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**Discourse of Silencing in the Context of the 150th Anniversary of the Naming of Hokkaido:
Representation of Ainu-Wajin Relations in the Television Drama
“Eternal Nispa, the Man Who Named Hokkaido, Matsuura Takeshiro”**

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<SUMMARY>

The year of 2018 has been officially announced as the 150th anniversary of the naming of Hokkaido in Japan and throughout the whole year a range of events were held to commemorate this date. The language used for this commemorative campaign indicates the construction of a new official discourse on the history of Hokkaido and Ainu-Wajin relations. This is a positive discourse of harmonious “co-existence”, but it does not leave space for discussions of the history of colonization and losses associated with it.

In this paper a new discourse created around the 150th anniversary of the naming of Hokkaido is discussed through the prism of the theory of silencing and the Critical Discourse Analysis. The paper examines how the images of “a good colonizer” and “a loyal native” are being created and how the figure of Matsuura Takeshiro, who is known for naming the island “Hokkaido” is being exploited for the sake of the new silencing discourse of co-existence by analyzing the representation of Ainu-Wajin relations in a TV drama “*Eien no Nispa. Hokkaidō to Nazuketa Otoko. Matsuura Takeshiro.*”, produced by NHK Sapporo broadcasting company in 2019 as a “Drama in commemoration of Hokkaido 150-years”.

Keywords: discourse of silencing, representation, Ainu people, Matsuura Takeshiro, naming of Hokkaido

The year of 2018 has been officially announced as the 150th anniversary of the naming of Hokkaido” in Japan and throughout the whole year a range of events were held to commemorate this date. The most northern island of Japan, which was known as “*ezo, ezogashima*” (“the land of barbarians”) (Mason 2012, 2) amongst Japanese in the Edo era, was officially named “Hokkaido” (northern sea circuit/province) on August 15th in 1869 by the Great Council of State act. The act of naming “Hokkaido” is associated with the name of the explorer of Ezo and Hakodate prefecture inspector, Matsuura Takeshiro, who was asked to propose a new name for the island as an official inspector hired by the Meiji government, as an experienced explorer of Ezochi who carried out 6 expeditions to Hokkaido, Sakhalin, the Southern Kuril islands and as someone who created a detailed map of not only the coast line but also of inner lands by recording Ainu toponyms. In July 1869, Matsuura submitted six proposals for the island’s name to the Meiji government, which decided on the variant “Hokkaido” (Shinya 1978, 200) as the island’s new official name.

The fact that the anniversary of the actual naming of the island by the Japanese authorities has been advanced one year before the actual date, and its coincidence with the 150th anniversary of the beginning of the Meiji era, and hence *Hokkaidō kaitaku* (Development of Hokkaido), suggests a hint about the hidden, underlying meanings of “the 150th anniversary of the naming of Hokkaido” campaign. The language used for this campaign indicates the construction of a new official discourse on the history of Hokkaido and Ainu-Wajin (ethnic Japanese) relations.

This discourse of Ainu-Wajin harmonious “co-existence” is a positive one, placing emphasis on the importance of paying respect and gratitude to the Ainu people for their rich culture and particular relations with nature ¹. But this discourse does not leave space for discussions of the fact that there have been no official apologies provided to the Ainu for the losses and trauma associated with colonization. In other words, a colonialist discourse based on the denial of and ignorance about Ainu people, which had been a mainstream discourse until the adoption of the Ainu Cultural Act in 1997, is being replaced by a new discourse of “co-existence”, which is in fact, a means of silencing the uncomfortable history of colonization and its consequences.

The aim of this paper is to reveal how the discourse of silencing is implemented in the official narratives on Ainu-Wajin relations in the context of the commemorative events dedicated to the 150th Anniversary of the Naming of Hokkaido. The author has chosen this specific angle for the reason that due to the attention addressed to this date by the Hokkaido government, mass media and local enterprises a significant spotlight has been casted as well on Ainu people’s history and culture, creating at the same time new narratives on the timeline of the island. Specifically, the analysis of the language used for the new discourse is focused on a TV drama “*Eien no Nispa. Hokkaidō to Nazuketa Otoko. Matsuura Takeshiro.*” (Eternal Nispa, the Man Who Named Hokkaido, Matsuura Takeshiro)² (further “*Eien no Nispa*”) produced by NHK Sapporo broadcasting company. This film was created as a “Drama in commemoration of Hokkaido 150-years”³ which accentuate Matsuura Takeshiro’s relations with the island of Ezo and the Ainu people. This drama has been selected as a target for this research analysis for the reason that out of a range of other events dedicated to the 150th anniversary of the Naming of Hokkaido this particular media product potentially has had a bigger impact on the audience being a product of entertaining industry which has also been advertised largely all

¹ Executive Committee for “Hokkaido 150 years” Project. “150 years of Hokkaido project record journal.” [Hokkaidō 150 Nen Jigyō Kiroku Shi]. *Greetings*. 14 Mar. 2019, p. 3.

² Ooishi, Shizuka, director. *Eternal Nispa, the Man Who Named Hokkaido, Matsuura Takeshiro [Eien no Nispa. Hokkaidō to Nazuketa Otoko. Matsuura Takeshiro]*. NHK, 2019

³ NHK Official Webpage. A Press Conference on the Drama in Commemoration of Hokkaido 150-Years “Eien no Nispa” Took Place. [Hokkaidō 150 nen kinen dorama “Eien no Nispa” no kisha kaiken wo okonaimashita], <https://www.nhk.or.jp/sapporo/nispa/infomation/2019070301/> Accessed 14 Jul. 2019

over the country, having a larger audience being broadcasted on the national television and starring famous and well-recognized actors.

