



# Japan's Ainu Minority in Tokyo: Diasporic Indigeneity and Urban Politics (Japan Anthropology Workshop Series)

*Mark K. Watson*

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This book is about the Ainu, the indigenous people of Japan, living in and around Tokyo; it is, therefore, about what has been pushed to the margins of history. Customarily, anthropologists and public officials have represented Ainu issues and political affairs as limited to rural pockets of Hokkaido. Today, however, a significant proportion of the Ainu people live in and around major cities on the main island of Honshu, particularly Tokyo. Based on extensive original ethnographic research, this book explores this largely unknown diasporic aspect of Ainu life and society. Drawing from debates on place-based rights and urban indigeneity in the twenty-first century, the book engages with the experiences and collective struggles of Tokyo Ainu in seeking to promote a better understanding of their cultural and political identity and sense of community in the city. Looking in-depth for the first time at the urban context of ritual performance, cultural transmission and the construction of places or 'hubs' of Ainu social activity, this book argues that recent government initiatives aimed at fostering a national Ainu policy will ultimately founder unless its architects are able to fully recognize the historical and social complexities of the urban Ainu experience.

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