

**DOMINANT NARRATIVES  
OF COLONIAL HOKKAIDO  
AND IMPERIAL JAPAN**

**ENVISIONING THE PERIPHERY AND  
THE MODERN NATION-STATE**

**MICHELE M. MASON**



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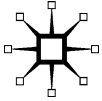
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*Michele M. Mason*

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# Introduction

## PERIPHERAL VISIONS

### REIMAGINING COLONIAL HOKKAIDO

We entrust the governor to perform admirable service to this development enterprise and to spread civilization widely, making Ezo into a small Japan. In this way, in addition to generating unprecedented profits, we will stop the Russians from watering at the mouth. We must do our all to enhance the Empire's power abroad. Whether we open Ezo or not will determine the future of the Empire, and gentlemen serving the imperial court should devote every effort to this project.

Iwakura Proposal (1869)

Today's Hokkaido is not yesterday's Ezo!

Kuroda Kiyotaka

(*Hokkaido Development Journal*, 1881)

Today, Hokkaido, Japan's northernmost island, takes hold in the Japanese imagination in a number of telling ways. It is a popular summer tourist destination renowned for its natural beauty and outdoor activities. Every winter, crowds clamor to view the massive ice sculptures of architectural wonders and popular cartoon and fairytale characters in the Sapporo Snow Festival.<sup>1</sup> National landmarks such as the impressive, original redbrick prefectural office and the charming Sapporo clock tower, built with Euro-American designs, lend the island a Western air. Hokkaido's famous local specialties—such as potatoes and corn—strengthen this foreign flavor. “Boys be ambitious!” William S. Clark's legendary exhortation, functions as Hokkaido's unofficial motto.<sup>2</sup> Moving “frontier” dramas, epic samurai-pioneer adventures, and romantic images of the indigenous population—the Ainu—are produced for popular consumption on television, in films, fiction, and manga. At the same time, the specter of Abashiri Prison, the Alcatraz of Japan, looms large in the national consciousness as the cruelest punitive fate.<sup>3</sup>

These diverse contemporary representations of Hokkaido constitute invaluable vestiges of the momentous exertions made during the Meiji era (1868–1912) to obfuscate a colonial project that radically refashioned the place we now know as Hokkaido. Just over 140 years ago, in 1869, the nascent Meiji state initiated its very first modern colonial operations by unilaterally extending its rule over an island that Japanese for centuries had called the “Land of Barbarians” (*ezo*, *ezogashima*).<sup>4</sup> Throughout the Meiji era, Hokkaido embodied extreme contradictions even as it was brought further into the strong embrace of the emerging Japanese nation. Commonly envisioned as an empty canvas, Hokkaido inspired government officials, literary figures, intellectuals, and a motley citizenry to draw their own designs and desires upon it. It was at once a natural part of the Japanese archipelago and a remote, alien land; a promise-filled frontier and an outpost of punishing prisons; a fount of untouched natural resources and an empty wasteland of snow and ice; and a utopian escape and a desolate dead end. While exotic exports from the island, such as beer and canned meats, were folded into everyday life on the mainland, numerous groups and individuals produced narratives that posited Hokkaido as an organic constituent of Japanese national territory and identity.

The dynamics of concealing and defining have been inextricably bound up with one another in the making of modern Hokkaido. A wide array of political, legal, cultural, and journalistic texts, replete with lacuna, distortions, and cleavages, portray Hokkaido’s inclusion into national boundaries as inevitable and generate totalizing ethnic identities. Prevailing national narratives weave Hokkaido’s complex and fraught history into a seamless tale of Japan’s modernization that favors a lexicon of development (*kaitaku*) and progress (*shinpō*) over colonization and conquest. The legal pretense of *terra nullius* (ownerless land) converts the devastating dispossession of indigenous Ainu into a masterful mission of transplanting advanced civilization to an empty wilderness.<sup>5</sup> Literary works, for their part, concentrate on the plight of Japanese colonists’ battles with oppressive nature as they discursively erase the long history of Ainu inhabitation from Hokkaido’s landscape. Confabulations of the remarkable transformation of Hokkaido, which promote the falsehood of inherently intertwined national and individual interests, veil discord and differences among Japanese and disregard competing claims to political rights and memory-making by Ainu to this day.

*Dominant Narratives of Colonial Hokkaido and Imperial Japan: Envisioning the Periphery and the Modern Nation-State* is an

interrogation of the collective imaginary—the visions—of Hokkaido that has facilitated this island’s widely unquestioned incorporation into Japanese territory and bequeathed modern Hokkaido and Japan a complicated legacy, reaching well beyond the temporal boundaries of the Meiji period. To begin, I contextualize and critique a historiographical love affair with the *tondenhei* system, a farming-militia unique to colonial Hokkaido, which overwhelmingly dominates the shared memory of its “development.”<sup>6</sup> In subsequent chapters, I situate depictions of Hokkaido’s empty land and brutal nature, notions of exile and punishment, and dreams of liberation and utopian escape within a nexus of dramatic political, economic, social, and cultural transformations. The juxtaposition of writings of the politicians, educators, and military leaders Nitobe Inazō, Tsuda Sen, and Kuroda Kiyotaka with the literary voices of Kunikida Doppo, Arishima Takeo, and Hara Hōitsuan, brings to the fore the vigorous interplay of varied sectors of Japanese society in the making of modern Hokkaido. Moreover, by analyzing contemporary spins on old stories that are populated with ethnic cross-dressing Japanese heroes and Ainu fossilized in a distant past, for instance by manga artist Tezuka Osamu and filmmaker Yukisada Isao, this work confirms the force of the dominant narratives in Japanese society today.

The critical readings herein destabilize and make transparent a whole host of conceptual categories, logical operations, rhetorical devices, and historical appropriations that serve to domesticate Hokkaido and mask its colonial origins. In examining diverse texts, what becomes conspicuous by its absence is any meaningful engagement with the pernicious effects of Japan’s colonial project in Hokkaido on Ainu communities. Therefore, although the primary focal point of this study is not colonial depictions of Ainu per se, an abiding question that guides this intellectual exploration is *how* (and with what consequences) do hegemonic myths remove the traces of Ainu existence, history, and culture from Hokkaido. Indebted to the excellent scholarship on modern Ainu, I adjust the aperture of this inquiry so as to capture the imbricated circuits of power and discourse that perpetuate the misguided and misleading modernization model effecting a number of intransigent and troubling erasures.<sup>7</sup>

In so doing, this book aims a critical lens at constructions of a time-space that I will deliberately and determinedly refer to as “colonial Hokkaido.”<sup>8</sup> Hokkaido’s status as a colony is commonly denied, implicitly or explicitly, in writings on Japan’s colonial past through terms such as “development” and “internal colony,” rendering Hokkaido all but invisible in colonial and postcolonial research.

The acquisition of Taiwan at the end of the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895) typically marks the inception of Japan’s empire. This dating, which excludes Hokkaido and Okinawa, prioritizes strictly *formal* colonies over the wide range of classifications, formations, and processes that comprised Japan’s modern expansionist venture. Some scholars accept that Meiji leaders were too consumed with the daunting practical tasks of securing economic stability and reforming the national infrastructure to produce imperial ideology in the early Meiji period, ignoring the significant ideological groundwork laid in Hokkaido long before the dust settled on the institutional landmarks that signify Japan’s embrace of modernity and the commencement of its formal empire. Thus, to employ the phrase “colonial Hokkaido” is to make an intervention that signals a significant break with common conventions of describing Hokkaido specifically and Japan’s age of empire more broadly.

Hokkaido constitutes a compelling object of study for what it can reveal about a too-often overlooked and marginalized part of the modern Japanese nation. Yet, just as importantly, I argue, it offers a window through which the Meiji state’s earliest moves toward national consolidation and imperial expansion can be more clearly apprehended. Just as historian James Edward Ketelaar rightly cautions us to not “equate the ‘declaration’ of the Meiji era with its production,” the present project rejects statements that assume the existence of the Japanese nation-state *before* the process of appropriating the island of Ezo/Hokkaido.<sup>9</sup> Rather, in a dialectical relationship, visions of and policies toward Hokkaido were constructed by and contributed to the discursive and material creation of the modern Japanese nation and empire. Hokkaido was the incubator of ideology and empire. It was the wellspring of wealth and stability. Amid domestic upheavals, the strategic redrawing of geographies lent life to a fledgling government and the authority of a refurbished emperor system. Engaged in ever intensifying struggles with Western imperial powers for an advantageous position on the global stage, the oligarchy quickly grasped that Hokkaido would prove an invaluable satellite economy and strategic military base. The expropriation of Hokkaido’s natural resources fueled Japan’s rapid industrialization and capitalist accumulation while protean political turns in its colonial administration helped forge the indispensable institutions of Japanese modernity.

Thus, as a counterpoint to prevalent narratives that place the northern island on the fringe of Japan’s modern history, I maintain that Hokkaido played a central role in the production of national and

imperial ideology, identity, subjects, and institutions. From the first days of the Meiji period, long before Japan acquired Taiwan in 1895, colonial policies, military recruitment campaigns, fictional pieces, journalistic reports, and popular opinions *simultaneously* defined Hokkaido (both *what* it was and its *place* in the nation) and Japan (both *what* it was and its *place* in the competitive international sphere). Rationalizations of the Japanese arrogation of Ainu homelands also functioned to define Japan as an advanced civilization replete with enduring historical continuities, a rich cultural inheritance, and a naturally unified and loyal citizenry. Throughout and since the Meiji era, Hokkaido has proved a fertile field for myriad ideological mystifications.

Literary scholar and popular critic Karatani Kōjin's discussion of the "discovery of landscape"<sup>10</sup> offers productive insight for confronting the "violent exclusions," to borrow Komori Yōichi's language, in Hokkaido's modern history.<sup>11</sup> Karatani elucidates how the privileging of emerging "realist" literary practices transformed perception by suppressing a previous symbolic order that favored figurative and transcendental modes of representation. Concomitant with the production of radically new ways of writing, reading, seeing, and being was the active expunging of the historicity of these paradigm shifts. That is to say, the ultimate victory of modern ideas of landscape, so successfully internalized that they appeared wholly self-evident in a span of less than a generation, was predicated on the active rejection and suppression of other diverse, viable forms.<sup>12</sup> In this context, Karatani explicitly, if briefly, refers to Hokkaido, asserting, "What I have called the 'discovery of landscape' was not merely an 'internal' event: it was accompanied by the discovery of a landscape that was new in actuality and not enveloped in any way by ancient texts."<sup>13</sup> As it was for modern notions of landscape so it was for the modern imaginary of Hokkaido. The repression of not only Hokkaido's multiple, overlapping, and conflicting histories but also the very fact of its invention in the Meiji period contributed (and contributes) to the ostensibly indisputable knowledge that Hokkaido is a natural part of Japan. If Karatani maintains that "'description' (*byōsha*) in Meiji literature should not be understood as a process of describing something, but as the emergence of the 'thing' itself," then this book argues that Meiji-era discourse on the island north of Honshu had the generative power to produce the spaces we now know as Hokkaido and Japan.<sup>14</sup>

As a final clarification, I add that in this cultural studies project I am not trying to uncover one *true* (hi)story, but to shed light on *how* certain narratives perilously reduce and impoverish the complexity

of history by assuming that “reality is the effect of an external realm of pure existence, untouched by the self and by the processes that construct meaning and order.”<sup>15</sup> Political and postcolonial theorist Timothy Mitchell perceptively illuminates this problematic premise of Orientalist thought in his article on the exhibitionary order of nineteenth-century world fairs thus:

In claiming that the “East itself” is not a place, I am not saying simply that Western representations created a distorted image of the real Orient; nor am I saying that the “real Orient” does not exist, and that there are not realities but only images and representations. Either statement would take for granted the strange way the West had come to live, as though the world were divided in this way into two: into an order of models, descriptions, texts, and meanings opposed to an order of originals, of things in themselves.<sup>16</sup>

Mitchell argues that our critiques must not simply identify the artificiality of representations and relegate the historical problem of Orientalism to the nineteenth century, but grasp how this binary between the real and representation—as a method of truth and order—has and continues to shape the workings and interpretations of our modern world.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, I do not assume that Hokkaido and Japan or Ainu and Japanese were obvious and static entities before material and rhetorical operations of the modern colonial intervention made them intelligible. Nor do the various representations of Hokkaido, or my critical appraisals of them, form, individually or collectively, a cohesive or authentic picture of Hokkaido. Moreover, lived experience in Hokkaido during the Meiji period did not unfold in uncomplicated teleological histories nor align neatly according to ethnic categories. Uneven and contentious historical processes organized a collective imagination of Hokkaido and Japan and gave meaning to notions of ethnicity and nationality. This was accomplished through the construction of difference (e.g., nature/culture and barbarian/civilized) and the disavowal of unfolding Ainu history. To acknowledge the partial, elusive, and tentative nature of these visions is *not* to dismiss the devastating historical effects they have generated. Within the limited space allotted in this book, I aim to bring to light the intricate intertwining of the incipient state’s strategic ambitions in and for Hokkaido and the visions of the northern periphery that, it turns out, was at the heart of making modern imperial Japan.

## SITUATING AINU WITHIN HOKKAIDO'S COLONIAL MODERNITY

In as much as an outside power, the Meiji state, came to exert absolute political sovereignty over Ainu Moshir (Land of Humans), subjugated the indigenous people, undertook rapacious economic exploitation, and pursued an aggressive permanent settlement project, Hokkaido can be regarded as Japan's only successful settler colony.<sup>18</sup> To make the claim that modern Hokkaido was a colonial space, however, requires an elaboration of distinct political realities and modes of engaging with Ainu in the Meiji and Tokugawa (1600–1868) periods. Certainly, the Meiji era was not the first time indigenous Ainu communities were forced to bear the brunt of foreign intervention from the Japanese mainland. A long history of interaction with and control over Ainu communities by *wajin* (ethnic Japanese) began even before the Tokugawa shogunate invested the Matsumae family with exclusive rights to trade in Ezo in 1604.<sup>19</sup> Brett Walker's *The Conquest of Ainu Lands: Ecology and Culture in Japanese Expansion, 1590–1800* lucidly and persuasively communicates the many ways Tokugawa economic order on the island eroded the Ainu way of life, created devastating dependencies on Japanese goods and employment, and reduced their population through warfare, disease, and dislocation. Two excellent treatments of identity/status formation and protocapitalism in early-modern Japan by David Howell, although not strictly focusing on Hokkaido, engage it as a central example, revealing the changing mechanisms by which Ainu were identified as Others and the vital role Ezo played in shaping early, indigenous forms of Japanese capitalism.<sup>20</sup> These works, coupled with foundational scholarship by Kaiho Mineo and Emori Susumu on the early-modern history of Ezo and Ainu, offer evidence of the central importance of Ezo to the Tokugawa regime as they elucidate the nature of centuries of permanent Japanese settlements, economic subjugation, and environmental degradation.<sup>21</sup>

As one might expect, there were numerous continuities from the previous age in the Meiji state's attitude and policies toward the island. The exploitation of natural resources, sometimes in only slightly altered guises, continued unabated. Not unlike the earlier practice of banishment to Ezo, prisons built in Hokkaido served as places of modern exile for those who dared to oppose the state's vision of Japan. Ainu labor and knowledge were further capitalized on to suit the needs of the *wajin* rulers, which deepened the suffering of populations already in crisis. Despite shifting notions of civilization and



Others, an enduring image of Ainu as barbarians shaped the supposedly benevolent policies toward the “former natives.”

Yet, it remains a critical fact that Hokkaido did not exist until 1869, when leaders coined the name to consecrate the modern cult of the emperor and bolster the Meiji nation- and empire-building projects. Whatever policies and images of Ezo existed previously, they supported a very different polity. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the significant breaks, manifested in substance and in degree. First, as the two distinct Tokugawa terms *Ezochi* (Ainu land) and *Wajinchi* (Japanese land) suggest, the island as a whole was not integrated firmly into Tokugawa Japan’s political territory, and wajin inhabited a relatively small portion of it. Ezo’s ambivalent position is expressed most succinctly in Walker’s assertion, “Ezochi was indisputably foreign but nonetheless within the orbit of Japanese cultural and commercial interests.”<sup>22</sup> Thus, although Walker makes a strong argument for the centrality of Ezo in Tokugawa and the many ways transformations between 1590 and 1800 “hastened [the Ainu’s] eventual conquest by the Japanese,”<sup>23</sup> he refers to the island as a “northern administrative district of sorts”<sup>24</sup> to qualify Ezo’s geopolitical status at the time. He also documents one shogunal official’s statement that Ezo was an alien country as late as 1856.<sup>25</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century, however, it was no longer a matter for debate that Hokkaido constituted “one of Japan’s four main islands,” naturalized as such by international recognition and domestic validation. Furthermore, the intensive Japanese colonial settlement of every region of Hokkaido in the Meiji era was just as much a *means* of incontrovertibly defining the island’s inclusion in the nation as it was a result of it.

Second, whereas Ainu communities maintained considerable autonomy within traditional hunting and fishing territories in Ezochi during the Tokugawa period, Meiji colonial land grabs and the codification of land ownership laws favorable to Japanese colonists, as well as the restrictions on traditional means of subsistence, completely stripped Ainu from hitherto customary land-use rights. Measures abolishing private hunting and fishing and forced removals from *kotan* (villages) lent a significantly different hue to the modern era. The intensification of capitalist, industrialist-driven imperatives spurred the Meiji state to commandeer the most fertile ground and rich mineral deposits across Hokkaido regardless of whether these had been areas of longtime Ainu inhabitation. Following the lead of Western imperial powers, Japanese colonial officials deployed a rhetoric that officially, and unilaterally, designated much of Hokkaido

ownerless land to justify Ainu dispossession.<sup>26</sup> Such policies exacerbated diasporic trends as Ainu sought jobs with the state or private enterprises, not infrequently doing work that earlier would have directly fed their families, but now earned them a miserable wage that could scarcely make ends meet.

Moreover, the pernicious and persistent assimilation campaigns that did not merely aim to “civilize” Ainu but also to eradicate their language and culture altogether were a notable departure from dominant Tokugawa formal and informal practices of emphasizing differences between Ainu and Japanese. The modern household registry (*koseki*) certainly reinforced the otherness of Ainu in the novel designation “former natives,” but mandatory name changes and legal codes outlawing fundamental Ainu customs signaled an abrupt turning away from earlier policies. An educational system that created a second tier of native schools (*dojin gakkō*) for Ainu provided “basic education with heavy doses of nationalist ‘ethics’” and forbade them to use of their own language.<sup>27</sup> The Hokkaido Former Natives Protection Law (*Hokkaidō kyūdojin hogohō*), which attempted to convert Ainu to farming by parceling out inadequate plots of land, was the linchpin of the Japanization of Ainu.<sup>28</sup> Academic and popular discourse that attributed the pervasive poverty, disease, and social disintegration caused by Japanese colonization to an intrinsic inferiority in the Ainu themselves only added insult to injury. In fact, the forced conferment of Japanese citizenship and the aggressive assimilation policies were significant means by which Japan claimed absolute authority over the island and established itself as a competitive imperial power. One might venture to assert that the Ainu or, rather, the process of otherizing Ainu as backward, did more to modernize Japan than the other way around.

Finally, possibly the most difficult legacy to address in contemporary Japan, namely, the claim to political rights, derives from the fact that the Meiji government utterly disregarded any conceptualization of Ainu sovereignty. This is not to say that Ainu did not have forms of political organization, but that the Japanese state did not recognize them as such. Thus, there exists no equivalent to the treaties drawn up between First Nations and the United States.<sup>29</sup> Even during the Tokugawa period, the Matsumae domain held audiences, ceremonies, and trade negotiations that functioned in some sense to confirm the legitimacy, if not the absolute sovereignty, of Ainu communities. Although the various parties may have viewed these exchanges differently, the gesture of physically meeting, however choreographed, accorded a crucial degree of recognition.<sup>30</sup> The Meiji state, however,

pursued a two-fold tension-filled approach. By fiat the Ainu were abruptly made into Japanese citizens and imperial subjects, and every outward sign of their ethnicity suppressed. At the same time, it was presupposed that the Ainu were a primitive people who utterly lacked civilization and required Japan's protective paternal guidance, which hardly necessitated discussing or consulting with them. Howell confirms that although Ainu in the Tokugawa era "had been subjected to political, economic, and ecological pressure for hundreds of years, they were always able to invest ties with Wajin society with their own cultural meanings and thereby retain a certain degree of initiative over defining the terms of the relationship."<sup>31</sup> This became ever more difficult in the Meiji period.<sup>32</sup>

Even so, Ainu did resist the imposition of Japanese political, economic, and cultural hegemony. Ainu in the Niikappu and Shizunai areas refused to cooperate with local bans on keeping their prized dogs, breeding and training them as they had done for centuries in secret.<sup>33</sup> There were many instances of Ainu escaping from abusive workplaces and several accounts of men spending time in prison for fishing for their families.<sup>34</sup> Photographic images from the twentieth century confirm that women ignored the prohibition on tattooing, and evidence of the private maintenance and passing on of Ainu traditions, what Tessa Morris-Suzuki calls "a quiet form of resistance to assimilation," suggest Ainu exercised their agency to define what actions held meaning for them in everyday life even before the emergence of more cohesive Ainu ethnic movements in the 1920s.<sup>35</sup> Rejecting "the notion that 'being Japanese' required amnesia about their own history and that adjustments to the realities of life in a modern nation-state implied renouncement of their self-awareness as Ainu," activist Kaizawa Hisanosuke and poet Iboshi Hokuto made public what many Ainu embraced quietly.<sup>36</sup> Howell rightly asserts that ethnic self-preservation came in all kinds of guises. He writes, "Incongruous as it may seem, [accommodation], too, was one strategy adopted by Ainu eager to retain a measure of control over their relations with the state and Japanese society at large."<sup>37</sup>

Significantly, past and present narratives almost wholly negate Ainu *living* history. On the one hand, Ainu remain frozen in the past in the national imaginary, histories, museums, and manga, victims of Japan's version of Johannes Fabian's notion of allochronism.<sup>38</sup> Defined as the "denial of contemporaneity" of an Other, this conceptual operation in the Meiji context insisted that Ainu, despite their simultaneous physical existence with Japanese, occupied a distinct, fixed, and unquestionably premodern time frame on an universal

historical chronology.<sup>39</sup> On this timeline of enlightenment, Japanese society was located irrefutably in the modern period, albeit behind the even more advanced Western civilizations. On the other hand, assimilation policies, which speciously promised the full privileges of Japanese citizenship, functioned to erase the distinctive linguistic, cultural, and social markers of the Ainu. In the realms of education, employment, and marriage, persisting discriminatory practices coerced Ainu to Japanese through shame and rejection. The tension of these competing concepts is embodied in the national household registry. Administrators professed discriminatory practices of the past null and void as they registered Ainu in the *koseki* under the ostensibly neutral designation former natives with Japanese names arbitrarily assigned by state officials. In this way, at the same time that the *koseki* officially conferred citizenship on Ainu, it also marked them as Other and stripped them of all rights to self-definition. Notwithstanding the obvious contradictions between forced assimilation and the highly politicized notion of time that depicted Ainu as permanently backward, colonial ideologies and policies in Hokkaido worked in concert to foreclose the possibility of a *modern* Ainu identity.

Following a pattern established during the Meiji era, today a very narrow spectrum of information about Ainu history and contemporary activism reach the general public. Even Kayano Shigeru's moving personal account of his family history and eventual rise as a modern Ainu leader; the scholarship by and on Chiri Yukie (1903–1922), who worked tirelessly during her short life to preserve the Ainu language and culture; and Emori Susumu's frank *Ainu History: The People of Hokkaido* are no match for the large body of literature that ignores the existence of Ainu in Hokkaido as it details the minutia of the hardships of Japanese colonists.<sup>40</sup> One will catch a glimpse of Ainu on occasion in historical accounts in as much as they aid government or business entities to survey their homeland for lumber or natural mineral deposits, teach Japanese women about indigenous herbal medicines, or share their traditional survival techniques with colonists struggling in harsh winter conditions. Japanese may know about ancient Ainu rituals (*iomante*, the bear sending off ceremony) and handicrafts (textile designs and wood carvings), but rarely learn of the vibrant recent history of Ainu who have (re)constructed a dynamic modern identity, revived the practice of *ukocaranke* (debating vigorously until consensus is reached) in their grassroots activism, reinvigorated education in Ainu language and traditional arts, and written new songs that speak to the concerns of Ainu today. One might have heard of the abolishment of the prejudicial 1899 Hokkaido Former

Natives Protection Law but be unaware that the replacement, the Law for the Promotion of the Ainu Culture and for the Dissemination and Advocacy for the Traditions of the Ainu and the Ainu Culture, is as short on power to resolve pressing concerns as it is long in title.<sup>41</sup> What passes for common knowledge is greatly circumscribed by a number of earlier narrative configurations. Therefore, Ainu activists, who have conflicted feelings about the partial victories of the 1997 Ainu Culture Promotion Law and the 2006 recognition of their status as an indigenous people of Japan, continue to press for an acknowledgment of Hokkaido's painful colonial history and policies that would secure their civil, political, and economic rights.<sup>42</sup>

What does it mean to say, then, that *Dominant Narratives of Colonial Hokkaido and Imperial Japan* is and is not a book about Ainu? A guiding principle of this project holds that the historical erasure of Ainu demands a close and critical examination of the narratives that cast *Japanese* as the main characters, agents, and even victims of Japanese modernity. Therefore, the chapters that follow certainly highlight how the ascription of particular meaning and significance onto Hokkaido obscures the effects of Meiji-era colonization on indigenous communities. At the same time, this work argues that those competing and conflicting forces that delineated the boundaries of knowledge of Hokkaido and Ainu also necessarily gave meaning to the modern notions of Japan and Japanese. Thus, herein I am invested in deconstructing narratives that serve to homogenize people and experiences, naturalize highly conflicted and violent processes of modernization, and simplify complicated historical entanglements in the production of both modern Hokkaido and Japan. To be more specific, the effacement of Ainu from Hokkaido, physically and discursively, made way for the inscription of agricultural, economic, social, and political practices of the Japanese mainland onto the landscape there and the realization of imperial desire to claim the island as a symbol of Japan's advanced status. The discourse that enveloped Hokkaido's colonization aided the Japanese state to inculcate nationalist sentiment and promote imperial ambitions. If written law and official decrees ensured the subjugation of the Ainu people and the appropriation of their homelands, then literary, journalistic, and popular works greatly assisted in "conquering the space of consciousness" of the Japanese citizenry so that they could participate in the illusion of the development of this virgin land (*shojochi*). Still, sometimes portrayals of banishment to Hokkaido and fantasies of freedom were employed to critique the Japanese state and society. That the visions of Hokkaido are as mercurial as its winter weather

owes to a long and complex history of Japanese groups and individuals making their claims on the island for a wide variety of agendas.

I will leave it to early-modern historians to characterize Tokugawa expansionist policy. However, it is an unequivocal truth that the Meiji state—so clearly colored by its imperialist designs—established Hokkaido as Japan's first modern colony. It was not a formal colony, such as Taiwan or Korea. Like Okinawa, its colonial status was cunningly and strategically suppressed. Nor was it an internal colony, but rather *internalized* by the colonization process that took place during the Meiji era. Without recognizing how the nationalistic mystifications have blurred our visions of Hokkaido, Ainu, and Japan, we cannot discern a path toward redressing historical injustices and addressing the complexity of this historical moment. To challenge these we must first contest the ideological framework that to this point has been dictated by the colonizers for their own interests.

### REENVISIONING COLONIAL HOKKAIDO

Invented traditions and histories crafted during the Meiji era—and surviving in various guises today—typically veiled the monumental changes and ruptures of the period under a shroud of nationalist discourse. In fact, an extraordinary overhaul of the country at every level was required to transform from the semifeudal polity of the Tokugawa period to a nation-state that could contend with aggressive Western capitalist and colonial encroachment. This was at once a process of demolishing, abolishing, revamping, refurbishing, and constructing. Naturally, political and economic reforms were priorities as were renovations of legal, military, and educational systems. The state conducted trying and delicate negotiations on unequal treaties with belligerent Western powers. The reorganization of capital, labor, and corporate structures, along with the modernization of transportation, forged Japan's industrial revolution. The newly established postal service and police force complemented the integration and fortification of the modern national infrastructure. Concomitantly, the creation of Meiji nationalist ideology served the purpose of homogenizing a diverse populace and radically reconfiguring a wide variety of decidedly nonnational/imperial affinities and identities. Religious practices and rituals were reconstructed to ratify the novel emperor system. A burgeoning print media helped lay down the conceptual bedrock of the nation-state by fostering ideas of homogeneous time (a shared time-space) and a national imagined community.<sup>43</sup> The projection of the nation into a timeless teleological progression aided

the conceptualization of an inherent Japanese-ness defined by an apparently shared history and culture. The Japanese public was acculturated to dramatically new notions of time and childhood, which appear self-evident today, rearranging structures and patterns of the work place, family, and leisure. In a remarkably short period of time, the deployment of a panoply of technologies and knowledge regimes on the home front considerably consolidated nodes of power and transformed a heterogeneous collectivity into a seemingly cohesive body politic.

Japan's furious drive toward nation-statehood was not motivated solely by imperatives to maintain order in the unstable and volatile domestic realm, but also by a desire to preserve its sovereignty within the international sphere, whose rules of engagement were defined chiefly by the interests of Western imperial powers. Japanese leaders attempted to authenticate their national boundaries, authority, and identity through colonial expansion, first in Ezo/Hokkaido and then beyond, amid pervasive Western depictions of Japan as an emasculated, uncivilized, childlike country. After the black ships of Commodore Matthew Perry made their bellicose entrance into Edo Bay in 1853, forcing Japan to participate in what was already a highly inequitable global system of trade, Japanese were keenly aware of their tenuous position in relation to the West. The following words of Bishop William Awdry, published just after Japan's stunning victory over Russia in the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905), epitomize the paternalistic and arrogant tone that was the mainstay of western portrayals of Japan.

The sudden revulsion of feeling has come when those who, not a generation ago, were thought of as pretty, interesting, artistic, little dolls or children, fantastic and whimsical, unsettled in purpose and loose in morals, dishonest in business, and cruel if you scratched through the skin, "great in little things and little in great things," have come out on the broad stage of the world.<sup>44</sup>

Although written in 1905, such racist sentiment was not limited to that specific point in time but represents a culmination of many decades of prejudicial foreign views about Japan that assumed its political, military, cultural, and moral inferiority. Thus, the nature of Japanese imperial expansion was molded by multiple, flexible discourses and actions vis-à-vis both Asian neighbors and the West. What has been termed variously "interstitial imperialism" and the "triadic structure of Japan's imperialism" recognizes Japan's desire to avoid being colonized by Western powers as a central motivating factor of Japan's

vigorous pursuit of colonial domination in the region.<sup>45</sup> This posturing began as early as 1869 when Japanese ideologues asserted in the Iwakura Proposal (see epigraph) that the colonization of Ezo would be instrumental in negotiating respect and influence with the West, in general, and Russia, in particular. Ezo/Hokkaido—the proving ground of Japan’s later empire—was intimately linked to the complex texture of Japan’s bid to compete in the global scramble for economic supremacy.

This study weds critical analysis of the construction of modern visions of Hokkaido to a steadfast commitment to questioning and disrupting the narratives that subsume Hokkaido’s colonization under Japan’s national history. As a latecomer to the regime of nation-states and imperial conquest, the Meiji government quickly leveraged Ezo/Hokkaido to enkindle nationalist sentiment at home and demonstrate its authority in the international realm. In this context, nationalism and imperialism promptly formed an integrated, mutually productive relationship. Yet, as Prasenjit Duara astutely observes in his examination of the normalization of Manchukuo’s sovereignty, “Perhaps the most distinctive feature of nationalist *ideology* in the twentieth century is the peeling away of imperialism from nationalism.”<sup>46</sup> As a case in point, the symbolic regime that chronicles the historical trajectory of modern Japan and its intervention to the north, to an impressive degree, successfully divorces the constitutive imperialist elements from the approbatory nationalist histories. Starting as early as the late nineteenth century, the dominant account of the process by which Japan seized and exploited Hokkaido endorses a story of an enduring civilization extending its technologically advanced skills to an undeveloped region of the nation. A variety of narratives ensure that Ainu are viewed as hopelessly fixed in the past while Japanese march steadily toward the future, foregrounding Japan’s enlightened scientific mastery that could harness the assets of the wilderness to meet the demands of a new age. The significant historical rupture and geographic reorganization at the beginning of the Meiji era is traded for timeless continuity, and the imperialist nature of the undertaking in Hokkaido is converted into an exemplar of Japanese national modernization. Herein I take a cue from Duara’s project, which adopts “a methodology capable of joining the history of modern nationalism with the understanding of *nationalism as the producer of history*—both in its material effects and, especially, in its enormous ideological capacity to code history as national.”<sup>47</sup> My examination of Meiji narratives—even oppositional ones—scrutinizes the dialectical processes of the production of modern Japanese nationalism and the



sanitization of the colonial aspects of Hokkaido's modern history. This invariably calls for the excavation of what is written out of the national stories; the fact that Japan's appropriation of Hokkaido produced devastating effects on Ainu communities *and* that the coemergence of early national and imperial projects fundamentally defined Japan as a modern nation-state.

Establishing Hokkaido's colonial status necessitates not only unmasking a battery of euphemisms and obfuscations that serve to minimize the violence of the undertaking that was the colonization of Hokkaido in national narratives since the Meiji era, but also a critical reassessment of the terms of denial and marginalization in post-war colonial scholarship that have perpetuated this distorted history. Early interpretations of how Japan's nation-state formation and global imperialist, capitalist competitiveness shaped the Japanese empire were greatly influenced by ideologies of nationalism and of a less blatant but nevertheless ongoing global system of imperialism in the post-war era. Increasingly perceptive colonial and postcolonial critiques of hitherto ambiguous colonial spaces, such as Australia, New Zealand, the United States, Ireland, and Hawai'i, have opened up new lines of inquiry. Scrutiny of the complexities of settler colonies, in particular, has helped challenge assumptions that trivialize the effects of imperialist projects on indigenous peoples and prioritize the hardships of the invading settlers vis-à-vis the ruling metropolitan center.<sup>48</sup> To fully understand the degree to which Hokkaido has been excluded and peripheralized in discussions of Japan's empire, we must extricate ourselves from characterizations of modernity that substitute the rhetoric of development and progress for the realities of domination and plunder.

An oft-unarticulated distinction between formal and informal colonies has succeeded in reinforcing a periodization of Japan's empire that excludes Hokkaido, as well as Okinawa, from canonical colonial history. Convention holds that Japan's age of empire began in 1895, when Japan took possession of Taiwan after its triumph in the Sino-Japanese War, and concludes in 1945 upon Japan's defeat in the Asia-Pacific War (1931–1945). To be sure there was no sensational military triumph or ostentatious ceremony to mark an internationally monitored cessation of Hokkaido to Japan. No document the likes of the Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty of 1910, which signed away the sovereignty of the emperor of Korea, exists to substantiate Japan's aggressive appropriation of the island. Further, in early scholarship on Japan's empire a dubious demarcation between colonization and colonialism authorized the expunging of Hokkaido from the

colonial record. Expressed both implicitly and explicitly, colonization was defined as the migration of a people to unopened land *within* a nation's territory and colonialism as an exertion of political and economic dominion over peoples *outside* the national boundaries. Consider, for example, Mark Peattie's characterization of Hokkaido.

There was, to begin with, the Japanese effort in the development, exploration, and colonization of Hokkaido, 1873–1883, which provided practical experience in the creation of a settlement colony, not unlike the British colonization of Australia and New Zealand, wherein a government settles its own lands with its own people. But such colonizing—as opposed to colonial—activities never became the dominant activity in the larger empire, though colonization as an ideal continued to inspire propagandists for Japanese expansion in the decades to come.<sup>49</sup>

The analogical sleight of hand that equates Hokkaido with Australia and New Zealand, characterized as Britain's *own land*, reveals the blinders that have supported the problematic distinction between colonizing and colonial activities. Such disavowals, which reflect and amplify nationalistic Japanese accounts of colonial Hokkaido, favor a restriction rather than an extension of colonial legitimacy to Japan's diverse colonial campaigns.

Also fostering the lacuna that colonial Hokkaido falls into is the disregard for the significance of early Meiji in determining Japan's ideological footprint. Carol Gluck's authoritative *Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period* masterfully captures the multiple political and social actors that shaped the dominant national and imperial narratives in the late Meiji era. It moves us away from cohesive and static notions of ideology, insisting that “[a number of versions of reality]...coexisted, overlapped or interacted with one another, so that rather than a single ideology, there were several ideologies, each in constant process of mutual adjustment and change.”<sup>50</sup> However, the work is limited in its historical scope. Gluck argues that the truly seminal modern ideologies and institutions took shape in the last decade of the nineteenth century, claiming, “what is now called ‘emperor system’ ideology did not begin to emerge in earnest until around 1890.”<sup>51</sup> Gluck asserts that the immediate goals of political centralization, industrialization, and building the national infrastructure constituted the mainstay of political activity during the first 20 years of Meiji because officials were “too caught up in the demanding work of modernization to bother excessively with political rationalizations or civic blandishments.”<sup>52</sup> Julia Adeney Thomas

takes issue with Gluck's quantitative notion of ideology. "Used in the Althusserian sense, 'ideology' cannot be quantified; there cannot be more or less of it in a particular period."<sup>53</sup> She clarifies with the following:

While I agree that it was not until the late 1880s that the "emperor system" (*tennōsei*) ideology of the Meiji state began to coalesce and develop full institutional expression, it seems to me that the documents and debates of early Meiji are nonetheless deeply ideological, and furthermore that late Meiji debates were decisively shaped by those of the earlier period.<sup>54</sup>

No earlier, or arguably clearer, case than Hokkaido exists of the influential ideological groundwork laid out in the opening years of the Meiji era that shored up the modern processes of imperial and national myth-making.

The customary practice of post-dating Japan's empire manifests a hierarchy of colonial authenticity, usually distinguishing formal colonies or colonies of occupation from internal colonies. More specifically, in English and Japanese scholarship the terms migration/*imin* and internal colony/*naikoku shokuminchi* have served to perpetuate the erasure of the fraught and complex case of colonial Hokkaido from postcolonial discussions. Although the phrase "internal colony" includes the word "colony," it typically functions to attenuate colonial legitimacy through a distinction between external and internal territories. This a priori assumption, however, presupposes an internal status *before* the actual process of internalization and sanctions the unilateral claims of rule over another group of people. In an encouraging turn, Robert Eskildsen, makes the invaluable critique that imperialism began before the 1890s. He writes, "The establishment of Japan's formal colonial empire has served as an influential historical guidepost, but it also encourages the view that Japanese colonialism happened after Japan had accomplished its own modernization, rather than that colonialism and modernization happened concurrently, and this has created a historiographical blind spot about the colonial dimension of the Taiwan expedition."<sup>55</sup> It is, then, perhaps all the more disappointing that after Eskildsen argues that Japan's process of modernization was profoundly connected to early imperialist enterprises such as the Taiwan Expedition (1874), he is reluctant to extend this same interpretation to the occupation and exploitation of Hokkaido or Okinawa. He contends that the Taiwan Expedition was "an opportunity to assert, rather aggressively, Japan's new status to the world," but that "the *internal* colonization of Hokkaido or

Okinawa [does not] raise the same issues about Japan's willingness to project military power abroad in order to increase its standing in the world."<sup>56</sup> Yet, the language of the directive to the first governor of colonial Hokkaido—for instance, “we must do our all to enhance the Empire's power abroad” and “whether we open Ezo or not will determine the future of the Empire”—is unequivocal. The aggressive incursion into Hokkaido was, in the minds of key figures holding the reins of power, conceived of as a means of displaying Japanese imperial power on the global stage so as to leverage a better position vis-à-vis strong Western states.

The use of settler colony (*ijūshokuminchi*, *teijūshokuminchi*) would certainly be an improvement over internal colony, but in the practice of describing colonial Hokkaido the various forms of settler tend toward an uncritically favorable or romantic characterization.<sup>57</sup> Words such as *paionia* (pioneer), *sakigakesha* (trailblazer, pioneer), and *kaikonsha* (settler, colonist, or literally a person who reclaims land) prevail in the modernization narratives. The term “settler colony” as a critical appraisal of Hokkaido's history has not taken root in Japanese or English scholarship. Moreover, even if settler colony might be useful, scholars of Australian colonialism, Anna Johnston and Alan Lawson, rightly argue that the term settler “was, and always [has] been, tendentious and polemical. The word ‘settler’ was itself part of the process of the invasion; it was literally a textual imposition on history.”<sup>58</sup> Thus, to sufficiently distance discerning analysis from the terminology of the intruders, it would behoove us to employ the phrase “settler-invader colony,” which has come into accepted use in English postcolonial scholarship. In addition to colonial Hokkaido, this could potentially be a fruitful point of entry to address the complicated legacy and the problematic position of the Japanese encroachers. Although the employment of such terms cannot undo injustice effected over a century, it can help destabilize Hokkaido's overdetermined seat in modern Japanese history and redefine the process that etched it so firmly into today's map of Japan.

As historical, literary, anthropological, and cultural theories and approaches to Japan's age of empire have become more versatile and encompassing over the last three decades, an encouraging trend can be seen in a number of works that push back the timeline of Japan's imperialist moves in early Meiji. Sandra Buckley's essay, “Japan and East Asia,” squarely places Hokkaido and Okinawa within Japan's colonial history. “Retold outside the constraints and silences of the dominant history these two distinct experiences of the colonial encounter with Japan discredit the authority of treaties and

annexation processes that justified the unproblematic categorization of Hokkaido and Okinawa as *naichi* (internal colonies) and Japanese sovereign territory.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, in Japanese scholarship there has been a move toward inserting the northern and southern peripheries into Japan's larger imperial project. In the introduction to the first volume of the Iwanami Lecture Series on modern Japan and colonialism, Hokkaido and Okinawa are quickly singled out for discussion. Despite his reliance on the phrase "internal colony," the author, Ōe Shinobu, frankly states, "Japan's issues of colonization begin with Okinawa and Hokkaido," and stresses that the histories and structures of later colonies cannot be separated from these early projects.<sup>60</sup> He explicitly addresses the peculiar historical condition of Hokkaido and Okinawa; they were at once formally Japanese territory (in contrast to colonies such as Taiwan and Korea) and peripheral and secondary in status. This is confirmed, he observes, by the custom in Hokkaido and Okinawa, still in currency today, of referring to the metropolitan center as the mainland (*naichi* and *hondo* respectively).

Although the term "internal colony" has not fallen out of favor, the employment of frank and forthright language that acknowledges the violence of the colonization of Hokkaido and assigns responsibility for the disintegration of Ainu communities has been central to the shift toward the recognition of Hokkaido's coloniality. For instance, Ōe is appropriately censorious, insisting that "the process of colonization was one of invading the land of the indigenous Ainu, usurping their rights to a livelihood, exploiting their labor power, decimating their population, and making them into a minority population. Hokkaido was really a colony of plunder."<sup>61</sup> Likewise, Hanazaki Kōhei's concluding remarks to his essay "The Revival of Ainu Moshir" put a fine point on subject: "The majority ethnic group that occupied the center of the Japanese archipelago invaded an outside island territory that was once known as a 'foreign land,' colonized it, and forcefully controlled, subjugated, and assimilated the independent ethnic group living there."<sup>62</sup> Besides stressing the island's foreign status before the Meiji era, made clear in the title of her article "The Internalization and Unification of 'Foreign Territory,'" Kaihō Yōko also consistently eschews the nominal internal colony, choosing the verb form—internalization (*naikokuka*)—to signal clearly both the agents and the actions.<sup>63</sup> Tamura Sadao's "Hokkaido as an Internal Colony" launches important interventions into the development model by, for example, referring to the island as "Ainu Moshir/Ezochi/Hokkaido," simultaneously stressing multiple perspectives and temporal spans.<sup>64</sup> He explicitly qualifies such commonly used phrases as

“wajin development” or “wajin settlement” with the parenthetical, defamiliarizing clause “read invasion” and mentions the systematic practice of forced labor, violence against Ainu women, and the utter destruction of Ainu social systems and natural resources.<sup>65</sup> Tamura does not go so far as to treat political rights, but indirectly addresses this when he notes that when Japan and Russia signed a treaty that officially made Hokkaido Japanese territory, the Ainu were *not* consulted. In these ways, ever more forceful declarative statements and critical descriptions challenge the assertions that the plight of the Ainu was an inevitable outcome of the unquestionably enlightened modernization process.

In the grander scheme of historiography, Okinawa constitutes a striking comparable example of a colony that has been tenuously incorporated into the Japanese imagined community.<sup>66</sup> Despite its history as an independent kingdom that excelled in maritime trade, Okinawa negotiated a precarious political sovereignty for 200 years under economic domination of Satsuma domain during the Tokugawa period only to find itself unilaterally made into one of modern Japan’s prefectures in 1879. Today, frequently at the center of political debate, Okinawa functions as a persistent and painful reminder of Japan’s collective defeat in the Asia-Pacific War.<sup>67</sup> Okinawans’ unwilling sacrifice in the Battle of Okinawa, the long decades of US rule in the postwar period, and the current overwhelming burden of US bases define Okinawa as a locus of violence and turmoil. Okinawa’s colonial legacy continues to be embodied vividly both in the daily lives of Okinawan residents and the minds of Japanese public as disturbing new cases of rape, murder, accidents, and environmental destruction by US military personnel come to light. Okinawa’s local concerns continue to be subordinated to national, regional, and international interests. Although there may be debates about the nature of Okinawa’s postcolonial status, there is no disputing that tenacious colonial associations cannot be disentangled from the popular imagination of Okinawa.<sup>68</sup>

One factor that explains, if not justifies, the comparative dearth of awareness about Hokkaido’s colonial history and its attendant violence is the lack of an obvious centralized polity, such as a kingdom, on the island. Unlike Taiwan and Korea, or even Ryukyu/Okinawa, Hokkaido was and has not been considered an independent entity, which has hindered recognition of the usurpation of the political rights of the Ainu. On the one hand, living in comparatively sparsely populated enclaves with sufficient cultural variation, Ainu never formed pan-island governance, unity, or self-identity. On the other, not unlike the indigenous peoples of the United States and Australia,

Ainu were deemed primitive tribal peoples, and, according to the prevailing global imperial logic of the time, disqualified from the narrowly defined precondition for sovereignty—statehood. Unwilling to grant human beings' self-determination outside of specific political formations, Japanese imperialists—like their Western counterparts—have imparted to later generations a very skewed history of modernization marked by the erasure of Japan's domination and exploitation of the Ainu and their native land.

Consequently, violence is not closely associated with Hokkaido, and it barely registers on the political scene. Hokkaido is perceived as a muted, peaceful land, overwhelmingly identified as a *place*—a wild wonderland, an island resort, a huge natural amusement park. When the troubling history of Ainu enters the picture, it tends to be viewed as an ethnic issue rather than one of sovereignty. The last armed resistance on the part of the Ainu, the Shakushain War (1669–1672), is far removed from common knowledge in Japan. The experiences of countless Ainu who watched in desperation the eradication of their traditional lifeways and lifelines, the devastation of Ainu villages from disease, the disintegration of families forced apart by economic exigencies, and the insurmountable obstacles to equitable treatment and opportunities during the Meiji era are largely lost to history. Without contemporary cues of the ongoing struggles of Ainu, such as those that continue to signal Okinawa's insufferable colonial condition, Japanese aggression toward Ainu is rendered virtually invisible. The vigorous assimilation policies of yesteryear live on as some Ainu continue to feel pressure to attempt to pass, to cut themselves off from their culture, and to blend their blood with Japanese to distance themselves and their children from prejudice. Hokkaido's political, economic, and social disparities that negatively affect the island population as a whole are felt to a much greater degree in Ainu communities. Its depressed economy forces Ainu into a national diaspora, further weakening networks and affinities.<sup>69</sup>

A central contention of this study holds that the historical amnesia of Hokkaido's colonial era that effaces the disquieting realities of modern Ainu history fundamentally determines the customarily accepted, but problematic, characterizations and identity of the Japanese nation.<sup>70</sup> The universal glue of nation-states, after all, is the aggregation of national narratives that absorb the messy aspects of history. The modernization model that stresses Japan's benevolent governance in Hokkaido and the amazing achievements of a patriotic and selfless citizenry conceals the diversity of experience and the ambiguous position of Japanese colonists in the northern territory.

The stories of the less-than-glorious motivations of “pioneers,” the punishment of political prisoners through the penal system there, and the many individuals (Ainu and Japanese) who lived in poverty as profits were shuttled back to the bank vaults of elite capitalists are shorn away to ensure a sleek account of Japanese progress and unity. The seemingly obvious territorial and ethnic boundaries are, in fact, the products of these forceful narratives. The formation of the modern nation-state that is now known as Japan was not a fore-ordained destiny but was created out of a crucible of conflict. This work directs a penetrating spotlight on prevailing representations to recuperate the complexities and contradictions of the inextricably intertwined projects that produced the visions and the actualities of modern Hokkaido and Japan.

### THE HYBRID VIGOR OF COLONIAL HOKKAIDO AND THE CULT OF THE EMPEROR

In the world of biology, the term “hybrid vigor” refers to offspring of two genetically different parents that show increased vitality or other superior traits. To contextualize and illustrate the central themes of the following chapters, I begin with analysis of how crossbreeding an antiquated imperial system with an island long viewed as a foreign space played a central role in manifesting modern nationalist and imperialist aspirations. The splicing of the early projects to naturalize the modern cult of the emperor and Hokkaido as quintessentially Japanese were at the heart of constructing not only a radically new identity for the emerging nation-state but also its crucial infrastructure. The active rationalizations of the colonial expropriation and aggressive extraction of resources and wealth from Hokkaido constituted the ideological and logistical seeds of Japan’s empire that would grow and expand over the next seven decades.

The swiftness with which Ezo was included in the new government’s roster of pressing concerns is striking. On March 9, 1868, not even two months into the Boshin War (1868–1869) that would later signify the dawn of Japan’s modern moment, the Meiji emperor summoned several of his closest advisors to discuss the importance of colonizing the island. A year later, the Iwakura Proposal (*iwakura teigi*) delineated what Iwakura Tomomi, one of the new government’s most powerful officials, believed were the three most urgent issues facing the government: foreign relations, the tax system, and the development (*kaitaku*) of Ezo. In this document, he suggests, all efforts should be devoted to spreading civilization and making Ezo into a



little Japan (*mata ikko no shōnihonkoku*).<sup>71</sup> One would naturally expect that negotiating a more advantageous position in the international realm and securing the state's economic revenue would be priorities for a newly minted government. Next to these matters the colonization of Ezo stands out. Yet, the three were intimately connected. The reference to displaying his majesty's authority to foreign powers and halting Russia's watering at the mouth (*suizen no nen*) over the territory corroborates the triadic nature of Japanese imperialism. Viewed together with the declaration that Ezo would reap unprecedented profits for the domestic sphere, it becomes evident that this seemingly arbitrary ambition, in reality, dovetailed neatly with the diplomatic and economic challenges addressed in this proposal.

One of the early and critical moves to domesticate the newly claimed territory was to christen it with a new designation that would disassociate the island from its vulgar "barbarian" past. The process of deciding on the final name and character combination, *hokkaidō*, the Northern Sea Route, presaged what was to come. The explorer and geographer, Matsuura Takeshirō (1818–1888), who made six expeditions to Ezo in the late Tokugawa period, is credited with coining the contemporary term. During his explorations, he collected copious notes on the daily lives of Ainu and drew detailed maps, giving names to locations based on native appellations. When, Matsuura originally assigned four characters to the name he included two meaningless phonetic equivalents (*ateji*) for *kai*, which, according to Matsuura's records, is an Ainu word meaning people born in this land. When Meiji officials made their final decision in August 1869, they eliminated the characters that referenced the Ainu and replaced them with the single one for sea, giving us the three-character combination that we use today.

This action was not simply a matter of erasing the Ainu. Hokkaido—literally Northern Sea Road—with its association with *gokishichidō*, or five provinces, seven highways, was carefully chosen to signify the centrality of the imperial court. *Gokishichidō* denotes a spatial conception from the Heian period (794–1185) wherein all of the seven main highways were understood to originate in and connect the five regions of the country to the imperial capital.<sup>72</sup> This appellation then signaled a specific temporal and spatial association—a time when the emperor was the supreme ruler and his court marked the center of the body politic. Fully aware of the power in naming, the oligarchs attempted to simultaneously legitimize their claim that the emperor had been restored to power and that Hokkaido was merely one region linked to the imperial center.<sup>73</sup> This renaming highlights

the indissolubility of nation-building objectives, the authorization of the imperial system, and the colonial expansion in the north.

Before the last of the resistance to the imperial restoration was subdued, the first steps were taken toward creating an administrative structure that would manage the colonization of the emperor's new territory. In July of 1869, under the auspices of the Grand Council of State (*dajōkan*), the Hokkaido Development Agency (*kaitakushi*) was established, and Ezo/Hokkaido and Karafuto (Sakhalin) were placed under its jurisdiction.<sup>74</sup> The document exhorting the first governor of the just claimed and named island to faithfully carry out his assigned duties emphasizes that the significance of his mandate lies far beyond the arduous, yet mundane, tasks involved in settling and opening a wilderness.

The flourishing condition of the Imperial Power is dependent upon the colonization and exploitation of Hokkaido. At present there is urgent need of action. We realize the great difficulties of governing this area which lies several hundred *li* in the Arctic North. On your official tour of duty do your best to exploit the area and to open the lock on the Northern Gate so that the people may prosper and there may be a firm base for the expansion of the Imperial Power.<sup>75</sup>

Fusing practical and material benefits with weighty symbolic power, the colonization of Hokkaido is understood to guarantee the stability of the emperor's authority, the well-being of his subjects, and the success of future imperial excursions. Over the next decade, various promotions of the colonial project in Hokkaido presented everybody from the highest official to the most ordinary pioneer as participants in the lofty goals of the Japanese imperial nation and empire.

The government's commitment to the mission in the north was confirmed by the vast sums allocated to the Hokkaido Development Agency. In 1872, the government approved a ten-year plan for the agency that included a startling average yearly budget of one million yen. The total of over ten million yen was culled from local taxes, the national treasury, and a dubious scheme supported by the central government of unprotected printed notes by the Mitsui Company. Some historians figure that the total expenditures of the Hokkaido Development Agency by the time it was abolished in 1882 reached over 20 million yen with at least 12 million coming from public monies.<sup>76</sup> An impressive amount of energy and resources was channeled to the construction of government buildings, prisons, roads; to the infrastructural development of cities and towns; and to the promotion of reclamation, farming, and forestry projects.<sup>77</sup> Additionally,

the agency amassed a wide range of profitable enterprises, including railways, factories (textiles, meat canning, etc.), mills (lumber, hemp, etc.), fisheries, breweries, mining, and sulfur operations.

The highest official to concern himself with the state of Hokkaido was the emperor himself. Beginning in 1872, the emperor cast his paternal gaze over the various regions of his empire in a series of imperial processions to symbolically consolidate the borders of Japan.<sup>78</sup> Hokkaido was visited twice to firmly inscribe the island into the national-imperial realm. In 1876, Emperor Meiji stopped over briefly in Hakodate during his Tohoku Tour and then in 1881 spent more time in the farthest northern reach of his territory during the Yamagata-Akita-Hokkaido Tour.<sup>79</sup> Underscoring the challenge of imparting to the Japanese public the importance of the emperor and its new relationship to him, Takashi Fujitani spotlights a proposal for an imperial tour to Hokkaido.

In a memorial urging an imperial progress to Hokkaido, probably drawn up in July 1875, Sanjō Sanetomi, then grand minister of the state (*dajō daijin*), argued that the people in such remote regions did not even know of the existence of the imperial household and that, conversely, “the emperor does not know the feelings of the people in the remote lands or the conditions there.” Thus in addition to explaining that should the emperor undertake such a progress, “all of the people of the nation will turn their eyes (*me o tenjiite*) and see the greatness of the emperor’s conduct,” he also emphasized that there was nothing more urgent than allowing the emperor “to see the extent of the borders and to discern the true conditions of the people.”<sup>80</sup>

The progressions ostensibly served the dual purpose of concretizing the figure and grandeur of the emperor and educating him of the extent and conditions of his vast realm. The rhetoric, as evidenced above, presupposes that the individuals and territory that fell under the emperor’s inspection were already always his. What was actually the *result* of the emperor’s visits—the establishment of the national boundaries and the affirmation of the emperor’s rule over the people there within—was presumed the precondition.

During the first two decades of Meiji, the two terms, Ezo and Hokkaido, were used interchangeably to refer to the island just north of Honshu. The mixed use of both terms continued until the 1890s when Ezo steadily fell off the modern map. This was due, in part, to the efforts to naturalize the place and the name Hokkaido through such venues as the *Hokkaido Development Journal* (*Hokkaidō kaitaku zasshi*, 1880–1881), the mouthpiece of the Hokkaido Development

Agency. Each issue of the *Hokkaido Development Journal* sports a cover with a mélange of images intended to convey the promise of Hokkaido's abundance. Inside a border, which is unmistakably of Ainu design, two large fish, canned seafood and meat, loaves of bread, a pile of hemp, a pelt, and chunks of minerals form a mountain of bounty.<sup>81</sup> Floating above all the fruits of Hokkaido's many industries is a handscroll, on which are listed the articles and the regular columns. The telescoping end of the scroll on the left is drawn to resemble rings of a large log.