This paper, first, discusses the phenomenon of the silencing in the discourse revealing how this tactics is implemented in the official language used by Hokkaido and Japan authorities, and then moves to the detailed analysis of the representation of Ainu-Wajin relations performed in the TV drama “Eien no Nispa” and attempts to unveil specific tools and symbols utilized for the silencing of Ainu voices.

Discourse of Silencing in Context

In order to develop the thought on the discourse of silencing in the Ainu context in Japan, the author would like to refer to the Foucauldian concept of discourse as “relations of power”, producing and representing knowledge about a topic at a particular historical moment through certain language (written text, images, music, etc.) (Hall 1997, 27-29). This means that certain knowledge could be given specific meanings only in a particular historical context, in other words depending on the characteristics of a certain period in history (Hall 1997, 31). Hence, a different discursive formation may emerge and produce new perspectives on the same matter, in our case – the embodiment of Ainu in a Wajin-created history of Hokkaido colonization, which has been transformed from “denial” to “co-existence”, upon the added condition that only cultural components be recognized.

If we examine the history of celebrations related to Hokkaido history, it is possible to draw the following timeline: 50-years of the Opening of Hokkaido → 100-years of Hokkaido → 150-years of the Naming of Hokkaido. The history of the island as “the land of the Ainu” is being erased from the very naming of these kind of anniversaries, which means erasure of the social and economic systems that Ainu society has been operating under for hundreds of years even before the island had been incorporated into the Japanese Empire or state. All these three dates are anniversaries of Wajin history and their relations with the island of Hokkaido, of their identity as pioneers who have “civilized and developed” this land. For example, in relation to the 100th anniversary of Hokkaido, Richard Siddle is calling the erasure of Ainu presence in commemorative events “historical amnesia that served to mask the violence of the colonial enterprise”. Siddle notes that the Ainu were mostly excluded from the narrative or given marginal roles as guides for the Japanese explorers (Siddle 1996, 163).

In this paper the author discusses a new discourse created around the 150th anniversary of the naming of Hokkaido through the prism of the theory of silencing. “Silencing” is delineated, according to Lynn Thiesmeyer’s definition, as the usage of a certain language to imply restrictions, limitations and even elimination of knowledge and language produced by a contrasting discourse (Thiesmeyer 2003, 2). Silencing involves “the act of force” on the subjects it is aiming for, their knowledge and the meanings they create out of it, provoking certain behavior - reactions or actions, which are directly influenced by the social frameworks which may enable

them. In other words, silencing occurs from “an act of language where language is used in order to enable some kinds of expression and to disable others” (Thiesmeyer 2003, 11). For example, such reactions as “choosing not to speak, choosing an alternative form of speaking, or discursive displacement” can be provoked by the act of silencing (Thiesmeyer 2003, 12).

Ruth Wodak describes an example of a discourse of silencing in Austria where anti-Semitic attitudes and the World War II Holocaust question had not been discussed, but rather concealed and avoided during public discussion, thus creating a discourse of silencing around “the Jewish question”.

“[There was ‘silence’] within which a new Austrian identity, a new collective memory, or a public memory was to be constituted (...) led to the creation of a new community of ‘victims’ where the Jews occupied an insignificant place. In other words, they were just victims like everyone else, and the Nazi policy concerning the Jews was minimized or concealed. In the eyes of the political elite who constructed these new values and myths, the ‘silence’ about the Jews was as much a sign of moral conviction as it was of moral deficit.” (Wodak 2003, 182-183).

The author suggests that the discourse of silencing as a phenomenon takes place in the contemporary narratives on Ainu history in Japan, wherein official narration of the history of the 150 years since the naming of the island includes the Ainu in one category of *senjin* (predecessors) with Wajin settlers from mainland Japan who experienced many “hardships”. The reason for these hardships is usually not presented in a clear manner, and the discourse-consumer interprets its meaning according to one’s own identity. Thus, for the majority of the Hokkaido population such a phrase as “predecessors who survived many hardships together”⁴ would be associated with the difficulties their ancestors had been facing while building a new life in the unfamiliar lands and “developing” the island.

Wodak mentions “*the use of coded terms*” in the Austrian context “to convey essentially racist content without appearing to do so” as a means of “continuing to silence publicly unacceptable anti-Semitic statements”. In the Ainu case the official discourse is not using clearly anti-Ainu statements, except for the statements of certain politicians denying the existence of Ainu as a distinct ethnic group⁵, but the usage of such coded terms as “co-

⁴ Executive Committee for “Hokkaido 150 years” Project. “150 years of Hokkaido project record journal.” [Hokkaidō 150 Nen Jigyō Kiroku Shi]. *Hokkaido 150 years commemoration ceremony*. 14 Mar. 2019, p. 21.

⁵ In 2014 Sapporo City Assemblyman Kaneko Yasuyuki posted on his Twitter account page that “Ainu people no longer exist”. Same year Hokkaido prefectural legislator Onodera Masaru also made a Tweeter post stating that “the question of whether Ainu can actually be recognized as Indigenous peoples must be revisited, and any funding allocated to Ainu programs or for Ainu welfare likewise must be reevaluated and possibly revoked” (Lewallen 2015). In January 2020 Deputy Prime Minister Asō Tarō made a public comment: “No country but this one has lasted 2,000 years with one language, one ethnic group and one dynasty,” ignoring the existence of Japan’s ethnic minorities including Ainu (The Japan Times 14 Jan. 2020).

existence” and avoidance of using any wording with negative connotation can be considered as a means of the discourse of silencing described by Wodak.

