

Contemporary issues on the restitution of Ainu remains in Japan with special reference to the skull of Bahunke, a Sakhalin chief

**Koichi Inoue
(Sapporo, Japan)**

It has been informed that more than 1,600 units of Ainu bone remains are preserved in twelve universities and twelve scientific institutions (such as museums) in Japan whilst their sporadic discoveries are also heard from abroad (*e.g.* Germany, Australia, *etc.*). This has resulted from a retarded boom of cemetery excavations in Japan (in the 1930s) by physical anthropologists and anatomists with the aim to secure Ainu bone samples (crania in particular), claiming that they were the indispensable source for elucidating the origin of Ainu, *etc.* Subsequently (during the 1950s~70s), a large number of Ainu remains were also collected through “administrative excavations”.

Due to a research report¹ [Hokkaido Univ., 2013], Medical Faculty of Hokkaido University preserves approximately 1,000 units of the Ainu remains obtained from Hokkaido, Southern Sakhalin and Chishima (Kuril) Islands. Although sporadic voices were raised from 1980 onwards either by individual persons or “Utari Association of Hokkaido” to deliver these remains back to the Ainu, it was only 2016 when this university began to give a small portion of them back to their legitimate descendants under the pressure of the world-wide trend of restitution. In this connection, a series of lawsuits have been filed against the university by the descendants and/or communities concerned. In the following presentation by Prof. Hiroshi Maruyama, a TV documentary film will be exhibited regarding the compromised lawsuit cases of Urakawa, Mombetsu, Urahoro and Asahikawa in Hokkaido. As a consequence, on May 14, 2018, a government decision was issued admitting that a certain group of remains, though unspecified but known as excavated from a specified community, can be returned to the given community in case that the latter might request their restitution.

Aikichi Kimura (1859-1919), a famous Sakhalin chief known as “Bahunke”, was the uncle of Chuhsamma, *i.e.* Bronisław Piłsudski’s spouse (Photos 1, 2, 3). Being one of two successful fishery entrepreneurs on the eastern coast, Bahunke built a large Russian-style log-house in the village of Ai, in which Bronisław hired a room as his base camp. Since 1905 on, under the Japanese reign, Bahunke held the position of village representative of Ai, the innkeeper of ‘the large log-house’, and manager of the ferry service over the river of Ai. He passed away in Ai on December 19, 1919, at the age of sixty.

According to the Japanese authors who had met him in person, Bahunke was “a

¹ Hokkaido University, *The Research Report on the Ainu Bones Gathered by and Preserved at the Medical Faculty of Hokkaido University*, Sapporo: Hokkaido University (2013).

skillful Japanese-speaker, well-versed in Russian and also a tactful diplomat”² [S. Ishida, 1907], and “a man of formidable looks, of more than ‘six *shaku* five *sun* [=197cm]’ tall, with his face, disproportionately huge even compared with his enormous body” [M. Matsukawa, 1909³; see the Bahunke’s figures: B. Piłsudski, 1902-5 (Photo 4); T. Uzumasa, 1905 (Photo 5); T. Aoyama, 1918 (Photo 6)].

The aforementioned university report of 2013 released for the first time the following quite instigating information: (1) There exists a male skull of about fifty years old labeled as “Aihama 1” (serial number 943) in the medical faculty bone collection; (2) the skull is personally identifiable, unlike the other seventy remains brought also from Sakhalin; (3) it was excavated by Sakuzaemon Kodama and his team from the Ainu cemetery at Ai in August 1936; (4) the bone collection includes the remains of two Ainu celebrities: “the Hidaka chief Penryu” [Penriuku Hiramura of Piratori/Biratori, Hokkaido] (Photo 7) and “the Sakhalin chief Bahunke” [Aikichi Kimura of Ai/Aihama]. In April, 2016, despite the present author’s request for the identification of ‘Aihama 1’ to Bahunke, “Chamber in charge of the restitution of Ainu remains *et al.*” of Hokkaido University turned it down resolutely on the pretext of personal data protection.

