreuil. (Arctic Studies Center, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution in association with University of Washington Press, 1999), 68-69.

[112] Richard Siddle, "Ainu History: An Overview," in *Ainu: Spirits of a Northern People*, Edited by William W. Fitzhugh and Chisato O. Dubreuil, 70.

In terms of historiography, the field of Ainu History is still underdeveloped in English owing to the lack of translation from Japanese works. However, the 1996 collection of essays, *Ainu: Spirit of a Northern People*, attempts to fill this void. It is a collaborative collection of essays written by Japanese and American scholars on the Ainu. The essays cover a variety of topics from religion and language to political history and art interpretation. According to William Fitzhugh, one of the main editors of the collection, the primary goal of the project was to track historical changes over time in the Ainu culture.[113] I intend to continue this trend, more specifically, by examining what constituted Ainu religious beliefs and how the loss of access to those beliefs affected a growing awareness of Ainu identity that evolved into the modern conception of an Ainu nation. Indeed, the essays I most relied upon in my research were those that discussed Ainu concepts of spirituality, life, and death.

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[113] William W. Fitzhugh, "Introduction," in Ainu: Spirits of a Northern People, Edited by William W. Fitzhugh and Chisato O. Dubreuil. (Arctic Studies Center, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution in association with University of Washington Press, 1999), 26.

Another invaluable secondary source of information in my research was Sarah Strong's book, *Ainu Spirits Singing: The Living World of Chiri Yukie's Ainu Shinyōshū*. This book explains and analyzes Ainu religious beliefs and their worldview through thirteen Ainu stories called *Kamui Yukar*. These stories were an essential part of the Ainu oral tradition and were translated into Japanese by the young Ainu woman, Chiri Yukie, in 1922. Strong emphasizes that the *Kamui Yukar* demonstrate the Ainu shamanistic and animistic worldview because of the way they depict animals and plants as "conscious subjects" and humans as "members of a much larger community of beings…both physical and spiritual."[114] In the aforementioned collection of essays on the Ainu, several scholars also agree with this sentiment. Interestingly, Strong and other scholars frequently comment that Ainu religious beliefs are quite similar to those of Native Americans, particularly those located in the Pacific Northwest of Canada. While I do not focus on this point of comparison, it is still an important to mention because it is an example of global trends of shamanism. I generally agree with Strong and other scholars' assessment of Ainu religion as animistic and shamanistic. However, where I depart from their analysis is my exploration of the connection between these religious beliefs and the constitution of Ainu identity.

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[114] Sarah M. Strong. *Ainu Spirits Singing: The Living World of Chiri Yukie's Ainu Shinyōshū*. (University of Hawai'i Press, 2011). 7.

In this chapter, I will explore how Ainu religious beliefs constituted Ainu identity and thus, how the loss of these beliefs severely injured Ainu culture and self-identity. The loss of their culture led to an increased awareness of what it meant to be Ainu, thus eventually leading to the creation of an Ainu national identity in an effort to valorize and preserve their waning culture. Organizing this chapter into three sections, I will first explain the Ainu worldview and their animistic religious beliefs. In this effort, I mostly rely on Strong's understanding and that of other scholars in *Ainu: Spirit of a Northern People* to lay out a comprehensive picture of the historical Ainu worldview. Moving into the second section, I then analyze some of the thirteen *Kamui Yukar* to demonstrate the relationship the Ainu held with nature and the spirits inhabiting it. In the third section, I turn to the first-hand accounts of two important Ainu individuals. These are Chiri Yukie, the young translator of the *Kamui Yukar*, and Kayano Shigeru, a dedicated Ainu community leader and activist. By looking at their words, and their lives, I hope to demonstrate the Ainu perspective on religious beliefs, cultural decline, and national identity. Expressed in their words is a desire to belong, regret over what was already lost, and a desire to preserve what was left of Ainu culture. Ultimately, I hope to show why and how the Ainu, like others living under Japanese rule, sought out a group identity.

II

An Ainu World of Spirits

The Ainu word *Kamui* can be translated into English as *spirit* or *god*. Often, the word is confused with the similar-sounding Japanese word *Kami* which possesses a similar meaning about spirits and divine beings in Japanese mythology. However, the

Ainu *Kamui* are quite unique in terms of their roles and relations with humans. Shinko Ogihara explains that, for the Ainu, while there is a separation between the spaces that humans and spirits inhabit, they, "both are equal members of nature itself and have the same interests, feelings, and way of life."[115] In the Ainu world, there were the Ainu, which translates to *human* in the Ainu language, and there were *Kamui* that resided in all other things. This ranged from trees, animals, land, rivers, and ocean. Even Ainu tools such as boats were considered *Kamui*. I will discuss this conception of *Kamui* as similar to humans in more detail later. For now, it is important to emphasize that the Ainu felt a closeness with spirits and the divine and did not conceive of them, mostly, as far-off beings intrinsically transcendent to human existence. Rather, spirits occupied the same natural world that the Ainu did and interactions with them occurred daily.

However, it is still important to understand that the Ainu conceived of their world as cosmologically separate from a heaven and underworld. Arranged vertically, above and below the human world, both were inhabited by *Kamui* seen as more powerful than those closer to the human world. In the Ainu language, the human world was known as the *Ainu Moshir*. Here, humans and many different *Kamui* coexisted in a relatively harmonious and peaceful relationship. These *Kamui* ranged in importance and power from the smaller hare to the mighty bear that ruled over the mountains of Hokkaido.

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[115] Shinko Ogihara, "Mythology and Animal Tales," in *Ainu: Spirits of a Northern People*, Edited by William W. Fitzhugh and Chisato O. Dubreuil. (Arctic Studies Center, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution in association with University of Washington Press, 1999), 275.

Above the human world was the *Kamui Moshir*, the spiritual realm of the *Kamui*. With the vertical arrangement I mentioned previously, the Ainu believed that the lower portions of this upper realm could be seen by the human eye. The clouds were the lowest visible portion where one could see birds flying, often perceived as messengers for the more powerful *Kamui* living further up.[116] These spirits lived beyond the stars, the last visible portion of the realm to humans, and included spirits such as the *Kanto-Kor-Kamui*, the dragon spirit that governs the heavens, or the Keeper of Game and the Keeper of Fish.[117] These spirits are invisible to the human eye and reside at the peak of the hierarchy of the *Kamui*. They were responsible for managing the lower *Kamui* that interact with humans in the *Ainu Moshir* (Earth).

Above all *Kamui* is the creator or progenitor spirit, *Kotan-Kar-Kamui*, literally translated as land-making-deity[118]. While the stories vary depending upon the Ainu community, they all agree that this creator-deity created the world and humans. In some versions of the creation story, other lower spirits helped and served as assistants to the creator-deity in fashioning the world or creating humanity. It is important to emphasize that the Ainu religion was not monotheistic, even with the existence of the creator-deity in its mythology. The Ainu did not worship nor interact with the creator-deity as they did with other lower *Kamui*.

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[116] Sarah M. Strong. *Ainu Spirits Singing: The Living World of Chiri Yukie's Ainu Shinyōshū*. (University of Hawai'i Press, 2011), 78.

[117] Strong. *Ainu Spirits Singing: The Living World of Chiri Yukie's Ainu Shinyōshū*. 78.

[118] Ogihara, "Mythology and Animal Tales," in *Ainu: Spirits of a Northern People*, Edited by William W. Fitzhugh and Chisato O. Dubreuil. 275.

Conceptually, the *Kamui Moshir* was associated with positive images of the sunlight and sky and was the final destination of human souls after death.[119] What is most important about the *Kamui* that live here is their role as protectors and providers for humanity. This relationship will be explored in more detail later, but just as some spirits helped the creator-deity create and maintain the *Ainu Moshir*, other powerful spirits such as the Keeper of Game made sure that deer, hares, and other animals assisted them in keeping humans alive and prosperous.