Silencing in a discourse is a not uncommon situation for Indigenous people around the world. Even the Maori people, who are considered to be one of the peoples who has managed to advance their movement for Indigenous rights, are facing certain issues revolving around the production of discursive meanings. As Moana Jackson, a Maori scholar, notes: “the only reality Maori are permitted to define and inhabit is a ‘cultural’ construct of language, music, art and custom, and it is confined with State perception of safe colonial expression”. Jackson is saying that by myth-making and re-interpretation of the history of colonization a new reality “to pacify the natives” is being created (Jackson 2018, 100). The purpose of designing such a new reality is to find a way to justify physical and economic dispossession caused by colonization, to silence an uncomfortable history and create reconsidered meanings of the identity of the majority.

Discussions on the New “Silencing” Narratives on Ainu History

The new discourse created around the 150th anniversary of the naming of Hokkaido is presented in the basic principles, of “150 years of Hokkaido” Project some of which are listed below⁶: unique Hokkaido history and culture commencing with Jōmon culture and Ainu culture; looking back at and being appreciative of the accomplishment of predecessors; a society of co-existence aiming for mutual recognition; reviewing the path taken so far and looking toward the future; sharing new values of Hokkaido that one can be proud of. The last idea can be interpreted as an attempt to construct a new Hokkaido (or Wajin) identity in the range of recent events that are focused on the Ainu people, such as the adoption of a new law on Ainu policy legally recognizing the Ainu as an Indigenous people, the opening of a new National Museum of Ainu culture in April 2020 (the construction of which has been announced as one element of the new law), and the Olympic Games to be hosted by Japan in the summer of 2020.

The former governor of Hokkaido, Takahashi Harumi, in her speech at the Hokkaido 150th anniversary commemoration ceremony on August 5, 2018, defined the 150th year after naming Hokkaido “as a starting point (...) for a solid step to the future towards the creation of a society characterized by dynamic diversity and mutual respect, a society that emphasizes Ainu reverence for nature and desire for co-existence.”⁷ Since 2017 a new regional day has been established, The Day of Hokkaido for Everyone⁸ (*Dōmin no hi*), on the 17th of July, the date when Matsuura Takeshiro submitted his proposals for the island’s new name. In the protocol defining the

⁶ Hokkaido Citizens Review Committee for “Hokkaido 150 years” Project. “150 years of Hokkaido Project. Basic Principals.” [Hokkaidō 150 Nen Jigyō Kihon Hōshin]. Oct. 2016

⁷ See Note 4

⁸ English translation for *Dōmin no hi* is presented by the author

principles of the date it is noted that the date is designed to serve to deepen understanding of Hokkaido history and culture, reaffirm Hokkaido values, nurture hearts proud of being a Hokkaido citizen, and build a more abundant Hokkaido together⁹.

However, despite the adoption of a new legislation in May 2019 recognizing “Ainu as Indigenous people of the northern part of the Japanese archipelago, and in particular Hokkaido”¹⁰ there has been no official recognition of the history of colonization, nor official apologies. Such basic rights, guaranteed by the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People, as collective rights for land and fishing, for self-determination and self-government are not guaranteed to the Ainu.

The opinions of Ainu on the 150th anniversary celebrations and representation of Ainu in it have been divided. Though the Ainu Association of Hokkaido, which the government of Japan considers as a representative organization of the Ainu people, is actively supporting the new discourse, there are some critical voices. In July of 2018 at the symposium “Questioning “150-years of Hokkaido” from the Ainu Viewpoint” “the celebration mood” of the official side was criticized by Ainu participants. For example, a well-respected Ainu elder Shimizu Yūji pointed out that “*these 150 years are the years of tragic history for Ainu*” because due to the assimilation policy Ainu were dispossessed from their land, prohibited from practicing their traditional lifestyle and their rights for fishing and hunting were taken away; they were also restricted from using their language. Shimizu calls the naming of Hokkaido “*a one-sided*” action, because Ainu who have been calling their land “*yaunmosir*” (the country on the land) or “*aynu mosir*”¹¹ (the land of humans) for centuries were not even consulted on the matter of the renaming of the island¹². Another contra-opinion was performed by an Ainu human rights defender, Sinrit Eoripak Aynu Kawamura, who organized a protest against the Hokkaido government, stating that it was “unacceptable to celebrate these 150 years without an official apology to the Ainu, obscuring the history of oppression that took place under the name of opening up [Hokkaido]” (Uzawa 2019, 271) .

The Myth about the Naming of Hokkaido

In this paper the exploitation of the image of Matsuura Takeshiro for the sake of the new silencing discourse of co-existence will be discussed, grounding the analysis in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), because this

⁹ *Hokkaido Government Official Website*. Protocol for the Day of Hokkaido for Everyone, 2017, www.pref.hokkaido.lg.jp/ss/ssa/717/jyourei.htm

¹⁰ Law on Promotion of Measures to Realize a Society that Respects the Pride of Ainu People. [Ainu no hitobito no hokori ga sonjū sareru shakai wo jitsugen suru tame no shisaku no suishin ni kan suru hōritsu]. Chapter 1, Article 1, Official Web Portal of Government of Japan, 2019

¹¹ Ainu language transliteration in this article follows “the Dictionary of the Ainu Language of Kayano Shigeru [Kayano Shigeru no ainu go jiten] (1996)

¹² Report on the Symposium “Questioning “150-years of Hokkaido” from the Ainu Viewpoint” [Ainu no shiten de tou Hokkaidō 150 nen. Kirokushū]. Ethnic Minority Groups Gathering, 31 Jul.2019.

method is problem-oriented and focuses on relations of power, dominance and inequality. One of the aims of CDA is “an attempt to uncover, reveal or disclose what is implicit, hidden or not immediately obvious” (van Dijk 1995).

