

# Introduction: Indigenous Efflorescence

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In thousands of communities, amongst hundreds of nations around the world, an Indigenous revolution is currently taking place, transforming the lives of millions of people. In Australia, the Aboriginal scholar Marcia Langton (2013) has referred to a ‘quiet revolution’ in the lives of Aboriginal people, a dramatic increase in economic well-being and political control that has largely gone unnoticed by mainstream Australia. Māori scholar Ranginui Walker (2004: 10) describes a ‘cultural renaissance’ amongst the Indigenous population of Aotearoa, accompanied by ‘exponential’ demographic increase. In the USA, Joane Nagel (1995) has pointed to similar trends amongst Native Americans, referring to an ‘ethnic renewal’ and ‘resurgence of identity’. In Canada, John Ralston Saul (2014) has spoken of a ‘comeback’ of Aboriginal peoples, a demographic upsurge, coupled with growing political assertiveness and cultural confidence. The anthropologist James Clifford, focusing on the Americas and the Pacific, has meanwhile declared our era as a moment of global *Indigènitude*, in which Indigenous people have ‘emerged from history’s blind spot’ to ‘renew their cultural heritage and reconnect with lost lands’ (2013: 13). In what follows, I introduce the concept of ‘Indigenous efflorescence’ as a way of both describing and analysing this situation, before moving on to introduce the contributions to this book, which explores Indigenous efflorescence in two very different contexts: Japan and northern Europe.

I have borrowed the term ‘efflorescence’ from sociologist and political theorist Jack Goldstone, who originally deployed it in a study of early modern economic history, as a necessary but lacking binary opposite to ‘crisis’. He defines efflorescence as ‘a relatively sharp, often unexpected

upturn in significant demographic and economic indices, usually accompanied by political expansion, institution-building, cultural synthesis, and consolidation' (2004: 252). The term therefore carries several implications: of economic prosperity, human flourishing, cultural creativity and surprise. This sense of surprise in efflorescence is embedded in the term's usage in another field—chemistry—where it refers to the sudden emergence of crystals formed by materials previously suspended, invisibly, in water, and which emerge on surfaces after the water has seeped through them and evaporated.

Perhaps nothing demonstrates the surprising nature of efflorescence more than the revitalisation of Indigenous languages (Hinton and Hale 2001; Grenoble and Whaley 2006; Jones and Ogilvie 2013; Hinton, Huss and Roche 2018). Dozens of languages once declared 'extinct' or pronounced 'dead' are now being spoken again. The Wôpanâak language of northeastern USA, not spoken since the mid-nineteenth century, is now being taught to hundreds of students.<sup>1</sup> The Myaamia language of Ohio tells a similar story (Leonard 2008). In Australia, the Kurna language (Amery 2016) is just one of many Aboriginal languages that have been reawakened (Hobson et al. 2010; Troy and Walsh 2010). In Finland, a revitalisation program successfully recreated a lost generation of speakers of the Aanaar Sami language, thus helping to heal the wound of ruptured intergenerational transmission (Olthuis, Kivelä and Skutnabb-Kangas 2013). Due to the success of these and many other programs around the world, activists and scholars working in language revitalisation now no longer speak of dead, extinct, or lost languages, but of dormant or sleeping languages, waiting to be reawakened, to spring back to life (Leonard 2008).

The efflorescence of languages contradicts in very concrete terms the sense of crisis that often surrounds conversations about Indigenous peoples, not only today, but also in the past, in the era of high colonialism. Past visions of the present future were replete with prophecies of 'vanishing savages' and 'doomed natives' (Brantlinger 2003). Such prophecies were the very foundation of colonial and modernist civilising projects (Wolfe 2006; O'Brien 2010). The prescriptive nature of these declarations is revealed by the reality of Indigenous 'survivance', the 'active sense of presence over historical absence' (Vizenor 2009: 1). Two of the most dramatic cases of

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1 For more, see the *Wôpanâak Reclamation Project*. Online: [www.wlrp.org/](http://www.wlrp.org/) (accessed 16 June 2018). For an overview of language revitalisation in the Americas, see the edited collection by Serafin M. Coronel-Molina and Teresa L. McCarty (2016).

survivance can be seen in the Caribbean and Tasmania, both canonical examples of ‘vanished natives’. In the Caribbean, Maximilian Forte (2005, 2006a, see also his 2006b edited collection) has drawn attention to the enduring presence of Indigenous Amerindian peoples in the region, supposed to have vanished in the violence that opened our present era of colonial globalisation. Another case in point is the Aboriginal people of Tasmania, the Palawa. Often touted as a classic case of colonial genocide and the lamentable passing of the native, the Palawa persist (Ryan 2012). Such continuities should not diminish our awareness of the violence and genocidal intent of colonialism, but rather, deepen our respect for Indigenous survivance, and heighten the significance of exploring and explaining Indigenous efflorescence.