The publication exudes the self-congratulatory tone one would expect from such a governmental public relations organ. In its first issue in 1880, various contributors, along with then director of the agency Kuroda Kiyotaka (1840–1900), praise the progress of the agency and applaud the release of such practical information and practicable advice for individuals immigrating to Hokkaido. The magazine holds as its mission to redress the dearth of up-to-date information and rectify the plethora of misconceptions about the island. The first few issues were dedicated primarily to promotional articles, whereas the subjects of horticulture and animal husbandry, local flora and fauna, seeds, farming implements, and pests, as well as local business news and official notifications, formed the bulk of the latter issues. In the 1880 inaugural issue, Kuroda wrote a stirring article relating the state of the colony with numbers, the tools of rational reasoning, dominating the piece. We are informed that there are 11 counties with 223 towns and 574 villages containing 37,579 households. The total population is 189,411 people, who are serviced by 49 hospitals and 74 schools managed by the government. Farms cover an area of 237,405 acres while more land is being cleared for cultivation and working fields equal a space of 21,070 acres. The yearly revenue now reaches 1,403,452 *koku*, generating 625,000 *koku* of taxes.<sup>82</sup> Kuroda admits that this achievement pales in comparison to California, frequently referenced benchmark for colonial ambitions in Hokkaido, which boasts more people, reclaimed land, revenue, sheep and pigs, but he is confident that efforts of the agency will yield greater success in the coming years.

What strikes the reader most, however, is the repeated mantra: "Today's Hokkaido is not yesterday's Ezo!" (*kyō no Hokkaidō wa kinō no Ezo narazuya*). Over and over Kuroda punctuates his paean to growth in Hokkaido with this refrain that confirms a clean temporal break. No longer the savage wilderness of yesteryear, the growing population in Hokkaido enjoys the fixtures of modern society (hospitals and schools) and the mainstay of Japanese civilization (agriculture).

The accomplishments in the farthest corner of the emperor's realm proves, Kuroda suggests, that Hokkaido—and by extension, Japan—has stepped bravely into the new age.

When the *Hokkaido Development Journal* first came out in January 1880, no one could have foreseen how Hokkaido and the highly visible and dominant figure of the Hokkaido Development Office, Kuroda, would take center stage in the political intrigue of 1881, namely the Hokkaido Development Agency Assets Scandal (*Hokkaidō kaitakushi kanyūbutsu haraisage jiken*), that dramatically changed the course of the nation. Nor could they have known that these events would bring an end to the Hokkaido Development Agency itself in 1882. The fallout after revelations of shocking impropriety in the management of the agency triggered one of the most monumental turns in Meiji history—the establishment of a constitution and elected assembly—and represents the clearest example of the fundamental intertwining of Hokkaido and the making of modern Japan. In July of 1881, news that the Grand Council of State had approved agency director Kuroda's proposal to sell an impressive portion of the assets of Hokkaido's government office at a fraction of its value to a group of business men from Kuroda's home area ignited public outrage. The scheme would have sold a collection of holdings paid for with taxpayers money valued at the time at 30 million yen, for less than 400,000 yen, payable over 30 years with no interest. The backdoor business deal further provoked the Freedom and Popular Rights Movement (*jiyū minken undō*), which had been vigorously agitating for a parliamentary government for over a decade. A burgeoning newspaper industry daily exposed the details of what was widely viewed as the latest example of the blatant political favoritism of the powerful Satsuma-Choshu (Satcho) clique that tightly gripped the reins of power.

Widespread condemnation of the scandalous sale and corrupt politicians exerted tremendous pressure on the government, and a frenzy of political maneuvering to maintain strongholds on power erupted in the following months.<sup>83</sup> Finally, to defuse the wrath of an incensed populace, the Meiji oligarchs were forced to take strategic conciliatory action. On October 12 the nation learned of the cancellation of the Hokkaido assets sale and the imperial edict proclaiming that an imperial assembly would be established in 1890. This series of events, known to Japanese scholars as the Political Crisis of 1881 (*meiji jūyūnen no seihen*), “determined the direction and speed of the formation of the national structure” (*kokka taisei keisei*).<sup>84</sup> In 1890, Japanese celebrated the promulgation of the Meiji Constitution

and the inauguration of the imperial Diet. In a strange twist of fate, Kuroda Kiyotaka, the man whose scheme ignited the scandal that forced the government to pledge a parliamentary government, later submitted the constitution as prime minister to the Meiji emperor.<sup>85</sup>

Earlier in that same year, a less noticeable, but nonetheless noteworthy news story would also serve to further broaden and strengthen imperial power. On January 21, the *Tokyo Nichinichi Newspaper* announced that the site for a satellite imperial palace in Hokkaido had been chosen and the plans to build approved.<sup>86</sup> The article reported that officials had found a scenic spot with views of Hokkaido's splendid mountains and rivers for the royal family. By physically extending the structure of the imperial palace to Hokkaido, the government hoped to draw it, quite literally, into the imperial realm. This new locus of the emperor functioned as a potent symbol, amplifying the monarch's prestige and confirming Japan's dominion over Hokkaido for citizens across the nation.

If the imperial tours and satellite palace helped position Hokkaido physically within the Japanese empire, a new narrative attempted to situate the island in the cozy confines of a national history. Just five days after the announcement of the imperial palace in Hokkaido, *Kokumin Newspaper* carried an article proclaiming the 200-year anniversary of Japanese development of Hokkaido. It claimed that reclamation (*kaikon*) of Hokkaido began in the fifth year of Genroku (1692) at the time of the court of Emperor Higashiyama (r. 1687–1709) and the rule of the fifth Tokugawa shogun, Tsunayoshi (r. 1680–1709).<sup>87</sup> Dazzling readers with an array of impressive numbers indicating the acreage opened by Japanese hands over the two previous centuries, the writers insert Hokkaido into a linear national history based on the seemingly benign process of transforming natural space into farmable land. “By a recent estimate, the 5, 377 acres of rice fields and 79,608 acres of farm land, equaling a total of 84,985 acres, has been opened up since the service of the Hokkaido Development Agency and the birth of the reclamation just 200 years ago.”<sup>88</sup> The Genroku era (1688–1704), known as the golden age of the Tokugawa period, was a cunning choice for the anniversary, associated as it is with prosperity and the flourishing of art and architecture. Moreover, 1692 was just 20 years after the defeat of Ainu in the Shakushain War (1669–1672), when the Matsumae domain began to formalize the boundary between Japanese and Ainu territories (*wajinchi* and *ezochi*) on the island. In this rather heavy-handed maneuver, the true nature of the manner in which Hokkaido had recently been incorporated into Japan's political landscape is suppressed.

Although His Majesty's subjects who resided in Hokkaido were denied participation in the historic election of 1890, Hokkaido was well on its way to being naturalized as part of the Japanese imagined community and the Meiji emperor's emerging empire.<sup>89</sup> Processions and palaces positioned the actual and symbolic power of the emperor in Hokkaido for the world to see as they nestled the island more closely to the imperial metropole. Discourse on Hokkaido's spatial and temporal reconfiguration in the nation concurrently enshrouded the island with a mantle of belonging and bolstered the verisimilitude of a timeless Japanese nation. These were just the first of many earnest efforts of a nascent nation-state to construct practical plans and rhetorical justifications for the incorporation of an island that had for centuries been regarded as beyond the pale.<sup>90</sup>

## HARVESTING HISTORY

### MODERN NARRATIVES FOR PATRIOTIC PIONEERS AND THE IMPERIAL MILITARY

Tondenhei are not a thing of the past and to think of them as such is a mistake. Their indomitable spirit is our spirit, and we are the tondenhei for the future citizens of the 21st century.

Itagaki Takeshi  
(*Mayor of Sapporo*, 1988)

In contemporary Japan, a profusion of histories, novels, museums, and monuments nostalgically posit the members of the tondenhei system, a Meiji-era farming-militia unique to Hokkaido, as the quintessential signifiers of the colonization of Hokkaido. Ascribed iconic status, they are regarded as patriotic pioneers, who defended the early empire from Russian aggression in the late nineteenth century. A postwar enthusiasm for tondenhei emerged as part of a movement to document, commemorate, and preserve the history of the “age of development” (*kaitaku jidai*), galvanized by the celebration of Hokkaido’s “centennial” in the late 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>1</sup> A leading figure of the tondenhei boom was historian Itō Hiroshi, whose early works, *As a Tondenhei Family* (*Tondenhei no kazoku toshite*, 1972) and *The Tale of the Tondenhei* (*Tondenhei monogatari*, 1984), drafted the blueprint of tondenhei studies.<sup>2</sup> Itō’s *A Study of Tondenhei* (*Tondenhei kenkyū*, 1992), an admirably detailed tome numbering over 600 pages, remains the authoritative scholarship on the subject.<sup>3</sup> Numerous fictional works, including, most recently, Yamamoto Fumio’s *The Fight for Hokkaido’s Development: A Tale of a Tondenhei Family* (*Hokkaidō kaitaku no kutō: tondenhei kazoku monogatari*, 2005) keep tondenhei fresh in the Japanese collective imaginary.<sup>4</sup> The Historical Museum of Hokkaido’s Development (*Hokkaidō kaitaku kinenkan*), whose grand opening in 1972 was slated as an anniversary



event, maintains a permanent display of tondenhei memorabilia and information. Only a short jaunt from there the open-air museum, the Hokkaido Development Village (*Hokkaidō kaitaku mura*), which holds an impressive collection of historical buildings from the Meiji (1868–1912) and Taisho periods (1912–1926), features a tondenhei home.<sup>5</sup> For the devotee, there are stone monuments marking former villages from Kotoni to Nemuro and stately statues of uniformed tondenhei in Asahikawa and Hanayama.

Since the inception of this singular settlement program in the Meiji period, the tondenhei have taken root and grown in the minds of Japanese as the emblem of Hokkaido's development (read colonization) quite out of proportion to their numbers and contribution. Such careful attention has been paid to them that the names and background of each of the 7, 337 men who immigrated to Hokkaido during the program's 30 years have been painstakingly recorded. They have been heralded as *sakigakesha* (pioneers, forerunners), whereas in contrast, the vast majority of the 1 million men and women who made their way north to participate in the colonial project during the same period remain, for the most part, nameless and unrecognized.<sup>6</sup> The tondenhei's exalted position is effected and affirmed by the frequent iteration of such statements as, "When one says 'Hokkaido,' tondenhei quickly come to mind for most people. It is certainly impossible to imagine the development of Hokkaido without tondenhei. That is what a significant role they played."<sup>7</sup> This tautology succinctly captures the presumption that the prominence of tondenhei in discourse on Hokkaido derives from their obvious "significant role" in the island's colonization. In this chapter, I argue, rather, that their unquestioned privileged position in history and the popular imagination have been constituted *through* the insistent repetition of their significance, irrespective of their relatively small numbers and negligible share of colonial labor.

That being said, the figure of the tondenhei *has* played a formidable part in shaping the "success stories" of both colonial Hokkaido and imperial Japan. What the tondenhei have long supplied is a compelling and useful repository for a constellation of associative and visual cues, which organize contemporary perceptions of and sentimentality for Meiji-era Hokkaido around a modernization model. Postwar narratives borrow from the Meiji construct what I will call the "trinity of prosperity" that, in overt and subtle ways, infused much of the discourse on colonial Hokkaido. A rhetorical operation rather than an explicitly formulated principle, the trinity of prosperity of the Meiji period postulated an inherent alignment of interests and shared

destinies of settlers to Hokkaido, the emperor, and modern Japan. At the same time, it prescribed the subordination of individual interests to those of the nation and the empire. A harbinger of later nationalist discourse that called on the whole nation to bear extreme sacrifice during the Asia-Pacific War (1931–1945), the trinity of prosperity was deployed to recruit *tondenhei* and instill devotion to the sovereign. This concept presumed the cohesiveness of the Japanese nation-state and its populace prior to the unilateral annexation of Ezo/Hokkaido and configured settlers as emissaries of Japanese modernity, who eagerly volunteered for their mission for the ostensive greater national and imperial good.

The commemorative painting, “Emperor Meiji Inspecting Yamahana Colonial Militia,” exemplifies the key elements of the trinity of prosperity.<sup>8</sup> An imperial procession, with a stately mounted retinue and fluttering chrysanthemum flag, passes in front of a *tondenhei* village nestled at the foot of a lushly forested hill. From his open carriage, the emperor observes the *tondenhei*, who, donning immaculate military garb, toil in well-groomed fields in the foreground. Just one of the many manifestations of the *tondenhei* narrative, the portrait conjures up an inspiring vision of a mighty imperial nation valiantly transplanting civilization to the northern hinterland. The idealized scene, replete with quintessential icons of imperial and national authority—royal flags and military uniforms—deftly communicates the devotion of individual citizen-subjects to the expansionist project in Hokkaido.

This ideal is preferable, of course, to the rather pedestrian, but historically factual, truth that Hokkaido was the first colony of the highly unstable Meiji state that attempted to repress and control opposition through programs such as the *tondenhei* system. Suppressed by the *tondenhei* narrative are the cacophonous and less glamorous facts about Japan’s fraught nation-building process. The import accorded to Russian encroachment during the Meiji period, which accentuates a Japan versus Russia binary, restricts our understanding of how the founding of the *tondenhei* system was a critical move to disarm powerful *domestic* threats on the mainland. Although the menace of powerful Western nations was no doubt one concern for the Meiji oligarchy, early recruitment of *tondenhei*, which explicitly targeted disgruntled and impoverished former samurai (*shizoku*), demonstrates that the state was motivated by more immediate and pressing crises at home. Likewise, in this heroic frontiersman model, patriotic fervor supersedes economic exigencies as an explanation for what spurred individuals to join the program, which disguises the volatile

instability of the period. In this way, the realities of internal discord and mundane motives have lost out to an account of the selfless sacrifice of manly samurai to protect the nation from an outside enemy.<sup>9</sup> The excessive emphasis on *tondenhei* soldiers, which continues to anchor the history of Meiji-era Hokkaido, must be critiqued and contextualized. A proper reckoning of the colonial project requires acknowledgement of the diverse population that made Japan's permanent invasion-settlement of Hokkaido possible.

The appropriation of "tradition" and "history" stood at the heart of processes that simultaneously advanced the *tondenhei* system and radically redefined national and imperial identities in the quickly changing social, economic, and political landscape of the Meiji era. Thus, mayor Itagaki Takeshi's rousing statement in the epigraph above, which stresses shared purpose over conflicting interests and continuity over change, is hardly a novel invocation of the *tondenhei*. When Itagaki recuperates a usable past to define Japan's present and future through the trope of *tondenhei* spirit in 1988, he follows in the footsteps of his predecessors who utilized a revisionist history of farmer-warriors of the classical period to simultaneously bolster the colonial project in Hokkaido and instill modern national and imperial subjectivities. Just as the island was renamed Hokkaido so as to hearken back to an emperor-centered polity, the term "*tondenhei*," literally soldiers stationed in the fields, was cunningly harvested from the chronicles of the Heian era (794–1185). The expedient narrative of the farming-soldier who, in times of need, selflessly followed the commands of the imperial commander in chief, was initially strategically employed to contain samurai uprisings and jumpstart the colonization of Hokkaido.<sup>10</sup> Against the backdrop of growing resistance, Meiji leaders targeted dissatisfied former samurai, stripped of their status and stipends, for immigration to Hokkaido by hailing a return to the Heian emperors' practice of temporarily mustering farmers to fight in peripheral borderland battles. Echoing the logic of an imperial restoration, this call to "return to the fields," first fully elaborated on in a colonial promotional organ, the *Hokkaido Development Journal*, functioned to legitimate the authority of the emperor, endorse the expansion of his empire, and realign samurai fealty. Later, several years after the shocking revolt of elite military personnel in the Takebashi Uprising (*Takebashi sōdō*) in 1878, this narrative of ancient farmers-cum-soldiers was reformulated for the opening passage of the *Imperial Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors* (*gunjin chokuyū*, January 4, 1882). The state perceived the usefulness of this historical construct to authenticate the emperor's position as supreme commander and

naturalize absolute loyalty to him for an unseasoned military deemed deficient in obedience and fidelity. Ever versatile, the notion of the august heritage of the *tondenhei* was put into action on the edge of the emerging empire and in the heartland of the new nation.

This chapter is, above all, a critical reading of the historical and historiographical love affair with the *tondenhei*. Tracing the rhetorical incitement to return to the fields from its origins in Hokkaido to its incarnation in one of the most important imperial decrees of the Meiji era brings into focus how colonial operations in Hokkaido were intimately connected to the creation of the cult of the emperor and modern military ideology. Contrary to popular belief, the northern periphery was never far from the central concerns in the metropole. Moreover, to challenge the prevailing narratives is to recognize multiple tensions, interests, and motivations among various agents of the Meiji era, which have been obfuscated for the sake of a history of national consolidation that accentuates intrinsic harmony and fidelity. Nationalist ideology continues to vitiate the considerable and concerted energy expended during the late nineteenth century to justify Japan's colonization of Hokkaido, to unify the nation, and to consecrate the modern imperial system. An examination of Meiji mythologies that apotheosize the *tondenhei* reveals a synergism between the strategic construction and concealment of these undertakings. If not the actual *tondenhei*, then, the trope of the *tondenhei*, it turns out, has carried a very heavy burden in the project to rewrite the modern history of Hokkaido and Japan.

### POSITIONING TONDENHEI IN THE HISTORY OF COLONIAL HOKKAIDO

The first order of business is to distinguish the *tondenhei*'s rather humble material contribution from their weighty symbolic power. The *tondenhei* farming-militia, established in 1874, was the flagship program of the Hokkaido Development Agency. In the 1870s and 1880s, in an effort to stem growing unrest among former samurai, the now defunct warrior class was offered an alternative identity and was promised a significant role in the creation of the empire through this unique arm of the military. Transportation costs were paid, farming implements and basic home furnishings were supplied, and rice and salt subsidies were provided for three years. A stipulation that *tondenhei* be married meant that households were moved *en masse* to specially designated soldier villages (*beison*), where they were housed in crude dwellings. The *tondenhei* and their families performed the

difficult work of felling trees, opening fields, and cultivating crops on their allotted tract of land. Since the cooler climate in Hokkaido made large-scale rice-cultivation infeasible until well into the twentieth century, the *tondenhei* tended to grow a variety of crops, such as buckwheat, barley, rye, millet, oats, beans (soy and red), and potatoes.<sup>11</sup> They were encouraged to supplement their incomes with silkworm cultivation, hemp production, or fishing net weaving. Tax exemptions also served to assist the permanent settlement of the recruits.

Mandatory periods of military training each year usually ran from December to April when agricultural duties were light. *Tondenhei* were equipped with distinct uniforms and essential military equipment. For the initial three years, the men were on full duty and remained on reserve status thereafter for ten years. They were mobilized for both the Seinan War (1877) and the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895). Nine months after the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905), the *tondenhei* system was abolished and eligible *tondenhei* soldiers were absorbed into the national army as the Sapporo-based Seventh Division according to the national conscription system.

The first group of *tondenhei* settlers inaugurated the program with Kotoni village in May of 1875. After the dissolution of the Hokkaido Development Agency in 1882, administrative power was transferred to the newly formed Hokkaido prefectural office as *tondenhei* villages continued to be founded—first in the inland areas not too distant from Sapporo, such as Sorachi and Asahikawa, and later in Monbetsu, Nemuro, and Kushiro, the farthest reaches of the island. During the first 15 years of its existence, recruitment was limited to former samurai, but in 1890 officials began promoting the enlistment of commoners (*heimin*). In 1899, the last group of recruits immigrated to the island and served until 1904, when the *tondenhei* system was terminated. Over the 30 years of its existence, 7,337 men were recruited to settle in Hokkaido under this program.

The *tondenhei* were greatly outnumbered by other colonial settlers, migrant workers, penal laborers, and indigenous Ainu, who contributed the major part of labor for land reclamation; road and railway construction; and the agricultural, fishing, mining, and shipping industries that constituted the backbone of Hokkaido's economy at the time. Even focusing narrowly on other immigrating farmer-settlers substantiates that *tondenhei* represented a meager number of all settlers. From 1874 to 1881, when the Hokkaido Development Agency administered the *tondenhei* program, it also officially sponsored and supervised the settlement of 5,241 non-*tondenhei* households (totaling 33,839 people).<sup>12</sup> The 499 former samurai (and their more than

2,300 family members) who moved to the northern island during the same time, then, would have accounted for less than 10 percent of the total households settled under the colonial office.<sup>13</sup> It should also be noted that there were many others who immigrated to Hokkaido on their own to take advantage of a variety of occupational prospects. A census record claiming that approximately 240,000 persons resided in Hokkaido in 1881 further clarifies our perspective of the *tondenhei*'s status within the larger society of inhabitants.<sup>14</sup> Nor does the physical contribution to the colonization of the island by *tondenhei* represent an especially dramatic feat within the larger context. Statistics of the percentage of land opened and cultivated by the *tondenhei* during the first eight years of the farming-militia system prove instructive. While in three of the years percentages reach double digits, peaking at 31.7 percent in 1878, in a majority of the years, the numbers are well below 10 percent.<sup>15</sup>

Widening the prevailing narrative's scope to include the great variety of persons who participated in the colonial project moves us away from the tales of heroic individuals but closer to a picture of the subordination of labor and resources to powerful state and corporate interests. The state of exceptionalism, whereby protective laws of the mainland were not applied to Hokkaido and laws specific to the island conferred phenomenal advantages to business, ensured oppressive working conditions and limited opportunities for ordinary citizens.<sup>16</sup> Indigenous Ainu coerced or compelled by desperation were instrumental in the fields of geographical surveying and forestry, which facilitated the establishment of Japanese colonial villages throughout their homeland. They joined countless other workers who risked their lives in lumber and iron mills, textile factories, seafood and meat canning facilities, and the fishing and shipping industries, whose products and profits were channeled back to the mainland. Much of the deadly labor on highway projects and in coal and sulfur mines was extracted from convicts, who sometimes also were forced to construct their own prison facilities. Buddhist organizations, to affirm their loyalty to the new state after a centuries-long alliance with the shogunal regime, built the lengthy Honganji Highway (*honganji gaidō*) in addition to numerous temples and early settlements.<sup>17</sup> Those who dreamt of owning and tilling a small plot of their own land more often than not became tenant farmers barely eking out a living. Even this limited array of examples attests to the heterogeneous group of residents that provided the productive labor that secured Japan's foothold in Hokkaido and established it as a satellite economy, making way for political stability and economic growth on the mainland.

A gendered configuration of the Hokkaido tondenhei system in historiography, which focuses almost exclusively on the male farmer-soldiers, perpetuates the erasure of another indispensable labor source, one closer to home. Despite the crucial fact that the men were required to be married, very little attention has been paid to the degree to which the success of tondenhei (and other colonial settlements) was predicated on the free labor of the wives (and children and other relatives). When the first group of 198 men arrived in Kotoni to inaugurate the tondenhei system in April 1875, they brought with them no less than 965 family members.<sup>18</sup> Women are estimated to have made up 40 percent of the total tondenhei population that reached approximately 40,000 people.<sup>19</sup> In the 310 pages of Itō's *The Tale of Tondenhei*, only 7 are dedicated to describing the colonial experiences of women tondenhei; the same number devoted to children.<sup>20</sup>

*The Pictorial Narrative of the Tondenhei (Tondenhei emonogatari)*, produced by Hirozawa Tokujiro (1865–1949), however, tells a very different story.<sup>21</sup> His four scrolls, which lend us a rare and insightful picture of daily life in a tondenhei village, are based on his experiences after he settled in Asahikawa in 1892. Hirozawa's watercolor scenes and pencil sketches, along with written explanations and reflections, vividly render the local landscape and wildlife, bring to life the settlers' varied reclamation and agricultural chores, and document the colonial material culture through careful composites of household implements, farming tools, and military gear. Besides one portrait of an Ainu couple, all humans are Japanese colonists. And as one might expect, in the depictions of military training there are only men. Yet, in all of the scrolls, there are only two other scenes containing Japanese without women; one of men felling trees and another of a man running away from a bear. In those of sowing and harvesting crops, women do not just participate, but dominate the activities. Moreover, in the section titled "Opening the Vast Forest," which illustrates the myriad strenuous tasks undertaken when clearing land, women work side-by-side with the men. They wield picks and rakes, haul large loads (in one case, while one man sits on a stump and smokes a pipe), and guide the horses with the reins as they plow the fields.

The few records that treat the lives of women in colonial villages reveal that they did much more than that. It goes without saying that they performed all of the domestic labor despite severe conditions and prepared meals in places where traditional foodstuffs were often scarce. The story of Watanabe Kane, a non-tondenhei settler who served her community informally as a doctor and teacher, is

striking. Watanabe received a higher education rare for women at the time, studying English and Chinese medicine in Yokohama before relocating to Hokkaido with her husband in 1883. She taught the children of Japanese settlers' and local Ainu in a temple until a public elementary school was built in 1895. She also used her connections and training to procure and administer quinine and other helpful medicines, and when supplies ran out, she learned traditional Ainu medicinal remedies to help ailing and injured villagers.<sup>22</sup> Watanabe's case may have some exceptional aspects, but one can safely assume that women fulfilled a wide range of functions in their local areas.

Official *tondenhei* documents, such as *The Tondenhei Handbook* (*Tondenhei techō*), the manual assigned to each soldier that detailed obligations and regulations, corroborate that wives and family members were expected to not only share the everyday burdens of colonial farm life but also exceptional sacrifice during wartime. *The Tondenhei Handbook* repeatedly stresses that all endeavors are to be undertaken as a family, using phrases such as “you, of course, but including all of your family” (*jiko ha mochiron sono kazoku ni itaru made mina*), “united as a family” (*ikkakokoro wo awase*), and “the best effort of the whole family” (*ikka no zenryoku*).<sup>23</sup> One notable article delineates the importance of family members' preparedness for when the soldiers would be sent to battle. This was not merely a theoretical proposition as wives were called upon to serve their nation by managing all the labor of their farms and homes in the absence their husbands during the civil war in 1877 and the Sino-Japanese War. The record of Tamaru Chiyono mentions that when she arrived in the Sorachibuto area of Hokkaido in 1895 through the *tondenhei* system, “there were not just a few homes with only women and children left behind.” Attesting to their impoverished state, she notes that although these families welcomed the newcomers, they did not “have even one cup of tea to spare.”<sup>24</sup>

What remains is that the ink devoted to *tondenhei* greatly outweighs their humble numbers and role in the colonial project. The significance conferred on them in historical scholarship and popular accounts continues to sustain their unparalleled symbolic status. I am not suggesting that the *tondenhei* be dismissed, merely that they be properly historically situated so as to recognize the disparate labor force that was managed and capitalized on by a state striving to establish its sovereignty in domestic and international realms. The most fruitful tack to follow, then, is an inquiry into the question that naturally emerges, namely *why* the *tondenhei* dominate much of the terrain of historical writing if not the actual history or landscape of Hokkaido.



## DEMISTIFYING THE DEFENSE NARRATIVE

The specter of Russian invasion is commonly emphasized as the predominant motivation for the *tondenhei* program in Hokkaido. Certainly, in the Meiji era, hardly an official hoping to legitimate the program could resist making the claim that the farming-militia members would be on the front line of national defense, securing the emperor's "northern gate." Emphasizing the martial aspect of the program was the key to convincing potential recruits—initially former samurai—who would have been much more inclined to identify themselves as soldiers than farmers. More recently, various scholars have taken the Meiji officials at their word, adding their voices to the chorus that asserts, "it goes without saying" that the state founded the militia to "respond to Imperial Russia's policy of southern expansion."<sup>25</sup> In this way, Meiji-period and contemporary narratives project national unity on a period of momentous instability by postulating the existence of solidified national and imperial identities that were actually still in the making through such processes as the implementation of the *tondenhei* system.

The fact that *tondenhei* soldiers were members of the national military has greatly facilitated the framing of Hokkaido's history within the defense of the imperial nation against a belligerent northern power. However, the initial placement of *tondenhei* villages, so poorly situated for readiness against external threats, calls into question the primacy of Russia as a guiding factor for establishing the farming-militia program. It is difficult to make a strong case for the "Russian menace" when all the early *tondenhei* villages were in landlocked areas near Sapporo, which "was a far cry from the teachings of men such as Hayashi Shihei and the priest Gesshō who preached the need for coastal defense."<sup>26</sup> In 1869, the first director of the Hokkaido Development Agency, Nabeshima Naomasa (1815–1871) outlined preliminary strategic goals for colonial Hokkaido, wherein he underscores military preparedness through batteries, ports for coaling warships, and a standing security force of *tondenhei*.<sup>27</sup> Yet, it was not until 1886 that 220 households were stationed in Nemuro, the first seaside settlement that might have been of some strategic value if Russia had launched hostilities. In fact, over the course of the 30 years of the *tondenhei* program, a vast majority of the villages were located in the interior of the island.

To the degree that the state's pursuit of the immediate settlement of Hokkaido was prompted by the desire to demonstrate Japanese

territorial claims on the island in the international realm, it also neatly dovetailed with the pressing concerns regarding resistance to their tenuous hold on power at home. In *tondenhei* documents circulated internally within administrative circles, the uneasiness over the volatile former samurai is constant and palpable. Even before the outbreak of *shizoku* uprisings beginning in the mid-1870s, Meiji leaders were cognizant of the domestic powder keg that was this jobless, homeless, and restless public. In 1869, Nabeshima ranked the establishment of a job assistance (*jusan*) program for former samurai on par with creating a rich country, strong army (*fukoku kyōhei*) and enhancing national prestige (*kokui*), as the foremost priority for ensuring imperial governance.<sup>28</sup> Viewed through this lens, the focal point expands to include national anxieties, so often left out, which vied, if not eclipsed, international ones.

Evidence of the link between the *tondenhei* system's formation and the efforts made to alleviate problems with former samurai emerges as early as 1869. One of the first mentions of *tondenhei* in the modern era appears in a proposal by the minister of foreign affairs Maruyama Sakura (1840–1899), who advocates that the surrendered men of Mutsu and Uzen be settled in Sakhalin as part of a five-point plan to secure Japanese borders and establish a Japanese presence in Ezo/Hokkaido and Sakhalin.<sup>29</sup> These samurai, defeated in the Boshin War (1868–1869), were targets of the Meiji government, which aimed to effectively remove potential antagonists to their rule. In 1870, in a bid to muster the Hakodate Defense Force (*Hakodate eitai*), one of the several short-lived precursors to the *tondenhei* program, the Hokkaido Development Agency issued a directive, which singled out the recruitment of former samurai. Officers instructed that *shizoku* be gathered into a military unit based on the French model and be permanently settled as farmer-soldiers (*tonden dochaku*).<sup>30</sup> When less than a year later the agency submitted an official request to the Grand Council of State to organize a *tondenhei* farming-militia, officials proposed to transfer 20 households from Tokyo to Hokkaido for the purposes of furthering construction projects and military security. "The objective," it claimed, was "to convert Tokyo's excess, useless population (*mu-yō no jōin*) into indispensable soldiers (*hissu no hei*)" by giving them a parcel of land and making them into a standing security force under the supervision of the agency.<sup>31</sup> Although, ultimately this proposal was not accepted and the earlier attempts proved futile, they represented the first indications that agency administrators conceived of the colonization of Hokkaido and the suppression of *shizoku* revolt as twin goals.

Former samurai continued to be a prominent obstacle as Meiji leaders dismantled the Tokugawa political and economic systems. Provocations to the samurai included, for example, the abolishment of status distinctions (1868), the forced cutting of topknots (1871), the prohibition on wearing swords (1876), and the commutation of stipends (1876). In 1872, the initiation of the universal conscription system, considered an affront to the samurai prerogative to bear arms, did little toward bringing the already alienated and impoverished samurai in line with the new Meiji government's vision. Such abridgements of the hitherto exclusive rights and privileges that lay at the heart of samurai identity, coupled with their quickly declining circumstances, inspired many to become involved in radical and violent antigovernment rebellions.

By 1873, when Kuroda Kiyotaka, then deputy director of the Hokkaido Development Agency, presented yet another formal petition to Meiji leaders requesting permission and funds to launch a *tondenhei* program, the national political climate had changed.<sup>32</sup> It is widely accepted that the planned invasion of Korea (*seikanron*) in 1873 was pursued, in part, to ease rising tension among former samurai. When the attack on Korea was deemed too risky, troops were dispatched to Taiwan on the pretext of punitive measures for the deaths of several Japanese citizens (in fact, Ryukyuan fishermen) in 1874. The Taiwan Expedition (*Seitai no eki* or *Taiwan shuppei*), as it is known, was concocted to replace the ill-fated Korean invasion, but short-lived as the expedition was, it proved to be only a fleeting remedy to the *shizoku* problem. The acceptance of the *tondenhei* proposal in December of 1873 must be viewed within this particular political context.

The first appeals for volunteers contained none of the inspiring nationalistic or imperialistic prose that would be the hallmark of later *tondenhei* recruitment notices. Echoing Nabeshima's notion of job assistance, they read much more clearly as announcements of a rescue plan. In one document, the word "relief" (*kyūjo*) is repeated four times while *tondenhei* doesn't appear at all.<sup>33</sup> Sent out to the southern area of Hokkaido where a number of *shizoku* of the former Matsumae domain and ex-officials of the Tokugawa administration lived in a state of poverty, the program was swiftly construed as a means to punish and exile defeated troops of the *bakufu* (Tokugawa shogunate). This recruitment initiative met with little more than frustration. Thereafter, the development agency set its sights on the mainland and dispatched officials to pressure candidates when they were undergoing health examinations and put a fine polish on this

opportunity in open forums. Finally, in April 1875, as spring flowers pushed their way up through the only recently thawed ground, the first 198 *tondenhei* inaugurated the system by sojourning to Hokkaido and setting up residence in the unfamiliar surroundings of Kotoni village.

Learning from their initial missteps, the administrators began to shift the rhetorical framework toward martial terminology, discarding the language of rescue. Savvy advertising campaigns were quickly distributed through official channels and in national newspapers emphasizing national defense (*shubi*). In 1875, just months after the first detachment arrived in Kotoni, the *Tokyo Nichinichi Newspaper* ran an article titled “The Hokkaido Development Agency and Defense of the Northern Border: Formation of the *Tondenhei*.”<sup>34</sup> Although Russia is not explicitly named, the message would have been sufficiently conveyed through the repeated use of the term “protection” (*hogo*), as in the permanent protection of the northern territory. Farming duties are played down in the compact opening blurb, which is peppered with an impressive number of concepts related to security, including soldiers (*heitai*), military drills (*chōren*), military duty (*heiyaku*), and war preparedness (*heibi*).

Notably, when the *tondenhei* were first called upon to contribute to the nation through military service, two years after the initial settlement, the battle wasn't against Russia, but shizoku enemy forces within. The Seinan War was the last and fiercest of the armed samurai resistance to the Meiji government. The rebel movement was fostered by the private academies of Kagoshima that attracted disaffected samurai, offering academic and tactical training. The conflict was ultimately provoked by the official cancelation of samurai stipends and raids on weapons stockpiles in Satsuma, and Saigō Takamori (1828–1877), one of the key commanders of the Meiji restoration and an influential figure in the early leadership, led the opposition in battle. Faced with the superior modern equipment and strategies of the government's army, however, the rebel forces sustained heavy losses and were defeated in just under nine months from the outbreak of hostilities. Two units of *tondenhei* troops were drafted and fought on the frontlines alongside other army conscripts. The names of the seven men who were killed in action, in addition to the twenty more who perished from a cholera outbreak on their journey home, were enshrined in another emerging national institution—the *shōkonsha* or shrine to beckon the souls of the war dead, specifically the one in Tokyo, which later came to be known as Yasukuni Shrine.

The fundamental flaw in the characterization of the *tondenhei* as faithful defenders of the empire is that it cuts off paths of inquiry that unveil the factious nature of national consolidation at this historical juncture. I am not arguing that there is no basis for believing that officials were anxious about Russia or that we should completely discount Japanese proclamations of Russia's imperial intentions. However, by accepting this as the only or even primary reason for Japan's northern expansion reinforces an historical account that falsely promotes images of a citizenry united against a formidable outside enemy and erases the conflicting interests and motives within Japan. Most importantly, it mistakes the process for the result. The *tondenhei* system itself was one of the state's instrumental projects for diverting hostility and assuaging the casualties of the new regime in its drive to confer national identity and purpose to a heterogeneous and divided populace. Both the "patriotic pioneers" and "Russian menace" aspects of the typical *tondenhei* narrative presume as accomplished fact that which was under construction. To demystify the *tondenhei* program, then, is also to demystify the making of an imagined community of self-sacrificing Japanese citizens who were inherently moved by a collaborative spirit with the state's agenda.

### PLANTING AN IMPERIAL LEGACY IN COLONIAL HOKKAIDO

Much has been written on the relationship between tradition and modernity. Eric Hobsbawm's paradigm shifting work on "invented traditions" complicated our understanding of the construction of modern identities and ideologies, inspiring a wide variety of provocative scholarship on the historicity of traditions. Encapsulating Hobsbawm's argument, Steven Vlastos explains, "Tradition is not the sum of *actual* past practices that have perdured into the present; rather, tradition is as a modern trope, a prescriptive representation of socially desirable (or sometimes undesirable) institutions and ideas thought to have been handed down from generation to generation."<sup>35</sup> Once we reject the notion that tradition is an unchanging, consistent, and coherent set of customs and beliefs, the task before us is to historicize how political structures and cultural patterns are forged as instruments of control in the creation of nation-states.<sup>36</sup>

Ideologues selected one suitably eminent tradition to promote and sanction the invasion-settlement of colonial Hokkaido. At the time of its founding, the choice of the word "*tondenhei*," which refers to a soldier who engages in farming in times of peace,

served to evoke the program's professed dual purpose to protect and develop Hokkaido.<sup>37</sup> Not unlike the appellation Hokkaido, this name is significant in that it cleverly imbued the program with a particular temporal specificity—an age when the emperor ostensibly reigned as the country's supreme political and military leader. The root *tonden* is connected with two very specific times in history—the Heian and the Meiji periods. In the former, *tonden* denotes the estates of the imperial household (*kōshitsu no ryōchi*) or territory of military posts (*chinjufu*), and, in the latter, *tondenhei* farmlands in Hokkaido.<sup>38</sup> Capitalizing on connotations of imperial landholdings and *chinjufu*, characterized as strategic bases used to pacify the Ainu (*ezo wo chinbu*), Meiji leaders were able to construct a revisionist history wherein the roots of the samurai class originated in farming-soldiers. That these farmers, occasionally temporary soldiers, fought expansionist battles with the “barbarians” in the nether regions also resonated with the images of Hokkaido as a perilous outer boundary. Similar to the assertions of the restoration of the emperor to his rightful position, this designation summoned former samurai to “reclaim” their ancestral heritage and serve their emperor in Japan's new periphery.

In the early 1880s, several cardinal rationalizations of the imperialist incursion into Hokkaido took substantial shape via the propaganda arm of the Hokkaido Development Agency, the *Hokkaido Development Journal*. The celebratory tone of the inaugural issue was set by Director Kuroda's resounding refrain, “Today's Hokkaido is not yesterday's Ezo!” and the telling statement, “Hokkaido is the coffer of the nation.” This issue also contained the first full articulation of the genealogy of the modern *tondenhei*, reinforced by and reinforcing the notion of the trinity of prosperity. The origin-myth of the *tondenhei* subtly melded individual needs and national priorities and confirmed the provenance of imperial governance. If Kuroda's remarks equated Hokkaido with a perpetually productive storehouse, whose vast reserves waited to be extracted for the benefit of the imperial metropole, supporting articles were instrumental in propagating the idea that the emperor's northern gate promised practical and sublime rewards for enterprising colonists.

In one of the opening columns offering kudos on the new publication, Okamoto Nagayuki, a secretary in the agency, harkens back to the emperor's divine ancestors to secure firm purchase for the *tondenhei* program. To exhort individuals to participate in the cultivation of the empire in Hokkaido, Okamoto refers to *The Chronicles of Japan* (*Nihon shoki*) and *The Record of Ancient Matters* (*Kojiki*),

appealing to an ideology of Japan's agrarian essence based in the practice of wet-rice agriculture. He traces the Meiji emperor's ancestry to the mythical goddess Amaterasu and her grandson, Ninigi no Mikoto, who bestowed Japanese with the "sacred garden grains of rice," which, over the centuries, provided Japanese with essential sustenance and civilized society.<sup>39</sup> Okamoto writes, "Because this rice was extremely beautiful, our country came to be known and praised as '*Mizuhonokuni*' or Japan, the land of abundant rice. With such a history, why would we not treasure farming today?"<sup>40</sup> Okamoto laments, however, that despite this glorious history, "we hear that among the shizoku of today there are many who do not have a livelihood and waste precious time. Why do they not remember their ancestors and return to the fields (*kiden*)?"<sup>41</sup>

After journeying beyond the literal limits of history, Okamoto treks back to the age before the ascendancy of the shogun. According to his narrative, in ancient Japan the emperor occasionally drafted men of age from the farming communities to serve as frontier guards (*sakimori*) and soldiers (*eishi*). Eventually, some of these men did not return to their farms and instead formed independent military units (*gundan*), thus making way for the wrongful seizure of imperial rule. During the Meiji period, this became a common account of the origins of the warrior ruling class as oligarchs emphasized the reinstatement of the emperor as the head and the father of the nation. Okamoto thus explains that the ancestors of the men who were conferred peerage and shizoku status in the Meiji period "after the feudal estates were returned to the court" were all farmers.<sup>42</sup>

A dedicated booster of the colonial project, Okamoto trumpets the advantages of Hokkaido.

If one is going to return to the fields, why not head for Hokkaido where the fertile fields and rich soil stretch for miles and miles rather than stay in houses piled up on each other in the narrow confines of the mainland? The people who peruse the *Hokkaido Development Journal* will understand well that returning to the fields in Hokkaido and developing the bounty there will bring prosperity and continue the tradition of old. For this reason I celebrate this publishing of this periodical.<sup>43</sup>

Okamoto approves of the public service provided by bringing to light the true state of the development of Hokkaido, which greatly benefits the imperial nation (*teikoku*). Just as the past and present are linked through the continuance of the tradition of old, so too are the

futures of individual citizens and the nation. By honoring the history of their ancestors in taking up the hoe in Hokkaido, the former samurai, he suggests, would contribute to the glory of the empire and secure its destiny.

The prominent agriculturalist and scholar Tsuda Sen (1837–1908) added his heady articulations on colonial theory, conditions in Hokkaido, and the *tondenhei* system as the chief editor to the *Hokkaido Development Journal*. Following his rousing endorsement of the spirit as an indispensable colonial strategy in the second issue, Tsuda presents what appear at first glance to be more prosaic topics in “A Report on *Tondenhei* Farming” and “The Practical Success of *Tondenhei*.” The first article delivers an overview of the history of the *tondenhei* settlements, a summary of flourishing agricultural production, and a rather stupefying array of details regarding the number of cattle in various villages and the names of farming tools written in *katakana* script. In the second column, he deflects criticisms that the *tondenhei* program is in a shambles. Admitting that although when he first learned of infighting and contentious resignations he harbored doubts about a promising future for the farming-militia, Tsuda is now convinced that “with encouragement and spirit, the officials are polishing a rough rock into gold.”<sup>44</sup>

Intent on championing the *tondenhei* system, Tsuda does not miss the opportunity to interpolate the selfless dedication of recruits to their twin duties into a proud national narrative.

Hardly concerned with the many difficulties, the *tondenhei* invest all of their energies into working the hoe, and during the Seinan War, they shouldered arms and departed for the front. Due to this, they were among the smoke of guns and the hail of bullets unable to work during those crucial days and months in the summer and fall. After their triumphal return, they again took up the tasks of farming, never begrudging the arduous work, year after year increasing their crop yields, escaping poverty, and becoming men of self-made wealth.<sup>45</sup>

Stoic sacrifice is brought together with rugged individualism to praise “self-made men” committed to national success. An anecdotal example, emphasizing individual ambitions resonant with the then popular catchphrase *risshin shusse*, or establishing oneself and advancing in the world, is offered to punctuate Tsuda’s point. An indefatigable Mr. Sato works diligently and manages to procure a larger plot of land. He buys two donkeys and ties them to a Siberian sled in winter, travelling to neighboring villages to sell various goods. Mr. Sato’s steadfastness pays off with prodigious profit, which he reinvests in



land purchases. With this, Tsuda concludes that the spirit of the *tondenhei* is intact and the militia on solid ground.

Aah! The security of the northern gate is of utmost importance to our country and high-spirited production is presently urgent. In the north in Hokkaido, good farmer-soldiers are increasing the power of our nation many times over and spreading the prestige of our country far and wide. I have heard reports of the situation, which continues to progress, and I predict that we will be given the opportunity to see positive results.<sup>46</sup>

If the phrase “spreading the prestige of our country far and wide” calls to mind the triadic structure of Japanese imperialism, then Tsuda’s article also invokes a trinity of prosperity, the well-being of samurai-settlers, the nation, and the emperor intimately intertwined. The *tondenhei* serve their nation and secure their own future by defending the northern gate and advancing Japan’s reputation on the international front.

Among personal histories later recorded by former-*tondenhei* is a humorous episode that suggests *tondenhei* likely formed subjectivities inspired by such lofty rhetoric, which could cast their decision to immigrate within concepts of national service and sacrifice. “The Story of my Mistake,” by Hirozawa, the creator of the four scrolls that make up *The Pictorial Narrative of the Tondenhei*, recalls his group’s first day in Hokkaido. Traveling toward Asahikawa by foot from Otaru after a grueling journey from the mainland, the newly arrived colonists settle into an inn at Takikawa. When they are served dinner, Hirozawa becomes incensed at seeing one dish on his tray that he believes is unfit for human consumption. He calls for the manager, and in his recounting of the event, angrily declares:

Where I come from, this is something we use to fertilize rice or wheat. I am neither rice nor wheat. How rude indeed! We are the subjects (*sekishi*) of the emperor. For you and for this country, I have become a *tondenhei* entrusted with a great duty to open up Hokkaido, where no humans have tread, and, when necessary, to take up arms and guard the northern gate. If you won’t acknowledge this, you should resign.<sup>47</sup>

The dish in question was a variety of dried herring. Used on the mainland predominately as fertilizer, Hirozawa does not realize that they are perfectly edible varieties. Calmly, the manager explains that this particular kind of herring, *migaki nishin*, was a delicacy of Hokkaido and that he had decided to serve it to mark the special occasion of hosting the *tondenhei*. With this, the misunderstanding was cleared up and Hirozawa apologetic.

We certainly want to acknowledge that a text drafted decades after the incident during wartime might be embellished and colored by the overwhelming militaristic discourse of the time. Still, it seems reasonable that Hirozawa, and other *tondenhei*, would have been inclined to conceptualize their decision to settle in Hokkaido within the idealized national/imperial rhetoric rather than notions of financial expediency or personal failure. Thus, the rhetorical device that I am labeling the “trinity of prosperity” suited the symbolic and practical ends of both the state and individuals who were in the process of constructing new identities amidst the chaos of Japan’s emergent modernity. Along with a whole host of other ideological state apparatuses that worked to convince “Japanese” to relinquish hitherto strong affinities with regional localities and the Tokugawa status system, the Hokkaido Development Agency called on individuals to willingly identify as national citizens and imperial subjects. The ever-deepening nationalist consciousness that grew out of expansionist projects such as the one in colonial Hokkaido, in turn, consecrated the reinvented emperor and the newly created nation-state, Japan.

The dominant *tondenhei* narrative is a persuasive, seemingly irresistible, story that continues decisively and detrimentally to shape the collective memory of the colonial project in Hokkaido and the making of modern Japan. Despite the fact that *tondenhei* were largely consumed with the rather unglamorous task of eking out an existence from the unfamiliar natural surroundings, their lives have repeatedly been transmuted into patriotic visions of “pioneers” who bravely opened a wild “frontier” and safeguarded the northern reach of the emperor’s modern realm. Not even their relatively meager numbers foreclose their virtual monopoly on the spotlight in histories lauding Hokkaido’s miraculous modernization. Official discourse and *tondenhei* testimonies continue to augment and reinforce each other as they sustain contemporary historical remembrance of colonial Hokkaido. The rallying call to return to the fields, however, not only reaches across the temporal divide to inform current understanding of Hokkaido’s history, but also, as I argue below, travelled beyond the island’s shores to the mainland in the early 1880s to help frame one of the most important Meiji formulations of imperial ideology.

### THE ROOTS OF MODERN IMPERIAL METAPHORS

The modern practice of mobilizing *tondenhei* farming-soldiers, as a system, was carried out solely in the colonial context of Hokkaido. As

a concept, it was sufficiently flexible to be serviceable in other settings. In the metropole, strains of this narrative proved useful for strengthening national unity and for legitimating the emperor's sovereignty through one of the most crucial decrees of the period, the *Imperial Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors*. Returning from the colonial periphery to the political hub of the nascent nation-state, the *tondenhei* "invented tradition" helped elites discipline a rebelling army by grafting an uncertain present to a comforting and lofty past. An unfolding conversation among the three texts—the *Admonition to Soldiers and Sailors* (1878), the *Hokkaido Development Journal* (1880–1881), and the *Imperial Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors* (1882)—reveals another contentious site where new individual and collective subjectivities were forged, namely the armed forces. The overlapping threads in these documents suggest that the trope of the *tondenhei*, first worked out in the context of colonial Hokkaido, was stationed at the center of the ideological debate on imperial authority.

The *tondenhei* were just one constituent among a number of armed forces being consolidated in the early decades of Meiji. In 1868, leaders of the opposition to the Tokugawa shogunate may have amassed enough troops out of the various anti-*bakufu* domains to eventually emerge victorious in the Boshin War, but these imperial forces (*kangun*) did not constitute an independent army. Creating a standing military and stabilizing political power were dual, and intrinsically interdependent, tasks that the government juggled in the 1870s and the early 1880s. It was, however, anything but a smooth road to building a modern, loyal army and navy. After the first call for able-bodied men, *shizoku* and commoners alike, was issued in 1870, the induction process began. Yet, keeping the recruits proved difficult. Historian Tobe Ryōichi attributes the high rate of desertion in these early days to the enormous gap between traditional life patterns and the regimented schedule of soldiers.<sup>48</sup> In 1873, the conscription law, which required all men of age to serve a mandatory three years, went into effect. This caused uproar among not only the former samurai, who saw it as an infringement on their privileges, but also the peasant class, who understandably misunderstood the phrase "blood tax" (*ketsuzei*) and could hardly bear the drain on its essential labor force. Despite the rocky start, the government was able to muster over 60,000 draftees to fight against the antigovernment forces in Satsuma during the Seinan War of 1877. Defeating the insurrectionists was a triumph for the modern monarch and his motley militia.

If defeat of the rebels marked the end of *shizoku* resistance, it also gave birth to the first and most shocking, modern military revolt,

the Takebashi Uprising (1878). Discontent with reduced salaries and the indefinite postponement of rewards promised for their services in the Seinan War, over 200 men of the Konoe Artillery First Battalion, the elite imperial guards stationed near the Takebashi Bridge in Tokyo, carried out an uprising on August 23, 1878. After the initial eruption at the Takebashi barracks, which left two men dead, most of the soldiers set out on foot to petition directly at the emperor's residence.<sup>49</sup> However, some officers caught wind of the plan even before it broke out, so that when almost 100 of the rebels arrived at the gate of the emperor's residence in the early hours of August 24, they were greeted by soldiers of the military guard (*goe-ibei*), who suppressed the revolt in a matter of hours.

From beginning to end, the Takebashi Uprising lasted less than five hours, but the reverberations from this incident were felt well beyond that night. More than half of the Konoe battalion had participated, and a total of 386 people (which included men from other units who helped in the planning) were punished. As many as 55 insurgents received the death penalty. Tobe argues that because the Konoe squad was the special pride of military and political leaders due to its status as the first independent unit directly controlled by the Meiji government, the mutiny was all the more distressing.<sup>50</sup> It was, above all, a wake-up call to the state. The revolt made abundantly evident that the new recruits did not view nationalist pride as an adequate substitute for the practical matter of financial remuneration and drove home the need to launch an energetic campaign to instill deeper national and imperial allegiance.

The Takebashi Uprising marked a decisive moment in Meiji history, functioning as a highly charged impetus for leaders to deploy rhetorical rationalizations that could inculcate the subordination of troops' personal interests to those of the state. To this end, the first response to the incident, the *Admonition to Soldiers and Sailors* (*gunjin kunkai*, October 12, 1878), relied on corporeal analogies, variously expressed as the undeveloped or broken bodies of individual soldiers. Attributed to one of the key architects of the modern military, Yamagata Aritomo (1838–1922), the five-page *Admonition* adopts a severe and lecturing tone and laments the modern troops' deficiencies in discipline and patriotism. The reproach argues that although the outer manifestations of the imperial army's strength and accomplishments are obvious, evidenced by the recent victory in the civil conflict, they are not matched by the refinement of the spirit, which "remains but a sprout (*hōga*)."<sup>51</sup> Not concerned with mixing metaphors, Yamagata explains, the soldiers are "big kids" whose "outer body is robust, but whose

inner spirit has not yet ripened.”<sup>52</sup> Moving away from developmental models, the text then stresses that a military without spirit is akin to “a body whose ears, eyes, or limbs do not function . . . In this case, even one million soldiers with hard armor and sharp weapons would be of no use.”<sup>53</sup> To ensure the potency of the armed forces, soldiers are counseled to cultivate martial virtues and refrain from engaging in political activities.

In the *Imperial Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors*, promulgated in 1882, the corporeal metaphor is utilized again, this time not to conjoin body and spirit, but the emperor and his soldiers. Herein, the emperor is posited as the head of the national body whose limbs are the soldiers who faithfully carry out the imperial supreme commander’s directives.<sup>54</sup> In “becoming as one heart” with the emperor, the soldiers ensure peace for the nation’s subjects and project the majesty (*iretsu*) of Japan throughout the world. In contrast to the *Admonition*, the weightiness of the message is conveyed through the authoritative voice of the emperor himself. The *Rescript*, fewer than two pages in length, is written in a variant of Japanese used exclusively by the imperial family and unfamiliar to the general public. In particular, the majestic plural (*chin*) underscores the momentous import of the speaker and his message. As the vehicle through which the Meiji emperor directly addressed his soldier-subjects, the *Rescript* embodied both his imposing presence and unassailable authority.

The connection between the two military texts, the *Admonition* and the *Rescript*, is straightforward. What is less apparent, but impossible to ignore, are the ways the *Hokkaido Development Journal* participated in this textual dialogue. What we find among these three texts is a borrowing, commingling, and syncretizing of doctrine and tenets that would decidedly inform the discourse on the supreme importance of the imperial personage in modern Japanese society.

One of the earliest enunciations that fixed the “ancestry” of the samurai in the farming-soldier from the era of Heian imperial rule is found in Okamoto’s congratulatory remarks to the *Hokkaido Development Journal*. This tondenhei tradition was especially conducive to the campaign to induce initially potentially threatening former samurai (and later other superfluous Japanese citizens) to settle in colonial Hokkaido. Just two years later, in a pivotal conversational turn, this narrative was reworked to form the effective opening of the *Rescript*. Echoing Okamoto’s mantra to “return to the fields,” the Meiji emperor calls for a return to the former, true body politic, when his royal ancestors reigned supreme. This formulation of history served to unify the history and people of Japan by suturing the novel

modern imperial system to a purported era of greatness when regal heads of state governed the country.

Emphasizing different aspects of the *tondenhei* origin-myth, the government sought to effectively repress and control two groups of dissenting warriors—the former samurai and the newly recruited personnel of the modern military. While highlighting the samurai's historical roots in agriculture was the shrewd strategy for the agency that encouraged dissatisfied *shizoku* to adopt farming as their occupation in the new colonial outpost, what was effectual for the military elites who wrote the *Rescript* was the assertion that the emperor was once the chief commander of the armed forces. The *Rescript* wastes no time in fixing the roots of the modern military in the mythical emperor Jimmu. From the beginning of Japan's history, the emperors directly commanded the military that was made up of men who fulfilled dual functions. They were, according to the document, farmers who fought on the orders of the emperor only when necessary. However, eventually the shogun, who received his authority from the emperor, abused his power and usurped the emperors' direct rule over the soldiers. Thereafter, soldier-farmers split into two groups (*heimō onozukara futatsu wakare*). The story of the specialization of farmers into warriors marks the wrong turn in history when professionalized warriors stole the power of Japan's legitimate ruler.

