
UNIT 7 OTHER VOICES: OPPOSITION TO MEIJI POLICIES

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7.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you shall be able to understand:

- the impact of modernity of Meiji period and resistance to some authoritarian ideas of Meiji period,
- the critical voices which opposed Meiji policies and programmes,
- the role of Tanka Shozo and Hisabestu Buraku's ideas in this articulation of resistance, and
- the predicament of Ainu.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The policies of the Meiji government were based on a top down programme of transforming the country into an industrial nation-state, a constitutional monarchy based on European models. Japan's path to becoming modern is often presented as a triumphal march without any debate or contestation. In fact there were many hotly debated issues, views and policies about the direction the country would take. In this Unit we will look at some of these critical voices.

We will look at a few individuals who were critical of the Meiji governments authoritarian policies, such as Tanaka Shozo (1841-1913), Kotoku Shusui (1871-1911), and Minakata Kumagusu (1867-1941), who from their different perspectives offered alternative perspectives.

We will look at how minorities reacted to the transformation in Japan, especially the reactions of the Ainu, the indigenous inhabitants, who lived in the northern island of Hokkaido, the Okinawans, whose islands were separated from the main islands, and the socially outcaste groups known as the 'hisabtsu buraku'. Looking at the Japan's path to modernity from these different perspectives helps us to understand how countries have modernised and the way minorities and other marginalised groups been made into 'nationals'.

7.2 TANAKA SHOZO: DEMOCRACY AND PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

In the Meiji period, as Japan was 'modernising', a former village headman Tanaka Shozo emerged as the leader of a movement to stop the pollution of the Watarase and Tone rivers by the Ashio copper mine. This movement brought together a wide range of social activists, peasants, farmers, journalists, teachers, socialists, Christians and Buddhists. The area was close to Tokyo so the movement gathered support from the urban intelligentsia and was widely reported in the press.

Tanaka is many ways an heir to the same critical tradition that shaped Ando Shoeki, as he draws both on popular traditions and a world of thinking that was shaped by moral objectives. His thinking was also shaped by Christianity and constitutionalism. Tanaka Shozo posed an early challenge to the Meiji state's drive to modernize the economy and society, a drive that began to create environmental destruction and restrict political freedom.

Tanaka Shozo was elected to the first Diet where he took up the constitutional struggle to use democracy to empower the people and ensure that public policies were for the benefit of the people. Tanaka strived to realize a strong sense of pluralism to preserve community and environment even as capitalist forces of production were working to transform the economic and social landscape.

7.2.1 Ashio Copper Mines: Modern Industry and Pollution

The Ashio copper mines in the prefecture of Tochigi, north of Tokyo, were functioning from the early Tokugawa period but in the early Meiji, with the discovery of rich veins of copper and the introduction of new technologies, their output began to increase dramatically. The mines employed what were then the latest technologies available. By 1885 the mines effluents had begun to poison the fish in the Watarase and Tone rivers and within a few years protests began. By 1890, as the presence of copper in the fields was confirmed, the protests grew. In 1896 major floods spread the pollution to a wider area and the contamination caused by the mines became a national issue.

On one side was the Meiji government backing the owner of the mines Furukawa Ichibei (1832-1903). The government sought to protect the functioning of the mines arguing that they were private property and the government could not interfere in their operation but, faced with the growing numbers of protestors,

the officials switched their stand and began to put in place policies to manage the natural environment and prevent flooding.

Japan had developed sophisticated river management techniques. The practice was to allow the rivers to overflow. The occasional floods were controlled by levees at the lower reaches but now government policy was premised on the idea of controlling the river and preventing any flooding. This shift underlined a major change in thinking, the objective now was the control of nature on a national scale.

The flood control policy led to the building of major flood control systems and as Robert Stolz writes, “By its completion in 1930 Japan had constructed 186 linear kilometers of high-water levees and displaced 220 million cubic meters of earth — by contrast the contemporary Panama Canal displaced 180 million cubic meters.” Was this policy effective in stopping environmental pollution? Tanaka Shozo argued that this was not the case, in fact he underlined the fact that the problem had been further aggravated.