In April, 2017, Kazuyasu Kimura, *i.e.* the sole male-line grandson of Bronisław Piłsudski and Chuhsamma, submitted to the above chamber an official application for the restitution of Aikichi Kimura’s skull. On July 21, 2018, after a-year-long public announcement, the chamber informed of its own decision to return the Aikichi’s remains (a skull with twenty-two burial accessories) to his legal heir, Kazuyasu Kimura. Thus, on July 30, Kazuyasu and the present author visited the university’s chamber in Sapporo and started a direct negotiation with its personnel. The chamber emphasized the presence of an official letter of acceptance for excavation and donation of the given remains, which had been signed by Aisuke Kimura, *i.e.* Aikichi’s adopted son and the inheritor. In the meantime Kazuyasu refuted that the letter had been in many places blotted out in black, including the date of Aikichi’s death in particular. The chamber has promised to take the complaint into reconsideration. The both sides have agreed that an expertise examination shall be conducted on the parity of the cranium size of ‘Aihama 1’ with the documented feature of Aikichi Kimura (*cf.* the passage cited above). Therefore, the bilateral negotiation is to be continued.

Incidentally, on June 3, 2018, *Enchu Izokukai* (‘Assembly of voluntary Enchu descendants, *i.e.* the Sakhalin Ainu’) was founded on the resolution decided at the 2nd general meeting of “the Sakhalin Ainu (Enchu) Association”. The assembly will pursue the following two goals: (1) the acceptance of all those Enchu remains that have been kept in various scientific and administrative institutions in Japan as well as abroad; (2)

² Shūzō Ishida, Trifles from the mores of the Sakhalin Ainu—The Introductory essay to: T. Aoyama (ed.), *A Different World of the Farthest North*, pp. 7-15, Tokyo: Hōbunsha (1918).

³ Mokukō Matsukawa, *The Account of a Sakhalin Expedition*, Tokyo: Hakubunkan (1909).

the implementation of consoling and memorial services for the souls of deceased brethren. The first and foremost task for the assembly is to gather as many voluntary Enchu members as possible together within a year, since all the Ainu and Enchu remains eventually left abandoned ought to be concentrated in the state-run memorial station by 2020 (an ossuary will be constructed in Shiraoi, Hokkaido, whilst a towering pole and a memorial facility (Photos 8, 9) have already been built therewith). It is highly probable that the Aikichi Kimura's remains shall be accepted by the very Enchu assembly when returned.



Photo 1: Bronisław Piłsudski in an Ainu traditional robe (the portrait in oil made by Adomas Varnas in Zakopane in 1912, preserved now at Józef Piłsudski Museum in Sulejówek).



Photo 2: Chuhsamma, 53 years old, photographed by Takeshi Kitasato in Shirahama in 1931
[Kitasato 1932]



Photo 3: Chusamma holding her son Sukezō on arms, photographed by B. Piłsudski in 1904-05.



Photo 4: Bahunke (Aikichi Kimura), photographed by B. Piłsudski in 1902-05. [Quite recently the person photographed has turned out to be not Bahunke but his younger brother Totekose].