The figure of Matsuura is being used to create an image of “a good Wajin” who was critical of the Matsumae domain’s unfair treatment of the Ainu, sympathizing with them, and who expressed his commitment to the Ainu people by incorporating his thoughts on Ainu into the very name of the island of Hokkaido. An image of a good partnership between Matsuura and Ainu is used as a pedestal of the Ainu-Wajin co-existence narration, which has been extensively popularized in recent years. Such a narration is facing certain critics from the Ainu community, because it is based only in a Wajin perspective.

Despite the fact that there were other prominent explorers of Hokkaido who also were expressing friendly feelings to Ainu (for ex. Sugae Masumi), it is exclusively Matsuura Takeshiro who is being glorified as a sympathizer with the Ainu people. Matsuura Takeshiro is called “the parent who named Hokkaido” (*nazuke oya*), “an explorer who loved the Ainu” (*Ainu wo ai shite ita tankensha*), a person “who came into contact with Ainu culture, deepening interaction with the Ainu people” as Fukui Teru, Minister of State for Okinawa and Northern Territories Affairs noted in his speech at the “150 years of Hokkaido commemoration ceremony” in August of 2018¹³.

The figure of Matsuura Takeshiro has been officially announced as a “key person” of “150 years of Hokkaido” campaign and is depicted as a must-know figure, a representative of Hokkaido. For example, a campaign note at one of the largest book-store in Sapporo proclaims “knowing Matsuura Takeshiro is knowing Hokkaido”. Another example is the key-phrase of a TV drama “*Eien no Nispa*” produced by NHK Sapporo broadcasting company as a “Drama in commemoration of Hokkaido 150-years”, which proclaims “Hokkaido would not have been born, if there was no Matsuura Takeshiro”. In this way, there is much attention dedicated to the person of Matsuura Takeshiro, whereas Ainu are again given the role of nameless guides (Siddle 1996; Mason 2012).

To support the hypothesis that the image of Matsuura has been extolled particularly for the 150th anniversary of Hokkaido, an analysis of newspaper articles of the Hokkaido Shimbun, the largest printed media on the island, was conducted. Articles since 1988 were examined from the Hokkaido Shimbun digital database, and such keywords usage as “Matsuura Takeshiro”, “Ainu”, “nazuke oya” were tracked from 1988 till September 20, 2019. The average number of articles including these keywords published from 1988 till 2016 is 8 per year, with variance from 0 to 23 per year, mostly mentioning the name of the explorer for the coverage of local events in

¹³ See Note 4

different regions of Hokkaido. In 2017 there were 67 articles, in 2018 - 165, and in 2019 till September 20th - only 21.

Furthermore, a thousand of various events were included as part of the 150-year anniversary celebrations under the umbrella of the “Future of Hokkaido” project. Several hundred of those were related to Ainu but limited to the themes of culture, dancing, cuisine, Hokkaido toponyms derived from the Ainu language, Matsuura Takeshiro’s connections with Ainu, and the view on Ainu living and culture through Matsuura’s eyes. Only two events related to the revision of the 150-year history were from the Ainu perspective. There were two productions related to popular entertainment as a part of the project: the musical “*Matsuura Takeshiro. Kai. Daichi to no Yakusoku*” (Matsuura Takeshiro, Kai, Commitment to the Big Land), and the television drama “Eien no Nispa” mentioned above¹⁴.

“Eien no Nispa” (2019)

“Eien no Nispa” was produced by NHK Sapporo broadcasting company as a “Drama in commemoration of Hokkaido 150-years”¹⁵ and broadcast four times during the period of June 2019 to February 2020. During the first seconds of the film a message on the screen reassures the audience that this film is fictional story created to commemorate the naming of Hokkaido with Matsuura Takeshiro as the main character. This is followed by a notice that “in the Ainu language Hokkaido is called Yaunmosir and was called Ezochi until the end of the Tokyo Shogunate”¹⁶.

The plot covers Matsuura’s life in Ezo and Edo (present-day Tokyo) from 1845 till 1869 starting from the opening scene in which Matsuura is presented through a close-up of him beating a path through knee-deep snow, checking his direction with a compass, and gazing with expectancy and admiration into the distance, into the great spaces of the yet unknown and to be explored Ezochi. Matsuura is played by one of the very most famous talents in Japan, Matsumoto Jun, who was a part of the popular boy band “Arashi”. He is presented as a very determined, ready to bear any difficulties, generous, gentle and handsome man, a real hero of the time. The opening scene, accompanied by the voice of the narrator, the Sapporo-born and widely popular Japanese singer and songwriter Nakajima Miyuki, announces that this man’s name is Matsuura Takeshiro, who in the 2nd year of the Meiji Era (1869) proposed a name for Hokkaido. Despite its claims to be fiction, due to the offscreen

¹⁴ A separate webpage was created to commemorate and provide the information about the events related to the 150-year anniversary of naming Hokkaido. 150 years of Hokkaido project finished in December 2018, the project webpage has been erased and the content moved to the Hokkaido government official webpage. Thereafter, in March 2019 the 150 years of Hokkaido project record journal was published.

¹⁵ See Note 3

¹⁶ See Note 2

narration, the film is perceived partly as a documentary, as the relation of the narrator to the story is never explained and stays unclear to the audience.