7.2.2 Tanaka and the People’s Rights Movement

Tanaka Shozo, who came from a rural elite background was influenced by the democratic movement for civil liberties, the Peoples Rights movement of the early Meiji. He played an active role as a member of the Progressive Party (Kaishinto) and as a journalist and editor of the local newspaper, The Tochigi News. The movement for civil liberties drew inspiration from the ideas of thinkers such as Rousseau and J.S. Mill, the practice of constitutional government in Western countries, as well as on the popular traditions of peasant protest, to argue for a constitutional government for Japan. The movement brought together differing perceptions but the activists were united in that they opposed the Meiji governments idea of constitutionalism. In 1890 Tanaka Shozo won a seat in the first national election to the Diet in 1890.

Tanaka brought his intimate knowledge of the region and environment as well as his readings of the new Western learning to think about the problems that the people were facing. He was familiar with some of the major European writers and read Rousseau as well as writings of the Quackers. He became a Christian but continued to maintain his connections with the Buddhists, many of whom would be involved in his movement. Local meetings were usually held in the Buddhist temples of the area. The basic principle that Shozo and his movement was motivated by was that the people were the active agents of change and to realize this the people must, first, be made aware of government policies.

The government enacted the River Law in 1896 based on the idea of control and creating the orderly flow of rivers. Tanaka focused his criticism on this law as it represented what he thought was fundamentally wrong with the premises of government policies. Tanaka was inspired by the eighteenth century idea of the eternal motion of material energy. He argued that nature was marked by movement or flow (nagare) but to this he added the idea of ‘poison’ (doku). The policies of controlling the natural ‘flow’ would result in a harmful ‘backflow’ (gyakryu). The toxicity so created would gradually accumulate and build up and flow back into the system. Toxic substances once they entered a natural system would not be gradually dissipated rather they would flow within and gradually render the whole system toxic.

In today's terminology this would be called 'ecocide'. So the policies of controlling nature by stopping or obstructing the flow of nature were responsible for creating famines and floods. Control, management, or addressing issues in isolation and in a piecemeal fashion would not resolve the problems but merely postpone them. It was necessary to address the fundamental approach of the government's centralized decision-making plan of industrialization.

The pollution of the Watarase and Tone rivers was destroying the fauna and their habitat and, in turn, this pollution contaminated the rice fields. This cycle of destruction was the logical result of the misguided policies of the government that justified them as modern development.

7.2.3 Yanaka and the One Tsubo Movement

To highlight his opposition in 1904 Tanaka Shozo moved to the village of Yanaka, which was to be flooded to make place for a reservoir. He and other activists bought token pieces of land, and so the movement was called the 'one tsubo movement' (1 tsubo = 3.3 m²). Yanaka became a symbol of the devastation caused by the governments' policies and the people's resistance to these policies.

The Yanaka based movement gave birth to what Tanaka Shozo called Yanakagaku, or Yanaka-ology, an alternative form of knowledge that would focus on ways to to nurture flow rather than the creation of poison. By buying a small piece of land the activists sought to thwart the state's claim that it could take over lands in the national interest. Between 1904-1910 the new 'villagers' of Yanaka had to fight against repeated demolitions of their village by the government. Even as the people were sent off as soldiers to fight wars for the state (1904-5 the Russo-Japanese war) and build its colonial empire the people's lands were being taken over and their livelihoods destroyed.

Tanaka's appeal is perhaps best expressed in his declaration in 1912 when he wrote "We have a constitution. Unfortunately this constitution is based on [narrow] Japanese principles, not on universal [natural] principles (*hiroki kempo, uchuteki kempo*). As such, even if Japan were to die, we are under no obligation to die with it." Shozo's ideas and his struggles place him in a powerful and vital tradition within Japan but his thinking also finds resonance in other parts where people struggled with similar issues.

