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„Remembrance of Lost Empire: Inter-Cultural Belonging
and Created Identity on Sakhalin Island“

verfasst von / submitted by

Noah Oskow

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Abstract

Sakhalin: the largest island in the Russian Federation and 23rd largest in the world, and the main landmass of the Sakhalin Oblast, which with its near 500,000 persons is a major population center of the Russian Far East. For the past 74 years, this land has been de jure and increasingly de facto Russian in terms of its demographic and cultural makeup. And yet, its history is not so simple. The ravages of World War II; hundreds of years of Russo-Japanese border standoffs; an infamous period wherein the bulk of Sakhalin's population was made up of exiled prisoners from the Russian heartland, and the military and penal administrators dispatched to Sakhalin to enforce the prisoner's settlement on this distant land; a longer history still of indigenous settlement; all these aspects complicate the story of present-day Sakhalin – which is not the only name by which this island has been known. Earlier, long before and during its period as Japan's 48th and now-lost prefecture, it had a Japanese, Ainu-derived name by which some in Japan still refer to it: Karafuto.

In all, there have been five main people groups who have called the island home. Three are indigenous, being the Nivkh (a so-called paleosiberian people whose language is an isolate), the Uilta (a Tungusic people whose linguistic cousins, the Manchu, ruled Qing-era China), and the Ainu, famous as the indigenous people of northern Japan, but whose community and history on Sakhalin has had its own distinguishing features from their southern brethren. The late-comers to the island were the two imperial powers whose aims upon this land have irrevocably changed it: The Russians and the Yamato Japanese. A third foreign group has become a major minority as well: Koreans, most of whom are decedents of those who moved or were forced to move to Karafuto during the Japanese imperial period, and who long remained in Sakhalin even post-war, essentially as prisoners who were not allowed to return to either Japan or Korea.

In a land such as this, where indigenous culture has been so disrupted (indeed, almost all the Ainu were forcibly moved to Hokkaido after WWII), and where two major empires have laid claim and ruled in recent history, what remains of Sakhalin identity for either the indigenous peoples or the conquerors? How has Sakhalin identity been reified by territorial changes which time and again have literally shifted the borders beneath the feet of both indigenous and settlers, and by consistent experiences of settlement and repatriation, both of which have often been forced or have involved some form of coercion? What has Sakhalin identity

become as oil brought massive immigration and population growth, followed with a sharp population decrease in the post-90s as the fall of the Soviet Union devastated the local economy? And in the contentious environment of conflicting territorial claims between Japan and Russia, what consciousness do people in the old imperial heartlands have towards Sakhalin/Karafuto?

This thesis will present the complex history and current reality of Sakhalin in an attempt to parse understandings of how consistent territorial change and rounds of settlement and depopulation can effect identity, and how identity created from both within and without can effect national narratives and policy. Focus is given to theories of national and regional identity creation, dialectics of nationalism, as well as those related to boundaries, frontiers, place, space, territorialization, and imagined containers, all of which are used in the attempt to produce a valuable understanding of Sakhalin, and what of value we can parse from such an understanding.

The following writing will track the reality of modern Sakhalin and the diasporic peoples who have been forced to leave the island in the last century, and attempt in doing so to explicate what Sakhalin means to them. Then, in a broader sense, I will tackle what Sakhalin means to people in Russia and Japan at large. Special attention will be given to the ability of imposed borders to disrupt and separate; to the power of shifting territory to displace and eradicate. What role does Sakhalin play in the modern world? What role does it play between Japan and Russia? What claims are placed upon the island and by whom? And what sort of future might there be in store for the long-suffering Nivkh, Uilta, and Sakhalin Ainu?

In terms of the value presented by such a study, it is my belief that Sakhalin represents an important and often overlooked location on the world stage, and especially as a portal of economic and cultural meeting between Japan and Russia (although its history also contains important meetings with Chinese, Mongolian, and Korean history as well). The island lies within visual range of the most northern tip of the Japanese island of Hokkaido, and the two islands have become more and more economically intertwined. After decades of frozen Cold War-relations between Sakhalin and Hokkaido, flights between the two islands now occur on the regular, and ferries and shipping boats bringing people and good ply those two islands on either side of the La Pérouse strait. Relations have become so friendly and commerce so intertwined that major plans have been made for a train tunnel to be built under the waters of La Pérouse, at last physically connecting the two landmasses of Hokkaido and Sakhalin. With this reality in mind, this writing will aim to create a greater understanding of how this

island is viewed by people in both countries, residents on the ground, and those who have historical ties to Sakhalin, in order to gauge more of this promising future – without ignoring the realities of the indigenous people, whose story is often left out when discussing the recent strengthening of ties between Sakhalin and Hokkaido; nor will the use of Sakhalin territorialization as a lightning rod for burgeoning nationalism within both Russia and Japan be ignored.

Back in 2006, a Sakhalin administrator said the following: “Moscow and Tokyo are far away, while Sakhalin and Hokkaido are very close.”¹ For the Sakhalin Ainu and, later, Uilta forced to live on Hokkaido after World War II; for the former Japanese residents of Karafuto who so attached their personal identities to their settling of the land; for the Sakhalinsky Koreans who for so long were locked behind an invisible Iron Curtain; this proximity to homelands from which they were exiled must have seemed a harsh irony. I hope to bring their experience into play while examining the identity of Sakhalin.

Zusammenfassung

Sachalin: Die größte Insel der Russischen Föderation und die dreiundzwanziggrößte Insel der Welt, Hauptlandmasse der Oblast Sachalin, und mit fast 500.000 Bewohnern ein bevölkerungsreiches Zentrum im entlegenen Osten Russlands. Für die letzten 74 Jahre war dieses Land de jure und in Bezug auf seine demographische und kulturelle Prägung auch zunehmend de facto, Russisch. Dabei ist die Geschichte dieses Landes weitaus komplexer.

Die Verwüstungen des 2. Weltkriegs; hunderte Jahre Russisch-Japanischer Grenzstreitigkeiten; eine weitgehend unbekannte Periode in der die Mehrzahl der Bevölkerung von Sachalin aus verbannten Gefangenen aus dem Russischen Kaiserreich bestand und Militär- und Justizbeauftragte nach Sachalin entsandt wurden, um den Bau von Gefangensiedlungen in dieser abgelegenen Gegend zu beaufsichtigen; und eine noch längere Tradition indigener Siedlungen; all diese Aspekte verkomplizieren die Geschichte des heutigen Sachalin – welches nicht der einzige Name ist unter dem dieses Land bekannt war. Früher, lange bevor und auch noch während seiner Zeit als Japans achtundvierzigste und jetzt verlorene Präfektur, hatte das Land

¹ Irish, A. B. (2009). *Hokkaido: A History of Ethnic Transition and Development on Japan's Northern Island*. McFarland. 282

einen Japanischen, Ainu-abgeleiteten Namen, welcher immer noch vereinzelt genutzt wird: Karafuto.

Und so gibt es insgesamt fünf Volksgruppen, die die Insel im Lauf der Geschichte als ihre Heimat angesehen haben. Drei von ihnen sind indigene Völker, darunter die Niwchen (ein so genanntes Paläosibirisches Volk, dessen Sprache weitgehend isoliert ist), die Uilta (ein Tungusisches Volk, dessen linguistische Verwandte, die Mandschu, in China während der Qing Ära geherrscht haben), und die Ainu, allgemein bekannt als die indigenen Einwohner Nord-Japans, deren Geschichte, im Vergleich zu ihren südlichen Verwandten, auf Sachalin allerdings einen ganz eigenen Verlauf genommen hat. Die Nachzügler waren die beiden Imperialen Mächte Russland und das Yamato Japan, deren Präsenz die Insel nachhaltig verändert haben. Eine dritte ausländische Gruppe, die zu einer der prägenden Minderheiten auf der Insel wurde, bilden Koreaner. Die meisten von ihnen sind Nachfahren jener, die freiwillig oder gezwungener Maßen während der japanischen Besatzung nach Karafuto auswanderten. Auch nach dem Krieg blieben viele von ihnen auf Sachalin, meist als Gefangene, denen es nicht erlaubt war nach Japan oder Korea zurückzukehren.

In einem Land, in dem indigene Kulturen derart marginalisiert wurden (tatsächlich wurden nach dem 2. Weltkrieg fast alle Ainu Angehörigen gewaltsam nach Hokkaido umgesiedelt), und welches in der nahen Vergangenheit von zwei Imperialen Mächten beherrscht wurde, stellt sich die Frage nach der Sachalin Identität, danach, inwiefern sich sowohl indigene Völker als auch imperiale Eroberer mit Sachalin identifizieren? Wie haben immer wiederkehrende territoriale Veränderungen, neu gesetzte Grenzen, und mit ihnen teils erzwungene Siedlungs- und Rückführungserfahrungen von Siedlern und Indigenen die lokale Identität auf Sachalin beeinflusst? Was wurde aus der lokalen Identität auf Sachalin als Ölfunde zu einer massiven Immigration und einem raschen Bevölkerungswachstum führten, nur um in den 1990ern, nach dem Fall der Sowjet Union und dem Zusammenbruch der lokalen Wirtschaft, ein ebenso raschen Bevölkerungsrückgang zu erleben? Und welches Verhältnis haben Menschen in den ehemaligen imperialen Kerngebieten zu Sachalin bzw. Karafuto, angesichts von Spannungen zwischen Japan und Russland in Fragen territorialer Ansprüche?

Diese Arbeit präsentiert die komplexe Geschichte und gegenwärtige Situation von Sachalin. Ziel ist es zu analysieren, wie konstante territoriale Veränderung, verschiedene Siedlungsphasen, und Entvölkerung (lokale) Identität beeinflussen kann und darüber hinaus zu untersuchen, wie Identitätskonstruktion sowohl von innerhalb als auch von außerhalb der

Region, nationale Narrative und Politik beeinflusst. Unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Theorien der nationalen und regionalen Identitätsschaffung und der Dialektik von Nationalismus sowie räumlicher Konzepte von Grenzen, Frontiers, Orten, Raum und imaginärem Raum und Territorialisierung, versucht diese Arbeit zu einem besseren Verständnis der komplexen Geschichte von Sachalin beizutragen und relevante Erkenntnisse zum Thema Identität zu liefern.

Im Folgenden soll nicht nur das heutige Sachalin abgebildet werden, sondern auch die im letzten Jahrhundert entstandene Diaspora der Menschen, die einst auf der Insel lebten, um zu erläutern, welches Verhältnis sie zu Sachalin haben. Darüber hinaus werde ich versuchen herauszufinden, welches Alltagsverständnis und welche Bedeutung Sachalin für Menschen in Russland und Japan hat. Ein weiterer Fokus der Arbeit liegt auf den spaltenden und disruptiven Auswirkungen von aufgezwungen Grenzen, und den Verdrängungs- und Marginalisierungsfolgen des sich wandelnden Territoriums. Darüber hinaus stellen sich Fragen zu der Rolle Sachalins in der heutigen Welt, beispielsweise zu seiner Rolle im Verhältnis zwischen Russland und Japan. Welche Ansprüche werden über die Insel erhoben und von wem? Und welche Zukunft ist für die lange Zeit leittragenden Niwche, Uilta und Sachalin Ainu in Aussicht?

In Bezug auf den Mehrwert den eine solche Arbeit darstellt, bin ich der Überzeugung, dass Sachalin eine wichtige und oft ignorierte Region auf der internationalen Landkarte ist, und vor allem als Portal für wirtschaftliche und kulturelle Aufeinandertreffen zwischen Japan und Russland gesehen werden sollte (wobei seine Geschichte auch wichtige Begegnungen mit Chinesen, Mongolen und Koreanern enthält). Sachalin liegt in Sichtweite der nördlichsten Spitze der japanischen Insel Hokkaido. Beide Inseln sind zunehmend ökonomisch miteinander verbunden. Nach Jahrzehnten von eingestellten Beziehungen im Zuge des Kalten Krieges gibt es nun wieder regelmäßige Flüge zwischen Sachalin und Hokkaido, und Fähren und Boote bringen Menschen und Waren über die Meerenge von La Pérouse. Die Beziehungen zwischen den beiden Seiten sind jetzt freundschaftlich und der Handel ist so stark ausgeprägt, dass es bereits fortgeschrittene Pläne für einen Unterwassertunnel für Züge gibt, der die beiden Landmassen von Sachalin und Hokkaido letztlich auch physisch miteinander verbinden würde. Vor dem Hintergrund dieser aktuellen Situation versucht diese Arbeit zu einem besseren Verständnis darüber beizutragen, wie Sachalin von Menschen in beiden Ländern gesehen wird, sowohl von heutigen Bewohner als auch von jenen, die historische Verbindungen zu der Insel haben. Ein solches Verständnis gibt auch Hinweise auf die weitere Zukunft der Insel – ohne dabei die Lebensrealitäten und das Schicksal der indigenen Völker zu

ignorieren, deren Geschichte oftmals ignoriert wird, wenn es in der aktuellen Diskussion um die Verbesserung der Beziehungen zwischen den beiden Inseln geht. Und auch die Instrumentalisierung des Territoriums von Sachalin als Projektionsfläche aufkeimenden Nationalismus, gleichermaßen in Russland wie in Japan, darf nicht ignoriert werden.

In 2006, machte der Verwaltungsleiter von Sachalin folgende Aussage: "Moscow and Tokyo are far away, while Sakhalin and Hokkaido are very close."²

[„Moskau und Tokyo liegen weit auseinander, während Sachalin und Hokkaido sehr nah beieinander sind.“]

Für die Sachalin Ainu und später für die Uilta, die nach dem 2. Weltkrieg gezwungen wurden auf Hokkaido zu leben; für die früheren Japanischen Einwohner von Karafuto, die sich persönlich sehr stark mit dem Land, auf dem sie lebten identifizierten; für die Sachalin Koreaner, die für so lange hinter einem unsichtbaren eisernen Vorhang gefangen waren; für sie alle muss die Nähe zu ihrem Heimatland, aus dem sie verbannt waren, eine bittere Ironie in sich getragen haben. Ich hoffe, es gelingt mir, in meiner Arbeit über die Sachalin Identität, ihrer aller Erfahrungen und Erlebnisse gerecht zu werden und ein größeres Bewusstsein für ihr Schicksal zu schaffen.

² Irish, A. B. (2009). *Hokkaido: A History of Ethnic Transition and Development on Japan's Northern Island*. McFarland. 282

Concepts of National and Regional Identity

Much of the academic discussion of Sakhalin that will take place within this writing will focus on the development and directionality of various Sakhalin “identities.” Just what such an identity is, and what value studying it may bring, must first be set down here (to the best of my ability). The nature of Sakhalin as an island, as a region, and as a previously contested space whose territory and boundaries have shifted and changed hands multiple times in its history complicate the story of Sakhalin and the “identity” that has existed both for those who lived there and for those who conceived of the land from afar; thus, identifying the production of identity for Sakhalin and its meanings and trajectories is here of import.

Sakhalin is, of course, not a “nation” – and yet, discussing the emergence and maintenance of national identity will be of use here. Ruth Wodak, a linguistics professor focusing in discourse studies boasting a long record of work at both the University of Vienna and Lancaster University, has offered the following assumptions involving the nature of national identity:

1. Nations are mental constructs, “imagined communities”.
2. National identities are “produced and reproduced, as well as transformed and dismantled, *discursively*.”
3. National identity contains an implication regarding shared attitudes and behaviors passed down via socialization, which draw upon mutually believed ideas of “a common culture, in the past, present and future; of a distinctive national territory; and of notions of and attitudes towards other national communities and their culture, history, and so on. The shared emotional dispositions relate to the attitudes members of a given ingroup have towards other members of that ingroup, as well as those towards members of an outgroup.”
4. Social conditions and practices, both institutional and material, interrelate via discourse, although such discourse is not always free of conflicting information.
5. Discourses involving national identity “primarily emphasize national uniqueness and intra-national uniformity but largely ignore intra-national differences. In imagining national singularity and homogeneity, members of a national community simultaneously construct the distinctions between themselves and other nations, most notably when the other nationality is believed to exhibit traits similar to those of one’s

own national community, similar to what Freud called the ‘narcissism of small differences.’”

6. There is no single “national identity,” as national identities are created via discourse which itself shifts depending on the audience. This causes national identities to become “malleable, fragile and, frequently, ambivalent and diffuse.”³

Wodak’s take on national identity goes farther than just this; she has also assembled four criteria by which discourse can be used to allow such identities to come into being. These are constructive, perpetuating/justifying, transformation, and dismantlement/disparagement modes.⁴ Constructive strategies aim to create the national identity itself, promoting unity and the formation of shared selfhood; strategies of justification are aimed at explaining away potential harmful episodes or stains on the national psyche (“we were forced into such action; we had no choice, it was truly the other who was at fault,”); transformational strategies attempt to reform the nation into an already-conceptualized new form; dismantling strategies hope to do away with aspects of a national identity already in place, but may not have anything with which to replace these aspects.⁵ All of these forms of discourse are used in the continual reification and debate over national identity.

Other important aspects of the “discursive construction of national identity” include the trio of chronologic axes of the imagined national past, the shared present, and an anticipated future (what can the nation hope for, what does it fear), as well ideas of what spatiality bounds the nation in question; what is the “national body,” where does this body belong, what territory does it claim, what is the physical and, indeed, spiritual nature of that territory?⁶

Of course, these concepts all refer to the creation of national identity – and Sakhalin has never been a “nation,” per se. Rather, it has been a region – a entity bounded by its (historically vague) distinction as an island, upon which various people groups have lived, and more recently been ruled over by larger nations in distant capitals. There may be national

³ Wodak, R., De Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., Liebhart, K., Hirsch, A., Mitten, R., & Unger, J. (2009). *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 3-4

⁴ Ibid. 8

⁵ Ibid. 33

⁶ Ibid. 26

identities which are unique to Sakhalin, however: those of the Nivkh and Uilta, to the degree to which they still maintain strong self-identity. However, just because the island is not itself a “nation” does not mean these modes of identity creation do not apply. Rather, they very much do – only within the designation of “regional” identities, the study of which is essentially “...an interpretation of the process through which a region becomes institutionalized, a process consisting of the production of territorial boundaries, symbolism and institutions.”⁷ Regional identities remain extremely important to conceptions of national identities and nationalisms as a whole; after all, “...the nation’s territory is not a simple block of space but a complex set of relationships between local, regional, and national levels of social practice and geographical imagination.”⁸

The very nature of the process of locating such regions is a complex and problematic one; the idea of “place” and “space” is contested in of itself⁹, and the choice in how one identifies the boundaries of a “region” involve willful choices which may not be agreed upon by all who live within or identify with said region. While the official boundaries set down for a governmental entity may overlap with an imagined region, they can just as easily exist concurrently and in disagreement with said region, and different individuals may place boundaries of regions at different places – this mountain range, this road, this lake, this liminal zone. In this sense, at least, Sakhalin is a simpler region to identify. Although the modern Sakhalin Oblast, a federal subject of Russia, includes the Kuril Islands in addition to Sakhalin itself (see chapter IX for the important ways in which this government-affixed territorialization has shifted Sakhalin identity), the more immediate region of the island itself is just that – an island. Irrespective of former conceptions of Sakhalin by both native inhabitants and foreign explorers, which had difficulty confirming Sakhalin’s geographic reality as island or peninsula, it is indeed a space very physically bounded by the waters that surround it (although the annual winter freeze briefly connects the island to the Asian mainland via long tracks of frozen seawater). Thus, ignoring governmental stipulations of the larger Sakhalin Oblast, at the very least the space which Sakhalin occupies has been easier

⁷ “This process concomitantly gives rise to, and is conditioned by, the discourses/practices/rituals that draw on boundaries, symbols and institutional practices.” Paasi, A. (2003). *Region and Place: Regional Identity in Question* TY. *Progress in Human Geography*, 27(4). 478.

⁸ Agnew, J. (2004). Nationalism. In Duncan, J., Johnson, N., and Schein, R. *A Companion to Cultural Geography*. Blackwell Publishing. 228

⁹ Cresswell, T. (2015). *Place: An introduction*. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell.

to identify. Intra-regional identification, of course, adds another layer of complexity.

Regional identity itself has long been “implicit” within national identity and geography, and in the past often linked the nature of physical environs with the character of those people who lived amongst them.¹⁰ (This has produced such essentialist ideas as “those who live in cold regions are hardy and stoic, those who live in hot regions are sultry and quick to anger.”) Such blanket statements about regional character have fallen out of academic favor, but still have a major part to play in classrooms and public discourse. Academic questions now focus more on the place of such discussions and their ideological origins. Whether or not these primordial notions of regionality are themselves no longer deemed accurate is not always of great importance; discursively, it is the repetition of such origin stories or regional character that continues to promote and reify such identities for the people of the regions in question. In this sense, such ideas (like those of the convict past of the nation of Australia or the region of Sakhalin) will prove of importance within this writing.

Paasi identifies two aspects to regional identity: cultural-historical and political-economic.¹¹ The first refers to the way in which bounded spaces are thought to play host to specific historical narratives and associated ongoing cultural attributes, while the latter is more involved with governance and local economic factors. Regions can be both areas to which certain stories are attached and those which happen to fall within governmentally created legal boundaries; the latter may have little to do with any particular imagined past or shared culture and may be based entirely around political control and zones of governmental services/tax bases. Modern regions are often associated more with economic zones than history or a certain “people,” and the arrangement and redrawing of maps within modern countries is often focused more on attempts to cater to perceived economies of scale.¹² (Sakhalin, I would argue, is still host to a

¹⁰ Paasi, A. (2003). 476.

¹¹ Ibid. 478

¹² A major example of this sort of regionalization from above is the Great Heisei-era Mergers that took place in Japan between 1999 and 2006, which reduced the total number of local municipalities in Japan from 3232 to 1882. Anthony Rausch, an academic noted for his work analyzing these mergers as they were still occurring, stated that the primary reasoning behind the push towards municipal consolidation were “issues of autonomy and economic growth...[spurred on by] fiscal economization and changing welfare demand.” While governance and economic desires spurred on these mergers, attempts at creating new local

great deal more identity based on cultural-historical attributes than its economy.) Despite the idea that modern governance is more focused on the usefulness of regions for financial, tax base, and administrative reasonings, identity continues to prove useful to the state and local administrations, whether for the purposes of fostering local solidarity and a strong polity or for the purposes of strengthening regional “character” that can attract tourist dollars. For populist elites hoping to gain or hold on to power, the territorialization of regional identity can also be one of their most powerful tools.

In other words, the sort of regional identity created from on-high via the promotion of local or centralized government is not necessarily the same thing as grassroots identity actually felt by the people who live in the bounded areas of a given region. Indeed, even more “primordial” images of regionality tied to geographical features and historical events may be the product of outside-in viewership and discourse by writers, poets, statesmen, and historians who are themselves not bearers of the identity in question. Thus Paasi identifies two more distinctions that are useful for the analytical discussion of regional identity: “the *identity of a region* and the *regional identity* (or regional consciousness) of the people living in it or outside of it.”¹³ Within the context of this writing, I would rather use the terms “outside-in identification” and “self-personified identity.” Where one begins and the other ends can be hard to distinguish; much of discourse ends up this way. Yet as much as is possible, this writing will attempt to make this distinction when it comes to the identity of Sakhalin.

Ideas related to regional identity come from a variety of sources, some of which having been identified by Paasi as: “ideas on nature, landscape, the built environment, culture/ethnicity, dialects, economic success/recession, periphery/centre relations, marginalization, stereotypic images of a people/community, both of ‘us’ and ‘them’, actual/invented histories, utopias and diverging arguments on the identification of people.”¹⁴ These ideas can be used separately, interrelated, and can even come in conflict with each other; regional identity is not the same for each individual within and without of the region in question; it is dynamic, ever

identities for the newly merged localities became increasingly important, both for creating a sense of civic duty and pride within these newly bounded spaces – and in terms of fostering tourism *to* these spaces. Rausch, A. (2006). *The Heisei Dai Gapper: a case study for understanding the municipal mergers of the Heisei era. Japan Forum*, 18(1).

¹³ Paasi, A. (2003). 478.

¹⁴ Ibid. 477

changing, and often different between person to person and time and space. Despite the reality of the ephemeral nature of identity, regional identity has been suggested to be especially actionable as a force for both reactionary and progressive movements; local identity, especially when coupled with the often-explosive factors of race, gender, ethnicity, class, and religion, can be a powerful thing.¹⁵ Longer-standing regionality felt deeply on a local level can be a force to contend with in terms of resistance towards the center; famous modern examples of regions which have engaged in remarkable pushes for independence include Scotland, Catalonia, and now-independent Kosovo.

Discussion of identity within the minds of those who associate with Sakhalin is useful, not because the region is likely to attempt a breakaway ala Kosovo or Catalonia, but because there still remains subcutaneous claims to whom that land - and its attendant resources - may belong. The best example of this within Japan, where legal claims to South Sakhalin (unlike those of the South Kurils) have long since been dropped, is the continued appearance of world maps in schools and other spaces that display the southern half of Sakhalin (the half of the island making up the former territory of Karafuto Prefecture, beginning at the 50th parallel) in white - making it appear as *terra nullius*, akin to Western Sahara. These maps may not explain why this land is seemingly unclaimed or the historical association with Japan, but the mere fact that these images are presented to so many schoolchildren throughout Japan implies that, no matter what the government itself may say, memory of a Sakhalin as a non-Russian place still has some form of power within Japanese society. Within Japan, Sakhalin may not be completely identified as Russian – even if most would no longer say it was Japanese land.

This brings us to yet another concept which lies on tipping point of much of national identity; that of nationalism. Agnew has described nationalism as “...the most territorial of political ideologies based on cultural beliefs about a shared space occupied by a kin-like, ethnic, or affinity group who face common dangers and bring to these a social bond forged *through* the trials and tribulations of a common history brought about by a common geography.”¹⁶ For most of the non-indigenous peoples who have lived on Sakhalin, the sense of protective, aggressive shared destiny associated with the island has been one born not of a long, shared

¹⁵ Harvey, D. (1993). From space to place and back again: reflections on the condition of postmodernity. In Bird, J., Curtis, B., Putnam, T., Robertson, G. and Tickner, L., editors, *Mapping the futures*, London: Routledge, 3–29.

¹⁶ Agnew, J. (2004). 223

history on the island, but rather the nationalism of the settler; or, as Richardson has called it, “the cult of the border.”¹⁷ This is a regional identity which focuses on the defense of the ethnic homeland and on local prosperity by identifying clear-and-present threats from the eternal other who lies just over the water; in the case of Sakhalin, where nationalisms have continually run strong since the Japanese and Russians first established their uneasy co-rule on the island in 1855, the nationalistic “cult of the border” is one which is understandably based on unease at the idea that, as has happened so many times on Sakhalin, the border may shift under one’s feet yet again, and the national experiment on the far-eastern, far-northern borderland that is Sakhalin will once again come crashing to the ground, destroying yet another of the varied societies which have struggled to make a lasting claim to the land.

Sakhalin has been host to many of the elements that makes for dynamic regional identity – differing ethnicity, shifting borders, class distinctions (long in the form of convict majorities), racial tension between colonizer and colonized, religious differences, and more. Such internal variety means that while it has been hard to completely identify a single Sakhalin, the varied identities it has produced have been strong and surprisingly long-lasting. This writing shall investigate the reality of the creation and continuation of the competing and dynamic identities of Sakhalin for all its major inhabitants, past and present – using both Wodak’s standards for national identity, Paasi’s ideas regarding regional identity, and more – and will attempt to parse the complexities of modern Sakhalin and what competing “outside-in identification” and “self-personified identities” can tell us about potential futures for this unique, peripheral island region.

¹⁷ Richardson, P. (2015). Russia’s ‘last barren island’: The Southern Kurils and the territorialization of regional memory. In *Voices from the shifting Russo-Japanese border : Karafuto/ Sakhalin*. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge. 161

Understanding Sakhalin

“The island of Sakhalin in the Sea of Okhotsk is a microcosm of Russo-Japanese relations.” – Mariya Sevela, 1998¹⁸

The above quote says much of the value of studying Sakhalin; however, the Russo-Japanese lens is but one of the important modes through which to view the island and its identity. Here, we will discuss the nature of Sakhalin in brief, in order to have a general understanding of the region before we investigate its peculiarities. Sakhalin itself is defined by unique geographical features; as an island, its borders appear natural, fixed, and self-apparent. Yet even its insular nature is only half the story. For long centuries, western and Japanese explorers were unsure if Sakhalin was an island or, in fact, a peninsula. Attempts at coherent understandings of Sakhalin’s geography by explorers from Japan, Russia, and the Netherlands alike were stymied by “...remoteness, fog, sandbars and winds [which] conspired to frustrate maritime surveys.” As a result, despite being a target for commercial and territorial expansion, the actual nature of Sakhalin’s geography eluded encroaching explorer’s for centuries, with the cartography of the island only being settled on around 1855 – long after the Japanese and Russians alike had begun the first attempts at settling the physical landscape.¹⁹ (The contested discoveries of Sakhalin and the vagaries of imperial cartography concerning it are explored more in the coming chapter.)

In previous ages, the lengthy geography of Sakhalin was generally split between three indigenous people groups; Ainu, Uilta, and Nivkh. The Ainu, having arrived from Hokkaido hundreds of years ago, lived on the island’s south; the Uilta tended to live towards the center of the island, and the Nivkh occupied the north. These borders, however, were not in any way fixed, and there was a great deal of interaction between the three people groups, whether through trade, marriage, or war. A Nivkh settlement might sit directly next to an Ainu one besides a river, or an Uilta family may have joined a Nivkh settlement. The Ainu and Nivkh especially have an ancient relationship (with the Uilta having arrived on the island more recently), and while their languages are completely unrelated, they have many similar cultural attributes (including the veneration of bears). For all three peoples, fishing historically represented the most important part of their diets and specialization, although the northern branch of the

¹⁸ Sevela, M. (1998). Sakhalin: the Japanese under Soviet rule. *History Today*, 48(1). 1

¹⁹ Stephan, J. (1971). *Sakhalin – A History*. Clarendon Press, Oxford. 33

Uilta also herded reindeer. The insular nature of Sakhalin notwithstanding, the Ainu, Uilta, and Nivkh were highly involved in commerce and cultural exchange with their cultural cousins of the lower Amur across the Tartar Strait on the mainland, and were historically vassals of distant Chinese dynasties, with whom they maintained a wide-ranging tributary trade relationship. Interactions and connections fanned out from Sakhalin to the Asian mainland; to Hokkaido; to the Kurils and Kamchatka.