Language as a Tool of Silencing and Appropriation

The very title of the film is striking because of the Ainu word “*nispa*” in it. “*Nispa*” in Ainu culture is a word indicating “a rich man of prosperity”, a well-respected and wealthy male who also has authority. It is also used to call someone’s husband (Kayano 1996, 343). The re-invented word “*nispa*” as presented in the film has connotations of “an important person”. Those who have not seen the film but know the real meaning of the word, mainly the Ainu, would naturally create an association of “*nispa*”, which means “a well-respected man” with Matsuura Takeshiro. Although this meaning is implied in the musical “*Matsuura Takeshiro. Kai. Daichi to no Yakusoku*” where Matsuura is welcomed by Ainu in every village he visits with the greeting: “Takeshiro-*nispa*, we have been waiting for you!”, the producers of the drama purposefully created a different meaning that would connote not a relationship of authority between Matsuura (or Wajin) and the Ainu, but a sympathetic and more intimate one, by inventing the romantic story of Takeshiro and a young Ainu woman named Rise, a sister of Uteruku, Matsuura’s Ainu guide through Ezochi. One of the main lines of the plot is the relationship between Matsuura and Rise, which evolves into mutual affection. This plotline will be analyzed separately.

In terms of the Ainu language presence in the film we should remark that once Matsuura comes into contact with the Ainu people, the audience can hear many Ainu phrases followed by captions in Japanese. For a person unfamiliar with the Ainu language it is difficult to catch any of these Ainu phrases, except for the following three words: “*nispa*”, “*pirka*” (good, nice, beautiful) and “*sisam*”. For example, in response to Matsuura’s line that Rise’s deceased husband would not want such a destiny for her, Rise claims:

You are a good *sisam*. For the first time I see a good *sisam*. How good that I met a good *sisam* in my life. (Anata ha ii *sisam*. Watashi ha hajimete mita ii *sisam*. Ikite iru uchi ni ii *sisam* ni aete yokatta.)

Sisam is an Ainu word for Wajin which literally means “beside one”. It seems that another word for Wajin “*samo*” is being avoided purposefully and replaced with the more neutral *sisam*. *Samo* is sometimes used with a negative connotation to express disrespect toward Wajin by the Ainu, but at the same time it has been and still is used by some Ainu as a neutral word for referring to Wajin, just like *sisam*. For example, Sugae Masumi, a Wajin traveler who visited Hokkaido in 1788-1792, was using the word *samo* in his travel notes to name Wajin settlers of those times (Hoshino 2011). Territories under the Matsumae domain rule were called Wajin-chi (the land of Wajin) or *Samo*-chi (the land of *samo*) in contrast to Ezo-chi (the land of Ezo) (Shinya 1978). By refraining from the usage of a word natural to the historical period and to the Ainu language, albeit with a trace of negative meaning, a more politically correct one is being promoted instead which unilaterally exercises the function of the principle

of “a society of co-existence aiming for mutual recognition”¹⁷. Simultaneously, silencing occurs not only of the antagonistic history of Ainu-Wajin settlers and Ainu-Japanese state relations, but also the Ainu language vocabulary used in that historical period is being misrepresented for the sake of the new narrative¹⁸.

The Japanese language spoken in the film reflects the historical period of Japan 150 years ago wherein archaic expressions and grammar were used. For a non-native Japanese speaker some phrases are difficult to comprehend at first try; however, the producers ensured that the message enclosed in the “key-phrases” would be delivered to the audience, by using rather contemporary and simple language. For example, the following line spoken by Matsuura to Rise: “I have to return to Edo and inform many people about what I have seen in Ezochi. For the sake of this country and for the sake of Ainu.” (Washi ha kono Ezochi de mita koto wo Edo ni modotte oozei no hito ni shiraseneba naranu. Kono kuni no tame ni mo, Ainu no tame ni mo.) conveys a powerful message through simple terms. And another Matsuura’s proclamation, “I think it is necessary to draw up a policy where Ainu and Japanese would be treated equally” (Ainu to Nihonjin wo byōdo ni atsukau seisaku wo ritsuan seneba naranu to omou deoru) is similarly meant to evoke feelings of sympathy and familiarity through its simplicity.

Romanticism and Power Relations

The character of Rise was created specifically for this drama (Wakaizumi 2019), and performed by a Wajin actress, Fukada Kyōko. Instead of developing the character of Uteruku and presenting him as, for instance, an honorable, intelligent, courageous Ainu man and a friend of Matsuura to achieve the “co-existence” idea, the producers give preference to the invention of a non-existent relationship between an Indigenous woman, whose people and culture are under threat, and a man from the colonizers side, who has authority and power.

The name of the character is Japanese¹⁹ and the appearance of the actress is striking with a dark-toned make-up and the absence of a traditional facial tattoo, even though she has already been married (along with Rise’s mother-in-law played by a Hokkaido-born Japanese actress, Sogawa Rumiko, and the other Ainu women extras). Rise’s Ainu husband had been sent to Kita-Ezo (present-day Sakhalin) as a laborer and Rise had been made a “local wife of Wajin” (lewallen 2016, 128) against her will, but she had managed to escape and give birth to a half-Wajin boy, Icinika. She is depicted as a woman who is proud of her culture and respects her people and land, but in her relations with Matsuura, Rise is presented as a person with a weak social position. She is a desecrated Ainu woman, and Matsuura turns out to be the person who can become her rescuer. In other words, Matsuura represents Wajin society (and particularly Meiji Wajin society) and Rise – the Ainu, who are rescued

¹⁷ See Note 4

¹⁸ Ainu language has been driven into a state of being “critically endangered” (UNESCO Atlas 2010) by assimilation policies and discrimination against the Ainu

¹⁹ There is a word “rise” in Ainu language, but it means “to pull, to pluck” (Kayano 1996, 468)

from the misfortunes of Matsumae rule era and are provided with new life embodied by the Wajin civilization.