In many ways, the opposite of the skywards and sunlit *Kamui Moshir*, the *Pokna Moshir* (the underworld) was associated with darkness, negativity, and being underground. Contrasting with birds from the sky, frogs and salamanders were seen as originating from bogs and swamps that were themselves the physical portion of the underworld that was visible. The deeper parts of the underworld, invisible to the human eye, are home to exiled spirits that seek to harm humans and disrupt the natural balance of the human world. Their agents, such as frogs and salamanders, were thought to cast curses and spread disease amongst humans. In this context, Sarah Strong remarks that the worldview of the Ainu was one that seemingly pitted "the qualities and forces of the *Kamui Moshir* against those of the *Pokna Moshir*."[120] Indeed, while the *Kamui* from the heavens sought to preserve and maintain human life the *Kamui* from the underworld seemed determined to disrupt and harm humans. Thus, for the Ainu, the good and natural order was a harmonious relationship with the spirits of the *Kamui Moshir* and their agents on Earth such as Orca whales, bears, or owls. Disruption of that relationship by a *Kamui* was viewed as wrong, and evil, and resulted in the spirit's banishment to the underworld in many stories.

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[119] Strong. *Ainu Spirits Singing: The Living World of Chiri Yukie's Ainu Shinyōshū*. 78.
[120] Ibid. 79.

In mythology, the vanquisher of these evil spirits was often the culture hero of the Ainu. This figure was known as Okikurumi and was cited as the progenitor of the Ainu culture as a half-human half-*Kamui* demigod. In one story, he rescues a sun goddess from an underground chamber where monsters had imprisoned her. He successfully rescues her and brings her back to the sky where sunlight is restored. As Ogihara remarks, “In this way, the world regained the sun and order was restored to the universe.”[121] This story, and others, reveals the dynamic between good and bad *Kamui* as markers of balance and nature versus disruptors and creators of chaos. While Okikurumi was important to Ainu mythology, I will also discuss the appearance of his son, *Pon Okikurumi*, in the *Kamui-Yukar* (chants about *Kamui*). He too fulfills the role of the culture hero as a restorer of balance and vanquisher of evil or mischievous spirits.[122]

While I have emphasized, thus far, the differences and separation between the human world of the Ainu and the heavens and the underworld, I would like to reemphasize the closeness between these three realms of existence. The Ainu envisioned nature as encompassing all three realms. This can be seen in the physical closeness of the heavens as the sky and the bogs, swamps, and underground of the underworld. There was a lot of movement between these different realms. *Kamui* came down from the heavens as birds (messengers), came from the underworld as chaotic troublemakers (frogs or salamanders), and human souls left for the *Kamui Moshir* upon death. In describing the Ainu worldview, I hope to have demonstrated how it is different from more strict religious worldviews that separate the material world and the spiritual. For the Ainu, everything was part of nature, and one could interact with the *Kamui* (good and bad) in degrees of gradience ranging from the animals in the human world to the invisible benevolent spirits beyond the stars.

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[121] Ogihara, “Mythology and Animal Tales,” in *Ainu: Spirits of a Northern People*, Edited by William W. Fitzhugh and Chisato O. Dubreuil. 276.

[122] Strong. *Ainu Spirits Singing: The Living World of Chiri Yukie’s Ainu Shinyōshū*. 133.

III

A Relationship with *Kamui*

Having spoken at great length about the world the Ainu inhabited, I will now turn to a more detailed exploration of the relationship the Ainu held with *Kamui*. As previously mentioned, the key to the Ainu world and relationship with the *Kamui* was the concept of balance. This applies especially to the, so called good spirits, those *Kamui* from the heavens whose purpose was to maintain balance in the human world for humanity's sake. In this context, balance was the ability of the Ainu to receive enough food and resources (given as gifts from spirits) from the land without becoming greedy for too much and therefore possibly disrupting the natural order. That order being the reciprocal relationship between Ainu and *Kamui*. In this order, the spirits offered up enough resources for humans to survive. In return, humans gave the spirits material offerings as thanks. The spirits, happy with their offerings would repeat the cycle. Thus, the Ainu survived off what nature (the spirits) appropriately provided, and they returned the favor with gifts of their own.

What modern civilizations calls nature, was simply the vehicle by which the Ainu believed they received gifts from the spirits. Trees, fish, deer, and all other resources the Ainu harvested were either spirits willingly giving themselves up to sustain humanity or they were weaker spirits guided by stronger spirits to feed humans. For example, Ainu that lived near the coast tended to pay great respect to and worship Orcas. In their eyes, when Orcas forced whales to beach themselves during a hunt this was a gift from the Orca. The Orca was the powerful spirit of the sea that graciously provided food and resources for tools by guiding the weaker spirits (whales) to the shore. The same would apply to fish caught in rivers or oceans who, at the direction of the Keeper of Fish, let themselves be caught for human consumption. In this way, the good *Kamui* graciously kept humanity alive.

It is important to emphasize that the Ainu did not see the *Kamui* as dead when its physical form was taken in a hunt. Rather, the spirit simply shed the physical form it had taken on when descending from the heavens. Strong likens this physical form to a costume or suit for the spirit. In Ainu, this physical form is called *hayokpe* which literally translates to *armor*.[123] When an animal died, really the spirit had just shed its *hayokpe* and returned to its immaterial and invisible spiritual form. For example, a bear killed in a hunt, having given its physical body to humans out of generosity would return to its mountain home in its spirit form where it eagerly awaited gifts from the humans. This is an example of a typical Ainu conception of hunting. In other cases, such as the Orca, offerings would be made to the Orca not because they sacrificed their own body but because they guided other spirits (the whales) to do so. The Ainu imagined the spirits when in their spiritual but invisible form, to be anthropomorphic in appearance and in the sense that they desired wine and other material goods as humans would. They imagined the spirits drinking gifts of wine and sharing them with other spirits, therefore increasing the prestige of that specific *Kamui* and reinforcing the benefits the spirits received too their reciprocal relationship with humans.

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[123] Ibid. 68.

The Ainu did not one-sidedly expect the spirits to keep the balance in their favor. Rather, it was the responsibility of a good Ainu to reciprocate any gifts or resources received from the spirits. This practice required that a few items be offered up as gifts to the *Kamui* in thanks. The two essential offerings were wine and *inau* (a shaved stick).[124] These gifts were conveyed to the spirits via the *tuki* (a ceremonial cup) and the *ikupasui*, an ornately carved stick that acted as a conduit for the prayers of the Ainu to reach the spirits. The *inau*, made of different local wood, were thought to transform into different metals upon entering the spirits' realm. In this way, the *Kamui* received gifts of alcohol and precious metal in return for the generous offering up of their physical form. However, as Strong emphasizes, "the *Kamui* do not need the humans' gifts…but they do *enjoy* the humans' gifts."[125] This reinforces the Ainu idea that the spirits provided for the

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[124] Ibid. 96.
[125] Ibid. 100.

Ainu out of generosity rather than a need for survival. Thus, it is important to remember that while humans interacted with and thought the spirits to be humanlike in their desires, there was still a degree of separation in terms of the material (human) and spiritual world.

I turn now to the *Ainu Shinyōshū* (Collection of Ainu chants of spiritual beings), a collection of religious chants about the *Kamui*. These chants were translated by a young Ainu woman during the early 1920s. I will turn to her story later, for now, I will focus on analyzing the chants she translated. The thirteen translated chants are from the oral tradition of the Horobetsu Ainu which, like all dialects of Ainu, lacked a written language. Thus, the translation was originally done in Japanese. These chants are called *Kamui Yukar*, and the meaning can be translated as *chant of the spirits*. They were performative rituals wherein, as Strong argues, female shamans were possessed by *Kamui*.[126] The spirit, in possession of the shaman, would then sing a chant about itself in the first person. This is why the chants are written from the first-person perspective. Ogihara categorizes the *Kamui Yukar* into four categories. There are chants that display negative deeds, those that display good deeds, those that explain Ainu rituals and beliefs, and those that explain the origins of animals. As Ogihara says, "these four types of kamuy-yukar instructed the younger generations about proper human behavior in general, and, especially, their relationship with kamuy."[127] At their core, these chants were animal tales, so it is important to remember that Ainu watching a chant performance would certainly have a particular real-world animal in mind when thinking of the possessed shaman.

