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# Whose archaeology?: Decolonizing Archaeological Perspective in Hokkaido Island

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**Abstract:** Indigenous archaeology is one of the most dynamic trends of Public archaeology. In many area colonized, have forced archaeologists to fundamental reconsider both aims and their methods. In this paper, I explore of some possibilities for promoting Indigenous archaeology in Hokkaido Island, which in the original homeland for the Ainu people and had been colonized by the modern Japanese state.

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## Introduction

Historically, archaeology has been a colonial discipline. In particular, its position in society the as tools of government, has been regarded as colonial (Smith and Wobst 2005 etc.). Certainly, problems that involve the current state of the discipline and it's the politics, related to it, not applicable only to archaeology. It was believed that all disciplines including archaeology, had the right to decide and control the history and their value a priori. However, it has now begun to be recognized that all members of community, and not just experts, have the right to be associated with such concerns. In the field of archaeology, it has been pointed out and recognized that many groups have rights and responsibilities for the conservation and study of archaeological sites.

More importantly, the relationship between Indigenous peoples and archaeologists in the colonized area has begun to be reconsidered. As pointed out by many commentators, the relationship between archaeologists and members of Indigenous groups still continues to be unequal and asymmetrical. Here, we also can see the political aspects and influence of the archaeology, and archaeologists must become aware of it.

On the other hand, archaeology in Japanese archipelago has been explained using the monogenesis theory in view of the island environment, and Indigenous people were only accorded the status as 'the ancient one' (Fujisawa 2006). Against this background, we found that insufficient attention was given to this issue by the experts and politician in that the Ainu were not recognized as indigenous peoples in Japan.

In this paper, I shall explore some of possibilities for promoting Indigenous archaeology in Hokkaido, which in the original homeland of the Ainu people and had been colonized by the modern state. This approach is related to the discussion of historical authority in Hokkaido Island.

### **Debate of the publicness in archaeology and Indigenous archaeology**

The advocacy that archaeology is not exclusive possessive to experts and scholars has been emergence through discussion on the publicness of disciplines. The public has two meanings: the state and the people. One concept of 'the public' refer to a collective body of citizens, and in contrast to the private realms, has been used since the Roman periods (Milton 2001: 1).

In modern archaeology, the word 'public' is associated with the state and its institutions. As in the case the national museum, the archaeological collection in the displayed related to the formation of national identity, and is a result of the era of intensive state formation.

Of course, we are aware of the discussion pertaining to public archaeology and Cultural Recourse Management (CRM) in the United States (Merriman 2004 etc.). However, here it is not included in the main discourse.

The second concept of 'the public' refer to a group of individuals who debate issues and consume cultural products, and whose reactions form the 'public opinion'. Archaeological sites are the cultural heritage located in the local society, and are a part of the infrastructure and commons of the local society. The concept of 'public' essentially means that "the issue is open to be discussed by all people should be decided by all citizens through collective discussion". This has led to the recognition of the historical contingency of archaeological work, and the multivalency of interpretation. Under the present circumstances, archaeologists have come to realize that the public is interested in archaeology. For instance, Schadla-Hall has defined public archaeology as 'any area of archaeological activity that interacted or had the potential to interact with the public'. (Schadla-Hall 1999: 147).

The understanding of public archaeology was expanded from state to the citizens, in order to awaken the authority of the local community. For instance, the discussion ob the publicity in the in the local community on the shared memory of the colonial history, which was originally dominated by indigenous peoples, has reignited the discussion on colonialism within the archaeological discipline and has re-established the authority of indigenous people on the cultural heritage. As the consequence, this paradigm shift in archaeology has impelled indigenous archaeology, following the efforts of Indigenous and other minority peoples to have a say in the study and interpretation of their own past.

### **What is indigenous archaeology?**

On 6 June 2008, the Japanese Diet (the 169<sup>th</sup> Diet, resolution No. 1) unanimously passed a resolution that recognizes the Ainu as an indigenous people of Japan. Also as a result, the Chief Cabinet Secretary issued statement on the same day. This statement was politically very important, as it formally recognizes the Ainu as "an indigenous people with a distinct language, religion

and culture". In a nation that has until now preferred to perceive itself as ethnically homogenous, this is a highly significant move.

