

# Fictitious Images of the Ainu : Ishu Retsuzo and Its Back Story

著者	SHIRAISHI Eri
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## Fictitious Images of the Ainu: *Ishū Retsuzō* and Its Back Story

SHIRAISHI Eri\*

In 1789, there was an Ainu uprising against Wajin (Japanese) in the Kunashiri and Menashi districts of eastern Ezo. The uprising was quickly quelled in what is often referred to as the Battle of Kunashiri-Menashi. A year later, Matsumae domain, assigned by the Tokugawa shogunate to govern Ezo, completed *Ishū retsuzō*, a set of portraits of twelve Ainu chiefs who collaborated with the domain in suppressing the uprising. The paintings, executed by Kakizaki Hakyō (1764–1826), were intended not just to honor the chiefs' deeds but also to represent Confucian ideals. This was a time when the shogunate was campaigning to revive Confucianism. It duly commissioned a work of similar style and purpose, namely the *Kenjō no sōji*, a set of wall panels for the Shishinden Hall in the imperial palace in Kyoto featuring thirty-two Chinese sages. Was the contemporaneous creation of these two sets of paintings a mere coincidence? *Ishū retsuzō* was first taken to Kyoto, where it was viewed by Confucian scholars, court nobles, and the emperor himself. The visually striking portraits enjoyed a quiet popularity among intellectuals and daimyo in Kyoto and Edo. Toward the end of the Edo period, part of the *Ishū retsuzō* was included in publications by Ezo explorer Matsuura Takeshirō. Contrary to the original intent of the work, it was used to introduce the “customs” of the Ainu, and was even introduced to Europe as such.

**Keywords:** Matsumae domain, Kakizaki Hakyō [Hirotoishi], Ezo, *kōshinzu*, *Kenjō no sōji*, Matsudaira Sadanobu, Emperor Kōkaku, Matsuura Takeshirō

### Introduction

The *Ishū retsuzō* 夷酋列像, a set of portraits of twelve Ainu chiefs, is one of the leading works of Kakizaki Hakyō 蠣崎波響 (Kakizaki Shōgen Hirotoishi 蠣崎将監 広年, 1764–1826), a painter and poet who was also a house elder (*karō* 家老) of Matsumae 松前 domain. His work inspired a major exhibition in 2015–2016 called *Ishū retsuzō, the Image of Ezo: Tracing*

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*Persons, Things and the World* which was held in Sapporo, Chiba, and Osaka.<sup>1</sup> The Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK) introduced the exhibition on national television, all at once making the existence of the *Ishū retsuzō* widely known. The exhibition provided a thorough overview of research on the *Ishū retsuzō* conducted over the three decades since 1984, when eleven of the original twelve portraits were discovered, along with the *Ishū retsuzō jo* 夷酋列像序 (Introduction to the *Ishū retsuzō*) at the Museum of Fine Arts and Archaeology of Besançon, eastern France. The exhibition catalogue includes the latest research findings, numerous photographs showing details of each original portrait, materials relating to hand-copied versions of the original work, a chronology, and a bibliography. The lineage of copies and imitations is well set out, and the relationships among the daimyo who owned versions of the works and the painters who did the copying are described in detail. The historical and social background of the imagery itself, however, awaits scholarly attention.

*Ishū retsuzō*, a grand project fully backed by Matsumae domain, is a mysterious set of paintings. No one has been able to answer such basic questions as why Matsumae domain commissioned the work; how many copies they commissioned, and for whom; how Hakyō created the unlikely portraits and why the project took him one whole year; why *Ishū retsuzō* was carried first to Kyoto instead of Edo; and how it was that one set of original copies made its way to France. This study is especially concerned with shedding new light on the hidden intent behind the production of *Ishū retsuzō*. For clues to Matsumae motives, I focus here on the shogunate's cultural policy of restoring a Neo-Confucian orthodoxy, on relationships between the Tokugawa shogunate and the imperial court, and on the contemporaneous paintings of a similar style in the Shishinden 紫宸殿 Hall of the imperial palace, namely the panel portraits of Chinese sages known as *Kenjō no sōji* 賢聖障子.

### Production of *Ishū Retsuzō* and the Imperial Viewing

The *Ishū retsuzō* set of portraits was created in the aftermath of an Ainu uprising in the eastern Ezo districts of Kunashiri and Menashi in the fifth month of Kansei 寛政 1 (1789) (figure 1). It began as a riot triggered by repeated cases of inhumane treatment (including forced labor) of Ainu workers by Hidaya 飛驒屋, the *basho ukeoi shōnin* 場所請負商人, or merchant contracted by Matsumae domain to administer affairs with the Ainu in specific districts (*basho*).<sup>2</sup> When Matsumae domain dispatched an armed force to suppress the uprising, some Ainu chiefs collaborated with the domain. The uprising was quickly quelled in what became known as the Battle of Kunashiri-Menashi, but not before many on both sides had died.

To “honor the meritorious service” of the Ainu chiefs who had collaborated, domain lord Matsumae Michihiro 松前道広 (1754–1832) commissioned Kakizaki Hakyō to make portraits of the chiefs. He began work immediately, and completed the set of portraits in about one year. Hakyō's uncle Matsumae Hironaga 松前広長 (1737–1801) was then commissioned to write an introduction (*Ishū retsuzō jo*), as well as a supplement (*Ishū retsuzō*

1 The official Japanese title of the exhibition is *Ishū retsuzō: Ezochi imēji o meguru hito, mono, sekai* 夷酋列像: 蝦夷地イメージをめぐる人・物・世界.

2 Iwasaki argues that, “[The incident] was what is known as friction between different cultures, and occurred when the order of prescribed relations was threatened from the viewpoint of both the Ainu and Japanese.” See Iwasaki 1998, p. 200.



Figure 1. Left: “Ikotoi”; center: “Shonko”; right: “Tsukinoe.” From the *Ishū retsuzō* by Kakizaki Hakyō. 1790. Color on silk. 40.0 x 30.0 cm each. © Musée des beaux-arts et d’archéologie de Besançon. Photo by Pierre Guénat.

*furoku* 夷酋列像附録).<sup>3</sup> The latter deals with the history of Ainu subjugation by Matsumae domain, the details of the 1789 battle, and also sketches in the biographies of the Ainu chiefs portrayed.