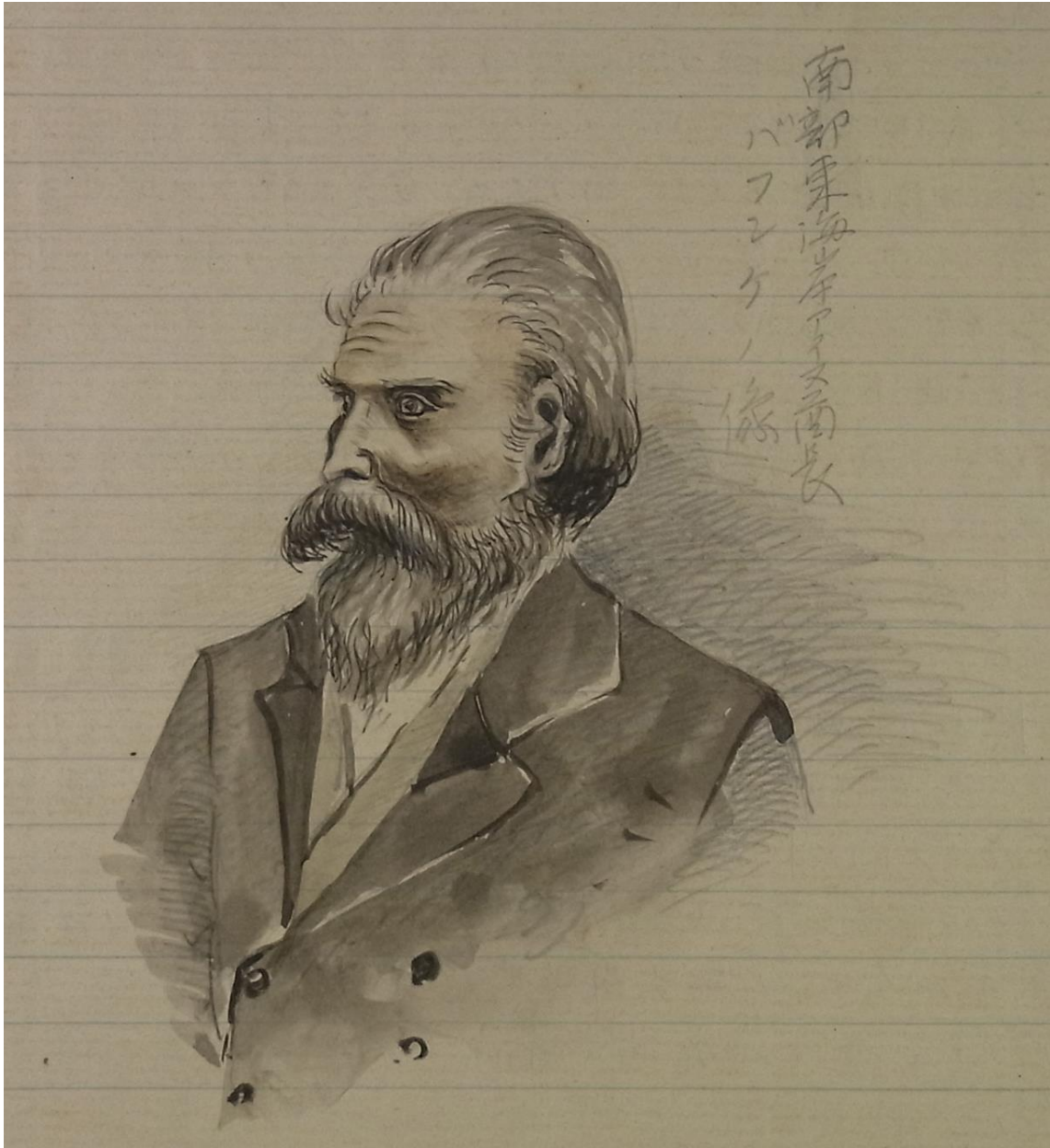


Photo 5: Aikichi Kimura drawn by Tomoyasu Uzumasa in 1905
[from Uzumasa 1905, preserved in Hokkaido Museum, Sapporo]



Photo 6: Aikichi Kimura with Tōen Aoyama in 1917 [from Aoyama 1918]



Photo 7: Penriuku Hiramura, drawn by Adolf Fischer in 1897,
preserved at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies, Kyoto



Photo 8: The Memorial Facility built in Shiraoui in March 2018
(a picture taken from the west side).



Photo 9: The Towering Pole alongside the Facility built in Shiraoi in March 2018.