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Dam Construction and Ainu Cultural Revival in Biratori, Hokkaido

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Abstract

This article attempts to contribute to a fuller and more nuanced understanding of Ainu policy in Japan by showing how efforts to revive indigenous Ainu identity and culture on the part of a local Ainu community interacted with concurrent changes in Japan's administrative state in the context of the implementation of a dam construction project to produce policy outcomes at the local level. There is a substantial body of English language literature that assesses the 1997 verdict in the lawsuit over the construction of Nibutani Dam in Biratori and its legal implications with respect to the status of the Ainu within the broader national context. This article, by contrast, uses the focuses on efforts to construct a second dam in the Saru River Valley watershed (the Biratori Dam) to examine how the relationship between the Biratori Ainu community and the national government changed in the years that followed the Nibutani verdict. In doing so, it outlines the seemingly paradoxical process by which the construction of the new dam facilitated a re-engagement on the part of the local Ainu community with their traditional culture, including practices that were on the verge of disappearing, and the discovery and re-inscription of cultural meaning into the landscape of the town. Through this, it illustrates the opportunities for and limits of the promotion of indigenous rights in a context like Japan's where the state has embraced the promotion of indigenous culture as a state function without recognizing any sort of indigenous sovereignty over land.

Key words: Ainu, Japan, indigenous politics, Nibutani, infrastructure administration, local government, environmental impact assessment,

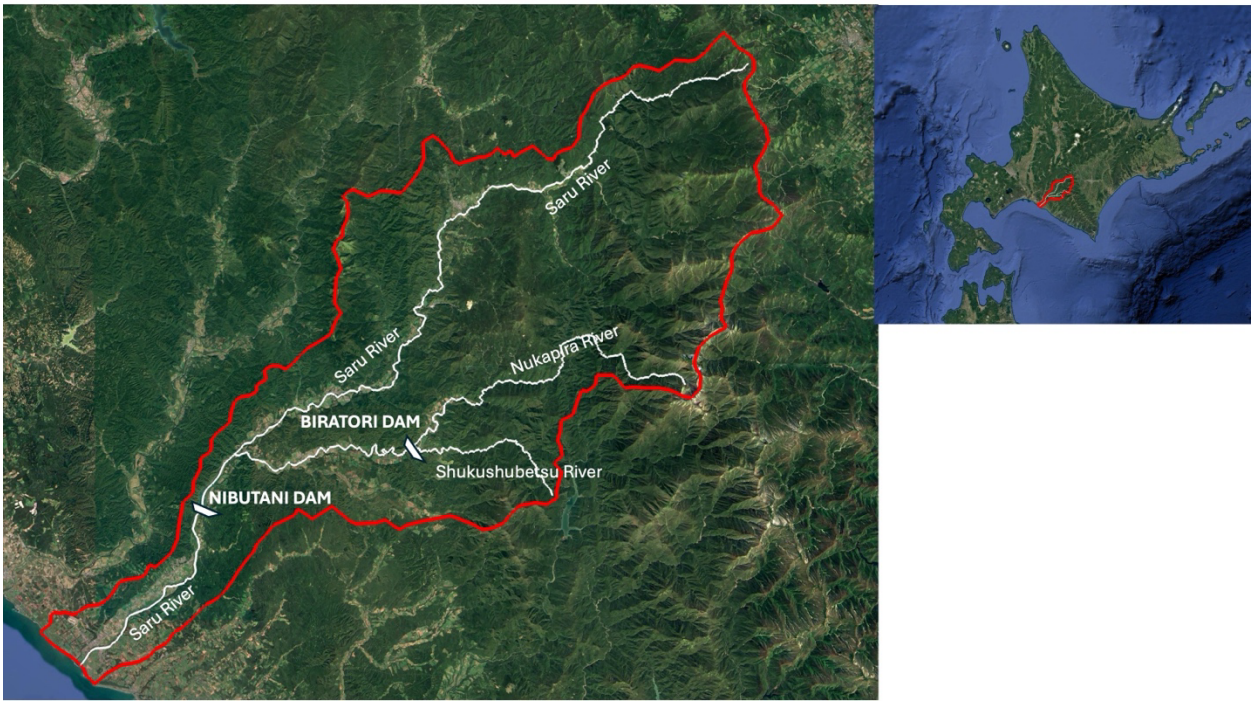

Figure 1 The Saru River Watershed and the Location of the Nibutani and Biratori Dams

Compiled using data from Google Earth and the Geoshape Repository Koku Sūchi Jōhō Kasen Dēta Setto (https://geoshape.ex.nii.ac.jp/river/) .