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[126] Ibid. 7.

[127] Ogihara, "Mythology and Animal Tales," in *Ainu: Spirits of a Northern People*, Edited by William W. Fitzhugh and Chisato O. Dubreuil. 277.

In addition, it is important to briefly describe the two categories that *Kamui* were split into. There were *Pase Kamui* and *Koshne Kamui*. *Pase* means *weighty* and is used to describe physically big animals and powerful spirits such as the bear or Orca whose goal was to help humans survive. In contrast, *Koshne* means *of lightweight* and describes physically light animals and weaker spirits such as hares or deer.[128] While not necessarily always opposed to humans, these spirits are usually more mischievous and are not as intrinsically kind towards humans as the *Pase Kamui* are. I turn now to the chants in which these are present and serve as the heroic, villainous, or mischievous protagonists.

IV

The *Kamui Yukar* of the *Ainu Shinyōshū*

The first chant portrays a *weighty Kamui* whose main goal is to take care of humans and restore balances where there are imbalances. The chant is titled, “The Sacred Bird Spiritual Being [Fish Owl] Sings About Itself” and is told from the perspective of the Blakiston’s Fish Owl, native to Hokkaido. One of the longer chants included in the *Ainu Shinyōshū*, it demonstrates the essential Ainu relationship with nature and the spirits as well as Ainu conceptions of morality. The chant starts with the owl flying above a human village and observing the children playing. Notably, the owl spots an imbalance or problem that becomes its goal to fix. The owl notes "gazing below, it seemed to me that those who were poor in the past were now rich, and those who were rich are now poor."[129] This is the setup for the main problem that the *Kamui* will set out to solve in the chant. That is, a moral imbalance between those who are wealthy and those who are not. As Strong points out, the Ainu conception of wealth was its focus on wealth as proof of one's virtue or lack thereof.[130] Morality, in the Ainu context, meant that one properly honored and respected the spirits. Essentially, if someone was prosperous and wealthy, then this was taken as proof their virtuous relationship with the spirits. If one was poor, then this was taken as proof of their immorality and lack of respect for the spirits. Because the Ainu concept of resource-gathering was directly tied to the favor of *Kamui*, an abundance or lack of material goods became associated with the spirit's appreciation or anger towards an individual or family that did or did not properly respect the spirits with offerings. With this concept in mind, when the owl recognizes a reversal of fortunes in the village, it is not a natural phenomenon. Rather, as the chant will further illuminate, the normal dichotomy of virtue and wealth has been reversed to virtue and poverty.

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[128] Strong. *Ainu Spirits Singing: The Living World of Chiri Yukie’s Ainu Shinyōshū*. 106-107.

While flying over the village the owl fixated its gaze on the children below who were attempting to shoot him down to prove their bravery and hunting prowess. All the children but one used golden bows and arrows, and the owl purposefully dodged their attempts at shooting him down. Among the group, the owl spotted one child with a plain bow who “seemed the child of a poor family…And yet, when I studied his eyes with their steadfast look, I felt he was of noble stock.”[131] When this particular child loosed his bow, the owl let itself be struck by his arrow and fell to the ground. This passage is important because it demonstrates the Ainu conception of hunting. Hunting was not chiefly based on human agency. Instead, if an animal like the owl in the story was hit by a hunter's arrow then it was the spirit's choice to simply not avoid the arrow. Thus, the *Kamui* was giving up its animal body as a boon to those humans it deemed good and worthy, such as the poor child in the story. It is interesting to note the reversal of virtue and prosperity wherein the owl recognizes that despite the child's apparently poor status, there is something morally better about him than the other rich children. Indeed, after the owl's body falls to the ground, incredulous that the poor boy took what they viewed as a prize, the rich children beat the poorer child who eventually escapes back to his small home with the owl’s body.

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[129] Chiri Yukie. "The Sacred Bird Spiritual Being [Fish Owl] Sings About Itself (1926)," in *Ainu Spirits Singing: The Living World of Chiri Yukie's Ainu Shinyōshū*, Translated by Sarah M. Strong (University of Hawai'i Press, 2011). 197.
[130] Strong. *Ainu Spirits Singing: The Living World of Chiri Yukie's Ainu Shinyōshū*. 121.

Once inside the home, the owl spirit sees an elderly couple who “although they were extremely poor, they had the bearing of a gentleman and fine lady.”[132] The young boy's parents bowed together and offered a venerating chant. Expressing gratitude for the owl's visitation the elder man also expresses doubt in their worthiness to house the spirit, stating, “‘Owl spiritual being ,weighty spiritual being…In the past we were ones who counted ourselves among the well-to-do, but now we have become, as you see, poor and despised.'"[133] Despite considering themselves and their small house unworthy of the owl spirit, they perform this chant many times over and make the traditional offering of *inau*. As before, this portion of the chant focuses on the reversal of fortunes. Just as it recognized in the boy, the owl recognizes a certain nobility and goodness in the boy's elderly guardians despite their poverty which would normally indicate one's immorality. Instead, their humility and virtue are demonstrated when they perform the traditional rites and veneration for the owl spirit despite their poor status. This is especially important given the owl spirit's role as protector of villages and status as a *pase* or *weighty* spirit. Observing them to be virtuous and respectful to the *Kamui,* the owl rewards them.

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[131] Chiri Yukie. “The Sacred Bird Spiritual Being [Fish Owl] Sings About Itself (1926),” in *Ainu Spirits Singing: The Living World of Chiri Yukie’s Ainu Shinyōshū*, 198.
[132] Ibid. 199.

In the night, while the family sleeps, the owl spirit transforms the small house into a large house. Also, the owl spirit brings down beautiful robes and other great treasures to fill the newly made home fit for rich people. The family wakes up surprised by their new home and the treasure in it. Once again expressing thanks to the owl spirit, they quickly brew wine to offer up to the spirits. Then they send the young boy out in his formerly poor clothes to invite all the villagers for a feast. The newly rich people of the village laughed at the invitation and said "'Now what sort of sake could poor people make and what sort of feast could they have that's worth inviting people to?'"[134] Mocking the family, the villagers made their way to their home and were surprised to find a large house full of rich treasures. Getting up to speak, the elderly gentleman of the family regrets that their former poverty led to their ridiculed status in the village. Then, citing the generosity of the owl spirit for their newfound prosperity, he says "from now on we and all the villagers are as one people, and we would like to convey to the elders our wish that we all…have friendly relations with one another."[135] Rather than chastise his fellow villagers for their mistreatment of him and his family, the elderly man focuses on the generosity of the spirits and his desire to reconcile with the village. Demonstrating, again, his virtue, he did not become arrogant or prideful because of his wealth. Instead, he proved his humility and ultimate desire for harmony with the other villagers and with the spirits. Agreeing with the elderly man, and shamed by their previous actions, the other villagers offer prayer to the spirits too and then the whole village participates in a feast that rekindles the unity and good relationship between the villagers.

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[133] Ibid. 199.
[134] Ibid. 203.