Attempting to return the ship of state to its rightful course, the *Rescript* stresses the divine emperor's role as supreme commander and his expectations of his martial forces. In doing so, it deftly fuses associations with samurai-*tondenhei* to a stirring iteration of the essential function of modern soldiers as the protective arms and legs of the imperial/national body. In the *Rescript*, the emperor declares his paramount authority over *bunbu*, the common character compound denoting the twin training of the samurai in the arts and military. He enjoins his soldiers to be loyal (*chūsetsu wo tsukusu*), respectful of superiors (*reigi wo tadashikusuru*), brave (*buiyū wo tattobu*), faithful (*shingi wo omonzuru*), and modest (*shisso wo muneto suru*). They are to maintain the way (*michi*) and the discipline and morals of a warrior (*shifū*). Language that would have been vaguely connected with some notion of a samurai code, later to coalesce in the term *bushidō*, was carefully introduced into a new paradigm that vested absolute power in the emperor and implicitly projected positive associations with the previously privileged samurai status onto all male Japanese citizens.<sup>55</sup>

If the corporeal references in the *Admonition* and the *Rescript* provided a conceptual framework for reframing loyalties to the emperor,

there was another much more practical and material manner by which the bodily connection was made between the emperor and his soldierly subjects. Highlighting the “sensory dimension of cultural practices,” Stephen Vlastos emphasizes that invented traditions are not adopted on the basis of logic alone. He reminds us of Dipesh Chakrabarty’s argument that “ideas acquire materiality through the history of bodily practices” and that “the past is embodied through a long process of the training of the senses.”<sup>56</sup> In the case of Meiji Japan, over the course of time, the resistance to conscription was forgotten and the imperial state internalized as tradition with an honorable patina through inculcation via formal recitations of the *Rescript*. Imperial Japanese troops were required to memorize and recite the difficult language of the text, and the reading of it came to be a central ritual in formal induction ceremonies throughout the nation. As though following through on the *Admonition*’s prescription that soldiers meld their spirit and bodies for the glory of the nation and its imperial sovereign, the calculated choreography of citizens’ bodies, voices, and sentiments were at the heart of forging fidelity to the imperial system.

In the final turn of the dialogue between these texts, every year after its promulgation in 1882, the *Rescript* graced the front pages of the *Tondenhei Handbook*, with supplemental sections reinforcing its message. The handbook introduced the edict as follows: “The five tenets of the *Imperial Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors* spell out the spirit of the soldier, and you must always respect and observe them. It is imperative that you endeavor to fulfill your *tondenhei* duties, be a model for the common people (*ippan jinmin*), and deepen the love and respect of the masses (*shūjin*).”<sup>57</sup> Associated as they were with defense and development, cultivation and civilization, and imperial expansion and adventure, the figure of the *tondenhei* presented an especially appealing symbol of the emerging Japanese nation-state and its people. Importantly, the discourse that seeded the colonization of Hokkaido was part of larger cross-pollinating currents between the mainland and the colonial periphery. The *tondenhei* narrative, germinated in Hokkaido, supported the drafting of both the national imaginary and the national armed forces. By also facilitating the taming and the conditioning of national subjects, it was at the heart of what would become Japan’s monumental expansionist project.

National consolidation in early Meiji had ever as much to do with the crafting of compelling stories and inventing traditions as it did with drafting policies and enacting political, economic, and legal reforms. That one of the most significant Meiji imperial documents,

perhaps second only to the *Imperial Rescript on Education* (*kyōiku chokugo*), that appeared eight years later, appropriated a historical narrative first employed to recruit colonists to Hokkaido demonstrates the centrality of the northern periphery in eliminating opposition, consolidating state and military power, and molding national-imperial subjects. Much like the discourse of the *Imperial Rescript on Education*, uniformly regarded to have fundamentally cultivated nationalism and loyalty to the emperor in the Japanese citizenry, the *tondenhei* narrative, both pliable and persuasive, functioned to construct at once a heroic national legacy and a modern imperial subjectivity. In a moment of intense rupture that left many uncertain about their ability to survive as well as about their cultural moorings and identities, expressions of shared history and customs putatively vouched for the inviolable authority of the emperor and cultivated devotion and loyalty in modern Japanese subjects. What comes into relief when tracing the physical and metaphorical deployment of the *tondenhei* is a forceful, synergistic vision that defined both modern Hokkaido and Japan.



WRITING AINU OUT

THE NATURE OF JAPANESE  
COLONIALISM IN HOKKAIDO

To Yezo, then, the northern frontier of the Empire and a land endowed with magnificent natural resources as yet untouched by human hand, the new Imperial Government wisely began to extend its fostering care.

Nitobe Inazō  
*(The Imperial Agricultural College of  
Sapporo, Japan, 1893)*

Returning to the wide road, I realized how strange it was. They had chosen to make it in this extreme no-man's-land, destroying the thick forest that had been here for thousands of years and using human power to defeat nature. As far as anyone could see on both sides, only the forest enveloped the road. Without even one shadow of a human, without even one thread of smoke, and without even one person to speak to or to listen to, it stretches out desolate and lonely.

Kunikida Doppo  
*(The Shores of the Sorachi River, 1902)*

At the heart of an impressive array of Meiji-period visions of Hokkaido lay the island's awe-inspiring natural world. Through the prism of nature, Hokkaido was frequently viewed as a place of incalculable advantages and plenitude, evinced in its pristine, rich natural reserves, as well as a place of adversity and hardship, manifested in the frigid and unforgiving winters. Hokkaido's majestic mountains, sweeping plains, and vast "virgin" forests collectively constituted what seemed an infinite "empty" expanse that beckoned adventurous Japanese settlers. In its rugged and undeveloped state, Hokkaido was characterized as a limitless source of hitherto untapped resources awaiting Japanese ingenuity and civilization. Images of Hokkaido as a "savage" wilderness served the state's goals by acting as a foil

to confirm Japan's superior status and rationalize the colonial project. The forbidding landscape and climate also provoked deeply disturbing reflections on the modern notion of the self and society and was occasionally deployed to represent an alienated Japanese psyche that struggled to cope with the vicissitudes of modern life. Inviting copious commentary, the naturescape of the island remained a pronounced marker of Hokkaido's otherness even as it became more firmly integrated into the political economy of the nascent Japanese nation-state.

The naturalization of colonial Hokkaido was accomplished through a number of complementary colonial operations. Terminological sleight of hand configured Hokkaido as a purely natural space, devoid of human habitation, history, and culture. At the same time, Hokkaido was thoroughly incorporated into the emergent national boundaries and was folded into the national imaginary as a natural part of Japanese territory. These processes were embedded in a larger discourse on the superiority of the Japanese landscape that sought to inculcate nationalist pride and identification with expansionist ambitions in a heterogeneous and not wholly cooperative population. Richard Okada's perceptive reading of Shiga Shigetaka's *The Landscape of Japan* (*Nihon fūkei ron*, 1894) within the historical context of Meiji-era nation-building, war, and imperialist exploits brings to light how new significations of nature played a part in inventing Japan and nurturing fervor for colonial ventures abroad.<sup>1</sup> In a similar fashion, during the same period, conceptualizations that pitted the ostensibly wild and untouched nature of Hokkaido against the civilized and cultivated mainland/nation helped launch the Japanese ship of nation-statehood and inaugurate its age of empire.

Representations of Hokkaido's natural world—whether articulated in historical, political, journalistic, or literary works—were not merely innocent descriptions but deeply ideological formulations produced concomitant with the physical appropriation of this colonial territory. In a nuanced exegesis of the varied and shifting repertoire of Western colonial discourse, literary and colonial scholar David Spurr identifies “negation” as one of the twelve interrelated rhetorical modes that sustained and justified European imperial authority across the globe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Negation requires the construction of “the Other as absence, emptiness, nothingness, or death,” and empties an inhabited space, making room for the envisioning and fulfillment of national and individual desires.<sup>2</sup> The frequent characterization of Hokkaido as a

no-man's-land (*mujinchi*, *mujin no sakai*), primeval forest (*genshirin*, *genseirin*), or virgin land (*shojochi*) in Japanese texts evinces a semantic coupling, which naturalized the colonization of the northern island as an ostensible enterprising plan to convert a vacancy into a model of civilization. The phrase "ownerless land" (*mushu no chi*), moreover, proved an expedient means to expropriate Ainu lands for the needs of the state and the Japanese settlers. The seemingly benign term *mikaichi*, literally unopened land, worked on two levels. First, it affirmed agriculture as the equivalent to civilization (hence, the need to open land). Second, it associated the northern region with savagery, barbarism, backwardness, and primitiveness as is connoted in its lexical root found in such words as *mikaijin* (barbarian, savage) and *mikaishakai* (primitive society). This congeries of colonial vocabularies conspired to legitimate Japanese incursion and subjugation and deny Ainu historical claims and rights to the land.

A panoply of Meiji-era narratives myopically concentrate on Japanese settlers' noble campaigns against nature, suppressing the story of the Ainu struggle with the colonial apparatus, the invasive settlement, and the policies and laws that violently denied them the right to their own culture, language, and means of subsistence. In the opening of a promotional booklet written in English for the 1893 World's Columbian Exhibition in Chicago, educator, diplomat, and politician Nitobe Inazō (1862–1933) extols the accomplishments of the Imperial Agricultural College in Sapporo, Hokkaido, where he had both studied and taught.<sup>3</sup> This short passage typifies many of the central contradictions in the literature, broadly defined, on the colonization of Hokkaido.

The War of Restoration over, the Japanese Government turned its attention to more peaceful pursuits. It began to divert the overflowing energies of the warrior class and the superabundant strength of the oppressed peasantry into new channels of industrial warfare and conquest. A field well suited for enterprises of this kind was not wanting... The northern islands of Japan, vaguely called Yezo, were for centuries a terra incognita among people; all that was told about it, and unfortunately most readily accepted by them was that the region was the abode of a barbarian folk known as the Ainu, and that it was a dreary waste of snow and ice, altogether unfit for inhabitation by a race of higher culture.

To Yezo, then, the northern frontier of the Empire and a land endowed with magnificent natural resources as yet untouched by human hand, the new Imperial Government wisely began to extend its fostering care.<sup>4</sup>

In the first sentences Nitobe depicts the “peaceful pursuits” of the Meiji leadership as “industrial warfare and conquest.” The dissonance between the two contrasting notions in Nitobe’s own language exposes, unwittingly, the historicity of the persistent characterization of the colonization of Hokkaido as merely peaceful pursuits when it would be more aptly discussed in terms of the unequivocally violent phrase industrial warfare and conquest. Not surprisingly, Nitobe acknowledges the Ainu of Hokkaido with the derogatory term barbarian. Although not acknowledged directly, the dispossession of Ainu land and livelihood is justified within the framework of “development,” buoyed by a belief undergirded by social Darwinism in the moral, intellectual, and racial ascendancy of the Japanese. In fact, immediately after mentioning that Hokkaido was the longtime homeland of the Ainu, Nitobe empties Hokkaido entirely of Ainu existence and history and describes the island in terms of its “natural resources yet untouched by human hand.” The indigenous peoples’ deft handling and transformation of the forests’ many resources into homes, medicine, clothing, hunting, fishing, and household implements go unrecognized. Echoing the logic of Christopher Columbus’s discovery of the New World, Nitobe declares that Hokkaido was a terra incognita, contrary to the evidence of the Ainu’s intimate knowledge of its flora, fauna, climate, and topography, which enabled their long-time survival and enriched their cultural inheritance.

Although moving in very different circles than Nitobe, the novelist, poet, and journalist Kunikida Doppo (1871–1908) was a celebrated figure in his own right. He is closely associated with Romantic poetry and acknowledged as a founder of Japanese Naturalism (*shizenshugi*). Doppo first attracted the public’s attention through his frontline dispatches published in the major national daily, *Kokumin Newspaper*, during the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895). His landmark works “Gen Oji” (*Gen oji*, 1897), “Musashi Plain” (*Musashino*, 1898), and “Unforgettable People” (*Wasure’enu hitobito*, 1898), which Karatani Kōjin claims, “embodied a fundamental break with the past,” established his reputation as a preeminent author.<sup>5</sup> A troubled childhood and painful love affairs are commonly credited for Doppo’s literary corpus imbued with melancholic introspection and frank depictions of emotional turmoil. Today, an impressive body of literary criticism treats his wide range of writings, many of them translated into English. That Doppo’s oeuvre remains potent in its appeal is attested to most recently by the six-volume collection of research on and Ashiya Nobukazu’s 2008 original and fresh interpretations of his literary works.<sup>6</sup>

Frequently, Doppo is praised as a man thoroughly attuned to nature and as an author who brilliantly captured landscape scenery. One biographer claims that Doppo's childhood in Yamaguchi and Hiroshima bestowed on him a special appreciation for the natural world. "Walking in the mountains, along the streams and down by the seashore, Doppo stored many impressions and experiences in his mind which would later influence his development as a writer."<sup>7</sup> Doppo's personal reflections reveal that he gave the subject conscious thought: "Once I had become a believer in Wordsworth I could not think of a man as being separate from nature."<sup>8</sup> More recent scholarship, however, eschews romantic views of Doppo's aesthetic portrayals of landscape, claiming that his writings associated with the school of Japanese Naturalism were deeply implicated in the contested construction of modern Japanese literature and imperialist consciousness.<sup>9</sup>

Likewise, in this chapter I examine Doppo's short story "The Shores of the Sorachi River" (*Sorachigawa no kishibe*, 1902) within its historical moment, situating this "naturalistic" work in the unquestionably ideologically charged horizon of Japanese national identity.<sup>10</sup> At first glance this text, wherein a man journeys from Tokyo to Hokkaido to investigate purchasing a tract of land to open and cultivate, does not seem akin to Nitobe's overt valorization of the colonial project in Hokkaido. Still, it represents a particularly telling example of colonial depictions of Hokkaido's nature. The nameless narrator, identified as a writer, observes and muses on the scenery of Hokkaido and the Japanese who make their home there while trying to locate prefectural officials who can provide him with information on possible plots along the Sorachi River, located in central Hokkaido. He experiences a wide range of reactions to the natural vistas, variously enchanted, awed, and terrified. He ultimately meets and consults with the experts. However, the landscape turns out to be so disconcerting that, as he confesses in the last lines, he never buys land or returns to Hokkaido again. In Doppo's famous short work "Unforgettable People," humans appear *as* landscape, but "The Shores of the Sorachi River" is unmistakably a story of a Japanese man's palpable alienation *from* an inhumane nature. Moreover, in the process of consciously evoking the protagonist's inner turmoil and vulnerability precipitated by Hokkaido's disturbing environment—accentuating the divide between the human and natural worlds—the author generates another disassociation. He discursively separates the Ainu from their homelands and history by constructing Hokkaido as a tabula rasa, thereby denying their suffering precipitated by Japanese subjugation and settlement.

If Nitobe's pamphlet functions as a paean to Japan's advanced civilization, "The Shores of the Sorachi River," with its concentration on humankind's conflicted relationship with overpowering natural forces in Hokkaido, serves to signify modern angst. Doppo foregrounds the "battles" of Japanese colonists confronting Hokkaido's unfamiliar landscape in such a fashion that the very real consequences of Japan's colonization on the Ainu are supplanted by metaphors of Japanese modern malaise. It effectively rewrites colonial history so that the oppression of the Ainu is displaced and replaced by the victimhood of the colonizer who is subjugated by a cruel and indifferent nature. This work exemplifies how numerous literary texts of the period, although clearly not officially connected to the colonial administration, reflected and reinforced the state's colonial project. By incorporating their Japanese-centric versions of the island into the collective imaginary of the nation, fictional narratives like "The Shores of the Sorachi River" worked in tandem with policies penned by the political elite to further naturalize Hokkaido as Japanese territory and facilitate Japanese settlement.

As I have already argued, it is not the case that a nation called Japan merely extended the benefits of its naturally endowed superior technological and cultural advancements to colonial Hokkaido. Rather, in a particular moment in history, when the direction and shape of the country was uncertain, the *process* of colonizing Hokkaido brought the Japanese state into being. That is to say, the particular configuration that we know as Japan was not inevitable. The modernization model, as applied to Hokkaido, therefore, is predicated on multiple omissions: the omission of the historicity of the making of modern Japan by which an unchanging Japan was projected back into time immemorial and an omission of the violence of the colonial project in Hokkaido that physically and discursively evacuated the Ainu from their homelands.

### THE NATURE OF COLONIAL HOKKAIDO AND THE NAICHI/NATION

During the Meiji era, particular notions of nature were deployed to simultaneously define Japan as a modern nation-state and shape an image of an island that hitherto had been largely associated with obscurity and exile. Rather than simple, self-evident reflections of the outer world, descriptions of Hokkaido were deeply wound up with novel images and ideals of the self and the nation. Commonly the difference between Hokkaido and the naichi was expressed through dichotomies of nature/culture and wild/tamed. On the one hand,

Hokkaido was a brutal wilderness, a no-man's-land, and a barbaric backwoods. On the other, official, intellectual, and popular writers attribute to the *naichi*/nation a domesticated landscape, comforting human ties, literary significance, and rich, enduring history—signifiers of Japan's advanced technological expertise and enlightened civilization. Held up to the mirror of Hokkaido's perilous, primeval natural world, the mainland appeared to be a place of orderly cultivated landscape inhabited by civilized, harmonious communities enveloped in time-honored traditions.

Central to justifications for the colonial project in Hokkaido were the implicit and explicit promotion of agriculture—that age-old practice of taming nature. By the 1890s representations that aligned Japanese-ness with agricultural production had taken root, and what Carol Gluck calls the “agrarian myth,” which asserted that the rice-producing villages were “the communal foundations of Japanese national experience”<sup>11</sup> and “the repository of ancestral custom,”<sup>12</sup> was a staple of officials and scholars alike. Hokkaido-born literary critic Ogasawara Masaru observes how the notion of the “civilized” *naichi* was anchored in traditional practices of cultivation, which lent the mainland a hospitable feeling.

*Naichi* [homeland] was not merely a word that signified a discreet geographical area—the Japanese mainland to the south of the Tsugaru Straits—but rather it was a vital symbol that measured a distance in spiritual topography. In other words, *naichi* meant home, native country, a place of unchanging configuration. It was the lands of one's beloved, of affecting mountains and streams, of a history that spanned the generations; a land that could make one forget if only for an instant the bodily fear and uncertainty that was Hokkaido. *Naichi* reminded one of harmony brimming with reassurance . . . the truth and poetry of a birthplace was *there*. Here, in Hokkaido, there was none of that. Here there was only a savage nature, not cultivated land. Here nature was an object to be fought. Survival depended on its continual destruction.<sup>13</sup>

Associations with history, harmony, and poetics reinforced the cultural plenitude of the *naichi* in contrast to Hokkaido's “cultural vacancy.”<sup>14</sup> In Hokkaido, in place of rice paddy fields and gardens stood “savage nature,” which had to be destroyed to bring it under the control and into the service of society as the many generations of Japanese had done on the mainland. Thus, *agriculture*, as the locus of Japan's “advanced” society, confirmed Hokkaido's distance in spatial and temporal registers from a cultured (read: cultivated) *naichi*/nation.

Further accentuating this divide was a historical distortion of the evidence of longtime agricultural practices among the Ainu. Ainu supplemented their staples of salmon, deer, and plants gathered in the forests with harvests from modest plots along rivers, which differed substantially from the specific forms of farming common among Japanese. Historian Tessa Morris-Suzuki cogently argues that the origin of Ainu deagrarianization is rooted in the Tokugawa period (1600–1868). Policies that discouraged or forbade the Ainu to continue their traditional forms of farming to secure a labor force for wajin-run fisheries “reconstituted Ainu society as an archetypal ‘hunter-gatherer’ society.”<sup>15</sup> We can imagine what role the eighteenth-century law that forbid wajin in the Matsumae domain to import seeds to Ainu communities played in worsening the survival conditions for the indigenous population living along, for instance, the Sorachi River. In the Meiji period, official and academic knowledge production upheld the notion of the Ainu as a primitive tribe of hunter-gatherers as an incontrovertible truth, which legitimized the purported Japanese mission to teach the ignorant Ainu practices of agriculture to bring them into the fold of civilized modernity.

Foregoing any recognition of the Ainu, Doppo’s 1902 “The Shores of the Sorachi River” maintains a strict focus on the constructed binary between the nature of Hokkaido and the *naichi*/nation, which sets the tone of the work from the very first passage. For the first-person narrator the initial impression of the uncultivated spaces of Hokkaido is thrilling, immediately inviting comparisons with the mainland. “Even the wilderness of the northeast inspired devotion in me, a person who grew up in the densely populated central region of our country’s mainland and was accustomed to scenery of mountains and fields that had been conquered by human power. Upon seeing Hokkaido, the northernmost part of the country, how could my heart not be moved?!”<sup>16</sup> Although no specifics are supplied, we are to infer from the description of the mainland that Hokkaido represents the opposite of a land that has been conquered by human power (*ningen no chikara de tairage tsukushitaru*). The landscape becomes increasingly unfamiliar to the narrator as the distance from the nation’s center increases, with Hokkaido signifying the extreme periphery. Hokkaido’s wilderness is even more breathtaking than that of the northeast (*tōhoku*), which still lies within the confines of the main island, Honshu. To further stress the difference between the center and periphery, the narrator debunks a rumor from the mainland that likens Sapporo to Tokyo. “Sapporo is said to be the Tokyo of Hokkaido, but I was all but bewitched by the many sights there.”<sup>17</sup>



Here, even the largest and most populated city of Hokkaido offers nothing familiar to the eye of the mainland traveler, constructed as peculiar yet alluring.

As delighted as Doppo's protagonist may be with the wild landscape of the north, it still remains that he imagines himself participating in the colonial project of domesticating Hokkaido. He has journeyed there to consider buying land to farm, and when he meets two officials in a cabin next to the Sorachi River, the three pour over maps and discuss and evaluate at least six plots that have been parceled out for Japanese immigrants. He is considering becoming a colonist or literally a person who opens land (*kaikonsha*). In such an undertaking, he will have to destroy the wilderness that fascinates him to imprint the agricultural model of the mainland on Hokkaido. The domestication project of Doppo's narrator is a single fictional representation of the historical reality of vigorous and widespread Japanese permanent settlement, which accomplished not only the "reclamation" of Hokkaido's untamed forests but also the integration of the island firmly into Japan's domestic realm.

The traveler's commitment to this agenda is affirmed in an epiphanic scene where his reverence for Hokkaido's natural wonders cannot match his adulation for the execution of Japanese colonial project. "I" admires an expansive road in the middle of the forest and appreciates the power that could achieve such a feat.

When we came out from the path of bear grass, there was a wide road that you would not expect to find penetrating the forest in one straight line. It was probably wider than thirty feet. Moreover, on both sides a dense thicket grew where there were many trees whose diameter ranged from over six feet to nine feet, and due to the ditches passing through, this expansive road seemed like a railroad track. However, seeing this road, I understood how great were the difficulties for the prefectural office's earnest plans for colonization (*takushoku*).<sup>18</sup>

With the core meaning of increasing or multiplying open land, the word, *takushoku*, emphasizes man's power over nature.<sup>19</sup> The narrator appears sympathetic to the state's goals to inscribe colonial ambitions onto the "empty" space of Hokkaido and to integrate the wilderness into the national economy. The towering trees along the road—with diameters up to nine feet—are evidence of the difficulty of the operation, and the accomplishment of transporting civilization to the unruly natural space of Hokkaido is all the more significant and impressive to the narrator in light of the scale of such an enterprise where one would not expect it. This road, possibly soon to be

displaced by a railway that will further carry out the economic agenda and settlement of the island, symbolizes the “triumph” of Japanese imperial expansion.

The ancient and highly stylized Japanese literary practices that coded the relationship between man and the natural world as one of harmony and sentimental veneration stands in stark contrast to typical rhetorical modes of writing that pitted protagonists against Hokkaido’s “savage” nature. Although it has been claimed that prominent Taisho period (1912–1926) author Arishima Takeo (1878–1923) “must stand apart as an anomaly” given the fact that “the perception of nature as antagonist or enemy is so alien to the Japanese literary tradition,” he was, in fact, the beneficiary of Meiji writers who had already established the thematic pattern of depicting bitter conflicts and mutual enmity between settlers and nature in Hokkaido long before Arishima wrote stories based on his extended relationship with the island in the teens and twenties.<sup>20</sup> In the case of “The Shores of the Sorachi River,” the Japanese incursion into the inner areas of Hokkaido is expressed through metaphoric battles with the formidable forest. “I” characterizes the colonial process with phrases such as “destroying the thick forest” and “using human power to defeat nature.”<sup>21</sup> *Horobosu* (to destroy) and *uchikatsu* (to conquer or defeat), the two verbs used, most readily conjure up images of a hero vanquishing a foe. In this particular formation, the degradation of the purportedly uninhabited environment to make Japanese settlements and railroads is converted into tales of adventurous combat not unlike those found in romantic battlefield stories. Calling to mind Nitobe’s image of “industrial warfare and conquest,” Doppo’s rendering participates in a much wider celebration of the project to remake Hokkaido in Japan’s image through the subjugation of nature.

If colonial Hokkaido inspired wonderment and pioneering fantasies, its unfamiliar landscape also engendered feelings of loneliness and isolation that were often contrasted to the comfort provided by the embrace of family and friends on the mainland. In “The Shores of the Sorachi River,” the narrator gazes out a window at the landscape as he waits for a train in a small Hokkaido township. He suddenly becomes aware that he is loved by his family members and keenly feels the distance between them.

In this time and place, knowing not a soul and without one person to talk with, I sat next to the window of the inn and stared out at the autumn rain. This was surely not enjoyable. I unexpectedly remembered my mother, father, younger brother, and good friends in Tokyo.

I felt the great warmth of human love by which I had been surrounded until now. When I desired to muster up my manly spirit and follow my ideals—now in the forest to search for a free land—I roused my heart that I definitely would not become womanly, but, in short, that ideal became cold and human feelings warm. Nature is brutal and intimacy with it is difficult; society is a comfortable nest.<sup>22</sup>

In this context, he is prompted to reflect on his emotional ties and the degree to which they bring him happiness. He is pulled between the two symbolic poles of stability and security of blood relations, on the one hand, and adventure and freedom, on the other. In the end, he cannot seem to summon forth the kind of manly courage that the task demands as he is lured by the strong memories and associations of love he has for his family and friends in the capital.

The ultimate failure of the narrator from Tokyo to become the frontiersman he dreams of is foreshadowed in a passage that reveals his increasingly alienated feelings toward the forbidding scenery. His unease is detected by the two officials with whom he consults. When the topic of the harsh winters comes up, one prefectural officer proposes, “If winter comes and it seems like you’re just not going to be able to hack it, well, sir, because of your situation, it would be good for you to escape to Sapporo.”<sup>23</sup> Following this logic the other man suggests lightheartedly, “If that’s the case, it would be best if you left things up to the tenant farmers from the beginning and lived in Sapporo.”<sup>24</sup> Finally, in a comic moment, the narrator jokes, “Yes, yes, you’re right. If I’m going to take off to Sapporo in the middle of the winter, I might as well stay in Tokyo and open land there.”<sup>25</sup> The bewitchment of Hokkaido gives way to the severe actualities of opening land. In the end, the narrator tells us he has returned to the safe, orderly mainland and “cancelled all plans to open land” in Hokkaido.<sup>26</sup> Even though an actual relationship with Hokkaido proves to be too daunting, he cannot help but be intrigued with his romantic imagination of what Hokkaido is and offers. “I’ve come to this day having never stepped foot on the land of Hokkaido ever again. And, although a family matter forced me to cancel all my plans to open land there, even now when I think of the shores of the Sorachi River, I feel as though I am being pulled in by that brutal nature (*reigen naru shizen*). I wonder why.”<sup>27</sup> The “real” Hokkaido turns out to be too fierce, but from the comfort of his study on the mainland his fantasy of Hokkaido—and in particular its “brutal nature”—is forever powerful and seductive.

Participating in the cultured practice of writing literature, both Doppo and the protagonist of “The Shores of the Sorachi River” strengthen the nature-culture opposition, so ubiquitous in comparisons of Hokkaido and the mainland. Positioning Hokkaido as the antithesis of the *naichi*/nation allowed modern Japan to affirm its sovereignty and status as an advanced nation. Meiji leaders legitimized the colonization of Hokkaido as they simultaneously endeavored to consolidate the domestic political and economic infrastructure, create imperial subjects, shape national identity, and negotiate a stronger position vis-à-vis the West. In this context, “mainland” as the translation of the Japanese word *naichi* (or *hondo*), should not be read neutrally. Rather this original Japanese term should be understood as a metonym for the emerging Japanese nation-state. The *nature* of the Japanese nation and empire came into being against the backdrop of the *natural* world of Hokkaido.

In this way, Doppo’s fictional work parallels historical realities, namely that Hokkaido was, by and large, produced in the metropolitan center. It is in the capital, after all, that Doppo and his narrator, taking refuge in their respective studies, reflect on and narrativize a journey through Hokkaido’s natural landscape. In the political realm, the highest officials in the Hokkaido Development Agency and other institutions wrote the laws that promoted Japanese permanent settlement and the assimilation policies meant to Japanize the Ainu. In the world of letters, authors assimilated the physical space of this once foreign land and installed the spatial metaphors that would dominate visions of Hokkaido for generations to come. Even if they did not *literally* open land in Hokkaido, they *literarily* opened space for a collective imaginary of colonial Hokkaido that furthered the state’s agenda there. Each, in their own way, solidified the contours of Japanese national territory and identity.

## WRITING THE AINU OUT OF HOKKAIDO

Not merely a metaphorical turn of phrase, “writing the Ainu out of Hokkaido” suggests that there exists an inextricable link between, on the one hand, how Hokkaido was constructed by the vast and diverse body of writing and, on the other, the political and economic structures that removed the Ainu from their villages, eradicated their cultural practices, and erased the traces of their history on the island. Spurr succinctly articulates the crucial interdependence of linguistic and political regimes of power: “The writer is the original and ultimate colonizer, conquering the space of consciousness with the

exclusionary and divisive structures of representation.”<sup>28</sup> Given the crucial role writing plays in colonial expansion, it is imperative to recognize the wide range of texts that function to authorize, execute, and sustain colonial domination. Examples include not only edicts and laws; correspondence between various offices of government; surveys of land, people and resources; and corporate contracts but also journalistic reportage in newspapers and popular magazines, fictional works that imagine the colonial frontier, and children’s adventure stories.

Regulatory and rhetorical operations that enabled and promoted Japanese private ownership of land were at the root of Ainu deaths caused by dislocation, disease, and desperation. Various legal theories of terra nullius first used by Western colonial powers, rationalized Japan’s seizure and occupation of Ainu ancestral lands.<sup>29</sup> Despite knowledge of Ainu communities’ historical inhabitation of the island and customary land-use rights, modern Japanese colonial policies dismissed both the indigenous people and their conceptualization of their relationship with the land. The Hokkaido Land Sale Regulation (*Hokkaidō tochi haraisage kisoku*, 1886) and the Law for the Disposal of Undeveloped National Land in Hokkaido (*Hokkaidō kokuyū mikaichi shobunhō*, 1897) were the legal linchpins that made Japanese ownership possible, furthering the settlement of Japanese who were to “make Hokkaido a little Japan.”<sup>30</sup> On top of this, various laws produced emptiness in the lives of the Ainu by forbidding them to conduct their own governance and rituals, speak their language, and hunt and fish for staples of the traditional Ainu diet (salmon and deer). As early as 1871 the Hokkaido Development Agency announced policies proscribing common Ainu customs, such as tattooing, wearing earrings, or burning residences of the dead even as officials encouraged mainlanders (*naichi jinmin*) to cooperate and live peaceably with the indigenous people.<sup>31</sup> Educational regulations, which segregated Ainu and Japanese children, aimed to maintain Ainu subordination through oppressive assimilation policies and shorter, inferior curricula.<sup>32</sup> In terms of basic survival, the intermittent laws that forbade spring-bow traps and poisoned arrows or fishing in certain regions during the Meiji era (usually precipitated by the radical depletion of herds of deer and stocks of fish because of the reckless hunting and fishing practices of the Japanese) delivered a crushing blow to Ainu subsistence. Thus, the calculated application of the term terra nullius facilitated the practical aspect of colonizing and settling Hokkaido and the greater goal of extending the territorial and expropriatory economic boundaries of the Japanese empire, but had grave consequences for Ainu communities.

If written law ensured the subjugation of Ainu communities and the appropriation of their homelands, then fictional works greatly assisted in “conquering the space of consciousness” of Japanese citizens by impressing upon them that Hokkaido was an open “frontier.”<sup>33</sup> “The Shores of the Sorachi River,” as one such example, is replete with phrases that portray Hokkaido as nothing more than a vacant, vast primeval forest. The narrator declares at different moments, for instance, that “the train ran on a straight line, piercing the huge forests in which not one person has tread since the beginning of time—thousands of years”<sup>34</sup> and that the forest “has never permitted a human footprint.”<sup>35</sup> Standing on a strange road that “was made in no-man’s-land (*mujin no sakai*),”<sup>36</sup> he reflects, “As far as anyone could see on both sides, only forest enveloped the road. Without even one shadow of a human, without even one thread of smoke, and without even one person to speak to or to listen to, it stretches out desolate and lonely.”<sup>37</sup> This vision is only possible because readers are not allowed to imagine people already living in Hokkaido. Not any evidence of Ainu hearths and homes, any hint of the conversational intercourse that defines human society, nor even the faintest indication of their existence is granted. The footprints—the historical traces—of Ainu are effaced and what is imagined in this space is only the impressive progress of ambitious Japanese.

Colonial conceptions of Hokkaido, after evacuating the Ainu, typically reinforce the idea that the bounty of Hokkaido lay patiently waiting for the “proper race” to use it. Spurr’s designation of another central operation of colonial discourse, “appropriation,” which “may take the form of chaos that calls for the restoration of order, of absence that calls for affirming presence, of natural abundance that awaits the creative hand of technology,” is instructive here.<sup>38</sup> In the case of Hokkaido, the justification of colonial exploitation was bolstered by the assertion that the Ainu had not used the land correctly as is indicated in the Nitobe excerpt above, wherein he implies that “a race of a higher culture” understood “that the fertile virgin soil could be made to yield its richest treasures.”<sup>39</sup> As much as Doppo’s protagonist professes a reverence for Hokkaido’s natural world, his primary motivation for the trip is to arrange to purchase, open, and transform that wilderness into profitable farmland. It was in these proprietary and productive terms that Japan’s ambitious plans for Hokkaido’s “unlimited natural resources,” quite irrespective of the Ainu livelihood, were forwarded.

The figurative erasure of the indigenous Ainu and the propagation of pioneer fantasies in Meiji-era texts were by no means harmless acts. The colonial project removed the Ainu from their historical homelands, which were vigorously exploited, for example, surveyed, divided into plots (reserved for Japanese), mined, and deforested to make way for cultivated fields, towns, and railways. By 1902, when Doppo's text was published, the many Ainu communities which had for generations dwelled along the banks of the Sorachi River, a rich source of fish and an excellent place to plant their rotating crops, had succumbed to the fatal colonial policies or been relocated, and their land replaced by parceled plots of land reserved for Japanese immigrants.<sup>40</sup> The Tokyoite of the story confers with officials over the maps detailing the surveyed tracts that ignore the indigenous presence, drawing over their many lost villages. The discursive and physical expunging of the Ainu from Hokkaido made way for the inscription of agricultural, economic, social, and political practices of the Japanese mainland onto the landscape there and the realization of imperial desire to claim the island as a symbol of Japan's advanced status.

The "failure" of the Ainu to have marked the natural landscape in a way that showed mastery over the land confirmed their backwardness in the eyes of Japanese. "History" is signified by leaving a permanent record of one's existence—of one's victory over nature. Because the Ainu had left no lasting disfigurement on their natural surroundings, Doppo is able to have his narrator contend that in the forest along the banks of the Sorachi River "not one person had tread since the beginning of time."<sup>41</sup> For the narrator, then, the road-cum-potential-railroad-track described earlier marks a break between human prehistory and history.<sup>42</sup> Since any faithful rendering of the centuries of Ainu inhabitation on the island is rejected, this character is able to wistfully ponder near the end of the story, "Where is society? Where is 'history' that humans are so proud to pass on? Here in this place and time, people are only creatures of 'survival.'"<sup>43</sup> For him Hokkaido is wholly without the landmarks of civilization and history. In this context, the Ainu are invisible, and the Japanese who live there are reduced to a level far below that of the civilized world of the *naichi*, only struggling to survive.

On those occasions when the Ainu were brought into view, the Japanese state exerted its power to interpret, define, and represent Ainu history, customs, and lives within Japanese conceptualizations of the relationship between humans and nature. In 1899, the

Hokkaido Former Natives Protection Law was enacted purportedly to alleviate rampant poverty among Ainu communities by extending Japanese-style agricultural methods to the Ainu. In urging the Ainu to renounce their own traditional farming, fishing, and hunting practices, the state sought to reconfigure the Ainu communities' relationship with their natural surroundings, which had not only been central to nourishing their people but also to sustaining their spiritual worldview and sociocultural practices. Literary scholar Komori Yōichi avers that Ainu "backwardness" was presupposed as the cause of their plight rather than the result of the enforced relocation from their villages, for instance those along the shores of the Sorachi River. He writes, "The term 'protection' in the Hokkaido Former Natives Protection Law not only suppresses the over thirty years of history of the Japanese invasion and looting of 'Ainu Moshir,' but also, in the end, contains the intention to invert the situation so as to make it appear that it was the Ainu's fault."<sup>44</sup> The notion of protection within the set of power relations that rationalized the subjugation of the Ainu rewrites history so as to confirm Japan's advanced status vis-à-vis the savage Other and cast the Japanese as benevolent guardians. In prescribing the elimination of the Ainu "primitive" lifestyle and the adoption of Japanese farming and customs as a path to fully authenticate their Japanese citizenship, the protection law and other assimilationist policies further eradicated Ainu-ness so that the island's predominant association is of its awe-inspiring, untouched wilderness.

Although no grand Ainu monuments imbued Hokkaido's landscape with historical or cultural significance, the Ainu did leave more subtle clues of their longtime connection to the place through the meaningful names they assigned to the natural landmarks and localities of Hokkaido. Most names of regions, cities, and natural formations (mountains, rivers, etc.) dotting the maps of Hokkaido today were originally Ainu designations that were derived from careful observations of the topography and characteristics of the island. To give just one example, the name of the largest city in Hokkaido today, Sapporo, comes from the Ainu *sat poro pet*, large dried up river.<sup>45</sup> Long accustomed to traversing their densely forested homeland for seasonal hunting and fishing, the Ainu lent invaluable assistance to the survey teams that mapped their land and its natural resources. Countless appellations were passed on to Japanese who assigned characters whose meaning typically had no connection to the original Ainu connotation and whose pronunciation was, and is, difficult to discern for many Japanese. Ignoring the fact that these names



constitute strong evidence of Ainu groups' centuries of inhabitation in the region, Meiji-era Japanese writers, official and otherwise, equate the commencement of the island's "history" with the commencement of Japanese "development" of Hokkaido.

This process of writing the Ainu out of their ancestral land—the elision of their history, culture, and existence—facilitated a great number of activities that enabled the colonization of the Ainu homelands. Exploitation of the natural resources, once the life-source of the Ainu, stoked the engines of Japan's rapid industrialization. Armed with the notion that the island was unoccupied, the military used its strategic position to aid in victories at war. Settlers, regardless of whether their decision to immigrate might have been motivated by pressing economic exigencies, could imagine their move to the northern frontier as a noble, national duty. And, as suggested above, one need not actually travel to or toil in the northern hinterland to have believed that not only was the colonial project inevitable and right, but also that the emperor's great works there were a source of pride for any subject of his majesty's expanding realm.

### WRITING THE JAPANESE IN

Many Meiji depictions of the northern territory go beyond merely emptying out any trace of the Ainu or their resistance to Japanese colonization. In numerous instances, the ordeals of the Ainu are, in fact, repressed and replaced by the struggles of the Japanese against a personified hostile natural world in Hokkaido. In these narratives, Hokkaido stands as the signifier of modern angst and the *colonizer* is recast as the victim of an oppressive, cruel, and indifferent nature. In Meiji literary works set in Hokkaido, characters are commonly impressed by its supernatural power and grandeur that bring to the fore a palpable sense of the insignificance of humans. The vastness of Hokkaido's seemingly unruly and uncultured landscape, which engendered fear and isolation, was converted into a symbol of the conflicted, turbulent nether regions of the mind.<sup>46</sup> Hokkaido became a useful tool with which writers could speak to Japanese feelings of disempowerment and disorientation in a rapidly transforming society.

The precipitating factors that heightened anxieties regarding modern selfhood were manifest in the changes that drastically reconstituted Japanese society. After over 250 years of rule by the Tokugawa shoguns, a thorough reengineering of political, economic, legal, educational, and religious practices redefined almost every aspect of

life. Meiji rulers mobilized foreign enlightenment principles, with an emphasis on models of rationality, to drive and define their policies. An incipient native capitalist system was reworked and bolstered to expedite modern Japan's industrialization, reconfiguring individuals' relationship to labor. With the deterioration of earlier modes of constructing identity—in particular, the Tokugawa status system and regional affinities—much of the population was unmoored. Definitions of an essential Japanese national character were introduced via state and popular media and reinforced through a variety of initially puzzling invented traditions. Daily rhythms and rituals were profoundly reshaped through, for example, the institution of “modern” time, dictated by advanced mechanical clocks, and the state's appropriation of local Shinto shrines as the symbols of a unified Japanese nation. At the same time, urbanization and imperial expansion produced unprecedented relationships between people within the emerging nation-state and their neighbors in the region. These extensive, bewildering permutations caused a great number of people to lose not only their livelihoods but also their traditional notions of society and personhood.

Among the legion ways modernity reorganized and regimented the daily lives and perspectives of Japanese citizens was a dramatically novel understanding of the relationship between humans and nature. Subject to the strong ideological influence of Cartesian dualism that assumed an a priori division between mind and matter, subject and object, mental and material realms, and inner experience and outer reality, new modes of signifying and conceiving landscape forged equally new modes of signifying and conceiving the modern “self.” Literary and cultural critic Tom Henighan addresses a sense of estrangement from nature that emerged from such binaries in nineteenth-century Europe. “In the face of the wild landscape man may feel himself diminished, and the scale may become radically inhuman. The psyche is pressed upon by the immensity and *a kind of agoraphobia of the spirit* occurs.”<sup>47</sup> In Meiji Japan as well, changing, turn-of-the-century perceptions of the external environment, or landscape, unmoored from premodern antecedents, generated new forms of expression of interiority. The “discovery” of landscape, which induced an inversion of consciousness that seemed to confirm the existence of an always, already existing inner self/inner voice, subsequently defined a particularized configuration of the modern Japanese subject alienated from the natural world.

The inhuman scale of the landscape of Hokkaido consistently inspired the twin reactions of awe and fear. Looking at nature with modern eyes and confronted with the incommensurability of the space, humans are simultaneously bewitched and distressed. For instance, viewed from the window of a train, the natural scene evokes an acute awareness of vulnerability in Doppo's narrator.

The fields of Ishikari were lost in the low-lying clouds, and as I stared out from the train window onto the fields and mountains, I was overwhelmed (*afure*) by the power of the frightening nature. Here there was no love, no feeling. To look out on this savage, lonely, heartless, and yet magnificent sight, all the more did it appear that nature scorns the powerlessness and fragility of humans.<sup>48</sup>

"I" is conflicted in that he is both impressed and frightened by the natural world he sees, which is invested with emotions and not only aloof, but also hostile to humans. Increasingly interpreted as the antithesis and antagonist of the human race, nature, and particularly the vast, open spaces associated with Hokkaido, precipitated an "agoraphobia of the spirit." The original verb, *afureru*, denotes to be deluged, flooded, or overflowing and accentuates the extremity of his powerlessness. Later, claiming, "nature is brutal and intimacy with it is difficult," the protagonist laments humanity's troubled *relationship* with the environment.<sup>49</sup> Viewed in this manner, Hokkaido's natural world does not stand as a backdrop to Japanese cunning and determination, but only punctuates the impotence of humankind.

Nature's indifference to humans is manifested in its timelessness as well as its immensity. The scale of human time is dwarfed or rendered insignificant in the "eyes" of nature. Reflecting on this the protagonist explains:

When the far away blue sky looks down upon the earth, silently, not saying a word, and when in a place deep in the forest that has never permitted a human footprint, a leaf from a tree in one corner dies and falls without any wind, nature yawns and says, "Ah, another day has come to an end." And in this instance a thousand human years fly by.<sup>50</sup>

In this scenario an anthropomorphized nature observes detachedly, but pays no heed to the vicissitudes of humanity. Nature's expansiveness, of space and time, reduces human reality to a meaningless

fleeting moment. Moreover, given nature's constant threats to life, humans are forced to face their deaths "at the mercy of one breath of nature."<sup>51</sup> The narrator of "The Shores of the Sorachi River" muses:

A Russian poet once said that having sat down in a forest, he felt the shadow of death press upon him (*semaru*), and this is very true. He also said "when the last person from the human race disappears from this earth, not even one leaf of a tree will tremble."

The death-like silence, the frigidness, the gloominess—sitting in the deep forest, there isn't a soul who could not feel this oppressive feeling (*ihaku*).<sup>52</sup>

Here I have translated *ihaku*, which denotes threat or menace, as oppressive feeling. Coupled with the verb *semaru*, which means to press down on, the distinctive impression is made that humans are the victims of the power and impunity of nature. In the context of this story specifically and in literature on Hokkaido in general, humans refer to Japanese not Ainu. These sentiments are, after all, voiced by the same narrator who never once acknowledges the existence of Ainu. Ultimately, Hokkaido functions as a tool to express Doppo's modern malaise.

In the context where modern thoughts and practices divided Japanese from their natural surroundings, Hokkaido proved a useful tool with which Japanese writers could display *their* apprehensiveness and anxiety. The denial of Ainu subjectivity and history—even their presence—worked in tandem with formulations of Japanese men's sometimes courageous, sometimes pitiful battles with Hokkaido's nature. Consequently, the violent nature of Japan's colonization of Hokkaido is subsumed under the ostensibly innocuous projects of developing the island and modern nation-state-building. The Ainu of Hokkaido, however, were the ones who most acutely suffered. Not because of Hokkaido's natural world, which they had found ways to cope with over the years, but from Japan's policies of subjugation and the colonization of their homeland. In a cruel twist, the victimhood of the Ainu is denied, while national progress and modern angst are the frameworks by which Hokkaido in Meiji Japan is understood.

## CONCLUSION

Since having taken deep root in the Meiji period through such works as "The Shores of the Sorachi River," these naturalizing rhetorical operations continue to survive and thrive. In 1938, Honjō Mutsuo

(1905–1939), a fiction writer born to parents who immigrated to Hokkaido in the tondenhei farming-militia, began serializing a novel about another famous river in Hokkaido, the Ishikari River.<sup>53</sup> His unfinished work by that name is based on the true historical episode of a group of Date samurai that landed in Hokkaido in 1871. Despite his connections to the proletarian literature movement, Honjō created a remarkably typical nationalistic portrait of spirited “pioneers” trying to survive in a land of blizzards and tenacious natural opponents in colonial Hokkaido. The personification of the natural world is so persistent in *The Ishikari River* that one scholar states, “you might say that nature itself is a character in this novel.”<sup>54</sup> Not unlike Doppo’s narrator, Honjō’s anthropomorphizes his surroundings.

The forest treading along the valley towers above, and when one looks up, the luxuriant growth of melancholy colored leaves seems to descend like an avalanche. Trees living in clumps face directly toward the wide-open sky, searching for light and fighting to grow. Pine trees are eaten up by moss and stand entangled in ivy. The branches, draped in moss, look as if they are wearing gossamer, and the Spanish moss, in ashen-colored bundles, bite into them.<sup>55</sup>

Additionally, the provocative phrasing that the colonists’ “hands were the first to touch this unsullied virgin land (*yogorenai shojochi*)” echoes, in a disturbing gendered metaphor, earlier versions that trade the truth about the existence of Ainu for a tale of making nature subservient to their needs. Critiquing Honjō’s chronicle of the tribulations and victimhood of the Japanese settlers, Inoue Yūichi astutely observes, “If we look at from the perspective of the Ainu, the members of this group from Date domain were unquestionably invaders, and to speak of the various hardships experienced because of the Meiji Restoration was, in the end, saying no more than there was a power struggle among the invaders.”<sup>56</sup> Again, the suffering of Japanese colonists—whether from the cruelty of Hokkaido’s harsh environment or from the changing fortunes of society—trump the suffering of the Ainu.

Postwar historiography on Hokkaido is no more immune from this trend. The extensive *New History of Hokkaido* (*Shin Hokkaidō shi*) assumes the development model as its guiding framework, uncritically using the term *kaitaku*. Written in 1973, the volumes that concentrate on the administrative challenges, economic successes, and demographics of Japanese settlement during the colonial era bear the hallmarks of the national narrative, with all the attendant tensions and contradictions. In one volume, the few pages devoted to the “Ainu Problem,” acknowledge the worsening conditions of

Ainu but never assign responsibility to the acts and policies of the Japanese state. Instead, a paragraph documenting the declining Ainu population and the growing number of Japanese immigrants concludes with the vague statement, “Accordingly, Hokkaido suddenly changed from the land of the indigenous Ainu to the land of immigrating Japanese.”<sup>57</sup> It is asserted that the “importance” of the Ainu diminishes in the Meiji era because their usefulness as a bargaining tool with Russia is quickly resolved through negotiation of official territorial boundaries, the stationing of *tondenhei* troops in Hokkaido, and the effectiveness of assimilation policies. In what appears to be an explanation for rampant poverty caused by the displacement from their ancestral lands and the disruption of their ways of life, the text claims that the Ainu, with their outdated skills geared toward hunting and gathering, struggled to compete with the Japanese, who were more familiar with farming, in a difficult labor market. The final assessment is that their singularly vulnerable position in Japanese society became “not only a burden but also a liability” for the Hokkaido Development Agency, which quickly endeavored to ameliorate the lives of Ainu through policies of “liberation” from Tokugawa-era unfair labor practices, occupational placement in farming, and education. In another volume dedicated to the “Expansion of Settlements,” there is the following passage.

At the same time, a series of surveys of the wilderness (*mikaichi*) were conducted, such as geographical and land surveys along with the selection of settlements, but there were already extreme hardships (*shinku*). That was because at the time, with the exception of only one area, Hokkaido’s inner region was completely a no-man’s-land (*mattaku mujin no sakai*). One can easily imagine the conditions by the facts that there were no passable roads, nothing but thickets of bushes and trees, and on top of bugs and snakes attacking you, bears and wolves made regular appearances.<sup>58</sup>

Japanese colonists suffer trials and privations in a backward land where, it appears, only bears and other pests live. Yet, just a few lines later, in a familiar pattern, the text mentions in passing that among the members of the survey team were Ainu who worked as guides and porters. In this way, the language and narrative content of the colonial mystifications move along in the currents of history.

As a result, today, among the general Japanese public, the most prevalent association with Hokkaido remains its beautiful, bountiful wilderness. A vast majority of its tourist attractions are related to outdoor activities, such as snowboarding, skiing, hiking, cycling,

mountain climbing, rafting, and canoeing. Not only is Shiretoko peninsula designated a World Heritage Site, but the island as a whole is also noted for its unique flora and fauna and dramatic four seasons. Whale, dolphin, and bird watching and horse riding are popular pleasures while hot spring resorts and a bounty of delicious local specialty foods promise to delight travelers. From the lavender fields of Furano to the drift ice of Abashiri and from the volcanic mountains peaks of its six national forests to the quaint historical coastal towns, an impressive diversity of scenery awaits the many Japanese and international tourists who travel to Hokkaido each year.<sup>59</sup>

It was exactly the island's connection to natural beauty that inspired the G8 to hold its 2008 summit in Toyako, Hokkaido. With its seedling logo, the conference not only listed environment and climate change to be a priority—boasting eco-friendly and carbon offsetting practices and clean-energy shuttle bus service—but also had an exhibit that featured the latest cutting-edge environmental technologies. Yet, exemplifying Japan's longtime fraught relationship with the indigenous Ainu on their homeland, the planners for the G8 Summit rejected offers from local Ainu groups, to perform a traditional ritual prayer (*kamuynomi*) on the opening day or to formally present traditional Ainu clothing to the representatives of the G8 nations. Despite the fact that the summit was to take place on Ainu ancestral land, Ann-Elise Lewallen writes, "The only case in which Ainu were 'presented' in any formal way took place when G8 First Ladies were invited by Hokkaido Governor Takahashi Harumi to don traditional Ainu coats for a group photo, before being whisked off to First Lady Kiyoko's Japanese tea ceremony."<sup>60</sup> The elaborately designed Ainu robes, which materialized ever so briefly on the G8 schedule, are distinct reminders of the marginalized position of Hokkaido's indigenous people who, as individuals and a group, have long been refused recognition while Hokkaido's natural world continues to affirm Japan as an advanced political and technological power.

Contemporary Ainu are not unused to the erasure of their history and existence within the modern nation-state of Japan. During the 1980s, the Ainu Association drafted the far-reaching New Ainu Law (*Ainu shinpō*), which articulated six demands that would assist Ainu secure civil, political, and economic rights. When the Japanese government chose to address only one of the six clauses in the 1997 Law for the Promotion of the Ainu Culture and for the Dissemination and Advocacy for the Traditions of the Ainu and the Ainu Culture,

Ainu activists bemoaned the state's repudiation of the more substantial appeals for redressing long-standing political and economic inequities, even as they celebrated the successful nullification of the 1899 Hokkaido Former Natives Protection Law. In 2007, after Japan signed the United Nations' Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (DRIP), government officials declared that the international proclamation did not pertain to them since indigenous groups did not exist in Japan. Understanding that the international attention on the G8 summit could lend some leverage, however, the grassroots Ainu community announced that it was hosting the Indigenous Peoples Summit (IPS) several months before the meeting. Representatives from native peoples across the globe attended to help put pressure on the Japanese government to officially recognize the Ainu. The resulting unanimous Diet resolution that accepted the Ainu as "an indigenous people with a distinct language, religion and culture" represents a victory, but one that is viewed by some as doing little to rectify the long history of discrimination and destruction.

Doppo's literary work, "The Shores of the Sorachi River," represents a much larger body of narratives that envisioned Hokkaido predominately as a natural landscape, devoid of previous inhabitants or civilization. The "naturalization" of Hokkaido then should be understood as two mutually defining processes; one that constitutes Hokkaido overwhelming in terms of its nature so that the indigenous people are rendered absent and another that authorizes Hokkaido as an unquestioned part of Japan's physical territory and imagined community. Rhetorical modes that erased the Ainu from Hokkaido in Meiji-era literary, journalistic, and official writings converged to enable the installation and maintenance of colonial power and to sanction modern definitions of Hokkaido *and* Japan. Contemporary depictions of Hokkaido's integration into Japanese territory as a natural process without the language of colonization denies the historical reality that Hokkaido was Japan's first modern colony and the seed of its modern nation-state and age of empire.

It bears repeating that the discursive evacuation of the presence and history of the Ainu in Hokkaido reflected and reinforced their actual dislocation and decimation. The insistence on the need to fill the "empty" space of Hokkaido with cultivated plots of land and other markers of "civilization" was not just a benign distortion of history. It was (and is) a strategic obfuscation of how Japanese colonization usurped Ainu land and lives. The Ainu continue to be viewed not as the victims of a violent colonial project, but the benefactors of Japan's assistance. Despite the recent success in the long-fought Ainu



struggle for recognition as an indigenous people of Japan, in society at large, the “pioneers” remain prominent fixtures in the narratives that celebrate the Japanese colonialists’ triumph over the wild, natural landscape of Hokkaido as part of Japan’s miraculous modernization. Therefore, active members of the Ainu nation continue to push for another victory, which will be won when this story is rewritten to acknowledge the less flattering and more complex realities of the history of colonial Hokkaido.

## POLITICAL PROTEST AND PENAL COLONIES

### NARRATING THE TRANSFORMATION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY AND LITERATURE

“You, detective, and you, judge, I am asking you from my heart, what is criminal work? What is an illegal job? What is a crime? Oh, please tell me, a crime, a crime is . . . ?”

In order to avoid the guards who come to lead them back to the jail, the inmates extinguish the lights they carry with them and for ten or twenty days hole up in some corner without going out of the mine. If some of their pals secretly bring them food, they will eat, but if they have nothing they don't eat. Existing in pitch darkness, they follow their wanton desire and lose their way out of the mine.

Hara Hōitsuan  
(*Secret Politician*, 1890)

In late 1890, just over two decades after the shogunate had been driven out of power and Emperor Meiji enthroned, Japanese turned their attention to what promised to be a spectacular event, the opening of Japan's imperial Diet. As decorations fluttered throughout Tokyo, residents learned from daily newspaper coverage that they could participate in the momentous occasion by attending the Diet inaugural concert or the imperial procession. One enthusiastic citizen declared, “Anybody with any claim to be Japanese must welcome this development with the utmost fervor and rejoicing.”<sup>1</sup> The inauguration of the Diet capped a series of landmark political changes, including the promulgation of the Japanese imperial constitution and the enactment of the Law of Election, which simultaneously established a constitutional government and affirmed the inviolable sovereignty of the Meiji

emperor. Observed by both the Japanese populace and the international community, the festivities in the imperial capital christened Japan's modern age and marked its civilized status in the world.