The *Ishū retsuzō* portraits appear to be a product of Hakyō’s own imagination. Matsumae Hironaga insisted that twelve chiefs, including one woman, be chosen from among more than forty Ainu who received an audience with the Matsumae domain lord, but historical accounts indicate that only five Ainu out of the twelve actually visited Matsumae castle.<sup>4</sup> It is not clear whether Hakyō had a chance to meet the other seven that he painted, and it is hard to imagine that he sketched them individually since they all display stereotypical facial features. Hakyō’s work was overseen by Matsumae Michihiro and Matsumae Hironaga among others.

In the eleventh month of Kansei 2 (1790), Hakyō left Matsumae for Kyoto, carrying with him the completed *Ishū retsuzō* portraits. In the second month of the following year, he arrived in Kyoto, and took up residence at the Masuya 升屋 Inn at Kiyamachi Sanjō-agaru 木屋町三条上ル.<sup>5</sup> There he made clean copies of the portrait set. Through the auspices of his acquaintance and fellow painter Ōhara Donkyō 大原吞響 (?–1810) and loyalist intellectual Takayama Hikokurō 高山彦九郎 (1747–1793), he was able to show these copies to such local cultural figures as Confucian scholar Minagawa Kien 皆川淇園 (1734–1807); the Classical Chinese poet Rikunyo 六如 (1734–1801); Daiten Zenji 大典禪師 (1719–1801), the abbot of Shōkokuji 相国寺 Temple and friend of the painter Itō Jakuchū 伊藤若冲 (1716–1800); and the Tendai priest and poet, Jien 慈延 (1748–1805). Takayama borrowed Hakyō’s portraits, and showed them to members of influential aristocratic families like the Iwakura 岩倉—with whom he was staying at the time—Fushihara 伏原, and Hiramatsu 平松.

3 There are two versions of the *Ishū retsuzō furoku*, one written in *katakana*, block style (*ichimeī mōi zuga kokuji furoku* 一名毛夷図画国字附録 [Supplement to the Ainu portraits, written in Japanese script]) and the other in *hiragana*, cursive style.

4 *Kansei Ezo ran torishirabe nikki*, p. 725. The five Ainu were Shimochi, Ininkari, Nishikomake, Ikorikayani, and Chikiriashikai, a sixty-five-year-old female.

5 *Kansei Kyōto nikki*, p. 45.

In the meantime, a messenger (identity unknown) from Matsumae domain approached twelve prominent Confucianists in Kyoto to write testimonial poems (*san* 贊) for the *Ishū retsuzō*. These men included Minagawa Kien, Akamatsu Sōshū 赤松滄州 (1721–1801), Ōta Gan'ō 太田玩鷗 (1745–1804), and Tatsu Sōro 龍草廬 (1714–1792). In the fifth month of the same year, Matsumae Hirohide 松前広英 (1761–?), Hironaga's heir, also arrived in Kyoto. He commissioned Minagawa Kien to write about Matsumae's manufacture of cannons for the dual purpose of defending the coastline against the incursion of Russian ships, and for dealing with any future Ainu uprising.<sup>6</sup>

Soon afterward, in the seventh month of Kansei 3 (1791), Sasaki Nagahide 佐々木長秀 (dates unknown), a retainer of Einin 盈仁 (1772–1830), the prince-abbot of the Shōgoin 聖護院 Temple, borrowed the *Ishū retsuzō* from Hakyō. Einin then showed the portraits to his brother, Emperor Kōkaku 光格天皇 (r. 1779–1817).<sup>7</sup> The emperor honored Hakyō with a gift of an inkstone, which he treasured. Hakyō even made a seal bearing the legend “Previously Viewed by the Emperor” (*sokyō tenran* 曾經天覽) that he would affix to works he was especially fond of. Hakyō left Kyoto immediately thereafter, and by the end of the ninth month was back in Matsumae with the original set. The domain held a grand banquet to celebrate the emperor's appreciation of the “Ainu portraits.”<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, about three months after the imperial viewing, Matsumae Hirohide left Kyoto carrying with him another copy of the *Ishū retsuzō*, and this time headed for Edo. There, in the eleventh month, he requested Inoue Shimei 井上四明 (1730–1819), a Confucian scholar-official of Okayama 岡山 domain, to write a foreword for the collection, which he styled *Ezo zuzō san* 蝦夷図像贊.<sup>9</sup> He had Confucian scholar Yūki (Inuzuka) Inami 結城(犬塚)印南 (1750–1813), who had studied at the Shōheikō 昌平黌, the shogunate's official academy, write an afterword.

### Hakyō as Painter

Kakizaki Hakyō was the son of Matsumae Sukehiro 松前資広 (1726–1765), the seventh lord of Matsumae domain. He lived in the domain's Edo residence until the age of twenty, and later served as a house elder. On the recommendation of his uncle, Matsumae Hironaga, Hakyō studied painting first with Takebe Ryōtai 建部凌岱 (1719–1774) and then with Sō Shiseki 宋紫石 (1715–1786), both of the Nanpin 南蘋 school.<sup>10</sup> The young Hakyō appears to

6 According to Minagawa Kien, Matsumae Hirohide came to see him in the fifth month of Kansei 3 (1791) and commissioned him to write an account of cannon manufacture in the domain. Earlier, in the third month of that year, Kakizaki “Hirotoshi” had entered Kyoto by domain order and, at his lodging, copied the “eleven [sic] portraits of meritorious Ainu chiefs,” and had a “messenger” visit Kien asking for a poem. It has long been presumed that either Matsumae Hirohide or Kakizaki Hakyō himself asked Kien and other Kyoto Confucianists for a poem, but Kien's account indicates a third party was responsible. See *Matsumae-kō shinsei taihō ki*, p. 241.