In this context, the term Indigenous efflorescence is, on the one hand, a descriptive one, which refers to the under-studied phenomenon of the multi-sited demographic and cultural flourishing of Indigenous peoples. As a coinage, the term helps us to talk about a previously diffuse set of events and trends, to bundle them together and slot them seamlessly into sentences, and thus start new conversations. It is, furthermore, a concept that gives us critical purchase on the present—the historical moment in which ‘the native’ was supposed to have disappeared—and provides leverage against simplistic narratives of both decline and progress. Beyond being a descriptive term, however, Indigenous efflorescence is also an analytical frame that provides new ways of looking at the contemporary Indigenous situation, as explored in the next section.

## Orienting efflorescence

This focus on Indigenous efflorescence is designed to both augment and provide alternatives to other approaches to the contemporary Indigenous moment based on various (re)work: *revitalization*, *resilience*, *resurgence*, *return*, *renaissance*, *resurrection*, *revival*, *resuscitation* and *renewal* (Amery 2016). ‘Efflorescence’ is distinct from these approaches, first of all, in being *process-oriented*. It draws attention to the creative, dynamic nature of the contemporary Indigenous moment, and sees it as involving something exceeding the recreation of the past, the return to a former state of being. Efflorescence is not simply about the resumption of stable cultural practices, of picking up where Indigenous people left off before the long colonial interruption, of a return to a precontact utopia. Revitalised

languages are not the same as the ancestral languages on which they were based; they are built differently, sound different, inhabit new contexts, and serve entirely different functions (Bentahila and Davies 1993). James Clifford (2013) captures this well when he speaks about twenty-first-century indigeneity as being rooted in *translation* and *generativity*: to be Indigenous is not to reproduce precolonial ways of being, but to translate them into the present, to draw on them as inspiration and authority for generating Indigenous ways of living in the twenty-first century. Or, as Leanne Simpson puts it, efflorescence means

reclaiming the fluidity around our traditions, not the rigidity of colonialism; it means encouraging the self-determination of individuals within our national and community-based contexts; and it means re-creating an artistic and intellectual renaissance with a larger political and cultural resurgence (2011: 51).

In drawing attention to processes of creativity and generativity, rather than on the social forms, cultural and linguistic products and so on which are generated, an emphasis on efflorescence is also *future-oriented*. This involves, first, an alertness to what Appadurai calls the ‘trap of trajectorism’—a deeply ingrained ‘epistemological and ontological habit’ which assumes that ‘time’s arrow always has a teleos’ (2013: 233), and thus that the future is knowable by extending a trajectory from the past, through the present and into the future. Our current moment of Indigenous efflorescence, and the way it makes patent failures of colonial and modernist trajectories as both explanatory models and ideological projects, recommends an orientation to the future as radically other, as ‘imaginable but unknown’ (Pink, Akama and Fergusson 2017: 133). We should therefore interrogate acts and aspects of Indigenous efflorescence for the multiple futures they may make possible, the ‘states of emergence’ and the many ‘about-to-be-present[s]’ (Tsing 2005: 269) with which they are pregnant.

In order to reject trajectorism and engage with multiple possible futures, we can look at (at least) three different types of future. First is the simple future—that something will (continue to) happen. It may be tempting to see individual incidents of efflorescence in temporal isolation, as aberrant blips with no future, or worse, as misguided, futile attempts to resist the inevitable logic of this or that trajectory, and therefore to erase projects from consideration of the future. We therefore need to imagine a future where projects of efflorescence, some taking place now, many unimagined,

not only occur, but develop, grow and expand. This, in turn, enables us to imagine in terms of the future conditional—if this happens, then what will/might/could happen? And finally, we can also look at the future perfect, or what Judith Butler (2016) calls the ‘future anterior’, a stance looking back to the present from some unknown point in the future—‘something will have happened’. This stance, of inhabiting a future replete with current and as yet unimagined works of efflorescence, and their multiple, contingent outcomes, gives us imaginary purchase on the many futures that are emerging in the present.