This is a political and social movement for Japanese archaeology that will emerge as a big problem in various phases in the future. However, the dullness of the reaction by the academic society shows that it has not enough recognized the importance of this problem.

The resolution of the Japanese diet is related with the U.N. Declaration on 'the Rights of Indigenous Peoples' which was adopted on 13 September 2007. This declaration stated that indigenous people clearly have political, legal, economical and social rights. Article 11 and 12 clearly state that Indigenous peoples have the right of management, conservation and repatriation for the archaeological collections and human remains from archaeological sites ([http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS\\_en.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf)).

The fact, that the Japanese government officially recognized Ainu people as an indigenous people in Japan, indicates that this issue is immediately related with archaeology in Japan.

Are archaeologists really recognizing this problem?

Here, we must mention Indigenous archaeology as one of the categories in public archaeology. As a result of the increasing publicness in archaeology, many archaeologists have recognized that the past is widely open to the citizens and the local societies. It is necessary to consider the right of Indigenous people who have owned the past and are directly affected by the historical interpretation.

The question 'who has the right to control the past?' is not just an academic question, but a practical reality that must be faced in the many day-to-day interactions between archaeologists and Indigenous peoples (Siller 2005, Smith and Wobst 2005, Watkins 2000 etc.). The debate over 'who owns the past' runs particularly 'hot' when it involves the cultural and intellectual property of Indigenous peoples (Nicholas 2004, Hollowell and Nicholas 2008 etc.). The core issues include the debate on who benefits from archaeological research. Do archaeologists have a right to control the past of others?

Moreover, although the Ainu people have lived as the original inhabitants of Hokkaido Island and have most of their archaeological and historical heritage, the Indigenous view point is not sufficiently reflected in the museum exhibition and the historical interpretation on archaeological collection. This is clearly due to a lack of theoretical examination. This situation is well evidenced by the avoidance of various discussions between the archaeological culture which has been dominated by archaeologists through archaeological information, and the historical cognition of Indigenous people.

What kind of historical events occurred in the Ainu culture after the 13<sup>th</sup> century and the *Satsumon* culture which was the pre-Ainu culture? What kinds of continuities or discontinuities can we find there? Should I discuss the history of the formation of the ethnic group called the Ainu along with the past? Should archaeologists classify and discuss the 'historical story' and the formation process of the ethnic group?

The relationship between traditional archaeology and Indigenous peoples has been pointed out, when we considered the necessity of the Indigenous archaeology perspective. As Clare Smith and Martin Wobst pointed out; 'traditionally, archaeology has been done 'on', not 'by', 'for' or 'with' Indigenous peoples' (Smith and Wobst 2005: 7). This aspect applies to the situation of

archaeology in Hokkaido Island.

In the next section, I would like to specifically discuss the necessity of the Indigenous archeology perspective in Japan. The case study is a problem concerning the Shiretoko national park, which is listed a world natural heritage site, and archaeological sites and cultural heritage of the Ainu.

### Shiretoko as the world heritage site

The Shiretoko peninsula is located on the east part of Hokkaido island. On July 14<sup>th</sup> 2005, the Shiretoko Peninsula was declared a UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site. There are as pointed out the nomination committee, it provides an outstanding example of the interaction of marine and terrestrial ecosystems (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1193/>).

The name of “Shiretoko” is not Japanese language, it is derived from the Ainu language. The Word “*sir-etok*” is meaning “the end of the earth” or “the place where the earth protrudes”. And, we can find so many archaeological sites, including from *Jomon* to *Ainu* periods, there.

However, in the nomination process, the voice of Ainu people had not included. The Shiretoko Peninsula was only declared as the Natural Heritage. In this paper, I would like to talk about our efforts for the Indigenous Archaeology in Hokkaido and further plan.

### Surrounding situation of Ainu

Surrounding situation of Ainu is not easy. Despite demands from Ainu People to be recognized as an Indigenous people, the Japanese government designates the Ainu people as an ethnic minority.