Tanaka Shozo's ideas and struggle recall what Gandhi (1869-1948) was doing in India. Gandhi also sought to address the problems of social and political development within an over-arching moral and ethical framework.

7.3 BRIDGING THE SECULAR AND THE RELIGIOUS

Minakata Kumagusu, naturalist, botanist, anthropologist and early environmental activist sought to link protection of the environment with democracy and spiritual traditions. His questioning of Western science through what Tsurumi Kazuko, called the Minakata mandala provides a way to see how Minakata, drawing on Buddhist ideas of inter-dependence, questions the widely influential evolutionism of Herbert Spencer and Western science and offers an alternative world view. Minakata's fight was against the governments' policies of unifying Shinto shrines,

a policy he called 'iegoroshi' or 'killing the home'. Minakata's ideas built on ideas from Japan and Asia's past to seek a way to counter the social alienation and economic destruction that marked the European project of modernity.

Minakata Kumagusu does not fit the typical image of the successful Meiji intellectual in his personal trajectory or in his intellectual concerns. Minakata differed from his contemporaries in three important ways. Firstly, unlike like many of his compatriots though he went abroad to study getting a degree was never important it was the search for knowledge that was a lifelong concern. He lived for six years in the U.S and traveled to the West Indies and Cuba, Venezuela, Haiti and Panama during that period. He spent eight years in England establishing his reputation with the publication of an article "The Constellations in the Far East" in *Nature*, a reputed science magazine. In England he became friends with influential intellectuals and activists such as Sun Yatsen, who would go on to become the Premier of China after the republican revolution of 1911.

His writings, as a scientist and a comparative folklorist, brought him recognition within the English speaking intellectual world. His large library held books on science, archaeology, folklore, religion and history and many annotated in a variety of languages. Most intellectuals in the English speaking world would have been familiar with the books in his library. He came into contact not only with English intellectuals but also with nationalists and revolutionary exiles from India, China, and other parts of the colonial world who gathered in London. Minakata's thinking was thus shaped not just by the concerns and debates within Japan but equally by his interactions with people across the globe. This was something he shared with many anti-colonial intellectuals.

Secondly, Minakata differed from many of his famous contemporaries in that his life was not driven by the idea of 'rising in the world' (risshin shusei). Meiji Japan was marked by making 'worldly success' important. This meant getting the right degree, making a career, either in the bureaucracy or industry, and contributing to making 'modern' Japan a 'rich country with a strong army' (fukoku kyohei).

Minakata was a trained scientist who worked as a naturalist discovering mycetezoa (nenkin) but he was above all concerned with integrating science, religion and ideas about the environment into an intellectual system. He found the modern Western systems unable to cope with the questions he raised. His intellectual project was thus both wider in scope and more revolutionary in its objectives than what many of his contemporaries were thinking.

Thirdly, he also differed from many of his academic contemporaries in that though he was not a 'political activist' he was what could be called a public intellectual taking a stand on what he considered were important issues. His writings on shrine integration are an example of this. Minakata's professional career and social activism needs to be seen within the framework of a larger colonial intellectual network who acquired Western academic credentials but did not reject their own, and other traditions. Their command over a set of professional skills gave them access and recognition, but they were, at the same time, on the margins of this world and in tension with many of its premises. This exclusion allowed them to question prevailing assumptions and think of ways to articulate alternative systems.

Minakata wanted to restore the break that modernity had created. The divide between the secular and the religious, the idea that rationality meant a denial of the spiritual, the invasion of the state into all aspects of life that was destroying communities and the environment. He questioned the idea that Japan had to 'catch up with the West' as this drive was then characterised. Kumagusu questioned these objectives and the assumptions they were based on to oppose the myths of the state, modern myths that created an illusion among the people weakening the critical exercise of power.

Shinto and the Amalgamation of Shinto Shrines

The Meiji government, in consonance with the self-perception it was creating of being modern, projected an image of religion as marginal to the intellectual life of Japan and Shinto as a 'rite of state' bound up with the imperial house and Japanese traditions.