The owl spirit watches on, disembodied, and approvingly leaves the humans of the village to their restored peace and harmony. Upon return to his home, he also finds the *inau* and wine provided by the family and has a feast of his own with his fellow spirits. Time passes, and the owl spirit recognizes that the village prospers, that the elderly gentleman becomes the chief of the village, and the boy becomes a man with a wife and family. The boy, now a man, continues to brew wine and make *inau* as offerings for the spirits. The chant ends with the owl spirit remarking "And as for me, I am always abiding here behind the human beings and protecting the human world."[136] The chant's end reemphasizes the role of the *Kamui* in graciously protecting humans and proving for them. Indeed, it is thanks to the spirit owl that the problem presented throughout the story, the reversal of fortunes and morality, is finally restored. The poor but virtuous family, once restored to wealth, prospered and went on to restore order amongst the other villagers too. It is implied that the newly rich villagers were originally disrespectful to the *Kamui*, demonstrated by the children's desire for the owl as a prize rather than a spirit to worship and their unfair greed and treatment towards the poor family. However, via the owl spirit's intervention, the poor family renewed good relations with the villagers and even got them to remember their obligations towards revering the spirits.

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[135] Ibid. 203.
[136] Ibid. 205.

This chant demonstrates many hallmarks of the *Kamui-Yukar* genre of chants as well as markers of Ainu culture. The formerly poor members of the village were apparently never reverent of the spirits and yet had attained great wealth while the formerly rich villagers became poor despite their veneration of the spirits. In the chant, it is not clear why this reversal and disruption occurred. Some scholars theorize that this reversal could indicate the Ainu's historical encounters with the Japanese that increasingly disrupted their relationship with nature.[137] If an Ainu could attain great wealth and resources through trade with the Japanese, this person was not attaining wealth via the good favor of the spirits but through material trade. Thus, it became difficult to ascertain if one was moral or not based on their wealth. In any case, the chant demonstrates the typical role of a *weighty Kamui* as a restorer of the natural order, that order being a balanced and respectful relationship with nature.

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[137] Strong. *Ainu Spirits Singing: The Living World of Chiri Yukie's Ainu Shinyōshū*. 122.

The next chant is titled “The Hare Sings About Himself” and is told from the perspective of two hares. It is a typical story of a *Koshne Kamui* meaning *of light weight*. This refers to the physically and metaphysically light weight of some animals, such as rabbits. While not necessarily evil, these types of spirits were seen as mischievous and less generous than the *weighty* spirits. The theme of the story is generally about the telling of the hare's origins and how it came to be an important game animal for the Ainu. Another important character in the story is Pon Okikurumi, the legendary son of the Ainu culture hero who plays a role similar to the *weighty* spirits such as the fish owl. The ultimate theme of the story, as in most *Kamui-Yukar*, is the reinforcement of *Kamui* support for humans.

The chant begins with narration from a hare who, along with his older brother, enjoys traveling around wrecking the snares and traps humans set to catch them. The younger brother recalls that his older “brother was wrecking all those spring bows” and he “always laughed at his doing that.”[138] Here, the problem of the story and the character of the hare is introduced. The issue is the hare's purposeful breaking of the human traps. Naturally, it is wrong of the hare spirits to contravene the wishes of the *weighty* spirits and those of the creator spirit to instead hinder human prosperity. Granted, the character of the hares is not one of complete malice, but rather one of childish mischievousness. After all, they are not directly attacking or harming humans but instead take joy from destroying their traps. It is also worth noting that the size of the hares in this story is much larger than in real life. More akin to the size of deer, this explains why the older hare can so easily break the human traps. The size of the hare becomes more important later in the story.

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[138] Chiri Yukie. “The Hare Sings About Himself (1926),” in *Ainu Spirits Singing: The Living World of Chiri Yukie’s Ainu Shinyōshū*, Translated by Sarah M. Strong. (University of Hawai’i Press, 2011) 217.

Moving back to the younger hare's narration, one day, he discovers his older brother trapped in a spring bow snare. Unlike the previous traps, this one holds and so the older brother tells the younger hare to get help from their village. The hare does so, only to return later to find his older brother gone. The perspective then switches to the older brother who finds himself caught in the trap only to be picked up eventually by a "human youth godlike in appearance."[139] Taken by the human to his home, the hare sees "The youth…drawing a ceremonial sword, chopped my body, skin and all, into pieces."[140] Then, the pieces are thrown into a pot and a fire lit to cook the meat. This youth would have obviously been known as the Ainu culture hero, Okikurumi, to any audience members of the chant. He, like the *weighty Kamui*, serves the important role of supporting humanity and even vanquishing evil spirits. In this case, before encountering Okikurumi, hares were as large as deer and easily able to break human traps. By cutting the hare into smaller pieces, as the chant will later explain, the culture hero becomes responsible for making the entire hare species into smaller and more easily huntable animals.

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[139] Chiri Yukie. "The Hare Sings About Himself (1926)," in *Ainu Spirits Singing: The Living World of Chiri Yukie's Ainu Shinyōshū*, Translated by Sarah M. Strong. 219.
[140] Ibid. 219.

The hare, waiting for the youth's attention to slip, crawls out of the pot as one of the smaller pieces of meat and tries to run away. Upon looking back, the hare notices the youth catching up and realizes, to his terror, that the youth is actually the powerful demi-god Okikurumi. However, out of pity for the hare, he lets him go. Upon returning to his village, the hare explains that "although previously hares had been creatures with big bodies the size of deer, because I had done those evil pranks I became the size of a piece of meat in Okikirmui's stew."[141] He then tells the other hares that they all shall be the same size as him now and that they should "never play evil pranks" again.[142] The chant ends with the hare's death after these final words towards the other hares. By the chant's end, the hare species assumed its natural position as an easily accessible game animal for humans. It is important to remember that the Ainu did not see hunting as exclusively based on the hunter's skill. Rather, the willingness of the animal spirit to give up its body was paramount. Here, the explanation for why hares were easily caught in Ainu traps is fully explained. As *lightweight* spirits, the hares were mischievous and less generous than the *weighty* spirits when it came to helping humans. It is through the intervention of the demi-god Okikurumi, similar to that of the *weighty* spirits, that the hares are taught a lesson to naturally support humans. Rather than a restoration of balance and harmony, this chant can be seen as the construction of the natural order. It also demonstrates how the Ainu relationship with nature and the spirits was not always strictly benevolent. The

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[141] Ibid. 220.

[142] Ibid. 220.

lightweight spirits such as the hare and deer, were more neutral in their morality than their *weighty* cousins that often forced them into a supportive relationship with humans.

In a third chant titled “The Bog Dweller Sings About Itself,” a *Kamui* that dwells in the underground and underworld take on the role of protagonist. While these *Kamui* are typically seen as taking on the form of frogs and lizards, the spirit in this story takes on no specific form in the beginning of the chant. Instead, it is simply described as a vague lizard-like monster that comes from a bog. This is a reminder that the Ainu did not always have a specific real-life animal corollary for every spirit. The spirit that tells this story, unlike the previous ones, is unmistakably evil. Called a *Wen Kamui* and *Nitne Kamui* or an *evil* and *hard* spirit, the bog dweller spirit is not mischievous like the *Koshne*, but malicious with the direct intent to hurt humans. Okikurumi again makes an appearance as the hero of mankind and the *Kamui* from the heavens. The chant is an archetypal display of the evil *Kamui*’*s* hostile relationship with humans and the natural order and how that natural order was preserved by spirits from the heavens.

The chant begins with narration from the bog dweller spirit who sees two humans walking toward him. One he notices is unhealthy-looking while the other looks brave and strong. While passing through the bog the unhealthy human remarks that the bog smells terrible and that the stench itself is enough to make him feel dirty. Upon hearing his comments, the bog dweller becomes angry and leaps out of the mud. It says, "As soon as I jumped out, the earth cracked open, the earth split into pieces, and I, with a loud gnashing of fangs, rushed pell-mell at the two."[143] The Ainu understanding of the *Pokna Moshnir* (underworld), and the evil spirits living in it, can be grasped from this passage. The Ainu associated smelliness, disease, and wetness with bogs, caves, and the animals that inhabited those environments. The spirits associated with the underworld thus took on these traits too. The bog dweller, though not completely revealed until the end of the chant, is a lizard-like creature with fangs that lives underground. The powerful description of it breaking apart the earth and coming from underground to attack the humans demonstrates the Ainu association of evil with the underground and the spirits that lived there. It is also important to note the bog dweller's direct targeting of humans rather than the hare's mischievous but relatively benign pranks. Thus, the bog dweller is cemented, from the start of the chant, as an underground dwelling evil monster.