Most Japanese academics agree that the Ainu are the prior in habitants of Hokkaido island. There are serious problems of the position of Ainu in Japanese History. After Meiji Restoration, the main topic of the debate around the Anthropological community was the racial origin in Japanese archipelago. Some of western researchers were thought the Ainu belonged to the “Caucasian” race, and direct descendants of European Stone Age people. On the other hand,

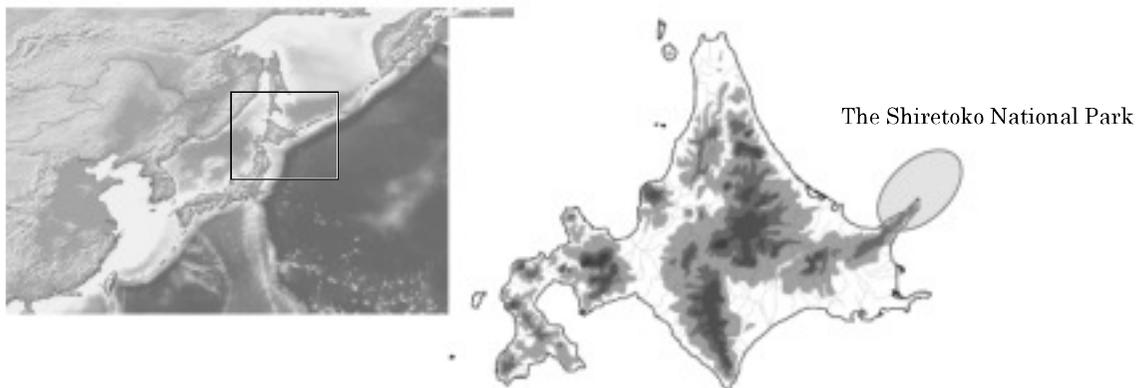


Fig. 1 Geographical location of the World Heritage “Shiretoko”

Edward Morse who was excavated at Omori shell midden, argued that the Ainu had replaced a pre-Ainu people that had lived in the Neolithic period (Morse 1877).

Japanese researches had also been discussed the debate of first inhabitants in Japanese archipelago. Shogoro Tsuboi, the reader of the Anthropological Society of Japan (correctly at that time named the Anthropological Society of Tokyo), argued that the inhabitants of the Stone age in Japan were the Koropokkur (which means ‘dwarf living under the butterbur leaves’) (Watase 1886, Tsuboi 1887). On the other hand Mitsutaro Shirai regarded by the Ainu as pit dwellers who made stone tools and pottery (Shirai 1877).

In this historical context, Japanese academics have played a principal role in defining Ainu identity. And in 1899 the Meiji Regime passed *the Act of Protections of Former Aborigines*. This act forced Ainu to change their traditional livelihood and to assimilate into Japanese society.

### **Relationship Archaeological sites and Indigenous peoples.**

Indigenous archaeology moves beyond research “about” Indigenous peoples to focus on research that is conducted with, and for, Indigenous peoples (Wobst 2005: 17). The debate is who owns the past, it is the important subjects on archaeology in Hokkaido island where was original territory for the Ainu before starting colonization.

Still now, the chronological framework of Hokkaido island is a part of Japanese history. Also, it has been strongly influenced by Japanese archaeological scheme. Here, we can find specific perspective of Japanese archaeology. Basically Japanese History could be divided prehistoric, proto-historic and historic periods. In Prehistoric periods are including Paleolithic, Jomon and Yayoi periods. The Jomon culture is original name of the local Neolithic culture in Japanese archipelago. The border of this archaeological culture is crossover the territory of modern Japan. Hokkaido island is including in the territory of Jomon culture, although Sakhalin and Kuril island is not. Here we can see a bias in interpretation of archaeological materials by archaeologist.

Archaeologists and anthropologists are trying to clarify when the Ainu culture emergence. The period of emergence of the Ainu culture identified by archaeological context on the material culture around 13 century. It is said that the period can be define on the material culture by the replacement of pottery by lacquerware and by appearance of bear ceremony (“*Iomante*”) (Watanabe 1972, Udagawa 2001).