In pursuing this agenda the government attacked Buddhism as a foreign religion and even destroyed temples. They looked at Shinto, as the original religion of Japan, an idea that was in fact a modern idea. The Shinto priests welcomed this idea as they were given state salaries and their lot improved. In 1906 all Shinto shrines were graded and ranked in a hierarchy with the Ise shrine, where the emperor worshipped his ancestors, at the top. In the interests of rationality and management the government decreed that there should be only one shrine for each village. This meant that many unmarked or small shrines were destroyed and the god image moved to the officially supported shrine. All shrines were surrounded by a sacred grove. Once the shrine was removed the trees could be cut and sold. This destruction was most extensive in Wakayama, where Minakata lived, and adjoining Mie.

Minakata's attack on this policy was comprehensive and marked by great intellectual depth. He argued that this policy would open to exploitation the sacred forests around the shrine and lead to environmental destruction. The wars Japan was fighting and economic development had led to an increase in demand for lumber and the Wakayama was a major timber producing area so there were economic reasons for this policy.

But Minakata also argued that these policies decided by bureaucrats in Tokyo undermined the authority of the regions and local governments by centralizing power and decision making. He also argued that shrines, small or big, had an organic link with the religious sentiments of the people they were not just buildings and through these 'open air museums' (yagai hakubutsukan) the people were linked to their past and traditions. Destroying these shrines, he writes was really iegoroshi or domicide, which can be understood as killing the 'house' (ie) in the sense of severing its links with its past.

Minakata had long campaigned for ensuring protection of the environment, he was the first person in Japan to use the word ecology, but in his thinking protection of the environment was inextricably bound with protecting the democratic rights of the people and could only be done if they were makers of their future. He viewed the protection of the environment and the community not in a narrow national framework but as a global issue.

7.4 ENDING POVERTY AND ESTABLISHING AN EQUAL SOCIETY

Socialist ideas came to Japan from Europe and the United States. The U.S was a major source. In the 1880s American socialism moved from social welfare to the scientific socialism of R.T. Ely and the Christian socialism of Edward Bellamy and from 1886 the American Federation of Labour (AFL) became an influential force and these ideas shaped the thinking of many Japanese who went to the U.S to study.

Japanese thinking about the social problems were mainly concerned with the question of poverty and the elimination of economic inequality. In 1896 the Social Policy Study Group (Shakai seisaku gakkai) was established to study these questions. Other groups followed.

Many of the socialists looked at the Meiji restoration as an 'ishin-kakumei' or restoration-revolution. They saw it as a progressive revolution which had overthrown feudalism and established freedom and equality. Thus the anarcho-syndicalist Kotoku Shusui wrote, "The restoration–revolution of our Japan truly has the spirit of freedom, equality and altruism".

The character of the ishin lay, for them, not in the imperial restoration, nor in the opening of Japan to Western trade, but in the impact of nineteenth century liberal ideas of freedom and popular government, which led to the establishment of a constitutional government. Therefore, when they talked of resistance and change, it was to restore the true aims of the ishin and to end the distortions that had taken place.

The two most representative socialist works of this period were both written in 1903. They were Kotoku Shusui's, *The Quintessence of Socialism* (Shakai shugi shinzui), and Katayama Sen's (1859-1933), *Our Socialism* (Waga shakaishugi). Kotoku Shusui's work, though based largely on the writings of Ely, Marx, and Engels, is a pioneering effort, along with Morichika Unpei's *The Socialist Programme* (Shakai shugi koryo). It shows a good grasp of socialist ideas. Kotoku's use of the concept of class struggle cannot be reduced to an evolutionary concept and linked to the struggle of the fittest. He sees society as progressing (shinka) and his analysis of class domination is both in economic and moral terms.

Katayama Sen's, *Our Socialism* is a slightly longer work which starts by defining the meaning of socialism and then proceeds to an analyses of capitalist society, offering criticism from the point of view of workers. Katayama explains the meaning of socialist revolution and argues that capitalist wealth will be appropriated without compensation as it does not belong to the capitalists but is produced by the workers.