Finally, whilst being distinguished from (re)work approaches in being future and process oriented, what an Indigenous efflorescence approach shares with these other ways of exploring the contemporary Indigenous moment is a commitment to anticolonial engagement and intervention. That is, an approach focused on Indigenous efflorescence seeks to extend beyond the descriptive and explanatory to the constructive and constitutive. It seeks to not only explore possible Indigenous futures, but to help create them. This is done in at least three ways. First, by exploring conditions that enable or create barriers to efflorescence. Second, by pursuing new theoretical insights from anthropology that might help in understanding and promoting Indigenous efflorescence. And third, by increasing the horizon of possible futures by helping to foster and multiply Indigenous future imaginaries.

## Grounding Indigenous efflorescence: Ainu and Sami

This book explores Indigenous efflorescence in two specific Indigenous contexts: amongst the Ainu of Ainu Mosir (in present-day northern Japan), and the Sami of Sapmi (in Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia). Our focus on these two groups aims to draw attention to activity taking place outside the more well-known CANZUS (Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the US) settler states, which dominate the Anglophone literature in anthropology and Indigenous studies. Although the Sami have been important in the development of international Indigenist theories, networks and practices (Merlan 2009), they still remain somewhat peripheral within Anglophone academic discussions; the Ainu are perhaps even more marginalised in this literature, due, in no small part, to the general resistance against applying concepts of indigeneity in Asia

(Baird 2016). Focusing on the Ainu and the Sami thus helps us expand the circle of paradigmatic Indigenous case studies beyond the CANZUS group and towards the vast number of under-represented Indigenous groups around the world, a topic we return to in the conclusion of this book.

The Ainu are the Indigenous people of northern Japan and southern Sakhalin and Kuril islands (Russia), a territory they refer to as Ainu Mosir (the land of the Ainu, or more literally, the land of humans). The colonisation of Ainu Mosir by the Japanese took place over several centuries, beginning with asymmetrical trade relations in the fifteenth century, which evolved into economic dependency in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Walker 2001). Colonisation intensified particularly after the Meiji Restoration (1868) with the establishment of the Colonial Office in Sapporo in 1869, and the formal annexation of the island of Hokkaidō in 1872 (Maruyama 2013a). The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the implementation of a range of assimilatory policies, which began by defining the Ainu as ‘former aborigines’ (Maruyama 2013b, 2014). These policies dispossessed the Ainu of their land, deprived them of their traditional livelihood, and outlawed numerous Ainu cultural practices. Meanwhile, immigration of ethnic Japanese into Ainu Mosir was actively promoted. Furthermore, assimilationist, monoglot language policies aimed at creating a linguistically homogenous Japanese nation, and implemented primarily through the formal schooling system, had disastrous impacts on the Ainu language (Heinrich 2012).

The other perspective this book draws upon is that of the Sami of northwestern Europe, a territory they refer to as Sapmi, now divided between Russia, Finland, Sweden and Norway. As with the Ainu, the story of Sapmi’s colonisation has two phases, a long, gradual diminishment of territory and steady growth in asymmetrical relations (Rydving 2004; Broadbent 2010; Roche 2017), and a final attempt at complete annihilation during the high tide of Romantic nationalism. For the Sami, the first phase dates back almost a thousand years, with south Scandinavian populations gradually moving farther and farther north. The intense phase of colonisation, meanwhile, lasted from the mid-1700s until the middle of the twentieth century. This period saw Sapmi divided between the nation-states of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia, fragmenting the Sami into several populations, all under different assimilatory regimes (Sergejeva 2000; Minde 2003; Lantto and Mörkenstam 2008; Axelsson 2010).

In addition to these shared histories of colonisation and assimilation, the Ainu and the Sami also share a recent past characterised by efflorescence. This has involved, in both cases, the termination of deliberately assimilative policies and the implementation of liberal, democratic multicultural orders, coupled with improved economic standing in both relative terms (within the state) and on absolute terms, globally. The contributions to this book document these developments and the ways in which Sami and Ainu people have made use of them, whilst engaging in ongoing struggles for decolonisation.