### **World Heritage “Shiretoko” and Ainu**

Let us turn to the topic of surrounding “Shiretoko” Peninsula. On the nominating process, officially Ainu people had not been joined to participate.

As well known, in relationship to World heritage Sites the idea of an Indigenous peoples council of experts was presented to the 24<sup>th</sup> session of the World Heritage Committee. This proposal had influence on UNESCO’s Convention for safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Also, on the nominating process, advisory of IUCN has been noted that “it is considered important that representatives of the Ainu people, such as though the Hokkaido Utari

Association (Hokkaido Ainu Association), have the opportunity to be involved in the future management of property, including in relation to the development of appropriate ecotourism activities which celebrate the traditional customs and uses of the nominated property” (IUCN World Heritage Evaluation Report 2005: 31).

Actually, in the Shiretoko Peninsula are located 114 archaeological sites, including 19 “Chashi-kotsu” (that mean “remain of fort” in Ainu language, but its function is not only the fort, but also the place for negotiation inter local group and sacred place). Now, “Chashi-Kotsu” is sacred sites for the Ainu. Therefore, in further management in the “Shiretoko” heritage, we have to concern how can work with Ainu people and access to their heritage.

### **New situation and attempts**

In 1994, an Ainu, Shigeru Kayano, was elected as a member of the House of Councilors. In 1997 the Japanese parliament ratified the *Act for the promotion of Ainu Culture and the Dissemination and Advocacy for the Traditions of the Ainu and Ainu Culture*. Since the adoption of new act, Ainu research and cultural events increasingly have been organized by the Foundation for Research and Promotion of Ainu Culture, an organization created in accordance with the Act.

Over 10 years, in 2007, Hokkaido University founded new research center “Center for Ainu and Indigenous Studies” (CAIS). This center is first research center for Ainu and Indigenous Studies in Japanese university. The first characteristic of the Center is its interdisciplinary approach. The Center fully demonstrates the strengths of the university as its members consist of experts not only in cultural anthropology, history, archaeology, linguistics and other humanities, but also social sciences, such as law, political science, sociology and pedagogy, as well as environmental science and other natural sciences.

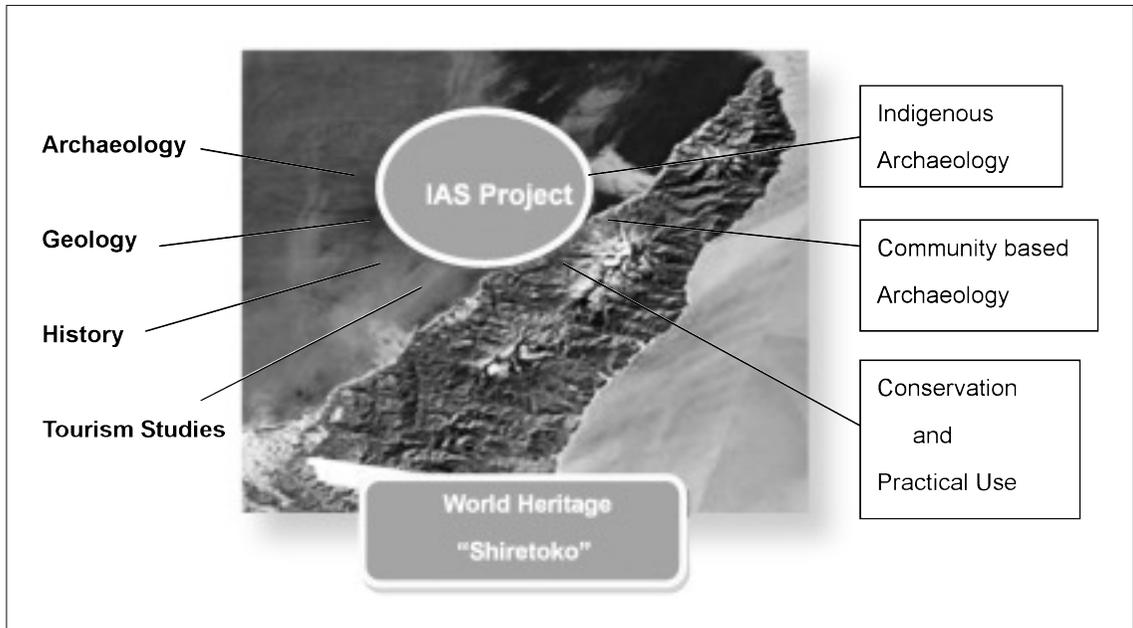
The center conducts according to the following projects (Working groups); 1) The recovering of legal rights for Ainu and Indigenous peoples, 2) The preparation of teaching materials and educational programs, 3) Museum represents, 4) Social survey, 5) Ainu language, 6) Indigenous Eco-tourism, 7) Reconstruction of the New Ainu history (including Ainu archaeology as Indigenous Archaeology).