Although the media and general public were overcome with delight at Japan's progress, some had not forgotten that the journey to political consolidation had been highly contested. For instance, coinciding exactly with the unprecedented celebrations was the serialization of Hara Hōitsuan's (1866–1904) *Secret Politician* (*Anchū seijika*, 1890), which clearly evoked the popular uprisings of the previous decade, specifically the Fukushima Incident (*Fukushima jiken*, 1882).<sup>2</sup> This work spotlights the struggle of desperate farmers in the northeast, who turn their hoes into weapons to fight ruthless state officials, and exposes the bitter fate of these farmer-protestors, who are disciplined and deformed (blinded, for example) in a brutal Hokkaido prison. Hara's *seiji shōsetsu* (political novel), one of the last voices of the Freedom and Popular Rights Movement, forced the readers' gaze away from the fanfare in the nation's center and reminded them of the heavy costs exacted to fulfill the rulers' vision of the modern nation. Because the view remains strong that the formation of the Japanese nation-state was the inevitable result of a smooth and obviously advantageous modernization process, projects that aim to demystify the operations and discourses of Meiji nationalism continue to be useful. In this light, Hara's *Secret Politician* warrants our attention as a work that dramatically engages with the history and legacy of the Freedom and Popular Rights Movement and underscores the extent to which state officials had to police, discipline, and punish dissenting citizens to impose their rule. Centering his story on a man's journey of discovery of the disquieting truths of the state's ruthless judicial and penal systems in colonial Hokkaido, Hara conjures up a stirring picture of an oppressed modern citizenry.

*Secret Politician* lodges its uncompromising critique of the Meiji state through the liminal space of Hokkaido, which serves as a metaphor for the marginalized position of ordinary Japanese who fight for a modicum of agency in determining their own future and that of the country. Hara does not glorify the Japanese settlement and colonization of the island. His is not a romantic rendering of the *tondenhei* who sacrifice by staking out homesteads in the Hokkaidoian "frontier" for the motherland. *Secret Politician* presents only bleak depictions of an isolated outpost with its penal colonies, rustic towns, and expansive wilderness. Despite being serialized amid the promising rhetoric of participatory government and the celebration of national unification, the work emphasizes physical and psychic isolation and

estrangement. Lofty correctional codes that envisioned the modern prison system as beneficent, rational reform and imagined the rugged landscape of Hokkaido as being particularly suitable for rehabilitating convicts are countered with representations of merciless injustices that engender hostility toward a callously indifferent government that metes out cruel punishment on the fringe of its empire.

Within a context of popular resistance to the Meiji state, Hara's novel built on and reshaped age-old associations of Ezo/Hokkaido with exile. Banishment to Ezo had been a practice for centuries, so the designation of Hokkaido as the new nation's lone deportation destination in 1871 only reinforced its status as a region of forsaken confinement for the condemned.<sup>3</sup> Still, imprisonment in Hokkaido during the Meiji era must be understood within the framework of the distinctive prison system known as *shūjikan*. By official description *shūjikan* were reserved for convicts with sentences of 12 years or more, often stipulating hard labor or deportation, for crimes ranging from murder to counterfeiting. These facilities were originally conceived of to relieve overcrowded prisons at the conclusion of the Seinan War (1877), when tens of thousands of defeated rebel troops became political prisoners. Thereafter, deporting voices of opposition, such as individuals involved in the Freedom and Popular Rights Movement, to remote Hokkaido remained an effective means of silencing Japanese subjects and removing the spectacle of punishment from public scrutiny. It is not a coincidence that during the Meiji period the three *shūjikan* built in Hokkaido—Kabato, Sorachi, and Kushiro—counted as *half* the number of such national fortresses.<sup>4</sup> Ominous reports of dissidents banished to northern *shūjikan* functioned as cautionary tale for the rest of the Japanese population of the power of the government and the risks involved in resisting it. Long and harsh sentences in Hokkaido penitentiaries lent new inflections to the notion of exile in the modern moment.<sup>5</sup>

For writers of political novels, the prison in general, and for Hara, the Hokkaido *shūjikan* in particular, registered as a palpable symbol of state repression. Sorachi *shūjikan* looms large in *Secret Politician*, which questions the policies and narratives that fortified the state-monopolized nation-building projects. As the oligarchy attempted to create loyal imperial subjects and naturalize myths of a unified nation, it instituted expansive legal and penal reforms so as to contain uprisings sweeping the country and to maintain their tenuous grip on power. A motley collection of individuals and groups, most importantly the Freedom and Popular Rights Movement (generally accepted as having lasted from 1873–1890), decried the restrictive

legislation, agitating for the establishment of participatory politics, civil rights, and policies to ameliorate worsening economic hardships.<sup>6</sup> The Freedom and Popular Rights agenda was frequently thematized in diverse and creative manners in *seiji shōsetsu*, whose supreme popularity paralleled the life of the movement. Emphasizing the centrality of the prison for authors of political novels, innovative literary scholar and public intellectual, Maeda Ai writes:

The optics of the prison inmate... would be developed by the generation that lived through the quarter century stretching from the turmoil of the Restoration to the Freedom and Popular Rights Movement. Above all, it was something that determined, at the most profound level, the conception of the political novel of the Meiji 10s (1877–1886). Not only was the prison used as an effective metaphor to figure the oppression of the Meiji state, but the authors of the political novels themselves had often experienced life in prison.<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, Hara's personal involvement in the Fukushima Incident deeply informed his novel. From that wellspring emerged *Secret Politician*, wherein Hara resists the ratification of the Meiji state's hegemonic definition of Japan, proffering a solemn reflection on prisons and human tragedy in the periphery to counter heady jubilation over the imperial constitution and Diet in the metropole.

Much more than just a notable embodiment of the contestatory nature of the creation of the modern Japanese nation-state, *Secret Politician* also punctuates the end of the period of political novels with a provocative evocation of male-male sexuality (*nanshoku*)—one of many marginalized practices (literary and otherwise) in the wake of the Meiji “civilizing” process. In his book, *In the Company of Men: Representations of Male-Male Sexuality in Meiji Literature*, Jim Reichert deftly argues that the ultimate victory of the realist novel as *the* model of modern Japanese literature and the eventual triumph of compulsory heterosexuality at the expense of the popular literary production of *nanshoku* were inextricably linked. Reichert's nuanced work reveals multiple ways the “ideological bias against male-male sexuality determined the boundaries of Japanese literary modernity” and emphasizes

that the course of Meiji literary history did not constitute an inevitable progression, or evolution, culminating in a foreordained resolution. To the contrary, what we refer to as Meiji literary history consisted of discrete moments, in which the definition of modern literature itself was repeatedly reimagined in relation to a series of cultural narratives, many of which revolved around issues of sexuality and gender.<sup>8</sup>

In the words of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, to “do justice to the (broad but not infinite or random) range of ways in which sexuality functions as a signifier for power relations,”<sup>9</sup> I will argue that Hara’s *Secret Politician* strategically deployed male-male sexuality to reprove the state and yet, in doing so, participated in a broader movement to masculinize the nation—a process that fortified that same state. Hara’s valorization of men’s relationships, which invoke an earlier code of manhood shaped by the tropes of nanshoku, operates as an oppositional act. Loyal bonds among former convicts on trial for attempting to break their friends out of the shūjikan at the end of the novel are framed within the sexualized language and associations of love-pacts between warriors, while the state is depicted as a deplorable villain lacking fidelity to its male citizenry. Thus, *Secret Politician* stands out among political novels, which frequently allegorize the Japanese political climate through heterosexual love triangles and national unity through marriage.

Yet, it is not my intention to celebrate uncritically the use of nanshoku signifiers as a radical opposition to power. In fact, even within *Secret Politician* total identification with male-male sexuality is undermined by a denouement that reasserts a normative heterosexual framework in the narrator’s relationship with an alluring *bishōnen* (beautiful youth). Rather, I maintain that its oppositional stance reinforced a growing trend that envisioned the Japanese nation as overwhelmingly masculine, a trend that not only bolstered the very state Hara sought to challenge but also had far-reaching consequences for women whose position in the new nation was greatly circumscribed to fit the needs of the masculinist, imperial state.<sup>10</sup>

*Secret Politician* demands attention precisely because of such fissures. It is, above all, a work that reveals the dramatically shifting ground of the production of national unification, literature, and identity. It is an embodiment of literary scholar Komori Yōichi’s term *yuragi*, which can be translated as slippage or fluctuation. The theoretical application of *yuragi* stresses the “violent exclusions” in the processes by which diverse and uneven phenomenon were rendered unintelligible and removed from historical view to shore up a grand narrative of the “beautiful progress and evolution” of modern Japanese fiction and nationalism.<sup>11</sup> Through the prism of the prison located in the hinterland of Hokkaido, Hara sheds light on the Meiji state’s extreme marginalization of oppositional voices and the material and corporeal practices involved in forging the modern Japanese citizenry, which goes unremarked in prevailing national histories. *Secret Politician*’s multivalent narrative structure and deployment of

sexual and gendered rhetorical strategies stands as a testament to a dynamism that is lost to the subsequent victory of the realist novel and the heteronormative sexual and gender norms. Thus, this work, set in the emerging nation's periphery, elucidates multiple peripheralizations. The close reading of Hara's work below seeks to excavate the multiple layers of Hara's censure grounded in the singular realities of Japan's new territory, Hokkaido, calling attention to the tension-filled historicity of modern national statehood, subjects, and literature.

### SECRET POLITICIAN AND POPULAR PROTEST

The Freedom and Popular Rights Movement played a crucial role in the shaping of modern Japan. In the span of less than two decades a wide variety of groups, including the *Aikokusha* (Patriotic Society), *Kokkai kisei dōmei* (League for Founding a National Assembly), *Jiyūtō* (Freedom Party), and *Rikken Kaishintō* (Constitutional Progressive Party), campaigned for the establishment of a national constitution and parliament. In 1874, Itagaki Taisuke (1837–1919) and Gotō Shōjirō (1838–1897) submitted the first in a long line of petitions that called for democratic representation. Over the next seven years, the movement's energies went toward forming political societies and parties; speaking in public tours; agitating in prefectural assemblies; and publishing newspapers, journals, and pamphlets. Although initially its members were by and large disgruntled shizoku, it expanded to include merchants and well-to-do farmers, at the same time gaining wide support among the general public. Finally, in 1881 the government, under great pressure, promised a constitution and Diet in nine years. Having achieved its central aim, the movement turned its efforts to tax reform, treaty revisions, preparing for the first general election, and other pressing issues.

During the years when the message of the Freedom and Popular Rights Movement gained popularity across the nation, the government formed and refined an oppressive legal system, which increasingly impinged upon the lives of Japanese citizens. Recognizing that protests could present a critical blow to the authorial foundation upon which the Meiji state tenuously rested, the leaders' response to resistance was severe. The 1870s and 1880s saw the enactment of newspaper codes and libel laws (1873 and 1875), the curtailment of speech and interactions of prefectural assemblymen (1879 and 1882), restrictions on the right to petition (1880), and greater legal limitations on public meetings and speeches (1880).<sup>12</sup> With these laws in

place, the government vigorously cracked down on opposition using what was by then a strong, organized police force and reformed penal code.

The frustration of many Japanese with government institutions and policies on the national and local levels took form in a number of explosive uprisings in the 1880s, most emblematic being the Fukushima Incident, the Kabasan Incident (*Kabasan jiken*, 1884), and the Chichibu Incident (*Chichibu jiken*, 1884). The Fukushima Incident was the unfortunate conclusion to a vigorous protest movement that included local farmers and Jiyūtō members. Their antagonism was provoked by a decree mandating corvéé for a road-building project in Aizu, which was instituted by the newly appointed governor, Mishima Michitsune (1835–1888). Supported by the central government, Mishima remained firm and ordered some of the leaders of the movement arrested. In response, an upwards of 10,000 people attacked the Kitakata police station and more than 2,000 individuals were arrested, some later sentenced for “crimes against the state.”<sup>13</sup>

Hara lived this history. Born in 1866 in what became Fukushima prefecture, the thirteenth son of a lower-ranking samurai, Hara was given up for adoption as an infant. In 1882 the Hara home happened to be diagonally across from Ringing Hill Press (*Meikōsha*) where Kōno Hironaka (1849–1923), popular Jiyūtō leader, and his cohorts published the *Fukushima Freedom Newspaper* (*Fukushima jiyū shinbun*). Hara was a regular visitor to the establishment and in July of that year even contributed a five-line miscellaneous news article to the publication. Just months later he, along with thousands of others, would be caught up in the central event of the Fukushima Incident. Hara was initially detained, but because of his age, just 16 years old, he was released without being formally charged. Over the next year and a half Hara finished his basic studies as he followed the arrests and trials of community members involved in the Fukushima Incident. Then, despite hostilities between France and China, Hara left for Shanghai in 1884 to study at the short-lived *Ajiagakkan* (School of Asia), an international language school founded by, among others, Nakae Chōmin (1847–1901), a Freedom and Popular Rights activist.

In 1886 Hara matriculated at Sapporo Agricultural College in Hokkaido. There he learned to read English through his studies of William Shakespeare, Lord Byron, Victor Hugo, Sir Walter Scott, and others. At some point, Morita Shiken’s (1861–1897) translations of western literature captured Hara’s attention. In 1887, Hara withdrew from Sapporo Agricultural College, and in October of 1888 he



published a review of Shiken's translation of Jules Verne's *The Child of the Cavern* (1877) in the *Yūbin Hōchi Newspaper*.<sup>14</sup> Taken with Shiken's work, Hara initiated communication, and soon the two were exchanging letters. In October 1889, Hara traveled to the capital to forge a friendship with Shiken. He worked a brief stint at *Yūbin Hōchi Newspaper* translating foreign telegraph messages, a job he distinctly disliked and promptly quit. However, just over six months later, Hara returned to the newspaper, this time as a literary writer. He was supervised by Shiken and, the political novelist, Yano Ryūkei (1850–1931) and spent his free time with literary figures such as Uchida Roan (1868–1929) and Aeba Kōson (1855–1922). In subsequent years, Hara too became a productive translator, making works by Verne, Hugo, Wilkie Collins, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry Rider Haggard, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, Mark Twain, and Edmondo De Amicis available to the Japanese public. At the time of *Secret Politician's* serialization in 1890, Hara, 25, was just becoming established as a translator and literary critic. Working at the newspaper gave him a forum, and the serialization began in early November and ran through the first week of December.

Given the various twists and turns in *Secret Politician's* plot, a synopsis will serve to clarify events and relationships among characters.<sup>15</sup> It begins with the first-person narrator (the personal pronoun *yo* is used) informing the reader that a dear person has entrusted him with a precious mission (*tattoki mei*), which can only be carried out in Hokkaido.<sup>16</sup> Traveling on a remote route, he meets two characters—Kensaku, an enigmatic and disturbingly powerful blind man, and Jūrō, his loyal friend since childhood. Convinced that they are the key to fulfilling his commitment, the narrator decides to doggedly follow these men. That night the three take lodging where an alluring young man, Yasunosuke, captures the intrepid narrator's heart. Eavesdropping, Yo discovers that Kensaku and Jūrō were imprisoned in Sorachi shūjikan for their involvement in a peasant uprising in Ogi just over seven years earlier. Having revealed the secret escape plans of a fellow inmate, they were released early.<sup>17</sup> The following morning, despite his intense attraction to Yasunosuke, the narrator remains firm in his decision to shadow the two men.

Tailing them all the way to Hakodate, he observes Kensaku and Jūrō meeting a third man, Sōsuke, a former prison-mate who has just successfully escaped Sorachi shūjikan. Through the walls of an abandoned, ramshackle house, the narrator listens to talk of indiscernible plans. That night, when out for an evening stroll, Yo happens to be close at hand when Sōsuke kills a vile warden at his Hakodate home.

The next day, following Kensaku, the narrator boards a ship bound for Ogi. Upon arrival, Yo discovers that another uprising is brewing, and while out spying he meets an undercover agent, who is sympathetic to the peasants' cause and sheds light on Kensaku's background and fate in prison. On the orders of the secret politician, a shadowy but powerful leader of the original incident still imprisoned at Sorachi, Kensaku thwarts the impending protest by forewarning the police.<sup>18</sup> To escape the wrath of the outraged farmers, Kensaku hurriedly leaves for Hokkaido with the narrator on his tail.

Back on the island, Kensaku meets up with Jūrō, Sōsuke, and another former Sorachi inmate, Yoshimatsu, and they plan a jailbreak for their friends. Their mission fails, and Kensaku drowns in the process, leaving the other three to stand trial, which Yo faithfully attends. The three men each give provocative testimony in the courtroom, explaining and defending their actions but to no avail.

Finally, it is revealed in the last paragraphs of the work that the narrator's mission was to find an interesting story for his ailing father, and that, as it would happen, Yasunosuke is, in fact, Yasujo, who is now the narrator's wife. Reflecting back on his experience, the narrator leaves us with these last lines of the novel: "I think that at the time I was a young fool, but from then I began to understand the reality of what a 'crime' is. When I think about it, that was a gift from my most righteous and loving father to me."<sup>19</sup>

The setting, the general description of the uprising that leads to Kensaku and Jūrō's banishment to Sorachi shūjikan, and a simple calculation of time would have readily steered readers to connect the fictional account with the Fukushima Incident. Hara locates his original protest and the later failed one near the port of Ogi. Most readers would have known that this port, which from 1881 was the first fixed port stop for Mitsubishi's regular commercial ocean route from Yokohama to Hakodate, was just northeast of Fukushima city. Fragments of the protagonists' history provided by the kindly detective, Shunzō, serve to fix these events in time. In one scene, Shunzō relates to the narrator that Kensaku, "a simple, peaceful, law-abiding citizen," was caught up in circumstances beyond his control, "namely the famous uprising seven years ago that even you must know of."<sup>20</sup> Simultaneously hailing the narrator and reader, the detective sparks memories of the attack on the police headquarters in November of 1882, approximately seven years prior to the serialization of *Secret Politician*.

The mention of corvéé could only have strengthened the associations with Fukushima. At one point in the narrative, the detective

Shunzō, disguised as a student, gives a rousing speech about an uprising to a captive audience on a boat sailing from Hakodate to Ogi. He explains that disaster after disaster had hit “his” village, and the deaths from starvation had reached horrific levels. “If things continued in that manner it would have been a matter of months before the village became nothing but a field of thin corpses.”<sup>21</sup> At this time of utter desperation, not only was a means of rescue not provided but also the villagers were asked to “build non-urgent, unnecessary housing and pay taxes through heavy labor.”<sup>22</sup> This scenario surely triggered recollections of the proposed forced labor on the Aizu-Mikata road construction project that inflamed the struggling local residents and sent them to the streets in one of the largest and most famous revolts of the decade, the Fukushima Incident.

Hara could confidently rely on popular memory of such uprisings when *Secret Politician* was published amidst celebrations of the opening of the Diet. Political novels of the 1880s did not lack for an enthusiastic audience and served to keep the struggles of the previous years fresh in the minds of many Japanese. Moreover, literary reading practices ensured that the public was well versed in the idioms of opposition. In her incisive study of Tsubouchi Shōyō’s attempt to prescribe that politics be separated from modern fiction in his *The Essence of the Novel*, Atsuko Ueda notes that the widespread practice of communal recitation attests to the popularity of political fiction. Furthermore, Ueda insists that in homes and schools across the nation the active participation in communal recitation produced “shared sentiments,” which dovetailed with “popular enthusiasms linked to the Freedom and People’s Rights Movement.”<sup>23</sup>

At the closing of a tumultuous decade, Hara’s work bore witness to the strife and violence that challenged the proud proclamations of national unity. *Secret Politician* ultimately evokes a somber sympathy for ordinary men caught in the sweep of history. Hara intensifies his condemnation by shifting from Fukushima to Hokkaido, where the shūjikan casts a dark shadow over Japan’s modernity. Just as the narrator perseveringly follows Kensaku and Jūrō to fulfill his mission, so too does Hara’s work follow them from uprising to Sorachi Prison, laying bare their lives caught in the clutches of an unmerciful state.

### HOKKAIDO SHŪJIKAN AND THE DISCIPLINING OF A MODERN NATIONAL BODY

Maeda Ai’s provocative piece, “Utopia of the Prisonhouse,” interrogates how literature, politics, and the prison system intersect in

eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe and Japan through a productive pairing of the seemingly incongruent ideas of utopia and prison. Maeda directs our attention to islands, imaginary and real, that figured prominently in Europe's burgeoning literary world and expanding colonial territories, remarking on their utopian/dystopian duality.

The literature of utopia, which enjoyed a resurgence with the advent of the Renaissance, typically begins with an explorer's discovery of an unknown island in the middle of the ocean. This island is surrounded by sturdy walls, within which the splendid sight of an ideal city unfolds. Such an introduction is quite appropriate to the great sea-faring age, but is not the golden island itself, isolated in the middle of the sea, a reverse image of the prison or the prison colony? In truth El Dorado of the New World, colored with rosy expectations of extreme wealth and romantic adventure, was also a dismal penal colony where serious criminals exiled from the Old World were sent.<sup>24</sup>

Likewise, the island of Hokkaido simultaneously served as a powerfully alluring "frontier" and a brutal penal colony. There was no shortage of promotional materials that lauded the incredible bounty that lay in wait for individuals who wanted to reinvent themselves and pursue their dreams. Corporate interests were encouraged to serve their nation (and fill their own pockets) by tapping into the unlimited resources and golden financial opportunities of Japan's own El Dorado. Fiction corroborated the image of Hokkaido as a land of plenitude, promise, and liberation. At the same time, as a naturally insular fortress in the sea in need of "development," it seemed only logical to deport and make use of hardened criminals in the colonial periphery. In the metropole, the political and corporate elite, hoping to contain and capitalize on the exiles of modern Japan, carefully designed three islands within Hokkaido—Kabato, Sorachi, and Kushiro shūjikan.

Shūjikan were a critical component of a large network of penal institutions and legal policies that worked in concert to confine and quarantine dangerous elements (*kiken bunshi*). The conceptualization for shūjikan drew from sections of the *Napoleonic Code*, which regulated the rule of French colonies and penal labor. In the early 1880s, concerted effort to reform the existing prison regulations that had been penned in 1872 resulted in the Criminal Code (*keihō*), completed in 1880 and enacted in 1882, and the Prison Law (*kangoku soku*) of 1881. These functioned to redefine crimes, sentences, and the treatment of criminals and reorganize prison facilities and their governing

administrative bodies. Such documents included the designation of a special category of prisons, *shūjikan*, for long-term prisoners.<sup>25</sup> Specifically, Article One of the Prison Law delineated six categories of prisons, the sixth being *shūjikan*, defined as “a place to incarcerate penal convicts (*tokei*), deportees (*ryūkei*) and those sentenced to imprisonment.”<sup>26</sup> Hokkaido *shūjikan* are singled out to receive the first two types of criminals, penal convicts and deportees.<sup>27</sup>

Meiji leaders, no less than their French counterparts, preserved their political authority by physically distancing both reprehensible criminals and dissenting voices from the political center. The immediate impetus to construct several new large-scale prisons in Hokkaido stemmed from the consequences of the civil war in 1877. The inadequacy of the prison system became manifestly evident as the authorities tried to decide what to do with the more than 27,000 insurgent prisoners. Initially, two *shūjikan* in Tokyo and Miyagi (Sendai prefecture) were built, but this response still failed to completely alleviate the problems, and the government quickly planned a facility in Kabato, Hokkaido at a bend in the great Ishikari River. Even as Kabato was under construction, the Home Ministry realized that budget cuts meant it could not possibly hope to meet the planned 4,000-inmate capacity. Yet with persistent overcrowding at the Tokyo and Miyagi *shūjikan* (not to mention other national facilities), it was imperative to expand prison space. Officials canceled preparations for two *shūjikan* in Kyushu and Shikoku, transferred these monies to the Kabato project, and approved two more installations in Hokkaido. Kabato *shūjikan* opened in September 1881, and less than a year later, in July 1882, Sorachi *shūjikan* was completed.<sup>28</sup> The designers of the Kushiro *shūjikan*, the third such prison in Hokkaido, located near Nemuro in the eastern part of the island, were frustrated by the challenges of building in such a remote area and dwindling funds. Finally, the officials decided that a small facility holding 300 men would first be built, after which the initial inmates would construct the remaining part of their place of imprisonment.<sup>29</sup> Kushiro *shūjikan* received its first convicts in November 1885.

A sentence that led a convict to a Hokkaido *shūjikan* was universally understood as one reserved for the vilest criminals. Arthur Griffiths, formerly an inspector of the prisons of Great Britain, published his survey of prisons of the Orient in 1900. *The History and Romance of Crime* offers what would have been a typical image of Hokkaido *shūjikan* abroad and at home.<sup>30</sup> “The very worst criminals are sent to the prison of Sorachi in the remote island of Yezo, beyond Poronaibuto—a bleak, desolate spot surrounded by the usual

bamboo fence—which holds about 1600 convicts.”<sup>31</sup> Some of the violent offences that earned a person a stint at, and sometimes a one-way ticket to, a Hokkaido *shūjikan* were premeditated murder, robbery with injury or death, arson, rape, and assault and battery. Some percentage of incoming inmates had attempted to escape from other prisons or counterfeit money.<sup>32</sup> Frequently, political dissidents charged with some class of crimes against the state were channeled into a Hokkaido *shūjikan* due to their long sentences of 12 years or more. Numerous “rebels” of the uprisings during the 1880s who were not given the death sentence were sent to the northern prisons. Protestors from even the small scale Akita Incident (1881) and the Gunma, Shizuoka, and Nagoya Incidents (1884), among others, were deported to Hokkaido to serve their time.<sup>33</sup>

Ambitious visions of modern penal reform asserted that prisons should be models of “rational” society. Moreover, the dictum that prisons should not just be self-sustaining but profitable for the nation and convicts appeared nowhere more applicable than the new colonial territory of Hokkaido. Historian Takashio Hiroshi summarizes three central goals articulated by then home minister, Itō Hirobumi (1841–1909), in documents sent to various officials concerned with Hokkaido and *shūjikan* in 1879 and 1880.<sup>34</sup> The first confirms the appeal of Hokkaido *shūjikan* as a solution for the twin problems of overcrowding and menacing threats to leadership (rationalized within the discourse of maintaining public order). “According to the enactment of the Prison Reform Law (*kaisei keihō*), convicts sentenced to long-terms will be sent to the unopened lands of the northern periphery and made to produce their own sustenance. This will simultaneously relieve the burden of detention on the mainland (*naichi*) and remove dangerous elements (*kiken bunshi*) so as to maintain social order.”<sup>35</sup>

The second goal begins to bring into view how the convenient dispatch of criminals to Hokkaido was linked to the pursuit of large-scale expropriation of the island’s natural resources for state and corporate advantages. Takashio articulates it thus: “Putting the deported convicts’ labor power to practical use, applying it to the development of Hokkaido, we will exploit the nation’s natural resources.”<sup>36</sup> The exploitation of the nation’s natural resources was, of course, made all the more profitable for the exploitation of penal labor. In fact, it would be difficult to fully assess how much credit should go to unremunerated prisoners for constructing the crucial infrastructure of colonial Hokkaido during those initial decades. To facilitate *wajin* settlement, they were used to reclaim land and build the houses of

early tondenhei villages. Much of the most arduous work to clear vital transportation routes (roads, bridges, and railways) was completed by deported convicts. Prison labor extracted coal from the Horonai mine that fueled the modernization project. At some point in the history of all these facilities, inmates were forced to expand or reinforce their own prisons.

The third goal that emerges in these early documents suggests that labor in Hokkaido was fundamental to the economy of punishment in ways beyond the practical. Attempting to put a glossier polish on the self-serving colonial penal project in the northern colony, it suggests, “[By putting prisoners to work], we will promote the convicts’ rehabilitation and improvement, provide a stable life in sparsely populated Hokkaido, and have them reclaim a life of independence.”<sup>37</sup> Toil stands at the heart of corrective strategies that aim to cure the convict of his unsociable ways and reintegrate him into society with a proper love of duty. In documents on Hokkaido *shūjikan*, physical exertion in the rugged natural surroundings of Hokkaido is at the center of the disciplinary process. Reminiscent of sentiments discussed in [chapter 2](#), coming into contact with and struggling against Hokkaido’s nature creates new men with the proper spirit. “[Penal labor] will likely completely eliminate the idle, dull, and careless behavior of the convicts. Scenes of the grand surroundings, battles with nature, and efforts to harvest the land will arouse their energy and create spirited vitality.”<sup>38</sup> Strenuous labor in Hokkaido, then, is the conduit for the inmate’s understanding of his usefulness within the proper confines of society and the nation.

Adhering to the principle of exchange, prison administrators meted out the penalty of labor commensurate with a convict’s crime and ability to exhibit signs of rehabilitation. This was implemented through classifications of inmates with categories of work assigned to each, ranging from the most taxing work in the fifth class to the easier and more skilled chores of the first class. In the case of the three *shūjikan* in Hokkaido, documents indicate that inmates performed a wide variety of tasks of self-sufficiency, such as farming; sewing; washing; cooking; and linen, shoe, and charcoal making. Some were assigned to skilled labor like brick laying, carpentry, metalwork, and barrel making (for making miso), which fell mostly into the third and fourth classes. This model of autonomy evokes an ideal city enclosed on the faraway island so celebrated in utopian literature. However, until the mid-1890s, a majority of Hokkaido *shūjikan* prisoners worked on dangerous projects outside the jail associated with the fifth class.<sup>39</sup> These included felling trees, removing stumps, mining, and the jobs categorized

as laborer and porter, which often meant working on, among other things, constructing highways and bridges. Maeda puts it to us this way: “The tranquil scenery of parks and small farms—reminiscent of a garden city—was in fact a hypocritical design within which the prison as a ruthless apparatus of punishment needed to drape itself.”<sup>40</sup>

In fact, records from 1886–1896 show that more than 70 percent of the shūjikan population worked on perilous jobs of the fifth class.<sup>41</sup> Predictably, in performing such demanding and dangerous jobs men were frequently injured and killed. A prisoner sent to shūjikan in Hokkaido was especially likely to meet an extreme fate. In 1885 alone, for example, 273 injuries were reported occurring in the Horonai mine, which used Sorachi penal labor. Gas explosions, cave-ins, and accidents with transportation carts accounted for most of the injuries.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, the death rate in the northern shūjikan was more than two times than that at the Tokyo or Miyagi facilities.<sup>43</sup> At Kabato Prison in 1882, the death toll reached 109 out of a total inmate population of 995.<sup>44</sup> The large number of inmates leaving Hokkaido shūjikan, compared to other regional facilities, was due, in large part, to the high numbers of deaths.<sup>45</sup> Despite the benevolent rhetoric, in those early decades, few shūjikan inmates had the chance to rehabilitate themselves.

What is known as the “Central Road Tragedy” has become perhaps the most infamous example of the abuse of shūjikan laborers. Abashiri Prison was constructed in 1890 as an outpost of the Kabato shūjikan for the express purpose of constructing a major throughway, the Central Road (*chūō dōro*) that would facilitate military and corporate agendas. A young man of 27, Arima Shirosuke was made warden and put in charge of the project, which called for over 100 miles through rough country to be excavated in just eight months. An extraordinary number of prisoners, exposed to horrific conditions—worked long hours while lacking food, medicine, and protection from harmful bug-bites—died in the process. That these deaths were a calculated outcome is confirmed by the following frank and callous statement of the government official Kaneko Kentaro. “Hokkaido’s land is undeveloped and it will cost tremendous sums of money to build roads. By using prisoners, we can accomplish this much more cheaply. If prisoners die in the process, that will mean less expense for the prison—two birds with one stone.”<sup>46</sup> Locating so many of the national penal colonies in colonial Hokkaido may have been an attempt to conceal the extent of the brutality of the system, but, as *Secret Politician* shows, it was impossible to keep the news of the suffering and deaths completely quiet.



## THE DARK SIDE OF MODERNITY

Speaking of author Miyazaki Muryū, Maeda claims, “To say that for him the political novel was a literature of the prison is not an overstatement.”<sup>47</sup> Muryū’s *Notes on the French Revolution: The Battle Cry for Liberty* (*Furansu kakumeiki: Jiyū no kachidoki*), which was serialized in 1882 as the events of the Fukushima Incident unfolded, centered on the Bastille prison as a symbol of oppression. Eight years later Hara would bring the prison motif closer to home, marshaling Hokkaido’s Sorachi shūjikan as a silent but sinister character in *Secret Politician*. Here Kensuke loses his sight and later meets a tragic death. It is the site of the four men’s futile attempt to break their friends from prison, which land three of them back into an unforgiving legal system. Although beyond the actual scope of the novel, readers cannot but assume that the former inmates will earn yet another stint in a shūjikan. Cruel prison administrators are ever present as an extension of the shūjikan. At one point the narrator reads several newspapers accounts of the dismissal of a warden for his incompetence in curtailing a spate of recent jailbreaks. According to rumors, a reputable, if heartless, “Mr—” would be appointed the successor. The articles report that although he had previously been suspended temporarily for beating an escapee to death, after an enforced hiatus, “Mr—” had been exacting excellent results in a new position.

Michel Foucault asserts in *Discipline and Punish*, his authoritative work on the transformation and normalization of penal policies and institutions in nineteenth-century Europe, that modern penal institutions do not necessarily mitigate the violence more readily linked to earlier forms of punishment. Rather, equally devastating correctional practices, dressed in the uniform of modernity, masquerade as benevolent rehabilitation. Crucial to Foucault’s exposition of modern penal power is a critical reading of how new ways of “seeing” played out in the modern nation-state. Public execution was abolished and replaced by the penitentiary whose innovative architectural design featured, if not the literal panopticon, the panopticon effect, which granted a monopoly on the privilege of seeing to only those designated as the supervisors of the convicts’ rehabilitation. The success of the panopticon effect lay in the internalization of the surveillance. The aim is “to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary.”<sup>48</sup>

Even though the most impressive Hokkaidoian architectural example of the panopticon, the Abashiri five-wing radial prison, was not built in until 1902, regimes of “overseeing” reigned supreme in Kabato, Sorachi, and Kushiro shūjikan from their earliest days. According to an emerging logic of modern science, prison officials in the West and Japan worked assiduously to eliminate the dark unhealthy spaces where convicts of an earlier age gathered in herds. The reasoning proposed that the prisoners, now in small, individuated cells methodically designed for cleanliness and uninterrupted observation, would benefit from their orderly, hygienic surroundings. Maeda writes, “The two conceptions—that of organizing a space for the efficient administration of punishment and that of reforming dark, and unclean spaces (which had also served to shield criminals from the watchful gaze of officials) into a hygienic space of clear vision—are ultimately two sides of the same coin.”<sup>49</sup>

In practice this meant highly regimented life inside and outside the jailhouse. Elaborately choreographed rituals under the constant watchful eyes of armed guards were used to provide structure in the convicts’ lives and order in the prison. Not a modicum of privacy was afforded to prisoners in the Hokkaido shūjikan. For instance, when returning from outdoor work, they were made to strip completely and step over a log suspended over two and a half feet in the air, in addition to being thoroughly searched by guards, to ensure that no tools or other items were smuggled into the prison. Bathing, normally a private affair, involved groups of men progressing through three rectangular pools of water (initial rinse, cleaning with soap, final rinse) at strictly timed intervals. Guards stationed in strategic locations enforced the rules that prisoners always face forward and never touch a fellow inmate. As Maeda suggests, despite ostensible humanistic justifications, extremely orderly spaces and disciplined schedules and patterns of movement first and foremost ensured the state’s efficient administration of punishment.

To underscore his critique of the Meiji state, Hara employs the trope of darkness to powerful effect through the story of circumstances that lead to Kensaku’s blindness, revealing a disturbing reality of modern prison life. Kensaku, it turns out, went blind from being too long in the bowels of the mine, where Sorachi shūjikan penal labor is used. However, contrary to a reader’s first assumption, Kensaku *chose* to escape to the mine. In fact, according to the detective, Shunzō, who narrates Kensaku’s saga, Sorachi inmates fight and beg to secure an assignment in the mines to avoid the strict eye of penal supervision. In the dark tunnels below the earth there exists a measure of freedom

impossible under unceasing surveillance in the jail. Away from the watchful eyes of the guards, in the obscurity of the mineshafts, the men manage to gamble (betting food), fight like sumo wrestlers, and have sexual relations with each other. Shunzō explains,

In order to avoid the guards who come to lead them back to the jail, the inmates extinguish the lights they carry with them and for ten or twenty days hole up in some corner without going out of the mine. If some of their pals secretly bring them food, they will eat, but if they have nothing they don't eat. Existing in pitch darkness, they follow their wanton desire and lose their way out of the mine. Some starve to death and not even their corpses are found. Not just a few receive major injuries to their face, arms, and legs in collisions with the rocks. Others, their sight weakens from exhaustion and starvation, so that they can't distinguish shapes and colors in the mines or even come to have trouble seeing things in the light of day. Some become completely blind in or out of the mines.<sup>50</sup>

Despite knowing that the marginal liberty accompanying mine labor could exact a heavy price, the prisoners clamor back to the shadows to regain some modicum of agency and privacy in their lives. Hara's juxtaposition of the ever-present *super-vision* of the prison system in colonial Hokkaido with Kensaku's blindness suggests that the pleasant portrait of modern penal reform cloaks a system fraught with bewildering contradictions and perilous consequences.

The character Kensaku conveys a complex meaning in *Secret Politician*. He clearly symbolizes the impossible circumstances of modern Japanese citizens. All efforts to fight the oppressive power of the state—first by protesting official indifference to the villagers' suffering and later by escaping the omnipresent surveillance of the modern prison—only precipitate a worsened fate. According to Shunzō, Kensaku is transformed by the bitterness he feels over his situation in the shūjikan. "Among these convicts, not even two or three out of ten think of tomorrow. Most of them can't contemplate even one hour or one minute ahead. They live like the burning lights they use in the mines. There is no front or back, no left or right, no future or past. They only breathe in this place at this moment."<sup>51</sup> In the end, even this extremely circumscribed existence is taken from Kensaku, when he dies attempting a final act of resistance against the state.

The exhilaration over the imperial constitution and Diet was decidedly directed toward Japan's promising future. Yet, in Hara's work the attention turns to the past and to characters, who, dead or fated to return to excruciating exile in Hokkaido's unforgiving

wilderness, have no future at all. By 1890, the shūjikan in colonial Hokkaido, ever more understood in the national imaginary as a literal and figurative dead end, surpassed the powerful symbolism of France's Bastille. In foregrounding the contested nature of national unification and the uncomfortable truths of modern banishment, this political novel betrays the slippage, to use Komori's term, of the mythology-in-the-making in the capital. *Secret Politician's* intervention lies in its sympathetic portrayal of the opposition in early Meiji, whose existence, it must have seemed to some Japanese in 1890, was but a faint flicker of light surrounded by an unfathomable darkness.

### SECRET POLITICIAN: A POLITICAL NOVEL AT THE END OF AN ERA

If today political novels have become the victim of a master narrative that anchors the genesis of "modern Japanese literature" in *genbun'itchi* (the supposed unification of speech and writing) and a genealogy that ostensibly begins with works such as Tsubouchi Shōyō's *The Essence of the Novel* (*Shōsetsu shinzui*, 1885), Futabatei Shimei's *Drifting Clouds* (*Ukigumo*, 1886), and Mori Ōgai's *Dancing Girl* (*Maihime*, 1900), it is not because they were marginal to literary culture or went unappreciated in their time. What is now called *seiji shōsetsu* is a collection of a wide variety of writing that was as dynamic and complex as the transformational historical moment in which it was produced. As an imperfect generic category, it encompasses works of not only historical and social fiction, but also allegorical love stories; detective mysteries; and translations of Western texts by Benjamin Disraeli, Victor Hugo, and Edward Bulwer-Lytton published in the 1880s. Among the most prevalent examples are *Storms of the Sea of Passions* (*Jōkai haran*, 1880) by Toda Kindō, *Inspiring Instances of Statesmanship* (*Keikoku bidan*, 1883) by Yano Ryūkei, *A Factual Record of the Nihilist: Demons Softly Crying* (*Kyomutō jitsudenki: kishūshū*, 1884) by Miyazaki Muryū, and *Plum Blossoms in Snow* (*Setchūbai*, 1886) by Suehiro Tetchō. Set in exotic places, such as France, America, and Russia, as well as Japan, these diverse and widely popular works both reflected and stimulated political and literary activity and discourse.

Recent scholarship in Japan and the United States has rightfully insisted on a reexamination of the role of political novels in shaping modern Japanese literature. Kamei Hideo's path-breaking readings of early-Meiji texts were among the first attempts to acknowledge the vibrant heterogeneity of this too often neglected part of Japanese literary history. Michael Bourdaghs observes, "Rejecting the conventional

view that these works represent failed experiments mainly of interest as faltering steps toward the creation of the modern novel, Kamei instead considers these works to contain a variety of possibilities, possibilities that were subsequently lost with the rise to hegemony of the ‘realistic novel.’”<sup>52</sup> Kamei’s contribution of the nonperson narrator, for example, has inspired many later scholars to recover and redeem important, diverse narrative strategies from this period.<sup>53</sup>

Building on Kamei’s work, two scholars in particular have elucidated the ways political novels functioned as a crucial literary Other as various forces constructed what is now the unquestioned category, modern Japanese literature. For instance, John Pierre Mertz addresses Meiji-era canon formation, questioning assumptions about literature that function to prevent political novels from getting proper recognition in the Japanese canon. Acknowledging what can be called the purge of politics from literature, Mertz states, “It would be more convincing—chronologically, at least—if the mainstream of literary modernity were described as ‘antipolitical,’ or, even more appropriately, ‘antipolitical novel.’”<sup>54</sup> In *Concealment of Politics, Politics of Concealment: The Production of “Literature” in Meiji Japan*, Atsuko Ueda offers a compelling argument that seiji shōsetsu were not identified as a literary category until 1886 and were thus identified to facilitate the discursive production of a modern, ideologically charged notion of shōsetsu as works that treated customs, emotion, and manners rather than politics. As a political novel punctuating the end of an era, *Secret Politician* strikes a defiant pose, challenging the increasingly hegemonic literary order that sought to erase a meaningful engagement with the political from the literary realm.

Even in the brief synopsis provided above, one can recognize the ambitiousness of *Secret Politician*, which incorporates elements of the detective genre, moving political commentary, suspenseful crime and courtroom scenes, powerful prison narratives, and love stories. In fact, Mertz contends that political novels have been left out of the canon precisely because the various texts nominated for the genre defy easy categorization. “Premodern or modern, Japanese or foreign, fiction or biography, realistic or idealistic, aesthetic or utilitarian: in each case they are both and neither. They flout the most common-sense distinctions and resist ascription to a positive historical ‘identity’ as a genre.”<sup>55</sup>

Assuming the existence of such a literary form, Hara’s *Secret Politician* is certainly an example. The title might suffice to characterize it as a political novel. Its inclusion may be judged by its celebration of ordinary citizens and vilification of officials, the political backdrop of its two protagonists’ fates, the depiction of state violence,

the symbolism of the prison, and its penchant for orotund political speeches. Hara incorporated the requisite intrigue, revelations, and riveting courtroom drama as well. The setting in the unfamiliar locale of Hokkaido heightens Hara's suspenseful mood and forceful criticism. Like other seiji shōsetsu, Hara's *Secret Politician* relies, to a degree, on characters who conform to recognizable types. There are, of course, the cruel prison administrators and uncaring local and state leaders. The tyrannical, corrupt officials, always presented through secondhand information, such as newspaper reports and speeches, function as stereotypes. However, a bodily and vocal presence is given to the characters sentenced to Sorachi shūjikan. Thus, *Secret Politician's* supportive stance toward the Freedom and Popular Rights Movement is evinced by a steady identification with more fully drawn human heroes.

Numerous narrative qualities also serve to associate *Secret Politician* with political novels. Not quite Kamei's nonperson narrator nor the separate but observing narrator of *gesaku* (vernacular playful writing), the "I" of *Secret Politician* represents one example of the many possibilities manifested in political novels of the 1880s. We journey with a character-narrator who surreptitiously follows and serendipitously meets individuals he deems vital to accomplish his mission. He parcels out discoveries to the reader as he peeks through a hole in the wall of a dilapidated house, listens outside windows, happens upon the scene of a crime, interacts with crowds that discuss rumors, and reports information gathered from lodging hosts and a friendly detective. Without any attempt to maintain a natural transparent narration, the narrator brings attention to the act of writing, incorporates excerpts from newspaper articles and political manifestos, and evokes the atmosphere of storytelling by directly addressing the reader as listener (*kiku hito*). Many of these aspects come together in the following amusing and ironic passage.

If this story were to be made into a novel, this scene would be the beginning of a vivid climax. If beauty is the goal, the interesting variety here in this sad, going-to-ruin cabin in the middle of a vast plain is an example of incomparable beauty; A big strong barbarian whose eyes only shine out from his body covered from head to toe with hair; A mysterious blind man; A suspicious looking guy—a ferocious type who looks like he'd even eat a snake. Then you add a dandy like me. You listeners, don't laugh now . . . I'm still not a bad looking guy. On top of this is a beautiful, bewitching boy, not quiet eighteen who could pass for a woman. Isn't this an interesting combination? How this would make a great drama!<sup>56</sup>

Before modern fiction became governed by the dictates of “realist” narration, writers in the Meiji period could employ this kind of playful, multiaccented narrator.

If *Secret Politician*'s content contests the narrative of Meiji-era Japan's smooth unification, then its textual strategies complicate the story of the natural emergence of the modern novel. The violent exclusion to which Komori refers was at work, on the one hand, in the neutralization and marginalization of a multiplicity of voices and interests by the Meiji oligarchy as it took greater hold on the reins of the state. On the other hand, it was manifested in the production of “modern literature” by the literary establishment that foreclosed a variety of possibilities to make way for the exclusive reign of the realistic novel. *Secret Politician* brings to the fore in full measure the dynamic historicity of the era of the Freedom and Popular Rights and the seiji shōsetsu eventually buried in the euphoric national modernization narratives.

### NANSHOKU AS CRITIQUE OF THE STATE

*Secret Politician*, already rich with the variegated, sedimentous layers of Japan's national and literary consolidation, contains yet another intertwining suppression, namely that of the practices and representations of nanshoku, or male-male sexuality. A Hokkaido shūjikan serves at the hub of the relationships between ordinary heroes, whose bonds are defined by nanshoku conventions. These relationships fall all along what Sedgwick identifies in her landmark work, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, as the “continuum of male homosocial desire.” She asserts a potentially fundamental concordance between, on the one hand, homosocial acts—such as friendship, mentoring, and the cooperative maintenance of male entitlement—and, on the other hand, homosexual relations. Noting Greek history, Sedgwick acknowledges that whether a society views “men who promote the interests of men” and “men who love men” as part of a continuum or as clearly incongruent is historically and culturally contingent.<sup>57</sup> At a time when Meiji Japan witnessed progressive movement toward the disruption of the continuity of homosocial and homosexual acts, *Secret Politician* evokes an earlier period of Japanese history when various mechanisms of male bonding were recognized as more seamlessly related.

*Secret Politician* exhibits contradictory tendencies in its representation of male-male relations savoring and celebrating traditional

hallmarks of eroticized nanshoku—an erotically captivating bishōnen, an experienced “warrior” who mentors a younger man, devotion and sacrifice in a “battle”—while at the same time frustrating the total identification with such relationships. The subplot, wherein the narrator falls in love with a bishōnen, is employed to provide the audience nanshoku elements, which still held wide appeal. Yet, when it turns out that the beautiful boy is in fact a woman in drag, the work seems to conform to the emerging demands of modern Japanese fiction, which, it became increasingly clear, would not tolerate positive depictions of male-male sexuality. Still, the steadfast allegiance among the four men who plot to liberate their friends from Sorachi shūjikan and the longtime intimate relationship between Kensaku and Jūrō, as articulated in the testimonies of the surviving three on trial, form the kernel of the work’s critique of modern Japan. A morality grounded in honorable and loyal commitments among individual men, recalling the close and sexual bonds between samurai, emerges to contrast with the relationship between a self-serving and unjust state and its suffering subjects.

*Secret Politician* represents another example of the strategic hybrid forms of erotic signification that emerged as popular depictions of male-male sexuality were steadily marginalized during the Meiji era. It features, for instance, the quintessential icon of nanshoku literature, the bishōnen, with all of its stock characteristics. A “bewitching youth (bishōnen) not quite eighteen who could pass for a woman” exhibits a “mysterious attraction about the eyes.”<sup>58</sup> His flowing hair is a deep black, and his skin has “the luster of a white rose.”<sup>59</sup> He is described as lacking courage, manliness, and vigor, more commonly associated with the older, experienced warrior of the traditional elder male-bishōnen couple. A fragrant aroma wafting about him is an attractive feature as well. “He has magical powers to seduce people. Last night with one glance taken by the light of the fire I was gloriously drunk and became intoxicated by his scent. But this morning, by the light of the sun his visage shines. When I drew near to him, I nearly fainted.”<sup>60</sup> The narrator struggles to contain his strong emotions as he further defines his object of desire. “Oh, it’s killing me (*kurushimu*). How beautiful he is! He is a combination of ‘love’ (*ai*), ‘emotion’ (*jō*) and ‘bewitchment’ (*kyō*).”<sup>61</sup>

Although the narrator’s passion is irrepressible, there is a niggling concern for the propriety of his infatuation. The following is the



narrator's impression of the young man after he chastises the youth for his lack of courage.

He dropped his head, without answering me, and sighed. That look, that gracefulness, at the very least that melody must be that of the nightingale's song. Could my having been so captivated by this boy invite the scorn of other people? Ah! He's a "fairy" man. But extreme beauty is not divided between men and women. Poets with insufficient imagination may use the words goddess (*joshin*) or nymph (*ten'nyo*), but the word "god" (*kami*) does not have two sexes. In my eyes, he truly looks like a fairy (*fuearii*).<sup>62</sup>

Despite the fear of criticism, the narrator continues to express and clarify his homosexual desire. The narrator confesses his knowledge of women is quite limited. He can't remember feeling any fluttering in his heart when he looks at women. In contrast to his tepid responses to women in the past, the narrator confides, "For a moment's time [the youth] ruled my whole body (*yo no zenshin wo shibai serunari*). No, not just for a moment. I felt as though this was greatly connected to my life's ultimate destiny. I have no idea how such a feeling happens."<sup>63</sup> The narrator finds that the oft repeated phrase love is blind (*koi wa mō*) fitting to his situation. "Without knowing anything about the young man, I've fallen in love with him (*yo wa ichimo shiru koto arazushite kare wo ai serunari*)."<sup>64</sup>

As is customary in nanshoku narratives, the bishōnen turns out to be a serious hindrance to fulfilling the narrator's duty. Yo has convinced himself that following the blind man and his friend promises the most success for fulfilling his mission. "But just one look at the boy (*shōnen*) and my resolve melts away."<sup>65</sup> The bishōnen refuses the narrator's invitation to travel together, but there is just enough time to ask a few last questions and learn that his name is Yasunosuke. With such recognizable formulaic language and narrative strategies, readers could not have missed the allusions to roman-tic nanshoku literature.

Yasunosuke, however, is actually Yasujo, who has traveled to colonial Hokkaido disguised as a young man to visit her sister-in-law incarcerated at Sorachi Prison.<sup>66</sup> If Yamada Bimyō (1868–1910) projects the erotic vocabulary and narrative structures of the male-male homoerotic relationship onto a heterosexual couple in *Musashino*, in Hara's *Secret Politician* a similar process happens through the cunning stratagem of a girl in drag.<sup>67</sup> Hara capitalizes on traditional nanshoku motifs but diffuses the emerging taboo by having Yasujo and the narrator marry at the end of the novel. The threat of homosexual desire is neutralized because, as it turns out, the narrator's attraction has been directed at the

appropriate object all along. With this camouflage Hara could mobilize straightforward depictions of bishōnen that remained popular with much of the Japanese reading audience while negotiating the emergent restrictions on depictions of male-male sexuality in modern fiction.

Although it seems evident that the imperatives governing the shrinking possibilities for portraying sexuality in literature influenced *Secret Politician*, other representations of loyal and loving bonds between men are not subverted in the same manner, and even sustain the final judgment of the Meiji state in the novel. The closing of *Secret Politician* is punctuated by the moving testimony of the three defendants on trial for attempting to set their friends free from that unmerciful fortress, Sorachi Prison. The narrator, a witness standing in a corner of the designated public section, devotes one chapter to each man, Sōsuke, Yoshimatsu, and Jūrō, to showcase their statements of defense. He makes the point that he records not the declarations of the judge or detectives, which conform to cold courtroom regulations, but the impassioned, if inarticulate, exclamations of the defendants that breach legal protocol at every turn. One speaks of great hardships seeking employment, while another stresses his struggles to provide for his family under the changed circumstances of the nation. A tragic portrait is drawn of a desperate village befallen by natural disasters and unfair demands by the government. And although their strategies for ameliorating their situations may be against the law, nowhere in the text does a condescending judgmental voice impose itself. Instead, an impeachment of the Meiji state is articulated through a series of questions that asks the officiators of this stark regional court to define the contours of crime. Sōsuke asks the judge, “Is it a crime to want work?” while Yoshimatsu suggests his only violation was to keep a promise. Jūrō queries, “Is it a capital offence to enjoy loving a friend?” Their accounts and questions combined ultimately function to indict the state for failing to keep its promise to the nation, specifically its male citizenry.

The court, as one branch of the state apparatus, represents the Meiji government, and *Secret Politician* does not shine a favorable light on the system. The state, through its far-reaching judicial arm, is given one more chance to determine the next turn in the lives of these men, but here there is no climactic court scene evoking resolution and justice. Our narrator sets the tone.

Three months after the extremely cruel and merciless scene outside the Sorachi fortress . . . Sadness. Tragedy. Deceit. Pitiful indignation. It seems like all of humanity’s suspicion and distrust has been intensified one level. I can’t but scowl with mixed feelings of bitterness, pain and

anger at the one backed-chair and single table. In this filthy, defiled and disgraceful court, in just moments, I will be able to see to completion that “mission that my heart has borne most painfully in order to get that serious and precious catch.”<sup>68</sup>

The state is without the attendant glitter and glamour of the celebrations at the nation’s center. No sense of moral authority is attributed to the unadorned courtroom and its proceedings unfolding in the peripheral space of colonial Hokkaido. The defendants’ brusque questions and unruly outbursts are directed to the judge and police who oversee, in the words of the narrator, the “disgraceful court.”

Sōsuke begins by explaining that his greatest desire was to be a working man and to make good on his life outside of prison. Despite his earnest efforts, however, he could not find employment and was starving. Then, he met his friends who offered him a certain kind of “job.” Sōsuke readily admits that he committed robbery and killed the warden. But he wonders what constitutes a job that is not a crime and one that is. He beseeches the court officials, “You, detective, and you, judge, I am asking you from my heart, what is criminal work? What is an illegal job? What is a crime? Oh, please tell me, a crime, a crime is...?”<sup>69</sup> For Yoshimatsu, his defense comes in one strongly stated remark. “It was important for me to keep my promises.”<sup>70</sup> We learn that he was a hardworking blacksmith struggling to feed his family, but when all of his efforts did not suffice to protect his family from starvation, he resorted to counterfeiting money. He was caught and sent to Sorachi where he met the other men. Their strong bonds helped them to survive the harsh conditions and sustain their morale. When Yoshimatsu was released from jail earlier than the others, he told them that if they should ever need anything they could always count on him. He would never forget their kindness. So, he was happy to forge tools with which to break into the jail when they asked, because it is absolutely necessary for a man to fulfill his word of honor.

The popular Meiji rhetoric of “establishing oneself and advancing in the world” promoted by the ruling elite fell short of producing material improvement for Sōsuke and Yoshimatsu, as it did for many Japanese. For the former, a job, any job, made it possible to live as a man. For the latter, his actions were guided by his manly obligations to his family and a brotherly fealty to the men who helped him bear the worst of prison conditions. Their biographical accounts, imploring questions, and strongly stated convictions, given prominence over the voice of the court, force the reader to reflect on the role of the state policies that deprive men of the means to fulfill the basic requirements

of manhood and imprison them when, out of utter desperation, they commit crimes to survive. To borrow from Sedgwick, these are men who most honorably “promote the interests of other men.”

With Jūrō’s testimony, however, *Secret Politician* moves to depictions of manly bonds that clearly signal eroticized samurai bonds. When his turn to speak comes, Jūrō confesses his utter devotion to and love for Kensaku. Jūrō describes him as a noble-hearted man of virtue. “There is just one thing I must mention. Just one thing I have to relate. And that is that the man who drowned in the moat at Sorachi prison is my most beloved, most pitiful friend, blind Kensaku.”<sup>71</sup> Jūrō offers his defense saying that he participated in the jailbreak out of loyalty to and love (*koi*) for Kensaku. The judge orders him not to speak of people who are unrelated to the case, but Jūrō insists that Kensaku is at the heart of the matter. They worked the fields together when they were young, and when the oppression became too great, they made farming tools into weapons and fought in the uprising. They endured long years of hard labor and cruel conditions in jail together, and their bond was so strong that the two men became as one. His account is repeatedly underscored with “I am him and he is me (*Kare wa yo to nareri. Yo wa kare to nareri*).”<sup>72</sup> What sustained Jūrō throughout the hardship was Kensaku’s light (*bikari*). Just as Sōsuke questions the notion of what constitutes a crime, Jūrō asks the court, “Is the pleasure of loving a friend a capital offence?”<sup>73</sup> In the phrase “the pleasure of loving a friend (*tomo wo kou no tanoshimi*),” the verb *kou* has stronger sexual connotations than the other viable option, *ai*, also used in places. The portrayal of the two men’s relationship here clearly borrows the language and associations of the homoerotic bond between samurai of *nanshoku* literature.