## About the book

This volume emerged, originally, in the wake of an Indigenous people's conference held at Uppsala University, from 14–19 October 2013. The conference was titled 'RE: Claimings, Empowerings, Inspirings: Researching and Exploring by, for, and with Indigenous Peoples, Minorities, and Local Communities' and brought Indigenous experts, both academic and otherwise, to discuss issues of relevance to the contemporary challenges of global indigeneity. Although taking inspiration from this conference and its approach to Indigenous issues, the materials collated here bear little resemblance to those presented in Uppsala. Rather, this conference served as a launching pad for conversations between the three editors, drawing on our work with and for the Ainu (Hiroshi Maruyama), Sami (Åsa Viridi Kroik) and Monguor and Tibetans (Gerald Roche).

Our book draws inspiration from the work of Indigenous academics in creating spaces where Indigenous concerns and achievement are acknowledged and advanced. The last 40 years have seen the emergence of a generation of scholars who have not only pushed back against the implicit colonial agendas of academic research, but have devised new research paradigms for research by, with, and for Indigenous peoples. We were inspired in this book by the work of such scholars as Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Shawn Wilson, Rauna Kuokkanen and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, amongst others. The volume is offered in an 'Indigenist' spirit—an inclusive research paradigm that emphasises indigeneity as a philosophical orientation and political project, and thus acknowledges that non-Indigenous academics have a role to play in supporting the pursuit of Indigenous goals (Adams et al. 2015).

In the spirit of the original conference that began the conversations which launched this book, we have adopted a supra-disciplinary approach (Gärdebo, Öhman and Maruyama 2014) in collating the contributions, and have thus included articles written by academics, and case studies written by both academic and nonacademic practitioners of Indigenous efflorescence. Criteria for inclusion in this volume involved not only typical academic standards of rigour ensured by peer review processes, but also the acknowledgement and recognition of contributors within the communities they were writing about. Therefore, whilst some authors hold the academic qualifications typical of contributors to scholarly volumes, others were considered qualified by virtue of their contribution to the Ainu and Sami communities, and their participation in Indigenous efflorescence.

The contributions to this book are organised into two main sections, looking at *contexts* and *practices* of efflorescence. Each of these sections is opened with a brief introduction exploring the broader context and providing information on the specific contributions. ‘Part One: Contexts of Efflorescence’ explores the political, economic and technological circumstances that have scaffolded the emergence of contemporary efflorescence. The case studies and articles in this section therefore look at developments within both mainstream settler societies and Indigenous societies. Thematically, they deal with settler epistemologies, digital technologies, land and sovereignty, and Indigenous social movements, and explore their role in Indigenous efflorescence. ‘Part Two: Practices of Efflorescence’ provides case studies and articles that explore how people *do* efflorescence, and what their subjective experience of it is.

In addition to explaining the origins and organisation of the book, we also feel that it is important for us, as editors, to explain our role in the volume, and our approach and motivations to its creation.

## Hiroshi Maruyama

My current research topic has been focused on policies towards Indigenous peoples, or Indigenous policy. It was in 2007 that I started studying the construction of huge dams in the Saru River in Hokkaidō, which is called the cradle of Ainu culture. Then, I was aware that the Ainu are still trapped by colonialism. They were in poverty and totally excluded from decisions about the construction affecting their community. However, the majority population does not recognise that the Ainu

should be especially protected by international human rights law for the reparation of historical and existent injustices imposed on them. Since then, I have been critically analysing Japan's Ainu policy in accordance with international human rights standards. In order to know more about the situation faced by the Ainu, I have been collaborating with Ainu Elders who are still fighting against the Japanese Government for their Indigenous rights and dignity. In the process of studying policies towards the Ainu, I came to know that comparative studies between Indigenous peoples are needed. I happened to meet Marie Persson, Sigrid Stångberg and Tomas Colbengtson in Tärnaby, Sweden. Marie Persson is a human rights defender with a focus on Indigenous peoples' and children's rights, a member of the Sami Parliament, founder of the organisation Stop the Rönnebäck Nickel Mining Project, and a graphic designer. Sigrid Stångberg is a long-time South Sami language expert and revitalisation leader. She was also a former principal at the Tärnaby Sami School, and was the first person to take 40 credits in South Sami at Umeå University. Tomas Colbengtson is a resident artist at KTH Royal School of Technology, where he has been working on visual arts. He is also a lecturer in fine printmaking at Konstfack National College of Art, Craft and Design, Stockholm. My encounter with these people has inspired me to study the situation faced by the South Sami in Tärna with Leena Huss, Professor Emerita, Uppsala University. My aim in studying Indigenous policy is to support Indigenous peoples' struggles for the right to self-determination, which is related to Indigenous rights and dignity as a people, based on scientific findings.