This article attempts to construct a fuller and more nuanced understanding of indigenous policy in Japan by showing how local level efforts to revive indigenous Ainu identity and culture interacted with concurrent changes in Japan's administrative state in the context of the implementation of a dam construction project to shape outcomes at the local level. While there is a substantial body of English language literature that assesses the 1997 verdict in the lawsuit over the construction of Nibutani Dam in Biratori and its legal implications with respect to the recognition of the indigenous character of the Ainu people and their status in Japanese society in the broader national context, this article focuses on the effort to construct a second dam in the Saru River Valley watershed (the Biratori Dam) to examine the way in which the verdict, in the context of a reorganization of Japan's national government bureaucracy and the law governing dam construction on Japan's major rivers, significantly altered the character of the relationship between the Biratori Ainu community and the national government. In so doing, it outlines the seemingly

paradoxical process by which the construction of the new dam facilitated a re-engagement on the part of the local Ainu community with their traditional culture, including practices that were on the verge of disappearing and the re-inscription of cultural meaning into the landscape of the town.

The first section below contrasts the politics and administrative processes associated with the construction of the Biratori Dam with that of its predecessor, the Nibutani Dam. The section that follows reviews in more detail the way in which the process of assessing the impact of the Biratori Dam on the Ainu cultural environment was skillfully utilized by the local Ainu community as a means to recover cultural practices and to rediscover the cultural significance of natural features in the local landscape, and through this to deepen and broaden Ainu identity in the local community. It concludes with a brief assessment of the possibilities and limitations of indigenous politics within the current Japanese institutional framework.

ADMINISTERING DAM CONSTRUCTION IN THE SARU RIVER VALLEY FROM THE NIBUTANI TO THE BIRATORI DAM

A. The Nibutani Dam and the Nibutani Verdict

The Saru River runs through Biratori, a town with a current population of around 4,500 located about 15 km from the coastline in south central Hokkaido. The impetus for the decision to build a dam across the river in the district of Nibutani, whose population is estimated to be 70 percent Ainu, was an industrial development plan adopted by the national government in the early 1970s to build a massive petrochemical complex in the nearby coastal town of Tomakomai located southeast of Biratori. The Nibutani Dam, along with a sister dam on a tributary further upstream known as the Biratori Dam, were to supply electric power to the industrial complex. However, the plan to build the Tomakomai complex was abandoned in the wake of the 1973-74 oil crisis. The national government's Ministry of Construction nevertheless pushed ahead with its plan to build the Nibutani Dam using the argument that the dam was still required for flood control purposes. Land owned by farmers, many of them Ainu, whose land would be submerged by the dam was

transferred to the government during the first half of the 1980s. Construction on the dam commenced in 1986 and the dam was completed a decade later in 1996.

As was common in public works projects at the time, planning for the dam proceeded with at best pro forma input from the local population and despite substantial local opposition. (Aldrich 2008, Jain 2000) It was in the face of this administrative juggernaut that two Ainu landowners, Kayano Shigeru and Kaizawa Tadashi, who had refused to accept the compensation offered by the government and whose land was subsequently expropriated, sued the Hokkaido Expropriation Committee, the administrative entity that approved the expropriation of their lands on behalf of the construction ministry, claiming that Committee's action was illegal due to its "failure to consider the influence of the above-described dam construction on the Ainu people and Ainu culture." (Levin 1999. p. 3) In its March 1997 verdict, the Sapporo District Court maintained that the dam had been completed and considering the public benefit it would provide in areas like irrigation and flood control, there was no reason or means to reverse this *fait accompli*. Nonetheless, it did accept the plaintiff's argument that in the process leading up to the dam's construction did not sufficiently take into account the impact of the dam's construction on the indigenous culture of the area's residents. In justifying its ruling, it put forward arguments that would ultimately reshape the way in which the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transportation (MLIT, into which the functions of the Ministry of Construction were incorporated in 2001) approached the construction of the second proposed dam, the Biratori Dam, and beyond this, state policy toward the Ainu more broadly. First, the verdict specifically recognized the Ainu were as an indigenous people with a culture distinct from Japan's majority *wajin*. As such, the state must assess the impact of any public works project that has the potential to significantly impact Ainu cultural practice. It claimed that the Japanese state failed to do this in the case of Nibutani Dam. The Hokkaido Development Agency, the regional branch of the Ministry of Construction that oversaw the dam's construction, failed to make any effort to gain the requisite knowledge it needed to make a proper assessment of the dam's impact on Ainu culture, as it should have. The verdict, in fact, went on to list specific Ainu cultural sites and practices that, by the time of the verdict, would be adversely affected or inundated by the dam's waters: the site where

