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The Japan Society for Ainu Studies (JSAS) is a citizens' group studying the Ainu issue based in Hokkaido, Japan.

Leaving the Ainu Issue Unaddressed Will Make Hokkaido Another Ukraine

1. Relevant Paragraph of the Government Report (CCPR/C/JPN/7)

18. Regarding the indigenous people, the Government recognizes Ainu people as the only indigenous people in Japan.

226. The Ainu people and Japanese nationals in or from Okinawa are equally Japanese nationals and are guaranteed to have full and equal rights that are enjoyed by any other Japanese nationals.

2. Summary

The Russian Federation is beginning to express its territorial ambitions toward Hokkaido through the Ainu issue. A written request that Russia should establish an Ainu autonomous province to place part of Hokkaido under its control has been submitted to President Putin from within Japan. Claims such as “Ainu are of the Russian origin” and “Russia has all rights to Hokkaido” are completely wrong. These claims made in Japan and overseas that encourage division of Hokkaido are caused by the the obscure document of the Japanese government that recognized the Ainu. Leaving such a situation unaddressed is very dangerous. We should not give Russia a pretext for invading Hokkaido.

3. Ainu Issue: Preventing Hokkaido from Becoming Another Ukraine

3-1. Recognition of the Ainu by the Japanese government, activities of Russia and scientific truth

The Japanese government’s views are expressed in a way that may create the false idea that the Ainu are not Japanese people. For example, the website of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism has a page entitled “Promotion of Ainu Culture” that says: ‘The Ainu, though small in numbers, are a race that is considered to have inhabited Hokkaido together with *Wajin* (“The people of *Wa*” or Japanese) in the period following the end of the Medieval Period.’ This expression leads to the misunderstanding that the Ainu are not Japanese people.

The statement is allegedly based on a “report” dated April 1, 1996, by *Utari taisaku no arikata ni kansuru yushikisha kondankai* (Advisory Panel of Experts on the Future Ainu Policy). The report says under “(1) Aboriginality of the Ainu People” of “1 Ainu People” that ‘at least, in the context of history of the period following the end of the Medieval Period, it cannot be denied from a scholarly perspective that the Ainu people indigenously inhabited the northern part of the Japanese archipelago, particularly Hokkaido, in relationship with *Wajin* of those days.’

The “Resolution to Recognize the Ainu as an Indigenous People” adopted in the plenary session of the House of Representatives and the House of Councilors on June 6, 2008, uses the same expression and states that ‘the government shall recognize that the Ainu are indigenous people who indigenously inhabited the northern part of the Japanese archipelago, especially Hokkaido, and have their own language, religion and culture.’

Expressions like this give a false impression that the Ainu people are not Japanese people. Up until now, many scholars have made assertions that “the Ainu are northern people and different from the Japanese.” The wrong assertions of these scholars are assumed to have been reflected in the government’s view and the Diet resolution of the House of Representatives and the House of Councilors.

However, these scholars’ assertions were only in a hypothetical stage and not based on firm

scientific facts. Recently, Japan's leading research institutions, including the National Museum of Nature and Science, the National Institute of Genetics and the University of Tokyo, conducted joint research and reached important scientific conclusions, summarized in an announcement made on May 13, 2019, that 'the Ainu inherit 70 percent of the DNA of the Jomon people. This is the scientific truth: The Ainu are undoubtedly descendants of the Jomon Japanese who have continuously inhabited Hokkaido at least since the Jomon Period (more than 10,000 years ago) and it has been made clear that the assertion that the Ainu are northern people who immigrated to Hokkaido in the Medieval and later period was completely wrong.

Furthermore, the "Research content" of the article "Ancient Jomon genome sequence analysis sheds light on migration patterns of early East Asian populations" by the University of Tokyo, the University of Tokyo Graduate School and Kanazawa University released on August 25, 2020, says that 'IK002 (note: bone of a Jomon individual excavated from the Ikawazu shell-mound site in Aichi Prefecture), a mainland Jomon individual, was found to cluster with the Ainu.' This result coincides with the whole-genome sequencing of the Hokkaido Jomon people (Kanazawa-Kiriyama et al.2019), which indicates that the Ainu people are the oldest lineage of inhabitants of the Japanese archipelago, and, at the same time, they are likely to be one of the direct descendants of the founding population of East Eurasians.

The research content mentioned above not only indicates that the Ainu are of a lineage of the Jomon Japanese but goes as far as implying the possibility that the Jomon population was the progenitor of the East Eurasians. That is, it shows that the population advanced from Hokkaido to East Eurasia, and it was not a case of continental people immigrating to Hokkaido from the north.