Upon seeing the bog dweller leap at them from the mud, the brave-looking human quickly flees back to the nearby village while the sick-looking human is swallowed whole by the monster. Chasing the surviving human, the bog dweller reaches a human village where the sacred grandmother, the *Kamui* of fire and a protector of humans, attempts to stop it. As the bog dweller says, "with her red staff, her metal staff, she struck me on the head, and from the tip of her staff many fierce sparks…poured down on my head."[144] The conflict between the heavens and the underworld directly occurs here between a good *Kamui* and an evil *Kamui*. The sacred grandmother, as the spirit of fire, was seen as an important protector of humans and their homes. However, the fire spirit could only distract and slow down the bog dweller who continues to chase the surviving human through the village. This demonstrates the power and malevolence of the bog dweller, and of the *Wen Kamui* in general, that was able to shrug off the attacks of a powerful spirit loyal to humans.

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[143] Chiri Yukie. "The Bog Dweller Sings About Itself (1926)," in *Ainu Spirits Singing: The Living World of Chiri Yukie's Ainu Shinyōshū*, Translated by Sarah M. Strong. (University of Hawai'i Press, 2011) 221.

[144] Chiri Yukie. "The Bog Dweller Sings About Itself (1926)," in *Ainu Spirits Singing: The Living World of Chiri Yukie's Ainu Shinyōshū*, Translated by Sarah M. Strong. 222.

While the bog dweller was distracted by the fire spirit, the surviving human grabbed a bow, nocked a mugwort arrow, (an important Ainu herb), and loosed it at the evil spirit. The spirit blacks out only to wake up disembodied and looking at its corpse, now fully revealed in the chant as that of a lizard. The humans are cutting its body into pieces and burning them. The bog dweller spirit notes that the youth he had chased was actually the culture hero Okikurumi. Recognizing itself as "a fearsome, bad spiritual being, an evil spiritual being, who lived nearby the humans' village" it notes that Okikurumi enacted a plan to draw it out and kill it "out of concern for the village."[145] The unhealthy-looking human was actually a decoy made of Okikurumi's feces, so nobody died during the evil spirit's rampage. Having been killed, dismembered, and burned, the spirit recognizes that "Because I was an evil spiritual being, I was now sent to the underworld…and so from now on in the human world there shouldn't be anything that causes worry."[146] The chant ends with the spirit's permanent banishment to the underworld by Okikurumi, never again a threat to humans. Again, Okikurumi serves as a vanquisher of evil on behalf of the heavens and humanity. Though, it is also important to note the role that humans played by helping dispose of the spirit's physical body thus displaying the part humans can play in vanquishing evil spirits and restoring peace.

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[145] Ibid. 223.

[146] Ibid. 223.

By the chant's end, peace is restored to the human world via human and spiritual aid. After all, Okikurumi is a half-human half-spirit demigod, so part of his efforts to vanquish evil spirits is a human effort. Indeed, the mugwort arrow used by the culture hero was an important herb to the Ainu in real-life, famed for its healing properties that proved, in opposite, deadly to the disease-spreading lizard. This story serves as a way to understand the real-life origins and practicality of the Ainu worldview. After all, bogs and swamps are notorious for disease-carrying animals and their bad smells. In this sense, it would be easy to understand why then the animals that inhabited these places became, to the Ainu, evil spirits that embodied the smells and traits of the places they lived. To an Ainu audience, especially children, these were animals and places to avoid and detest.

It was through such chants that Ainu children learned about the world they lived in and how they should interact with it. Animals such as owls were to be respected as they were *weighty* spirits responsible for bringing prosperity to humans. The *lightweight* spirits, such as the hare, were to be distrusted to some extent for their mischievousness but ultimately graciously accepted for food and resources. Then, the evil spirits of the underworld were to be detested and avoided because of their desire to spread disease and physically hurt humans. From these chants, the Ainu world appears not as one strictly divided between heaven, earth, and hell. Rather, it appears as a world full of movement between different realms. Benevolent spirits come down from the heavens to provide for and protect humans from the evil spirits of the underworld that come from underground to attack humans. These stories highlight this movement, and the agency of the spirits not as animals without intelligence, but as beings with desires and agency similar to that of humans. Ultimately, the overarching theme of these chants is one of a balanced relationship with nature. Every chant is about a disruption of this balance and a return to peace. These disruptions were caused by humans and spirits but also capable of being fixed by humans and spirits. Thus, to the Ainu, maintaining a balanced relationship with nature was central to their identity, culture, and way of life.

V

Modern Ainu Identity and Politics

Now, I turn to the lives and words of Chiri Yukie and Kayano Shigeru. I also, more briefly, discuss the words of Giichi Nomura, a staunch Ainu activist. It is through their lives, as Ainu, that I hope to demonstrate how modern Ainu conceived of their culture and identity as one, once, intimately connected to nature but now in decline. Through their experiences and the experiences of those around them I hope to understand how their lonely feelings and self-perception of the Ainu as a dying people were tempered by a determination to preserve and revitalize in the face of Japanese power. Their words demonstrate the modern creation of an Ainu national identity centered around a romantic past in which Ainu maintained a balanced relationship with nature.

Chiri Yukie was born in 1903 in the Ainu community of the Horobetsu area of Hokkaido. From a young age, she displayed exceptional intelligence and a keen understanding of language. Moreover, she was exposed to the oral traditions of her people via her maternal grandmother who was a shamanistic performer of *Kamui-Yukar*. There is no doubt that the time spent with her grandmother lent her great knowledge and familiarity with the Ainu language and culture that she would later utilize to translate the oral chants into Japanese.[147] While at school, she also attained a masterful understanding of the Japanese written and spoken language, despite discrimination from ethnic Japanese students. At around fifteen years old, in 1918, she was noticed by the Japanese linguist, Kindaichi Kyosuke, who had traveled to Hokkaido to research the oral traditions of the Ainu. Originally, he had intended to meet with Yukie's grandmother but upon discovering the young girl's bilingual abilities and knowledge of Ainu oral traditions, he instead began working with her instead. With her Japanese linguistic abilities in mind, Kindaichi convinced Yukie to create a transcription of the *Kamui-Yukar*, a part of the oral traditions of her people.[148] She agreed and eventually he convinced her to move to Tokyo and directly work with him on translating the Ainu language into the Latin Alphabet which was then translated into Japanese letters. Her transcription of the *Yukar* was finished on September 13, 1922, and, suffering from heart disease, she died soon after on September 18, 1922.[149] It is thanks to her final efforts in a short life that the *Ainu Shinyōshū* of thirteen Ainu spiritual chants was completed.