The representation of an Ainu woman in the character of Rise resembles the depiction of Japanese women in the Western films in the second half of the 20th century. One of the relatively recent examples would be the image of Mariko from the TV series “Shōgun” (1980) who speaks perfect English and serves as an interpreter for an English navigator named John Blackthorne, a survivor of a shipwreck. Blackthorne is depicted, just like Matsuura, as “a highly skilled, very intelligent and resourceful foreigner”, and Mariko serves as “the perfect cross-cultural mediator” (Fox 2005, 281), just like Rise who speaks Japanese without any accent and plays the role of a mediator between Matsuura and Ainu in the kotan (village).

Proud to be an Ainu and not willing to leave her land with Matsuura, Rise dies by the arrow of an assassin hired by the Matsumae domain to kill Matsuura, who notified the Tokugawa Shogunate about the inhuman treatment of the Ainu by the Wajin merchants under the Matsumae domain. She sacrifices her life for the sake of the high ideals of Matsuura to tell the world about the Ainu situation, and to “rescue” them from the Matsumae domain’s mistreatment. Her sacrifice is also an attempt to design a brighter future for the Ainu in the Meiji era as natural subjects of the Japanese state, just like Mariko sacrificed herself “to the male ideal of a cross-cultural mediator” (Fox 2005). The death of Rise can be interpreted as a symbol of the “dying” Ainu culture which continues to live on and transforms in the character of Rise’s half-Ainu, half-Wajin son.

The absence of such an important cultural mark as a traditional tattoo on Rise’s face and on the faces of all Ainu female characters in the film could be explained in several ways. Either the absence of tattoos was a request from the Ainu women from the Nibutani community, which became the main location for the film production, for the reason that Ainu facial tattoos are still associated with discrimination and psychological pain that Ainu women had to go through, and the producers treated this delicate question with respect. Another possible reason is that in Japanese culture a tattoo gives a negative impression, and an image of a beautiful young Ainu woman (played by a Wajin actress) was created according to a Japanese image of beauty. The image of Rise in this context is similar to representations of Asians in Western movies as a “yellow face”, or, in this case, a so-called explicit yellow face, wherein a non-Asian person plays the role of an Asian character. Historically in Hollywood, this meant white people wearing makeup and clothing to make them “look Asian” (Ono 2017, 107). In “Eien no Nispa” the actress who plays Rise has dark-toned make-up and she looks even darker than Matsuura, who walks 60 km daily under the sun.

Image of a Thoughtful “Good” Colonizer

The scene of the naming of Hokkaido on July 17, 1869, which was designated “Dōmin no hi” in 2017, portrays Matsuura Takeshiro, who presents 6 variants of names for the island and is asked which one he thinks is best. In this scene, Matsuura’s explanation for picking the name “Hokkaido” is a device employed by the producers to project their version of his thoughts about the Ainu. According to Matsuura’s travel notes, “the aborigines (*dojin*) are calling each other “*kaino*” (...) or recently pronouncing with an accent as “*aino*” (Shinya 1978, 200). In the film Matsuura explains that in old Ainu language “a person who lives on that land “was called “*kai*”, in other words, “the northern land where *kai* live”. The official narration of the film has picked up this idea, but by accenting the part “*kai*” which is incorporated into the name of “Hokkaido”²⁰. This fact has not been proved by Ainu language and culture specialists. Nevertheless, this story of Matsuura being committed to Ainu has been romanticized and extensively exploited as an official account, not only in the film. Moreover, an expert on Ainu history, Emori Susumu, notes that though Matsuura knew the word *Ainu*, in his notes he often used such words as *ijin* (barbarian/foreigner) and *dojin* (aborigine) (Emori 2018).

The film depicts a long scene of Takeshiro regretting being unhelpful for improving the Ainu situation, representing the embodiment of a “good Wajin” who wanted to tell the world about the unfair treatment of the Ainu by Matsumae people. However, the official narration created around the 150th anniversary of the naming of Hokkaido ignores the history of Ainu-Wajin relations during these 150 years since the Meiji era started. Besides avoiding the usage of such wording as “colonization”, the topic of discrimination against Ainu people is mentioned only very briefly in the official discourse, more often being replaced by the phrasing “hardships”, in the context of “predecessors who survived many hardships together” (*ooku no kunan wo tomo ni norikoe ikinuite kita senjin*)²¹. Furthermore, this discrimination is being portrayed as a phenomenon that took place in the past, often emphasizing the unfair and violent treatment of the Ainu by the Matsumae domain, the predecessor of the Meiji government, which by association represents development and civilization.

Creating an Image of a “Loyal Native” and Silencing Ainu Voices

The head of the Sapporo broadcasting department (Wakaizumi 2019) claims in his essay that many Ainu were presented in the film. This statement can be questioned, as most of them appear on the screen only for several seconds and remain for the audience just Ainu figures without names and history. Ainu are mainly presented as voiceless extras and the only Ainu actor, Ukaji Takashi, is given an episodic role of Rise’s father-in-law, who has only two lines in the film. It can be called a form of tokenism when one claims that the minority group is so

²⁰ The variants that Matsuura Takeshiro proposed were as follows: “Hokkaidō” (with two characters for “*kai*”), “*Kaihokudō*”, “*Kaitōdō*”, “*Hitakamidō*”, “*Tōhokudō*”, “*Chishimadō*”. (Shinya 1978, 200)

²¹ See Note 4

“well” presented for the first time in the fiction-film production, but de facto it is under-represented and given only secondary roles. The only Ainu characters who have individuality and whom the producers to some extent introduce to the audience are Rise, her son Icinika and her brother Uteruku, all three played by non-Ainu actors²². Judging from the distribution of roles and representation of characters it can be stated that the main purpose of this film was to present the importance of the figure of Matsuura Takeshiro and his well-established relations with the Ainu.