7 Sasaki and Tanimoto 2017, p. 146.

8 Nagata 1988, p. 90.

9 A later reproduction is held today by the Matsura Historical Museum. See Hokkaidō Hakubutsukan 2015, p. 178.

10 This was a school of realistic painting featuring gorgeous coloring and meticulous brush techniques. It was introduced to Japan by Chinese painter Shen Nanpin 沈南蘋 (Jp. Shin Nanpin; 1682–1760), who came to Nagasaki in the twelfth lunar month of Kyōhō 享保 16 (1731). During his less-than-two-year stay in Japan, Shen taught painting to Nagasaki artist, Kumashiro Yūhi 神代熊斐 (1712–1773). Many pupils from across Japan came to Nagasaki to study under Kumashiro. On the spread of the Nanpin style of painting, see Miyajima 1985 and Chiba-shi Bijutsukan 2001.



Figure 2. Detail from *Nanban kishi no zu* (Drawings of European knights), by Kakizaki Hakyō. Late-eighteenth to early-nineteenth century. Sumi on paper. 27.9 x 19.7 cm. Collection of the Hakodate City Central Library.

have been apprenticed to Ryōtai for only a brief period of time. His relations with Sō Shiseki are mentioned in a number of biographical publications from the late Edo to Meiji periods. Volume 3 of the *Gajō yōryaku* 画乗要略 (Brief history of painting, 1832) mentions that he was called “Shōgen,” and studied under Sō Shiseki, and that he was known in the northern provinces of Mutsu 陸奥 and Dewa 出羽 for his paintings of birds and flowers. In an essay published in 1907, Kōno Saisen 河野犀川 (1862–1930) drew on the Kakizaki family archive to confirm that Hakyō studied under Shiseki for three years from An’ei 安永 7 (1778) when he was fifteen. During this time, his painting technique greatly improved. Kōno also notes that he produced many outstanding works under the name of Kyōu 杏雨.<sup>11</sup>

Sō Shiseki (real name Kusumoto Kōhachirō 楠本幸八郎) was born in Edo, went to Nagasaki at the age of around forty during the Hōreki 宝曆 era (1751–1764), and studied painting first with Kumashiro Yūhi and then with Song Ziyān (Sō Shigan) 宋紫岩 (?–1760), a Chinese painter who came to Japan in Hōreki 8 (1758). His elaborate Chinese-influenced painting technique, which Shiseki himself called “a method of drawing things as they are” (*shasei shinsha hō* 写生真写法), was favorably received in Edo, where modern empiricism was enjoying popularity owing to the influence of Dutch learning, as well as Korean practical studies (*silhak*; *jitsugaku* 実学). Shiseki was in charge of illustrations for the *Butsurui hinshitsu* 物類品騰 (Classification of materials, 1763) written by multi-talented physician and inventor Hiraga Gennai 平賀源内 (1728–1780). There is evidence of Hakyō’s study of Western painting in the *Nanban kishi no zu* 南蛮騎士の図 (Drawings of European knights; figure 2), which is said to be in Hakyō’s hand. He copied this series of drawings from hanging maps originally produced in the Netherlands in the second half of the seventeenth century.<sup>12</sup> Hakyō presumably encountered the original through someone close to Sō Shiseki, who had European geographical works in his collection.

Shiseki was in the final phase of his life during the three years from An’ei 7 (1778) to An’ei 9 (1780) when he taught the young Hakyō. Shiseki enjoyed close relationships with daimyo families and upper-ranking samurai in Edo. Around An’ei 1 (1772), he had painted

11 Kōno 1907, p. 9.

12 Isozaki 2005, pp. 168–169.



Figure 3. Part of *Ezo kokufū zue* (Illustrated customs of Ezo), attributed to Kodama Teiryō. Mid-1700s. In *kansubon* (scroll). 23.5 x 972.5 cm. Collection of Hakodate City Central Library.

the *Hyakuchō zu* 百鳥図 (A hundred birds) for the daimyo of Kaga 加賀 domain, and from An'ei 8 (1779) he was a frequent visitor at the Edo residence of Sakai Tadazane 酒井忠以 (1755–1790), lord of Himeji 姫路 domain. It is likely that he also lectured Tadazane's younger brother, Sakai Hōitsu 酒井抱一 (1761–1828), on painting.<sup>13</sup> When Hakyō studied the techniques and composition of realistic drawing in his teens and twenties, he took Shiseki's works as his models. The *Ishū retsuzō*, which Hakyō painted at age twenty-seven, fully displayed both his debt to the Nanpin style in its depiction of texture, as in the softness of bird feathers, and to such Western painting techniques as shading, evident in faces and folds of clothing.

Sometimes art historians in Japan have discussed the *Ishū retsuzō* in the context of the history of Ainu painting (Ainu-e アイヌ絵). It makes little sense, however, to place Hakyō's work in the same category as paintings by artists such as Kodama Teiryō 小玉貞良 (active 1750–1760), who produced Ainu paintings in and around Matsumae prior to Hakyō (figure 3). These so-called “Ezo ga” 蝦夷画 typically depicted groups of Ainu (faces, bodies, and clothes of young and old, male and female), landscapes indicative of their lifestyle (sea, mountains, and other natural features, and dwellings), their means of livelihood (fishing, hunting, and related animals and artifacts), and distinctive rituals and practices (such as the Iomante “bear-sending ceremony,” and ceremonial banquets). These paintings were done by Japanese (whom the Ainu called “Shamo”) to satisfy Japanese interest and curiosity. They exaggerated and distorted, and depicted no identifiable individuals, except for the occasional elder.

By contrast, the *Ishū retsuzō* portraits each show a full-length figure with no background. The artist gives the name of each figure in kanji characters phonetically corresponding to his or her native name. Such portraits were extremely unusual. The only other Ainu painting done in a similar style seems to be the *Ezo Monbetsu shūchō Tōbu gazō* 蝦夷紋別酋長東武画像 (Portrait of Tōbu, Ainu Chief of Monbetsu), produced by Hakyō himself in Tenmei 天明 3 (1783) (figure 4). The portrait is inscribed “Painted at the request of Ainu Chief Tōbu in Monbetsu.” In terms of imagery, this portrait was clearly the prototype for the later *Ishū retsuzō*, although they diverge in terms of production, brushwork technique, and design.

<sup>13</sup> Tsuruta 1993, pp. 68–69.



Figure 4. *Ezo Monbetsu shūchō Tōbu gazō* (Portrait of Tōbu, Ainu Chief of Monbetsu), by Kakizaki Hakyō. 1783. Color on paper. 164.8 x 90.9 cm. Collection of Tokyo National Museum. Source: ColBase (<https://colbase.nich.go.jp/>).

