Introductory Chapter
Problem Awareness and Survey Outline

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Awareness of Issues in the Ainu Research Project

A large number of research projects have been carried out concerning Ainu society and Ainu culture. Many of them, however, were historical studies on traditional society and culture (Kikuchi 2002), and these conventional historical studies were centered on pre-modern Japan. Few research projects have been based on the history of modern and contemporary Japan after the Japanese government started its policy of Ainu assimilation. Ainu people have come to be recognized as Japanese citizens only recently, and even then they have been referred to as "former aborigines" and continued to be blatantly discriminated against in modern and contemporary Japanese society. Against this background, Ainu history researcher Susumu Emori emphasized that studies in a modern and contemporary historical context would be paramount in exploring Ainu history (Emori 2008).

Recently, however, research outcomes covering modern Japan in the period before World War II have been accumulated to a certain extent, including in-depth analysis of the establishment of the Former Aboriginal Protection Act and the assimilation policy introduced under it (Ogawa 1997; Yamada 1999, 2002). Some researchers consider the period after World War II scarcely covered by research projects–in particular the years from the latter half of the 1940s to the 1960s (Higashimura 2006:12).

This is also essentially true of Ainu research in the fields of ethnology and cultural anthropology. Conventionally, the main focus of ethnological studies has been placed on collecting examples showing the traditional society and culture inherent in Ainu people. Their traditional society and culture were on the verge of collapse due to discrimination and exploitation from the Edo period (1603 to 1868) onward and the government's policy of assimilation and mixed parentage with Wajin (a term used to describe non-Ainu Japanese people) from the Meiji period (1868 to 1912) onward. As Ainu people were forced to rapidly change their traditional lifestyles, a joint survey on the Saru Ainu conducted in 1951 mainly by ethnologists and anthropologists focused on revealing, through interviews with elders and others, how the Ainu had traditionally formed kinship organizations and social groups with shared ties to a locality and conducted ancestor worship, festivals and the like, rather than clarifying the present state of affairs (Ishida et al. 1952).[1]

As early as 1972, ethnologist and cultural anthropologist Yuko Baba pointed out that the many research projects conducted on Ainu society and culture had all addressed traditional cultural aspects or their historical restoration (Baba 1972: 215). In 1996, Yasunobu Ito emphasized the need to promote research on the present situation of the Ainu by citing Baba's observation and adding that the situation had remained largely unchanged (Ito 1996). Nonetheless, only a few studies have since been conducted on the present state of affairs in the fields of ethnology and cultural anthropology.[2]

In this way, despite the numerous studies that have been conducted on Ainu society and culture, only a handful have aimed to shed light on present-day society and culture, particularly actual Ainu working and living conditions. Although these themes are expected to be covered in the field of sociology, there have been few notable research achievements except those by Kazuyoshi Matsumoto and some other scholars (Matsumoto ed. 1988; Matsumoto, Ohguro, and Nakano 1993; Matsumoto and Ohguro eds. 1998; Matsumoto 1998, 1999, 2002;

Matsumoto and Egawa eds. 2001).[3]

Matsumoto et al. conducted surveys in several municipalities in the Hidaka and Iburi regions of Hokkaido. Kazuyoshi Matsumoto, Masanobu Ohguro and others specifically discussed discrimination and prejudice, levels of satisfaction with living conditions, religious activities, social movements, and other themes based on questionnaire surveys (Matsumoto and Ohguro eds. 1998), while Kazuyoshi Matsumoto, Naoko Egawa, and others focused on historical and structural analysis and held discussions based on the investigation conducted in this analysis (Matsumoto and Egawa eds. 2001). These studies represent valuable resources for understanding the present conditions of Ainu people.

However, the series of studies by Matsumoto et al. does not necessarily shed sufficient light on the Ainu's working situation, education, living conditions, and the like. This is because they failed to highlight issues faced by the Ainu in daily life as the social surveys on which such analysis is based tend to be inclined toward so-called consciousness surveys, such as those addressing levels of satisfaction with living conditions. The causes of these studies' shortcomings also include a strong tendency to interpret survey data by applying them to sociological theories from such sociologists as Talcott Parsons, David Émile Durkheim, and Pierre Bourdieu. Consequently, the Ainu people–the subjects of such surveys–cannot see the survey results as being realistic from the viewpoint of everyday life.

