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## Three Ainu Musicians : A Legacy of Resistance and Synergy

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## Three Ainu Musicians: A Legacy of Resistance and Synergy

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How does legislation affect a culture's viability? Legislation in the performing arts takes many forms, from immigration visas for visiting artistes to tax deductions and supporting educational programmes in the arts. Some landmark legislations, such as the well-known Federal One arts projects of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), which was created during the 1930s Depression era in the United States, have had long-lasting and wide-ranging effects on the cultural arts. In Japan, the 1997 Ainu Cultural Promotion Act or CPA—officially called the Act for the Promotion of Ainu Culture, the Dissemination of Knowledge of Ainu Traditions, and an Education Campaign—has had a considerable impact on the Ainu indigenous performing arts and the recent revival of Ainu culture. This chapter argues that this landmark legislation helped to stimulate the Ainu performing arts, not only through direct subsidies, but that the Ainu performing arts experienced a cultural flowering by filling a gap created by the downturn of the Ainu socio-political movement—which was a direct result from the enactment of the CPA. The passage of the CPA marked a critical juncture in time—an ending and a beginning: the decline of almost thirty years of hard-line political activism and the start of Ainu cultural expansion. This chapter is a study of the CPA and three musicians who participated significantly in this space—namely Yūki Kōji, Ogawa Motoi, and Kano Oki—and how their engagement affected the creation of the Ainu performing arts through the lens of minoritisation.

### 1. Background

The Ainu had no written language before their official colonisation in 1868; their customs and common laws were handed down through an oral tradition and their literature consisted of narrative epic poems called *yūkar*, which were commonly sung by tribal elders. Often accompanying the *yūkar* of the Sakhalin Ainu was their unique instrument, the *tonkori*, a fretless zither, which, alongside the mouth-harp *mukkuri*, has profoundly defined the Ainu indigenous soundscape. Both the *tonkori* and the *mukkuri* regularly appear in Ainu musicians' performances, and both have become iconic symbols of Ainu culture. The Ainu musicians discussed in this chapter all engage with the *tonkori*; Kano Oki and Ogawa Motoi in particular are known as *tonkori* experts, while the *tonkori* is a vital part of Yūki Kōji's musical group.

After the World War II, many Ainu silently assimilated into Japanese society to

escape the economic hardship of what can be considered a double deprivation of post-war poverty coupled with discrimination. Today, it is estimated that 95%–98% of the Ainu ‘pass’ as Japanese, which entails hiding their Ainu heritage from their neighbours, friends, and co-workers (Gayman 2013; 2015). Against this backdrop of minoritisation, a grassroots social movement was born in the 1970s that is now referred to as the Ainu rights recovery movement (Gayman 2013). The Ainu political consciousness was significantly influenced by the U.S. civil rights movement and by the student protests that expressed social turmoil in Japan in the 1960s. The paternal parents of the three musicians discussed in this chapter worked closely with the Ainu rights recovery movement. Yūki Kōji’s father, Yūki Shōji, who is considered to have been one of the most extreme Ainu political activists, followed in the steps of the Buraku Kaihō Dōmei (Buraku Liberation League) and adopted their forceful confrontation tactics, initiating the Ainu Kaihō Dōmei (Ainu Liberation League) in 1972 (Siddle 1996: 172).<sup>1)</sup> His most effective campaign was against Professor Hayashi Yoshishige of Hokkaido University in 1978, in which Hayashi was eventually forced to offer a public apology after allegedly making ‘racist’ remarks about the Ainu in his lectures (Siddle 1996: 167). Yūki Shōji popularised the term ‘Ainu Moshiri’, which became a common term for the Ainu rights recovery struggle in the late 1970s (Siddle 1996: 176). The term came to represent the desire for a national territory and also a nostalgic depiction of a harmonious pre-colonisation Ainu era. The younger Yūki continues to promote the concept of Ainu Moshiri as ‘Mother Earth’, a notion that can be seen as a reimagined look back in time, but also one that looks forward to the possibility of a Hokkaido that is environmentally sound.

Ogawa Motoi’s father, Ogawa Ryūkichi, was a leading figure on the Ainu political scene beginning in the 1970s, and he was also a member of a communist-influenced group known as the Hoppō Gun. In 1972, the elder Ogawa forced the cancellation of a questionable Hokkaidō Broadcasting Company television programme, and in the following year, he forced the removal of a Tokyo department store’s offensive promotional poster advertising Hokkaidō goods (Siddle 1996: 167). He also became increasingly concerned with education, specifically with regard to teaching the ‘correct’ version of Ainu history and eschewing the schools’ official textbook history, which views the creation of Hokkaido as ‘development’ rather than colonisation (Siddle 1996: 175). The elder Ogawa is still very involved in the Ainu political scene, for instance, as one of the plaintiffs in a lawsuit against Hokkaido University for the restitution of human bones taken from Ainu graves in the early twentieth century. Such acts were often carried out under coercion or in secret and these human bones were originally used for eugenics and research in the sciences (Gayman 2012). As can be imagined, the restitution of the bones has enormous psychological and spiritual meaning for the Ainu community. The newly-constructed Memorial Facility (Irei Shisetsu) will house the remains of over one thousand Ainu in a building that is part of the Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park complex in Shiraoi, Hokkaido,<sup>2)</sup> a large-scale government project connected to the 2020 Olympics and the cultural focus of the 2019 New Ainu Law.<sup>3)</sup>