### Kansei-Era Cultural Policy as Found in the *Kenjō no sōji*

How then might we understand the significance of the *Ishū retsuzō* set of portraits? In his aforementioned introduction to the work, Matsumae Hironaga wrote:

The domain lord [Matsumae Michihiro] ... ordered his vassal Hirotoishi to portray the twelve [Ainu chiefs] who had performed meritorious service. He would keep the portraits by his side so that he might show to others the rewards [to be earned by those who do good] and the punishments [that await those who do evil].

Hironaga also wrote as follows in the *Ishū retsuzō furoku* supplement:<sup>14</sup>

The lord summoned more than forty loyal Ainu and received them in audience. He bestowed on them abundant rewards. He had Kakizaki Shōgen [Hirotoishi] paint the portraits of twelve chiefs among them who had displayed the greatest wisdom and courage in quelling the uprising and who were also widely respected by their communities. In this, he secretly followed the precedent of the Kirin Tower episode (Rinkaku no kyo 麟閣の挙), to ensure they serve as examples of Ainu loyalty for future [generations]. He provided brief biographies of each, the better to honor them.

The Kirin Tower episode refers to the portraits of Huo Guang 霍光 (? –68 BC) and eleven other meritorious vassals which Emperor Xuan 宣帝 (r. 74–49 BC) displayed in the Kirin 麒麟 Tower in the grounds of the Chang’an 長安 Palace. Kakizaki Shōgen [Hirotoishi]’s portrayal of the twelve Ainu chiefs was a way for the domain to praise their loyalty in emulation of such ancient Chinese practice. This was precisely the purpose of “rewarding good, punishing evil” paintings (*quanjie hua*; Jp. *kankai ga* 勸戒画) or paintings of loyal

<sup>14</sup> From the reproduced scroll paintings of *Ishū retsuzō* (ca. 1798–1829), National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka.





Figure 5. Reference paintings for the *Kenjō no sōji byōbu*, by Sumiyoshi Hiroyuki. Eighteenth century. Colors on silk. Collection of Tokyo National Museum. Source: ColBase (<https://colbase.nich.go.jp/>).

vassals (*kōshinzu* 功臣図). These were genres of traditional Chinese painting that depicted historical events and figures in line with Confucian ethics.

The best example of such painting in Japan is the *Kenjō no sōji*, a set of paintings featured on the wall panels of the Shishinden Hall of the Kyoto imperial palace (figure 5). The paintings, which depict thirty-two Chinese sages from the Yin 殷 (ca. 1600 BC–ca. 1046 BC) through Tang 唐 (618–907) dynasties, decorate the Shishinden Hall’s northern wall behind the emperor’s throne. The space above the portraits is lined with square sheets giving each figure’s name and profile. Representing the Japanese tradition of partition or interior wall painting (*shōheki* 障壁画), the *Kenjō no sōji* were reworked over and over for one thousand years from the early Heian 平安 (794–1185) through the late Edo periods.<sup>15</sup> There is no established theory about when the *Kenjō no sōji* paintings were first made, but the mid-thirteenth century *Kokon chomonjū* 古今著聞集 (Notable tales old and new) mentions them in passing: “[They] probably follow the example of the portraits of meritorious vassals displayed at the Kirin Tower.”<sup>16</sup> This suggests that the *Kenjō no sōji* also originated in the Kirin Tower episode. However, no comparative study of the *Kenjō no sōji* and the *Ishū retsuzō* has so far been attempted.

The comparison here of the extant versions of the *Kenjō no sōji* and the *Ishū retsuzō*, both dating back to the Kansei era (1790–1792), is intended to reveal the differences and commonalities of these two “rewarding-good” sets of paintings.<sup>17</sup> The imperial palace was rebuilt eight times during the Edo period.<sup>18</sup> The *Kenjō no sōji*, too, were reworked each time, except for during the Ansei 安政 era (1855), when the Kansei era (1792) paintings were

15 Kawamoto et al. 1979a, pp. 10–11.

16 “Shishinden *Kenjō no sōji* and Sliding-screen Paintings of the Seiryōden 清涼殿 and Elsewhere,” in vol. 11 (Paintings and Drawings, no. 16) of the *Kokon chomonjū*.

17 This study of the *Kenjō no sōji* draws on Kawamoto et al. 1979a and b; Fujioka 1987; Fujita 1991; Kamata 2007; and Kamata 2009.

18 The rebuilding took place in Keichō 慶長 18 (1613), Kan’ei 寛永 19 (1642), Jōō 承応 4 (1655), Kanbun 寛文 2 (1663), Enpō 延宝 3 (1675), Hōei 宝永 6 (1709), Kansei 4 (1792), and Ansei 2 (1855).

reused. The *Kenjō no sōji* on display at the Kyoto imperial palace today date back to the Kansei era, although partial repairs have been made. The artist was Sumiyoshi Hiroyuki 住吉広行 (1755–1811), a painter in the service of the Tokugawa shogunate (*goyō eshi* 御用絵師).

The Kyoto imperial palace had burned down in the great fire of the first month of Tenmei 8 (1788). Its reconstruction started in the seventh month of Kansei 1 (1789), and was completed in the eighth month of the following year. Matsudaira Sadanobu 松平定信 (1758–1829), Shirakawa domain lord and the shogunate's chief senior councilor (*rōjū shuza* 老中首座), was overseer (*sōbugyō* 惣奉行) of the project. Yielding to the imperial court's request, the shogunate allowed the reconstruction of the palace according to Heian-court style. Emperor Kōkaku's initial proposal that the entire palace grounds be restored to their ancient grandeur and solemnity was not adopted, however, partly at least for financial reasons. The reconstructed palace ended up being limited to the Shishinden, the Seiryōden, and other important ceremonial halls. Be that as it may, the imperial court's success in having its way can be seen as an indication of the rise of power in the court.<sup>19</sup> To put it another way, the reconstruction illustrates how important it was for the shogunate to utilize imperial prestige in order to maintain its authority.<sup>20</sup>