Also worthy of examination is the island's very size. As the twenty-third largest island in the world, with the most extensive territory of any Russian island, it's essentially a third the size of Japan's largest island, Honshu, and (as stated by Chekhov in an attempt to explicate the sheer size of the island to his primarily European Russian audience), is "twice the size of Greece and one and a half times the size of Denmark."²⁰ Despite its lengthy coastline, the island has few natural harbors; sheer cliffs, some as high as 400 feet, greet ships sailing from the Asian mainland across the straights of Tartary, ice blocks paths from the north, and eastern lagoons are pitted and marked with spits and bars, limiting suitability for navigation. Only in the most southern area around Aniva Bay offers the occasional safe harbor. Inclement weather – especially blanketing fog around the island's shores throughout the summer – make the large island additionally difficult to approach by ship. Winters are brutal, with warmer but humid summers plagued – like much of the nearby Russian Far East - by mosquitos, gnats, and horse flies.²¹ Little wonder Chekhov was not the only Russian author to remark on the "hellish" qualities of Sakhalin as seen from a European perspective; Vasilii Doroshevich, who has been called "imperial Russia's most famous and successful journalist,"²² writing his own travelogue a few years after Chekhov, proclaimed, "...Nature created this island in a moment of wrath, with the intention of making a prison of all things. Here the sea is a traitor and the shore is not a friend. Both sea and shore are to be feared."²³

The natural environment, which can serve to make life difficult for human settlement – especially settlement by interlopers not used to

²⁰ Chekhov, A. P., & Reeve, B. (2019). *Sakhalin Island*. London: Alma Classics.

²¹ Stephan, J. (1971). 8-9

²² Gentes, A. (2009). *Russia's Penal Colony in the Far East: A Translation of Vlas Doroshevich's 'Sakhalin'*. Anthem Press. Xv-Xxxii

²³ Doroshevich, quoted here in Johnson, H. (1939). *The Socialist Sixth of the World*. Victor Gollancz. Retrieved online on October 25th, 2020 at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/johnson-hewlett/socialistsixth/ch05.htm>

subarctic lifestyles, and even more so for those whose settlement in such an environment was not carried out via their own volition – has shaped much of the outer-inward perspective of what “Sakhalin” means. The difficult environs of the island have done much to shape its often dark reputation; even more noteworthy for the evolution of Sakhalin identity, however, is the coerced nature of so much historical life on island.

Outside of its shrinking and increasingly outnumbered indigenous peoples, Sakhalin identity has very rarely been what one might call “organic”; the only “organic” inhabitants were overruled, their agency in many ways removed, their numbers diminished until they became a tiny minority surrounded by unwilling transplants. Within the Russian sphere, the vast majority of the population up until 1906 and the abolishment of the penal labor colony was made up of people who had no say in their being located in Sakhalin; of being *Sakhalinsky*. They were either prisoners or exiles who had been uprooted from home provinces or colonized homelands and forced to live in this distant land, or they were part of the military-prison administration, who themselves also had no say in where they were dispatched to. This resulted in what Chekhov called a “motely” sort of population;²⁴ twenty-five separate languages were spoken on Sakhalin during this period by people who worshiped separate gods, who

²⁴ “The rural inhabitants here still have not formed into a society. There are still no adult non-aboriginal natives of Sakhalin for whom the island would be their home region, there are very few established residents - the majority are newcomers; the population changes every year; some arrive, others leave, and in some settlements, as I have said already, the inhabitants create the impression not of a rural society but of a randomly assembled rabble. They call themselves brothers because they have suffered together, but they still have little in common, however, and they are alien to each other. They have different religions and speak different languages. The old men regard this motley with derision and ask laughingly what sort of society can there be if in one in the same village live Russians, Ukrainians, Tatars, Jews, Chukhons, Kirgizes, Georgians, and Gypsies. I have already had occasions several times to mention how unevenly the non-Russian element has been allocated around the settlements... a motely characteristic of another type also unfavorably affects the development of each settlement: many people enter the colony who are elderly, frail, physically and mentally ill. have criminal tendencies, are incapable of labor, or have not been trained for practical work, people who, at home, lived in a town and were not involved in agriculture.” Interesting to note is that indigenous peoples are not counted among this moteliness, as a general rule they did not live in the towns and settlements unless wed to a convict or other settler. Chekhov, A. P., & Reeve, B. (2019). 223

longed for different homelands.²⁵ These groups of immigrants had not willfully come to this new place and created new versions of their home communities, as is often seen in mass immigration. Rather, they were individuals, snatched up from their societies, sometimes accompanied by spouses, parents, or children. Everything here was patchy; agency or organic settlement was a foreign concept.

Japanese *Karafuto-jin* identity was shorter lived, ultimately cut off from growth when Karafuto ceased to exist following the end of World War II. Yet here, at least, most of those settling in the south of Sakhalin had come so under their own power. Poverty and other pressures lead them to twice “cross the salt rivers,” as the act of moving to Karafuto was known. However, this was at least their own choice – something hardly any of the Russians before them had known. Yet still, the Karafuto administration continued with the dark local history of coerced inhabitation by forcefully and duplicitously moving large Korean laborer populations to the island during the 1910s-1940s. The major Korean population that exists on Sakhalin today are the descendants of these forced migrants, who were further disallowed to leave Sakhalin following the fall of the Japanese administration at the very end of WWII. They, too, add to Sakhalin’s legacy as a place whose identity is formed by seemingly unending exile.

Alongside these dark histories and stark landscapes is the reverse face of Sakhalin; a land described as a “treasure,” abundant with natural resources. Herring brought Japanese fishermen to the island in droves, hoping to turn these fish stocks into fertilizer for rice fields back on mainland Japan; salmon, cod, and king carp have provided food for the locals, Japanese, and Russians. The southern half of the island is covered in dense forests of larch, birch, spruce, and fir, targets of the island’s major forestry and paper industries during the Karafuto period (spearheaded by the monopolistic Oji Paper Company). Huge coal reserves slumber in high-quality rifts to the west of the island; in more modern times, oil and gas to the east and north, perhaps the greatest deposits in the Russian Far East, have been the focus of intense investment.²⁶

Yet it is these very “treasures” which have seen the engagement of both imported (convict and colonial indentured) and native (indigenous) coerced labor; the first Russian convicts sent to Sakhalin were dispatched to work in coal mines with Tsar Alexander II proclaiming the island to be a

²⁵ Corrado, S. (2010). *The “end of the earth”: Sakhalin Island in the Russian imperial imagination, 1849–1906*. (unpublished University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Ph.D. thesis). 7

²⁶ Stephan, J. (1971). 9

penal colony in 1869;²⁷ Ainu were forced to work in Japanese fisheries in near slave-like conditions; Nivkh were used to trap escapees fleeing prison work aimed extraction; Koreans labored in Karafuto mines. These days, the investment in oil and gas reserves threatens to enrich those from far afield while doing little to create long-lasting gains for either locals or natives.

Thus Sakhalin continually rests in a dual position of natural beauty and bounty alongside dark coercion and difficulty; native tradition alongside colonization and dispossession; and above all, a history and local sense of being constantly re-written by shifting borders, altered treaties, administrative growth, and government collapse.

²⁷ Paichadze, S. and Seaton, P. (2015). In *Voices from the shifting Russo-Japanese border : Karafuto/ Sakhalin*. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge. 233

Chapter I: The Discoveries of Sakhalin

Much of regional identity is based upon origin stories; “this is how we arrived to this place,” “we discovered this land.” History often seems to start when a dominant group arrives, developing a land into one definite thing or another. For colonial creations of identity and ownership, claims of discovery and exploration – even of places which were clearly “discovered” centuries or millennia before by native people – come to take on great importance. Such narratives can signify the right one has to be in a space, or, indeed, to own it. Sakhalin has been the site of a diverse series of claims towards colonialist finders’ rights; these claims continue to influence identity and historical claims on who deserves to call Sakhalin their own.

In the case of Sakhalin, the obvious first “discoverers” of Sakhalin were either a no-longer extant local group, or the ancestors of the current indigenous peoples of Sakhalin. Debate over which among them arrived first (European and Japanese scholars long claimed the Ainu were the initial settlers, but more recent research points to them arriving only in the last thousand years) seems to have little bearing on large-scale ownership claims, as within general imagination Ainu, Nivkh, and Uilta have shared the island since time immemorial. Of course, this isn’t true, but functionally it often seems as though it might be. In the past centuries, the overwhelming debate over discovery has been one made between Japan and Russia. After all, colonial claims rested on being the first to have seen the island, or set up a small settlement, or begun trade with the natives. Stephan wryly demonstrated the way in which this need to be first played out in Russian/Soviet claims by juxtaposing these two quotes:

“The history of Sakhalin’s discovery, exploration, development, and defense is the history of the feats of the Russian people.” - A.N. Ryzhkov, 1960.

“Undoubtedly, the right of the first exploration belongs to the Japanese, and the Japanese were to first to occupy southern Sakhalin.” – Anton Chekhov, 1895.²⁸

Likely, Chekhov had the right of it – Japanese explorers and traders arrived in Sakhalin (just barely) before the first Cossak expeditions in the 1640s spotted the island from far (never even embarking on it). Of course, if this was the only claim that mattered, neither Japanese nor Russians would have much say – various Chinese documents from hundreds of years previous seem to reference the island, and the Mongol-controlled Yuan dynasty held contested suzerainty over the regions and

²⁸ Stephan, J. (1971). 32

fought and extracted tribute from the Ainu and Nivkh four centuries before the first Japanese missions to the island.²⁹

The chronology essentially goes as so: In 1635, an expedition sent by the Matsumae *Daimyo*, lord of the Japanese settler colony on southern Hokkaido, reaches Sakhalin. This is the first confirmed Japanese landing, although there are implications of earlier contact. More Matsumae missions followed in 1636 and 1650, and seasonal fishing settlements were set up in 1679. The first Japanese map of Sakhalin resulted from the 1636 expedition. In terms of European “discovery,” the first to have spied Sakhalin was the Dutch explorer de Vries in 1643, ten years before the first Russians encountered it. While this seems to establish the order of still-extant countries encountering Sakhalin as China->Japan->The Netherlands->Russia, both Russian/Soviet and Japanese nationalists would make extreme claims or omissions to buttress their own assertions of first arrival. Wartime Japanese patriots wrote that Sakhalin had somehow been Japanese since 200 BC, that Asuka-era Japanese semi-legendary general Abe no Hirafu had fought the mysterious Mishihase people at Sakhalin in 659 AD³⁰, and that a Nichiren-sect monk proselytized to the indigenous people of Sakhalin in 1295. The Soviets, for their part, simply omitted any reference in histories of Sakhalin to Japanese contact with the island until 1789, insisting that Russians reached it well over a century beforehand.³¹

These represent both the construction and justification of identity based on a view towards the “historical” past. Both Japanese and Soviets attempted to manipulate history to create an imagined Sakhalin which had long belonged to themselves (although, of course, the Russians could only reasonably set the date back so far, since their cultural hearth was so much more distant from Sakhalin than that of the Japanese). The “construction” aspect is that of the assemblage of national connection to the island, and the “justification” is the setting up of discourses of initial arrival, and the attendant claims to the island that result.

Further causes for justification modes of discourse were additionally established by events in 1806, as a nationalistic Russian

²⁹ And, indeed, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties all had tributary relations with the Ainu and Nivkh, which only faded away in the early 1600s as the Qing presence in the eastern Amur region dissipated. Ibid. 19-29.

³⁰ In reality, this likely occurred in norther Honshu or at the Ishikari river on Hokkaido – although the Mishihase may have been a people of the Okhotsk culture, who the Nivkh may descend from. Kanko, R. (1987) オホーツク文化人とモヨロ貝塚 網走. *Kamuimintara* (in Japanese).

³¹ Stephan, J. (1971). 32-22

lieutenant, Nikolai Khostov, led a raid on a Japanese settlement on Aniva Bay. The raid itself was undertaken in order to avenge Russian honor besmirched by the Shogunate's recent rejection of Russian attempts to gain mutual trading rights; Khostov also likely believed this aggressive action would help cow Japan towards opening up trade. The end result, however, was extreme anxiety in the Shogunal capital of Edo (modern Tokyo) over possible future incursions, which instead caused the Shogunate to take direct control of Japanese interests on Sakhalin away from the Hokkaido-based Matsumae domain. The raids have subsequently been looked on as pure Russian aggression within Japan (even Chekhov, writing most of century later, considered the raids mere "piracy,"); Soviet historians, however, painted the actions as justified Russian defense of Russian land and local indigenous people, thus further justifying their country's rightful hold on the territory. Stephan explains Soviet historicizing of the Khostov raids thusly:

"Soviet historians of Sakhalin interpret the Khostov-Davydov incident in a radically different manner [to the Japanese]. Zhukov characterizes Khostov's mission as one of peaceful intent until the Japanese started shooting. Ryzhkov describes the Russian lieutenants as 'patriots,' 'young heroes' carrying out their duty reclaiming Russian land illegally seized and plundered by the Japanese."³²

Stephan further explicates how Ainu were used as props to establish the valorous nature of Russian occupation and defense of Sakhalin:

"Osipov notes that they liberated the Ainu from Japanese oppression by destroying the facilities of the exploiters and distributing fish and salt to the grateful natives. All of the sources agree that the significant point of the affair was Khostov's raising the Russian flag over Sakhalin thus officially sealing the island's ownership. Khostov then landed five sailors elsewhere in Aniwa Bay. These men died on the island before ever regaining contact with their countrymen. They are hailed as Sakhalin's first settlers."³³

Notwithstanding five soldiers dying of exposure without building or creating any lasting continuative presence on the island being somehow counted as the beginning of Russian settlement, this helps establish the narrative of Sakhalin being Russian. Only imperial Russians could defend the helpless local people from Japanese abuses and encroachment; the Japanese fired first; somehow, the Russians were also there first. By

³² Ibid. 46

³³ Ibid. 47

completely ignoring earlier Japanese presence and by recrafting this incident to their own purposes, the origins of a valiant, just Russian Sakhalin can be created. Once again, construction paired with justification. Of course, Japan reacted as well.

In 1808, the Shogunate, made extremely anxious by the attacks on Japanese settlements in Sakhalin and Iturup by irate Russian sailors, set forth now-famed explorer Mamiya Rinzo (as well as Matsuda Denjiro) to seek out what was described as 「大日本国の地境」 - the “boundaries of Great Japan.”³⁴ This implies that the frontiers of Ezo (and, in turn, Sakhalin) were even then a truly hazy place, and that the extent of what served as “Japan” and what was foreign were blurred – much more so in the north than in the other zones of Japanese influence. In their quest to determine the nature of what we might now imagine as Japanese sovereignty, Mamiya and Matsuda were accompanied by a native Nivkh guide, managing to get as far north as Cape Rakka on Sakhalin’s west coast. Here, their small boat was stymied from moving farther northwards by “...deep, stinking beds of rotten kelp... cover[ing] the littoral landscape for as far as the eye could see,” which, aided by cold weather, halted their progress.³⁵ Rakka became, in Mamiya’s mind, essentially the extent of Japanese influence. Here, at least, the native people had still heard of the Japanese (whom they referred to as “Shisha,” similar to the word now used by Ainu for ethnic Japanese – “Shamo.”) The dark forests to the north and sea to the west marked the end of Japanese influence.³⁶ It was also from Cape Rakka that Mamiya set off by boat some 2000 meters into the Strait of Tartary, from which he gazed in all directions and determined that Sakhalin was in fact an island – and not a peninsula of the Asian mainland, as many imperial interlopers from foreign countries around the world had previously, and would later, assume.³⁷

Russia, for its part, was exploring the region around Sakhalin not in an attempt to preemptively establish its borders, but rather to expand them. This desire, which drove Russia across the steppes of Siberia and into a contiguous expansion of such volume rarely seen since the Mongol conquests, came from many fronts. By the 19th century, much of this had to do with heading off colonization by rival powers like Britain or France;

³⁴ Morris-Suzuki, T. (1999). Lines in the Snow: Imagining the Russo-Japanese Frontier. *Pacific Affairs*, 72(1). 68

³⁵ Walker, B. L. (2007). Mamiya Rinzo and the Japanese exploration of Sakhalin Island: cartography and empire. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 33. 283

³⁶ Morris-Suzuki, T. (1999). 68

³⁷ Walker, B. L. (2007). 284

there was also a sense that Russia was uniquely “Asian” amongst the European powers, and by existing in both worlds, it had the right and responsibility to civilize the great expanses to its east. Conquering carried out by large military bands and Cossack hosts was both military and vaguely legalistic; in the case of Sakhalin, Russian explorer Captain Gennadii Ivanovich Nevel'skoi invoked the 1689 Treaty of Nerchinsk between his home country and the Qing Dynasty to lay claims to the island. Despite the long history of various Chinese dynasties extracting tribute from Sakhalin indigenous groups and even occasionally hosting forts on its shores, the extreme vagueness of the territorial claims of the treaty, which used various wording depending on language of translation,³⁸ assisted Nevel'skoi in making his claims. When, during the 1850s and Japan's coerced opening to European diplomacy and trade, Russia and Japan began discussing the ownership of the island, Japan made claim to Sakhalin via a new form of identity decided from upon high: the native Ainu of south Sakhalin, once considered foreign barbarians, had in fact been traditionally under the “protection” of the colonizing Matsumae clan and its small settler domain on southern Hokkaido; thus, by extension, Sakhalin itself fell under Japanese purview.³⁹ Russia, for its part, would later make similar arguments regarding the native Nivkh people (both in terms of claims to Sakhalin and to the lower Amur region, inhabited by other Nivkh.) The frontiers had become a contested space, one in which natives were no longer independent masters of their own fate; rather, “...the indigenous people on both sides of the frontier were reassigned from the role of exotic foreigners to that of national subjects, whose links to the land no longer empowered themselves, but instead empowered the territorial claims of the

³⁸ “The territorial terms of the Nerchinsk Treaty, which were to remain in force for something like 160 years, are extremely ambiguous, and an analysis of a number of discrepancies between the Russian translation and the Latin text of the treaty reveals reason for the ambiguity.” Frank, V. (1947). The Territorial Terms of the Sino-Russian Treaty of Nerchinsk, 1689. *Pacific Historical Review*, 16(3). 265

³⁹ Japan would treat the indigenous Ryukyans in a similar way within the next few decades, using the excuse of Taiwanese aborigines having murdered Ryukyans castaways – then still denizens of a country which had not formally been annexed to Japan – in order to mount an invasion of Taiwan in 1874. The Ryukyans, being under Japanese colonial influence, were thus “Japanese” enough to be used as pawns for Japanese colonial expansion Amano, N. (2019). Karafuto as a Border Island of the Empire of Japan: In Comparison with Okinawa. *Eurasia Border Review*, 10(1). 7

colonizing nation-state.”⁴⁰ The contestation of Sakhalin identity, imposed by those looking towards the island but not of it, had begun.

1855 marked the first treaty agreement made by Japan and Russia as regarded the territorial nature of Sakhalin; however, the decision therein was simply one of procrastination. The Treaty of Shimoda granted both Russia and Japan the rights of “joint possession” and the ability to settle on the island until further negotiations could be made.⁴¹ The nature what Sakhalin was, and who owned it, was merely as confused as it ever was – and this confusion could only lead to more contestation.

⁴⁰ Morris-Suzuki, T. (1999). 70

⁴¹ Stephan, J. (1971). 53

Chapter II: Sakhalin under joint-ownership of Tokugawa/Meiji Japan and Tsarist Russia

The period between 1855 and the signing of the Treaty of Shimoda and 1875 and that of the Treaty of St. Petersburg marked a confusing and fraught time on Sakhalin, as the formal ownership and future of the island remained unclear. However, this was also an important early period in the development of ideas regarding the island for both of the two countries that would come to rule it. Here we see the earliest formations of what has become the multivariate Sakhalin identities – as well as the first pushes towards true colonial settlement on the island.⁴²

Although 1867 had seen an international agreement signed between Imperial Russian and Shogunal Japanese envoys in St. Petersburg that reinforced the rights of both countries towards their joint-ownership of the island of Sakhalin⁴³, this treaty, vague in nature, would not hold for long. This treaty was a compromise, even referred to as mere “temporary regulations” by scholar Yamamoto Takahiro⁴⁴.

12 years earlier, in 1855, the issue of Sakhalin had been continually brought up during the diplomatic discussions that resulted in the Treaty of Shimoda, and yet Tokugawa Japan and Russia had been unable to find a solution to the issue of ownership of said island. For the next decade, soldiers posted on Sakhalin from both nations “increasingly saw each other’s presence as a problem.” Things came to a head in when, in 1866, ten Japanese officers patrolling the area around Komoshiraraoro, about a third of the way up the island on the Straight of Tartary side, were set upon by a larger group of Russian soldiers. Eight of the Japanese were captured. This represented the first direct confrontation between Tokugawa soldiers and a foreign foe, and resulted in shockwaves being felt further south in the Shogunate capital of Edo. Representatives of both countries met in Kushunnai, where the Japanese soldiers were being held. Talks dragged on for a month and a half as the Tokugawa officials insisted that the border lay at the 50th parallel, which the Russians had crossed in

⁴² Despite attempts by both countries to begin settlement of Sakhalin during this era, the entire population of Sakhalin – including at least three thousand indigenous peoples – is thought to have only reached around 10,000 persons in the early 1870s. Nakayama, T. (2015). 22

⁴³ Yamamoto, T. (2016). The end of the ‘dual possession’ of Sakhalin as multilateral diplomacy, 1867–73. *Historical Research*, 89(244). Institute of Historical Research, University of London. 340

⁴⁴ Ibid. 348

order to be arrive in Komoshiraraoro; the Russians, for their part, argued that they had been attacked first.

The Japanese captives were finally released, but it had become clear to the Tokugawa that something would have to be done in order to make the borders in this muddled frontier land more stable.⁴⁵ Koide Hidemi, foreign magistrate and governor of the Hokkaido treaty port of Hakodate, argued his case to the central Shogunate; neither Japan nor Russia had firm claims backed by evidence as to whom owned what on Sakhalin, or where a border should be, but that there was a small chance Russia could be convinced to draw up a fair border. On 18th November, 1866, Koide was dispatched to St. Petersburg to begin the first Russo-Japanese negotiation whose main purpose was discussing territory on the island of Sakhalin.⁴⁶

In previous discussion over territorial rights in Sakhalin, the Tokugawa had begun what developed into a long-standing tactic of territorial claim by indigenous proxy. The presence of Ainu on Sakhalin, long trading partners under the “protection” (read: domination) of the Matsumae clan in Hokkaido, was asserted as living proof that Japan deserved at least the southern portion of Sakhalin wherein the Ainu mostly lived.⁴⁷ (Here we see how claims of Karafuto’s “Japanese” identity have long been tied to indigeneity, although not an indigeneity of their own. The Russians would soon consider “winning over the Ainu” in southern Sakhalin in order to stake similar claims.⁴⁸) In 1867, however, Koide elided this tactic, instead focusing on Japanese explorers having reached Sakhalin before the Russians and on European maps that showed a divided Sakhalin. His counterpart, Petr Kazakevich, allowed that Koide had valid points, but that Sakhalin would be in danger of occupation if one country went to war with another power, which could subsequently occupy the combatant country’s side of Sakhalin without the owner of the other half being able to interfere.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 333-334

⁴⁶ Ibid. 334

⁴⁷ “This was a crucial step in the gradual process of dispossession, by which the indigenous people on both sides of the frontier were reassigned from the role of exotic foreigners to that of national subjects, whose links to the land no longer empowered themselves, but instead empowered the territorial claims of the colonizing nation-state. The Russians too were intermittently to use the presence of Nivkh-speaking indigenous groups on both sides of the Tartar Straits to reinforce their claims to Sakhalin.” Morris-Suzuki, T. (1999). 69-70

⁴⁸ Yamamoto, T. (2016). 354

For Russia, this fear of incursion by other countries, be they British, French, or American, was of primary concern. Sakhalin's position directly across the mouth of the Amur river and Russia's new territories in the region made it too strategically important to risk in such a way. Kazakevich offered small territorial gains for Japan in the Kurils and fishing rights off of Sakhalin's southern coast in exchange for Japan relinquishing Sakhalin proper – Koide, however, knew that retreating from Japanese-held territory under foreign pressure could be deadly to the Tokugawa government, already seen as inexcusably weak in the face of western power.⁴⁹ The end result of the impasse presented by these two positions was a treaty that demarcated no border, but allowed either nation to make use of any uninhabited section of the island and to employ (indeed, even indenture) any of the native peoples.⁵⁰

The subsequent year, the government Koide Hidemi had served would fall. The 268-year-old Tokugawa Shogunate, despite frenzied attempts at modernization, perished at the hands of a rebel army spearheaded by the samurai domains of southwestern Satsuma and Choshu (modern Kagoshima and Yamaguchi Prefectures) who fought in the name of the young emperor, Mutsuhito, known posthumously by his reign name of Meiji. This new Meiji government picked up where Tokugawa modernizing efforts had left off, diving into an enormous nation-building project aimed at making Japan into a centralized, unified state on Western lines. Such foreign powers had exposed the Tokugawa as weak and unable to contend with external pressure, which had in turn fueled internal dissention. Only two decades earlier, Japan had in many ways been a closed-off country; now, foreign relations and clear borders had again emerged as something of utmost importance for the young Meiji government.

Relations with Russia, Japan's sole "European" neighbor, were amongst the most pressing of these, of which establishing a firm presence on Sakhalin was part. To this aim, while the revolutionary Boshin war still waged farther south in Hokkaido, Meiji explorer and frequent proponent of Sakhalin resource extraction Okamoto Kansuke sailed to Sakhalin in the summer of 1868. His group of 80 officers and 200 settlers supplanted the former Tokugawa administration there, and engaged their neighboring Russians in disputes over who deserved to be where on the island. This sudden shift in government and Okamoto's pushy attitude made Russian officials in the Siberian mainland wary, and ironically helped create the first

⁴⁹ Stephan, J. (1971). 59

⁵⁰ Yamamoto, T. (2016). 345

push towards a true Russian settlement in Sakhalin, which until then had mostly been the province of soldiers and a scant few fur traders and fishers.

On September 19th, 1868, not long after Okamoto's arrival in Sakhalin, Mikhail Korsakov, governor-general of eastern Siberia, sent the following message to the central Tsarist government: "the existence of military posts alone is insufficient for the achievement of our goal. Political and economic considerations demand the urgent founding of a settled agricultural population on the island."⁵¹

Similar plans were soon being contemplated on the Japanese side. In Japan, this period was marked by anxiety regarding the Tsarist state's purported aims on Hokkaido; an anxiety whose flames were fanned by the British, who themselves hoped to prevent Russia from gaining the strategic port of Hakodate. If Russia controlled all Sakhalin, an invasion of Hokkaido, so very close by, would be made all the easier. British representative to Japan Harry Parkes played an important role in advising high-ranking Japanese officials on this point.

Parkes was startled by reports of the Russian founding of the settlement of Korsakov near the southern coast of the island, something which had been done in clear view of the Japanese. (Parkes viewed this as proof of Russian designs on Hokkaido; Yamamoto, however, believes this to be a reaction to increased Japanese settlement.) Parke's suggestions mainly centered around reinforcing Hokkaido and setting up a telegraph system there, but leading Meiji statesman Iwakura Tomomi (of Iwakura Mission fame) began instead to contemplate the further settlement of Sakhalin. Iwakura wished to dispatch the recently-defeated Tokugawa loyalist troops of the so-called "Ezo Republic," a breakaway state based in Hakodate that had existed briefly during the recently ended Boshin War, to help settle Sakhalin. 500 such former enemy soldiers would be sent to Sakhalin, with 700 further sent to strategic points in Hokkaido. Iwakura also hoped to round up some 200 Tokyo vagrants to swell these numbers.⁵²

Although this plan was scrapped – Parkes warned that Russian numerical superiority on Sakhalin meant sending soldiers there was a poor idea – here we already see the essentially coercive method by which Sakhalin was to be populated by the state. To reify Japanese claims to sovereignty, a stronger Japanese presence would be needed; "boots on the ground," as we might say in modern parlance. But just who would these persons be who would be sent to a sparsely populated frontier beyond the frontier? Iwakura was already grasping an idea used before and many times

⁵¹ Corrado, S. (2010). 39

⁵² Yamamoto, T. (2016). 351

after (and shortly to be used on Sakhalin in mass scale by his Russian counterparts), or using forced or otherwise coerced population transfers in an attempt to shore up depopulated colonies. Such would be the basis of much of Sakhalin's identity and reputation in the years to come.

By the early 1860s this direction was already becoming clear to the Russians, for whom complete control of Sakhalin was emerging as an important part of their Far East policy. Already Stremoukhov, the Asia chief of the Russian foreign ministry, was advising that "there was little prospect of the island being occupied by voluntary colonists." The conclusion was arrived to that Sakhalin would be made into a penal colony. This would serve to populate the island, and would conversely add more incentive to get the Japanese to renounce any claim to the land; the penal administration could not risk convicts escaping into Japanese held parts of Sakhalin.

Tsar Alexander II ordered the first transport of convicts to Sakhalin to occur on April 19th, 1869. 800 convicts were bound for the island. And yet, only 250 reached their destination; the rest were diverted to other parts of the Russian Far East for want of appropriate housing on Sakhalin. Nonetheless, this marks the beginning what Sakhalin would become for nearly 40 years thence: a convict colony.

Both Russia and Japan continued to engage in furtive attempts to gain the upper hand in terms of territorial rights and ownership on the island up until 1875. For Japan, these initially included attempts at obtaining arbitration by a third party, namely the United States.⁵³ When this failed, they attempted purchase the land outright from Russia; this too did not succeed.⁵⁴ The failure to reach a lasting settlement that would ease the constant anxiety caused by the tension between Japanese and Russian claims was becoming a major problem for the fledgling Meiji state. In the Japanese homeland, samurai rebellions were being fomented by those unhappy with the erasure of warrior class privileges; foreign policy crises were developing in Korea and Taiwan. Additionally, Hokkaido, just south of Sakhalin, was receiving the brunt of governmental colonial attention, with great efforts being put into its settling and firm inclusion within the

⁵³ The United States was seen as a good choice at the time, being on friendly terms with both nations, and having recently managed to purchase Alaska from Russia. However, Russia refused American arbitration when offered in 1870. Stephan, J. (1971). 61

⁵⁴ Japanese officials offered to buy Sakhalin for 2,000,000 yen in 1872; this was met with a counter-proposal that Japan sell off *its* rights to the island instead. No purchase was made on either side. Ibid.

newly-developing identity of the Japanese nation-state. Kuroda Kiyotaka, head of the *Kaitakushi*, the Hokkaido Development Commission, since 1872, believed that Sakhalin was diverting funds and attention away from more important projects on Hokkaido; worse still, the contestation of the island could lead to war with Russia, with the attendant danger of Hokkaido being invaded and usurped by the Tsar's military. In May 1873, Kuroda addressed the Chrysanthemum Throne to express the danger and foolishness of the current situation in Sakhalin. He argued that the government was wasting funds and gaining little in return, that Sakhalin's climate was too severe for agriculture to flourish, that coal deposits would be too expensive to exploit, and that the so-called "Japanese" population of Sakhalin, put at 3,073 persons, was in fact two-thirds Ainu and Uilta.⁵⁵ (Indigenous peoples, who had been used to lay claim to Sakhalin and who would be used for the same again, are here not "Japanese" enough to be of value towards settlement efforts.) Russian settlement and military presence was increasing at a much faster rate than that of the Japanese as result of the creation of the convict colony; de facto hold on the island was quickly slipping out of Japanese hands.