Kano Oki is one of the children of the famed artist/sculptor Sunazawa Bikky (1931–

1989), who was very politically active in the 1970s and early '80s. Sunazawa is now remembered for his exquisite sculptures, but during his lifetime, he was equally well-known for his political stance. In 1973, Sunazawa organised the Zenkoku Ainu no Kataru Kai (Dialog Forum for Ainu Nationwide), a forum for young Ainu to participate and freely discuss the divisive issues constituting the 'Ainu problem' (Siddle 1996: 172). Furthermore, during the eightieth anniversary of Asahikawa in 1970, which was celebrated with the unveiling of a statue depicting four young Wajin colonisers surrounding an elderly Ainu, Sunazawa handed out leaflets protesting the symbol of Ainu subordination. He also designed the new Ainu flag, first shown at the 1973 May Day parade in Sapporo, which symbolised Ainu pride, struggle, and passion. This became one of the most potent symbols of Ainu Moshiri, the Ainu homeland (Siddle 1996: 176). The Ainu flag featured a cerulean blue, which represented the sea, the sky, and the Earth, while the arrowhead in white and red symbolised snow and the Ainu god of fire, Abe Kamui.

The emergence of Ainu performing arts has, in many cases, developed alongside the Ainu rights recovery movement, with musical activities serving to support and intensify the Ainu's political cause during the social movement's gatherings and demonstrations. In *Music and Social Movements*, Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison write about how social movements' messages are communicated through music and the arts; they also state that social movements are a source of renewal and rejuvenation for music, giving it new meaning and a sense of purpose: 'By combining culture and politics, social movements serve to reconstitute both, providing a broader political and historical context for cultural expression, and offering, in turn, the resources of culture—traditions, music, artistic expression—to the action repertoires of political struggle' (1998: 10). Music and musicians are often a source of inspiration for social causes, as illustrated in the U.S. civil rights movement by the close connection between Martin Luther King Jr. and the 'Queen of Gospel' Mahalia Jackson, who often sang for Dr. King over the telephone to help him sleep;<sup>4)</sup> Dr. King's 'I Have a Dream' speech at the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom can be said to have emerged, in part, from this music-based relationship with Ms. Jackson, who urged him to 'tell them about the dream, Martin...', as is well-documented by Clarence B. Jones (2011), who was Dr. King's personal attorney. Dr. King's example illustrates how closely music is allied with social causes and how musical sounds encapsulate the passion and spirit of social movements and the role of music can be clearly seen in both the U.S. civil rights and the Ainu rights recovery movements. As is custom, Ainu traditional ceremonies incorporate song and dance, a practice which was extended to the political gatherings of the Ainu rights recovery movement. An example is the political forum sponsored by the Hokkaido Ainu Association, the Symposium on Ainu Political Policy, held on 6 August 2011, at the Christian Center Hall in Sapporo. The symposium included a panel discussion with Yūki Kōji on 'Visualising Ainu Rights' and ended with songs by Yūki's band the Ainu Art Project (AAP) as well as a circle dance that included all who were in attendance. During my fieldwork in Hokkaido, most of the Ainu political meetings and symposiums that I attended concluded with a circle dance.

Musical expression in traditional Ainu culture is inseparable from daily life in which music and sounding were embedded not only in circle dances and songs in Ainu rituals and ceremonies, but also in everyday activities. Before the growth of the rights recovery movement and the post-war tourism industry, the Ainu performing arts genre had no precedent; such performative practice defined by a stage, a performer, and an audience did not exist in traditional Ainu culture. As an early platform of staged performance, the tourism industry created an entertainment genre that, despite its promotion of Ainu stereotypes, nevertheless helped to create a 'contact zone' (Clifford 1997) in which the Japanese public could experience Ainu music and dance. It was in the rights recovery movement, however, that Ainu musicians found their voice through cultural and political expression, finding meaning and a sense of purpose through the musical arts, which ultimately led to the formation of their identity as an indigenous people of the world, enjoying established artistic achievement and recognition. Due to the rights recovery movement's distinct timing and the three Ainu musicians' respective familial lineages, there exists a direct evolution from the rights recovery movement to the contemporary Ainu performing arts. With the creation of the CPA, the Ainu performing arts genre was boosted by a political shot in the arm.

## **2. Ainu Shinpō (The New Ainu Law)**

The CPA was a culmination of a thirteen-year process that began in 1984 with an Ainu campaign pertaining to what the Ainu Association of Hokkaido<sup>5)</sup> called the Ainu Shinpō or the Ainu New Law. By the time the Ainu Shinpō materialised, the rights recovery movement had been active for a little over a decade, but the sentiments addressed in the Ainu Shinpō were grievances that had been culminating from a century of colonisation and Japanese government assimilation policies. The Ainu Shinpō called for the following: 1) the eradication of racial discrimination, 2) guaranteed seats for Ainu representatives in Parliament and local assemblies, 3) a measure to promote the transmission of Ainu culture and language, 4) the granting of increased amounts of farmland to Ainu, 5) fishing and hunting rights, and 6) the establishment of an Ainu Independence Fund to promote economic autonomy. The multiple demands of the Ainu Shinpō were ultimately reduced to a single motion that came to be known as the Cultural Promotion Act (CPA); in its final form, the CPA only took up one part of the original Ainu proposal: the request concerning the promotion and transmission of Ainu culture and language (Morris-Suzuki 1999). Ainu participation in the preparation and drafting of the CPA in May of 1997 was almost non-existent, paralleling the circumstances surrounding the Japanese government's passage of the 1899 Ainu Protection Act almost a century prior. No Ainu were invited to join the committee that drafted the CPA proposal, and out of the ten 'hearings' involving noted experts, Nomura Biichi (head of the Ainu Association) was the only participating Ainu (Siddle 2002). When the draft of the CPA was presented to the Ainu Association, the reaction was mixed, and many Ainu activists reacted negatively, feeling that it represented a poor compromise. Critics of the CPA pointed out that it does not guarantee economic redress for the Ainu, which was one of the key demands of the 1984 Ainu