The reconstruction project took as its basic reference source the *Daidairi-zu kōshō* 大内裏図考証 (Historical research on the plan of the Heian imperial palace) by Uramatsu Kozen 裏松固禪 (1736–1804), scholar of ancient court and military practices. Also consulted were *funpon* 粉本 (study sketches), and picture scrolls passed down in the Tosa 土佐 family of designated head painters of the court (*edokoro azukari* 絵所預), and held in various temples and shrines. Court noble Nakayama Naruchika 中山愛親 (1741–1814) and others were appointed commissioners of construction (*zōei goyō gakari* 造営御用掛).<sup>21</sup> Sadanobu assigned to two men the task of studying the first drafts of portraits of the *Kenjō no sōji*. They were Confucian official Shibano Ritsuzan 柴野栗山 (1736–1807), and rector (*daigaku no kami* 大学頭) of the shogunate's chief educational institution, Hayashi Nobutaka 林信敬 (1767–1793). The ancient style restoration of Shishinden Hall saw it enlarged from six spans (*ken* 間; 1 *ken* = 1.82 meters) to nine spans. The thirty-two portraits of the sages were arranged so that sixteen fitted in the four-span space on the east and sixteen on the west, with a one-span space in between them.

The *Kenjō no sōji* were destined for the walls of the most prestigious hall within the palace, so naturally they were assigned to prominent painters in the service of the shogunate. The highest-ranking Kanō 狩野 school painters employed by the shogunate (*oku eshi* 奥絵師) had taken charge of the six reworkings that preceded the Kansei era. At the time of the Kansei restoration of the palace, too, Kanō Michinobu 典信 (1730–1790) worked on the *Kenjō no sōji*, although the shogunate commissioned painters of the Kyoto-Osaka region for other partitions and interior wall paintings in order to cut down on expenses. When Michinobu died in the eighth month of Kansei 2 (1790), immediately after completing the preliminary sketches, the aforementioned Sumiyoshi Hiroyuki took over.

The Kansei period *Kenjō no sōji* took four years and five months from planning to completion in the tenth month of Kansei 4 (1792). This was nearly two years after the

19 Fujita 1991, pp. 15–16.

20 Takeda 2008, p. 82.

21 Matsuo 1992, pp. 58–59.

emperor's return to his new palace. The delay was probably owing to Shibano Ritsuzan's repeated revisions to the preliminary sketches.<sup>22</sup> According to a record by Mizuno Tamenaga 水野為長 (1751–1824), an aide to Matsudaira Sadanobu, Sadanobu would reply to complaints of slow progress with, “The paintings will remain for generations to come. A delay of two or three months is no problem. Do not be in the least concerned. The thing is to produce paintings that will be models for later generations.”<sup>23</sup>

What then was the proposed design for the *Kenjō no sōji*? There are several historical records of discussions on this matter between Shibano Ritsuzan and the two professors (*monjō bakase* 文章博士) of the Bureau of Education (Daigakuryō 大学寮). The professors took charge of research on design history for the third set of preliminary sketches done in 1792.<sup>24</sup> Ritsuzan and the two professors differed in terms of their reference materials, but shared a recognition that each portrait must have the headgear, clothing, ornamentation, and accessories suitable to the time and status of the portrait's subject. The figures in the pre-Kansai-era portraits wore almost the same headgear, court dress, and footwear. It would have been impossible to tell which portrait represented which figure if the order in which they stood had not been known. At the same time, Ritsuzan and others undertook thorough research on the colors, and shapes of the faces, clothing, headgear, and even the small accessories worn by each of the thirty-two figures. As a result, the portrayals in the Kansei-era *Kenjō no sōji* are varied and diverse, and the individual sages are distinct for each of the periods in which they lived.

Most interesting were the discussions between Ritsuzan and the two professors concerning the colors and postures of portrait figures. Ritsuzan proposed, “Bodily posture is secondary, but if all figures have a similar pose you cannot distinguish them. If possible, I would like them to differ somewhat from one another in appearance and color.” The professors disapproved, however, insisting, “The imagery should be such that you can identify who is depicted through his court rank, and his visage which should suggest his age. Color variation of the clothing would only please the eye, nothing more.”<sup>25</sup> As this exchange suggests, what they aimed for was not flowery, varied appearances but imagery faithful to historical accounts. The Kansei-era restoration of the *Kenjō no sōji* was not intended to “follow painting traditions,” but to “form new images obtained through scholarly research.”<sup>26</sup>

It can be said, therefore, that the *Kenjō no sōji*, while placed in the most symbolic space in the palace, were not flamboyant at all. Rather, they were rendered solemn and dignified by faithful adherence to historical accounts, and by their greater emphasis on the Confucian spirit than had been the case before. The style was consistent with Matsudaira Sadanobu's ongoing policy of restoring a Neo-Confucian orthodoxy.

### The *Kōshinzu* Approach and Matsumae Domain Objectives

Now, let us return to the *Ishū retsuzō*, completed around the time when the preliminary phase of sketching was being done for the *Kenjō no sōji*. What was the design desired by the

22 Kamata 2009, p. 47.

23 *Yoshino sasshi* 15 (entry of the first day of the second month, Kansei 3 [1791]).

24 Kamata 2009, pp. 55–61.

25 Kamata 2009, p. 60.

26 Kamata 2007, p. 497.



Figure 6. “Mautarake” from *Ishū retsuzō* by Kakizaki Hakyō. © Musée des beaux-arts et d’archéologie de Besançon. Photo by Pierre Guénat.



Figure 7. From *Ressen zusan* by Gessen, 1784. Courtesy of the National Diet Library.

lord of the Matsumae domain? After all, it was he who had commissioned paintings in the style of famous Confucian sages.

First, the subjects of the portraits were to be twelve living leaders of the Ainu, whom the Japanese called “Ezo” or “Ijin” 夷人, not figures of antiquity. Moreover, the domain lord chose local painter Kakizaki Hakyō, master of the modern Nanpin style of painting that merged decorative realism with Western-style expression. The *Kenjō no sōji* depict Chinese themes in a plain style using traditional *yamato-e* 大和絵 techniques. But the *Ishū retsuzō* portraits feature bright colors and elaborate decorations. They are full of elements that please the eye, and would no doubt have incurred the displeasure of the *monjō hakase*.