Under these research circumstances, the government, rather than private researchers, has tried to understand how present-day Ainu people live and work as well as investigating various related issues that may not immediately be obvious. Among the vanguard of such efforts were the General Condition Survey on Hokkaido Former-Aboriginal Settlements conducted in 1960 by the Hokkaido Government's Department of Livelihood and the Survey on the Living Conditions of Ethnic Ainu in the Hidaka Region in 1962 by Hokkaido's Hidaka Subprefectural Office. The former survey was conducted for the first time in the two decades since 1941, making it the first postwar survey of its kind, and covered 51 former-aboriginal settlements in the prefecture with 20 or more households and a population of 100 or more. For other districts, rough numbers were estimated based on the 1941 survey (Department of Livelihood, Hokkaido Government 1960a), which aimed to provide basic data for the implementation of measures to improve areas with unfavorable environments in Hokkaido (Department of Livelihood, Hokkaido Government 1960b) under the five-year plan that began in 1961 (Higashimura 2006: 296). The latter Survey on the Living Conditions of Ethnic Ainu in the Hidaka Region was also intended to improve understanding of Ainu living conditions from a social welfare viewpoint to provide basic data for future policy measures (Hidaka Subprefectural Office, Hokkaido Government 1965: 16). It was more elaborate than the survey conducted by the Department of Livelihood, and elucidated the situation regarding poverty, slum housing, schooling environment shortcomings, discrimination, and prejudice in local communities and other issues. The related report published in 1965 candidly described Ainu people living in dire financial straits and included photos of slum housing (Hidaka Subprefectural Office, Hokkaido Government 1965: 12-5).[4]

The prefectural government also conducted the first Hokkaido Utari Living Conditions Survey covering the entire prefecture in 1972 (Department of Livelihood, Hokkaido Government 1973) and, based on the results, promoted the first set of Hokkaido Utari Welfare Measures from 1974 to 1980 (Matsumoto 1998). The government has since carried out the survey every seven years (renamed the Ainu Living Conditions Survey in 2006), and implemented four further sets of Hokkaido Utari Welfare Measures up until 2001. Since 2002, the prefectural government has advanced the Measures to Promote the Improvement of Ainu Living Standards (Department of Livelihood, Hokkaido Government 1973, 1979, 1986; Department of Policy and Welfare, Hokkaido Government 1994; Department of Environment and Lifestyle, Hokkaido Government 2000, 2007). The Hokkaido Government

also established the second set of Measures to Promote the Improvement of Ainu Living Standards in July 2008.

The six Hokkaido Utari (Ainu) Living Conditions Surveys conducted provide a significant basic dataset for devising administrative measures. They also give researchers valuable input to offset the difficulty of obtaining an overall picture of Ainu living conditions. Some researchers have engaged in studies with unique research themes developed through re-analysis of these data (Matsumoto 2001; Kikuchi 2002; Watarai 2007).

The latest Report on the Hokkaido Ainu Living Conditions Survey in 2006 showed that the Ainu population in Hokkaido consisted of 23,782 individuals in 8,274 households across 72 municipalities (Department of Environment and Lifestyle, Hokkaido Government 2007).[5] The survey defined Ainu as people who are considered to have an Ainu bloodline and those who reside with Ainu people due to marriage, adoption, and so forth, and counted those whom the municipal governments concerned could identify as Ainu.