The validity of these arguments was enough to sway the Meiji government, and enough to overcome hardliners who believed Sakhalin was indivisible Japanese territory, such as Okamoto Kansuke, Nabeshima Naomasa, Maruyama Sakura, and – initially- such luminaries as Eto Shinpei and Saigo Takamori.⁵⁶ Okuma Shigenobu had even written that "Ryukyu was exterior, while Karafuto was interior" – placing precedence over Sakhalin as a what Amano has called "inherent Japanese territory" over even the Ryukyus, which had been an important colony for almost two hundred years at that point.⁵⁷ Nonetheless, it was decided to exchange territorial rights in Sakhalin for those in the Kuril Islands; a treaty to this effect was signed on May 7th, 1875, in St. Petersburg. Japanese on Sakhalin were allowed to retain significant rights for trade and fishing.⁵⁸ The confused nature of the spatiality of Sakhalin shifted; this had major ramifications for the Ainu population, of which around one-third left for Hokkaido with the departing Japanese. (This will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter V.)

1875 thus marked an end to the era of shared rule on Sakhalin, and

⁵⁵ Ibid. 62

⁵⁶ Saigo Takamori backed down from his stance on Sakhalin in order to gain support for intervention in Korea. Ibid. 63

⁵⁷ Amano, N. (2019). 7

⁵⁸ Stephan, J. (1971). 63

to the first long era of Japanese claims on the island. The results of this first mass border shift still echo through time. Beyond the significant effects of the following Imperial Russian convict era, as well of those on the Sakhalin Ainu who were “repatriated” to Hokkaido, this initial retreat by Japan is even seen as a mass blunder by the assumed representatives of the modern Karafuto diaspora community; in 2014, the *Zenkoku Karafuto Renmei* (National Karafuto League) declared that the 1875 treaty meant “...300 years of our ancestors efforts [being flushed] down the drain.”⁵⁹ (300 years, of course, is a very generous estimation of Japanese settlement on Sakhalin.) The island was, for the time being, no longer Japanese – but the stage had been set for continued contestation and vagaries of identity.

⁵⁹ Seaton, P. (2015). Memories beyond borders: Karafuto sites of memory in Hokkaido. In *Voices from the shifting Russo-Japanese border : Karafuto/Sakhalin*. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge. 127

Chapter III: The Russian Prison Colony Era and Chekhov's Sakhalin Island in Sakhalin Identity

"I have seen Ceylon, which is paradise, and Sakhalin, which is hell." -Anton Chekhov, 1895

This chapter will deal with the period of Sakhalin history that is perhaps most well-known to the outside world at large, and thus which serves as an important point of identity creation, both self-reflexive and from outside-in. The years 1875 to 1905 cordon off a period which has been described as "Sakhalin's Dark Ages." While struggle and hardship has in many ways marked the history of the island for the past three hundred years, this era – the era of the *kartoga*, the Imperial Russian forerunner to the infamous gulag system, looms darkly in Russian and world imagination. It was here that "Sakhalin's debut among the educated public in the [so-called] West" occurred, with such lasting effects that even in 1935, when Soviet positivist propaganda was already at work, a "patriotic Russian" still referred to Sakhalin as an "island of ill repute."⁶⁰ Stephan describes the ill-famed features and episodes of this period with some expository verve:

"On Sakhalin, the guards were more criminal than the convicts and the free settlers suffered more than the imprisoned. On Sakhalin, free women sold their children to preserve a mockery of a family, while convict women, rationed like precious commodities, were known to murder their designated spouses in hope of a better match. On Sakhalin the aborigines enjoyed an open season on escapees with a bounty for each corpse. On Sakhalin, men and women went to the woods not in search of grapes nor to gratify their lust, but for deadly toxic wolfsbane which would bring a quick end to their tormented lives. On Sakhalin, peasants talked wistfully of that same Siberia that Muscovites dreaded. On Sakhalin, one convict murdered a perversely cruel jailer by suffocating him in fermenting bread dough. The event caused such rejoicing that the other convicts rewarded the murderer and the authorities re-named the town after the jailer. On Sakhalin, the coal-miners ate tallow candles and rotten wood while the rivers were clogged with salmon. Sakhalin infused its unfortunate residents with a special malady. Chekhov called it 'febris sachalinensis' and described it as sensations of dampness, shivering fits, severe headaches, rheumatic pains, and a sinking feeling that one would never be able to leave the island. He added that 'if

⁶⁰ Stephan, J. (1971). 66

only those who like Sakhalin lived here, the island would be uninhabited.”⁶¹

And well that Stephan should so clearly reference and quote from Chekhov, for it was perhaps he more than anyone else who established the image of Sakhalin as convict hellscape.

It was during the heyday of this prison colony system that twenty-nine-year-old Anton Chekhov, already a well-known playwright and celebrity, embarked on his now-famous journey to Sakhalin. The announcement in 1889 of his desire to travel overland to the penal colony came suddenly and without much preamble, and many explanations, both contemporaneous and modern, for the reasons behind this huge undertaking have been given by any number of observers. Some believed Chekhov felt the simple need to search out new topics for writing; others that he wished to escape the constant scrutiny of his peers in the metropolitan literary world or to run away from a love affair gone bad. Brian Reeve, translator and researcher for Alma Classics’ 1993-2007 English editions of *Sakhalin Island*, saw in Chekhov’s grand adventure a desire to escape from the author’s own awareness of his encroaching mortality. Chekhov had tuberculosis, and had recently watched friends and family die from the terrible disease. Although the onerous three-month long Siberian journey to Sakhalin likely took years off Chekhov’s life, it also served to take his mind off of that reality.⁶²

In preparation for this undertaking, Chekhov began a voluminous study of every piece of information and analysis on Sakhalin and the penal system he could find. These included works on Sakhalin ethnography, geography, history, and natural science, and his extensive and multivariate research on the subject comes through in the final product, itself often more academic than literary (the 2015 edition of the book contains 123 pages of endnotes, the majority of which are Chekhov’s own work). The author, a practicing doctor himself, also brought his medical expertise to bear in his studies on the island, even ministering to the sick and injured on the island towards the end of his stay there.

In terms of his thematic goals in venturing to the island, Chekhov offered many reasons: medical research in lieu of an actual degree or conducting a household census. Neither seem to be the full picture, as Chekhov himself records:

⁶¹ Ibid. 65

⁶² Reeve, B. (2019). Extra Material on Anton Chekhov’s Sakhalin Island. In Chekhov, A. P., & Reeve, B. *Sakhalin Island*. London: Alma Classics. 454, 455

“In order as far as possible to visit all the inhabited spots, and to become somewhat closer acquainted with the life of the majority of the exiles, I resorted to a device which, in my position, seemed the only way. I carried out a census. In the settlements that I visited I went round all the cabins and noted down the heads of the households, members of their families, tenants and workmen. To make my work easier, and to cut down on time, I was very obligingly offered assistants, but as my main aim in conducting the census was not its results but the impressions received during the making of it, I used somebody else’s help only on rare occasions.”⁶³

Such suggests towards what the nine separate chapters that make up the collected *Sakhalin Island* really represent: an early form of investigative journalism.⁶⁴

After months on the road across a pre-Trans-Siberian-Railway Siberia, Chekhov finally crossed the Straight of Tartary onboard the ferry *Vladivostok* and arrived to the center of colonial administration at the time, Aleksandrovsk. From there, Chekhov met with people from all walks of life on Sakhalin, from the highest level governmental administrators to hundreds and hundreds of settled exiles, prisoners, soldiers, free peasants, Nivkh, Ainu, Japanese, Chinese, and more. Chekhov made expeditions through the Sakhalin taiga to interior settlements, recording detailed observations on the state of each township, right down to statistics of the local populations (numbers of men, women, children, age groups, amount of arable land available for each household’s use, marital situation, percentage of settled exiles to prisoners, etc.). He made his way down the island’s western coast, stopping at prisons and examining the situation in each one. Eventually he reached the southern tip of Sakhalin. Of those areas he did not reach himself (eastern and far northern Sakhalin) he includes details of such as he heard or from documents he was able to avail himself of.

Chekhov’s account of the island during his few weeks there in 1890 is dense with detail and well observed (although he was stymied from reporting on or even speaking to one important, if small, subsection of island society: political prisoners), but is also useful in coming to understand perspectives on Sakhalin not only via the well-researched details

⁶³ Chekhov, A. P., & Reeve, B. (2019). 65

⁶⁴ This is exact phrase used to describe the book by author and reviewer Akhil Sharma. Sharma, A. (2015). Chekhov’s Beautiful Nonfiction. *The New Yorker*. Retrieved on April 13th, 2019 from <https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/chekhovs-beautiful-nonfiction>

it contains but also in terms of its very existence: by speaking such facts and observations about the prison colony into the world, it made such images as it portrayed the base idea with which the island would long be associated. *Sakhalin Island*, in many ways, has set this discourse about the actual place and society of the time. As such, it's valuable to go over some of the content and claims made within that work.

The overall message of the completed *Sakhalin Island* (including the chapters often used as preamble written about Chekhov's difficult and long journey from European Russia across the horribly maintained roads of Siberia by sledge) is one of cruel, outdated penal practices being employed in an essentially doomed exercise in colonization. It serves not only as critique of the particulars of the Sakhalin penal colony, but of the Russian system of punishment-by-exile as a whole.⁶⁵

Island exile was not itself a new idea by any stretch of the imagination. Chekhov himself was well aware of this, comparing Sakhalin to the "Roman exiles" of antiquity, where criminals were sent off to Mediterranean islands such as Crete, Sardinia, or Cyprus. In the developing modern penology of the age, such colonial exiles became more common – Australia's use as a penal colony between 1788 and 1868 being the most well-known to this day.⁶⁶ Other examples included the French use of New Caledonia (1864-1922) and Devil's Island (1853-1946) as site of prison exile. As such, Sakhalin's use at the time can be seen as in line with concurrent colonial trends. Corrado has said that Sakhalin's attempt at forming an idealized modern Russia on Sakhalin soil met a similar fate as that of Devil's Island – the name of the land itself becoming associated with cruelty, criminality, and a sort of living hell – the ultimate cautionary tale. Corrado additionally says that Sakhalin's reputation was even more damaged, however: "the failure of Sakhalin as a Russian colonial settlement, along with the scope of its discursive othering, led not only to the abolition of penal servitude on the island, but to rejection of the land itself."⁶⁷ Such

⁶⁵ "All the higher measures of correction which have replaced the death penalty still continue to bear its most significant and material aspect, namely that they are for life, for eternity, and every one of these measures of correction has the objective inherited directly from the death penalty – to remove an offender from the normal human milieu for ever..." Chekhov, A. P., & Reeve, B. (2019). 23.

⁶⁶ Government of Australia. (n.d). *Convicts and the British colonies in Australia*. Archived from the original on 1 January 2016. Retrieved May 24th, 2020 from <https://web.archive.org/web/20160101181100/http://www.australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/convicts-and-the-british-colonies>

⁶⁷ Corrado, S. (2010). 10

cannot but have a major effect on modern perceptions of Sakhalin and its current identity.

I say “on identity” very purposefully – the convict past does not guarantee a certain destiny of regional character (although Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk’s dubious honor as home to the highest rate of juvenile crime in Russia could provide for a tantalizing, if unacademic, *post hoc ergo propter hoc*).⁶⁸ An accessible comparison can be made with Australia, where the convict past is so often linked to modern national identity, explained by historian John Hirst as such:

“What to me seems the most challenging question in Australian history receives commonly a very confident answer. What effect did the convicts have on our national character? Answer: they made us an anti-authoritarian people.”⁶⁹ While Hirst argues against a direct lineage between convict culture and modern Australian cultural tendencies,⁷⁰ he instead says that the “the strongest influence of the convicts is not to be sought in the anti-authoritarian attitudes in a segment of the people, but in the trauma of a nation which had to come to terms with its shameful origins... How was Australia to cope with the world's bad opinion? The one thing that everyone knew about Australia was that it was founded with convicts, which continued to make it morally suspect.”⁷¹

If possessing such a well-known convict origin could have such a major effect on Australian identity, surely the same could be true for that of Sakhalin. Australia is of course different from Sakhalin; Australia is a major independent country known the world over, whereas Sakhalin is a peripheral island region whose particulars are little known outside of Russia and, to a lesser extent, Japan. Yet within the containers of Russian and

⁶⁸ “In 1998, the crime rate among minors was 2,029 offenses per 100,000 people aged 14 to 17 years, or 1,487 crimes per 100,000 total people... The highest rates of juvenile crime were reported in Sakhalin Oblast (4,430 crimes per 100,000 people aged 14 to 17 years), the Jewish Autonomous Republic (3,874), and the Perm Oblast (3,584).” Pridemore, W. A. (2002). Social Problems and Patterns of Juvenile Delinquency in Transitional Russia. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 39(2). 199–200.

⁶⁹ Hirst, J. (2020). An oddity from the start: Convicts and National Character. *The Monthly*. Retrieved on May 15th, 2020 from <https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2008/july/1277335186/john-hirst/oddity-start#mtr>

⁷⁰ Hirst uses Tasmania as an example of how convicts and anti-authoritarianism are not a direct link; Tasmania had the highest rate of convict population yet was the least statistically criminal of the provinces. Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

post-Soviet society, surely Sakhalin holds the same sort of historical reputation as Australia does worldwide. Its early history of colonization (on the Russian side) is based almost entirely on convict labor and attempted penal and exile settlement. Its black reputation was spread far and wide by Anton Chekhov's reportage on life in the various Sakhalin locales. As such, any understanding of modern Sakhalin identity will perforce require an examination of this period.

Indeed, the pervasive view of Sakhalin as "an antitype of what Russia was supposed to be... a place of cruelty and darkness, within which Russian society could test liberal ideas and protest autocratic practices" became prevalent throughout Russia in the 1890s as Chekhov published the chapters of his *Sakhalin Island*.⁷² Indeed, such pervasive images of the darkness of Sakhalin were generated far beyond imperial Russian borders. Foreign journalists and writers also visited the island, disseminating depressing and fearful prose regarding the nature of the region and the prison system. English traveler B.D. Howard visited the island in the same year as Chekhov, declaring, "Sakhalin is the unmentionable ... this island has been reserved chiefly as the final destination of the unshot, the unhanged, the convicts and exiles who by frequent escapes or repeated murders have graduated perhaps from other prisons." Howard was driven to near psychosis on the island, carrying around a revolver at all times in case of convict assault, one day suddenly discharging his weapon in a fit. Many more English travelers came after Howard (including Charles H. Hawes, Albert Bordeaux, L. V. Dalton, W. S. Chisholm, and Harry DeWindt). Stephan marks Chisholm's statement that Sakhalin was "...the most notorious penal settlement in the world ... the land of moral darkness and abject misery" as the enduring image of Sakhalin going forward.⁷³

Added to this fact was that Sakhalin was simply not very successful as colony; not in attracting uncoerced settlers, not in creating a meaningful economic base for the Tsarist empire in the far east. Treaty compromises, export taxes, and, according to Saveliev, the probable limited interest the Russian government actually held for the region, which led Priamur Governor-general N.I. Grodekov to remark that, at least on the southern area of the island, where Japanese still held fishing rights, Russians "...were not the real owners in their own territories."⁷⁴ Saveliev also remarks that,

⁷² Corrado, S. (2010). 16

⁷³ Stephan, J. (1971). 75

⁷⁴ Quote is rephrasing by Saveliev. Saveliev, I. R. (2015). Borders, borderlands, and migration in Sakhalin and the Priamur region: A comparative study. In *Voices from*

compared to the Priamur, which was able to rely on the development of the Trans-Siberian Railway to enclose it within the Russian economic sphere, Sakhalin "...was more suited to being part of the Chinese and Japanese trade and economic zones," and more than that, "...its development by convicts also cast a dark shadow on its image in the Russian Empire."⁷⁵

While this period continues to play an outsized role in shared conceptions and memory of what defines Sakhalin, the actual continuation of the self-personified *kartoga* period identity within the actual population of the island suffered a major rupture in 1905 with the Japanese invasion during the dying days of the Russo-Japanese War. The Japanese military routed and defeated Russian defenders of the island, including at least a thousand of whom were convicts who mobilized under promise of freedom. During and after the invasion, masses of convicts and free exiles fled the island, eventually assisted by Japanese transports. The demographic shift was huge – the Russian population of Sakhalin dropped from 40,000 to a mere 7000 in that year alone. The Treaty of Portsmouth conferred southern Sakhalin, starting at the 50th parallel, to Japan; the island was once again under divided ownership, this time with a firm border cutting Sakhalin in twain. For Japan, this was the birth of the true Karafuto identity; for Russia, this major blow would still later be used for justifying discourse – Japan had wrongfully stolen Russian territory; it was claimed that Ainu, Nivkh, and Uilta had even fought against the Japanese invaders alongside their Russian neighbors, again proving Russia's rightful place as stewards of the island. (Stephan could find no evidence to back up these claims.)⁷⁶

The fact that the majority of the convict and former-convict denizens of Sakhalin escaped the island during this period, and thus the majority of modern Sakhalinsky are in no way their direct descendants, brings up another interesting comparison to Australia. Approximately 20% of modern Australians are descendants of the Australian convict colony;⁷⁷ for Sakhalin, the percentage of the population who can claim their ancestors were victims of the *kartoga* system must be much, much smaller.

the shifting Russo-Japanese border : Karafuto/ Sakhalin. Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY : Routledge. 49

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Stephan, J. (1971). 81

⁷⁷ *ABC News*. (25 July 2007). Online records highlight Australia's convict past. Archived 25 March 2019 at the Wayback Machine. Retrieved on 25 September 2020 from <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2007-07-25/online-records-highlight-australias-convict-past/251253>

The fact that so much of Australian and Sakhalinsky identity, both outward-in and self-personified, is defined by groups of long-dead people for whom only a small portion of the modern population is related, says much about the constructed nature of identity. Aspects of the territorialized historical narrative are so strong that they are believed to continue to affect modern realities, continuing to instill certain reputations and expectations for people for whom situational geography is the main connecting factor. For Sakhalin, certainly, the dark convict past cannot be completely forgotten.

Following the Japanese invasion, Russian-controlled Northern Sakhalin was at first essentially a rump state, merely a shadow of its former self. Even with the return in 1906 of 5000 Russian settlers who had fled to the mainland, the population had been decimated by flight. This also marked the end of the convict system; not only had most of the prison population escaped into the ether in the confusion of the invasion, but the main utility of Sakhalin as the ultimate place of exile – that it was a presumably inescapable island – had been forfeited by the creation of an international border running through it, into which escapees could easily vanish. The system was officially abolished in 1906. Attempts at promoting the island as an appealing place to settle failed so spectacularly that Sakhalin's then-governor, Valuev, petitioned the imperial government to change the island's blighted name. The request was denied. Despite the failure to change the island's name and reputation, a new era, with attendant new identities, was at hand – but in the mind of many, for Sakhalin, the *kartoga* has never left. According to a Russian author, writing in 1935, "...all over Russia, the word 'Sakhalin' is synonymous with a living hell."⁷⁸ Only 105 Russian families moved to Sakhalin in the first eight years following the partition.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ V. Koudrey (1935). *Island of Ill Repute*. Quoted in Stephan, J. (1971). 91.

⁷⁹ Stephan, J. (1971). 90-91.

Chapter IV: *Karafuto-jin*, an Identity Created and Then Dispersed

Tessa Morris-Suzuki has said that “...empires were full of overlapping, jostling, discordant ‘imagined communities,’ within which both colonizers and colonized struggled to visualize coherent identities.”⁸⁰ For the Japanese living on the southern half of Sakhalin island, a territory which they called Karafuto, this was certainly the case. These rugged individuals were settlers who had “crossed the two salt rivers” of the Tsugaru and Soya straits; from their perspectives, they were bringing civilization and reaffirming Japanese culture amidst a land peopled by barbarians and bordered by rough foreigners, both of whom served to distinguish what made these settlers “Japanese.” Yet while the nature of settling a once-foreign frontier reified ideas of Japanese identity – of “*kokka* (国家),” the cultural sphere of national belonging – it also brought about a new, separate identity: that of the *Karafuto-jin*. This was an identity tied to “...a distinctive *tōmin seishin* [島民精神, islander character]” which, within the larger Japanese polity, “...struggled to make itself heard above the wider background echoes of *kokumin seishin* [国民精神] (national character).”⁸¹ This indeed represented the evolution of a distinct regional identity.

The nature of this identity, however, was one which was first brought into being and raised over the course of nearly half a century, and then scattered to the wind as Sakhalin borders shifted yet again. The result, however, was not of the complete loss of this identity, but rather the creation of a new internal diaspora group of returnees, and of the creation of a secondary identity – that of the *Karafuto-jin* displaced.

The modern Karafuto, which played host to the last historical Japanese identity on Sakhalin, is that which emerged following Japan’s re-entry into the island in 1905. While Japanese continued to do business on Sakhalin during the Russian imperial era (1875-1905), with a certain number of privileged Japanese living on Sakhalin and governmental missions present,⁸² the vast majority of settlers from the mixed-governance

⁸⁰ Morris-Suzuki, T. (2017). *Becoming Japanese: Imperial Expansion and Identity Crises in the Early Twentieth Century. Japan's Competing Modernities*. University of Hawaii Press. 161

⁸¹ Ibid. 167

⁸² Chekhov met one such Japanese consul on his visit to the south, named Kuze. He described the consul and his cadre thusly: “Out of doors they wear European clothes, and they speak Russian very well; when I visited the consulate, I would

era had departed to the Japanese mainland. The return of Japanese force on the island began in July 1905, when the Japanese military invaded and occupied the then-current Russian capital of Korsakov, on the southern Aniva Bay. The next month, the military established the Karafuto Civil Office (樺太民政署), and the following month, September, saw Japan officially taking control of southern Sakhalin per the terms of the Treaty of Portsmouth. In April, 1907, governance of the new territory transferred from the military to a civilian colonial government, and the Civil Office became, fittingly, the Karafuto Colonial Government (Karafuto-cho, 樺太庁). Korsakov had been renamed Odomari, and had briefly continued on as a territorial capital (although for a separate colonizing entity from its original Russian disposition), but the colonial government wished to encourage farming and hoped to shift Karafuto resource-gathering away from just the shores; a new inland capital, Toyohara, was founded.⁸³

From the very beginning, Karafuto's place within Japanese administration was an anomaly. The military had hoped to have Karafuto ruled over by a governor-general imbued with executive powers, like that of Japan's colony of Taiwan; meanwhile the Home Minister wanted the prefecture placed under their own jurisdiction, thus bringing it more within Japan proper. Neither quite got their way, as Karafuto was instead placed within a halfway point between both proposals – it was governed by a director-general who had less powers than a colonial governor-general, yet was not within the same legal setting as the Japanese home islands. In many ways, the island so close to Hokkaido as to be visible on a clear day was legally very separate. This meant that colonists/settlers were also not to be represented within mainland political power in the same way as those in, say, Kyushu. Settlers had little political power within Karafuto, and only received a small degree of enfranchisement, with the popular vote selecting municipal headmen starting in 1929 – more than two decades after the founding of the colony. There was no elected representation at any higher level than municipalities, something which differed from mainland prefectures to the south, and which resembled administrations in Taiwan and Korea.

quite often find them reading Russian or French volumes... They have had a European-style education and are elegantly polite, considerate and cordial. For the Japanese officials, the Japanese consulate is a nice, cozy corner where they can forget the prison, forced labor and petty squabbles and unpleasantries of service, and can consequently relax." Chekhov, A. P., & Reeve, B. (2019). 210

⁸³ Shiode, H. (2009). Nation or Colony? The Political Belonging of the Japanese in Karafuto. *Social Science Japan Journal*, 12(1). 104

Still, there was one aspect that separated Karafuto from other settler colonies of the Japanese empire and helped ensure its hazy status as a sort of internal rather than external colony: its population was overwhelmingly Japanese. This was the exact opposite of Taiwan and Korea, both of which had huge populations of native colonized people being ruled over by a small Japanese colonial elite.⁸⁴ Even the closest analogue, *Nan'yo*, the South Seas Mandate consisting of the islands which now make up Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and the Northern Marianas, whose islands were overwhelmed by Japanese immigrants arriving to work in sugar and phosphate industries, still held sizeable native minorities which would make up at least a third of the population of each island administrative region. Karafuto went far beyond this – native populations on the southern half of Sakhalin were smaller than even the diminutive populations of the Micronesian *Nan'yo* colonies, making up less than 2% of Karafuto's population in its later years. Eventually, even the forcibly immigrated Korean laborer population would be larger than the native population. As such, this was a colony whose ethnic makeup more greatly resembled that of mainland Japan – comparisons have been made to British colonies in America and Australia and their respective population discrepancies between colonizer and native. It was part of this identity as more “Japanese” than other colonies that led Karafuto to occasionally be lumped in with the mainland,⁸⁵ and to have court systems that were the same as in the southern four main islands.⁸⁶ The essentially contiguous nature of the mainland and Karafuto via its extreme proximity to Hokkaido likely helped as well.

The result of a population in which the settler population held great preponderance over the indigenous Ainu, Nivikh, and Uilta was the creation of a society in which settlers were considered the true bearers of local culture and identity, and the people native to the island, who had lived

⁸⁴ Seaton and Paichadze referenced Miki (2012, 87) by calling Taiwan and Korea “exportation and investment-type colonies.” Karafuto, by comparison, would be considered a true settler colony. Paichadze, S. and Seaton, P. (2015). Introduction. In *Voices from the shifting Russo-Japanese border : Karafuto/Sakhalin*. Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY : Routledge. 8

⁸⁵ “To establish a legal framework appropriate to its social composition, the ‘Uniformity Law’ of 1918 was enacted to reconcile the varied legal systems of the empire. The new law included the phrase ‘The territories referred to in this law are the Naichi, Korea, Taiwan and Kanto. Here, ‘Naichi’ also includes ‘Karafuto’.” Ibid. 105

⁸⁶ Ibid. 106

there for centuries or more, were subordinated, coerced, and often erased from local narratives. (The exact nature of how this occurred will be discussed in greater depth in the coming three chapters.) The nature of how settler societies enfranchise the identity of the settler while disenfranchising indigenous people's identity on their own land is born out in modern Australia, among other places, where "...The contestation over what it means to be Australian is a result of the exclusionary practices and minimalist notions of citizenship which have operated in Australia. The exclusion of Aboriginal people, women, people of colour, gay people and recent migrants has rendered a crisis of citizenship which remains entrapped within certain white settler notions of identity in which 'others' can only be constituted as hyphenated Australians."⁸⁷ Karafuto only existed for a comparatively scant 40 years, yet many portals of comparison exist between these two societies and the settler identities that have existed therein.

More than this, both the example of Australian notions of who was a "native" Australian and that of Karafutoan discourse over citizenship and its attendant erasure of indigenous peoples smack of what Wodak has termed "the discourse of sameness," in which national identities are often built up via a discourse "...emphasise[d] foremost [on] national uniqueness and intra-national uniformity, and [which] largely tend to ignore intra-national difference."⁸⁸ Both settler identities are rooted in establishing the common narrative and experience of the settler, who themselves are of the privileged ethnic group which is centered in the national narrative. Those who do not fit the pattern of similarity, be they Australian aborigines, Ainu, Nivkh, Uilta, or Korean laborer, are erased from the nation-building narrative unless useful (such as stories about how indigenous people are being made more like the imagined national whole or are benefiting from their tutelage). In terms of who is the "citizen" or deserves inclusion in nationhood, such people are generally not included. Certainly this tended to be the case in Karafuto.

Additionally helpful for the creation of this new identity was that Karafuto, unlike the Tsarist convict colony before it, was actually quite successful at building up its population, engaging in (often destructive, yet effective) resource extraction, and creating infrastructure. From 1907 to

⁸⁷ Ahluwalia, P. (2001). When Does a Settler Become a Native? Citizenship and Identity in a Settler Society. *Pretexts: literary and cultural studies*, 10(1). Carfax Publishing. 64

⁸⁸ Wodak, R., De Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., Liebhart, K., Hirsch, A., Mitten, R., & Unger, J. (2009). 186

1921, the Japanese population of Karafuto increased tenfold, from 10,806 to 101,329, with coal production increasing 20-fold, and seven separate paper mills being built.⁸⁹ By 1936, the population had swelled to 350,000. Saveliev quotes the Russian *Sibir'* newspaper as taking note of the stark differences between the former convict colony and Karafuto, demonstrating the Russian view of Japanese success:

“Sakhalin was completely changed under Japanese rule: electricity, steam engines, and other blessing of civilized life appeared here as soon as the Japanese stepped ashore on this island. The nasty desolation which existed under Russian rule remains only in memory.”⁹⁰

As regards a local sense of identity, *Karafuto-jin* were already putting up identarian walls between themselves and their closest analogue, Hokkaido, by 1924. In that year, there was “...a large-scale opposition movement by the Karafuto Japanese” towards a tabled merger of the Hokkaido and Karafuto administrations. What makes this particularly interesting is that Hokkaido and Karafuto had much in common in terms of history, geography, economy, and ethnic make-up. Both were northern extremities of the Japanese archipelago, and had seen a slow settling by Japanese colonizers for centuries; both were the homeland of the Ainu people; both had economies based around fishing, forestry, and mining. Indeed, for long centuries Japan had considered Sakhalin simply a hazy extension of “Ezo,” the old name for Hokkaido, and until explorers like Mamiya Rinzo established otherwise had often believed the land to be connected to Hokkaido or to the Asian mainland.⁹¹

And yet, here we see *Karafuto-jin* whose desired goal is to be considered a separate entity. While much of this had to do with supporting local priorities in regards to governmental spending on colonial projects in Karafuto, it also established that, even 20 years into settlement, there was already a “us” and “them” aspect to Hokkaido and Karafuto; perhaps yet

⁸⁹ Paper mills played a major role in establishing large permanent populations in Karafuto; the colonial government wanted to attract settlers by way of creating capital, and invited major paper firms to create pulp factories on the island at cheap prices, encouraging them to let employees settle in the colony permanently. Pulp factories built during and after the paper boom created by World War I helped spread Japanese populations into the otherwise sparsely populated north of the colony, expanding demographics in cities like Esutoro from the hundreds in the 1920s to 17,774 by 1937. Amano, N. (2019). 12

⁹⁰ Saveliev, I. R. (2015). 50

⁹¹ Nakayama, T. (2015). Japanese Society on Karafuto. In *Voices from the shifting Russo-Japanese border : Karafuto/Sakhalin*. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge. 20

another case of the ‘narcissism of small differences.’ Additionally, Hokkaido had itself been integrated into the mainland Japanese system in 1900, resulting in enfranchisement for Hokkaido citizens; yet still, *Karafuto-jin* resisted the conflation of their settled home with Hokkaido, even though this would have brought them more rights. Rather, they instead sought enfranchisement on their own terms; in 1926, 1927, 1929, and 1931, bills for the enfranchisement of Karafuto made their way through the lower house of the Japanese Diet, only to be left on the table each year by the upper house.⁹²

Karafuto-jin attempted to define their identity within the empire by way of identifying themselves as “Japanese,” something which set them apart from the peoples of other colonies – but also set themselves apart from the native people in their midst. The 1926 argumentation before the Diet specifically made reference to Karafuto’s identity as a natural extension of the Japanese homeland and people, one which could not be compared to Taiwan or Korea: “...the continuing denial of the franchise in Karafuto was a ‘misinterpretation of the constitution’ because the ‘manners and customs’ of Karafuto’s ‘population’ were identical to the ‘Japanese.’”⁹³ The *Karafuto Nichinichi Shinbun* newspaper was rife with local debate over Karafuto’s rights to enfranchisement, although these debates only made reference to native peoples to the extent that they could be used as comparative props. In 1926, the following argument was recorded, attempting to invoke the rights of *Karafuto-jin* vis-à-vis enfranchised for non-“Japanese” Hokkaido natives: “Now that even the Ainu of Hokkaido have voting rights, the continued lack of rights here on the island is certainly untoward.”⁹⁴ *Karafuto-jin* were, in their own eyes, more Japanese than any Ainu on Hokkaido, yet they seemed to possess fewer rights within the view of the central state. Of course, whether the same editorialist would have argued to include Karafuto Ainu in enfranchisement alongside their Hokkaido brothers is questionable. (In reality, Karafuto Ainu were at the time in an amorphous state of non-citizenship that would not be rectified for another six years.)⁹⁵ Indeed, ten years later, in stressing the Japanese nature of Karafuto, Governor Imamura Takeshi would go so far as to say that “...because there is no aboriginal population, Karafuto does not differ

⁹² Shiode, H. (2009). 106

⁹³ Ibid. 107

⁹⁴ (18 September 1926). *Karafuto Nichinichi Shinbun*, quoted in Shiode, H. (2009). For more details on the complexities of Ainu citizenship in Hokkaido vs. Karafuto, see chapter V: Sakhalin, a Lost *Ainu Moshir*, as well Morris-Suzuki. (2017).

