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Article Review
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“Ethnic Tourism in Hokkaido and the Shaping of Ainu Identity” Article Review

The journal article “Ethnic Tourism in Hokkaido and the Shaping of Ainu Identity” was written by Lisa Hiwasaki and published in the 2000 autumn issue for the *Pacific Affairs Journal*. Hiwasaki has worked in the environmental and development field for 20 years and currently works for the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) located in Canada. Hiwasaki has been published fourteen times during her career. These works include articles on sustainability in national parks of Japan, ethnic minorities in agriculture, and indigenous peoples. She has also worked for nine years with United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a programme specialist.

Hiwasaki’s article on ethnic tourism in Hokkaido focuses on the usefulness of ethnic tourism for the Ainu people, specifically looking at four popular centres of Ainu cultural tourist destinations: Shiraoi Poroto Kotan, Akan, *Kawamura Kaneto Ainu Kinenkan* (Memorial Hall), and Nibutani. Her main points revolve around the economic, cultural, and political benefits of this type of tourism. Hiwasaki includes the opposition side to ethnic tourism by a group of Ainu people. The article also delves what ethnic tourism is, and introduces the beginnings of ethnic tourism involving the Ainu people by the Japanese government. What began as Hokkaido advertising their tourism industry as one where tourists can come and escape to nature led to the Ainu people being included in the “nature” of Hokkaido, as many people historically and today consider the Ainu people and culture to be primitive. The Japanese government and the Ainu people have taken this stereotype and used it to their advantage to gain economic revenue.

Hiwasaki's main points on the economic benefits of ethnic tourism include added revenue into the local economy and a chance to escape hard, low paying wage jobs. This section includes an interview with an Ainu man working in the tourism industry, however it does not have direct quotes from the interview mentioned. Also included is the opposition side, which states that most companies that work in this industry are outsiders and the majority of the money coming in does not stay within the Ainu community. The middlemen in this industry have also been known to take advantage of the Ainu people.

The cultural benefits for the Ainu people were spread out throughout the article. The main point that Hiwasaki made was that through ethnic tourism, the Ainu culture has been preserved and the Ainu people can find their identities by practicing their culture. Many of the traditional dances, folk art, and clothing have been recorded and continue to be practiced because of the demand this type of tourism produces. Hiwasaki also includes museums in this cultural preservation, as they maintain the items and work directly with the Ainu people. However, there is addressed the negative impact of these cultures being changed and exploited for the benefit of Japanese people. The way Hiwasaki explains this change in culture, was that by exaggerating some of the aspects of Ainu culture for tourists, the traditional meaning and significance has been altered and is no longer pure. Hiwasaki argues that by partaking in traditional cultural practices, it is a "venue through which Ainu ethnic identities are represented, formulated, and reinforced..."(Hiwasaki, 405).

Lastly the author sets forth that through the popularization of Ainu ethnic tourism, the Ainu people have gained visibility in the Japanese minds and are slowly becoming recognized by the Japanese government as an indigenous people. Hiwasaki believes that the positive attention

outways the negative impact of perpetuated stereotypes. The attention and museums have led to greater awareness in the education system as there was mention of an increase of high school student groups attending tours in museums and villages too.

Lisa Hiwasaki does a fantastic job on expressing both the positive side and negative sides on ethnic tourism in Japan. However, Hiwasaki merely looks at the impact it has had on Japanese citizens, or Wajin, as she addresses them in the article and does not examine the potential global impact of international tourists visiting Ainu villages and museums. She also mentions at the beginning of her article that most of her analysis is coming from research done in 1995, however she does not mention who the research was done by, reasoning behind research, or where to find it.

The work laid out in the article contains information on the Ainu people and their lives as it pertains to tourism. This article fits perfectly in two areas of literature: papers written on Japan's indigenous population and research papers on the effects of ethnic tourism. Not many papers have been written on the Ainu people, and Hiwasaki herself states, "...this paper attempts to fill a gap in the literature on the Ainu." (Hiwasaki, 395). One such example of Ainu literature is Robert H. Sayers's "Ainu: Spirit of a Northern People". This work takes a look at the research done the Ainu people by other countries. "Scholarly interest in the Ainu began almost immediately following the Meiji Restoration of 1868, which permitted foreigners limited access to Japan's northern region." (Sayers, 877). Hiwasaki's article also fits into the context of ethnic tourism in the world and is very similar to Jenny Chio's book A Landscape of Travel: The Work of Tourism in Rural Ethnic China which delves into ethnic tourism in rural China and how the

people are being affected. “tourism in these communities rests upon their ability to turn a profit from the tourist’s experience of encountering ethnic difference in a visually and physically distinctive rural landscape.” (Chio, 21).

The author uses many sources in writing their article. In the Authors bibliography, she acknowledges Carleton College for granting Hiwasaki money, allowing her to do fieldwork in Hokkaido, which she uses for her paper but she does not credit a document of the field research. She also uses KataLastley, one of her sources for the opposition of ethnic tourism was “‘Kanko Ainu’ ni Miru Sabetsu” which is written on the negative effects the Ainu people face from tourism.

Bibliography

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