

Key Points of the Report of the “Panel of Experts on Ainu Policy Countermeasures”

1. History Until the Present

(1) History and Culture Leading Up to the Ainu (Upper Stone Age~Middle Ages)

- * Humans began to inhabit Hokkaido in the Upper Stone Age, and it was after that that the Jomon Culture began to develop, 12,000 years ago.
- * During the time when other regions of Japan were experiencing the Yayoi Period, in Hokkaido where the cold climate inhibited the spread of rice cultivation, the unique Jomon Culture continued until the 6th century.
- * Entering the 7th Century the Satsumon Culture emerged, and it was during this period that the prototype of what is now known as Ainu Culture became visible. In the ensuing period until the 13th~14th centuries, characteristics of the Ainu culture, a livelihood deeply related to nature centered on hunting, fishing and gathering with some conduct of agriculture as well as vigorous overseas trading, formed.

(2) Contact, and Trade, between “Foreigners” and “Wajin” (Middle Ages)

- * After the Kamakura Era Wajin¹ came to conduct vigorous trade with Hokkaido, and references can be seen in written materials from the Muromachi Era referring to the Ainu as “Foreigners” (*ibunkabito*, literally, “persons of a different culture”) whose language was different than Japanese.
- * Around the middle of the 15th century, Wajin constructed bases on the coastal regions of the Oshima Peninsula and engaged in trade with the Ainu who were already living there. With the expansion of trade battles between the two peoples such as the Battle of Koshamain did not abate, but the two peoples made peace during the middle of the 16th century.

(3) Sites of Harsh Labor (Early Modern Era)

- * During the Edo Era, the Matsumae Domain came to grant monopolies to its vassals over trade with the Ainu (trade fief system), under which trade with the Ainu came to be restricted.
- * Entering the 18th century, merchants under commission came to conduct trade at trading posts (trading post commission system), and in order to increase their profit began to manage fishing outposts themselves. Ainu were forced to work as laborers in the fish camps and were subjected to harsh physical labor.
- * Even amidst such conditions, however, the Ainu continued to develop a unique culture including art and craft, literature, philosophy and religious ceremonies.

(4) Grave Blows to the Ainu Culture (Modern Era)

- * Entering the Meiji Era, the Japanese government annexed Hokkaido, and the

colonization of Hokkaido through massive emigration proceeded.

- * Due to the introduction of a system of modern property ownership, Ainu lands for hunting, fishing and gathering were constricted, and further prohibitions of hunting and fishing forced the Ainu into a state of destitution.
- * Restrictions and prohibitions on the Ainu's own ethnic culture and reductions in chances to speak the Ainu language hastened Ainu assimilation to Wajin culture, and Ainu culture came onto the verge of disappearing.
- * Further, vastly outnumbered amidst the overwhelming numbers of Wajin settlers, the Ainu were driven into a position of subjection and were subject to discrimination in a variety of situations.
- * Even in the present day human remains taken against the will of the Ainu people can be found amongst Ainu items stored as research materials in universities and other places.
- * In the 32nd year of the Meiji Era (1899) the Hokkaido Former Aborigines Protection Act was promulgated, but it did not achieve a sufficient improvement in the destitute conditions of the Ainu people.

2. Present Conditions of the Ainu People and Recent Trends Revolving Around the Ainu

(1) Present Conditions of the Ainu People

- * Most Ainu are believed to reside in Hokkaido (According to a survey conducted by the Hokkaido Government the identifiable population is around 24,000 people).
- * As per diet, clothing and housing the Ainu are leading a lifestyle which does not vary largely from that of the majority of Japanese citizens.
- * The living conditions of Ainu living in Hokkaido have been improved considerably, but still lie far below those of Hokkaido citizens in general or national averages. No special measures have been effected for those Ainu residing outside of Hokkaido.
- * Implementation of the Ainu Cultural Promotion Act (1997) has widened the scale of activities for the maintenance and transmission of the Ainu language and culture. Nonetheless, there are claims that this law is not functioning fully enough in all aspects necessary for the transmission and development thereof.
- * Ainu lifestyles which vary little from the lifestyles of other Japanese should be respected along with lifestyles which promote an Ainu pride in their Ainu identity.

(2) Recent Trends Revolving Around the Ainu

- * September, 2007: Adoption of the "United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples" (supported by the Japanese government)
- * June, 2008: "Resolution Recognizing the Ainu as an Indigenous People" approved by the House of Representatives and the House of Councilors of the Japanese Diet

3. The Future of Ainu Policy

(1) Fundamental Tenets for Future Ainu Policy

① Policy Development Based on the Recognition of the Ainu as an Indigenous People

* It can be considered that the Ainu are the Indigenous inhabitants of the northern part of the Japanese archipelago, and particularly of Hokkaido.

* Based upon the fact that the modernization policies of the Japanese State dealt a devastating blow to the Ainu culture, it is a strong responsibility that the Japanese government should give full effort to the revitalization of the culture of the Ainu, who are an indigenous people.