Elements of heroic samurai battles also shape the relationship between Kensaku and Jūrō. The survivor of the pair explains,

Our village unexpectedly fell to darkness. It became a desert. [Kensaku] encouraged me to lay aside my plow. He gave me straw sandals made by his own hands to use on the battlefield (*ikusa no ba*). And on the battlefield . . . I was brave. I watched his actions. I watched his form as he held tightly weapons made from farming tools. “This is a greater show of valor (*mushaburi*) than Kato Kiyomasu,” he shouted. We were caught. From the prison bars we stuck our heads out and looked and smiled at each other. With straw ropes around our waists we stood on the deck of the ship, pointing at the sky of our homeland, not saying a word. Together we cried. Together we became inmates of Sorachi prison.<sup>74</sup>

The uprising is denoted by the word *ikusa*, which evokes images from epic martial tales of the past. The term *mushaburi*, meaning valor, contains the character combination *musha*, a synonym for *bushi* or samurai. Thus, these two are depicted as warriors defending their village. Kensaku is the senior, more knowledgeable “warrior” who serves as a model and mentor for Jūrō. He is a constant source of inspiration and strength for Jūrō and personally attends to his every need. The reference to the famous samurai Kato Kiyomasa (1562–1611), the valued general of Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536–1598), reinforces such associations. Their mere presence brings comfort to each other as they wait in the temporary jail, and the repeated word together emphasizes how they continue to act as one.

The practice of following one’s lover in death is evident as well. Jūrō exclaims, “I don’t know what the definition of the word love actually is. But if it is a relationship in which you entrust your life and death to another, give over your body and go together to the furthest border of misery without even a hint of regret, then we are the world’s only friends.”<sup>75</sup> Now that Kensaku is dead, Jūrō finds little meaning in life. “The light that shined on me and warmed me is gone. I have completely lost the only happiness that existed in the heavens above and the world below. Now, if I were to be ordered to death, I would be happy.”<sup>76</sup>

The language of Jūrō’s testimony, such as *koi*, *ai*, and *hikari*, lends a romantic shading to this relationship. But regardless of whether Kensaku and Jūrō were lovers, their intense and noble bond, budding in Fukushima and blossoming in Sorachi shūjikan, is configured to contrast with the heartless treatment of the state. The uncaring treatment of common citizens and the bankrupt principles and behavior of prefectural officials, prison administrators, and custodians of the court presented throughout *Secret Politician* reveal the misguided direction of a state that undermines, dismisses, and denies the importance of fidelity and love among men. While the Meiji state endeavored to criminalize male-male sexuality through legal codes, and compulsory heterosexuality took deeper root in the literary, political, and social realms, Hara’s evocation of male-male relationships suggests that “men who promote the interests of men” and “men who love men” are cut from the same cloth.<sup>77</sup> In *Secret Politician*, traditional depictions of brotherly ties and even male-male homoerotic relations, cultivated in the prison system in colonial Hokkaido—the nation’s remotest margin—and recalling typical samurai *nanshoku* liaisons, constitute the signifier of a masculine noble truth lost in the new order.

## CONCLUSION

Published at a crossroads in Japanese political and literary history, *Secret Politician* represents one of the last defiant efforts of both the Freedom and Popular Rights Movement and the era of political novels. In Hara's work, the oppression of ordinary-men-turned-political-prisoners on the edges of the empire takes center stage at the very moment when most dissenting voices had been drowned out by the drums of the parades celebrating the emblems of national unity. Recited to both the narrator's father and the readers, *Secret Politician* is a story set in Hokkaido that highlights Meiji Japan's fraught history. Above all, it suggests that although the country was poised to look forward, readers should not turn a blind eye to the contentious past and continuing abuses that reveal the injustices upon which the modern nation-state was built.

However oppositional *Secret Politician* may have been, it contributed to a profusion of overwhelmingly masculine national signifiers that would underpin the subjugation of women and colonial subjects for decades to come. With the formal institutions largely in place by the end of 1890, various individuals and groups vied to shape the face of Japan, and it quickly became apparent that the metaphorical and material face of the nation was to be male. Manly icons in literature, newspapers, journals, children's stories, and songs proliferated: the courageous soldier praised, the manly samurai reinvented, the colonial adventurer exalted, the "primitive" *bankara* man glorified, and the paragon of Meiji masculinity, the *seinen* (young man), promoted.<sup>78</sup> In earlier political novels, national politics was commonly played out through affairs of the heart between men and women as is evidenced in, for instance, the relationships between Wakokuya Minji and O-Ken in Toda Kindō's *Stormy Seas*, Kunino Motoi and O-Haru in Suehiro Tetchō's *Plum Blossoms in Snow*, and the attorney Nakajima and Tsuyuko in Sudō Nansui's *The Local Self-Government (Ryokusadan, 1886)*.<sup>79</sup> Whereas once it was *de rigueur* for a "woman" to serve as a symbol of the nation and for marriage to serve as an analogy for the unity of people's rights and democratic governance, beginning in the last decade of the nineteenth century more exclusively masculine cultural representations emerged. The promulgation of the Meiji constitution and the opening of the Diet essentially made "real" the fictional marriage of O-Ken (Ms. Rights) and Wakokuya Minji (Mr. Popular Government in Japan), the characters of Toda's *Stormy Seas*. However, legal codes and discursive creations of gender made it increasingly evident that men were to wield political power and alliances would be made among men.<sup>80</sup>

The growing body of celebrated manly heroes, real and legendary, both reflected and produced the state's growing domination over women's lives. Women's citizenship was constructed increasingly within the confines of their relationships to men, a rigid, patriarchal family system, highly regulated access to the labor force, and greater imperatives on reproductive responsibilities, all of which were formulated and enforced through policies that served the needs of the masculinist, imperial state. Whatever roles women had played in political novels, now actual women were not even to be considered participating members of the political landscape. This was made manifestly clear in the Public Meeting and Political Societies Law (1890) and the Peace Police Law (1900), which forbade women to participate in any political activities. It turns out that neither valorized nanshoku nor Meiji-era hegemonic heterosexuality could imagine a place for women's agency, subjecthood, or full-citizenship in the new nation. O-Ken, "Ms. Rights," was not to get hers.<sup>81</sup>

Although Hara's *Secret Politician* critiques the state's abuse of power through depictions of loyal men struggling with the punishing penal system in Japan's first modern colony, in later years variations on this manly theme would be used to broaden and strengthen the power of that same state both at home and abroad. Yet, to mention these weaknesses is not to diminish the importance of Hara's work. Whatever its faults, *Secret Politician* nevertheless remains illustrative of the contradictions that were part of this turbulent historical moment. In both content and form, it accentuates the centrality of political, territorial, and literary peripheries in the making of modern Japan and its empire. Ultimately, Hara's forceful seiji shōsetsu bequeaths to us a refreshing perspective on the dynamic and synergistic role national dissent and colonial Hokkaido played in the processes of defining modern Japanese polity, subjects, and literature.

A PANTHEON OF PROMISES  
THE MAKING OF FANTASIES OF  
FREEDOM AND CAPITALIST DREAMS

Ever since my schooldays, I thrilled to my heart just to hear the name of Hokkaido . . . I was resolved to leave this defiled part of the country and take my chance in the free lands of Hokkaido.

Kunikida Doppo  
(*Meat and Potatoes*, 1901)

Hokkaido is the coffer of the nation.

Kuroda Kiyotaka  
(*Hokkaido Development Journal*, 1880)

Although Hokkaido had long been envisaged as a space of exile and emptiness, in the post-restoration period visions of opportunity and prosperity vied for a competitive edge over such notions. In the Meiji market of Hokkaido fantasies, government officials, corporate interests, and fiction writers plugged financial security, personal freedom, and utopian escape. State agencies promoted the bountifulness of vast tracts of untouched virgin land in the north waiting for the guiding hand of spirited Japanese settlers and enterprising capitalists. Starting in the 1880s, private businesses, such as the Revitalization Company (Kōfukusha), the Progress Company (Kaishinsha), the Shining North Company (Hokkōsha), and the Sincerity Company (Sekishinsha) planted sunny pictures of second-chances and self-sufficiency in Hokkaido as they plied their services to navigate mainlanders through the relocation process. Along with their inspiring names, these immigration enterprises disseminated promotional materials that affirmed the successful transfer of Japan's advanced technology and institutions to Hokkaido while peddling the tantalizing prospect of owning land in the pioneer territory. Authors, for their part, figured Hokkaido as a



haven where individuals could reinvent themselves, escape prejudice, or shake off the constraining demands of either tradition or modernity. These modern fantasies all, in one fashion or another, touted liberatory, fresh starts.

What emerges from the clamoring voices constructing modern Hokkaido is a salient tension between conceptualizations of the northern Promised Land as a destination *for* Japan's civilization and modernity and a refuge *from* them. If the homeland afforded the benefits of an advanced society and the comfort of familiarity, it also exacted a high price. Amid widespread turmoil during the Meiji period, the enthusiastically hailed enlightenment ideals—emancipation from tyranny, individual autonomy, universal rights, and democratic rule—butted against the realities of increasing burdens and limitations on citizens' lives in the newly unified nation, which was fundamentally shaped by the entrenchment of capitalist imperatives. Dismal economic prospects and living standards on the mainland were commonly contrasted to favorable land legislation and incentive programs for reclamation projects with special emphasis on aspirations to property ownership. At the same time, it became ever clearer that unjust social conventions borne of familial obligations and age-old intolerance persisted despite rhetorical appeals to liberty and the importance of reason. The ostensibly unoccupied and unspoiled expanse of Hokkaido, however, granted ample economic opportunities and independence from traditional society's oppressive patterns. Consequently, the ideas that Japan's superior civilization needed to be urgently transferred to Hokkaido and that Hokkaido could be an escape route from the shadow side of mainland civilization existed in a pervasive but uneasy relationship.

This ever-present discursive dissonance, in fact, underscores the complex relationship between Hokkaido and the mainland. Contrary to idyllic visions, the potential for personal success and liberation was greatly impeded by political and legal maneuvers that subordinated the needs of the island's population (Ainu *and* Japanese) to the agenda of mainland expansionist priorities. As is suggested by the 1869 Iwakura formulation, which put the colonization of Ezo/Hokkaido on par with tax reform and foreign relations, the Meiji government promptly recognized the incredible potential for the extraction of wealth from the resource-rich island. These shrewd statesmen also apprehended that profits from the island could pay for their ambitious plans to upgrade Japan's status to first-rate nation. The initial state-run industries, whose capital base came from primarily

the public treasury, were sold in the 1880s on extremely favorable terms to former employees of Hokkaido's administrative agencies and *naichi* business interests, whose monopolistic hold grew stronger due to rampant collusion between officialdom and merchant capital. In modern Japan's colonial history, this was just the beginning of the intimate relationship between market and imperial expansion. In what would become the model for virtually all of Japan's extractive empire, Hokkaido ensured the overwhelming dominance of Japanese *zaibatsu* (financial cliques), which made their early fortunes there in shipping, sulfur, and, most importantly, coal. In short, Hokkaido was a space that enriched the architects of Japan's ever-broadening empire who rose to power on the mainland.

Naturally, the fantasies and facts fed each other. Even if material realities in Hokkaido rarely lived up to the expectations, the dream-scape popularized in settlement campaigns, promotional speeches, and fictional works nevertheless, to some degree, inspired over a million Japanese to immigrate during the Meiji period. Most people who immigrated to Hokkaido did not become landholders. It was much more likely that they ended up tenant farmers on land owned by wealthy individuals in Tokyo, Osaka, or Kyoto. Others would find work in grain, wood, or iron mills; hemp or flax factories; breweries; tanneries; or lumber and mining industries managed by ever more powerful business combines based in the homeland. Still, their successes in these areas, as well as in reclamation, food production, and highway and railway construction, allowed successive endorsements of Hokkaido to champion advancements on the island, encouraging more settlers. As national and imperial subjectivities took deeper root, mainlanders' desire for a better life conveniently dovetailed with an emerging collective imagination of contributing to the improved prestige and power of imperial Japan through settlement in Hokkaido.

It is within this climate that "Meat and Potatoes," (*Gyūniku to bareisho*) a short story by Kunikida Doppo (1871–1908), was published in 1901. Bringing to bear the multiple tensions of colonial Hokkaido, my reading of Doppo's text demonstrates that visions of individuals staking out freedom in Hokkaido and state and corporate exploitation of the island's natural resources were not mutually exclusive but mutually reinforcing aspects of Japan's emerging empire. Doppo's humorous work features a fireside debate among seven men at a club on the relative virtues of realism and idealism, signified by meat and potatoes respectively. The discussion is dominated by two men, Okamoto and Kamimura, both former members

of the “Potato Party,” who once harbored elaborate fantasies of farming in Hokkaido. Kamimura converts to the “Meat Party” after just three months of actual farm life, preferring material wealth and financial stability in Tokyo. A superficial interpretation of “Meat and Potatoes” might assume that Hokkaido’s function is confined to the metaphorical expression of idealism, symbolized by one of the island’s most famous agricultural crops, potatoes. Certainly Kamimura and Okamoto’s vivid descriptions of bucolic farm life construct Hokkaido as a utopian space. Upon closer inspection, however, we notice that Kamimura works for the Hokkaido Coal Company (*Hokkaidō tankō kaisha*), an obvious reference to the (in)famous Hokkaido Colliery and Railway Company (*Hokkaidō tankō tetsudō kaisha*). Thus, rather than a juxtaposition of Idealistic Hokkaido and Realistic Japan, “Meat and Potatoes” configures colonial Hokkaido as the locus of both aspects.

Therefore, although the title might imply a contrast between an idealized Hokkaido farming fantasy and a pragmatic metropolitan beef binge, Doppo’s story puts another element—coal—into play. Delving into the significance of the coupling of potatoes and coal that lies just below the surface of this work, I situate both the tenant farming system and the rise of the coal industry in Hokkaido within the context of Japan’s imperialist-capitalist expansion. Compelling prospects lured a formidable immigrant labor force to the northern colony, at the same time that the vigorous Meiji invasion-settlement there established Hokkaido as a lucrative satellite economy for Japan’s heartland—foodstuffs and coal topping the list of profitable enterprises. In this light, I consider the fictional work *The Absentee Landlord* (*Fuzai jinushi*, 1929) by proletarian writer Kobayashi Takiji (1903–1933), who bequeathed us a notable, biting critique of the exploitation of farm laborers in Hokkaido. This text is a sympathetic portrayal of the perennially wretched lives of tenant farmers and a condemnation of the unscrupulous system that all but ensured that hopeful newcomers ended up tenant farmers. Moreover, the extraction of millions of tons of “black diamond” from the massive, high-quality Ishikari coalfields of Hokkaido helped fuel Japan’s expansionist ambitions. Hokkaido coal ran the steam engines of railways, warships, and transport and shipping vessels. It powered the machines of the manufacturing sector in factories and mills across the country and helped produce the building blocks of modern industry, especially steel and cement. Advancing “development” and “progress” with coal, Japan’s first modern colony played its part in underwriting the extension of

Japan's rule over much of Asia. By paying attention to the overlooked character of Kamimura in Doppo's "Meat and Potatoes" and the indispensable role coal played in furthering Japan's industrialization, development of capitalism, and imperialist project, we come to understand the multiple duties Hokkaido performed. Even if independent farmer-settlers dominated the popular imagination of Hokkaido, it was the diverse, exploited work pool, tenant farmers and coal miners included, that made the meaty fantasies of imperialist-capitalists come true.

Contrasting Doppo's reveries of the Hokkaidoan cultivator with Arishima Takeo's (1878–1923) castigation of the oppressive tenant farming system in his nonfiction writing two decades later, I reveal the bitter contradictions veiled in the fantasies of freedom. In the latter half of this chapter, I turn my attention to the complicated figure of Arishima, sometimes called the "father of Hokkaido literature," examining the complex intersection of his visions of Hokkaido's liberatory potential, critiques of modern capitalism, and philosophies of social justice.<sup>1</sup> Essays and interviews reflecting on his long, intimate relationship with Hokkaido and his sensational act of turning over ownership of his extensive farm to the tenant farmers in the summer of 1922 highlight Arishima's belief in the possibility of creating a more equitable and free society in Hokkaido. Arishima understood the "liberation" (*kaihō*) of Kaributo Farm, which grew out of the author's rejection of his aristocratic origins and fierce reproof of intolerable economic disparity engendered by capitalism, to contain the potential for personal liberation and revolutionary national transformation. Despite the fact that Arishima posits Hokkaido as a site for resistance to the capitalist logic of private property and profit, his confessions of disappointment, and perhaps even his suicide, begs the question of whether he ultimately concluded that meaningful change was futile in the face of Japan's market-driven imperialist polity. If Doppo's 1901 "Meat and Potatoes" highlights the collaborative nexus between the fantasies of individual freedom in Hokkaido and modern Japan's entrenchment of capitalist and colonial domination, Arishima's essays from the Taisho period (1912–1926) brings to the fore the limitations of Hokkaido as a truly liberatory space. These texts—bookends on 20 dynamic years of Japanese history—cast new light on the dreamy images of Japan's first colony, revealing the jarring discordance between the rosy rhetoric and the fortification of a violent project of expropriation both at home and in the growing empire.

## IDEALIZING HOKKAIDO

Kunikida Doppo, already introduced in [chapter 2](#), is deservedly recognized as a key figure in the transformation of modern Japanese prose fiction. Assessments of his contribution include Edward Fowler's high praise: "Modern Japanese literature may have begun before Doppo, but few writers were more instrumental than he in setting its scope and tone at the turn of the century."<sup>2</sup> His short work, "Meat and Potatoes," however, is often mentioned in passing or ignored altogether in literary criticism. Donald Keene dismisses it saying, "The story as such is insignificant" and "leaves much to be desired."<sup>3</sup> In Dennis H. Atkin's scholarship on Doppo, "Meat and Potatoes" is dispatched with a few lines as one of several works Doppo wrote based on his love affair with Nobuko Sasaki.<sup>4</sup> In fact, the prevailing views of the text maintain that it either reveals Doppo's disillusionment over his failed relationship with Sasaki or a crisis of his Christian values.<sup>5</sup> Though early interpretations are steeped in analyses of the causal links between the author's life and work, more recently David G. Chibbett, who translated many of Doppo's most important short pieces in *River Mist and Other Stories*, observes that "Meat and Potatoes" marks Doppo's experimentation with dialogue and his turn toward Naturalism.<sup>6</sup> Moving away from questions of literary merit and characterizations, I argue that Doppo's deceptively simple text, far from insignificant, yields fertile instantiations of the convergences and incongruities of colonial fantasies of freedom and capitalist dreams.

Assertions that free and independent lives were assured in Hokkaido formed a crucial conceptual pillar of discourse on the distant island's promise. This stirring ideal merged from a confluence of literary works that viewed Hokkaido as an escape from either the burdens of the mainland's age-old, oppressive social conventions or the burdens of a modern, morally bankrupt society in the urbanized metropole. To illustrate, I offer Shimizu Shikin's short story "School for Émigrés" (*Imin gakuen*, 1899), which depicts a couple that moves to Hokkaido to flee from deep-rooted discrimination against the outcaste group, the *burakumin*, which provides fruitful comparison for Doppo's "Meat and Potatoes." Shikin, known for her outspoken writing on women's rights, produced a forceful if modest oeuvre. In this work, the protagonist, Kiyoko, hurt and puzzled by her father's sudden breaking off of relations after her marriage to a socially well-placed politician, suffers from malicious rumors about her background. When she unexpectedly receives a letter explaining that her

father has fallen seriously ill, Kiyoko seeks him out only to find him in an outcaste neighborhood. There, in a dramatic scene, her father reveals that her mother was burakumin. When Kiyoko confesses the newly discovered truth to her husband, he confirms his support for her and resigns his prominent position. “Rather than waste his life battling with those whose *barbaric* hearts could not be concealed behind feigned aspirations for *civilization*, he would devote himself to education, biding his time until things improved.”<sup>7</sup> The couple opts to set up a school for burakumin children in Hokkaido. The text describes the decision this way: “He and Kiyoko would take everything they owned and move to Hokkaido, gathering the children from all over the country who had grown up in unfortunate circumstances. Together, they would start a school for émigrés and raise a new generation of citizens, as fresh as the land of Hokkaido was new.”<sup>8</sup>

The architecture of this utopian view is secured by equating Hokkaido with new ways of thinking and being and a critique of the charade of modern Japan’s civilization. It is precisely Hokkaido’s peripherality that signifies the liberatory potential. In Shikin’s “School for Émigrés,” Hokkaido, usually defined by spatial and temporal differences that mark its backwardness, stands in opposition to the mainland’s putative civilized society mired in a long and barbaric history of bigotry. Upending the typical ideological associations of Hokkaido and Japan, this short work evokes a promising future for a new generation of citizens molded in Hokkaido’s imagined landscape of liberation. The trope of Hokkaido as a social blank slate functions to expose the thin veneer of Japan’s advancements, which was stained not only with archaic inequities but also with new ones, betraying the gap between rhetoric and realities.

If Shikin’s protagonists immigrate to Hokkaido to seek an alternative to long-standing prejudicial customs, Doppo’s, on one level, seem to believe Hokkaido offers an antidote for empty and materialistic modern life. The story itself—essentially an extended conversation—features a Mr. Okamoto, who decides to make an impromptu visit to a private men’s club in downtown Tokyo on a cold winter night. There he finds six gentlemen enjoying drinks and one another’s company in a hot, stuffy room. They engage in a spirited discussion about whether reality and ideals are irreconcilable, wherein the analogy of meat and potatoes emerges to represent each camp. A businessman named Kamimura champions the realist cause. He admits that in the past, as a fervent member of the Potato Party, he moved to Hokkaido and tried his hand at farming. When the pioneering life did not live

up to expectations, he gave up on idealism and entered “the fray of the social world” in the nation’s capital. “So now I’m a realist. I make money, eat good food and drink with you like this by a warm stove. And I say exactly what I like. When I’m hungry, I eat meat.”<sup>9</sup> Okamoto, who also once embraced idealism, however, claims that although he would like to choose between one of the two, he finds that he can no longer submit to the ideals of any “-ism” or give in to “lusts of the flesh.” He is always prevented from taking a particular side by his unusual wish “to be surprised.”<sup>10</sup>

Okamoto and Kamimura may have left behind their enchantment with idealism, but both delight in sharing the intricacies of their still palpable fantasies of life in Hokkaido. Rousing speeches by missionaries, who acclaimed the wonders of Hokkaido, first ignited Kamimura’s interest. He relates, “Some marvelous things they used to tell! They kept saying that nature was this or that, or talking about how wide the River Ishikari was, or how forests extended as far as the eye could see. It was too much for me. I fell head over heels in love with it.”<sup>11</sup> Both men animatedly narrate how they had imagined American-style houses with sloped roofs, chimneys, and glass windows. They listen intently to the small details that each had carefully mulled over, such as the exact number of windows or whether the bridge would look more natural with or without railings. And insofar as it was a dream, Kamimura had drafted a mental blueprint of the natural surroundings on his farm, including a windbreak of trees and a pristine stream, which he populated with geese and ducks. “And a cow lowing in the barn, of course!”<sup>12</sup>

Okamoto affirms that he too once had a great “enthusiasm for Hokkaido” and even still harbors favorable notions about living there. His connection to and fondness for Hokkaido was highly mediated by the relationship with his nameless darling. The fantasy of Hokkaido facilitated their romance by giving them full license to imagine their future together. “I had all sorts of images in my mind about Hokkaido, and my love and I were never happier than when we were discussing it.”<sup>13</sup> Okamoto had summoned up a picture of his dream house, like Kamimura, but it included an element that Kamimura never bothered to pencil in. “It differed in one respect . . . in that besides the red glimmer of light from the window on winter nights, I wanted to hear the sound of happy laughter from time to time; the clear ring of a girl’s voice singing.”<sup>14</sup> If Kamimura opts for a lowing cow to epitomize his oasis in the north, then Okamoto chooses the sweet sounds of his lover’s voice. Either way, the mere conjuring up of Hokkaido has great power to produce joy and satisfaction.

In Kamimura and Okamoto's renderings, winter, one of the most quintessential icons of Hokkaido—and one often imagined as threatening and oppressive—is a metaphorical marker overlaid with visions of emancipation and peaceful quiescence. Snow-covered landscapes, icicles hanging from the eaves, and imagery of Christmas were the stuff of this seasonal dream. When Okamoto asks, "Didn't the very sound of the word 'winter' carry you away?," Kamimura is stunned to have had the man read his thoughts. "How on earth did you know that? How interesting. I can see why you're a member of the Potato Party! Yes, I was over the moon at the very sound of the word. Somehow it seemed to me that winter and freedom were synonymous."<sup>15</sup> Rather than narrate their physical engagement with Hokkaido's natural world, these two men cast back to inventive daydreams conjured up by the mere utterance of the word "winter" in the context of Hokkaido. Kamimura explains that when he imagined his house buried in the snow and the wind scattering the snow from tree branches, he "shivered with excitement."<sup>16</sup> This conversation inspires a poetic moment in the story, wherein Kamimura recites a line from the second stanza of Thomas Grey's paean to pastoral life, "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," which begins, "Now fades the glimm'ring landscape on the sight / And all the air a solemn stillness holds." Rather than the roaring winds and the destruction of terrifying blizzards, the imagined frosty calm of Hokkaido's winter heralds an escape. Freedom, as conceptualized through snapshots of wintry natural splendor and sentimental Yuletide celebrations, evokes soothing serenity far from the fray of the social world.

As the romanticized notions of winter suggest, these gentlemen's reveries only tenuously and vaguely reference the toil and hardship involved in working the land. Okamoto makes no mention of it except to say that he planned to "open up some new land on Hokkaido."<sup>17</sup> Kamimura glorifies the tasks of clearing the wilderness, felling trees, and converting forests into fields, the phrase "with the sweat of my brow" repeated more than once. He envisions fields of azuki beans and potatoes surrounding his New England-style home, but the infrequent mention of labor is quite at odds with the refined pictures painted by the man. At one point it is unclear to a listener whether Kamimura's description was in fact real, and he asks whether Kamimura really built this house. "No. This is how I imagined it when I was in Kyoto."<sup>18</sup> He adds, "Let me see. That's it! It was on my way home from a stroll to the Nyakuō temple that I thought about the windows."<sup>19</sup> Divorced from the labor, discrete items such as windows are understood as a frame through which to view the fruit of



one's labor or as a glowing reminder from outdoors of the rewards of the man who works hard on his farm. It seems, however, there can be no similar pleasure derived from savoring the minutia of the actual exertions.

The dialogue in "Meat and Potatoes" might explicitly focus on idealism and realism, but what is notable is the *idealized* construction of Hokkaido repeatedly served up as conversational fare. For both men, Hokkaido still holds a powerful fascination from the great distance of the convivial atmosphere of their gentlemen's club in Tokyo. Yet, for every Kamimura and Okamoto—who returned to the comforts of the imperial center—there were countless less-fortunate individuals who had little choice but to settle and toil permanently in colonial Hokkaido. If the alluring potential of becoming a landholder initially attracted numerous Japanese settlers during the Meiji period, most did not find themselves in the idyllic conditions imagined in the two interlocutor's musings. In "Meat and Potatoes," farming fantasies are savored without mention of the dire realities of the tenancy system so prevalent in Hokkaido, and Kamimura's cushy lifestyle paid for by Hokkaido's coal industry is celebrated without remark on the formidable role coal played in Japan's oppressive colonial regime in Hokkaido and abroad. Below, as a contextual bridge between Doppo's 1901 text and Arishima's jottings in 1922, I situate tenant farming and coal production—two crucial institutions of colonial Hokkaido that were the backbone of the success of Japan's empire.

### A RECIPE FOR EMPIRE

On the surface of the story, Hokkaido appears to be the central signifier of idealism, which is explicitly linked to notions of personal freedom and independence from societal pressures. It stands in opposition to the national capital, where Kamimura works and eats his meat and which seems to serve as the heart of the world of realism. Kamimura, after all, recounts that during his period of youthful romanticism he "was resolved to leave this defiled part of the country and take my chance in the free lands of Hokkaido."<sup>20</sup> He remembers the exuberance that took hold of him as the train was leaving Ueno station and his overwhelming urge to shout out "Fools! Idiots!" to the Tokyoites. Buoyed by a sense of pride that he was unlike them, "with their constant hankering after wealth and fame," Kamimura spat out the window.<sup>21</sup> The strength of his conviction to leave behind the pettiness of society and take up the laudable task of taming nature, Kamimura willingly admits, brought tears to his eyes. Yet, after a three-month

stint working the land in the north, Kamimura defects from the Potato Party and returns to the metropolitan center.

Kamimura may have physically left the island, but his employment at none other than the Hokkaido Coal Company suggests that Hokkaido is not the antithesis of realism but at the heart of it. If in the earlier chapters I explicate the momentous contribution colonial Hokkaido made to the production of national ideology and subjectivities, here I assert its centrality in the growth of the material underpinnings of Japan's colonizing project. Although Doppo chose to title his short story "Meat and Potatoes," the pairing of potatoes and coal more aptly symbolizes the recipe for Japan's early empire: a concoction combining the relocation of Japan's superfluous population *to* its northern territory with the transfer of massive corporate profits *from* colonial Hokkaido into the war-making and empire-building machine. On the one hand, Japanese settlers pursued their desires for private land ownership in the northern colony, spurred on by a chorus singing the praises of Hokkaido as a brass ring of modern times. Although lived realities certainly betrayed the utopian fantasies, the colonists' labor nevertheless secured colonial Hokkaido as a vital strategic food and energy production base for the *naichi*. On the other hand, capitalist dreams were no illusion. Exceptional business deals and exploitative labor practices in Hokkaido—especially in the sites of tenant farms and coal mines—set the precedent for unrestrained collusion between political and corporate interests that would plunder the natural resources and siphon off the profits of Japan's formal colonies in decades to come.<sup>22</sup> Whereas settlers labored to dig potatoes and coal from Hokkaido's ground to (barely) survive, the political and business elite formulated their plans for empire over heaping servings of meat, a status symbol signaling Western-inflected modernity. As much as Hokkaido was identified with promises of self-realization and freedom, it was above all a space that made possible the very real and aggressive imperialist and capitalist projects of the modern era.

By the time Doppo's work appeared in 1901 the bitter realities of the tenancy system in Hokkaido were abundantly clear. Its beginnings can be traced back to the enactment of the Hokkaido Land Sale Regulation in June 1886. Officials toasted the measure as an excellent means to foster homesteading by offering land at fair prices and conditions to independent farmers. By the letter of the law, an individual was limited to 80 acres and was obliged to reclaim a certain percentage of the plot and build a primary residence within a specific time period. However, the prefectural office made

so many exceptions that by the end of the century the vast majority of the nongovernmental land in Hokkaido was owned by rich absentee landlords, while ordinary farmers, who found it difficult to meet the conditions of the loan packages, were forced into tenant contracts.<sup>23</sup> Businesses with stirring names, such as the Sincerity Company and the Shining North Company mentioned above, were most commonly expressly devoted to recruiting workers to reclaim and cultivate such large-scale farms.<sup>24</sup> In 1902 and 1903, Kawano Tsunekichi (1883–1930), a government official who had been charged to undertake a thorough survey of the conditions of land use in colonial Hokkaido, railed against speculators, whose abuse of destitute farmers, he argued, rivaled the destruction of insect infestations and floods in previous years. In one official report, Kawano writes, “most of the land has been eaten up by speculators or fallen into the hands of worthless nobles,” who “suck the blood of the poor.”<sup>25</sup> He added that rampant bribery, chicanery, and fraud ensured that the tenancy system was rigged to benefit the interests of the wealthy whereas those laboring on the estates “fall forever into the abysmal misery of a tenant farmer.”<sup>26</sup> In 1907, one among many newspaper articles decrying the same injustices equated the Hokkaido Prefectural Office to a “den a thieves.”<sup>27</sup>

Kobayashi Takiji, the widely acclaimed author of proletarian literature, wrote some of the most noteworthy documentation of the violent legacy of colonial Hokkaido. Kobayashi’s family moved to Otaru, Hokkaido when he was four, and he spent his childhood and youth there during some of Japan’s most tumultuous years of state repression of labor movements, peasant uprisings, and socialist organizing. His most famous work *The Crab Cannery Ship* (*Kani kōsen*, 1929), which portrays a laborers’ revolt against inhumane treatment on a crab-canning vessel that plies the frigid waters between Hokkaido and Russia, was well received and continues to attract critical attention.<sup>28</sup> During his short life, Kobayashi used his writing and speaking talents as a labor activist, a member of the Proletarian Writers Guild of Japan, and (as of 1931) a supporter of the then-illegal Japan Communist Party. His short work titled “March 15, 1928” (*Senkyūbyakunijūhachinen sangatsu jūgonichi*, 1928), about a case of torture by the Japanese Special Higher Police, presaged his own demise. On a cold day in February 1933, at the age of 29, Kobayashi was killed in police custody.

*The Absentee Landlord* (*Fuzai jinushi*, 1929) at once poignantly depicts a community of Hokkaido tenant farmers and lays bare the systemic problems that made the tenancy system insufferable.<sup>29</sup> The

plot reveals the plight of tenant farmers, already living in dire poverty, who reach their breaking point when rice crops are ruined by an unseasonably late rainfall. After their appeals to the absentee landlord, Mr. Kishino, are met by callous indifference, they mount public protests to ameliorate their intolerable situation.<sup>30</sup> Pointing to widespread corruption, Kobayashi's narrator explains that the Hokkaido Prefectural Office had sold huge plots of the most fertile tracts of land in Hokkaido at almost giveaway prices to the nobility and well-connected, wealthy families.<sup>31</sup> The background of the farmers is conveyed through the story of the family of a central protagonist, Ken, a young man who takes an active role in the farmers' resistance. Deserting their home on the mainland full of hope for a fresh start in Hokkaido, Ken's family discovers that "the land that had been described as being 'receivable in its entirety at no cost to you when you have cultivated 60 percent of it' turned out to be from fifty to seventy-five miles from the nearest railroad station. Just the cost of transportation alone would cut deeply into the profits."<sup>32</sup> The paltry subsidy provided to the aspiring farmers by the immigration services, moreover, sufficed only to carry them through one year. By the time families like Ken's had converted enough land to meet the conditions of the contract, they would be awash in debt for basic necessities. Just two years into the contract, Ken's father abandons his land and becomes a tenant farmer. At the mercy of ruthless merchants who charged usurious interest rates, such as Kaneuroko in *The Absentee Landlord*, and the fluctuations of market prices, often manipulated to benefit the landlords and merchants, the tenant farmers could not avoid going into debt.<sup>33</sup> Scenes also highlight the tension between farmers and police and soldiers, the latter often used as the strong arm of the state to protect the landlord's property. One soldier who stays in Ken's humble house when training in the area shares the story of his cousin who "suffered agonies" when ordered to quash an uprising in his own village.<sup>34</sup> The soldier then proclaims, "I wouldn't be surprised if some day we have to come charging through your village with bayonets."<sup>35</sup> Soon thereafter, the local policeman comes to seize what little rice the farmers could save from their unsuccessful crop. Kobayashi, deftly depicting the precarious position and conflicted feelings of these men, has the officer, well-known and even liked by some farmers, apologetically carry out his orders.

Kobayashi's stark portrayal of the squalor of the farmers' living conditions, confirmed in Arishima's writings below, stand in contrast to the idealized lodgings of Doppo's protagonists. The farmers

suffer constantly from the inadequate and unsound construction of their quarters, which they share with farm animals. A glimpse into such shanties is seen through the eyes of the landlord's daughter, who accompanies her father when he inspects his estate.

Her sweet, pretty fantasies about the chocolate-colored farmhouses which, seeing them through the train windows and in storybooks, she had pictured as being pastoral and idyllic, had been completely smashed. She had peeked inside two or three farmhouses. The heavy odor of horse dung and decaying straw assaulted her from the dark interiors. As a swarm of horseflies flung itself against her cheeks like pellets, she had let out a scream. She had seen a child, its belly distended from hunger, its eyes round and staring, grab a handful of ash from the hearth and bring it to its mouth . . . From atop a pile of bedding in a corner jumped a cackling hen, its head jerking warily.<sup>36</sup>

The shock of Ms. Kishino's discovery of filth and privation where she expects quaint hominess emphasizes the fiction of the "sweet, pretty fantasies" of farming life in Hokkaido. Kobayashi also underscores the smashed fantasies of the farmers themselves, describing the role immigration recruitment campaigns played in luring Japanese from the mainland. The third chapter opens with several lengthy quotations from promotional materials from the Hokkaido prefectural government that hail the "abundance" and "life of plenty" waiting for "diligent persons" in Hokkaido. One excerpt characterizes the opening of Hokkaido as a "national enterprise" and suggests farmers adopt the "devotion that soldiers demonstrate in time of war" "to increase the wealth of the nation."<sup>37</sup> The narrator offers pointed commentary: the families who "were hopelessly trapped found it difficult to resist such glowing promises and statements. The trap was cunningly baited."<sup>38</sup> Now 30 years later, even though "the impossible dreams that had been held out to him in *Information on Emigration* had collapsed before his eyes," Ken's father still "carried a copy of the emigration pamphlet in his pocket."<sup>39</sup>

If the labor of tenant farmers lined the pockets of rich landowners, then the sweat of coal miners supplied another key ingredient for the imperialist-capitalist recipe.<sup>40</sup> When "Meat and Potatoes" was published, the most famous Hokkaido coal company was indisputably the Hokkaido Colliery and Railway Company, known as Hokutan, founded in 1889.<sup>41</sup> It began when the Hokkaido Development Agency built up the infrastructure and operations of the Horonai mine and railway with its generous ten-year budget funded largely by public monies in the 1870s. In the late 1880s, as part of official government

policies to promote industry, a wide range of government-operated mines and factories in Hokkaido were sold to tycoons of commerce and industry at absurdly low prices and with extremely favorable conditions. Hokutan's founder Hori Motoi (1844–1912), an insider in Hokkaido's bureaucracy, created the company expressly to purchase what was by all accounts the undeniable prize among the Hokkaido assets sold off during this time.<sup>42</sup> Even though over two million yen had been invested, the government sold it for just over three hundred thousand yen, or around 15 percent of the original investment. A modest down payment, a flexible ten-year payment plan, and generous tax breaks ensured an overwhelmingly profitable enterprise.<sup>43</sup> New companies could not compete with Hokutan, whose incredibly favorable start up included a mine equipped with advanced technology and rewarding government contracts. It quickly added Yubari mine, which turned out to be the richest and the largest coal bed in Hokkaido, and Sorachi mine, which benefited from the use of penal labor until that practice was abolished in 1894, securing its dominance in Hokkaido's coal industry for decades. Hokutan maintained a near-total monopoly for years, holding over 90 percent of the market share until 1907, when it dipped to just over 73 percent.<sup>44</sup> Hokutan is an early but archetypal example of the corporate feeding frenzy of this era, a particularly welcome boon to emergent zaibatsu, proving that the dreams of gaining unfathomable wealth in Hokkaido were fulfilled for an elite minority.

Yet, to be sure, profits did not remain in Hokkaido. The black diamond was shipped out in service to modernization on the mainland and colonization projects abroad. During the years dubbed the era of "railway mania," 1890–1893, Hokutan's impressive line was considered one of the nation's Big Five private railways.<sup>45</sup> When Hori purchased it, the railway ran between Otaru and Horonai. In 1890, a new leg of track was laid to Muroran, and, in 1893, the regular steamship run from Aomori to Hakodate was extended to Muroran, then swiftly becoming one of Hokkaido's busiest ports.<sup>46</sup> Soon, Yubari rivaled some of the largest mines on the mainland with production exceeding one million tons a year.<sup>47</sup> A song, whose jaunty rhythm unfortunately suffers in translation, manifests the excitement Hokutan's Yubari mine generated at the time.

In the middle of this reclaimed world,  
is the story of the incredible prosperity of the Yubari mine enterprise.  
Horokabetsu, until two years ago the dwelling place of bears and  
badgers,  
today has been transformed into a city.

Lump and pulverized coal are sent out daily  
 on a railway laid down from Otaru to Muroran.  
 Over one thousand miners fervently extract the coal  
 on three shifts day and night.  
 An inexhaustible mine, Yubari really is Japan's gem safe.  
 Indeed, a warehouse of jewels.<sup>48</sup>

This panegyric, written by a dedicated employee, extols the conversion of a backward hinterland into a civilized city and Yubari's productivity, made possible by the faceless workers who toil round-the-clock. Lurking behind the hyperbole is the truth that Hokutan's train transported the gains of Hokkaido's coal to the vaults in the imperial metropole, where Doppo's Kamimura and his ilk enjoyed their beefsteaks and comfortable life. In the early 1880s, then director of the Hokkaido Development Agency Kuroda Kiyotaka explicitly stated, "Hokkaido is Japan's coffer."<sup>49</sup> By the same token, the last line of this melody, with its glorification of Yubari mine's longevity and incalculable value through the analogies of "Japan's gem safe" and "warehouse of jewels," betrays the true designs of those with the most power to determine reality in Hokkaido.

Hokutan's operations reinforced and were reinforced by the mainland state and economic interests that furthered Japanese colonial exploits. In addition to supplying coal to Japan National Railways (Nihon kokuyū tetsudō), Hokutan also had a contract with Nippon Railway (Nihon tetsudō), Japan's first private railway, which the government specifically ordered be established between Tokyo and Aomori to support the colonization of Hokkaido.<sup>50</sup> The steam engines of Mitsubishi's marine shipping company NYK Line (Nihon yūsen kabushiki kaisha), which operated regular, daily runs between Hokkaido and the mainland, ran on Hokutan coal.<sup>51</sup> The direct links to capitalist growth and empire can be discerned from Hokutan's trajectory of market expansion and A-list customers. In 1902, the company began producing coke, a valuable coal-by-product that provided the source of energy for blast furnaces used to produce iron and steel, the indispensable materials for warships and aircraft. It also broke into the shipping industry, exporting freight and carrying passengers to Shanghai and Hong Kong. In 1907, Hokutan collaborated with the British arms manufacturers Sir W. G. Armstrong, Whitworth and Company Ltd. and Vickers Son and Maxim, Ltd. to open The Japan Steel Works (Kabushiki kaisha Nihon seikōsho), thereafter making steel and armaments in its Muroran factory. Hokutan also maintained numerous profitable connections with the Ministry of the Navy and

Tokyo Munitions Company (Tōkyō hōhei kōshō), which constructed rifles, small arms, and metal work.

If, as one scholar claims, “Hokkaido’s coal mining history is really the history of Hokutan’s development and expansion,” then likewise, Hokutan’s development and expansion is really the history of Japan’s capitalist growth through the making of modern monopolies.<sup>52</sup> Mitsui was the first zaibatsu on the scene in Hokkaido, after establishing itself in the burgeoning coal industry with lucrative government deals, such as the Miike mine in 1888. It purchased Noboribetsu coal mine in 1911 and after acquiring sufficient shares of Hokutan stocks seized control of the company in 1913. Mitsui subsequently opened Sunagawa mine in 1915 and purchased Monjū in 1922. Mitsubishi was just one step behind, taking possession of Bibai mine in 1915 and Ōyūbari mine in 1916, as well as opening Ashibetsu mine in the same year. Sumitomo started its collection of Hokkaido coal mines in 1916 with Tōmatsu and picked up five productive mines in the Utashinai area in the mid to late 1920s.<sup>53</sup> These monopolies overwhelmingly dominated the coal industry in Hokkaido until the 1930s.<sup>54</sup> Yet, just as importantly, revenue from coal made up the majority of the top three financial combine’s earnings at this time. For instance, from 1894–1918, Mitsubishi’s coal profits amounted to 52.5 percent of total earnings, constituting one of the essential core operations that bolstered the emerging zaibatsu.<sup>55</sup> In this way, Hokkaido coal production functioned as a keystone for securing their unassailable economic supremacy.

For decades Hokkaido’s most precious gem—the black diamond—fueled the growth of these financial cliques and their later colonial exploits. As early as 1902, Hokkaido coal accounted for 10.5 percent of the national production and by 1928 it surpassed 20 percent.<sup>56</sup> This represents an unexpectedly high portion of the national output for just one region, especially given Hokkaido’s comparative lack of infrastructure, its late start of establishing mines, negligible population (read labor power), and considerable distance from the markets in the Tokyo-Yokohama and Kansai areas. Mitsui, Mitsubishi, and Sumitomo reinvested profits from their coal interests into heavy industry, which constituted the core of their contribution to Japan’s militarization and wartime imperialist projects. Mitsubishi manufactured the infamous Zero Fighter plane along with Japan’s biggest warships. Sumitomo played its part by providing smaller but crucial parts for the Zero Fighter and other military equipment. Mitsui-controlled Japan Steel Works, established in Muroran by the Hokkaido Colliery and Steamship Company in 1907, manufactured the then the world’s largest gun barrels that assailed Japan’s enemies from, for instance,



the battleship Yamato. Mitsui's coal chemical division also created coal tar—used in steel- and paper-making—and ammonia—with practical applications for explosives, fertilizer, and textile production. Examining Hokkaido coal—both its use as an indispensable energy source and as a source of funding the further expansion of the empire—one begins to sense the significance of the northern colony in the most decisive ventures of the time.<sup>57</sup>

### THE LIMITS OF LIBERATION

By 1922, the renowned author Arishima Takeo was accustomed to seeing his name in print and attracting the attention of admirers and critics alike. Still, he was unprepared for the news frenzy that greeted the liberation of his farm in Hokkaido in August of that year. Spurred to respond to both the censure and the dismissal of his attempt to establish a communal farming community, Arishima granted interviews and composed a handful of essays explaining various facets of his thinking on and the process by which he pursued this radical act. In fact, over the course of his life, he wrote about how experiences in Hokkaido, first as a student and later as a professor at Sapporo Agricultural College, had profoundly influenced his literary production and personal worldview. A man who rarely minced words about the depravity of political leaders and the corporate elite, Arishima frequently conceptualized Hokkaido as a foil for the maladies of modern Japanese society. Yet, if Arishima's writings on Hokkaido often embody the notions of revolutionary transformation and personal freedom, some of his musings in the last year of his life also suggest a degree of resignation that reveals the limits of liberation discourse for the individual, Hokkaido, and the nation.

Arishima, a contemporary of Doppo, was a complicated figure, whose short life took a number of unconventional turns. Born into an affluent and influential family, he was accordingly well educated and traveled. He had the good fortune to learn English young in a private mission school in Yokohama and then attended the prestigious Gakushuin peers school. The royal family once requested that he be made the official playmate (*gakunyū*) of the crown prince, later the Taisho emperor. At the age of 19, he surprised his family by choosing to matriculate at Sapporo Agricultural College, hardly regarded at the time as an institution equal to the Arishima family's standing in society. He again upset his father, with whom he had a long-term, strained relationship, when he announced his conversion to Christianity. After graduating, he spent four years abroad, earning

a master of arts at Haverford College in the United States and traveling extensively in Europe. Upon his return to Japan in 1907, Arishima assumed a professorship of English at his alma mater in Sapporo, then known as the Agricultural College of Tohoku Imperial University. He also married and had three children before, in 1915, returning to Tokyo, where he hoped his wife might be able to fight what was ultimately a losing battle with tuberculosis. The shocking news of the transfer of his vast Hokkaido land holdings to the tenant farmers free of cost in 1922 was eclipsed less than a year later by the scandal of his successful love-suicide with a married woman.

Arishima, who maintains the reputation as a path-breaking Meiji author, started his writing career rather late in life. In 1910, he joined the literary coterie, the White Birch Group (*Shirakabaha*), when in his early thirties, an age considerably older than the other members. His earliest short stories, such as “Death of Osue” (*Osue no shi*, 1914), “An Incident” (*An inshidento*, 1914), and “Delusion” (*Mōsō*, 1914), were written during his second stint in Sapporo. Still, it was not until his father died in 1916 that he was freed from familial pressures and announced writing as his profession. In 1917, he made his first indelible stamp on the world of literature with the wrenching short story, “The Descendants of Cain” (*Kain no matsuei*), a depiction of the miserable conditions of tenant farmers in Hokkaido. This was quickly followed by *The Agony of Coming into the World* (*Umare izuru nayami*, 1918), which sympathetically portrays the struggle of a young man in Hokkaido who passionately desires to be an artist but is forced by circumstances to follow in his father’s footsteps as a fisherman. Perhaps his most famous work, however, is the full-length novel, *A Certain Woman* (*Aru onna*, 1919), which features a female protagonist—fiercely independent, intelligent, and in command of her sexual agency—the likes of which Japanese literature had never seen. Arishima’s body of work may be relatively modest compared to other literary giants, but he has left a lasting impression on Japanese modern letters, today frequently described as a passionate writer (*jōnetsu no sakka*).<sup>58</sup>

Arishima’s outspoken political commentary paralleled his provocative literary works. He was a notable critic of contemporary society and the increasingly belligerent nation-state of Japan. The objects of his acerbic criticisms included militarism, war, nationalism, and capitalism, and he frequently made astute connections among all of these national ills. Concern for economic and social inequities, a dominant theme in his writings, was sparked early in his life in Hokkaido. Arishima, who experienced immense shame over his

privileged aristocratic upbringing, performed charity work in impoverished areas of Sapporo when a student, and as his indignation grew, proclaimed that a society that produced such injustices was a deformed civilization (*katawana bunmei*).<sup>59</sup> A stint in compulsory military service deepened his disapprobation of the Japanese government, which he lambasted, writing “in the filth it conceals, the sovereign state resembles the lid of a night-soil bucket.”<sup>60</sup> In later years, he proclaimed, “The Diet does not represent the will of the people. It represents the will of money. Society is supposed to be made up of a collection of people, but ours is constituted by the aggregation of money. War and peace are ultimately decided by the whims of a capitalist minority. This while the majority of the people, whose existence is wretched, is sacrificed.”<sup>61</sup> His disillusionment with Christianity, which he mistakenly believed embraced pacifism, intensified when he watched aghast from the United States his country’s embroilment in the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) and the fervent support of this conflict by his American Christian friends.<sup>62</sup> Disturbed by the inculcation of unquestioning patriotism in the Japanese populace, he once sarcastically remarked that the Imperial Rescript on Education, “a concoction of ambitious politicians,” “should be crumpled and thrown in the fire—at least it would then be making itself useful by providing more ash for the *hibachi*.”<sup>63</sup> Arishima’s censure remained unabated years later when he wrote, “To commit inhumane barbarity in the name of patriotism only nurses the miserable suffering of the people.”<sup>64</sup>

In juxtaposition to stagnating traditions and burdensome modernity, Hokkaido held potent symbolism as a place of new beginnings and invigorating novelty. For Arishima, who spent a total of 12 years living, studying, and working in Hokkaido, the island held a special charm for its ability to astound him with startling marvels. Speaking to the draw of Hokkaido on Arishima, Paul Anderer writes, “The freshness and freedom of the uncultivated early frontier society of Hokkaido, his romantic childhood dreams, and a love for quietude far removed from the restrictions of home combined to impel him toward the adventurous complexity of nineteenth century Hokkaido.”<sup>65</sup> Indeed, Arishima’s own reflections are suffused with the sense of freshness of Hokkaido. He regards his years as a student there the most formative of his life, having deeply shaped his outlook on how to live and his relationship with nature. In “Impressions of Hokkaido” (*Hokkaidō ni tsuite no inshō*, 1923), he relates how captivated he was by both the intensity of the seasons and their abrupt changes. The sudden change to spring after a long winter—the whole

island quickly becoming a “dramatic, passion-filled stage”—thrilled his heart.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, Arishima was fascinated with the mysterious celestial wonders unique to the northern hemisphere, such as on one fall morning when he saw four suns in the sky. He immediately ran to the home of an astronomy professor who explained the atmospheric conditions that give rise to this rare, otherworldly phenomenon. Hokkaido, for Arishima, was a place that dazzled and delighted the senses and brought unrivaled surprises.

If some utopian Hokkaido narratives focused on economic opportunities or escape from prejudice, Arishima stressed the possibilities for self-realization and self-determination. Again, in “Impressions of Hokkaido,” Arishima writes,

Like no other place, Hokkaido overwhelms people who are new to it with a savage and rough sense of freedom, but for those who get used to it, it is difficult to shake its enchantments. When you live there, you feel as if what we call the “self” becomes clear. It gives birth to the courage to face hardships. It spurs you to devote all of your efforts to each and every task you do. Certainly, this is the manifestation of the special spirit of Hokkaido’s inhabitants.<sup>67</sup>

Within the larger context of the essay, Arishima intimates that the sense of freedom is disorienting at first because settlers are so accustomed to stifling traditions and expectations of mainland society. The unfamiliar surroundings provoke a fundamental rethinking of oneself and one’s place in the world. Inspired to achieve great feats, the newcomer to Hokkaido can forge an original personal identity, which Arishima essentializes as a collective spirit engendered from the singular conditions of the northern territory.

Furthermore, Arishima envisions that Hokkaido’s liberatory force would be favorable not only for individuals but also for the nation as a whole. In the same essay, he conceives of a potential for a new mode of being—a revolutionary rewriting of Japanese culture—if the central government would give rein to the settlers of Hokkaido to follow through on their Hokkaido-inspired “spirit.” “If those living there were allowed even more freedom to exercise their human agency, then most likely Hokkaido’s immigrants would make some new contribution to Japanese traditional norms.”<sup>68</sup> Lamenting that as a result of the sycophancy of the men running the country the citizens of Hokkaido are being “thoroughly trampled on,” he writes, “Today, the distinctive traits of Hokkaido’s nature gradually are being extinguished, and it seems the supporters of the conventional patterns of the mainland will

prevail. One wonders if there could be a politician with a poetic, penetrating vision, who could put people to work to resuscitate Hokkaido's unique natural world."<sup>69</sup> Scandinavia and New England, which Arishima characterizes as frontier spaces that have driven their developing civilizations forward, are called forth as models for Hokkaido. By contrast, citizens of Hokkaido, stymied by self-interested merchants and narrow-minded statesmen, are hindered from attaining their true promise, preventing a revitalization of Japan.

Throughout Arishima's life, seeds that had been planted early blossomed as he became absorbed by socialism and philosophies of self-determination, in particular the writings of the Russian revolutionary thinker Pyotr Kropotkin (1842–1921) and the iconoclastic American poet Walt Whitman (1819–1892). Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*, published in London in 1902, offered a challenge to the prevailing science, which emphasized the function of competition in animal and human survival. Kropotkin contends that cooperation was just as critical an evolutionary imperative as competition. Arishima was attracted to Kropotkin's arguments that challenged notions of natural hierarchies with which he struggled so much.<sup>70</sup> From Whitman, a man Arishima viewed as a "free, self-reliant, unified human being, confident and strong," he gained inspiration to forge personal freedom through earnest reflection on his ethical convictions and endeavoring to reconcile these with his actions.<sup>71</sup>

One of the most remarkable outcomes of Arishima's longtime struggle over his ethical integrity and engagement with doctrines of economic justice occurred on August 17, 1922, when he turned over his large farm in northwestern Hokkaido to the tenant farmers free of charge, an event he called "the revolution of his life."<sup>72</sup> His father had amassed parcels of land over a number of years, managed their reclamation (from Tokyo), and bequeathed them to his son. In 1922, the tract amounted to almost 800 acres, on which lived 71 families, who worked its fields. After his father's death, he gave considerable thought to how to resolve his conflicted feelings about his class privilege. In an effort to align his personal moral philosophy with his actions, he chose to relinquish ownership. After a difficult process of drawing up the legal paperwork, finally, Arishima gathered the families together on a summer afternoon to read aloud "Farewell to My Tenant Farmers" (*Kosakunin e no kokubetsu*), which announced the liberation of Kaributo Farm.<sup>73</sup>

In an interview that appeared in the March 1923 issue of *Kaibō* (*Liberation*), Arishima details the many aspects that made the tenant

farming system untenable and cruel. Besides the obvious burdens of the tenancy fees and taxes along with shouldering the costs of fertilizer and transportation, Arishima highlights the pernicious debt cycle that prevented farmers from improving their dwellings. When Arishima first travelled to Kaributo farm with his father in 1900, what left the most lasting and disturbing impression were the deplorable living conditions of the tenant farmers. If Doppo's Potato Party men put idyllic residences at the heart of their farming fantasies, it was precisely the reality of the Hokkaido farmers' lodgings that convinced Arishima of the savagery of the tenant farming system. Like Ms. Kishino in *The Absentee Landlord*, Arishima was stunned by the primitive mud huts with crude thatched roofs, which afforded none of the protection or comfort of a home. When he returned years later to find that the farmers had been unable to improve these habitations in any way, he realized the problem was rooted in a predatory economic system and not the farmers. "In my case, of course, what made me see just how awful the current system of capitalism is and the direct motivation for me [in liberating the farm] was actually learning about the lives of farmers, and in particular the realities of the lives of tenant farmers."<sup>74</sup> Unable to escape the misery, he states, the dirt-poor farmers are always chasing after a better day.