Under the project of “Reconstruction of New Ainu History”, we start new approach to making the Ainu archaeology as Indigenous Archaeology. And as the first field for this project, we selected the grand of World Heritage site “Shiretoko”. The projects started in april, 2008.

### **The creation of Indigenous Archaeology in World Heritage “Shiretoko”**

Our project “Indigenous Archaeology in Shiretoko” (IAS) conducts according to the following projects; 1) collaboration with the Ainu in research activities, 2) making collaboration with local community. 3) using Indigenous ecotourism as cultural resource management. Also the organization of project we selected interdisciplinary approach (see also Fig. 2).

The first characteristic of IAS is most important for us. It is the first experiment to participate Ainu people on the making process of research plan in Archaeological investigation.



**Fig. 2 The Scheme of IAS project**

We would like build Ainu's view and voice the research and conservation plan. We believe that it is important to access Indigenous voice at all levels. And more important point of this plan, Indigenous people is working with non-Indigenous researchers (partnership).

The second characteristic of IAS is also significant. Any archaeological site is located in the local community. As like World Heritage "Shiretoko", archaeological and historical monuments is also very important space and place for local community. We would like to organize crating place to exchange opinions all of participants of projects including local people and Ainu peoples, and to discuss for the conservation model in "Shiretoko"

We think that the Indigenous ecotourism is one of effective methods how to use archaeological site to recognize local history for tourist and students. Here we cooperate with local NGO that is organizing ecotourism, and supports to making manuals and guide book for Indigenous ecotourism. Project members consist of different experts including archaeology, geology history, and tourism studies.

In past three years, we found here many consequence remains that related the roots of Ainu bear cult and bear ceremony to go back 11 century AD. There are many multi-layer site from prehistoric periods to Ainu culture. We also would like to pay attention on the debates of the concept between "Archaeological culture" and "Indigenous past", and the continuities and discontinuities of their past (history).

In 2008 field season, our group carried out archaeological investigation in the top of Shiretoko peninsula. We successfully found the remains ritual space made by Ainu people, which dated around 17-18 centuries on the sea terrace edge nearby Keikichi bay. This structure consist of many fragments of iron items including iron pan and axe so on. All artifacts were intentionally broken. Also well known, it is wide spread a lot of prehistoric pit dwelling in this

area, which dated AD.4 century to 11 century.

It is no wonder that ‘Shoretoko’ is not simple natural park and provide great value as complex heritage (natural and also cultural). Unfortunately, when ‘Shiretoko’ natural park was declared a UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site in 2005, it was not fully evaluated on its historical and cultural value.

### **To the next stage**

There are few archaeologists who study Indigenous archaeology in Hokkaido. I could not find indigenous archaeologists here. Even if this paper insists on the necessity of the Indigenous archeology perspective, the academic society will not react seriously. However, the knowledge in the field of archaeologists is increasing greatly. We also shall not be indifferent to this movement.

We have to understand the impact on of society by the stance taken by archaeologist and the museum representation. The communication and behavior of archaeologists are not non-political action. They should be extremely conscious of political actions as they influence the right and the people. The influence on Indigenous people is especially strong.

Here, we can find the necessity of a more serious discussion on research the ethics of archaeology. We have to consciously understand our position and initiative in the history. This is because that archaeologists cannot exist without building partnerships with communities. Zimmerman has noted ‘not to do so opens the door to uniformed decision-making and an uncertain future for the discipline’ (Zimmerman 2005).

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