Shinpō. However, after considering the difficulty of the political process, the Ainu Association felt that such an opportunity would not come again (as warned explicitly by the Japanese Diet), and they approved the report submitted by the government for legislation (Siddle 2002).<sup>6)</sup>

### 3. The 1997 Cultural Promotion Act (CPA)

During the time that the CPA was being enacted in 1997, Ainu musicians were just beginning to forge their own musical paths: Kano Oki had by then started performing the *tonkori* and producing CD albums, Yūki Kōji was in the beginning phase of the Ainu Art Project, and Ogawa Motoi was in an experimental stage with the *tonkori*. Ainu cultural arts were beginning to evolve as a performing arts genre, separate itself from tourism, and slowly break away from their association with political movements. These three musicians would eventually interact with the CPA to varying degrees and breadths, although each had a similar goal: to educate the Japanese public about Ainu culture and participate in the creation of a recognised Ainu performing arts practice in Japan. The musicians' intention dovetailed well with the timing of the CPA. As stated in Article 1 of the CPA, its objective is to promote multiculturalism; the law 'aims to realize a society in which the ethnic pride of the Ainu people is respected and to contribute to the development of diverse cultures in our country (FRPAC 2000).'<sup>7)</sup>

According to historian Richard Siddle, two months after the passage of the CPA, the FRPAC<sup>8)</sup> administrative body (The Foundation for the Research and Promotion of Ainu Culture or Zaidan) was created as a corporation and appointed six months later as the sole official managerial arm of the CPA (Siddle 2002).<sup>9)</sup> There are two FRPAC offices in Japan: the main office is in downtown Sapporo, with a secondary office at Yaesu station in Tokyo. The CPA defines FRPAC-funded cultural projects to include the following three topics: 1) research and revival of Ainu culture, 2) revival of the Ainu language, and 3) education in Ainu tradition. Projects might range in scope from small to medium, and anyone, whether Ainu or not, can apply for funding from the FRPAC; the applications are vetted by a committee of both Ainu and Wajin (an Ainu term for the Japanese) (Siddle 2002).

### 4. The Pros and Cons of the CPA and the FRPAC

UNESCO has deemed the Ainu language 'critically endangered',<sup>10)</sup> and the number of remaining native speakers of the Ainu language diminishes each year. The FRPAC initiated many projects supporting the revival of the Ainu language, and at its peak, the FRPAC supported Ainu language instruction in classrooms and museums in twelve cities in Hokkaido and funded an annual Ainu speech contest that has been held for over fifteen years in Sapporo at the Hokkaido University.<sup>11)</sup> By promoting language preservation and sponsoring cultural events, the CPA is partly responsible for a cultural renaissance through its work in conjunction with preservation societies and Ainu research institutions such as the Center for Ainu and Indigenous Studies at Hokkaido University.



Among the musicians studied in this chapter, Yūki Kōji and Kano Oki have received grants from the FRPAC for cultural events and musical performances. The FRPAC also subsidises a number of international cultural exchanges, with Ainu descendants serving as ambassadors who travel to Europe, New Zealand, Australia, and the United States. The former Shiraori Porotokotan Ainu Museum featured Ninaitejigyō, an in-residence tradition-bearer school where Ainu youth learned the Ainu language, the *yūkar* oral tradition, religion, art, and plant lore over the course of three years (Gayman 2013). Associate Professor at the Hokkaido University Center for Ainu and Indigenous Studies Kitahara Jirota, who is one of the very small number of researchers of Ainu descent, believes that the CPA has greatly helped the spread of Ainu culture (2012).

Traditional cultures can be portrayed in significantly different ways depending on the approach. The Ainu can be portrayed as either an extension of the ancient Neolithic Jomon culture and a hunter-gatherer people from the distant past, or as an evolving ethnic minority that shares its history with the Japanese. The narrative put forth by the Hokkaido Historical Museum, which is a national project, is starkly different from that of the Ainu Culture Promotion Center (Pirka Kotan), which is run by the City of Sapporo; the Hokkaido Historical Museum takes the former approach, while the Ainu Culture Promotion Center takes the latter. These two represent the various differences between national and local projects—where Ainu traditional culture can be represented as either one that is frozen in the past or, alternatively, is a transforming ethnic group. Institutions created by government programmes are most often the projects of national elites, and their perspectives varies greatly according to who is choosing the projects and how the project's narrative is being told (Appadurai 1996).

The CPA's endorsement of Ainu culture is indisputable in terms of the role it plays in bringing awareness to Japanese society, which is much deprived of Ainu history and presence. However, in the same way that a museum can choose to portray the Ainu as frozen in time, or alternatively, as a contemporary living culture, performances can also entail varying degrees of representation. What the Ainu musicians bring to the performative stage can differ widely between FRPAC-sponsored and non-FRPAC-sponsored events. Many FRPAC-sponsored performances attempt to recreate movements of traditional dances that were studied via archival videos where historical accuracy is valued and there is a moderate aim to educate the public. In addition to the restoration of traditional dance and song performances, the FRPAC also sponsors the recreation of rituals and ceremonies as performative events in public spaces.