The postures of the Ainu figures are diverse: they stand, sit, bend over, twist sideways, face forward, and look back. It has been pointed out that the posture of Mautarake appears to have been borrowed from the painting of Chinese hermits titled *Ressen zusan* 列仙図贊 (1784) by painter-priest Gessen 月僊 (1741–1809) (figures 6 and 7).<sup>27</sup> All the portraits in the *Ishū retsuzō* appear to have been carefully composed with reference to Chinese and Japanese picture albums, and various kinds of art manuals (*etehon* 絵手本) and study sketches (*funpon*). It is likely that the motifs used were intentionally chosen from ancient Chinese figures, as in the case of the *Kenjō no sōji*. One such figure was Dong Fangshuo 東方朔 (ca. 154 BC–ca. 93 BC), a second-century-BC scholar-official of the Western Han dynasty. Another was Guan Yu 關羽 (162–219), the principal character in *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, the fourteenth-century Chinese historical novel, and a popular subject of painting. The posture of Guan Yu in Hakyō’s 1815 portrait *Kan U zu* 關羽図 is quite similar to that of Ainu chief Ikotoi (figure 1) in the *Ishū retsuzō*.<sup>28</sup>

27 Inoue 1991, p. 17.

28 This is from a private collection, shown in Hokkaidō Hakubutsukan 2015, p. 86.

Kikuchi Isao 菊池勇夫 holds that the early modern Japanese view of the Ainu was determined by their physical features and customs.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, the features more or less common to the Ainu chiefs in the *Ishū retsuzō* are thick, connected eyebrows, “sinister” eyes with conspicuous whites, large noses and ears, unbound hair, long beards, hirsute bodies, and garments worn with the right side over the left (considered in ancient China to be “barbaric”). These were the symbolic features Japanese used to depict Ainu at that time. Hakyō followed those precedents with some consideration for the age differences of his subjects.

At the same time, Hakyō does seem to have had firsthand knowledge of the distinctively Ainu apparel and articles with decorative motifs shown in the portraits, such as the *shitoki* necklace Ainu women always wore for rituals, the *kuwasaki* decorative crest treasured by Ainu, the *attush* robe (made from the inner bark of the elm tree) worn daily, as well as bows and arrows, spears, and tobacco pouches. These and other items were preserved in the storerooms at Matsumae Castle, and Hakyō was presumably able to see them with his own eyes and sketch them.<sup>30</sup> Despite the stereotyped faces, the details of the costumes and accessories skillfully depicted by Hakyō with his Nanpin-school techniques endow the portraits with an outstanding feel of reality.

Hakyō dressed almost all the figures in the elaborately embroidered garments that Japanese of the time called “Ezo nishiki” 蝦夷錦 (Ezo brocade). Such garments were brought to Matsumae via Karafuto 樺太 (Sakhalin) and Sōya 宗谷 through the Ainu's trade with other northern peoples, such as the Santan 山丹; they were thought to have originally been worn by members of the Chinese court. From the seventeenth century, Matsumae domain sold Ezo brocades in Edo and the Kyoto-Osaka region. When Ainu chiefs had audiences with the domain lord, they typically borrowed these clothes. At the time of their audience after the Kunashiri-Menashi battle, the Ainu chiefs were lent “Ezo brocades, battle surcoats, and such like,” since their own apparel was so poor.<sup>31</sup>

In addition to the Ezo brocade coats, the portraits show blue beads made of glass and seal skin boots—both acquired through trade with northern peoples—as well as white tights and even European shoes, thereby emphasizing their “foreignness.” Sasaki Shirō 佐々木史郎 asserts that the Russian coats worn by chiefs Ikotoi and Tsukinoe were intended to show that “eastern Hokkaido, including Kunashiri and Etorofu, was at the forefront of relations linking Russia, Ainu people and the Matsumae clan.”<sup>32</sup> If that iconography was deliberate, it may be possible to interpret the Ainu chiefs’ apparel as hinting at the grave threat to Ezo posed by Russia, and the importance of Matsumae domain resistance.

Some of the portraits display formal aspects of the Ainu, such as the figure stroking his beard in greeting the Japanese, while others depict aspects of ordinary daily life, such as figures holding hunting equipment or carrying game. The *Ishū retsuzō* portraits were clearly intended to demonstrate the diversity of Ainu life in its formal and informal aspects. It is intriguing to note that content related to salmon and herring fishing, a major source of livelihood for the Ainu and often depicted in Ainu painting, was simply eliminated. This

29 Kikuchi 2013, p. 77.

30 *Matsumae shi*, pp. 294–296.

31 *Kansei Ezo ran torishirabe nikki*, p. 726.

32 Sasaki 2015, p. 120.

may be a consequence of the fact that the Kunashiri-Menashi battle arose over management of the local fisheries.

### Between Political and Cultural Affairs

To what extent can the *Ishū retsuzō* portraits be evaluated as “rewarding good” paintings, in the manner of the *Kenjō no sōji*? It is difficult to see in them evidence of such Confucian qualities as benevolence, righteousness, or virtue. The similarity of the faces and the diversity of the figures and colors are ironically opposite to the approach that informed the palace portraits. The *Ishū retsuzō* collection stands out, rather, for its panoply of Ezo-related visual information. Indeed, Ezo and the Ainu were topics of rapidly growing interest in Japanese society. We can observe here a deliberate attempt on the part of Matsumae domain to imbue the paintings with all the information to which it had privileged access. It seems, moreover, that by creating dignified but artificially constructed Ainu images, the domain was asserting its authority. The views expressed by Matsumae Hironaga in his supplement were colored by a civilized-versus-barbarian bias against the Ainu.<sup>33</sup>

As noted above, Hironaga wrote that the series was painted secretly following the model of the Kirin Tower episode. The domain’s true intent of this set of Ainu paintings in the *kōshinzu* style was meant to go unnoticed. Ordinarily, the aim of the “rewarding good” paintings was both to display the high moral standards observed by the ruler in public and private life, and to serve as political propaganda: the larger the painting, the greater its impact.<sup>34</sup> The dimensions of the *Ishū retsuzō* portraits, however, were small, each 40 cm high and 30 cm wide, making them suitable for private appreciation, and of course highly portable. No doubt the original intention was to have them taken to Kyoto. Maybe the *Ishū retsuzō* portraits were fashioned from the start in the image of the *Kenjō no sōji*. Is it too much to suggest that the artist depicted the Ainu chieftains as though they were Chinese sages, and that the desired outcome was a sort of intellectual caricature?