⁹⁵ Morris-Suzuki, T. (2017). 171

much from metropolitan Japan and that allows us to consider it a continuation of Japan proper.”⁹⁶ As always, Ainu and other indigenous people were usually only brought up when useful, and erased from local narratives at other times.

Although the final admission of the colony into the mainland Japanese system would be stalled on multiple occasions, that Karafuto was more “Japanese” than other colonies continued to be used a reference point in debate, both in local circles and in the Diet in Tokyo, throughout the existence of the colony. In 1927, the committee dealing with the question of Karafuto enfranchisement proclaimed that, “...of course, regarding the ethnicity of the residents and in other matters, Karafuto differs from the other colonies.”⁹⁷ In 1930, the head of the Ministry of Colonization, Matsuda, expressed that the colonial aims of Karafuto was the “extension of the *Naichi* [Japanese homeland].” Other debates within the Diet included claims that Karafuto was ‘...more than an extension of the *Naichi*, it is indeed part of the *Naichi* itself’.⁹⁸ In other words, from both an self-personified and outwards-inwards identity perspective, Karafuto was “Japanese” in a way other colonies simply weren’t. In fact, a major part in what seems to have stalled the enfranchisement of Karafuto was that, as it occupied such a liminal zone between mainland and colony, its enfranchisement might cause unrest in Korea and Taiwan – places which, for reasons of ethnic distribution, the Japanese Diet did not yet want to grant the vote.⁹⁹ *Karafuto-jin*, for their part, were also split on how southern Sakhalin should be incorporated into Japan – many wanted to maintain some colonial structures that ensured money flowing into local projects – but essentially all seem to have been in agreement that they deserved the vote as much as any other Japanese.

Meanwhile, the central government and the Karafuto colonial government were involved in attempts to further create an outwards-in identity of Karafuto as a place of stalwart, masculine, and heroic pioneers. The goal was to make Karafuto an ever-more-appealing site for Japanese settlement; the method was via filmic propaganda. The government produced, Karafuto-set film *Northern Lights* (194-) aimed to “...increase the cultural profile and self-confidence of the colony [as well as to]...promote a sense of pride in Karafuto history and identity, and so (it was hoped) to

⁹⁶ Saveliev, I. R. (2015). 50

⁹⁷ Quote from *Shugūin Jimukyōku*, 1927, recorded in Shiode, H. (2009). 108.

⁹⁸ Seiyūkai Party Representative Kokubo Kishira, as quoted in Shiode, H. (2009). 110.

⁹⁹ Shiode, H. (2009). 111

address some of the negative stereotypes that discouraged Japanese from colonial migration.” A major part of the film centered around the dramatic setting of the Karafuto railway, itself a testament to colonial success.¹⁰⁰ This effort to accentuate the importance of Karafuto within Japan was meaningful in part because, even then, Karafuto was often seen an inhospitable frontier peopled by low-class ruffians who had fled the mainland because of intense poverty. (The view of *Karafuto-jin* as gruff and lawless echoes imagined identities foisted upon other colonial settlers – once again, Australians spring to mind.)

Additionally, there was a desire to continue the creation of a firm image of Karafuto because of the transient nature of much of the population. As had been the case with the original Japanese settlement of Karafuto nearly 200 years earlier, Karafuto was often host to seasonal residents. Indeed, in the 1920s, the population often grew by 10% in summer, as workers arrived to make some money and then head home. This number had fallen by the 1930s,¹⁰¹ yet the extractive nature of Karafuto industry still meant that towns were often erected, flourished for a brief boom period, and then collapsed. Impermanence and nostalgia was thus a major part of the Karafuto psyche even before the prefecture ceased to be.¹⁰²

Yet slowly, Karafuto became more and more a place of permanent residence; it became, for many, their “kokyo” (故郷), the place they would call their home, where their bones would be laid to rest. This was represented in the increasing number of settlers who chose to officially enter Karafuto as their place of residence in their family registers (an all-important document within Japan, now as then), which reached 42% in 1941.¹⁰³ A local dialect developed, making use of loan words from Russian and other languages spoken on Sakhalin.¹⁰⁴ Local officials made use of both

¹⁰⁰ Morris-Suzuki. (2001). Northern lights: The making and unmaking of Karafuto identity. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 60(3). 649

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 650

¹⁰² “Towns like the southern port of Odomari experienced brief moments of glory and then atrophied as shoals of fish were depleted or transport links developed elsewhere. As a result, long before the ‘loss’ of the colony to the Russian in 1945, Karafuto was already a site of nostalgia: of regret at vanished pasts, abandoned settlements, and disappearing customs.” Ibid. 651

¹⁰³ Nakayama, T. (2015). 26

¹⁰⁴ Vassiliouk, S. (2012). *The Karafuto-jin and Their Role in Japanese-Soviet/Russian Relations*. Paper delivered at the 2012 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association. 9

the media and education, attempting to plant the idea of the dual mission of the Karafuto settler into the population, which Nakayama has described as "...to be the frontier for the expansion of the Japanese empire to the north, and to establish a new culture for living in the sub-frigid zone."¹⁰⁵ There were many *Karafuto-jin* who refused to allow a sense of rootlessness to persist, such as those who formed the Karafuto Local Research Association in 1937. They endeavored to study local history and culture, announcing the "birth of northern culture" in their inaugural journal. A local 1938 contest sought to find the perfect song to represent Karafuto, receiving hundreds of submissions. Songs tended to mix aspects of Japanese character with those of rugged local terrain. One of the two winning songs contained the lyrics, "...we seek to rise and march ahead, striving for an ideal culture. Karafuto indeed is our homeland, guardian of the glorious nation."¹⁰⁶

By the 1930s, more and more of the denizens of Karafuto had been born there, and the number of workers and officials on the island who had been there for decades had also increased. A Karafuto-born student in 1942 expressed the shifting feelings of belonging in the colony thusly: "When one of my father's friends died, those who knew him said it was a pity that he had come to such a place and died. But for those of use born in Karafuto, it is not a place for migrant laborers or a place people drifted to: it is home. It is not a pity but our desire to work here and to die here."¹⁰⁷

Part of this sense of Karafuto as home, and of the self as *Karafuto-jin*, came from increased attempts at creating narratives of the Japanese past on Sakhalin, like those attempted by the Karafuto Local Research Association. Such attempts to reach into the localized past, and to create a modern identity with a sense of historical continuity, are an important part of region identity world over. Such attempts have also been echoed within both the local Soviet and the modern Russian Sakhalinsky identity; the nature of Sakhalin as settler frontier constantly calls upon the settlers to exhume and repurpose old histories, most of which have little to do with the people then living on the land. These histories allow for a grounding, a territorialization of local identity, and a strengthening of feelings of local community and mutual destiny. In a region like Sakhalin, border shifts, repatriations, new settler projects, and depopulation continue to necessitate the re-inventing of local identities for new populations existing within new-

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. 29

¹⁰⁶ Morris-Suzuki. (2001). 651-652

¹⁰⁷ Nakayama, T. (2015). 37

found societal structures. For the *Karafuto-jin*, the 40 years of their society's existence saw a broad range of such efforts, which still seem to bear out a degree of success in the continued perceptions related to the colony.

A symbol of the need to create an identity that reflected the local realities of Sakhalin came from the issue of staple foods; rice, not only the staple foodstuff of Japan but an intrinsic piece of Japanese identity, could not grow in the climatic and agricultural setting of Karafuto. As such, Karafuto thought-leaders stressed the need for *Karafuto-jin* to adapt, and to replace rice with something that could be produced from within the colony. Such voices were raised in criticism of the new Karafuto governor, Ogawa Masayoshi, who took office in June of 1940, and whose policies treated rice shortages as merely "ordinary and temporal problems common in other areas." Karafuto intellectuals knew better – Karafuto, in this case, could not be compared with other parts of Japan.¹⁰⁸

In the midst of World War II, whose battlefields remained remote to Karafuto despite sharing a border with the USSR, the official identity of the colony was altered in a major way. In April of 1943, Karafuto officially became part of the Japanese homeland, being welcomed into the national polity as Japan's 48th prefecture. This had occurred during the re-organization of the Japanese Empire begun in 1942, which abolished the Ministry of Colonial Affairs, creating the Ministry of Greater East Asia in its place. While other colonies became the subjects of this new governmental hierarchy, Karafuto alone did not – rather, it was placed within the purview of the Home Ministry. Officially, Karafuto was now part of the home islands of Japan.¹⁰⁹ In a sense, Karafutoan identity as an inherent extension of Japan had been reified.

This state as an official part of the Japanese *Naichi* would only last a scant two years.¹¹⁰ The decision to put an end to Karafutoan society was one made far from the shores of Aniva Bay or the Strait of Tartary. Rather,

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Amano, N. (2019). 17

¹¹⁰ Indeed, it appears it might have lasted for even shorter a period – despite Karafuto's official status as part of the Japanese mainland, in the last month of WWII, the Japanese government attempted to use the USSR (who had not yet proclaimed war on Japan) as an intermediary with the USA in order to broker a peace. According to Amano, the reward the USSR would receive for these good works would be Karafuto prefecture itself. Karafuto had been placed in the same category as Okinawa and the Bonin Islands – seemingly a firm part of Japan, but, in reality, expendable. As these talks were secret, they did not inform *Karafuto-jin* identity in the last month of the prefecture's existence – but they say much about the validity of Amano's idea of border island "unease." Amano, N. (2017). 6

it was decided upon in Yalta, near the tides of the Black Sea, in a then-secret pact made between the allied leaders Roosevelt, Stalin, and Churchill. In exchange for the Soviet Union reneging on its non-aggression pact with the Empire of Japan by making war upon it “in two or three months after Germany has surrendered and the war in Europe is terminated,” the Allies would consent to the re-taking of Southern Sakhalin and the Kurils. Within the text of the agreement, the reasoning for allowing annexation of Japanese land awarded Japan by international treaty was that “..the former rights of Russia violated by the treacherous attack of Japan in 1904 shall be restored.”¹¹¹ Since Karafuto had been taken during war, it seems war was a good enough excuse to take it back – treaty or no treaty.

This agreement was made on February 11th, 1945, and came to fruition on August 9th of the same year, as Soviet forces began the bombardment of Japanese settlements from across the border between the two nations on Sakhalin that existed at the 50th parallel. Soviet forces moved south, meeting fierce resistance from the Japanese, and made aquatic landings in Toro, Esutoru, and Maoka. Fighting continued for 16 days, including for ten days following Emperor Hirohito’s radio-broadcast announcement of surrender. While the war was ending elsewhere, the Soviets pushed on, hoping to ensure the whole of Karafuto lay within their hands before the ending of hostilities. Japanese refugees fled the fighting, streaming across the difficult terrain of Karafuto on foot, hoping to find security or a way off the of island in the capital of Toyohara. Ferries began escorting refugees across the Soya Straits to Hokkaido, and a massive 77,000 Japanese women, children, and the elderly managed to evacuate¹¹² - but this route of escape was cut off by Soviet submarines, who torpedoed three refugee ships, costing well over a thousand civilian lives. By the time the guns were finally set down in Karafuto, a third of the Japanese population was still stranded within what was now Soviet-held territory.¹¹³ The era of Karafuto was at an end; but the trauma of its last moments would leave a deep impact on what would become the diasporic identity of the soon-to-be-dispersed, landless *Karafuto-jin*.

¹¹¹ Quotes taken from Yalta conference agreements. (February 11, 1945). Agreement Regarding Japan. In *Protocol Proceedings of the Crimea Conference*. Retrieved on September 27th, 2020 from <https://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/yalta.asp>

¹¹² Nakayama, T. (2015). 28

¹¹³ Sevela. (1998).

Chapter V: Sakhalin, a Lost *Ainu Moshir*

Although the three largest Sakhalin indigenous groups (Ainu, Nivkh, and Uilta) all play their respective and unique roles in the history, cultural milieu, and modern identity conception of Sakhalin, it is the Ainu whose presence and civilization upon the island has been most made use of by imperial interlopers in their attempts to ground Sakhalin within their respective identarian spheres. Although the number of Ainu who still live in their homeland on the island has been decimated as a result of forced “repatriation” to Hokkaido, the history of the Ainu on Sakhalin remains of great importance to those who trace their ancestry to the island’s southern lands – and for continued imagined (although non-official) claims towards the island by Japanese irredentists.

Sakhalin has been just one of the three main regions of Ainu settlement – the so-called *Ainu Moshir*, the Ainu homeland, based out of modern Hokkaido and historically encompassing southern Sakhalin and the Kurils. (As we shall see, at other points in time Ainu habitation extended to the Asian mainland and as far north as southern Kamchatka.) The Sakhalin Ainu, living in such close proximity to other Sakhalin peoples and the Asian mainland, played an extremely important role as a node of the flow of trade from China and the Amur estuary to their Ainu cousins in Cape Soya, Hokkaido, and from thence onwards towards Japan. While often stereotyped as “mere” hunter-gatherers, the Ainu were themselves part of a cosmopolitan trading culture, their own material culture influenced by historical trading ties to the Asian mainland.¹¹⁴ While possessing a shared culture and language with their cousins in Hokkaido and the Kurils, the Sakhalin Ainu spoke their own distinct dialect of the Ainu language, and – being in more direct contact with other tribal and continental peoples than the Hokkaido Ainu – had various shared cultural and material attributes with those people, leading to cultural distinctions from other Ainu groups. Phenotypically, both Russian and Japanese anthropologists noted that Sakhalin Ainu had more “Mongoloid” features than did Hokkaido Ainu –

¹¹⁴ This connection is old enough that continentally-produced Chinese bronze mirrors, likely from the Song Dynasty (960-1279) have been found in proto-Ainu Satsumon burial sites in Hokkaido. Such goods would likely have arrived via trade from Sakhalin. Ainu women on Sakhalin also wore golden medallions from the mainland in a similar fashion as did Nanai tribeswomen from the area of the Tungus river and other regions of Northeast Asia. Walker, B. (2001). *The Conquest of Ainu Lands: Ecology and Culture in Japanese Expansion, 1590-1800*. University of California Press. 131

although this sort of physical-based assumption may be questionable, the conclusion that this implied that Sakhalin Ainu often bore children with other northern tribal peoples would make sense given proximity.¹¹⁵ (On Hokkaido, the last non-Ainu indigenous people – the Okhotsk culture, likely themselves ancestors of Sakhalin's Nivkh people – had disappeared by the year 1000AD). Ainu of this region had specific traditions absent in the lands of their cousins – Sakhalin Ainu, for example, were observed to mummify their dead, as did some nearby tribes on the continent.¹¹⁶

The Ainu may have first moved into Sakhalin in large numbers in the early 13th century from Hokkaido, engaging in struggles with the Nivkh (with whom they shared some cultural similarities but whose languages were completely unrelated).¹¹⁷ Sakhalin was a major base from which Ainu historically engaged in expansion, crossing over to the Amur delta and warring upon Nivkh outposts there. The Nivkh, at the time subjects of the Mongol-governed Yuan dynasty, entreated the Mongols for aid in stemming the flow of warlike Ainu. The result was various expeditions by Yuan armies into the Amur region, resulting in fierce fighting between themselves and the Ainu in 1264 and two decades later in 1284. In 1308, half a century after the first Yuan-Ainu clashes, the Ainu were finally pushed back into Sakhalin and subjugated, although they were not destroyed; rather, they were inducted into the Yuan tributary system, their chieftains given honorary titles and brocades. The Yuan fell in 1368, replaced by the Han Chinese-ruled Ming, but the tributary system remained. Ainu crossed over to Chinese trading posts on the Amur in small boats bearing furs used as tribute; in exchange, they were bestowed with Chinese goods and silks, which became important marks of prestige and later valuable goods for trade with the encroaching Japanese south in Hokkaido. A similar state of affairs continued with the Manchu-ruled Qing dynasty; the Ainu were considered a tributary people, and engaged in tributary trade.

Despite their vast trade network, most Ainu productivity went into fishing, subsistence hunting, and small amounts of agriculture. Ainu believed hunting was a spiritual ceremony carried out between pious hunters and *kamuy*, the spirits which inhabited animals, plants, and inanimate objects. Kamuy who lived inside animals allowed morally upright

¹¹⁵ Trekhsviat'skiy, A. (2007). At The Far Edge Of The Chinese Oikoumene: Mutual Relations Of The Indigenous Population Of Sakhalin With The Yuan And Ming Dynasties. *Journal of Asian History*, 41(2). 131

¹¹⁶ Walker, B. (2001). 26

¹¹⁷ Trekhsviat'skiy, A. (2007). 139

hunters to take their lives, thus freeing them from the earthly plain and allowing them to return to *Kamuy Mosir*, the land of the gods. While pelts and fish were used for trade, the hunt was still undertaken in a sustainable and spiritual manner – until the Japanese intruded further into Sakhalin trade from south in their settler colony on Oshima Peninsula in Hokkaido. Pressure to trade with the ever-increasing Japanese trading posts and the resultant depletion of furred animal stocks and time for subsistence hunting altered Ainu material and societal culture, impoverishing Ainu communities and later robbing them of control over their own actions, although Ainu spiritual culture and tradition still remained. Hokkaido Ainu activist and first indigenous member of the Japanese Diet, Shigeru Kayano (June 15, 1926 – May 6, 2006), recalled the various household Ainu rites his father and others would partake in, such as sprinkling sake as an offering to the *kamuy* that governed the hearth and the winds.¹¹⁸

In terms of identity, it is of import that we reflect on the fact that Ainu did not necessarily think in ethnic terms when first creating internal borderings between themselves and others. Firstly, one belonged to one's family and tribe, and then to a wider tribal association (in Hokkaido, usually based around river deltas). Sakhalin Ainu had the most in common with the Hokkaido Ainu of Soya, with whom they often traded, and Ainu were known to move between the two spaces – yet Sakhalin Ainu identity was specific to tribe. Even today, when Ainu as a whole no longer live on the island, the specificities of Sakhalin Ainu culture help set some apart in terms of their identities.

Ainu have themselves played the most important role in shaping initial Japanese perceptions of Sakhalin (and, even more prominently, Hokkaido). Ainu, the native inhabitants of the northern lands into which Japanese were encroaching, had vastly more detailed knowledge of local

¹¹⁸ “My father, Kaizawa Seitaro (1893-1956), was very fond of salmon fishing - or perhaps he was simply desperate to catch salmon because his family could not survive without them. When he caught the first salmon of the year, he placed it on a cutting board at the master's seat to the side of the fireplace, with the salmon's head pointing toward the fire and its belly toward the left of the fireplace. Sitting to the right of the fireplace, my father bowed ceremonially to the salmon and said in Ainu, ‘Thank you for honoring us with your presence at our house today.’ Then he faced the flames in the fireplace and prayed to the goddess of fire: ‘Today, for the first time this year, I have brought home a salmon. Please rejoice. This salmon is not merely for us humans to eat by ourselves, but for us to eat with the gods and with my children, as tiny as insects. Please watch over me, that I may catch many salmon hereafter.’” Kayano, S. (1994). *Our Land Was A Forest: An Ainu Memoir*. Routledge. 19

geography and environs than did the Japanese; even following the years in which some Japanese cartographers had undertaken some degree of exploration and map-making, much of the knowledge of the interiors and distant areas of Hokkaido, Sakhalin, and the Kurils as shown in Tokugawa-era maps came from discussion with the Ainu. A map from the year 1644, long before the Japanese had thoroughly explored any of the three Ainu regions, shows the area in what would now be considered highly inaccurate form – yet one clearly influenced by Ainu perceptions of their land.¹¹⁹ As Brett Walker points out, the Ainu perceived the land in terms of the physical and natural features that mattered to them – shores, rivers, hunting grounds. Japanese perceptions of geography were different than indigenous perceptions – although these regions, essentially foreign frontiers for so long, were initially mapped in such a way as to show their essential foreign nature within the Japanese worldview, the lands of whom the Tokugawa only knew of from Ainu descriptions were slowly incorporated into Japanese styles of cartography. By the 1830s, when Hokkaido and southern Sakhalin were being incorporated more firmly into what the late-stage Tokugawa regime considered its own territory, the maps no longer resembled Ainu ideas – the Ainu lands were disappearing, replaced by those that Japanese identified as cartographically familiar – as their own.¹²⁰

This act of taking indigenous knowledge and transferring it into a Japanese mode of understanding to further the uses of expansionism has many parallels with European colonialist applications of geography, in which native understandings of local landscapes and positionality was churned into the system that was then used to dominate those same lands. In these modes, indigenous knowledge is used when necessary, but is also discounted as unscientific, and is later subordinated to the form of knowledge used by the colonial power. Barret, speaking of European geographical colonization of Africa, had remarked that “...routine practical dependence on local knowledges and information is not accorded any epistemological value. Local knowledge is refashioned as a hindrance, as a barrier to the arrival of the truth . . . Indigenous geographical meanings and knowledges are admitted into this discourse on the condition of being stripped of any validity independent of European definitions of scientific

¹¹⁹ Walker, B. (2001). 3

¹²⁰ Ibid. 6

knowledge.”¹²¹ While the exact nature of 18th and 19th century European colonialism cannot be mapped perfectly onto the aims and modes of operation of the Tokugawa Shogunate, the similarities are striking.

The Japanese view of the Ainu as a barbarian other by whom it self-reflexively established its own civilized nature is one with a long and shifting history. With the Chinese-based worldview on which Japan fashioned its own self-perception, Ainu and their lands were considered to be those of “inner barbarians” – foreigners, but foreigners who were “...nonetheless within the orbit of Japanese cultural influence and commercial interests. In the case of the Ainu, [they]...traced the incorporation of ancient Emishi groups into the Japanese cultural orbit back to the glorified pacification campaigns of Yamato-no-Takeru, the mythical unifier of Japan.”¹²² When Japan closed itself off from most direct foreign relations or trade in the 1620s, the Ainu lands remained one of four “windows” through which trade was still allowed – Hokkaido (where trade was conducted with the continent via the Ainu), the Ryukyu Islands (where trade was mostly carried out with China via the Ryukyu Kingdom), Tsushima (where the Sō dynasty was allowed to conduct trade with Korea), and Nagasaki (where the Dutch were allowed limited trade, and where privately licensed Chinese traders were also sanctioned on a case-by-case basis).¹²³ Like the Ryukyuan in the far south, the Ainu’s inner-barbarian status allowed them to play a useful role for Japan as intermediaries in trade with larger nations. (In the case of both the Ryukyuan and the Ainu, the main subject of this third-party linked trade was China.) The submission of the Ainu brought prestige to the Matsumae samurai fief (*han*) which ruled the Japanese settler colony on Hokkaido and marked Japan as a civilizing country in the Chinese mold, further strengthening Japanese self-identity as a central and important civilization.¹²⁴

This is not Freud’s ‘narcissism of small differences’ as used by Ruth Wodak as an example of how nations create identity (if anything, this would have been the case with China vis-à-vis Japan), but rather was a

¹²¹ Barnett, C. (1998). Impure and worldly geography: the Africanist discourse of the Royal Geographical Society, 1831–73. *Transactions*. Institute of British Geographers. N23. 244–45.

¹²² Walker, B. (2001).40

¹²³ Ravina, M. (2015). Tokugawa, Romanov, and Khmer: The Politics of Trade and Diplomacy in Eighteenth-Century East Asia. *Journal of World History*, 26(2). 270.

¹²⁴ Ainu were even conscripted to do battle on behalf of the Matsumae family – Ainu warriors armed with poison arrows were noted as militarily effective during the putting-down of the Kunohe Rebellion. *Ibid.* 42

more Sino-centric concept of self-identity based on civilization vs. barbarism (although none-the-less one which bears striking similarities to colonial ideas found the world over). Japanese self-identity during the age of modernization and centralization in the 1860s onwards following the Meiji Restoration was further influenced by distinctions made towards the Ainu.

Previous to the 1870s, Japan had engaged in its own versions of colonization in Hokkaido, Ryukyu, and, as we have seen, in Sakhalin, but it was with the Meiji restoration and the rush to make itself into a modern country that Japan began engaging in the sort of colonialism that more resembled – in both form and ethos – that of the Western world of that time. The modern Japanese version of colonization, however, was in fact one in which the colonized peoples tended to be those with whom Japan already had close contact with centuries. As Morris-Suzuki says, “apart from Russia, Japan was the only major power to create a large and long-lasting contiguous empire: an empire that stretched geographically outward from the ‘mother country,’ rather than being strung in far-flung constellations across the face of the earth.” This certainly held true for the Ainu in Sakhalin. As we’ve seen, they were already a people with whom Japan had been in contact with for hundreds of years, and against whose barbarity they already reified their own civilization. As the Ainu became integrated into a more firm form of modern colonization – one in which ideas regarding citizenship and membership of the state became something which was necessary to grapple with – this produced further issues of identity for both Japanese and Ainu. Morris-Suzuki continues, saying, “...Japanese colonization, therefore, evoked no allusions to ‘empires on which the sun never set,’ but instead provoked an almost obsessive concern with similarity and difference: a passion both for detailing the links that bound colonizer to colonized and for assiduously tending the frontiers that kept them apart.”¹²⁵ Those links with the Ainu meant Japan had legitimate claim to land on which they traditionally lived, such as southern Sakhalin; yet, then, were the Ainu in fact now “Japanese?”

As with so many people who found themselves living under foreign colonization, the answer is “both yes and no.” Faced with the Ainu question, the Meiji government chose the path of forced assimilation. In 1899 (at which point Karafuto had been given over to Russia), the Japanese government passed the Former-Aborigines Act, which greatly altered Ainu lifestyles in an attempt to quickly phase their culture out of existence. Ainu were forced into the Family Register (*koseki*) system from 1872, ostensibly

¹²⁵ Morris-Suzuki. (2017.) 162

the system that granted membership within the Japanese polity, yet they had the title “former-aborigine” (旧土人) appended to their registration, still separating them from the whole. Morris-Suzuki has spoken of how duty to the nation, in particular through military service, was the idea which truly granted membership to the Japanese polity of the Meiji, Taisho, and early Showa eras (thus precluding women and children from full enfranchisement); Ainu were finally subject to conscription from 1889 (although those in areas considered especially remote had to wait until 1898)¹²⁶, thus seemingly giving them more rights to be considered “Japanese.” Indeed, some Ainu served with distinction in the Russo-Japanese War.¹²⁷

Of course, from 1875 through 1906, these laws did not apply to those Ainu who remained on Sakhalin (or those of the Kuril islands), who instead existed within Russian borders as a result of the Treaty of St. Petersburg. Rather, within Russia it was declared that “the natives of Karafuto and the Kurile Islands have permanent residence in these places but have no rights as subjects of the present ruling powers.”¹²⁸ However, the Japanese government did manage to convince (or coerce) a large proportion of Sakhalin Ainu to move to Hokkaido before the border change. 841 Sakhalin Ainu were resettled in Tsuishikari, where nearly half of them would perish from epidemics. Those who survived were rewarded with official inclusion in the Japanese polity and eventual conscription. In 1906, southern Sakhalin again became Japanese – yet, strangely, no official proclamation was made regarding the citizenship of Sakhalin Ainu (or the few hundred Uilta and Nivkh) in the newly-proclaimed Karafuto colony.¹²⁹ They remained in this official limbo for some decades to come, in large

¹²⁶ Ibid

¹²⁷ Ainu had in fact been fighting for northern lords in their battles for centuries earlier, often considered to be fierce warriors – although, of course, this never granted them membership within feudal polities.

¹²⁸ Morris-Suzuki T. (2017.) 163

¹²⁹ The question over citizenship or belonging for Sakhalin natives is one the Japanese government has continually had a difficult time with. For example, in 1871, four years before the end of dual-settlement, Kuroda Kiyotaka of the *Hokkaido Kaitakushi* would complain of the feasibility of settling the island, as “two-thirds of the 3,073 ‘Japanese’ population on Sakhalin consisted of Ainu or Oroki natives;” in other words, the Meiji state was counting indigenous peoples as “Japanese” to inflate their numbers on the island and gain a better claim, all while prestigious statesmen were complaining over the futility of bestowing that identity to them. Stephan, J. (1971). 62.

part due to “...a wider official uninterest in indigenous society.”¹³⁰ Sakhalin Ainu remained in the least politically-enfranchised sphere of Japanese domination – they were not “former aborigines,” like their cousins on Hokkaido, nor were they those who possessed “external family registers” like the underprivileged colonial citizens of Korea or Taiwan. Rather, they were simply “Karafuto aborigines (*Karafuto dojin*, 樺太土人)” who were enrolled in “native lists,” not subject to conscription and the citizenship-granting duty that came with it, nor capable of applying to run most forms of business – most civil Japanese law did not apply to them. Further complicating this strange set of distinctions between levels of Japanese citizenship was that those Sakhalin Ainu who had moved to Hokkaido in 1875 generally returned to Sakhalin post-1906, yet they counted as “former aborigines” when their cousins who had continually inhabited Sakhalin did not.¹³¹

Still, the Karafuto period did of course see major alterations to Sakhalin Ainu society. The colonial government forced them from their scattered villages by the seashores and rivers and into ten larger “designated settlements” (指定部落), from which they could be “...more easily assimilated, educated, and controlled.”¹³² Schools for the Ainu were set up, where they were exposed to Japanese language and writing; However, Nakanome Akira, a linguist sent to Karafuto to study the Uilta language, was actively against teaching the Ainu to read and write, and fought against “...proposals to allow them to study alongside ‘more highly civilized children from Japan proper.’”¹³³ Indeed, integrated schools were only introduced in the early 1930s.