a *cipsanke* or boat-launching ceremony was held, a *casi* or Ainu hilltop fortifications . . . , and a *cinomisir*, or sacred outcropping near a mountain peak. (Levin 1999, p. 38)

Given that the Ministry of Construction had attained its primary objective keeping the dam in place, it decided not to appeal the Superior Court's verdict. On their part, the plaintiffs Kayano and Kaizawa Kōichi also chose not to pursue further legal remedies in light of their recognition of the verdict as a huge legal advance for the Ainu.

B. The Biratori Dam

The Biratori Dam was conceived as a dam that would hold back flood waters that might otherwise exceed the capacity of the Nibutani Dam 34 km downstream. Located at the confluence of the Nukapira and Shukushubetsu Rivers, both large tributaries of the Saru, the dam is considerably larger than the Nibutani. Opposition to its construction, reassessments of the desirability and feasibility of the project, and other developments conspired to delay its construction, and it was not until after the Nibutani Dam was completed that the Ministry of Construction began to actively push forward the initiation of construction on the Biratori Dam.

By that time, however, the political and policy context for dam construction had changed greatly from that of the earlier Nibutani Dam. Perhaps most fundamental here was the May 1997 revision of the River Law that altered the regulatory framework governing river projects. Whereas prior to the revision, the objective of the objective of the management of the nation's Class I rivers was defined simply as supplying water and flood control, the revision added the additional objective of the improvement and preservation of river environments, including water quality, ecological environments and landscapes, increasing greatly complexity involved in designing dam projects. (Union of Kansai Governments n.d.) In addition, the review process for approving plans was altered to increase the number of steps required and added the requirement that there be opportunities for input from outside experts, local residents, and local government heads. This requirement of outside input had been absent from the previous version of the law that was applied to the Nibutani Dam project. (Hayashi 2007) By increasing the number of voices that needed to be heard the revision greatly complicated the dam approval process. In addition, it also deserves note here that in 2001 there was an extensive

reorganization and consolidation of the national government's ministries and agencies that marked the culmination of a quarter century long neoconservative push to slim down Japan's state bureaucracy. (Carlile 2013) In the reorganization, the Ministry of Construction was merged with the ministries in charge of transportation, national land development, and Hokkaido Development into the newly created Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT). This new organizational structure helped to shift public works administration away from a narrow engineering oriented "hard" policy focus to a more inclusive, broadly configured orientation that took into account a variety of "soft" dimensions.

A second can be seen in the alteration of the relationship between the Japanese state and the Ainu people that was embodied in the Ainu Culture Promotion Act also passed in May 1997. As detailed in Nakamura (2018), this legislation has its roots in a push by Ainu organizations in Hokkaido to replace the assimilationist Hokkaido Former Aborigines Act of 1899 that was at the time serving as the legal framework defining the relationship between the Japanese state and the indigenous Ainu people. (See also Stevens 2014) The new law by contrast called on the government to "make efforts to promote measures for the nurture of those who will inherit Ainu culture, the fruitfulness of educational activities concerning Ainu Traditions, the promotion of the monitor and study of the Ainu culture . . . ." (University of Minnesota Human Rights Library n.d.) MLIT—into which the earlier Ministry of Construction was incorporated--was named along with the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology as one of the two ministries specifically responsible for the law's implementation. From the standpoint of the analysis of the Biratori Dam case specifically, it is noteworthy that the new law added the promotion of Ainu culture to the ministry's writ.