Again, the shogunate and domains throughout Japan were increasingly interested in Ezo. This interest led to a flurry of publications: commentaries on Ezo and treatises on how to defend northern Japan against Russian incursions.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, “foreigner” itself was a controversial topic from both political and cultural perspectives. During the Tokugawa period, Korean and Dutch diplomatic envoys made their way along the Tōkaidō to Edo, attracting attention wherever they went, fueling an interest in all things foreign. In Kansei 2 (1790) as well, led by the Satsuma 薩摩 domain, the kingdom of Ryukyu sent its eighth mission to the Tokugawa shogun in Edo. The envoys dressed in costumes of a Chinese style as if to emphasize their exoticism.<sup>36</sup> The *Ishū retsuzō* set of Ainu paintings drew on this heightened interest. Matsumae domain was anxious to share information, the better to demonstrate its vital state role. The tool it chose for that purpose was painting,

33 Kikuchi 2013, pp. 201, 207.

34 Sakakibara 1990, p. 133.

35 Examples of such work include *Kamucharoka koku fūsetsukō* 加模西葛杜加国風説考 (also known as *Akaezo fūsetsu kō* 赤蝦夷風説考; 1783) by the Sendai domain’s physician, Kudō Heisukesu 工藤平助 (1734–1801), and two works by Hayashi Shihei 林子平 (1738–1793), a specialist in military affairs: *Sangoku tsūran zuzetsu* 三国通覧図説 (1785) and *Kaikoku heidan* 海国兵談 (1787–1791).

36 Okinawa-ken Bunka Shinkōkai 2001, p. 3.

an indispensable medium through which the political elite and the literati might create interpersonal networks.

Political motives were no doubt at work as well. There were tensions between the shogunate and imperial court over such matters as the rebuilding of the palace on account of the shogunate's financial straits. Another source of tension was the so-called *songō* incident (*songō ikken* 尊号一件; 1789–1793), in which Emperor Kōkaku had sought in vain to bestow the title of “retired emperor” (*daijō tennō* 太上天皇) on his father, Prince Kan'in no miya Sukehito 関院宮典仁 (1733–1794). In other words, these were times when the imperial court was seeking to assert its authority against the bakufu. The Kunashiri-Menashi battle occurred at this historical juncture.

For generations, Matsumae domain had been closely related by marriage to the court aristocracy in Kyoto. It cultivated those ties through the *kitamae-bune* 北前船, ships that plied the coast of the Japan Sea. This was how Kyoto culture, ranging widely from religion to language, lifestyles, and customs, made its way up to Matsumae.<sup>37</sup> In Meiwa 明和 7 (1770), the domain lord, Michihiro, married Keiko 敬子, daughter of Minister of the Right Kazan'in Tokimasa 花山院常雅 (1700–1771). One of Kazan'in's relatives was Nakayama Naruchika, mentioned earlier as the court noble charged with constructing the new imperial palace buildings. Naruchika was a close aide to the emperor and, during the *songō* incident, was sent to Edo as an imperial emissary. No records confirm his overt connection to the *Ishū retsuzō*, but by way of Nakayama Naruchika and others around him, Michihiro had access to information about the moves of the emperor, the court, and the shogunate. There is a good possibility, therefore, that the *Ishū retsuzō* was made for the emperor's gaze as a manifestation of Matsumae domain's loyalty. Among those possibly behind any such scheme were Ōhara Donkyō, Michihiro's advisor on military art, and Takayama Hikokurō, the imperial loyalist much favored by Michihiro.<sup>38</sup> The *kōshinzu* type of painting was an ideal medium for persuading twelve leading Confucian scholars in Kyoto to write testimonials for the portraits. Their testimonials would be powerful support for Matsumae domain at a time when the movement for restoration of Confucianism was gathering momentum. After the emperor's viewing, the collection was carried to Edo to facilitate cultural and information exchange with various daimyo. The plan was presumably to show to the shogunate at the same time Minagawa Kien's *Matsumae-kō shinsei taihō ki* 松前侯新製大砲記 (An account of Lord Matsumae's newly produced cannon). Together these volumes were intended to demonstrate the domain's high level of culture and military preparedness.

Matsumae domain carefully chose the Ainu chiefs for the portraits. They gathered information about their status, achievements, skills, and physical characteristics which no doubt mixed fact and fiction. Matsumae Hironaga used the information to write his supplement to the *Ishū retsuzō* which became thereby an “authentic record” of the domain and the Ainu. The *Ishū retsuzō* was complete only after Hakyō had painted his portraits and after Hironaga—the greatest scholar in the domain—had completed the supplement.

<sup>37</sup> *Matsumae chōshi* 1984, pp. 930–931.

<sup>38</sup> *Matsumae ki* 1974, p. 23 notes that “[Michihiro] invited Ōhara Donkyō from Kyoto to study military arts.” It also notes that “[Michihiro] loved Takayama [Hikokurō] Masayuki from Ueno the most, and they interacted beyond their class and status.”

### Circulation of the Ainu Virtual Portraits

In Kyoto, Minagawa Kien interacted with Hakyō and was present when Hakyō produced a copy of *Ishū retsuzō*. The farewell poem he wrote for Hakyō, on his return to Matsumae, reads in part,

This painting of twelve meritorious Ezo figures.  
So elaborate and precise.  
Whoever sees it sighs with admiration.<sup>39</sup>

Sasaki Nagahide, who acted as intermediary when the portraits were shown to Emperor Kōkaku, wrote in his letter to Hakyō:<sup>40</sup>

When I showed the prince-abbot the *Ishū retsuzō* which I had borrowed from you the day before yesterday, he was so impressed by the extraordinary imagery and the exquisite brushwork that he showed it to the emperor. The work was kept in the palace for the whole day.