* Culture as referred to here should be understood as the composite of particular modes of Ainu life, including Ainu means of using the land, in addition to language, music, dance, craftworks and so forth

* Alongside revitalization which stands firmly on tradition, perspectives which focus on creating new Ainu culture through the core use of tradition, are necessary.

* In order to extinguish prejudice and discrimination and achieve smooth promotion of new Ainu policies, the sharing of correct information amongst Japanese citizens will be necessary. The effort to create a society in which future generations can live with dreams and pride is crucial.

② The Impact of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (hereafter “UNDRIP”)

* Although, the UNDRIP possesses no legal binding authority, its significance as a general international guideline for policy relating to indigenous peoples, should be given full respect.

* In using the UNDRIP as a reference, it is necessary to stand upon the particular histories and present conditions of the indigenous peoples in each country.

* It is critical to seek the basis for Ainu policy in pertinent provisions of the Japanese Constitution as well as to explore the prospects for proactive development therewith.

③ Fundamental Tenets for Policy Development

A Respect for Ainu Identity

* It is necessary to pursue policies which enable the proactive selection of life as an Ainu, as well as the self-determination of a life based upon such a choice.

B Respect for the Coexistence of Diverse Cultures and Ethnic Groups

* The very fact of the existence of the Ainu people is highly significant. Measures for the promoting of culture in its broad sense, by enabling enjoyment of diverse and richer culture, will benefit all Japanese citizens.

C Nationwide Implementation by the Japanese Government

* As they have until now, the future quasi-governmental and/or private efforts of local governments, third-sector and other civilian initiatives will continue to be important, but the national government should take even more responsibility in legislating and effectuating policy. Cooperation and coordination with local governments will be crucial to future measures.

* Development of policies aimed at Ainu nationwide is vital.

(2) Concrete Policies

① Promotion of Understanding Amongst the Citizenry

A Education

* Research into educational materials and pedagogical methods suited to children's development level, in-services for instructors, enhancement of textbook content, and so forth

B Consciousness-Raising

* Implementation nationwide of a period of concentrated public awareness-raising activities through the enactment of a "National Ainu Day (tentative name)", and so forth

② Policy Relating to Culture in the Broad Sense

A Establishment of A Space Symbolizing the Coexistence of Ethnic Groups

* Amongst other measures; establishment of a facility for the education, research, and exhibition of Ainu culture, history, and so on, establishment of a facility wherein dignified memorial of Ainu remains now stored at universities and elsewhere can be carried out.

* Amongst other measures; creation of a park or other space which would include these facilities and would be symbolic of ethnic coexistence.

B Promotion of Research

* Amongst other measures; establishment of a central research organ which can serve a central organizing function in the networking and capacity building of researchers, to develop in the mid to long-term into comprehensive and applied research structure.

C Promotion of the Ainu Culture Prioritizing the Ainu Language

* Amongst other measures; enhancement and expansion of opportunities to learn and experience Ainu language and culture; initiatives for advancing the status of the Ainu language (designation/signation of place names by their Ainu name, and so forth)

D Promotion of Usage of Land and Resources

* Amongst other measures; expansion and development of designated Ainu Traditional Territory (Iwor), establishment of a body for regulating Ainu obtainment of

natural materials².

E Promotion of Ainu Industry

* Among other measures: programs for enhancement of handcraft and industrial arts skills, expansion of marketing routes for Ainu products, establishment of an Ainu trademark³, support in promotion of Ainu tourism.

F Policy Relating to Improvement of Quality of Life

* Implementation of survey of current living conditions of Ainu outside of Hokkaido; investigation and implementation of necessary measures on a nationwide scale.

③ Establishment and Enhancement of Systems for Implementation

* Establishment of national mechanisms for the planning, legislation and promotion of a comprehensive Ainu policy

* Establishment of consultation and deliberation bodies and so forth for carrying out Ainu policy based on Ainu input, etc. and for monitoring implementation of measures

* Bestowing a special seat for the Ainu people in the Japanese Diet or other governmental body is seen to conflict with the Japanese Constitution and will likely require amendment of the Constitution. Prospects for political participation by means other than a special seat are mid to long-term issues which will require deliberation regarding validity and Constitutionality. Simultaneously, creation of a system for reflecting the collective opinion of the Ainu will be called for.

In Conclusion

* It is strongly expected that the collective proposals in this Special Report shall be taken up in an integrated fashion and implemented in an ongoing and consistent manner.

* It is considered that a legislative measure for the dependable advancement of Ainu policy possesses large significance. In the course of ongoing investigations, we request deliberation on this point.

* Efforts toward coexistence and understanding are desired of concerned local governments, private enterprise and other groups, as well as by each and every citizen of the nation.

¹ An expression currently used to distinguish the ethnic Japanese majority from the Ainu

² Translator's comment: Presumably for the sake of carrying out "cultural" activities

³ Translator's comment: Worded as "Ainu brand"; i.e., a measure for advancing Ainu intellectual and cultural property rights