Rise’s brother, who assures his sister in the Ainu language that Matsuura is a very good man who can be trusted, from the very first scene of his acquaintance with Matsuura is depicted as a faithful servant greeting him bowed on one knee with his head low and eyes bent on the ground. He is so devoted to Matsuura that is ready to absorb a bear attack alone to protect his Wajin master, lose one arm and eventually die.

Finally, the image of the Wajin (Meiji) world as a world of the society of civilization and enlightenment that opens up new opportunities for the future is depicted by the scene of the son of Rise who wants to move to Edo with Matsuura and is eager to acquire Wajin knowledge and see the Wajin world. The embodiment of the “co-existence” idea can be observed in the character of this boy, who has both Ainu and Wajin heritage. Icinika’s desire to become a part of the Wajin world can be found reflected in the “looking toward the future” idea of the 150th anniversary of the naming of Hokkaido campaign presented in the speech of the former governor of Hokkaido, Takahashi Harumi, at the 150th anniversary commemoration ceremony on August 5, 2018, quoted earlier.

The film depicts a scene of Matsuura looking at Icinika leaving from Edo back to Hokkaido, following him with a gaze of hope and satisfaction with Icinika’s decision to return to his homeland. Then the focus is turned to Matsuura energetically walking straight in the direction of the camera, and the scene is accompanied by the words of the narrator “if there were no Matsuura Takeshiro, there would be no today’s Hokkaido”.

A Film for Whom and for What Purposes. Conclusions

“History is a representation of the past linked to the establishment of an identity in the present.”

(Friedman 1992, 195)

According to the weekly report “Your Voices” (Minasama no Koe) (July 15, 2019 - July 21, 2019) published by the NHK Public Relations Bureau, after the film’s all-Japan release on July 15, the audience responses to the TV drama “Eien no Nispa” ranked third after the news related to the elections to the House of Councillors (July 21, 2019), and the Grand Sumo tournament in Nagoya (which usually takes place in July). Comments from the

²² Rise's brother is also played by a Wajin actor with an artificial thick beard to look more like an Ainu man

audience included those such as the following : “I felt a strong will, a sense of justice, the sincerity of Matsuura Takeshiro through the presence and eyes of Matsumoto Jun”; “I felt that it would be appropriate to call Takeshiro the first Japanese journalist, as he recorded the repression of the Ainu people at Ezochi and informed the world about it with “the power of a pen ”; “During the scene when the Ainu people were abused my heart hurt like it was my own pain. I wish there was more focus on people who help out the weak just like Takeshiro”; “It was a deep and memorable content, but I felt that the development of the story is a bit rushed”. The drama topped the list in the week between July 15-21, 2019 in number of responses from the audience (806 responses) and as a program the audience wished to be re-broadcast (162 votes)²³.

If we try to think from the Ainu perspective, indeed, this work had several positive effects in terms of presentation of Ainu culture and history. Many Ainu phrases are presented with Japanese captions, there is a short scene of violent treatment of the Ainu by Wajin overseers at a fishing camp which Matsuura witnesses in Kita-Ezo (present Sakhalin). Nevertheless, the responses from the audience presented here reflect reactions to the story through the dominating majority perspective. The Managing Director of the Akan Industrial Arts Association, Akibe Hideo, in an interview with the Tokyo Shimbun newspaper in August, 2018 called the campaign created around the name of Matsuura Takeshiro – “a camouflage masking the real meaning of the date, which is “150-years since the Development of Hokkaido has begun”, like trying to acquit negative impacts caused by colonization by using the image of a man who was sympathizing with Ainu”. (Ideta 2018)

The head of the Sapporo broadcasting department, Wakaizumi Hisaaki, in his essay for the special volume of the journal “Eureka” (August 2019) dedicated to Matsuura Takeshiro, notes that in the creation of this film such works as “Dersu Uzala” (1975) directed by Kurosawa Akira, “Lawrence of Arabia” (1962) by David Lean, “Dances with Wolves” (1990) directed by and starring Kevin Costner, were used as references for the reason that “all these films are telling a story of an outsider who obtains an entrance into the local community and the figures who are at the mercy of history” (Wakaizumi 2019, 49). Indeed, the above-mentioned works’ central figures are those who are presented as positive characters respected among the locals despite being outsiders, heroes in the eyes of the majority audience. It seems that when choosing the above-mentioned works as authoritative references the creators of “Eien no Nispa” paid attention only to the superficial narration, not digging deep into the methods of representation and messages broadcasted in these films. For instance, Robert Baird in the article “Going Indian” Dances With Wolves (1990)” comments that this film “is a cinematic myth that addresses still unresolved traumas and contradictions of American history, as well as current contradictions between industrialism and environmentalism, tribal society and industrial society, the melting-pot (assimilation) and multiculturalism (racial/ethnic pride)” (Baird 1998, 155). Kevin Costner in the person of lieutenant John