Critics of the new law rightly point out that the Ainu Culture Promotion Act focused on the promotion of Ainu *culture* and did not grant any sort of land-based sovereignty to the Ainu people. (e.g., Stevens 2014) Nevertheless, the idea that Ainu should have *access* to land-based resources traditionally important to their culture came to be put forward as a tenet in the discussion of post-Promotion Act Ainu policy. The catalyst here appears to be the 1996 final report of the advisory commission that the government had set up to formulate

recommendations for a new Ainu policy. The commission's final report advocated what it described as the "re-creation of [a] traditional [Ainu] living space[s] (*iwor*)." (Utari Taisaku no Arikata ni Kansuru Yūshikisha Kondankai 1997) The term *iwor* refers to a hunting and plant gathering area reserved for the exclusive use by a particular Ainu *kotan* (village). (See, e.g., Olschleger 1999, 218-219) The description in the commission's report indicates that it conceived of a single central recreated traditional living space that would serve as a national demonstration space for educating Ainu and non-Ainu about traditional cultural practices akin to what was ultimately built around the current National Ainu Museum complex in Shiraoi. However, the concept came to take on a life of its own as it was embraced by various Ainu communities throughout Hokkaido, each declaring their intent to create their local version of an *iwor*. [Note that in the Japanese language there is no inherent demarcation between the singular and the plural nouns.] Finally, there was the Nibutani verdict itself, which as noted, specifically identified the Ministry of Construction's failure to consider the impact of dam construction in the Saru River Valley on Ainu culture as illegal.

The altered administrative environment required the MLIT to revisit and revise its plans for dam construction in the Saru River watershed, a process that reached fruition in a revised Saru River System River Improvement Plan completed in July 2002. In line with the new procedures, an initial outline was released by the Ministry of Construction in December 1999 that mainly addressed the technical engineering aspects of the project. Following this, a series of hearings and public meetings prescribed under the revised Rivers Law were held. Noteworthy for our purposes is the inclusion in the new plan of a set of "initiatives to preserve, pass on, and promote Ainu culture": 1) an archaeological survey to locate Ainu-related sites and the preservation and the display of discovered artifacts, 2) the conservation and management of the landscape adjacent to the dam with consideration given to its significance from the standpoint of Ainu culture, and 3) the support of initiatives aimed at the preservation and advancement of Ainu culture. (Biratori Chō 2009, p. 49)

Following this, via a series of negotiations with local authorities in Biratori, the decision was made to subcontract to the Biratori Board of Education and the Biratori town

government the task of conducting a formal assessment the dam's likely impact on local Ainu culture. This decision to conduct a formal cultural impact assessment on a major public works project was unprecedented and a complete contrast with the process that characterized the construction of the Nibutani Dam a quarter-century earlier.

THE AINU CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT PRESERVATION MEASURES SURVEY

A. Cultural Preservation in Biratori

In agreeing to subcontract the cultural impact assessment, the Ministry of Construction was engaging with a community that had the capacity to not only to conduct the assessment but also to make use of it as a vehicle for facilitating its agenda of Ainu cultural preservation and promotion. As discussed earlier, the town of Biratori is noted for its large Ainu population when compared to other areas of Hokkaido, with the percentage of Ainu residents district of Nibutani District estimated to be as high as 70 percent. However, like all areas of Hokkaido Biratori, had experienced a decline and disappearance of Ainu cultural practices from the Meiji Period onward. By the postwar period, it was common for Ainu parents to actively discourage their children from learning about Ainu culture. With the aging of the last generation of Ainu who had been directly exposed to the old practices and the Ainu language, Ainu culture was on the verge of disappearing as a living culture by the last quarter of the 20th Century.

Amid this general trend, the Nibutani District was noteworthy for active efforts there to preserve and record Ainu culture. The seminal figure here was Kayano Shigeru (1926-2006), one of the two plaintiffs in the Nibutani suit. As described in his memoirs (Kayano 1994), after years of rejecting his Ainu heritage, he experienced an epiphany in his late 20's that led him to tirelessly collect Ainu artifacts, learn the Ainu language, preserve cultural knowledge through recorded interviews with Ainu elders, publish books on these subjects and to engage in a variety of other endeavors aimed at preserving Ainu culture. He eventually established a museum in Nibutani in 1972 to display his burgeoning collection. Much of this collection was transferred to the newly built and city-run Nibutani Ainu Culture Museum 1992. In the mid-1980s Kayano initiated a program to teach the Ainu language. Having established himself as a leader in the local Ainu community, he

was elected as a member of the upper house of the Japanese Diet in 1994, thereby becoming a nationally known advocate for Ainu causes.

