

Onikuma:  
The Sankebetsu Brown Bear Incident and Japanese Modernity

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## ABSTRACT

In 1915, a bear slew and consumed seven residents of a farming hamlet in Hokkaido, Japan. The circumstances surrounding these killings are laden with semiotic gravitas. A comprehensive analysis of the millennia of historical forces that preceded and begat Japan's modern shift is impractical. Rather it is through the identification of the ideal précis of change, and a Thick Analysis thereof, that I arrive at an understanding of how, and precisely when, Japan crossed modernity's rampart. The attacks perpetrated by, and the hunt and dispatch of, the bear include aspects of separation from the past vis a vis their relationship to religion, the Ainu, and the artifacts of daily life. The bear's presence and anthropophagous propensity relate to the primal human urge to practice arctolatry, and Japanese patterns of relationship between men, land, and animals. So too is the gory nature of the incident analytically valuable insofar as macabre events resonate in the breasts of men. Finally, the presence of a monster indicates, as per Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, an epochal liminality. Thus through a disarticulation of this incident, I arrive at a cogent understanding of what sundered Japan from her past.

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\* A note on spelling: For purposes of digital reproduction and accesibility I here employ a modified variation of the Hepburn Romanization System wherein I exclude both macrons and circumflexes above lengthened vowels, as well as repeated vowels and *chonpu*.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Ainu – The indigenous group native to Hokkaido, Sakhalin Island, the Kurile Archipelago, and Khabarovsk Krai.

Akita – A modern Japanese prefecture in the Tohoku region. Also a breed of hunting dog closely related to wolves.

Arisaka – The second generation of domestically produced Japanese military rifle. The type of firearm used to kill Kesagake. Also the surname of its inventor, Arisaka Nariakira.

Bakufu – The de facto government of Japan from the twelfth through nineteenth century headed by the position of Shogun.

Burakumin – The polluted bottom caste of Japanese society charged with performing work considered unclean.

Byakkotai – The 305 teenaged Aizu samurai of the Boshu war who erroneously presumed their cause to be lost and committed mass suicide.

Edo – The name for the city of Tokyo until 1868. Also a synecdoche for the period of time between 1603 and 1868.

Emishi – The indigenous group native to the Tohoku region.

Ezo – The Japanese name for the island of Hokkaido until 1869.

Ezochi – The entirety of Ezo save for the Oshima Peninsula, especially the interior woodland and Ishikari Plain.

Hakodate – A Hokkaido port town opened to international trade after 1853.



Hayokpe – The guises of flesh Ainu deities take so that they may go amongst the Ainu upon earth.

Hibagon – The enigmatic man-beast of Hiroshima Prefecture.

Higuma – The brown bears native to Hokkaido.

Hokkaido – The name of Japan's northern island since 1869. Also a synecdoche for Hokkaido Prefecture, Japan's largest prefecture.

Honshu – The long narrow island in the center of the archipelago. Japan's largest island.

Iomante – The Ainu rite of spiritual release through animal sacrifice. Bears were the most common, but wolves and owls served as sacrificial vessels in some regions.

Inau – A wooden stave with shaved wooden streamers pendant from one end carved by Ainu faithful as devotional gifts to the Kamuy.

Ishikari – Hokkaido's longest river. Also a synecdoche for Ishikari City and Ishikari Subprefecture.

Jingu – A Japanese shrine of especial significance.

Jomon – The period of Japanese history from 14,500 BCE to 300 BCE.

Juumonji – A rare form of self-disembowelment involving incising a cross onto one's midsection. Used by General Nogi Maresuke.

Kaishakunin – The assistant in an act of seppuku charged with performing a coup de grace.

Kaitakushi – The government bureau charged with developing Hokkaido with population center, agriculture, and industry.

Kamon – A stylized heraldic sigil.

Kamuy – The Ainu pantheon of numinous beings. When unmodified, the term is synonymous with “bear”.

Kansai – The region of Japan at the eastern point of the Seto Inland Sea. Unique in Japan for its arable flat plains.

Kappa – A malicious water imp.

Karafuto – The former Japanese prefecture that corresponds with modern Sakhalin Island.

Kesagake – The name given to the bear of Sankebetsu infamy.

Kofun – Keyhole-shaped tumuli use for burial purposes. Also a synecdoche for the historical period of 300 CE through 538 CE.

Kotan – An Ainu settlement.

Kurile – The island group northeast of Hokkaido claimed by both Japan and Russia.

Kyushu – The southwestern island of the main archipelago.

Matagi – A cultural group of subsistence bear hunters in the mountains of the Tohoku region.

Meiji – The ceremonial name of the 122<sup>nd</sup> Japanese Emperor, Mutsuhito. Also a synecdoche for the period of his reign (1867-1912).

Murata – The first generation of domestically produced Japanese military rifle. Named for its developer, General Murata Tsuneyoshi.

Nibutani – A city in western Hokkaido, home of late Ainu activist Shigeru Kayano. Also a synecdoche for the dam adjacent to the town, as well for the legal case associated with the dam's erection.

Nusa – A wooden rod with paper streamers affixed to one end employed in Shinto and syncretic Buddhist practice as numinous antennae.

Oni – Japanese demons.

Oni-kuma – A demonic bear, legendarily possessed of preternatural size, strength, and ferocity.

Oshima – The southwestern peninsula of Hokkaido.

Sankebetsu – A former township in northwestern Hokkaido The site of the bear rampage of December 1915.

Sapporo – The current capital of Hokkaido, and the island's largest city.

Satsumon – The culture of northern Honshu and southern Hokkaido that followed the Zoku-Jomon. Also a synecdoche for the northern Japanese historical period of 700 CE through 1200 CE.

Seppuku – Suicide by self-disembowelment.

Shamo – The mildly derogatory Ainu term for Wa-jin.

Shikoku – Japan's smallest main island, situated athwart the Seto Inland Sea.

Shinbutsu Bunri – The concept of separating Shinto worship from Buddhist worship.

Shingon – A school of Esoteric Buddhist practice introduced to Japan by Kobo-Daishi in the ninth century.

Shogun – The head of the Bakufu government, and the de facto leader of Japan from the twelfth through nineteenth century.

Taisho – The ceremonial name of the 123<sup>rd</sup> Japanese Emperor, Yoshihito. Also a synecdoche for the period of his reign (1912-1926).

Tokugawa – The family name of the family that emerged victorious from the Warring States period to establish hegemony over the Shogunate. Also a synecdoche for the period of their shogunal dominion (1600 CE -1868 CE).

Tomamae – A coastal town in northwestern Hokkaido. The nearest municipality to Sankebetsu.

Tondenhei – The soldier-settlers recruited to colonize Hokkaido's interior and serve as a militia.

Tsugaru – The strait that separates Hokkaido from Honshu.

Tsukinowaguma – The bear native to the islands of Honshu, Kyushu, and Shikoku.

Wadokei – A clock that measures Japanese temporal time.

Wa-jin – The ethnically Yamatai inhabitants of the Japanese archipelago.

Wajinchi – The enclave of trade and settlement on the Oshima Peninsula.

Wen-Kamuy – A bear who has partaken of human flesh and is inhabited by a malicious demon rather than a beneficent god.

Yamato – An ancient name for Japan. Also a synecdoche for the era of Japanese history composed of the Kofun Period (250 CE – 538 CE) and the Asuka Period (538 CE – 710 CE).

Yayoi – The culture of Japan that during the move from a Neolithic society to an Iron Age society. Also a synecdoche for the period of time between 300 BCE and 300 CE.

Yokai – The pantheon of Japanese monstrous supernatural beings.

# CHAPTER 1

## PROLEGOMENA

### Introduction

Until the beginning of the twentieth century, Hokkaido's interior remained dense woodland. Yet this forest was not lifeless, but was the demesne of the indigenous Ainu. However *Wa-jin*,<sup>1</sup> ethnically Yamatai settlers, were beginning to establish tentative outposts of agriculture and trade at the edge of empire. It was here they came into contact with a specific, and infamous, bear.

While Hokkaido's forests are rich in bear in the early twenty-first century, in the Taisho Period (1912-1926), the island was an ursine paradise. The smaller Asiatic black bear (*Ursus thibetanus*) of the largest southerly isles of Honshu, Shikoku, and until the twentieth century, Kyushu, with their unmistakable golden-crescented breast was, and is, the more numerous. These animals do not suffer fools gladly, and ought be given wide berth. Yet, with due caution, these mastiff-sized ursines keep largely to themselves, preferring retreat to arboreal nests over direct confrontation with men or competitive predators. The Ussuri brown bear (*Ursus arctos lasiotus*) however, is a beast apart. Genetically synonymous with the North American grizzly bear, this forest behemoth knows no equal, no threat, and acts accordingly. For centuries, these “black grizzlies” of Ezo stood as ferocious, insatiable suzerains of their native range.

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<sup>1</sup> Wa-jin, literally, “The People of Wa,” refers to those inhabitants of the Japanese Archipelago associated with the racial and cultural traits of the Yamato State and the established societies of southern Honshu, Kyushu, and Shikoku. It is employed to avoid the conflation with the distinct Ainu, Emishi, Okhotsk, or Ryukyu peoples that might result from the use of the broader term “Japanese.”

It was one such animal as this which, over the course of several weeks in the final months of 1915, emerged from the virgin forests of the as yet un-industrialized palearctic. This bear engaged in a series of mortal skirmishes with the population of the secluded hamlet of Sankebetsu. In November, intermittent raids on crop stores and livestock signaled that there was a bear about who had not yet entered a den to hibernate. On November 20, the Ikeda family sighted it definitively outside their home as it carried away a bushel of corn. They noted its prodigious size and apparent lack of fear of man. A small hunting party went into the forest to find the offending animal. They shot and wounded it, but a snowstorm prevented further pursuit. Local families presumed the injury would make the bear fearful of approaching human settlement thenceforth.

Then, on the morning of December 9, the bear entered the village once more. Outside of the Ota family house he encountered a woman and a child. He killed them both and dragged the woman's body into the trees. Men armed themselves and began a round the clock vigil on the scene of the attack. Witnesses described a bandolier-like pattern of gray pelage across the bear's chest, and so named him "Kesagake": diagonal sword stroke. Under the cover of darkness of the night of December 10, the bear endured a fusillade of bullets from the guardsmen, but survived to make his way to the Miyoke house, where he leveraged the window frame to pull the wall open, whereupon he entered and slew eight more.<sup>2</sup> By December 13, the bear's physical damages to homes and food stores rendered the village uninhabitable for the winter.

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<sup>2</sup> In this total I include the death of an unborn child whose mother perished in the attack. The premature infant did survive the emergency caesarian procedure performed amidst the carnage, but died shortly thereafter.

The villagers believed they were confronting an animal possessed, a nine-foot monarch with a taste for human flesh. Messengers departed for coastal Tomamae from whence they dispatched telegraphs to the new capital of Sapporo requesting assistance.

Baited by the prospect of harvesting the lucre of bear gall, a proud team of government-sponsored marksmen rode north but failed to take the bear, shivering in the brush as Kesagake loped from kill to kill at will before ghosting unscathed back into the timber. Only after a graying local hero emerged from his alcoholic dotage to once more take up arms against nature, calling upon the fading traditions of the *Matagi*, a dwindling hunter caste, did the pioneers ultimately slay Kesagake on December 14.

Though some residents did return to Sankebetsu in the spring of 1916, the damage and depopulation wrought by Kesagake proved overwhelming. After an abortive attempt to rebuild, the traumatized settlers decamped to reestablish their lives and families in alternative locations. Today, aside from an historical monument, only a few scattered pieces of crumbling cut stone and rusting metal remain on the village site. Sankebetsu was never the same after Kesagake. Nor was Japan.

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The superior cuspids of an adult male Ussuri brown bear exhibit a mean protrusion of three inches from their maxillary sockets. These fangs distend in a logarithmic curve to age-blunted points that overlap and interlock with their mandibular counterparts, identical inverted models of their stalagtitic opposites mirrored in one half scale, to form a pair of dental scateurs.

Progressing ventrally, the ursine dentition transitions from tor to karst; the vampiric eye teeth giving way to cadres of bicuspid one point five inches wide, the

jagged troughs and peaks of these carnassial premolars shearing against each other with each closure of the jaw, keeping these serrations ever-sharpened. Finally, at near the temporomandibular hinge sit the molar pestles, their textured surfaces ready to grind flesh and forage to coarse grist.

This array of dentin and enamel is actuated primarily by the *musculi masticatori* group, a cluster of four muscles that facilitates jaw adduction and abduction. Connecting as these sinews do to plains and processes of the skull and jaw, in ursines, and in all Mammalia, bite strength may be calculated as a function of the breadth and length of these points of attachment. Thus, the *os temporale*'s surface area of twelve square inches, and the *processus zygomaticus ossus temporale*'s length of seven inches indicate that a healthy specimen might be expected to exert 1,200 pounds per square inch of bite force, translating arithmetically to 20,000 pounds of pressure at the canine tip.

The existence of modern institutions facilitates this authoritative precision of biological measurement. Atop a hill in Hokkaido prefecture's Noboribetsu City, a mountain enclave renowned primarily for the salutary effects of the local geothermal spring waters, is the Ezo Brown Bear Museum. Within, scholarly researchers or the merely curious are privy to the world's only museum dedicated solely to this species. Arrayed in glass cases, skeletal specimens abide patiently. Neatly labeled by gender, age, and relevant particular in Japanese, Latin, and English, the standard measurements of any ergonomic facet may be readily ascertained by any party with ruler, patience, and proclivity.



Similarly, specimens of each bodily organ and tract are suspended canopically in urns of limpid formaldehyde. Every function and feature of this species has been dissected, observed, preserved, and catalogued. In this age, at this institution, the Ezo bears, their behavior and characteristics, are compassable, comprehensible, and safely within the boundaries of rational analyses.

This sanitary categorization however, belays the visceral realities of the Ezo bear *in situ*. What these numbers translate to, is an ability to flense a salmon in the pause between inhalation and exhalation. The points and furrows of teeth revealed by loupe and caliper are, when sheathed in saliva and warmed by fetid breath, suited for the mastication of an extraordinary array of flora and fauna. The coarsest grasses and stoutest nuts are ground to grist. Ants, songbirds, and unwary rodents are churned to feathered and furred boluses. The tidily quantifiable measurements and ratios of the canines are incalculable when obscured by gore. For an Ezo grizzly kills in one of two ways. Either they puncture and rend the hides, adipose tissue, and musculature of any larger animal it may encounter, plunging into lung or cardiac muscle, exposing innards from larynx to bowel, effecting a crude zipper of flesh and tooth; death comes from exsanguination and shock. Alternatively they split the prey animal's braincase; an efficient death from cerebral trauma.

Museum patrons are further treated to collections of claws, full skeletal reconstructions, and tanned pelts. When extrapolated to their natural meanings, these indicate that in addition to the formidable oral arsenal, the Ezo bear has four billhooked cudgels as paws, a musculature of imposing efficiency and girth, eight feet of bipedal

erect height, and the capability to canter for miles at speeds in excess of an Olympic sprinter.

For all the weighing and measuring conductable upon expert taxidermies, and gleaming, bleached osseous matter, this ursine is an engine for processing food, a primeval force of brawn and fur designed for mastication and digestion. It is omnivore apotheosized.

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This duality of aspect, the mutual exclusivity of contemporary precision and ancient unconstrained animal, recapitulates the schism between Japan's past and present. When Kesagake came to Sankebetsu, he provided the final piece necessary for making the ensuing days an ideal précis of the shift to the New Yamato Paradigm. The Sankebetsu Brown Bear Incident occurred due to a confluence of the modernizing changes then occurring in Hokkaido. These were an accelerated recapitulation of those changes transpiring in the archipelago generally.

*Therefore, the termination of the incident represented the end of pre-modernity not just in the Japanese north, but the empire entire.* To establish this point, I must provide evidence of several supporting principles. I must illustrate some manner of continuity within Japanese pre-modernity, some thread of linkage that avoids over-essentialization and orientalization but still demonstrates some manner of unity within Japanese history before the Sankebetsu attacks. So too must I provide support for the claim that modernity was different from its historical predecessor; I need to find examples of change. Finally, I need to support my choice of the Sankbetsu Incident as the

point of epochal shift by illustrating both the variety and depth of that moment's semiotic implications.

Japanese modernity comprises an holistic suite of attributes, all of which were involved in the events at Sankebetsu. The conceit that a rupture occurred between the archipelago as it *is* and that which *was*, is predicated on four general principles. First that there was a leaving behind of lifeways. Government policies and popular attitudes were effecting the de facto effacement of the cultural distinctiveness of the bear-worshipping Ainu. New religious cladistics terminated centuries of syncretism. The artifacts of quotidian existence no longer connected to ancient lineages. The supporters of Tokugawa tradition fled to a final northern bastion before a final capitulation. Second, a new order of relationships between men and the natural emerged. Calculated zoological and silvicultural management replaced forest numinism and arctolatry. The goals of resource extraction and water management overpowered the concept of sacred geographies. Third, aspects of the macabre indicate an incipient severance. Kesagake's killing was a blood sacrifice, a required element in the archipelago for both making and unmaking. The ancient rite of the mortal hunt made his pursuit a time of gravity and potential. Finally, Kesagake's monstrosity evince his power to bring forth change. This aspect of his nature is evident in his membership in the fraternity of preternaturally anthropophagous beasts, his yokaic nature, his demonic association, and his cryptozoological characteristics.



1. Map of Ezo/Hokkaido (Circled regions represent modern ranges of Ussuri brown bear population)

## Methodological Approach

Whereas the events I consider in *Onikuma* are diverse in content and meaning, I select and apply a variety of analytical frameworks to the subjects for which they are respectively appropriate. Despite this diversity of means, I apply an overarching analytical framework to unify these discrete sub-units.

This whole is connected by the sinew of a Thick Analysis. I employ the Clifford Geertz 1973 primer on holistic social comprehension, *The Interpretation of Cultures* as my foundational guide. A thesis such as mine that seeks to evaluate the epochal change of a nation entire within the scope of a single work, must endeavor to identify a moment sufficiently linked to significant facets of the shifting paradigm to make an analysis thereof a reasonable semiotic synecdoche. The right event, dissected with rigor, permits me to reach and support a novel conclusion about the time and place I have scrutinized. To ascertain, as Geertz expresses it, that “man is suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun,” and that an analysis thereof is “not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning.”<sup>3</sup>

To this end I disarticulate the Sankebetsu Incident. I sever semiotic parts from the conceptual whole, and confine them to individual chapters where I consider them in manners befitting their content. It is from an amalgamation of these separate studies that I draw my thesis. At the intersection of a mandala-like Venn diagram of these subunits, there in that most intersectional filet, is where my conclusion lies.

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<sup>3</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

I begin with the Ainu and seek to illustrate how their worldview shifted concurrently with, and in reaction to, the events surrounding the Sankebetsu massacre. As such my initial task is to identify the perceptions of in-group members before and after this period. To this end I adopt Emic<sup>4</sup> techniques as articulated by Claude Lévi-Strauss and Russel McCutcheon at the Tenth Congress of the International Association for the History of Religion in 1960.<sup>5</sup> I attempt to understand the Ainu perspective on Ainu psychosocial change. Insofar as I am concerned with the disruption of ancient belief systems, it is the internal experience of participants in that break that is germane to my study. Therefore I attempt to discern and analyze what Emic method advocate Fred Luthans terms “the 'informant's' view of reality.”<sup>6</sup>

I move next to a focus on religion, I concentrate on vernacular perceptions, and the experiences of individual pieties. As such I adopt a Lived Religions approach in the mode of David Hall and Robert Orsi. Within this paradigm, participant experience is the foundation of comprehension. Whereas I use popular belief and empirical examples of shifting orthopraxy as my foundational sources, I am able to, as Hall expresses it, “bring

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4 I choose this term as it is the au courant phraseology, although practitioners of emic/etic methods, and participants in the debates regarding them, have employed a variety of terms such as John A. Saliba's preference for the German language loan dyad of verstehen/einfühlen and Geertz's choice of “experience-near” and “experience-far”.

5 Till Mostowlansky and Andrea Rota, “A Matter of Perspective? Disentangling the Emic-Etic Debate in the Scientific Study of Religion/s,” *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 28, no. 4 (2016): 324.

6 Nancy C. Morey and Fred Luthans, “An Emic Perspective and Ethnoscience Methods for Organizational Research,” *The Academy of Management Review* 9, no. 1 (1984): 29.

to the foreground the...question of change.”<sup>7</sup> In this manner, I compass the quotidian, personal impacts of newly ascendant sociocultural standards.

Then in my search for analogous implications in atavistic millennial *fin de siècle* violence, I attend to Leopold von Ranke's call to see the historian's craft as “primarily a study of politics and foreign policy.”<sup>8</sup> By operating with this preconception, that the great patterns of empire and war are always the motivating force of historical events, I can rationally conclude that my case studies of zealotry and sacrifice are not the result of singular charismatic leaders, incomprehensible esoteric fervor, or a stochastic combination of factors legion. Rather, through the von Rankian gaze, these events are illustrative of historical themes that are both broad and knowable. I apply this model to Japanese history in the mode of Gavan McCormack. Just as McCormack uses this wide conceptual foundation to consider Okinawan history,<sup>9</sup> I employ it to draw conceptual parallels between the political contexts of global epochal culminations and early twentieth century Hokkaido.

Whereas the subsequent chapter concerns ecological history, my methodology reflects the Environmental Turn. My subjects here are plants, animals, land, water, as well as these elements' relationships both to each other and men. As such I employ the

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7 David D. Hall, “Introduction,” in *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice*, ed. David D. Hall (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), xi.

8 M.A. Fitzsimon, “Ranke: History as Worship,” *The Review of Politics* 42, no. 4 (1980): 533.

9 This penchant is evident in his articles such as “The Henoko Base Project: Okinawa's Tamaki Government at the Brink”, “Irresistible Force (Japan) Versus Immovable Object (Okinawa): A Struggle Without End?”, and “Japan's Problematic Prefecture – Okinawa and the US-Japan Relationship.”

conceptual precepts of Samuel Hays and Roderick Nash: that nature is the prime motivating force in historical change and normative perception. Nash for example contends “morality ought to include the relationship of humans to nature.”<sup>10</sup> By assuming this gaze in this section, I am able to achieve the “thickness” necessary for inclusion in my broader Geertzian framework.

In the next chapter I focus on symbolism and significance. It is here that I examine what facets of this incident in particular serve as signs epochal change. I contend that this historical event has meaning beyond the immediate transpiration of events. As such I pursue the semiotic methodology of Yoshihiko Ikegami. As editor of *Empire of Signs: Semiotic Essays on Japanese Culture*, Ikegami demonstrated how a search for the symbolic in Japanese history can elucidate otherwise invisible national truths.<sup>11</sup>

Finally, in my analyses of the macabre and the monstrous, I continue to pursue a semiotic methodology. Japanese traditions of extrazooological menageries and Kesagake's slippery taxonomy, are resonant because of their symbolic weight. They all mean something that is separate from, and greater than, their absolute reality. To consider this in full I must then place symbols, and considerations thereof, at the center of an assessment of these events. I therefore adhere to George Mead's adjuration to view history not as a continuum of occurrences, but as a series of signs that carry specific connotations temporally forward, that “[t]he past as it appears is in terms of

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10 Roderick Frazier Nash, *The Rights of Nature: A History of Environmental Ethics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 4.

11 John Whittier Treat, “Reviewed Work: The Empire of Signs by Yoshihiko Ikegami,” *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 18, no. 2 (1992): 639. Not to be conflated with Barthes' *Empire of Signs*.



representations...typically in memory images.”<sup>12</sup> To invert Jeffery Jerome Cohen's aphorism regarding symbolic interpretation: I am a hierophant who has sought out an array of glyphs.<sup>13</sup>

## Literature Review

*Onikuma* lies at the intersection of two traditions of Japanese studies. Luminaries of the field have spent a century defending specific theses regarding the origins of modernity in the archipelago. So too have scholars used specific events they deem meaningful to extrapolate conclusions about Japanese history and culture more generally.

Those of the “modernity's origin school” select dates or periods they believe to be the foundational kernel of Japan's paradigmatic shift between the Meiji Restoration and the Second World War. The tendency to seek ever temporally backwards for the foundation of a nation's nature illustrates the epistemological danger of presuming a fixed point of historical beginning for any human phenomenon. However, these works have been of such breadth and depth that despite the ultimate inconclusiveness of their central tenets, they have become the standard texts for understanding their respective periods. To wit: Marius Jansen's compendious *The Making of Modern Japan* identifies the entirety of the Edo Period as the basis of future change. Despite the unremarkability of concluding

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12 Elzbieta Halas, “The Past in the Present: Lessons on Semiotics of History from George H. Mead and Boris A. Uspensky,” *Symbolic Interaction* 36, no. 1 (2013): 64.

13 A corruption of Cohen's pronouncement that a monster is always “...a glyph that seeks a hierophant.” Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, “Preface: In a Time of Monsters,” in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 4.

that three centuries of national history influenced what came after, Marius' tome remains the authoritative single-volume Anglophone source for the history of the era concerned. In contrast to this, in *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, Herbert P. Bix argues it was the Showa Period that was the source of significant changes. Here again, despite the contentiousness of giving little regard to the centuries that preceded Emperor Hirohito's reign, Bix's imperial biography serves as a survey of the sixty-three years of the Showa. Though the conclusions of these two works stand in opposition to each other, the scope of Kenneth B. Pyle's *The Making of Modern Japan* eclipses them both. For Pyle, it was Hirohito who enacted the changes made possible in the Meiji, which itself would not have been possible without the 300 years of the Tokugawas' Pax Nipponica, a period that could only have occurred as a culmination to the Warring States Period. Thus Pyle begins his work with the Onin War in 1467. Though a product of the temptation to delve ever deeper in search of some concrete beginning, Pyle's slim book is an effective and concise primer for six centuries of Japanese history. This trio illustrates that the swift and drastic character of Japanese modernization lures scholars to fix this phenomenon at the center of their efforts.

Alternatively, scholars have sought to consider pre-modernity exclusively, and made thereby implicit claims about modernity's beginnings with their choice of temporal scope. Mikiso Hane and Louis G. Perez' *Premodern Japan: A Historical Survey* for example ends with the termination of the Tokugawa Shogunate.<sup>14</sup> In contrast, Charlotte

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<sup>14</sup> Mikiso Hane and Louis G. Perez, *Premodern Japan: A Historical Survey* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

von Verschuer and Wend Cobcroft's *Rice, Agriculture and Food Supply in Premodern Japan* ends with changes to rice production and distribution in the seventeenth century.<sup>15</sup>

In my choice to focus on a bear-scoured village teetering on the modernity's precipice I am part of this pattern.

Though scholarship has not heretofore used the Sankebetsu Incident in this manner, the methodology of using a single, semiotically rich moment to draw forth a suite of findings is well established in the field. For example, in *Samurai Revolution: The Dawn of Modern Japan Seen Through the Eyes of the Shogun's Last Samurai*, Romulus Hillsborough places the death of Hijikata Toshizo at the heart of his history of the Boshin War. For Hillsborough, rather than a bear, it was this Shinsengumi lieutenant who embodied the era his passing punctuated. Similarly, in *Suicidal Honor: General Nogi and the writings of Mori Ogai and Natsume Soseki*, Doris Barga's chosen avatar is the titular Maresuke Nogi, and his suicide is the key event. Barga uses that one act as a foil to meditate upon both the entire Meiji Period, as well as the meaning of suicide in Japanese society. In environmental history, Brett Walker seizes upon animal extinction in *The Lost Wolves of Japan*, and determines that the elimination of the lupine from the archipelago was a moment of foundational paradigm shift, and considers how what came before then was essentially different from what has come after. In contrast, John Knight's *Waiting for Wolves in Japan* points to the hypothetical reintroduction of wolves to northern Japan as being such an event, and uses that presumption to make arguments about the underlying

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<sup>15</sup> Charlotte von Verschuer and Wendy Cobcroft, *Rice Agriculture, and the Food Supply in Premodern Japan* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

schism between flatland urbanites and upland agriculturalists. My vivisection of, and deductions from, a Taisho Period bear attack are my unique iteration of this tradition.

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No work aside from *Onikuma* employs the Sankebetsu Incident as a foil to investigate historical theme. However a several categories of work do engage with the same central themes of: Hokkaido, the ursine, the indigence, and the numinous.

One category of extant literature is that involving the history of the event itself, and the place of its occurrence. Kimura Moritake's *Valley of Lamentation* is the only non-journalistic source to provide a comprehensive overview of the Sankebetsu attacks using eyewitness accounts. The testimonies Moritake collects remain the foundational source for the chronology of the events of December, 1914. Additionally, the oral history of these traumatized settlers depicts the quotidian realities of life at the fringe of of the *Ezochi*.<sup>16</sup> Moritake's informants thus provide a case study of what colonization meant for the character of Hokkaido. Analogously, Ann Irish's *Hokkaido: A History of Ethnic Transition and Development on Japan's Northern Island* also seeks to compass how a changing Japan impacted boreal people and places. Irish utilizes historical sources to create a primer on the island's past from geological formation until the twenty-first century. She then contrasts that past with her current observations. It is a book about how men and their environment are ever in a state of reciprocal creative influence.

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<sup>16</sup> Beginning in the seventeenth century, some ares of southern Hokkaido, including the entirety of the Oshima Peninsula were explored and colonized by the Wa-jin. This “Wajinchi” was ruled by the Matsumae Clan as proxies for the Bakufu, trading with the Ainu for Hokkaido's natural goods. The interior, and majority of the island, the “Ezochi,” however was outside any Shogunal governance, and left, until the colonization efforts of the nineteenth century, to nature and the Ainu.

The study of human-bear relationships has an identifiable lineage. Arthur Hallowell founded arctolatric studies as a discrete and worthy field with his 1926 thesis *Bear Ceremonialism in the Northern Hemisphere*. By aggregating the theretofore disparate findings regarding ursine worship's archaic ubiquity in half the globe, Hallowell made a convincing case that bear adulation has been an intrinsic human trait for most of our species' history. In *Giving Voice to Bear: North American Indian Myth, Ritual, and Images of Bear*, David Rockwell has brought Hallowell's supposition into the realm of current scholarship by updating the arctolatric canon with three quarters of a century of findings. So too does Rockwell's concentration on Amerindian bear worship, in contrast to Hallowell's Eurasian concentration, add weight to the pan-hemispheric thesis. Finally the work of Thomas E. Berres, David M. Sothers, and David Mather in "Bear Imagery in Northeast North America: An Update and Assessment of A. Irving Hallowell's Work" use several archaeological test cases to argue that Hallowell and Rockwell's conclusions not only remain valid, but that contemporary excavation increases the significance of their arctolactic principles.<sup>17</sup>

The sciences have a plethora of ursine-centric scholars. Within the Japanese studies field however, research biologist Tsutomu Mano of the Hokkaido Research Institute dominates modern peer-edited journal publications with dozens of his own articles to his credit, dozens more as the expert bear consultant for collaborative work in

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<sup>17</sup> Thomas E. Berres, David M. Sothers, and David Mather, "Bear Imagery and Ritual in Northeast North America: An Update and Assessment of A. Irving Hallowell's Work," *Midcontinental Journal of Archaeology*, 29, no. 1 (2004): 5-30.

Japanese biological studies, and several citations as the bear expert of record in journalistic work.

Scholars of the Ainu have worked with differing models and intents. Brett Walker's *The Conquest of Ainu Lands: Ecology and Culture in Japanese Expansion, 1590-1800* recounts the saga of Japanese relationships with the Ainu, and the gradual but inexorable influence of the former on the latter. Walker demonstrates that by the nineteenth century, the Ainu were, by certain rubrics, due to artefactual and moral infiltration, no longer distinctive exotics, but the subjects of incipient empire. In 1892, missionary cum linguist John Batchelor (1855-1944) gave the bear-adulating autochthons of northern Japan their first semblance of academic representation in *The Ainu of Japan*. Working from a normative standpoint, that linguistic and culturally distinct populations are worthy of study and preservation, Batchelor strove to write an account of what seemed to him a dying race. He therefore makes an effort to describe the minutiae of rite, raiment, and racial character, that others might understand the need to protect a threatened *sui generis* population. Batchelor's work serves as a sourcebook for the final unsteady moments of the Ainu as a pre-modern people. Shigeru Kayano's *Our Land Was a Forest* is the memoir of a twentieth century Ainu activist. His personal account of his family's attempts to cope with unaccustomed laws restricting subsistence practices, and his own unsuccessful efforts to use the Japanese legal system to defend native sites from usurpation and destruction, depict Hokkaido as a post-lapsarian world. Finally, in works such as "Spatial Concepts of The Ainu of the Northwest Coast of Southern Sakhalin" and "Regional Variations in Ainu Culture," Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney researches the subject of

Ainu sociocultural history in the latter half of the twentieth century.<sup>18</sup> Walker writes of before The Fall, Batchelor of during, Kayano of after, and Ohnuki-Tierney of recovery therefrom.

The scholarship of Japanese beliefs is characterized by influences between generations of practitioners. Joseph Kitagawa's *Religion in Japanese History* does not just trace millennia of developments in archipelagic piety, but also serves to legitimize religious studies as a valid methodology for the conduction of rigorous historical work. Kitagawa's work is predicated not on outlining precepts or listing deity names, but on considering how shifting religious allegiances, and tides of syncretism and separation, are the product of international linkages, domestic developments, and the changing psychological exigencies of an evolving population. This is the fountainhead of the practice of delving in to Japanese numen for the purposes of reaching an historical conclusion. Kinki Ito's 2015 documentary film *Have You Heard About the Ainu?* is composed of a score of interviews with members of twenty-first century Ainu communities, with a focus on how their worldview has traditionally been one of animism reified by practical communion. Ito's informants elucidate how restrictions on their abilities to hunt, fish, and practice animal sacrifice have severed their bond to the

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18 Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, "Spatial Concepts of the Ainu of the Northwest Coast of Southern Sakhalin," *American Anthropologist*, 74, no. 3 (1972) and "Regional Variations in Ainu Culture," *Journal of the American Ethnological Society* 3, no. 2 (1976).

*Kamuy*.<sup>19</sup> The documentary uses Kitagawa's principles to practical effect to illustrate the empirical and intimate repercussions of shifting currents of Japanese religious history.

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<sup>19</sup> The Kamuy are the pantheon of Ainu numinous beings from whom all of nature's bounty comes. See also Chapter 2.



## CHAPTER 2

### LEFT BEHIND

*“Time passed. But time flows in many streams.”*  
-Yasunari Kawabata

In *Left Behind* I examine how the Sankebetsu Incident represents a break from past paradigms through rupture and obfuscation. The components of the incident I identify as most representative of this phenomenon are its links to: the Ainu, Japanese religion, physical quotidian artifacts, and atavistic millennialism.

The Ainu persisted in state of cultural, linguistic, and ethnic distinctiveness into the twentieth century. Their demi-Satsumon lifeways contrasted with the post-Perry, post-Restoration customs and attitudes of the Wa-Jin and the *naichi*.<sup>20</sup> The changes to newly global Japan separated her from beliefs and lifestyles extant in the archipelago since its habitation. However, separated as they were from these changes by the Tsugaru Strait, the density of Ezo's forests, and boreal climes, it was the Ainu who remained as the modernizing empire's only avatars of the ancient. Thus when their chief deity, the Ezo brown bear, frantically sought to survive the changes colonization wrought upon the northern island by gorging himself on human flesh, it was the final revolt of the old against the new.

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<sup>20</sup> The term *naichi* is a compound word of the Chinese ideographs connoting home and soil. In Japanese sociopolitics it identifies lands that are the historical core territories of the Japanese Empire, specifically the Oyashima, eight lands named in ancient liturgical texts: Awaji Island, Shikoku, the Oki Archipelago, Kyushu, the Iki Archipelago, Tsushima Island, Sado Island, and Honshu, rather than colonial or outlying territories such as Manchuko, Okinawa, or Hokkaido.

The settlers who fled Kesagake's rampage were distal representatives of a larger movement to occupy and alter the northern island. At the center of this movement was an effort to alter the ontology of sacred belief in the archipelago. The pre-Buddhist contact Shinto of Japan was an organic pastiche of nature worship, sacrifice, and taboo. From the fifth century until the late nineteenth, the syncretism of continental dharma, Confucian morality, and Daoist esoterism synergized into a blurred current of Japanese numinism. However the pragmatic necessities of the Meiji Emperor's newly-empowered constitutional monarchy demanded the precise cladistics of the centrality of emperor worship and the Separation of Gods and Buddhas; the sacred was to be known, and measured, and regulated. North of the Tsugaru however, the Ainu Kamuy still reigned. Local village worship predilections dictated how and when which Kamuy might be propitiated. The sacred remained entangled with blood communion and nature's unpredictability. Thus the installation of Hokkaido Jingu in Sapporo, a shrine dedicated to the Meiji Emperor, was the beginning of the end for these unacceptably disorganized pieties, and the death of Kesagake the bear was the end of this beginning.

The homes and tools of Sankebetsu's settlers also bespoke a severing. I trace the forms and purposes of a set of architectural and agricultural objects and contrast the lack of chronological change between Jomon and Edo period functionalities with the drastic aesthetic and utilitarian evolution of the Meiji and Taisho eras. A maelstrom of novelty replaced the consistency of millennia in less than half a century. The isolation and indigenous presence in Hokkaido made it the final bastion of these disappearing styles.

As such, the last throes of Ezo's ferocity was likewise the moment the way of life these artifacts represent was aught more than relic.

As evidence that what I present as the severed past was indeed left behind at this juncture, I examine analogous cases of *fin de siècle* uprising. The infamy of Wounded Knee terminated Wovoka's millenarian Ghost Dance movement. The siege of the Forbidden City ended the Boxer uprising and presaged the end of the Qing Dynasty. Thus it follows that the defeat of the morally atavistic Tokugawa loyalists during Boshin War that preceded the colonization of Hokkaido augured the end of an era. So too did the unprecedented primal violence of nature against man in Sankebetsu signify that this end was at hand.

#### The Ainu

The fate of Japan's autochthonous Ainu following the Meiji Restoration recapitulates the climactic currents of the archipelago's history. Regnant for centuries of the northern Honshu, Ezo in her entirety, and the Okhotsk ecumene of Sakhalin and the Kuriles, the Ainu and the *Emishi*<sup>21</sup> formed an ethnic and cultural body distinct from the Wa-jin. By the Meiji Age however, the Ainu were primarily confined to the Ezochi. Ainu cultural history had diverged from austral destinies to persist in a semi-agricultural Satsumon state until the time of Hokkaido's colonization. Dominion over the forests and annual bear sacrifice continued to define their lifeways until geographic encroachment, environmental alteration, and legal strictures made these defining practices unfeasible.

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21 Culturally and ethnically identified with the Ainu, the Emishi was an indigenous tribal society that ruled the northern reaches of Honshu until their subjugation by the Yamato State in the late eighth century.

The moment of crux, the point at which what had been could never again be, was the Sankebetsu Brown Bear Incident. At the ragged fringe of development, a settler village's encounter with, and ultimate destruction of, an empirical incarnation of the lord of all Ainu gods, represented the final severing from the indigenous past. A newly forged Hokkaido emerged to eclipse the Ainu Way and the resistance to modernity it represented. Therefore an analysis of what precisely changed for the Ainu during this period serves as a précis for the more protracted shifts that had begun to envelop Japan entire since 1853.

This modernization forced the Ainu to undergo an accelerated microcosm of the changes the country was experiencing as a whole. This compulsory development is emblematic of the Meiji and Taisho Eras' sea changes in several ways. These include the methodical dismantling of Ainu religious and secular traditions that did not conform to the precisely delineated categories of permitted practice, and an effacement of any possibility of return to, or continuation of, a premodern lifestyle in Hokkaido or adjunct islands, erecting a theretofore inextant barrier between past and future.

The culture and theism of the Ainu did not conform to the new typologies of the Meiji and Taisho reforms. A primary incompatibility was Ainu heterogeneity, which precluded the indigenes from conforming to sanitary cladistics, for, as contemporary anthropologist of the Ainu Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney concisely observes: “ the cultural diversity of the Ainu culture is extremely great.”<sup>22</sup> Insofar as the historical range of

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<sup>22</sup> Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, “Another Look at the Ainu – A Preliminary Report,” *Arctic Anthropology* 11, Supplementary Festschrift Issue in Honor of Chester S. Chard (1974): 189.

Japan's indigenous included the diverse environments of the floe-choked Sea of Ohkotsk, the tideless Sea of Japan, and infinity of the Pacific, “Ainu life in each region reflects, among other things, adaptive strategies to the specific conditions of both natural and social environments.” For example, the customary Ainu *chise* shared certain features such as the ubiquity of *rorun-puyar*, orientation relative to bodies of water, a sunken hearth, and generally an *iyokir* alcove.<sup>23</sup> However, recreations of regional variations of Ainu dwellings illustrate that: “...many differences such as whether the door of the main entrance is attached to the earth floor or not, projected room is attached or not and height of the roof and walls...”<sup>24</sup> differentiated the interiors of regional construction. Similarly, *kotan*<sup>25</sup> custom and regional flora dictated that “...the raw materials used for building the house were also different such as reed grass Japanese pampas grass and bamboo grass.”<sup>26</sup> This diversity was such that in comparably temperate regions such as those that comprise the present-day Hokkaido sub-prefectures of Oshima, Iburi, and Hidaka, the *kotan*'s residential structures were aboveground affairs, while those in the raw chill of the former

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23 The Ainu *chise* is a single-family dwelling, distinct in purpose, placement, and form, from the communal, storage, agricultural, or pastoral constructions.

The *rorun-puyar* is an eastward-facing opening intended for the ingress and egress of gods, and the passing of ritual accoutrement.

The *iyokir* is a raised, recessed space reserved for the storage and display of household treasures, especially *urushi* lacquerware boxes and vessels imported via trade with the south.

24 “Houses in Various Regions,” Poroto Kotan Ainu Museum, September 11, 2017.

25 Though commonly translated as “village”, in the Ainu language, the word *kotan* also means “homeland”, intimating a specific relationship between the place itself and the residents thereof.

26 “Houses in Various Regions.”

Karafuto prefecture were subterranean pit dwellings, sunken unto the eaves in insulating earth.<sup>27</sup>

The geographic dispersal of indigenous populations also engendered variation in regional histories and attendant cultural lore. Those populations in the island's southwest came into contact with Wa-Jin sooner, and more often than those in the less readily accessible island center or northeastern Shiretoko peninsula regions, creating a divide of acculturation between formerly homogenous septs. Those with earlier and greater contact altered their lifeways to include such customs as supplementing traditional garments with lacquered plate armor and ornate kabuto war helms on occasions of high ceremony.<sup>28</sup> So too did these southwesterners gradually incorporate alien concepts into their philosophies of theism and reality, mixing motifs and rites of *onmyodo* exorcism and *shugendo* asceticism freely into their accustomed ceremonial practices.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, residents of the western coast and on Sakhalin Island conducted a brisk barter economy with Chinese traders. At population centers near Ezo's shores, and from ships on trading expeditions sailing into China's Amur River, these groups exchanged pelts and hides for coats of silk brocade.<sup>30</sup> In these regions, a mark of status was ownership of the rich imported garments. This contrasted to the Ainu communities elsewhere in which such textiles were unknown. These remoter populations instead wore surcoats of hide or *attush*, a coarse

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27 "Pit Dwelling of Karafuto Region," Poroto Kotan Ainu Museum, photograph, September 11, 2017.

28 Yo Nishimura, "Archaeologist Awarded for Ainu Trade Theory," *The Japan Times*, March 1, 2016.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

fabric wrought of tree bark, and indicated status through ornateness of embroidered pattern.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Ainu population underwent further schisms as the control of Sakhalin shifted back and forth between Russia and Japan to reflect the outcomes of military conflicts or the agreements of treaties. The Ainu, as well as the Native Nivkh<sup>31</sup> and Oroch populations with which they historically strove for power and resources, underwent a series of forced emigrations, exiles, and identity realignments in correspondence with these extrinsic geopolitical developments. For example, following the re-partitioning of Sakhalin after Russia's 1905 defeat in the Russo-Japanese War, the southern part of the island reverted to Japanese control, whereupon the Tokyo government embarked upon a program to incentivize the Japanization of the new Ainu subjects<sup>32</sup>.

Whereas the *Kaitakushi*,<sup>33</sup> the National Diet, and the imperial Household perceived these multifarious cultural distinctions as incompatible with their goals of a homogeneous, unified, archipelago, they sought therefore to eradicate this impertinence of uniqueness. In 1881, Emperor Meiji deigned to view an Ainu *iomante*<sup>34</sup> bear ceremony. His aloof presence at this event was a subtle calculated gambit by which he

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31 The name "Nivkh" people, the autochthonous semi-nomadic culture that occupies some areas of northern Sakhalin, were known as alternatively as the Gilyak people until the Soviet era.

32 Carrie Crockett, "Forced Labor and Shifting Borders," *Carceral Archipelago*, University of Leicester, January 10, 2016.

33 The Kaitakushi was the bureau charged overseeing Hokkaido's colonization.

34 The Ainu ceremony of animal sacrifice.

“highlighted the 'otherness; of Ainu ethnicity and its difference from that of the Japanese, but it also spotlighted their 'sameness' as proof of the success of the assimilation policy.”<sup>35</sup>

The avenue pursued by the Wa-jin authorities in the newly designated capital of Tokyo was one of erasure; by denuding aboriginal groups of their alien traditions, they might more readily cause them to conform to the strictures promulgated by the Meiji administration. Illustratively, the bear hunt had been a fixture of Ainu life since before recorded history: a significant, if hazardous, source of nutrition that was also bound inextricably to Ainu religious tenets. Historically, the Ainu hunted the brown bear cursorially, with a simple bow,<sup>36</sup> complimented by poisoned arrows.<sup>37</sup> Hunters adhered a neurotoxic aconite tincture to their arrows with a pine resin fixative. Ainu syncretized these useful natural substances with their spiritual pantheon: “In the Ainu hunting tradition, the role of the Kamui of Aconite, as an arrow poison, was the messenger from the Kamui of Fire to the Kamui of Mountains.”<sup>38</sup> Thus, in addition to being a primary means of subsistence, Ainu hunting traditions were integral to their religio-cultural group identity. However, by the beginning of the twentieth century, Tokyo bureaucrats were

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35 Yoshiko Imaizumi, *Sacred Space in the Modern City: The Fractured Pasts of Meiji Shrine, 1912-1958* (The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2013), 112.

36 Though the bows employed by Ainu hunters and in the iomante ceremonies were simple, single-pieced wood constructs, these are to be differentiated from the mechanical crossbow traps used in Ainu game snares, which were sophisticated deadly automata.

37 Walter L. Beasley, “The Aborigines of Japan,” *Scientific American* 90 no. 6 (1904): 121.

38 Takashi Irimoto, “Ainu Worldview and Bear Hunting Strategies,” in *Shamanism and Northern Ecology*, edited by Juha Pentikainen (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1996), 294.



“endeavoring to enforce a law against this method,”<sup>39</sup> and what they labeled as “repugnant practices' and 'inferior customs.’”<sup>40</sup> This effected the effacement not merely of what the central government perceived as the unseemly anachronism of native poison bow hunting, but a spiritual touchstone of an already marginalized minority group.

The Ainu religion, both its pantheon and practices, came under especial pressure as part of the Meiji reforms. Derived from neither continental Buddhism or ancillary influences, nor from the freshly canonical Shinto schema, an array of government agencies undertook to express the policies of *kominka* and *doka* by respectively eradicating or bowdlerizing the religion of the Ainu.<sup>41</sup>

The foundation of Ainu spiritualism was the iomante, chiefly that of the Ezo bear. Though the Kaitakushi did not seek to ban this practice outright, the regulations and tourist spectacle that now accompanied the rite shifted its meaning. For once the climactic slaying/releasing transpires, the crux of the ceremony is revealed to be shared group experience: “Although it's dead, the bear is ceremonially strangled between two poles. This ritual strangling involves buffoonery and burlesque, and relieves the tension which has built up during the slaying of the bear and release of its spirit.”<sup>42</sup> This shared

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39 Ibid.

40 Tomek Bogdanowicz, “Where are the Ainu Now? In Search of Answers about Japan's Indigenous People,” *The Japan Times*, March 2, 2003.

41 Kouminka and douka are nineteenth century Japanese sociology terms referring respectively to absorption into the absolute dominion of the Empire, and homogenization of the empire's people via compulsory acculturation.

42 Neil G. Munro, *The Ainu Bear Ceremony*, movie, University of Hokkaido Botanical Gardens Ainu Museum collection.

catharsis of community and reaffirmation of divine covenant is the heart of the rite. Presiding over this sanctification is the bear's head. Left intact and set atop the still-attached folded cape, “[c]ushioned on the skin, the head of the bear is still believed to attract the lingering spirit.”<sup>43</sup> Thus the physical head converges with the Kamuy godhead, and as such, must be duly propitiated: “Gestures of gratitude are made, and praise and libations are offered [to the head].”<sup>44</sup> After the festival's end, the Ainu faithful affix the bear skull to the kotan's tutelary *nusa*.<sup>45</sup> These *atkoshiratki kamui*,<sup>46</sup> ever-imbued with a spark of divine energy, remain as a constant living symbol of connection between men and gods: “The skulls so set up are not only worshipped at the time of the [*iomante*] festival, but very often as long as they last.”<sup>47</sup> Thereafter they preside as desiccated totems of The People's special relationship with their creators. The need to have permission from an outside legislative body, and requirements to permit out-group viewership both for purposes of entertainment and anthropological study turned the sacrifices from moments of exclusive covenant to performative exercises.

These compulsory changes consisted of mundane tyrannies such as the mandated “replacement of surviving Ainu dwellings with Japanese-style houses as the cornerstone

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43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

45 *Nusa* are wooden wands with strips of jagged shide paper affixed to one end. They are a ubiquitous accoutrement to Shinto shrines and rites. The word is employed here as a general term for rods with numinous power, though the Ainu have their own lexicon for describing them.

46 Divine protectors.

47 John Batchelor, *The Ainu and their Folk-Lore* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1901), 41-43.

of their efforts to modernize Ainu everyday lives,<sup>48</sup> making however “no provisions for so-called god's windows, treasure shelves, or central fireplaces,”<sup>49</sup> which were not mere architectural eccentricities of the quaint boreal aborigine, rather “the physical layout of Ainu dwellings...had great religious import.”<sup>50</sup> The shelved alcove of traditional Ainu homes was the repository of the family's spiritual treasures: dearly-imported lacquer boxes containing “Very many of the Ainu fetiches (sic), such as birds' nests, skulls of certain animals and birds...enveloped in innumerable wrappings of fetich shavings.”<sup>51</sup> This shelf's absence displaced these holy caches and subdued their divine import. The newly-eradicated square fire pit of an Ainu home was only secondarily a source of heat and cooking area, rather it was the sanctuary of *Unci Ahci*, a matriarchal deity who, via her presence in every family's domestic space, “mediates between the Ainu and their deities at all times.”<sup>52</sup> Indeed, it was through her divine benevolence that Ainu learned how to make homes for themselves: “When the first hut came down from heaven with the Goddess.”<sup>53</sup> This vital lineage of links between the race and their gods disappeared with

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48 David L. Howell, “Making “Useful Citizens” of Ainu Subjects in Early Twentieth-Century Japan,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 63, no. 1 (February 2004): 11.

49 Ibid.

50 Howell, “Useful Citizens,” 10.

51 Batchelor, *The Ainu and their Folk-Lore*, 404.

52 Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, *Illness and Healing among the Sakhalin Ainu: A Symbolic Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 74.

53 Batchelor, *The Ainu and their Folk-Lore*, 121.

their homes' compulsory redesign, necessarily forcing reassessment of ethnic identity and reconsideration of formerly unassailable epistemological conclusions.

Similarly, the tattooing prohibitions and prejudices were a strategy aimed not just at reducing the physical distinctiveness of Hokkaido's natives, but at severing ties to their ancient ethnic theological identity. For millennia, Ainu women bore a thick band of birch charcoal pigment permanently embedded about their mouths, and a matrilineally inherited pattern of interwoven abstract geometric shapes girded about their hand and wrists. In addition to serving as a ready identifier of cultural in-group status as well as sexual maturation, this inking was a constant visual signifier of the Ainu religio-magical covenant with the *Kamuy*. Ainu oral tradition revered the practice as having been “brought to earth by the 'ancestral mother' of the Ainu *Okikurumi Turesh Machi* who was the younger sister of the creator god *Okikurumi*.”<sup>54</sup> This body modifications had such spiritual significance, that for women, their presence was necessary for ingress to the afterlife.<sup>55</sup> Thus, the first national prohibitions against tattooing in 1872 which “were designed both to demonstrate to Western powers that [Japan's indigenous peoples] were under Japanese rule and to homogenize them into the Japanese Empire,”<sup>56</sup> was also an abolishment of a Hokkaido's native culture's *sui generis* relationship with itself that had persisted since prehistory. So thorough was this effort and its enforcement, remaining

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54 Lars Krutak, “Tattooing Among Japan's Ainu People,” *Lars Krutak Tattoo Anthropologist*, November 27, 2012.

55 Ibid.

56 Jon Mitchell, “Japan Inked: Should the Country Reclaim its Tattoo Culture?” *The Japan Times*, May 3, 2014.

officially in effect until the post-war occupation, that no traditionally tattooed Ainu women exist in the twenty-first century.<sup>57</sup>

The colonization of the Ezochi also began to erode the use of hereditary *ekashi itokpa*, heraldic motifs unique to families, villages, and religious societies. The *kamon* of the occupying Wa-jin decorated the waxing fashions of clothing.<sup>58</sup> Newly imported styles of construction in all social realms bore these crests as well: religious buildings, private homes, businesses, and government buildings. So too was this pattern evident in sails of merchant and pleasure vessels, plinths of tombstones, and the *dou*<sup>59</sup> of *Tondenhei* armor.<sup>60</sup> This influx overwhelmed the use of Ainu crests. In addition to being visual signifiers of status, lineage, and group affiliation, the Ainu *ekashi itokpa* had been graphic design gifts from the Kamuy, and thus linked those who bore them with specific associated divine patrons. The presence of such a sigil on a wooden bowl excavated from Matsunorikawa Kitagishi site for example is that of Orca Lord of the Sea *repun-kor-kamuy*.<sup>61</sup> This mark treblely signifies ownership of the vessel, protection of said owner by the invoked deity, and the owner's literal descent from that powerful being. The ultimate

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57 Krutak, "Tattooing".

58 *Kamon* are stylized emblems used to identify inclusion in groups such as families, clans, and institutions.

59 The plated cuirass of samurai armor.

60 The *Tondenhei* were settler-soldiers recruited by the Meiji government for the dual purposes of bringing agriculture and military capability to Hokkaido.

61 William Fitzhugh, curator, Bear Effigy Vessel, Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of Natural History, Faces of Ainu: Room 1 Overview.

abandonment of such crests thus eliminated a regular visual source of connection between the Ainu and their creators.

In addition to cultural and religious effacement, the restored Imperial government's policies included provisions that were intended to preclude any renewal of traditional subsistence lifestyles thenceforth. Insofar as the interior of Hokkaido was thinly peopled and agriculturally undeveloped, in 1869, the Meiji government embarked on the *Kaitakuushi* project for over a decade. The primary document regulating this undertaking was the Hokkaido Land Act, a piece of omnibus legislation that dictated the specific intended disposition of every quarter of the island and its environs. The Ainu were historically sedentary, and engaged in domestic ursine husbandry and small-scale crop cultivation. However the locations of their settlements were not as fixed as those of the Wa-jin, tethered in place as they had been by the necessities of wet-rice agriculture for over two millennia. Rather Ainu populations exhibited semi-nomadism in response to weather patterns, ebbs of natural resources, and migration of animal populations: the same forces that drew their ancestors across an exposed land bridge from Siberia to Ezo some 20,000 years ago.<sup>62</sup> They relied on wild vegetable foraging, river fishing, and seasonal game hunts for the balance of villages' alimentary needs. The Meiji Era effort to populate and develop Hokkaido's interior included a series of legal prohibitions intended to steadily erode the Ainu capability for self-sufficiency in the manner to which they were accustomed. The River Act of 1896 proscribed the salmon fishing which had been a mainstay of Ainu winter survival, and the 1889 Regulation Act of Hunting Deer likewise

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<sup>62</sup> Jude Isabella, "The Untold Story of Japan's First People," *Sapiens*, October 25, 2017.

banned outright the taking of sika deer (*Cervus nippon*) and Japanese serow (*Capricornis crispus*) by means of poison or mechanical trap as was the Ainu's wont.<sup>63</sup> These regulations also effaced and replaced the ancient *iwor* system, in which loose affiliations of clan and *kotan* maintained intra-cultural exchange via joint custodianship of exclusive territorial swathes that exemplified the race's "land use [conception that] was not only for the commercial purposes of buying and selling property. [Rather] it was a comprehensive concept of fishing, hunting, cultivation, and other land uses."<sup>64</sup> Thus, when "Article 16 of the Hokkaido Land Act provided that all traditional lands of the Ainu were to be given up to the government,"<sup>65</sup> it meant not just a mandated cession of property, but that a traditional lifestyle was rendered untenable.

Having legally disowned Ainu of the land and resources so necessary for their cultural identity, the Meiji government enacted the Hokkaido Former Natives Protection Act of 1899, "modeled on the United States' General Allotment Act (Dawes Act) of 1887, which was an attempt to turn American Native Indians into propertied citizens through land grants."<sup>66</sup> Granting Ainu applicants a plot of land on the condition that they cultivate it, "solved" the problem of the island's inhabitants for the Hokkaido

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63 Kunihiro Yoshida, "Property Law Policy for the Indigenous Ainu People and the Unresolved Issue of Reparations in Japan," in *Multicultural Challenges and Sustainable Democracy in Europe and East Asia*, edited by Nam-Kook Kim (United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 61

64 Tadashi Takizawa, "Land Reform of the Colonial Commission in Early Meiji Era and the Land of the Ainu," *The Journal of Historical Association of Hokkaido University* 51 (2011): 3.

65 Fred C.C. Peng, "The Socioeconomic Status of the Ainu: The Past in the Present," *American Ethnologist* 1, no. 4 (1974): 740.

66 Kim, 61.

Development Commission. No longer could the aborigines continue as semi-nomads or subsistence hunters, rather they would be forced, with under penalty of starvation, to peaceably cultivate their allotments of precisely 49,590 square meters<sup>67</sup> and conform to the standards of productive empire set by the central government and its Development Commission. The Ainu People lived on, but the Ainu Way died by the turn of the century.

Necessities of survival also drove Ainu to engage in new forms of labor. Migration to urban centers for employ as unskilled workers was only one way they sought to cope with the pressures imposed by the strictures of Meiji “progressivism.” This new era did however bring economic opportunity in the form of ethno-curious *Wa-jin* lured to the north by the exoticism promised in the then recently published *Yukar*<sup>68</sup> of Chiri Yukie – a tourism facilitated by the taming of the boreal frontier. Determined to return home with trinkets of their excursion, but unimpressed by whittled raw wooden *inau*,<sup>69</sup> Japanese tourists demanded more appropriate souvenirs of wild Hokkaido. Despite a general prohibition on graven images, the confluence of native need and *Wa-jin* desire “forced Ainu carvers to carve bear and other figurative art for the tourist trade.”<sup>70</sup> Though the Ainu have effectively reclaimed wooden bear carving handicraft as a unique

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67 Ibid.

68 The Ainu form of worshipful singing poetry, characterized by descriptions of natural bounty, animal characteristics, and gratitude to the Kamuy.

69 Rounded staves adorned with curled shavings carved as propitiatory offerings to the Kamuy.

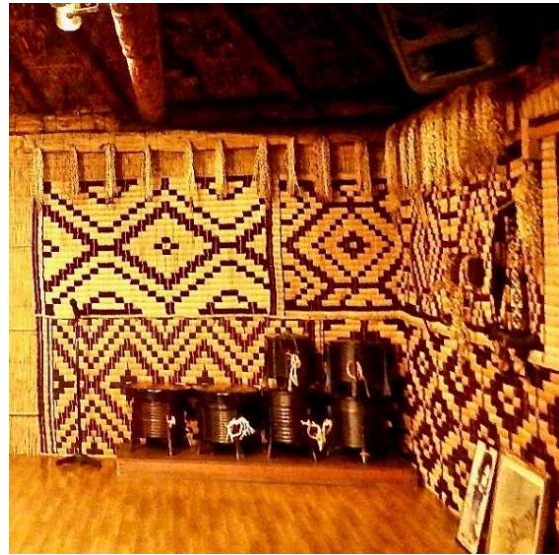
70 William Fitzhugh, “Rising from Adversity,” *Ainu: Spirit of a Northern People*, slideshow narration, Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History.



art form of their culture, the forces that caused them to preference exigencies of quotidian survival over the prohibitions against violating their sacrosanct covenant with the world the gods by so depicting their earthly forms,<sup>71</sup> forever separates the Ainu past from the present.



2. Ainu bear carvings (Yakumocho Carved Wooden Bears Museum, Yakumo-cho, photograph by author)



3. Modern reconstruction of an Ainu *iyokir* platform (Poroto Kotan, Shiraoi, photograph by author)

### Of Gods, Buddhas, and Kamuy

Archaeological evidence indicates that religious belief entered the archipelago with its first inhabitants, and has remained a part of life there ever since. As such, an analysis of the changes to religious orthopraxy and orthodoxy over the course of millennia serves as a method for elucidating *longue durée* patterns of societal change in

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71 Ooya Shigeru, Chief Curator, interview by author, Yakumo-cho Wooden Bear Carving Museum, Yakumo, September 8, 2017.

the mode of Fernand Braudel. Although applying such a technique indicates a number of shifts, they all remain connected to what had come before *except* for that of the decades immediately preceding the Sankebetsu Incident. Here a sacral analysis supports the conclusion of a rupture. Whereas the foundation of the expanding empire's piety changed from an organic iteration of ancient indigenous precepts of worship to a calculated commodity. Although patterns of using religion for purposes of state occurred previous to this period, and enforced practices had long been co-opted for purposes of Foucaultian power, here the relationship was reversed. In this instance it was no longer a *use* of extant belief for purposes of economy or state, but a new genesis for such ends.

A score of millennia transpired thereafter wherein the perceptual religious methodologies remained unchanged. Practitioners altered untold companies of particulars, renamed, repurposed, and reconfigured pantheons, rendering them new and distinct. Philosophies from the continent to the west: Tao, Confucius, and most influentially, the dharmic tide of Buddhism broke over Yamato. Changes to the methods of prayer, means of salvation, or other scriptural and instrumental alteration are however less consequential than the enunciative viewpoint of the faithful. In cave, *kofun*,<sup>72</sup> shrine, or temple, the antediluvian paradigm did abide.

This phlegmatism is evident in two categories of phenomena: organic origins of belief and practice, and the indistinguishability of conceptual boundary between contradictory faiths.

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72 A keyhole-shaped burial mound.

The former type is characterized by gradual, uncodified schemata of theistic evolution until the Meiji Era philosophical transformation. Ancient religion blossomed chiefly through the predisposal of the minds of men to search for, and *find*, the numinous. The supplantation of *dogu* with the *haniwa*<sup>73</sup> and bronzes associated with *dotaku*<sup>74</sup> as the central regalia of religious rites stemmed from the cogent desire of the lay and clergy to pay obeisance only to such powers, and only in such manners, as might prove efficacious. This newly consecrated equipage was the fruit of comparatively refined continental goods and technically advanced manufacturing practices; lauded as superior advancements, metal and clay thus wrought were therefore more fitting to facilitate sacred communion than the wares they replaced.

However, this holy tackle too was ultimately held in disdain. Not due to official proclamation or dogmatic diet's pronouncement, rather it was the instinctual reaction to climatic hardship, and the perceived inefficacy of worship by such means. For the decision of the *Kofun* (300-538 CE) faithful to smash, scatter, and discard dear, and presumably sanctified bronzes, coincides with “the time of the little Ice Age, when famine spread throughout the whole of East Asia. In Japan, people everywhere joined their rulers in praying for the aid of the kami, using the ritual bronze spearheads, daggers, and bells, but the successive years of famine did not come to an end.”<sup>75</sup>

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73 Funerary terracotta figures of man and horses characterized by realistic sculpting, including detailed clay replications of armor and saddlery.

74 Ornate copper bells used for ceremonial purpose rather than actual percussion.

75 Hironobu Ishino and 石野博信, “Rites and Rituals of the Kofun Period,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 19, no. 2/3 (1992): 192.

Every subsequent theistic germination and surcease had like initiative impetus. The fortunes of individual *kami* flagged or waxed with the individual and communal fortunes of their respective devout.<sup>76</sup>

So undirected and unplanned were the tides of these theo-philosophical patterns that until the sixth century CE, the Japanese belief structure was an a priori presumption, an “...unnamed, unorganized, and unsystematized cluster of religio-magical views, beliefs, and practices.”<sup>77</sup> Every mountain, stone, or tree was a self-evident *acheiropoietia*: the island chain was literally the flesh of the *kami*, its residents their de facto children. To be of Yamato was to acknowledge and revere this axiomatic relationship.

Even as a tripartate<sup>78</sup> divine tempest crossed the Sea of Japan and gave cause for Shinto to endow itself with distinct nomenclature<sup>79</sup> to “refer to the hitherto unnamed,”<sup>80</sup> and distinguish itself from continental belief systems, still “...the court-sponsored Shinto could not incorporate all the features of early Japanese religion. In fact many such features remained outside the framework of official Shinto.”<sup>81</sup> The origins and

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76 Variouslly translatable as “god,” “spirit,” and “holy power,” the term *kami* refers to the pantheon of indigenous Japanese numinous beings, objects, and places.

77 Joseph M. Kitagawa, “Paradigm Change in Japanese Buddhism,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 11, no. 2/3 (1984): 127.

78 Taoist, Confucian, and Buddhist.

79 Before Buddhism's arrival in Japan, Shinto's antiquity and unchallenged spiritual monopoly was such giving the belief system a name had never been necessary.

80 Kitagawa, “Paradigm Change in Japanese Buddhism,” 128.

81 Ibid.

organically evolving nature of Shinto were such that any pretension to ecumenical ediction was hollow impotence.

The penetration of transformative Buddhist ethos likewise transpired in a manner of incremental, holistic incorporation. Buddhism of the era was uniquely suited to just such a benevolent phagocytosis, insofar as its communicants and catechism were characterized “not with a body of doctrine, but with the formation of a [community] bound by certain rules.”<sup>82</sup> Even such lax obligations and proscriptions as these however, proved unduly onerous. Thus the pseudo-divine nobility of the *Ritsuryo*<sup>83</sup> synthesis, and laity welcomed the superficially competitive system as an errant prodigal “due to their affirmation that everything is potentially a manifestation of kami.”<sup>84</sup>

Ergo it follows that rather than obediently adhering to the imported teachings as directed by foreign suzerain or frustrated Korean theological proctor, “lavish temples were built, elegant Buddhist statues were imported or created, a series of scriptures were copied, and colorful rituals were performed mostly for mundane benefits, but very few efforts were made to understand the subtleties of doctrine.”<sup>85</sup>

This ludic paradigm persisted until the Meiji Restoration. Central to the Restoration's comprehensive reform programs, was a conscious resculpture of Japanese

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82 Kitagawa, “Paradigm Change in Japanese Buddhism,” 116.

83 The Asuka (538-710 CE) and Nara (710-794CE) periods' comprehensive system of hierarchical governmental and societal organization consciously modeled on Tang China and an interpretation of Buddhist principles.

84 Kitagawa, “Paradigm Change in Japanese Buddhism,” 133.

85 Kitagawa, “Paradigm Change in Japanese Buddhism,” 136.

religious life. Nowhere is this change to premeditated theistic typology more evident than in “the establishment of an Office of Rites in 1868 as one of seven departments of the Council of State.”<sup>86</sup> The considered genesis of a bureaucratic organ casts the restored imperial government securely in the role of artificial theistic progenitor. In contrast with the *Fukko*<sup>87</sup> Shinto philosophy it displaced, Meiji governance sought to elevate the duty of *generating* national piety to a lofty council, rather than *seeking* to discover the nature of Shinto spiritual reality as Kada no Azumamaro (1669-1763) and Kamo no Mabuchi (1697-1769)<sup>88</sup> did in the previous century. The Emperor, his government, and the Office of Rites became conscious creators rather than the spontaneous believers and naturally inclined seekers they superseded.

The inhabitants of the archipelago in prehistory operated cognitively in a manner indistinguishable from their contemporary descendants. There is no “qualitative difference between prehistoric man and contemporary man,”<sup>89</sup> thus “terms such as 'prelogical mentality' or *urdummheit* will distort our understanding of the true ability of prehistoric man.”<sup>90</sup> Yet, the reality of the Japanese religious experience in the twenty-first century CE *is* qualitatively different than at its inception. It follows that this change must

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86 Marius B. Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan* (Cambridge: The Belknap of Harvard University Press, 2000), 351.

87 An eighteenth-century CE Japanese Great Awakening popularized and promulgated by theologian Mootori Norinaga who sought to discover the spiritual truth of Shinto via extensive philological exegeses of canonical works.

88 Prominent founders of the *Fukko* school.

89 Y.T. Hosoi, “The Sacred Tree in Japanese History,” *History of Religions* 16, no. 2 (1976): 97.

90 *Ibid.*

therefore be one of manufacture. Shinto's origins lie in ancient man's proclivities when confronted with the primal emotions of awe at natural grandeur, and a carnal fear of death and disease. Thus it took on forms “including nature worship and taboos against *kegare* (impurities).”<sup>91</sup> The varieties of coastal and alpen landscapes wherein these earliest communicants dwelt, thereby gave rise to belief in, and worship of, deities with competing powers and seemingly incompatible purviews. Likewise, the gamut of ancient death and disease comprised all possible classes of infirmity and mortality, which also generated distinct, conflicting pieties based upon the homicidal fauna, deadly weather patterns, or epidemic diseases native to given habitational enclaves.

Yet, despite this apparent setting for conflict, even between warring *uji*, communities resolved theistic differences by incorporating alien beliefs into accepted patterns.<sup>92</sup> Instead therefore of dissolving into warfare predicated on theistic grounds, these disparate beliefs resolved thesis and antithesis into the synthesis of a permissive trans-archipelagic whole. Herein nothing was heretical so long as it adhered to the latitudinarian principles of reverence for the “sacred time” of *matsuri* the “sacred space” of shrine or other vicinity demarcated as sacrosanct, and for the “aspects of the divine,” the worship of “supernatural beings as kami who oversee all aspects of nature and life.”<sup>93</sup>

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91 Kuroda Toshio et al., “Shinto in the History of Japanese Religion,” *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 7 no. 1 (Winter 1981): 1.

92 *Uji* were Japanese kinship groups that preceded the more formal clan houses that prevailed from the seventh century onward.

93 Scott C. Littleton, *Understanding Shinto: Origins Beliefs Practices Festivals Spirits Sacred Places* (London: Watkins Publishing, 2011), 5.

Ibid.

When, during the final zenith of Korea's *Baekje* Dynasty (18 BCE – 660 CE), King Seong (r. 523–554 CE) gifted an image of *Shakyamuni* to Japanese emperor Kinmei (r.539-571 CE), Buddhism gained its first permanent foothold in the archipelago.<sup>94</sup> With origins that profess to specific historical reality, and its alien precepts of cyclic katabasis, nirvanic salvation, and tacitly severe proscription on even the lives of devout laity, Buddhism appeared utterly immiscible with the theretofore uncoded<sup>95</sup> pantheism of Nippon identity.

Within a single century however, the two belief systems became “.almost inextricably intertwined” for over a millennium.<sup>96</sup> This syncretism span into a theistic force unto itself, both in the construction of religious infrastructure, for soon “virtually every temple included a Shinto shrine,”<sup>97</sup> and in clerical duties, for “monks frequently served them both.”<sup>98</sup>

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Ibid.

Littleton, *Understanding Shinto*, 16.

94 Shakyamuni is the incarnation of Buddha associated with the personage of Siddhartha Guatama, or historical Buddha. Physionomically the depiction is characterized by a wispy mustachioed visage of placid expression.

95 Insofar as Shinto belief can ever be said to have been authoritatively codified. The chronicles that come closest to a canonical enchiridion, the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi*, were not compiled until the eighth century however.

96 Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, 351.

97 Ibid.

98 Ibid.



The extent and fervor of this union was such that several prophets and saints formed sects that were characterized primarily by their embrace, and advancement of, syncretic philosophies. Dengyo Daishi<sup>99</sup> (767-822 CE) and Kobo Daishi<sup>100</sup> (774-835 CE) are respectively associated with the Japanese foundations of “Tendai and Shingon, the two most important schools of Heian Buddhism.”<sup>101</sup> The Tendai school's exegesis of syncretic reality was that of *honji suijaku*, a “primary union of kami and Buddhist higher beings in the form of *honji* 'eternal prototypes' and *suijaku*, 'incarnations', or 'manifestations'.”<sup>102</sup> Similarly, Shingon explicated the dualism by asserting that the kami themselves have a dual nature akin to that attributed to “aspects of the chief Mikkyo deity, Dainichi Nyorai.”<sup>103</sup>

This paradigm reigned until the latter half of the nineteenth century. Following the close of the Edo Period, the de facto religio-political philosophy was *shinbutsu bunri*, an holistic effort to parse the Buddhas from the kami.

Inspired by the pursuit of directing popular devotion to the authority of restored imperial rule, *shinbutsu bunri* was the central pillar of *Fukko-Shinto*<sup>104</sup>, a revisionist

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99 Japanese Buddhists of great renown are awarded posthumous honorific names. In life, Dengyo Daishi was known as Saicho.

100 Known in life as Kukai.

101 Klaus Antoni, “The Separation of Gods and Buddha' at Omiwa Jinja in Meiji Japan,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 22, no.1/2 (1995):144.

102 Ibid.

103 Ibid.

104 Literally “restored” Shinto.

historico-theology that had imperial *arahitogami*<sup>105</sup> as its precarious apex; to lead as a god demanded an *ab initio* perception of faultless purity in subjects' belief. The March 28, 1868 *shinbutsu bunri hanzen rei*,<sup>106</sup> “accompanied in part by frightening outbursts of violence against Buddhist institutions (*haibutsu kishaku*),”<sup>107</sup> is dramatic evidence of a new cladistic clarity.

Some aspects of this decree took effect with concrete immediacy. Those Buddhist cloisters dedicated to serving *Gongen*, indigenous kami considered local manifestations of Buddha's universal will, were forced to abandon this key precept of their faith. Enforcers sought to cauterize this dangerously improper belief by regulating speech: prohibiting even the word “Gongen” from being spoken.<sup>108</sup> Reformers pressured those clergy wishing to continue their worship of the Kami to laicize, formally becoming shrine priests and converting their holy precincts to an approved non-syncretic format forthwith.<sup>109</sup> Separation efforts further included a temporary attempt at repression of the mystical syncretic practices such as those of the ascetic *Yamabushi* hermits of Kumano, and a permanent interdict on the hyper-austerities of the self-mummifying *Sokushinbutsu*

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105 The concept of a deity appearing in human form.

106 Literally meaning a decree to clarify gods and Buddhas.

107 Antoni, “The Separation of Gods and Buddha,” 159.

108 Ibid.

109 Barbara Ambros, “Clerical Demographics in the Edo-Meiji Transition: Shingon and Tozanha Shingon in Western Sagami,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 64, no. 1 (2009): 83.

enlightenment-seekers of Yamagata Prefecture's Swamp of Wizards, Senninzawa.<sup>110</sup> The Meiji government further advanced its cause of Imperial empowerment by turning physical artifacts into a source of lucre for the Chrysanthemum Cathedra, selling at auction texts and statuary confiscated from the newly-heretical religious factions. In other instances this conversion of heterodox symbol to Meiji power was quite literal: *Shinbustu* enforcers seized bronze bells and statuary from syncretic institutions, melting them down to make cannon.<sup>111</sup>

Despite violence, and the very real effects upon the livelihood and practice of legions of *shinbutsu shugyo*<sup>112</sup> practitioners, the primary paradigmatic shift was one of perception. For the fulcrum of Japanese historical change was worldview. As such, even at the supposed godhead, appearance, and official bureaucratic classification was the focus of the schismatic movement's operators. Thus, “on 3 January 1877, the Imperial Household determined that, even though all worship (*hosai*)<sup>113</sup> of the Imperial family would be officially held according to Shinto rites, the individual's personal faith would be

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110 Lay Custodian of Kaikoji Temple, interview by author, Kaikoji Temple, Sakata City, September 7, 2017.

111 Jacqueline Stone, “Review of *Of Heretics and Martyrs in Meiji Japan: Buddhism and its Persecution*, Edward Ketelaar,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 116, no. 2 (December 1993): 583.

112 The incorporation of Shinto and Buddhist beliefs and practices into each other, the literal meaning is: syncretism of gods and Buddhas.

113 Though translatable as worship, it does not necessarily mean one's private private worship. In the instance of this pronouncement, it encompasses the public rites and duties of the Emperor as the high priest of Shinto, such as the annual communion with his direct patrilineal ancestor, the sun goddess Amaterasu at Jingu in Ise, the holiest Shinto site.

respected. This would apply to memorial services, visiting or paying respects at memorial halls, the offering of incense (*shoko*) and the dedication of colored flowers (*irobana*). For more than 100,000 years, the abiding religion of Ezo, Sakhalin, and the Kuriles, was Kamuy worship. This broad theism of the Okhotsk, Orok, Nivhk, Satsumon, Mishihase, and Ainu cultures was predicated on the conviction that “natural phenomena that are useful to human beings, including flora and fauna, as well as daily life necessities such as fire, water, living implements and forces beyond human control like weather,” were incarnations of powerful beings from parallel world. Inhabiting and controlling every aspect of existence from the mundane “boats, hearth hooks, mortar and mallets” to celestial bodies like the sun and moon, all fates of meet or ill might be dispensed then only at pleasure of these divines.<sup>114</sup>

### Artefactual Continuity

The humble artifacts of daily residence and subsistence: agricultural implements, clay wares, and personal dwellings, narrate a history of unbroken connectivity between generations and eras. Evidence of inherited design and purpose links Japan's most ancient civilizations to the end of the Tokugawa Period with a profusion of parallel methods, motifs, and artefactual schema. Frayed beyond repair in the Meiji Period, the strands of continuity twist apart permanently at the time of the Sankebetsu incident.

Organized and systematic cultivation has been, and continues to be, a signal characteristic of the protracted success of the genus *Homo* since the Neolithic Revolution:

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<sup>114</sup> “Prayer to Kamuy – Religion,” Akarenga website, accessed December 9, 2019.

for thirteen millennia, the domestication of edible or otherwise useful plants has waxed to near-synonymity with human society. Thus, the devices and appurtenances of agricultural undertakings necessarily bear semiotic significance for their respective cultures. Japanese agricultural artifacts evidence domestic and imported evolutions of farming tools that coexists with a throughput of technological heritage. In the Yayoi Period for example, “polished stone and metal tools were introduced from China and the Korean Peninsula.”<sup>115</sup> The products of this continental technology wrought to meet the needs of simultaneously-imported wet rice agriculture included bronze, and later iron blades, axes, and adzes for clearing and cultivating, broad, blunted stone implements for threshing, as well as finer metal shaping tools for producing hafts.<sup>116</sup> Centuries later, during the Kofun Period, “agricultural tools designed to mount iron blades were produced in greater numbers and their functionality was also improved. This was due to improvements in ironware production technologies, with the introduction of new techniques from the Korean Peninsula.”<sup>117</sup> These implements, though produced exclusively of iron, more prolifically, and with greater refinement, remained updated analogs of their predecessors. The blades, though longer, stronger, and more delicately tapered, still adhered to the same principles of blade geometry and functionality: a thickened poll with flat butt, narrowing to a single straight bit.

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115 “Daily Tools of the Yayoi Period,” Tokyo National Museum, September 20, 2017.

116 “Daily tools of the Yayoi Period.”

117 “Agricultural Tools of the Kofun Perion,” Tokyo National Museum, September 20, 2017.

This pattern of every age's wares serving as the templates for subsequent development, continued unabated until the nineteenth century. Beginning in the Meiji Era, the influx of Western technologies and commodities did not aid in the evolution of extant items, rather it replaced them.

However, even when this transformation became an inevitability for the *naichi*, still in Ezo did the ancient ways persist. Though not the fixture of nutrition it was in the south, Ainu villages did maintain cultivated plots of barnyard grass (*Echinochloa crus-galli*), Japanese millet (*Echinochloa esculenta*), and adzuki beans (*Vigna argularis nipponensis*)<sup>118</sup> to supplement their hunting, snaring, fishing, and foraging. The agricultural effects of the boreal indigenes continued to echo the design and use principles of Japan's ancient societies. Here the thread of continuity was as of yet ancient.

The cultivation of rice in Japan ever-employed specific accouterments that evidenced but little change since their adaptation to the cycle of harvesting and planting since the instance of the first domestication of rice-like wild grasses over 10,000 years ago.<sup>119</sup> Whichever strain, and however cultivated, the grain bearing plants must be harvested at maturity if they are to be processed into food. Pulling each plant up individually by hand made completing such undertakings within the limited temporal window unfeasible. As such, men have used sickle-type hand tools for as long as harvest tasks have been an aspect of humanity. Neolithic cultures combined ungulate jaws and

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118 "Haru Kor (Abundant Harvest)," Biratori Town Nibutani Ainu Culture Museum, informational pamphlet (Nibutani: 2017).

119 Ancient civilizations domesticated three different strains of the *Oryza* genus grasses independently in Asia, Africa, and the New World.

chipped stone to form “thin, edge-slotted bone implements with straight edged microliths inserted into the (tooth socket) slot to form the cutting blade.”<sup>120</sup> If and when a civilization underwent technological advent to the ages of bronze or iron, man turned their new abilities to the production of ever more sophisticated sickles, steadily incorporating such efficacy and durability upgrades as edges ground sharp from both sides of the blade, and socketed wooden hafts.<sup>121</sup> Despite differences in materials, a stone-age sickle is analogous in form and function to a mid-nineteenth century Japanese farmer's *kama*, just as it is to every iteration of hand-harvester from the Yayoi thence.

Because many Japanese families and individuals continue to maintain small agricultural plots as a hobby or part time job, and the geography of certain regions demands that rice paddies be irregularly shaped terraced affairs of less than a hectare, the use of traditional farming implements maintains some relevance in modern Japan. However, the ever-consuming prevalence of large agri-business is the standard for the country's crop production. On a trajectory to comprise two-thirds of sales by 2030,<sup>122</sup> these farms almost exclusively employ mechanized rice harvesters: small tractors produced in push, and ride-upon varieties that replace the grasp and cut labor intensiveness of hand tools with gas-fueled combines that allow a single skilled operator to reap in hours areas that would formerly have taken a village an entire day. The latter

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120 Robert F. Heizer, “The Sickle in Aboriginal Western North America,” *American Antiquity* 16, no. 3 (1951): 247.

121 F.C.J. Spurrell, “Notes on Early Sickles,” *Archaeological Journal* 49, no. 1 (1892): 53.

122 Kaori Kaneko, “Tech-savvy Farmers a New Hope for Japan's Shrinking Agriculture Sector,” *Reuters*, August 8, 2017.

half of the nineteenth century brought the advantage and anomie of the Industrial Revolution to Japan in an accelerated rush. At its inception harvests were advanced but superficially from those of the ancients. By its climax however, farms had access to such machinery as Kubota Corporation's flagship “Harvesking” combination rice harvester/transplanter, boasting a “Water-Cooled 4-Cycle 4-Cylinder Vertical Diesel Engine [With Turbocharger],”<sup>123</sup> and Shibaura Machinery's compact model ST460 60 tractor with 2.2 liter turbocharged diesel engine and 60 horsepower that “...helps you work faster and more efficiently.”<sup>124</sup> An equal coexistence between these clashing paradigms proved to be an impossibility.

Those modern farms that do choose to eschew the efficiency of combines and the convenience of Heisei's agricultural accoutrement consciously define themselves as an outlying minority. Organic farmer Mitsuo Ishizuka's transplants the rice seedlings in his Niigata Prefecture *Koshihikari*<sup>125</sup> paddies individually by hand, into grids etched with a man-powered furrowing wheel. Though ostensibly evocative of the technique of the ancients, his methods are not the product of necessity, rather they cater to the demands of a niche market of environmentally, and health-conscious gourmands. His intentionally anachronistic tractorlessness bestows an economically desirable outlier status that serves

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123 HarvesKing Specifications,” Kubota Corporation website, accessed November 1, 2019.

124 “ST460 (60hp),” Shibaura Machinery Website, accessed November 1, 2019.

125 Koshihikari is a modern hybrid short-grain rice variety that has attained status as a premium food item due to a delicate sweetness prized in luxury Japanese cuisine.



to illustrate the hegemony of mechanization and the irreversible absolutism of severance from the past.<sup>126</sup>

Dwellings too have been culturally distinctive aspects of humanity since at least the Upper Paleolithic, when *Homo heidelbergensis* crafted permanent shelters out of stones and saplings some 40,000 years ago in the area now-known as the French Riviera.<sup>127</sup> The oldest-known architecture of the Japanese archipelago is that of the Jomon Period. It was characterized by sunken, circular dwellings with tamped earthen floor thatched with dried *Kaya* grass (*Miscanthus sinensis*). Later constructions included larger ovular or rectangular longhouses supported by peeled log pillars and rough-hewn wooden ceiling beams.<sup>128</sup>

Izumo-Taisha, still extant and revered in present-day Shimane Prefecture, is the most ancient of all Shinto shrines. Among other august deities, the principal god enshrined within is *Okuninushi*, an especially venerable being associated with establishing the Land of Izumo, an area that roughly corresponds with an ancient kingdom that had great political and cultural influence on the nascent Yamato State, which absorbed them in the fourth century CE. It is here at Izumo that all of Japan's infinite pantheon gather annually to plan the nation's fate for the forthcoming year. This shrine is the spiritual navel of the nation. Though Izumo Taisha's origins predate

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126 Peter Barakan, "NHK- Japanology Plus: Rice," Youtube video, Directed by Takamitsu Motomochi, Tokyo: NHK, 2014, accessed September 2, 2019.

127 Ian Tattersall, "In Search of the First Human Home: When Did the Savanna Give Way to the Crash Pad?" *Nautilus*, December 5, 2013.

128 Sannai Maruyama Archaeological Site, exhibits, Aomori.

recorded history, Nara period documents relate that aside from being the largest structure then extant in Japan, the shrine's primary supports were prodigious vertical posts sunken into the earth, held fast by their own weight. In 2000, excavators unearthed three *uzubashira*, giant axis pillars that supported the shrine superstructure, confirming these descriptions. Thus it can be inferred that the architecture of ancient Japan's religious locus was conceptually identical to the method of construction used in the Jomon. Though separated by thousands of years, the materials and basic form of structures remained largely unchanged.

Certain other anachronistic details were especially characteristic of Izumo, architectural details that typify the *Taisha-zukuri* style. The roof ornamentation harkened to primitive methods of maintaining the integrity of the thatch structures, long unnecessary due to advances in construction techniques.<sup>129</sup> *Chigi*, finialed gables that fork out perpendicularly from the roof's cant, and *katsuogi*, short tapered billets thrust horizontally though the ridge, served only decorative purposes by the time of Izumo's construction but continued in use out of skeumorphic predilection. So vital was this historical connection, that such ornamentation was long-governed by strict sumptuary laws. In the Nara Period, aside from dedicated holy sanctuaries, it was “a symbolic architectural style reserved solely for the 'emperor's palace,’”<sup>130</sup> and later laws restricted

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129 Yasutada Watanabe, *Shinto Art: Ise and Izumo Shrines*, translated by Robert Ricketts (Tokyo: Weatherhill/Heibonsha 1974), 123-124.

130 Watanabe, *Shinto Art*, 129.

their use to the homes of certain august persons, permitting increased placement thereof in accordance with higher social ranks.<sup>131</sup>

Beginning with the post-1853 Western ingresses however, the standards for building construction altered radically. Initially, the hubs of international trade exhibited enclaves of foreign-designed residences and commercial buildings. The residence of Thomas Blake Glover (1838-1911), a Scottish-born, Nagasaki-based trade mogul exemplifies this severing from traditional form. Erected in 1861 in a hilly district overlooking Nagasaki's Omura Bay, the residence soon became a hub of a Western enclave characterized by imported architectural styles. Distinguishable via its employ of the methods and materials of the Industrial Revolution, “types of brick, plasterwork, iron and glass technology, paint, plumbing and drainage systems and lighting methods,”<sup>132</sup> the Georgian architecture of this new district was unprecedented in the archipelago. The Doric pillared Palladian porticos, latticed arbors, and English gardens of the neighborhood reflected the British aesthetic response to Baroque designs, and the desires of wealthy European and North American property owners rather than having aught to do with the millennia of stylistic preference and structural exigency that had informed Japanese building theretofore.

Shunted to this alternative design paradigm, archipelagic construction metastasized until Western, and Western-influenced erections typified the architectural

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131 Mary Neighbor Parent, “Katsuogi,” *Japanese Architecture and Art Net Users System*.

132 Ingrid Cranfield, *Georgian House Style: An Architectural and Interior Design Source Book* (Cincinnati: David & Charles Limited, 2008), 13.

landscape. Modern Japanese homes and buildings *do* have distinguishing characteristics such as the prevalence of walls adjustable for preference, seasonal need, or changing a room's use, and the inclusion of *oshiire* storage areas set flush into the wall for daytime bedding stowage.<sup>133</sup> Despite these nuances, Japanese building designs have followed this new path so faithfully that Modern Japan's cityscapes are an Eastern facsimile of the modern West's Bauhaus obedience. Tom Wolfe's (1931-2018) description of Manhattan's Avenue of the America's as “[r]ow after Mies van der row of glass boxes. Worker housing pitched up fifty stories high,”<sup>134</sup> might just as readily describe the views of any thoroughfare in Osaka, Tokyo, or Sapporo, merely substituting the visual nonconformity of an ancient temple or castle's *toriyasumi* and *onigawara*<sup>135</sup> for aquiline Art Deco gargoyles or the anachronistic optimism of a dirigible mooring mast.<sup>136</sup>

The Japanese countryside though, is pocked with conservative enclaves wherein “...the lifestyle of farmers was not reconciled to the need for Western fashions,”<sup>137</sup> and resistance to change, especially that perceived to be inspired by alien influence, is a point

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133 Noboru Murata and Alexandra Black, *The Japanese House: Architecture and Interiors* (Singapore: Tuttle Publishing, 2000).

134 Tom Wolf, *From Bauhaus to our House* (New York: Picador, 1981), 2.

135 Toriyasumi and onigawara are ornaments of traditionally roofed Japanese structure. The former is a curved, cylindrical tile extending past the gable from the ridge cap, ostensibly as a place for birds to alight, and the latter is a tile wrought to resemble the face of an oni, an ogre from Japanese folklore.

136 Features of the Chrysler Building and the Empire State Building respectively.

137 Jason G. Karlin, “The Lure of the Modern: Imagining the Temporal Spaces of City and Countryside,” in *Gender and Nation in Meiji Japan: Modernity, Loss and the Doing of History* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014), 178.

of cultural distinction between rustics and urbanites.<sup>138</sup> Yet even here, the twenty-first century scenes resemble no idealized Utagawa<sup>139</sup> landscape, rather for every *machiya* or *shikkui*-plastered lane, two ferro-concrete convenience stores, beige *danchi*, or earthquake-proofed pachinko high-rises clot the panorama.<sup>140</sup>

The rarity of pre-Western styles is evident in the recognition and protection given unto the villages of Shrakawa-go and Gokayama. These secluded hamlets remain an enclave of exclusively indigenous architecture, where the *minka* exhibit the anachronistic *gassho-zukuri* style.<sup>141</sup> The nailless construction and sericulture-specific attic spaces testify to the ancient provenance of these thatched-roof buildings. These sites stand unmarred by the usual interspersal of cement and cinderblock. The paradigm of change engulfing the archipelago reached even to this remote settlement, wreaking its predictable change: “At the end of the nineteenth century, there were still 1,800 *gassho*-style houses

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138 Karlin, “The Lure of the Modern,” 177-178.

139 A school of Japanese woodblock printmaking that flourished through the Edo period, many of their works include depictions of idyllic country life and traditional architecture.

140 A *machiya* is a form of business and home construction typical of cities from the Heian to the Edo Period. They are characterized by multi-story wooden construction, earthen upper-story facades, tiled roofs, latticed *koshi* windows, and sliding doors.

*Shikkui* is a white lime plaster that was fixture of Japanese architecture and city planning from its importation from Korea in the sixth century until the end of the Edo Period. This coating, when applied over earthen construction allowed the wide swathes of castles and roadside walls to be finished jointlessly, imparting the smooth, white planes so distinctive of pre-modern Japan's cityscapes.

*Danchi* are Low-rise public housing projects characterized by unadorned functionality.

141 *Minka* were dwellings constructed by, and for the use of, the lay non-nobility.

*Gassho-zukkuri* style is characterized by steeply canted roof angles. This term literally means praying hands, as such roofs resemble a pair of hands pressed together as if in prayer.

in the Shirakawa-go and Goyakama areas. Today fewer than 200 of these remain.”<sup>142</sup>

However, locals, the national government, and ultimately the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recognized these villages as an important aspect of human civilization, worthy of preservation. This World Heritage Site thus escaped modernization or alteration. This effort to preserve such an area was necessitated by the inexorability of the forces set in motion by Perry's arrival that would otherwise commit such bastions to oblivion: the need for conscious preservation pays tacit tribute to the puissance of change.



4. Jomon Period blades (Tokyo National Museum, photograph by author)



5. Yayoi Period blades (Tokyo National Museum, photograph by author)

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142 Janice Francis Lindsay, “The Intrinsic Value of Cultural Heritage and its Relationship to Sustainable Tourism Development: The Contrasting Experiences of Jamaica and Japan,” *Caribbean Quarterly* 55, no. 2 (June 2009): 158.



6. Reconstructed Ainu pu, an elevated storehouse (Noboribetsu Ainu Village, photograph by author)



7. Reconstructed Jomon Period dwelling (Sanna Maruyama Archaeological Site, photograph by author)

### Atavistic Millennialism

The Japanese historical period of which the Sankebetsu Brown Bear Incident serves as culminating apogee, is part of a broad sociopolitical pattern. At great irreversible watershed junctures, men have striven to avert the quickening of new epochs incompatible with their worldviews and lifestyles. In the American West, the Ghost Dance, an ecumenical indigenous movement typified by attempts to physically and spiritually resist the closure of the frontier and the inexorable dominance of the United States federal government, waxed and thrived until the inhumanities of Wounded Knee. In China, the Boxers of the Righteous and Harmonious Fists represented anti-Western sentiment rooted in an ancient Sino-centrism fated to be dashed by coalition forces' entry into the Forbidden City and subsequent Imperial capitulation. So too in Hokkaido did General Enomoto and the routed forces of the *Bakufu* retreat to Ezo in an attempt to

reinstate ancient mores. There they entrenched themselves literally and philosophically in the star-shaped Goryokaku Fortress of Hakodate, until forced into final surrender, leaving their cause *célèbre* all but abandoned, with only Kesagake to hoist the final desperate gonfalon.

One year before the U.S. Census of 1890 declared the disappearance of the American frontier, Great Basin and plains Indian tribes embraced a brief, but fervid courtship with an end times “utopian narrative.”<sup>143</sup> The traditional ways of native life, under siege since 1492, were about to enter a state of *durance vile*. Nominally inspired by the millenarian sermons of one Jack Wilson (1856-1932), the unprepossessing Paiute prophet known to the faithful as Wovoka, Great Basin and Plains Indians began to proselytize his message of a coming regenerative apocalypse. This message resonated beyond his Nevada revival meetings to “reinvent a sense of community, to renew and create culture through songs and dance and gatherings”<sup>144</sup> among indigenous groups facing the prospect of irreversible cultural alteration. Having been “defeated militarily, concentrated onto reservations, removed from their homelands, and forced to accept new laws”<sup>145</sup> North American indigenes thirsted for a miraculous continental sedition. Their world was ending, yet they sought unto the last to remake it anew.

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143 B. C. Mohrbacher, “The Whole World is Coming: The 1890 Ghost Dance Movement as Utopia,” *Utopian Studies* 7, no. 1 (1996): 77.

144 Ibid.

145 L.G. Moses, “The Father Tells Me So!” Wovoka: The Ghost Dance Prophet,” *American Indian Quarterly* 9, no. 3 (1985): 335.



Across thousands of square miles in the officially-closed frontier, openly in ersatz camps, and surreptitiously in reservations and at trading posts, warriors with no chance to fight, hunters without game, and mothers without food engaged in ecstatic dances during which communicants had visions of “a great cataclysm whereby whites and their ways would be swept away, inaugurating an Indian millennium.”<sup>146</sup> The frenzied faithful entered trances wherein they reunited with dead family members, spoke to spirits directly, and returned to their senses spent, elated, and clutching hunks of meat of the nigh-obliterated plains bison, pulled back through the spirit veil. Believing then that soon “all Indians – living and dead – would be united in a world paradise, where Indians would be eternally free from poverty, disease, and death,” pious tribesmen energized by the message of precipitant salvation donned holy jerkins wrought bulletproof by faith, and encamped to dance and await the coming epoch.<sup>147</sup>

The reality however was a redoubled enforcement of draconian federal policy, decades of legal oppression, and the arrant reign of European descendants over the whole of the continent. Though modern scholars such as Drs. Benjamin Kracht (1955- )<sup>148</sup> and Louis S. Warren (1962- )<sup>149</sup> have begun to reevaluate the legacy and longer-term impact of the Ghost Dance movement as the initial steps towards the current resurgent native

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146 Moses, “The Father Tells Me So!” 336.

147 Ibid.

148 Author of “The Kiowa Ghost Dance, 1894 – 1916: An Unheralded Revitalization Movement,” *Ethnohistory*, 39, no. 4 (1992): 452-477.

149 Author of *God's Red Son: The Ghost Dance Religion and the Making of Modern America* (New York: Basic Books, 2017).

identity paradigms, its significance for those nineteenth century natives ardently wishing for a return to an imagined pre-Columbian utopia was only to emphasize the futility and finality of their yearnings. Frederick Jackson Turner's (1861-1932) foreboding thesis' warning that "the frontier has gone, and with its going has closed the first period of American history"<sup>150</sup> had an inverted chiliastic implication for the possibilities of the continent's autochthonous races as well.

On December 9, 1890 at Wounded Knee Creek on their reservation in South Dakota, Spotted Elk's (1826-1890) band of eschatological Miniconjou Sioux confronted Major Samuel M. Whitside's (1839-1904) U.S. 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment. Charged with disarming the millenarian natives, Colonel James W. Forsyth (1834-1906) sought to confiscate the group's weaponry. A ghost dancer named Yellow Bird began to dance the sacred dance, holding forth on the precipitant millennium, and the efficacy of their magical anti-ballistic jerkins. One Lakota man, Black Coyote (?-1890), was deaf and could not understand the shouted orders of the cavalrymen. He refused to surrender his rifle, firing it during the scuffle to confiscate it. Shouldering .45 caliber Winchester repeating carbines and unlimbering a four-piece battery of M1875 Hotchkiss mountain guns, the regiment began a lustful butchery of outgunned and outmanned Sioux, riding down fleeing women, youths, and the wounded to dispatch them with hoof and saber. As many as 300 Sioux lay dead before the day's end.<sup>151</sup> Once the Army unceremoniously

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150 George Rogers Taylor, ed., *The Turner Thesis: Concerning the Role of the Frontier in American History*, Revised Edition (Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1956): 18.

151 Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West* (New York: Open Road Integrated Media, 1970).

interred ardent ghost dancers among the stiffening Indian dead in a jumbled charnel pit, no amount of *fin de siècle* desperation could further sustain earnest belief in the possibility of an atavistic renaissance.

Less than a decade later, a distinct, but analogous violent social movement punctuated the death throes of the Qing Dynasty. The Shandong martial arts militia, the eponymous 'Boxers', sparked a pan-China resistance to the encroachment of Christianity, westernization, and the Imperial court's capitulation thereto. The movement spread quickly, predicated on emotional response to events such as the Second Opium War in 1858 in which “the Chinese were miserably defeated.”<sup>152</sup> This was concluded by the punitive 1860 Treaty of Tianjin which proved “more humiliating to the Chinese than the previous Treaty of Nanking.”<sup>153</sup> Though at once vague and legion, the aims of adherents were generally to “Revive the Qing”<sup>154</sup> from its state of quisling subservience to alien powers, “and destroy the foreigners”<sup>155</sup> responsible for the late nineteenth century dissipation of the Middle Kingdom. Driven by the contrast of China's contemporary reality of subordination to Western wealth and arms with the shared belief in a mythic Cathay of ancient eminence, the Boxers embarked on a foredoomed campaign of sporadic violence against foreign clergy, Chinese Christian converts, and the international

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152 A.C. Sahu, “Genesis and Growth of Indo-Chinese Opium Monopoly Under East India Company,” *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress 38*, (1977): 531.

153 Ibid.

154 Lanxin Xiang, *The Origins of the Boxer War: A Multi National Study* (United Kingdom: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 115.

155 Ibid.

Legation Quarter enclave of Peking. Armed almost exclusively with melee weapons of traditional Chinese hand-to-hand combat and protected only by the Armor of the Golden Bell, a “‘hard’ (*ying*) form of deep-breathing exercise (*qigong*), accompanied by recitation of magical formulas and the swallowing of charms,”<sup>156</sup> which, when enacted properly, was meant to ensheath the entirety of the practitioner's body “‘with a golden bell which bullets could not penetrate.’”<sup>157</sup>

The abruptness of the movement's transition to tactics of wide-scale violence, and the perfervidity of its adherents propelled the Boxers to a series of early victories. Working in congress with the Imperial Chinese Army, Boxer forces halted British Admiral Edward Seymour's (1840-1929) attempt at mounting an Alliance<sup>158</sup> relief expedition at the Battle of Peitsang Village, after which the international relief column was “‘Unable to go any farther because of exhaustion, lack of supplies, and casualties...Seymour's expedition was a serious failure.’”<sup>159</sup> However, the multi-national coalition soon brought the capabilities of eight modern militaries to bear against the insurgents. A series of massacres featured cadres of professional riflemen vying to mow

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156 Paul A. Cohen, *History in Three Keys: The Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1997), 17-19.

157 Cohen, *History in Three Keys*, 19.

158 The military coalition of eight nations (Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, the United States, Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy) allied for the duration of the relief intervention.

159 Robert R. Leonard, *The China Relief Expedition Joint Coalition Warfare in China Summer 1900* (Laurel: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 13.

down the most *qiang*<sup>160</sup> and *jian*<sup>161</sup> wielding militiamen<sup>162</sup> with arsenals of semi-automatic firearms and field pieces for the greater glory of their respective nations. Though ostensibly the unified field command of British Lieutenant General Alfred Gaslee (1844-1918), the Eight Nation Alliance members cooperated with each other only for the duration and for this single purpose. The international relations jockeying within the ranks was evidenced by individual national cadres' attempts to be the first to reach Peking, "It was to be, in Olympic terms, a run for the gold – and may the best army win."<sup>163</sup> Though the Russian contingent disobeyed central command and charged ahead, winning the race to the ancient capital, the deeper meaning of this was that the system of global power struggles against which both Qing and Boxer strove characterized the very oncome of their defeat; the Great Game had come to China, and the nation's future would be ever changed thereby.

The climax of the eight party intervention was the invasion and occupation of the Imperial capital, culminating with the forced concessions of the Boxer Protocol, an agreement that levied blame for the disturbances on the pseudo-complicit Qing, and as

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160 A broad-tipped tasseled spear.

161 A straight-bladed, one-handed sword.

162 Though Boxers were predominantly male, a women's' auxiliary, the Red Lantern Society operated in a support role.

163 Larry Clinton Thompson, *William Scott Ament and the Boxer Rebellion: Heroism, Hubris and the Ideal Mercenary* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company Inc., 2009), 172.

such, exacted a variety of punitive monetary, territorial, and trading policies as recompense, “The insult to Chinese sovereignty was obvious and equally inescapable.”<sup>164</sup>

Chinese nationalism has sought to reclaim the legacy of the Boxers as plucky heroes of The People, “by the 1920s Chinese revolutionaries were beginning to rework the Boxers into 'a more positive myth'. Mao Zedong's Red Guards sometimes called themselves 'new Boxers'.”<sup>165</sup> However their defeat heralded the end of the paradigm they sought to preserve: modernity overtook ancient insularity, and the Qing were soon no more. Though the Boxer events were confined to the Asian continent, they illustrate the general principle of millenarian convulsion auguring a paradigm shift, a pattern that was evident in the Japanese archipelago as well.

Analogously, era ending violence characterized the Japanese epochal shift in the form of the Boshin War. After centuries of unabashedly Japan-centric and resolutely cloistered foreign policy, the governing shogunal system failed to halt the persistent armed diplomatic overtures of the West. A clique of powerful *daimyo* viewed the 1854 Treaty of Kanagawa brokered with Commodore Perry, and subsequent diplomatic and trade concessions to the United States and European nations as shameful, unnecessarily conciliatory, and evidence of a dangerous weakness that might set Japan on the same course as other foreign-dominated Asian countries such as India, China, Macau, or Singapore. Political scholar Sakuma Shozan warned that “After the British finished fighting in China...they might send ships to Japan under the pretext of seeking trade – but

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164 Leonard, *The China Relief Expedition*, 56.

165 “A Righteous Fist,” *The Economist*, December 16, 2010.

in reality having designs on the country.”<sup>166</sup> Following decades of regional posturing and political maneuvering, those factions favoring an end to the Tokugawa Era embraced the inexorability of the coming age and reestablished the titular, direct sovereignty of the imperial house, thus instituting a strong, identifiable locus of national leadership consciously in the appearance of European constitutional monarchies. Beginning also efforts to adopt forms of Western technology and sociological precepts, the Restoration-backers sought thereby to enter into the congress of developed nations at the age's fore as equals.

However, a coalition of stalwarts sought to resist the New Age in which they were to have no place. The powerful domains of Takamatsu and Aizu allied with several lesser regional powers, and took up arms in an ultimately futile resistance to the Restoration and its attendant progressivism. Their conclusive defeat came only after an audacious attempt to establish a permanent conservative enclave in the less-developed north: the Republic of Ezo. Following the pro-Tokugawa forces' defeats at Koshu-Katsunuma, Ueno, and their ultimate surrender, the Bakufu's Naval commander, one Enomoto Takeaki (1836-1908), retreated with the remnants of the Tokugawa Navy to Hakodate on the edge of the northern frontier. There, he and the remaining Shogun loyalists vainly resisted the newly restored Imperial forces. The Emperor's troops exhibited their new adoption of modern international industry by using the American-purchased ironclad *Kotetsu* and a Gatling gun to decisive effect in the abattoir waters of the Hakodate Bay engagement. Fighting

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<sup>166</sup> Romulus Hillsborough, *Samurai Revolution: The Dawn of Modern Japan Seen Through the Eyes of the Shogun's Last Samurai* (China: Tuttle Publishing, 2014), 38-39.

the Ezo secessionists to a defeat at the Goryokaku bastion fortress during the Battle of Hakodate, the Imperial military continued to operate as a unified national force under the emperor's pennant for the first time in over three centuries, “the sun in gold on a red ground and the moon in silver...none of [the combatants] present had ever seen the ancient standard, though many had probably heard about it in the war chronicles of Japan.”<sup>167</sup> Together with the titular field leadership of Prince du sang Lieutenant General Komatsu Akihito (1895 -1898),<sup>168</sup> this unmistakably established the legitimacy of the restored Chrysanthemum Throne. The lusty futility of the northern resistance evidenced the approaching expiration of the Way its followers defended and represented. Once Enomoto accepted surrender terms on June 27, 1869, officially capitulating to Imperial forces and peremptory epochal change, none remained who might still stand against the coming Age, save for a single Ezo bear sow soon to birth an as-yet-unnamed cub destined to maintain an unconquered duchy of one at the fringe of the recently-renamed Ainu settlement of Rurumoppe.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Hillsborough, *Samurai Revolution*, 443.

<sup>168</sup> Formerly Prince Yoshiaki before his adoption by Emperor Ninko (1817-1847). Alternatively known as Ninnaji no Miya Yoshiaki, a religious appellation from his period of monzeki in Kyoto's Shingon Buddhist Ninna-Ji Temple, a practice whereby an Imperial scion served a period as the head of the priesthood of a favored institution. Prince Akihito's abbacy was the final example of this custom.

<sup>169</sup> In 1869 the Hokkaido Development Commission renamed the city of Rurumoppe, meaning “brackish water” in the Ainu tongue, Rumoi, a corruption of the original name more compatible with Japanese pronunciation.



## CHAPTER 3

### THE NATURAL WORLD

*“He used both hands when he made the bear. Imagine a bear proceeding from the hands of God.”*

*-N. Scott Momaday*

In *The Natural World* I consider how the changes within the tripartite relationship of men, animals, and place evident in the Sankebetsu Incident signifies a gestalt meaning for the history of modernity in Japan.

Whereas a characteristic predilection of the human species since the paleolithic has been ursine worship, I discuss how this ancient tie imbues Kesagake's attacks with sufficient numen and gravitas to permit it to serve as semiotic synecdoche of the entirety of Japanese pre-modernity. I delve into the history of this phenomenon, the historiography thereof, and how it has presented in the Japanese archipelago. By drawing parallels between the archaeological findings regarding arctolatry in prehistoric Eurasia and the nineteenth century remnants of this practice in such traditions as *Matagi* adulation of the bears in *Tohoku*<sup>170</sup> and the persistence of iomante in the Ezochi, I illustrate the symbolic depth of that December's rampage.

So too do I contrast that past with the state of Japanese human-bear relationships thereafter. I present as evidence of a changed paradigm the popularity of Japanese bear parks; the ancient hemispheric Godhead of terror and reverence is now a zoological attraction. Additionally, I submit that despite the academic value and benefits to the

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<sup>170</sup> The geographical region that includes the six prefectures of northern Honshu. It is characterized by harsh winters and steep mountains.

health and conservation of the species, the scientific study, harvest, and management of bear populations in modern Japan evinces a wholly different type of belief and interaction.

Bears however are not the only species indicative of an altered worldviews. The Hokkaido wolf, Blakiston's fish owl, and the anadromous dog salmon are also unique representatives of precisely what changed in man's relationship to the anthro-habitat. A campaign of extinction, a desperate conservation effort, and the restriction on vernacular fisheries are respectively illustrative of how New Japan regarded the extent of sentient dominance. The fate of these species supports the identification of the Sankebetsu Incident as the final resistance to this transformation by embodying a series of gradual but inexorable elegiac denouements.

Hokkaido's tamers learned that the island's flora and fauna were their fellow travelers; tamable, intelligent, organisms from which they might learn to occupy the same geo-ecological niche. Nature's true animus was to be found in the stone, water, and fire that shaped the northern land. To truly modernize the fierce north therefore required that even these elements be compassed and controlled. Thus I elucidate the methodical ore extraction, river damming, and coastal terraforming projects that reified a new image of the very earth. I connect the animal reasoning behind Kesagake's preternatural predation to the theretofore unfamiliar forces that caused his unaccustomed anthropophagy.

## Ezo Itself

The transformation of Ezo's feral expanses was a process that recapitulated the aeon-spanning domestication of Yamato proper in the course of half a century. The paths of her rivers, vegetation of her plains, and geographic isolation of her regions embodied the Ancient Way; a comprehensive manner of life and thought nearing eradication, kept alive only by the presence of the features of the primal North. The renaming, populating, reconstructing, damming, deforesting, and grading, of Ezo's environs birthed Hokkaido: a compassable imperial prize only realized by strangling the older, darker twin from the womb.

Until 1869, non-Ainu used the name “Ezo” to refer to the vast land mass north of the Tsugaru Strait, a term synonymous in the Japanese consciousness with barbarism; even the compound of Chinese characters that comprise the word (蝦夷) includes a logograph meaning “savage” and “foreign.”<sup>171</sup> Its imposing breadth, remoteness from established and metropolitan centers combined with the hostility of natives and climate to make “Even the birds do not fly to Ezo,” a popular nineteenth-century saying about Japan's northernmost island<sup>172</sup> emblematic of the region's perceived inhospitably. Therefore, as an opening semantic maneuver in the campaign to convert the North into a productive imperial province, the Meiji Government renamed the island Hokkaido in accordance with the recommendation of geographer Takeshiro Matsuura (1818-1888). The new name, meaning “North Sea Route” had the advantage of having none of the

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171 The Ainu referred to their native island by the name “Ainu Moshir”, literally “Land of the People”.

172 Michael, Hoffman “Hokkaido's Ancient Place in the Modern World,” *The Japan Times*, May 20, 2017.

negative associations of the old, as well as inferring Hokkaido's connectivity to the rest of the Empire; it was the northern vicinity thereof, rather than a separate entity.

Additionally, the name was in the pattern of those of Honshu's Five Routes: storied highways that exemplified established domesticity.<sup>173</sup> This nominal revision was but the first erasure of the land's intrinsic nature. Naming a place is an implicit exertion of dominion of namer over namee.<sup>174</sup> This nomenclatural shift demonstrates that the Meiji government had established the necessary hegemony to begin to rework the wild North into subservience.

For centuries the Ezochi abode as the exclusive territory of an occasionally hostile indigenous culture. However, one facet of Japan's entrance in modern international affairs was her need to establish absolute rights of sovereignty over the entirety of the archipelago. The Russian Empire to the northwest, separated from Ezo only by the twenty-seven miles of the La Perouse Strait,<sup>175</sup> waxed powerful in the latter half of the nineteenth century, slicing choice territorial concession from China and the Ottomans, growing in terms of men, arms, and wealth to a continental superpower. Thus the Japanese sought to accelerate the colonization of Hokkaido's interior as a buffer against

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173 The Tokaido, Nakasendo, Kosshu Kaido, Oshu Kaido, and Nikko Kaido.

174 Loren Graham, "The Power of Names: In Culture and Mathematics," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 157, no. 2 (June 2013): 229.

175 This La Perouse Strait separates Hokkaido's Cape Soya from Sakhalin Island's Cape Krilon. The latter has been nominally under Russian jurisdiction since the end of the Second World War, but for the majority of the nineteenth century, sovereignty shifted back and forth in a series of Russo-Japanese treaties. When under their control, the Japanese administered it under the name Karafuto Prefecture. At such times, Japanese and Russian territories were divided only by the Tartary Strait, less than five miles at its narrowest.

any designs the Tsar might have regarding eastward expansion. To that end the Kaitakushi established the Tondenhei system not out of domestic national need, but as a calculated international relations gambit. In this system, the Ezo Colonization Office enticed former samurai displaced by the Meiji reforms that deprived them of their livelihood to become paramilitary agricultural pioneers with promises of opportunity and government support. These armed pioneers settled along the western, Russia-facing half of the island, as well as near strategic ports. Thus they reaffirmed Japan's claim to the region by right of occupancy insofar as “By the end of 1876 more than two thousand Tondenhei soldier-farmers had gone to Hokkaido in the program,”<sup>176</sup> and created a standing militia: “They would turn out for military duty if needed,”<sup>177</sup> and as such “could help protect Hokkaido from the Russians.”<sup>178</sup>

Additionally, the inhabitation of the northern island, from the Meiji Era onward, was characterized by a conscious adoption of, and adaptation to, the contemporaneous Western thought. To wit, 1859's Treaty of Amity designated Hakodate, though at the very fringes of the Empire, to accompany Nagasaki and Yokohama as one of Japan's first officially sanctioned international trading ports in centuries.<sup>179</sup> The foreign influences of

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176 Ann B. Irish, *Hokkaido: A History of Ethnic Transition and Development on Japan's Northern Island* (Jefferson: Mcfarland and Company Inc., 2009), 119.

177 Ibid.

178 Ibid.

179 In company with the likewise-designated ports of Yokohama and Nagasaki. This is in contrast to Dejima, the fan-shaped island enclave that served as a Dutch trading center through which the only governmentally permitted goods and knowledge entered and exited the Empire during the centuries of the Tokugawa Shogunate's efforts to enforce isolation policy.

the buildings of the Motmachi and Suehirocho districts of Hakodate stand testament to this vigorous effort to enter the sphere of internationalism. Suehirocho's domed Russian Orthodox Church, the first of its kind in Japan, evidences the purposeful philosophical shift characteristic of its age: “In 1861 the young priest Nicholei came to Hakodate from Russia to propagate the Russian Orthodox Church for the first time in Japan after the embargo on early Christianity in Japan was removed.”<sup>180</sup> Even evangelical missions of more distant origin took advantage of the Meiji's calculated policy of increased foreign acceptance, such as when “missionary W. Denning of the Anglican Church Missionary Society, first came to Hakodate to preach the gospel in 1874, and establish a base,”<sup>181</sup> erecting a traditionally named Episcopalian church. This pattern is further evidenced by the presence of such contemporaneous Western-style buildings as the British Consulate, the Hokkaido Prefectural Government Branch Office, and the Old Public Hall, which exhibit such then unseen-in-Japan features as asymmetrical construction, upstairs verandas, skylights, and pillared entranceways. Additionally, even traditional Japanese architecture of the time exhibits Western influence such as the Kanemori Haberdashery and the Tachikawa Residence that possess such imported design features as “vertical

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“Treaty of Amity,” reproduction, Perry Memorial Hall, Kanagawa, September 13, 2017.

180 “The Russian Orthodox Church,” historical plaque, erected by the City of Hakodate: Hakodate. September 9, 2017.

181 “Episcopal Church of Japan,” historical plaque, erected by the City of Hakodate: Hakodate. September 9, 2017.

decorated windows...a wave-like trim between the two levels...and a decorated console under the roof.”<sup>182</sup>

This transplantation of foreign and naichi-birthered construction to the northern island did more than provide infrastructure for the shifting demography, it carried with it an alternative perception of reality. The chores and festivals of the native populations had ever been dictated by the waxing and waning of daylight, and the cycle of the seasons. The earliest *Wa-jin* incursions opened the first fissure in this perception of how and when things ought to be done by scheduling tasks in accordance with the abstract demands of the lunosolar calendar and sexagenary cycle, and the mechanical precision of the temporal hours of *wadokei* clocks.<sup>183</sup> However, it was on the occasion of the 1881 installation of an American-made, hand-cranked, weight-driven tolling clock atop the military drill hall of the recently established Sapporo Agricultural College that time in Hokkaido changed evermore. Accustomed to regulating daily activity in time with naught save circadian necessity, or in the case of an elite few by the mercurial hours of their imported *wadokei*, the citizens of the Sapporo, a city which but 15 years earlier was the small Ainu settlement of *sat poro pet*,<sup>184</sup> might every hour, upon the hour, hear the time tolled with dread precision. Echoing from what was at time the tallest structure in the

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182 “Imitation of Western Buildings,” historical plaque, erected by the City of Hakodate: Hakodate. September 9, 2017.

183 Timepieces intended to show the twelve shifting, and unequal hours of the Japanese pre-modern reckoning; in this system both night and day are divided into six equal units. As such, the length of the nocturnal and diurnal hours wax and wane as seasons shorten or lengthen the length of daylight and darkness.

184 Meaning “large dry river”.

city, and thereby audible in all quarters of the provincial capital, twenty-four times a day the peals mechanically tolled regnancy of the new order's absolutism in Hokkaido.

Ezo's flowing freshwater, once the coursing capillaries of a fierce island, have since been brought to heel. The island's rivers were always distinctively ardent watercourses. Their sheer size set them apart; due to the island's size and topography, her “rivers are longer than most in Japan.”<sup>185</sup> So too did their power: strength unbridled by any but the most incidental and transitory of course correction or flow constriction. By at least the tenth century CE, the Wa-jin incorporated significant hydrological engineering projects into their lifestyle, damming rivers to provide reservoirs for irrigation canal systems.<sup>186</sup> In the ensuing few centuries, major construction projects such as the dams at Kagawa Prefecture's Ichibanike and Kagoshima Prefecture's Sumiyoshiike<sup>187</sup> volcanic crater were an accepted and expected fact of the austral Japanese relationship with nature. Today however, Hokkaido's rivers are subject to all manner of damming, most infamously when “in 1973, the Hokkaido Development Agency...publicised its plan to construct a dam on the Saru River in Hokkaido. The dam was to provide water resources for a planned industrial development zone called Tomakomai Tobu on the Pacific coast of Hokkaido, and to local residents in the Nibutani region.”<sup>188</sup> The stated aims of the

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185 Irish, *Hokkaido*, 9.

186 Keiji Imamura, *Prehistoric Japan: New Perspectives on Insular East Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996), 134.

187 Both completed in the year 400 CE.

188 Kahara Kaori, *Nibutani Dam Case*.



Nibutani Project focused on thwarting the powerful caprices of Hokkaido's native waters through mechanical artifice, such as “controlling flood waters, to protect persons and property from flooding and to eliminate residents' anxiety with regards to flooding”<sup>189</sup> and to predict and compensate for droughts and floods by controlling control currents to “obtain a stable flow of water through the river course.”<sup>190</sup> The means of this undertaking demanded however that to tame the untameable, any vestiges of the Ezo paradigm be washed away, in this instance quite literally; insofar as “The vicinity of the Instant Confiscated Properties [was] said to be a holy place to the Ainu people, and furthermore, an extremely high proportion of the residents in the vicinity [were] Ainu people.”<sup>191</sup> However, despite the subsequent legal case's acknowledgment that “In the Nibutani area, traditional spiritual and technological culture is preserved,”<sup>192</sup> specifically the *Yuoy Chashi* and *Poromoy Chashi*<sup>193</sup> located in the vicinity of the Instant Confiscated Properties are important remains for understanding the history of the Ainu people,”<sup>194</sup> Japanese courts ultimately granted all necessary legal permissions to allow the Nibutani Dam Project to be constructed, physically drowning connectivity to Japan's atavistic avatars: unbridled nature and the worldview of premodern Ainu. Furthermore, once the

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189 Kayano and Others v. Hokkaido Expropriation Committee (Nibutani Dam Decision). Sapporo District Court, March 27, 1997.

190 Ibid.

191 Ibid.

192 Ibid.

193 Elevated Ainu strongholds.

194 Kayano and Others v. Hokkaido Expropriation Committee.

deluge took its toll, the severing was irreversible due to particularities of Ainu cultural history: “Because Ainu people have no written language,<sup>195</sup> the *Chippusanke*<sup>196</sup> and similar ceremonies [celebrated in the flood plain] and the Chashi relicts which have been preserved though their forms are precious irreplaceable resources in the quest for understanding Ainu ethnic culture.”<sup>197</sup> The *sui generis* nature of *place* to a traditionally pre-literate society meant that changing the physical shape of Hokkaido effaced preserved beliefs and paradigms as well. Hokkaido's longest river, the Ishikari, once flowed from its source in the Daisetsuzan volcanic mountains, across the eponymous Ishikari Plain, to its ultimate outlet in lazy, serpentine fashion. So indirect was its route that it vied with the Shinano for the title of Japan's longest river.<sup>198</sup> This circumlocuity was so intrinsic to its nature, that the name Ishikari is a Japanese linguistic corruption of “an Ainu term *ishikaribetsu*, meaning 'greatly meandering river' which describes the flow of its lower course.”<sup>199</sup> However, the construction of scores of dams, jetties, artificial inlets, and canal projects for transport and irrigation altered the currents to such a degree that the river abandoned its historical course for a more direct route, shortening its length by over 60 miles, and dotting the plain with oxbow lakes.<sup>200</sup> Hokkaido's developers acted

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195 When transcribed, Ainu language is commonly rendered with characters from the Japanese katakana syllabary.

196 A series of rites and invocations concerned with the launching of newly built canoes.

197 Kayano and Others v. Hokkaido Expropriation Committee.

198 C.A. Brebbia and S. Boukalova, *River Basin Management IX* (Great Britain: WIT Press, 2017), 34.

199 The Editors of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, Ishikari River.

200 Brebbia, 34.

with such vigor in transforming the island's hydrological realities, that they wrought from the same currents that perpetually threatened flood, drought, and the assorted danger of thousands of miles of virgin river the first Japanese-built modern municipal waterworks in Japan. So complete was this submission of natural forces, that as of this writing, this reservoir and filtration plant continue to supply sufficient water for the needs of the city's entire population.<sup>201</sup>

Just as hydrological engineering irrevocably separated Hokkaido from her past by changing the island's landscape, so too did technological artifice change not just the river courses and levels, but likewise exerted a form of domestication upon those aquatic species resident therein. The fauna of Ezo's rivers was, since before the existence of man as a species, subject to water's fickle strength. The Ainu subverted this only scarcely, employing impermanent “uray fishing using weirs and rawomap fishing using conical basket traps made of bamboo or twigs of willows.”<sup>202</sup> This is in stark contrast to the subsequent implementation of imposing steel automata: in 1896 the first fish wheel began collecting salmon on the Chitose River.<sup>203</sup> Composed of riveted metal beams, fish wheels proved efficacious assistants in counting, collecting, and redistributing Hokkaido's salmon populations for man's commercial ends. Still employed for conservation research

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201 Hakodate Waterworks, historical plaque, erected by the City of Hakodate: Hakodate. September 9, 2017.

202 “Bounty of the Rivers,” Poroto Kotan Ainu Museum, wall text, Shiraoi. September 12, 2017.

203 “Fish Wheel,” Chitose Salmon Aquarium, wall text, Chitose. September 11, 2017.

purposes, the presence of these girdered fish Ferris wheels in Hokkaido's waterways altered the physical reality of, and man's relationship with, the Japanese waters.

In addition to changing Ezo's aquatic interface, developers of the island's interior remade the state of the flora as well. Much of the Hokkaido, in contrast to the other islands of the archipelago, “is characterized by broad gentle slopes and broad lowland plains...the result of broad erosion due to the glaciated process.”<sup>204</sup> Until the latter half of the nineteenth century, these plains that comprised much of the Ezochi were characterized by an abundance of old growth timber; “[m]ost of Hokkaido was naturally forested...Deciduous trees which make up about seventy percent of the island's trees, abound in low lands while in the mountains and farther north and east more evergreens, mainly spruce and fir, appear.”<sup>205</sup> The breadth and density of this the virgin greenwood caused American civil engineer William Wheeler (1851-1932) to remark: “The forests are truly primeval, consisting of huge trees of strange varieties, twined with numerous kinds of climbing vines, hung with parasitic ferns and lichens, and an undergrowth of dense shrubs and bamboo grass from five to eight feet high.”<sup>206</sup> These conditions were ideal for Ezo's endemic species: the Ezo wolf, Blakiston's Owl, and her gargantuan brown bears, and were therefore likewise meet for her indigenes who depended on the natural bounties delivered by those thriven in the wood. This feral ecosystem however was

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204 Hasegawa et al, “Geology and Geomorphology Along the Ishikari River in Central Hokkaido,” *IGCP-581 Evolution of Asian River Systems Linking to Cenozoic Tectonics, Climate and Global Geochemical Cycles, post-symposium field trip guidebook*, (June 13-14, 2011): 4.

205 Irish, *Hokkaido*, 16.

206 Ibid.

antipathetic to the goal of the Kaitakushi: an obedient prefecture for a modern empire. Unpredictable, unknowable, an impediment to industrial agriculture, and a tangible connection to the island's prehistoric past – these forests were incompatible with that objective. Cultivable flatlands of the South had long been domesticated through centuries of timber use and agricultural expansion, so that “By 1620...with the exception of Hokkaido, the old growth forests [of Japan] had been completely logged.”<sup>207</sup> The Kaitakushi Commission bore primary logistical responsibility for Hokkaido's modernization, evidencing by its name the intended means of executing this change; “Japanese-English dictionaries define *kaitaku* as reclamation, cultivation, development, or opening up land.”<sup>208</sup> It sought to recreate an accelerated microcosm of Japan's austral development in the north by encouraging and subsidizing agriculture and the necessarily attendant clearcutting forthwith, such as promoting the Tondenhei program *reclaiming* thereby the island from its untilled state, forcibly transmuting flourishing forest to national breadbasket. Though not fated to endure the totality of flatland timber clearance characteristic of the Japanese heartland, to a significant extent “The original boreal forest in Hokkaido Island has been replaced by cropland, paddy field, and urban areas.”<sup>209</sup> The Hokkaido Development Agency did however spare some forests the axe, preserving them for their future and ongoing use as a silvicultural repository. Old growth and afforested

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207 Gerald G. Marten, “Environmental Tipping Points: A New Paradigm for Restoring Ecological Security,” *Journal of Policy Studies* 20 (July 2005): 83.

208 Irish, *Hokkaido*, 117.

209 T. Sato and T. Sasaki, “Impact of Historical Deforestation and Urbanization on Regional Climate in Northern Japan,” *American Geophysical Union* (Fall 2011): abstract.

areas of Hokkaido remain thus not as a tacit link to the empire's primeval past, but as a resource managed nationally and for specific mundane purposes. For example, the current Hokkaido Regional Forest Office states that it seeks to contribute “to [the] development of regional industries and the welfare of rural communities by systematically and dependably supplying wood from thinning and other forest managements.”<sup>210</sup>

In addition to waters and woods, the changing paradigm altered the Japanese perception of, and relationship with, the island's soil and stone: the very flesh of Ezo. This pattern is evident both in the extractive industries that found a foothold in the North, and in terraforming projects necessitated by infrastructural growth. Before the middle of the nineteenth century, any excavation of Ezochi beyond the most casual of quarrying was an unthinkable feat. The Ainu had neither the specie need, nor the technological ability, to tunnel, mine, or otherwise delve, and as such, restricted their movements to the island's crust. The corpus of Ezo itself was an inviolate superstructure upon which the *kamui* condescended to permit them residence. Similarly, the Wajinchi dwellers of the Matsumae Era were not privileged to pierce the interior regions, vouchsafed ingress only to their enclaves on the island's distal peninsula to which they clung. As modernity's altered paradigm shifted mens' relationship with Ezo's forbidden secrets however, northern pioneers waxed bold, burrowing fast and deep to extract, at various points in its

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210 National Forests in Hokkaido, informational pamphlet, Hokkaido Regional Forest Office Administration Department Policy Planning Division.

history: gold, silver, coal, and sulfur from Hokkaido's private depths, as well as oil and gas from coastal deposits.

The first priority was anthracite, for the “Japanese Government understood that coal was the first priority for the industrial modernization of Japan.”<sup>211</sup> The importation of expertise in the person of American mining engineer Benjamin Smith Lyman (1835-1920) facilitated the opening of Horonai Coal Mine in 1879.<sup>212</sup> This served both as a source of the valuable organic fuel, and as the initial implementation of a concerted policy to “hire foreign engineers in order to induce advanced Western mining techniques in to the country.”<sup>213</sup> The virgin mineral bounty of the north was to serve as the catalyst whereby the relationship between Japan entire and her mineral wealth might be reconstrued to Meiji advancement.

Sumitomo *zaibatsu*<sup>214</sup> began extracting specie-rich ore from Konomai mine in 1915, and for a time “produced more gold and silver than any other mine in Asia.”<sup>215</sup> This is especially significant in the context of Hokkaido's conversion from indigenous enclave to natural resource repository: the Ainu believed this mineral wealth to be a gift

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211 Development of Coalfield,” Otaru Railway Museum, wall text, Otaru, September 15, 2017.

212 Ibid.

213 Kazuichiro Ono and Heitaro Namba, “The Growth of Iron & Steel Industry in Japan and the Problem of Raw Materials (II),” *Kyoto University Economic Review* 25, no. 2 (October 1955): 52.

214 The Zaibatsu are a select group of Japanese technological, financial, and industrial business conglomerates. With connections in politics, and every conceivable industry, these corporate titans have wielded influence over the course of Japanese history since the Edo period. Despite legal pressure to break up their monopolies, and an effort during the Occupation to force their dissolution, they, and their influence, persist as national fixtures to this day.

215 Irish, *Hokkaido*, 297.

from “the owl god Chikap Kamui, god of the land and of wealth, whose tears were sometimes considered to be gold and silver.”<sup>216</sup> Miners wrung Hokkaido's buried wealth, literal portions of the island itself, from the land's innards until it had nothing more to give. By the Konomai Mine's closure in 1973, “most of the precious metal had been extracted and what was left cost more to obtain than it was worth.”<sup>217</sup>

In addition to tumbling through the island's intimate invaginations, Hokkaido's obligate siblicide included remaking characteristic terrain features, turning Ezo's harsh shapes to fit modernity's demands, rather than adapting lifestyles to it, as had ever been done in those northlands. As the modern habitation of Hokkaido was based on the growth of, and profits from, the farming and ranching industries of the interior, reliable access to, and ready egress from, expansive, fertile, naturally irrigated areas such as the Ishikari Plain were primary goals of the island's Meiji and Taisho developers. Thus, a creeping seine of rail lines soon clove the safety of the developed Wajinchi together with remote landlocked enclaves, and those coastal reaches previously accessible only via risky ocean voyages. So dependent on these ferrous arteries were the early pioneers that “occupation of the arable land [was] *induced* by the building of railroads, agriculture rapidly following rail construction (emphasis added).”<sup>218</sup> Hokkaido's caldera-pocked shores were not amenable to these intrusions however; only by grading, dredging, and blasting, might

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216 Chiri Yukie, *The Song the Owl God Sang*, translated by Benjamin Peterson (San Bernardino: BJS Books), 3.

217 Ibid.

218 Darrell H. Davis, “Present status of Settlement in Hokkaido,” *Geographical Review* 24, no. 3 (July 1934): 387.



beam, ballast, and crosstie wend their inorganic way into the bastioned fen and glade. In these efforts, the tips of the spear were American Railroad Engineer Joseph Crawford and his two chief lieutenants, Matsumoto Soichiro and Hirai Seiji. <sup>219</sup> He caused the terminus of the rail line he engineered to be constructed in Otaru, mere meters from the *Temiya Cave*, a petroglyph site of *Zoku-Jomon* (340 BCE-700 CE) <sup>220</sup> provenance. The anthropomorphic and theriomorphic carvings abidden therein for millennia were unconnected to, and overwhelmed by, this technological invasion. Crawford's statue erected at his rail terminus tellingly reads: "Shoulder to shoulder to *open* a way (emphasis added)." <sup>221</sup> Intended as an aphorismic bromide on the power of international fraternity, it evidences the attitude that: in an effort to convert the inland isle to a fitting province of the dawning century's most modern regional power, the land's stony sinew ought be severed and strewn by engine and explosive should need arise, and as was befitting that end. Thus it was that when "constructing [the railroad] along the rugged coast from Zenibalo to Otaru presented a serious [engineering] challenge," <sup>222</sup> foreign rail experts and Meiji bureaucrats caused Hokkaido itself to be reshaped, earning their routes of safe passage through employ of artifice and force, "Construction included landfills as well as protective retaining walls. The line ran through five tunnels and crossed several

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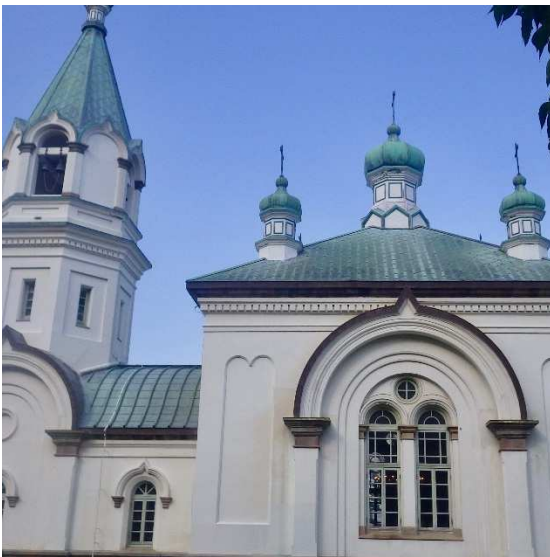
<sup>219</sup> Irish, *Hokkaido*, 153.

<sup>220</sup> While the culture of southern Japan moved from the Jomon to Yayoi period, the culture of the Tohoku region changed, but in a more subtle manner. This period of continuity with, but development from, Jomon Culture in Japan's north is referred to as the Zoku Jomon.

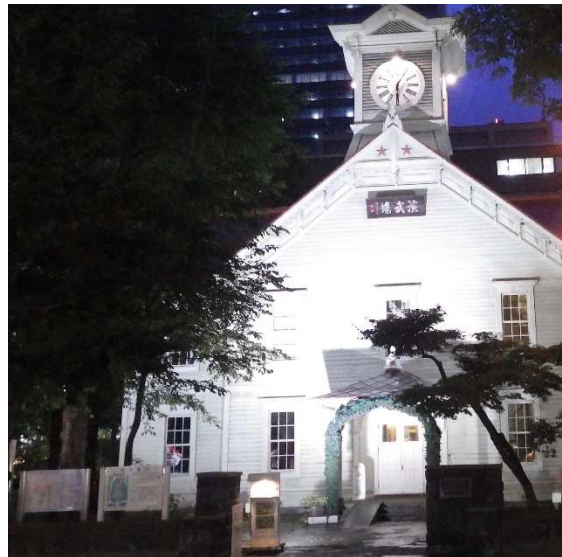
<sup>221</sup> Joseph Crawford, statue, unsigned, Otaru Railway Museum.

<sup>222</sup> Irish, *Hokkaido*, 67.

bridges...where the track ran partly through swampland, a stable foundation had to be provided.”<sup>223</sup> This subversion of Ezo's asperous coasts additionally corrupted the aspect of Ainu worldview that held the ruggedness of the coastal regions to be due to the haste with the gods formed them due to a contest of speed they had been engaged in during those lands' creation;<sup>224</sup> to reshape this inconvenient geography was to undo the unique stamp of the hand of the Kamuy upon the land. Thus, forced to conform with the demands of industrialization and colonization, Ezo passed away and the Hokkaido of tame rivers and coke-strewn collieries took its place.



8. Hakodate Orthodox Church  
(Hakodate, photograph by author)



9. Sapporo Clock Tower (Sapporo,  
photograph by author)

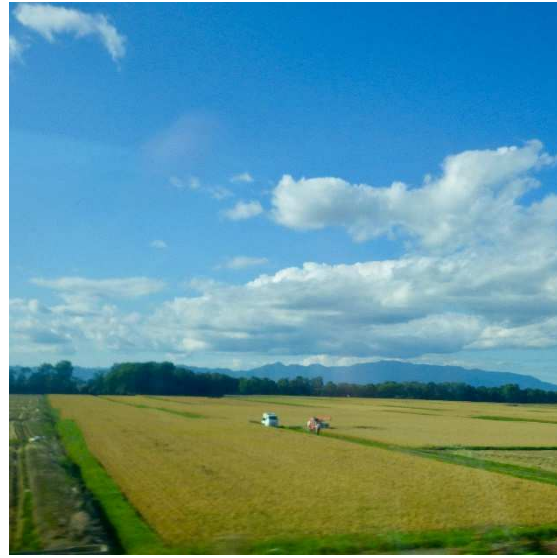
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223 Ibid.

224 Batchelor, *The Ainu and Their Folk-Lore*, 38-39.



10. Fields where once stood forests (Otaru, photograph by author)



11. Indian Fish Wheel (Chitose Salmon Acquarium, photograph by author)

## Of Bears and Men

Kesagake, the ultimate avatar of an entire way of life, and harbinger of an holistic paradigmatic change, was a bear. This taxonomic classification was not incidental to his semiotic poignance. The Ursidae family possesses an array of characteristics that made one of its members the ideal vessel for historical changes at the confluence of humanity and esoterism: the conceptual coordinates of the Sankebetsu Incident. The particular morphology, conduct, and history of sapien interaction tie ursines to humans in a *sui generis* relationship as well as maintaining a perpetual veil of mystique about the species.

The connection of bear and man is such that events affecting the former resonate with the latter. This is due to the physical and behavioral parallels, as well as the shared history, of hominines and ursines. As tetrapodial terrestrial mammals with the capability to walk upright, and flat-footed plantigrade gaits rare in tiptoed digitigrade predilected class Mammalia, men and bears developed analogous phenotypes: a flayed bear

resembles a human cadaver quite convincingly. Thus, to stalk, kill, and consume a bear bore more significance than the hunt of ungulates or snaring of rodents. It is but one remove from cannibalism. In diet, the omnivorous nature of extant Ursidae,<sup>225</sup> mirrors that of humans: adapted to subsist on an admixture of vegetation, supplementing this with opportunistic predation. The modern zoological consensus is that wild bear,<sup>226</sup> are “omnivores that eat a great diversity of plant and animal species.”<sup>227</sup> Their dietary adaptability permits survival when changes in climate affect “hydrology, insects, and fire regimes influence the abundance, range, and elevational distribution of the plants and animals consumed.”<sup>228</sup> Their flexibility is their strength. Similarly, ancient man subsisted only at the sufferance of nature's caprices, “...in the Paleolithic, the human diet varied immensely by geography, season and opportunity. 'we now know that humans had evolved not to subsist on a single Paleolithic diet but to be flexible eaters...’”<sup>229</sup> In lands without native populations of non-human Homonidae species, such as the Japanese archipelago, and especially in those lacking primates entirely,<sup>230</sup> such as Hokkaido, bears are therefore the closest intuitive animal analog to human beings.

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225 With the exception of the Giant Panda.

226 With the exceptions of polar and panda bears who have pursued alternative evolutionary niches.

227 Kerry A. Gunther et al., “Dietary Breadth of Grizzly Bears in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem,” *Ursus*, 25, no. 1 (2014): 61.

228 Ibid.

229 Ferris Jabr, “How to Really Eat Like a Hunter-Gatherer: Why the Paleo Diet is Half-Baked,” *Scientific American*, June 3, 2013.

230 Save for humans.

So too are ursines' communication, and by extension, best practice for encounters with them, both complex and subtle. Bears communicate via body postures, facial expression, tooth grinding, scent excretions, chuffing exhalations, an array of low frequency rumbles, and moaning ululations. Thus, in contrast to meeting other potentially dangerous animals, there is no standard approach to surviving a bear encounter. Other hazardous Hokkaido animal species are associated with a standardized best practice for safe encounters. The Mamushi viper's (*Gloydius blomhoffi*) venom can be avoided by watchfulness, avoidance, and retreat. Chances of a bite from the disease-bearing taiga tick (*Ixodes persucatus*) may be reduced by donning loose, light-colored clothing over tight fitting garments, thereby allowing the ticks to be seen and holding them away from the body. Bear encounter procedure however is dependent on the season, time of day, the bear's sex and familial status, hunger, previous experience with humans, and the individual disposition of a given animal. At different instants, bears must be cajoled, confronted, or soothed to prevent mauling and devourment. This necessity of intricate communication elevates human/bear encounters to a remove from other zoological interactions. Bear defense expert Troy Hurtubise (1963- )<sup>231</sup> states that a bear's behavior “depends what kind of mood he's in. They're just like human beings man, their habits are just the same. You get 'em on the wrong day, you get 'em on the right day, depends on

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231 Troy Hurtubise is a Canadian entrepreneur and outdoorsman who, inspired by a chance encounter with a grizzly bear in his youth, has, despite having no formal zoological education, built a series of increasingly complex suits of armor intended to provide protection from bear attacks.

what he's gonna want.”<sup>232</sup> So varied, expressive, and convincingly anthropomorphic is the emotional communication of bears that despite the disassociation of distress from lacrimal secretion in animals, a Matagi hunter well-acquainted with the expressions of dying and struggling animals stated “One time when I saw the eyes of a bear (that I was trying to kill) I realized she was as desperate as I was to fight, with tears in her eyes. She cried and I cried too. I sometimes wondered which was the bear and which a human being.”<sup>233</sup> Though fraught with mortal peril, such pseudo-verbal interlocation anthropomorphizes bears, and makes of their beings a carrier for humanity's ancient id.

Additionally, the complexity of ursine social relationships evokes human relationship patterns. Bear kinship groups based on matrilineal descent form the basis of extended multi-generational family groups that communicate and cooperate regarding resource availability, even into adulthood. Observers of North American bear populations determined that “Mothers recognized their independent offspring and tolerated them in their territories.”<sup>234</sup> Dominance and subordination for access to food, mates, and territory is decided by a constantly reshuffling hierarchy predicated on physical metrics such as size, strength, and ferocity, as well as on more subtle social cues such as kinship group support, historical claims, and an ineffable ursine charisma. Environmental pressures exacerbate extant social schisms between individuals and groups, while plentitude begets

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232 Troy Hurtubise, *Project Grizzly*, Youtube video, directed by Troy Hurtubise, Montreal: National Film Board Canada, 1997. Accessed December 1, 2019.

233 Otake, “On the Trail of Bear Hunters' Heritage.”

234 Lynn L. Rogers, “Effects of Food Supply and Kinship on Social Behavior, Movements, and Population Growth of Black Bears in Northeastern Minnesota,” *Wildlife Monographs* 97 (April 1987): 5.

tolerance and social ease; in locations where the amount of available food exceeds demand, “males commonly tolerated individual distances of < 2 m. Play was common among bears up to 4.7 years old around garbage dumps but was not seen elsewhere except among cubs.”<sup>235</sup> Governed by the exigencies of biological needs and instinctual drives, but tempered by intra-familial relationships and a social stratification: the society of bears mirrors that of men, stripped however of all the veneers of civilization and material culture.

In obedience to Bergmann's Rule,<sup>236</sup> north of Blakiston's Line,<sup>237</sup> Ezo bears grow to prodigious size: since the archipelago's megafaunal extinctions of the Late Pleistocene, Ezo's bears have been the largest land animal in the island chain.<sup>238</sup> Once connected to Siberia, Hokkaido shares much of its wildlife with the Russian mainland: a vast stark steppe that bred hearty hulking beasts. The Ussuri bear walked blithely across endless tundra 12,000 years ago, and remained once rising sea levels made what had been a peninsula of Northern Asia into an island.<sup>239</sup> These animals are the product of evolutionary exigency that demanded enormity and power for survival. Compared to their

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235 Ibid.

236 A biological precept dictating that those species inhabiting colder environments are larger than similar species inhabiting balmer climates.

237 A zoogeographical barrier identified by Thomas Wright Blakiston that corresponds with the Tsugaru Strait separating Honshu and Hokkaido. He described how the enforced separation between the two regions caused the fauna of Hokkaido to be distinct from the rest of Japan.

238 Norton et al., “Megafauna Extinctions in Japan The Nature of Megafaunal Extinctions During the MIS 3-2 Transition in Japan,” *Quaternary International* 211 (2010).

239 Zoe Gough, “The Bears that Became Fishermen's Friends,” embedded video, BBC, June 21, 2015.

ancient realm, Hokkaido is smaller, but the bears themselves are not, inspiring a worshipful dread and awe through their prodigious presence. This synthesis of human attributes and physical enormity meant that for the entirety of archipelagic inhabitability, those dwelt in the boreal reaches<sup>240</sup> were ever keenly aware of the cohabitation of a wilder, fiercer, reflection of themselves. Kesagake's death therefore eliminated not just a zoological threat, but an aspect of humanity as well.

Additionally, the ancient human predilection to worship and deify bears increases the inherent significance of any incidents in which they are involved. Wherever prehistoric man did coexist with bear, the veneration of the latter by the former was synonymous with the origin of human religious belief. In Alpen caves, *Homo Neanderthalensis* amassed the long bones and skulls of slain cave bears and arrayed them in elaborate circles.<sup>241</sup> In the Middle Paleolithic, these ancients constructed joint tombs for man and bear, enshrining their dead in permanent unison with the remains of the object of their worship.<sup>242</sup> During the Upper Paleolithic, in bear skeleton-strewn Chauvet Cave in southern France, Cro-Magnon Man painted the walls with bear profiles, and offered mammoth bone trinkets worked into the ursine forms before a stone plinth surmounted by a single, enormous short-faced bear skull.<sup>243</sup>

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240 Until 15,000 years ago, Ezo Brown Bears also inhabited mainland Japan, and as such had contact with southern Japan's paleolithic inhabitants. However the survival exigencies of the ending glacial age drove them extinct in lands south of the Tsugaru Strait.

241 Ina Wunn, "Beginning of Religion," *Numen* 47, no. 4 (November 2000): 435.

242 Paul Pettit, *The Paleolithic Origins of Human Burial* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 112-114.

243 Andrew Curry, "Fate of the Cave Bear," *Smithsonian*, December 2010.



Later cultures with complex, recorded mythologies likewise embraced Ursine divinity as central to their theism. The Arcadians of ancient Peloponnesian Greece worshipped seductress nymph turned bear Kallisto as their civilization's generative matriarch. Similarly, Pre-Confucian Korean shamanic liturgy names bear-woman Ungnyeo as the literal mother of semi-historical founder of Korea, Dangun Wanggeom.<sup>244</sup> Traditional Inuit, Finnish, East Indian, and North African folk traditions exhibit analogous patterns.<sup>245</sup> Men have been ever eager to make gods of bears.

Echoes of this intercontinental ubiquity continue in the prevalence of bear-centric religious festivals and rites across Eurasia and the Americas: the Pyrenees town of Prats-de-Mollo-la-Preste celebrates an annual *Fete de l'ours*, a bear-themed celebration of man's triumph over evil,<sup>246</sup> while on Colorado's Southern Ute Reservation, tribesmen yearly partake in a communal dance meant to show respect for the spirit of the bear.<sup>247</sup> Men with knowledge of bears saw in them an aspect of the numinous, it has always been thus, and the doings of gods are not to be taken lightly.

Additionally, within their gallbladders, bears hold a rare nectar that sets them apart. Though chemically this gall is little different than that of countless other creatures,

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244 Shin Hyong Sik, *A Brief History of Korea*, Volume 1, trans. Lee Jean Young, (Seoul: Ewha Womens University Press, 2005), 20.

245 Though Africa no longer has any indigenous bear populations, the extinct Atlas bear (*Ursus arctos crowther*) was common in the mountainous regions of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria until the nineteenth century.

246 Eric Ziolkowski, "From Ursus Daibolus to Ursus Ex Machina: The Ambivalent Legacy of Biblical Bears in Christian Art and Hagiography," in *Fallen Animals: Art, Religion, Literature*, ed. Zohar Hadromi-Allouche, 23-47 (Lanham: Lexington Nooks, 2017), 32.

247 Verner Z. Reed, "The Ute Bear Dance," *American Anthropologist* 9, no. 6 (1896): 238.

for centuries men have attributed wondrous medical efficacies to this difficult-to-obtain fluid.

A bear's gallbladder is a fig-shaped organ pendant within its abdominal cavity. It serves as a repository for the bile produced by the liver, a murky myrtle green fluid released periodically thence into the duodenum to assist in the digestion of lipids. The functional compound in bear bile is a chemical called ursodeoxycholic acid, a substance that has proven to have legitimate medical applications related to gallstone treatment, colon cancer prophylaxis, cirrhosis care, and neurodegenerative disease treatments.<sup>248</sup> These properties have been known to, and employed by, traditional Asian medicine for 3,000 years.<sup>249</sup> Since the mid-twentieth century, pharmaceutical companies have synthesized molecularly identical analogs of this precious acid, making the benefits readily available in the form of oral capsules marketed under the brand name Actigall and generically as Ursodiol. In China, Vietnam, and South Korea however, demand for authentic bear bile has metastasized into a lucrative industry of gray and black market bear-farming: held in small cages, bears have their gallbladders 'milked' of bile via catheterization or permanent surgical fistulas.<sup>250</sup> Thus, whether in the porcelain glare of a sterile laboratory, or among the ghastly inhumanities of an illegal bile-farming operation, the precious gall is no longer regularly harvested from the wild: with scientific ingenuity,

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248 Sandeep Akare et al., "Ursodeoxycholic Acid Modulates Histone Acetylation and Induces Differentiation and Senescence," *International Journal of Cancer* 119, no. 12 (December 2006).

249 Laura E. Tsai, "Detailed Discussion of Bears Used in Traditional Chinese Medicine," Michigan State University College of Law, 2008.

250 Ibid.

and with cruel subjugation, men have sought to escape the dangerous necessity of hunting bears for this purpose.

In 1915 however, no such alternatives existed: to secure the contents of a bear's gallbladder required the slaying of a wild specimen. The difficulty and danger of securing these gory prizes in the greenwood adding to their price and perceived potency. Yet by the beginning of the Showa Era, the incoming tides of Western medicine and development of synthesized and farmed alternatives meant that such practice dwindled. Thus the sale of Kesagake's gall to defray the costs of hiring his exterminators was the final apogee of the the power of vital fluids in a disappearing order.

The inherently esoteric aspects of the ursine further enhanced that December's exchange of death and meaning. Though parsable via modern biological analyses, a bear's begetting is superficially inexplicable and wondrous. Rutting season roughly coincides with the summer months.<sup>251</sup> However, through biochemical alchemy, the sow's reproductive system delays development past “formation of the blastocyst at which time the cells stop dividing and the young embryos enter a diapause which causes delay of implantation into the lining of the uterus.”<sup>252</sup> Only after autumn's vital pre-hibernatory feedings does the bear mother's body permit life-making to proceed. Even then miscarriage will occur unless the sow is sufficiently fed. This selectivity thus allows the sow to engage in the preparations necessary to survive the winter, taxes her only when

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251 Miha Krofe, et al., “Mating-related Movements of Male Brown Bears on the Periphery of an Expanding Population,” *Ursus* 21, no. 1 (2010): 25.

252 Joseph C. Daniel Jr., “Dormant Embryos of Mammals,” *BioScience* 20, no. 7 (April 1970): 411.

birth will not threaten her own survival, and causes cubs to be born safely in the den.

Bears then are effectively telekinetic fakirs able to control their innermost organs with effortless instinct.

A further mysterious attribute that lends gravitas to bears and their doings is their hibernatory ability. During the wintry months, bears seclude themselves in an insulated redoubt to endure until spring via metabolic gambit, “Due to the highly insulating pelts of bears and their lower surface area to mass ratio than smaller hibernators, body heat is lost slowly which enables bears to cut their metabolic rate by 50-60%.”<sup>253</sup> This brumal hyper-torpority reduces respirations to less than twice per minute, and heartbeats to one fifth of the waking resting average.<sup>254</sup> Hibernating bears transcend the standard definitions of a living organism, they “generally do not eat, drink, defecate, or urinate,”<sup>255</sup> subsisting wholly on stored adipose tissue, and by recycling their own wastes wrought thereby into “protein, which allows them to maintain muscle mass and organ tissues.”<sup>256</sup> Exempt from the frore exigencies of heimal survival in cave or hollow, anus plugged with a cork of semi-digested roughage,<sup>257</sup> the bear works the hibernaculum into an ideal closed system. There, in an esoteric womb below the gelid surface, the bear adds uncanny aspect to its

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253 Mark J. Biel and Kerry A. Gunther, “Denning and Hibernation Behavior,” Yellowstone National Park Information Paper BMO-10 (March 2006).

254 Ibid.

255 Ibid.

256 Ibid.

257 Ibid.

anthropoid behavior and physiology, securing thusly the semantic significance of its genus.

#### Bears Now

Kesagake died that December: aggrieved villagers ate his flesh and sucked his bones. However the destiny of Japan's Ussuri brown bears as a species did not end there. The black grizzly escaped the perfunctory eradication of the Ezo wolf, has thus far been able to avoid the critical endangerment of Blakiston's owl, and has not arrived at a state of fully managed natural resource as have Hokkaido's post-lapsarian salmon. Rather the species has continued to abide in those wild bastions of the northern island left to it. However, the development of Hokkaido, changes in Japanese society, and the evolving relationship between men and animals has been such that the conditions encountered by modern Ezo brown bears are wholly dissimilar to those faced by Kesagake.

For millennia, the bears of Ezo thrived in all quarters of the forested isle, hunting and foraging at will throughout their wooded demesne. Though in quarters of Siberia and the Caucasus brown bears may be prey for Amur tigers (*Panthera tigris tigris*),<sup>258</sup> Japanese grizzlies knew no enemy save for disease, debility, and the rare intrusions of bold Ainu hunting parties. Gradually however, the settlement of the Wajinchi, with the attendant drive of early colonizers to control their environs, began to erode the absolute sovereignty the bears had enjoyed theretofore, culling bears on the grounds of protection

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258 V.G. Geptner and A.A. Sludski, *Mammals of the Soviet Union* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Libraries and National Science Foundation, 1992), 170 and 177.

of persons and livestock from nuisance animals.<sup>259</sup> However it was in the late nineteenth century that this management philosophy spread to, and overtook, the island's interior and created a paradigm of adversariality, so that “brown bears were intensively harvested as a result of conflicts with pioneers.”<sup>260</sup>

Attitudes toward cohabitation with bear populations have since been tempered with ecological, as well as long-term economic considerations. Radio tracking collars have been used to monitor behavior, resulting in findings that inspired a cessation of the annual Hokkaido spring bear harvest.<sup>261</sup> This changing attitude stems from several sources. The global movement to instill a desire to conserve native species purely for the value of their perceived intrinsic worth as unique natural entities is one such spur. Modern environmentalism did not gain official, or broad public support in Japan as early as in the first world nations of Europe or North America. However, a gradual but steady increase in this sentiment has resulted in such outcomes as the national government's establishment of the Wildlife Protection Bureau in 1986, charging it with safeguarding the welfare of islands' endemic species.<sup>262</sup> In 1992, the passage of the Law for the Conservation of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora that “recognizes the

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259 Tsutomo Mano, “Harvest History of Brown Bears in the Oshima Peninsula, Hokkaido Japan,” *Ursus* 10 (1998).

260 Mano, “Harvest History of Brown Bears in the Oshima Peninsula,” 173.

261 Mano, “Harvest History of Brown Bears in the Oshima Peninsula,” 180.

262 “[Protection of Endangered Species] Wildlife Conservation in Japan,” Ministry of the Environment: Government of Japan.

importance of wild fauna and flora as essential to the existence of humanity,” gave the newly-established agency legal teeth.<sup>263</sup>

Additionally, the national curatorship of a sustainable brown bear population has been part of an effort to maintain a vestige of vanishing cultural practices. Within the modern Matagi community, a conscious effort to maintain a semblance of traditional practice is evident in the continued employ of historic garb. A generation of youthful cultural preservation-minded mountain hunters have begun to eschew GORE-TEX and Polartec camouflage ensembles in favor of hand-wrought garments fashioned from the furs and hides of the animals they hunt, and products of the forests within which they stalk. So too is their deadly ensemble purposefully anachronistic, wielding “the same weapons their ancestors used seven generations ago.”<sup>264</sup> Growing awareness of the ephemerality of cultural practice tied inextricably to natural resource has begotten preservation efforts, dedicating 17,000 hectares of the hereditary Matagi hunting territories of the Shirakami Mountains' beech forests as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, providing recognition of and legal protection for the bears within and by extension the tradition lifestyles associated with hunting them.<sup>265</sup>

Where once the Kaitakushi and Tondenhei represented forces that sought to efface developing Hokkaido's link to Ezo's autochthonous past, today Hokkaido

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263 “[Wildlife Protection System and Hunting Law] Wildlife Conservation Japan,” Ministry of the Environment: Government of Japan.

264 Alexandra Genova, “Japan's 400-Year-Old Bear hunt is Sacred – and Controversial,” *National Geographic*, November 14, 2017.

265 Tomoko Otake, “On the Trail of Bear Hunters' Heritage,” *The Japan Times*, July 20, 2013.

University boasts the burgeoning Center for Ainu and Indigenous Studies, and “government administrators now answer the phone '*Irankarapte*', an Ainu greeting.”<sup>266</sup> Whereas Ainu lifeways are ultimately inextricable from arctolatry and iomante, one aspect of the dawning acknowledgement of this historical connection and the growing drive to study and preserve the living culture has been to consciously model ecological policies on the heritage of “real coexistence, even interdependence with the natural world, the indigenous Ainu of Hokkaido offer.”<sup>267</sup>

Finally, the brown bear population serves as a lucrative draw, both for more remote Hokkaido destinations struggling to attract domestic visitors, and as an international eco-tourism beacon for Japanese tourism efforts in a broader sense. Despite being Japan's largest prefecture, the hyper-convenience of the *shinkansen* bullet train system does not extend past the tip of Hokkaido's Oshima Peninsula, and the national railway system thins considerably in the island's less-developed northeastern quarter. Distal communities dependent upon the traffic to difficult-to-access natural preserves such as the bear-rich Shiretoko, Daisetsuzan, and Akan National Parks, have found some success luring tourists past Sapporo to explore the interior with the potential opportunity of viewing and photographing the country's largest predator in situ:<sup>268</sup> normative

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266 Jude Isabella, “How Japan's Bear-Worshipping Indigenous Group Fought its Way to Cultural Relevance,” *Smithsonian*, October 18, 2017.

267 John Patrick Moll, “Western Influences on the Management of Brown Bears in Hokkaido Japan,” Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers: University of Montana (1994): 13.

268 “Wild Bear Watching Attracts Hikers to Hokkaido National Park,” *Kyodo News*, September 9, 2017.



considerations aside, sustainable wildlife conservation is a matter of economic self-interest for those in Hokkaido's bear country.

The present population of Ussuri brown bears on Hokkaido proper exceeds 10,000 individuals, double estimates of thirty years ago. Several methods effected this increase. A combination of voluntary reductions in the take of sport hunts, as well as official policies restricting the use of lethal measures to control nuisance bears have brought the annual harvest from totals that peaked at 868 in 1962, to figures that have remained below 300 since the beginning of the Heisei Period.<sup>269</sup>

Additionally, certain ursine sub-populations, such as the western Ishikari enclave group, are classified sufficiently vulnerable to warrant a listing in the Japanese Environment Agency's Red Data Book of threatened indigenous species, and are accorded special protections from hunting and environmental encroachment thereby.<sup>270</sup>

However the protections provided to Hokkaido's bears are consistently a matter of “management”. In this context that entails a bureaucratic process predicated on rational assessments of the benefits of such programs prompted by the need to find ways for a large predator to exist on an island dominated by human civilization. Absent is any drive to include the primal id of the animals in society. Rather, animal-management policies attempt to reach a detente whereby the modern paradigm of cities, agriculture, and anthropocentrism can include an indulgence of the unruly but valued commodity that

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269 Moll, “Western Influences on the Management of Brown Bears in Hokkaido Japan,” 12.

270 Tsutomu Mano and Joseph Moll, “Status and Management of the Hokkaido Brown Bear in Japan,” in *Status Survey Conservation and Action Plan: Bears*, compiled by Christopher Servheen, Stephen Herrero, and Bernard Peyton (United Kingdom: IUCN): 128-129.

bears represent. This is evident in the efforts of Sapporo urban planners to accommodate the desire of residents to have verdant greenbelts despite the potential hazards of attracting wildlife to urban areas such infrastructure entails,<sup>271</sup> or to “contend with the thuggish bears that steal apples and maul farmers,” now that regular human contact and hunting restrictions have habituated some Hokkaido bear populations to human contact.<sup>272</sup> The working locus of presumption is ever one prioritizing human safety, urban expansion, and economic potentiality. Just as the anthracite coal, coastal oil, and salmonflesh have been accorded consideration due to their value as resources, so too do Hokkaido's modern laws and inhabitants protect bears as the logical solution to a mercenary calculus: just as the island's pioneers culled them for the benefit of perceived commonweal, so too is the toleration and scientific management of brown bears a product of modernity's ratiocination rather than a return to the primitive.

The Noboribetsu mountaintop that houses the Ezo Brown Bear Museum is also home to a bear 'ranch': a small park dedicated to preservation of, and education about these animals via captive display. After paying an admission fee, visitors may view a small population of native bears. Safely housed in an expansive enclosure that features environmental enrichment and a variety of climbable or otherwise interactive terrain feature, Asia's largest predator persists in an idealized state: healthy and well-cared for, able to entertain and instruct the public, yet always within the confines of absolute human

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271 Yoshikazu Sato, “The Future of Urban Brown Bear Management in Sapporo, Hokkaido, Japan,” *Mammal Study* 42, no. 1 (2017): 17-30.

272 James Brooke, “Bigger and Bolder Population of Bears Incites Fear in Japan,” *The New York Times*, November 7, 2004.

control and predictability. The more daring may thrill to the experience of entering the “human cage,” a transparently walled tunnel that projects into the center of the bear enclosure. Therein, the tooth popping, and guttural chuffing of bears communicating with each other is loud and resonant. The true size of these ursids becomes viscerally real as they pass within a hand's breadth of where one stands, dwarfing human onlookers. Pheromonal scent messages, mixtures of anal gland excrement, pedal gland secretion, and urine wallow,<sup>273</sup> waft a pungent musk into the tunnel, lending their bestial reality a fierce sensory immediacy. However at no time is the visitor in any peril. The meek may retreat at any time they should wish, while those made of sterner stuff may remain to experience a cathartic thrill of adrenaline as the lizard brain interprets these sensations instinctually and react accordingly.

Preserved obediently in their bell jar menagerie, these bears represent the distillation of modernized Hokkaido. Though held perpetually in a state of sumptuous durance vile, the animals themselves remain biologically unaltered from their wild predecessors, untamed and uncouthy they endure. Several deadly incidents at bear parks serve to illustrate that even when seemingly held in supreme bondage and subservience, natural forces pulse unabated. In 2012, a pair of bears escaped their enclosure in Akita Prefecture's Hachimantai Bear Park, fatally mauling two keepers.<sup>274</sup> In 2016, a bear slew

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273 Agnieszka Sergiel et al., “Histological, Chemical and Behavioural Evidence of Pedal Communication in Brown Bears,” *Scientific Reports* 7 (2017): 1052.

274 Yoko Wakatsuki, “2 Women Killed After Bears Escape Northern Japan Park,” *CNN*, April 20, 2012.

an employee at a Gunma Prefecture safari park when it managed to enter the worker's vehicle to eviscerate and devour her stomach.<sup>275</sup> Wild instincts rage still.

However, the shock, police investigations, and summary destruction of the culpable animals evidence the rare exceptionalism of such incidents. Though natural ferocity continues to thrum behind thick plexiglass slabs or sheets of chain link, the general human population abides without daily fear of deadly animal encounter, and correctly presumes that any aberrations from this paradigm of perpetually predictable safety will be corrected.

### Holy Menagerie

While the death of Kesagake the bear was a dramatic climax to the reign of the natural order in Hokkaido, it was but a coda to a multi-decade saga of modern Japan's quest for dominion over the northern island's primal denizens. Tracing the destinies of three of Hokkaido's endemic animals evidences the broad patterns of species management. The Ezo wolf (*Canis lupus hattai*), Blakiston's fish owl (*Bubo blakistoni*), and the dog salmon (*Oncorhynchus keta*), via an examination of their respective treatments, illustrate that, beginning in the nineteenth century, policies and practices regarding the northern island's native species were characterized by two connected, though distinct, schemata. Spared the millennia of increasingly heavy agriculture and denser human habitation experienced by Japan's austral reaches, laws and acts of the Meiji and Taisho eras sought to beget a truncated boreal recapitulation of the cladistic

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<sup>275</sup> "Japan Safari Park Worker Killed in Bear Attack," *The Guardian*, August 16, 2016.

orderliness wrought thereby. Thus the first distinct class of changes enacted consisted of a perceptual reorganization; Tokyo's administrators besought settlers and natives to rudimentarily splice their consideration of Hokkaido's fauna into neat categories. This class of mental alteration was subsequently supplemented by policies intended to wreak physical, permanent changes to the environment.

By the midpoint of the Meiji period, the Japanese wolf (*Canis lupus hodophilax*) of Honshu neared its eventual extinction. Over the course of the preceding centuries, the modernization of the naichi nourished attitudes of practical hostility towards wolves. Years of progressive encroachment into lupine habitats created an incongruity of belief and praxis. Deification and respect for the carnivora of the archipelago persist but in such places as the megalopic oasis of Shibuya's Miyamasa Mitake Shrine where a pair of wolven statues stand in place of foxes or *komainu*, and via practices such as “the tradition known as *inu no ubumimai*...whereby *sekihan*<sup>276</sup> is offered to the wolf when cubs are born.”<sup>277</sup> Yet the balance of human-wolf welfare was increasingly adjudged to be a zero sum equation so that “Indeed there are tales of villagers organizing wolf hunts (*inugari*) in response to livestock predations.”<sup>278</sup> This, combined with the culling of rabid specimens, and perceived acts of self-defense increasingly influenced the general estimation of Honshu's wolves, which while complex, and tempered with an ancient awe,

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276 Sekihan is an ancient dish of boiled red rice associated with felicitous occasions. Whereas Japanese cultivation of red rice has waned, the rufous hue is now commonly imparted by adding adzuki beans to the mixture.

277 John Knight, “On the Extinction of the Japanese Wolf,” *Asian Folklore Studies* 56, no. 1 (1997): 139.

278 Ibid.

had decidedly metastasized to adversariality, heralding their ultimate extinction in 1905.<sup>279</sup>

In contrast, when the Meiji period began, the relationship with the Ezo wolf had not yet deteriorated to such a degree. Bereft of the proto-industrial agriculture that had characterized the other main islands, an antipathetic human-lupine mindset had yet no cause to develop. To the contrary, Ainu populations revered the species as the *Horkew-kamuy*,<sup>280</sup> an incarnation of the male aspect of their divine ancestors. Japan historian Brett Walker collected oral legends that recount an incident whereby one such numinous lupine being ensorceled a lone damsel, and led her to a solitary isle, whereupon “she became his wife. From this union the Ainu people were born.”<sup>281</sup>

However, a major principle of Hokkaido's government-directed modernization was the introduction of ranching to the island, for “In the eyes of the Meiji officials and their Western counterparts, ranching was progressive and scientific,”<sup>282</sup> and as such the Kaitakushi was eager to make those in the north the equal of their southern peers in terms of wolveren perception.

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279 Not to be confused with the Yamainu, self-sustaining populations of feral canines descended from domestic dogs, which continue to exist due to en-masse releases of pets and farm animals during the Second World War inspired by the impracticalities of feeding them during wartime rationing and shortages. Similarly, the Okuri-inu, a wolf-like yokai with preternatural intelligence and voracious appetites continues to populate the netherworld of Japanese childhood bogeymen.

280 Literally, “Howling God.”

281 Brett L. Walker, *The Lost Wolves of Japan* (Seattle: The University of Washington Press, 2005), 83.

282 Brett L. Walker, “Meiji Modernization, Scientific Agriculture, and the Destruction of Japan's Hokkaido Wolf,” *Environmental History* 9, no. 2 (April 2004): 249.

The avatar of this attempt was one Edwin Dun (1848-1931). Having gained experience in ranching and attendant carnivore extermination in the United States, he advocated principles of thought typology whereby the Meiji regime officially “categorized wolves as 'noxious animals' (*yugai dobutsu*).”<sup>283</sup> Thus the millennia of tolerance for wolves' coexistence in Hokkaido soon turned to animosity. With the zeal of the newly converted, this acrimony soon equaled, and then surpassed, that of established Japanese custom. Within a decade, Dun and the Kaitakushi “brushed aside centuries of reverence for wolves – and to a lesser degree, the entire East Asian order that supported such reverence – replacing it, brick by brick, with the edifice of modernity.”<sup>284</sup>

The unstartling consequences of this shift were physical endeavors to extinguish the Ezo wolf, an animal so driven by primal instinct and tied to mystical, uncategorizable folk belief, that it could never be reconciled with the dawning order. One method took the form of hiring “professional 'wildlife hunters' (*yajubogyusha*) – armed with Western rifles and paid [five yen] per month,”<sup>285</sup> to track, trap, poison, and shoot the offending lupine on a full-time basis. Additionally, the Kaitakushi implemented a formal reward system that encouraged native and pioneer alike, upon encountering a wolf to “shoot them, sever their ears or legs, bring these to a municipal office, and collect a lucrative bounty.”<sup>286</sup> The ultimate task fell to taxidermists; when properly mounted, neatly labeled,

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283 Walker, “Meiji Modernization,” 252.

284 Ibid.

285 Walker, “Meiji Modernization,” 261.

286 Walker, “Meiji Modernization,” 251.

and placed in a modern institution such as the Natural History Museum of Hokkaido University's Botanical Garden, where several of the rare specimens still reside, the intractable beast was finally made to conform to the new paradigm's behavioral expectations.

Attitudes toward Blakiston's fish owl were likewise transformed. Until the latter half of the nineteenth century, human contact with the owl, as with all species endemic to Ezo's interior, consisted primarily of interactions with the Ainu. A pillar of Ainu theism and general worldview, is the belief that certain animal species are disguised Kamuy, and it is out of largesse and concern for the welfare of The People<sup>287</sup> that they deign to permit themselves to be snared, slaughtered, and consumed, after which they may cast aside these *hayokpe*<sup>288</sup> and return joyously to the *Kamuy moshir*, the parallel dimension of divine residence. Batchelor records that one creature accorded such status was the fish owl, and as such iomante rituals centered on releasing the *kotan-koru-kamuy*<sup>289</sup> were a spiritual touchstone of various Ainu communities. After arduously collecting, or painstakingly hand-rearing, specimens of these prodigious raptors, “[b]y and by the horrible time comes when the bird is to be throttled.”<sup>290</sup> On the day of the sacrifice, the faithful spoke unto the doomed bird a prayer of imprecation: “Beloved deity, we have

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287 In the language of the Ainu, as in most autochthonous tongues, the race's name for itself is synonymous with the term for human beings.

288 Hayokpe, literally meaning armor, are the raiments that permit Kamuy to interact with the human world. These take the form of animals native to Hokkaido.

289 Kotan koru Kamuy is a Kamuy that takes the form of a great owl to oversee the behavior of men.

290 Batchelor, *The Ainu and Their Folk-Lore*, 414.



brought you up because we loved you, and now we are about to send you to your father.<sup>291</sup> We offer you food, *inao*, wine and cakes: take them to your father and be very pleased.”<sup>292</sup> By then garroting the owl, the Ainu sought to reaffirm their transactional relationship with the divine: prosperity and health were to be repaid by adulation, gifts, and a terminal release to permit the Kamuy a joyous return to their home country.

This perception, that “outside of this world where men were living, there is a country of gods,”<sup>293</sup> and that “these gods sometimes came to this world to play, but always in disguise,”<sup>294</sup> permitted and encouraged the concepts of deicide and multidimensionalism. This was incompatible with the new order imposed by the Emperor's hand in the north, the Kaitakushi. Opposition to revering a nocturnal, ungovernable forest creature took therefore the guise of scientific advancement. Embodied in this instance by one Captain Thomas Wright Blakiston (1832-1891), this ideal took the form of Western research methodology, and modern biological analyses. The biologist laureate of Meiji Hokkaido, Blakiston gained renown publishing, for the royal Geographic Society, “A paper of considerable length, full of information regarding the topography, climate, forests, fisheries, and coal mines and the condition of the

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291 In Ainu theology, the owl Kamuy acts as a mediator between mortals and his father, the powerful Creator of All Things.

292 Batchelor, *The Ainu and Their Folk-Lore*, 414.

293 Kyosuke Kindaichi and Minori Yoshida, “The Concepts Behind the Ainu Bear Festival (Kumamatsuri),” *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 5 no. 4 (1949): 345.

294 Ibid.

Japanese colonists and aboriginal Aino [*sic*].”<sup>295</sup> This work included the collection of the first specimen of Hokkaido's fish owl taken for scientific purposes. Thus when British ornithologist Henry Seebohm eponymized Blakiston in the bird's name, the pervading view of the world's largest owl<sup>296</sup> ceased to be that of Ainu religious covenant, and became rather the subject for empirical studies, spawning a catalogue of work with titles such as “Recent Fragmentation of the Endangered Blakiston's Fish Owl (*Bubo blakistoni*) Population on Hokkaido Island, Northern Japan, Revealed by Mitochondrial DNA and Microsatellite Analyses.”<sup>297</sup> Assuredly, nowhere in such tracts does the owl of blood and mysticism abide.

Additionally, the silvicultural custodianship of Hokkaido's forests changed the habitat of the owls to their reproductive detriment. Despite leaving some swathes of Hokkaido timber standing as natural bastions, the compulsion of Hokkaido's developers to manage the orderliness of their charge so strictly, that even within such preserves did they cause infirm or dead trees to be culled, thereby reducing the chance of natural, but unmanageable wildfires, and making even the wildest greenwood free from the unsightliness of cracked, graying branches. However Blakiston owls rely on just such trees as these to reproduce; their prodigious size requires a nesting venue that only the

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295 “Obituary: Thomas Wright Blakiston R.A.,” *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography* 13, no. 12 (December 1891): 729.

296 The Great Grey Owl (*Strix nebulosa*) may exceed the length and wingspan measurements of Blakiston owls, but the girthiness as well as weight of fish owls is greater.

297 Keita Omote et al., “Recent Fragmentation of the Endangered Blakiston's Fish Owl (*Bubo blakistoni*) Population on Hokkaido Island, Northern Japan, Revealed by Mitochondrial DNA and Microsatellite Analyses,” *Zoological Letters* 1, no. 16 (2015).

cavities in the crotches of broad-trunked old-growth Japanese oaks (*Lithocarpus glaber*) and elms (*Ulmus davidiana var. japonica*) cracked by decay and hollowed by age can provide. This elimination of potential nest sites caused this once widespread species to now be “listed among a 'Critically Endangered' category as a species at an extremely high risk of extinction in the immediate future.”<sup>298</sup>

Escaping as of this writing the Ezo wolf's irremediable status, a movement to protect and reestablish populations of the fish owl has likewise been a product of the new paradigm. Progress and precision, the causes of the species' decline may ultimately prove its salvation. The supplementation of Hokkaido's forests with artificial nest boxes sizable enough for the owls' needs has proven an efficacious stopgap measure to permit a modest increase in the number of breeding pairs.<sup>299</sup> Plans to plant new stands of trees that will be appropriate nesting venues for fish owls a century hence are also underway, a necessary beginning for the species' sustained survivability.<sup>300</sup> Efforts to combat inbreeding within the diaspora enclaves of owls that have survived also include hyper-modern genetic sampling, wherein “A few drops of the blood were preserved in ethanol or dried on filter paper, and tissues were preserved in ethanol and frozen at -20° C until use.”<sup>301</sup> Though

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298 Yuko Hayashi, “Blakiston's Fish Owl,” *Bird Research News* 7, no. 2 (2010): 5.

299 Jeremy Hance, “The Owl Man: Saving the Incredible Bird You've Probably Never Heard of,” *The Guardian*, March 3, 2016.

300 “Efforts Continue to Protect Japan's Endangered Blakiston Fish Owl,” *The Daily News*, February 22, 2016.

301 *Ibid.*

efficacious, these efforts are unconnected to the hooting shadow gods of earlier generations.

The salmon populations of Hokkaido similarly served as a bellwether of changing philosophies. In an effort to convert Hokkaido from an uncompassable, interdependent web of nature, indigene, and alien gods to a well-mannered subsidiary of the burgeoning modern Japanese state, in 1870, the Kaitakushi decreed that thenceforth “fishing salmon in the rivers was prohibited.”<sup>302</sup> Subsistence fishing had no place in the northern island's planned future. No longer might salmon be viewed as AINU Kamuy, the staple food of a backwards race. It was therefore not incidental, rather it was premeditated consequence that “[p]rohibiting salmon fishing meant 'death to the AINU'.”<sup>303</sup> Ezo brown bears too depended upon the unregulated bounty of salmon runs to ingest enough caloric stores to survive hibernation. This was likewise not in keeping with the vision of Hokkaido's future of natural obedience wherein the island's salmon served only as an orderly gear in an ideal national mechanism: calories for settlers and beflashed additions to gross domestic product if canned and exported.

This viewshift consequently levied practical sequelae upon salmon, and those who would fish for them. Since the age when human habitation in Ezo was but new, those dwelt therein procured anadromous salmon with weir, net, and *marep*.<sup>304</sup> The fish

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302 Kinki Ito, *Have You Heard About the AINU? Elders of Japan's Indigenous People Speak*, Youtube video. Directed by Kinki Ito. Little Rock: A Kinki Ito Film, 2015, accessed September 1, 2017.

303 Ibid.

304 A harpoon with a toggled hook for securing speared fish.

thus acquired, once dried and smoke-cured, might safely see Ainu households through seasonal dearth. As of this writing, this practice persists, but as a considered, intentional method of cultural preservation in consciously anachronistic enclaves such as Shiraoi's *Poroto Kotan*, wherein busloads of foreign and domestic tourists dutifully peer rafterward at the pendant salmon carcasses, as an Ainu docent narrates the intricacies of the practice. To celebrate the stocking of this suspended larder, the Ainu celebrate *ashiri cheppu nomi*, a ceremony focused on the propitiation of fish Kamuy that includes the spearing of anadromous salmon. Once an intrinsic facet of native belief, the prohibitions against fishing rendered the rites untenable and the festival meaningless. Only “In 1982, [Shigeo] Toyokawa and his colleagues revived the '*asir-cep-nomi*'...for the first time in 100 years.”<sup>305</sup> As it was only after “[Toyokawa and company] lobbied hard and won permission from the Hokkaido government to catch salmon in the rivers, which is normally banned, measured bureaucratic consideration has replaced ancient belief, fear of hunger, and nature's unpredictability.”<sup>306</sup>

Ainu rights activist Shigeru Kayano contrasted the impact of subsistence catches on fisheries, with the results wrought by industrial harvest. He reminisces that although “It was the *shamo*'s<sup>307</sup> indiscriminate fishing that caused the decrease in salmon,” his community's custom was to cast “fishnets the width of an adult's outstretched

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305 Takashi Tahira and Teruhiko Kobayashi, “Some in Hokkaido Preserve Ainu Culture but the Lack of Young Supporters does not Bode Well for Future Efforts,” *The Japan Times*, January 25, 2007.

306 Ibid.

307 *Shamo* is an anachronistic, mildly derogatory term used by Ainu to refer to Wa-jin.

arms...(whereby) we only caught enough to feed our families.” Yet it was his father who suffered arrest and imprisonment for violating 1899's Former Hokkaido Aborigine Protection Act: he had committed the crime of fishing while Ainu.<sup>308</sup> These prohibitions not only served to create nutritional deficits in the *Ainu Mosir*,<sup>309</sup> but to sever the ancient and bonds of affinity between generous Kamuy and thankful Ainu. No longer might an Ainu fisherman kneel penitent at his hearth before his family was to sup on salmon flesh and intone “This salmon is not merely for us humans to eat by ourselves, but for us to eat with the gods and with my children, as tiny as insects.”<sup>310</sup> Meiji fishing regulations effectively forbade this communion.

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308 Shigeru Kayano, *Our Land Was a Forest* (Boulder: Westview Press), 57-59.

309 The interior of Hokkaido, the woodland that remained the inviolate preserve of the Ainu into the modern age. Distance from the sea made populations resident therein especially dependent on the annual spawning runs for dietary protein.

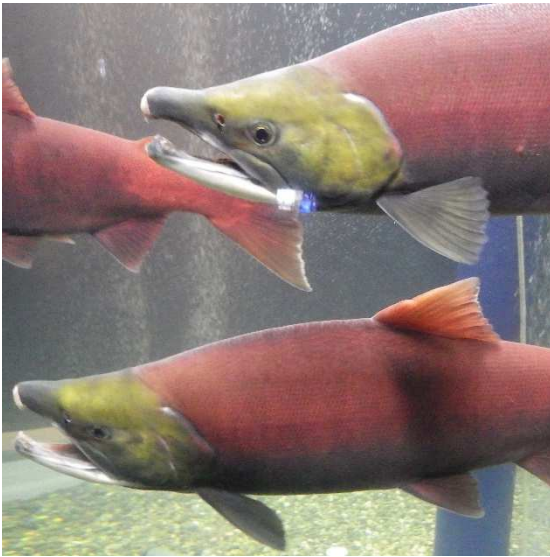
310 Kayano, *Our Land Was a Forest*, 19.



12. A taxidermied specimen of Blakiston's Fish Owl (Ainu Museum, Poroto Kotan, Shiraoi, photograph by author)



13. Taxidermied specimens of the extinct Ezo Wolf (Natural History Museum, Hokkaido University Botanical Gardens, Sapporo, photograph by author)



14. Captive Sockeye salmon (*Oncorhynchus nerka*) in their spawning phase (Chitose Salmon Aquarium, photograph by author)



15. Eviscerated Keta Salmon carcasses hung to dry from the ceiling of a traditionally-constructed Ainu chise (Poroto Kotan, Shiraoi, photograph by author)

## CHAPTER 4

### NIGHT AND BLOOD AND DEATH

*“But my Heart's leaning toward night and blood and death would not be denied.”  
-Yukio Mishima*

In pre-modern Japan, blood was a supreme repository of arcane power. I therefore employ an increasingly specific frame of analysis of how worship thereof signifies pre-modernity. From general anthropological evidence of this phenomenon I move to Japanese specific records, and thence to the practices of the Ainu and finally to the blood of Kesagake's himself. Ultimately I support the conclusion that the circumstances surrounding Kesagakes rampage and death are a final exaltation of blood communion. This evidences a unity of past linked by the medium of blood, and that the sanguinity of the Sankebetsu Incident is such that it can serve as an historical pivot.

The hunt itself was a passion play that climaxed with Kesagake's slaying. I consider the ancient freedom of mountainous Japan represented by the lone successful huntsman, Yamamoto Heikichi the Matagi (1858-1950). His use of an ancient canine breed, his adherence to an elder cursorial tracking methodology, his clothing and tools, connected him to centuries of what had been. His modern rifle, turned on imported lathes, forged to fight international wars, and bearing the chrysanthemum *kamon* of the Imperial House, not only slew a bear, but severed the threads of historical attachments borne by both Kesagake and Heikichi.



## Prince of the Blood

Since bipedalism separated our forebearers from other primates, if not before, they attributed orphic properties to life's slick, sanguine medium. Japan's martial castes long reveled in the perceived latent power of their enemies' viscous pools, as well as that of their own coursing reservoirs. Though dedicated to the pantheon of battle on the occasion of taking the conflict's first head, the attendant ceremony was, not incidentally, named the “chimatsui (*sic*), literally 'blood -festival’”<sup>311</sup> the specificity of nomenclature indicating that their belief system demanded that the fallen's spurting claret ought be accorded not inconsequential reverence. So too did the blood of *self* possess diverse incantatory powers. The storied *seppuku* of the island empire duly proved the courage of the self-disemboweler, exposing the literal seat of his courage to spectators' mortal and heavenly, thereby exculpating any number of personal, familial, or group sins. When this method was adjudged insufficiently pious or apologetic however, only through the addition of an agonizing crimson deluge might the ritual suicide ascend to a higher plane. To wit: the climactic tragedy of the *Byakkotai* was an instance wherein “[a] group of several dozen samurai youths, known to history as the White Tigers, thought that all was lost and committed seppuku,”<sup>312</sup> ending the agonies of themselves and their fellows via *coup de gras* decapitation sword strokes, or by driving blades into their own necks. While these teenagers saw fit to pay for their perceived failure with vainglorious suicide, a more

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311 Anthony Cummins, *Samurai and Ninja: The Real Story Behind the Japanese Warrior Myth that Shatters the Bushido Mystique* (North Clarendon: Tuttle, 2015), 92.

312 Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, 330.

severe toll was required of those wishing to simultaneously absolve the souls of self, family, and ruler, after a lifetime of service characterized by symbolic failures. The *junshi*<sup>313</sup> of General Maresuke Nogi (1849-1912) was one such instance: to cleanse the pneuma of all concerned, “While the funeral bells [of Emperor Meiji] tolled, [General Nogi and his wife] proceeded to commit ritual suicide.”<sup>314</sup> The manner of death for the General however involved no merciful *kaishakunin*<sup>315</sup> or welcome neck piercing, rather Nogi committed *jumonji*. After wrapping the naked tang of his personal dagger in *washi*<sup>316</sup> that his hands might not slip when lubricated by bouts of his own thoracic penetralia, the General opened a vertical incision from groin to sternum, and bisected the abdomen horizontally with a perpendicular slice crosswise. Rebuttoning his tunic and settling into torturous repose, the General sought to repay with interest all spiritual debts as he endured an excruciating death by exsanguination, ascending to a higher plane carried on his ceaseless scarlet wave. A telegram sent by Nogi's Zen master on the occasion of his subsequent funeral encapsulates some of the fervent awe this act inspired: “Banzai, Banzai Banzai.”<sup>317</sup> This effect, and General Nogi's posthumous enshrinement as

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313 Junshi was the practice of loyal retainers and vassals committing suicide as a final act of absolute fealty upon the occasion of their master's death. Its practice has been official forbidden since Shogun Ietsuna's national prohibition of the practice in 1663.

314 Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2001), 208.

315 The assistant to the disembowellee, whose role it was to perform a coup de grace.

316 A coarse, handmade paper, manufactured from the inner bark of the kozo mulberry (*Broussonetia papyrifera*).

317 Bix, *Hirohito*, 208.

a deity,<sup>318</sup> shows that blood had the power to be a medium of numinous communion; it powered the hydraulics of premodernity's irrational efficacy.

However, in certain circumstances, blood, though powerful, was too mystically dangerous to be allowed egress into the sacrosanct. Such potential courses redly within, that it is unsafe to tap such energies, lest their twisted magicks prove a foul pollution. The blood of life-generation most especially is too fathomless to permit on holy soil, “This applies to menstrual blood in particular as well as to blood produced in childbirth...This 'red uncleanness' (*aka fujo*) has historically served as a justification for *nyonin kinsei* and *nyonin kekkai* (both meaning 'prohibition against women'), which refer to the restriction of women from sacred mountains and other sacred spaces, practices which lasted until 1872.”<sup>319</sup>

As the final avatars of the age, Ezo brown bears generally, and Keasgake in particular possessed a blood that was endowed with an especial arcane power, and as such held a dread fascination commensurate with the strength of its dire possibility. A vital aspect of Ainu iomante was the moment when, “[a]s a symbol of continuing life, the bear's blood is placed upon the top of the central post to which he was tied,”<sup>320</sup> here

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318 Shintoism permits august persons, and even notable animals, to be officially declared gods. Gen. Nogi and his wife were posthumously accorded this honor in recognition for their dramatic suicidal atavism. Revered at several sites around the country, the godly pair reign from the restored site of the manor where they slew themselves in the commercial district of Akasaka in Tokyo. The unique circumstance of a husband and wife enshrined together as deities makes this shrine a popular location for marriage ceremonies.

319 Heather H. Kobayashi, “The Miko and the Itako”, Vassar College Senior Capstone Project (2013): 20.

320 N. G. Munro, “The Ainu Bear Ceremony,” Youtube video, The Royal Anthropological Institute, 1931, accessed September 10, 2017.

abiding as an unmistakable symbol of what has taken place: the taking of life and releasing of spirit. As for the balance of the sacrificial bear's vital fluid, "The Ainu reverently drink the rest of the blood, calling it divine medicine,"<sup>321</sup> here using it as a medium for accruing benefits numinous and mundane. Finally, the blood of Kesagake, held madness in its rufous depths: the primal humor of greatest foe distilled into perilous gnostic tincture. In the case of Kesagake, this esoteric magnetism exerted a baleful pull on those present at the bear's butchering, "Some present licked fresh blood from the bear's rib cage, causing those sitting nearby to avert their eyes."<sup>322</sup> In a posthumous aftershock of ancient power, those who partook of scarlet communion thus fell into a delirious mania, reveling so orgiastically so that one onlooker recalled: "when the night began the families were in a frenzy...their behavior was becoming hardly different from that of the bear's."<sup>323</sup> Though afterwards, "(p)eople trembled in fear at the thought of the beast, even in death"<sup>324</sup> pious efforts of the priesthood of nearby Tomamae Township's Myosen-Ji Temple, and the efficacy of holy implements brought therefrom, ultimately restored sanity and order. Thus, when the final ruby-stained ice disappeared in the spring thaw, the power of blood magic perished from the land.

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321 Ibid.

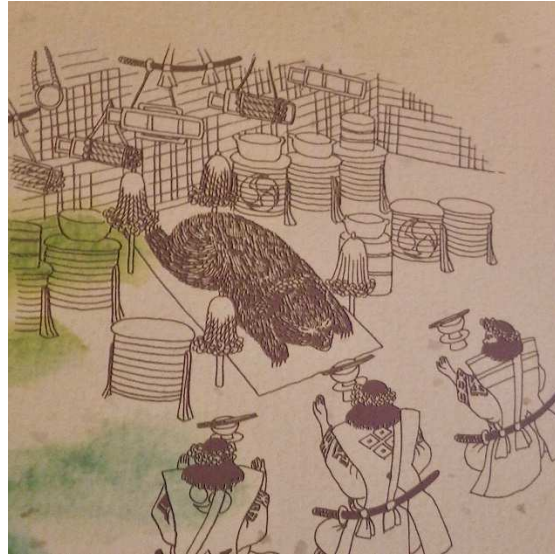
322 Moritake, *The Valley of Lamentation*, trans. Anthony D. Perrin,(Nobboribetsu: Nobooribetsu Bear Park Publications, 2015), part 12.

323 Ibid.

324 Ibid.



16. A desiccated bear's head affixed atop an Ainu ceremonial rod (Noboribetsu Brown Bear Museum, photograph by author)



17. Ainu men partaking of the sacrament of the bear's blood (Hakodate City Museum of Northern Peoples, modern, unascrbed)

### The Wild Hunt

Many features of form and mind distinguish *Homo sapiens sapiens* from all other terran life; hunting is not one of them. As early as the close of the Plio-Pleistocene,<sup>325</sup> hominins engaged in making tools for the purpose of taking and butchering animal quarry.<sup>326</sup> Our facultatively carnivorous ancestors were but one addition to the numberless multitudes of organisms stalking others in a predatory paradigm that has persisted since before life left the oceans. Aeons of sentience, art, and increasing

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325 12,000,000-12,000 years ago.

326 Thomas W. Plummer et al., "Oldest Evidence of Toolmaking Hominins in a Grassland-Dominated Ecosystem," *PLOS ONE* (2009), unpaginated electronic, accessed February 28, 2018.

dominion over the earth did nothing to alter the human stalker's connection to an unbroken primordial lineage.

Before a New Age dethroned Ezo's Old Gods, the primality of The Hunt burned for a final hour of fiercest defiance. This ardentness, and the finality of its disappearance, are evident in various features of that December odyssey to slay Kesagake: the cultural background of the man who drew the executioner's bead, the breed history of the dogs employed, and the artefactual provenance of the fatal rifle.

Kesagake's rampages drew swift rebuttals from the affected villagers themselves, and from the expert marksmen lured thither by promise of glory and lucre of gall. Immediately following the initial attacks, frontier residents formed an ersatz company of farmers and local hunters: “The more than fifty men who had been tasked with destroying the animal – the exterminators.”<sup>327</sup> Despite securing ideal position for a deadly enfilade, the exterminators squandered their best opportunity to put an early end to Kesagake's depredations, “Sure that the beast was about to leap out into the open, the capable shooters among the men positioned themselves to one side of the door [of the Miyoke house]. Their positions finalized, Tomi Kihechi fired two shots into the night sky. They should have a perfect bead on the bear. They couldn't have asked for a more perfect setup.”<sup>328</sup> However, a misfired gun, and fear of hitting any survivors in the darkened house permitted Kesagake a casual egress: “The bear, shooting a backwards glance at the stunned exterminators, turned its back on the house and lumbered off into the

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327 Moritake, *Valley of Lamentation*, Part 13

328 Ibid.

darkness.”<sup>329</sup> These efforts of scared farmers, unlucky hunters, and unwitting riflemen came to nothing until the arrival of Yamamoto Heikichi. An accomplished bear hunter responsible for over 300 successful Ezo bear hunts, and rumored to have killed one at close quarters with a short sword, Heikichi was a battle-hardened Russo-Japanese War veteran originally from the island's northernmost Soya subprefecture, and then resident of nearby Onishika.<sup>330</sup> It was this accomplished expertise the beleaguered frontierfolk called upon to exorcise their village. Though at the time of the first attacks, Heikichi had abandoned The Hunt for a retirement of alcoholic obscurity, he was born Matagi.

Originating in the uplands of Tohoku at least as early as the sixteenth century, the clannish society of the Matagi initially developed as a response to that region's topographic and ecological exigencies. In those northern mountains, “people developed regional cultures quite distinct from the dominant lowland culture.”<sup>331</sup> Shifting away from the sedentary agriculturalism of austral lowlands such as the Kanto Plain, the Matagi instead began to rely “primarily on hunting and gathering for much of the year in order to sustain themselves over the colder months when agriculture was not possible.”<sup>332</sup> Thus Heikichi was personification of centuries of obligate subsistence hunting.

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329 Ibid.

330 Moritake, *Valley of Lamentation*, part 23.

331 Catherine Knight, “The Moon Bear as a symbol of Yama: Its Significance in the Folklore of Upland Hunting in Japan,” *Asian Ethnology* 67, no. 1 (2008): 81.

332 Ibid.

His Matagi inheritance was ideal for one who would seek to destroy Kesagake. This was due to three distinct features of Matagi hunters' traditional methodology: weapons and hunting stratagems that focused especially on the wiles and dangers of Japan's ursines, gear and tactics honed to function keenly in conditions of snow and ice, and finally a tradition of exclusive in-group knowledge meet for facing a creature exhibiting preternatural behavior.

Hokkaido's Wa-jin pioneers, especially those of secluded hamlets such as Sankebetsu adapted out of necessity to the merciless winters of their adopted home. However they possessed no hereditary custom or garment forged through centuries of hoary trial to deal with the impediments presented by attempting to hunt a bear in its accustomed habitat during winter. The Matagi however, had long embraced, and were much accustomed to the use of, just such methods and raiments. Tracking through feet of snow precluded swiftness of movement, and as such, quarry could not be efficaciously chased. The Matagi therefore sought not to flail precariously through snowbanks after fleeing animals: rather they utilized a beater/sniper pincer tactic. In this method, the group of *sego*<sup>333</sup> used calls and gunshots to drive their prey to a predetermined glade surrounded by a defilade of *mabba*,<sup>334</sup> who might then dispatch the cornered beast by marksman's ambush. It was this method that the final, successful hunt employed to lethal effect on December 14, when after establishing Kesagake's approximate location, “ten Matagi hunters formed a large circle and began to sidle up the slope. Behind them were

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333 Matagi Beaters.

334 Matagi snipers.



the dogs and the beaters.”<sup>335</sup> Additionally, as the pursuit of a wounded animal in mortal fear through the quagmires of Japanese snow gave undue risk of losing their mark, or, in the case of bear, retreating to a den and mounting a deadly defense, the Matagi groups were wont to close in on bleeding game to dispatch on the spot with expedient strokes of the *konagiya*,<sup>336</sup> preventing egress from the killzone thereby. Assisting in these proceedings was the Matagi's hunting attire. Hokkaido's Wa-jin settlers, hailing from such temperate regions as the *Seto Naikai* and the *Kanto Heiya* were unaccustomed to, and unprepared for, the realities of winter at such latitudes.<sup>337</sup> For example, young Hokkaido's “Houses were not insulated against the cold, because this had never been done in the heartland.”<sup>338</sup> Contemporary photographs show pioneers swaddled in a melange of Western trousers and jerkins, girt about by padded haoris and coverlets and they tread across dams of ice.<sup>339</sup> Keeping warm even within the confines of civilization (such as it was) was an onerous task, the average pioneer had no business trekking through the woods of a December night. The Matagi equipage by contrast was purpose-built for just such demands. Belted securely to his feet, a pair of *gosu* struck a balance

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335 Moritake, *Valley of Lamentation*, part 23.

336 A wooden, oar-shaped club.

337 The Seto Naikai is an inland sea between the islands of Shikoku and Honsu that facilitates habitation via its relative pacific nature and aquacultural fertility.

The Kanto Heiya is a plain in central Honshu that has encouraged settlement and agriculture via its contrast with the island's mountains.

338 Irish, *Hokkaido*, 129.

339 “The First Winters,” Tomamaecho Local History Museum, exhibit, Tomamae, September 17, 2017.

between the agility of a sandal and the buoyant advantage of a snowshoe. *Habaki*, *matagibakama*, *maekake*, and *kappo*<sup>340</sup> made of plaited leather and plaited fibers insulated the body and provided a layer of physical protection for the wearer. On top of these, the *hidamosokka* and *daobochi*<sup>341</sup> comprised of rice straw and bear furs kept chilling snow from settling on the wearer. Thus girded, Matagi, and by extension and right of inheritance, Heikichi, might readily tread the bear's domain.

Finally, as the vanguard of modernity deep in the forests primeval, enemy territory as it were, the methodical, rationality-backed settler programs and the communities propagated thereby, were ill-suited to deal with an extramundane foe. Whether *kaiju*<sup>342</sup> or merely metabolically hypertrophied gargantuan natural specimen, Kesagake's fell deeds effectively portended such possibilities of darkest fabulism, that pioneers relying on the scientific advances of boreal farming, and the ordered hierarchy of Taisho bureaucracy, were incapable of countering the primal scourge. Kesagake appeared to those frontiersmen as a force outside of logic, a bestial exigency for which they had no established procedure. Some thought the creature a doomsday harbinger, such as one Ikeda who asserted that he “felt that the bear's appearance was an omen, and he grew steadily more uneasy.”<sup>343</sup> Others questioned their recently-acquired belief in rationality, ascribing demonological aspects to the bear, “Crying aloud 'that bear is the

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340 Garments visually analogous to gaiters, knickers, lorica, and sleevelets respectively.

341 Garments visually analogous to a shouldered cape and amigasa respectively.

342 A category of Japanese monster characterized by enormous size.

343 Moritake, *The Valley of Lamentation*, Part 4.

devil'.<sup>344</sup> Matagi culture however, had long incorporated aspects of supernatural belief, and proscribed esoteric rites to their hunting traditions. Lest their quarry, or the forest itself overhear them, Matagi hunters adhered to a strict coded lexicon while in the ursine domain. For example, while afield, these huntsmen never referred to a *kuma*, *tsukinowaguma*, or *higuma*.<sup>345</sup> Rather they spoke only of “*itachi*,”<sup>346</sup> so as not to alert wary ursines of their true intent. Additionally, women were absolutely forbidden from taking part in Matagi hunts. This exclusion was not however predicated on any perceived lack of physical endurance or any other sexually dimorphic disparity, rather it reflected the secretive mystery of the hunt, rich in practices only known to initiates. The power of rarefied knowledge stems from its exclusivity. Furthermore, the origins of Matagi culture itself is clouded with semi-mythic provenance: certain families claim their ancestors, whom they credit as the founders of the mountain hunting lifestyle, were warriors fleeing from the Battle of Dannoura, the climactic clash of the Genpei War.<sup>347</sup> In centuries of retelling, this event has waxed replete with bold deed, divine imprecation, and self-sacrifice, to become synonymous with dramatic heroism. To claim that “...the Heike warriors became fugitives, fled from their pursuers deep into the mountains...where even

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344 Moritake, *The Valley of Lamentation*, Part 13.

345 The standard Japanese terms for bear, Asiatic black bear, and Ezo brown bear respectively.

346 The standard Japanese term for weasel.

347 The Genpei War (118-1185) was a conflict between the rival Minamoto and Taira clans for hegemony of political influence. The decisive final clash was a naval battle that secured Minamoto victory, and resulted in the creation of the Kamakura Shogunate.

now the villages still stand,”<sup>348</sup> ostensibly creating the foundation of local culture, ties Matagi history to one of the most spiritually significant esoteric national legends. Finally, the Matagi culture, though ostensibly operating within the permissive boundaries of accepted Shinto pieties, adhered to a Kabbalistic mountain sect thereof. Twentieth century urban adherents' offerings to the *Kami* included pecuniary offerings at the grated repository boxes of a shrine by individuals, large donations from corporations and philanthropists, symbolic barrels offered by breweries, and a diverse assortment of lanterns, gates, and statuary dedicated to divine propitiation. Those lingering anachronistic rituals that *do* continue to demand blood offerings, such as the frog-impaling ritual of Nagano Prefecture's Suwa Grand Shrine, are subjects of public protest and progressive revulsion, attesting to their rarity and disconnectedness from contemporary spiritual practice.<sup>349</sup> Matagi practice however continues even into the Reiwa to demand an older type of sacrifice be made in acknowledgement of a hunt's success: one of the flesh, for “once gutted and dismembered...part of the bear's intestines are left as an offering to the mountain goddess.”<sup>350</sup> Here these hunters' gifts of steaming offal harken to the primal human instinct to sanctify with life-taking: reviving seasonally a facet of this primal impulse. An instinct that, according to the Nihongi, drove Emperor Nintoku (r. 313-399 CE) to cast living human offerings into the surging Kitakawa and

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348 Blacker, “The Exiled Warrior and the Hidden Village,” *Folklore* 95, no. 2 (1984): 141.

349 “Rabid Animal Rights Activists go Head-to-Head with Tradition,” *Japan Today*, September 30, 2015.

350 Genova, “Japan’s 400-Year-Old Bear hunt is Sacred”.

Mamuta rivers to prevent torrential catastrophe,<sup>351</sup> and similarly inspired the drowning of the nobleman described in the *Taiheiki* that delivered his compatriots from becalmed seas.<sup>352</sup> Likewise did parents of yore in the Harima Province<sup>353</sup> deem it necessary to permit their virginal daughters to be devoured alive by weasels,<sup>354</sup> or, as recorded in the eleventh century *Konjaku Monogatari*, ravenous monkeys.<sup>355</sup> Thus did the continued Matagi adherence to this past with their offerings of offal make them the oppositional equivalent of worthier foe for Kesagake.

Aside from the hunter's background, the biological and cultural distinctiveness of the canines engaged to hunt and track Kesagake evidence, via the unique primal ties of subspecies to which they belonged, the climactic atavism of the tyrant they helped lay low. The most common and practical dogs for northern hunters to employ were variants of the Matagi-ken, Hokkaido-ken, and Akita-ken breeds. Photographic, written, and oral histories record such dogs in use almost exclusively in such terrain and after such quarry.<sup>356</sup> Two specific characteristics of these breeds, and their ultimately successful

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351 *Chronicles of Japan from the Earliest Times to A.D. 697*, trans. William G. Aston (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & CO., Limited, 1896), 281.

352 *Taiheiki: A Chronicle of Medieval Japan*, trans. Helen Craig CcCullough (Rutland: Tuttle, 2004), 281.

353 Between the seventh century and the Meiji Restoration, Harima Province occupied an area that corresponds with the southwestern quarter of modern Hyogo Prefecture.

354 Noritake Tsuda, "Human Sacrifices in Japan," *The Open Court: A Monthly Magazine Devoted to the Science of Religion, and the Religion of Science, and the Extension of the Religious Parliament Idea*, 740 (January 1918), 765.

355 A Heian Period anthology of local lore that recounts hundreds of tales from India, China, and Japan.

356 "Hunting," Akita Dog Museum, exhibit, Odate.

employ in the hunt of Kesagake, elucidate the brutal primality of their fanged foe: their genetic descent from the earliest canine symbiotes of ancient man, and by extension to primal, undomesticated ancestors, as well as their association with Japan's north generally, and the Ainu and Matagi specifically.

Breed characteristics of the type of dogs used to hunt Kesagake herald to the very dawn of canine domestication. This is evident in both phenotype and demeanor. The ideal breed standard for the Akita, the touchstone of all northern Japan's hunting dogs, includes guidelines for the expected physiognomy: a square formed by the perimeter of the dog's back, forearms, fetlocks, and ground,<sup>357</sup> a tail that completes a single entire coil reaching to the hocks, and ears that point forward in a continued projection of the buttress formed by the neck, crest, nape, and occiput.<sup>358</sup> These features combine to form a breed that is “morphologically different from other dogs including native Japanese dogs, Saghalien<sup>359</sup> dogs, Laikas, and Samoyeds, one must [therefore] assume this dog to be the one *bred before recorded history*, rather than a product of subsequent human improvement (emphasis added).”<sup>360</sup> This exceptional lineage to human and canine's shared ancient past provided entry into a reality in which species survival entailed mortal duels with

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357 Breed standards permit females a slight rectangular shape, the added length being necessary for bearing pups.

358 Angel Itay, interview by author, Odate, September 7, 2017.

359 An obsolete spelling of Sakhalin.

360 Toru Uchida, *The Book of Dogs* (Tokyo: Hosei University Press, 1957), 79.

megafauna. Heikichi's hunting pack was little different from those Hamakita man<sup>361</sup> employed to bring down gargantuan Neumann elephants (*Paleoloxodon naumanni*) on the shores of Lake Nojiri 18,000 years ago. On through the Holocene did men maintain this canine link to prehistory. The Jomon culture domesticated and revered hunting dogs; in a pre-agricultural society, all that aids subsistence is hallowed. As the climate of 12,000 years ago began to warm, shifting the species of the archipelago, megafauna and evergreen “gave way to a dense woodland of oak, maple, and birch inhabited by smaller prey like deer and wild boar. Dogs...would have been highly valued in this Holocene forest, as they would be ideally suited to track, chase down, and hold these smaller prey animals.”<sup>362</sup> Given medical care, buried in shell middens, and represented in period artwork,<sup>363</sup> these canine companions were a vital facet of ancient Japanese survival; to use dogs once more in a situation wherein human survival was precariously balanced, harkened a final, visceral time to ancient antecedents. Thus did hunters face the fanged demigod of Sankebetsu in a setting where such an engagement was, if not quotidian, at least not necessarily a preternatural death sentence.

Additionally, the behavior of these dogs was such that they bore with them their inborn lupine savagery. Scrupulous breeders selected their stock via a dire trial of courage. To determine qualification for inclusion in the gene pool of succeeding

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361 The oldest human remains discovered in the Japanese naichi to date.

362 David Grimm, “Prehistoric Japanese Graves Provide Best Evidence Yet that Dogs were our Ancient Hunting Companions,” *Science*, September 16, 2016.

363 Ibid.

generations, breeders placed would-be gene-contributors within a demarcated circle with a bear secured in its center. Only those dogs willing to remain inside the circle and stand their ground in the face of this perceived threat were chosen to contribute their genetic information.<sup>364</sup> This vicious lupine hubris, conscientiously preserved through aeons, is a remnant of gore-steeped prehistory; an age when lupine, ursine, and hominine beasts strove amongst themselves for survival. Only thus were Heikichi and his fellows able to follow their hunting dogs through time's occlusion, into a dimension wherein they were but cruel apes, destroying Kesagake with the desperation of fevered animals, rather than the quaking repositories of the twentieth century scurrying about a hostile forest they would otherwise have been.

Finally, the dogs of the Japanese north are bound in deed and predilection to the indigenous Ainu, those Elders of Japan whose chief deity Kesagake so resembled. Dogs formed one half of a vital symbiotic relationship in traditional Ainu society: care and feeding were exchanged for sled-pulling, emergency food source, and a key member of hunts to slay Ezo bears and secure the cubs so central to the culture's arctolatry.<sup>365</sup> Thus, the dogs characteristic of the last stronghold of premodernity in the Japanese archipelago proved to be efficacious servants not just for their native masters of yore, but for the antithetical cross-purpose of bear hunters with the motive of extermination rather than worship.

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364 Itay.

365 "Hokkaido Dogs," Poroto Kotan Ainu Museum, wall text, September 11, 2017.



The third semiotically significant component of that December hunt was the fatal rifle: the Arisaka Type 30 bolt-action. The Arisaka brought a level of precision and lethality to the frontier that had theretofore striven primarily against only cudgel, blade, the occasional arquebus, and the lethal tripwires and mystical botany of Ainu hunting practice. The Arisaka lacked the intimacy of the former implements, killing men and beasts reliably from hundreds of yards. Nor had it anything to do with the alchemical admixtures of the Ainu who ground organic compounds and imbued the choice of weaponry materials with a metaphysical homeopathy; the indigenous choice for combating apparently preternatural threats for instance was a wormwood arrow, favored in such instances “because of their efficacy against demons.”<sup>366</sup> Rather its efficacy was the calculated sum of technological advancement and the newly-felt pressures of international military entanglements. The Arisaka was a product of various circumstances that made it mechanically capable of dispatching the dread bear, as well as maintaining emblematic significance. These circumstances included the exposure of Japan to both the martial possibilities of Western technological advancements, and to the exigencies of warfare between the industrializing military complexes of Imperialism. Additionally, the rifle's association with the *kokutai* is evident in the weapon's history and design.<sup>367</sup>

Until Perry's black ships prised open access to the island nation, the Tokugawa Shogunate had, since the seventeenth century, actively stymied the modernization of the

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366 Yukie, *The Song the Owl God Sang*, 21.

367 Kokutai is a Japanese political concept that denotes the Emperor, his descent from Amaterasu, and the right of the imperial family to rule.

empire's armories. Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616), personally witnessed Oda Nobunaga's (1534-1582) volley-fire matchlock teams employed to decisive effect at the battle of Nagashino in 1575. So too did Ieyasu deploy a cadre of arquebusier marksmen at the battle of Sekigahara in 1600 at which he established his claim to the seat of Japanese political power. Thus Ieyasu, as well as his shogunal inheritors, well understood the decisive power of firearms. They sought therefore to redact their use from the national consciousness out of desire to maintain hegemonical potential for force.<sup>368</sup> This took the form of strict proscriptions on the possession, sale, use, and development of weapons, issuing decrees variously prohibiting use of firearms in the capital, registry of hunting guns, and rewards for turning in or reporting illegal gun ownership.<sup>369</sup> Therefore, by the twentieth century, Japan's public and private stockpiles of firearms consisted of an ailing menagerie of antique Dutch and Portuguese matchlocks, domestically converted *tanegashima*,<sup>370</sup> smoothbore Gewehr,<sup>371</sup> air rifles more ingenious than practical, and precious few caches of Snider Enfields and Spencers bought in a desperate rush after the Boshin War.<sup>372</sup>

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368 Noah Perrin, *Giving up the Gun: Japan's Reversion to the Sword, 1543-1879* (Boston: David R. Godine Publishers, 1988).

369 Sayuri Umeda, "Firearms-Control Legislation and Policy: Japan," The Law Library of Congress, 2013.

370 Matchlock rifles named for the island where where shipwrecked Portuguese sailors unintentionally imported Japan's first firearms in 1543. Conversion to breech-loading, or percussion cap ignition was common in later examples.

371 Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, 287.

372 John Walter, *Rifles of the World 3rd Edition* (Iola: Krause Publications, 2006), 86-88.

On Perry's second expedition however, he included “[a] collection of arms involving Maynard and Hall rifles, 20 'Army pistols'...and several models of Colt revolvers” in the gifts he bore for the Emperor and other august persons.<sup>373</sup> This encounter with premier examples of the late nineteenth century's finest munitions, paired with accounts of contemporary military rifles in action from Meiji officials touring the European continent, spurred an immediate desire to make technological haste to assemble a military arsenal equal to those of Western powers.

In 1880, the product of this effort was Japan's first domestically produced military rifle, the Type 18 Murata. Using the ballistic and tactical lessons learned during his European travels, the eponymous General Murata Tsuyeyoshi (1838-1921) recapitulated several centuries of armaments manufacturing. This inspiration from extant Western models is evident in the Murata's duplication of design features. The Murata's breechloading bolt action for example, mirrors similarly-apportioned European models such as the French *Chassepot*.<sup>374</sup> Additionally, the mass-manufacturing ease, and field reliability of brass-jacketed ammunition used in such service-rifles as the French *Gras* and the Prussians' Mausers, was likewise replicated in Japanese domestic arms manufacture.<sup>375</sup> Even the lathes and presses employed to turn out the first models were of Western provenance; after making the rifles that tempered the American West and

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373 Garry James, “The Mysterious Murata,” *Military Surplus*, 2014.

374 The French Fusil Modele 1866, colloquially known as the Chassepot.

375 The French Gras was the Fusil Gras Modele 1874, and the Prussian Mauser was the M80 Infaterie-Gewehr 1871.

brought the United States into the Modern Age, the Winchester Repeating Arms Company's imported machine tools aided Japan in doing likewise. Finally, the exigencies of land wars of Western powers witnessed by those traveling on the Meiji government's behalf motivated the incorporation of military-specific features into their rifle designs: bayonet lugs and a collapsible, range-adjustable rear sight. Further iterations of these rifles evidenced a new capability to keep pace with the standards of international modernity as well, incorporating box magazines and smokeless powder into succeeding generations. All technical aspects of these weapons assert that Japan sought to enter the global arena of the coming century.

Thus In 1895 Lieutenant General Arisaka Nariakira (1852-1915) directed a project at Tokyo's Koshikawa Arsenal to continue the advance of Japan's firearms industry. The result was the Arisaka Type 13, a direct descendant of the Western-inspired Murata updated for the needs of Japan's new role as international belligerent. With speed-loading charger clips, strengthened cupronickel bullets, and a sword bayonet, it was a lethal incarnation of Japan's new developmental paradigm.<sup>376</sup>

Firearms were synonymous with Western development to a sufficient degree that the hyper-conservative former samurai of the *Keishinto*<sup>377</sup> eschewed their use in the abortive 1876 Shinpuren Rebellion. Loathe to accept any dilution of *Yamato Damashi*<sup>378</sup>

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376 The numerical identifiers associated with Arisaka models indicates the year of Meiji association with the respective models' invention.