However, the survey of individuals and households covered only 300 domiciles to which those who identified themselves as Ainu belonged, in addition to 712 individuals aged 15 years or older living with them. Methods virtually identical to this one were used in all six surveys, prompting the Ainu Association of Hokkaido and other interested parties to point out the insufficient sample size to reflect actual living conditions. Some respondents to the sixth survey also raised doubts over some of the tabulation results due to the indication of considerable improvements in consciousness of living conditions (i.e., whether or not respondents consider that they live comfortable lives) despite widening gaps in terms of the percentages of public assistance recipients and students who go on to higher-level education (Takeuchi 2007). There is a need for surveys that take these issues into consideration and reflect actual conditions more appropriately so that the results can be incorporated into future studies and Ainu policy.

Based on these considerations, the Hokkaido University Center for Ainu & Indigenous Studies (CAIS) organized an interdisciplinary research team to conduct a comprehensive living conditions survey of Ainu people in Hokkaido. The project was launched with a four-year duration including quantitative research using questionnaires in the first year, qualitative research based on interviews in the second year, overseas research for international comparison in the third year, and summarization in the fourth and final year.

Considering the limitations of previous research on the living conditions of the present-day Ainu, this project can be considered as a springboard to drive forward Ainu research, which has so far tended to lean toward historical studies.

Survey Outline and Composition of the Report

In 2008 (the first year of the Ainu research project) we conducted the Hokkaido Ainu Living Conditions Survey as a quantitative research initiative using questionnaires. The greatest challenge here was to involve the maximum number of respondents possible. Following our survey feasibility examination of 2008, we decided to conduct the project with the full cooperation of the Hokkaido Utari Association (renamed the Ainu Association of Hokkaido in April 2009).

The survey covered all households to which members of the Association, former members living in Hokkaido, and seemingly Ainu non-members living in the prefecture belonged, as well as those living with them who were at least 18 and under 85 years of age.

Generally speaking, various ideas lie behind the definition of ethnic groups, including language, religious identity, and emphasis on group unity. Hence, the definition of ethnic groups is characterized by a number of difficult issues. The Ainu Association of Hokkaido specifies that its members must be either descendants of

Ainu or their families, and requires applicants to prove their eligibility. Because of this, we can presume that the majority of survey respondents here were of Ainu descent. However, non-Ainu descendants in terms of blood relationships (i.e., those adopted by or married to Ainu people) were also included.

Prior to the survey, counselors and branch managers of the Hokkaido Utari Association listed the survey respondents. As surveyors, they distributed and collected questionnaires during the period from October 1 to 31, 2008, using the placement method in which questionnaires were delivered to respondents and filled out at their homes before being collected and mailed to CAIS by mid-November. Some respondents directly mailed their questionnaires after filling them out instead of having them picked up by surveyors. To ensure privacy protection, respondents' names, addresses, telephone numbers, and all other types of personal information were managed by the Hokkaido Utari Association, and CAIS received only the anonymous questionnaires collected.

Household questionnaires were distributed to 3,438 households, and 2,903 were collected as effective responses; individual questionnaires were distributed to 7,306 individuals, and 5,703 were recovered as effective. The effective response rate was therefore 84.4% for household questionnaires and 78.1% for individual questionnaires.

As already noted, the Hokkaido Ainu Living Conditions Survey conducted by the Hokkaido Government in 2006 covered 712 individuals in 300 households. In comparison, we received approximately 9.7 times as many effective household responses and 8.0 times as many effective individual responses. In relation to the numbers of Ainu households and individuals in Hokkaido according to the 2006 survey (8,274 households and 23,782 individuals), our survey's effective responses accounted for 35.1% of all Ainu households and 24.0% of the Ainu population in Hokkaido (Department of Environment and Lifestyle, Hokkaido Government 2007).

Major results from simple tabulation of the collected questionnaires were published via the CAIS website in late May of 2009. These outcomes were introduced at the Ainu Association of Hokkaido's General Meeting and in the final report submitted by the government's Advisory Council for the future Ainu Policy.

This report covered not only the results of simple tabulation but also in-depth study on characteristics of the living conditions and consciousness of Ainu people in terms of education, employment, lifestyles, and awareness.

We attached particular importance to the three viewpoints outlined below in compiling our report.