Both the poem and the letter testify to the strong impression made by the artist's new techniques and the striking imagery. The *Ishū retsuzō* duly enjoyed a quiet popularity among daimyo, scholars, and others in Kyoto and Edo. Hirado domain lord Matsura Seizan 松浦静山 (1760–1841), for example, borrowed the work from the Matsumae lord, and had it copied by a Kyoto painter in 1799.<sup>41</sup> The aforementioned Matsudaira Sadanobu, the Tokushima domain lord Hachisuka Haruaki 蜂須賀治昭 (1758–1814), and the Hiroshima domain lord Asano Nagamichi 浅野長訓 (1812–1872) followed suit, and had the collection of portraits copied, or presented copies to others. Indeed, copies were made intermittently over a period of some fifty years. Toward the end of the shogunate, some of the portraits were revived in a new context by Matsuura Takeshirō 松浦武四郎 (1818–1888), activist and explorer from Ise Province (now Mie Prefecture). The *Ezo nisshi* (1850), a collection of his records of exploration of Ezo in Kōka 弘化 2 (1845), reproduces three of the portraits of Ainu chiefs (Poroya, Nishikomake, and Shimochi). Takeshirō wrote that he had been given privileged access to the twelve portraits which were kept under lock and key by the Matsumae family.<sup>42</sup>

In a later publication, *Ezo manga* 蝦夷漫画, Takeshirō made use of the portrait of Ainu chief and master archer Shimochi, to help popularize Ainu life and culture (figures 8 and 9). This was the first case in which an *Ishū retsuzō* portrait was carried in a printed publication. It was a simple woodblock print, which gave a quality of authenticity to the fictitious garment and the hair ornaments worn by the chief. The same portrait is found in David MacRitchie's book on Ainu, titled *The Ainos*, published in Leiden and elsewhere in

39 *Shahon Kien bunshū (shōroku)*, p. 410.

40 The letter is in the collection of Hakodate City Central Library.

41 The copied works comprise two volumes of scroll, colored on paper. They are in the collection of the Matsura Historical Museum in Hirado. See Hokkaidō Hakubutsukan 2015, pp. 52–55, 149, 177.

42 *Ezo nisshi*. In the *Hokkaido Shinbun* (evening edition, 29 August 1985), Tanisawa Shōichi 谷澤尚一 indicates the likely involvement of Yamada Sansen 山田三川 (1804–1862) from Ise Province, a Confucianist and a feudal retainer of Matsumae domain, who was on close terms with Matsuura Takeshirō. See Miura 2015.





Figure 8. “Shimochi” from *Ishū retsuzō* by Kakizaki Hakyō. © Musée des beaux-arts et d’archéologie de Besançon. Photo by Pierre Guénat.

Figure 9. From *Ezo manga* (Illustrated Ezo) by Matsuura Takeshirō, 1859. Color woodblock print.



Figure 10. *The Ainu*, by David MacRitchie. 1892. From International Research Center for Japanese Studies database “Overseas Images of Japan.” (<https://sekiei.nichibun.ac.jp/GAI/ja/detail/?gid=GP008042&chid=12>)

the Netherlands in 1892 (figure 10). The book introduces the portrait as that of “Eyutoi, chief of Akkeshi,” an erroneous reference made by Takeshirō, taken directly from the *Ezo manga*. Fiction was mistaken here for reality. In time, some of the *Ishū retsuzō* portraits were introduced overseas as reference material for research on the Ainu. Matsuura Takeshirō blamed the “tyrannical rule” of the Matsumae domain for the Kunashiri-Menashi battle, and sympathized with what he understood to be the simple, naively honest, and pure-hearted Ainu people.<sup>43</sup> Yet, ironically, he was a leading disseminator of fictitious images.

One of the two original sets was in the keeping of the Matsumae family at least until 1902.<sup>44</sup> Its whereabouts since then remain unknown. In 1933, the *Ishū retsuzō* was registered in the inventory of the Museum of Fine Arts and Archaeology of Besançon.<sup>45</sup> No historical records exist to indicate how the collection was taken abroad. French missionaries, military men, or merchants may have been involved.<sup>46</sup> It may have reached Besançon as early as 1914.<sup>47</sup>

Today, eleven of the original portraits and the introduction are owned by the Museum of Fine Arts and Archaeology of Besançon, and two original portraits are held by the Hakodate City Central Library. In addition, eight copies by other painters are extant. Recently, a portrait of Ainu chief Shimochi painted by Hakyō himself (1802, private collection) was discovered in Hokkaido. It seems to be a later version of the original in the *Ishū retsuzō*.<sup>48</sup> This discovery has overturned the established theory that Hakyō never painted an Ainu after the *Ishū retsuzō*.

## Conclusion

The set of portraits produced in the late Edo period as an integral part of domain cultural policy generated a visual appeal beyond that which the artist can have anticipated. To this day, the portraits are still disseminated as representations of Ainu people in a manner far removed from that of the original context.

In July 2020, Upopoy, a national center for Ainu history and culture, opened in Shiraoi, Hokkaido.<sup>49</sup> Before then, in April 2019, the government enacted a new law certifying the Ainu as the “indigenous people in the northern part of Japan, especially in Hokkaido.” The law marked a breakthrough after the long history of Ainu oppression. However, this author was surprised to see that the *Ishū retsuzō* featured last year in a promotional video of the opening of Upopoy. Similarly, I feel deep misgivings whenever I see the *Ishū retsuzō* portraits displayed in European art galleries, say. After all, they symbolize the fact that ethnic representations have taken on a life of their own without due regard for the distinction between fiction and fact. This is partly an outcome of multicultural contact. It is also a dangerous phenomenon created by a society where revision in meaning and content cannot keep pace with the speed at which information is disseminated.

43 Miura 2015.

44 Yagi 1902, p. 440.

45 Hokkaidō Hakubutsukan 2015, p. 6.

46 There are no records, either, that would prove that the portraits taken out to Besançon had belonged to the former collection of the Matsumae family.

47 This is according to a curator of the Museum of Fine Arts and Archaeology of Besançon who appeared on the NHK program *Nichiyō bijutsukan* 日曜美術館 (Sunday Museum) aired on 24 January 2016.

48 Hokkaidō Hakubutsukan 2015, p. 71.

49 <https://ainu-upopoy.jp/en/> (Accessed 3 May 2021).

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