The non-FRPAC sponsored events often mix electronics (i.e., synthesisers and electric bass) and non-Ainu musical elements such as the Peruvian *cajón* and reggae rhythms with traditional Ainu culture, including instruments and singing in the Ainu language. When the performance space is large enough, audiences are invited to participate in circle dances, set in the communal spirit of traditional Ainu custom. Both Kano Oki and Yūki Kōji tell traditional Ainu folktales in the context of current environmental issues; Kano Oki has also, on occasion, recounted politically sensitive issues such as Japanese colonisation and Ainu subjugation during his concerts, and Yūki Kōji often tells *wepeker*, Ainu folktales, during his concerts, first in the Ainu language

and then in Japanese translation.

Another critique of the FRPAC concerns the demographics of the funding recipient. Since the FRPAC's application process is complex—where the funds are given to those with resources, knowledge and connections, and because non-Ainu can also apply to FRPAC—a portion of the research budget is allocated to well-connected Japanese academics. Moreover, many Japanese people can also attend Ainu language classes. Since a sizable portion of the cultural activities inform the Japanese, the relevance of cultural activities for most Ainu descendants is questionable, although Japanese-directed Ainu cultural education is not without merit. In addition, many Ainu are economically unstable and are therefore forced to focus on everyday subsistence rather than honing the skills that would allow them to take advantage of the CPA (Siddle 2002).

While Japanese contribution is inevitable for the resurgence of Ainu culture, increased Japanese participation also engages the dominant culture in redefining the narrative of Ainu traditional arts. Japanese participation is twofold: they are involved both as members of what Mark Slobin (1993) terms the 'superstructure', i.e. as FRPAC committee members and museum curators, and also as part of the 'substructure', i.e. as artists and musicians promoting and performing Ainu crafts and musical traditions. Institutional participation is particularly pronounced: in 2012, the Sapporo FRPAC office employed approximately twelve people, with only two or three of these employees being of Ainu descent, while the rest were Japanese.<sup>12)</sup>

Since the CPA is the sole funding source for much of Ainu cultural dissemination, critics state that the Ainu culture is 'locked' into a structure of institutionalism due to its dependence on the CPA. Perhaps more than financial support, it may be that the perceived fading of the Ainu rights recovery movement is what is most poignantly felt within the Ainu community. Many Ainu recount how the social movement for self-determination and land rights was derailed because the Ainu political movement lost critical momentum and a sense of direction after the passage of the CPA (Gayman 2013).

## 5. Marginality and Minoritisation

In describing power relations, activist bell hooks defines the marginalised as having an absence of choices while being 'part of the whole but outside the main body' (2000: xvi). The power dynamic between what hooks locates as the margin and the centre (hooks 2000) is played out in the politics of domination between the Ainu and the Japanese government, where the agency or power lies with the FRPAC as an extension of the centre. However, as hooks points out, the margin as a minority culture can exhibit agency and redefine the majority, a notion that was deliberated at the 2014 ICTM 'Music and Minorities' symposium held in Osaka, Japan. Marginalised peoples' music has often been absorbed and appropriated by majority cultures as a means of redefining and refashioning the dominant culture, and examples of this can be seen in jazz music from the 1920s, reggae music from the 1970s, and the hip hop culture from the 1980s.<sup>13)</sup> Ainu music's contribution to the wider Japanese culture is yet to be determined, but the Ainu's presence in Japanese performing arts brings multiculturalism to the otherwise



homogeneous Japanese discourse and opens up inquiry not only into the Japanese's self-perceived 'pure race' concept, but also into Hokkaido's colonial history and the discriminatory misconceptions about the Ainu.<sup>14)</sup>

This chapter (and my research) did not begin with political motivations or a predisposition to partisanship, but as the research progressed, and as I began working with informants during fieldwork, the issues revealed such grievances against human rights that would compel the advocacy of Ainu political justice. Non-partisanship is an approval of the present condition; being a neutral observer becomes complicity in the status quo. Hokkaido University Associate Professor Jeff Gayman addresses this predicament for scholars conducting Ainu research; he writes:

One thing which I am constantly reminded of in my work with the Ainu is that I have no right to be involved in this engagement as a researcher unless I am fully prepared to fight the political battle which could lead to actualization of Ainu Indigenous rights of self-determination. It must be remembered that any interpretation which frames the Ainu movement as a social one, and neglects to recognize the Ainu as an Indigenous people, inherently harms the potential of the movement. This is a question which we who would research Indigenous social movements must all ask of ourselves. (2015: 49)

While I fully concur with Gayman's recognition, I also see the colonisation and subjugation of Ainu culture as a human rights issue, in addition to being an indigenous one, for land was taken and lifeways were destroyed without consent—deplorable acts committed by a dominant government against powerless people—where indigeneity was but a foil and not the grounds for subjugation. Indigeneity, or 'primitive' lifeways, was used as a justification to pilfer lands from the Ainu people under the pretext of 'modernising' the 'aboriginal' peoples. Furthermore, to take a look back at the distant past, if each one of us traces our roots far enough, we will find that we are all 'indigenous' peoples. Perhaps the term 'indigenous' peoples should be qualified with the somewhat awkward descriptor of 'most recently indigenous'.