Thanks in no small part to Kayano's efforts, by the turn of the 21st Century Nibutani had come to be recognized as—and to increasingly to recognize itself as--a hub for Ainu cultural revival. As early as 1982, the idea of developing the Nibutani area as an "Ainu Culture Village" (Ainu Bunka no Sato) was being discussed. This brainstorming process picked up momentum and took a synergistic turn following the passage of the 1997 Ainu Culture Promotion Act, precipitating developmental concepts like the Ainu Culture Promotion Cluster Formation Vision (Ainu Bunka Shinkō Kurasutā Keisei Kōsō) and the Saru River Watershed *Iwor* Vision (Sarugawa Ryūiki Ioru Kōsō). Both of these "visions" were built on the idea that what the community needed were dedicated spaces where Ainu culture could be practiced and passed on. In the case of the former, this space was envisioned as a "clustering" of facilities around the existing Nibutani Ainu Culture Museum such as a group of traditional Ainu *cise* (houses) that would provide a venue for the performance of oral recitations and dances and a crafts center where Ainu woodcarving skills could be mastered. The latter proposal, echoing the broader rise of *iwor* as a core concept, would be a forest space where non-native species would be replaced with trees and plants traditionally used by the Ainu for raw materials in the weaving of *attus* and other Ainu clothing items and for traditional medicine and food.

In a nutshell, all of this meant that when the proposal to subcontract the cultural impact assessment to the Biratori Town government, the community was primed to respond. The proposal was recognized as a challenge and an opportunity for its efforts to revive Ainu culture locally, and in particular to its *iwor* initiative. Over the course of negotiations with the regional MLIT office, it was agreed that the Biratori branch of the Ainu Association would be directly involved, and that members of the local Ainu community would be recruited to participate directly in the implementation of the assessment process. (Biratori Chō 2006, p. 4) A more detailed summary of the arrangement that was arrived at is as follows:

1. It would be implemented as a three-year project running from April 2003 to March 2006.

2. It would be overseen by a steering committee that would meet periodically and whose membership consisted of Biratori Town government officials, members of the Ainu Association, and academic specialists in anthropology, Indigenous rights, and cultural heritage.
3. Day-to-day operations would be conducted by paid staff hired for that purpose, the majority of whom would be local Ainu.
4. Administratively, the project was organized into three function-specific “working teams” attached to the steering committee and seven work groups attached to the administrative secretariat. These units and their respective functions are described in Table 1.
5. A series of seminars open to the general public would be held in the name of “Sisirmka [Saru River in Ainu] Iwor Cultural College” that would provide periodic reports on the ongoing work and resulting findings of the assessment teams. Ultimately, sixteen such seminars were held over the course of the three-year project. (Biratori Chō 2006, 4-5, 9-10)

The cultural impact assessment project dictated a specific type of investigation—the identification of culturally significant objects within the delimited space of the proposed dam site and its immediate vicinity. A conventional approach to such an assignment might have ended simply with the identification of tangible culturally significant sites and artifacts in that delimited territory. However, those involved in framing the Biratori project chose an approach that emphasized the connections of such objects to intangible elements in Ainu cultural traditions as well as to the flora and fauna there. This was an approach that was consistent with Ainu cultural traditions wherein individual or village ritual practices and symbolic meanings embedded in the natural landscape are more central than fixed monumental edifices.

Figure 2 Graphic from the Cultural Assessment Final Report.

Translation of Circled Text: A Living Things and Their Living Environment; B. Spiritual Culture; C. Life Style; D. Cultural Landscape. See appendix for translation of numbered text boxes.
Source: Biratori Chō 2006, p. 39.

Information was derived from several qualitatively different sources. These are described in Table 1 (See Appendix). One such sources was histories and historical documents that was used as a tool to reconstruct where Ainu resided in the past and how they utilized the landscape surrounding their villages. There was also an emphasis on identifying Ainu places names. These place names were utilized as lenses through which to ascertain the significance of a particular place (its functional utility, its symbolic or spiritual meaning). Fieldwork was conducted to determine the location and quantity of plants traditionally used as food and material for crafts. Finally, interviews were conducted with Ainu elders and area residents to shed light on past and current practices regarding hunting and the collection of forest resources, and to survey the views and opinions of residents living near the Nibutani Dam regarding the impact of that dam has affected their lives. This

information was then utilized to construct a composite, multi-dimensional picture of the cultural significance of the dam site and its vicinity both in the past and in the present.