Despite attempts to assimilate them out of existence or to create in the Ainu idealized northern workers, their difference and status as “other” was still of contradictory importance to the Japanese colonial state. “...The indigenous people of Karafuto, while being gradually deprived of the basis of their social autonomy, were also exposed to a steady stream of anthropologists, tourists, and photographers coming to marvel at the exotic customs of this corner of ‘far northern Japan.’” Morris-Suzuki brings up an illuminating example of how Ainu and other indigenous peoples of Sakhalin were used for their otherness to display the colonial grasp of Japan: “...When Crown Prince Hirohito visited the colony in the summer

¹³⁰ Morris-Suzuki T. (2017.) 164

¹³¹ Ibid. 168

¹³² A separate settlement, Otasu, was created for the relocation of Oroki, Nivkh, and smaller ethnolinguistic groups – likely Evenki and Nanai. Ibid.

¹³³ Nakanome (1918), quoted in Ibid. 165

of 1925, he did not see its native inhabitants working in the fisheries or tilling the fields that they were being encouraged to farm, but was greeted instead with displays of traditional Ainu music and Uilta reindeer herding.”¹³⁴ For identity creation within the empire, the Ainu thus fulfilled strangely contradictory roles as both the reifiers of the value of civilizing power of the Japanese state and of its power and grasp, which could dominate and encompass lesser, distinct people groups. Ainu symbols and imagery was further used for this purpose in both the 1939 East Asia Northern Region Development Exhibition held in Karafuto, and in 1940 in the “Karafuto: Guardian of the Northern Gate” exhibition held in Tokyo during the celebration of the supposed 2,600 year anniversary of Japanese civilization.

The Ainu themselves were not oblivious to this strange treatment, and by the 1930s calls for enfranchisement and recognition of indigenous rights were growing. Indeed, in 1930 a delegation of Ainu set off to meet the Minister for Colonial development, then touring Karafuto, at Tarandomari Station. They presented him with a set of demands, which both made claims for Ainu inclusion in the citizenry while still attempting to set themselves apart as a community within itself:

“1. That Japanese administration should be extended to the Ainu people; 2. That Ainu should be given civil rights (*kòminken* [国民権]); 3. that the Tarankotan fishery, which is designated as a ‘native fishery’, should be placed under direct native management.”¹³⁵

In 1932, their wish suddenly seemed to be coming true; citizenship was finally extended to Sakhalin Ainu (although not to other native groups on Karafuto). Within the press, this was touted as “giving the Ainu their long hoped-for opportunity to serve in the armed forces.”¹³⁶

In many ways, Ainu traditional culture and activities managed to survive through the Karafuto period. Ainu elders still recited *Yukagir*, the epic poems depicting Ainu heroes and legends, with their families; shamanic practices continued. Japanese culture had long influenced the Ainu, especially in regards to the incorporation of Japanese sake and lacquerware into ceremony, but now more modern aspects entered the Ainu household, such as popular music heard on record players. Outside of the household, however, some Ainu practices were deemed overly primitive, and were frowned upon; the idea for the inclusion of an Iyomante bear ceremony for the Karafuto propaganda film *Northern Lights*

¹³⁴ Morris-Suzuki, T. (2017). 167

¹³⁵ Ibid. 169

¹³⁶ Quoted from the *Karafuto Nichinichi Shimbun*, December 14, 1932; Ibid. 171.

was abandoned based on “strong local disapproval,” likely from those who did not want Karafuto represented by what many Japanese considered barbaric practices.¹³⁷ Ainu culture was in flux, and what they represented to Japanese and Karafuto self-identity was also complex.

In a terrible irony, the hard-fought for Japanese citizenship desired by Sakhalin Ainu activists proved to be the undoing of their society. As they (unlike the Nivkh and Uilta) were now Japanese citizens by law, the Soviet invasion of 1945 and dissolution of Karafuto Prefecture resulted in “repatriation” to mainland Japan alongside other Japanese citizens. This was the second time Sakhalin Ainu had been drawn to a homeland that was not their own as a result of shifting borders; this time, however, there would be no return. Most were resettled in distant parts of Hokkaido; a land that was indeed an Ainu homeland, but not *their* homeland.¹³⁸ They were cut off from the land of their ancestors by the hardened Cold War borders; Sakhalin, for its part, had lost one of the major cultural entities which had played such a major role in its local milieu and history. To this day, the Sakhalin Indigenous Minorities Development Plan website describes the histories and cultures of Nivkh, Uilta, and even Evenki and Nanai, but has no listing for the Ainu. Under the category for Nivkh, it makes a single passing reference to this now-lost population, saying that the Nivkh “...along with the no longer resident Ainu community, are the original human inhabitants of the Island.” This is the only instance of the word “Ainu” on the website.¹³⁹ There have been no Ainu officially registered as such in Russia since 1945.¹⁴⁰

Seventy-five years onwards, understanding and knowledge of the Ainu within Japan is scanty; appreciation for the separate identities of Sakhalin and Hokkaido Ainu even more so. Many descendants of Sakhalin Ainu only know a small amount about their heritage as Ainu at all, and much less so the specificities of where their recent ancestors hailed from.

Nonetheless, memorials and testaments the Sakhalin Ainu do remain, and commemorations still take place. One such example is the annual memorial held for the Sakhalin Ainu of Tsuishihikari, who were

¹³⁷ Morris-Suzuki. (2001). 659

¹³⁸ Ibid. 667.

¹³⁹ Sakhalin Indigenous Minorities Development Plan (2010). *History of Sakhalin Indigenous People*. Retrieved September 17th, 2020 from <http://www.simdp.ru/eng.php?id=7>

¹⁴⁰ Hanks, D. (2017). Policy Barriers to Ainu Language Revitalization in Japan: When Globalization Means English. *Working Papers in Educational Linguistics*, 32(1). University of Pennsylvania. 96

forcibly relocated to the area following the 1875 “repatriation” of over 800 Sakhalin Ainu to Hokkaido. 300 of these Ainu died from cholera in this forced settlement, and a gravestone memorial erected in the early 1930s serves as a site of memory and mourning for those who assemble there every year. In June of 2010, about 60 descendants of Sakhalin Ainu and members of the Ainu Association gathered at the site for its 31st annual memorial ceremony. Another example of continued efforts at retaining the memory of these Ainu was the 2008 walk from Wakkanai, the northernmost tip of Hokkaido and initial point of entry for the “repatriated” Sakhalin Ainu, all the 380 kilometers to Tsuishihikari, carried out over the course of 24 days. This was done to coincide with the Indigenous People’s Summit being held that same year,¹⁴¹ which itself was carried out in response to the G8 Summit being held in Hokkaido that year.¹⁴²

Indeed, it was that very same year that the Japanese government suddenly announced that the Ainu were to be officially considered the indigenous people of the Japanese north. This was a non-binding resolution which stated that the Ainu were “an indigenous people with a distinct language, religion and culture,” and that the Japanese government “would like to solemnly accept the historical fact that many Ainu were discriminated against and forced into poverty with the advancement of modernization, despite being legally equal to [Japanese] people.” This announcement was also seen having been made to coincide with the 2008 G8 summit, and marked a major shift in official Japanese treatment of the Ainu up until that point, which had generally focused on assimilation and little else.¹⁴³ For the first time the Japanese government was seemingly positioning the Ainu as both equal Japanese citizens *and* as a separate, indigenous ethnicity.

¹⁴¹ Seaton, P. (2015). 128

¹⁴² “...the G8 Summit made possible a critical moment – a moment for articulating agency – whereby a new generation of grassroots Ainu leaders were able to launch new initiatives, by harnessing the wave of international attention focused on Hokkaido in early July to articulate a new politics of Ainu indigeneity, which this time had received the imprimatur of Japanese officialdom.” Lewallen, A. (2008). Indigenous at last! Ainu Grassroots Organizing and the Indigenous Peoples Summit in Ainu Mosir. *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, 6(11).

¹⁴³ Fogarty, Philippa. (2008). *Recognition at last for Japan's Ainu*. *BBC News*. BBC. Archived from the original on November 8, 2017. Retrieved September 26th, 2020 from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7437244.stm>

By this point in time, the vast majority of Ainu had been culturally and linguistically assimilated into Japan, with only a very few elderly native speakers still living. By 1994, less than 1% of Ainu in Hokkaido claimed to be proficient in the language, and in the same year, the Sakhalin Ainu dialect lost its last known native speaker. This created an atmosphere within Japan in which those who knew of the Ainu generally considered them a “dying race” (滅びゆく民族), which Hanks has stated “...[served] to further reify the notion of Japan as a monoethnic and, crucially, monolingual nation.”¹⁴⁴ Such notions map very clearly onto ideas expressed by Chekhov almost exactly one hundred years earlier, when he wrote that he believed that Ainu and “Gilyak” tribes were not long for this earth. Clearly, this is not the case – over 25,000 self-proclaimed Ainu still live within Japan, even if their way of life and language has been greatly altered with the passing of time. In fact, 1986 had marked a turning point in terms of Ainu activism; in that year, Prime Minister Nakasone had stated that Japan’s “intellectual competence” was a result of the homogenous nature of Japan, which, in his view, had no racial minorities. Ainu bristled at this assertion, which so clearly subjected them to erasure. One reaction to this was petitioning of the Hokkaido government to help sponsor locally-taught Ainu language schools in municipalities with large Ainu populations, something which followed in the footsteps of Kayano Shigeru and his earlier language school in Nibutani.¹⁴⁵ In 1994, Shigeru was elected to the national Diet, and continued in promoting Ainu rights.¹⁴⁶

Such Ainu activism, like that of the 2008 march in honor of the Sakhalin Ainu, seems to have slowly made its mark on Japanese and world consciousness; the 2008 government announcement of indigeneity is proof of this. While it was a watershed moment, it was also a source of criticism from within the Ainu community; after all, it was a mere non-binding declaration which provided no concrete legal framework for actualizing indigenous rights. Indeed, despite these new developments (including vastly increased Ainu representation in Hokkaido school textbooks¹⁴⁷ and the creation of new Ainu museums), in some sense, the promotion of the Ainu language or Ainu rights in a more official manner is perhaps even seen as a danger towards Japan – a type of “globalization” which will breakdown the

¹⁴⁴ Hanks, D. (2017). 98

¹⁴⁵ 13 such schools were established in Hokkaido through 1997. Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. 99

¹⁴⁷ Oskow, N. (2020). *Ancestral Ainu Remains Returned by Tokyo University*. Unseen Japan. Retrieved September 26th 2020 from <https://unseenjapan.com/ancestral-ainu-remains-returned-by-tokyo-university/>

Japanese image of homogeneity of ethnicity and language. Indeed, in 2014, a Sapporo Municipal Government official made the following incendiary tweet: “There are no such people as the Ainu anymore, are there?... [And yet] they constantly demand rights they don’t deserve. How can this be reasonable?”¹⁴⁸ The give and pull between Ainu being able to express their separate identities while seeking governmental rights and the pushback by the Japanese majority seeking to shore up its own identity persists.

As for the now dispersed Sakhalin Ainu people and culture, there are those seeking its revival and embracing their links to its past. Tokyo-born Kitahara Jirōta Mokottunas is one example; now an associate professor at the Hokkaidō University Center for Ainu and Indigenous Studies, Kitahara first learned that his grandmother was a Sakhalin Ainu when he was in junior high school. His grandmother, Toonintemah, had formerly been reticent to engage with any aspect of her Ainu past or memories of Sakhalin, but following watching an *Kamuy Yukar* ceremony at an Ainu gathering in Hokkaido, she suddenly began to open up to her curious grandson. Kitahara was not yet aware that his grandmother was not from Hokkaido, and indeed, “...talking about Ainu things meant bringing up a lot of complex emotions for her, and often she would not speak at all when she was not in the mood. I found it strange that at times, the Ainu words she used sounded different from those I had learned.” This, of course, was because she was speaking in the dialect of her native Sakhalin. The realization that he was descended from the Karafuto Ainu diaspora was a shock, “Until then I had associated Ainu only with Hokkaidō... the word “Karafuto” lodged itself in my brain...After that, I was always thinking about Sakhalin. I wanted to know about the customs and language of my forebears, but maybe these were different from those in Hokkaidō. I began to think about the diversity of Ainu language and culture.”

Kitahara had become fully invested in uncovering his cultural heritage; despite dismissive reactions from classmates and teachers at school, he went on to study the Ainu language and culture at university in Sapporo. Even here, finally immersed in studies about his culture, he felt something was missing. “The more I studied, the more painfully I felt how all of the prevalent information was about Hokkaidō, and that I would have to conduct my own research to learn about Sakhalin.” In his post-graduate studies, he did just that.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ Hanks, D. (2017). 106

¹⁴⁹ Kitahara, J. (2020). *Speaking in Ainu: Cultural and Personal Recovery*. Nippon.com Retrieved September 26th, 2020 from <https://www.nippon.com/en/japan-topics/g00848/speaking-in-ainu-cultural-and-personal-recovery.html#>

The nature of what remains of Sakhalin Ainu identity, and what the Sakhalin Ainu have meant for Sakhalin identity as a whole, is thus complex. Ainu identified with their own families and clans, and had shared cultural and linguistic traits with all those on the island; they also had deep historical ties to the Nivkh and other lower Amur peoples, and tributary relations with successive Chinese dynasties. Encounters with Japan cut them off from many of these historical ties, and increasingly forced them into specific boxes – setting them up as simplistic, barbaric *naïves* against which Japanese identities as civilized and powerful could be reified, and which could be used to territorialize Japanese claims on northern frontierlands. Border shifts depleted Sakhalin Ainu populations, and then dispersed them all together. And yet, Ainu, then and now, have continued to leverage their identities in their quest to gain just treatment by the settlers who surround them – whether samurai, Japanese imperialists, or the modern Japanese state. While the exact Sakhalin Ainu identity has now been subsumed into the greater, Hokkaido-centered remaining Ainu identity that still exists within Japan, those like Kitahara Jirōta Mokottunas will continue to seek out their Sakhalin heritage, and in doing so will engage in the creation of new Sakhalin Ainu identities.

Chapter VI: To Be Nivkh in Sakhalin

When Bruce Grant, NYU Chair of Anthropology, was on Sakhalin in 1990, he would often ask the indigenous Nivkh people he was able to speak to if they identified as European or as Asian. He reports that such a question seemed strange to them; “Europe” was an extremely distant idea, whereas Asia represented unpleasant memories of imperious treatment by the Japanese (and even the Chinese). The answer he heard time and again was a simple, “we’re Soviets.” Only a year later, however, that union to which they identified ceased to exist. So have the Nivkh, the only indigenous group on Sakhalin who still remain in any significant numbers¹⁵⁰, since become merely “Russian?” What is their history, their identity, and how does their presence on Sakhalin from time immemorial effect the overall identity of the island they call home?

The Nivkh have long been known to their neighbors in their region of Northeast Asia, having been allied to the both the Yuan and the Ming dynasties of China, paying tribute to the imperial magistrates and convincing Mongol and Ming armies to intercede on their behalf in the aforementioned wars against encroaching Ainu, who appear to have been crossing into Sakhalin from Hokkaido.¹⁵¹ Their population has historically been located in the middle and northern reaches of Sakhalin, with a separate population living on the Asian mainland near the Amur River basin. Speakers of a language that has yet to be linked conclusively to any other on Earth, the Nivkh are sometimes considered a remnant of some ancient and otherwise lost paleo-Siberian linguistic sphere. In terms of more recent origins, their culture has been linked to that of the lost Okhotsk people of southern Sakhalin and eastern Hokkaido.¹⁵² This culture spread across Hokkaido’s eastern sea coast and into the Kuril islands during the 8th century, coming into contact and occasional conflict with the already-present Satsumon culture (itself often linked to the Ainu people).

These interactions between those who were likely the forebears of the modern Nivkh and Ainu shows the important way in which these

¹⁵⁰ Grant places their numbers at around 4,500. Grant, B. (1995).

¹⁵¹ Trekhsviatyskiy, A. (2007). 131

¹⁵² “There are differing points of view concerning the Okhotsk culture. In the opinion of R. Vasilevskyi, V. Golubev, Kikuchi Toshihiko and Emori Susumu, its bearers were the ancestors of the Nivkh (Paleo-Nivkh). A. Vasilevskyi considered that the Okhotsk people were the legendary people Tonchi from the medieval Ainu folklore. H. Ishida and A. Kozintsev pointed to the closeness of the Okhotsk people with the Ulchi and the Nanai.” Ibid. 134

cultures defined themselves via external interaction, and how they evolved and changed together. This can be shown in the way the Ainu seem to have taken on their worship of the bear and their famous *Iyomante* bear-sacrifice ceremony from the Okhotsk (paleo-Nivkh) people. Ainu legends from Sakhalin also point to early conflicts with the Nivkh in the form of the “Tonchi,” a group that similarly traded with the Manchurians on the Asian mainland using boats like those of the Nivkh to cross the Tatar Strait, and whom Ainu expansion pushed to leave more permanently towards said mainland (which meshes with Yuan records of Ainu expansion in Sakhalin). Meanwhile, the Okhotsk disappeared or were absorbed by the Satsumon culture on Hokkaido in the 13th century, with pottery shards found from this point on mixing techniques from both cultures. This is often considered the moment the Satsumon culture morphed into what we would now consider the Ainu, and seems to further mark how closely linked these two peoples have been in the trans-Perouse Strait region.¹⁵³

However, when considering these ancient ties we assume relate to those who would currently identify as Nivkh, it remains important to reflect upon the vagaries of our current understanding of ethnic identity and how we place this container upon the imagined people of the past. Tessa Morris-Suzuki has warned of how, by attempting to distinguish certain ethnic groups and their descendants through the fog of long centuries, we invariably project colonial language and thinking onto people who can no longer speak for themselves. In particular, she has written regarding the Nivkh and their ties to the Okhotsk people, saying:

“...the Nivkh...today inhabit northern Sakhalin and the region around the mouth of the Amur, and...some consider the true descendants of the ‘Okhotsk people.’ But in doing this, scholars project a modern vocabulary of identity (with all its complex layers of meaning) back upon history, and are prevented by an impassable barrier of time from recapturing the meaningful boundaries and connections which shaped this region's precolonial past.”

She has also spoken of the difficulty with which colonial researchers even affixed names to the Nivkh and other Siberian peoples; they all had various exonyms and endonyms for others and themselves, associated themselves with certain tribes or areas, existed in a polyglot society, and their personally imagined boundaries of identity existed in such a way as to confound those such as Lev Shternberg, the famed Sakhalin prisoner-turned-ethnographer who set off to understand the peoples of the island. For example, “...the ‘Gilyak,’ meanwhile, referred to themselves as

¹⁵³ Ibid. 135

‘Nivkh,’ meaning ‘human being,’ but also insisted that they and the Manchus were *kehal'-nyakhr-* ‘one people.’”¹⁵⁴ Thus, while the Nivkh now exist within an identity ascribed them by both Russian and Japanese colonizers, and by research such as this, their own thoughts towards who they were may have differed greatly from our ideas of what the modern word “Nivkh” has come to mean.

Although Chekhov’s examination of Sakhalin society pays most attention to its settler society, he didn’t completely ignore the Nivkh (who were then called Gilyaks by the Russians). A large portion of a chapter is focused in on them, in which he spoke of them affectionately (if also somewhat paternalistically). The author described their temperament as “intelligent, gentle, and naively attentive,” but also “dirty, repulsive, and prone to lying.” Chekhov also seemed convinced that their tribe was not long for the world, and would soon disappear into the mists of history. The Nivkh are likely glad that he was wrong in this respect. The long history of the complex perception of the Nivkh by the Russians was also related by Chekhov in the form of a local legend he heard while in Alesksadrov; that upon the Russian occupation of Sakhalin and subsequent mistreatment of the Nivkh, that a “Gilyak Shaman” had cursed the island to never bring the Russians any good.¹⁵⁵

Whether cursed or not, Nivkh guides had in fact first introduced Russians to what would become in time one of their prime interests with the island – its oil reserves. In 1879, Phillip Pavlov, clerk of Russian Merchant A.E. Ivanov, was taken to marshy area of nine versts off of the Sea of Okhotsk, where his Nivkh guides showed him an expanse of holes brimming with black liquid. The oil, eventually discovered to be the largest deposit in the Russian Far East, would be a contested focal point for extraction by Russian, Japanese, Americans, and more¹⁵⁶ – but, like so much indigenous knowledge, its introduction by the Nivkh would have little bearing to any claims to indigenous ownership of the substance.

From 1906, the Japanese came to control the southern half of Sakhalin as what was eventually the country’s 48th prefecture, Karafuto. However, for five years, from 1920 to 1925, the whole of the island came under Japanese control. This was the period where the Nivkh and the Japanese most directly interacted, as the new Japanese territory now included the regions that most Nivkh called home. Beyond that five-year

¹⁵⁴ Morris-Suzuki, T. (1999). 62-63

¹⁵⁵ Chekhov, A. P., & Reeve, B. (2019). 58

¹⁵⁶ Lisitsyna, E.N. (2010). Sakhalin’s Oil: Historical Episodes. *Herald of the Russian Academy of Sciences*, 80(1). 105–110.

time-period, most Nivkh lived in the Soviet half of the island – but even those five years of habitation under Japanese rule would cost them dearly.

Under Soviet dominion for the first time starting in 1925, Grant has explained how the Nivkh were made to feel more “international” by Soviet projects at the expense of any feeling of “Asianess” they may have possessed. This was the result of various flip-flops in regards to policy on nationality as envisioned by the central Soviet state, something he has termed the “century of perestroikas”, which would one moment encourage the strengthening of ethnic identity and then suddenly decide that such was in fact anti-communist (a hazardous tendency for many Soviet ethnicities, including Jews)¹⁵⁷. National identity was only deemed useful in terms of how it could bring populations towards the Communist ideal; with the state controlling sanctioned expressions of “Nivkh-ness,” the onus on control of that identity no longer lay in Nivkh hands. In some sense, the outward embrace of nationalities was simply a vehicle through which to shine light on the civilizing effect of communism, as this statement from a Nivkh by the name of Pimka during the 1930 District Clan Conference displays:

“...We are a dark and uneducated people. Before Soviet power, people thought of the natives as there to be trod upon and said, why not let them die off? The Japanese gave us vodka and little else. Under the Japanese, everyone died off because the Japanese didn’t pay us. The Soviet authorities prohibited the sale of vodka and paid us wages. We are grateful...”¹⁵⁸

In 1929, one year previous to Pimka’s statement and in the very same settlement of Nogliki, a so-called “culture base” was set up by the Soviet Committee of the North. This was a base from which the Soviet government could supply services and promote their political message, and included a boarding school, hospital, reading room, storage space, a stable for sled dogs, workshops, staff housing, and office space for the local clan and various branches of local Soviet entities. The committee additionally built a “House of the Native” (Дом Тыземна), imagined as a space where Nivkh could visit to learn about Soviet policies and ideology in their own language, in addition to being given practical lessons on “how to best build their house, dog houses, and yukola racks... and how to help their dogs and reindeer.” Such spaces were not only used to propagandize to the Nivkh but to also provide a propaganda that could be spread throughout the USSR; the Nivkh were being taught how to bake bread, how to sow

¹⁵⁷ Gessen, M. (2016). *Where the Jews aren't: the sad and absurd story of Birobidzhan, Russia's autonomous region*. New York: Nextbook/Schocken.

¹⁵⁸ Grant, B. (1995). 83

potatoes, and were portrayed as successfully and happily taking on the artifacts of modernity taught to them by the civilizing powers of the Soviet. Newspapers reported on Nivkh being shown their first films, with some running away in fear from the scenes of battles and crowds shown on the flat screen; later, however, these same people would return to request to be shown patriotic films such as *Battleship Potemkin* (1925). Soviet posters specifically aimed at propagandizing to Nivkh could be seen in Sakhalin, even in Nivkh homes, such as one bearing the slogan “Lenin said: The Giliak Will Be Clean! Cut Long Hair!”¹⁵⁹ The Nivkh could be portrayed as tribal *naïves* benefiting from the magnanimity of the forward-thinking Soviet state.

The 1930s saw a shift towards more direct Soviet “cultural creation,” wherein the Soviet state “...appropriated control over the definition of what ‘Nivkh’ meant.”¹⁶⁰ By 1930, Sakhalin had only been under Soviet control for five years – compared to parts of Europe, it had missed nearly a decade of Soviet governance. The shift from seeming attempts to emancipate the Nivkh towards the placing of firmer controls on them was, relatively speaking, a quick one. By 1931, the Nogliki newspaper, the *Bolshevik Fish Run*, was targeting Nivkh who did not go along with the program of collectivization for public shaming, saying: “At the time of the elections, Pimka aspired to the downfall of the kolkhoz, spreading the rumor that those who entered the kolkhoz will be sent to prison; he tried to prevent people from sending their children to school... these facts speak for themselves. The moment has come for the entire native population to lead a decisive battle against class enemies, to strengthen the party... the moment is approaching when through total collectivization, worker natives will destroy the kulak as a class.”¹⁶¹ This, of course, was in reference to the very same Pimka who only a year earlier had been adulating over the benefits of Soviet presence at the District Clan Conference. (The rapid rise and fall of such figures within Soviet society was not uncommon.)

Propaganda focusing on the benefits of communism for the backwards-yet-pure small peoples inhabiting the Far East was put to use with popular mass efforts to help “civilize” the tribal peoples of Siberia, such as the “culture relay race” (*kul’testafeta*) of 1931, wherein a great deal of effort and funds were expected to be expended in the attempt to make native populations literate. Cultural ambassadors and evangelists set off

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. 81

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. 82

¹⁶¹ Ibid. 83

from cities on the Russian mainland in order to bring the light of letters to native peoples, that they might gain access to Soviet political thought.¹⁶² Although this was yet more attempts from outside to change the nature of Nivkh communities, it is important to recognize that Nivkh themselves were not passive in the face of such attempts; rather, many of them actively engaged in literacy courses, including many Nivkh women. While some Nivkh shamans attempted to divert fellow Nivkh away from the classes, others in their communities did the opposite— such as Mikhail Petrovich Kul'pin, a Nivkh and chairman of the Viskovo district committee who devoted all his free time to learning to read and write, and in engaging other Nivkh in similar activities.¹⁶³ The 30s also saw the development of an alphabet for the Nivkh language, making use of Roman lettering rather than Russian Cyrillic (the Roman alphabet was seen as more “internationalist” and its use avoided any signs of Russian chauvinism). By teaching the Nivkh both to read in Russian, and to be able to write in their own language, these Soviet activists hoped to alter Nivkh society, and specifically sought to use literacy to remove their indigenous charges from the influence of “...Nivkh exploiters, kulaks, and shamans.” Much of these efforts focused specifically on women, who were seen as the lowest rung of Nivkh society and thus most likely to embrace the increased power and prestige being lettered could bring them.¹⁶⁴

By the mid-30s, Nivkh lifestyles had been greatly altered. Gone were small villages of traditional dug-out winter houses and elevated wooden summer homes; Nivkh villages had been consolidated as part of collectivization, with most now living in Russian-style houses. Traditional clothing, celebrated in the early Soviet era, disappeared. The family-based economy had given way to collective kolkhozes, with Nivkh sharing fishing nets and tools in common. Literacy was up, and Nivkh children were by-and-large being enrolled in schools. As Bruce Grant says, at first many of these changes were welcomed and actively participated in by Nivkh hungry for improvement in their lives. Yet as the Stalinist period moved onwards, the centralized grip of Moscow became less of a distant embrace and more of an immediate choking. Nivkh became the target of purges; those deemed too materially successful, whether from profits from before or during Soviet rule, were declared Kulaks and censured. Shamans, bearers of Nivkh tradition, were often targeted first – and, since relatively little time had elapsed between Soviet occupation of the island and the beginning of

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid. 85

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. 87

the purges relative to other areas under USSR sway, shamans had little chance to organize opposition amongst their spiritual constituency. The shaman class quickly ceased to exist. Additionally, heightened suspicion of Japanese influence remaining from the 1920-1925 period led to the 1934 mass execution of 40 Nivkh and Uilta.¹⁶⁵ This, however, was merely a prelude to what was to come.

Between 1936 and 1938, the Stalinist government and its numerous local governments throughout the USSR engaged in a vast array of deadly purges, nominally against those declared to be kulaks or saboteurs, but which actually targeted those who had been involved in the pre-Stalin government, communist party, and Red Army, and which resulted especially in near-genocidal violence against ethnic minorities. Even the official Soviet records produced in 1953 for the years 1937-1938 show an incredible 681,692 executions throughout the Soviet Union¹⁶⁶; the true number was likely much higher, and quite possibly well over a million individuals. Siberia bore an unequally high brunt of these deaths, and within Sakhalin, native peoples like the Nivkh, Uilta, and Evenki were particularly likely to find themselves “disappeared” as a result of sticking out in a society that was increasingly and randomly punitive against any cultural or identarian heterogeneity. Stalinist authorities claimed that secret pro-Japanese intelligence rings were operating amongst the Nivkh. Mikhail Petrovich Kul’pin, the noted proponent of literacy and local party member, was shot in March, 1938 for the crime of “espionage,” although his only true offence seems to have been owning a Japanese watch, and for using the Marxist principle of self-criticism during a district meeting in 1937. He was but one among many of those Nivkh who had so excitedly worked towards communist ideals in the 1920s and early 30s who were then killed for his efforts.¹⁶⁷ Around 36% of the adult population in the region was “removed,” i.e. either imprisoned or outright killed, in 1937-38, leaving few of the Nivkh thought-leaders of the generation alive.¹⁶⁸ When Bruce Grant spoke with Nivkh who had been alive at the time during his stay in Sakhalin in 1990, few could say that they did not have a close relative who had been disappeared.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. 90-96

¹⁶⁶ Thurston, R. (1996). Fear and Belief in the Terror: Response to Arrest. In *Life and Terror in Stalin's Russia, 1934-1941*. Yale University Press. 137

¹⁶⁷ Grant, B. (1995). 102

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. 103

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. 101

The result of this mass-murder of Nivkh adults was the loss of cultural memory and momentum. Although only years earlier Nivkh had been both re-engaging with their national culture and striving to become model Soviet citizens; now any engagement with an identity beyond “Soviet” was grounds for disappearance. The House of the Native in Nogliki was given over to Russian, rather than native, use, and the House of Culture was nearly abandoned. As Grant says, “...by regularly arresting ordinary citizens without pretext, and by wildly exaggerating accounts of saboteurs posing as citizens, the Sakhalin administration had most Nivkhi pressing to bury their pasts, both metaphorically and literally.” Nivkh families, many of whom still possessed Manchurian and even Ming silk for their previous centuries as traders in a multi-ethnic entrepôt, either burnt or buried all “outward trappings of premodern Nivkh life.”¹⁷⁰ Families, already shattered by disappearances of relatives, were forced to shift any outward identity away from whatever national identity they had been re-creating. For the time being, they would have to be as Soviet as possible.

