



AINU LANGUAGE POLICIES

Past and Present

This talk will give a short introduction to Japanese assimilation policies targeting the indigenous people of Japan, the Ainu, from ~ 1800 up to the present. First we will look at loanwords between Japanese and Ainu-*itak* (especially place-names), followed by a summary of the process of colonization of Ainu homelands in the course of mass immigration of Japanese settlers after 1868 (inauguration of the modern Japanese state).

Presentation by Uwe Makino

Chuo University, Tokyo

Uwe Makino, married, 2 children, professor at Chuo University. German national, in Japan since 1990. Books on the Nanjing Massacre (2007) and on the Ainu (2015). Jazz and Sumo fan.

During the process the professional profile of the Ainu changed from independent hunters/gatherers/tradesmen to workers for Japanese trading companies, and finally to welfare recipients. School education was the most efficient tool to eradicate the Ainu language and thus sever the ties to a culture based on orally transmitted knowledge. In the late 1920s the government of Hokkaido discontinued the system of special schooling assuming that >almost nobody uses the Ainu language and most of the younger generation do not know it<.

A summary of Ainu legislation since 1899 will be given. This act was about forced assimilation and public welfare. Only in 1997 the Ainu were officially acknowledged as a cultural minority, followed by 2008 which sees the Ainu as the indigenous people of Japan. Finally the presenter will share some impressions from a modern classroom.

November 22, 2016 | 12:30 – 1:30 pm | Hickman, Room 120 UVic