377 A Kumamoto-based political group cum militia predicated on the principle of cultural conservatism.

378 A Japanese sociocultural concept that concerns the distinctiveness of the Japanese mentalité due to the supposed prominence of valor and prudence that contrasts with the worldviews of foreigners.

with alien technologies the 181 insurgents accoutered themselves solely with swords, polearms, and lacquered wooden armor despite their demonstrated inability to respectively compete with or deflect new ballistics in protracted martial engagements.<sup>379</sup> The suddenness of the attack on the Imperial Japanese Army's Kumamoto Garrison and armory under the cover of an October night's darkness permitted the rebels to use their antiquated steel to lethal effect for some hours. However, the Emperor's state of emergency declaration facilitated a swift armed response. Armed with rifles and artillery, the counter-insurgency force routed the attackers with a tempest of black powder and lead. In his final written thoughts, a member of the League of the Divine Wind<sup>380</sup> expressed his revulsion at the transition from blades, despite his assurance that they would prove mortally inferior: "They sold the country to the dirty foreigners and ordered us to give up our weapons and swords...Today, our last, on the road to another world."<sup>381</sup> Guns were the quintessence of modernity's inexorable usurpation of ancient ways.

Finally, a key aspect of the New Age was institutionalized Emperor worship. The suzerain's official doctrine of *arahitogami* endowed him with de jure control of every aspect of the empire. All affairs public and private were ostensibly within his absolute bailiwick. Therefore, when Japan began producing military armaments domestically,

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379 John M. Rogers, "Divine Destruction: The Shinpuren Rebellion of 1876," in *New Directions in the Study of Meiji Japan*, edited by Helen Hardacre and Adam Lewis Kem, 408-412 (Leiden, New York, and Koln: Brill, 1997), 408-409.

380 The literal translation of Shinpuren.

381 Donald Keene, *Emperor of Japan: Meiji and His World, 1852-1912* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 279.

manufacturers engraved the instantly identifiable *kikukamonsho* of ancient imperial descendance, an idealized, symmetrically-petaled chrysanthemum, on the receiver of each rifle produced.<sup>382</sup> Thus, when Heikichi fired the fatal rounds in Hokkaido, though he drew on centuries of ancient Matagi and native primitivism to lead him thither, it was effectively the Taisho Emperor Yoshihito, that august avatar of modernity, stretched northwards that dealt Kesagake's deathblow, thereby severing the ultimate strand connecting Japan's ancient past to her rational future.

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382 The *kikukamonsho* was, and is, the Emperor's *kamon*, a heraldic symbol tied to family lineage.



18. Matagi abu no gurumi foot wraps fashioned of bear pelt (Matagi Shiriyokan, Kitaakita, photograph by author)



19. The slaving lupine atavism of the Akita Inu (Akita Dog Preservation Society building, Odate City, photograph by author)



20. “Legendary Hunter Yamamoto Heikichi” (Image courtesy of the Tomamae Town Board of Education)

## CHAPTER 5

### MONSTERS

*“You will have reason to be afraid of the night – plenty of reason.”*  
*-Lafcadio Hearn*

Real and imagined instances of monstrous entities are indicative of incipient and dramatic changes for the societies that encounter them. Those aspects of Kesagake's attacks that show how and why a monster was present in that northern wood.

Consideration of this facet of the incident is significant not only because it indicates that change is occurring, but that the monster's geographical placement is the locus of that change.

One method by which an animal can become an organism of extra-Linnean horror is by committing homicides in a number well beyond the average of even the most dangerous species. Here I correlate the infamy of the Ghost Lions of Tsavo, the Mysore sloth bear, and Gustave the centenarian Tanganyikan crocodile with the changes evident in their respective contemporary regions. This supports the hypothesis that extraordinarily ravenous beasts are the products of the disruption associated with drastic and sudden environmental and cultural changes.

The Japanese archipelago is the singular and ancient habitat for a variegated clade of indigenous monsters, the *yokai*. Kesagake, the avenging bear god, fits somewhere within this fantastic taxonomy. The death of such an empirical incarnation of this ancient bestiary held meanings for the state of a culture that began to disbelieve.

One characteristic that makes an animal monstrous is its persistence in a state of liminal identification. This pattern is evident in consider the histories of several cryptids,



organisms unrecognized by academic biology. In some cases they remain unclassified, and in other instances new discoveries push them into biological canon. However, whatever the outcome, the state of non-definition makes monsters of even the most inoffensive of creatures. This concept illustrates how the possibilities of Kesagake's obfuscated origins add to his monstrosity. The testimony of boreal adventurers and traders, as well as native folklore illustrates the foundations of beliefs that this particular animal may not have been a standard member of the *Ursus arctos lasiotus* subspecies. This zoological mystique therefore made Kesagake a monstrous arbiter of past and modernity.

A parallel class of monstrous beings that haunts the Japanese landscape are *oni*, a certain type of demonic being that due to its unique religious associations I consider discretely. Since Buddhism's arrival, a Dantesque array of hells has awaited the sinning faithful. The jailers and torturers of these damnation realms are oni who exact millennia of poetic revenge upon those souls that violated Buddhist mores. A theriomorphic being inflicting horrid punishment is not restricted to the *jigokus* of some shadow realm however, but was precisely what transpired in Sankebetsu. I thus conclude that this demonic synonymity further establishes Kesagake's monsterhood, and by extension, establishes the incident of his infamy as the time paradigmatic change.

### The Anthropophage

Kesagake's rampage was, and remains, the deadliest bear attack in recorded Japanese history. It was not, however, the deadliest bear encounter in recorded *human* history, nor is the phenomenon of animal serial killers confined to the Ursidae family.

However, in all instances of humanophagic hyper-predators, their sordid legends represent a revolt against modernity's ordered, compassable rationality.

The face-devouring bear of Mysore, the man-eating lionesses of Tsavo, and the still-at-large Burundian Nile crocodile Gustave: the entire rogue's gallery, independently, in disparate regions, and at various times, embodied a reactionary anti-carnism. These most infamous of man-eaters emerged from nightmare at instances when modernity's discipline catalyzed the despoilment of their natural ranges beyond plausible recovery. By embarking on campaigns of carnal rapine, they tacitly evidenced the fore-ordained inevitability of the very forces against which they served as unwitting guerillas.

The scientific agonies of modernity's paradigm came later to the Indian state of Mysore than to Hokkaido. However, after 90 years of patrimonial governance, the modern Indian state shrugged off the stultifying hand of the Raj, and began its attempts at ingress to the society of advanced nations. Rather than a heterogeneous pseudo-state under the umbrella of Britain's intercontinental dominion, India began at once to reorder itself according to a definitive cladistic rubric. Persisting theretofore in the forced coexistence of shared subservience as a pluralistic subcontinent, India soon subdivided on the bases of language, religion, and geography, begetting the independent nationhood of Pakistan. The new government recapitulated this movement at the state level, geographically reapportioning territories in an attempt to create enclaves of homogeneity. One such instance was the state of Mysore, emerging as a distinct political entity

following the States Reorganization Act of 1956.<sup>383</sup> It was in this atmosphere of self-conscious ratiocination that a sloth bear out of dystopian Kipling began gouging the eyes from, and devouring the shrieking blinded faces of, local honey gatherers.

The sloth bear (*Melursus ursinus*) is generally the most inoffensive of omnivores. It feeds on such placid quarry as ants, termites, honey, carrion, and flowers, actively avoiding human contact, and generally eschewing predation on domestic livestock.<sup>384</sup> Insofar as their preferred prey tends to be less than evasive, sloth bears have poor eyesight and hearing.<sup>385</sup> Because of the weakness of these senses, they may be happened upon unawares and are readily startled. Additionally, their carnivorous instincts being so subdued, evolution has deprived them of their upper incisors. Distending the tongue pairs with the toothless hollow of the upper lip to form an oral funnel that facilitates myrmecophagous slurping at the expense of biting or tearing. This potential for close-quarters surprise, and reliance on thew'd forearms to tear open insect hives with forepaws arrayed with distended sickles, compound into circumstance wherein human foragers in sloth bear country are in perpetual danger of startling a placid ursine diner, and having their faces treated in the same manner as a bee hive, termite mound, or ant hill: flensed and split. This was the understood state of human/sloth bear relations in India for centuries; to tread those forests was to chance a mauling. However, even with

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383 "The States Reorganization Act," *The Constitution of India*, via Indian Law Ministry electronic Database, accessed October 30, 2019.

384 Ronald M. Nowak, *Walker's Mammals of the World Sixth Edition* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 692.

385 Ibid.

such occasional incidents as the norm, in the Indian state of Mysore in the mid 1950s, one bear waxed unnaturally wroth. Professional game hunter Kenneth Anderson (1910-1974) was present at the time of the incidents. Though Anderson made a multi-decade career of stalking and exterminating problematic carnivores in the subcontinental jungles, the Mysore animal struck him as unusual in its aggressive attitude and bodycount. He records that: “[t]his particular bear was exceptional among his kind for his unwarranted and exceptionally bad temper,”<sup>386</sup> and that “[t]his bear had quite a long list of victims to his credit...some twelve persons had been killed, and two dozen others injured.”<sup>387</sup> This rule of Jungle law was a final Indian gasp of ancient paradigm. New laws and customs sought to shunt the past abaft in favor of bureaucratic constitutionality. Thus the bear of Mysore that “Carried the mark of Cain”<sup>388</sup> did, as Kesagake before him, embody the final exaltation of the uncontrolled wild: “Quite half [those injured by the bear] had lost one or both eyes; some had lost their noses, while others had their cheeks bitten through. Those who had been killed had died with their faces almost torn from their heads.” Ultimately he too fell to a hunter's gunshot. Thus, when Anderson laid him low with a single rifle bullet in the breast, remarking “that was the end of that really bad bear,”<sup>389</sup> it was also the end of an historical paradigm, a temporal cataract that may not be undone. Soon after the

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386 Kenneth Anderson, *Man Eaters and Jungle Killers* (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1957), 55.

387 Anderson, *Man Eaters*, 56.

388 Anderson, *Man Eaters*, 68.

389 Ibid.

horror of devourment was eclipsed by the civilized savagery of Partition's sectarian genocides, forced migrations, and wholesale rapine.<sup>390</sup>

Similarly, in the Tsavo region of Britain's East Africa Protectorate,<sup>391</sup> a pair of leonine man-eaters confronted the ingress of rail transport to their queendom. In 1875, the crown embarked on a program of holistic development of Protectorate territory; planners sought to replace the Kenyan interior's population of native Africans living as hunter-gatherers or subsistence agriculturalists with white settlers practicing modern agriculture for export purposes, and to supplant ancient traditions of witchcraft with the staid rationality of a colonial administration.<sup>392</sup> At this endeavor's van, a great rail system was to physically connect the Indian Ocean and the Protectorate's administration in Mombasa with the Kenyan and Ugandan interior.<sup>393</sup> However, shortly after its inception, a pair of African lions (*Panthera leo*) did, for a time, forestall the completion of this ambitious infrastructural project. The Ugandan Railway Advisory Committee appointed one Lieutenant-Colonel John Henry Patterson (1867-1947) to supervise the construction. Patterson records that “For over nine months these insatiable monsters carried on an intermittent warfare against the Railway and all those connected with it in the

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390 William Dalrymple, “The Great Divide: The Violent Legacy of Indian Partition,” *The New Yorker*, June 29, 2015.

391 Roughly geographically equivalent to the present-day Republic of Kenya.

392 Richard D. Waller, “Witchcraft and Colonial Law in Kenya,” *Past & Present* 180, no. 1 (August 2003): 241.

393 Helen Kinuthia, “The Iron Snake: History of the Kenyan Railway,” *Destination Magazine*, 2013, unpaginated electronic, accessed November 10, 2019.

neighborhood of Tsavo.”<sup>394</sup> Able to run at a speed of forty miles per hour, leap a distance of twelve meters, and endowed with superb senses of sight, hearing, and scent, lions dispatch Africa's large game via pawstrike, jugular bite, or by closing their jaws about a prey animal's mouth and nostrils, clamping in place with flesh-anchored fangs, and suffocating their quarry. Pairs are wont to engage in coordinated, two-front ambushes.<sup>395</sup> Such was the force confronting those seeking to convert the nature of the Kenyan interior with locomotive access thereto. Thus did two queens of the savanna perpetrate the ghastly execution of 135<sup>396</sup> artisans and laborers, thereby stymieing the onrushing tide of the Crown's dream of colonial modernity, “bringing the rail works for a time to a complete standstill.”<sup>397</sup>

The Tsavo lion population had inherited a generational predilection for feasting upon man-flesh. Centuries of sere subsistence in the Nyiri Desert shared with Mombasa-bound Arab slave trading caravansary routes, along which “[t]he death rate was high; it was a bad area for sleeping sickness from the tsetse fly; and the bodies of slaves who died or were dying were left where they dropped,”<sup>398</sup> taught these cats that men were

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394 Lieut.-Col. J.H. Patterson, *The Man Eating Lions of Tsavo* (Chicago: Field Museum Press, 1926), 89.

395 Nowak, *Walkers Mammals of the World*, 832.

396 This total comes from Patterson's persona estimate, however more modern estimates put the actual total as low as 24, while still other estimates that take care to account for the contemporaneous fatalities of locals and laborers that Patterson may have disregarded or been unaware of, arrive at comparable totals. The topic remains in dispute.

397 Patterson, *The Man Eating Lions of Tsavo*, 89.

398 Paul Raffaele, “Man-Eaters of Tsavo,” *Smithsonian*, January, 2010, unpaginated electronic, accessed November 10, 2019.

toothsome and feeble. Upon ascertaining then “our encroachment into what was once the territory of lions,”<sup>399</sup> the Tsavo pair culled railroad workers at will, because they knew us to be “slower, weaker, and more defenseless.”<sup>400</sup>

Ultimately however, Patterson sent a barrage of .450 big game slugs and .303 Martini-Henry bullets into the heads and vitals of the sanguinary pair. After this leonine Rubicon, the development project resumed unabated, dispelling the pre-modern paradigm the Ghost Lions of Tsavo devils had unwittingly defended. Those vessels of uncompassable natural fury now reside in Chicago's Field Museum as specimens FMNH23969 and FMNH23970, a pair of classified, categorized, and analyzed remains: grist for modernity's cladistic lust.<sup>401</sup>

Elsewhere in Africa, history took a different course. In 1962, Burundi emerged from decades of German and Belgian colonization to join the post-World War Two bustle of newly sovereign nations seeking international validation and a pathway to prosperity. Accompanying initial development efforts was the extermination of buffalo, elephants, and warthogs from Rusizi Plain as the exigencies of population growth and the ecological degradation of efforts to rapidly extract natural resources took their predictable toll.<sup>402</sup> This feverish climate of development encountered a dire opponent in the form of

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399 Ibid.

400 Ibid.

401 Justin D. Yeakel, et al., “Cooperation and Individuality Among Man-Eating Lions,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States* 10, no. 106 (November 2009): 45.

402 Helene Fieschi, *Capturing the Killer Croc*, Youtube video, directed by Jean Michel Corillion and Vincent Munie, Silver Spring: Animal Planet, 2003, accessed October 3, 2019.

Gustave. Of prodigious but uncertain proportions, venerable but debated age,<sup>403</sup> this Nile crocodile (*Crocodylus niloticus*) has tallied a bodycount of hundreds in the Rusizian Delta and along Tanganyikan shores during the past five decades.<sup>404</sup> Gustave employs the “greatest bite force ever directly measured for living animals,” a double-gimballed jawbone structure and hypertrophied mouth musculature turns crocodile mouths into a vise of bone that can close with a force of “7,700 pounds [43, 250 newtons], which is the low end of *T. rex* bite-force estimates.”<sup>405</sup> With the leverage of this serrated clamp, crocodiles drown, disarticulate, and “butcher” victims with the shearing force of violent longitudinal rotation, “dramatically termed the 'death roll.’”<sup>406</sup> Crocodilians secure this jumble of limbs and torsos in an underwater larder to putrefy and soften to the point of maximum reptilian delectation. Gustave however leaves disjointed human cadavers to bloat and fester on the site of the massacre, his wanton thrill-kills growing his reputation with each grisly discovery: “[b]etween myth and reality... Gustave is no longer just an animal, he is a legend, a demon.”<sup>407</sup> His identifying pock-marks, presumably the impact

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403 In *Capturing the Killer Croc*, South African bioscientist Dr. Alison Leslie posits that despite a body size generally correlated with much older animals, the apparently well-preserved state of Gustave's dentition indicates he may be as young as 60. However, several confirmed super-centenarian crocodilians such as Russia's Kolya, South Africa's Henry, and Australia's Mr. Freshie, all maintained healthy dentition for decades longer than Dr. Leslie's age estimate.

404 Having cohabited with, and preyed upon, humans for perhaps a century, Gustave's kill count is certainly prodigious, but hard to verify. His notoriety causes local Burindians to ascribe other crocodilian humanophagy, as well as unrelated deaths, to his particular predation. Estimates vary from 100 to over 300.

405 Ibid.

406 Frank E. Fish, et al., “Death roll of the Alligator: Mechanics of Twist Feeding in the Water,” *Journal of Experimental Biology* 210 (2007): 2811.

407 Fieschi, *Capturing the Killer Croc*.



sites of machine gun bullets, indicate that Gustave's scales and scutes, have, due to size and age, thickened and ossified to such a degree that they may not be pierced by small-arms fire – Gustave is bulletproof.<sup>408</sup>

Despite her efforts to enter the congress of modern nations following independence, progress-thwarting internal strife of the most ancient kind perpetually wracks Burundi. Since gaining sovereignty, mortal ethnic conflicts predicated on tribal animosities between Tutsi and Hutu littered Burundi with the offal of two genocidal civil wars.<sup>409</sup> Assassination, ethnic cleansing campaigns, and political purges, once the status quo of Burundian life have abated to a degree after protracted international peace-brokering.<sup>410</sup> Despite these recent successes in manufacturing a lasting concordat, outbreaks of blood hatred and violent barbarism continue to characterize modern Burundi. So too does Gustave abide- propelling a Mesozoic form through central Africa's alkaline waters with deft lashes of his Brobdingnagian tail to feed at will. His unending tenure of instinctual violence mirrors the persistent carnage of his homeland.

## Yokai

The yokai of the Japanese archipelago comprised a population of endemic entities as unique to, and illustrative of, the Yamatogeist as the Ezo brown bear. A boundless

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408 Michael McRae, "Have You Seen this Crocodile?" *National Geographic Adventure*, March 2005.

409 United States Institute of Peace, "International Commission of Inquiry for Burundi: The Final Report," 2002.

410 Ibid.

cultural compendium of impossibilities, the infinite taxonomies of sentient umbrellas, faceless rustics, anthropomorphic caco-oxen cannot be contained in any single grimoire. Though the former reality of this outré bestiary challenges modern credulity, based solely on the rubric of personal belief, this night parade persisted for the overwhelming existence of the islands' habitation as presumptive reality. Equally certain however is the disappearance of this transrealistic menagerie. An examination of the paradigmatic shift from monstrous possibility to prohibitive empiricism evidences both that this extinction of fabulism included the death of Kesagake, and that what once was shall never more be.

Kesagake the bear was a yokai. Though not listed in any of what pass for canonical compendia,<sup>411</sup> he possessed all requisite qualifying characteristics. The extinct yokai of the Japanese islands include, but are not limited to, the categories of “...monster, spirit, goblin, ghost, demon, phantom, specter, supernatural creature, [and] lower-order deity...”<sup>412</sup> This ecumenical typology indicates that the necessary attributes for inclusion are not empirically quantitative, rather membership is conferred upon those entities which are “...an embodiment of a certain cultural moment – of a time, a feeling, and a place.”<sup>413</sup> By this standard the entire *Ursus arctos lasiotus* subspecies is eligible for probationary consideration, while its most notorious individual is already pledged to this diverse fraternity. Furthermore, yokai compendiums published decades prior to the

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411 Though the number and variety of such documents make any authoritative list impractical, the ubiquity of some yokai, as well as the popular fame of certain works give a general sense of the “canonical.”

412 Michael Dylan Foster, “The Other Worlds of Mizuki Shigeru,” *Mechademia* 3 (2008): 8.

413 Ibid.

Sankebetsu Incident include entries regarding the *oni-kuma*. The *Ehon hyaku monogatari* in particular goes so far as to include a woodblock illustration of a bipedal bear absconding with a distressed horse pick-a-back. Though the bear's ebon coat and pale gorget indicate that the superficial aspect was based on Japanese black bear, those features that warrant inclusion in a yokai compendium rather than zoological text: the upright gait, the dwarfed scale of juxtaposed equine, and the indicated propensity for carnivorous preference, all align more closely with Hokkaido's bear population. Additionally, yokai can arise as manifestations of contemporary cultural anxiety. Therefore, the Wa-jin perception of Hokkaido as a forbidding unarable waste unfit for the agriculture necessary for genteel acculturation was sufficiently acute to metamorphose the most visible of Ezo's predators into something extramundane. It was immediately evident to would-be northern settlers that "Less than twenty per cent of the land area of Hokkaido is level enough for cultivation, even by Japanese criteria of suitability."<sup>414</sup> Even the earth itself appeared to oppose developmental incursion: "Lowland of new alluvium are scarce, and the majority of the small littoral plains are not properly drained."<sup>415</sup> Thus the severity of precipitation, and the depth of accumulation thereof further wrought a perception that such a place might be home only to felonious exiles.<sup>416</sup>

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414 "Hokkaido and Karafuto: Japan's Internal frontier," *Population Index* 12, no. 1 (1946): 7.

415 Ibid.

416 Many of Hokkaido's early Wa-jin inhabitants were inmates of the notoriously brutal Abashiri Prison. Constructed in 1890, this hard-labor penal site housed only the most hardened convicts. Its presence, and the prisoners' infrastructure work, solidified Japanese claims to the island's theretofore sparsely populated Northeastern quarter.

A land characterized by an interior populated by an alien race perpetually at odds with the traders and governing Matsumae of the Wajinchi: both sides of the unreconciled multi-century tension operated under the conceit that “The advance of the Japanese meant a retreat for the power of the Ainu.”<sup>417</sup> The attendant Ainu wars of 1457, 1699, and 1789 gave further weight to an antipathetic personification of Ezo. Koshamain's War, Shakushain's Revolt and the Menashi-Kunashir Rebellion respectively, all three conflicts concerned Ainu tribes lashing out against perceived injustices in their interactions with the Wa-jin trading enclaves. In all instances, after losses facilitated by the surprise of the initial attacks, Wa-jin forces defeated the native threats and conducted mass executions of surviving revolt leaders. However this repetition of skirmishes on the fringes of empire served to cement an image of the northern island as a hostile, menacing region. Thus the brown bear, ideally suited for survival in the forbidding north, an animal that strove with, devoured, and sought to drive away all intruders, ready-made with strength, size, be-dirked paw and crushing jaw, was the natural yokaic instantiation of that realm; its inborn qualities transcending the need for supernatural embellishments. This was a demon bear proper.

Though not strictly yokai, the Ainu had their own varied cast of shadow beings. For centuries, macrocephalic *toihekunra* demons nocturnally roamed Ezo's marshy wastes, luring the unwary to their deaths,<sup>418</sup> dark waters contained leviathans such as the

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417 Takaura Shinichiro and John A. Harrison, “The Ainu of Northern Japan: A Study in Conquest and Acculturation,” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society New Series* 50, no. 4 (1960): 25.

418 Batchelor, *The Ainu and their Folk-Lore*, 41-43.

deer-swallowing monster trout of Lake Chitose,<sup>419</sup> and rivers ran with the sinister bald *pe boso koshimpuk* mermaids. Most dreaded of this brigade however, was the *wen-Kamuy*: the possessed bear. Distinguishable by irregular markings on their pelts,<sup>420</sup> these gods-run-amok had no truck with the benevolent transactions characteristic of standard Ainu/Kamuy interaction, rather they “...are considered unambiguously dangerous, disruptive, and hostilely disposed towards humans.”<sup>421</sup> Ever-accompanied by pestilence and hardship, they unnaturally hunger exclusively for the flesh of men. Kesagake, unambiguously a *wen-kamuy*, in falling as he did to Heikichi's rifle rounds, showed that even the most dreadful among the ancient supernatural order of the native north was to fall before the coming of serene modernity.

Though Ezo bears still inhabit the less populous quarters of twenty-first century Hokkaido, the oni-kuma has passed from this vale. For they were of a genus that thrived only in shadow, preferring the period between midnight and dawn for their perambulations.<sup>422</sup> This necessary gloom was both that of light's literal absence, as well as that of premodernity's mental cerement. The twentieth century's arch-apostle of yokai, Shigeru Mizuki (1922-2015) asserted that “[m]onsters prospered in pre-electricity days,

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419 Batchelor, *The Ainu and their Folk-Lore*, 53-55.

420 Pentikainen, “Ainu Worldview,” 298.

421 Sarah M. Strong, “Weighty Animal Spirits and Important Game Animals,” in *Ainu Spirits Singing: The Living World of Chiri Yukie's Ainu Shin'yoshu*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011): 108.

422 This time period corresponds with the hour of the ox. Until the Western reforms of the Meiji Restoration, the Japanese told time using the temporal hour system in which the day was broken up into twelve divisions named for the animals of the Chinese zodiac that varied in length by season and latitude. Folk belief particularly associated the hour of the ox with devilry and misfortune.

when people used andon<sup>423</sup>...and oil lamps.”<sup>424</sup> Lantern and torch generated the yokai's ideal illumination conditions: a crepuscular aurora girded about by infinite pitch. The unknowability of the outer dark kept plausible credulity ever-kindled. Even in the hell of the Pacific war, Mizuki added preternatural terrors that creep at night to those of flesh and steel who walked at noon. He found that “In New Guinea, old people believed the yokai were really alive because there was no electricity. In fact, when I asked the people to let me see 'the head yokai', who supposedly lived in the river, they were dead serious as they woke me in the middle of the night and took me there, pointing to a certain location shouting 'there he is!' I couldn't see anything. Electricity is dangerous.”<sup>425</sup> However Japan inexorably electrified her homes and streets. Even to far Hokkaido the wires carried currents to banish the gloom. Energetic young Hakodate served as a testing ground for the increasingly ubiquitous utility. The Taisho Emperor's reign heralded the first conversion of ersatz electricity poles to permanent erections of pressed concrete in the city's port-adjacent Suehirocho district.<sup>426</sup> Whereas “[t]he ambiance of electric lights is bad for yokai,”<sup>427</sup> even unto the wild north island, the spreading web of luminous *entzauberung* left no haven for sane adult credulity in such dread fantasy. This

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423 A type of lamp consisting of a paper-enclosed wire frame enclosing a small flame.

424 Foster, “The Other Worlds of Mizuki Shigeru,” 8.

425 Ibid.

426 “The First Concrete Electricity Pole in Japan,” historical plaque, erected by the City of Hakodate: Hakodate. September 8, 2017.

427 Ibid.

inescapable demystification consigned *hakutaku*, *tengu*,<sup>428</sup> and *oni-kuma* to historical eccentricity, children's amusement, and metaphor.

Though a motif of interest in, and enjoyment of, the traditional monster pantheon continues to permeate modern Japanese society, the monsters are consigned to national memory, the surreal, the childish, or colorful analogies. This relegation to fanciful outre is typified by Nobuhiko Obayashi's 1977 film *House*. Visual effects distort the artificially vivid colors of the absurd monsters: an anthropophagic array of home furnishings such as a futon and a longcase clock that hunger for young women's flesh,<sup>429</sup> as well as reframing several members of traditional pantheon with psychotropic encounters with a *kaibyō* and a lantern-visaged *Oiwa Inari* spectre.<sup>430</sup> Obayashi combined slow motion and intentionally crude matte effects with “sound design fever schemes (cocks crowing babies wailing, piano glissandi and thunderous waves crashing on an unseen shore”<sup>431</sup> to mimic the lysergic disorientation of a Dali painting or an hallucinogenic drug experience rather than induce visceral fear. The employ in children's entertainment is evident in Kimiyoshi Yasuda's 1968/69 Yokai Monsters movie trilogy,<sup>432</sup> which depicts monstrous

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428 Respectively a many-faced ox-beast, and a mountain demon with an unmistakable phallic proboscis.

429 Katsura Chiho, *House*, DVD, directed by Nobuhiko Obayashi, Tokyo: Toho, 1977.

430 Respectively a domestic feline possessed of supernatural abilities such as Brobdingnagian growth and shapeshifting, and the disfigured spirit of female vengeance central to Tsuruya Nanboku IV's (1755-1829) influential kabuki play *Yotsuya Kaidan*.

431 Chuck Stephens, “*House: The Handmaidens*,” *Criterion: On Film*, October 26, 2010, unpaginated electronic, accessed July 19, 2018.

432 Chronologically: *Yokai Monsters: One Hundred Monsters*, *Yokai Monsters: Spook Warfare*, and *Yokai Monsters: Along with Ghosts*.

beings as intentionally humorous caricatures of themselves. Central to the narrative is a *kasa-obake*, a possessed umbrella traditionally associated with *motainai*, a philosophy exhorting against the vice of wastefulness: if sufficiently neglected and unrepaired, even something as harmless as a forgotten umbrella may bring misfortune. In these film adaptations of this legendary figure however, Yoshida abandoned this stern moral for series of plots involving an adorably puppeted sentient parasol teaming up with his monster friends to overcome a variety of zany obstacles.

Some modern depictions of yokai do not fit this pattern, and do seek to depict the more dreadful possibilities of a world populated by supernatural fiends. Yet their creators set these scenes of yokaic mayhem in pre-Meiji eras. When the vengeful feline she-ghosts of *Kuroneko* materialize to tear out the throats of their destructors with their teeth, it is set amidst the events of the eighth century Emishi wars.<sup>433</sup> Likewise, *Kwaidan*, a disquieting filmic anthology of vengeful human hair, a gelid succubus, restless war-spectres, and a possessed tea bowl, is an adaptation of folktales recorded by Lafcadio Hearn at the end of the nineteenth century, and as such, are set in an unspecified, but pre-electric, pre-Perry, universe.<sup>434</sup> These implication of these films' temporal settings is that pre-modernity is a necessary precondition for the suspension of disbelief in horrifying fabulism.

Recent trends in Japanese storytelling have included a re-embrace of the gut-shot terror of realistic indigenous monsters. However, the nippon-centric imagery is merely a foil to spin an accessible horror yarn, as evidenced by the frequency of such films'

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433 Kaneto Shindo, *Kuroneko* (Tokyo: Kindai Eiga Kyokai, 1968), DVD.

434 Masako Kobayashi, *Kwaidan* (Tokyo: Toho, 1965), DVD.



subsequent Western adaptations with round-eyed, anglophonic casts. The horror franchise-spawning phenomenons of the twenty-first century *Ringu*<sup>435</sup> and *Ju-On: The Curse*<sup>436</sup> are superficially based on ancient yokai lore. The former seems tied to a lineage of retribution-seeking wraiths emerging from wells. *Bancho Sarayashiki*, the legend of Okiku, wrongfully-executed for thieving valuable plates from the lord of Himeji Castle in Hyogo Prefecture where she served as maid, climaxes with her ghost ever-haunting that castle's well into which her body had been cast, has been fodder for dramatic interpretation since its performance by *bunraku* troupes of the eighteenth century. The latter is superficially a continuation of the *onryo*, or vengeful spirit tradition that dates at least to the wrath of Prince Nagaya's ghost described in the eighth century in the *Nihongi*. Yet the ease of replacement of culturally-significant aspects with bowdlerized Hollywood pablum without significant change to the films structure in their English-language adaptations, *The Ring*<sup>437</sup> and *The Grudge*<sup>438</sup> make evident that the appearance of these tales hearkening to ancient themes was but an ancillary veneer to what were in reality generic horror films into which any monster might have been readily substituted.

Ryunosuke Akutagawa (1892-1927) immortalized the role of yokai as non-literal rhetorical device in *The kappa*, “mythical Japanese creatures, humanoid in form, chameleonic, amphibious and sustained by water held in an indented bowl on the top of

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435 Hideo Nakata, *Ringu* (Tokyo: Toho, 1998), DVD.

436 Takashi Shimizu, *Ju On: The Curse*, (Tokyo: Toei, 2000), VHS.

437 Gore Verbinski, *The Ring* (Universal City: Dreamworks Pictures, 2002), DVD.

438 Takashi Shimizu, *The Grudge* (Los Angeles: Columbia Pictures, 2004), DVD.

their head.”<sup>439</sup> The kappa were once perceived as literal denizens of Japan's aquatic ecosystems, to the extent that a neighborhood of Edo believed itself so beleaguered by their caprices, that it established Sogenji, a Buddhist temple charged with their placation, wherein a mummified *kappa* arm served as the locus of veneration. Akutagawa however merely used the bizarre physiognomy and repulsive mores of the *kappa* as a transparent foil to ridicule the flaws he saw in prevailing Japanese attitudes towards “[r]eligion, morality, legal justice, economics, sex, and death.”<sup>440</sup> A distant remove from the visceral terror of centuries previous evident in such depictions as that included in Kitagawa Utamaro's *Utamakura*, which graphically illustrates two *kappa* simultaneously raping and drowning a struggling female abalone diver as her companion looks on in helpless horror.<sup>441</sup>

Just as literal enlightenment of Japan's theretofore candlelit nation made yokai existence unsustainable, so too did modernizing Japan's rulers and subjects seek to cast the pitiless light of empirical observation and encyclopedic understanding on all aspects of the empire. Included therefore was that elusive Venn diagrammatic filet of folklore and cryptid; the sanctum of *obake* and *yurei*.<sup>442</sup> Until the final decade of the nineteenth century, knowledge of the supranatural persisted as an unclassified conglomeration of the

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439 Ian Maloney, “Kappa’: Akutagawa's Masterpiece Blunted by Time but Still Fascinating,” *The Japan Times*, March 18, 2018.

440 Ibid.

441 British Museum, *Utamakura*, Kitagawa Utamaro.

442 *Obake* refers to corporeal monsters of types divers, while *yurei* indicates a spectral ghost.

suspended disbelief of popular yokai compendia,<sup>443</sup> the respective fear and reverence for the devils and saints of Buddhist hells and heavens,<sup>444</sup> a presumptive acceptance of the ubiquity of the *yaoyorozu no kami*,<sup>445</sup> and inherited practical cautions regarding the dangers of nature's deadly indifference. The sum of the parts was a gestalt collective racial consciousness impervious to authoritative analysis. However, the national transformations of *fin de siècle* Meiji society permitted, for the first time in her history, Japan to conduct an objective assessment of traditional lore: *minzokugaku*.<sup>446</sup> Yanagita Kunio (1824-1962) brought a newly imported approach to native folkloristics. Before his work *kokugaku* studies were the exclusive purview of native scholars and philosophers who were wont to “advocate the non-rational tradition, 'the primitive man within us', to use Tsurumi Kazuko's expression, as a philosophy of life. In a certain sense this tendency can be described as a sort of primitivism.”<sup>447</sup> While centuries of such atavistic self-examination did produce an extensive corpus *sui generis*, it proved not to be an

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443 Yokai compendia were a popular amusement beginning in Edo Era Japan: bound books of woodblock prints that illustrated varieties of yokai accompanied by brief exegetic descriptions were cheap entertainment for the general public, while wealthier connoisseurs might commission hand-painted scrolls of monstrous processions.

444 Buddhism's Hells are many and varied: accumulated karmic sins send sufferers to an indefinite, but finite stay in any one of the hot or cold Hells where the torment of respective frigid or blistering temperatures is accompanied by specific punishments. Heaven is likewise plural, and those with accumulated karmic equity may hope for rebirth in one of them to delight for a time in the blissful purity of the realm.

445 Literally meaning 8,000,000 gods, *yaoyorozu no kami* refers not to a specific number of deities, but rather indicates the countless multitudes that comprise the Shinto pantheon.

446 *Minzokugaku* is the study of folklore as an academic discipline, separate from the simple collecting and recounting of lore that had constituted folkloristics theretofore.

447 Shun'ichi Takayanagi, “Yanagita Kunio,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 29 no. 3 (Autumn 1974): 330.

efficacious methodology for the empirical categorization of the dawning paradigm. Kunio's practice however, introduced novel approaches such as comparative studies by keeping himself “informed of European folklore and ethnological studies,”<sup>448</sup> and maintaining “personal contact with contemporary research there.”<sup>449</sup> Furthermore, his research was self-consciously evidence-based, eschewing navel-gazing presumptions about the transcendent nature of the national consciousness, “he could not accept the national history which was used as a state myth.”<sup>450</sup> Rather, influenced by Western conceptions of social science and the spirit of Meiji intellectualism, he engaged in actual fieldwork, personally traveling to record observations of “the rural villages where the traditional natural life in the form of communal living based on the cycle of rice cultivation could still be studied.”<sup>451</sup> Though this at last created a thorough, accurate documentation of Japanese rural folk belief, doing so proved fatal for the monsters elucidated thereby. His scholastic inheritors built upon his research to agonizingly parse the creative genesis of Japan's legends and attendant creatures. Kazuko Tsurumi sought to distinguish the layered forms of logical and pre-logical thinking at the root of all folklore, concluding that the origins of popular unnatural beliefs lay in “The combination of 'endocepts' with clear and distinct Cartesian concepts or the combination of 'paleologic' and formal logic [which] can be interpreted as the combination of pre-modern and

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448 Takayanagi, “Yanagita Kunio,” 332.