Table 2 (Appendix) contains a list of excerpts from the assessment report that highlight key findings of the survey. The report concludes:

> Historically and presently, the Nukapira River Basin is inextricably linked to the Ainu people's way of life and cultural identity. This connection underscores the basin's vital role in safeguarding Ainu cultural heritage. Serving as a spiritual anchor for the Ainu, the region embodies the essence of their cultural heritage. The abundant flora and fauna provide the raw materials for their traditional practices, ensuring the continuation of their cultural legacy. The Nukapira River Basin stands as a sacred space, ensuring the future generations of Ainu people have access to the resources and spiritual environment necessary to experience and perpetuate their unique culture. (Biratori Chō 2006, 12)

The report included the graphic reproduced in Figure 2, which expresses its understanding of the cultural significance of the site in terms of a holistic model in which the various dimensions of its findings are interconnected.

It is apparent from the preceding that the three-year cultural impact assessment, which was compiled into an expansive 760-page final report and a large collection of compiled data, interview transcripts, audio and video recordings, and other resources, was a massive exercise with which Biratori's Ainu community came to be engaged directly as part of a work group or vicariously via the Cultural College's seminars.

B. After the Assessment

Further negotiations with the Hokkaido Development and Construction Bureau following the completion of the cultural assessment report produced an agreement to set up a successor oversight committee whose mission it would be to engage in continued research on the impact of the dam on Ainu culture, to come up with ideas for "countermeasures" to alleviate or compensate for the loss or alteration of culturally significant sites in the dam construction area, and to monitor the ongoing impact of the dam's construction. The membership of the committee was essentially the same as the

earlier oversight committee with representation from the town government and the local branch of the Ainu Society. The new committee, which was given the name, Committee for Examining Measures to Preserve Culture in the Biratori Dam Area, held its first meeting in August 2006 and has continued to meet periodically ever since. A research and analysis apparatus similar to that of the original assessment was also set up, again accompanied by the hiring of members of the local Ainu community.

It was as a result of discussions in the new oversight committee that a number of "compensatory" arrangements were put forward. One was the creation of what came to be known as the Nokapira Iwor Visitor Center, a two-story MLIT-operated museum next to the dam that houses interpretive displays on Ainu culture focused on the Biratori Dam area that echo the content of the 2006 cultural assessment report. Center staff are recruited from local Ainu. Another example of such "compensatory" arrangements is the ministry's building into the project alternative prayer sites on nearby dry land as substitutes for prayer spots that were inundated. Modern day "improvements" such as parking areas and paved walkways were incorporated into these plans.

The submission of the assessment report also appears to have marked an inflection point of sorts for Ainu policy initiatives in Biratori wherein Ainu policy experienced a new moment and expanded scale and scope. It is arguable that the clarification of local Ainu culture and a resulting concrete articulation of what it was in Ainu culture that needed to be revived and preserved in the context of the local landscape was a factor. On the supply side, there was a concurrent increase in the willingness among the national government ministries in funding Ainu-related projects. Among the projects implemented by Biratori Town with central government grants and subsidies (with implementing agencies and dates in parentheses) were: Ainu Cultural Environment Conservation Project (MLIT, 2005), Cultural Landscape Maintenance and Improvement Project and the town's designation as an "important cultural landscape" (Agency for Cultural Affairs, 2007), and the 21st Century Forest for the Transmission of Ainu Cultural Traditions Project (Forestry Agency, 2013). As can be seen in the project titles, the landscape and its cultural significance were thematically central to these projects. It was also with central government assistance that a "cluster" of facilities for the passing on and promotion of Ainu culture was completed in

the area adjacent to the Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum. (Biratori Ainu Bunka Shinkō Kōsha 2022) In fact, the significance of Ainu Policy initiatives within the context of government administration in Biratori has risen to the point that the town government now has a public corporation for implementing Ainu policy initiatives and a formal Ainu policy promotion plan that has been incorporated as a key pillar of the town's general development plan.