In addition, the release clearly states that 'the genome of the bone of the Jomon individual (IK002) is of an old lineage that can be considered as the origin of East Eurasia and belongs to the southern route with hardly any influence of the northern route.' That is, the Jomon people (including those who would later be called the Ainu) are people of the southern route. This means that the assertion made by Japanese archaeologists and other people that 'the Ainu are northern people' has been scientifically denied.

The Japanese government should clearly recognize the fact that 'the Ainu are undoubtedly Japanese people' based on these scientific grounds. The current view of the government may contribute to the propagation of the false understanding that the Ainu are different from the Japanese people and encourage a tolerant attitude toward malicious initiatives that attempt to divide Japan, started by destructionists from within and by hostile countries overseas.

In fact, the "Request to President Vladimir Putin" submitted on January 11, 2019, requests that Russia should establish an Ainu autonomous province in Russia and, in addition, place part of Hokkaido under the control of Russia. The signatory organization, which calls itself Mosir Kor Kamuy no Kai (with Representative Hatakeyama Satoshi and Deputy Representative Ishii Ponpe), claims to comprise of 'Ainu volunteers living on and off the Hokkaido Island.' In addition to making the Kuril Islands (note: refer to Chishima Islands) an autonomous province/district of the Ainu people, the request goes so far as to ask for 'considering integrated conservation and management with the Shiretoko Peninsula (Hokkaido Island).'

Such claims by far-left groups that have crept into the Ainu are very dangerous. These claims only give Russia a pretext for invading Hokkaido. As can be seen from the current situation in Ukraine, Russia only needs a pretext for making a false accusation to invade another country without hesitation,

totally regardless of what the truth is. These dangerous political claims have been derived from the little-known Ainu policy of the Japanese government. These are absolutely intolerable claims and the government's view that may encourage their spread should be corrected immediately.

Russian President Putin is reported to have 'indicated an intention to recognize the Ainu people as Russian indigenous people' (December 19, 2018, Hokkaido Shimibun). Furthermore, as if to respond to this trend, Sergey Mironov, Deputy of the State Duma, is reported to have said that 'according to experts, Russia has all rights to Hokkaido' (April 8, 2002, ZakZak).

The article says that this was reported on April 4 by a Russian online news service called REGNUM News Agency but, apparently, the statement was actually made on April 1 on the official website of a political party, A Just Russia, and Mironov serves as its leader. The article mentioned above says that Mironov, a left-of-center opposition legislator, has become well-known in the Russian political world after assuming the chairmanship of the Federation Council, for example, and explains that he has close ties with Vladimir Putin's administration.

A J-CAST News article released on April 7, 2022, says that 'Sergey Chernyakhovsky, a political scientist, appeared in a REGNUM News Agency report and claimed that "Tokyo (the Japanese government) illegally holds historically the Russian territory of Hokkaido."' Then, referring to a claim by Russia in the 1855 Treaty of Commerce and Navigation between Japan and Russia, he goes on to explain: 'The Ainu people lived there (Hokkaido) - the same one that lives on Sakhalin (note: refers to Karafuto), in the Vladivostok region and in the south of Kamchatka, that is, one of the peoples of Russia.' A series of claims like this is a manifestation of Russia's territorial ambitions toward Hokkaido. They are taking advantage of the Japanese government's little-known Ainu policy.

3-2. Problems with the Japanese government

The conventional theory of the Japanese scholars has supported the view that "the Ainu are different people from the Japanese." However, this was only a view in a stage of hypothesis, not backed by scientific proof. Under such circumstances, it was unavoidable for the Japanese government to have the same position.

Today, however, scientific elucidation is progressing, and it has been revealed that the Ainu inherit as much as 70 percent of the nuclear DNA of the Jomon people and the Ainu and the Jomon people are positioned in the same cluster of the phylogenetic tree of nuclear DNA. These facts indicate that the Ainu are undoubtedly descendants of the Jomon Japanese.

Based on these scientific findings, the Japanese government must correct its position and accept the fact that "the Ainu have their own strong characteristics but are members of the Japanese people." The current position and public statements of the Japanese government maintain the false impression as if the Ainu were Russian northern people, which may give Russia a pretext for invading Hokkaido. At least, it may make it impossible to completely deny Russia's malicious claim.