In spite of her lifelong sickness due to genetic heart disease, she was fiercely motivated to complete the transcription. Her motivations for traveling far away from her home in Hokkaido to metropolitan Tokyo to complete the transcription are strong and can be understood from her own words. In the preface to the *Ainu Shinyōshū*, she describes the natural setting of Hokkaido. She describes the snowy vistas of winter, the blossoms of spring, and the mating calls of deer in the autumn. However, she then laments "that this is now a thing of the past; the dream was ruptured decades ago. The land has undergone rapid change…progressively turning mountains and fields to villages, villages to towns."[150] Here, Yukie reminds the reader of a romantic Ainu past in which the natural landscape of their homeland was still untouched by industrialization and Japanese influence. As we know from the chants, nature was extremely important to the Ainu with Yukie going as far as to say her people were once "truly the beloved children of nature."[151] Reflected here was a sad acknowledgment that the romantic past in which the Ainu lived in harmony with nature was finished. When she was writing these words, Hokkaido was an official prefecture of Japan and a ripe source of lumber, fish, and other natural resources. One example of Japanese exploitation of natural resources, at the expense of Ainu, was the banning of fishing for salmon in rivers. Instead, as Sarah Strong says, the Japanese government "outlawed the taking of these fish when they returned to the rivers…Instead, the salmon are caught from large offshore fishing vessels."[152] This is but one example of how the Ainu were denied access to their traditional sources of food, and thus a part of their cultural identity.

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[147] Strong. *Ainu Spirits Singing: The Living World of Chiri Yukie's Ainu Shinyōshū*. 15-17.
[148] Ibid. 29.
[149] Ibid. 3.

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[150] Chiri Yukie. "Preface, by Chiri Yukie (March 1, 1922)," in *Ainu Spirits Singing: The Living World of Chiri Yukie's Ainu Shinyōshū*, Translated by Sarah M. Strong. (University of Hawai'i Press, 2011). 195.

[151] Chiri Yukie. "Preface, by Chiri Yukie (March 1, 1922)," in *Ainu Spirits Singing: The Living World of Chiri Yukie's Ainu Shinyōshū*, Translated by Sarah M. Strong. 195.

[152] Strong. *Ainu Spirits Singing: The Living World of Chiri Yukie's Ainu Shinyōshū*. 60.

Further on in the preface, Yukie laments not only the loss of the Ainu's natural homeland to industrialization but also a decline in her people's numbers. As she says, "The few of fellow kinspeople who remain…from those eyes has faded the beautiful sparkle of the spirit of the people of the past whose every action was informed by religious feeling."[153] While this claim of Ainu population decline is not entirely true, one must also understand the forced cultural assimilation that the Ainu were undergoing at this time. While the number of Ainu did not significantly decline in the modern period, assimilation policies by Japan did cause a major decline in linguistic and cultural knowledge within the Ainu community. Even Yukie's name, a Japanese one, reflects this change. Her rare status as a bilingual Ainu with a deep understanding of their oral traditions further demonstrates the decline amongst Ainu of their culture and language.

Indeed, as the quote above shows, she recognized this decline in a religious sense too. Her people's identity as a people that lived close to nature, and thus the spirits in it, was diminished. The performance of a shamanistic chant was become increasingly difficult given that younger generations could not speak fluent Ainu, nor did they have access to animals as they did before due to Japanese laws. Thus, cut off from their way of life that was religiously connected with nature, Yukie pessimistically says, "We are a pitiful sight. A dying people….That is our name. What a sad name we bear!"[154] The world conceived of in the chants, the Ainu world, was already gone and her people were dying for want of it. And yet, despite this pessimism, Chiri Yukie persisted in transcribing the oral traditions of her people.

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[153] Chiri Yukie. "Preface, by Chiri Yukie (March 1, 1922)," in *Ainu Spirits Singing: The Living World of Chiri Yukie's Ainu Shinyōshū*, Translated by Sarah M. Strong. 195.
[154] Ibid. 195.

In letters written from Tokyo to her parents back in Hokkaido, Yukie expresses the importance of what she calls a "mission" in transcribing the oral legends of her people. In reference to the *Kamui-Yukar*, she states in one letter,

> *I can't think of anything that would be a greater souvenir for later generations of scholars, but the myriad of legends that have been passed down since ancient times are crumbling in the heat of the struggle for survival. It is truly a sad thing for us that we, the Ainu people, will perish along with them.*[155]

Mirroring the same pessimism in her preface, Yukie feels that the Ainu are a dying people and that their oral traditions are also dying with them. Although, the structure of this sentiment in her letter demonstrates a slightly different nuance. She first establishes the value that these oral traditions hold by describing them as great gifts for scholars in the future. Then, she describes how these traditions are destroyed in a "struggle for survival." It is only after this that she states that the Ainu people will "perish along with them." The nuance in this structure is that the oral traditions are not "crumbling" because of the Ainu people's decline but rather the opposite. The Ainu people "will perish" because of the crumbling of their oral traditions. This is what is most sad to Yukie, and it is consistent with her statements in the preface about the importance of the Ainu identity and religion. It is sad enough that her people's oral traditions are disappearing, but, because Ainu identity is so closely tied to their religion, this means too that the Ainu people will perish. In this sense, the *Yukar* are not just religious chants, but also an irreplaceable organ of the Ainu people.

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[155] Chiri Yukie. Chiri Yukie to Kyosuke Kindaichi, June 24, 1920. In *Chiri Yukie's Letters*. Edited by Takashi Kawayama and Masatoshi Matsunaga. https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000276/files/46482_28582.html.

In another letter to her parents, written only a few days before her death, Yukie expresses her religious conviction in her endeavor to transcribe the *Yukar*.

> *And I keenly felt that I was entrusted with a big mission that only I could do. It is to write down the literary arts that our beloved compatriots have left behind over the millennia. This job is the most worthy and honorable business for me. The past twenty years of sickness, the agony of repentance for sins, all these things were the whip of love that God gave me. All these experiences have made me cultivated and refined, and made me realize that I have only one mission...*[156]

Interestingly, Yukie expresses her Christian devotion to God and the belief that the transcription of her people's oral traditions is a mission from God. Indeed, the presence of missionaries and mission schools among the Ainu was strong in the 20th century. Chiri Yukie's mother was educated at such a school and thus her daughter became Christian too.[157] Yukie's rationalization of her relationship with God is especially interesting considering the content of her mission: the non-Christian religious traditions of her people. In this passage, Yukie reflects on her lifelong sickness from her weak heart. She understands her physical condition as a sort of trial from God, one that endowed with her a weak body, shorter life, and the inability to produce children (as she would likely die during the pregnancy). While she may not have known she would perish only a few days after writing this letter, Yukie was clearly aware of her shortened lifespan. In this context, she came to understand her short life's mission was to record her people's legacy. Even if she did not religiously believe in her people's traditions, she saw beauty in them and their preservation. Her conception of herself as on a divine mission to preserve her people's culture, despite its un-Christian nature, speaks to a sense of Ainu nationalism. Although not worded strongly, Yukie's identification of her culture and peoples as "millennia" old with "ancient" traditions is emblematic of nationalist ideas of the permanence of the nation stretching back many years. It is important to remember that her nationalist and religious motivations for transcribing her people's oral traditions only existed in the context of her perception of the Ainu as a dying people. It is this solemn acknowledgment that leads Yukie to view her people's lonely disposition in the "struggle for survival" as a people destined for destruction. With her culture and people fated to vanish, Yukie saw her nationalistic mission of preservation as absolutely important.

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[156] Chiri Yukie. Chiri Yukie to Takayoshi and Chiri Namiko, Sept 14, 1922. In *Chiri Yukie's Letters*. Edited by Takashi Kawayama and Masatoshi Matsunaga. https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000276/files/46482_28582.html.

[157] Strong. *Ainu Spirits Singing: The Living World of Chiri Yukie's Ainu Shinyōshū*. 14.

Another modern Ainu individual who sought the preservation of his culture was Kayano Shigeru. Kayano Shigeru was born on June 15, 1923, around a year after Chiri Yukie's death. Much like Chiri Yukie, Kayano learned much about Ainu culture, language, and traditions from his grandmother. Similarly, he was known as particularly skilled in the Ainu language although he never considered himself fluent. He also is known for his transcriptions of *Yukar* on which he coincidentally also cooperated with Kyosuke Kindaichi in the 1960s and 1970s.[158] After a long life, he died in 2006, having cemented himself as a cultural leader of the modern Ainu.