In Meiji socialism it was the principle of economic organization that was fundamental to what was considered socialism; politics, however was not just a conditional element (jokenteki) it was an important way to bring about change. The socialists recognized the importance of the political system in providing the framework to realise their ideals.

Kotoku's writings on the electoral system indicate this understanding, and his use of categories and stages to mark the dominant characteristics of a period were part of the accepted framework that history moved from a period of 'free competition', to one of 'trusts and syndicates' (shihongodo shugi), and finally to world socialism.

The understanding of "people" in Meiji socialism is a very important issue. Tokutomi Soho (1863-1957), who conceptualized the idea of "commonerism" (heiminshugi), referred to those who were not nobility or samurai by the would 'ordinary people' heimin. In Kotoku's understanding too the core of this group constituted the "people". This included people who own land and can vote.

By the turn of the century most socialists were agreed upon the content of socialism. Their ideas centred on a) public ownership of production facilities, and b) equal distribution. To bring about these changes they argued that given the level of development in Japan, violence was unnecessary. These changes could be brought about peacefully through parliamentary institutions and that is why they supported a universal suffrage law that would, they argued, enable them to win power. Therefore, they were also active supporters of general education that would create awareness among workers and tenants, who formed a large part of the population.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Discuss the steps taken by Tanaka Shozo for preservation of Environment.

- 2) Briefly describe the ideas of Minakata Kumagusu?

7.5 THE STRUGGLE OF THE HISABESTU BURAKU: JAPAN'S LEVELLERS

The socially outcaste groups became known as 'burakumin' after the Meiji restoration, as earlier they had lived in designated villages or 'tokshu buraku', a word no longer used. Today the term used is 'hisabtsu buraku' or discriminated communities or ghetoes. In 1871 a decree abolished the 'ignoble classes', today it's known as the Emancipation Edict. In the Meiji period and later the movement

to end this discrimination was divided into two camps, one advocating assimilation (dowa) and the other which was critical of the practices and called for emancipation.

In 1905 the Japanese government sponsored the improvement project for the hisabetsu buraku with an ideological campaign called the Yuwa (Harmony) movement. Yuwa, was based on the idea of conciliation and sought to merge minorities into majorities under the emperor's authority. It was superseded by popular movements that were more critical of the government. The government backed the Yuwa movement till the beginning of the Asia-Pacific war in 1942.

In direct opposition to the Yuwa movement, the Suiheisha, (Levellers, the 17th century English movement that fought for popular sovereignty, universal suffrage, and religious toleration) was independently organized by the hisabetsu buraku people. Significantly it took the its name from the English Levelers suggesting an appeal to a universal agenda not bound by nationalism. The Suiheisha issued a declaration on March 3, 1922 calling for the restoration of humanity. It proclaimed that the time had come 'to throw off their stigma' that had bound them for centuries. The declaration said the time had come for the buraku to take the blessings of the martyr's crown of thorns' to bring about the light of liberation. As one of the founders, Mankichi Saiko (1895-1970) wrote, contrasting the metaphor of light and temperature – the cold nightmare of alienation and oppression that the buraku were subjected to against the warmth and light that liberation would bring for the working class and tenant farmers – 'let there be warmth for human society; let there be light for all human beings'

The Suiheisha was a modern organization established to fight for the rights of the hisabetsu burakumin, who though granted equality in principle, were discriminated in practice. The language of the declaration and the idea of martyrdom shows the influence of Christian beliefs.

It was also strongly influenced by anarchism. Two scholars who have examined this, Miyazaki and Mihara, bring out the fact that anarchism was a major influence in the Suiheisha and it continued to play a vital role till the outbreak of the war in 1942. The movement had its economic basis in the idea of 'snatch' (ryaku) from the capitalist or rich. Other specific aspects of anarchism in the movement were expressed by their practice of communal living, and in their strong spirit of solidarity. (spirit of "Ninkyo"). These ideas also linked them to religious groups at that time.