²³ *Your Voices [Minasama no Koe]*. NHK Public Relations Bureau, 21 Jul.2019

Dunbar “stood poised to claim his exemption from the national guilt” (Prats 1998, 6). *Dances With Wolves*’ narration is Dunbar-centered and as Prats (1998, 7) notes “we never know any Indian in DWW as intimately as we know this white-man-become-Indian, hence, it is an attempt of self-actualization (Collins 1993, 258) which is supported by the narration from the first person and described through the colonizer’s eyes. In “*Dersu Uzala*” created by the Japanese director Kurosawa Akira through the image of Dersu Uzala, a Nanai man, the commemoration of the forgotten - nomadic peoples in the Japanese-dominated areas of Manchuria, is performed as Solovieva suggests (2010). “The detour by the adaptation of a Russian source, Arseniev’s book, allowed Kurosawa to restore Dersu’s grave in a pan-Asian space on the Manchurian border so that the Japanese could join in their remembering and forgetting of the genocide with the whole modern world, thus entering a global community via the memorial magic of cinema” (Solovieva 2010, 78).

In all the works mentioned above one can notice a feeling of nostalgia, or more precisely *imperialist nostalgia*, when “people mourn the passing of what they themselves have transformed”. Imperialist nostalgia takes a form of “innocent yearning” both to capture people’s imaginations and to conceal its complicity with often brutal domination” (Rosaldo 1989, 108). When the life-being of a dominated group is destabilized by the dominant one, the latter perceives transformations of other cultures as its own disaster. Rosaldo argues that nostalgia is an “appropriate emotion to invoke in attempting to establish one’s innocence and at the same time talk about what one has destroyed” (Rosaldo 1989, 108).

Indeed, imperialist nostalgia is present not only in the representation of the Ainu past in the drama, but also in the current policy of the Japanese state, where it is, in the absence of stakeholders, making attempts to preserve and restore Ainu culture by such means as establishing a new National Museum (“Symbolic Space for Ethnic Harmony”) to display Ainu culture rather than give a second life by means such as developing Indigenous educational programs or revitalizing Ainu Indigenous rights²⁴.

American anthropologist Jonathan Friedman notes that “representation of historical events is a process of creating making meanings, or in other words creating a discourse that constructs one’s identity.” (Friedman 1992, 196). It is an act of “enacting of myth in reality”. Once myth is created and successfully communicated, it converts created story into nature for the myth-consumer and provides the myth with natural justification (Barthes 1972, 128, 142). In the circumstances of global attention to Indigenous people’s rights and movements, Hokkaido (and also Japan) is in the process of re-creating a new identity for Hokkaido citizens that can both construct new meanings of being Hokkaido citizen and part of the Japanese state.

²⁴ For further readings about the new National Museum and current policy see Tessa Morris-Suzuki. *Performing Ethnic Harmony: The Japanese Government’s Plans for a New Ainu Law*. *The Asian-Pacific Journal*. vol. 16, no. 2, 2018, www.apjjf.org/2018/21/Morris-Suzuki.html.

The way which has been chosen to design this new identity, though, lacks a dialogue with Ainu and is based on Wajin visions on reality and history, which are based on attempts to justify the negative history of colonization by ignoring it, or silencing it. At the same time, myths are made speculating on the figure of Matsuura Takeshiro, an explorer of the island and a person known in Japan as “the parent who named Hokkaido”. An image of “a good Wajin” who was able to establish a good partnership with Ainu is being created, and this idea is the embodiment of the 150 years narration. In spite of Matsuura Takeshiro being a prominent explorer and a sympathizer with the hardships Ainu were facing, he is a representative of the Meiji (colonizer) government, first being employed as a Hakodate prefecture inspector in 1868 and then in the next year as a government urban planner (*kaitaku hangan*), who was supportive of the idea of incorporation of Hokkaido into the Japanese state (Shinya 1978, 199). The embodiment of Ainu in the Wajin history of Hokkaido, which has been transformed from “erasure” to “co-existence”, represents a new discursive formation according to the Foucauldian notion, that produces new perspectives on this matter. The emergence of such a formation has been influenced by specific characteristics of a certain period in history. Roland Barthes states that “myth is constituted by the loss of the historical quality of things: in it, things lose the memory that they once were made” (Barthes, 1972, p.142).

Judging from the nature of the language utilized for the sake of the discourse created around the 150th years anniversary of the naming of Hokkaido – emphasizing on the focus to the future and concealing of uncomfortable to the dominant society history; acknowledging that complete erasure of the past may cause discontent, hence, consciously demonizing the Matsumae domain, which is associated with Edo era and whose authority was limited to Ezo, leaving the Japanese outside Hokkaido exempted from the colonial guilt; spotlighting to the figure of Matsuura Takeshiro as a counter to the evil; deliberately creating a myth of “a good Wajin” to diminish the moral burden of colonization crimes; the result has been the silencing not only of the Ainu history and their voices, but at the same time silencing of the history of Japan and masking it under the cover of the ideas of co-existence, mutual respect and cooperation. An ideology founded on such principles can transmute into a time bomb, because purposeful concealment and constant understatement may result into a deeper trauma and dissatisfaction from the silenced side. The official narration on the Ainu-Wajin relations is designed to satisfy the dominant society, to assist in their explorations for self-identity as a bearers of colonization past, and appease or as Moana Jackson phrases it “pacify the natives”, who are deprived of presenting their own view on the reality in the context of this official discourse of silencing.

The author believes, silencing of history and the voices of the Indigenous is a crucial issue not just for the representation of Ainu history but also for the sustainability of Ainu culture and identity. The silencing of negative history and the making myths of “co-existence”, “good partnership” and “looking into the future” by intentionally forgetting the past would not be of benefit for the resilience of the Ainu nor the resurgence of Indigenous rights.

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