For a modernising Japan in the Meiji era, the Ainu 'primitive' other was a barometer to measure the Japanese 'advanced' self; the construction of otherness marked the Ainu as having a distinct, inferior 'race'. Among the many scholars who have addressed this topic, historian Michael Weiner writes how the Japanese racial discourse in the Meiji era differentiated the 'civilized self' from the 'primitive, aboriginal Other', inspired by Western Enlightenment and Darwinian notions of a teleological hierarchy of human progression (2009: 4, 16). Following the Meiji era in the early twentieth century, eugenics materialised in Japan, and the concept of Japanese homogeneity came to have a problematic effect on Ainu identity. As the Ainu social movement was kindled, Siddle points to how oppression and resistance constituted the common unifier of Ainu identity and sees the resurgence of ethnicity in the rights recovery movement as being a 'response to deprivation' rather than a revival of tribal identities (1996: 2, 22–24).

Marginalisation has deeply shaped the lives of the three musicians discussed in this study. For Ogawa Motoi, the discrimination was so intense as to bring emotional trauma

to his childhood and adolescent years. Kano Oki came to terms with his Ainu identity upon returning to Japan after spending five years in the United States, where he wholeheartedly embraced his Ainu identity. For Yūki Kōji, his father's very active role in the rights recovery struggle had a major impact on his childhood as the cause of his parents' separation (Birmingham 2010). I focused my study on these individuals due to their high visibility and notability in the general public and for their commitment to Ainu culture. Although the three musicians' engagement with the CPA can range from high to low levels of participation, the effects of the CPA on both their personal and professional lives are undeniable. As mentioned above, the rights recovery movement and the creation of the CPA were both heavily influenced by the political activities of the parents of the three Ainu musicians discussed in this chapter. The three musicians have all adopted their parents' respective legacies and the Ainu claim for cultural independence and recognition, expressing their efforts through the arts.

## 6. Yūki Kōji

Activist and musician Yūki Kōji is one of the most influential members of the Ainu community, and he is also a well-known figure in the FRPAC administration. Despite his connections, he initiates non-governmental organisation (NGO) projects that are not associated with the Japanese government. In May 2012, Yūki Kōji became the board president (*daihyō*) of the World Indigenous People's Network (WIN) Ainu. Presently non-operational, WIN Ainu was a non-profit NGO that did not receive funding from the Japanese government; it promoted cultural exchange among indigenous peoples worldwide, such as with the Maori people of New Zealand, the Hawaiian native people, and the Native American peoples residing in New Mexico. Like his father before him, Yūki Kōji has emerged as a community leader who is active in Ainu politics. As mentioned above, the elder Yūki is considered to have been one of the Ainu's most extreme political activists, and the younger Yūki carefully negotiates his father's politically active legacy. He certainly draws upon the political leverage that it furnishes, but he keeps his distance from the conflict-driven tactics that his father used, instead entering Ainu politics through the grassroots via the musical and artistic group the Ainu Art Project.

As a very visible figure in the community, Yūki Kōji involves himself in organising major political Ainu events. He was the chairperson on the steering committee of the 2008 Summit of Indigenous Peoples in Hokkaido—a highly-publicised conference that is believed to have prompted the 2008 Japanese government's acknowledgement of the Ainu as indigenous peoples of Japan. Yūki has established an international presence as a cultural ambassador by participating in many overseas events, such as the Ainu Mythology Dramatic Reading at the Louvre in Paris in December, 2011, and the Ainu and Sami Culture Festival in Oslo, Norway, with the Sami indigenous people in the fall of 2012. More recently, in the summer of 2017, he joined two other Ainu performers and the Blackfoot Nation dancers and drummers of Alberta, Canada in presenting *Indigenous Bridge*, a cross-cultural collaborative performance that was funded by the Consulate-

General of Japan in Calgary. In addition, he is currently a participating artiste in Indigenous Traces, an international residency programme in Sweden for indigenous artists within the visual and performing arts, music, literature, storytelling, and crafts.<sup>15)</sup> Breaking away from his father's very confrontational methodology, he feels that the Ainu should work with the Japanese instead of forcing minority issues that are divisive; he encourages the Ainu to 'move forward from the difficult times in the past'.<sup>16)</sup> However, even though his methods are different from his father's, the younger Yūki treads the path that the elder Yūki initiated—that of bringing light to the Ainu condition and Ainu history in Japanese society and advocating for the recognition of Ainu people's rights.

Yūki Kōji is not only one of the most recognised political figures in the Ainu community today, he is also highly regarded as a performing artiste in his role as leader of the Ainu Art Project, which performs regularly in public. He considers AAP to be a conceptual *kotan*, an Ainu village, where the members create tapestry, woodblock, weaving, embroidery, and woodcarving, in addition to performing as a musical group.<sup>17)</sup> Jeff Gayman notes, 'In a sense, [the Ainu Art Project] is a community of several families who are positively striving to pass on their heritage to their own children and grandchildren, and it is a break from the strictly commercial activities that has been going on in Ainu tourism centres in Akan, Shiraoi, and Asahikawa'.<sup>18)</sup>

More than any other Ainu musical group, AAP regularly performs during Ainu political gatherings and meetings, since Yūki is often part of the organizing committee for such events. In addition, AAP is regularly featured at public events around Sapporo, performing, for example, at the Sapporo Snow Festival, the Sapporo Christmas Festival, and the Sapporo Summertime Beer Festival, to name a few. The band uses a fusion of various instruments: electric bass, electric guitar, electric keyboard, the *tonkori*, the *mukkuri*, and the *cajón* (Peruvian box drum). Yūki sings lead vocals, harmonising with fellow female vocalist Hayasaka Yuka in a rhythmic, rock style of music that incorporates Western tonal harmony. As mentioned above, Yūki also performs traditional Ainu storytelling (*uepeker* or *wepeker*) onstage. Wearing traditional Ainu clothing, the band sings most of its songs in the Ainu language, and when the band begins to play, the Ainu members in the audience invariably participate in a circle dance featuring traditional movements, which are repetitive and uncomplicated enough for the uninitiated to participate as well. Very often, a 'howling' type of vocalisation is interjected into the bands' songs, which is a characteristic feature of many Ainu songs.