World War II saw the enlistment of many of the remaining adult Nivkh men, and their absence spurred on Nivkh women to finally engage more actively in Sakhalin industry, a goal long desired by cultural creationists. The final days of the war also saw the invasion of Japanese-held South Sakhalin/Karafuto from the Nivkh’s own homeland in the north; as the Soviet army pressed on against surprisingly intense Japanese resistance, the borders of the island shifted, resulting in a post-war polar shift in center and periphery on Sakhalin. Hundreds of thousands of Russians moved to this newly annexed half of Sakhalin in the following years, greatly altering demographics on the island.¹⁷¹ The Nivkh’s homeland in the North had until then been at least somewhat oriented to the center of Soviet administration on the island, the centrally-located Alexandrovsk. When the capital was shifted to the somewhat warmer, more developed, and more advantageously-placed Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk (formally the Karafuto capital of Toyohara), services previously available to the Nivkh moved with them. Multiple kolkhozes were also shifted south, damaging northern industry.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. 107-108

¹⁷¹ Tonai, Y. (2015). *Soviet Rule in South Sakhalin and the Japanese Community. Voices from the shifting Russo-Japanese border : Karafuto/ Sakhalin*. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge

¹⁷² Grant, B. (1995). 112

By Kruzchev's time, direct persecution of the Nivkh had ended – yet Soviet policy continued to dislocate them from their pasts. While state functionaries congratulated themselves on the “successful resolve[ment]” of “the nationality question of the Soviet Union,”¹⁷³ the 60's through the early 80's (corresponding to the eras of Khrushchev and Brezhnev) saw an incredible series of forced relocations and mergers within Sakhalin. In Sakhalin as a whole, settlements decreased by over 67% between 1962 and 1986.¹⁷⁴ Indeed, by 1975 the number of villages on north Sakhalin's shores had been reduced by 75% from their pre-1905 (Japanese partition) number. The mergers of kolkhozes and small municipalities during this era were not like the mergers seen, for example, the mass mergers in Japan in 1954¹⁷⁵ or in 2006¹⁷⁶. These were not mere voluntary border changes, with small municipal territories being added to larger ones, or small towns joining up to become new, more populous governed areas. Rather, these were directives coming from upon high which slowly shuttered functioning and even thriving communities, often forcing groups of people to move from successful lives and industry to poor, less advantageously situated areas nearer to sites with larger government presence. While supposed economic rationale abounded (rationale which would be proven faulty), Grant quotes Derevianko and Boiko from 1983, demonstrating the identarian reason behind this mass redrawing of the Sakhalin landscape, once home to so many Nivkh communities along the coastlines:

“The creation of concentrated villages in northern native areas goes hand-in-hand raising of [Siberian native peoples'] social and cultural potential, the creation of new forms of housing, and the mastery of nontraditional types of work: All this leads to a change in their ethnic self-consciousness. For these national minorities, life in multiethnic, multilingual villages and labor collectives is connected with the need for preserving their “ethnic identity,” their roots and their cultural self-respect. In other words, the accelerated development of the international way of life and the transformation of traditional cultures into socialist ones sharpen

¹⁷³ Following the 21st Party Congress in 1961, Il'ia Gurvich wrote that “the path followed by the peoples of the North fully bears out the position of the Program of the CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union) that the nationality question of the Soviet Union, now behind us, has been successfully resolved.” Ibid. 132

¹⁷⁴ From around 1000 total settlements across the island to a mere 329. Ibid. 126.

¹⁷⁵ See Rausch, A. (2012). A framework for Japan's new municipal reality: Assessing the Heisei gappei mergers. *Japan Forum*, 24(2). 185-204

¹⁷⁶ See Rausch, A. (2006).

rather than weaken the need for recognizing the diversity of national cultures.”

Local responses did not quite match this rhetoric. In regards to how this sudden shift felt to those on the ground, Grant records the following comment from a Nivkh worker from a shuttered khlokhos:

“None of us could believe the news when we first heard it. The town had grown to about 700 people, about 300 of us Nivkhi. The government has spent so many years building us up! There was a school, a laboratory, two clubs, a kolkhoz... They had only just finished a whole new set of houses and a two-story hospital on the edge of the village. A new rail line too. I had been a party organizer there before and I didn't know a thing. They called a meeting for the whole village. The *raispolkom* explained that small settlements were no longer profitable for the country, that they were too broadly spread out and maybe even dangerous. Then they tried to tell us that the town was badly situated, that there was a danger of flooding. There's never been a flood there ever!”¹⁷⁷

Most of these consolidations were not needful nor financially successful, and for many Nivkh they spelt a further step towards life as “second-class citizens,” since the amalgamation of kolkhozes and towns meant that those which had previously been Nivkh majority or had large Nivkh workforces were now flooded with Russians, who often took the best jobs and positions. For example, the kolkhoz East, officially a “national” (in the ethnic sense) Nivkh kolkhoz, only had 19% of its Nivkh working in skilled positions. Nivkh unemployment spiked following the mergers.¹⁷⁸ Nivkh livelihoods, already affected by these forced moves and subsequent unemployment, were further damaged by the state continually reducing the annual of salmon catch allowed to them. 1000 grams of the fish, long their staple food, had been eaten on average by a Nivkh up until the 1950s; in 1962, however, the state imposed a limit of only 20% of that, further reduced to only 6% in 1969.¹⁷⁹

Despite all of these hardships, and despite the continued dislocation of the Nivkh from their histories – a forceful and “willful forgetting” of their past – many from this community remained staunch communists, patriotic Soviets who believed that all this suffering was for a purpose. It was for this reason that, when Gorbachev's Perestroika and the subsequent fall of the USSR itself came about in the late 1980s and early 1990s, many Nivkh were left with a deep sense of rootlessness and ennui.

¹⁷⁷ Grant, B. (1995). 127

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. 129

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. 133

With the loss of Soviet identity,¹⁸⁰ and the detachment from old traditions and ways of life, many Nivkh lived in strange identarian purgatory – neither here nor there.¹⁸¹ The extreme financial deprivations of the early post-Soviet years also meant that old methods of hunting and fishing were more vital to survival than they had been in decades, yet few skilled individuals remained who had been taught the old methods.

Still, this time did begin to see a revival of Nivkh culture. The Nivkh language, which had been pushed towards a state of clear endangerment, received a new in-language newspaper, *Ykh-Mif*, in 1988.¹⁸² In 1990, *Nivkh-Dif* followed – with the newspaper, in the Nivkh tongue, still being printed today. (Interestingly, the oil company Exxon Neftegas is a primary sponsor.)¹⁸³ Discussion was even held in Moscow regarding giving over large swathes of Sakhalin to the Nivkh as land in-perpetuity – it was stressed that the Nivkh, once again touted as primordials and noble savages rather than advanced proletariats, would be better stewards of the land than their Russian countrymen. In the end, this was rejected, but in its stead Yeltsin decreed that Sakhalin would begin implementing the portioning of clan plots to Nivkh for their use in new enterprises. Although few had the funds or business experience necessary, by 1992 thirty-six such plots had been claimed, and some Nivkh were looking to establish fishing businesses in the towns formerly abandoned during collectivization.¹⁸⁴ Other Nivkh retreated into the remaining forests and began re-engaging with what information had been passed down to them regarding hunting methods.¹⁸⁵

So, the Russian Federation period has seen some new freedoms come into play for the Nivkh – they are more now at liberty to chart their own course as regards their relationship to a past once forgotten. Cultural revitalization efforts are underway; Nivkh representatives travel across formerly closed boundaries to such events as Slow Food conventions in

¹⁸⁰ Bruce Grant has said that by the 1990s, most elderly Nivkh thought of themselves as Soviet first, and that young people sometimes thought of themselves *only* as Soviets. Ibid. 159

¹⁸¹ “Neither innocents nor moderns, neither of nature nor culture, most Nivkhi I knew were culling through their own personal and collective pasts for moments of redemption.” Ibid. 158

¹⁸² Ibid. 151

¹⁸³ Хурьон, А. (2020). У газеты «Нивх диф» – юбилей. *Нивх Диф*. 2020 ань (2020 год), 2(300)

¹⁸⁴ Grant, B. (1995). 150-151.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid. 161

Hokkaido,¹⁸⁶ representing their traditional food culture. Indigenous rights activists battle it out in court with giant oil companies over rights to traditional Nivkh land and waters.

So herein we see how in the past century, the Nivkh, although engaged in some degree of national building themselves, were more thoroughly the object of a series of attempted Soviet cultural construction and identity creations placed upon them from upon high. The Soviet state pushed them to be Nivkh, but also Soviet – pushed them to be recognized as their “primitive” ethnic group, only so that they could be shown as evolving away from what made them Nivkh and into Soviets and assimilated socialist success stories. While initially the distinctiveness of the Nivkh (and other small Siberian people groups) from the villainized Russian Empire was celebrated, the goal of these acts of cultural creation were that “... the overt distinctiveness of people's like the Nivkhi would gradually diminish but, like salt, would lend flavor to the Soviet character.”¹⁸⁷ This is the sort of identity creation which Ruth Wodak's series of national identity creation acts cannot cover: a national identity foisted upon oneself almost completely from the outside. Like so much of the history of Sakhalin identity, it is a story of the making and unmaking of regional identity, loyalties, and boundaries. While the Nivkh were just as subject to the territory, under which they had lived for centuries, shifting under their feet with each expansion and contraction of neighboring empire, they were also uniquely subject to the constant shifting of Soviet state policy towards their identities, and to the final collapse of the system which had controlled their fates from 1925 to 1991.

¹⁸⁶ Slow Food. (2019). *Indigenous Peoples from Across Russia Are Coming to Indigenous Terra Madre*. Retrieved August 25, 2020, from <https://www.slowfood.com/indigenous-peoples-from-across-russia-are-coming-to-indigenous-terra-madre/>

¹⁸⁷ Grant, B. (1995). 82

Chapter VII: Smaller but Significant: Uilta and other Small Ethnolinguistic Peoples of Sakhalin

Almost any writing on Sakhalin will, of course, make at least passing reference to its main indigenous populations. That the Ainu used to inhabit the southern stretches of the island will be spoken of; Nivkh and their traditional inhabitation of the northern reaches are often written about at length. In the same sentences introducing these groups, a third people is almost always mentioned: the Uilta, often referred to by their older Russian name of Oroki. That they live in the central regions of the island may be included, as well as the fact that they speak a Tungusic language. Yet often, little more is said of the Uilta; focus invariably moves towards the Ainu, so significant to former Japanese claims to the island and whose conspicuous absence on modern Sakhalin points to the ravages of shifting borders, or towards the Nivkh, clearly the most numerically significant native group still on the island. There are innumerable writings on the Ainu which include discussion of Sakhalin Ainu; Bruce Grant has written an entire book on the history of the Nivkh during the Soviet era. The Uilta, comparatively, get short shrift; their place in Sakhalin identity as seen from the outside has less to do with their specific history or reality and more to do with simply being another representative of the indigenous Sakhalin past. This, of course, is to say nothing of the even smaller indigenous groups who also inhabit the island, and who are often simply not mentioned at all.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁸ In this last respect, this writing will mostly follow the usual pattern regarding the other Siberian peoples who live in Sakhalin – this is mostly because their presence on the island was usually as small groups who had migrated from larger communities on the mainland, and not as long-term indigenous communities of the island itself. They play into Sakhalin's identity as a site of diverse lower Amur peoples, but otherwise do not leave as large a mark. Briefly, the two communities large enough to merit mention in the Sakhalin Indigenous Peoples Development Plan website's history of Sakhalin's indigenous peoples page are the Evenki and the Nanai. There are about 326 Evenki on the island, having moved there historically recently - towards the end of the 19th century. The Evenki on Sakhalin have been associated with the Uilta, and also herd reindeer. There are also 169 Nanai people living in Sakhalin, most of whom came to the island in the post-WWII years; most of them live in the Poronaisk region. Although this writing will not go into further descriptions or analysis of how Evenki and Nanai specifically relate to Sakhalinski identity, their presence is demonstrative of the previously porous nature of the insular border of Sakhalin, and of how the people of the lower Amur rarely had

Perhaps some of this has to do with the perceived uniqueness of the Uilta in comparison to the Ainu¹⁸⁹ or Nivkh. Both of the latter are so-called “paleoasiatics,” their languages both isolates offering up intriguing mysteries and notions of connections to an unownable, primordial Siberian and Asian past. The Uilta, in comparison, while clearly their own people, are but one among many small Tungusic-speaking Siberian and Far East groups (in particular, the Uilta are close cousins of the Olchi people who live near the Amur River on the mainland¹⁹⁰).

Of course, the other reason they’re not written of in the same detail as their fellow indigenous neighbors is a matter of demographics. While neither Ainu nor Nivkh on Sakhalin ever appear to have been very numerous, their populations were at least in the thousands. The Ainu, of course, have now mostly disappeared from Sakhalin – but this absence by way of nominal “repatriation” makes investigations of a lost Ainu past all the more enticing. Said Ainu absence makes the Nivkh by far the most significant indigenous presence in the history of Soviet and Russian Sakhalin. Meanwhile, as of 2001, the Uilta numbered only 333 persons on the whole of the island – a tiny population amongst the hundreds of thousands of Russians.¹⁹¹ One can perceive of how they might seem – unfairly – to get their presence downplayed or even omitted in larger narratives of Sakhalin.

There is another reason to add to this, however, and it all has to do with identity – or, perhaps, identification. We have already discussed how Morris-Suzuki had written of the ways in which colonialists use names to classify people groups and to place them into comprehensible and controllable containers. In the case of the Uilta and other small peoples of Sakhalin, this was an especially confounding undertaking for ethnologists such as Lev Shternburg. Indeed, in the case of the Uilta, “...since the end of the nineteenth century a confused identification has been making an

hard borders between their ethnic territories and were constantly involved in a web of interaction. Sakhalin Indigenous Minorities Development Plan (2010).

¹⁸⁹ The Ainu in particular received a great deal of attention from European adventurers, scientists, and travelers in the centuries of exploration and initial decades of colonization; Stephan believes this had to do with the somewhat Caucasian-presenting features of some Ainu, referencing the works of Europeans such as Moskvitan (1640), De Vries (1643), Witsen (1687), La Perouse (1787), Broughton (1797), and Krusenstern (1805) upon whom the Ainu “...left an indelible impression.” Stephan, J. (1971). 11

¹⁹⁰ Ibid. 8-9

¹⁹¹ Missonova, L. (2009). The Main Spheres of Activities of Sakhalin Uilta: Survival Experience in the Present-Day Context. *Sibirica*, 8(2). Berghahn Journals. 71

impact on the destiny of the people while generating myths about their population number and territories occupied.”¹⁹²

Shternburg, during his voluminous studies of the indigenous peoples of Sakhalin and the Amur river basin, had a particularly hard time deciding where one ethnic group ended and another began. The Uilta fell under an umbrella group he called “Nani,” referring to all the Tungusic-speaking hunter-fisher cultures of the region, whose languages and cultures both seemed to exist on a closely related continuum.¹⁹³ Shternberg took to simply calling the Uilta “Sakhalin Nani.” While these peoples are linguistic cousins of larger Tungus groups like the Manchus, it has been noted that they share more cultural similarities with “paleosiberian” peoples, such as the Uilta’s neighbors, the Ainu and Nivkh.

Just who the “Uilta” were, then, is, from a colonial standpoint, murky. Indeed, in 1890s when Shternburg was active, personal senses of belonging for “Uilta” would likely have been tied more to where their families lived (which river valley or shoreline) and whom they descended from, rather than “dialectal or cultural factors.” As such, various local identities came into play, which from the outside continued to appear “...arbitrary and subjective until the 1920s.” The people now called Uilta had numerous names to refer to themselves: “Ulta, Uylta, Ulcha, Olcha, Orcha, Orocha or another variant of a name shared with the Ulcha of lower Amur.”¹⁹⁴ Soviet ethnographers (who called the Uilta “Oroki”) established the official demarcations of ethnic identity which still persist; reindeer herding was one of the cultural features thought to separate Uilta from other “Nani” peoples, although “...these and other local cultural peculiarities often cut across ethnic boundaries,” as did local “...lineage and *doha* (lineage alliance) composition which is generally unrelated to the ethnic divisions.”¹⁹⁵ To make matters more confusing, the modern “Uilta” usually refer to themselves as “Orochon,” as do another Nani group on the mainland. Essentially, the outwardly imposed definition of “Uilta” mattered less for self-perceived identity than at first meets the eye. The assumed fact

¹⁹² Ibid. 72

¹⁹³ The term “Amur complex” has now overtaken “Nani” to describe this ethnolinguistic umbrella group. Beyond the Uilta, other groups included are Nany, Ulcha, Orochi, and Udehe, with a few more sometimes included as well. Zgusta, R. (2015). 4. Lower Amur Valley: The Amur Complex (Nanay, Ulcha, Orochi, Udehe, Ulta). In *The Peoples of Northeast Asia through Time*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill. 105

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. 107

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. 105

of indigenous identity was simply not as cut-and-dry as those closed identities that Soviet ethnographers and lawmakers willed into existence.¹⁹⁶

Still, there are at least some features that help distinguish the Uilta from their greater Nani continuum. Like much of Sakhalin, the insular nature of their homeland helped bring about some cultural and linguistic differences; in particular, the reindeer herding of the northern Uilta is unique to them alone out of their close kin or neighbors.¹⁹⁷ It has been estimated that they must have arrived to Sakhalin fairly late, especially compared to the Ainu and Nivkh; no mention of them is made in any historical or legendary narrative from Chinese, Ainu, or Nivkh sources. Linguistically, their language is extremely close to that of the Ulcha people on the mainland, and they use the same sort of conical tent for shelter, although the Ulcha do not tend reindeer. Thus, it is assumed that the Uilta were a single branch of the Ulcha, influenced by nearby Tungusic reindeer herders, who migrated to Sakhalin in the past few hundred years. Living on the island, their language developed separately from other Ulcha,¹⁹⁸ although they continued to interact and intermarry with many of the Amur basin peoples – the nature of Sakhalin as an island, yet so close to the mainland, allows for this interesting combination of cultural meetings and isolation.

In general, the Uilta experienced the same colonization, which featured both periods of being ignored and of forced inculturation as did the Nivkh and Ainu. With their traditional lands lying in the middle of the island, they were essentially split in two by the partition of 1905, with slightly more Uilta on the Japanese side of the border as on the Russian side. On the Russian side, they were the focus of similar attempts at Socialist evangelism as were the Nivkh; in Karafuto, Uilta were slated to become as “Japanese” as could be expected of anyone who wasn’t from the *Naichi*.

¹⁹⁶ It was not just the Russians who had various, vague categories for lower Amur peoples; Qing era sources also used various interchangeable titles for different people groups. The Japanese, for their part, often called these people by the overarching name “Santan,” from which the phrase “Santan Trade” originates. Zgusta, R. (2015). 159, and Aihara, H. (2020, May 30). *In Search of the Northern Silk Road: From China to Japan Through the Russian Far East*. Retrieved September 16, 2020, from <https://www.nippon.com/en/column/g00211/>

¹⁹⁷ Uilta did not keep reindeer all year round, however. They were used as draft animals in the winter months, and then allowed to roam as they wished during the summer months, while the Uilta focused on fishing. Zgusta, R. (2015). 111

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

Whatever transformative plans both colonial regimes envisioned for their indigenous charges, the Uilta did not initially graft on to either identity. Indeed, up until the 1930s and the increase in border tension between Imperial Japan and the USSR, the Uilta on either side of the supposedly hard border – through which only a single road actually crossed – moved back and forth as they pleased, using forest pathways far from the eyes of colonialist guards. Whatever globally distributed maps or treaties might say, for a time these borders were less than imaginary to Uilta, who still operated as though they were masters of their own land.¹⁹⁹

The idea that the Uilta had yet to create an identity of colonial membership is further shown in the following example. In 1912, the Japanese government dispatched Nakanome Akira to study the languages of the Tungusic-speaking indigenous peoples of Karafuto. He spent summer after summer in a Uilta village in northern Karafuto, struggling to make sense of their language (despite the Uilta’s “...disinclination to spend hours repeating basic words and phrases to him.”²⁰⁰) Eventually Nakanome began understanding some degree of the Uilta language – significantly, he wrote that the Uilta “...‘think that their country is their own, and that it is an independent country.’”²⁰¹ For the Uilta, their land was still, indeed, their land, and they were very far from being Japanese.

However, Nakanome saw them as destined for the same sort of cultural obliteration via assimilation as the Japanese government had slated the Hokkaido Ainu for; he believed that the Uilta and Nivkh should be exposed to as many Japanese people as possible via settlement in their villages, be made to work in Japanese fisheries to increase their exposure to the Japanese language, be shown Japanese technological achievements to impress upon them the value of civilization, and thus be turned into the perfect Japanese citizens for the difficult northern terrain they inhabited: “The function of ‘native education,’ therefore, was ‘nothing other than to turn them into permanently resident laborers (永住の労働者).’”²⁰² Nakanome saw the Uilta as future citizens – although citizens of a lower rung, their purpose as “people of economic worth to the state”²⁰³ tied entirely to their role as permanent resident laborers. For this reason, he

¹⁹⁹ In Stephan’s somewhat patronizing words, “...they crossed and recrossed the 50th parallel dividing Karafuto and Soviet Sakhalin with innocent impunity.”

Stephan, J. (1971). 116

²⁰⁰ Moriss-Suzuki. 165

²⁰¹ Nakanome (1917), quoted in Ibid.

²⁰² Nakanome (1918), quoted in Ibid.

²⁰³ Nakanome (1918), quoted in Ibid. 165

wrote that their education should focus on teaching Japanese speaking and ethics, but not on making them literate – there was no purpose in teaching these laborers to read kanji. When the single school for Uilta children was finally opened in Otasu in April, 1930, it did indeed focus on Japanese language and Shinto-derived ethics, but put little effort into teaching kanji.²⁰⁴ Yet just like the Ainu, the Uilta were used as props for demonstrations of the colonial and civilizing power of the Japanese empire.

Otasu in particular was used as an example of the so-called civilizing power Japan had over lesser peoples; a full-sized replica of the village, featuring wax figures of Uilta and Nivkh fishing and involved in traditional activities, was erected as part of the 1940 “Karafuto: Guardian of the Northern Gate” exhibition held in Tokyo. Here one could listen to recordings of the children of Otasu singing patriotic Japanese songs – these complete Others were, it seemed, in thrall of the beatific value of Japanese empire. It was in this sense that Uilta and Nivkh were, from a Japanese perspective, mere props of colonialism, used to reinforce colonial Japanese identities as powerful bringers of culture; Morris-Suzuki has mentioned how Uilta, living as they did near the Soviet border, often represented the very-most northern reaches of empire. As such, pictures of them were often featured in the final pages of books of pictures from the colony, “...next to photographs of wildlife, flowers, and fossils.”²⁰⁵ Uilta women in Otasu were also encouraged to earn extra money by making traditional craft souvenirs for tourists visiting “exotic” Otasu; embroidered purses made from reindeer hide were popular. Visitors also received a commemorative stamp featuring a reindeer and a conical Uilta house, even though most Uilta had in fact been forced to move into more modern housing.²⁰⁶ Their culture, which the government was generally trying to do away with, continued to serve a valuable purpose for Japanese self-identity.

The school in Otasu could not help but greatly influence its Uilta pupils’ sense of identity – more and more, they took pride in speaking Japanese, and felt shame at speaking the “Oroki” language in public. They came to wish to be recognized as Japanese citizens, despite comfortably

²⁰⁴ “In the school building, half of which served as a house for the teachers, Kawamura Hideya and his wife Nao, the blackboard was inscribed with basic words and numerals in Uilta and Japanese. Lessons (all of which were conducted in Japanese) emphasized stories from Shinto mythology and the heroic moments of Japanese history, and the class received several visits from military officers who gave glowing accounts of Japanese military victories.” Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Morris-Suzuki, T. (2001). 656

²⁰⁶ Ibid. 659

speaking their own languages at home. Dahinien Gendânu, eventually to become well-known as a crusader for Uilta rights and the preservation of their language and culture, has spoken of these mixed feelings and uncertainty of one's own identity. In the early 1930s, his classmates in the native school helped translate the message of village elder Jonburainu, who, threatened by the ravages of the Japanese forestry industry, expressed the Uilta desire to become "Japanese," and thus masters of their own fate, as quickly as possible:

"For the natives of Otasu . . . there is no firewood for homes or logs to build houses, so we've got to ask for help. The Japanese living back of the Shimkuki River cut them down to their stumps, every year two miles long by a mile wide. That's why we've got to ask for help. We want to become Japanese quickly, so please help us."²⁰⁷

Yet this request was ignored – while Sakhalin Ainu were finally made citizens in 1932, Uilta, Nivkh, and other indigenous peoples on Karafuto were not. The excuse used regarding this was that their "way of life" still precluded citizenship.

The various pulls of Uilta life – towards their own culture, towards becoming more Japanese – were ignored in the commentary of some Japanese visiting Otasu. Samukawa Kotaru, for example, had spoken of being entranced by the lifestyle and attitudes of the Uilta he had met in the early days of the colony; however, upon returning to the same villages in the 1930s, he was perturbed and disillusioned by the changes he saw in Uilta youth. "[T]he young people have forgotten their own customs, abandoned their language, and adopted the bad habits of the Japanese. The girls smother their moon-shaped faces with cream and the young men walk around the streets of Shisuka wearing open-necked-jackets which smell of sweat..."²⁰⁸ That Japanese teachers would be actively encouraging Uilta youth to abandon "barbarity" and to become Japanese, while another visitor would be bemoaning the loss of Uilta culture and even insinuating that Uilta youth were involved in making a mockery of themselves by even trying, represents the impossibility of fitting into a mold that would please all the desires and expectations of the colonial society surrounding them.

By the late 1930s, the borders had truly hardened, and the Uilta had been forced into living in designated spaces like Otasu. The younger generation was being educated into feeling a connection with Japan – their identity was shifting. When the cataclysm of August, 1945 occurred, Uilta in Karafuto – still technically not citizens of any country – were now

²⁰⁷ Tanaka and Dahinien, quoted in Morris-Suzuki, T. (2017). 170

²⁰⁸ Morris-Suzuki, T. (2000). 660.

presented with the idea of living under a completely different colonial system. Worse, many were subject to long years of imprisonment over suspicion of being Japanese spies – Otsu had been used as a site for training some Uilta to conduct reconnaissance across the 50th parallel, which they could more easily sneak across than ethnic Japanese. Uilta, abandoned by the very government which had pushed them to become “Japanese,” began petitioning Japan to allow them to leave Sakhalin for assumedly friendlier shores. From the 1950s, Japan began allowing some individuals to migrate to its territory; in 1965, a Japanese court formerly recognized that Uilta did indeed have the right to reside in Japan. Migration began, with Uilta (and some Nivkh) leaving their ancestral homes behind. The Hokkaido town of Abashiri became the main site of their relocation.²⁰⁹

Since bidding farewell to Sakhalin, this new community has sought privacy, and has generally avoided the hopeful and all-encompassing gaze of scholars and intellectuals. Even when it was discovered that Hokkaido University was housing Uilta skulls surreptitiously taken from graves at Otsu, the response by the Uilta Association displayed the complex mix of needs felt by the Uilta in Japan – that of both honoring their past while attempting to remain as invisible as possible. In a letter, the chair of the association insisted that the Uilta people felt “great resentment” over the desecration and unearthing of their ancestor’s remains, yet preferred to not be dragged into the public eye over the issue. He wrote that “...The Uilta people living in Japan still feel a sense of fear as a result of their experiences and impressions during the Soviet period. In order to avoid further anxiety, we think it desirable that the return [of the skulls] should be negotiated between the two governments [meaning Russia and Japan].”²¹⁰

The presence of the Uilta in Abashiri as indigenous transplants from the ruin of Japanese colonialism is not so well known, with the Japanese name for their people – once Oroppo, now Uiruta – seeing much less traction than Hokkaido’s native Ainu.²¹¹ However, the Uilta did

²⁰⁹ Abashiri is perhaps most famous – or infamous – for a prison operating as the most northern site of Japanese imprisonment since 1890. Ibid. 667

²¹⁰ Morris-Suzuki, T. (2013). Tourists, Anthropologists, and Visions of Indigenous Society in Japan: Changing Academic and Public Perspectives. In *Beyond Ainu Studies: Changing Academic and Public Perspectives*. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press. 61

²¹¹ Despite their extremely important place in the history of Hokkaido and Japanese expansionism, the Ainu themselves are actually not all that well known or understood within Japan. A national survey from 2016 showed that a huge 74% of respondents had never been exposed to Ainu culture or people. Kimura, K. (2015).

become the subject of research and discussion within the grassroots *minshūshi* (people's history) movement which blossomed around the northern Hokkaido city of Kitami on the 70s and 80s. Here, the Uilta were recognized as part of this *minshū* (民衆, usually meaning "the people"), referring in this setting to the subaltern victims of oppression by powerful national forces. The aforementioned Uilta rights activist, Dahinien Gendānu, was brought in to speak at one of the local historical movement's meetings, where he expressed his anger at how Japanese researchers treated the Uilta community: "You researchers give us attention during your research, but after finishing it you look away from us. Do you take care of our lives and futures? Shit!" This feeling closely resembles that of Ainu activist Kayano Shigeru, who also bristled under the clinical eye of Japanese researchers, demonstrating a shared feeling of frustration from the various indigenous peoples within northern Japan. Oda has recounted how Dahinien's speech affected conceptions of the Uilta. "When Gendānu told of his experiences of discrimination and pain at a workshop in 1975, a Japanese high school student broke down in tears. The participants shared Gendānu's pain. This experience gave them the momentum to organize the Group Protecting the Human Rights and Culture of Uilta."²¹²

With the thawing and then end of the Cold War, communication between this diaspora community and their kin and friends back in Sakhalin have finally been made possible again, and connections are strengthening.

Kitagawa Aiko, a Uilta who grew up in Otsu, moved to Hokkaido, and who runs a small museum dedicated to indigenous culture in Abarashiri, succinctly described the way in which her identity has been molded by the vagaries of colonial projects coupled with her indigenous heritage:

"When the Japanese were evacuated from Karafuto, the schoolteacher, Mr. Kawamura, apologized to me and said, 'what I taught you was wrong.' Then he said, 'from now on, live according to your own beliefs.' I answered 'Yes, I can do that. But that means I will neither go

Japan's indigenous Ainu sue to bring their ancestors' bones back home. *The Japan Times*. Retrieved August 25th, 2020 from <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/07/25/national/japans-indigenous-ainu-sue-bring-ancestors-bones-back-home/>

²¹² Oda, H. (2015). Unearthing the history of minshū in Hokkaido: The case study of the Okhotsk people's history workshop. *Local History and War Memories in Hokkaido*.140

back to being a Uilta nor will I become Japanese.’ And that has been my resolution ever since.”²¹³

This demonstrates the dramatic effects wrought by attempts at identity creation which can only go so far; which, additionally, are cut short and destroyed, their purposes laid to waste and weaknesses laid bare. The result, in Morris-Suzuki’s words, are “...a process of creating identity through negation.”²¹⁴

While a large proportion of Uilta created a new life and community in Hokkaido, away from their homeland, the remaining few hundred back in Sakhalin had to come to terms with a completely new identity – that of being a Soviet citizen. While their status as former subjects of a Soviet enemy endangered many of their lives in the 1940s, by the 1950s, the Uilta had become part of a similar project of socialistic education and “liberation” as had the Nivkh. This liberation came with the stipulation that the Uilta were now to focus on reindeer herding (which only half of the Uilta population had formerly engaged in), although now within communally owned enterprises.²¹⁵ Their identity as indigenous people would be something they would leverage and which would be used by others throughout the Soviet period, and even until this very day.