7.6 THE INFLUENCE OF ANARCHISM IN THE CULTURAL LIFE

Anarchism, as re-interpreted in Japan, exerted a profound influence in shaping the fundamental conceptions underlying cultural life in modern Japan. In Japan anarchism was refashioned, according to Sho Konishi, to develop a civilization based on mutual aid from a Bakunist ideology of violent destruction.

This vision of cooperativist progress became a very powerful construct for the conceptual basis of modern Japan's cultural life. It provided the basis for intellectual movements such as the, The New Man Society (Shinjinkai), set up by Tokyo Imperial University students, to bring about democracy by 'going to the people' (jinmin no nakae). These ideas also influenced the Suiheisha.

Mankichi Saiko, one of the founders of the Suiheisha was influenced by his reading of Marx and Engels, and Russian radical thinkers such as Kropotkin, Bakunin, the writer Maxim Gorky, as well as French humanists like Romain Rolland. He read Japanese socialists such as Kotoku Shusui, Osugi Sakae, Yamakawa Hitoshi, Sano Manabu and others. He was familiar with the major intellectuals of the time.

Scholars of Russian literature have pointed to the influences from Russian writing on the Suiheisha's idea of humanity. Gyofu Soma (1883-1950), poet and translator of Russian literature, writing about Gorky's novels especially "The Lower Depth" (1902), argues that the importance of human dignity is very important as shown in his descriptions of the underclass, such as vagabonds and ex-convicts, and this resonated with Japanese readers.

This was true for others in the organization as well. Kondo Hikari (1887-1961), an associate of Katayama Sen (1859-1933), one of the early socialists who took steps to organize labour unions moved to Irkutsk in 1918 and became the correspondent of Pravda. He came back soon after the Suiheisha was formed to join it. The Suiheisha, in the period of its formation had a wide following in the Kyoto area, which had a higher population of hisabtsu buraku.

7.7 QUESTIONING RACIAL SCIENCE

These radical ideas were used to question and the 'racial sciences' then being popularised in Japan as well. In the 1920's, European "racial sciences", such as genetics and criminal anthropology, which argued that each race had certain inherent traits, were very widely accepted in Japan. Many people began to think that poor people, vagabonds, criminals, disabled people and Burakumin were "inferior" human beings. The appeal of anti-racist sentiments and the absolute value placed on human life in anarchism is what led to the Declaration asking not for "compassion" from society, but for human dignity.

7.8 RELIGIOUS GROUPS AND THE SUIHEISHA

The Suiheisha worked along with other movements which sought to end discrimination within the temples. Buddhist sects also followed the social hierarchy and outcaste priests were confined to their own temples. The refusal to silently tolerate discrimination was increasing, and the monks turned to the judiciary to find an answer to their plight. They also took to more direct action as well. In 1881 buraku believers took a head priest to court for his discriminatory behavior. In 1902 a discriminatory remark by Ryuge, a Honganji priest sparked the largest buraku demonstration since the beginning of the modern period.

Many of the activists associated with the Suiheisha were members of the Shin Buddhist sects, which had a nation wide following. The linkages between the Honganji and buraku activists is well illustrated in the three generations of the Nakamura family from the Nishikoji temple in Nara Prefecture. Nakamura Teishi a monk involved in the fight against discrimination, his son was removed from priesthood by the sect because of a book that went against the official doctrine, and then, the grandson, Nakamura Jinya, carrying on this fight against discrimination, helped to establish the Suiheisha. He was also key figure in the

All Japan Suiheisha Youth Alliance. The linkages between the struggle within the temple and the Suiheisha were very close.

7.9 MAKING THE AINU (UTARI) JAPANESE

The Meiji government took control, after the restoration, of the land of Ezo (Ezochi) and in 1869 renamed it Hokkaido, (Northern Sea Circuit, a name based on the terminology used in the classical period). The government was worried about Russia and wanted to establish clear control. Russian expeditions were exploring this area and looking to colonise the islands.

The Japanese Ainu are considered the original inhabitants of Japan. Their language, dress and culture are different, and, according to some scholars, their origins go back to the Jomon culture. In the pre-modern period there were rebellions against mainland rule but they enjoyed a degree of autonomy to practice their culture and life.

The name 'Ainu' which means 'human' has been problematic because of its derogatory nuance and they prefer to identify themselves as Utari (comrade in the Ainu language). Official documents use both names. The Ainu lived in Hokkaido, the Kurile islands, Sakhalin and parts of northern Honshu, the main island. They called their land Ainu mosir.

The civilising mission of the Meiji government aimed to transform the Ainu into modern imperial citizens through education, training them to shed their identity even as legal regulations continued to create laws that marked their separateness. To become modern they had to shed their 'traditions'. Ironical, as the dominant motif of Japanese modernity is the balance between 'tradition' and 'modernity'.

The initial thrust of the government was twofold, populate and colonise Ezo, renamed Hokkaido, with people from the 'mainland' and carry out forced assimilation. This meant that large tracts of land were given to mainlanders brought to populate these 'empty' spaces. The Ainu were forced to use the Japanese language, adopt Japanese names and traditional practices, such as tattooing, were prohibited. The Ainu lost their lands and their history. In this political process they were transformed into a trans-historical community. The politics that defined them as a community, through their traditions, kept them eternally discriminated. To end this discrimination what was required was not the 'preservation' of an essentialised Ainu identity, defined by the politics of modernity, but the questioning of the modern Japanese state and the politics that it created.

7.9.1 Resistance and Accommodation by the Ainu/Utari

Resistance and accommodation took many forms. Three areas mark the boundaries of an alternative history of the Ainu. One, resistance to forced land acquisition, two, the recovery of their own past, and three, the formation of groups to articulate their interests and concerns. It was through these social, political and intellectual struggles that the Ainu were becoming modern even as the Japanese state worked to keep them as a 'pre-modern community to mark the enlightened modernity of Japan.

7.9.2 Opening Hokkaido to Mainland Japanese

The Meiji period saw the forced resettlement of Ainu as their lands were opened to colonization by the mainlanders, or wajin (that is people of Yamato), as they were called. The Ainu population of Hokkaido stagnated around 18,000 but between 1850 and 1913 the mainland Japanese population jumped from 111,000 to 1.8 million.

These people from the main islands were known by the Ainu as shamo'. This led to battles over the right to possession. To give one example, in 1891 the Ainu living on the river banks and around lakes in Asahikawa were forcibly moved by the Hokkaido administration to the north-west of Chikabumi, where the government reserved 1050,000 tsubo (a measure of land about 3.3 sq metres) land for their needs but in 1894 out of this only 46,000 tsubo was given to 36 Ainu households.

The Hokkaido government while recognizing their right to the use of this land did not recognize their right of possession. In 1899 the native protection law came into effect and as it was decided that the 7 th Division of the army would be moved nearby. The Hokkaido government removed this land from the purview of the law and stopped the Ainu grants. Finally, in 1900 Okura Zenhachiro, the person who formed the Okura zaibatsu, which was constructing the buildings for the 7 th Division, used a fake seal to hoodwink the illiterate Ainu to sign away their rights. The administration supported his contention that they had signed away their rights. An Ainu group was formed to defend Ainu rights but it was not until 1913 that the sale was cancelled and the Asahikawa city agreed to pay compensation.

7.9.3 The Rise of Ainu Journalism

The government's policy of spreading public education led to the growth of a literacy and the growth of a reading public. Many Ainu turned to journalism to raise consciousness of their problems. In the Taisho period (1912-1926) Ainu journalism began to develop. In 1913 Yamabe Yasunosuke (1867-1923) published the autobiographical, 'The Story of the Ainu' (Ainu monogatari), the first book written in the Ainu language, which told the story of the Karafuto Ainu. In 1916 the first book about Ainu life and culture written by an Ainu.