## 7. Ogawa Motoi

Each of the musicians expressed concerns about dependence on the Japanese government through the CPA. Ogawa, who also goes by his artistic name ToyToy, was most vocal in this regard and chooses to keep his distance from Japanese government programmes by not collaborating with any projects sponsored through the FRPAC. He also elects to stay away from the Ainu rights recovery movement, as he stated in his interview: 'I'd like to erase my dependence [on Japan], not through [social movements], but from my spirit/heart' (Ogawa 2013). Nevertheless, Ogawa's commitment to furthering the visibility of

Ainu heritage is truly noteworthy in execution and effort. Taking a grassroots approach, he connects with the community by performing in elementary schools, local retirement homes, and public spaces. He has a mailing list of enthusiastic supporters comprised equally of Ainu and Japanese who regularly attend his performances around town, whether the venue is the lobby of a big hotel in downtown Sapporo, a small café 'live house', or a holiday gathering for the elderly and their families.

Recently, in June 2017, Ogawa was invited to hold Ainu workshops for schools and the community in Perth, Western Australia. The project was not funded by the FRPAC, but rather by the Japanese Language Teachers' Association of Western Australia, The Japan Foundation of Sydney, the Department of Education Western Australia, and the Hyogo Cultural Centre in Perth. Ogawa's trip entailed the promotion of Ainu heritage by way of demonstrations of traditional Ainu papercutting designs, *tonkori* and *mukkuri* performances, and audience-participation activities showcasing traditional Ainu dances (Whittle 2017). Ogawa found this trip troubling, however, because he observed the psychological depression and economically oppressed state of the indigenous Aboriginal peoples in Australia, whose living conditions are extremely inferior to those of the dominant society.<sup>19)</sup>

Ogawa Motoi's identity is problematic. On the one hand, he wants to be a part of Japanese society. On the other, he wants to be liberated from it. He articulated his thoughts on the TEDx Talks stage in 2015 in his presentation titled 'Tradition for the Future—Coexistence Without Dependence', in which Ogawa explains how growing up as an Ainu in Japanese society impacted his identity formation. Perhaps the extreme prejudice that he endured as a child led him to his strong conviction to be part of Japanese society without being dependent on it, i.e. by avoiding FRPAC-sponsored projects. Both his parents were very active in Ainu politics and human rights, which complicated his upbringing in an overtly racist and discriminatory Japanese society (Ogawa 2012). His mother is an accomplished and well-known embroideress, hence Ogawa Motoi has been described as 'expressing the fighting spirit of his father in combination with the soft artistry of his mother, and developing a kind of heartfelt, new Ainu music' (Gayman 2013).

Although Ogawa Motoi clearly separates his methods and activities from his father's, the objective of his work—the spread of Ainu cultural awareness—represents an extension of the work begun by an earlier generation of Ainu activists. Perhaps the political environment in which he was raised caused Ogawa Motoi to distance himself from Ainu political associations as well as Japanese politics. His music is focused on nature, incorporating forest, river, and insect sounds and featuring his vocals along with his *tonkori*. His songs are in the Ainu language, and the sensibility of his music can be described as being focused on simplicity and directness, while incorporating tonal melodies and rhythmic structures with repetitions of straight or dotted rhythms. Recently, he has branched out into teaching Ainu papercutting workshops to share the papercutting skill he learnt from his grandparents. He interacts on a personal level in the Ainu and Japanese communities and has become highly visible within his network of expanding supporters and followers.

## 8. Kano Oki

Kano Oki is arguably the most accomplished and well-known Ainu musician in Japan and abroad. He performs extensively throughout the Japanese islands with his band Oki Dub Ainu, and he also travels worldwide to perform as a *tonkori* player and a singer. Experimenting with the modern musical rhythms of reggae and dub, incorporating tonal harmony, and fusing Western musical elements with traditional Ainu melodies and lyrics, Kano is recognised as the first to have brought the *tonkori* out of its confines in museums and as a tourist tradition into the Japanese popular music arena. Kano's concert tour in Japan usually includes performances in nine or ten cities within a two-week timeframe, with Tokyo being a recurring stop for live house performances typically every other month. International concerts have included the Rainforest World Music Festival in Malaysia in July 2019, the Ethnic Music Festival in Almaty, Kazakhstan in May 2017, and a tour of Latvia and Lithuania in November 2017, to name a few. Kano became interested in his Ainu roots after living in New York City for five years, and he is now based in Asahikawa, Hokkaido, where he is extremely prolific in terms of producing CDs (twenty to date) in his home studio. His creativity is not relegated to music; he is also an artist who has been reinvestigating the essence of the Ainu soul and experimenting with how this can be expressed in modern forms.