The first viewpoint involved comparison of the actual living conditions of Ainu people between Hokkaido and the whole of Japan. Some people view Ainu lifestyles as having been assimilated into those of non-Ainu Japanese people to a considerable degree. Accordingly, as pointed out by Milton M. Gordon, it is necessary to study both structural and cultural assimilation (Gordon 1964). Here, the important points for discussion are the extent to which Ainu lifestyles are akin to those of non-Ainu Japanese people and how the two lifestyles differ. Based on this consideration, we designed the questionnaires to enable data comparison between Hokkaido and the whole of Japan as much as possible.[6]

The second viewpoint was related to changes in living conditions. Differences between eras and generations must be considered even for comparison with non-Ainu Japanese people. It is also preferable to assume that even among Ainu people, educational and employment conditions as well as Ainu consciousness differs by era and generation. To examine these matters, we compared our survey results with those of the past Utari (Ainu) Living Conditions Surveys conducted by the Hokkaido Government and analyzed differences by generation and age.

The third viewpoint was related to differences among Ainu people. The lifestyles and consciousness of Ainu individuals as well as standards of living among Ainu households have now surely become diversified. Hence, there may be income gaps and inequalities that cannot be overlooked among individuals and households. Based on this consideration, we also attached importance to analysis of income gaps among different levels of Ainu society,

gender or regional disparities, and the like.

This report clarifies the Characteristics of the Survey Subjects (Chapter 1) and then examines factors concerning Ainu Heritage and Identity (Chapter 2), Current Labor and Income Conditions (Chapter 3), Social Welfare: Current Conditions and Issues for Future Consideration (Chapter 4), Current Situation of Educational Inequality and Awareness (Chapter 5), Health Risk Factors and the Present Situation (Chapter 6), Social Consciousness of Factors for Success and Sense of Inequality(Chapter 7), Ainu Religious Consciousness and Challenges of Cultural Preservation (Chapter 8), and Requests for Ainu Policy Measures (Chapter 9). However, as the authors of these chapters each have different levels of consciousness regarding the issues involved, their emphasis in terms of the above viewpoints differs. Nonetheless, we did not insist on coherence of viewpoints because we wanted to value their individual levels of consciousness in relation to these issues. Efforts will be made to improve overall coherence in the future. The appendixes at the back of this booklet include a request for cooperation in the survey along with questionnaires and simple tabulation results with brief explanations.

Notes

1) This survey also collected physical anthropological data about physical characteristics, such as blood types, fingerprints, and postures of Ainu people, and the results were also reported (Ishida et al. 1952).
2) The few ethnological or cultural anthropological studies conducted regarding the present-day Ainu include those by Takashi Irimoto (Irimoto 2001, 2004), which examined the nature of ethnic coexistence through present-day Ainu funerals and the Marimo Festival.
3) Sociologists Kiyohide Seki and Hyoichi Saito also wrote a paper and a book, respectively, on the Ainu (Seki 1966, Saito 1989). However, the former was an essay included as supplementary reading in Seki's book The Urban Family, and the latter was a book bringing together prior publications on traditional Ainu manners and customs. They cannot be compared with the research conducted by Matsumoto et al.
4) Questions have been raised over the extent to which the results of these surveys have been reflected in various policy measures (Watarai 2007: 74). However, the efforts made to understand the present situation of Ainu people in order to lay a foundation for devising policy measures should be positively evaluated.
5) Full-scale surveys on the actual conditions of Ainu people living outside Hokkaido were implemented only by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government in 1974 and 1988 (Investigation Division of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government's Bureau of Planning and Coordinationed 1975; the Tokyo Metropolitan Government's Office of Policy Planning 1989). The 1988 survey estimated Tokyo's Ainu population at 2,700.
6) Strictly speaking, even Ainu data for the whole of Japan or Hokkaido cannot be compared with data for non-Ainu Japanese people because the range of surveys on which the latter set of figures are based also included Ainu people. Nevertheless, to understand the characteristics of the Ainu in comparison with non-Ainu Japanese people, comparison with data for the whole of Japan or Hokkaido is considered the most appropriate way.

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