The state-run reindeer business in Sakhalin during the 1950s-1980s was fairly substantial, involving the participation of many Uilta. In this way, they continued to work within the same traditional enterprises they’d been involved in for centuries. The end of the Soviet period coincided with this business becoming less profitable.²¹⁶

The end of the Soviet period in 1991 also saw the emergence of new programs meant to enfranchise indigenous minorities by providing them with business opportunities. These include *obschchinas*, national clan enterprises, national family enterprises, and national and *obschchina*-like enterprises and national cooperatives. Uilta businesses run as one of these national organizations engage in traditional targets of Uilta extraction, such as fishing, reindeer herding, hunting of land animals and birds, and the collection of wild berries. Missonova described the purposes of these ethnically-based enterprises as the “...preservation of traditional skills, training of children in Uilta decorative arts and dancing, assistance to aged

²¹³ Kitagawa, A. (1997). *Otasu no kurashi to watashi. Karafuto 1905-1945: Nihonryo kida no shosu minzoku*. Quoted in Ibid.

²¹⁴ Morris-Suzuki. (2001). 668.

²¹⁵ Sakhalin Indigenous Minorities Development Plan (2010).

²¹⁶ Missonova, L. (2009). 78

people, and participation in the organization of national holidays.” However, she added that “...they do so with varying degrees of success.”²¹⁷ Part of this has to do, again, with demographics; there are only a few hundred Uilta, and only a certain amount will be engaged in traditional lifestyles. This leads, for example, to there only being a few hundred to a thousand total reindeer owned by these national enterprises; in 2001, in the Uilta population center of Val, only around 10 of the 114 Uilta residents worked with reindeer. This also has to do with the economics of post-Soviet Sakhalin; without state subsidies, reindeer herding in the Uilta fashion is simply not profitable. As such, the Uilta attempt to leverage their identity further – they say they wish to herd as is part of their rightful lifestyle as Uilta, and ask the Russian state to provide tax incentives in order to allow all this to be possible. They have also managed to receive some money from large extractive businesses in Sakhalin, such as Sakhalin Energy Company.²¹⁸ Still, many of the national enterprises remain riven with controversy.²¹⁹

These enterprises are often multi-ethnic in nature, run by people who, for example, have a Korean father and a Uilta mother, with workers who are Evenk, Nivkh, Nanai, or Russian. As just one example, take the clan enterprise “Tii”: founded in 1996, the clan was directed by someone with a Korean father and Uilta mother, but had been raised in a Nivkh family; the word “Tii,” in fact, means “plain” in Nivkh. Initially, the clan had two Nivkh families, two Uilta families, one family of Sakhalinski Koreans, and one Russian family.²²⁰

So, while these “national” enterprises serve to allow the continued traditional work activities of the “numerically small peoples of the north,” they also, in effect, demonstrate what has always been true about lower Amur people groups – that people of numerous clan and ethnic backgrounds interact and intersect within them. Very little could serve as a better representation what indigenous identity has been, and continues to be, within Sakhalin.

²¹⁷ Ibid. 73

²¹⁸ Ibid. 75

²¹⁹ Controversies range from the difficulty of actually obtaining licenses for clans to engage in fishing, to clan businesses not employing any actual indigenous people, and others forms in which the system is taken advantage of by non-Uilta simply looking to make a little money. Ibid. 80.

²²⁰ Ibid. 80.

Chapter VIII: Sakhalin's Invisible Minority: the Sakhalinsky Koreans

There remains one important ethnic subsection of Sakhalin with their own history and identity that bears discussion within this writing. Unlike the others whose actions and experience make up the most oft told stories of the island, these are neither imperial conqueror nor overwhelmed native minorities. Rather, the Sakhalinsky Koreans share an experience more in common with the island's dark convict past: they were forced to Sakhalin, not arriving of their own volition. They also share at least one thing in common with the Nivkh, in that shifting borders and new foreign overlords did not mean they were free or to be re-enfranchised.

Worldwide, there are more than 5.65 million people of Korean descent whom live outside the borders of the current two Korean nation states.²²¹ Of these, a significant portion live in the territories of the former Soviet Union. With Korea located on Russia's eastern borders, and given the porous nature of said borders up until the early 20th century, it makes sense that those seeking opportunities not present in their home provinces would cross over into Russian spaces. The Russian empire had previously viewed these Koreans, like the Chinese, as "un-Russofiable."²²² During the Stalinist period, fear that Koreans might in fact be Japanese spies or aligned with China gave rise to one of the largest scale population transfer in the history of the Soviet Union; 180,000 ethnic Koreans living in the Maritime provinces were forcibly moved to Central Asia. Yet these Koreans, whose story and complex identity very much deserve attention, are not the ones we shall be focusing on here.

While the Soviet Union was busy deporting the entirety of the 180,000 members of the Korean community in Primorye to Central Asia,²²³ the Japanese were using pressure and coercion in order to transfer sections of the native population of their Korean colony to their territory in Karafuto. Much as the Russians before them, Japan was finding it difficult to convince enough of its citizens and colonial charges to leave for the harsh climate and still-developing infrastructure of Sakhalin. Mining, meant

²²¹ Lee, J. (2011). *Ethnic Korean Migration in Northeast Asia*. Kyung Hee University. 131

²²² Chia, Y. H. (2006). *The Chinese Eastern Railroad and the making of Russian Imperial Orders in the Far East*. (PhD diss, New York University).

²²³ This deportation was carried out under the premise of the Korean community being infiltrated by Japanese spies – similar to the reasoning the NKVD had used to "disappear" Nivkh and Uilta during the same period. (See chapter VI). Saveliev, I.R. (2015). 56.

to be a major industry in Karafuto,²²⁴ had a particular dearth of manual laborer stock to choose from. Immigration founded on forced movement or fraudulent claims of high pay led to the Korean population of Karafuto more than tripling in the 1930s, with a population of 16,056 in 1940.²²⁵ By 1945, amidst wartime labor law “recruitments,” the Korean population of Karafuto had soared to 23,498²²⁶, and then to 43,000 by the time of the Soviet invasion.²²⁷ Much of their forced work in the mines involved the *takobeya* (octopus room) system, a form of cruel indentured labor; workers in this system were often “virtual prisoners” of their employers, and if caught attempting escape could even be lynched.²²⁸

By the 1940s, Koreans had become far and away the largest minority group in Karafuto – their population was dozens of times higher than local Ainu, Nivkh, Uilta, or the few hundred Russians who remained in the Japanese colony. Yet their absence can be keenly felt when examining artefacts of Karafuto culture – picture books, films, and novels from the time omit them. Morris-Suzuki discusses how Koreans on Sakhalin weren’t useful as colonial props, since they neither represented colonial Japanese spirit, nor provided photogenic examples of colonized local culture in either primordial stages of in the act of being “civilized.” Only after the fall of the colony did the major Korean presence start to be acknowledged in diaspora literature, thus recreating the image of Koreans within the Karafuto populace and identity.²²⁹

²²⁴ “The escalating war in China required natural resources, and coal in Karafuto was one of them.” Ibid.

²²⁵ Koreans went from being 2% of the Karafuto population to 4.8%. Ibid.

²²⁶ Bull, J. (2015). Occupation-era Hokkaido and the Emergence of the Karafuto Repatriate. *Voices from the shifting Russo-Japanese border: Karafuto/Sakhalin*. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge. 63

²²⁷ Comparatively, there were some 390,000 Japanese living in Karafuto at the same time period, showing how significant the Korean populace was. Son, I. (1992). Koreans in Sakhalin. *International Journal on World Peace*, 9(3). 8

²²⁸ Morris-Suzuki. (2000). 662.

²²⁹ In 1949, Karafuto diaspora author Yuzurijara Masako published a short story called “Lynching Koreans” (朝鮮焼) about a Japanese teacher in the mining town of Ochiai befriending a Korean pupil. She realizes that the boy is putting on a show of being happy to ingratiate himself to his Japanese classmates, but that he lives in poverty and suffers from prejudice within Karafuto colonial society. She becomes close to the Korean community, but when revolt is fomented over brutal working conditions, many are killed, and her young charge disappears into the ether. Ibid. 664.

Upon the Soviet invasion of South Sakhalin, the Korean population (like much of the former Karafuto population) was not granted the freedom to leave – the Soviets wanted the Koreans to continue working in the same mining industry they’d been forced into by Japan.²³⁰ Pleas to Soviet officials and large demonstrations by Koreans demanding repatriation to Korea in the early days of the Soviet occupation had no effect.²³¹ While Japanese nationals were guaranteed eventual repatriation to Japan under the 1946 United States-Soviet Agreement on Repatriation, Korean nationals were not covered within the agreement – despite having been colonized citizens of the Japanese empire until only the year previous. Whether or not these Koreans would have defined themselves as Imperial Japanese citizens, they certainly had been in the legal sense. The Japanese Ministry of Justice only officially deprived Koreans living in Sakhalin and Japan of citizenship in 1952; yet, as Son has said, “...Japanese and Soviet governments had already decided not to regard Koreans as Japanese nationals and excluded these Koreans from the repatriation program.”²³² Koreans in Sakhalin had experienced a unilateral decision upon the nature of their identity as non-Japanese.

To many Sakhalinsky Koreans, these was a double-betrayal by Japan. First forced to the island or brought there under false pretenses, they had now been “mercilessly abandoned” by a Japan which had failed in its “obligation of returning them to their home.” Indeed, many of the ethnic Japanese who remained in the former Karafuto following 1949 and the departure of most of their fellow citizens were those who had married Korean men – leaving would have meant abandoning their spouses. In 1956, upon the normalization of the Japanese-Soviet relationship, negotiations were made which allowed these 480 of these women and their Korean-Japanese families still on Sakhalin to repatriate to Japan. At this point, many of the Sakhalinsky Koreans had already been on the island for as long as 17 years. A decade later, a survey conducted by a advocacy group made up of 50 of the Korean men who had left Sakhalin with their Japanese wives showed at least 7000 Koreans stranded on Sakhalin who

²³⁰ Saveliev, I.R. (2015). 57

²³¹ “Koreans have repeated approached the local Soviet authorities and Soviet military commanders with petitions, asking to be repatriated to their homeland” – report to Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs V.M. Molotov dated Oct. 7th, 1947. Din, Y. (2015). *Dreams of returning to the homeland: Koreans in Karafuto and Sakhalin. Voices from the shifting Russo-Japanese border : Karafuto/Sakhalin*. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge. 177

²³² Son, I. (1992). 9

still wished to repatriate to their former homes in either Korea proper or Japan²³³ – a fairly sure sign that many of these did not consider Sakhalin their true homes or themselves as Sakhalinsky. In the 1970s, the desire to return was so great for some Sakhalinsky Koreans that, being denied repatriation to either South Korea (with whom the USSR had no relationship) or to Japan, they staged a small protest in the town square in Korsakov – the sort of act that was virtually unheard of at that time in the Soviet Union.²³⁴

As decades passed and these thousands of Koreans remained stranded from their homeland, stuck on foreign soil, some began to mount court cases against the Japanese government, “seeking compensation for their suffering in these years since the war.”²³⁵ This included a case that lasted for over 13 years starting in 1975. Four Koreans still marooned on Sakhalin brought the case against the Japanese government, arguing Japan’s responsibility towards its colonial citizens it had forced to Sakhalin and then abandoned. Somewhat darkly, the case was withdrawn in 1989, by which time three of the four plaintiffs had died in the intervening years, still stranded on Sakhalin. The remaining fourth plaintiff was able to leave Sakhalin for South Korea that same year – now at the advanced age of 74, having spent nearly half his life on the island.²³⁶

In the late 80s and early 90s, as perestroika and then the fall of the Soviet Union made Sakhalin borders more porous than they’d been in decades, emigration for the Sakhalinsky Koreans was finally allowed. Both the Korean and Japanese Red Crosses began activities to assist the now elderly Koreans and their families to repatriate, if so wished. The Japanese government also apologized for the predicament of Sakhalinsky Koreans, pledging 100,000,000 yen towards reuniting families. However, Japan officially still maintained that this was not an admission of guilt but rather a humanitarian gesture – something which angered Sakhalinsky Koreans, who filed a second lawsuit aiming to force Japan to apologize for decades

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ The end result of this small protest was the deportations of over thirty involved Sakhalinsky Koreans – not to South Korea, but to North Korea. Those who possessed Soviet citizenship were stripped of it before deportation. Din, Y. (2015). 183

²³⁵ Despite all attempts by this and other groups, only a mere further three Koreans were able to leave Sakhalin between the four decades between 1945 and 1988. Son, I. (1992). 8

²³⁶ Ibid. 10

of trauma and to provide funds for Sakhalinsky moving to Korea.²³⁷ Eventually, this was settled out of court; South Korea and Japan have since undertaken to build various living facilities for Sakhalinsky returnees in South Korea, and thousands have finally moved back in their greying years. At least a thousand hopeful returnees still lived on Sakhalin as of 2005; their descendants, now in the second and third generation, numbered 40,000²³⁸ – still a significant minority on Sakhalin.

Throughout all this, the very nature of the identity of these 45,000 Koreans had been questioned numerous times; Soviet officials felt they were overly Japanese, and disallowed them to enter into *kollektives*. They also arranged for Korean-language schooling for their children, and, while pressuring them to continue work in Sakhalin industry, actively moved Koreans (*Koryo-saram*, Koreans whose families had lived in Russian lands for decades and who spoke Russian) from other parts of the USSR to the island. *Koryo-saram* often looked down upon Sakhalinsky Koreans, creating many hurtful names for them. This created lanes of separation between the ethnically Korean communities on the island. Additionally, the Soviet Union pushed the Sakhalinsky Koreans to gain citizenship with either the USSR or North Korea (South Korea had no diplomatic relationship with the USSR, and was out of the question; Japan, as we have seen, had abandoned its colonial charges). Most Sakhalinsky were from southern Korean provinces, and thus did not feel a connection to North Korea; however, being stateless added an additional layer of difficulty to a life already spent in exile. As of 1960, 65% of the Sakhalinsky Korean had decided to become officially North Korean. Only 25% took Soviet citizenship; an additional 10% continued to remain stateless.²³⁹ Such extremities must have played havoc with their sense of cultural belonging.

The way in which Sakhalinsky Koreans feel they must create a separate identity from the greater *Koryo-Saram* population is another valuable example of “the narcissism of small differences” aspect of identity creation. Indeed, Korean nationals visiting Sakhalin have remarked on the insular nature of the modern Sakhalinsky community, which apparently features “friction between Sakhalin Russians and Koreans” in addition to

²³⁷“Monetary compensation is particularly important for the repatriates to Korea because almost all of them are old (over 70) and lose their pension in the Soviet Union once they leave Sakhalin.” Ibid. 11

²³⁸ Ishikida, M. (2005). *Toward Peace: War Responsibility, Postwar Compensation, and Peace Movements and Education in Japan*. Center for US-Japan Comparative Social Studies. 51

²³⁹ Ibid.

the difficulties in identifying differences found between Sakhalinsky and other ethnic Koreans on the island.²⁴⁰

The two principle features of historical Sakhalin identity formation – forced immigration and border shifts – helped forge in this unwilling community the need to distinguish themselves from even other Koreans within the same state. This identity continues to shape the modern Sakhalinsky Koreans, although by this point the majority have become native-born Russians, and are now primarily Russophones. They remain one of the four main Korean groups of the former Soviet Union, with the others living in mainland Russia, and primarily in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.²⁴¹ Part of what continues to set Sakhalinsky Koreans apart is that, when they immigrate away, they still tend to move back to South Korea. The other *Koryo-Saram*, on the other hand, are more likely to move within Russia or the CIS states (those belonging to the Commonwealth of Independent States, a regional intergovernmental organization made up of former Soviet republics) – this is because, having lived in Russophone areas for generations, they tend to no longer speak Korean.²⁴²

Yet for the current generations of Sakhalinsky Koreans, even that distinction may be fading. Those of the 2nd, 3rd, and even 4th generations who have gone to Korea to work have found themselves placed in awkward, demoralizing positions as subalterns, forced into lower-paying positions than native-born Koreans. Although there are many first-generation Sakhalinsky Koreans now living in South Korea on government stipends, there is the general feeling that the country is simply not the right place for their children and grandchildren. The shift in identity – from one of a diaspora people longing for home, to one which knows that their home is, in fact, Sakhalin, is reflected in the following comments made by a younger Sakhalinsky Korean:

“I always thought we should be like the Koreans. But now I see they are totally different from us. I do not understand them; they treat us as if we are really inferior to them. Then I thought about it and decided I am a special Korean – a Sakhalin Korean. So I should live here, in Sakhalin...I think and speak as a Russian; my homeland is Sakhalin....I can learn a language or change my location, but my mentality, my worldview, will

²⁴⁰ Yong, K.R. (2005). Sakhalin's Three Sets of Koreans. *The Sakhalin Times*. Archived from the original on 2006-11-20. Retrieved September 20th, 2020 from <https://web.archive.org/web/20061120210623/http://www.thesakhalintimes.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=1610>

²⁴¹ Lee, J. (2011). 121

²⁴² Ibid. 122

remain forever, and this is why I consider myself Russian.”²⁴³ For Sakhalinsky Koreans of this generation, the shift to a identity territorialized within Sakhalin itself may be close to being completed.

²⁴³ Anonymous Sakhalinsky Korean interviewed by Yulia Din during the period of 2008-2010. Din, Y. (2015). 190

Chapter IX: The Modern, Russian Sakhalin and the Subaltern Karafuto

Since September, 1945, Sakhalin has been a Russian island; first, as part of the Russian Soviet Federated Republic, and, as of 1991, as simply a part of the Russian Federation. Indeed, it is the country's largest, and an important population center of the Russian Far East. Much has changed since Karafuto was absorbed into Sakhalin, completed with the creation of Sakhalin Oblast (containing the former Soviet Sakhalin, Karafuto Prefecture, and the Kurile Islands) on January 2nd, 1949. The Karafuto population, which once dwarfed that of northern Sakhalin, dispersed (in large part) to Japan. A population of 200,000 remained in 1945, excluding Japanese and Koreans; by 1966, this had more than tripled to 640,000, 78% of which were ethnic Russians.²⁴⁴ For many years, economic output increased alongside the population, with the value of products coming out of Sakhalin in 1965 being worth five times that of 1946. For a time, the economy began focusing on manufacturing, rather than the island's traditional extractive industries (coal, oil, fishing, forestry, etc.).²⁴⁵

Having reclaimed the entirety of the island, the USSR set about producing a new cultural identity for Sakhalinsky – of whom the vast majority had only settled on the island post-reunification. Much of this had to do with instilling a sense of local pride focused around the background of Soviet achievements; it also involved "...work[ing] assiduously to expunge all evidence of any constructive role that the Japanese may have played in Sakhalin's past." Vestiges of the very real Japanese past, such as buildings, parks, and monuments were destroyed, covered up, or assigned new, Russian histories. Japanese place names were replaced by Russian names, both new and old.²⁴⁶ While some signs of the former Japanese capital of Toyohara can still be seen if one knows where to look, for most intents and purposes, the Japanese identity of southern Sakhalin has been erased.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁴ Stephan, J. (1971). 177.

²⁴⁵ Ibid. 178.

²⁴⁶ The decision to official change the place names of south Sakhalin and the Kuril islands came about in spring of 1946, with names being chosen by a committee led by military geographer Yury Efremov. 14 regions were initially renamed – including Toyohara, which became Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, which remains the capital of Sakhalin Oblast. Tonai, Y. (2015). 89

²⁴⁷ Stephan, J. (1971).190

This erasure was assisted, of course, by the complete replacement of the Japanese population with a Russian one. The Soviet Union began a program to encourage immigration to replace Japanese labor almost as soon as the invasion was complete, and by 1947 south Sakhalin had an approximate population of 300,000 – mostly Russians.²⁴⁸ This also represented a shift within the character and nature of Soviet Sakhalin, as the Russian population and focus of governmental and commercial attention migrated from the north to the south; nothing represents this better than the choice of capital for the oblast. Aleksandrovsk, the former imperial capital midway up Sakhalin’s west coast, and center of Russian history on the island, had first been considered – but instead, southerly located Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk (the renamed Toyohara) was selected.²⁴⁹

In order to help foster the new local identity, the USSR built schools in each town and city, with teachers giving out reading assignments by local authors, showing locally-based films, and studying (the Soviet version) of Sakhalin history, in which Russians had been liberators of the Nivkh, Uilta, and (now mostly absent) Ainu, and wherein the Japanese were late-arriving invaders and abusers, and American whalers of the 18th century were capitalist predators. In 1968, a library in the former imperial hub of Aleksandrovsk hosted talks with victims of the imperial convict system and with veterans of the 1945 invasion which had “liberated” the island from Japan. In 1967, mass pilgrimages brought Sakhalin youth to the battlefields of 1945, instilling a sense of local liberation and historical purpose. Publishing houses printed local histories extolling the virtues of socialist Sakhalin; even Chekhov’s great-nephew, Sergei, wrote a series on Soviet accomplishments on the island after receiving a guided tour. (What his great-uncle would have thought of this is something we can only imagine.) Although the majority of such work was written by ethnic Russians, at least one Nivkhi author emerged from the crowd – Vladimir Sangi, who wrote of “his tribes emergence into the modern world of socialist construction.” From 1955, some Sakhalin-born authors began producing a continuing series of novels, short stories, and poems dedicated to portraying the true experience of life on the island, rather than the propagandistic geographic hagiographies made for what Stephan has described as “quota-filling.” The Sakhalin past may have been dark, but the Soviet’s had clearly brought the liberating light of Communism to the island.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁸ Tonai, Y. (2015). 98

²⁴⁹ Ibid. 97

²⁵⁰ Stephan, J. (1971). 185-188

In regards to the outwards-inwards perception of what “Sakhalin” means; its regional identity as imagined by those living far away from the everyday reality of the island, Stephan has written that “...the expression [of the word “Sakhalin”] might evoke images of a distant island, vaguely exotic for its proximity to Japan, rich in natural resources, and endowed with stunning scenery....no longer does one hear epithets of fear or revulsion that made Sakhalin an object of universal dread.”²⁵¹ By 1970, Soviet attempts at re-habilitating the island in the national perception had been at least somewhat successful.

Post-Soviet breakages with the past, however, brought about painful ruptures in identity for all former citizens of the USSR, and Sakhalinsky, be they Russian, Tatar, Nivkh, or Uilta, were no exception. Sakhalin no longer had a glorious purpose as a site of production, both ideological and material, for the future utopia of Communism. Alongside this spiritual loss came an economic one, as state-financed institutions and enterprises crashed and prices soared. Industrial towns supported by the Soviet economic system saw mass depopulation, something in fact exacerbated by the nature of Sakhalin as a place populated by migrants and immigrants and their descendants. Many ethnic Russians fled economically dead cities for the mainland, and thanks to the greater ease of movement granted by the fall of the Iron Curtain, many Korean and Japanese descendants still living on Sakhalin decided to repatriate to their ethnic homelands.²⁵² Amongst the ruin, new modes of life and fresh inspirational identities would have to be created.

One interesting aspect of this new Sakhalin identity appears to be a jealous guarding of the territory of the oblast taken from Japan in 1945. This includes the disputed Kuril islands, which are part of Sakhalin Oblast, even appearing on its official flag. Indeed, Anno has said that “...within Russia, Sakhalin is the region where nationalistic opposition to the territorial

²⁵¹ Stephan had never been to the island himself – in 1971, at the time of his writing, foreigners were essentially banned from setting foot on Sakhalin. As such, he wrote based on what had perceived from the Soviet “popular press,” which may indeed be a good way to gauge outwards-inwards perceptions of identity. Ibid. 189

²⁵² Paichadze, telling the story of ethnic Japanese repatriates to Japan post-1990, gives two examples of the depopulation of Sakhalin: Poronaysk, on the Poronai river, went from a population 25,971 on the eve of the fall of the USSR in 1989 to 16,120 in 2010; the coal mining town of Shakhtyorsk saw a population decline of 12,945 to 8,382 during these same years. Paichadze, S. (2015). Language, identity, and education issues of ‘repatriates’ from Sakhalin. In *Voices from the shifting Russo-Japanese border : Karafuto/Sakhalin*. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge. 212

transfer to Japan has been expressed with the greatest intensity and consistency.”²⁵³ In surveys undertaken regarding the territorial disputes with Japan over these islands, 85% of Sakhalin residents say they are against any return of territory²⁵⁴ – this is a rate that is higher than the country as a whole. Members of the Sakhalin duma have been active in promoting the inherently Russian nature of the Kurils, and in crusading against omissions or misrepresentations of the islands in Russian maps and state media – such as being left off of meteorological maps on TV, or being absent on maps shown in schools or commercials in other parts of the country. Groups within Sakhalin regularly protest against even the smallest showing of Russian willingness to discuss compromise on territorial disputes. Physical memorials to Russian presence in the Oblast are set up in places like the Kuril Islands, leading to the “...continuity of a Russian presence [being] embedded and inscribed on to the fabric of the islands.”²⁵⁵

Richardson has argued that this represents an identity of “regional exceptionality, which arises to large degree from the elite-led promotion of a distinct, local memory of the settling, claiming, defense, and appropriation this territory.” He has also termed this a “cult of the border,”²⁵⁶ something which arises from the barren landscape and physical signs of the borderland – such as Soviet-era radar complexes, guns, and bunkers, which “...sharply [emphasize] a sense of insecurity brought about by being located at the very edge of the nation.”²⁵⁷ Amano has implied that this sort of insecurity is perhaps especially great for those who live on border islands, a feature he terms “uneasiness,” which stems from “from the bordering / de-bordering / re-bordering process on border islands... The central government can include or exclude the border islands into / from their homeland due to national security and the benefit / cost of rule. The geopolitical strategy of the central government can make border islands a fortress or sacrificial stones defending the mainland.”²⁵⁸ Not only do those on such borderlands, separated from the national whole by watery

²⁵³ Anno, T. (2007). *Peripheral Nationalism in Contemporary Russia: The Case of the Sakhalin Oblast Duma*. In Kimura, H. (ed.). *Russia's Shift Toward Asia*. Tokyo: Sasakawa Peace Foundation. 129

²⁵⁴ This refers to two surveys, one from 1995, and one from 2000, both of which found the same 85% of Sakhalinsky being highly opposed to any return of the islands to Japan, no matter the cost. Richardson, P. (2015). 161

²⁵⁵ Ibid. 161

²⁵⁶ Ibid. 169

²⁵⁷ Ibid

²⁵⁸ Amano, N. (2019). 4.

expanses, have to worry about conquest by other nations – they have to worry about the national center retreating from or handing over their land when holding it is no longer expedient. While this can lead to the desire to exhibit additional displays of nationalism in order to prove one’s membership in the greater nation,²⁵⁹ it in turn brings about friction with the center – in this case, Moscow, as Sakhalinsky elites strain under the burdensome perception of the periphery.

While the Kremlin may think of Sakhalin as a distant, if somewhat important, part of the far-east borderlands, Sakhalinsky identity necessarily centers the island, even if doing so involves fighting back against a sort of frontier cultural cringe. Valerii Goreglyad, Sakhalin representative to the Federal Council in Moscow, made this perspective abundantly clear when speaking at the Russian State Duma in March of 2002: “[Sakhalin] is no kind of periphery, it is the beginning of Russia, it is our eastern outpost...for one it is merely a point on a map, for others it is the Motherland, but for all of us it is part of Russian territory, and I think that all in this hall are united in this.”²⁶⁰

Sakhalinsky “political and intellectual elite” have in fact been openly engaging in the creation of a territorialized identity for the people of Sakhalin which seeks to establish a deep connection to the local past – one which in many ways resembles that previously written of here regarding how the Soviets narrated Sakhalin history. The Japanese and indigenous pasts have been forgotten, except for where they can be skewed and made use of – the Japanese as the villains needed in order to set up local heroes fit for veneration, and the indigenous peoples as adoring *naïves* needful of rescue. Russian connections to Sakhalin and the Kurils have been exaggerated or posited with the purposeful absence of the historical connections of other peoples. Richardson quotes Anthony Smith’s discussion of the development of territorialized identity, saying “...the veneration of an ancestral homeland by the inhabitants and their attachment to its landscape makes a particular stretch of territory seem part of the community’s distinctive character and destiny... without that specific ethnic landscape, the nation would lose much of its meaning and *raison d’être*. As a result every inch of the ancestral homeland must be defended, down to the last barren islands, lest the ‘personality’ and ‘character’ of the nation be impugned.”²⁶¹

²⁵⁹ Amano calls this “peripheral nationalism.” Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Richardson, P. (2015). 165

²⁶¹ Richardson aptly quotes from Smith, A. (1999). Sacred territories and national conflict. *Israel Affairs*, 6(4). 13-31. Indeed, the Israel-Palestine conflict has become

Within the current Sakhalin identity, the Kurils are now indeed these selfsame “barren islands” – this despite the fact that Sakhalin and the Kurils were historically different regions. Richardson also brings to bare Calhoun, discussing the nature of the *post hoc* use of historical figures by the nation to create a national identity – even if the figures used would have had no knowledge or connection the nation, and existed long before such ever existed.²⁶² Wodak also speaks of the importance of creating ties of identity with a past, which itself would find no relationship or similarity with those connecting with it; this is part of the continuum of the evolution of a nation from one thing to another. Agnew, too, discusses this idea, referencing the idea of Greek students refusing to read the Roman-written *Aeneid*, seen as a weak imitation of the original Greek aesthetic – “...the ideal original, of course had to be Greek,” yet, “whether that Greek would recognize himself in modern Greece is, for the nationalist, entirely beside the point.”²⁶³ In a place like Sakhalin, where the vast majority of the people living there are in no way descended or connected with anyone from the islands in its past stages – all of which featured major ruptures which washed away the majority of its populations – this connection can only truly be to the land, and to the events which transpired on it. Sakhalinsky are thus not a people by dint of direct connection to any ancestors, but instead are Sakhalinsky because they exist within the land. As Richardson shows, Sakhalin leaders thus dredge up old documents to prove early Russian exploration of the Kurils (even if Japanese explorers in fact got there first, and even if the no-longer-present Ainu were there long before) and create heroes with which the modern Sakhalinsky can identify.²⁶⁴ Thus, an attachment to a territorialized identity is constructed via a long history, despite the fact that most Sakhalinsky have only lived on the island for several decades at most. In other words, elites must engage in Wodak’s “constructive” mode of identity discourse all over again for new generations living on the island in new eras whose historical breakages have

essentially the prototypical identity-based territorial settler conflict of the modern era, alongside settler conflicts like those of Northern Ireland and South Africa. I would argue that the Sakhalin settler conflict in some way more resembles that of Algeria – but only in that it seems to essentially have ended. In all other aspects, Sakhalin only resembles these particular conflicts in terms of the attachment and significance given to the land by settlers, although Sakhalinsky historically have been portrayed as despising the island they live on.