In 2005, as Kano was embarking on his fledgling musical career, he documented the traditional *tonkori* repertoire by creating a solo *tonkori* CD album comprising works taken from archival recordings by Nishihira Umé and Kuruparuhama, who were vital Ainu *tonkori* players from Sakhalin Island. Broadly speaking, Nishihira Umé was responsible (along with Fujiyama Haru, who is also known as Husko) for the transmission of the *tonkori* practice from Sakhalin to Hokkaido after World War II (Uyeda 2015). In 2004, Kano produced his first CD album with Oki Dub Ainu; with his band, Kano's musical style developed to include a dub rhythmic foundation and included an electric bass, electric guitar, drums, and an electric *tonkori*, with Kano on vocals and *tonkori*. Dub rhythm, which is commonly regarded as a musical style that is used to fight oppression, represents a grassroots phenomenon and thus connects the Ainu's political agenda to those of other minoritised peoples. However, when asked during an interview why he chose to incorporate dub rhythm in his music, Kano (2012) replied that he considers dub to be the 'fundamental rhythm of Mother Earth'; notably, his answer avoided dub's political aspect. Expanding to musical styles beyond dub and reggae, Kano (2013) often collaborates with musicians from other genres, such as the Irish band Kíla and the Okinawan folk singer Ōshiro Misako.

Although he avoids politics with regard to his musical styles, Kano addresses socio-political issues through his songs' lyrics. Perhaps even more than Yūki Kōji or Ogawa Motoi, Kano Oki has been publicly critical of the political situation surrounding the Ainu, and many of his songs have incorporated social activism (Okuda 2013). The following lyrics from the song 'Topattumi' from Kano's album *Oki Dub Ainu Band*, which he sings in the Ainu language, recount the Japanese dispossession of Ainu's lands:

It is incomprehensible to me  
 That thieves attacked and Topattumi (taking over)  
 The soil and mountains which Hokkaido Ainu lived on...  
 Ekashi says  
 Grandfather, great-grand father  
 Great-great-grandfather says:  
 People who forget their ancestors are trees without roots  
 Huchi says:  
 Grandmother, great-grand mother  
 Great-great-grandmother says:  
 Ainu *ramat* (the spirit of Ainu) will never  
 Disappear like running water (Kano 2006)

Music-making aside, Kano has made waves in the international indigenous rights recovery movement by giving testimony at the United Nation's headquarters on the shortcomings of Ainu politics (Gayman 2013). As an advocate of the 1984 Ainu Shinpō, Kano was stridently critical of the CPA's shortcomings and was disappointed in the settlement reached by the Ainu Association of Hokkaido. Kano (2012) asserted in an interview:

Autonomy was the first priority before the Ainu Promotion Law passed in 1997. ... The Japanese government wanted to quiet the Ainu from demanding autonomy: hunting rights, fishing rights, land autonomy rights, etc. So the Japanese government made kind of a 'deal' with the Ainu people [the Ainu Association] and asked, 'How about putting in place the Ainu Promotional Law?' The Ainu group turned their position and accepted this.<sup>20)</sup>

Although Kano does not publicly acknowledge his father's influence on his political ventures or his musical endeavours, he has adopted activism in his music making, especially in the years prior to 2008. Kano Oki has explicitly expressed his thoughts of how being funded by the CPA makes him financially dependent on them. However, in a 2010 interview, Kano stressed that he was focusing on being less political in his music in relation to Ainu politics and that he had begun collaborating with FRPAC-sponsored projects, for instance, the Ainu folklore shadow puppet play that was produced in the winter of 2012. On the other hand, his political activism has become more entwined with the coalition against nuclear power, triggered by the 2011 nuclear disaster in Fukushima. Activism continues to play a role in his life; recently, in response to the new 2019 Ainu Cultural Promotion Law (generally referred to as the New Ainu Law),<sup>21)</sup> Kano stated that in requiring Ainu groups to seek approval for state-sponsored cultural projects, the new law grants too much power to Japan's central government. Kano continued, stating that government funding should extend beyond Ainu culture: 'We need more Ainu to enter higher education and become Ainu lawyers, film directors, and professors; if that doesn't happen, the Japanese will always control our culture'.<sup>22)</sup>



## 9. Conclusion

Although the FRPAC is by no means responsible for sponsoring the entire scope of the Ainu performing arts, nor has it attempted to do so, it holds political legitimacy due to its position in representing the superstructure, and thus it inherently influences the Ainu people's cultural landscape. It is a visible public marker as part of the arts sector in Japanese society. As a public institution, the FRPAC presents the Ainu with a choice—to either participate within the Japanese government's structure, as Yūki Kōji and, to a lesser extent, Kano Oki do, or to maintain a distance, as Ogawa Motoi does. Perhaps its value is to centralise and consolidate a politically fragmented society and be the point of cultural contact for people outside of the Japanese islands, including foreign government officials, researchers, and arts organisations. However, due to its role in representing Ainu culture, the FRPAC is responsible for disseminating the viewpoints and narratives of the Ainu people in all their diverse backgrounds and agendas.

The CPA can also be seen as the beginning of an ongoing process of negotiation between the Ainu and the Japanese State for recognising indigenous rights (and/or human rights) as part of a continued post-colonial process and a resolution to a narrative that is marred by discord. The most recent continuation of political discourse seen by the passage of the 2019 New Ainu Law<sup>23)</sup> points to a stalemate in this process. Historical rectification is complicated, and any attempt at such resolution carries emotional weight for many Ainu. This chapter is a study of how a piece of legislation impacted the dissemination of a culture—directly, through funding; and indirectly, through its impact on the counterbalance between the rights recovery movement and the performing arts.