In his memoir titled *Our Land Was a Forest: An Ainu Memoir*, Shigeru traces his life and struggles as an Ainu. Like Chiri Yukie, despite possessing a Japanese name he identifies himself as an Ainu. Going beyond Yukie's softspoken nationalist sentiment, Shigeru can much more comfortably be described as an Ainu nationalist. As an adult, he was part of the Ainu political movement in the 1960s that emphasized the Ainu people as a separate ethnic minority from the Japanese.[159] His political activism went further as he eventually became the first Ainu member of the Japanese Diet. It is important to keep in mind, as with Yukie, that his nationalist sentiments did not always reflect reality. However, they are a good lens through which one can understand his conception of modern Ainu identity.

Like Chiri Yukie, Shigeru emphasizes the importance of nature to the Ainu. Speaking from personal experience, he begins his memoir with a nostalgic recalling of his home's formerly great forests. A native of the Nibutani region of Hokkaido he says,

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[158] Kayano Shigeru. *Our Land Was a Forest*. Translated by Kyoko Selden and Lili Selden (Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2018) 126.

[159] Richard Siddle, "From Assimilation to Indigenous Rights: Ainu Resistance Since 1869," in *Ainu: Spirits of a Northern People,* Edited by William W. Fitzhugh and Chisato O. Dubreuil (Arctic Studies Center, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution in association with University of Washington Press, 1999) 112.

> *Ignoring the ways of the Ainu, who had formulated hunting and woodcutting practices in accordance with the cycles of nature, the shamo came up with arbitrary "laws" that led to the destruction of the beautiful woods of Nibutani for the profit of "the nation of Japan" and the corporate giants. With this, half of the Nibutani region ceased to be a land of natural bounty.*[160]

First, Shigeru's language and punctuation choice is interesting. Rather than use the Japanese word for *Japanese people* Shigeru chooses to use the Ainu word *shamo* to describe the Japanese. Moreover, he also puts *the nation of Japan* in quotes. These grammatical decisions display Shigeru's Ainu nationalist sentiment in far stronger terms than Chiri Yukie did. By refusing to use the Japanese language and instead using the Ainu word for *Japanese people* he is emphasizing his Ainu identity in contrast to Japan. Then, he uses quotes to cast doubt on the idea of a Japanese nation that collectively benefited from the deforestation of Nibutani. In this way, he is signifying that he does not consider himself a part of that nation nor does he consider the Ainu to be a part of the nation (Japan) that profited from the deforestation. Another word in quotations is *laws* which implies their illegitimacy when compared to the Ainu way of life. Like Yukie, Shigeru identifies the Ainu way of life as a balanced relationship with nature, thus it was more *natural* than the *arbitrary* laws of the Japanese.

The implication from this passage, and the whole memoir, is that Shigeru and the modern Ainu created a national Ainu identity centered around a romanticized past in which the Ainu maintained a harmonious relationship with nature and were eventually victimized by the Japanese. In this narrative, the Japanese are invaders, and their laws are anathema to the Ainu way of life, resulting in the near-destruction of the Ainu. For a specific example, the author mentions the laws banning the fishing of salmon. These laws personally affected him as his father was once taken to jail for illegally fishing for salmon. Salmon was formerly a staple food for the Ainu but, as previously mentioned, the laws that banned fishing were done for the benefit of fishing companies that eventually overfished local salmon populations. In contrast, Shigeru claims that the Ainu lifestyle was sustainable "Precisely because we were a hunting people, the Ainu had the wisdom and love that kept us from exhausting natural resources."[161] While there is truth to this claim, it is still very much a nationalistic claim made in opposition to the Japanese and their apparently more destructive methods of consumption.

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[160] Kayano Shigeru. *Our Land Was a Forest*. 9.

In a more religious sense, Shigeru also considered the Ainu as equals to nature. He recalled a case in his childhood when his father was summoned to lead a eulogy of sorts for a deceased Ainu. This person had died in what was considered unnatural circumstances. The ritual to send the person off was called an *uniwente* and was a reprimanding of the spirits seen as responsible for the person's death. If, for example, someone drowned then the river spirit would be reprimanded and reminded not to drown people. Shigeru adds that "In our Ainu world, humans and gods are perfectly equal; we do not consider the gods to possess absolute power."[162] As seen from the *Kamui-Yukar*, this sentiment mostly holds true, although I believe the insistence that humans and gods were “perfectly equal” is a bit overstated. Nevertheless, Shigeru's words echo those of Chiri Yukie too and represent a modern Ainu conception of themselves as, at least in the past, mostly in balance with nature and the spirits in it. Thus, the cutting off of the Ainu from nature via laws, overfishing, and deforestation, very directly leads to an isolation of the Ainu from their identity. In lamenting the loss of forests and salmon, Shigeru laments that the Ainu identity itself is destroyed and the people are left in a lonely place outside of their Ainu world of nature and its spirits.

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[161] Ibid. 59.
[162] Ibid. 67.

Another tangible way that the Ainu lost connection to nature and their identity was the loss of their language. While the author was, himself, quite skilled at native Ainu he still did not ever use it for daily life. His father’s generation was the last generation that had experience speaking Ainu daily, the last that could be considered fluent. In a sobering recounting of his past, Shigeru tells how by 1953, there only remained three fluent speakers of Ainu in his home village. Among these three speakers was his father. According to Ainu funeral rituals, a person was sent to the realm of the gods via a special chant. Of course, this chant was only performed in Ainu and so the last three agreed that whoever first died was the luckiest among them as the other two could perform the funeral ritual sending them off. Shigeru recalls,

> *“Whoever dies first is the lucky one”- I repeated it again and again in my heart. I was saddened by their words. Their import cannot possibly be grasped by those who have not been robbed of the very roots of their language and culture…The desire to die early*

> *simply for the sake of a meaningful funeral shows the extent to which culture and language are important to us Ainu.*[163]

The reality faced by these three Ainu individuals reflects the sad and lonely existence the Ainu led. These three individuals acknowledged this reality with their solemn desire to die first so that their passage into the afterlife was guaranteed. Language and culture were so intertwined that, for the Ainu, a proper passage into the afterlife relied on the proper chants and funeral rites. The unluckiest of the trio faced an uncertain afterlife and the reality that he was the last of their village to truly be Ainu. After all, with his death, there remained nobody who could properly commune with the spirits in the Ainu language. As Hisazuka Fujimura notes, the Ainu believed that the spirits inflicted suffering upon humans so that they could spiritually strengthen themselves and overcome obstacles in life. Upon death, they would then be considered a good person and, as the soul was immortal, achieve reincarnation faster.[164] However, if one could not commune with the spirits then how would they reach the afterlife? Not only did the Ainu lose access to much of the natural resources and animals they previously harvested, but they also lost the ability to perform rituals honoring the spirits. This was the bleak reality faced by the last three Ainu who could speak their native tongue in Shigeru's village. With both happiness and sadness, Shigeru's father was apparently the luckiest as he died first. When the last individual died, there was nobody to perform the traditional funeral ritual. In this way, the Ainu language and culture died.

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[163] Ibid. 107.

[164] Hisakazu Fujimura, "Life and Death," in *Ainu: Spirits of a Northern People*, Edited by William W. Fitzhugh and Chisato O. Dubreuil (Arctic Studies Center, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution in association with University of Washington Press, 1999) 273.

Giichi Nomura was another prominent Ainu individual in Ainu modern history and politics. He, like Shigeru, was a staunch advocate for the Ainu people politically and culturally. Speaking at the 1992 U.N. General Assembly, Nomura's speech focused on the rights of indigenous peoples across the world while drawing on the Ainu experience in Japan. Describing Japan's policies towards the Ainu as assimilationist he said, "the Ainu language was banned, our traditional culture was denied… We were unable to continue our traditional way of life in our ancestral lands, as fishing became "poaching" and cutting wood in the hills was branded as "theft.""[165] His words echo the sentiments of Shigeru in the belief that Ainu identity was strongly tied to the traditions associated with nature. Again, he uses the example of fish (salmon) and trees to express how modern Japanese policies denied Ainu access to these resources that were essential to their traditional lifestyles.