By the time Arishima liberated Kaributo Farm in 1922, the idea of *kaihō* had been circulating for some time. The prewar socialist magazine *Kaihō*, started in 1919, denounced the class system, unfair labor practices, and the oppression of militarism and autocratic governance. Beginning in the 1920s, it took up such issues as universal suffrage, the right of women to participate in politics, and discrimination against burakumin. In 1922, individuals at an unprecedented conference of burakumin in Kyoto established the National Levellers Association (*Zenkoku Suiheisha*), a burakumin advocacy organization, whose stirring manifesto is sometimes characterized as the world's first declaration of human rights.<sup>75</sup> Arishima specifically mentions being inspired by the Suiheisha movement and their conceptualization of freedom as not something bestowed by authority, but a birthright that one personally claims.<sup>76</sup> There is evidence that the term *kaihō* was also used for disingenuous ends. Arishima took issue with the then popular trend of speaking euphemistically of rich individuals liberating mansions (*teitaku kaihō*) or farms to describe selling off assets or property that the wealthy could no longer make a profit from or that threatened to become an economic liability. Along these same lines, he rebukes the hollow pretensions of landowners who promoted their

so-called altruistic acts of temporarily commuting the tenant farmers' yearly dues when, in fact, they were receiving government subsidies for such payouts.<sup>77</sup>

Arishima honed his thinking on the transfer of his Hokkaido farm through engagement in a debate on the New Village Movement (*atarashiki mura undō*). In 1918, Mushanokōji Saneatsu (1885–1976), fellow member of the White Birch literary school, established New Village (*atarashiki mura*) in Miyazaki prefecture, a utopian commune whose philosophy emphasized the notions of cooperative living, universal humanity, and the attainment of happiness and freedom through perfecting one's self according to one's natural calling. Members disavowed war and class disparity, and, emphasizing the value of artistic expression, published a literary journal and produced plays.<sup>78</sup> In an article in *Central Review* (*Chūō kōron*), Arishima expresses ambivalence about the project, in one line forecasting the failure of the experiment and in the next professing that even a frustrated attempt should be considered a success. In more straightforward moments, he speaks to the situation of the propertied class, reminding them that they owe their lives—their health, talents, and character—to their elite backgrounds and not solely to their own efforts. In Arishima's estimation the idealistic community smacked of an intellectual or spiritual exercise, and its members shirked a responsibility to radically rework the class system. Arishima directly addresses Mushanokōji as a fellow elite: "Since we must leave behind our handicap—our very true nature that seeks to enjoy happiness—it is predictable that we will continue to have painful experiences in regards to materialistic well-being. People like us are restrained by our existence. We do not have true freedom (*hontō no jiyū*). Given that this is the case, those of us who have greatly enjoyed the benefits of the capitalist system must, then, consider the distress of people if this system should continue on as it is."<sup>79</sup> After giving up the Kaributo farm in 1922, Arishima emphasized the difference between the New Village and his actions in Hokkaido in an interview with the journal *Kaihō* titled, "From Private Farm to Communal Farm" (*Shiyū nōjyo kara kyōsan nōdan e*, 1923). The New Village members are highly self-motivated, working almost religiously to see if they can make the experiment a success. However, the crux of the matter for Arishima is that whereas "the New Village lives off donations and other kinds of monies and not from the products directly from the farm," the Kaributo farmers, who exist in abject poverty, do not have the luxury of such recourse.<sup>80</sup> He emphasized the marked difference between people who supplemented their idealistic life with generous handouts

and real tenant farmers unable to extract themselves from the oppressive forces of capital.

The texts published after Arishima surrendered his farm manifest the conflicted feelings he held about the potential for his act to have any meaningful or lasting effect. They are suffused with a quiet resignation of effecting the wider change Arishima hoped to see in society. He was discouraged by the legal system's thorough subordination to capitalist ideology, which thwarted his goals at every step. His lawyer made trying requests for "arrangements to harmonize the benefits between the landowners and that tenants" and suggested negotiating a legal basis for a farm that would be based on "co-existence and mutual prosperity."<sup>81</sup> The advocate also wrote numerous communiqués complaining that Arishima completely disregarded his own position, and that his unprecedented demands wreaked havoc on all normal procedures. Arishima remained staunchly opposed to any hypocritical compromise, stating, "No matter how much I think on the matter, there is no way to harmonize the economic positions of landowners and tenants. I find it impossible to appease my conscience through the exploitation of the fruits of the labor of my tenants that is not the result of my own exertions."<sup>82</sup> Arishima was exasperated when he discovered that existing law did not allow for true communal property, forcing one to choose between an organizational plan along the lines of a foundation or a union, each with their drawbacks and contradictions. Since Arishima wanted the new farm to be owned equally by all farmers rather than be an entity made up of separate owners pooling resources, he struggled to make the biased legal system work for him. Tension in Arishima's vision and the actual practical outcome also emerged as he negotiated the logistics of the transfer with the farmers themselves. He chaffed at the reluctance of the farmers and friends to comply with his wish to use the phrase "communal farm" (*kyōsan nōdan*) because of its connections with communism. In the end, he was not completely satisfied and worried that greedy profiteers would seize the farm.

At the same time, Arishima emphasizes in interviews and essays that transforming the private farm into a self-governing collective was, most importantly, a means to attain personal liberation. In 1922, in a short essay on the meaning of freedom written in the months just before he relinquished his farm, Arishima stressed that scholars and revolutionaries who believed that absolute freedom was something authorities bestowed on humans suffered from the incurable disease of self-deception that reversed the ends and the means. Rather, freedom was something humans were required to cultivate in their everyday



lives and actions. He writes, “While we hold up hope for a revolution (*benkaku*) of society’s organizational structure, nay, even before we hold up hope for such a thing, we must claim our own personal freedom.”<sup>83</sup> The attainment of freedom was, in this formulation, distanced from the loftier intentions of intervening in the oppressive capitalist system, even made a prerequisite of the latter. In another essay, he goes so far as to claim that his literary production had been sullied (*yogosu*) as a result of the contradiction in his private life and that he suffered deeply from a paradox of the self (*jiko mujun*). He effuses, “Therefore, by giving over my land to the tenants—by liberating the farm—I have escaped the anguish I have felt for a long time because my actual life actions and philosophies were discordant. That today is a splendid cheerful day for me is absolutely a result of having liberated the property.”<sup>84</sup> Thus, liberating the farm was just as much an act of liberating himself. Whereas earlier Arishima had critiqued the members of the New Village for not endeavoring to change society at large, as he faced the enormous frustrations of making his ideal communal farm a reality, he modified his understanding of success within the framework of personal liberation.

In many of his writings in 1923, the year of his suicide, Arishima stresses that regardless of whether the liberation of his farm succeeded or not, it sufficed that the act engendered a sense of personal gratification. Fearing that all of his plans would come to naught and the farm self-destruct under the avaricious, autocratic political and corporate rulers, he confessed to having little optimism about the project he had taken up in all earnestness. He admits:

I think it is fine if people know the extent to which what I’ve done ends in failure, not just because of the intransigence of the current capitalist structure or the harmful consequences it creates, but also because even if I donate my farm for free, that alone cannot bring farmers well-being. For me, that I just took on the challenge gives me satisfaction. Once I let go of it and it is no longer mine, I won’t have any regrets no matter what happens. At least right now I plan to put my all into making it as worthwhile, effective, and successful as possible.<sup>85</sup>

Unable to compete with the larger forces of capitalism, Arishima concedes that his one isolated act cannot effect the systemic change necessary to bring farmers well-being. In an article published in the *Otaru Newspaper*, he rather defensively asserts that people should not view his act as one undertaken “to be seen as a man of virtue.” Rather, “it was an act I had to do to appease my conscience.”<sup>86</sup> In

lieu of resolving society's economic inequities, he is forced to settle for resolving the paradox of the self. It is left to all of us to wonder what his suicide in June of 1923 suggests about his ability to do even that.

We need not question Arishima's sincerity in wanting to help tenant farmers. His embrace of personal liberation reflects a disillusionment, which derived from a sobering reckoning with the limits of liberation within the modern capitalist system. As he tried to negotiate the uncompromising legal labyrinth that frustrated his every effort to create a true communal farm, it became all too clear that the forces behind Doppo's Kamimura character reigned supreme. What Arishima had once hoped might be a special collective spirit possible in Hokkaido, meaningful for the inhabitants of Hokkaido and the nation, was unfeasible under the powerful imperialist-capitalist regime. In the end, the only refuge was to be found in a private satisfaction evoked through the language of inner freedom.

## CONCLUSION

In the 1930s, the invitations to immigrate to Hokkaido continued to be widely disseminated, recruitment materials still contrasting the mainland and Hokkaido through dichotomies of scarcity and abundance, and struggles and freedom. A typical specimen from 1931 communicates its summons to Hokkaido in the following terms:

Recently, each year our population increases by one million people, but the development of resources does not keep up, and people's life struggles grow ever more difficult. So now our country is turning over a new leaf (*kōshi isshin*) and the citizens likewise have to be inspired and determined in order to face an important era that demands enormous effort. Come this fall, we must cultivate a new destiny (*shin'unmei*) for the imperial nation and a new life (*shinseimei*) for each individual. To introduce Hokkaido, a land of abundant gifts of nature and developing freedom (*shinkō jiyū*), below we not only describe today's urgent business but also provide a summary of conditions.<sup>87</sup>

The newness of Hokkaido holds particular attraction, with suggestions of a cornucopia of economic opportunity, tantalizing citizens with the chance to start afresh. As one might expect from a text that coincides with the opening years of what would be the Asia-Pacific

War (1931–1945), it emphasizes the trinity of prosperity, linking personal interests and destinies to loftier imperial and national goals and futures. Like its forerunners in the Meiji era, this text implies that sacrifice and resolve assures wealth and freedom.

The rallying call of Meiji utopian narratives—and their later progeny—may have been “To Hokkaido!” where, by all indications, one could bring to fruition personal and imperial fortunes and avoid the bleak and trying future that awaited citizens on the mainland. Yet, in reality, the direction of benefits ran in the opposite direction through an economic order that exported resources and profits from the labor of Hokkaido’s inhabitants to the mainland, enriching an ever thinner slice of Japan’s populace. What had been set in motion with the promotion of exceptional land regulations that benefitted the wealthy, fortification of monopolies, and legal reinforcement of private ownership in the 1880s, rendered Arishima’s attempt to construct a true commune in 1922 unpracticable. By then, the imperialist, capitalist Coal Party model had won. Those who produced the collective imaginary of the colony and physically exploited it not only determined the discourse but also the legal and economic framework that would shape the realities of Hokkaido, the nation, and the empire. No degree of utopian optimism or attempt at personal liberation could counteract that.

Still, those original Meiji narratives hold such power that they have definitively shaped the postwar nostalgia for Hokkaido’s past. As discussed in [chapter 1](#), heroic *tondenhei* farmer-soldiers win top billing over the more sobering story of tenant farmers in the romanticized retelling of the brave farmers who settled in colonial Hokkaido. Just as interestingly, a virtual industry generates sentimental historical memory of coal mines, which are posited as definitive symbols of Hokkaido. A number of unique publications, including calendars, documentary photography collections, travel guides, and pictorial and social histories document the history of mining in Hokkaido and lament its demise. A conspicuous, aching yearning for the prosperity once known in many now-collapsed communities pervades these works, which typically feature captivating visuals. The 2011 calendar titled “Hokkaido’s Mining Heritage” (*Hokkaidō tankō isan*) spotlights 12 seasonally appropriate mining scenes culled from the winning entries of a photo contest sponsored by the Hokkaido Mining Heritage Fan Club. This group, known by its nickname “The Yama Navigator,” which utilizes the common jargon, *yama*, for the word mine (*tankō*) among miners, also advocates for the preservation of former collieries, conducts tours,

sponsors exhibitions, creates postcards, and regularly issues a newsletter. The initial portion of the calendar briefly outlines the history and the legacy of mining in Hokkaido, pointing out that five of the island's most productive sites were collectively designated as one of the Thirty-three National Heritages of Modernization Industries by the Economic and Industry Ministry in 2007. Carefully avoiding any reference to the indispensability of coal during the age of the empire and the Asia-Pacific War, a passage declares, "Hokkaido's mines played a crucial role in Japan's modernization in the Meiji era and the Showa revival in the postwar period."<sup>88</sup> Offering tidbits of trivia each month, the producers of this calendar aim to educate future generations about the legacy and the culture of Hokkaido mining and convey the importance of Hokkaido's contribution to the making of the modern nation.

The tropes of inheritance and legacy is employed to fold both old and new generations into a collective imaginary of a golden age. A guidebook of former colliery sites and their remains in the Sorachi region, *Walking the Sorachi Mining Legacy (Sorachi tankō isan sanpō, 2003)*, combines easy-to-read historical passages and maps. A section on coal mining vocabulary, diagrams explaining the extraction process, and personal oral histories give a picture of both the difficulties and the vibrancy of life in coal mining communities. The text professes its goal is to inform young people about "Japan's and Hokkaido's gem," echoing the Hokutan ditty that praised Yubari mine as "Japan's gem safe" and "warehouse of jewels." "The fuel for fire power, a resource for steam power, and a main ingredient in chemical products, coal supported the foundation of Japan's modernization and postwar revitalization."<sup>89</sup>

A wealth of information about the minutia of mining labor and life can be gained from another document, *The Meiji and Taisho Period Mining Picture Scrolls (1963)*.<sup>90</sup> The collection of more than one hundred vivid Indian ink sketches and detailed annotations educate the reader about tools, equipment, structures, and processes and portray living conditions, customs, and entertainment. This work, which addresses the use of women in mines, highlights disasters and cruel treatment by boss-hands, and documents the slang and the chants of miners represents an important contribution to preserve social history and material culture. All of these works—from the calendar to the scrolls—ultimately do not situate the mining communities within the larger capitalist or imperial context. Rather, a focus on the struggles of individual and localized communities facilitates a collective imaginary defined by nostalgic memory.

Still, some recognize the fragility of the dependence on the whims of capital. The editors of *A Record of the Rise and Fall of Mines* approach the notion of inheritance and legacy in a different manner.

It can be said that the rule of zaibatsu capital over Hokkaido's coal industry has bequeathed serious problems to the prefecture in respect to the structure of former coal mining areas. As is well known, modern Hokkaido's regional society has its origins in towns whose boundaries grew out of former-samurai immigrant communities, *tondenhei* villages, *shūjikan*, and colonial districts, but coal-mining settlements must be included among these as well. The zaibatsu's investment in coal had enormous influence, and in mountainous areas, where it could be said almost no one lived, they created coaling institutions and the laborers' living quarters in one fell swoop with only the goal of extracting the natural resource of coal in mind. However, that they would just as quickly withdraw according to the rise and fall of this natural resource is why these regional communities are once again returning to nature. The reality is that under the rule of capital of the financial combines called Mitsui, Mitsubishi, and Sumitomo, the history of the coal mining towns was tossed about by the "logic of capital."<sup>91</sup>

The editors rightly place coal mining towns on equal footing with the *tondenhei* and other colonial villages that facilitated Hokkaido's early settlement. They also stress the significant role zaibatsu played in determining the path of Hokkaido's colonial project. Goshima Ken's exquisite collection of color and black-and-white photos of the ghostly tombs, towers, smoke stacks, and detritus left behind chronicles of the afterlife of the defunct coal mining industry and conveys a vivid picture of how "these regional communities are once again returning to nature." Aerial views show the dense forests engulfing crumbling structures. The poignancy is accentuated by the stark contrast of, for example, fiery autumnal leaves captured through the broken panes of a rusted out window. Hints of the humans who once populated these towns are evoked in the caption explaining that workers recycled steel pipes to make the now rusted red gate of a small shrine for their community.<sup>92</sup> More than any of the other works, Goshima's photographic essay provokes a haunting reminder of the vicissitudes of the "logic of capital."

Writing in his later years, Arishima's remembrances of Hokkaido were colored by a wistful attachment: "Somehow I clearly cannot shake the memory of that place... Perhaps this is the way it is with

any place one lives a long time, but I think that the land called Hokkaido particularly inspires such feelings.”<sup>93</sup> What he identifies as his nostalgic feelings for Hokkaido resonate with many works of this era, including Doppo’s “Meat and Potatoes,” wherein Hokkaido exerts a strangely powerful attraction, stimulating fond reminiscences. Doppo’s interlocutors, Kamimura and Okamoto, cannot seem to let go of their youthful fancies, but the fact remains that they represent society’s elite, sitting by a warm stove in the metropolitan capital. Yet, as Arishima’s personal dilemma generated by the abysmal conditions of his tenant farmers indicates, there were also those for whom Hokkaidoan dreams did not come true. Arishima’s idealistic notions of Hokkaido’s liberatory force were tempered by the realities of ordinary Japanese prevented from improving their lives—the precariousness of life that hung in the balance of market forces worsening the human and environmental degradation at home and across the growing empire.

## CONTESTED SITES OF AN ENDURING COLONIAL PAST

In this work, I wanted to portray the sorrows of men who clung to their samurai pride and the strength of women who opened up a path for themselves with nothing but dreams and hope. Contemporary Japanese can likely see the parallels to today in the samurai who fought unseen enemies in dark times when the future was uncertain and the heartrending figures of the wives that supported them...I will be happy if this film speaks to the hearts of Japanese today.

Yukisada Isao  
(*Year One in the North*, 2005)

I imagined that I would write an elegy to the destruction of nature and address the tragedy of Ainu history. However, as I researched the history of Hokkaido, I realized that it would not be so easy to comprehend Ainu issues in a short period of time and nor did they seem to be appropriate as something to be taken up in a manga, and I had to give up the idea ever so reluctantly.

Tezuka Osamu  
(*Shumari*, 2009)

Tessa Morris-Suzuki's richly interwoven reflection on the "political economy of historical truthfulness" in *The Past Within Us*, stresses the need to recognize the potency of popular mediums to shape contemporary historical knowledge. Concerned that we perceive much too narrowly the loci in which history is produced in the age of multimedia, she directs her critical eye toward commemorative sites, film, manga, historical fiction, and photography to examine the unique ways each shapes contemporary understandings of the past. Among the many crucial interventions she makes, her reframing of the thorny question of responsibility through the notion of "implication" is exceedingly fruitful. Speaking to the Jewish Holocaust, Nanjing Massacre, and the violence of British colonialism, Morris-Suzuki writes, "Though

we may not be responsible for such acts of aggression in the sense that we caused it, we are implicated in the sense that *they* caused *us*.<sup>21</sup> That is to say that the structure and texture of our lives are to a great degree determined by our society's ideals and institutions, which grow out of both the decisions made in and the interpretations crafted about the past. Quoting Falkner's famous line, "The past is not dead, it isn't even past," Morris Suzuki urges a meaningful examination of the many ways the past continues to animate and define our world, national policies, memories, and personal lives.

Although the dominant narratives of colonial Hokkaido's history were first constructed by a number of dynamic forces and agents over the course of the Meiji period, in contemporary Japan these are adopted and adapted in a variety of sites, institutions, and media. The notion of progress functions as the cornerstone for a number of discourses that elevate particular figures and visions, such as pioneers and limitless natural abundance, which apotheosize Japan's modernization of Hokkaido. The story of how a great nation-state called Japan extended the fruits of its superior civilization—advanced technology and industry, political acumen, and moral fortitude—to the northern hinterland has been reinforced over the years and still holds its persuasive power today. At the same time, a number of counternarratives have emerged, however unevenly, which permit important interventions in the official discourse on Hokkaido's past. Today, anniversary events, museums, memorial sites, Ainu villages, film, fiction, and manga vie to shape the national imaginary and memory of Hokkaido. Although hegemonic histories still dominate the national consciousness, there is an effort to contest the modernization model and extend the Ainu historical horizon beyond monolithic and static representations. It is difficult to assess the actual effect of resisting voices on centuries-old discriminatory associations and practices related to Ainu. Small victories in recent years, such as the promulgation of the Ainu Culture Promotion Law (1997) and the recognition of Ainu as an indigenous people of Japan (2008), however, must be attributed to the efforts by Ainu communities and their allies to challenge the all too common mythologies.

The prevailing narratives got a boost in the late 1960s when a burgeoning postwar interest in Hokkaido emerged as Japan prepared to observe the 100-year anniversary of the development of Hokkaido. A local history movement made up of individuals devoted to gathering, archiving, and writing histories of the many villages across the island stimulated a *tondenhei* boom. Now a considerable body of academic and amateur historiography, photographic collections, memoirs, and fiction on the *tondenhei* specifically, and Hokkaido more generally,



transmits the prevailing narrative of Hokkaido's "age of development" to the latest generation of Japanese. From 1965 to 1968 the eight volume series *People Devoted to the Development of Hokkaido* (*Kaitaku ni tsukushita hitobito*) featured hundreds of biographical portraits of individuals under such title themes as "The Dawn of Hokkaido," "Opening the Vast Land," and "Hokkaido's Growth." Itō Hiroshi's *As a Tondenhei Family* (*Tondenhei no kazoku toshite*, 1972) and *The Tale of the Tondenhei* (*Tondenhei monogatari*, 1984) would establish much of the conceptual and terminological parameters of the historiography for decades. The Hokkaido Newspaper Company was especially active in publishing books, including the 52 volume series on various aspects of Sapporo and Hokkaido's history called the *Sapporo Archives* (*Sapporo bunko*, 1977–1991). In 1982, *The Pictorial Narrative of the Tondenhei* (*Tondenhei emonogatari*), produced by the Asahikawa Tondenhei Village Memorial Museum (*Asahikawa heison kinenkan*), provided a rich visual record of the daily lives of tondenhei and their families through watercolor scenes and pencil sketches. Building on the centennial fervor, the prefectural office, municipalities, foundations, and research groups funded the construction of memorial halls, historical museums, and commemorative sites, some of which were designated locations of national importance. The ensuing years also witnessed the proliferation of inscribed stone monuments (*ishibumi*), statues, and historical placards, which are promoted as tourist destinations. The stone memorials dotting Hokkaido's landscape, such as those commemorating the Meiji emperor's visits to Hakodate, the opening of the Horonai railroad in 1882, and the history of the Mitsui coal mine in Bibai, impose modernization history onto the physical and discursive landscape of Hokkaido.

Popular media have also been creating contemporary renditions of Hokkaido for the Japanese public. Films dazzle viewers with sweeping pioneer epics and snowscapes that symbolize protagonists' alienation. Kurosawa Akira chose stormy Hokkaido as the background for his adaptation of Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Idiot* (*Hakuchi*, 1951). Ishii Teruo's *Abashiri Prison* (*Abashiri bangaichi*, 1965), which launched Takakura Ken's stellar career (and by some accounts the *yakuza* film genre), began a series that would ultimately include 18 films featuring Japan's meanest criminals and Hokkaido's cruelest winters. A recent blockbuster movie, *Year One in the North* (*Kita no zeronen*, 2005) by Yukisada Isao, offered Japanese a refresher course on the Meiji-era trailblazing samurai story. Japanese youth in the 1980s grew up together with two siblings living on a Hokkaido farm in the popular television show *From the Northern Country* (*Kita no kuni kara*,

1981–2002). *Song of the Vast Land* (*Daichi no uta*, 2011), an archetypal Meiji-era melodrama, chronicles the life of Tomeoka Kōsuke (1864–1934), whose commitment to prison reform and innovative educational institutions was forged through his disturbing experiences as a priest at a Hokkaido shūjikan. A variety of manga, such as Tezuka Osamu's *Shumari* (*Shumari*, 1973) and Yoshikazu Yasuhiko's *A Dog's Righteous Path* (*Ōdō no innu*, 1998–2000), transport the minds of readers to Hokkaido's dangerous and exciting “frontier” and appropriate Ainu motifs and language to embellish tales of adventure. Capturing hearts and imaginations with compelling historical figures and personal dramas are fictional works, such as award-winning author Ikezawa Natsuki's *A Quiet Land* (*Shizukana daichi*, 2007). Taken collectively these historical, cultural, and textual sites ensure that in contemporary Japan Hokkaido continues to be, with some notable exceptions, envisioned through iconic associations as a land of adventure, exile, pioneering greatness, phenomenal modernization, and awe-inspiring nature.

Coinciding with and in opposition to the Hokkaido centenary celebrations in the 1960s and 1970s, individuals of Ainu descent formed a vigorous social justice movement that would define Ainu activism in a significantly different way from the previous decades of conciliation and assimilation.<sup>2</sup> Buoyed by the defiant actions of burakumin, resident Korean (*zainichi*), student, leftist, and labor organizations resisting systemic, social, economic, and political discrimination, young Ainu activists rejected “welfare colonialism” and “sought to confront the social and administrative mechanisms that underlay Ainu marginalisation.”<sup>3</sup> To that end, Ainu groups protested the modernization narrative and various events connected with the “anniversary” of Hokkaido. Historian Richard Siddle characterizes the construction of an enormous statue of Shakushain, the Ainu leader of a major revolt from 1669–1872, as “one of the first attempts by Ainu activists to challenge the master-narrative of *kaitaku* [development] and its implications of peaceful and orderly progress with their own narrative of invasion, dispossession and heroic resistance.”<sup>4</sup> Denunciation tactics, borrowed from the Buraku Liberation League, targeted individuals and media, drawing attention to the persistence of discriminatory portrayals of Ainu in influential sectors of society. Increased pressure on the Japanese state prompted new government investigations into the living conditions of Ainu, and a new assistance package aimed at stimulating self-reliance (*jiritsu*), the Hokkaido Utari Welfare Measure (*Hokkaidō utari fukushi taisaku*), went into effect in 1974.

Undergirding the new generation of activism was a radical reconsideration of Ainu identity. Directly engaged with the emerging global movement of indigenous peoples, Ainu activists forged a conceptualization of Ainu identity grounded in ethnic pride and a focus on the distinctiveness of Ainu history, experience, and culture within the modern Japanese nation-state. This reformulated ethnic identity gave birth to what Siddle calls “the Ainu nation” (*Ainu minzoku*), replete with requisite symbols, such as a flag, (re)invented traditions, and the strategic use of Ainu words, for example, *Ainu Moshir*, the Ainu name for their island. These postwar groups and strategies may have called into question the Hokkaido Ainu Association’s (*Hokkaidō Ainu kyōkai*) earlier modes of thinking and interaction with the Japanese state, but both cooperation and confrontation among diverse Ainu groups invigorated community building.<sup>5</sup> Ainu of various backgrounds and convictions worked to create spaces for festivals and rituals reserved for Ainu to foster communication and connection. Museums created and curated by Ainu, such as the ones in Nibutani and Shiraoi, began to rewrite the history of Ainu. Nibutani became an indispensable location for Ainu education, especially in Ainu language. Although there was some criticism of Ainu who “pandered” to tourists (*kankō Ainu*) and the commercialization of Ainu culture, Ainu activists at sites like Poroto Kotan (Poroto Village) not only endeavor to eradicate common misconceptions about Ainu among Japanese, but also offer valuable programs for Ainu who wish to study their own history, arts, and traditions.<sup>6</sup> The far-reaching draft of the 1984 New Ainu Law embodies this fundamental shift in the perception of Ainu identity.<sup>7</sup> Penned by Ainu in part to advocate for the abolishment of the 1899 Former Native’s Protection Law, the organizing principle of the proposed law is grounded in the assertion that the Japanese state must address multiple, not just economic, consequences of systemic discrimination against the original inhabitants of Hokkaido. This is especially evident in, but not limited to, the articles that call for Ainu political rights through guaranteed representation in the Diet and the restoration of earlier land-use rights, such as fishing.

The history of these dynamic decades can be further illustrated through the achievements of one of the towering figures of the Ainu liberation movement, Kayano Shigeru (1865–1972). Kayano was instrumental in preserving the tangible and intangible Ainu inheritance by personally amassing over 2,000 cultural artifacts and recording oral histories and epics (*yukar*) from Ainu elders. He was the driving force behind the Nibutani Ainu Culture Museum, which was

seeded with his private collection in 1972. His scholarship on Ainu oral narratives and folklore is highly respected. As one of the complainants in the Nibutani Dam lawsuit, Kayano worked tirelessly in the 1980s to oppose to the state's expropriation of his land and the destruction of one of the largest Ainu communities on the island and their sacred ancestral sites. This case marked a dramatic turn in modern Ainu history as the first time a Japanese official (Sapporo district court judge Ichimiya Kazuo) recognized the Ainu as an indigenous people.<sup>8</sup> Kayano is renowned for not only being the first Ainu elected to the Japanese Diet, but also for his addresses to the assembly and the upper house in the Ainu language. He documented his personal history, as well as the lives of his family and community, in his 1980 memoir that was given the title *Our Land Was a Forest* when translated into English in 1993. Notably, the original title is *A Monument to the Ainu (Ainu no ishibumi)*, which stands as a crucial counternarrative to the many heavy monuments weighing down Hokkaido's historical landscape with a Japanese-centric perspective.<sup>9</sup>

Heeding Morris-Suzuki's call to contest the "historiography of oblivion," below I examine competing and evolving (re)presentations of Ainu and Japanese history in a diverse range of institutions and popular media.<sup>10</sup> The excavation of the unconscious assumptions that continue to hinder a fuller accounting of the colonial project in Hokkaido entails not only an interrogation of what is said about the colonial period but also of what is omitted. Thus the task demands the parallel processes of deconstructing the prevalent collective imaginary of the past and critically appraising significant suppressions and silences. This entails denaturalizing and complicating the histories and identities of Ainu *and* Japanese and Hokkaido *and* Japan. In doing so, we note that the existence of contradictory elements in the repertoire, such as utopian and dystopian associations, does not hamper the potency of these stories. In fact, the strength of master narratives commonly lies in their ability to contain potential destabilizing signifiers of resistance and critique. For instance, a text might acknowledge the lamentable truth that the Ainu lost their traditional lifeways at the same time it implies that this was an *inevitable* consequence of ushering primitive peoples into modernity. Central to this rhetorical operation is the subsumption of capitalist, imperialist violence against the people and the environment under a framework of teleological advancement and sacrifice for the greater national good. By identifying how the past lives on in the present and how the citizens of Japan are *implicated* in the history of colonial Hokkaido,

this chapter renders transparent the contradictory, destructive, and dialectical nature of the making of modern Hokkaido and Japan.

### EXHIBITING MODERN NARRATIVES

Even as Ainu continue to struggle to have their history acknowledged and the legacy of Japanese colonialism addressed, in society at large the *tondenhei* remain prominent fixtures in narratives that celebrate the Meiji colonial project in Hokkaido as part of Japan's miraculous modernization. On the grounds of the Nopporo Forest Park, once the site of a *tondenhei* village and vast imperial estates, stands the Hokkaido Centennial Tower (*Hokkaidō hyakunen kinen tō*). The ground was broken as part of 100-year anniversary celebrations in 1968, and the monument completed in 1970. An inscription on the first floor informs visitors that the tower was erected to memorialize "the amazing feats of the many pioneers who cut through and reclaimed the once primordial forests, survived severe snowstorms, and lay down the foundation of the island's development." The one-hundred-meter-tall tower symbolizes their "determination to build a bright future." All of the requisite elements are evident in this inscription—the hagiography of Japanese pioneers, the emptying of the natural world of its indigenous inhabitants, the feting of human mastery over nature, a focus on Japanese hardships, and the emphasis on progress. The anniversary tower serves as a potent punctuation mark on David Spurr's assertion that colonial modernity views indigenous peoples as lacking history "because they have failed to leave a permanent mark on the landscape . . . nothing to bring about the transformation and construction of the environment which provide the measure of civilization."<sup>11</sup> Thus, the existence of Ainu goes unremarked, while Japanese trailblazers are heralded as fulfilling Japan's modern destiny by affixing the boundaries between nature and culture, instilling the primeval void with presence, and awakening a historical dormancy to a portentous present and future.<sup>12</sup>

That this mindset continues to go largely unexamined is borne out in what seems an excessive devotion to imprint Hokkaido's landscape with the memory of Japanese accomplishments. Joining the anniversary tower, one of the early installations, is a whole host of other memorials and markers of Japanese progress. To that end, the preservation of historical buildings, such as former train stations, temples, rustic pioneer homes, governmental offices, prisons, and their related artifacts, has been pursued with

vigor. Some of the more stellar examples have been collected in the open-air Hokkaido Development Village, which boasts 52 architecturally and historically significant structures. Calendars, tours, and promotional materials salute other sites, such as coal mines, *tondenhei* villages, and old roads and transport routes. Particular events or accomplishments, for instance the opening of the Otaru-Mikasa railroad, are singled out for commemoration for moving Hokkaido's development forward. Stone monuments and statues are dedicated to literary figures, colonial heroes, unnamed Japanese groups who immigrated to the island, and even plants. In the town of Iwanai alone an eclectic mix memorializes everything from Arishima Takeo's decision to transfer free of charge his farm to the tenant farmers to the "discovery" of native Hokkaidoian hops, which inspired the beer making industry in Japan, and from the cultivation of asparagus on the island to Natsume Sōseki, the famous literary figure who transferred his family register to Iwanai, Hokkaido to avoid the draft. The surfeit of memorials bespeaks the necessity of extraordinary efforts to supplant Hokkaido's recent and precarious incorporation with the fiction of its tidy inclusion in the national imaginary.

As repositories of public memory, historical museums play a crucial role in producing and promoting national narratives. In his persuasive exegesis on nineteenth-century world fairs and Orientalist discourse, Timothy Mitchell explicates how the "binary terms of the world-as-exhibition" attempt to distinguish and separate the sphere of representation from an uncorrupted external reality. He writes:

This reality, which we take to be something obvious and natural, is in fact something novel and unusual. It appears as a place completely external to the exhibition; that is, a pristine realm existing prior to all representation, which means prior to all intervention by the self, to all construction, mixing, or intermediation, to all the forms of imitation, displacement, and difference that give rise to meaning.<sup>13</sup>

Mitchell stresses the dialectical relation between the arrangement of "Orientalist reality" in the elaborate exhibits and the knowledge production that emerged from "actual" engagements with the lands of Others. Underwriting the vast body of Orientalist texts and critical to the discourses of domination is the West's "discovery" of these places as unchanged essences. "[The Orient] appears as an essentialized realm originally outside and untouched by the West, lacking the meaning and order that only colonialism can bring."<sup>14</sup> Orientalist

articulations obfuscate the intermediation of the observing participant as well as the political, economic, and social forces that fundamentally construct the historical trajectory and its retelling.

The reigning ideological imperative informing most historical museums in Hokkaido is the denial that the Japanese expansionist project was defined by confrontation, violent subjugation and expropriation, and mutual, however unequal, exchange, which profoundly shaped both Japanese and Ainu identities. In fact, an organizing principle of difference reinforces the well-worn popular imagery of Ainu (as a primitive, dying race) and Japanese (as civilized and modern) even in contemporary Japan. This is accomplished through the ordering, classification, and framing of Ainu material culture in a fashion that exoticizes their lifeways and spiritual beliefs and negates their coevalness. By freezing Ainu in a prehistoric past, while situating *tondenhei* and pioneer accomplishments and sacrifices within a narrative of Japan's natural advancement, it is implied that the colonization of Hokkaido and the history of Ainu are completely unrelated, forever separated in time and space. In typical exhibits, the Ainu are fossilized, represented by the preserved items of their ancient traditions, and erased from the historical narratives that record Japan's steady march toward modernity.<sup>15</sup> Mitchell's assertion that what "we take as something obvious and natural, is in fact something novel and unusual" points to not only exhibiting *practices* that emerged in the nineteenth century but also the *products* of these practices, namely, in the case of Japan, notions of the modern Japanese nation-state made intelligible by constructions of Ainu otherness.

In conducting the final research on historical and commemorative sites in 2011, I revisited museums across Hokkaido after a span of a decade to see if there had been any reconsideration of their presentations of Hokkaido's history in general and Ainu history in particular. These trips revealed that in most of the major museums across Hokkaido considerable effort and funds had been applied to renew and remodel spaces and exhibits. However, the commitment to rethinking the conceptual frameworks of their collections has been uneven, depending largely on affiliations and funding sources as well as their understanding of the role of the museum as "temple" or "forum."<sup>16</sup> For some the changes have been confined to expanded floor-space and more technologically savvy exhibits. Others have undertaken transformations that indicate deeper reflection on the complex texture of Ainu society and history and the interactive potential of museums.

It should come as no surprise that museums most closely connected to staunch national institutions, such as the Japanese Self-Defense

Forces and the Asahikawa Shrine for Honoring Dead Heroes, maintain a strong nationalistic bent. Ten years ago, when one entered the small, cramped site of Asahikawa Northern Defense Museum (*Asahikawa hokuchin kinenkan*) inside the Self-Defense Forces base, the first thing to capture the visitor's eye was the large oil painting hanging on the wall opposite the front entrance. Therein two Ainu guides in traditional clothing accompany uniformed farming-militia soldiers and development agency officials who survey the lay of the land.<sup>17</sup> However, as one progressed through the exhibit there was not one comment on the fact that the Ainu had lived for generations on the land confiscated for Japanese settlers. Instead, it is emphasized that the settlers lived in bear country, one placard reading, "Building their homes in a world where bears lived, enduring hardships (*kon'nan*), the farming-militia worked hard to achieve the utopia they saw in their dreams." Today the completely remodeled Northern Defense Museum is located outside the base in a much larger and improved exhibition space. The painting has been quietly integrated into the exhibits, but when the sergeant who guided me through a personal tour stopped to give an extended explanation of two persons in this artistic work, she failed to mention the presence or significance of the two Ainu figures. Moreover, the sign that effaces the long history of human inhabitation on the island by referencing only the subtle, but seemingly more riveting, prospect of bears remains. Although the Ainu guides in the impressive painting are a testament not only to the existence of Ainu but also their role in introducing and acclimatizing Japanese to the island, such exhibits imply that the colonization of Hokkaido was and is wholly unconnected to Ainu.

The Asahikawa Tondenhei Village Museum (*Asahikawa heison kinenkan*), which shares its grounds with a shrine honoring Asahikawa's war dead, is another example of what one longtime curator in Hokkaido calls the "tondenhei banzai" narrative. The banner fluttering at the ground's entrance, which reads, "The hinomaru is the national flag," signals its nationalist inclination.<sup>18</sup> According to its promotional literature, the museum was built with donations from local residents—the prefectural and municipal offices, and, interestingly, the Japanese Keirin Association, which promotes professional cycling. Over the last decade, this museum has seen no more than superficial changes to its exhibit. Today, just as when the museum opened in 1982, the recreated tondenhei home, farming implements, exotic clothing, and household items present a picture of the struggles and accomplishments of the colonists. In one jarring metaphor in a historical booklet published by the museum, the local tondenhei



are collectively described as the mother's body (*botai*), sometimes translated as the parent organization, of Asahikawa, Hokkaido's second largest city.<sup>19</sup> A distinguishing feature of this museum is its focus on the difficulties of rice cultivation in Hokkaido as a symbol of the Japanese settlers' extraordinary hardships and resourcefulness. Technological innovations, such as the octopus legs (*tako ashi*), a rice-planting tool invented by colonist Suetake Yasushijirō, become emblematic of the larger story of Japanese modernization in this backward region. These two museums, by no means unusual in their approach, represent the typical articulation of the prevailing narrative that writes out the violence of the colonization of the island and its original inhabitants just over a century ago.

The Hokkaido Historical Museum (*Hokkaidō kaitaku kinenkan*) and the Asahikawa Historical Museum (*Asahikawashi hakubutsukan*), in comparison, illustrate salient transformations in recent years and some remaining thorny issues of representations of multiculturalism. The largest historical museum on the island is the Hokkaido Historical Museum, which opened its doors just outside of Sapporo in 1972 to deepen knowledge of Hokkaido's history and environment. Funded and managed by the prefectural office, it initially displayed a typical version of the development narrative as might be expected given its Japanese name, the Hokkaido Development Memorial Museum. The exhibits on Ainu and *tondenhei* were sharply demarcated. The Ainu exhibit was limited in historical scope and focused on cultural artifacts, such as elaborately stitched robes, exquisitely carved ritual objects, a spring bow, a fishing spear, and various stuffed animals. In the next section, an immense photograph of settlers in reclaimed fields dotted with enormous stumps served as the background for a three-dimensional model of a man atop a plow pulled by a hardy workhorse. Combined with the distinctive *tondenhei* uniforms and other military regalia, this exhibit accentuated Japanese pioneers' contribution to "opening" Hokkaido and defending their nation. Neither the layout nor the narrative progression betrayed evidence of any historical exchange or conflict between *wajin* and Ainu. In this way, the themes of the dominant narrative were reinforced in the museum's physical and discursive organization through the subtle but weighty emphasis on Ainu culture and Japanese pioneer history.

If you were to visit Asahikawa City Museum in the late 1990s, you would have strolled through two model Ainu homes, or *chise*, learning about their construction and interior organization. You might have perused the cases exhibiting local plants used for home-building and healing ailments, as well as the well-honed implements of daily

life and the artistic accouterments of ritual of the local Peniunkur Ainu. If you picked up a handout, you would have learned a few helpful phrases in an Ainu dialect. Following the layout of the museum would bring you to the next section titled "Life During the Development Period" (*kaitakuki no kurashi*). Here you would have viewed the evidence of hardships borne by the brave colonists who battled the harsh Hokkaido terrain and climate. The evidence of an ancient Ainu society and the historical narrative of pioneers stood side by side, the arrangement seemingly inconsequential, yet conveying a message just the same.

Although recognition of Ainu historical existence in Hokkaido is certainly an improvement over the stark absence in the first two museums discussed above, the central role of cultural artifacts in the exhibitionary order demands a critical approach. Scholar of performance studies and folklore, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett writes, "The artfulness of the ethnographic object is an art of excision, of detachment, an art of the excerpt."<sup>20</sup> Arranged in display cases, Ainu ethnographic objects are removed from their historical and social moorings, values, and significance, attaining an assumed "artifactual autonomy." They are excised from the fullness of their sensory experience and meanings within Ainu communities and lack the revealing historical context of Japanese colonialism that is at the root of these items' relegation to the category of ancient artifact. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, moreover, suggests, "Perhaps we should speak not of the ethnographic object but of the ethnographic fragment. Like the ruin, the ethnographic fragment is informed by a poetics of detachment. Detachment refers not only to the physical act of producing fragments, but also to the detached attitude that makes that fragmentation and its appreciation possible."<sup>21</sup> Collections conceptualized and ordered via the themes of Ainu *culture*, constituted by ethnographic fragments, and Japanese *history*, frequently brought to life through visual images of humans, function to reinscribe Ainu alterity. In this form, the national imaginary of Hokkaido's development sustains and reproduces representations of monolithic and static Ainu existence in the ancient past and the detachment from the violent history that caused the collapse of Ainu societies in the modern moment.

Still, as suggested, these museums have undertaken renewal projects and greatly reorganized their exhibition spaces. Surprised by the extent of the transformations on my recent trip to the Hokkaido Historical Museum, I asked about what had motivated the changes. The docent confessed that complaints about the biased and disconnected history by Ainu and non-Ainu visitors spurred curators to

reformulate their approach to the collections. Some of the noteworthy improvements are the placement of the larger-than-life image of the Ainu leader, Shakushain, at the entrance to the section on “Age of Ezo” (early modern Japan) and a description of the Shakushain War (1669–1672). Important events concerning Ainu are now engraved into the extensive historical timeline that runs throughout the entire museum. A large model of a ritualized trading scene and a folding screen depicting various activities on a wharf, featuring Ainu laborers, give a picture of both the formal and the mundane interactions between Ainu and wajin. Photographs and informative placards concentrate attention on the detrimental effects of wajin decisions and actions on Ainu society, for instance, the fact of Ainu compulsory labor in fisheries in the Tokugawa period and the forced relocations, discriminatory educational system, and detrimental assimilation policies in the Meiji period. Direct links between the incursion of the wajin colonists and the increasing difficulties for the Ainu to sustain their livelihoods through traditional hunting and fishing practices are acknowledged as is the fact that the Hokkaido Former Natives Protection Law did little to help the Ainu, whose desperate conditions only worsened after it went into effect. References to early Ainu activism in the 1930s and the ways the state pulled Ainu into the war project also mark a notable departure from the earlier exhibit.

Despite these crucial improvements, which are also manifested in the museum’s various catalogues, the overall framework remains definitively shaped by the notion of development. The very first display is made up of enormous native pine trees and a mural of a colonial village, which, it is written, are the symbols of Hokkaido’s nature and the challenging conditions under which the early pioneers persevered. Moreover, the commitment to Ainu history gets weaker and weaker as one progresses in time, so that nothing is said about Ainu in the postwar period. Thus, although agricultural advancements, the energy revolution, and postwar growth in Hokkaido are documented in latter displays, there exists no discussion of, for instance, Ainu campaigns to have discriminatory legacies and persisting inequities from the colonial period recognized by the Japanese state, the battle over sacred sites in Nibutani, or the recent debates about their status as indigenous peoples and political rights. The only reference to modern Ainu appears in a few images in the looping almost-ten-minute photographic montage at the end of the exhibit, where Ainu are distinguishable by their clothing and art crafts.

Another radical transformation can be found in the Asahikawa Historical Museum. Today, after an overhaul of the museum in

2007, visitors encounter an exhibition that is the result of considerable rethinking and rewriting. It is the only museum among those run by prefectural or municipal entities that consistently uses Ainu language, even marking the entrance with the Ainu word for their homeland, Ainu Moshir. Reproductions of scenes of daily life with human models, carefully organized display cases, and informative panels bring a much broader spectrum of Ainu history to life. Now consisting of perhaps as much as 70 percent of the total floor space, the Ainu exhibits are devoted to history from the eighth century, highlight overlooked facts (such as the existence of Ainu blacksmiths and the changing role of farming in Ainu culture), and locate Ainu within a vibrant, global network of trade long before contact with wajin. The cases and video that feature contemporary Ainu artists and the revival of Ainu festivals and rituals remind visitors of the living history of Ainu. Besides the typical strategies of conveying historical facts, the museum has fashioned a customized manga that is displayed at the eye-level of a grade-schooler to help people of all ages engage with the information. A particular feature that distinguishes this collection from most others is the use of Ainu oral recordings of music and traditional tales. Inside the chise a visitor is able to listen to a grandmother passing down to her grandchild stories that encode and record essential wisdom for everyday life. If even for just a brief moment, the sonorous tones of the spoken Ainu language add a valuable human dimension to the experience.

Regardless of the welcome changes, there are further steps that need to be taken to more fully acknowledge the complexity of the intersecting histories of Hokkaido and modern Japan. In particular, the unspoken premise of the development narrative that a consolidated Japanese nation-state and a cohesive Japanese population existed prior to the commencement of the colonial project in Hokkaido in 1869 needs to be challenged. Implicit in even the current arrangement of the Hokkaido Historical Museum is the notion that the actions of the Japanese at the state and individual level affected the Ainu, often in admittedly negative ways, but that there existed no discernible mutually constitutive exchange. Settlers and the tools of advanced civilization seem to flow naturally from Japan's mainland to Hokkaido, gradually, if unevenly, improving the lives of the island's inhabitants. However, only rarely is it hinted that Ainu knowledge, skills, and labor and the vast resources expropriated from their homeland were indispensable practical and economic contributions to Japan's dramatic entrance onto the global stage as a full-fledged, advanced nation-state competitive with Western countries in the 1890s. This is not due

to a dearth of examples of the ways Ainu heritage and individuals shaped the colonial project and modern Hokkaido. We could start with the women who taught wajin colonists medicinal remedies and local food sources and the men who helped create the maps that from Oshamanbe to Chimikeppu and Ashoro to Hamatonbetsu document the Ainu's long history on the island. Moreover, the massive wealth and resources extracted from Hokkaido and exported to the mainland, especially coal, lumber, and foodstuffs, funded and fostered Japan's industrialization, imperial wars, and economic growth. Yet, even today the overall exhibit conveys the message that Japan and the Japanese were virtually untouched and unchanged by *their* encounter with the Ainu Other and their ancestral home. Crucially, this nationalist vision forecloses any meaningful discussion of the fundamental ways a constructed regime of difference—which juxtaposed modern Japan and Japanese and backward Hokkaido and Ainu—made possible the very unification and modernization that is assumed to have predated Japanese colonization in the north. Such ideological operations preclude Ainu from being *agents* in modern Japanese history and prevent a full reckoning of the *historicity* of modern Japan and Japanese identity.

The absence of discussions of political rights remains another glaring problem today even in venues such as the Asahikawa Historical Museum, which attempts to expand the usual historical scope, contextualize ethnographic artifacts, and humanize Ainu society and history. In all fairness, this is an element missing from museums solely devoted to Ainu history, such as Hokkaido [Prefectural] Museum of Northern Peoples and the Ainu-run museums at Pirka Kotan outside of Sapporo and Poroto Kotan in Shiraoi. In fact, the only location in Japan I have found that directly addresses contemporary Ainu political rights is the Osaka Museum of Human Rights (also known as Liberty Osaka). Originally dedicated to a forthright disclosure and criticism of the historical prejudice against the burakumin, it has now expanded to address a whole host of marginalized people in Japan, from sexual and ethnic minorities to the aged and the handicapped. The Osaka Museum of Human Rights clearly situates Hokkaido within Japan's imperial history, and makes crucial links with other groups that have colonial pasts and postcolonial presents, by, for example, juxtaposing the interconnected topics "Modern Japan and its Colonies," "Resident Koreans and Citizenship," "Ainu: Japan's Indigenous People," and "Okinawa and American Military Bases" in one handout. Moreover, the original draft of the Ainu proposed New Ainu Law is explicitly compared to the watered-down Ainu Culture

Promotion Law, with incisive commentary on a placard and in a short but powerful video.

The form and degree of the prioritization of Ainu culture over political history in museums in Hokkaido has been determined by unconscious assumptions about the story of Japan's modernization, which generally conceives of Ainu and Japanese as distinct and cohesive groups, and decisions regarding presentational styles of museums, which favor an overarching, authoritative voice and seamless narration. To a degree, it also reflects the reality that Ainu themselves have struggled to secure an effective practical or conceptual foothold in the fight for contemporary political rights, which can be attributed to the enduring power of modern Japanese ideology that has and continues to deny discrete Ainu communities or a pan-Ainu entity any separate sovereignty.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, Ainu leaders have themselves, understandably, supported presenting a united front in their efforts to demand political and social justice, minimizing historical and contemporary differences among Ainu. We will have to wait to see if the next wave of renovations moves toward more experimental formats that use Hokkaido's modern history to complicate the identities and experiences of Ainu *and* Japanese and to call attention to the historicity of Hokkaido *and* modern Japan.

To emphasize that the modernization narrative continues to be actively updated in contemporary Japan, I examine another unique historical site, the Abashiri Prison Museum (*Abashiri kangoku hakubutsukan*). An impressive open-air museum in the beautiful outlying hills of a small northeastern coastal town, this historical museum features the only intact radial prison still in existence in Japan. This five-winged prison, a variation of Jeremy Bentham's panopticon, built in 1890, has been declared an important cultural property of Japan (*kokutei jūyō bunkazai*). After closing for a time to refurbish and reorganize, the Abashiri Prison Museum reopened in 2010 with close to 30 restored structures and buildings, including the awe-inspiring redbrick gate, the claustrophobic outdoor solitary confinement chambers, the menacing guard towers, and the bath house replete with mannequins sporting colorful tattoos. This outdoor museum, one pamphlet explains, covers ground 3.5 times larger than Tokyo Dome, now also includes the Prison History Museum, which provides historical contextualization with the aid of attractive visuals, informative placards, interactive exhibits, and reconstructions of prison interiors. If one really wants to experience the flavor of life in this once maximum-security prison, the cafeteria menu offers two simple but nutritious prison lunch sets (*kangokushoku*).

What especially defines their recent renewal is the framing of the deaths of penal laborers in the Central Road Tragedy (*Chūō dōro no higeki*) within a narrative of sacrifice (*gisei*) for national progress. The original motivation for establishing Abashiri Prison as an outpost of Kushiro shūjikan was an ambitious plan to strike out over 100 miles from densely forested areas for a major transportation thoroughway. Over the course of eight months a disturbing number of prisoners lost their lives from a combination of extreme work and environmental conditions. Not unlike the lamentable-but-inevitable premise that underwrites shallow acknowledgements of the destruction of Ainu society, this exhibit recruits the memory of Meiji-era prisoners and deftly integrates it into a history of progress. The centerpiece of the new building is a state-of-the-art projection center, which plays a video recreating the hardships of the prisoners onto three huge semitransparent screens. Surrounded by a set worthy of a Hollywood film, the viewer, who stands on a clear plexiglass floor that reveals the prisoners' tools on a rugged ground, is surrounded by trees and plants of Hokkaido's forests. The stunning special effects, as the museum's promotional materials suggest, make you "feel like you're right there with the prisoners in the nineteenth century." This tragedy is, however, quickly and consistently inserted into a linear narrative of national advancement. In the official museum catalogue, it is explained as follows:

Although severe conditions owing to a lack of medical care, difficulties with food distribution, and diseases from bug bites and poisonous plants claimed a great many victims, Arima pierced the difficult to traverse mountains, keeping to the supreme mission's deadline. Afterwards, the excavated Central Road was variously called the "Development Road of Death" and "Road of Prisoners' Death," but the fact that the prisoners of the early development age were forced to function as bulldozers is a historical fact of what could be called a national mission. Viewed in this way the maximum-security prisoners of that time were, in fact, the cornerstone (*ishizue*) of Hokkaido's development.<sup>23</sup>

Rather than a nuanced critique of the exploitative nature of government and business entities during the Meiji era, a nationalist narrative emerges that appropriates even these reviled prisoners, who by no choice of their own, "sacrificed" their lives for a greater good. The direct agent of their victimhood, Arima, is not excised from the explanation, but instead is assigned credit for the success of this monumental undertaking. The nature of the prisoners' sacrifice,

specifically that it was not self-motivated but imposed by powerful state and capitalist forces, is superseded by a solemn narrative that emphasizes the accomplishment of a national mission made possible by their sacrifice. The elevation of their status from dispensable labor force to cornerstone of Hokkaido's development lays bare the imperative to appropriate even the potentially subversive and uncomfortable realities of Hokkaido's history for the maintenance of official national histories.

### VISUALIZING MODERN NARRATIVES

We need only turn to the popular medium of film to be sure that the story of the successful development of Hokkaido by spirited samurai still holds currency in Japan. In December of 2004, posters plastering the halls of Tokyo's subways hailed the opening of Yukisada Isao's *Year One in the North* (*Kita no zeronen*, 2005), brandishing the byline "The last weapon of the samurai who threw his sword away was believing in his dreams." The film chronicles the many hardships of the Awaji samurai who were ordered by the Meiji government to settle in Hokkaido in 1870. One of Japan's most beloved actors, Yoshinaga Sayuri, graces the screen and in 2006 won a Japanese academy award for her performance.<sup>24</sup> The cast also features other blockbuster stars, such as Ken Watanabe and Toyokawa Etsushi. Every effort was put into promoting this 15-million-dollar production, including the publication of a high-quality booklet with synopsis, historical background, interviews, and stills as well as a free giveaway of collector cards featuring the central seven characters.

*Year One in the North* capitalizes on all of the formulaic elements of the epic drama—a stirring soundtrack, a stunning natural backdrop, impressive Meiji-period sets and costumes, and plenty of overwrought human drama. The Awaji colonists, who are utterly ill prepared for the climate and the demands of Hokkaido's natural world, struggle with adversity and catastrophes bordering on biblical proportions. A great number of tearful scenes—such as the death of a child, the loss of over 80 loved ones in a shipwreck, and the locust attack that destroys the fruits of their hard labor—pull on the heartstrings of viewers. The shocking and suspenseful elements—the rape of a woman by a nefarious merchant and the rescue of a mother and daughter from sure death in a blizzard—are tempered by a few heartwarming and humorous moments, including the scene of a poor soul whose testicles become inflamed when a bug bites his privates.



Yukisada's film is just one in a long line of cultural productions that rework the true story of the samurai of Awaji domain.<sup>25</sup> After fighting on the side of the imperial forces during the Boshin War (1868–69), the Awaji-Sumoto samurai, officially part of Tokushima (Awa) domain, were shocked and upset to discover that they were to be designated low-ranking samurai (*sotsuzoku*) rather than awarded the more esteemed *shizoku* status in the new era. In response they attempted to establish themselves as an independent domain, which sparked long-held tensions between the two groups that originated in a dispute in the sixteenth century. Samurai of the Tokushima domain attacked Awaji, killing and injuring residents and burning down residences and a famous school. In the aftermath of what is known as the Kōgo Incident (*kōgojihen*), Awaji samurai were ordered to relocate to Hokkaido.

This incident is the focus of Funeyama Kaoru's work of historical fiction *Otose* (1969), which centers on the eponymous female character, who is sent into service at the house of a low-ranking Tokushima vassal at the tail end of the Tokugawa period. *Otose* the novel is a well-paced work replete with heart wrenching love triangles, dramatic uprisings, and thrilling sword fights. *Otose* the character is hailed as an enduring female figure, who shows exceptional courage in the face of adversity in the vast land of Hokkaido. This story's long-lasting popularity is evidenced by the numerous reprints of Furuyama's book, the made-for-television versions that were broadcast in 1971 (TBS) and 2001 (NHK), and, most recently, its staged production by Tokyo-based Zenjiza Theater group in 2007.

In the case of *Year Zero in the North*, the Awaji clan background and well-placed historical facts threaded throughout the storyline lend the film historical authenticity. Edwin Dun (1848–1931), the American who saves the lives of Shino and her daughter during a snowstorm, was, in fact, an eminent figure in introducing Western agricultural techniques to Japanese colonists. Horse-breeding farms in the Hidaka area, such as the one Shino builds and manages with success, were leaders in an emerging industry, which supplied horses for war, as depicted in the film, as well as for farms, transportation, and racing.<sup>26</sup> That enormous swarms of locust severely damaged crops across Hokkaido several times is a matter of record.