For my fieldwork and research, I am very much indebted to Yūki Kōji, Ogawa Motoi, and Kano Oki, as well as the many Ainu individuals and researchers conducting work on Ainu issues, for their openness and generosity in their time and spirit. With the passage of the CPA, Ainu political activism has been augmented by cultural activism, where awareness and redefining cultural identity—both for the margin and the centre—depends on artists and musicians who, in the spirit of the Ainu traditional *yūkar* long-songs and storytelling, not only transfer the knowledge and spirit of a culture, but also create a vision for cultural reimagination. Through cultural activism, Ainu artists and musicians continue the work of their forbearers in the transmission of their practice to redefine not only the minority Ainu landscape, but also that of a multicultural Japan.

## Notes

- 1) In 1972, Yūki Shōji, stormed the podium of the Joint Conference of the Anthropological and Ethnological Societies of Japan at Sapporo Medical University and read a list of criticisms.
- 2) The museum and park are known in Japanese as Minzoku Kyōsei Shōchō Kūkan.
- 3) While the Ainu Association of Hokkaido supports the Memorial Facility project, Ainu critics cite that such a memorial should not be connected to a 'theme park', and the bones should be returned to their home communities (Morris-Suzuki 2020).
- 4) Lecture, 15 November 2019, University of San Francisco Performing Arts and Social Justice

Department, by Jonathan Greenberg, Senior Associate Director and Scholar in Residence, University of San Francisco Institute for Nonviolence and Social Justice.

- 5) Formerly known as Hokkaidō Utari Kyōkai.
- 6) The New Ainu Law of 2019 formally recognised the Ainu as indigenous peoples of Japan but failed to recognise indigenous economic and political rights. As with the 1997 CPA, there were demands for a formal apology as well as for Ainu self-determination. These demands were not met, and the outcome was focused on cultural promotion, such as the large project of the Upopoy National Ainu Museum in Shiraoi.
- 7) FRPAC. 2000. *Together with the Ainu—History and Culture*. Sapporo: Zaidan hōjin Ainu bunka shinkō kenkyū suishin kikō. 30. This was to be accomplished by promoting language and traditional culture, administered by the Minister of Land, Infrastructure, and Transport and the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology, who were responsible for appointing a corporation to carry out the various programmes. An important addendum to the law was the abolishment of the 1899 Hokkaido Former Aborigine Protection Act and the Asahikawa Former Aborigines Protected Land Disposal Act; this was seen by the Ainu as being long overdue for the acts' restrictive and discriminatory policies.
- 8) Zaidan hōjin Ainu bunka shinkō/kenkyū suishin kikō.
- 9) The FRPAC was appointed by the Ministry of Education and the Hokkaido Development Agency.
- 10) <http://www.unesco.org/culture/languages-atlas/index.php?hl=en&page=atlasmap> (accessed: 23 November 2014)
- 11) At the time of the initial writing of this essay in 2014.
- 12) The FRPAC's current website posts their endowment from the Hokkaido government to be 100 million yen, in addition to undisclosed subsidies from the national government.
- 13) African Americans' musical language, rhythms, and styles were initially adopted by the younger generations of the dominant white culture and have come to dominate the popular musical language of the United States, and eventually, the world (Starr and Waterman 2018).
- 14) There is a continued narrative of the Japanese as a homogenous population, as evidenced by Japanese Deputy Prime Minister Aso Tarō's comment on January 2020 that 'No country but this one [Japan] has lasted 2,000 years with one language, one ethnic group, and one dynasty' (Japan Times, 14 January 2020, 'Deputy Prime Minister Taro Aso again courts controversy with remarks about Japan's ethnic identity').
- 15) This residency programme is sponsored by a grant from Kulturbryggan, an arm of the Swedish Arts Grants Committee.
- 16) Yūki Kōji personal interview, Sapporo, 21 December 2012.
- 17) Yūki Kōji personal interview, Sapporo, 21 December 2012.
- 18) Jeff Gayman, personal interview, Sapporo, 3 April 2013.
- 19) Anonymous, personal interview, Sapporo, 28 July 2019.
- 20) Oki's first album, *Kamuy Kor*, was originally released in 1997. His first solo album of traditional *tonkori* instrument works was released in 2005. To date, Oki has produced fifteen CD albums of either his solo music or that of his group's. He established his recording studio, Chikar Studio, in 1995. '*Chikar*' means 'we create', which is a reference to his intention to develop and produce Ainu music independently from the Japanese, without relying on them

economically. He began recording because of his belief that Ainu music was being used for musicological study, 'like a study of insects or something like that', and he wanted to 'update music for life, for the present and the future, not just a study of the past'. The band Ainu Dub was created in 2004.

- 21) The actual title is Act on Promoting Measures to Realize a Society in Which the Pride of the Ainu People Is Respected.
- 22) Jozuka, Emiko. 2019. "Japan's 'vanishing' Ainu will finally be recognized as indigenous people." 22 April 2019. CNN. <https://www.cnn.com/2019/04/20/asia/japan-ainu-indigenous-peoples-bill-intl/index.html> (Accessed: 13 May 2020)
- 23) A separate entity from the 1984 Ainu campaign called the Ainu New Law.

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