## Åsa Viridi Kroik

My reason for writing and editing this book is that I have participated in many revitalisation projects where I have gained knowledge and experience that has been important for my development as a Saami, but also as a human being. There are a few things that have been striking about those projects. One is their low status. Although the participants often enjoy the work and think it is important, it is usually not considered as important as their 'ordinary' or 'real' work or hobbies. Revitalisation projects are also very enjoyable and the participants often laugh a lot. People participating in revitalising process are oppressed—and their history of oppression stays as a sorrow in their souls. I initiate and participate in revitalisation projects because I think they have something very important to contribute. I have learned a lot about methods and methodology that I can take with me into

other fields, but I also have learned that the moments of joy and laughter binds people more tightly to each other. To discover that other Indigenous people also are dealing with the same threats against their language and culture, and to see the similarities in what we protect and the ways we protect it, also binds us together. Researchers are also protectors of knowledge. While Indigenous peoples' languages and cultures have been neglected in the past, an increasing number of researchers are now finding the value of, and joy in, the revitalisation process, and even participate in the laughter. My hope is that Saami and Ainu people will be able to share inspiration and the joy of revitalisation in this book, and to do so together with we editors and with you—the reader.

## Gerald Roche

At one point whilst writing this introduction, I found myself reading two books side-by-side: Judy Atkinson's (2002) *Trauma Trails, Recreating Song Lines: The Transgenerational Effects of Trauma in Indigenous Australia*, and James Clifford's (2013) *Returns: Becoming Indigenous in the Twenty-First Century*. Both books were erudite, nuanced and eloquent, but their tone and voice set them miles apart. The first was written by an Indigenous author, and dealt with the intergenerational trauma inflicted on Indigenous peoples as the result of colonisation, resulting in the horrific violence and substance abuse (violence against the self) seen in many Indigenous communities in Australia today. The tone is forceful, the rhetoric strong. Clifford's book, on the other hand, is far more detached. He adopts an approach of 'lucid ambivalence' (2013: 18), characterised by 'an alert receptivity and willingness not to press for conclusions' (2013: 23). It is whimsical, almost playful, and in lacking 'the emotional convulsions of identification and memory' (Pearson 2017: 23) that Indigenous researchers experience, is therefore also devoid of hope and has no need of optimism. On the one hand, as an engaged anthropologist, I identify strongly with Atkinson's search for certainty. I admire the strength of her rhetoric and share her belief in the importance of knowledge as a tool for justice and healing. However, like Clifford, as a non-Indigenous person, I have the luxury of deferring certainty in order to inhabit peripheral nuances and contradictions. In addition to my intellectual positioning, my work on this book was also influenced by physical position. At the time we started work on this book, I had just left China, where I had lived for several years, and I was thinking about the volume in relation to the Monguor and Tibetan communities I had worked with there, in comparison to what I

was learning about in Sweden. I was also thinking about how communities in China, and elsewhere around the world, might use materials like those we have collated here. By the time we were finishing this volume, I had returned home to Australia after an absence of 10 years, and was thinking about what the concept of Indigenous efflorescence could tell me—and couldn't—about the Indigenous context here.

## Conclusion

By way of conclusion, we, as editors, wish to jointly express our hope that, in addition to starting a discussion on Indigenous efflorescence as a topic of anthropological analysis—a possibility we discuss further in the conclusion—we also hope the materials presented in this book help inspire new projects, and perhaps even new collaborations, amongst people working towards efflorescence. We particularly hope that they demonstrate the ways in which efflorescence can take place in all aspects of life: from watching films, to drinking coffee and dancing. We hope that the articles raise issues and offer solutions that are helpful in navigating the complex terrain of efflorescence. We hope that the materials presented here help those working towards efflorescence to see their individual and collective efforts as part of a movement that is a dynamic, growing field of activity that is expanding and will likely continue to do so. And finally, we hope that this volume can offer a source of respair—the return of hope after a period of despair—to activists, scholars, and others working to bring about Indigenous efflorescence.<sup>2</sup>

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2 On the term 'respair', see 'Why words die: How to keep lexical treasures from keeling over', 2017.

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