This melodramatic motion picture is designed to evoke the facticity of a documentary and incite national pride, allowing viewers to read Japan's colonial project in Hokkaido as a noble modernizing project. The Awaji tale holds special appeal because it draws upon a narrative of courageous samurai who endured great sacrifices, as

it is often described, to create a new country (*atarashii kuni*) in Hokkaido. This speaks neatly to the larger project of forming the new nation-state of Japan during the Meiji period. Yukisada's romanticized version also dovetails with the attractive portrait of individuals recreating their lives and charting new territories for themselves and the nation. Celebrating the dawn of Japan's modern history through the courageous actions of individuals, this historical drama emphasizes the role of the individual while belying the systemic oppression of indigenous peoples and the degradation of the environment by a new nation-state that gained valuable political and economic capital through its aggressive settlement and expropriation of natural resources of Hokkaido.<sup>27</sup>

Although *Year One in the North* may look back in time, it most certainly was produced to speak to an audience of contemporary Japanese. The director, Yukisada, articulates this explicitly in the promotional catalogue, stating that he was attracted to the story of men, who despite being "suddenly thrust out of their plentiful homeland of Awaji into the desolate and vast land of Hokkaido" are unable to "throw away the soul of the samurai."

In this work, I wanted to portray the sorrows of men who clung to their samurai pride and the strength of women who opened up a path for themselves with nothing but dreams and hope. Contemporary Japanese can likely see the parallels to today in the samurai who fought unseen enemies in dark times when the future was uncertain and the heartrending figures of the wives that supported them. There at the outer limits of grief is the vision of brave samurai who threw away the sword and took up a hoe. I will be happy if this film speaks to the hearts of Japanese today.<sup>28</sup>

It is these sentiments that resonate so strongly in this historical drama that most likely inspired film critic Mark Schilling to characterize *Year One in the North* as "a big-scale, inward-looking celebration of Japanese-ness" that is "intended as a chins-up, get-on-with-it message for a dispirited time."<sup>29</sup> Functioning as both patriotic and palliative fodder for a contemporary audience affected by Japan's long-standing depressed economy, *Year One in the North* seems to promise renewal and reinvention through a prescription of samurai (read Japanese) forbearance and fortitude.

As if answering Yukisada's wish that *Year One in the North* speak to the hearts of Japanese, Inoguchi Kuniko, professor of political science and former minister of state for Gender Equality and Social Affairs, wrote a short article "The Philosophical Radiance of *Year*

*One in the North*,” which was featured in a regular column of Nikkei Shinbun titled “Topics for tomorrow.” In her piece, she asserts that the film is instructive to a modern audience. She finds particularly appealing the earnestness with which the characters face challenges, opening new land, which she vaguely offers Japan as a metaphor for working through hard times today. “It is not a film that gives a typical depiction of the struggles and hardships of developing Hokkaido. What makes this an excellent film is that it expresses contemporary human society’s way of thinking and sheds light on how this originates from specific historical facts in Japanese history.”<sup>30</sup> So powerful was the effect of Yukisada’s creation on Inoguchi that she left the theater feeling “a confidence deep in my bones about Japan’s future in this world” due to her epiphany that there exist a great many “people with tremendous talent who embody Japanese thought and the abilities to convey it.”<sup>31</sup>

Notwithstanding the emphasis on the male samurai/pioneer in even the director’s conceptualization of *Year One in the North*, which repeats a similar pattern in earlier narratives discussed in [chapter 1](#), it did not escape the notice of its viewers that the lead character is actually Yoshinaga’s character, Shino. Inoguchi writes, “It could be argued that the film’s protagonist is not Ken Watanabe’s character, Komatsubara Hideaki, but his wife, who during his inexplicable disappearance for five years, manages to establish a horse-breeding farm and to work with others from Awaji to cultivate crops.”<sup>32</sup> Yukisada’s description of the Awaji women as supporting actors to their husbands, belies both historical fact and the thrust of his own film. In actuality, the time allotted to Watanabe—the main samurai figure—is relatively minimal compared to that of Yoshinaga, whose powerful presence dominates the storyline and screen. Still, Inoguchi’s interpretation of women’s significance in history and the film suffers from an adherence to overdetermined, static gender and national identities. She explains:

[*Year One in the North*] addresses how Japanese women, even though they rely on propriety and prudence, still demonstrate matchless tenacity and perseverance, shown through Yoshinaga’s compelling performance. A woman, with her daughter in tow, who saved a Meiji settlement in farm clothes atop a horse, bequeaths today’s Japanese society, which is infused with this history, a beautiful, universal message.<sup>33</sup>

Inoguchi may shift the focus and complicate the usually male-dominated narrative, but her assessment ultimately relies on essentialized notions

of Japanese women, who are recouped only to serve as a source of national pride.

If *Year One in the North* has a male hero, then it is most certainly Ashirika. An ethnic cross-dressing Japanese man with a haunted past, Ashirika is overwhelmingly portrayed as a protector. He rescues wajin children from a bear, secretly leaves a deer for the hungry and ailing colonists, and prevents the government from requisitioning Shino's horses for the Sino-Japanese War. He moves quietly and adeptly through the forest, on the run from the colonial police for having fought on the wrong side of a battle in the Battle of Hakodate (1868–1869). He lives with the sole Ainu character in the film, Monokute, and is proficient in Ainu rituals and familiar with Hokkaido's natural world. He is always referred to by his Ainu name, which means a man who opens a new road, by all characters except one official who seeks to arrest him. At the end of the film it is indicated that Ashirika has become the love interest of Shino.

The expropriation of Ainuness by Japanese is a common feature of postwar popular depictions of colonial Hokkaido. Ethnic masquerade by Japanese characters in film and manga permits a sympathetic identification with Ainu even as such works on the whole reinscribe ethnic categories and mythologies. The lens through which the viewer glimpses Ainu life narrowly concentrates on cultural markers, often embodied by a Japanese performing Ainu identity. It is difficult to not make comparisons with such Hollywood blockbusters as *Dances with Wolves* (1990), which similarly project at once the hegemonic society's desires, envy, and discomfort with the indigenous Other. In Yukisada's film, barely a worthy gesture toward communicating the various and complex interactions and exchanges between colonial settlers and Ainu during the Meiji era exists. History is jettisoned and the appropriation of distinguishable symbols of Ainu culture, for example clothing with unique Ainu embroidery patterns and the performance of a bear sending off ritual, constitutes the extent of the expression of Ainuness.<sup>34</sup>

The conspicuous visual erasure of Hokkaido's Ainu in *Year One in the North* is accomplished not only through the usurpation of Ainu identity by a Japanese character but also through the absence of any substantive Ainu character. In a scene where two samurai children encounter a farmer's boy picking giant lilies, which were a staple of the Ainu diet, the boy explains that he learned of this edible plant from Ainu children. He also discloses that his father avows that Japanese need to learn from those who have lived on this land and know it well. Although the boy's comment points to local

Ainu communities, no Ainu child, family, or kotan, of which there were many in the Hidaka area, is presented in the film. As for the one Ainu character, the few lines allotted to Monokute in the film function to introduce Ashirika's mysterious past. His blurb, moreover, reads, "An Ainu elder. Helps out at the horse farm along with Ashirika, imparting wisdom on how to live in the northern wilderness."<sup>35</sup> The single Ainu character exists to support and highlight the Ainu-ized Japanese hero.

The degree to which Ainu individuals and history are ignored in the film is confirmed in a stark fashion in the booklet produced to promote *Year One in the North*. In the pictorial layout of the characters, Tokokawa's character, Ashirika, is located in a box labeled "Ainu" along with the only actual Ainu character, Monokute. Ashirika's blurb reads, "A mysterious man who moves about with Monokute. On the occasion of rescuing Tae from a bear attack, he meets Shino. From the shadows he supports the mother and daughter who live on their own."<sup>36</sup> His Japanese identity is briefly acknowledged via his original name, which, set off in parentheses, is deemed a negligible piece of information. Most telling, however, is Toyokawa's interview. When asked about the image and attractiveness of the hero Ashirika, Toyokawa in no way indicates the ethnic dimension of the character or ever utters the word Ainu even though Ashirika is never seen without Ainu clothing and so much of his attractiveness is grounded in his performance of ethnic otherness.

*Year One in the North* makes it manifestly evident that narratives that focus on the development of Hokkaido by spirited samurai still have powerful hold in Japan and sheds light on the ways contemporary portrayals of Japanese colonists' struggle in Hokkaido marginalize the fate of Ainu in modern Japan. The lofty ideal expressed in one of the film's many treacly catchphrases, "All dreams start from zero," along with the title, suggests that Japanese colonizers were working with a blank slate in Hokkaido. However, the fantasies of colonial Hokkaido that exalt Japanese sacrifices cover over the many bitter realities of the Ainu for whom the year Awaji samurai arrived hardly numbered year one. Far from being able to indulge in dreams, Ainu communities throughout the island were forced to give up hope that they might have a future on their own terms. Their suffering is not permitted to disturb the story of the Japanese settlers carving out a brave new world in a vast and empty primeval forest. Although that process might seem a page in the distant historical past, the Meiji-era legacy, which continues to legitimate and justify the Japanese invasion and rule over Ainu homelands, is replicated in current forms of

cultural representation that deny Ainu voices and proper recognition of their history.

In 2010, one of the first films about the Ainu by an Ainu, *Tokyo Ainu* (*Tōkyō Ainu*, dir. Moriya Hiroshi) debuted.<sup>37</sup> *Tokyo Ainu* represents an eloquent counternarrative to films like *Year One in the North*. Moriya's documentary weaves an intricate tapestry of many Ainu voices and histories. Interviews of Ainu of all ages, who have migrated from Hokkaido to Tokyo, share differing experiences and ideas of what constitutes the Ainu community. In promotional materials Moriya explains some rules that guided his filmmaking process. There was to be no narration, no sound track, and no prepared questions. Loath to reinforce the monolithic visions of Ainu, Moriya views the contradicting opinions and diverse and complex identities of the interviewees as the film's strength. Over the course of the film, a picture emerges of efforts to pass on Ainu culture, reinvent traditions, and invigorate political activism. *Tokyo Ainu* listens carefully to both political and personal struggles and honors both individual and collective histories.

The information booklet for the *Tokyo Ainu* also signals Moriya and his supporters' commitment to documenting the history and the vibrancy of the Ainu nation. A timeline outlines Ainu history from the seventh century to today. Photographs of rituals, festivals, concerts, performances, and protest events offer vital evidence that the Ainu have not vanished, but thrive in ways that contest disavowals of the notion of modern Ainu. Portraits of creators of Ainu art and performers of Ainu song and dance attest to the fact that real people make up the Ainu community. Paragraphs aimed at educating readers spotlight recent historical events, such as the declaration by the Japanese government that Ainu are an indigenous people of Japan, commenting on the victories and work left to be done.

It remains a fact that films such as *Tokyo Ainu* rarely meet a wide audience. Documentary films do not captivate the attention of contemporary citizens the way epic dramas like *Year One in the North* do. Nor do directors like Moriya have the financial support that Yukisada can generate. Still, this does not detract from the significance of this film, which models a fruitful way of picturing the diversity of Japan and the Ainu nation.

### TEZUKA'S POSTCOLONIAL CONUNDRUM

Tezuka Osamu's *Shumari* (1973), a manga series set in colonial Hokkaido, offers a complex and intriguing rendering of Japan's

modernization project. The 1,000 action-packed pages of *Shumari* span the years from 1869 to 1895, which neatly covers the first phase of Japan's modern imperial expansion. *Shumari* functions on a number of generic levels; it is at once a riveting adventure, an intriguing mystery, a sentimental romance, and a sweeping historical drama. The eponymous hero, in the vein of a Hollywood Western, is a lone maverick, who fights against cruel colonial administrators, challenges greedy industrial tycoons, defeats brutish, marauding thugs who prey on the Ainu, and bears the inhumane conditions of several prisons (including a *shūjikan*) and a coal mine. In the course of this epic tale, he also miraculously survives numerous natural disasters, including blizzards, floods, earthquakes, locust attacks, crop-eating vermin, and diseases that threaten his horse farm and family.

*Shumari* does not pander to the usual romantic and nationalistic depictions of courageous samurai opening up a new country against all odds in the north. Although it becomes clear that Shumari was a former shogunal vassal, his authority as a hero derives from a rejection of his former status and his Japanese ethno-national identity. Shumari's self-styled code of ethics and his competent sword-wielding skills might subtly signal some notion of bushidō, perhaps evoking Kurosawa Akira's famous *rōnin* in *Yojinbo* (*Yōjinbō*, 1961). His mysterious, bandaged right-arm, the rustic hero's signature feature, acts autonomously, cutting down evil men who threaten him or other innocent people. However, Shumari regards his right arm as a curse (*yakubyōgami*) and, in one case, exhibits something akin to a dissociative state vis-à-vis his murderous appendage when he claims, "If [my right arm] gets loose, someone gets killed. So, usually I tie it up and don't use it."<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, the sole scene that directly hails ostensible samurai spirit evokes wry cynicism rather than sentimentality. Preparing to confront a lawless gang with his loyal friend—a former *shinsengumi* member—Shumari laments that the two of them are relics from another time, who do not fit in the age of civilization and enlightenment (*bunmeikaika*). "It's stupid to be brandishing a sword like this," to which Shumari's companion, Jyubei, responds, "Ha ha, those who speak of samurai or bushido . . . It's just tenacity."<sup>39</sup>

With its extremely unfavorable depictions of officials, aristocrats, industrialists, police, and prison guards—painting them all shades of immoral, avaricious, manipulative, and cruel—*Shumari* rejects typical development mythologies. The teleological national history that chronicles the miraculous progress of modern Japan is not to be found in these pages. Although it debuted shortly after Hokkaido's so-called centennial, it presents a welcome counternarrative to the

myopic vision promoted in those commemorative events. In an afterword, Tezuka explains, “I wanted to show the fall of the samurai class and the making of the capitalist system in a critical fashion through the protagonist.”<sup>40</sup> To that end, he depicts the dangerous, exploitative conditions of bonded and penal laborers in coal mines, the plight of prisoners in a *shūjikan*, and the trafficking of women in the colonial outpost.<sup>41</sup> The examples of an unscrupulous miner who knowingly pollutes a river and the radical depletion of Ezo deer herds through excessive hunting with guns and deliberately setting forest fires (which sometimes burned out of control for weeks), highlight the environmental costs of a colonial project governed by the principles of profit.<sup>42</sup> Tezuka inserts historical commentary at key moments to contextualize the storyline and direct the reader’s judgments of and sympathies for characters. In one case, in discussing labor riots, he notes both workers’ resistance to their slave-like existence, emblematic of the modern labor struggle, and the way factions within companies would plant spies and agitators among the workers to instigate rebellions as a means to push their agendas through in moments of crisis.<sup>43</sup> The dust jacket belt of the 2009 edition proclaims that the work “questions the meaning of civilization,” and in as much as *Shumari* widens the historical lens in a manner that captures uncomfortable realities, such as how collusion between political and corporate entities vigorously exploited the land and people in Hokkaido, it, to a notable degree, succeeds.

Still, *Shumari* relies on the stock terminology and associations of Hokkaido as a frontier space, which anchors the viewpoint in the eyes of the Japanese invaders. The first chapter title, “At the Edge of Earth,” sets the mood for the lawlessness, chaos, and uncertainty that reign in this backward region outside the realm of civilization. The most recent edition’s promotional material urges readers to “find out about the life of a man who roams savage Hokkaido! (*mikai no Hokkaidō*)” and piques their interests with a byline that asks, “What is the mystery behind the bandaged right arm of Shumari, a maverick wandering the Ishikari wilderness a century ago?” Tezuka’s admission that one aspect of his inspiration for this work was a desire to write “a Japanese version of a Western” only confirms that the frontier model was a vital factor shaping the story and imagery.

Moreover, a tension suffuses Tezuka’s *Shumari* as it both subverts and reinforces prevalent, timeworn images of Hokkaido’s indigenous people. On a number of occasions, Tezuka yields the floor to Ainu characters, who are thus able to articulate their critiques, voice their opinions, or explain their cultural inheritance directly to characters



and readers. In this way, the text legitimizes Ainu perspectives on the injustices of the colonial project and destabilizes the usual monopolistic, Japan-centered visions. Additionally, the defining feature of this work is certainly Shumari's identification with "Ainuness," most strongly indicated by his insistence on being called—even registered in the prison roster—by his single Ainu name. The glosses of Ainu words on Japanese character combinations spoken by him signal Shumari's linguistic facility. Shumari travels about Hokkaido in clothing with distinctively Ainu designs, rescues Ainu maidens, interacts comfortably with Ainu leaders, and adopts an Ainu boy, Pon Shon, whose mother is killed by a Japanese man. Intimate with traditional Ainu wisdom regarding the ways forests, rivers, and mountains provide sustenance and shelter, he moves deftly around the wilderness and weathers the challenges and setbacks that nature delivers with aplomb rather than a sense of desperation. As affirming as these respectful portrayals may be, *Shumari* also raises questions about the limits of an intervention based on ethnic masquerade. Postproduction notes reveal Tezuka's own misgivings regarding his protagonist and suggest that the final version of this manga tells us less about Tezuka and more about the historical moment of its creation, which was profoundly shaped by the lasting legacies of the colonial period.

The first chapter establishes Shumari's thorough adoption of Ainu lifeways. Our very first glimpse of the protagonist shows him fishing Ainu style. After he singlehandedly vanquishes eight men who had kidnapped a young Ainu woman, Imekano, he reluctantly agrees to return her to her kotan even though it puts him in danger. Preparing a cave for a night's stay, Shumari displays his adeptness in the natural world by quickly setting up clappers to keep wolves away and extracting oil from a vegetable to make a lamp. Imekano compliments Shumari's *yukarakuru*, extensive knowledge, and, naturally, falls in love with him. His standing in the Ainu community is confirmed in a scene wherein Ainu elders protect him from a well-armed militia that aims to arrest Shumari. The Ainu chief sends him off with parting words that bespeak an equal and respectful friendship, invoking an Ainu cultural hero as his guardian. "Our friend, safe travels to you. As far as the edge where the heavens meet the earth is Ainu land. The place where you go is far. May Okikurumi keep and protect you."<sup>44</sup>

At different points in the story, individual Ainu relate the suffering caused by the colonial invasion by the mainlanders during the Meiji era as they interact with Shumari and his family. In one chapter, an Ainu chief, Kuuchinkoro, comes to Shumari after his people are forced to leave their ancestral land. He explains, "The wajin have

taken over all of the Peninkur region. Our land, our country, each and every day is less ours. Ten years ago, when I went to negotiate with wajin officials, they recognized our land-use rights, but that was an empty promise.”<sup>45</sup> Kuuchinkoro speaks strongly about their claim to their homeland. “We want to appeal to wajin. This country is ours. The mountains, rivers, trees, and grass are all ours.”<sup>46</sup> When the Ainu elder asks permission to set up a temporary kotan on Shumari’s land, he assents immediately saying, “Stay ten years, a hundred years, as long as it takes to find peace,” confirming that all of Hokkaido is Ainu land.<sup>47</sup> This narrative turn permits Tezuka to feature an Ainu festival during which an Ainu man gives Shumari’s adopted son, Pon Shon, a crash course on his cultural heritage. Pon Shon eats salmon soup and enjoys watching women dance, sing yukar, and play the *mukkuiri*.<sup>48</sup> Throughout the work, scenes such as these draw a positive portrait of Ainu individuals and society and convey historical truths that are routinely suppressed in national narratives.

It is clear from the work itself and from later reflections by Tezuka that depicting the oppression of the Ainu was an important and intentional aim of the artist. In an afterword to the 1979 edition, Tezuka shares his observations about the early research and the ideas for the project. The historical documents about Hokkaido’s colonial era he consulted were

written thoroughly from the unilateral perspective of mainlanders, but I thought that if one wrote from the side of the Ainu, it would probably be a fairly different story. Then, I felt like depicting a fictional Ainu hero who has confrontations with various invading mainlanders. So, the first conceptualization of the protagonist Shumari was of a young man of mixed Ainu and mainlander blood.<sup>49</sup>

After the promotional materials for Tezuka’s forthcoming serialization of *Shumari* were made public, a number of concerned Ainu individuals contacted Tezuka and his editorial staff, warning them to be cautious with their portrayals of Ainu. It is impossible to know the tone of these messages, but given that denunciation practices were used by activists and media were specifically targeted, we might imagine that passionate appeals were made. Taking these seriously, Tezuka began to rethink the project. He recounts this process as follows:

But above all . . . I imagined that I would write an elegy to the destruction of nature and address the tragedy of Ainu history. However, as I researched the history of Hokkaido, I realized that it would not be so

easy to comprehend Ainu issues in a short period of time and nor did they seem to be appropriate as something to be taken up in a manga, and I had to give up the idea ever so reluctantly.<sup>50</sup>

Returning to blank sheets, Tezuka dramatically reconfigured his main character, who subsequently graced the pages of *Big Comic* (*Biggu Komikku*) from June 1974 to April 1976.

Although not detracting from Tezuka's laudable attempt to honestly examine the disturbing facts of violence against the Ainu during the colonial era, it is instructive to note how *Shumari* falls short of demystifying several misconceptions about the Ainu. With the exception of Pon Shon, who attends Sapporo Agricultural College and is drafted into the army, all of the Ainu depicted in *Shumari* live in kotan in virtual isolation from Japanese settler society. One does not, for instance, see an Ainu laborer in the coal mine or walking in the street of Sapporo. On one of his many meanderings in the forested areas, Shumari does not encounter Ainu making charcoal or working for survey teams or the forestry service. Despite the fact that many Ainu married Japanese, no such interethnic couple is featured in the manga. It is true that some small kotan existed into the twentieth century, but most Ainu were forced to integrate themselves into the economic and social order of the Japanese rulers. Much the same as museums that expunge Ainu from modern history, the segregation of Ainu in *Shumari* denies the multitude of interactions and intermingling—both intimate and quotidian—between Japanese and Ainu that defined colonial Hokkaido. This fosters a contemporary conceptual detachment that makes it possible for Japanese even today to compliment Ainu on their Japanese or ask them what it is like to live in a chise.<sup>51</sup>

Shumari is, moreover, configured as the guardian of the Ainu, whose inherent naiveté makes them defenseless in the face of ruthless and cunning Japanese. In the first volume, Shumari secures his release from a prison by agreeing to help colonial officials find a stash of gold hidden by renegade soldiers of the Battle of Hakodate (1868–1869). Shumari finds the man who has the map to the secret location tattooed on his back hiding out in a kotan and forcefully intervenes when the police move to commit violence on the premises. He insists he will not allow killing in a kotan, arguing, “Ainu are a peaceful and compassionate people. They don't care for bloody business.”<sup>52</sup> Then, Shumari scolds the chief, “You understand, right? You guys are too nice! You can't be giving hospitality to this kind of pestilence.”<sup>53</sup> Notwithstanding his ethnic cross-dressing, Shumari is still a *Japanese*

protector, a lone rescuer, who marshals quick and decisive force to defend the guileless Ainu.

*Shumari* also unintentionally reproduces the myth of the Ainu as a “dying race,” which was widely promoted from the late nineteenth century. A revealing statement by anthropologist Tsuboi Shōgorō (1863–1913) exemplifies the contradictions of the dying race theory. In a speech delivered in the late 1890s, he not only succinctly summarizes the Japanese-induced obstacles for Ainu survival, but also asserts, “barbarian races that come in contact with civilization gradually become extinct.”<sup>54</sup> However, finding the idea that the Japanese are at fault hard to swallow, Tsuboi places the onus for remedying the situation on the Ainu, who must overcome their weaknesses or face their ineluctable fate. This plays out in a scenario in Tezuka’s work, wherein Shumari learns that a band of thieves plans to attack a nearby kotan for their valuables. He races there and immediately begins ordering them to put out the fires, get their bows, and prepare for battle. One Ainu elder responds, “Our bows and arrows are for hunting, not for shooting people. We don’t like meaningless fights.”<sup>55</sup> A young Ainu man, however, protests, “Shumari, we have no intention to take directions from or be protected by you.”<sup>56</sup> After Shumari and his friend vanquish the half of the marauding gang that attacks his home, he goes forthwith to the kotan only to find the men who attempted to defend themselves wiped out, their bodies and bows strewn on the ground. The older men are forced to dig up their treasures while the women and children cower together in fear. Just as the Japanese rogues announce that they will take a few women along with their loot, Shumari launches his attack. What happens to the surviving members of the kotan is unknown for in the remaining 300 pages of the work, Pon Shon is the only Ainu to appear. Their quiet disappearance—their discursive extinction—confirms the futile efforts of the Ainu to deal with the modern realities of wajin-dominated Hokkaido.

The instrumentalization of Ainuness, then, counts among Tezuka’s principal modes of critiquing modern Japan. The idealization of Ainu as a peaceful, honest people living in harmony with nature holds potent symbolic value as the imagined antithesis of Japanese society. Ainuness, as performed by Shumari, is a signifier of the Japanese protagonist’s enlightened status and his rejection of Japanese civilization, which enhances his moral authority. Pants with a hem of distinctive Ainu design are the sartorial markers that consistently remind readers of Shumari’s adopted ethnic identity. In fact, Tezuka tests one’s suspension of disbelief when on more than one occasion Shumari

inexplicably and promptly acquires another pristine pair of the exact same pants after the previous pair—and most notably the hem—is visibly damaged or destroyed.<sup>57</sup> In both this work and Yukisada's film, Japanese take Ainu names, wear Ainu clothing, and dispense traditional Ainu wisdom, but always in service of a particular ethical positioning vis-à-vis Japanese. The pants are tailored to assign specific essentialized cultural-ethnic values to Shumari, ones that are deemed superior to those of the Japanese. The fact remains, however, that Shumari has a choice to don this identity. Rather than destabilize totalizing images of Ainu and Japanese, it simply assigns different values to the ethnic groups. Such stories continue to empty Hokkaido of diverse Ainu voices, replacing them with Japanese ventriloquists and images of honorable Ainu stuck in a reified past.

Tezuka himself understood and lamented the limitations of *Shumari*, attributing them to his lack of qualifications to represent the deeply complex Ainu issues. His own words suggest that he hoped to counterbalance the one-sided account of Japanese development and highlight the oppression of Ainu. However, Tezuka recounts that he came to the conclusion that “I, as a conquering mainlander, could not possibly understand the feelings of the victimized Ainu.”<sup>58</sup> It is to Tezuka's credit that he was aware of his positionality as a Japanese. Yet, I would offer Spurr's discussion of “the myth of social integrity or authenticity” as a fruitful line of thinking. Envisioning identities as constructed through a process of continual negotiation, Spurr writes,

From this perspective, culture itself is no longer a unified and coherent construct, but rather an ongoing phenomenon in human relations arising out of the dialectical play between forces of homogeneity and heterogeneity. The encounter between one culture and another cannot finally be distinguished from any given culture's continued confrontation with its own ruptures and discontinuities.<sup>59</sup>

Thus, in the case of Japan and Hokkaido in the post-restoration era, the notion of authenticity must be challenged on two levels. The first interventionist move is to bring to the fore the ways the fraught engagement between Ainu and Japanese in the colonial context of Hokkaido dialectically formed complex identities for both the groups. This entails destabilizing the detachment that isolates Ainu history, experience, and agency from the construction of Japan's modernity and acknowledging the fundamental ways Japanese defined their modern selves vis-à-vis the Ainu Other. Second, Japan's

confrontation with its own radical remaking in the Meiji period must be reinserted into the historical narrative in such a way as to stress the diversity of experience among Japanese and across time. It might be too much to ask Tezuka to tackle these difficult tasks in the early 1970s when Ainu themselves, understandably, strategically opted to project a cohesive identity as a means to confront long-held prejudice. If, however, the film *Tokyo Ainu* suggests that there may be room to affirm Ainu pride while respecting the diversity of experience and opinions within the community, then it may also be possible to find a way to embrace the complexity of modern Japanese history, holding in our understanding at once all its jarring, dissonant, and chaotic aspects.

Despite several drawbacks, Tezuka's *Shumari* is undeniably a significant critique of Japan's colonial exploits. At the conclusion of the story, in 1895, Pon Shon is drafted and sent to Korea. There he runs into his adoptive father, Shumari, who is wandering the countryside alone, his appearance that of a wild, bearded mountain man. In their brief exchange Shumari explains that he left his family and life behind because he "could not bear to watch Hokkaido be poisoned by civilization."<sup>60</sup> When Pon Shon asks Shumari about his next destination, he replies he is heading to northeastern China, which would later become the colony dubbed Manchukuo by imperial Japan. Shumari says he has heard it is just like Hokkaido. Indeed, Manchuria would be very much like Hokkaido, in so far as it was also a place of extreme exploitation of resources and the local population by the imperialist political and economic elite.<sup>61</sup> In tracing Shumari's journey from Japan's first modern colony to what would become one of the empire's most profitable and violent colonial projects, Tezuka's work renders a much less orderly, favorable, and inspiring version of modern imperial Japan compared to the usual fare of national narratives. While *Year One in the North* ends on a victorious and hopeful note with Shino professing undying love for her ethnic cross-dressing hero, *Shumari* closes with a broken-down leading man wandering the Asian continent, looking in vain for civilization.

## CONCLUSION

An assemblage of forces has long endeavored to commandeer the collective imaginary of Hokkaido's colonial history to configure modern Japan as a naturally formed cohesive entity. The fundamental,

unspoken assumptions of the official histories have foreclosed the possibility of acknowledging a wide range of diverse, overlapping, and conflicting historical truths and personal experiences. In the postwar era we have witnessed some encouraging willingness to move away from the narrow nationalist line of vision and reconsider presentational approaches and content in museums and popular media. It, therefore, seems worthwhile to contemplate how we might further leverage the power of these sites to make more transparent the constructedness of identities (of ethnic groups, nations, and spaces) and the central processes and mechanisms of the production of knowledge that have so profoundly shaped the contours of Japanese history.

Taking a cue from Morris-Suzuki, who asserts, “Historical truthfulness begins...with an attentiveness to the presence of the past within and around us; the recognition that we ourselves are shaped by the past, and that knowing the past is therefore essential to knowing ourselves and others, and indeed knowing what is human,” I offer one possible reenvisioning of the legacy of colonial Hokkaido.<sup>62</sup> Steven Lavine and Ivan Karp, in their discussion of the challenges of exhibiting multiculturalism in the United States, advocate collaboration between museum organizers and communities that are to be represented in exhibitions and efforts to educate curators and museum directors in “non-western cultures and minority cultures.”<sup>63</sup> Most intriguingly, they recommend “experiments in exhibition design that try to present multiple perspectives or admit the highly contingent nature of the interpretations offered.”<sup>64</sup> Lavine and Karp offer an exhibit titled *Art/artifact*, created by the Center for African Art in New York, as a model of this kind of fruitful intervention. The exhibition catalogue elucidates the organizing principles that informed the project.

This is not an exhibition about African art or Africa. It is not even entirely about art.

*Art/artifacts* is an exhibition about the ways Western outsiders have regarded African art and material culture over the past century...An exhibition on how we view African objects (both literally and figuratively) is important because unless we realize the extent to which our vision is conditioned by our own culture—unless we realize that the image of African art that we have made a place for in our world has been shaped by us as much as by Africans—we may be misled into believing that we see African art for what it is.<sup>65</sup>

By displaying shifting constructions of Africa and African art in various recreated contexts and mediums, the organizers were able to bring to the public's awareness the undeniable power cultural preconceptions exert on the way we see and understand the world and the things in it.

This is the question before us then. Is there the potential for an exhibition titled *Culture/Acculturation in Japan* that would denaturalize the national imaginary of Ainu culture and history and bring to the fore the incontrovertible fact that images of Ainu produced over the last century have also centrally defined modern Japan and Japanese identity? Might it include a video installation that reenacts the "Koropokkuru debate" on the "savage" Ainu among anthropologists in a period-appropriate room of Tokyo Imperial University and highlight the process of knowledge production at Japan's most esteemed national institutions? In another room, there could be a simulation of a historical museum presenting the typical pioneer narrative while commentary called attention to the erasure of Ainu, replaced by bears and a natural world configured as a formidable enemy. Perhaps curators could pair a recreated exhibit of Ainu artifacts with another of Japanese objects of samurai and geisha, the likes of which might have been presented in an early Western World Fair. Could the informative placards raise questions regarding the limitations of such fragmented objects to convey the totality of culture or society? A collection of contemporary images of Ainu in popular media could encourage museumgoers to reconsider the cultural assumptions that shape today's national imaginary of Ainu and Japanese identities. The catalogue might read as follows:

This is not an exhibition about Ainu culture or Ainu. It is not even entirely about culture in the sense of a people's collective art, beliefs, and traditions.

*Culture/Acculturation* is an exhibition about the ways Japanese outsiders have regarded Ainu and their material culture over the past century... An exhibition on how we view Ainu objects (both literally and figuratively) is important because unless we realize the extent to which our vision is conditioned by our own acculturation—unless we realize that the image of Ainu culture that we have made a place for in our world has been shaped by us as much as by Ainu—we may be misled into believing that we see Ainu culture for what it is.

Such an exhibit would not aim to maintain an authorial voice that homogenized the experiences of Ainu or Japanese. Instead, it would



heighten awareness of the instability, contestation, and transformation of social constructs. This would be, above all, an exhibition that deconstructs the dominant national narrative to bring to consciousness the processes that have and continue to posit cohesiveness where there is diversity, a collective mission where there are multiple perspectives and motivations, and teleological time where there are uneven histories.

## EPILOGUE

### Lament of the Fish Owl Who Remembers What Now is Lost to Our Land

In those days, trees grew in the mountains.  
In those days, many trees grew in the mountains.  
We built our nests in the trunks of old Mongolian oak trees.  
We flew over the treetops of the black alders and brushed lightly the branches of Japanese ash trees.  
The Chishima bellflowers rustled in the northern wind and the red flowers of the fireweed swayed in the bright sunlight on the hillsides.  
In those days, trees grew in the mountains.

In those days, many salmon swam up the rivers.  
The salmon fought to be first as they swam upstream.  
The river was filled with their numbers, so much so you couldn't see the river bottom.  
The clever fox stepped on the salmon's heads to cross the river, and there were so many he could cross without getting his feet wet.  
We ate plenty of salmon.  
No matter how much salmon we ate, we never ran out.  
All the salmon swam upstream until their fins were worn out, and in the shoals, they shook their bodies, mated, and laid their eggs in the pebbles.  
Then, once more countless salmon children were born, they headed to the ocean and came back again.  
In those days, many salmon swam up the rivers.

In those days, there were many deer.  
The clever fox walked from one deer's back to the next, and there were so many he was able to pass over to the next hill without getting his feet dirty on the ground.  
The deer, standing shoulder to shoulder, ate the mountain grasses.  
The wolves cunningly hunted the deer and nourished their children with the meat. They gave us the leftovers.  
The Ainu also cunningly hunted the deer and nourished their children with the meat. They gave us the leftovers.

In those days, there were deer in the mountains.

Now they are all gone.

There are no trees in the mountains, there are no salmon in the rivers, and there are no deer in the mountains. The wolf and the Ainu too are gone.

There are not enough Mongolian oak trees to make our nests in. We can no longer hatch our eggs or raise our chicks.

In the mountains, where everyone and everything is gone, only the wind blows.

Just the wind blows.

Now, everyone is gone.

Now, our lament merely echoes.

Ikezawa Natsuki  
(*A Quiet Land*, 2007)

If the colonial nature of modern Hokkaido has been repressed and overlooked since the Meiji era, its postcoloniality is even more obscured. Hokkaido, as a former invader-settler colony, is beset by the complicated postcolonial dilemmas typical of such entities. Economic and tax policies inconsistent with national conventions and thorny issues related to restricted regional autonomy survive to this day. The colonial legacy of exceptionalism in Hokkaido has been codified in numerous cycles of postwar legislation and regulations that are not in keeping with practices of other prefectures. While the infrastructure crumbles, unemployment soars, as does the number of young people who move to the mainland to secure jobs. At the same time, the percentage of Hokkaidoans who elect to join the Japanese military grows in disproportionate numbers to the general Japanese population. In its current postcolonial incarnation, the island serves as a strategic supply base for natural resources, food, and tourism, which prioritizes the needs of the mainland over those of the inhabitants of Hokkaido.

Although it differs in particulars from Okinawa, Hokkaido also functions as a proving ground (*jikkenjō*) for policies related to the fraught US-Japan security alliance. Ever since Okinawans have understandably begun to appeal for other parts of Japan to relieve Okinawa of the burden of US bases, Hokkaido has been increasingly called on to provide unprecedented access to ports, training grounds, and facilities across the island to the US military. Moreover, the first Japanese Self-Defense troops to be deployed to Iraq hailed from Asahikawa, and the Hokkaido Aerospace Science and Technology Incubation Center (HASTIC) collaborates with American facilities

and firms on rocket and space technology projects related to intelligence research and military applications. As an example of a disturbingly insensitive contemporary Japanese appropriation of Ainu culture, one of HASTIC's key projects is the CAMUI (Cascaded Multistage Impinging-jet) hybrid rocket, whose name is taken from the Ainu word *kamuy*, referring to the pantheon of gods that defined the Ainu worldview suppressed and denigrated by the Meiji colonial rulers.

There is a growing awareness that all inhabitants of Hokkaido are marginalized and disadvantaged in contemporary Japan as a result of persisting economic, political, and civil disparities. *Hokkaido and the Constitution: From the Local to the Global (Hokkaidō to kenpō: chiiki kara chikyū e, 2000)* is one work that exemplifies this important reexamination of the way Hokkaido's past lives on in the present. The book clearly acknowledges Hokkaido's colonial history by exposing Japan's usurpation of Ainu land, lives, political rights, and cultural practices with such statements as: "This was the state of Hokkaido, which was made into an internal colony. Asia was not the only place Greater Imperial Japan invaded."<sup>1</sup> It also explicates how particular forms of discrimination against Ainu persist. At the same time, the contributors highlight the specific history of and prejudice toward Ainu, they situate current conditions of a wide variety of groups (e.g. women, handicapped, etc.) in Hokkaido within a set of power relations that perpetuates systemic injustice at odds with Japan's modern constitution. It addresses contemporary inequities of national tax distribution, which have profound effects, although in differing degree and form, on the island population as a whole. It probes a whole gamut of issues, including the infringement of labor and human rights, challenges to educational freedom, struggles to protect the environment, and historical injustices (territorial disputes and forced labor).

Hokkaido's postcolonial condition, of course, is the current manifestation of the complex history that took particular shape, starting in 1869, when the imperial head of the nascent state of Japan unilaterally claimed and renamed an island that until then had been largely associated with barbarians and exile. To make transparent the historicity of the naturalization of Hokkaido as Japanese territory, this study aims a steady and sharp lens on a variety of potent stories created in the Meiji period, bringing into the light the rhetorical operations that both rationalize and erase the violence of that project. My principle investment is in demystifying prevailing narratives that have been instrumental in constructing a collective imaginary of

Hokkaido's so-called age of development. In strategically deploying the term "colonial Hokkaido" throughout, I have attempted to defamiliarize the seeming innocuousness of the euphemisms that attend the framework of development, the hallmark of the modernization model, which favors romantic tales of admirable national unity, sacrifice, and progress. By deconstructing these visions, I argue that Hokkaido, far from being an inconsequential peripheral entity, in fact played a central role in consolidating state power, drafting imperial ideology, building national identities and institutions, disciplining the modern citizenry, and bolstering colonial-capitalist ventures at home and abroad.

The competing, contradictory, and complementary discourses critically examined in the body of this work have produced knowledge, meaning, and a history that deeply inform contemporary understandings of both Hokkaido and Japan. In explicating her argument that we are all "implicated" in the past because it, in manifold obvious and subtle ways, determines the form, boundaries, and substance of our lives today, Tessa Morris-Suzuki pens a passage that could be specifically describing postcolonial Hokkaido.

We live enmeshed in structures, institutions and webs of ideas which are the product of history, formed by acts of imagination, courage, generosity, greed and brutality performed by previous generations. Often we are quite unconscious of the way in which these structures and ideas have come into being. Our lives thus continue to be shaped by the oppressive institutions built on a history of violence, and will continue to be so unless we act to change.<sup>2</sup>

*Dominant Narratives of Colonial Hokkaido and Imperial Japan* constitutes one attempt to change and challenge the "webs of ideas," which, often taken in unknowingly, still determine Hokkaido's present.

The novel *A Quiet Land* (*Shizukana daichi*, 2007) by award-winning novelist and prolific commentator on Japanese history and society, Ikezawa Natsuki (1945–), represents another notable effort, strikingly distinct from the usual renderings of colonial Hokkaido. Broadly speaking, the plot traces the lives of Saburo and Shiro, sons of a Tokushima samurai who is forced to immigrate to Hokkaido in the early 1870s. Given the popularity of fictionalizations of the actual case of the Inada clan, which commonly focus on their many hardships setting up "civilization" in Hokkaido during the colonial period, Ikezawa could have easily served up the usual fare. Yet, at every turn *A Quiet Land* subverts a unitary perspective,

totalizing ethnicities, and nationalist readings. This work challenges the heroic Japanese pioneer epics that erase the Ainu from their homeland and cruelty from the colonial historical record. Alongside the key Japanese protagonists are just as many central Ainu characters, each drawn fully as distinct persons, who are principal actors in all of the unfolding events. The fragmented and overlapping narrative structure emphasizes the tensions between and comingling of cultures, peoples, and histories. In this 600-page tome, Ikezawa makes clear that the relationships between Japanese and Ainu are complexly textured, lived experiences highly varied, and Hokkaido's colonial legacy multigenerational.

*A Quiet Land* does not impose a unified narrative or perspective on the reader. Most of the details of Saburo and Shiro's lives—and the knotty history of colonial Hokkaido—are woven together from multiple voices who pass on their recollections to one pivotal character, Yura, the daughter of Shiro. Yura's mother, father and his lifelong friend Oshi'ankuru, and a government official, for instance, regale Yura (at different times in her life) with childhood adventures, tales of love and friendship, lamentations over great personal loss, and tangles with the law. The storyline unfolds unevenly through varied generic forms, such as epistolary and legal documents, Yura's amateur biography, imbricated and multivalent oral accounts of the same events, and traditional Ainu epic narratives. In one case, several decades—beginning with Shiro and Oshi'ankuru's first meeting and moving through their years of close friendship—are narrated by the two characters. Each version offers readers differently textured and shaded details, perspectives, and commentary. Together the fragmented recollections form a multifaceted mosaic of the history of their personal relationship, Hokkaido, and Japan at the same time that they suggest the limits of any one history to fully communicate the past.

Anchoring most of the narrative in listening, Ikezawa's work complicates the notion of memory and history. The narration itself moves fluidly between an omniscient third-person narrator and Yura, forcing readers to pay close attention to who is disseminating the information. In one passage, Yura, as the chief recipient of numerous reminiscences, establishes the instability of memory. Yura shares, "Father told the same stories over and over. It wasn't that he would repeat stories because I hadn't heard it, having succumbed to sleepiness the night before. Sometimes a story would be different from previous tellings."<sup>3</sup> When Yura asks her father about the various renditions, he replies simply, "Those were true. This is true too."<sup>4</sup>

Ikezawa, moreover, deftly conveys the nature of history as memory that is handed down through generations.

[Yura] remembered one time walking in Sapporo after moving there. She was meandering, walking the unfamiliar streets, when she turned a corner to end up in front of her home all of a sudden. She couldn't remember how or what route she had taken. Still, by walking through the streets countless times, gradually the layout of Sapporo soaked into her head. Yura thought this was just like her father's stories. Through her father's nightly recitations, the experiences of her uncle and father...like the geography of a new town, were slowly handed over to her and her sister. In her dreams, Yura would walk the streets of this town she didn't know over and over.<sup>5</sup>

Even though Yura has never set foot in her father's hometown and did not personally experience the events of his life, through multiple retellings the landscape of these "memories" seep into Yura's body and become a part of her. They are embedded in her subconscious, where she repeatedly "reenacts" them. Ikezawa's perceptive portrayal of the reiteration of history and the embodiment of intangible memories skillfully relates how collective history is communicated and preserved in individuals and societies.

Through its depictions of the innumerable mundane ways Ainu and Japanese lives intersected, melded, collided, and clashed, *A Quiet Land* skillfully destabilizes notions of cohesive ethnicities. The most obvious example is found in the story of the woman Ekarian, whose name means person from the other side. Chapter Seven is a lightly suspenseful account of Saburo's nervous attempts to win her heart and learn the significance of her name. When asking for her hand in marriage from the Ainu elders, he learns that Ekarian, to his great surprise, was abandoned by wajin parents and raised in the Ainu community. If wajin by birth, Ekarian is officially Ainu according to the national register as the "third daughter of the former native Akiyama Benzō." Moreover, she is culturally Ainu, although her father, a translator for wajin, has made sure she learned Japanese. The novel, which depicts Saburo's mother's initial rejection of the match and the couple's decision to hold both Japanese and Ainu wedding ceremonies, maintains the complexity of the colonial context, where deep-seated prejudice against the Ainu and countless blended families and identities existed simultaneously.

Small details of Ainu culture, history, and colonial experience are threaded throughout *A Quiet Land*, presented naturally by the narrator and Ainu and Japanese characters. An incident wherein a Japanese casually kills an Ainu dog reveals the long tradition of breeding and

training dogs and the importance they held in Ainu communities. A passing remark by Shiro about Ainu fields of millet debunks the myth that they did not farm. Many distinct aspects of Ainu lifeways and belief systems are seen through the eyes of Shiro and Saburo as young boys, who are free of the distorting filter of their society's prejudicial ideas. So enthralled by the adventure of learning about their new world as introduced to them through Oshi'ankuru and his family, Shiro and Saburo cannot comprehend the strange comments of adults who speak of Ainu as backward and dirty. Later as adults, they do not observe Ainu culture from afar, but are intimately involved as they marry into Ainu families, work side by side with them, and mourn the loss of their dear friend's grandmother, Morotan'ne. The chapter devoted to the ritual burning of Morotan'ne's home at her funeral not only provides a poignant depiction of the ways Ainu carried on their lives with dignity under the heavy burden of foreign rule, but also exposes the suffering inflicted by colonial law that made such central Ainu cultural practices illegal. Myriad facets of Ainu hardships before and during the Meiji period are parceled out over the course of the work. At some point, readers are confronted with the brutality of the Shakushain War, the cruelty of forced labor schemes, the devastation of Ainu fishing and hunting grounds, and the pain of discrimination and deception. Oshi'ankuru, speaking with Yura when he is older and crippled, voices his criticism that the Meiji state used its military might callously so as to compete with Western imperial powers. He explains with ironic contempt,

at the beginning of the Meiji period Japan was worried it would be taken down by other strong countries, but soon it won a war with China and another with Russia. Well, my body got like this because of that war. But what's the loss of one Ainu man's foot if it is for the good of the country? Even if ten thousand men die, that's nothing if you win.<sup>6</sup>

The use of Ainu language by both the Ainu and the Japanese characters is crucial to Ikezawa's critical reworking of the colonial and postcolonial condition. Recollections by Ainu and Japanese alike are peppered with Ainu language, signifying the intermingling of everyday lives in colonial Hokkaido. As early as the third page of the novel, in the middle of the suspenseful story of the terrifying guns used in the ambush on Awaji, Shiro suddenly mentions Shitona, his Ainu friend who gave him a magnificently carved bow and arrows. Shiro catches himself using the Ainu words for bow and arrow and explains



the meanings to Yura before he returns to his narrative. After Shiro moves to Hokkaido, the many geographical appellations that derived from the Ainu's long relationship with the land seemed strange—almost like “magical words”—to his ear. He whispers the name of the nearby river again and again, trying out Shibechari in his small mouth. Memorizing it, he tells Yura, “was the first step in getting acquainted with this place.”<sup>7</sup> The two brothers quickly learn Ainu words of everyday life as they and Oshi'ankuru amuse themselves for long hours in the forests. Shiro remembers that language (*kotoba*) was the most engaging plaything (*asobidōgu*) of that first summer.<sup>8</sup> During the early months, he hears the Japanese villagers murmuring about the meanings of native (*dojin*) words and discovers for the first time in his life the charged nature of language and ethnic prejudice. He shares, “I came to love the sound of Ainu words, soft and smooth. The word ‘native’ is rough with sharp corners and sounds terrible.”<sup>9</sup> Ikezawa consistently renders the derogatory word “native” in katakana script—generally employed for foreign terms or to call attention to an idea—to ensure that it does not go unmarked. In this way, readers are compelled to repeatedly engage with an unfamiliar language and think about Japanese terms in new ways.

Ikezawa's *A Quiet Land*, although it pays tribute to the quiet heroism of ordinary Ainu and Japanese, is a story of profound loss and sorrow. In the last passage of the narration, Yura reflects on the passing of the generations. Her father and uncle have passed away, and now she and her sister are old enough to join them, leaving the future in the hands of their children. Yura's final somber thoughts reveal that she regrets that the one lesson life has taught her is that the strong always get their way. She ponders, “When her children are grown, what will have become of this country?”<sup>10</sup> The question hovers as readers finish the novel, which closes with two cautionary tales in the form of traditional Ainu oral epic narratives. The first, titled “The Boy Who Became a Bear,” recounts the story of a youth from the Toumunchi tribe. Unlike the Ainu, the Toumunchi do not observe proper rituals when hunting bear that respectfully send off the souls of the catch. These people do not know that the bears are gods that sacrifice themselves for the Toumunchi, but instead mistakenly believe that they are stronger and therefore superior to the bears. The young boy, despite being raised with these beliefs, one day feels empathy for a tortured bear cub and realizes the error of their ways. At first he is confused as his tribe does not have a word for empathy, and he conceals his strange feelings. On a later hunt, he follows a bear back to his den, and there the boy is taken in by the family as one of their own. Over time his

body becomes just like a bear's. One day he is shot by a man, who turns out to be his human father, and the youth is reunited with his family and fellow villagers. When he explains the truth of the bears' sacrifice to them, they laugh at him and brag that they are strong Toumunchi and not weak Ainu. They will not be taken in by such foolishness. The distraught young boy is forced to live by himself in the woods, alienated from both the human and the bear worlds. His sadness turns into despair, and he prays for death. The gods grant him his wish, and the youth's soul is reborn in the proper realm. The last line of the story reads, "Still today the Toumunchi do not observe the soul-sending-off ritual."<sup>11</sup>

The last word is given to the Ainu. Not one individual Ainu, but the collective community of Ainu through a yukar narrated by an owl, one of the most important gods in the pantheon of Ainu gods. The fish owl recalls a land of plenty in an earlier age. Yet, where once nature and humans thrived, the owl cries, "Now, our lament merely echoes."<sup>12</sup> In Ikezawa's *A Quite Land*, he seems to ask us whether these histories will fall on deaf ears. Will arrogance win over empathy? What will Yura's children's generation—our generation—learn and what will they (we) do with the knowledge?

## NOTES

### INTRODUCTION PERIPHERAL VISIONS: REIMAGINING COLONIAL HOKKAIDO

1. The 2011 festival featured, for example, snow exhibits of the famous manga/cartoon character Sazae-san and her family, the Lion King menagerie, Darth Vader, and the 2010 Nobel Prize winner in chemistry Suzuki Akira, as well as ice replicas of the Chinese “Temple of Heaven” and a historic pavilion of Kyoto’s Honganji Temple.
2. The appeal of this phrase in Japan, moreover, is evidenced by Central Japan Railway’s 2003 “Ambitious Japan” campaign. Their Nozomi bullet trains were emblazoned with the phrase, and the famous boy band TOKIO was commissioned to create a promotional song (Ambitious Japan!, 2003). For more information see Laura MacGregor’s article “JR Tokai ‘Ambitious Japan’ Campaign: A Case Study in Advertising,” *Stanford Journal of East Asian Studies* 7 (2007): 39–52.
3. Abashiri Prison was first constructed in 1890, and it continues to function, although in modern buildings, as a correctional facility. I borrow Dani Botsman’s analogy to Alcatraz. See *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 186. See [chapter 3](#) for more on prisons in Hokkaido.
4. The island historically known by Japanese as *Ezo* or *Ezogashima* before the Meiji period was renamed Hokkaido in August 1869. On occasion I will employ the Ezo/Hokkaido compound to refer to the island during the time from the outbreak of the Boshin War (1868–1869) to around the time of the name change. I use the term *Ezo* to refer to the entire island before Meiji rather than *Ezochi* (Ainu Land), which was a Tokugawa designation of the greater portion of the island in contrast to the much smaller *Wajinchi* (Japanese Land) area. See Emori Susumu’s thorough clarification of the use of the term “wajinchi” in *Hokkaidō kinseishi no kenkyū: Bakuhau taisei to Ezochi* (Sapporo: Hokkaido Kikaku Sentā, 1982), 74–81.
5. This term harkens back to Roman law and means literally “land belonging to no one.” In the United Nations’ Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, several passages challenge the legality of *terra*

- nullius* and promote the rights of indigenous peoples to seek restitution. See Haunani Kay Trask's *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage, 1993), 43.
6. I will make frequent use of the Japanese term, "tondenhei," throughout this work since the cumbersome English equivalent, farming-soldier, lacks the specificity of time and place (i.e., Meiji period, Hokkaido) embedded in the original word.
  7. Richard Siddle, *Race, Resistance and the Ainu of Japan* (London: Routledge, 1996). Siddle provides a superb history of the subjugation of the Ainu in modern Japan and the resurgence of Ainu ethnic activism beginning in the 1970s, directly addressing the colonial and postcolonial aspects of Hokkaido. See also Komori Yōichi, "Rule in the Name of 'Protection': The Vocabulary of Colonialism," in *Reading Colonial Japan: Text, Context, and Critique*, ed. Michele M. Mason and Helen J. S. Lee (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 60–75. Originally published as "Hogo' toiu na no shihai: shokuminchishugi no bokyaburarii," in *Media, hyōshō, ideogōji: meiji sanjūnendai no bunka kenkyū*, ed. Komori Yōichi, Kōno Kensuke, and Takahashi Osamu (Tokyo: Ozawa Shoten, 1997), 319–334.
  8. The use of "colonial Hokkaido" in this book will roughly overlap with the Meiji era, but I am not unaware of the thorny issue of determining the end of Hokkaido's colonial status. For an excellent treatment of the many facets of Hokkaido's postcolonial condition, see Ōta Kazuo and Torii Kiyokazu, eds., *Hokkaidō to kenpō: chi'iki kara chikyū e* (Tokyo: Hōritsu bunka sha, 2000).
  9. James Edward Ketelaar, "Hokkaido Buddhism and the Early Meiji State," in *New Directions in the Study of Meiji Japan*, ed. Helen Hardacre (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 534.
  10. Karatani Kōjin, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, trans. Brett de Bary (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 11–44.
  11. The phrase is *bōryoku to mo iubeki haijō*. Komori Yōichi, "Yuragi" no *Nihon bungaku* (Tokyo: Nihon Hōsō Shuppan Kyōkai, 1998), 17.
  12. Karatani, *Origins*, 27.
  13. *Ibid.*, 40.
  14. *Ibid.*, 30.
  15. Timothy Mitchell, "Orientalism and the Exhibitionary Other," in *Colonialism and Culture*, ed. Nicholas B. Dirks (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 313.
  16. *Ibid.*
  17. *Ibid.*, 313–314.
  18. I am cognizant of the potential criticisms of employing the term Ainu Moshir, which means "Land of Humans" in the Ainu language and was used by some Ainu communities to refer to their homeland. I wholly agree with Brett Walker's important statement that "neither the Ainu nor the Japanese were ever a unified ethnic block" before the Meiji era.

He complicates the use of the contemporary use of “Ainu Moshir,” noting the “linguistic regionalism and political disunity that actually prevailed in Ezo.” Brett L. Walker, *The Conquest of Ainu Lands: Ecology and Culture in Japanese Expansion, 1590–1800* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 76. Still, I am sympathetic to, for instance, the Hokkaido Ainu Association’s strategic use of the phrase as a critical contestation of the Japanese state’s previous terms such as the derogatory “Ezochi” (Land of Barbarians) or the unilaterally conferred and Japanese-centric “Hokkaido.” Hanazaki Kōhei uses “Ainu Moshir” in the title of his important critical review of Ainu history under Japanese rule. See “Ainu Moshiri no kaifuku: Nihon no senjūminzoku Ainu to Nihon kokka no tai Ainu seisaku” in *Minzoku, kokka, esunishite—gendai shakaigaku* 24, ed. Inoue Shun (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1996), 93–108.