As a result, the poorly defined Ainu policy of the Japanese government and the recognition of the Ainu that has led to that policy, has provoked malicious speech and behavior in Japan and overseas. The public at large, who do not have a good understanding of the Ainu, might understand it to mean that "perhaps, the Ainu are Russian northern people and Russia's claim may be correct." A dangerous

situation like this should never have been created.

3-3. Problems with the Russian government

It was only after the beginning of the 18th century that Russia intruded into the Far East and, before that, Russia had no interests in the Far East. Kamchatka was occupied in 1706 and it was not until 1711 that Russia invaded the Chishima Islands. The Ainu reported to the Matsumae Han (note: a Japanese regional administration in control of the then Hokkaido, Karafuto and Chishima) about the Russians in Kamchatka: “There are many foreigners wearing red clothes in Kamchatka” (1759).

In other words, Russians only recently appeared in the Chishima Islands as foreign invaders. Then, they engaged in high-handed behavior such as exacting heavy taxes from the Ainu in northern Chishima, by which the Ainu were enraged and attacked Russians on Urup Island and other places in 1771 and drove them off to Kamchatka.

In this way, although Russia had no interests in Karafuto or Chishima before the 18th century, they have always claimed sovereignty over Karafuto and Chishima. Russia, being such a country, took advantage of its military power to obtain certain interests in Karafuto and Chishima by the 1885 Treaty of Commerce and Navigation between Japan and Russia and the 1875 Treaty of Saint Petersburg. At present, it does not only illegally occupy Karafuto and Chishima but further harbors territorial ambitions toward Hokkaido.

3-4. Analogy to the Ukraine issue

Russia invaded Ukraine under the slogan of protection of its own people. It is only a one-sided false accusation disregarding historical facts and the actual state of things and totally ignoring the claims of the other country. That is, Russia takes no account of the opinions of other countries but invades another country without hesitation as long as it maintains accountability to its own people (even if the explanations are far-fetched). Even fabricated claims are good enough.

Now, Russia has fabricated a claim that “the Ainu are of Russian origin” and, through the Ainu issue, is beginning to make outrageous claims, such as “Russia has all rights to Hokkaido.” If false accusations like these hold water within Russia, Russia will start claiming its sovereignty over Hokkaido. If that happens, the invasion of Hokkaido will be justified on the part of Russia. This is exactly how Ukraine has been invaded.

Many of the present-day Japanese nationals accustomed to peace would be thinking that “Russian invasion of Hokkaido can never happen.” However, many people around the world thought until immediately before the invasion of Ukraine that “Russian military invasion of Ukraine can never happen.” Even so, Russia started its military aggression against Ukraine. We should never think of Russia as easy to deal with. At present, Hokkaido is in the same position as Ukraine and, furthermore, terrorist groups inviting Russia to Hokkaido are already in Japan to ask President Putin to place even part of Hokkaido (Shiretoko Peninsula) under the control of Russia. A situation analogous to that of Ukraine has already been created.

4. Conclusion

We request that the United Nations Human Rights Committee give the following advice to the government of Japan.

- 1) We request that the Committee advise the government to correct the significantly wrong recognition of the Ainu resulting from the past theories without scientific background and to establish new recognition of the Ainu based on the scientific truth. It is nonsensical for the government to show recognition that encourages division of its own people. The UN should encourage giving priority to ethnic harmony over instigating ethnic conflicts.
- 2) We request that the Committee should advise the government to make clear counterarguments to the absolutely irrational claims of Russia. The present government of Japan has made no counterarguments to the selfish claims of Russia. This may be understood by the international community as Japan's tacit approval of the claims of Russia. The counterarguments will be essential to the stability of East Asia as well as to those who wish for peace in Japan.

We also request that the Committee give the following advice to the government of the Russian Federation.

- 1) We request that the Committee advise the government to understand that the claim that the Ainu are Russian northern people has absolutely no foundation and that "the Ainu are the oldest lineage of inhabitants of the Japanese archipelago" as revealed by the results of the latest nuclear DNA sequencing. Russia should also understand that the Ainu and the Jomon people are positioned in the same cluster of the phylogenetic tree of nuclear DNA, the Ainu maintain as much as 70 percent of nuclear DNA of the Jomon people even now and the Ainu are descendants of the Jomon Japanese.
- 2) We request that the Committee advise the government to stop harboring territorial ambitions toward Hokkaido by using the Ainu issue as a cause and not to repeat military activities around Hokkaido. Russia must learn that there are absolutely no grounds for claiming sovereignty over Hokkaido. It should never ignore these facts and should never plan a military invasion into Hokkaido.

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