449 Ibid.

450 Takayanagi, “Yanagita Kunio,” 334.

451 Takayanagi, “Yanagita Kunio,” 333-334.

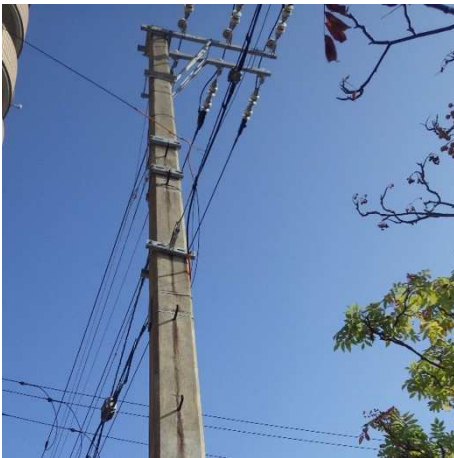
modern patterns of thinking,<sup>452</sup> Though well-considered and logically sound, this spotlight of ratiocination discarded fear, left no room for awe, and doomed the ancient yokai so dependent thereupon.



21. Okiku's Well (Himeji Castle, Himeji, photograph by author)



22. Mummified kappa arm (Sogenji Temple, Tokyo, photograph by author)



23. Oldest electric light pole in Japan (Suehirocho, Hakodate, photograph by author)

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452 Kazuko Tsurumi, *The Adventure of Ideas: A Collection of Essays on Patterns of Creativity & A Theory of Endogenous Development* (Tokyo: Japanime), 66.

## Demonology

Japanese folk wisdom instructs homebuilders regarding the specific cardinal directional placement of doors and windows. Placing such structural openings in a building's northeasterly quarter is proscribed. Failure to heed these precautions produces portals in such a fashion as to provide ready ingress to malevolent entities. The irreverent or unaware may thus unwittingly construct *kimon*, gates to the demonic realm. Via these entrances, the literal denizens of hell can enter a domicile and beget all manner of calamity with their presence. Though increasingly disregarded by Japan's younger generations, the elderly, as well as staid architectural firms and major public erections, continue to abide by these ancient prohibitions.<sup>453</sup> For those that believe, inappropriate blueprints may lead to a dangerously open gateway, however, the door between Japan, and her demonic past, remains well shut.

From prehistory until the Taisho Era, the Japanese archipelago teemed with broods of baleful hellspawn. Disregarding the absolute veracity of this demonic infestation, the absolute belief of the populace roused very real fear and countermeasures that exerted profound influence on Yamato's pre-modern millennia. The aeons of demonic confrontation are evident both in the nation's laws and policies, and in the intimate practices of individuals and families.

So characteristic was demonic fixation within the island chain, that it was a regular aspect of official laws, utterances, and acts of premodern Japanese governance

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453 Theresa Matsuura, "Episode 11: The Devil's Gate (Kimon)," podcast, *Uncanny Japan*, October 7, 2017, accessed September 1, 2019.

and leadership at the municipal, shogunal, imperial, and clerical levels. During the medieval period, townsfolk regarded certain castes of extra-societal itinerants as sufficiently outre of aspect, demeanor, and lifestyle to perceive them as being of literally demonic lineage. As such, local ordinances compelled these outlier classes to be subjected to compulsory brandings, to serve as permanent cautionary sigil, ever warning all those whom they might encounter of their bedamned genealogy.<sup>454</sup> Though officially liberated from caste-predicated legal discrimination during the Meiji reforms, governmental tacit and explicit governmental actions evidenced the lingering prejudice against those with supposed demonic ancestry. This pattern remained characteristic of *burakumin*<sup>455</sup> relations with officialdom as late as 1919 when the a Nara prefectural ordinance caused the summary and compulsory evacuation of such a community due to its proximity to, and supposed demonic pollution of, a sacred grove.<sup>456</sup> The influence of demonic power in governance is likewise evident in the value Tokugawa bakufu rulers placed on their ancestral history of confronting and overcoming hell's minions. The shogunate emphasized genealogical links to the Minamoto clan, concentrating especially on reverence for Minamoto no Yorimitsu (1045-1127) due to the perception of this historico-legendary hero as one able to quell Hades' forces with martial valor. Illuminated

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454 Noriko T. Reider, *Japanese Demon Lore: Oni, from Ancient Times to Present* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2010), 49.

455 A Japanese social caste composed of those who are associated with, or who are descended from those associated with, work perceived as unclean such as tanning and encoffining.

456 Pharr, Susan J., "Burakumin Protest: The Incident at Yoka High School," in *Race, Ethnicity and Migration in Modern Japan*, Volume II: Indigenous and Colonial Others, Michael Weiner ed. (London and New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004), 134.

scrolls recorded as that Yorimitsu accomplished such feats with the ingenious employ of disguise, soporific sake, and an ensorceled *kabuto*<sup>457</sup> to decapitate *Shuten-Doji*, an especially disagreeable man-eating *oni*. Belief in connection to this demon-conquering lineage, added glory, and by extension, legitimacy, to the shogunal see.<sup>458</sup>

Additionally, since its archepelagic inception, evangelical policies of Buddhist leadership encouraged inclusion of demonic themes in didactic artwork, coopting the native belief in the true threatening presence of devilry to add fearful gravitas to the teachings of the sutras. Even while the imported koinonia still bore the residue of its foreign, polytheistic origins, Yamato's devilish preoccupation shaped prescribed clerical procedure, as is evidenced by such installations as “The seventh-century Tamanushi Shrine (which) depicted the temptation of Siddhartha by Indra in the guise of a demon.”<sup>459</sup>

Conversely, certain Japan-centric faiths of the post-war Showa and Heisei periods *are* characterized by doctrines that consciously embrace the demonic aspects of their native islands. Modern sects such as the *Sukyo Mahikari*<sup>460</sup> focus on possession of malign spirits, and the exorcisms thereof. The origins of these traditions are consciously anachronistic, linking present pedagogy to forgotten or subverted religious traditions in

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457 Joseph Caputo, “Shuten Doji Will Drink Your Blood and Eat Your Flesh,” *Smithsonian*, March 19, 2009.

458 Reider, *Japanese Demon Lore*, 69-70.

459 Melinda Takeuchi, “Kuniyoshi's 'Minamoto Raiko' and 'The Earth Spider': Demons and Protest in Late Tokugawa Japan,” *Ars Orientalis* 17 (1987): 11.

460 Known anglophonically and internationally as the True-Light Supra-Religious Organization.



an effort to rediscover or reclaim dead gnostic traditions. Though they claim connections to lost ways, the dead to whom they claim hearken are long silenced. Termed “New Religions”, these pieties' dogmatic desperation to claim links to ancient magicks reveals their novelty and disconnection from just such a heritage, rather than convincingly establishing the venerable heritage to which they so aspire. Contemporary practitioners of such inorganic henotheistic sects as *Tenrikyo*, *Oomoto*, and *Mahikari* are therefore reduced to substituting “latent ethnocentrism and manifest occultism” for the primitive dread certainty of demonic reality that served as the credulous animus of the ancients.<sup>461</sup>

In addition to the proclamations of officialdom, malevolent entities informed significant aspects of vernacular belief. The exigencies of survival for pre-modern Japanese included striving against the invisible omnipresences of disease and senescence. Lacking microscopy or an equivalent to the Germ Theory of Disease, the culprits were necessarily presupposed to be sapient fiends of the nether realm. Thus it followed that “[t]he celebrated tenth-century essayist Sei Shonagon (c.966-?) noted chest illnesses caused by malign spirits.”<sup>462</sup> Similarly, rural communities wracked by the blinding, scarifying, scabrous pustules of smallpox (*Variola major*) epidemics, sought variously to fend and propitiate one *Housougami*, an especially, malicious demonic instantiation, by engaging in an uncoded barrage of folk practices. These included such ersatz anti-demon remedies as draping and filling the afflicted's bedchamber with fabric and objects

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461 Winston Davis, *Dojo: Magic and Exorcism in Modern Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980): vii.

462 Haruko Wakabayashi, *The Seven Tengu Scrolls: Evil and the Rhetoric of Legitimacy in Medieval Japanese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012), 3.

of red, a color supposed to be an anathema to this *Housosugami*, bringing convalescents into the presence of dogs, of whom the demon was greatly affrighted, or offering gifts and prayers unto the malignant spirit that it might be sated and depart.<sup>463</sup>

Similarly, the specific malfeasances of which such entities were capable was determined by local oral traditions. The *Nihon ryoiki* collection of the eighth and ninth centuries for example, is a collection of previously unrecorded narrative anecdotes, wherein are recorded conflicting accounts of such creatures' true capabilities. In some tales the demons are harbingers of insanity, while in others they are the cause. In other instances death is the victims' outcome, while yet further cases recount *oni* curses that twist their object into becoming a demon themselves. The physical appearance was likewise split between standard horned, *kanabo*<sup>464</sup>-wielding ogres, and animal-headed<sup>465</sup> torturers of hell.<sup>466</sup>

### The Coelacanth and the Hibagon

Though incidents of animals displaying uncommon appearances and irregular behaviors are common enough in natural lore, the details of certain among these case studies push the topic of inquiry from the realm of strict biological science to that of

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463 Theresa Matsuura, "Episode 18: The God of Smallpox (Housosugami)," podcast, *Uncanny Japan*, May 18, 2018, accessed September 1, 2019.

464 A long wooden club arrayed with iron studs: a feudal Japanese tool of war, and the customary weapon of *oni*.

465 Named *Gozu* and *Mezu*, this respectively ox-headed and horse-headed pair of demons is charged with overseeing the exquisite agonies of Buddhist hell.

466 Kawamura Kunimitsu, "Oni," *Kokogakuin University Encyclopedia of Shinto*, 2007.

cryptozoology: the Sankebetsu incident is one such. Both Kesagake's physical attributes, as well as his deportment, mark him as an organism due consideration apart from the strictures of ordinary mammalogy.

The Ezo bear is a large animal. An adult man's hand placed against the palm of an average-sized specimen will appear as a child's. While not beyond the extreme feasible limits of a mature adult male, Kesagake's measurements are sufficiently distal outliers that special recognition is warranted. Though physical specimens are no longer extant to permit precision assessments, contemporaneous appraisals of the corpse place him at just under nine feet from head to foot, and roughly 750 pounds,<sup>467</sup> extraordinary measurements for that era.<sup>468</sup> Eyewitness accounts describing the incident generally and the bear specifically, notoriously unreliable though such sources may be, are neither lacking nor inconsistent. Event chronicler Kimura Moritake (1920- ) attests "...the more than thirty witnesses I had the privilege to hear testimony from remember the events of forty-six years ago clearly. I was surprised, more than anything by the accuracy of their accounts."<sup>469</sup> From the first-hand testaments of these survivors, he records that Kesagake was "bigger than [one] could imagine."<sup>470</sup> The bear's prodigious size may also be inferred from its disproportionate insatiability when consuming human-sized prey; Moritake's

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467 Moritake, *Valley of Lamentation*, part 23.

468 Beginning in the latter half of the twentieth century, reports of Ezo bears growing half again as large as this have been regular occurrences in rural Hokkaido. The easy availability of crops, especially corn, permits bears to annually gorge themselves on acres of agricultural bounty, fueling Brobdingnagian growth.

469 Moritake, *Valley of Lamentation*, part 18.

470 Moritake, *Valley of Lamentation*, part 12.

interviewees go on to describe such an anthropophagic scene as comparable to “a cat eating a mouse.”<sup>471</sup> Of such monstrous proportions was this hypervore that consuming a single human body entire was insufficient to abate his hunger, “[Miyoke house massacre victim] Take was not enough to sate the bear, and next it started on the expired Kanakura, eating his chest, shoulder and head.”<sup>472</sup> Yet still the vast carnivorous engine hungered: “Then it moved to Iwao, still clinging to life. The bear chewed at his groin, rear, chest, and shoulders”<sup>473</sup> easily doubling such species' standard daily intake of 100 pounds.<sup>474</sup>

Another aspect of Kesagake contributing to his cryptozoological designation is his activity, both the physical capabilities he displays thereby, and his behavioral predilections. Brown bears as a group are stupendously strong: in a muscular strength to mass ratio, they qualify as the tenth strongest living land animals.<sup>475</sup> Even accounting for this physical prowess however, Kesagake's demolition of a village is an exceptional case. Before dawn on the fifteenth of December, Kesagake “destroyed the homes of Matsuura Nagasuke, Nakagawa Magoichi, Yoshikawa Terukichi, Tsuji Hashikawa, and Matsu'ura Tozaburo.”<sup>476</sup> Such force did this specimen wield that at the end of his depredations, a full two-thirds of the frontier settlement lay in ruin. Today, only a modern reconstruction

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471 Ibid.

472 Ibid.

473 Ibid.

474 Ibid.

475 “The Strongest Living Land Creatures on Earth, Measured by their Power to Weight Ratio,” *The Telegraph*, 2018.

476 Moritake, *Valley of Lamentation*, part 17.

of the abattoir Miyoke House stands where once the village of Sankebetsu thrived. The immediate environs are given over to repossession by the forest so fully that physical ruins of the site are reduced to scattered bits of bemossed hearth or sluice, their viridescent decay and the encroaching creepers soon to efface such traces completely. The physical destruction was so catastrophic, that settlers abandoned the immediate vicinity soon thereafter. The title of lives so appalling that none ever returned to reclaim it. No instances of similar wholesale destruction by a bear, in Hokkaido or elsewhere, are recorded in natural history; the severity Kesagake's rampage suggests therefore that he was a beast distinct from his ursine kin.

Additionally, this hyper-brawn is evidenced in his observed ability to instantly take a human life, in this instance that of Kanakura of the Miyoke House Massacre of December 10, with the impact force of but “a single blow of its paw.”<sup>477</sup> With the exception of the polar bear, which are instinctually driven to hunt anything it sees,<sup>478</sup> bears unaccustomed to human contact, as they would have been in the Taisho Era Hokkaido interior, do not preferentially hunt human beings. Attacks are more commonly the result of humans startling a bear, or unknowingly entering its territory, which may result in defensive aggression.<sup>479</sup> However, the Sankebetsu attacks were predatorily-motivated: the purposeful approach of Kesagake to the village and entrance into homes

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477 Moritake, *Valley of Lamentation*, part 12.

478 Jim McNeill, *Explorer: Polar Bears will Actively Hunt Man*, Youtube video, Channel 4 News, 2011, accessed October 4, 2019.

479 Stephen Herrero and Andrew Higgins, “Human Injuries Inflicted by Bears in Alberta 1960-98,” *Ursus* 14, no. 1 (2003): 46.

evidence that this was no extemporaneous rejoinder to perceived territorial encroachment, and the surprised parties were the villagers, not the bear. Furthermore, predatory bear attacks are characterized by a tactic whereby the bear “knocks its prey to the ground. Once the prey is down, the bear pins it with its paws and starts feeding...A bear may take its time as it tears random mouthfuls from back, buttocks, legs, and shoulders, or goes in through the stomach for the organs,”<sup>480</sup> a description that well accords with the accounts of the manner in which Kesagake consumed the victims of Moritake house massacre. Eschewing the custom of his brethren, Kesagake viewed men as prey, and actively sought to feed on their flesh.

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Cryptozoological entities are divisible into two broad categories. The first consists of the biologically impossible, mistaken identifications, delusional fabrication, outright frauds, and tourism-boosting local hoaxes. An example of this type is Hiroshima Prefecture's Hibagon. In the summer of 1970, a local rustic claimed to have seen, striding across his farm, a “big ape...[with] dark reddish-brown hair, a head like a cone...[that] was galloping on two feet.”<sup>481</sup> Several months of interest followed, during which reporters descended en masse to the vicinity of Mt. Hiba, Hibagon search clubs formed and scoured the environs, and a number of semi-hysterical reports of rufous ape-men

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480 Lynn Schooler, “The Grizzly that Tried to Eat Me Alive: One Man's Petrifying Story of an Attack by an Alaskan Bear,” *Daily Mail*, September 9, 2010.

481 Dom Joly, *Scary Monsters and Super Creeps: In Search of the World's Most Hideous Beasts* (Great Britain: Simon & Schuster, 2012).

trickled in from the region.<sup>482</sup> Theories as to its origin caromed from undiscovered Neanderthal, to the mutations of an atomic bomb victim. However, after no legitimate photographic, film, or physical evidence surfaced, and the frequency between reports lengthened to years, the Hibagon passed to into local folklore: a winked-at artifact of the innocence of mid-Showa exuberance. In this new century, neither anthropologists, nor locals consider the legend to have any basis in zoological reality, consigning it therefore to the realm of curio shop figurines, poorly staged hoax videos, and local confectionery: the Hibagon egg, a chocolate covered sweet sealed in pouches whimsically illustrated with a pair of startled ape-men remains available as a regional souvenir.

Similarly, “a rash of sightings of something large and unexplainable”<sup>483</sup> reported by divers, fishermen, and pleasure boaters in the 1970s in Yamanashi Prefecture's scenic Fujigoko lakes region spawned a brief aquatic monster craze: an influx tourists and fishermen spent several years using sonar, nets, video, and came equipment to try to variously film, photograph, snare, or kill “Mossy” to no avail.<sup>484</sup> Since that time, occasional reports of shredded nets, inexplicable sonar signatures, and one piece of inconclusive film footage have kept a credulous few eagerly speculating on the plausibility of a plesiosaurus (*Plesiosaurus dolichodeirus*) or mosasaurus (*Mosasaurus hoffmannii*) enclave population surviving the eons, citing the international phenomenon of massive and inexplicable lake entities such as Scotland's celebrated Loch Ness

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482 Ibid.

483 Brent Swancer, “The Lake Monster of Japan's Mt. Fuji,” *Mysterious Universe*, July 24, 2014.

484 Ibid.

Monster, the giant octopus of Oklahoma's artificial lakes<sup>485</sup>, or oft-photographed Champ and snake-like Pressie of the Great Lakes.<sup>486</sup> Competing factions of the credulous posit the alternate possibilities of gargantuan carp, freshwater sharks, or preternaturally huge turtles.<sup>487</sup> However, the true modern assessment is reflected in the carefree fishing, boating, and bathing that typify Fujigoko tourism. After a brief dalliance with possible reality, the sale of keychains, post cards, and stickers depicting a sauropterygian silhouette remain the monster's last true influence. The beast has settled into a role of footnote to the lakes' vistas: fodder for ironic ephemera rather than hypothetical zoological reality.

The latter category consists of two types of organism: the feasible and the fanciful. The first includes cryptids which possess the plausibility of as of yet unconfirmed species hinted at by verifiable, though scant evidence, as well as Lazarus taxons, organisms presumed extinct but which may yet linger in remoteness or seclusion. Animals such as these with some tenuous but real pretension to reality include both of Japan's indigenous wolf species, persistently rumored to survive in inaccessible mountain enclaves of Honshu's Kii peninsula, or in sparsely populated pockets of forest in northeastern Hokkaido. Since their early twentieth-century extinction, rustic villagers have reported a continuous stream of visual wolf encounter, as well as as regular

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485 Katherine Harmon Courage, "Could an Octopus Really be Terrorizing Oklahoma's Lakes?" *Scientific American*, December 19, 2013.

486 Robert E. Bartholomew, "New Information Surfaces on 'World's Best Lake Monster Photo,' Raising Questions," *Skeptical Inquirer* 37, no. 3 (2013).

487 浩庵本館セントラルロジ, informational display, September 23, 2017.



occurrences of wolf howls, unusually large canine tracks, and what they believe to be lupine feces.<sup>488</sup>

The second type in this category consists of those organisms which have emerged from the ignominy of Fortean science to confirmed reality. This category may be exemplified by the Coelacanth (*Latimeria chalumnae* and *Latimeria menadoensis*), an antediluvian fish of the Saccopterygii clade. Centuries of ichthyologists consigned these lobed finned fishes to ancient extinction, until fish-conscious museum curator Marjorie Eileen Doris Courtenay-Latimer (1907-2004) spotted a fresh coelacanth in the catch of a South African fisherman in 1938.<sup>489</sup> Occasional angling cognoscenti have added several score specimens over the ensuing decades, confirming the reality of an extant, viable coelacanth population, 66 million years after their presumed extinction.<sup>490</sup>

Additionally, the uninitiated sometimes weave from exotic tales' fabulism, a falsely predicated credulity in what would otherwise be consigned to theology or folkloristics. The Ainu legends of *Koropuk-guru*, a miniature race with whom they once cohabited Ezo, proved sufficiently engaging for the first thorough Western student of their ethnology, John Batchelor, for him to conflate a mythologized racial history of conquering a lilliputian populace with actual historical events of Ainu, conflict and conquest. This misapprehension caused Batchelor, and his Oriental Studies colleague,

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488 Knight, "On the Extinction of the Japanese Wolf," 144.

489 J.L.B. Smith, *Old Fourlegs: The Story of the Coelacanth* (United Kingdom: Readers Union, 1957), 14.

490 Phillip Venter et al., "Discovery of a Viable Population of Coelacanths (*Latimeria chalumnae*) at Sodwana, Bay South Africa," *South African Journal of Science* 96, no. 11-12 (2000): 567-568.

Basil Hall Chamberlain (1850-1935), to at least entertain the possibility that some alternative species of sentient hominids may once have dwelt in Ezo concluding that “Before the time of the Ainu, Yezo was inhabited by a race of dwarfs...[who were ultimately] exterminated by the wooden clubs of the Ainu.”<sup>491</sup> As such they actively searched for evidence of their existence among the remains excavated from Ainu archaeological sites.<sup>492</sup>

Kesagake however, is not classifiable into any of these groups. He does not fit into the Hibagon's fanciful category, for with certainty he did exist: dozens of eyewitnesses, contemporaneous newspaper accounts, the confirmed deaths of Sankebetsu's victims, and the temporary but verifiable existence of physical remains corroborate the animal's physical reality. This evidence of reality likewise precludes it from inclusion in the folkloric conflation clade of Batchelor's *Koropuk-Guru*. Lazarus taxon possibility must too be discarded, though certain particularities of Kesagake's physiology and activity do resemble those of the extinct giant Short-faced bear (*Arctodus simus*). Presumed extinct for 11,000 years, these bears' larger median size, and proportionate megafaunal strength that allowed it to prey on the behemoth North American ancient bison (*Bison antiquus*), and defend such kill from hulking sabretoothed cats (*Smilodon fatalis*), do accord with accounts of the Sankebetsu animal's

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491 Edward Tyson, *A Philological Essay Concerning the Pygmies of the Ancients* (London: David Nutt in the Strand, 1894), xxiii.

492 John Batchelor, *The Koropuk-Guru or Pit-dwellers of Northern Japan, and a Critical Examination of the Nomenclature of Yezo* (Yokohma: Japan Mail, 1904).

fearsome feats.<sup>493</sup> Additionally, evidence *does* exist for the survival of the species into the present in the Kamchatka Peninsula and palearctic Canada, both tantalizingly similar biomes to northern Hokkaido. Physical artifacts such as the queerly-proportioned bear skull obtained by amateur naturalist Roderich McFarlane (1833-1920) of the Hudson's Bay Company from Northwest Territory Inuits in 1864, and the unaccountably large, short-haired pelt from eastern Russia documented by Swedish zoologist Sten Bergman (1895-1975) in 1920 add weight to such a possibility.<sup>494</sup> Kesagake however, for all his size and power, was by all accounts of otherwise standard physiognomy and appearance, save for his distinctive bandolier marking. Indeed, the most distinctive feature of short-faced bears, their characteristic shortness of face relative to latter-day species was something Keasagake did not possess. Rather, when commenting upon his corpse, his slayers commented upon the *largeness* of his head, banishing thus the hopes of even the most credulous of Fortean.<sup>495</sup>

A separate, demi-cryptozoological category consists of animals that do verifiably exist, yet also rumored to persist in secretive populations outside of their presumed native ranges. This category includes such hypothetical unorthodoxies as the international phenomenon of ABCs (Anomalous Big Cats), large felines roaming lands outside their presumed indigenous ranges. Elusive populations of panthers have been reported

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493 "Giant Prehistoric Bear," Youtube video, *National Geographic*, 2009, accessed October 4, 2019.

494 Raymond E. Hall, *Geographic Variation Among Brown and Grizzly Bears (Ursus arctos) in North America*, Special Publication of the Museum of Natural History, University of Kansas Number 13 (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1984), 1.

495 Moritake, *The Valley of Lamentation*, part 23.

intermittently for decades by the rural residents of the English counties of Gloucestershire and Dorset,<sup>496</sup> Cornish quarries are hotspots for lion sightings of late,<sup>497</sup> and the Australian state of New South Wales has experienced a steady stream of tiger sightings since the nineteenth-century.<sup>498</sup> Certain of these instances have proven explicable due to escape of big cats from zoos or circuses, while the majority remain disputed inconclusivities. The possibility of polar bears existing in secluded reaches of Hokkaido is an analogous consideration. Kesagake's unusually large size for the time, and his idiosyncratically humanophagic disposition match the zoological attributes of *Ursus maritimus*. Furthermore, the aquatic capabilities of polar bears, and their potential for travel on drifting sea ice potentiates their occasional presence in Northern Hokkaido. Additionally, white bears are regularly and verifiably sighted on islands in the southern reaches of the Sea of Okhotsk, and along the Hokkaido's northeastern Kurile Island chain, though the species is in doubt due to the presence of pale-pelaged *Ininkari* bears in the region that may be conflated with polar bears from a distance.<sup>499</sup> Despite this circumstantial possibility however, one conclusive contra-indicatory aspect of Kesagake's physiognomy remarked and agreed upon by eye-witnesses was his umber coat, distinctly

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496 Jasper Copping, "Research Suggests Big Cats May Roam the Wild," *The Telegraph*, November 23, 2013.

497 Tom Bevan and Rachel Bishop, "Fears of 'Lion on the Loose' in Cornwall Fueled by Gruesome Discovery of Headless Fawn in Quarry," *The Mirror*, August 16, 2016.

498 Damon Cronshaw, "An Encounter with the 'Tantanoola Tiger' at Mount Kembla in 1909," *Newcastle Herald*, July 2, 2017.

499 Yoshikazu Sato, et al., "The White-colored Brown Bears of the Southern Kurils," *Ursus* 22, no. 1 (2011): 84.

identifiable by its pale slash mark, but otherwise unremarkable. Whether polar bears do occasion Hokkaido's north, or if the only specimens on the island are confined to Sapporo's Maruyama Zoo, the Sankabetsu animal was not of their kind.

Yet still this singular bear's aspect and activity set it apart from others of its species, creating a singular category populated only by itself. The cause of his rampage remains both legion and obscure. Kesagake's desperate lust for food in mid-December is a central clue. His mere wakefulness and presence at such a late date were irregular, insofar as “[m]ovement to dens is correlated to weather and snow conditions with most movement occurring from late October to mid-November.”<sup>500</sup> Even Japan's traditional seventy-two microseason calendar names the twelfth through sixteenth December, “bears seclude themselves in holes.” The 1873 adoption of the Gregorian calendar made December a time of preparation for New Year's holiday festivities, however this meant little in rural Hokkaido where it was a time to ensure stores for winter survival, and nothing to an Ezo bear for whom biological impulse remained unchanged. His lust to devour indicates that Kesagake had been unable to take in sufficient caloric substance to generate the sufficient adipose stores necessary for a beast of his prodigious biometric proportions to survive hibernation, a period of dearth so extended that despite bears' metabolic retardation during such times, they may lose as much as half their body weight by spring's arrival.<sup>501</sup> To prepare for this fasting ordeal, an animal of Kesagake's size

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500 Mark J. Biel and Kerry A. Gunther, “Denning and Hibernation Behavior,” Yellowstone National Park Information Paper No. BMO-10.

501 “Brown Bear,” *National Geographic*, 2013, unpaginated electronic, accessed December 1, 2019.

must consume thousands of pounds of nutrient-dense food in the autumnal months.<sup>502</sup> If unable to prepare adequately, bears may remain undenned unseasonably late, growing increasingly frenzied in a desperate effort to store the fuel needed before winter's final descent. Animals in this state may take on aspects of aggression and ferocity theretofore unseen.<sup>503</sup> It was a situation such as this that proved fatal for grizzly bear researcher and environmentalist Timothy Treadwell (1957-2003) and girlfriend cum research assistant Amie Huguenard (1966-2003) in 2003 in Alaska's Katmai National Park, when they encamped later in the season than had been their former practice. The exigencies of approaching Alaskan winter drove grizzlies to feed on less-favored food sources: putrefying fish carcasses, their own young, and ultimately Treadwell and Huguenard.<sup>504</sup> To be still abroad in Hokkaido's forests days before the winter solstice, Kesagake must have been in truly frantic straits.

This concurrence of ursine desperation and burgeoning human presence was not incidental. Fields cleared for cultivation denuded bears' accustomed hunting grounds. The clamor of civilization's concomitant activity in and around settlements drove away game whence they had thriven for centuries. Finally, the needs and hungers of a surging wave of inhabitants depleted the bounties of shore, thicket, and stream. Formerly culled only to meet the needs of Ainu inhabitants and the few early pioneers, Hokkaido's native sika

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502 Ibid.

503 Nick Jans, *The Grizzly Maze: Timothy Treadwell's Fatal Obsession with Alaskan Bears* (New York, NY: Dutton, 2005).

504 Werner Herzog, *Grizzly Man*, (Santa Monica: Lionsgate, 2005).

deer (*Cervus nippon*) faced exponentially escalating slaughter as commercial hunting grew to support a thriving industry of canned venison exportation. With an annual harvest of over half a million annually beginning in the 1870s, “by 1900 deer number were down to near-unsustainable low levels.”<sup>505</sup> The runs of salmon, their shoals struggling upriver into the bears' domain bearing fatty skins ideal for nutrient-lusting pre-hibernators, diminished as dam construction cut off twenty-seven percent<sup>506</sup> of spawning grounds from the ocean. Outside encroachment swiftly and negatively affected the extant web of natural dependencies: wild subsistence grew ever more arduous.

Therefore, although genotypically and phenotypically identical to previous millennia of Ezo bear ancestry, the provocation of such signal stimuli worked change upon Kesagake as decidedly as a chromosomal mutation. Just as the hand of man can consciously shape a species to domesticity with breeding and behavioristics, it may bring forth an analogous inverse thereof with decades of implementing environmental pressures so severe, that only by waxing abominable might an organism survive them. Thus Kesagake represented a subspecies of one: a zoological divergence unaccounted for by the taxonomies of the age. He was a singular doomed cryptid wrought monstrous by the confluence of biological need and anthropological interference. This arrow of influence directed from civilization to the natural world, represents a directional departure from the theretofore absolute order of the Ezochi, the empire's final bastion of environmental-

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505 Melinda Joe, “Deer Problem Growing Fast,” *The Japan Times*, November 29, 2009.

506 “Reenvisioning the World's Largest Chum Salmon Fishery,” *Ocean Outcomes*, accessed December 1, 2019.

driven causality in the Taisho Era. Thus did Kesagake's very existence evidence this new reality's hegemony.



## CONCLUSION

Spliced and analyzed, the Sankebetsu incident is thus evidence of something greater than itself. The incident was a series of animal attacks; tragic for its casualties and memorable for its dread fascination, but not an event that intrinsically shifted historical paradigms. However, upon dissection, its constituent parts compose a gestalt conclusion. Each of its separate aspects, taken singly, *is* evident in other times and places in Japanese history. However, it is in Sankebetsu that they are all assembled. Here, the diversity and significance of semiotic aspects are such that I have been able to undertake a type of conceptual bricolage.

The victims were in the territory of an Ezo bear as part of the efforts of national transformation pursued by the Tokyo government; the village of Sankebetsu was a tool of archipelagic hegemony.

Kesagake's desperate hunger in December was a product of game-diminishing silvicultural and fishing practices employed by Hokkaido's Wa-jin colonists as mechanisms of control over nature. This control ruptured the relationship of bears to their food sources.

Kesagake crushed homes and ate his fill of Sankebetsu residents until the place was uninhabitably damaged and depopulated. He descended upon Sankebetsu like a wrathful god. As the National Diet passed acts to bowdlerize and commodify the linguistic and cultural distinctiveness of the empire's indigenous groups, a physical incarnation of the the lord of the Ainu Kamuy, the bear enshrined in millennia of lore, worship, and sacrificial rite represented the final flare of disappearing lifeways.

As an ursine, Kesagake hearkens to the numinous throughput of arctolatry that had persisted as a fixture of the human species in the northern hemisphere since men dwelt in caves. Bears inhabited the minds of men as much as forests. They are easily anthropomorphized, capable of mystic hibernatory torpor, and hold within precious and powerful gall. A bear's presence in this incident thus signifies both gravitas, and a connection to ancient practice.

By acting in a monstrous manner, it is further evident that Kesagake was emblematic of epochal change, for it is at these points of crux that monsters make themselves known to men. He was yokai, cryptid, and demon; a trifecta of horror befitting the consequential nature of his role. He was the psychopomp of historical continuity.

When assembled, these aspects are able to communicate a conclusion about Japanese modernity. Heretofore in this work I have referred to modern and pre-modern periods without specifying what defines them. From the Japanese studies canon, I was certain only that these eras existed and are separated by some essential difference.<sup>507</sup> I knew also that this elusive quality would be shared by all of the incident's conceptual divisions; whatever unifies subjects as disparate as political history, indigenous studies,

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<sup>507</sup> I here refer to the body of Japanese studies work that chooses either “modernity” or “pre-modernity” as its focus. Though authors do not necessarily concern themselves with defining precisely why they have spliced their history so, the phenomenon is sufficiently prevalent to presume that there is some definitive difference beyond convenience of temporal scope. Works such as these include: W.G. Beasley's *The rise of Modern Japan*, Christopher Goto-Jones' *Modern Japan: A Very Short Introduction*, Andrew Gordon's *A History of Modern Japan*, and Susan Hanley's *Everyday Things in Pre-modern Japan*, Akira Hayami's *Population Family and Society in Pre-modern Japan*.

religion, and nature would be the determining factor in the delineation between Japan's modern and pre-modern periods.

When Michel Foucault considered the subjugation of colonized people, the efforts of men to make nature serve them, and patterns of religious credulity, he sought to understand them in terms of control.<sup>508</sup> This can mean physical control in the form of violence, imprisonment, forest clearcutting, or animal extermination campaigns. Alternatively it can be an ineffable control of belief and thought via catechism, naming, and propaganda. Foucault terms this suite of mechanisms used to control thinking and acting power-knowledge. Whereas power-knowledge accounts for all those permutations of causation and influence apparent in a Geertzian deconstruction of the Sankebetsu Incident, it is somewhere within this idea then that the pre-modern/modern schism must lie.

Japanese history is characterized by centuries of instances of men seeking to exert influence over each other, their environment, and belief systems. However, what sets the period after the Sankebetsu Incident apart from that before, is a new determination, a normative hubris, that this influence not only should, but *could* be extended to all territories of an ascendant empire.

This is significant because it provides an understanding not just of the *what* of Japanese modernity, but of the *whence* as well. It did not come with Perry on the Susquehanna. Nor did the Occidental experts such as Edwin Dun and Horace Capron

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508 Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), 17, 172 and 157.

import it. Rather it was a new iteration of mentalité in the minds of those able to exert Foucaultian control. The sum of this investigation is that Japanese modernity separated itself from the past when the Japanese began to see Japan in this new way. This shift is what is evidenced by the Sankebetsu Brown Bear Incident, and why, despite its brevity and obscurity, it is the moment of epochal divergence.

Though Kesagake is representative of the pre-modern paradigm, he also, through his death, birthed the era that followed. The requirement of the presence of the old at the dawn of is paradox of reactionary opposition. For modern Japan to exist as a discrete condition, it must have something against which to define itself. This illustrates the recurrent dramatic peripeteia intrinsic to human historical condition: the longer and stronger an age endures, the more abrupt and absolute is its ultimate rupture.

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