CONCLUSION

In one sense, one could argue that participating in the cultural impact assessment was an ultimately futile exercise given that Biratori Dam, like the Nibutani Dam, was ultimately built and culturally significant sites and resources that the assessment painstakingly identified in the report ended up under water. Nevertheless, some of those involved in the assessment look back on it as a "good" or useful exercise. How can this be? In addressing this question, it is helpful to deconstruct how participation of the Biratori Dam cultural impact assessment process might have encouraged a more holistic apprehension of traditional Ainu culture on the part of members of the Biratori Ainu community. It should be emphasized that what is being posited here is not an empirical claim about local Ainu perspectives since it is not based on any sort of survey of the members of that community but rather it is being put forward as a hypothetical postulate that should ideally be confirmed or denied via appropriate further research involving listening to Ainu voices. First off, the focus of the research conducted for the assessment was a delimited area—namely the site of the dam and areas in its immediate vicinity—and as a delimited area it was well suited for the observation and apprehension of interactions and interconnections among different aspects and variables operating therein. It was, at the same time, to one degree or another a familiar landscape for members of the Biratori Ainu community since even members of the community who lived outside of the surveyed area were likely to have passed through the area on multiple occasions. Furthermore, there was a directly experienced, tangible dimension for those who took part in the field surveys of plants and animals, the cultivation of traditional crops, and the experiments with Ainu cooking. These tangible elements were then connected via the report's narrative to intangible aspects of

the culture associated with specific places or objects in the area —historical significance, legends, religious significance, etc.—thereby making it possible to comprehend the cultural significance of the area in a holistic way. This holistic understanding would constitute an engagement with Ainu culture qualitatively different the way in which traditional Ainu culture is encountered by most modern-day Ainu—that is, the form of occasional or periodic participation in or observing rituals or as abstracted concepts, in both cases disembodied form outside of their original environmental context. And since such interconnections between tangible and intangible elements of a landscape operate in parallel ways elsewhere, this gestaltic apprehension of the Biratori Dam site could be transliterated in other areas of Ainu settlement, facilitating a deeper engagement and identification with traditional Ainu culture throughout the community more generally.

The ultimate outcome of the dam building project illustrates both the positives and the limitations of the exercise. On the one hand, the local Ainu community participated in the planning process in a manner that was inconceivable when the earlier Nibutani Dam was built. It also resulted in a number of MLIT actions that served at least symbolically as a kind of compensation for the loss of sites of cultural significance. While not necessarily conflict-free, the relationship between officials of the Muroran Branch of the MLIT's Hokkaido Development Bureau has been transformed into one that is consultative in character. On its part, in the years since the compilation of the cultural assessment report in 2006 the local Ainu community has been able take advantage of a number of national government programs to obtain subsidies to cover initiatives through Biratori Town's Ainu Policy Promotion Section that to one extent or another reflect the holistic, landscape-centered orientation articulated in the assessment report.

As significant as these gains might be, it is also important to reflect on the fact that in Japan all of this is occurring in a context where there is no recognized legal framework of indigenous rights over territory or resources nor are there institutional arrangements for Ainu self-government as is the case in a number of other countries. The most prominent consequence of this that can be seen in the Biratori Ainu community's lack of autonomy in implementing Ainu-related initiatives. Instead, it has little choice but to work through the town government and, given the limited nature of local government in the Japanese

system, various agencies of the Japanese state. As a result, these initiatives must inevitably remain within parameters defined by non-Ainu governance mechanisms.

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APPENDIX

FIGURE 2 TRANSLATIONS OF TEXT IN NUMBERED TEXT BOXES.