19. The term *wajin* (literally “Yamato people”) refers to ethnic Japanese and is only used vis-à-vis Ainu within the Ezo/Hokkaido context. The terms used for ethnic Japanese within Ainu communities were *shisam* and *shamo*, meaning neighbor.
20. David L. Howell, *Geographies of Identity in Nineteenth-Century Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005) and *Capitalism from Within: Economy, Society and the State in a Japanese Fishery* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).
21. Examples include Kaiho Mineo’s *Bakuhansei kokka to Hokkaidō* (Tokyo: San’ichi shobō, 1978) and *Kinsei Ezochi seiritsushi no kenkyū* (Tokyo: San’ichi shobō, 1984), as well as Emori Susumu’s *Hokkaidō kinseishi no kenkyū* (Sapporo: Hokkaidō Shuppan Kikaku Sentā, 1997).
22. Walker, *The Conquest of Ainu Lands*, 40. See also Mitani Hiroshi, “A Protonation-state and its ‘Unforgettable Other’: The Prerequisites for Meiji International Relations,” in *New Directions in the Study of Meiji Japan*, ed. Helen Hardacre (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 293–310.
23. *Ibid.*, 6.
24. *Ibid.*, 5.
25. *Ibid.*, 41.
26. Scholar of Hawaiian Studies, Haunani Kay Trask, quotes the following frank assessment of the process by which the forced conversion of communal lands to private property aided the United States’ occupation and usurpation of Hawai’i, which seems applicable to the Hokkaido context as well. “In this way . . . Western imperialism had been accomplished without the usual bothersome wars and costly colonial administration.” Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 8.
27. Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation* (Armonk, New York and London: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), 181.
28. David L. Howell, “The Meiji State and the Logic of Ainu ‘Protection,’” in *New Directions in the Study of Meiji Japan*, ed. Helen Hardacre (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 612. See also Komori, “Rule in the Name of ‘Protection,’” 60–75.

29. Needless to say, having such treaties did not necessarily guarantee better treatment or conditions as the long history of the United States government unilaterally nullifying legal agreements suggests. Still, I believe they have given leverage to First Nations in their long struggle to gain a modicum of self-governance.
30. See Walker's discussion of ceremony and subordination in early modern Japan in *The Conquest of Ainu Lands*, 204–226.
31. Howell, “The Meiji State and the Logic of Ainu ‘Protection,’” 616.
32. Today, Ainu are taking a cue from models in Finland, the continental United States, and Hawai‘i, which inspire them to stress the term “self-governance” over “self-reliance” (both pronounced *jiritsu* in Japanese) and advocate for an ethnic-regional self-government, technically permissible under the current Japanese constitution.
33. Brett L. Walker, “Meiji Modernization, Scientific Agriculture, and the Destruction of Japan’s Hokkaido Wolf,” *Environmental History* 9:2 (2004): 260–261.
34. Kayano Shigeru, *Our Land Was a Forest: An Ainu Memoir*, trans. Kyoko Selden and Lili Selden (Boulder: Westview, 1994), 57–70.
35. Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan*, 182.
36. *Ibid.*
37. Howell, “The Meiji State and the Logic of Ainu ‘Protection,’” 633.
38. Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Work of Anthropology* (Chur: Harwood, 1991), 201.
39. See also Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan*, 86.
40. For more on Chiri Yukie, see Hokkaido bungakukan, ed., *Chiri Yukie: The Road to the Ainu Shin’yōshū* (Noboribetsu: Chiriyukieainushin’yōs hūenomichikankōkai, 2003) and Sarah Strong, *Ainu Spirits Singing: The Living World of Chiri Yukie’s Shin’yoshū* (Honolulu: Hawai‘i University Press, 2011). Emori Susumu, *Ainu no rekishi: Ainu no hitobito*: 2 (Tokyo: Sansaidō, 1987).
41. The full title in Japanese is *Ainu bunka no shinkō narabi ni ainu no dentō ni kansuru chishiki no fukyū oyobi keihatsu ni kansuru hōritsu*, but it is commonly referred to as the “Ainu Culture Promotion Law” or *Ainu bunka shinkō hō*.
42. Protection for fundamental human rights, guaranteed Ainu representation in the legislature, and economic assistance are a few of the concrete proposals made in the Hokkaido Ainu Association’s 1984 proposal for the New Ainu Law (*Ainu shinpō*) that are not addressed in the Ainu Culture Promotion Law.
43. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).
44. John F. Howes, ed., *Nitobe Inazō : Japan’s Bridge across the Pacific* (Boulder: Westview, 1995), 79.
45. See the introduction of Robert Tierney’s *Tropics of Savagery: The Culture of Japanese Empire in Comparative Frame* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 1–37 and Kota Inoue’s essay “A Little Story of Colonialism: Imperialist Consciousness and Children’s Literature in the

- 1920s,” in *Reading Colonial Japan: Text, Context, Critique*, ed. Michele M. Mason and Helen J. S. Lee (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 188–208.
46. Prasenjit Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), 9. Italics in original.
  47. Ibid. Italics added.
  48. See Tracey Banivanua Mar and Penelope Edmonds, eds., *Making Settler Colonial Space: Perspectives on Race, Place and Identity* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, England; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); and Daiva Stasiulis and Nira Yuval-Davis, eds., *Unsettling Settler Societies: Articulations of Gender, Race, Ethnicity, and Class* (London: Sage Publications, 1995).
  49. Mark Peattie, “Japanese Attitudes Toward Colonialism,” in *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895–1945*, ed. Ramon H. Myers and Mark R. Peattie (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 81.
  50. Carol Gluck, *Japan’s Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), 16.
  51. Ibid., 17.
  52. Ibid.
  53. Julia Adeney Thomas, *Reconfiguring Modernity: Concepts of Nature in Japanese Political Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 75.
  54. Ibid., 74.
  55. Robert Eskildsen, “Of Civilization and Savages: The Mimetic Imperialism of Japan’s 1874 Expedition to Taiwan,” *American Historical Review* 107:2 (2002): 2.
  56. Ibid., 2–3. Italics added.
  57. In reference to Hokkaido, sometimes the term *kaitakushokuminchi* is also used to mean settler colony.
  58. Anna Johnston and Alan Lawson, “Settler Colonies,” in *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, ed. Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000), 365–366.
  59. Sandra Buckley, “Japan and East Asia,” in *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, ed. Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 321. Italics in the original.
  60. Ōe Shinobu, introduction to *Iwanami kōza: kindai Nihon to shokuminchi I: shokuminchi teikoku nihon* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1992), viii.
  61. Ibid., viii—ix.
  62. Hanazaki, “Ainu Moshiri no kaifuku,” 106.
  63. Kaihō Yōko, “‘I’iki’ no naikakuka to tōgō: Ezochi kara Hokkaidō e,” in *Ezochi to Ryūkyū*, ed. Kuwabara Masato and Gabe Masao (Tokyo: Yoshikawakō Bunkan, 2001).
  64. Tamura Sadao, “Naikoku shokuminchi toshite no Hokkaidō,” in *Iwanami kōza: kindai Nihon to shokuminchi I: shokuminchi teikoku Nihon* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1992), 98.
  65. Ibid., 88 and 96.

66. For some interesting comparisons of Hokkaido and Okinawa see *Hokkaidō to Okinawa* (Sapporo: Sapporo Gakuindaigaku Seikatsu Kyōdōkumiai, 2003) and Mieko Chikappu, *Kaze no megumi: Ainu minzoku no bunka to jinken* (Tokyo: Kabushiki Gaisha Ochanomizu Shobō, 1991), 77–88 and 96–98.
67. For example, Prime Minister Hatoyama stepped down in June 2010, just eight months into his term of office, citing his inability to keep a pledge to remove Futenma US base from Okinawa.
68. See Nomura Kōya's *Muishiki no shokuminchishugi: nihonjin no beigun kichi to okinawajin* (Tokyo: Ochanomizu Shobo, 2005).
69. See the 2010 documentary film *Tokyo Ainu*, directed by Moriya Hiroshi, discussed in [chapter 5](#). *Tokyo Ainu* interweaves interviews with Ainu from a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences and footage of activities related to the revival of Ainu culture and community building in Tokyo and Ainu political activism.
70. Siddle, *Race, Resistance and the Ainu of Japan*, 22.
71. Tada Kōmon, ed., *Iwakura kōjikki: chūkan* (Tokyo: Hara Shobō, 1968), 703–704. See also Tanaka Akira, *Hokkaido and the Meiji Restoration* (Sapporo: Hokkaidō Daigaku Toshō Kankokai, 2006), 26. The proposal is dated February 28, 1869.
72. The *Tōkaidō* (Eastern Sea Route) is one such highway still well-known today. There were also the *Tōsandō* (Eastern Mountain Route), *Hokurikudō* (Northern Land Route), *San'indō* (Mountain Shade Route), *San'yōdō* (Mountain Sun Route), *Nankaidō* (Southern Sea Route), and the *Saikaidō* (Western Sea Route) that linked the five regions of Yamashiro, Yamato, Settsu, Kawachi, and Izumi to the Heian capital.
73. For another interpretation of the significance of the name Hokkaido, see James Edward Ketelaar, “Hokkaido Buddhism and the Early Meiji State,” 535–536.
74. There have been a number of translations of *kaitakushi*. Donald Calman and John A. Harrison typically use the Japanese term, but offer as possible approximations Pioneering Office and Colonial Office respectively. Richard Siddle settles on Colonisation Commission, while Tessa Morris-Suzuki prefers the Hokkaido Development Agency. After much consideration, I too decided to use Hokkaido Development Agency for the following reasons. The Japanese word primarily suggests opening up land or development and should be distinguished from the verb coined for colonization, *shokuminchika suru*. *Kaitaku* is often used in tandem with *imin* (immigration/emigration) to imply development and settlement. I retain the original connotation to stress the significance of such words in the process of naturalizing Hokkaido as Japanese territory and concealing its colonial status.
75. John A. Harrison, *Japan's Northern Frontier: A Preliminary Study in Colonization and Expansion with Special Reference to the Relations of*



- Japan and Russia* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1953), 64. Italics in the original.
76. For more information on widespread waste and fraud during the Hokkaido Development Agency's regime, see Harrison's chapter titled "Finances and Industrial Development," *Japan's Northern Frontier*, 90–108.
  77. In this work I use the term "to reclaim" cautiously, understanding that it is infused with problematic modern assumptions that nature is man's dominion to be made his again through its destruction.
  78. The most prominent of these are called the "Six Great Imperial Tours" (*roku daijunkō*). For the names, dates, and a discussion of imperial progresses, see Takashi Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 42–55.
  79. The Hōheikan Hotel was built in Sapporo just for the emperor's stay. Now, located in Nakajima Park, it is open to the public with plaques that inform visitors of the rooms in which the emperor slept.
  80. Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy*, 53.
  81. Although the editors appropriate a typical artistic pattern of Ainu clothing and artifacts to decorate the cover of the journal, there are no articles that address the indigenous people inside any issues. However, tellingly, there is one drawing titled Karafuto Natives who Immigrated from the Opposite Shore among the many pictures of fish, insects, and plants. Besides this one image of Karafuto Ainu, there are no other humans depicted.
  82. Interestingly, notwithstanding the emphasis on the new era, this article calculates profits and tax revenue in *koku*, or bales of rice, the typical unit of measure of wealth during the Tokugawa period. Kuroda Kiyotaka, "Kaitaku zasshi hakkō no shushi," *Hokkaidō Kaitaku zasshi* 1:2 (1880), 1.
  83. George M. Beckmann, *The Making of the Meiji Constitution* (Westport: Greenwood, 1975), 56.
  84. *Nihonshi dai jiten* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1992), 671.
  85. This event is depicted in a colorful commemorative wood-block print. See Sakamoto Takao, *Meiji kokka no kensetsu, 1871–1890* (Tokyo: Chūōkōron, 1999), 365.
  86. Edamatsu Shigeyuki and Sugiura Tadashi, eds., *Meiji nyūsu jiten*: 4. (Tokyo: Mainichi Komyunikeshonzu, 1988), 688.
  87. *Ibid.*, 689.
  88. *Ibid.*
  89. In fact, not only was the electoral vote greatly restricted to men who paid a certain amount in taxes, but all residents of Hokkaido, Okinawa, and the Ogasawara Islands were also denied to vote "because the system of local and municipal self-government had not yet been extended to them." R. H. P. Mason, *Japan's First General Election, 1890* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 231.

90. The phrase “beyond the pale” is a particularly apt description since its origins derive from England’s colonization of Ireland. Before England subjugated the entire country during Queen Victoria’s reign, Pale was the area over which England forcibly exercised jurisdiction. It was commonly derogatorily referred to as the very outer fringe of English civilization, and, thus, anything beyond it was unimaginably barbaric and backward.

## 1 HARVESTING HISTORY: MODERN NARRATIVES FOR PATRIOTIC PIONEERS AND THE IMPERIAL MILITARY

1. In practice, the phrase “age of development” lacks fixed dates, but generally is understood to overlap with the existence of the *tondenhei* system (1874–1904) or the Meiji era (1868–1912).
2. Itō Hiroshi, *Tondenhei no kazoku toshite* (Tokyo: Itō Hiroshi, 1972). Itō, *Tondenhei monogatari* (Sapporo: Hokkaidō Kyōikusha, 1984).
3. Itō Hiroshi, *Tondenhei kenkyū* (Tokyo: Dōseisha, 1992).
4. Yamamoto Fumio, *Hokkaidō kaitaku no kutō: tondenhei kazoku monogatari* (Tokyo: Shinpūsha, 2005).
5. The official English translations of the names of these two museums on their websites are the Historical Museum of Hokkaido and the Historic Village of Hokkaido, neither conveying the notion of development in the word *kaitaku*.
6. For numbers of Japanese settlers see Itō, *Tondenhei monogatari*, 7.
7. Enomoto Morie, preface to *Tondenhei kenkyū*, by Itō, 1.
8. A color reprint of “Emperor Meiji Inspecting Yamahana Colonization” (*Meiji tennō Yamahana tonden shisatsu*) can be found in Hirozawa Tokujirō, *Hokkaidō tondenhei emonogatari: Asahikawa bunko 2* (Asahikawa: Sohokkai, 1982), 76. For more on the construction of the representations of the modern emperor see Takashi Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).
9. The aggrandizement of the samurai in Hokkaido is also reinforced through works such as Enomoto Morie’s *Samuraitachi no Hokkaidō kaitaku* (Sapporo: Hokkaido Shinbunsha, 1993).
10. Despite the vagueness of the term “samurai” in Japanese, I will use it in lieu of the more common Japanese word *bushi* when referring to those having hereditary military status previous to the Meiji period. *Shizoku* and former samurai will be used interchangeably to refer to the approximately 3 million Japanese that fell under this new categorization after the status system of the Tokugawa era was abolished.
11. As a 2006 newspaper article titled “Hokkaido Farmers Beat Odds, Produce Successful Rice Strains” suggests, scientists and farmers have long been working to devise a variety of rice suited for Hokkaido’s climate. Hasegawa Tomokazu, *Japan Times*, December 22, 2006.

12. *Shin hokkaidō shi*. (Sapporo: Hokkaido, 1969–1981), 346. Most settlement programs required men to be married, and historical documents commonly provide numbers of households, which refer only to the male heads of the households and not the many family members that accompanied them to Hokkaido.
13. Itō, *Tondenhei kenkyū*, 297–299.
14. John A. Harrison, *Japan's Northern Frontier: A Preliminary Study in Colonization and Expansion with Special Reference to the Relations of Japan and Russia* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1953), 61.
15. *Ibid.*, 86.
16. For a discussion of how the national Prostitutes Liberation Law (1872) was counteracted in practice through amendments, which nullified the “unconditional release” clause, by the Hokkaido Development Agency, see Hoshi Reiko, “Hokkaidō ni okeru shōgi kaihō rei,” *Rekishi hyōron* 491 (1991): 67–83.
17. James Edward Ketelaar, “Hokkaido Buddhism and the Early Meiji State,” in *New Directions in the Study of Meiji Japan*, ed. Helen Hardacre and Adam L. Kern (Boston: Brill Academic, 1997), 531–548.
18. Itō, *Tondenhei kenkyū*, 297.
19. Itō, *Tondenhei monogatari*, 128.
20. *Ibid.*, 128–134. Itō also highlights the story of one woman, Takahashi Shoei, but focuses narrowly on her conversion to Christianity.
21. Although the exact date of the production of the paintings is unknown, it must have been before 1934, when they were first published in a historical work on Asahikawa ton-den-*hei*. Hirozawa finished the 88 pages of commentary in 1941.
22. *Hokkaidō sōmubu bunsho ka*, ed. *Kaitaku ni tsukushita hitobito: 3: Hiraku yuku daichi (jyō)* (Sapporo: Hokkaidō, 1965), 158–172.
23. *Tondenhei techō*, 1–2.
24. The Record of Tamaru Chiyono, 15.
25. Itō, *Tondenhei monogatari*, 7. This is repeated in the introduction of Itō's *A Study of Tondenhei*, 5. Although he does address other issues, they are mentioned in passing and much later on.
26. Donald Calman, *The Nature and Origins of Japanese Imperialism: A Reinterpretation of the Great Crisis of 1873* (London: Routledge, 1992), 249.
27. Hokkaidō kyōiku iinkai bunka shiryōshitsu, ed., *Tondenhei* (Sapporo: Hokkaidō Shinbunsha, 1985), 18–19.
28. *Ibid.*
29. Itō, *Tondenhei kenkyū*, 30.
30. *Ibid.*, 34. The use of “*dochaku*” should be noted. In this context, it does not denote native as in indigenous. This obviously is not suggesting a troop of natives, or Ainu. Here *dochaku* indicates living in a place for an extended period of time or a permanent settling. However, the connotation of native served to reinforce the idea that Hokkaido was part of Japan and that the Japanese belonged there.

31. *Ibid.*, 35.
32. Kuroda was promoted to Director of the Development Agency on August 2, 1874, but even as a deputy director he had been, since as early as 1871, leading virtually all aspects of the office.
33. Itō, *Tondenhei kenkyū*, 84.
34. “The Hokkaido Development Agency and Defense of the Northern Border: Formation of the Tondenhei,” *Tōkyō nichinichi shinbun*, August 1, 1875 in *Meiji nyūsu jiten*: 1, ed. Edamatsu Shigeyuki and Sugiura Tadashi (Tokyo: Mainichi Komyunikeshonzu, 1988), 529.
35. Stephen Vlastos, *Mirror of Modernity: Invented Traditions of Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 3. Italics in original.
36. *Ibid.*, 8.
37. *Kojien: 5th Edition* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1998), 1960.
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Hokkaidō kaitaku zasshi* 1 (1880–1881): 7 (Hereafter referred to as HKZ). For later articulations of agrarianism (*nōhonsbugi*), see Carol Gluck’s chapter “The Agrarian Myth and *Jichi*,” in *Japan’s Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 178–203.
40. This short article does not have a title, but is the third article in a section headed “Congratulatory Remarks” (*shukushi*). HKZ 1: 7.
41. HKZ 1: 7.
42. *Ibid.*
43. *Ibid.*, 7–8.
44. *Ibid.*, 270.
45. *Ibid.*
46. *Ibid.*, 272.
47. Hirozawa, *Tondenhei emonogatari*, 10.
48. Tobe Ryōichi, *Gyakusetsu no guntai* (Tokyo: Chūōkōron, 1998), 31.
49. Due to a fire in the main imperial palace some years earlier, the emperor lived at a temporary residence in Akasaka at the time of the insurrection.
50. Tobe, *Gyakusetsu no guntai*, 25.
51. “Gunjin kunkai,” in *Nihon kindai shisō taikei 4: Guntai, heishi*, ed. Fujiwara Akira and Yoshida Yutaka (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1989), 163.
52. *Ibid.*
53. *Ibid.*, 164.
54. “Gunjin chokuyu,” in *Nihon kindai shisō taikei 4*, 172–176.
55. For more on the history of the term “bushido,” see G. Cameron Hurst III, “Death, Honor, and Loyalty: The Bushido Ideal,” *Philosophy East and West* 40:4 (1990): 511–527 and Michele M. Mason, “Empowering the Would-be Warrior: Bushidō and the Gendered Bodies of the Japanese Nation,” in *Recreating Japanese Men*, ed. Sabine Frühstück and Anne Walthall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 68–90.

56. Vlastos, *Mirror of Modernity*, 7.  
 57. *Tondenhei techō*, 1.

## 2 WRITING AINU OUT: THE NATURE OF JAPANESE COLONIALISM IN HOKKAIDO

1. Richard Okada, “‘Landscape’ and the Nation-State: A Reading of *Nihon Fūkei Ron*,” in *New Directions in the Study of Meiji Japan*, ed. Helen Hardacre (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 90–107. Shiga wrote some of his very first observations on nature in a diary he kept during his four years in Hokkaido (1880–1884), when he was a student at Sapporo Agricultural College.
2. David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 92.
3. The 1893 World’s Columbian Exhibition in Chicago commemorated Christopher Columbus’s voyages 400 years earlier. The displays of “native villages” and Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show were evidence of the prevalence of Western imperialism throughout the world, which was, in large part, the legacy of Columbus’s violent invasion into indigenous communities throughout the southern hemisphere. For an excellent pictorial tour of a similar fair, see Eric Breitbart, *A World on Display: Photographs from the St. Louis World’s Fair, 1904* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997). One chapter, “Ainu and Pygmy,” includes pictures of nine Ainu individuals who traveled to be part of an exhibit of “native peoples.”
4. Nitobe Inazō, *The Imperial Agricultural College of Sapporo, Japan* (Sapporo: Imperial College of Agriculture, 1893), 1.
5. Karatani Kōjin, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, trans. Brett de Bary (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 23.
6. Saito Chōken, ed., *Kunikida Doppo kenkyū* (Tokyo: Makino Shuppan, 2000). Ashiya Nobukazu, *Kunikida Doppo no bungakukēn* (Tokyo: Sōbunsha Shuppan, 2008).
7. Dennis H. Atkin, “The Life and Short Stories of Kunikida Doppo” (University of Washington, 1970), 20.
8. Donald Keene, *Dawn to the West: Japanese Literature in the Modern Era* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 227.
9. Refer to Karatani, *Modern Japanese Literature*, 11–44 and Kota Inoue, “The Suburb as Colonial Space in Modern Japanese Literature and Cinema,” (Irvine: University of California, 2004), 25–69.
10. “The Shores of the Sorachi River” by Kunikida Doppo appeared in the 1902 November and December installments of *Seinenkai*, a journal for youths. A Japanese version can be found in Ogasawara Katsu, Kihara Naohiko, and Wada Kingo, eds., *Hokkaidō bungaku zenshū 1:shintenchi no roman* (Tokyo: Rippū Shobō, 1979–1980). Herein, I reference my

- translation published in Michele M. Mason and Helen J. S. Lee, eds., *Reading Colonial Japan: Text, Context, Critique* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 21–32.
11. Carol Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 180.
  12. *Ibid.*, 181.
  13. Paul Anderer, *Other Worlds: Arishima Takeo and the Bounds of Modern Japanese Fiction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 29. Italics in original.
  14. *Ibid.*, 30–31. Author and translator Hara Hōitsuan provides us with an interesting alternative interpretation of the lack of poetry associated with Hokkaido. The narrator of his work *Secret Politician*, which combines elements of detective and political novels, claims, “It was rare that a man of letters left footprints on this land in ancient times, and there is not even one poem or line, not even one volume or verse that poetically expresses the splendor of the wonderful sights here. All the more because it is impossible to describe, we should make Hokkaido a sacred place.” Hara Hōitsuan, “Anchū Seijika,” in *Hokkaidō bungaku zenshū: shintenchi* 1, ed. Ogasawara Katsu et al. (Tokyo: Rippū Shobō, 1979), 102.
  15. Tessa Morris-Suzuki, “Creating the Frontier: Border, Identity and History in Japan’s Far North,” *East Asian History* 7 (1994): 22. Also instructive herein is her fascinating discussion of Ainu dog-farming, which further challenges the prevailing notions of Ainu as hunter-gatherers.
  16. Kunikida, *Shores of the Sorachi River*, 21.
  17. *Ibid.*
  18. *Ibid.*, 30.
  19. This character combination is slightly different in nuance from the homonym, which emphasizes planting the opened land.
  20. Anderer, *Other Worlds*, 27.
  21. Kunikida, *Shores of the Sorachi River*, 31.
  22. *Ibid.*, 25.
  23. *Ibid.*, 31.
  24. *Ibid.*
  25. *Ibid.*
  26. *Ibid.*, 32.
  27. *Ibid.*
  28. Spurr, *Rhetoric of Empire*, 93.
  29. Komori Yōichi, “Rule in the Name of ‘Protection’: The Vocabulary of Colonialism,” in *Reading Colonial Japan: Text, Context, Critique*, ed. Michele M. Mason and Helen J. S. Lee (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2012), 60–75.
  30. For more information on land and settler policy, see Richard Siddle, *Race, Resistance and the Ainu of Japan* (London: Routledge, 1996), 55–60.

31. "Diary of the Development Agency, September 1871," in *Meiji nyūsu jiten: 1 (1868–1877)*, ed. Edamatsu Shigeyuki and Sugiura Tadashi (Tokyo: Mainichi Koyunikeshonzu, 1988), 668.
32. For more refer to Siddle's discussion of the Hokkaido Former Natives Protection Law (*Hokkaidō kyūdojin hogobō*, 1899) and the Regulation for the Education of Former Native Children (Kyū dojin jidō kyō iku kitei, 1901) in *Race, Resistance and the Ainu of Japan*, 71–72.
33. Spurr, *Rhetoric of Empire*, 93.
34. Kunikida, *Shores of the Sorachi River*, 22.
35. *Ibid.*, 31–32.
36. *Ibid.*, 31.
37. *Ibid.*
38. Spurr, *Rhetoric of Empire*, 28.
39. Nitobe, *Imperial Agricultural College of Sapporo*, 2.
40. Siddle, *Race, Resistance and the Ainu of Japan*, 57.
41. Kunikida, *Shores of the Sorachi River*, 22.
42. Spurr illuminates how this colonial logic played out in European colonies in Africa: "The Africans lack a history because they fail to leave a permanent mark on the landscape—no ancient architecture, no monuments or records—nothing to bring about the transformation and construction of the environment which provide the measure of civilization. This lack of inscription becomes the sign of another failure—the failure to mark the difference between nature and its others, between present and past, between presence and absence." Spurr, *Rhetoric of Empire*, 99.
43. Kunikida, *Shores of the Sorachi River*, 32.
44. Komori, "Rule in the Name of 'Protection,'" 68.
45. Siddle, *Race, Resistance and the Ainu of Japan*, 57.
46. For another example, see Paul Anderer's nuanced reading of Arishima Takeo's (1878–1923) "The Descendants of Cain" (*Kain no matsuei*, 1916), which is set in Hokkaido. Anderer writes, "Just as Hokkaido represents some 'other world' where the traveler sees around him nothing familiar and so is assaulted by the discordance or at least the difference of a new milieu, so does Arishima's fictional journey toward the interior of the mind reveal hitherto unknown areas of division and conflict." Anderer, *Other Worlds*, 37.
47. Tom Henighan, *Natural Space in Literature: Imagination and Environment in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Fiction and Poetry* (Ottawa: Golden Dog, 1982), 36. Italics added.
48. Kunikida, *Shores of the Sorachi River*, 21.
49. *Ibid.*, 25.
50. *Ibid.*, 31–32.
51. *Ibid.*, 32.
52. *Ibid.*
53. Honjō Mutsuo, *Ishikarigawa* (Tokyo: Taikandō shoten, 1939).
54. Inoue Yūichi, "Shizen/inaka no saihakken," in *Kōza Shōwa bungaku: 2* (Tokyo: Yūseidō, 1988), 205.

55. Ibid., 204.
56. Ibid., 206
57. *Shin Hokkaidō shi*: 3 (Sapporo: Hokkaidō, 1969–1981), 878. (Hereafter referred to as *SHS*.)
58. *SHS*: 4, 248–249.
59. It should be noted that Ainu villages are increasingly prominent features of Hokkaido’s tourist economy. Lisa Hiwasaki, “Ethnic Tourism in Hokkaido and the Shaping of Ainu Identity,” *Public Affairs* 73:3 (2000): 393–441.
60. ann-elise lewallen, “Indigenous at last! Ainu Grassroots Organizing and the Indigenous Peoples Summit in Ainu Mosir,” *The Asia Pacific Journal* 48:6 (November 30, 2008).

### 3 POLITICAL PROTEST AND PENAL COLONIES: NARRATING THE TRANSFORMATION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY AND LITERATURE

1. Andrew Fraser, R. H. P. Mason, and Phillip Mitchell, eds., *Japan’s Early Parliaments, 1890–1905: Structure, Issues and Trends* (London: Routledge, 1995), 1.
2. The Meiji Emperor opened the Japanese Imperial Diet on November 29, 1890. *Secret Politician* was serialized in the *Yūbin Hōchi Newspaper* from October 7 to December 8, 1890.
3. As early as the Kamakura period, Ezo was an official site of exile supervised by the office of the Ezokanrei. The famous case of the court noble Kazan’in Tadanaga’s (1588–1662) deportation from 1609 to 1636 for his participation in the Inokuma Incident affirms that Ezo still functioned in this capacity in early Tokugawa.
4. Besides the Tokyo and Miyagi (Sendai) shūjikan, there was the Miike shūjikan built in Kyushu. The shūjikan designation was eliminated in 1903, replaced by the term *kangoku*.
5. Images of exile in Hokkaido held their potency into the Taisho era and beyond. In 1920, Yoshiya Nobuko wrote *Chi no hate made (To the Ends of the Earth)*, wherein a main character is relocated to the company’s branch in Hokkaido as punishment for his labor activism.
6. I use the terms “*seiji shōsetsu*” and “political novel” interchangeably, but cautiously, fully aware of both the historic specificity of this retroactive categorization and of the imperfect rendering of the Japanese word *shōsetsu* as novel in English.
7. Maeda Ai, *Text and the City*, ed. James A. Fujii (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), 30.
8. Jim Reichert, *In the Company of Men: Representations of Male-Male Sexuality in Meiji Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 11–12.



9. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 7.
10. The focus of this chapter does not allow me to fully address the marginalization of Ainu in *Secret Politician*. Although Japan's first modern colony, Hokkaido served Hara's ends well as a symbol of state oppression against struggling Japanese citizens. Hara was unable to recognize the other violent oppression occurring there, evidenced by his lack of comment on the Ainu except to predictably characterize his Ainu host as a hairy barbarian. In the singular portrayal of an Ainu person, the Japanese narrator threatens trouble if an Ainu man does not consent to give him (and two other men he has met on the road) lodging for the night. After the man accedes, the narrator boasts of the compliant nature of the "barbarians." While *Secret Politician* is an important example of an oppositional work from the Meiji era, in it Hokkaido is appropriated to tell a tragic story of modern *Japanese* citizens who bear the brunt of the modern project.
11. Komori Yōichi, "*Yuragi*" *no Nihon bungaku* (Tokyo: Nihon Hōsō Shuppan Kyōkai, 1998), 317.
12. Roger W. Bowen, *Rebellion and Democracy in Meiji Japan: A Study of Commoners in the Popular Rights Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 287–288.
13. Janet Hunter, *Concise Dictionary of Modern Japanese History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 47.
14. The Japanese title was *Tankō hiji*, or *Secret of the Coal Mine*.
15. Hara Hōitsuan, "Anchū Seijika," in *Hokkaidō bungaku zenshū*, ed. Ogasawara Katsu et al. (Tokyo: Rippū Shobō, 1979), 101–184. All translations of *Secret Politician* are my own.
16. The narrator's name is never provided.
17. The port area formerly known as Ogi is in Miyagi Prefecture. Ogi no longer exists as a municipality since during the Showa period Ogihama was incorporated into Ishimaki City. In 1890, Mitsubishi's regular steamer from Yokohama to Hakodate stopped in Ogi, which readers would have recognized as being very close to Fukushima.
18. The title character is a mysterious, only vaguely identified figure that merely hovers in the background of the story. The "secret politician" may be loosely modeled on Kōno Hironaka, one of the influential leaders of the popular rights movement and the president of the Fukushima prefectural assembly during the time of the Fukushima Incident, although there is no evidence that he betrayed the opposition as does the secret politician. Kōno was imprisoned in 1883 and pardoned in 1889. I would like to thank Kota Inoue for first bringing this to my attention.
19. Hara, *Secret Politician*, 182.
20. *Ibid.*, 168.
21. *Ibid.*, 141.
22. *Ibid.*

23. Atsuko Ueda, "The Production of Literature and the Effaced Realm of the Political," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 31:1 (2005): 74–75.
24. Maeda, *Text and the City*, 22. Maeda is referring to the penal colony known as El Dorado in French Guiana.
25. *Shin Hokkaidō shi*: 3 (Sapporo: Hokkaidō, 1969–1981), 775.
26. The others are listed as *ryūchijō*, *kansō*, *chōjijō*, *kōryōjō*, and *chōekijō*, which are difficult to translate into distinct words in English. *Ryūchijō*, *kansō*, and *kōryōjō* refer to detention centers, temporary or otherwise. Only the last one, *chōekijō*, designates the sentence specifically—that of imprisonment with hard labor. See Shigematsu Kazuyoshi, *Hokkaidō kangoku no rekishi* (Abashiri: Shinzansha, 2004), 19.
27. *Ibid.*
28. *SHS*: 3, 776.
29. *Ibid.*, 777.
30. Arthur Griffiths, *The History and Romance of Crime* (London: The Groiler Society, 1900). He included India, Burma, China, Japan, Egypt, and Turkey in his study.
31. *Ibid.*, 229–230.
32. Takashio Hiroshi and Nakayama Kōshō, eds., *Hokkaidō shūjikan ronkō* (Tokyo: Kōbundo, 1997), 118.
33. *SHS*: 4, 160. For an extensive treatment of the link between *shūjikan* in Hokkaido and the Freedom and Popular Rights Movement see Tomono Sotokichi's *Gokusō no jiyūminkensha tachi: Hokkaidō shūjikan no setchi* (Tokyo: Miyama Shobō, 1974).
34. These include proposals made to Sanjō Sanetomi, one of the most powerful figures of the Grand Council of State, and Kuroda Kiyotaka, the director of the Hokkaido Development Agency.
35. Takashio and Nakayama, *Hokkaidō shūjikan ronkō*, 18
36. *Ibid.*
37. *Ibid.*
38. *Ibid.*, 17.
39. After doing majority of the most difficult and treacherous outdoor work on reclamation, road, and construction projects, such forced labor became prohibited. Thereafter, prisoners were lent out to local mines for low wages in similarly horrific conditions.
40. Maeda, *Text and the City*, 34.
41. *SHS*: 4, 162–163.
42. *SHS*: 3, 781.
43. *Ibid.*, 780.
44. *Ibid.*
45. There was also the persistent problem of escapes, an issue featured in *Secret Politician*.
46. Abashiri Prison Museum, ed., *The Largest and Oldest Prison Museum in Japan: Experience the Hidden History of the North at the Open-Air Prison Museum*. (Abashiri, Hokkaido: Abashiri Prison Museum, 2).

47. Maeda, *Text and the City*, 53.
48. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 201.
49. Maeda, *Text and the City*, 34. Naoyuki Umemori's history of Meiji-era penal codes has a useful discussion on the epistemological revolution regarding the role of panoptic surveillance. See "Spatial Configuration and Subject Formation: The Establishment of the Modern Penitentiary System in Meiji Japan," in *New Directions in the Study of Meiji Japan*, ed. Helen Hardacre (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 734–767.
50. Hara, *Secret Politician*, 169.
51. *Ibid.*
52. Kamei Hideo, *Transformations of Sensibility: The Phenomenology of Meiji Literature*, trans. ed. Michael Bourdaghs (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2002), viii–ix.
53. For a detailed description of the nonperson narrator and many other key terms for understanding the significance of Kamei's work, see Bourdaghs' "Introduction." See also the illustrative discussion of Shimazaki Tōson's "Kyūshujin," in James Fujii's *Complicit Fictions: The Subject in the Modern Japanese Prose Narrative* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 57–75.
54. John Pierre Mertz, *Novel Japan: Spaces of Nationhood in Early Meiji Narrative, 1870–88* (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2003), 255.
55. *Ibid.*, 253.
56. Hara, *Secret Politician*, 110.
57. Sedgwick, *Between Men*, 1–5.
58. Hara, *Secret Politician*, 110.
59. *Ibid.*, 114.
60. *Ibid.*
61. *Ibid.*
62. *Ibid.* The translation "'fairy' man" in this passage derives from the combination of the Chinese characters *ten'nyo* glossed as *fuearii* immediately followed by the word for man, *danshi*.
63. Hara, *Secret Politician*, 117.
64. *Ibid.*
65. *Ibid.*, 114.
66. According to my research, this would be historically incorrect. I cannot find any evidence that women were imprisoned at Sorachi Prison.
67. Reichert, *In the Company of Men*, 99–131.
68. Hara, *Secret Politician*, 173–174.
69. *Ibid.*, 175.
70. *Ibid.*, 178.
71. *Ibid.*, 175.
72. *Ibid.*, 176.
73. *Ibid.*, 178.

74. Ibid., 176.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid., 177.
77. Gregory M. Pflugfelder, *Cartographies of Desire: Male-Male Sexuality in Japanese Discourse, 1600–1950* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 146–192. In 1872, Article 266 of the Reformed Legal Code made anal intercourse between men a criminal act. This was repealed in 1882.
78. For more on the *bankara* man, see Jason Karlin, “The Gender of Nationalism: Competing Masculinities in Meiji Japan,” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 28:1 (2002), 41–77.
79. Mertz, *Novel Japan*, 139–188.
80. It should be noted that initially election laws severely restricted male suffrage; universal male suffrage was granted only in 1925.
81. The ascendancy of normative heterosexuality within modern Japanese fiction and society did not mean that women were more realistically portrayed in literature or that they were allowed to participate in the public sphere.

#### 4 A PANTHEON OF PROMISES: THE MAKING OF FANTASIES OF FREEDOM AND CAPITALIST DREAMS

1. Hokkaido-born novelist Yagi Yoshinori (1911–1999) has conferred the title “the father of Hokkaido literature” on Arishima. See *Arishima to Hokkaidō* (Niseko: Arishima Kinenkan, 2003).
2. Edward Fowler, “Review of *River Mist and Other Stories*,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 43:4 (August, 1984): 757.
3. Donald Keene, *Dawn to the West: Japanese Literature of the Modern Era* (New York: Holt, Reinhart, and Winston, 1984), 236.
4. Dennis H. Atkin, *The Life and Short Stories of Kunikida Doppo* (University of Washington, 1970), 34. The others works were “The Kamakura Woman,” “The Third Man,” and “People Who Love Love.”
5. For instance, Keene writes, “the story expresses Doppo’s philosophy after his Christian fervor had cooled.” Keene, *Dawn to the West*, 236.
6. Kunikida Doppo, *River Mist and Other Stories*, trans. David G. Chibbett (New York: Kodansha International, 1983), 136.
7. Shimizu Shikin, “School for Émigrés,” trans. Rebecca Jennison in *Modern Murasaki: Writing by Women of Meiji Japan*, ed. Rebecca L. Copeland and Melek Ortobasi (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 263. Italics added.
8. Shikin, “School for Émigrés,” 263.
9. Kunikida, “Meat and Potatoes,” *River Mist*, 142.
10. Ibid., 149.
11. Ibid., 138–139.
12. Ibid., 139.

13. *Ibid.*, 146.
14. *Ibid.*, 147.
15. *Ibid.*, 139. Kamimura also claims, “I did not so much think of winter in Hokkaido as that winter was Hokkaido.”
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Ibid.*, 146.
18. *Ibid.*, 139.
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*, 138.
21. *Ibid.*, 140.
22. Moreover, the settlement campaigns and cultural assimilation policies experimented with in Hokkaido presaged the migration of Japanese settlers and corporate entities to places such as Taiwan, Korea, and Manchuria in later years. See, for instance, Louise Young, *Japan’s Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).
23. *Shin Hokkaidō shi*: 3 (Sapporo: Hokkaido, 1969–1981), 265.
24. *Ibid.*, 229–230.
25. *Ibid.*, 277.
26. *Ibid.*, 277–278.
27. *Ibid.*, 278.
28. For more on renewed interest in Kobayashi and his works, see Norma Field, “Commercial Appetite and Human Need: The Accidental and Fated Revival of Kobayashi Takiji’s *Cannery Ship*,” *Asia-Pacific Journal* 8–8–09 (February 22, 2009) and Heather Bowen-Struyk, “Why a Boom in Proletarian Literature in Japan?: The Kobayashi Takiji Memorial and *The Factory Ship*,” *Asia-Pacific Journal* 26–1–09 (June 29, 2009).
29. *The Absentee Landlord*, which was published in the same year as *The Crab Cannery Ship*, did not garner the same critical reception. It did, however, capture the attention of Kobayashi’s employers at Hokkaido Colonial Bank (*Hokkaidō takushoku ginkō*). After having worked there for almost five years, he was summarily fired subsequent to the publication of *The Absentee Landlord*.
30. The story was based on a true incident that occurred in 1926. Kobayashi Takiji, “*The Factory Ship*” and “*The Absentee Landlord*,” trans. Frank Motofuji (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1972), xxii.
31. *Ibid.*, 96.
32. *Ibid.*, 95.
33. At one point a friend of Ken’s writes from Otaru, laying out how land-owners and businessmen fixed prices and distorted information about international trading to serve their own interests. *Ibid.*, 146–149. Additionally, Kobayashi’s narrator notes that there were many cases in which owners of large estates would break their promise to transfer for free a percentage of the land a farmhand had converted to arable plots. *Ibid.*, 96.
34. *Ibid.*, 137.

35. Ibid.
36. Ibid., 126–127.
37. Ibid., 93.
38. Ibid., 94.
39. Ibid., 96.
40. Sometimes they were the same people. Tenant farmers often worked in other industries, such as coal mining, when agricultural duties were lighter. Kobayashi indicates as much when he mentions that some farmers had tried to make ends meet by working in the Mitsui mines at Sunakawa. Ibid., 152.
41. Hokutan was forced to sell its railway when the government ordered the nationalization of railroads in 1906. The company changed its name to Hokkaido Colliery and Steamship Company (*Hokkaidō tankō kisen kabushiki kaisha*). Although it has ceased mining operations, Hokutan still exists as an importer of coal from Russia. The motto on their company website boasts, “Dreams [sic] come true through Coal.”
42. Hori, who hailed from Satsuma, had worked in the Hakodate court system and held numerous positions in the Hokkaido Development Agency. In 1888, he assumed the directorship of Hokkaido’s prefectural office, which he abruptly resigned so as to avail himself of the opportune sale of Horonai mine. *Tankō: Seisui no kiroku* (Sapporo: Hokkaido Shinbunsha, 2003), 16–17. (Hereafter referred to as *Tankō*.)
43. Yano Makio et al., *Sekitan no kataru nihon no kindai* (Tokyo: Soshiete, 1978), 56. (Hereafter referred to as *Sekitan*.)
44. *Tankō*, 17. Yano, *Sekitan*, 60.
45. Eiichi Aoki, “Expansion of Railway Network,” *Japan Railway & Transport Review* (June 1994), 34. The other four in this category were the Sanyo, Kyushu, Kansai, and Nippon railways.
46. Today, Muroran continues to maintain a vital port, the only one in Hokkaido that has a cruise-ship berth.
47. Yano, *Sekitan*, 56–57.
48. *Tankō*, 17.
49. Kuroda Kiyotaka, “Kaitaku zasshi hakkō no shushi,” *Hokkaidō Kaitaku zasshi* 1:2 (1880): 1.
50. Today this is JR Eastern Japan (Je Aru Higashi Nihon).
51. A government-run, tax-payer-funded operation until 1875, Mitsubishi purchased the NYK Line under extremely favorable conditions, strengthening its position in the zaibatsu hierarchy.
52. Yano, *Sekitan*, 64.
53. Ibid., 81.
54. *Tankō*, 17–18.
55. Yano, *Sekitan*, 87.
56. Ibid., 93. Labor reform of the mining industry during the Meiji period might also be said to have started in Hokkaido. The leaders of the Association for Sincerity in Labor (Rōdō Shinseikai), founded in 1902,

- gained their skills in Hokkaido. Figures such as Nagaoka Tsuruzō, who got his feet wet in Yubari coal mine, went to Ashio copper mine and trained the laborers there in strike strategies.
57. For more on these zaibatsu's wartime profits, see Mark Driscoll's discussion of their investment in the opium trade during Japan's colonial rule over Manchuria. *Absolute Erotic, Absolute Grotesque: The Living, Dead, and Undead in Japan's Imperialism, 1895–1945* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 286–287.
  58. Kenneth Strong, introduction to Arishima Takeo, *A Certain Woman*, trans. Kenneth Strong (Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1978), 2.
  59. *Ibid.*, 8.
  60. *Ibid.*, 6.
  61. Arishima Takeo, “Mushanokōji kei hei,” in *Arishima Takeo zenshū*: 7 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1980), 208. (*Arishima Takeo zenshū* will hereafter be referred to as *ATZ*.)
  62. That Arishima associated Christianity with pacifist and egalitarian beliefs might be attributed to his introduction to the religion through a Quaker-influenced community. His close relationship with the Quaker Nitobe Inazō and his attendance at the reputable US Quaker institution Haverford College indicates a familiarity with this unique denomination of Christianity.
  63. Strong, Introduction, 7. Strong notes that this comment was censored in two collected works published after Arishima's death.
  64. Ayame Hiroharu, “Arishima Takeo to kokka/shihonshugi/sensō,” *Kaishaku to kanshō* 72:6 (2007): 57.
  65. Paul Anderer, *Other Worlds: Arishima Takeo and the Bounds of Modern Japanese Fiction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 186.
  66. Arishima Takeo, “Hokkaidō ni tsuite no inshō” in *ATZ*: 9 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1980), 298.
  67. Arishima, “Hokkaidō ni tsuite no inshō,” 299.
  68. *Ibid.*
  69. *Ibid.*
  70. Today, the large, forceful calligraphic rendering of the phrase “mutual-aid” in Japanese (*sōgo fujo*), written by Arishima's own hand, occupies a prominent place in the Arishima Takeo Memorial Museum in Niseko, Hokkaido.
  71. Strong, Introduction, 9.
  72. Anderer, *Other Worlds*, 214.
  73. Arishima made his intentions public before the official transfer through an essay titled “A Manifesto” (*Sengen hitotsu*), which was published in *Kaizō* in January 1922. *ATZ*: 9 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1980), 5–10. In “Facts Regarding the Liberation of my Farm” (*Nōjyo kaihō tenmatsu*), Arishima lays out the historical background of the farm and the process by which he liberated it. *ATZ*: 9 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1980), 370–373.

74. Arishima Takeo, “Shiyū nōjyo kara kyōsan nōdan e,” in *ATZ: 9* (Tokyo: Chibuma Shobō, 1981), 365.
75. Ian Neary offers a fruitful historical contextualization of the founding of Suiheisha, pointing to the many debates and forces that were informing the use of the word “liberation” at this time. See “The Emergence of the *Suiheisha* Movement,” in *Political Protest and Social Control in Pre-war Japan: Origins of Buraku Liberation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 50–77.
76. Arishima Takeo, “Kaributo nōjyo no kaihō,” in *ATZ: 9* (Tokyo: Chibuma Shobō, 1981), 407. This originally appeared in *Otaru Newspaper* in two installments on May 20 and 21, 1923.
77. Arishima, “Shiyū nōjyo kara kyōsan nōdan e,” 365.
78. Due to local dam construction, New Village was forced to move to its current location in Saitama prefecture in 1939. Today the members manage a farm, selling their produce, in addition to operating an art museum, a cultural center, and a library. For more information on the original collective and its philosophical underpinnings, see Mushanokōji Saneatsu, *Atarashikimura no seikatsu* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1918).
79. Arishima Takeo, “Mushanokōji kei hei,” in *ATZ: 9* (Tokyo: Chibuma Shobō, 1981), 207.
80. Arishima, “Shiyū nōjō kara kyōsan nōdan e,” 367.
81. Arishima, “Kaributo nōjyo no kaihō,” 405.
82. *Ibid.*, 406.
83. Arishima Takeo, “Jiyū wa ataerarezu,” in *ATZ: 9* (Tokyo: Chibuma Shobō, 1981), 18.
84. Arishima, “Kaributo nōjyo no kaihō,” 406.
85. Arishima, “Shiyū nōjō kara kyōsan nōdan e,” 366.
86. Arishima, “Kaributo nōjyo no kaihō,” 405.
87. *Hokkaidō imin an’nai* (Sapporo: Hokkaidō Kaitaku Kinenkan, 1982).
88. *Hokkaidō tankō isan* (Sapporo: Hokkaidō Tankō Isan Fuankurabu, 2011).
89. Kazama Kensuke, *Sorachi tankō isan sanpō* (Sapporo: Kyōdō Bunka Sha, 2003), 8.
90. See *Meiji/Taishō tankō emaki* (Fukuoka City: Meiji/Taishō Tankō Emaki Hakko Kai, 1963).
91. *Tankō*, 19. Italics added.
92. Goshima Ken, *Hokkaido tankō isan* (Tokyo: Aspect, 2010), 13.
93. Arishima, “Hokkaidō ni tsuite no inshō,” 297.

## 5 CONTESTED SITES OF AN ENDURING COLONIAL PAST

1. Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *The Past Within Us: Media, Memory, History* (London and New York: Verso, 2005), 27. Italics in original.
2. Naturally, there were Ainu who organized to advocate for better treatment before the 1960s. See Richard Siddle’s excellent treatment of the



period between 1869 and 1960 in Chapters Five (“With Shining Eyes: Ainu Protest and Resistance, 1869–1945”) and Six (“Ainu Liberation and Welfare Colonialism: The New Ainu Politics and the State’s Response”) in *Race, Resistance, and the Ainu of Japan* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996).

3. Ibid., 162.
4. Ibid., 164.
5. The Hokkaido Ainu Association was first established in 1946 and changed its name in 1961 to the Hokkaido Utari Association to avoid the prejudicial associations with the word Ainu. It reversed this decision in 2009.
6. Lisa Hiwasaki, “Ethnic Tourism in Hokkaido and the Shaping of Ainu Identity,” *Public Affairs* 73:3 (2000): 393–441.
7. ann-elise lewallen, “Indigenous at last! Ainu Grassroots Organizing and the Indigenous Peoples Summit in Ainu Moshir,” *Asia-Pacific Journal* 48:6 (November 30, 2008).
8. For more information on this landmark case, see Mark A. Levin, “Essential Commodities and Racial Justice: Using Constitutional Protection of Japan’s Indigenous Ainu People to Inform Understanding of the United States and Japan,” *New York University of International Law and Politics* 33 (2011): 419–526.
9. Kayano Reiko, *Shashin de tsuzuru Kayano Shigeru no shōgai: Ainu no tamashii to bunka wo motome* (Tokyo: Nōsangyoson bunka kyōkai, 2008).
10. Morris-Suzuki, *Past Within Us*, 8.
11. David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 99.
12. The doctrine of manifest destiny was explicit in the United States, but in the sense that the justifications for the invasion of Ainu Moshir assert that it was incumbent on the superior Japanese civilization to develop the virgin land of Hokkaido, we can detect a similar attitude that profoundly shaped the Japanese incursion into Ainu homelands.
13. Timothy Mitchell, “Orientalism and the Exhibitionary Other,” in *Colonialism and Culture*, ed. Nicholas B. Dirks (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 300.
14. Ibid., 313.
15. For a discussion of the “fossilization” of Ainu and indigenous peoples of the United States see Nishide Kei’ichi, “*Amerika gasshūkoku shi to senjūminzoku*,” in *Hokkaidō to shōsū minzoku*, ed. Sapporo Gakuin Daigaku Bunngakubu (Sapporo: Sapporo Gakuin Daigaku Seikatsu kyōdōkumiai, 1986), 1–59.
16. Duncan Cameron, “The Museum: A Temple or the Forum,” *Curator: The Museum Journal* 14:1 (March 1971), 11–24.
17. You can see a reprint of this painting in Hirozawa Tokujirō, *Tondenbei emonogatari: Asahikawa bunko* 2 (Asahikawa: Sohokkai, 1982), 80.

18. The *hinomaru* flag—with its simple red disc on a white background—was not made the official state flag in the postwar period until August 1999. The government passed the Law Regarding the National Flag and Anthem amidst heated debate about the appropriateness of embracing emblems of ultranationalism and aggression during Japan's imperial age and the Asia-Pacific War.
19. Ashihara Iwao, ed., *Asahikawa heison kinenkan: shiryō setsumei* (Asahikawa: Zaidanhōjin Hakubutsukan Sōtōshisetsu, 2011), 1.
20. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Objects of Ethnography," in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, ed. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine. (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 388.
21. Ibid.
22. In contrast, in the United States, First Nations at least have the record of treaties made with the early administrations that, despite having been broken countless times, in theory recognizes them as sovereign states.
23. Shigematsu Kazuyoshi, ed., *Hakabutsukan abashiri kangoku* (Tokyo: Abashiri Kangoku Hozon Zaidan, 2002), 18–19.
24. This was celebrated as Yoshinaga's 111th film and the promotional materials devote several pages in the back to her long career. With Yoshinaga as star, the producers of the film could count on longtime fans above the age of fifty to attend, but the collector's card campaign suggests efforts to reach a younger demographic as well.
25. Historical accounts can match the romantic versions. See Enomoto Morie, *Samuraitachi no Hokkaidō kaitaku* (Sapporo: Hokkaido Shinbunsha, 1993), 193–228.
26. Hidaka's Horse Breeders Association claims that Hidaka is Japan's largest horse-breeding area today, accounting for 80 percent of the total number of domestically bred horses.
27. Such representations of the Awaji incident also overlook the fierce resentment that Awaji samurai harbored for the Meiji state that banished them to the northern colony despite their loyalty during the Boshin War.
28. Kanezawa Makoto and Ishigami Minako, eds., *Kita no zeronen* (Tokyo: Tōei, 2005), 28.
29. Mark Schilling, "A New World in Post Feudal Times," *Japan Times Review*, February 2, 2005.
30. Inoguchi Kuniko, "Kita no zeronen no shisōteki kagayaki," *Nikkei Shinbun*, February 9, 2005.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. The two men do not perform a real *iyomante* ritual, which would be scheduled for an entire village's participation at a particular time of the year, but an impromptu one when Ashirika is forced to shoot a bear to save the children. It is not surprising that the extremely overdetermined

- symbol of Hokkaido's natural world and Ainu culture, the bear, appears in one of the few scenes with Ainu themes.
35. Kanezawa and Ishigami, *Kita no zeronen*, 4.
  36. Ibid.
  37. The word Tokyo in the title of this film is written in English while Ainu is rendered in katakana script. *Tokyo Ainu*, Dir. Moriya Hiroshi (Tokyo, 2010).
  38. Tezuka Osamu. *Shumari: Volume 1* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2009), 22.
  39. Tezuka, *Shumari: Volume 2*, 169.
  40. Ibid., 493.
  41. Chapters 12, 13, 15, 16, and 17 cover Shumari's stint at a privately run coal mine, Chapters 10 and 11 portray his life in a *shūjikan*, while [Chapter 4](#) relates his encounter with a caravan transporting women to "pleasure men of Ezo."
  42. See Chapters 26 and 14.
  43. Tezuka, *Shumari: Volume 2*, 381–389.
  44. Tezuka, *Shumari: Volume 1*, 32.
  45. Tezuka, *Shumari: Volume 2*, 80
  46. Ibid., 81
  47. Ibid.
  48. A musical instrument similar to a Jew's harp.
  49. Tezuka, *Shumari: Volume 2*, 491.
  50. Ibid., 493.
  51. Personal discussions with an Ainu elder at Pirka Kotan and Nakamura Itsukushi at Poroto Kotan.
  52. Tezuka, *Shumari: Volume 1*, 102.
  53. Ibid.
  54. Komori Yōichi. "Rule in the Name of 'Protection': The Vocabulary of Colonialism," in *Reading Colonial Japan: Text, Context, and Critique*, ed. Michele M. Mason and Helen J. S. Lee. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 60–75.
  55. Tezuka, *Shumari: Volume 2*, 129.
  56. Ibid.
  57. One could also argue that just as important as what Shumari wears is what he does *not* wear. In almost every frame of the manga, Shumari is shirtless, his right arm tucked away into the armhole of a vest. Although going bare-chested is not a common association with Ainu specifically, for his audience it would have served to bring Shumari into the proximity of a barbarian or native realm. It should be remembered that in early Meiji, Western criticisms of Japanese men wearing only loincloths in the streets and men and women publicly bathing were stressed as evidence of Japan's uncivilized status. The Meiji state worked hard to eliminate these practices with formal laws and informal policies and distance themselves from this history.
  58. Tezuka, *Shumari: Volume 2*, 491.

59. Spurr, *Rhetoric of Empire*, 140.
60. Tezuka, *Shumari: Volume 2*, 483.
61. An excellent history of Manchuria can be found in Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). For a disturbing account of the Japanese imperial-capitalist project in Manchuria, see Mark Driscoll, *Absolute Erotic, Absolute Grotesque: The Living, Dead, and Undead in Japan's Imperialism, 1885–1945* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010).
62. Morris-Suzuki, *Past Within Us*, 237–238.
63. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, eds., *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Displays* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 7.
64. *Ibid.*
65. *Ibid.*, 8.

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2. Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *The Past Within Us: Media, Memory, History* (London and New York: Verso, 2005), 26.
3. Ikezawa Natsuki, *Shizukana daichi* (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 2007), 26
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*, 141.
7. *Ibid.*, 46.
8. *Ibid.*, 93.
9. *Ibid.*, 47.
10. *Ibid.*, 640.
11. *Ibid.*, 647.
12. *Ibid.*, 650.

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