Interestingly, Nomura does not embrace too much nationalistic rhetoric near the end of his speech. Instead, he tempers the goals of the Ainu community stating, "What we are after is a high level of autonomy based on our fundamental values of "coexistence with nature" and "peace through negotiation." We do not seek to create new states with which to confront those already in existence."[166] This is interesting because it demonstrates the modern Ainu identity of pacifism and harmony with nature. This mirrors Shigeru's views and even Chiri Yukie's views, despite being removed by almost seventy years. Thus, Ainu national identity and nationalism is interesting because it does not emphasize its separation or opposition to another group. Nomura, like Shigeru and Yukie, asserts the unique history and existence of the Ainu but this does not mean the Ainu desire a separate nation-state. Rather, the Ainu are politically content with more autonomy and recognition within Japan. Again, Nomura places an emphasis on 'coexistence with nature' which further reinforces the tying of nature to the Ainu identity.

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[165] Giichi Nomura. "Inauguration Speech at the U.N. General Assembly." Transcript of speech delivered at the United Nations General Assembly, New York, NYC, December 10, 1992. https://www.ainu-assn.or.jp/english/inaugu.html.

[166] Nomura, 1992.

Nomura ends his speech with a description of a word in the Ainu language, "URESHIPAMOSHIRI, which signifies our concept of the world as an interrelated community of all living things."[167] This is especially interesting because it refers to the Ainu religious worldview. Historically, this worldview was limited only to the Ainu people living in a highly interconnected world with nature and its animals and spirits. However, in the context of the modern Ainu identity, this word takes on a different meaning that emphasizes that all humans too should live in harmony together. Essentially then, the modern Ainu answer to nationalism is one that allows for a group to assert its own unique existence while also emphasizing cooperation rather than competition with other groups.

Chiri Yukie and Kayano Shigeru had complex feelings about being part of a declining people. Both expressed how important nature was to the Ainu culture and identity. They imagined a romantic past in which the Ainu were in perfect harmony with nature and the spirits in it. This past contrasted with their current understanding of the Ainu as a people in decline because of the Japanese seizure of their land and exploitation of their resources. Moreover, Japanese policies of assimilation forced Ainu, over the generations, to adopt Japanese names and only learn the Japanese language. Even Shigeru, a staunch Ainu nationalist, could not escape from this reality. By losing access to nature, language, and their religious spirits, the Ainu faced a cultural oblivion that Yukie and Shigeru resisted. Yukie preserved her people's oral traditions, as did Shigeru. Shigeru went further to build a museum of Ainu artifacts and even run for political office in the Diet, which he eventually succeeded in winning.[168] His efforts represent the modern Ainu efforts to construct a new national identity for themselves. One that preserves their past while also revitalizing it. And, as Nomura Giichi's speech reveals, the Ainu desire to protect their own national identity does not mean they desire the repression of other nationalities. In line with their traditional religious worldview, they believe that humans can coexist with one another peacefully even as they also cling to national identities.

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[167] Ibid. 1992.

VI

Conclusion

In this chapter, I analyzed how Ainu identity was constituted by their relationship to nature and how the cutting off of this relationship by Japanese intervention led to a self-perception of the Ainu as a lonely and declining people. Through examining the *Kamui-Yukar*, it is clear that the Ainu historically valued their relationship with the spirits that they believed inhabited the natural world around them. From their religious perspective, all interactions with nature were interactions with the spirits. Thus, how one properly treated the spirits, or not, determined if one was a good or bad person. In this context, the modern disruption of the Ainu's connection with nature, and thus the spirits, can be understood as disastrous. As Chiri Yukie and Kayano Shigeru expressed, the Ainu were a dying people not necessarily because they were physically dying. Rather, because of a loss of language, homeland, and their right to harvest natural resources, they felt divorced from nature and the spirits. Their identity as a people in constant communication with the spirits of nature was lost as nature literally disappeared around them in the form of deforestation or animal depopulation. Moreover, the loss of their native language left a profound feeling of loneliness in the ever-shrinking number of individuals who knew it. Those who inherited pieces of their past culture and language constructed a modern Ainu identity that was self-conscious of its decline and nostalgically called back to a romanticized time when the Ainu were seemingly in harmony with nature. This new Ainu national identity became a mission to remember, preserve, and revitalize the Ainu people.

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[168] Kayano Shigeru. *Our Land Was a Forest*. 162.

Much like the other ethnic minorities of Japan, the Ainu crafted for themselves an identity that directly opposed the Japanese. This group identity was not formed in a vacuum, rather, it was formed as a response to the existence of a strong Japanese state and nation that threatened the Ainu identity. The fear of facing this threat alone, or even dying alone with an uncertain future, motivated the creation of a modern Ainu identity. Subjugated but not destroyed, the Ainu could not help but come bound together in an identity that assured the survival of individuals.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The history of ethnic minorities in Japan is one of complex and shifting national identity. These groups were faced with subjugation, alienation, and oppression by a modern Japan intent on assimilating them. In this context, they struggled to define themselves. Shifting over time, pressures from within each community and from the outside, from Japan, influenced individuals to choose between different group identities. The Zainichi first imagined themselves as Koreans fervently nationalistic and destined to return to their homeland. Successive generations shifted their stance and came to see Japan as their home and Japanese as their identity. Okinawans began their interactions with Japan as a Chinese-influenced islander culture. Many decades of control by the Japanese led to the near-complete assimilation of Okinawans but, they always retained the stain, or point of pride, of being from the beautiful but remote set of tropical islands. The Ainu envisioned themselves as a peaceful people living in harmony with nature before the Japanese arrived. To them, Japanese exploitation of Hokkaido’s resources and its people destroyed their previously religious and peaceful world. A nationalistic resurgence in their Ainu identity has led to preservation and reconstruction of Ainu culture.

The ethnic minorities of Japan all share a similar experience. All of them experienced great alienation and isolation from mainstream Japan because of racial, imperialistic, and nationalistic prejudices. More than just isolation, these groups were faced with cultural destruction by Japanese policies of assimilation that demanded adherence to modern Japanese standards of language, dress, food, and religion. In response, each group tended to seek out a group identity to belong to. At times, this group was the Japanese nation, and at other times they forged for themselves a separate identity.

The experiences of the Zainichi, Okinawans, and Ainu demonstrate the innate human propensity towards group identity. Their literature shows the words and feelings of individuals who always expressed a desire to belong to a group. While the conditions of each group’s desired identity changed over time, what remained constant was the need to belong. Strip away each group’s different experiences and what you are left with is quite similar. What each group shared was a fear of isolation and discomfort with their alienation from mainstream Japan. It is these shared feelings of loneliness in the face of the Japanese nation's power that, even today, motivates individuals to advocate for either ethnic nationalism or increased inclusion with Japan. Humans are social creatures, and they have historically always sought out a tribe to belong to. When individuals are faced with a threat, such as an aggressive larger tribe, they come together for safety. Nationalism, though a product of modern history, is an extension of this basic innate human tribalism.

Much of human history is concerned with competition between different groups, between different tribes. With nationalism as the most dominant form of group identity, humans have killed, enslaved, and subjugated one another in the name of their nation. While humans always separate themselves into groups, I do not believe it is inevitable that this must result in conflict. Rather, by understanding that individuals are not defined exclusively by their group identity, I believe humans can look past their differences to cooperate with one another of their own free will. Even if humans live in different tribes, perhaps we can recognize that, at the very least, we all share the human experience of wanting to belong and not wanting to be alone.

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