Ainu organizations were established, such as the Kaiheisha (1926), which was influenced by the Suiheisha (1922) the buraku organization. Other organizations were formed and many published journals were published, such as 'The Light of Ezo' (Ezo no hikari). Only four issues of this magazine survive but these show that their programme was one of social reform and the encouragement of education and an opposition to the native protection law.

Faced with these struggles the paternalistic protection laws were modified in 1937 and policies now began to provide subsidies not just to encourage Ainu to become agriculturalists but also to take up other professions. The Ainu poet and intellectual wrote in the 1970's , That the Ainu were "nationals who are unequal to [other] nationals" (*kokumin nami de wa nai kokumin*).

The premises of the 1899 Hokkaidô Former Natives Protection Act was that 'former natives' were 'the same imperial subjects' and yet, according to the principle of 'survival of the fittest,' said that they had 'lost the ability to live their

lives.’ Therefore, they must be ‘protected.’ This schema overlaps exactly the schema that says they are ‘Japanese nationals’ but ‘not equal’ and therefore must be socially advanced through ‘welfare.’

7.9.4 Post World War-II Situation of the Ainu

In the post-World War- II period these ideas were questioned and groups organized to fight for the return of the confiscated Ainu lands. They also began to question the use of Ainu and began to see it as an insult to their identity preferring, instead, to use the word *uteri* or *comrade*. It was not till June 6, 2008 that the Japanese Diet approved a bipartisan, non-binding resolution recognizing the *Utari* as an indigenous people of Japan with “an indigenous people with a distinct language, religion and culture” and urged the end of discrimination. The government noted: “The 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.”

7.10 FROM RYUKU ISLANDS TO THE PREFECTURE OF OKINAWA

The islands of Okinawa were originally called the Ryukyu islands. Their language and culture was heavily shaped by Chinese influence and different from mainland Japan. Historically they accepted the sovereignty of both China and Japan. The Satsuma domain invaded the islands in 1609 and by 1611 annexed it but the Ryukyu’s continued to be a vassal of China as well. After the Meiji restoration in 1872 they were made a domain (*han*) but continued as a tributary of Japan. In 1879 when Japan declared that it would annex them, China protested but Japan went ahead and converted them to the Okinawa prefecture. The king of Okinawa *Sho Tai* (1843-1901) was exiled to Tokyo.

The people of Okinawa were hostile as Japan began to replace the language and culture by enforcing the use of Japanese. Japan set up a system of public education and Japanese was taught in schools, as with the Ainu. The use of the local language was forbidden and students shamed for using it. Gradually a class of people who spoke Japanese was created though tensions remained.

Okinawa was the only part of Japan where a major battle was fought, the Battle of Okinawa in April-June 1945 when over a 100,000 civilians died. Many hid in caves and frightened of being captured by the U.S soldiers they committed mass suicide. They were convinced by the governments propaganda that to surrender was to be a traitor to the imperial cause. Some scholars argue that the ferocity of the battle, and that the Okinawans, with no sight of help, resisted so fiercely, led the U.S to use a nuclear bomb thinking that Japanese resistance would lead to heavy casualties.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Briefly discuss how Ainu people resisted assimilation in the Japanese culture.

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- 2) Evaluate the influence of Anarchism on the cultural life of Japan in the context of Suiheisha organization.

7.11 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit we have looked at a few social activists and intellectuals who examined the problems Japan was facing and offered a variety of alternatives. We have also looked at the socially disadvantaged groups, known as the hisabetsu buraku and their organization known as the Suiheisha and discussed them. We have also looked at two peripheral areas of Japan, the northern island of Hokkaido and its inhabitants the Ainu, and the islands of Okinawa to show that nation building was a contested process and these groups, often had differing notions of what it meant to be Japanese.

These differing voices are a few examples from the many voices that helped to shape modern Japan. Each in their own way contributed to widening the area of public debate and contributed to ending social discrimination and economic inequality and strengthening civil society.

7.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See section 7.2 and Sub-section 7.2.1
- 2) See section 7.3

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See section 7.9 and Sub-section 7.9.1
- 2) See section 7.6 and 7.8