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### AINU: ETHNIC CULTURE IN JAPAN

The northern island of Japan, called Hokkaido, was merged by the Japanese government in 19<sup>th</sup> century and where a separate native culture existed known as the Ainu. They have a specific language and culture which is very different from Japanese.

Japanese people have been agricultural people for a long time. On the other hand, Ainu people are similar to a hunter-gatherer society. They traded fur, feather, and seafood, with Japan. Their characteristic culture can be seen in the folk faith. There are bears living in Hokkaido, and they sometimes damage people. Ainu people feared and worshipped bears.

Ainu people have been discriminated by Japanese for a long time. Their rights have been oppressed by law in the past. Ainu had lived in difficulty and poverty. Although they have argued for equality. They spoke to the Japanese parliament in the Ainu language, arguing that their own culture and human rights must be saved. Finally, law was made obsolete, and the Ainu people were finally accepted as aborigines.

In the ancient times, the Japanese and the Ainu interacted peacefully. What changed in later period, is that the Japanese required more resources and obligation to the Ainu. Since then, Ainu people were oppressed for 400 years. It is because Japan got more power and development than the Ainu that they were gradually oppressed.

How could they keep the friendship? How can we make equal relationships among two countries? The answer is not to require only profits and respect each other's culture. That is the way of the multicultural world.

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