²⁶² Richardson, P. (2015). 159

²⁶³ Agnew, J. (2004). 234

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

all but separated the denizens of Sakhalin from any actual connection to realities of the local past. In the modern, post-Soviet era, the defense of native Sakhalinsky land in the form of the Kurils has become the impetus for much constructive discourse on local identity, replacing communism and other former modes of identity. In the sense that the Kuril dispute, something which remains an important touchstone for Russo-Japanese relations, remains so tied to Sakhalinsky identity, so too does Sakhalinsky identity transform into something of noteworthiness far beyond the territory on which that identity is lived out.

The issue of what remains of the Karafuto identity is another question entirely. Russian Sakhalin is an active, extant place, evolving and changing every day in the hearts and minds of hundreds of thousands of residents, for whom being Sakhalinsky is a simple reality. Karafuto, however, no longer exists in the physical sense. It is retained only in the minds of the rapidly-disappearing first-generation Karafuto refugees, with some sense of heritage being passed down to diaspora generations.

The very nature of this diaspora is itself worthy of question – this is, after all, a case of an internal diaspora; those who were forced to leave their homes in Karafuto were still Japanese citizens when they arrived in other parts of Japan; they were still part of the ethnic majority. Diaspora itself has been defined as “... a ‘special form’ of transnational ethnic communities marked by a ‘persistent sense’ of belonging among members ‘across borders and generations,’”²⁶⁵ and if we were to take this definition as the totality for our basis of this idea, we could question both the nature of the Karafuto diaspora and whether it could possibly be considered to exist beyond the first generation.²⁶⁶ Yet still, multiple actors exist who

²⁶⁵ Dahlman, C. (2004). Diaspora. In Duncan, J., Johnson, N., and Schein, R. *A Companion to Cultural Geography*. Blackwell Publishing. 485

²⁶⁶ The reality of Japanese diaspora and transnationalism as regards Sakhalin is, of course, much more complex than the realities of the 400,000 who repatriated when Karafuto fell or their descendants. For various reasons – family, health, coercion, happenstance – there were in fact many Japanese citizens who were left on Sakhalin after the final repatriation boats had left in 1949, and they and their descendants entered into a new and complicated series of transnational identities in the Soviet society they suddenly found themselves to be a minority within. With the fall of the Iron Curtain, more of these families – which now often have Korean or Russian members – began to immigrate back to Japan. The complexities of the experiences and identities of 1st, 1.5th, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th generations of these returnees is discussed in detail Paichadze (2015) and is sadly beyond the scope of this writing. Paichadze, S. (2015). 212-231

continue to keep Karafuto alive in the minds of as many Japanese people as will listen, to advocate for the preservation of memory; and, indeed, there are even those who openly seek to reclaim Karafuto as an integral part of Japan, both physically and in the imagined container of what Japanese consider to be their homeland.

Following the collapse of Karafuto, the former population of the now-defunct prefecture began the long process of repatriation to the Japanese mainland. Overall, this process took four years, with the remaining Japanese population of nearly 300,000 leaving piecemeal, being slowly allowed back to Japan on daily ferries plying the La Pérouse Strait.²⁶⁷ As Japanese society on what had once been Karafuto dissipated person-by-person, back on the homeland, former residents had to confront the realities of being part of one of the largest forced migrations in human history, as the 6.9 million Japanese living in the empire's former colonies and occupied territories left their old lives behind and attempted to make their way to Japan. *Karafuto-jin* became just one just among a numerous diaspora groups of lost empire, collectively known as *bikiagesha* (引揚者, returnees), who represented a massive 9% of the Japanese population of that era.²⁶⁸ Their identities would be complicated by the complete physical loss of their homes and the society which they had helped build or had been born into, as well as by the nature of the times; as a whole, Japan was initially eager to ignore the pain, and indeed shame, which came with reflecting on the huge empire it had lost.²⁶⁹

The majority of the Karafuto *bikiagesha* found refuge in Hokkaido, an island physically, culturally, and historically linked with Sakhalin, and which lies only 26 miles to its south. Between December 1946 and 1949, 279,356 *Karafuto-jin* repatriated to Japan – which individuals were allowed to repatriate first tended to rely on how useful the Soviet occupiers thought an individual's labor would be to the newly-occupied region.²⁷⁰ By August, 1950, a total of 268,417 Karafuto repatriates were living in Hokkaido –

²⁶⁷ Around a quarter of the population managed to flee the island before and during the Soviet invasion, including 24,000 *Karafuto-jin* who are believed to have “escaped” the island during the initial months of Soviet occupation. This proved invaluable for assisting the remaining refugees in the coming years, as many repatriate groups created to assist Karafuto *bikiagesha* already existed on Hokkaido when Soviets began allowing repatriation in December 1946. Bull, J. (2015). 66

²⁶⁸ Ibid. 63

²⁶⁹ “For Japanese society as a whole, colonial memories were ‘an unwelcome reminder of the past.’” Seaton, P. and Paichadze, S. (2015). 11

²⁷⁰ Bull, J. (2015). 67.

representing more than 6% of Hokkaido's then-population of 4.3 million people. Eventually, two-thirds of the former Japanese population of Karafuto ended up calling Hokkaido home – enough that Seaton has termed Hokkaido the “de facto ‘proxy site of memory’” for the lost prefecture.²⁷¹ Representing these refugees were a wide variety of “repatriate groups” – 92 such distinct groups had already been founded by the time the first repatriation boats reached Hakodate in late 1946.²⁷² Repatriate groups proved invaluable for returnees, most of whom faced extreme financial burdens upon arrival to Japan – the majority had to leave almost all their material good and wealth behind in Sakhalin.²⁷³ These groups were often led by former leaders and men of privilege from Karafuto communities, who found new ways to consolidate their former prestige in this new era via the repatriate groups. They sought out aid and attention from the Hokkaido government, while a younger generation of Karafuto leaders – those who had been born in the now-lost territory – organized talks and meetings for refugees.²⁷⁴ Groups even attempted to form “Karafuto Villages” where refugees could re-create their former society on Hokkaido, although this never came to pass. Discourse over the need for such new locales founded on lost identities focused on such ideas as “loss of home-place,” “building a second home in Hokkaido,” and also spoke of the “Karafuto repatriate community;” already, a new imagined identity as “Karafuto repatriate” was coming into being. One such group pushing these ideas was the “Born in Karafuto Group” (樺太生まれの会), created to assist those refugees who had now lost the home to which they had been born and raised. The language used by these groups in newsletters, talks, essays, and more helped establish what Bull has called an “idealized Karafuto.” Karafuto-born writer Arazawa Katsutaro spoke of “reviving the will of Karafuto” for the benefit of Hokkaido prefecture, even writing in 1947 that “I want to return to Karafuto. Although the land has changed to

²⁷¹ Seaton has also written about how Hokkaido had already once been site of this same sort of identity proxy, when a large portion of the Sakhalin Ainu population had moved to Tsuishikari in 1875. He defines such “proxy” sites of memory as “a site of memory created in the next-best meaningful location rather than the preferred site of memory, which cannot be used freely by the community wanting to commemorate the past.” Seaton, P. (2015). 119, 121

²⁷² Bull, J. (2015). 69

²⁷³ Tonai, Y. (2015). 95

²⁷⁴ Bull, J. (2015). 70

a Soviet name, for me no matter what anyone says, it is my birthplace in this world.”²⁷⁵

Such discourse must have been effective, as Karafuto refugees managed to carve out an identity which seems to have lacked the stigma of those repatriating from more culturally-dissimilar colonies. This was represented in a message received by Orito Soichi, head of the Alliance of Karafuto Repatriate Groups, from an Hokkaido Prefectural Government official: “As for Karafuto, [the Hokkaido Government] does not think of [repatriates] as strangers, [but rather] fully understand their position is different from Manchurian settlers.”²⁷⁶ This allowed Karafuto refugees to create an identity somewhat divorced from now-disgraced colonial imagery; their identity was further strengthened by active newsletters circulated among the diaspora community, where Karafuto thought-leaders and average people alike shared their opinions, reminiscences, and plans for the future. Such modes of discourse allowed for “...the men of influence who took the lead role in repatriate groups to build upon their ideas of who a Karafuto repatriate was and what ‘Karafuto’ been like.” As a result, by the 1970s – when there was a boom in memoirs written by people who had called former colonies home – the post-facto Karafuto identity had already been fairly solidified.²⁷⁷

While Japan renounced all claims to southern Sakhalin in 1956 as a prerequisite of the October 19th Soviet-Japanese Peace Declaration, the government still asserts that the actual legal status of the island – now in Russian hands for three-fourths of a century – has not yet been confirmed.²⁷⁸ This is not necessarily a sign that the government of Japan has any actual hope to reestablish Karafuto; rather, it may be assumed that this is simply a way of leaving some negotiating chips on the table in order to seek the return of the southern Kurile islands (still claimed by Japan but occupied by Russia). Nonetheless, this has allowed a certain amount of irredentists to cling to the idea of retaking the short-lived prefecture. Many of these are far-right fringe activists who still honor the memory of Japanese empire, such as the late Akao Bin (1899-1990). However, better-established organizations which directly focus on the welfare and continued memory of *Karafuto-jin* also continue to assert Japanese rights to the former colony. These include the *Zenkoku Karafuto Renmei* (National Karafuto League), an important repatriate organization once run by the former

²⁷⁵ Ibid. 71-73

²⁷⁶ Ibid. 74

²⁷⁷ Ibid. 77

²⁷⁸ Stephan, J. (1971). 172.

Karafuto chief of police. The League had a subsidy known as the *Minami Karafuto Henkan Kisei Domei* (Alliance for the Realization of the Return of Southern Sakhalin). These irredentist desires were quickly co-opted by the Japanese Right, which created an environment wherein Karafuto identity and nostalgia were weaponized as a justifying dialectal in the Cold War struggle. According to Morris-Suzuki, “[t]his politicization of memory left rather little space for the expression of identities that did not conveniently fit into the formats of Cold War rhetoric.”²⁷⁹ In an interview with John J. Stephan in 1970, the director of the League asserted that “Japan will not rest until southern Sakhalin has been regained, even if it takes 500 years.”²⁸⁰ Of course, 50 years – or one tenth of the timeframe attested – have since passed, and the furor for the return of Karafuto has already died down – especially as the Japanese government has now *de-facto* recognized Russian ownership of the territory of the former Karafuto Prefecture by opening an official consulate in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk.²⁸¹

The League helps to collect documentation about Karafuto in order to keep its identity alive; more than that, it has also played a major role in establishing just what exactly Karafuto identity even was to begin with. It became an important factor as to why, as recently as 1998, Sevela described Karafuto memory as “...kept alive in contemporary Japan to an extraordinary extent.” She described the activities and scope of the group, saying, “*Karafuto Renmei*, the Union of former residents of Karafuto, counts over 6,000 members and has thirty-six branches all over Japan. The typical member's age is between seventy and seventy-five. A special members' directory provides not only personal data, but the name of the person's 'home' town or village in Karafuto. *Karafuto Renmei* publishes a monthly newsletter, re-prints old books on Karafuto, organizes trips to Sakhalin and holds an annual commemoration -- Karafuto Day -- on August 23rd, the official date of the Soviet occupation of Karafuto, alternately in Tokyo and Sapporo. The commemoration includes a Shinto memorial ceremony and a luncheon in a luxurious hotel, where people are seated according to their place of origin. Lunch is accompanied by nostalgic, tearful speeches, Banzai eruptions and the cry: 'Never forget Karafuto!'"²⁸²

²⁷⁹ Morris-Suzuki. (2000). 667

²⁸⁰ Quote is a rephrasing written by Stephan. Ibid. 173.

²⁸¹ This consulate was first opened in December, 1997 as a branch of the Khabarovsk Japanese Consulate General, and in 2001 was upgraded into a full consulate. Vassiliouk, S. (2012). 24

²⁸² Sevela, M. (1998).

Hundreds of other associations existed to unite diaspora *Karafuto-jin* and assist in their continued connection, including such associations founded in the name of every former municipality and former school in the lost prefecture. What's more, "...the relatives of the victims who were on one of the three ships torpedoed by the Russians have an association, as do the prisoners of war who were kept for several years in a camp in Okha (North Sakhalin). Yet another is busy arranging trips to Japan for those few Japanese who still live on Sakhalin today. Each of these associations has an annual meeting for its members."

Hokkaido remains the most important site of continued Karafuto identity; the site of most of the aforementioned "de facto proxy sites of memory." The prefectural government, which was so active in finding housing and aid for Karafuto refugees and in interacting with repatriate groups, has taken on the responsibility for official commemorations regarding Karafuto.²⁸³ By doing so, the prefectural government has been directly involved in the continued existence of Karafuto identity within the minds of the modern people of Hokkaido. One such commemorative site is the exhibit of Karafuto featured at the famous Aka Renga ("Red Bricks") building in Sapporo, which are an updated version of a separate exhibit first opened in 1992. The exhibit is framed entirely around a specific Japanese-oriented history of Karafuto, beginning in 1604 and ending in 1945. Indigenous history, older Chinese ties to Sakhalin, and the Russian penal colony era are notably absent in this portrayal of "Japanese" Sakhalin. It presents Karafuto identity as one that flourished via the effort of bold frontier settlers, but was then subject to wartime brutalization during the Soviet invasion, and then extreme hardship as the result of forced diaspora. As Seaton explains, the narrative here pointedly ignores the colonial, extractive nature of Karafuto, nor any of the context in which the colony was created and ceased to be – rather, it focuses on a common form of history often found in Japanese memorials related to WWII: a victim's history. Seaton remarks that this narrative framing "...clearly represents...special interests," namely those of the National Karafuto League, which assisted the prefectural government in the creation of the exhibit.²⁸⁴ Here we see how identity continues to be created and reinforced by state-created dialecticals. It also establishes how, in some ways, the Karafuto identity as it still exists and is expressed by groups like the National Karafuto League is still one that perpetuates colonial ideas, and which makes little room for Ainu, Nivkh, or Uilta. In other words, even

²⁸³ Seaton, P. (2015). 122

²⁸⁴ Ibid. 124

after the prefecture itself is no more, identity creation for Karafuto continues to stress what Wodak terms “the discourse of sameness.”²⁸⁵

To read Seaton, it would seem that the whole of Wakkanai, where Sakhalin is so close as to be visible, and the most northern city in Japan and primary site of historical contact between Japan and Sakhalin, has essentially been given over to “proxy sites of memory” which continue to create Japanese associations with the former colony. City museum focus on Karafuto rather than Wakkanai itself; memorials to the lost colony dot the city parks. One statue located at Cape Soya, closest to Sakhalin, features explorer Mamiya Rinzo gazing across to the island he explored and mapped for the Shogunate; another portrays a Karafuto refugee woman, wailing, her back to the island. For Seaton, these two statues “...encapsulate two elements of the dominant narrative of Karafuto: leaving hopeful and determined, but returning in despair and anguish.”²⁸⁶

Beyond the aspirations of the organizations representing actual former *Karafuto-jin* themselves, the identity of Karafuto does seem to reflect these ideas: spirited conquest and frontiersmanship, followed by victimhood and loss. This is despite there having been a great deal of infighting within the diaspora community in the first decades of separation from Karafuto over what the primary narratives of the lost colony truly meant; for some time, repatriate newsletters hosted essays taking aim at corrupt and incompetent colonial leadership.²⁸⁷ Indeed, perhaps the most famous story from the Soviet invasion – that of the suicide of nine young female telephone operators in Maoka, who took their own lives rather than be taken prisoner by the Soviets – was itself a matter of contentious discourse regarding the event’s true meaning. Was it a sign of the dedication *Karafuto-jin* had towards the emperor? Was it proof of the cruelty and unjust nature of the encroaching Soviets? Or was it a potent sign of the negligence of Japanese imperial fervor, of a system and ethos of absolute nationalism which had driven young women to suicide who ought to have lived, had they not been indoctrinated with destructive propaganda?

Seaton, though, has explained how such narrative disputes within the Karafuto repatriate community have been whittled down to mere stories of frontier success followed by victimhood. “When collective memories become contested within a community...official narratives gravitate towards the lowest common denominator, of the elements on

²⁸⁵ Wodak, R., De Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., Liebhart, K., Hirsch, A., Mitten, R., & Unger, J. (2009). 186

²⁸⁶ Ibid. 133

²⁸⁷ Bull, J. (2015). 75

which most people can agree. Suffering and loss are typically sentiments that will forge unity within a community; debates over responsibility, by contrast, have the power to divide.”²⁸⁸ Indeed, this can be used to represent so much more than Karafuto identity – much of the presentation of Japanese war memory within Japan follows this same pattern; victimhood, the pain and loss of war, the hope to avoid such pain being caused again. Responsibility or additional complexity, however, is largely ignored.

So, where do these two modern identities – extant and geographically grounded Russian Sakhalin identity and dissipating, diaspora Karafuto identities meet? In the first few years of Soviet rule in south Sakhalin, *Karafuto-jin* and Soviets had ample opportunity to interact; after all, newly-arrived Soviet settlers were often placed in Japanese houses where *Karafuto-jin* families, non-yet repatriated, still lived. Despite the remarkable and difficult nature of these times, it seems that *Karafuto-jin* themselves often held little ill-will towards their Russian neighbors or cohabitants. This seems to have come from the bedraggled, war-weary nature of the invading conquerors, whom the *Karafuto-jin* often noted as wearing oddly-mixed clothing made up of parts of uniforms matched with stolen Japanese garments. One diasporic *Karafuto-jin* told Sevela: “How could you fear or respect such an enemy? They were poor, dirty, illiterate -- beasts, in one word, but they weren't mean.” Sevela went on to comment on the impression this left on *Karafuto-jin*, affecting their continued consideration of those who came to take their home: “...this apparent contempt towards the Russians was strongly interlaced with a feeling of sympathy or even attachment to this ‘white but poor enemy’. Unlike the Americans, they were socially inferior and, therefore, pitiful and even likeable. Russian military were often mentioned with fondness. ‘They were good, simple people. We made friends and were sorry to part with them’ -- was a common comment.”²⁸⁹

Yet, with the waves of repatriation across the Iron Curtain from 1946-1949, any such relationships as existed between the disappearing people of Karafuto and the ascendant Sakhalin Oblast ceased. Once in re-settled in Japan, the narrow Soya Straits became an unpassable border, as difficult to cross in body or word as an endless sea. Each identity would have to exist separately.

However, with perestroika, followed by the fall of the Iron Curtain, these former identities and the people associated with them are

²⁸⁸ Seaton. (2015). 134.

²⁸⁹ Sevela, M. (1998).

having more chances than ever to interact. Indeed, for the years 1998 to 2011, Japanese visitors represented 90.5% of all tourists to Sakhalin, with 80% of these estimated to be members of tour groups of former *Karafuto-jin* visiting their lost home.²⁹⁰ Repatriate groups have coordinated with Sakhalin municipalities to erect memorials to Japanese dead in former Japanese towns on the island, which have become sites of pilgrimage for former Japanese residents.²⁹¹ In more recent years, the number of visiting diaspora *Karafuto-jin* has been seeing a rapid decline – simply put, the generation who lived within the prefecture are becoming too old, too infirm, or have already left our mortal plane behind. Without the Japanese tour groups ranging through the desolate absence of their former homes, the sense within Sakhalin that they ever existed at all may fade away – after all, as we have discussed, the erasure of any Sakhalin past besides that of Russia has been paramount in the creation of the modern Sakhalinsky identity.

The *Karafuto Renmei*, perhaps the single more significant bearer of Karafuto memory and identity, has seen its influence and membership steadily decrease alongside the loss of the Karafuto diaspora itself; while it was one of the most important special interest groups lobbying the Japanese government regarding the northern territorial issues for decades following the war, the 1997 de-facto recognition of Russian ownership of Sakhalin also took some wind out of the League's political sails. Despite dwindling membership, the League still has as its goals: “(1) fostering “Karafuto Family” ties in Japan and Sakhalin by maintaining cultural and sister-cities ties with Sakhalin Region; (2) conducting and supporting research and education activities concerning Karafuto; (3) raising awareness about Karafuto by establishing museums in Japan and installing memorials in former Karafuto's major cities (currently there are 16 memorials that were all paid for, and installed by, the Karafuto Renmei and its affiliated

²⁹⁰ The 80% here is a rough estimation given by the head of a tour company based out of Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk. He noted that Japanese tourists had been declining in recent years, as *Karafuto-jin* aged and passed away. Miyashita, M. (2015). Homecoming visits to Karafuto: How is home (*furasato*) reconstructed after a long absence? In *Voices from the shifting Russo-Japanese border : Karafuto/Sakhalin*. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge. 141

²⁹¹ As Seaton has said, most memorials to Japanese histories on Sakhalin can only be made if they openly stand for peace and cooperation between Russia and Japan. As such, the graveside memorial for the former Japanese town of Esutoro states that it was “...erected in the hope of comforting the souls resting here and of maintaining lasting peace and friendly relations between the two countries.” It makes no reference to the nationality or nature of said souls. Ibid. 148

organizations).”²⁹² It continues to attempt to create ties between Sakhalin and its Japanese diaspora, even as that diaspora ceases to be active.

Connections between Japan and Sakhalin, however, continue to be stronger than at any time previous to the fall of the Iron Curtain. Fishing vessels ply the seas between Hokkaido and Sakhalin, and goods such as car parts are shipped between the two island. Famously, Japan has also been involved in the development of oil and gas on Sakhalin, specifically with the Sakhalin-I and Sakhalin-II projects. Russia has been more active in attempting to nationalize these projects, however,²⁹³ so the interplay between Japanese and Russians in these Sakhalin-based extractive enterprises may not offer that long-lasting or deep of a connection.

Perhaps the most illustrative example of Karafuto and Sakhalin re-encountering one-another came in 1998, as the local governments of neighboring Sakhalin Oblast and Hokkaido Prefecture concluded an agreement to develop and promote cultural and economic ties. The governor of Hokkaido, Hori Tatsuya, set off to Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk in order to sign the agreement. For Hori, this was a sort of homecoming; he had, in fact, been born in Tomakishi Village (modern Vakhrushev), on the colony of Karafuto.²⁹⁴ As he alighted onto the island to carry out an act that would draw Sakhalin and Hokkaido closer, he was returning to what was once his home – his *kokyo* – for the first time since the Iron Curtain had cut off Sakhalin and Japan from each other for so many decades. Hori was able to go home, if only briefly; Sakhalin and Hokkaido are indeed being drawn closer together. Yet as territorialized nationalism from the Northern Territories dispute continues to fester, and the living memory of Karafuto held by those such as Hori disappears, such interactions between the Karafuto and Sakhalin identities may indeed become lost to time.

²⁹² Vassiliouk, S. (2012). 25

²⁹³ Bradshaw, M. (2006). Battle for Sakhalin. *The World Today*, 62(11). 18-19

²⁹⁴ Irish, A. B. (2009). 282

Conclusion

The defining features of Sakhalin history are also those which have defined its varied identities, outwards-inwards and self-personified; mass territorial shifts, unsteadiness, colonial condescension, coercion, breakages with the past, the “cult of the border,” and the struggle of the periphery vs. the center. The constant shifts in population, the blossoming and constricting of national enterprise, and the rise and fall of empire have conspired to create a region in which the only people who have a true claim to deep historical continuity are the numerically small indigenous peoples; even they, however, have faced extreme breakages with their pasts and communal knowledge as the result of colonial mandates and interference (although it must be remarked that many indigenous individuals have been active actors within the varied periods of foreign rule). As Seaton and Paichadze say, “in short, none of the indigenous people groups escaped the pernicious influences of empire.”²⁹⁵

These themes of constant breakages and discontinuities, however, remain true for all the peoples who have called Sakhalin home. Grant, writing about the Nivkh, displays the way in which ruptures of identity are a common theme amongst all on Sakhalin: “The Sakhalin island of Nivkh history, littered with ghost towns, suffered no shortage of ruins either literal or metaphorical - Nivkh ruins, Russian ruins, Korean ruins, Japanese ruins, ruins of culture and ruins of time, ruins of politics and ruined lands, ruined individuals.”²⁹⁶

The Japanese ruins and the Ainu ruins remain the most invisible on the island itself, willfully forgotten and erased by both Soviets and the Russian Federation. For Morris-Suzuki, the legacy of the Karafuto self-perceived identity is one of “the pain of uprooted belonging and superimposed identities” for all those who called (or where forced to call) the colony home. “For the indigenous people of southern Sakhalin, for conscript laborers from Korea, and even for the children of migrant workers from the Naichi, the problem was generally not just one of concealing their ‘true’ loyalties being a politically expedient disguise, but rather the endless task of living life amidst conflicting narratives of homeland, nation, and progress, which pulled in divergent directions at their sense of truth itself.” This applied to settlers who had arrived from Japan by choice, and who sought to create a new Karafuto identity, just as it did for those who were only “Karafutoan” in the sense that a border had

²⁹⁵ Seaton, P. and Paichadze, S. (2015). 6

²⁹⁶ Grant, B. (1995). 158

shifted under them, or that they had been coerced into moving to the island. “Indigenous communities and Korean conscript worker confronted this problem in the immediate and violent form of forced resettlement and suppression of their native language, yet for other Karafuto migrant workers too, this colonization of the mind had consequences which lasted beyond the end of the Pacific War.”²⁹⁷

Each identity on the island has necessitated the erasure of those that came before; imperial Japanese and Russians erased the indigenous people’s right as master of their own fate and disincluded them from any identity of citizenship; the *Karafuto-jin* identity ignored the Koreans forced to be in their midst, while in the breakdown at the end of WWII, the Japanese government erased the citizenship of these colonial subjects of empire, abandoning them to exile on an island they’d never meant to live on. Soviets and Russians, in turn, erased the identity of Sakhalin as ever having been Japanese. This need to restart the narrative and recreate identity with each border shift and collapse is reflected in this quote by Sevela: “...for the Japanese residents of Karafuto, the Russian presence on the island before the Russo-Japanese War of 1904 was just as remote and insignificant as is the Japanese presence for those Russians born on Sakhalin since 1945. For both peoples, the history of the island started with them.”²⁹⁸

Border-shifts have defined Sakhalin, and yet even without a shift in border around the island, identities have been displaced. In the post-Soviet period, starting in 1991, we have seen a major rupture in self-personified identity within Russia as a whole, and no less so than in the impoverished and distant mining, fishing, oil producing, and manufacturing towns of Sakhalin. Now bereft of the guiding purpose of Communism, Sakhalinsky elites have had to increasingly rely upon nationalistic constructive and justificationary modes of identity discourse; they use words to pit the Japanese other, who wishes to encroach on “native” Russian land via territorial treaties, against the just Russian claim to a land for which they produce and reproduce historical ties. Governmental and political elites attempt to create and sustain a local identity which feels itself deeply rooted in the space of Sakhalin – connected to Russian explorers and settlers like Atlesov, Nevelskoy, and Korsokov, even when the reality of the Sakhalinsky population is often at odds with these ideas of deep historical connectedness. For many Sakhalinsky, this is an effective mode of discourse, creating a local population which is more defensive of Russian territorial

²⁹⁷ Morris-Suzuki, T. (2000). 665

²⁹⁸ Sevela, M. (1998).

claims than the country is as a whole, and which is often willing to counter the will of the federal government in the distant Moscow center.

The Sakhalinsky embrace of a territorially local variant of nationalism in this post-ideological world calls to mind the words of John Dunn, who wrote that nationalism is "...the very tissue of modern political sentiment, the most widespread, the most unthinking and the most immediate political disposition of all at least among the literate populations of the modern world."²⁹⁹ Local nationalism gives meaning to a precarious and often bleak world in a way that weak neoliberal capitalism alone cannot in such economically uncertain locales as Sakhalin, since capitalism cannot provide for "...the lethal combination of identity and interests fused with territory that nationalism encouraged."³⁰⁰ As Paasi has said, regional identity is often especially actionable for reactionary movements. That this degree of local nationalism, rather than creating a unifying "we Russians" feeling between Sakhalinsky and the mainland, instead often puts them at odds with the center, echoes Chekhov's observations of the ways in which convicts on Sakhalin viewed mainland, European Russia as a land apart. Despite the incredible advances in communication, connectivity, and transportation since the dark days of the imperial convict colony period, the effect of existence on the periphery continues to create identities which stand in opposition and alienation from the center. This is something that remains worthy of attention; as White says, "...regional relationships can become quite volatile when some regional identities assert their agenda and try to make them the national agenda,"³⁰¹ as has been the case with Sakhalinsky elites and activists within the territorialized issue of the Kurils.

As for the issue of the lost Karafuto Prefecture, its history and the memories of those who once called it home will retain some importance within Japan. As long as repatriate groups, such as the *Zenkoku Karafuto Renmei*, remain, even as membership diminishes, the issue will continue to be brought up in spaces of national memory (such as the exhibit in the Aka Renga building in Sapporo) and will be used for the furtherance of various political goals. The nature of the former Karafuto as a legally-decided-upon space will continue to be a card to be used by the Japanese when the time arises. However, as the generation of *Karafuto-jin* who actually lived on the colony disappears into the mists of time, the question of diaspora

²⁹⁹ Dunn, J. (1979). *Western Political Theory in the Face of the Future*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 55

³⁰⁰ Agnew, J. (2004). 226

³⁰¹ White, G. (2000). *Nationalism and Territory: Constructing Group Identity in Southeastern Europe*. Rowman & Littlefield. 61

transnationalism will, most likely, subside. After all, if transnationalism is “...a condition in which somewhat regularized nongovernmental transborder relations persist among individuals who share a common culture and historical memory, a common experience of dispersal from and loss of a homeland, and a desire to symbolically maintain, or physically return to, that homeland,”³⁰² one must wonder if such feelings will continue to exist for the grandchildren of grandparents who once lived on a now long-lost settler colony. Enmeshed in a numerically, economically, and culturally powerful nation in which they are simply part of the ethnic and linguistic majority, colonial memories and identities from generations past may well fade away. What, then, will become of the Karafuto identity? – something which will no longer be self-perceived, but rather something simply enshrined within the palace of national memory.

In the abstract for this writing, we encountered this quote from a Russian administrator in Sakhalin: “Moscow and Tokyo are far away, while Sakhalin and Hokkaido are very close.” This remains true, both in the geographical sense, and, since the early 1990s, increasingly in terms of local interactions via trade and cross-border governmental and touristic interaction. Yet, as Karafuto memory drifts away, it may come to be that the remembrance of lost empire exists only within the space of re-created narratives of nationalistic localized identities, holding on to ruined or vainglorious pasts, waiting to be supplanted by the next wave of discourse on a settler island frontier.

³⁰² Dahlman, C. (2004). 486

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