1. Adaptations Related to Plants and Their Habitats
   - Regeneration and recovery of dormant natural environments
   - Research and testing on the environmental conditions required for growth
   - Secure an area for growing plants used for medicinal purposes
2. Adaptations Related to Fish and Their Habitats
   - River development that does not block natural water flows and circulation, such as springs
   - River development that allows migratory fish to easily reach upstream areas
3. Adaptations Related to Birds and Their Habitats
   - Create forest and riverine spaces suited for bird (including birds of prey) habitats
4. Adaptations Related to Spiritual Culture
   - Consultations regarding *Cinomisr*, *Kamuiwakka*. Etc.
5. Adaptations Related to Lifestyle
   - Establish rules for collecting plants and animals, land utilization, etc.
   - Promote voluntary and proactive participation while respecting the local lifestyle and culture and the lives of residents.
6. Adaptations Related to Animals and Their Habitats
   - Follow-up investigation of the activities of *yuk* (Ezo deer) and *kimun kamui* (brown bears)
   - Investigation of the impact on the natural environment and implement countermeasures
7. Adaptations Related to "Topography and other phenomena as cultural landscapes"
   - Design dam embankments, bridges, etc., with consideration given to the natural landscape
   - Display and provide guidance facilities for Ainu place names, construct a database, model display
   - Memorial and commemorative measures for Ainu ancestors who contributed to Ainu place names, such as Matsuura Takeshirō

TABLE 1 ORGANIZATION OF THE ASSESSMENT PROJECT

Unit	Task
Working teams	
1. Historical Documents Study Working Team (s*hiryō kentō wãkingu chīmu*)	Investigate historical records in order to understand the historical meaning and importance of Ainu culture in the Saru River area.
2. Impact on Local Life Working Team (*chiiki seikatsu eikyō kentō wãkingu chīmu*)	Consider what the impact of the construction of the dam will be on the lives of local residents
3. Working Team for the Study of Ecological Change (*seitaikei hen'i kentō wãkingu chīmu*)	Predicted future impacts on the ecosystem of the Saru River basin and suggest remedies
Fieldwork Groups	
1. Interview Group (*kikitori chōsa han*)	Organize interview data and connect it to information from other work areas.
2. On-Site Field Study Group (*genchi chōsa han*)	On-site field observation of cultural assets and resources that are closely related to Ainu culture such as plants and animals, place names, and legends.
3. Plant Cultivation Test Group (*shokubutsu shiken saibai gurūpu*)	Gain a practical understanding of how plants were traditionally used by the Ainu and explore how they might be cultivated
4. Food Culture Trial Group (*shokubunka shikō gurūpu*)	Research involving the practical testing and examination of the traditional food culture of the Ainu people.
5. Data Aggregation Group (*dēta shūseki han*)	Organize information from field surveys, literature surveys, interviews, etc. and compile them into databases
6. Simulation Task Force (*Shimyurēshon sagyōhan*)	Study and test methods for visualizing simulations of survey data.
7. Summarization Working Group	Work with the secretariat to in supporting the investigation committee, managing the Iwor Culture University, overseeing the work of the various work groups, and handling accounting-related matters.

Source: Biratori Chō 2006, p. 9.

TABLE 2 EXCERPTS FROM THE CULTURAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT (KEY FINDINGS)

"The Nukapira River basin is steeped in Ainu history and spirituality. Its mountains, rivers, and cliffs serve as backdrops to their ancient oral traditions, including *uepeke*, *yukar*, and *kamuy yukar*. The river's headwaters are located at the base of the sacred Mount Poroshir, a mountain revered as a divine abode and a place of worship."
"Approximately 49 [buried cultural property] sites are located in the Nukapira River basin. Seven of these sites have been confirmed to be located in and near the proposed Biratori Dam construction site."
"The Nukapira River basin has long been a hunting and fishing ground for the Ainu people, and various records show that they have hunted *kimunkamuy* (brown bear), *yuri* (Yezo deer), *isepo* (Ezo mountain hare), *hoinu* (Ezo marten), weasel, *shipe* (salmon), and *susamu* (smelt)."
"It has been reported that the Nukapira River basin was divided into a number of *iwor*."
"The area to be submerged by the Biratori Dam contains a variety of plant life important for the continuation of Ainu traditions."
"For the Ainu people, hunting is a deeply spiritual practice, and the Nukapira River basin holds significant religious importance. . . . It has been confirmed that there are three *cinomisir* [prayer spots] within the proposed site for the Biratori Dam, where certain Ainu families have inherited their faith and even today offer *kamuinomi* (prayers)."
"There are many Ainu place names in the Nukapira River basin, including names related to faith, legends, animals, plants, and names that describe the topography or appearance of the place."
"The area that is scheduled to be inundated after the Biratori Dam is built was also where crops were cultivated."

Source: Biratori Chō 2006, pp. 10-12