CHALLENGING JAPAN’S MONOETHNIC MYTH

The Histories And Experiences Of Japanese Ethnic Minorities

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Former members of an excluded cast; considered to have impure bloodlines due to work with death/blood

Labeled by residence in certain areas ("Buraku")

Buraku remain less developed; low social status and lack of resources are biggest challenges

Sources:

 Ainu

- Japan’s “official” indigenous group; lives on the northernmost island of Hokkaido
- Subject to assimilation efforts both before and after Japan claimed Hokkaido as part of its territory.

Sources:

**OKINAWANS** 琉球民族

- Live on the southernmost islands, equidistant between China and have historical ties to both

- Site of intense fighting in WWII, occupied until 1972 and still houses most of the US military presence in Japan

Sources:
Korea was annexed in 1910, making then Japanese nationals. Some migrated voluntarily to Japan, others were forced during wartime.

Many were unable to return to Korea, resulting in several generations of Zainichi with no legal status as Japanese despite being Japanese culturally.

Sources:

Broad term for post-war migrants; often motivated by economics and currently by Japan’s labor shortage.

Japan is hesitant to let in migrants, due to a belief that their ethnic homogeneity creates harmony that would be lost if they became more diverse.

Sources:

Before and during the war, Japan was defined as a multiethnic, pan-Asian empire.

After, the narrative shifted, with the result being a reinforcement of the invisibility of minority groups.

Japan broadly associates ethnic diversity with conflict, which creates barriers to the improvement of conditions for minorities.

Sources: