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# The Ainu Speak of Famine: How Oral Traditions Reflect and Inform Historical Analysis of Changing Food Practices and Trade Relations in Early Modern Period Hokkaido (1603-1868)

Joanna Charlotte Moody  
*Bates College*, [jmoody6@bates.edu](mailto:jmoody6@bates.edu)

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**The Ainu Speak of Famine:  
How Oral Traditions Reflect and Inform Historical Analysis of Changing Food  
Practices and Trade Relations in Early Modern Period Hokkaido  
(1603-1868)**

An Honors Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the Asian Studies Program  
Bates College

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Japanese major  
Degree of Bachelor of Science

by  
Joanna Charlotte Moody

Lewiston, Maine  
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## Introduction

The Ainu are an indigenous people of northern Japan, Sakhalin, and the Kurile Islands and have the legacy of a culture, oral language, and ethnic background distinct from their mainland Japanese neighbors. Ainu culture emerged from the blending of different cultures and existed throughout history with the continued influence of surrounding peoples. It therefore varies by region, with those groups in Hokkaido<sup>1</sup> seeing more influence from southern Japanese culture, while the groups in the northern Ainu territories have a prehistory more closely linked to the Amur River region, Siberia, and Kamchatka (Kikuchi, T, 47). This study will focus on the culture, history, and oral traditions of the Ainu of Hokkaido, the northernmost island of Japan because this group of Ainu is the largest of the regional populations and because throughout their history they had the greatest contact with mainland Japan.

Ainu history itself has a history and it is one that has been, until recently, filtered almost singularly through a Japanese lens (Siddle, 67). Since the Ainu traditionally had no written language, historical documentary sources on the Ainu are almost exclusively written by the Japanese. Historians are therefore reduced to viewing Ainu history through the eyes of often mistaken and prejudicial Japanese accounts while attempting to flesh out a wider picture through

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<sup>1</sup> The northernmost island of the Japanese archipelago was officially named Hokkaido by the Japanese government in the more modern Meiji Period, therefore the use of this name may seem misleading as it is neither a native Ainu word for their homeland nor a word that existed during the Early Modern Period, which is the focus of this work. I have nevertheless chosen to use it throughout this work when referring to the geographic space of the island. Older names for the land such as Ezo or Ezo-chi are politically charged as Japanese terms for the land of “barbarians,” so I have avoided using these words except when the political nuance is appropriate. The Ainu language does have the word *ainu-moshir* that designates the land in which human beings, or the Ainu, lived. However, my understanding of this word is that it holds as much or more cosmological meaning as geographic identification, so I have used it in this work only when discussing Ainu beliefs.

the use of more objective archaeological and, in some cases, ethnographic evidence. In this way, historians have written Ainu history from a Japanese perspective, and there is still little attention paid to the indigenous perspective. I believe that it is time to let the Ainu speak for themselves on the many pressures and cultural changes that occurred, particularly during the Edo Period. Even though the Ainu traditionally have had no written language, they have a sophisticated and profuse oral tradition that can be used to show how the Ainu themselves viewed changes to their traditional way of life.

The rich Ainu oral traditions included many types of stories, including folktales, ballads, rhymes, riddles, and epic legends. Of these many genres, this study will compare two – the *kamui yukar* and the *uwepeker*. The *kamui yukar* are ritual narratives recited in a fairly strict meter. These narratives are generally told from the first-person point of view of a god, usually animal gods or gods of other natural entities, and often focus on how these gods repay the Ainu for their piety and proper conduct. They are one of the oldest forms of Ainu oral tradition and therefore represent the most traditional Ainu culture and worldview. In contrast, the *uwepeker* are un-metered narratives, generally telling the stories of cultural heroes, god-like humans, or the adventures of famous Ainu ancestors. These stories developed much later and reflect the impact of modernizing influences, especially those of Japanese encroachment, on Ainu society, culture, cosmology, and ways of life.

The long-held popular belief of historians and scholars is that Ainu culture, society, and worldview remained unchanged through the 17<sup>th</sup> century and that Ainu isolation only ended after the implementation of forced assimilation policies during the Meiji Period (1868-1912). Using two genres of oral traditions – the static, traditional *kamui yukar* and the mutable, modern *uwepeker* – I will show through the Ainu's own perspective and voice that the Ainu lifestyle was

already changing during the Edo Period (1600-1867). This thesis will add to the recent archeological and ethnographic evidence that reinforces this same idea: that the traditional Ainu way of life was already in decline before Meiji policies were put into place.

Ainu narratives demonstrate an adaptive quality as a direct result of being a solely oral tradition. According to psychodynamic theory, this means that the contents of the stories are altered as the social, political, and environmental situation surrounding the audience changes. Thus oral traditions change with each retelling and therefore more readily reflect the times in which they are recited. The oral traditions inherently contain commentary on modernizing influences throughout history. I will present the argument that the different genres of oral traditions reflected these historical changes to differing degrees. My thesis shows that the metered forms of the *kamui yukar* are intrinsically more conservative than the unmetered *uwepeker*. Therefore the rigid *kamui yukar* genre presents traditional Ainu practices and cosmological views, while the more adaptable *uwepeker* genre reflects more recent Ainu experience altered by outside influences during the Edo Period.

For this study, I focus on Ainu oral narratives centering on the depiction and appeasement of famine in both the traditional, metered *kamui yukar* and the modern, unmetered *uwepeker*. I decided to focus my study on stories of famine, because traditional Ainu subsistence and ritual life centered around procuring and securing food, so preventing famine was a central issue. In particular, I argue that the *kamui yukar* stories present traditional beliefs and practices surrounding food, highlighting the reciprocal relationship between the traditional Ainu pantheon of deities and human beings. On the other hand, *uwepeker* stories of famine contain commentary not only on growing trade with and reliance on the Japanese for basic nourishment during the Edo Period, but also on the deterioration of faith in traditional human-god relationships. These



stories also hint that these changes and loss of autonomy are the direct consequence of pressures from the Japanese to the south. We can see clear evidence of a loss of both traditional spiritual beliefs and hunting and gathering practices when comparing the *kamui yukar* and *uwepeker* of food and famine.

As a traditionally hunter-gatherer people with limited agricultural cultivation and no trade for food, the Hokkaido Ainu were largely dependent on the abundance of the natural world around them. Ainu society, religion, and language developed to maintain a comfortable, and autonomous subsistence level so that every Ainu could live ‘not wanting for food’, *kupoutar yayperepoka*, the condition of greatest happiness (Kayano 1994, 109). The Ainu believed that the ecosystem in which they lived, or *ainu moshir*, was inhabited by a variety of deities, or *kamui*, who protected and gave food to human beings in return for ritual offerings. Under these traditional views, the plants and especially animals that provided the Ainu with food were believed to be the corporeal form of divine spirits, which must be properly honored to maintain a balanced, reciprocal relationship between human beings and the gods. These religious views informed strict rituals surrounding food collection and consumption and influenced early trade practices. All of these characteristics of the early Ainu subsistence lifestyle are reflected in the oldest and most religious form of Ainu oral tradition, the *kamui yukar*.

It is a commonly held belief among historians of the Ainu that the traditional ways of life and traditional cosmological views survived into the Meiji Period, when the systematic development of Hokkaido by the Japanese destroyed or appropriated the resources of land, fish, and game upon which the Ainu hunter-gatherer lifestyle depended (Siddle, 72). However, there is a key error in this way of thinking – it assumes that traditional Ainu culture remained insulated from outside influence until the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century, which was definitely not the case. Trade and

cultural exchange with mainland Japan and other Asiatic peoples existed from the earliest emergence of Ainu culture (Kikuchi T, 47). Also, not only did Ainu culture never exist in isolation, but traditional beliefs and life practices deteriorated under outside pressures long before the Meiji government began its campaigns of subjugation and assimilation. While it is true that government-sponsored and systematic development of Hokkaido, resulting in the displacement of Ainu people, began with the policies of the Japanese Meiji government, this is not the whole story. Historians have often overlooked the results of Japanese immigrant encroachment and unfavorable trade policies during the Edo Period on traditional Ainu ways of life. Already in the Edo Period, due to contact with Japanese immigrants and trade, the Ainu had begun to lose their traditional culture and autonomy.

Although it is obvious that the Ainu lost many rights and freedoms during the Meiji Period, their traditional and autonomous subsistence and cosmology were already altered by Japanese expansion and trade before the implementation of Meiji control, particularly during the latter part of the Edo Period. During this period the traditional Ainu hunting and gathering lifestyle changed to one focused on procuring goods for trade with Japanese merchants. This meant a shift from hunting and gathering for autonomous subsistence, to food collection activities for barter, which led to a drastic shift in Ainu cosmology. Even as trade arrangements became increasingly unfavorable, the Ainu began to rely more and more heavily on Japanese trade for sustenance. Toward the end of the Early Modern Period, the Ainu had depleted much of their native hunting and gathering lands through overexploitation and had lost other lands to invading mainland Japanese farmers. Japanese fishing stations also usurped rivers and traditional Ainu fishing sources. This resulted in a considerable change in traditional Ainu food practices to keep up with the new trade and environmental pressures. This historical change in food practices is reflected

in the comparison between the more traditional, conservative *kamui yukar* and the more modern narratives of Ainu oral tradition, the *uwepeker*.

For this study I have translated one narrative of each genre from Japanese into English and will use these primary stories, along with others, for my literary and historical analysis. I have included both the *kamui yukar* story, titled “The White Weasel Goddess,” and the *uwepeker*, titled “The God of Famine Tells the Story of his own Experience.” These two translations are included in Appendix I and II respectively. Through the comparison of these two genres, and my translated stories in particular, I show the persistence over time of basic, traditional Ainu concepts regarding the spiritual cosmology of food in the *kamui yukar*. Then I present how the “God who Governs Famine” and other *uwepeker* stories appear more modern than the conservative *kamui yukar* tales. In other words, I show how modernizing influences in the *uwepeker* reflect the changing political and social situation of the Ainu during the Edo Period.

Oral traditions have largely been overlooked by historians as sources for historical analysis (largely due to the fact that they are mutable and cannot be reliably dated). However, I show through psychodynamic analysis and comparison of two types of Ainu oral traditions that modern influences in these narratives can be analyzed to show historical change. These oral traditions about famine can therefore be used to provide an indigenous perspective on history. During the later Edo Period, increasingly unfavorable trade and Japanese encroachment irrevocably changed Ainu food practices, and the Ainu famine narratives offer ways of seeing the experience of food anxiety from the Ainu point of view.

By looking at the spiritual conception of famine control in the more traditional and static *kamui yukar* and the more modern and mutable *uwepeker*, I show that Ainu oral traditions contradict the history written by Japanese documentary sources. Comparison of Ainu oral

narratives sheds light on how loss of traditional Ainu food practices and faith occurred during the Edo Period, long before the systematic subjugation by the Meiji government.

First, I will present a psychodynamic theoretical framework for reading oral traditions, which have characteristics distinct from written texts. Then I will present a short discussion on how to use these oral traditions as sources for historical analysis. Following this setup of academic theory and practice, I will discuss traditional Ainu food practices and cosmology using written documentary sources in both Japanese and English. This historical review will be continued with a discussion of the changing nature of Ainu-Japanese trade relations and its effects on traditional subsistence and worldviews. These chapters will provide the reader with a historical account based on conventional historical methods, such as textual analysis and archeology. The following chapters will look at the *kamui yukar* and *uwepeker* genres to show how these stories not only mirror historical changes, that Japanese sources documented during the Edo Period, but also provide an Ainu perspective on history that speaks to a significant loss of faith in traditional hunting and gathering practices and cosmological views.

## Chapter 1: 'Reading' Oral Traditions

In an increasingly literate global society, the idea of language has come to be inseparable from the idea of writing systems. In particular, for the average English-speaking audience, it is nearly impossible to imagine literature or narrative as something other than lettered text. In other words, the idea of a story as a written document that must be *read* in order for the story to be consumed has become intrinsic to the idea of a narrative. Therefore, a modern, literate reader approaches a narrative text with a particular way of consuming meaning that is informed by their familiarity with a written (chirographic) language. For example, when modern readers sit down to immerse themselves in a story, they find a quiet space with no distractions that may influence the meaning of the words on the page. They have only the text to guide them through the narrative and therefore they read the story for subtleties of meaning implied solely by the words.

This closeted and word-oriented consumption of meaning is in distinct contrast to the experience of oral recitation – with perhaps the most relevant comparison for a modern literate reader being the performance of a one-act play. Consuming the meaning of an oral narrative, like watching a play, means not just listening to the words of the story, but also incorporating the sights, smells, sounds, and emotions evoked by the time and place of delivery. This difference in consumer experience between reading a story and listening to that same story performed suggests that a person's narrative consumption depends on his or her language vehicle, be it text or oral communication. This realization has become a central issue in literary studies and has fueled the question of whether people from oral cultures may understand narrative differently

than those people from chirographic cultures and furthermore, whether or not this difference in narrative consumption is the product of an underlying difference in thought process.

Although the chirographic mode of consumption applies to most modern, written narratives it is not an appropriate method of understanding narratives from oral traditions, because these stories are produced by cultures not influenced by writing systems. Therefore, it is necessary to first understand the inherent differences between primary oral cultures – those indigenous cultures that have no written language and (ideally) no concept of written characters as representative of language – and chirographic cultures before seeking to understand the meaning of oral narratives. Only after understanding how oral traditions differ from written traditions and how these differences manifest in particular psychodynamic<sup>1</sup> characteristics of orality, can an informed reader approach and consume an oral narrative as the intended audience did. Therefore, to inform my reading of oral traditions I will provide an explanation of how orality influenced certain characteristics of oral traditions distinct from written narrative. To do this, I will borrow heavily from the work of ‘great divide’ theory, although only to the extent of understanding the distinct psychodynamics of orality as applied to literature. In explaining the divide between oral traditions and chirographic traditions, I hope only to help the reader better understand and appreciate the particular character of oral narrative, not to pass judgment on the relative advantage of either type.

### **Great Divide Theory**

What is known today as ‘great divide’ theory is the body of discourse by literary scholars, such as Milman Perry and Albert Lord, Walter Ong, and John Goody and Ian Watt, that attempts

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<sup>1</sup> I use this term as it is used in ‘great divide’ theory to mean the thought processes and motivational forces acting especially at the unconscious level

to identify the fundamental differences between narratives and thought patterns in oral traditions and those in written traditions. Although this theory was improperly used to show the superiority of chirographic culture and has since been written off as obsolete and discriminatory, I believe that the average chirographic reader can benefit from understanding the general characteristics of oral tradition identified by ‘great divide’ theorists. I claim that the theory of the ‘great divide’ and the characteristics of oral traditions identified by it should not be completely disregarded as they can still serve as a useful, although admittedly limited, tool to help readers understand the structure and meaning of primary oral narrative. My motivation in using this theory is not to show how chirographic, or textually literate, cultures are a superior stage of psychodynamic development (a common, yet misguided application of ‘great divide’ theory), but instead to acknowledge the differences between oral and written narrative in order to inform analysis and celebration of unique works of oral traditions.

Through the 1960s and into the 1970s, the study of oral traditions was dominated by the idea that the differences between written and oral language inform the differing thought processes of people of chirographic and primary oral cultures. These works identified characteristics of oral narratives as distinct from textual narratives and then used these characteristic differences to define the ‘great divide’ between the psychodynamics, or thought processes, of oral cultures and those of chirographic cultures. Many theorists working under the framework of the ‘great divide’ theory sought to use the comparison of oral and written language to show how human consciousness evolves to its “fuller potentials” through writing (Ong, 15). They claimed that logical, analytic, and esoteric thought could not develop without the advent of writing. ‘Great divide’ theorists were focused on using the distinct characteristics of oral cultures to better appreciate and understand the impact and importance of written language. In so doing,

they concluded that oral traditions are incapable of the “development of not only science, but also of history, philosophy, explicative understanding of literature and of any art” (15). In other words, writers concerned in establishing a ‘great divide’ between the thinking processes of different social groups (illiterate/literate) “have classically described them in such terms as pre-logical/logical, primitive/modern, and concrete/scientific” (Street, 24). By doing this, they claimed that the development of sophisticated and modern thinking is tied to the development of written language and literacy.

Thus, in more recent years, ‘great divide’ theory has been criticized for being elitist and Western-centric. As a consequence of this and the increasing literacy of the world, literary theory has moved away from this idea of a definite divide, instead insisting that there exists a more fluid continuum between oral traditions and chirographic cultures, one that better accounts for “the reality of ‘mixed’ and interacting modes” of communication (5). This continuum model makes increasing sense in modern times as the number of truly primary oral cultures has dwindled. The focus of literary studies has shifted from the distinction between oral and written language to the study of differing levels of literacy within an almost exclusively chirographic world. Thus many have written off the works of ‘great divide’ theorists as not only biased, but also parochial and obsolete.

These critics, while appropriately questioning the assertion that written language is necessary for sophisticated and analytic thought (and is therefore more advanced than and superior to oral communication), have largely ignored other insights that could be gained from ‘great divide’ theory. Although the conclusions drawn from the psychodynamic analysis of oral traditions have been largely discredited, I claim that the characteristics of oral traditions identified by ‘great divide’ theorists – in particular the formulaic, repetitive, participatory and



experiential, homeostatic, and temporal natures of the narratives – can be applied to increase understanding of oral narratives. In particular, traditional Ainu oral narratives serve as an especially good model of ‘great divide’ characteristics because the Ainu culture can be considered a nearly primary oral culture. This is because, for much of their history, the Ainu had no written language and only limited contact with the Japanese writing system and therefore were little influenced by chirographic modes of thinking and narrative consumption. Thus, Ainu stories were passed down for hundreds and possibly thousands of years in an environment of primary orality.

### **Psychodynamics of Orality**

The telling of stories in an oral tradition functions as the transmission of a collective cultural knowledge. All beliefs and values are communicated between individuals in a chain of interlocking face-to-face conversations (Goody and Watt, 29). This oral communication mandates that collective knowledge be stored and transmitted in distinct ways. In these oral traditions, narrative functions as a means of transmission and absorption of cultural and social knowledge. So ultimately the orality of the language and the associated collectivity of cultural knowledge in which these narratives are delivered influences the meaning behind the stories.

#### **(I) Formulaic and Mnemonic**

In chirographic cultures, when knowledge is forgotten literate peoples can easily look up information in a preserved text to bring it back to mind. However, in a primary oral culture, which has no texts to reference, people know only what they can recall to memory (Ong, 33). Because of this reliance on memory, oral traditions develop complex mnemonic systems to facilitate the preservation of knowledge. “In a primary oral culture, to solve effectively the

problem or retaining and retrieving carefully articulated thought, you have to do your thinking in mnemonic patterns, shaped for ready oral recurrence” (34). According to ‘great divide’ theory, because of this reliance on mnemonic patterns, thoughts within oral cultures come into being in “heavily rhythmic, balanced patterns, in repetitions or antitheses, in alliterations and assonances, in epithetic and other formulary expressions, in standard thematic settings, ... which come to mind readily and which themselves are patterned for retention and ready recall, or in other mnemonic form” (34). This heavy use of mnemonic systems goes so far as to occasionally determine syntax (Havelock, 87-96, 131, 294) and gives rise to very rhythmic and formulaic language within oral traditions centered on standardized themes and structures (Lord, 68-98). This use of formulary expressions and mnemonic devices can be seen in both the narrative structure and particular language of oral traditions.

A predetermined story, thematic structure and content outline are important to oral delivery because they serve as a memory aid to the reciter, who as he or she relates the story knows the general direction it must follow. Therefore, this prescribed narrative form ensures that the narrated stories are similar with each recitation. In addition, the formulaic nature guarantees that the meaning or lesson of the narrative comes through with each retelling. Narratives in oral traditions often serve not just as entertainment, but also as a way to pass down cultural practices, belief systems, and moral lessons. These stories are often told during festivals or at communal gatherings and teach the listeners the proper ways of living according to cultural practices and the consequences if they should disregard these important lessons. Thus, the formulaic nature of the narrative structure serves to clarify and solidify the meaning of the story in its transitory delivery by giving a prescribed, easy-to-follow model that assures that the reciter always includes the moral conclusion.

Not only is the structure of oral narratives generally formulaic, but the genres also utilize, with varying degrees, many formulaic expressions and epithetic language (Lord, 30). Depending on the demands of the genre, this formulaic language and set phrasing can help the reciter fit the story to a rigid meter or simply allow the reciter time to recall what comes next in the story. In other words, having set phrases that introduce integral characters or episodes in the narrative make them easier to remember and so reduce the burden on the reciter to include these pivotal parts in the delivery. But this is not the only purpose served by formulaic language; it also helps the listener understand the meaning of the narrative. According to ‘great divide’ theory, since oral cultures store knowledge in a collective memory of proverbs and stories, learning or knowing means achieving close, empathetic, communal identification with known expressions and tropes (Havelock, 145-146). So the audience gains understanding by associating known formulas in the story with their communal connotation. Or in other words, when the audience hears these formulaic introductions (generally a staple of all narratives of one or more genres), they recognize not only the formulaic words delivered but also all of the accumulated connotations associated with the familiar use of those words.

## **(II) Repetitive**

Repetition, or what Ong terms “redundancy,” is another key characteristic of oral tradition identified by ‘great divide’ theory. Similar to the way formulas and mnemonics function to ensure smooth oral delivery, repetition is also necessary to allow the speaker time to recall from memory and express in formulaic structure what comes next in the narrative. In oral delivery, although a pause may be effective, a hesitation is disarming to the audience and disrupts the flow of the story. Thus, it is necessary for reciters “to repeat something, artfully if possible, rather than simply to stop speaking while fishing for the next idea” (Ong, 40).

Not only does redundancy allow the reciter time to think, it is also favored by the physical conditions of oral delivery. Acoustic problems often make it difficult for everyone in a large audience to hear or understand every word. This means that it is advantageous for the reciter to say the same thing, or to deliver equivalent information in a new way, two or three times (40). Since there is no text that can be reread to remind the consumer what has happened previously in the story, it also becomes imperative in longer narratives to remind listeners of previous episodes within the same story.

This repetition of certain passages or even shorter epithetic formulas additionally serves to influence the listener's interpretation of the narrative and thus inform the consumption of meaning. Repetition can be effectively used to place emphasis on salient points within the narrative, whether they are moral lessons or a particular mood. For instance, repeating an episode of a character's previous failure to juxtapose it against a current episode of success would help audiences by making the comparison between right and wrong clear. Additionally, the overt repetition of moral troupes, such as the lessons taught by gods in the narratives, can help solidify the audience's communal knowledge of how to live life according to what the narrative and society teaches as culturally appropriate.

In addition to episodic or long-passage repetition, epithets and other forms of phrasal repetition are often used. Due to the formulaic and mnemonic nature of oral tradition, the oral poet has an abundant repertoire of epithets diversified enough to provide an epithet for any exigency that might arise as he or she stitches together the story (Ong, 21-22). And this repertoire grants the reciter the ability to choose an epithet to elicit in the listener a particular mood or connotation. For example, continually referring to a character in a story by an epithetic characteristic, the reciter can manipulate the audience's impression of the character, pushing it

toward one desired interpretation of that character's role in the story. Or similarly, repeating a set phrase about the weather or scenery can connote a particular atmosphere. In this way, the reciter can use repetition to emphasize particular traits and in so doing guide the listener to a preferred meaning as they consume the story.

### **(III) Participatory and Experiential**

The recitation of an oral narrative has a distinct relationship with the very nature of sound itself. Sound exists only as it is going out of existence – it is essential evanescent (32). Furthermore, sound can only be transferred across a limited range. Therefore, unlike a fixed and persistent written text, the oral narrative and the chance to understand its meaning ends when the spoken words stop or when the words cease to reach the listener. Once the words are replaced by silence, the story is no longer perceivable. This means that a fundamental consequence of its orality is that oral narrative requires the physical presence of both a storyteller and audience. In other words, the storyteller and his or her audience need to be within earshot of each other for there to exist any communication of ideas or meaning. So the relationship between the audience and the storyteller is of much greater importance to the meaning of oral narratives than the practically non-existent relationship between an author of a written narrative and its reader.

The participatory nature of oral culture, or in other words the active role of the audience in consuming oral delivery, informs not only the structure of the narrative but also its meaning. According to 'great divide' theory, in the total absence of any writing, there is nothing outside the thinker, no text, to enable him or her to produce the same line of thought again, making an interlocutor, or listener, virtually essential (Ong, 34). In other words, "sustained thought in an oral culture is tied to communication" (34). Thus, in an oral tradition, the content is much more contingent on the relationship between the narrator, audience, and characters. To create complex

and continuous narrative, the reciter must use the audience and their reactions as a sounding board off which to bounce ideas and must tailor each delivery to the preferences and immediate needs of the audience at the time. This means that the presence of the listener not only facilitates the delivery of the narrative, but also informs its content and dictates immediacy of meaning.

In oral tradition of every genre, audience participation is key to the pacing of the narrative. Many oral traditions have rhythmic accompaniment in which the audience can take part. In fact, the audience as a whole can speed up or crescendo this rhythmic accompaniment to mirror its quickening interest or heightening anticipation. The reciter then uses these reactions to tailor the narrative to the particular expectations or emotions of the audience at the time of delivery. This participatory nature of oral recitation means that the same narrative structure and formulas is manipulated each time to mean something slightly different depending on the audience and other outside factors.

Not only does audience participation of oral recitation inform the pace and temporal delivery of the narrative, but the experiential nature also serves to reinforce the currency and immediacy of the content of the story to the human experience. In the terms of ‘great divide’ theory, the stories and their content tend to be ‘empathetic’ and tied more closely to the immediate ‘human life world.’ Or as Ong explains, “without historical records and writing to structure knowledge at a distance from lived experience, oral cultures must conceptualize and verbalize their knowledge in close reference to ... familiar interaction of human beings” (42). This immediacy to the human life world is most obvious in oral narratives, where the gods appear anthropomorphic, with physical features, personalities and ways of life similar to those of human beings. As a consequence, these narratives, even when their characters are gods, tend to teach lessons that are concrete and practical to the everyday lives of the human listeners.

I would like to note here that I do not use this characteristic of oral narratives to claim, as ‘great divide’ theorists would, that oral cultures lacked the analytic thought necessary to produce a complex and distant cosmology. However, I do recognize that oral narratives tend to be based on human experience and speak directly to the immediate, daily lives of the listeners as opposed to esoteric and theoretical concerns and I also recognize that understanding this immediacy of meaning can help inform the reading of these stories.

This participatory and experiential nature of oral narrative helps control the pace of the narrative and helps to tailor the context toward relevance to the human life-world. This active listening distinctly contrasts the way in which a reader consumes a written narrative. Reading a static text is a very individual and reproducible mode of consumption. The story is impersonal – it cannot change to meet the reader’s expectations or mood. Therefore a consumer of the story simply sits down alone with the narrative document and passively interprets the fixed wording on the page. On the other hand, it is clear that the audience interacts with not just the content of an oral narrative but also the experience of the recitation in a more immediate and more personal way than a reader of a written text.

#### **(IV) Homeostatic**

Understanding the participatory and experiential nature of oral traditions helps us to appreciate why skilled oral reciters deliberately vary their traditional narratives. This is because part of their skill is their ability to adjust to new audiences and new situations. ‘Great divide’ theory claims “oral societies live very much in a present which keeps itself in equilibrium or homeostasis by sloughing off memories which no longer have present relevance” (Ong, 46). In other words, the content of oral traditions changes subtly with each retelling to reflect the cultural, social, and political present. Even with narratives that tell stories of history, the part of

the past with no immediately discernible relevance to the present falls away. Thus, the present imposes its own restrictions on past remembrance (Goody and Watt, 31-34).

This focus on the present is not just a ploy by the reciter to preserve the audience's attention, it also arises from the fact that what an individual remembers tends to be only what is of critical importance to his or her immediate experience. Therefore the individual memory of each person and each generation "will mediate the cultural heritage in such a way that its new constituents will adjust to the old by the process of interpretation... and whatever parts of it have ceased to be of contemporary relevance are likely to be eliminated by the process of forgetting" (Goody and Watt, 30). One concrete example of this phenomenon is the omission of historical allusions that no longer have any meaning or are no longer understood by newer generations in their cultural environment (Vansina, 6). In other words, since social relevance is stored in the memory, oral traditions necessitate the transmission of stories and experiences from one generation to the next through face-to-face communication. So in each of these conversations,

The social function of memory – and of forgetting – ... [is] the final stage of what may be called the homeostatic organization of the cultural tradition in non-literate societies. The language is developed in intimate association with the experience of the community, and it is learned by the individual in face-to-face contact with the other members. What continues to be of social relevance is stored in the memory while the rest is usually forgotten: and language ... is the effective medium of this crucial process of social digestion and elimination. (Goody and Watt, 30-31)

Consequently, unlike a written text that is static in time, an oral narrative continuously changes to reflect the immediate human environment in which it is delivered. This means that oral traditions more readily reflect a society's present cultural values rather than a curiosity about the past or possible futures.

Therefore, it may be easy to assume that these homeostatic oral narratives can only really be about the present since the medium of oral transmission allows for inconvenient parts of the



past to be forgotten and instead replaced by present exigencies. Following this view, one might say that oral narratives are ‘modern’ stories. However, oral narratives have been passed down for generations. Would this not make them very ‘historical’ stories? This seemingly inherent contradiction has sparked controversy over whether oral traditions, since they are continuously changing with the historic and social context of the times, can be used as historical sources. This relationship will be explored further in the following chapter.

### **(V) Temporal**

One final point crucial to understanding these psychodynamics of oral tradition is realizing that the art form is temporal. Listening to the recitation of an oral narrative is unique and cannot be reproduced in the same way again. First, the words of the narrative themselves change with each retelling. It has been well documented that oral storytellers do not normally perform from verbatim memorization of their work, but instead piece formulaic phrases together into a tentative narrative outline (Ong, 21). In other words, the reciter is continuously composing as he sings and therefore each retelling of the story is unique in word combination and meaning (Lord, 17).

But the experience of the oral delivery does not only encompass the words themselves, but also the gestures of the reciter, the company and mood of the audience, the noises, sceneries, and smells of the surroundings, etc. All of these factors couple with the vocabulary to help solidify the emotive interpretation of the words and to add to a greater meaning through the stimulation of other senses. So that,

The meaning of each word is ratified in a succession of concrete situations, accompanied by vocal inflections and physical gestures, all of which combine to particularize both its specific denotation and its accepted connotative usages. This process of direct semantic ratification operates cumulatively and as a result the totality of symbol-referent

relationships is more immediately experienced by the individual in an exclusively oral culture, and is thus more deeply socialized. (Goody and Watt, 29)

Therefore, the total experience, of the oral narrative, and hence how the listener interprets meaning, are dependent on the exact time and environment of delivery. This makes the recitation of oral narratives a very singular experience, and one that is not well understood by a chirographic audience who seeks to simply ‘read’ the text of the story without participating in its mutable and personal time and place.

### **The Consequence of Psychodynamics on ‘Reading’ Oral Narratives**

Especially in the modern age when primary oral cultures no longer exist, the singular experience of oral recitation is lost when the narratives are recorded in print for a chirographic audience. These transcriptions or their translations are only one, fixed telling of the narrative that are often recorded in a forced, unnatural setting – a time and place without the usual reciter-audience relationship and without the other sensory stimuli that make up the oral narrative experience. This means that the reciter at the time of recording cannot address the needs of the intended audience. This is particularly true for written transcriptions that, especially when published, are meant to be consumed (like any other written story) by any reader who picks up the text in any undetermined time and place. It would seem that in studying and anthologizing these narratives of oral cultures, scholars have forced an oral art form that is experienced for its meaning into a static document without context or audience. These transcriptions are fixed texts, but they reflect a single moment in an oral tradition and therefore the stories are fundamentally oral (Lord, 124). There are those who come to think of this written text not as the recording of one moment of the tradition, but instead as *the* story. It is then the great consequence of the fundamental difference between the oral and written ways of thinking that if a reader approaches

these narratives with such a chirographic view of consumption they will fail to fully understand the meaning of the story.

It may then seem impossible for the chirographic, modern reader to consume oral narratives as they were intended to be. A reader of these narratives can better appreciate the lost experience of oral delivery if he or she understands particular characteristics that make oral traditions different from chirographic texts. In fact, without the use of ‘great divide’ theory and its understanding of certain psychodynamics of orality, I claim that it would be impossible to consume narratives of primary oral cultures, such as Ainu narratives of famine, as their intended audience did. Thus, it is impossible to gain the true meaning behind the narrative without understanding how and why they were delivered in formulaic, repetitive, participatory and experiential, homeostatic, and temporal style.

In this study, ‘great divide’ theory will also be used to explain how psychodynamic characteristics of oral recitation influence the relative ages of oral narratives. In particular, it is important for understanding that narratives with more prescribed formulas and regimented recitations will tend to be more conservative in content, whereas narratives with a freer style of recitation, that leave the reciter more creative license to fit the content to the immediate environment of the audience, tend to show more modern influences (be more homeostatic). This ‘dating’ of oral traditions makes them more valuable as sources for historical analysis.

## Chapter 2: Oral Traditions as Historical Sources

Myth making is a process not unlike a conversation in which narratives are transmitted spontaneously from one person to another. While myths are often portrayed as timeless stories handed down through generations, they are rarely static (Cruz and Frijhoff, 6). Psychodynamic theories have identified that, in varying degrees, oral traditions share a common homeostatic characteristic – as oral narratives are transmitted, the stories adapt and mutate as content is lost or distorted through imaginative invention. Many of these changes in narrative detail originate in the creative license of the reciter as he or she seeks to elicit certain sensations in the audience (Vansina, 5). The orality of these narratives means that the ‘atmosphere,’ the pleasure gained by both reciter and audience not only from the words and content of the story itself but from the interplay of smells, sounds, and temporal emotions of the entire experience, demands a certain originality and immediacy of each inspirational telling.

Thus, mythologies are created at any time and arise from events that address the immediate needs of an audience. However these myths spread easily only if they have a basis in truth or probability that speaks to the hearts and minds of a majority. Oral narratives often maintain a loose narrative structure with each retelling, but the details are tailored to the needs of the immediate recitation. The themes and general narrative structure of powerful myths remain fairly constant through time because, like powerful symbols, they speak to many different people and can convey multiple meanings not just across time, but simultaneously (Cruz and Frijhoff, 7). On the other hand, the details of the narratives are rooted in the epoch’s mental frame (Daba-Buzoianu, 127). A successful myth is one which offers an answer to a matter of great importance

given a particular time and environment, one whose message is relevant to the immediate human experience of the audience. So myths refer to an unhistorical theme or archetype, but they are not necessarily ancient stories – they simultaneously show continuity in history and the possibility to adapt to the social, historical, and political conditions of a certain era (127).

Therefore, we can say that mythologies are neither just modern nor just ‘historical.’ And this is because the tendency of these stories towards homeostasis is not complete. That is, that not all old elements in the myth are forgotten or replaced with more modern influences; some elements remain consistent with each retelling even from generation to generation. Furthermore, even those items that are forgotten tend to leave traces and are not totally erased from memory (Vansina, 121). In other words, changes in the social, cultural, and political environments often lead to additional influences, but not necessarily to the suppression of more traditional qualities, leaving older variants intact. “Symbolically, the myth discloses the substance of the past and of the present, making them appear as interrelated parts of the same reality” (Tamse, 15). Therefore, a body of traditions reflects both the past and the present. Because of this some recent scholarship has argued that myths can be distinguished as either more historical or more modern, depending on their level of conservative retention of old elements on the one hand, or participation in homeostatic tendencies on the other.

In the following chapters, I will discuss how an understanding of the conservative or homeostatic nature of an oral mythology (or a genre of mythologies) can help determine the relative ‘historicity’ or ‘modernity’ of a myth. By comparing myths from different times, we can see not only multiple and complex connections between myths, but also to understand how myths have a certain periodicity, as they are created and transmitted through history, and in time are replaced by other symbolic constructions and stories (Daba-Buzoianu, 127). I will then claim

that by comparing these historical and modern mythologies we can see, from an indigenous perspective, how cultural views change over time to meet the environment of a particular time period.

### **The Development of a Historical Methodology for Oral Sources**

Oral traditions are historical sources of a special nature. Their special nature derives from the fact that their preservation depends on the powers and limitations of memory of successive generations of human beings and the consequent mutability of their content (Vansina, 1). For many years, the general consensus among historians was that anonymous oral traditions could not be relied upon with any certainty as a true account of events. Many went so far as to claim that one cannot “attach to oral traditions any historical value whatsoever under any conditions whatsoever” (Lowie 1915, 598). Some of this aversion to oral traditions went hand in hand with the elitist chirographic bias that also influenced ‘great divide’ theory. Many believed that without a writing system and the analytic thought that developed with it, primitive tribes had no sense of history, nor any sense of historical perspective (Lowie, 1917, 165). Oral traditions were seen then simply as sources with little value as historical evidence, apart from certain broad implications as to cultural diffusion (Hartland, 428).

This outright rejection of oral traditions gradually changed, and historians began to rely on them to fill in gaps in historical interpretation. Although these historians still distrusted the historical value of oral traditions and preferred ‘more accurate’ written records and other empirical data, they started to turn to oral narratives as a source for historical analysis only as a last resort. With this view, the historian only “in the absence of better evidence, follows the lead of tradition until further data, of higher evidential value, serve to confirm or to refute his preliminary conjectures and hypotheses” (Goldenweiser, 763). Therefore, oral narratives were to

be used only when no other written records or analysis from other disciplines could shed light on the topic in question. And even when used, these sources needed to be corroborated by comparing them to ‘more trustworthy’ sources.

This skepticism toward accepting oral narratives unless they are corroborated by outside sources was codified into historical methodology and the influences of chirographic bias toward written sources can still be seen today. These skeptics claim that, due to their inherently anonymous nature, oral traditions cannot be relied upon as a true account of events because neither the first eye-witness nor the subsequent tellers of the tale are known (Vansina, 4). Many historians noted that oral traditions even included contradictions, not just between two stories but also even occasionally within the same myth. Still other oral traditions went against historical ‘fact’ already established from other disciplines and sources (5). Therefore, the consensus was that reliability of oral traditions could not be established by internal evidence, but only by criteria taken from auxiliary disciplines, or by a correspondence between various independent accounts (17). We see this view summarized clearly in the proceedings of the first conference on African history in 1953:

It [is] clear that oral tradition ought never to be used alone and unsupported. It has to be related to the social and political structure of the people who preserve it, compared with the traditions of neighboring people, and linked with the chronological indications of genealogies and age-set cycles, of documented contacts with literate peoples, dated natural phenomena such as famines and eclipses, and of archeological finds. (Hamilton, 11)

This skepticism toward oral narratives was not only shared by colleagues in the study of history, but in related studies of ethnography and anthropology. In fact, in 1951 a standard handbook of anthropology and its methodologies instructed practitioners,

Where authoritative historical evidence is available the investigator must evaluate it in accordance with the canons of the historian. Great care must be exercised in interpreting oral traditions historically. Frequently evidence about the past of a society can be derived

from an analysis of present-day customs, from material culture, archeological and linguistic data, and the physical anthropology of the people. (RAI, 40)

So it is clear that this skeptical, if not hostile view toward the historicity of oral traditions required that if these sources were used at all, that they be corroborated by written historical sources and other empirical data. But in applying a western and chirographic idea of history and fact to oral sources, these historians are rejecting mythologies that offer a unique and important source for understanding how indigenous peoples related with and lived in their cultural environment.

### **The Utility of Oral Sources**

Although many historians remain skeptical of using oral sources as fact, many have moved toward using them, not to establish a chronology of historical events, but instead for a greater understanding of the culture and indigenous perspective that gave rise to the tradition. In this way, historians look at how traditions satisfy certain psychological needs of the audience and so function “to emphasize particular qualitative aspects and details of events, not necessarily to distort the major historical sequences” (Southall, 139). Thus a tradition need not be entirely without value as historical evidence in that oral narratives can be used to illustrate a less event-oriented history. In other words, oral sources shed more light on the history of thought, philosophy, and cultural practice of certain peoples rather than fact (Vansina, 11).

Oral traditions are conditioned by the society in which they develop and are transmitted so their content can speak to the historical environment in which the indigenous people lived at the time of recitation. It follows therefore that no oral tradition can transcend the boundaries of the social system in which it exists. It is spatially limited to the geographical boundaries of the society in question, and limited in time to that society’s generational depth (171). Myths are



invented to meet the demands of a particular, often political situation, and hence suffer from the bias imposed by the function they fulfill. But there is more to it than this. Each type of society has in fact chosen to preserve the kind of historical traditions suited to its particular type of structure and the historical information to be obtained by studying these traditions is restricted by the framework of reference constructed by the society in question (171). Because of this, some historians regard the content of traditions as being entirely determined by the function performed by traditions within the social structure as a whole and as a means for maintaining that structure (Wilks, 84-86, 116-118). So the study of myths, which are a cultural collective representation of past events, is part of the study of the society to which they belong (Evans-Pritchard, 121). In this view, the function of oral narratives defines the limitations of such traditions. The historical information that can be obtained from oral traditions is therefore always of a limited nature and has a certain bias. However, this is not unique to oral traditions but is in fact equally true of many written sources.

The contemporary historical methodological approach toward oral narratives has in some ways shifted from focusing on understanding a text to understanding its relationship to its audience and understanding the cultural context from which the content arises – an approach very similar to that of a discerning literary critic reading a story (Cruz and Frijhoff, 6). It is important to recognize that myths are different from other forms of storytelling because of their historical foundation. Mythical narratives must speak to a concern of its consumer, and therefore must have some basis in possibility or some grain of truth (10). However, they still serve many of the same functions as other forms of storytelling, such as moral elevation, articulation of cultural and individual aspirations, reinforcement of values and collective knowledge, and of course pure entertainment. Literary scholars read myths to find universal human truths that

underlie the stories and characters. Historians then read myths not to discover the truth or untruth of the myth, but instead to dissect its meaning in a cultural and historical context (9).

Oral traditions admittedly have their limitations as historical sources, since their content continuously mutates with the immediate environment of the tradition. Yet oral traditions can be of real value in historical analysis, especially when they are used to shed light on cultural history. While working with events and details within each story, doubts must be entertained about the factual events in the story unless they can be substantiated by other written historical sources (mainly from other societies) or from a number of auxiliary disciplines such as archeology, linguistics, ethnology, and physical anthropology (Vansina, 126).

### **History as Interpretation**

Oral traditions are historical sources, which can provide reliable information about the past if they are used with all the circumspection demanded by the application of historical methodology to any kind of source whatsoever (183). In short, oral traditions are no different from any other historical source that may contain bias, error, or invention. Many people imagine that past events revealed in written sources can be accepted as fact, since they are fixed and often dated. On the other hand, events in oral sources are viewed with little certainty; they are thought of as the invention of the reciter and therefore things that may or may not have happened. In other words, myths are seen as the product of imagination and therefore not anchored in history (Daba-Busoianu, 127). However, this black-and-white view forgets that any historical synthesis comprises an interpretation of the facts and is thus founded upon probabilities, no matter what the nature of the source.

It is important not to lose sight of the fact that history is always an interpretation and that historians themselves are not immune from myth making (Cruz and Frijhoff, 3). Like myth, history is about storytelling, about putting events into a plausible narrative sequence and about creating larger meaning from small events. No historian can have an unlimited knowledge of history, and is therefore obliged to interpret the sources at his or her disposal. This interpretation is never an absolute truth, but only one of a few possible interpretations of the facts at the historian's disposal (Vansina, 184). The role of the historian is then not to find the 'ultimate truth' as a judge or observer, but instead to choose between several hypotheses as a mediator of probabilities (Cruz and Frijhoff, 3). It is thus the ultimate goal of history to refine these interpretations, to accumulate so many probabilities that they almost amount to certainty. But even with this methodological rigor, the historian can never fully arrive at 'the truth' because the past is something outside our experience (Vansina, 185).

The historian decides on historical truth "by using calculations of probability, by interpreting the facts, and by evaluating them in an attempt to recreate for himself the circumstances which existed at certain given moments of the past. And here the historian using oral traditions finds himself on exactly the same level as historians using any other kind of historical source material" (186). A consequence of the discipline of historical analysis is that the historian can never know more than what documents and sources have preserved for him. Each type of historical source has its own limitations and its own particular lens through which it presents events. The existence of such a bias means, however, that each type of source has its own advantages as a means for conveying information about the past (141). In particular, oral narratives can serve to represent the voice and perspectives of the indigenous culture from which they originated.

It is a tenet of general historical methodology that a more rounded view of the past can be achieved by comparing widely different historical sources, be they written or oral. Through this process facts can be corroborated and source bias can be detected and corrected (142). In the case of Ainu history, mainland Japanese government officials and traders wrote the great majority of historical sources. As a result, historical accounts, especially of the late premodern and early modern periods, during which the Ainu remained largely illiterate, are heavily influenced by Japanese bias. Although recent efforts in archeology and other more objective methodologies have tried to minimize this bias, much of the new data is analyzed within the historical framework established by Japanese-biased sources. Therefore, by introducing analysis of oral traditions to the history of the Ainu, I hope to offer another perspective, namely, the Ainu perspective as a counterbalance to the perceived Japanese bias. Therefore, I do not just recognize, but in fact celebrate the bias within the oral traditions of the Ainu. It is a central goal of this thesis to let the Ainu stories speak for the people themselves and shed light on not only the facts of changing Ainu food practices and trade relations due to growing social, political, environmental, and cultural pressures during the Edo Period, but also on how the Ainu felt and viewed these pressures.

## **Chapter 3: Traditional Ainu Food and Trade Culture**

The Jōmon period, which spanned from about 14,000 BC to about 300 BC, was a time in Japanese prehistory when the island of Hokkaido and the main island of Honshu were both inhabited by various Neolithic cultural groups. These Jōmon peoples, although differing considerably between communities, were characterized most notably by their sophisticated pottery. In these times, people lived with very limited development of agriculture and without the use of metal. However, as this period came to a close ethnic and cultural differences between Hokkaido and the mainland developed and two separate histories began to unfold.

The Yayoi culture emerged in southern Honshu and introduced rice agriculture to Japan as early as the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE. During this time, however, the north (primarily the Tōhoku area of northern Honshu and much of southern Hokkaido), was inhabited by the Epi- Jōmon people, longtime residents dating back to the Jōmon period who continued to live as a hunting and gathering people (Kikuchi I 1999, 74).

Between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Epi-Jōmon communities in Tōhoku and Hokkaido split and took two largely different paths. The Tōhoku people were integrated into Japanese society while those in Hokkaido developed the Satsumon culture. This culture, although sharing the sophisticated production and use of ceramic pottery with its Jōmon predecessor, was characterized by ways of life very different to that of the Jōmon peoples. In particular, a new hunting and gathering culture strongly focused on salmon fishing and influenced by the agricultural and metalworking culture of the south emerged to fit the Hokkaido ecology.

Timeline of Hokkaido Historical Periods<sup>1</sup>

	Hokkaido		Mainland Japan (Honshu)
	East	South	
AD	Jōmon Period		Jōmon Period
	Early Epi-Jōmon Period		Yayoi Period
300	Okhotsk Culture	Later Epi-Jōmon Period	Kofun Period
500			Asuka Period
700	Tobinitai Culture	Satsumon Period	Nara Period
900			Heian Period
1100	Ainu Culture		Kamakura Period
1300			Muromachi Period
1500			Azuchi-Momoyama Period
1700			Edo Period (1603-1868)

<sup>1</sup> This timeline is modified from a chart in Segawa's *Ainu no rekishi: umi to takara no nomado* (17).

## **The Satsumon Period and the Rise of Ainu Culture**

In the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries, farming people from the south began to colonize the Pacific coastal areas in northern Honshu. Because the thin volcanic soil there is not conducive to rice cultivation, these settlers probably came to raise horses and to produce mixed grains. Along with agriculture, these settlers brought with them the Yamato tomb building culture. Most likely, the Jōmon peoples in northern Honshu were assimilated into these settlers' culture, forming a distinct Tōhoku Epi-Jōmon culture (Segawa, 26).

These settlers also moved into the southern parts of central Hokkaido, where they introduced agriculture and metal tools. Despite increased periods of settlement due to unrest on the mainland between the 9<sup>th</sup> and the 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, migration from the south in Hokkaido was small scale and short-lived. Unlike in northern Honshu where the Jōmon people were assimilated, in Hokkaido the Tōhoku people did not dominate over the Epi-Jōmon people (27). In this way, the former unified culture of northern Tōhoku and Hokkaido became distinct, with the Tsugaru straits as the cultural boundary (30).

Although not dominated by this influx of foreign culture, the Jōmon people of Hokkaido adopted agriculture and absorbed the settlers, creating a new hunting and gathering culture which incorporated agricultural practices and iron from the south (27). The Jōmon people also adopted other practices from the south including, the building of raised storage sheds, the use of chopsticks, and the making of pottery for ritual (29). These new cultural influences were absorbed and localized to become Satsumon culture, named for the characteristic pottery patterning that emerged in the region.

In addition to influences from the south, trade and contact with northern Asiatic peoples in Sakhalin and northern Hokkaido influenced Jōmon hunting practices. Just as the Satsumon

peoples had gone south in search of metal goods, the Okhotsk people come south to Hokkaido (4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> century) aiming to trade for iron goods in northern Honshu (Segawa, 32). The Okhotsk culture is a culture that had the characteristics of adaptation to the ocean with fishing and hunting of sea mammals and originated in Sakhalin. In the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the Satsumon people advanced north and east into parts of Hokkaido that were occupied by the Okhotsk people (Kikuchi T, 50). By the end of the Satsumon period (late 12 early 13<sup>th</sup> c) they were assimilated and around the same time Okhotsk culture was ending on Sakhalin, moving from earthenware to iron.

Although the switch from Jōmon to Satsumon culture preserved the hunting and gathering lifeways, the subsistence practices and social structures took on new characteristics. First, the Satsumon began to specialize their hunting practices to fishing, most likely due to the influence of Okhotsk marine-mammal hunting culture. The hunting and gathering ecosystem of the Jōmon had been the forest, where they could forage for plants and kill wild game, which provided both food and materials for everyday life. However, with the introduction of agriculture and a new focus on fishing, Satsumon settlements moved from the upper forest levels to riverside plains, which had been previously avoided by Jōmon peoples due to flooding. The new Satsumon landscape was primarily the reed plain area corresponding to the spawning ground of salmon, with the upper levels reserved as hunting grounds or for agricultural plots (Segawa, 246).

A second influence in the rise of a distinct Satsumon culture was the introduction of metal tools with the introduction of agriculture from contact with the Japanese to the south. The Satsumon began to incorporate these iron goods not only into their subsistence practices, but also into their daily and ritual lives. But because the Satsumon people had no methods to mine ore and produce iron, all iron goods had to come from trade from Tōhoku and mainland Japan. In addition, Satsumon society stopped making pottery and replaced it with lacquerware also



imported from mainland Japan (Segawa, 37). In other words, early contact with the mainland Japanese and the introduction of metal meant that specialized trade had to be carried out on a regular basis.

This growing trade became the impetus for the maturation of Satsumon culture into Ainu culture. From the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century and tenth century onward, “What can be seen in the movement to a unique Hokkaido culture, is a system in which a hunting and fishing become specialized in a particular way to produce goods for trade, in other words what we can call the Ainu ecosystem came into being” (30). The Ainu then can be said to represent a composite of the Epi-Jōmon, Satsumon, and Okhotsk cultural groups (Walker 2001, 26). Materially there were great changes between the Satsumon and their expanding economic power and Ainu culture but in genealogical terms there was continuity, no change of actual people (Segawa, 40).

### **Relations between the Japanese State and Hokkaido**

Some of the earliest contacts between Japanese and the northern Epi-Jōmon peoples were politically orchestrated by Great Kings of the Yamato state (300-710AD). At this time Japan was ruled by theurgist and militaristic chiefs who were influenced by the notion of a Chinese-style “middle kingdom” with its pretensions to global centrality. Toward this goal, the 7<sup>th</sup> century Great Kings began to refashion themselves as Chinese-style universal monarchs “presiding over a multiethnic realm and receiving homage from far and wide” (Piggott, 117). The Epi-Jōmon peoples in the north had a vastly different language, culture, and religion than the Yamato state and lived outside the national framework and did not acknowledge the emperor’s rule (Kikuchi I. 1999, 75). Thus, under the borrowed Chinese model, they came to be seen as “barbarian” quasi-countries in the developing diplomatic order of the Japanese state (Walker 2001, 21).

Following this philosophy, the ancient Japanese state launched an aggressive campaign to subjugate the “northern barbarians” from the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century. The Japanese state, now under the rule of the Heian court (794-1185), launched a number of punitive expeditions into northern territory, pushing the Epi-Jōmon peoples further north (Kikuchi I. 1999, 76). However, these people in Hokkaido controlled natural resources not present on the island of Honshu that the Japanese desired, and continuing warfare stopped peaceful trade contacts. Therefore, after this period of warfare the belligerent strategy was switched to a policy of appeasement in order to secure the Japanese nation favorable trade conditions (76). The nation demanded that the chiefs of the northern Epi-Jōmon communities recognize the authority of and pay tribute to the Japanese, and northern border regions were placed under a local magistracy (Walker 2001, 21). By the 10<sup>th</sup> century, powerful families administered the Six Northern Districts for the Heian government. It was through these official posts that the borders of the burgeoning Japanese polity could be maintained and the “barbarian fringe” pacified (Kikuchi I. 1994, 28-30).

Even as political authority shifted in the Japanese state and the Kamakura government came to power, control of eastern barbarians was still viewed as one of the great affairs of state. And in the 11<sup>th</sup> century the Fujiwara family, vassals of the Kamakura government, emerged as the foremost military power in northeastern Japan (Walker 2001, 23).

By the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the Fujiwara had pushed the borders of their domain north and opened several new districts to cultivation and settlement and had nearly eradicated what remained of Epi-Jōmon communities in northern Honshu. With this northward expansion, elements of the Epi-Jōmon culture and local tradition disappeared from the mainland except in the northernmost part of the Tōhoku region. This area still maintained relations with the Satsumon and other

indigenous peoples in Hokkaido, southern Sakhalin, and the Kurile Islands (25). Therefore, the Satsumon people on the island of Hokkaido and Japan were connected largely by the assimilated Epi-Jōmon tribes in the Tōhoku area, who served as local powerbrokers at the border of the two cultures.

Ultimately, the Ando family was granted the title of governor of Hokkaido (then called Ezo) and placed in charge of administering the northern border and pacifying barbarians for the medieval state. The Ando although appointed to control regional affairs, were most involved in economic functions and trade with the emerging Hokkaido Ainu. Lucrative trade developed between port cities on Tsugaru Peninsula and Hokkaido. Special ships exempted from Kamakura tariffs brought goods originating from Ainu communities, such as salmon and animal skins, to ports on the Japan seacoast. Ainu ships also brought a fairly steady flow of goods from Hokkaido to Japan through the 17<sup>th</sup> century (26). In order to secure more direct trade, the Ando clan of Tsugaru invaded Hokkaido and installed a governor to control the trading network at the southern tip of the Oshima Peninsula in Matsumae, pushing the indigenous people northward.

But increased control over shipping and trade, the influx of Japanese settlers fleeing warfare on the mainland, and the practice of banishing political prisoners to Hokkaido, which became fairly commonplace in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, caused friction (Emori, 34-7). Increased settlement and trade restrictions put Ainu chiefs on the defensive, trying to protect claims to their homeland and the animals and fish that lived there as well as unrestricted rights to trade. And eventually Ando family attempts to assert more political and commercial influence over southern Hokkaido ended in bloody rebuff. In 1456 Ainu, led by Koshamain, destroyed all but two of the settlements in Matsumae and almost drove the Japanese out of Hokkaido altogether, which initiated a century of intermittent warfare (Siddle, 68). The Kakizaki family, in

vassalage to the Ando family, fought with distinction in Koshamain's War and emerged as the leader of the Japanese in southern Hokkaido. They believed that continued warfare was not beneficial for trade and so orchestrated an agreement with hostile Ainu groups which split the profits of trade between Ainu and Japanese leaders, but it gave the Kakizaki monopolistic control and established Japanese territorial control over the small area of southern Hokkaido (69). In essence, the Kakizaki, with their base at Fukuyama castle in Matsumae, took over control of eastern and western Hokkaido trading groups from the Ando clan.

The break between the Kakizaki and the Ando came later, however, after the Minato War of succession and the rise to power and political reunification efforts of Hideyoshi Toyotomi. Under Hideyoshi, who pushed for greater political centering, the rights to control shipping in Ezo shifted completely from Ando authority to broader public authority claimed by Hideyoshi. The Kakizaki drew on their relations to Hideyoshi and his claim to broader public authority, hoping to gain legitimacy for their own local status and land holdings (Walker 2001, 31). In exchange for allegiance to Kyoto and recognition of Hideyoshi's claim to broader public authority, in 1593 Hideyoshi granted the vermilion-seal order investing the Kakizaki family with formal authority to levy shipping duties on all trade in Hokkaido and gave liberal access to post stations located throughout the northeast (Matsumae K, 43). Kakizaki ports became the center of the region's trade activity and the Kakizaki were transformed from Ando vassals to vassals of Hideyoshi and made lords of Wajinchi, the extension of the Japanese state in southern Hokkaido (Walker 2001, 34).

However in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century Kakizaki control over Ainu trade was not complete. Ainu traders maintained ties with traders in the north that connected them to Sakhalin and the continent. And when they did trade with the Japanese it was sanctioned only once or twice a year

at Fukuyama castle. This meant that Ainu traders had to travel long distances with only limited products, primarily dried fish, animal skins, and eagle feathers. This meant that Ainu communities were only small, relatively removed players in the Japanese economy and as a consequence maintained relative autonomy. Furthermore, as merchants opened up branch shops in ports on southern Hokkaido, the Ainu began bypassing the Kakizaki customhouses and trading directly with merchants in Wajinchi or in Tsugaru and other parts of northern Honshu (Walker 2001, 89).

This early, limited trade between the Ainu and the Japanese tended to involve items that had cultural rather than economic capital. The Kakizaki family and its traders sought items of prestige such as animal skins and eagle feathers that could be given as gifts to the political elite in Edo (Segawa, 139). On the other hand, profit-seeking trade of precious metals such as copper remained conspicuously absent from Ainu-Japanese trade, although it was flourishing between Honshu and the Asian continent (Innes, 240). The Ainu traded for some everyday materials such as salt for preserving, iron pots and kettles, thread, knives, needles, and other utensils and tools, cloth, dye, cotton, and thread, but the majority of their trading at this time was also focused on items like rice and *kōji* for brewing *tonoto*, that had cultural, and more specifically ritual importance (Walker 2001, 92).

### **(I) Integrating Japanese Goods into Domestic, Ritual, and Social Life**

These political and commercial developments in northeastern Japan ushered in the full-blown emergence of Ainu culture. Trade in furs and sea products with the Japanese, which had been established since the Satsumon flourished. In fact, it could be said that “the end of Satsumon culture and the formation of Ainu culture was nothing other than the rapid spread of Satsumon trading activity” (Segawa, 37).

Both the Ainu and Japanese in southern Hokkaido came to rely on each other: the Japanese needed the Ainu to harvest and exchange the natural products of the region, while the Ainu relied on Japanese trade goods – iron, rice, and other items – which were incorporated into Ainu society as symbols of wealth and power (Siddle, 68). With more regularity in trade, Japanese goods became a standard feature of Ainu material life. Many Japanese goods were integrated into Ainu life and became fundamental utensils in Ainu ritual and domestic life. In addition, many of these goods came to symbolize power and authority in Ainu society. The increasingly important role of trade led to the emergence of powerful chiefs who oversaw trade with the Japanese. This sparked new social hierarchies and forms of political leadership linked to prestige (Emori, 37-41).

Japanese commodities such as lacquer cups and iron pots and kettles began to replace traditional items such as earthenware pots made by earlier Ainu groups, a holdover from Satsumon pottery culture. As the Ainu incorporated Japanese iron, pots, clothing, and wooden lacquerware into their daily lives, these items took on new value and were appreciated for more than just their utilitarian purpose (Walker 2001, 109). In the hands of the Ainu, Japanese items and the domestic space that surrounded them evolved into spiritual hubs of worship, mediating spiritual relations between the Ainu and the metaphysical order (116).

One documented example of this trend was the growing place of metal products in Ainu domestic life and ritual. Because the Ainu did not produce their own iron, they were dependent on new Japanese trade to procure this raw material used for household and hunting implements (93). As trade with the Japanese increased, metal eating and cooking utensils became a regular feature in Ainu home life. In particular, as the iron kettle suspended over the household fireplace became a central part of Ainu domestic life, a spiritual atmosphere was built surrounding the

hearth and the fire goddess, *ape huchi kamui* (Miyajima, 39-42). With the new emphasis on the hearth influenced by the import of iron kettles and other utensils, the worship of the fire goddess, who acted as a medium between people and other gods, became the most common domestic ritual and a central part of the Ainu metaphysical order (Walker 2001, 109-110).

Trade goods did not only become new hubs of worship themselves, but they were also incorporated into traditional Ainu ritual practice. This is not to say that incorporation of Japanese commodities into ritual life changed the fundamental relationship between the Ainu and the kamui and the natural environment. Instead, new Japanese-manufactured goods and the intensification of trade modified how the Ainu communicated with the metaphysical world and showed reverence to the kamui during worship. Items such as lacquerware cups and bowls, which were believed to each have their own spiritual being, were symbols that mediated between Ainu and the vast spiritual world. Objects acquired in trade were used as utensils in ritual, adorning ceremonial space or serving as actual tools in ritual performance along with traditional Ainu ritual utensils such as *inau* (shaved wooden offering sticks) (Walker 2001, 112).

The Ainu traditionally brewed their own millet alcohol, *tonoto*, which they offered to the gods in virtually every important ritual. A key ingredient in the brewing of this millet alcohol was *kōji*, a fungus that serves as a malting agent that turns grain starch to sugar. *Kōji* is used to brew sweeter and more powerful alcohol and is a fundamental ingredient in traditional Japanese sake brewing (Frost and Gauntner, 27). This fungus must be kept in rice to survive and is not native to Hokkaido, so had to be procured through trade with the Japanese. Thus, in early Ainu-Japanese trade, *kōji* and rice for its preservation became the single most important import for Ainu ritual life. Therefore, early Ainu-Japanese trade was a fundamental part of Ainu cosmological existence because the *tonoto* brewed from this imported *kōji* served as one of the

fundamental offerings that linked Ainu elders to *kamui moshir*, the metaphysical plane that gods and ancestors inhabit (Walker 2001, 115).

In addition to being incorporated in Ainu domestic and ritual life, Japanese items also became tied to Ainu notions of personal prestige and political status. Ainu who possessed grain, sake, clothing, and various lacquerware containers and utensils obtained through trade were considered to be wealthy as Japanese commodities came to be viewed as hereditary or family treasures, *ikor* (110). Examples of these Japanese-manufactured treasures include small sword hilts, sword pommels, gold utensils, lacquered wooden food and drinking containers, and gold and silver lacquer works (110). The measure of an individual's household wealth was tied to the number of treasures he had gained through trade. And in turn, the political power of many Ainu chiefs came to rest on this trade wealth.

Later on in Ainu history, as trade with the Japanese increased this absorption of Japanese trade commodities in Ainu social life would come to not only determine the social and political status of chiefs, but also the distribution of Ainu standards of living. During the Edo Period when trading activities multiplied, wealthy Ainu came to be those that lived in areas where there was active trade with Japanese and large amounts of natural resources that yielded high prices on the Japanese market (Walker 2001, 110). And this disparity in resource wealth led to inter-chiefdom conflict.

### **The Ainu Ecosystem and Food Culture**

Although early trade contact with the Japanese was a formative influence in the emergence of Ainu culture, this trade remained limited, relatively autonomous, and focused on the procurement of cultural items. Therefore, although Ainu culture did not ever exist in isolation of Japanese influences, it remained distinct, with a different language, subsistence lifestyle, social



hierarchy, and worldview. The culture that developed out of the Satsumon period still maintained ties to its Epi-Jōmon and Okhotsk cultural roots, particularly in regards to its subsistence activities. The Ainu remained a primarily hunting and gathering culture, with limited agriculture and trade.

### **(I) Political Groups and Cooperative Units**

The basic unit of Ainu social life was the simple family, which lived together in a one-room house, *chise* (Nomoto, 227). These households settled together with other households of close family relations and formed a *kotan*, or loose village of scattered or semi isolated houses supervised by a chief (usually the eldest male of the village family line) (Batchelor 1927, 35). These *kotan* settlements were generally self-sufficient, situated on the terrace of the river near salmon spawning grounds, so that each settlement was proximate to sources of drinking water and fishing and hunting grounds. In addition to the availability of food resources from river, wood, and mountain areas, another consideration in the location of the *kotan* was availability of building materials such as wood, bark, and wild reeds and vines (Nomoto, 227). In this way each family and each *kotan* had access to all necessary food areas and supplies for everyday living and thus could function as a self-sustaining independent subsistence unit.

Although most Ainu techniques of gathering, such as spear fishing and bow hunting, could be carried out by a single person, there were other activities such as bear hunting, weir fishing, and bag-net fishing, that required cooperation. This cooperation was most often contained within the simple family unit (Watanabe 1973, 44).<sup>2</sup> However, there were families that obtained part of their living through cooperation with other families, but this cooperation was of a limited scale

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<sup>2</sup> It is important to note here that although Watanabe is considered an authority on ‘traditional’ Ainu social structures and hunting and gathering practices, his observations are based on fieldwork conducted with inland groups on the island of Hokkaido in the 20<sup>th</sup>. Although these groups were better insulated from influences of the Japanese due to their interior location, one must be open to the possibility that their lifestyles varied from more historic times.

and never extended beyond the boundaries of the *kotan*. There were some families that chose to specify their subsistence practice and either bartered or exchanged as gifts the surplus of their household product for the other foods with their relatives within the settlement (47). For example, one family in the settlement may devote themselves to collecting edible plants, some of which were given to neighboring families in return for meat or fish. Another family may focus its efforts on fishing, and then trade part of the catch for other meat from their relatives (Watanabe 1973, 47). This occupational differentiation may have been related to the individual skill of the family members in handling hunting devices such as fish spear or bow and arrow.

Cooperation did occasionally extend beyond the family, but never beyond the settlement. Men from a number of households in one *kotan* may form a larger hunting party, which was then overseen by an elder leader, responsible for all technical practices, guidance and supervision in ritual observances, and for the disposal and distribution of the game and catch (46). Women of neighboring households would also form groups for companionship and safety when gathering edible plants, although each woman would generally gather for her own family.

Although cooperation in food collection did not generally extend beyond the borders of individual settlements, exchange of goods and political structures did. *Kotan* groups would form larger political groups, or local groups, whose integrity was manifested in the presence of a common headman, collective ownership of spawning beds of chum and cherry salmon, group participation in certain rituals, and cooperation in house building (10-11). The headman was chosen from the chiefs of the component *kotan*, who were born or adopted into a patrilineal line (13).

Neighboring local groups were collected even further into larger territorial groups, which consisted of several local groups next to each other along a river (15). These political alignments

called *petiwor* (river-based chiefdom) had self-declared rights to exploit the river basin territory and any resource within this productive spaces (Walker 2001, 77). The main function of this political organization was the defense of their territory against trespass of outsiders, but at normal times there was no single authority controlling the group as a whole.

This meant that Ainu subsistence territories fell into two categories: 1) the territory inhabited and utilized exclusively by a river group as a whole, and 2) the inner territories stewarded as gathering sites by individual groups within the river group (local groups, *kotan* groups, and simple families) (Watanabe 1973, 56). Ainu territorialism, which was inextricably tied to their adaptation to their habitat and the exploitation of natural resources for subsistence and trade, was a part of the special structure of their community. The maintenance of this territory could be an important factor in relation to the distribution and spacing of groups and to group activities (Bartholomew and Birdsell, 484).

Although cooperation in food collection did not extend to the greater structures of local and river groups, the interchange of goods took place at all levels. For example, within a river group, coastal families from one local group often declined to migrate to the inner mountains to hunt hibernating bears. Instead these households made more efforts in fishing and then bartered the surplus fish catch for other foods such as deer and bear meat (Watanabe 1973, 45). This trade existed not only within the reaches of the same river group and even between the reaches of adjacent Ainu river groups, but also extended to trade with foreign peoples, such as the Japanese.

Within the Ainu river groups, the main bond which linked the people together not only seems to have been economic interests but a deeply rooted cosmological background (16). These territorial rights claimed by a river group were articulated and sanctioned metaphysically rather than economically or politically, and chiefdom borders were authenticated by a sacred

relationship between the Ainu of the *petiwor* and the local *kamui* (Walker 2001, 77). The Ainu living in a river valley were regarded as the guardians of the river valley and of the deities that were believed to live there and look after the human and natural ecosystems. In this way, members of a river group were tied together by their collective observance of the rituals for local deities (Watanabe 1973, 17).

## **(II) Subsistence Activities**

The Ainu had two major cycles of gathering activities: a two-month leisure season in winter and a ten-month work season from spring to fall (Watanabe 1973, 50). As soon as snow began to melt in spring, animals moved from their wintering quarters and plants began their cycle of new growth. With this, the Ainu had to begin preparing for the coming winter (Kohara, 202). During the work season, labor was divided socially in terms of gender-specific activities and ecologically in terms of migration and growth seasons of certain foods. Men devoted their time to hunting for about two to three months, women, children and elders collected edible plants and tended small plots for about five to six months, and all able bodies cooperated in fishing for about eight to nine months (Watanabe 1973, 50).

The ecology of the Hokkaido Ainu was primarily composed of the river basin and surrounding river terrace areas. These rivers were used as spawning grounds by a variety of anadromous fish, which are born in fresh water, spend most of their lives in open sea, but return to rivers for the duration of their reproductive cycles (Ölschleger, 210). The Ainu diet relied heavily on these fish, particularly the chum and cherry salmon, and to a more limited extent other fish such as dace (*supun*, *Tribolodon* spp.) and carp (*chirai*, *Hucho perryi*) (210). The spawning habits of these fish, particularly those of salmon who returned yearly to breed at the same place, informed Ainu fishing activities and settlement formation. Each local group controlled a certain

number of salmon spawning grounds, which were distributed near its settlements, which each exploited the grounds nearest to them (Watanabe 1973, 31). The methods used to catch fish depended on the species and their specific seasonal behaviors.

The fishing season started in spring and lasted until the beginning of winter, but was more heavily concentrated in the late summer and fall months. The first fish to ascend the rivers were dace and carp, which were caught in small quantities only for immediate consumption (Ölschleger 211). These fish were speared with the *marek* usually in tributaries where the water was clearest after the first thaw. In addition, basket traps (*urai*) were set up in main streams and small bag-nets were operated by pairs in streamlets (Watanabe 1973, 26). These basket traps consisted of fences made from stakes driven into the riverbed and filled in with wickerwork screens constructed in the shape of an arrow pointing downstream. Fish moving downstream after spawning would be corralled to the point of the fence where there was a doorway with a net (Batchelor 1927, 400).

The cherry salmon (*ichanui*, *Oncorhynchus masou*) appeared in July (Hikita, 33). To catch the initial ascending fish, groups living downstream on the deeper and broader watercourses usually employed trawling nets (*yash ya*), which they operated from a pair of dugout boats at night (Watanabe 1973, 26). The cherry salmon as they migrated upriver lurked inactive during the day in pools or under driftwood in the shallows. At these daylight times, Ainu would spear the hiding fish with the *marek*, or drive them out and capture them using a bag-net (*yaroshiki ya*). Around August, cherry salmon began to run up to small tributaries or glens for spawning. They were caught with a basket trap in these tributaries as they returned downstream after spawning, while other forms of spear fishing continued in the main river areas (Watanabe 1973, 27). In September, at the end of the cherry salmon runs, each family built a dark-hut or peep-hut (*worun*

*chise*) in the main stream near their settlement. Males would spear salmon from the hut in evening and early morning when cherry salmon runs returning to the sea were most active (27)

These huts were then used during the chum salmon (*chep*, *Oncorhynchus keta*) season, which began in late September and continued into late October or early December (Sano and Nagasawa, 12). During the time between the first run in the area about the settlement and the first spawning in the local grounds, the Ainu fished with the *marek* at peep-huts set up on the running course. This proved most effective at hours before sunset when the fish resumed their active ascent and at daybreak before they became inactive and went into hiding (Watanabe 1973, 28). Much like with the earlier cherry salmon fishing, daylight hours were used to spear chum salmon hiding in the bank side shallows. During these pre-spawning runs, only enough chum salmon needed for immediate consumption would be fished. Methods of catching salmon in bulk, such as the use of the wicker fence and bag-net were considered taboo until the latter part of the season after the fish had spawned (29). This practice was practical not only in that it guaranteed that enough fish successfully reached the spawning ground to reproduce for the following year but also in that the fish that had finished breeding and had already made the arduous journey upriver were less fatty and therefore less likely to spoil in storage (Batchelor 1927, 403). Due to the timing of their spawning season, these fish were caught in large quantities and dried to provide the majority of stored provisions before the winter.

Although fish were generally the main source of protein and fatty nutrition, the relative importance of food resources varied by region. The further downstream the Ainu settlement, the more important was salmon due to the greater concentration of spawning grounds on the lower reaches of the river (Ölschleger 210). Besides river fish, marine animals, such as seals, sea lions, and swordfish, were important only for those Ainu living close to the open sea. These animals

were hunted in dugout boats with harpoons, with detachable tip fastened to a long fishing line (210). Seaside communities also made use of beached whales. Conversely, the further upstream, the more important was meat from deer and bear that wintered in the hills and mountains by the river source.

Deer (*yuk*, *Cervus nippon*) were hunted in two seasons, the spring and autumn. During the summer, the deer would roam in herds over hills and plains, but the meat was stringy and the fur patchy during these months so that these times were more often devoted to fishing and collecting rather than hunting (Inukai 1943, 16). During the fall season, the Ainu erected wooden fences along migration paths, where spring bows set with poisoned arrows were placed in openings in the fence to be triggered by a passing deer activating a trip wire (Ölschleger, 209). During the later mating season, hunting with hand bows became especially important. During this time, Ainu trolled marshy tracks and lured male deer with a decoy whistle (*irektep*) that imitated the call of the doe (Watanabe 1973, 35). This field hunting continued until the base snow came to cover the food plants for the deer, which then retreated from the fields to their winter quarters in the foothills upriver (Inukai 1952, 14-16).

Hunting on the fields was usually done by hunters on day trips out from their settlement, however as deer moved into the hills hunters were forced to migrate in parties to wintering areas (Watanabe 1973, 36). This is where they hunted in the early spring. At these times, Ainu hunters used dogs to drive deer from into glens still filled with snow and killed them while they floundered either with hand bow or with clubs (Ölschleger, 209). As the snow began to disappear and spring growth lured deer down from the hills in herds, the Ainu again hunted using spring bow traps set along migration paths (Watanabe 1973, 36).

In addition to deer hunting, the Ainu also systematically hunted the Hokkaido brown bear (*kimun-kamui* or *nupuri-kamui*, *Ursus arctos*). This hunting activity, was more important ritually than as a source of meat and nutrition (Ölschleger, 210). Also, furs of the animal were among the most important items bartered with the Japanese (Watanabe 1973, 37). Bears were hunted in spring and fall by groups of men, according to the hibernation patterns of the animals (Inukai 1933, 63). The hunting grounds lay farther from the *kotan* and more interior than the deer hunting grounds, so men generally had to travel in hunting parties to the mountain hibernation districts where the rivers have their source (Watanabe 1973, 37).

The autumn hunt was the more important of the two hunting periods when it came to Ainu subsistence. The season began when the bears began to retreat to their dens at which time spring bows traps with poisoned arrows would be set up along migration paths, usually in small glens where bears sought food (38). The early spring hunt began when the mountain snow became hard enough to walk on and bears had given birth to cubs in the dens (Inukai 1933, 64). Ainu hunters would raid the dens as the bears remained in hibernation and flush them out by prodding with long poles or throwing rocks (Ölschleger, 210). As the adult bear emerged, it was shot with hand bow and poisoned arrows and the newborn cubs were taken back to the village to rear for ritual ceremony (210).

In addition to the primary land mammal food sources of deer and bear, Ainu also hunted foxes (*chironnup*, *vulpes vulpes*), otters (*esaman*, *lutra lutra*), hares (*isepo*, *lepus timidus*) and other species with snares and special box traps activated by trip lines (Ölschleger, 210). These meat products were never eaten raw, but were always cooked either by boiling or by smoking and drying (Kohara, 202). Meat was not the dominant element of the Ainu diet, but was used to



only supplement more important foods like fish, the major source of protein and fat, and plants (202).

The annual task of preserving food was crucial to supplying nutritional needs during a long winter and for avoiding unpredictable famines that occurred when fish or game became scarce (202). Excepting a few coastal villages in the north, there was no preservation by refrigeration and salt was a very expensive commodity only obtained through trade with the Japanese, so most foods were preserved by drying (203). The Ainu caught large quantities of cherry and chum salmon from early spring into the fall and preserved them by grilling, drying, or smoking (204). In addition, smaller quantities of deer and bear meat were also dried or smoked. Although these meat sources were preserved in some number, the majority of Ainu sustenance during the winter months was composed of plants that were collected in spring and then preserved and kept in storehouses next to the main house.

In spring when the snow had disappeared from the plains, Ainu women, children, and elders set to work collecting wild plants for both food and raw materials used in other aspects of daily life. The spring and summer saw the collection of most edible plants, which were dried and stored away to last the winter. These edible plants included wild garlic, cow parsnip, and skunk cabbage in inland settlements, and seaweed in coastal settlements (Kohara, 203). Perhaps the single most important plant collected and stored for the winter was the bulb of the lily root (*turep*), which was gathered in late June and July. *Turep* was pounded and the starch extracted and formed into cakes for drying. These fibrous cakes were preserved and could be rehydrated by boiling them in soups (204).

Collecting work continued until autumn when the chum salmon began ascending the rivers. In autumn, the fishing and hunting activities of Ainu reached their climax in preparation for

approaching winter and women gatherers often had to join the men in cooperative hunting practices (Watanabe 1973, 40). Even so, the greater part of plants for raw materials, such as the inner bark of the elm tree used to make cloth (*attush*) were gathered during autumn and even certain kinds of edible plants such as nuts, fruits, and berries were collected (Ölschleger, 213).

The early Ainu of Hokkaido, although primarily a hunting, gathering, and fishing people, also retained the small-scale agriculture practiced by their Satsumon predecessors (Walker 2001, 22). Crops differed between communities, but often included sorghum, barley, buckwheat, adzuki and mung beans, hemp, barnyard grass and foxtail millets (Crawford, 201). Remarkably absent from this list of crops is rice, which was not locally grown. Even during this period of early Ainu-Japanese trade, rice was not imported for subsistence purposes, so it remained absent from the traditional diet.

Suitable plots near the *kotan* were cleared of underbrush and leveled with a hoe (Ölschleger 214). This preparation of field and sowing of seeds was done in July after storing the chief varieties of edible spring leaves and stalks (Watanabe 1973, 410). Weeding was done only once or twice between the time of sowing and the harvest, which occurred in the last part of September into October (41). Since the Ainu did not practice crop rotation, the fertility of garden plots declined after about 3 years at which time the site was allowed to lay fallow and a new one was prepared (Ölschleger 215). This plant husbandry supplemented the collection of wild plants used as food and as materials for clothing and tool making.

### **(III) The Cosmology of Food**

The Ainu believe that the natural world and ecosystem in which they live, *ainu moshir*, was created by the “land-making deity,” *Kotan-kar Kamui* and other great deities (Sarashina 1971, 37-38). In the numerous and varied creation stories, *Kotan-kar Kamui* and his wife, often aided

by various other animal deities, descend from the upper world of the gods, *kamui moshir*, and create the land of Hokkaido. As the creation gods move about this new land, their discarded tools, belongings, and even parts of the body become the spirits of living creatures and plants that populate this new world (Ogihara, 275).

For example, according to one story, after completing the arduous task of creating the human world, *Kotan-kar kamui* decides to have a smoke. From the black soot springs the bear deity, the yellow soot becomes the smallpox spirit, and the flint he tosses into the ocean turns into a whale and a sea lion. In this way, he populates the land with animals used for food (and some evil demons) (275). His wife is similarly responsible for the creation of other animals not directly used for food and more importantly plant food sources. Tales tell of how his wife's spit becomes the crane, her dress and girdle become the turtle and octopus, her nose mucus gives rise to bush clover, and her body hair turns into a type of edible grass (Ogihara, 275). So, along with the creation of the ecology of Hokkaido, the great *kamui* populate the land with lower *kamui* to protect it and animal and plant spirits to provide food to the Ainu (Yamada, 72). These manifestations of *kamui* include not only living beings such as animals and plants, but also some inanimate objects and pathological and natural phenomena (Munro, 21).

From the creation and population of *ainu moshir*, there existed a complicated hierarchy of gods and spirits between the two worlds. Many of the great pantheon of Ainu *kamui*, such as *Kotan-kar Kamui* himself, returned to the upper reaches of the world of the gods, far removed from the human world. Two other important deities that lived thus removed are *Yuk-kor Kamui*, the Keeper of the Game, and *Chep-kor Kamui*, the Keeper of the Fish. These deities never visited *ainu moshir* and could not be reached directly through daily worship (Yamada, 84). Other animal gods, such as the bear deity, lived in the lower reaches of *kamui moshir*. These animal *kamui*,

who in *kamui moshir* had appearances and lives much like those of the humans of *ainu moshir*, donned an animal form or *hayokpe* (armor) and descended to the world of the humans to offer their flesh, fur, and other useful materials to Ainu subsistence (Strong, 68-69). Finally, in Ainu cosmology there also exist *kamui* that lived permanently in *ainu moshir* as protectors of the land and human beings, such as *Ape Huchi Kamui* (the fire goddess and protector of the hearth and home). These gods who were most proximate to the lifeworld of the human beings, along with those in the lower reaches of *kamui moshir*, were the deities involved in everyday Ainu ritual life. These more immediate and accessible deities also served, in dire circumstances, as mediators or messengers between the humans and the more removed pantheon of gods (Yamada, 86).

In addition to these animal *kamui*, *ainu moshir* was populated by a myriad of spirits, or *ramat*. These spirits, which were often controlled by greater deities and not the direct object of worship, inhabited much of the plant food consumed by the Ainu. Unlike the bear, who is seen as the manifestation of a *kamui*, the other two main protein sources of the Ainu, fish and deer, are seen as inhabited by *ramat*, spirits (Strong, 69-70). These fish and deer spirits are not deities directly but are instead controlled by the Keeper of the Fish and the Keeper of the Game in the upper reaches of *kamui moshir*.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, they cycle between *ainu moshir* and *kamui moshir* on the order of the greater Ainu pantheon.

Unlike the origin of the world of the humans, the origin of human beings themselves is vague in Ainu cosmology (Ogihara, 275). Many tales focus not on the creation of human beings, but instead on their teaching and their entrance into a cosmological relationship with the gods.

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<sup>3</sup> It is not clear to what extent the spirits of the deer and fish are seen as eternal. It is clear that these spirits do not die when the food they inhabit is consumed, since they are depicted as reporting back to the Keeper of the Fish and the Keeper of the Game in *kamui moshir*. However, it is unknown whether the same spirits circulate between the realms each year (Strong, 264n45). There are other tales that seem to indicate that new fish and deer spirits are created from the scales of the mouth of the Keeper of the Fish and the hairs of the mouth of the Keeper of the Game when they smile at the beginning of each new season (Kubodera, 238-343).

According to some Ainu oral traditions, *Aeoina kamui* ('divine tradition holder') was sent by the *kamui* in the upper world of the gods to teach the ancestors of the Ainu people how to hunt and fish, how to make tools, and how to perform religious rites and ceremonies, including the making of *inau* to worship the gods (Batchelor 1927, 113)<sup>4</sup>. According to these teachings, the daily life of an Ainu, especially when it came to subsistence activities related to the gathering and consumption of food, is ritually strict (Watanabe 1994, 47). This ritual behavior stems primarily from two interrelated beliefs, the first being that all living beings, particularly those that provided food such as animals and plants, have incarnated spirits and the second being that these spirits are everlasting. In other words, the Ainu believe that all of the natural biotic species exploited by them in hunting and gathering activities are either *kamui* or *kamui*-controlled spirits in temporary animal or plant form and when consumed, these gods return to their divine homes and the spirits return to their masters in the upper world of the gods (Watanabe 1994, 48). Consequently all Ainu gathering activities imply interaction with *kamui*. In fact, the Ainu term *iwor*, which signifies hunting, fishing or gathering ground, can be glossed as 'area where deity is.' In this way the concept of *iwor* is not only that of a geographically defined subsistence territory, but also a classification of cosmological space (Yamada, 70).

The act of food collection, in particular the hunt, and the consequent ritual observances are nothing more than a give and take between humans and the *kamui*, who both receive what they are lacking through this reciprocity (Yamada, 99). Under a system of social solidarity, the animal *kamui* manifest themselves in the human world in order to give the humans the gift of their flesh, skin, and bone (Watanabe 1994, 49). Thus, to kill an animal to feed and clothe one's family is to

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<sup>4</sup> It is important to note that Batchelor worked with the Ainu as a Christian missionary and therefore had a religious agenda. Some of his work has been justly criticized for ascribing Christian views of creationism to Ainu cosmology. However, his work is still valuable as it contains some of the earliest accounts of Ainu culture and oral tradition. I use his conclusion on cosmology here only when able to corroborate them with other sources.

free the *kamui* from its ephemeral temporal animal form, a process that involves the active participation of the spirit. In this way, the Ainu view the hunt as a spiritual act, which legitimizes their place in the natural landscape (Walker 2001, 79). To the Ainu, a successful hunter is one who achieves his goal not primarily through practical knowledge or skill, but rather by virtue of his respectful attitude and behavior toward the prey. If he is reverential and proper in his observance of ritual, the animal spirits consider him worthy of the gift of meat and allow themselves to be killed (Serpell, 181). In other words, Ainu hunters kill these animal *kamui* because the spirits choose to be killed.

In return for this gift of food and material, the humans are expected to treat the animals they consume with respect. The spirits are not extinguished by the death of the animal form, but are instead just sent off to return again later (Batchelor 1927, 101). As a consequence, any failure to perform proper rituals or treat the spirits of the food respectfully would offend the *kamui* and they may refuse to return to be killed or captured again (Watanabe 1994, 49). However, if the animal *kamui* is treated properly and entertained with song and dance and given many offerings of *inau*, prayer, and home-brewed millet alcohol to take back on their journey home, then the spirit will return again to the human world bringing the gift of sustenance.

When considering the relationship between the Ainu hunting subsistence and ritual, it becomes clear that the development of personal or private subsistence rituals may be regarded as an ecological phenomenon conditioned by behavioral adaptations to seasonal animal cycles (Watanabe 1944, 51). The mythological cycle of the visit, return, and revisit of game spirits in the Ainu worldview coincided with the natural cycle of the appearance, disappearance, and reappearance of northern animals due to seasonal migration and hibernation (61). The Ainu used ceremony as time markers and pacemakers in order to adjust subsistence activities to the

complex periodicity of the northern animal communities (62). In this way, the sending-off ceremonies could be seen not just as an act of respect toward the spirit of the animal, but also a way of synchronizing the rhythms of the hunting and fishing life with those of the animal community, as these ceremonies were performed for animals that were seasonal migrants. In this way, in Ainu cosmology and daily life animals function as symbols to intersect religion and the surrounding ecology (Yamada, 101).

The cosmology of food held by the Ainu not only reflects adaptations to the seasonal cycles of Hokkaido wildlife, but also the gender-specificity of the society's subsistence practices. Deities manifested as animals and worshipped because of their specific behavioral attributes are mostly thought to be male (Yamada, 90). This is most likely because the qualities of these animas such as great power, ferocity, quickness in attack, fleetness of foot, sharp-sightedness, and ability to see in dark are necessary attributes for male hunters. Similarly, deities of territory who exist to rule over space are usually male (91). This reflects the Ainu patriarchal social structure and the greater role of men in administering affairs of settlements and larger groups.

Although animal *kamui* are generally held to be male, the *kamui* of other sources of food, particularly plants, were considered to be female (91). For example, barnyard grass millet (*haru kamui*) and the bulb of the heartleaf lily (*turep kamui*), both major sources of food, were considered goddesses. Not just plants used for food, but also plants used for other purposes such as tree bark for clothing, reeds for cord, or aconite (*shurku kamui*) and pine resin (*un-ko-tuk kamui*) for arrow poison are seen as embodiments of female deities (89).

The Ainu not only worship plants directly, they also give thanks to the female *kamui* who ensure their regeneration and who taught humans how to use them for food, medicine, and other purposes (Kohara, 202). These deities are also personified as female. For example the ground,

the source of all edible plants, is worshipped as the female *Shir-kor kamui* (‘possessor of the Earth’) and water, indispensable for human life and the source of salmon, is worshipped as *Wakka-ush kamui* (‘deity of water’) (Yamada, 91).

Therefore, although animals are viewed as manifestation of male *kamui*, plant *kamui* and other deities associated with subsistence are viewed as female. In particular, the *kamui* of plants associated with food, material for clothing, or medicine, are female because they are tied to primarily female social activities such as vegetable gathering, tending of crops, weaving, and shamanism (93). Thus the Ainu view of gender is metaphorically integrated into their view of nature. The plant is the metaphor for femininity and productivity (gathering), and the animal for masculinity and power (hunting) (91).

## **Conclusion**

It is clear that Ainu culture and daily life did not develop nor exist in isolation. Instead, Ainu culture was the product of the mixing of many different peoples over different periods of time: the Epi-Jōmon from 250BC to 700AD, the Okhotsk from 600 to 1100, the Satsumon from 700 to 1200 and the mainland Japanese (Walker 2001, 21). Even after Ainu tradition emerged as a distinct, defined culture, contact with outsiders continued to influence daily life. In particular, goods acquired through trade with the Japanese, such as iron, *kōji* (and rice), and treasures (metal swords), were incorporated into traditional Ainu domestic, ritual, and social life. This foreign trade, however, remained very limited and was focused on the procurement of prestige and culture goods as opposed to necessities. Therefore, trade in early Ainu history was not a part of the Ainu autonomous subsistence way of life.



During the early period of Ainu history, Ainu settlements, while participating in small-scale trade for specialty items, focused the majority of their efforts on traditional hunting and gathering, supplemented by limited cultivation activities. These traditional food collection practices were in tune with the natural migration and growth cycles of the animals and plants surrounding them, and when combined with food preservation techniques, supplied the Ainu with sufficient food and materials year round. In cases where a settlement was unable to meet a basic standard of living, larger cooperative groups were formed to utilize all of the abundant natural resources of the Hokkaido river basins.

Food collection and traditional hunting and gathering practices were accompanied by very particular rituals that stemmed from a rich Ainu worldview and cosmology closely associated with the procurement and consumption of food. This cosmology stressed the importance of the reciprocal relationship between the gods, *kamui*, who were responsible for protecting the humans and maintaining the abundance of the natural world, and the human beings, who in return gave prayer and ceremonial offerings. It was believed that the Ainu, should they behave piously and in harmony with the natural and cosmological world around them, would exist free from hunger or suffering. However, should the human beings break their end of the bargain with the *kamui*, the great pantheon of deities in *kamui moshir* would cut off the source of the cycling food spirits and the human world would suffer famine.

This autonomous subsistence and accompanying worldview are characteristics of what can be seen as the traditional Ainu lifestyle. With the understanding of this early economic, social, cultural, and religious environment as the foundation, I will show how the pressures from mainland Japan during the Edo Period irrevocably changed these traditional food practices and worldview.

## Chapter 4: Loss of Ainu Autonomy in the Early Modern Period

After the death of Toyotomi Hideyoshi in 1598, Tokugawa Ieyasu became the dominant military and political figure in mainland Japan. Responding to the shift in political power, the Kakizaki family, who had pledged to recognize the authority of Toyotomi in return for local authority of shipping and trade with the island of Ezo, assumed the name of Matsumae and became a vassal of the Tokugawa household (Walker 2001, 35). The Tokugawa Shogunate consolidated its power in 1603, moving the capital to Edo and establishing the early modern Japanese state. In 1604, Tokugawa Ieyasu continued Hideoyoshi's policy of granting the Matsumae exclusive rights over trade with the Ainu by passing the black seal edict:

- [1] It shall be unlawful for people from outside provinces to enter or exit Matsumae to trade with the Ainu without the consent of Matsumae
  - [2] It shall be unlawful for [Japanese] people to cross freely into Ezo for trade, [but] Ainu should be considered free to go where they please.
  - [3] It is strictly prohibited for [Japanese] people to inflict injustices or crimes upon the Ainu
- If people act contrary [to these edicts], [they] shall be punished rigorously. (37)<sup>1</sup>

The black seal edict institutionalized the hereditary place of Matsumae as overseers of trade in Ezo, granting them exclusive economic rights to trade between mainland Japan and the island of Hokkaido. In fact, this edict served as the model for similar edicts issued by later shoguns during the Tokugawa period, so the relationship between the Matsumae and Edo remained basically in place until 1799 (Walker 2001, 37).

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<sup>1</sup> For the original Japanese text and more on the black-seal edict see “Tokugawa Ieyasu kokuinjō” (222).

The black seal order simply granted widespread authority over trade, which allowed Matsumae administration at the local level to determine the form of land distribution, shipping duties, and economic development of the Japanese lands of southern Hokkaido (38). Although the order clearly established the economic authority of the Matsumae family, conspicuously absent was any acknowledgment of the political or legal rights of the Matsumae family in Ezo. This indicates that although the Matsumae lords were Japanese, they remained on the cultural fringe of late 16<sup>th</sup> century Japan. Matsumae lords therefore, had to use their new economic position to gradually integrate themselves into the warrior system of government by presenting products obtained through Ainu trade as gifts in Edo (41). This meant that the Matsumae family was reliant on this trade to survive in the Tokugawa polity.

Not only were the Matsumae dependent on trade for their political authority, they were also dependent on trade for their economic viability and income. The new Matsumae domain on the tip of the Oshima Peninsula in southern Hokkaido possessed rich fishing grounds, but there was little agricultural potential, so trade remained vital for the economy. The domain's reliance on Ainu trade and its lack of agricultural base shaped the Japanese-Ainu relationship, one founded upon a set of mutual dependencies, for the remainder of the Tokugawa period. Under this institutional system, the domain depended on Ainu trade, merchants' depended on the domain for the protection of their trading privileges, and the Ainu grew increasingly dependent on Japanese commodities (Howell D. 1995, 27). In short, the recognition of Matsumae as a proxy in southern Hokkaido for the authority of the early modern state transformed a relatively equal balance of economic and military power into one heavily favoring the Japanese (Howell D. 1999, 97).

## The Wajinchi-Ezochi Line

One important proviso of the black seal edict was that it, in theory, protected a separate Ainu identity. Although the Matsumae had economic rights to trade with Ezo, they were not given political authority over the land of the Ainu. Ezochi remained a nominally autonomous appendage of the state, whose Ainu inhabitants were bound by trade and ritual to the Matsumae domain (Howell D. 2005, 110). Thus, the status of Ezochi and the Ainu who inhabited it in the early modern period resembled the status of “inner barbarians” in the Chinese diplomatic order; Ezochi was indisputably foreign outside the sphere of Matsumae or Tokugawa control but nonetheless within the orbit of Japanese cultural influence and commercial interest (Walker 2001, 40).

There existed a border dividing Ezo into two spheres, Wajinchi, the land in the southern part of the Oshima Peninsula inhabited primarily by Japanese settlers, and Ezochi, the land of the Ainu (Walker 2001, 43). However, this border constantly moved northward, in effect leading to the slow absorption of Ainu territory as commercial growth sparked increased Japanese settlement. The border was created to restrict Ainu and Japanese movement in Ezo. In theory, the Wajinchi-Ezochi line might have served to demarcate the political and cultural boundaries of the Tokugawa



Figure 1. The Wajinchi-Ezochi line (Howell D. 2005, 111)

polity but in practice it was porous and permitted Japanese to exploit Ezochi easily (*Tsugaru Ittōshi*, 191). In Ezo the economic activity of Matsumae vassals, as well as that of many Wajinchi villagers, remained dependent on their ability to cross into Ezochi. The guarded border served as one of the Matsumae family's most successful systems to protect their trade monopoly (Walker 2001, 44). The border was used to prohibit travel by the Ainu beyond Ezochi and therefore ensure that Ainu could trade only with merchants with ties to the domain. Although the Ainu retained their formal freedom of movement until 1672, by 1644 Ainu boats were no longer to be seen in Tohoku ports, an indication of the success of Matsumae borders and monopolized trade (Howell D. 1995, 25).

### **Trading Posts and Ainu Dependency**

Prior to the passage of the black seal edict, the Matsumae regulated trade with the Japanese mainland customs houses, permitting trade with the Ainu only once a year at Fukuyama Castle (Walker 2001, 89). However, as the Matsumae's political position in the warrior order solidified through the gifting and trading of exotic items obtained through trade with the Ainu, they claimed the right to distribute trade-fiefs located throughout Ezochi to their domainal vassals (39). In the Tokugawa polity, fiefs were traditionally territories for agricultural production, but since the black seal edict did not give the Matsumae control over the land in Ezochi their fiefs were instead only domain-sanctioned trading rights over particular areas that contained valuable natural resources. So Matsumae vassals under the trade-fief system built trading posts in the most potentially lucrative parts of Ezochi, penetrating into Ainu lands and bringing the trade closer to Ainu communities. This meant that obtaining Japanese commodities became easier for Ainu and so they began to increasingly incorporate these goods into their daily lives.

As time went on, Matsumae vassals under the trade-fief system became indebted to Japanese merchants, who advanced them on credit the goods that they traded to the Ainu in Ezochi. In order to pay for these debts, vassals began to sell their fief trade rights to Japanese merchants. The debt situation got so bad that by the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Matsumae finances relied on vassals successfully securing credit by contracting out their trade fiefs to merchants from Japan (90). As Matsumae creditors, merchants were given a free hand to shape trade and they established permanent trading posts, which became marketplaces where merchants freely exploited the Ainu in year-round trade. This new merchant-based system led to an increased volume in trade and local monopolies, which only further involved the Ainu in the Japanese market economy (90).

### **(I) Changing Subsistence and Relationship with Food**

Although limited trade in natural resources such as eagle feathers, animal skins, and dried fish had existed since the rise of Ainu culture, the existence of large, permanent trading posts along rivers and watersheds increased the volume of this trade exponentially. Easy access to trading posts allowed the Ainu to quickly trade traditional subsistence products such as animal skins and fish that normally would have been used to feed and clothe their communities for rice, tobacco, sake, and other Japanese items (Walker 2001, 91). Increased accessibility of trade commodities and increasing demand from the Matsumae domain and Japanese markets led to overexploitation of traditional hunting and fishing grounds. And it soon became clear that the environment that comprised the traditional river-based Ainu chiefdoms could not simultaneously sustain hunting and fishing at the pace dictated by the trading post while also supporting the subsistence needs of native Ainu communities (117). In short, increased abuse of natural resources for trade undermined the ecological basis of traditional Ainu subsistence patterns,

creating scarcities. At the same time, new foods introduced from mainland Japan also influence Ainu daily sustenance.

During early periods of trade, the use of Japanese commodities had been largely focused on the relationship between humans and the *kamui* of the natural world around them. Small surpluses of natural products were traded with the Japanese for domestic, ceremonial, and treasure items for prestige. Although some Ainu became rich and powerful through the accumulation of trade treasures, trade with the Japanese was limited and generally an action done in order to better worship the gods. As trade increased, the focus moved away from the relationship with the natural world and the Ainu began to exploit the resources around them. They moved far from a bucolic people, hunting and fishing to satisfy basic subsistence needs and trading for ceremonial purposes. Instead, Ainu hunted and fished according to more materialistic conceptions of production and personal prestige (111).

The first fundamental change in Ainu subsistence and in their overall cosmological view of food, was a change in how Ainu viewed the hunt, which had once dramatized the spiritual relationship between Ainu chiefdoms and their local environment, and the *kamui* that lived there, but with increased trade with the Japanese took on more commercial connotations (Walker 2001, 91). Resources upon which Ainu subsistence and social autonomy had depended for centuries, such as traditional animal game, now served the growing market economy in Japan, which assigned a commercial value to local Hokkaido fauna (and flora). Consequently Ainu productive systems changed from a subsistence-focused system with limited trade to a more commercial system of heavy natural exploitation for every day trade as a form of income. The purpose of hunting and fishing became the acquisition of animal skins that could be exchanged at trading posts for Japanese commodities. And these commodities were viewed more and more as items

for a personal, and materialistic use rather than as gifts for the *kamui*. These changes were accompanied by shifts in deeper sentiments about animal killing. In time, deer and salmon, whose spirits were traditionally revered for their critical role in Ainu survival, came to be viewed only in terms of what Japanese commodities they could purchase at trading post. Much of the traditional relationship between the Ainu as hunter and consumer and their food as a gift from the natural world of the gods, which had helped to maintain ecological order in Ainu Ezo was lost as traditional game became overhunted and overfished for trade. By 1715, trade had become part of the Ainu subsistence base or at the very least part of their industry of livelihood (119). Because fishing and hunting became more profitable than other activities, Ainu did “little else other than fish and hunt” for the purpose of trade (Mogami, 523).

This commodification of hunting practices placed added pressure on certain desirable species such as deer, salmon, and hawks. As the demand for trade in both Japanese and Ainu societies increased, localized overhunting depleted many of these and other animal species whose skins purchased valuable items at trading posts. Pressure from hunting, combined with other environmental factors such as pestilence and hard weather drove game from habitual feeding grounds. In short, excess, commercialized trade led to the exploitation of resources at a pace that local environments could not sustain. This weakened Ainu subsistence systems as the populations of salmon and deer, which had once fed and clothed their communities, declined and those that were caught were exported to satisfy new Ainu wants as well as commercial demand in Japan (Walker 2001, 75). There are documented cases of famine directly related to dramatic declines in the number of deer from over hunting and environmental factors. During the winter of 1784, when heavy snowfall disrupted deer migration patterns and took a heavy toll on herd number, some 300 to 400 Ainu starved to death (Hezutsu, 432). The record even notes that



before the famine, deer had been abundant, but for the purpose of acquiring sake and tobacco in trade, Ainu had carelessly overhunted local deer herds and therefore these depleted herds no longer had the numbers to survive environmental pressures (432).

The regional disappearance of food resources such as salmon and deer was not the only result of Matsumae's economic activity and the expanded Ainu appetite for Japanese commodities. At the same time that trade provided Ainu with the impetus to increase their hunting and fishing activity at the expense of other subsistence practices, it also introduced Japanese foodstuffs, especially grain, which began to supplement their diet and further nurture their dependence (Walker 2001, 85). With the regional depletion and trade of traditional game animals, Ainu became dependent on food goods acquired through trade to supplement their weakening subsistence system.

Traditionally, many Ainu communities in Hokkaido supplemented their hunting, fishing, and foraging activities with agriculture as part of a regular subsistence routine. However as trade with the Japanese expanded through the Tokugawa period, Ainu abandoned much of their agricultural subsistence, focusing more intensively on hunting, fishing, and gathering in inland districts where there was ready access to the commodities most desired by their Japanese trading partners (particularly fish and animal pelts) (Howell D. 2005, 117). Later on in the period, women who provided the backbone of traditional Ainu community agriculture and gathering activities were drawn from their plots and foraging areas to work in fisheries, which further weakened their community's subsistence. By as early into the Edo Period as 1715, Japanese records indicate that Ainu predominantly subsisted on animal food sources of bear, herring, whale, fur seal, and a variety of fish, and on gathered plants. With the exception of millet and a

few other edible grasses, Ainu raised few grains but ate a substantial amount of rice acquired in trade (with tobacco and sake) (Matsumae N, 134).

It should be here noted that most likely grain never constituted a large enough portion of the Ainu diet to seriously undermine their ability to subsist (Walker 2001, 87). However, the changes in diet during the Edo period portray the growing dependence on Japanese trade among the Ainu, even for things fundamental to survival such as food and clothing. This growing dependence began with Ainu greed and desires to procure trade goods and through them treasures at the expense of their natural environment. However, Ainu dependence on grain, such as other commodities, was also fostered directly by Matsumae economic policies.

The Matsumae family, even in its own domain, did not encourage wetland rice cultivation or other agricultural pursuits because it would disrupt harvesting of more lucrative fisheries, so even most settlers in Wajinchi devoted the majority of their time to herring and salmon fishing (Walker 2001, 76). With rice and sake being lucrative export products in domainal trade, Matsumae officials used local prohibitions to nurture Ainu dependency on Japanese cereals and rice. In 1786 Matsumae prohibited them from raising their own grain (85). Soon after, in 1790 Matsumae prohibited Japanese from bringing seeds, for rice or any other grain, into Ezochi and prohibited Ainu from learning how to cultivate any cereal crop (86). With declines in game supplies, prohibitions against cultivating grain or even importing seeds into Ezochi meant that Ainu became increasingly dependent on rice and Japanese grain acquired in trade. Matsumae's rice and brewing fungus (*kōji*) were essential ingredients in making traditional millet alcohol, *tonoto*, which in the 17<sup>th</sup> century became an ever-present feature of Ainu rituals and daily life.

## **(II) Growing Competition between Chiefdoms**

The environment could no longer sustain hunting and fishing at the pace that either the market or the newly developed desire among Ainu for certain items acquired in trade required of it. The market culture of the trading post had caused a breach in the relationship between Ainu and their local animals, destroying the ecological balance between people and animals and for this reason their overhunting and overfishing for trade struck deeper cultural resonance (Walker 2001, 122). In addition to causing a breach in the cosmological relationship between the Ainu and their environment, trading posts also caused rifts within the political and social structure of the Ainu as an ethnic group.

In traditional Ainu society in a time before the establishment of permanent trading posts, the Ainu had demarcated their self-sustaining and independent chiefdoms with the understanding that each designated region contained enough resources to feed and clothe its inhabitants. However, by the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, whether an Ainu community was self-sustaining depended on access to the resources necessary for trade (Walker 2001, 118). Thus traditional Ainu chiefdoms were transformed from self-sustaining political and ecological regions to production bases for trade. The very nature of Ainu social and economic space changed; Ainu chiefdoms no longer exemplified regions defined by spiritual relationships with the animals and their kamui. It was intensification of commerce at the trading post, fueled by the demand for goods in cities that focused pressure on the natural resources of Ezo tipping the ecological balance that had once been a defining characteristic of the independent Ainu chiefdom (118). Ainu settlements in areas where trade was conducted had become much larger groupings than in the traditional *kotan* and were controlled by powerful leaders who gained their wealth and status from trade (Siddle, 69).

Access to natural resources for trade became directly linked to higher standards of living. Ainu living near areas inhabited by fur-bearing animals converted animal skins into improved standards of living and higher levels of subsistence. Ainu who lived on land where these animal species were scarce, on the other hand, found themselves pushed below the subsistence level (Walker 2001, 118). Fueled by the materialism inherent in Japanese culture and a need to trade for survival, Ainu chiefdoms attempted to expand over new production bases that assured a steady flow of resources and thus the Japanese-manufactured goods that accrued prestige (124). This expansion over traditional chiefdom boundaries caused increased competition and disputes between Ainu groups. These disputes were not over the demarcation of borders but rather over the animals and fish that lay within the borders. It was access to the fauna and the environment that defined political and identity-forming space (Walker 2001, 125).

Prior to the construction of trading posts, cooperation might have been possible between chiefdoms. Negotiations likely took place over access to game, plants, and migrating salmon, and small-scale trade of food and ritual items between Ainu communities probably flourished in early years. However by the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Chiefs were no longer killing animals primarily to feed and clothe their community and control of natural resources for trade became extremely competitive. As a consequence, wars over 'hunted commodities' and access to trade broke out. This in-fighting between Ainu groups made it particularly hard to mount a unified front against Japanese encroachment from the south. Ties between groups of Ainu people broke down, with some Ainu chiefs even siding with Japanese officials against other Ainu in order to receive better trade agreements or new hunting and fishing lands.

## **Shakushain's War**

One of the most well-known conflicts in late premodern and early modern Ainu history, Shakushain's War (1669-1672), also began as a petty squabble over access to trade goods between two powerful Ainu groups in eastern Hokkaido, the Shibuchari Ainu led by Shakushain and the Hae Ainu under the chiefdom of Onibishi. Although this conflict led to a war between the Japanese army and the Ainu, the conflict had roots in infighting between Ainu groups maneuvering for better access to fish and fur-bearing animals traded with the Japanese (Walker 2001, 49). However, as Shakushain felt threatened by his opponent chief's seeming alliance with Japanese traders and gold miners in the area, the conflict began to take on ethnic overtones.

Other economic and ecological factors soon brought on direct violence toward the Japanese as Ainu began attacking gold miners, trading posts and vessels over much of Hokkaido (70). Not only were Japanese traders the most immediate targets, being situated within Ezochi, but they were also a major source of discontent among the Ainu. Japanese mining and large-net fishing near the coast had destroyed fisheries upriver in Shakushain's chiefdom (60). Furthermore, Ainu were chafed at strict prohibitions and increasingly unfair exchange rates that frustrated their growing desire for metal products, rice and sake. In particular, Ainu leaders were angry that although prices were fixed, Japanese traders were decreasing the size of rice bales (Howell D. 2005, 113). Shakushain and his allies, numbering a few hundred strong, killed hundreds of Japanese in Ezochi before marching west to confront the Matsumae near their domain in order to demand unrestricted access to trade with mainland Japan (Walker 2001, 51). To Matsumae officials, the Ainu request for unrestricted trade threatened the very existence of the domain's political and economic role in Ezo and the Tokugawa polity. The Matsumae, with the aid of

shogunal officials and troops, initiated a campaign to regain control of their domain and assassinated Shakushain and other leaders (73).

Shakushain's War represented the Ainu's final concerted effort to assert their independence from Matsumae trade restrictions and reestablish trade with Japan on their own terms and the last major violent uprising (Howell D. 2005, 113). Shakushain's death revealed social and economic tears in Ainu autonomy marked the end of Ainu hopes of a successful insurrection. The fact that a number of Ainu chiefs sided with the Japanese during the conflict, most likely in order to obtain gifts of Japanese commodities and trade privileges in exchange for loyalty, exposes the lack of solidarity among Ainu groups.

The conflict also exposes the degree to which Ainu had come to depend on trade. Matsumae military leaders used Ainu dependence on trade to their advantage and imposed a trade embargo (Walker 2001, 69). Shakushain's War was possibly the only occasion between 1590-1800 in which Japanese halted most trade with Ainu (70). Many Ainu groups quickly faced possible starvation as a result of the embargo (*Tsugaru Ittōshi*, 184). Clearly rice and other goods obtained in trade had long since become elements in the subsistence system of Ainu in western Ezo, thus intensifying the dire impact of Matsumae's monopoly in trade. Although the Matsumae were also dependent on trade, they could fall back on aid from Edo, whereas the Ainu had no other trade relations due to strict Matsumae controls (Walker 2001, 70).

With Matsumae victory in 1671, the domain extracted an oath of submission from Ainu leadership. Ainu chiefs agreed to comply with domain directives and inform authorities of any plots against Matsumae, but most importantly they also promised to trade according to the rules established by the domain. In practice, this meant that they agreed to higher prices for Japanese commodities, which they could obtain only at designated trading posts within the Ezochi. The

agreement thus forced the Ainu to sever their long-standing commercial ties to Tsugaru and other Honshu domains (Howell D. 2005, 114). One other result was that Matsumae exerted control over previously autonomous regional groups in western and central Hokkaido. At this time, Ainu communities in the outlying areas to the north and east still remained independent or maintained a tribute relationship with Matsumae. However, with the rise in Matsumae dominance, trading posts and trade vessels gradually began to penetrate into these territories as well. Thereafter all trade was conducted at outposts managed by merchants who gained privileges from trade-fief vassals.

### **Japanese Exploitation of Ainu Dependence**

Ties of mutual dependence joined the Ainu and the Japanese during the Tokugawa period. As has been previously mentioned, the Ainu were dependent economically on the Japanese: they relied on their southern neighbors for commodities they could neither produce for themselves nor acquire by any other means. However, this dependence was not one-sided and Ainu subsistence dependency on Japanese food stuffs was more than just a matter of dietary preferences. Ainu dependency was a necessary element of the Matsumae domain's political economy (Howell D. 1995, 46). For their part, the Japanese relied on trade and relations with the Ainu to define their position within the Tokugawa polity. In other words, the Matsumae's financial survival and political autonomy were predicated on its continuing commercial relationship with the Ainu people (Howell D. 2005, 112). And as a result, maintaining the vitality of the Matsumae's trading posts required that trade regulations be aimed at exploiting exotic resources in Ezochi and fostering Ainu demand for Japanese goods (Walker 2001, 86)

Even before the consolidation of Matsumae's trade authority and the proliferation of merchant-run trading posts, the Matsumae's financial needs had an impact on Ainu living in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. In particular, early Japanese infiltration and exploitation of traditional Ainu lands led to environmental degradation and a weakening of traditional Ainu subsistence practices. One early example of this was the expansion of the Japanese mining industry into Hokkaido. Precious metals (gold, silver and copper) were major Japanese export commodities in the early Tokugawa years (Innes, 533). The most innovative and widely used technique at the time involved redirecting a river's current to flush out or expose metal deposits – a process called placer mining. Altering the flow of streams and depositing large quantities of sediment in water likely disrupted migrating salmon and destroyed spawning beds (Walker 2001, 84). By 1617, gold miners, using placer techniques, had begun extracting gold from streams on the Oshima Peninsula. And as early as 1620, the Matsumae received approval from shogunal officials to open new mining sites in Ezo. Matsumae's gold-mining operations began to disrupt the seasonal fishing of Ainu living up river in eastern Ezo, creating widespread starvation and unrest (82).

As the trading posts came under the control of Japanese merchants, these traders, motivated by risk and profit, increasingly began to exploit the Ainu and to exploit Ezochi directly instead of relying on Ainu to procure goods. For example, the presence of Japanese fishers in Ezo increased, and they began to cast huge nets in rivers that once belonged to traditional Ainu hunting and fishing grounds, *iwor*, and, bypassing the Ainu trade, take all the salmon directly to markets in Honshu (Walker 2001, 85). For the Ainu who were increasingly reliant on Japanese trade for subsistence, this direct exploitation of Ezochi fisheries was a double-edged sword. Not only did the Ainu lose the income from catching these fish and trading them themselves, larger scale



fishing operations depleted local fish populations even more quickly and brought about widespread scarcity.

Japanese merchants quickly identified goods on which the Ainu had become dependent and using their privileges from the Matsumae domain and local trade monopolies, demanded exorbitant exchange rates on those goods most sought by the Ainu, who had no recourse to negotiate prices after the defeat of Shakushain and his allies. For example, Japanese merchants realized both the ritual and material value of sake and ingredients for brewing millet wine (rice and brewing fungus, *kōji*) and began increasing exchange rates to exploit Ainu dependence. When selling Japanese-brewed sake, merchants constructed bogus barrels that held less than they were supposed to and sold them for the going market rate (114). Similarly, the size of the *ezotawara*, the special rice bales used in the Ezo trade was reduced while rates of exchange were maintained, in effect raising prices for one of the staple Japanese goods on which Ainu living around the trading posts had become dependent (Siddle, 69).

### **The Introduction of Wage Labor and Contract Fisheries**

During the Tokugawa period fishing production took two basic forms: the family fishery and the contract fishery. The Japanese family fishery formed from the cooperation of independent petty fishers who worked with household members and perhaps a few hired hands in and around the periphery of *Wajinchi*. The contract fishery system, on the other hand, emerged from Ainu trade in eastern and western *Ezochi* as Matsumae vassals found it more convenient and more profitable to turn management of their trading posts over to merchants than to run them themselves (Howell D. 1995, 36). Ainu communities in southeastern Hokkaido and along the Japan Sea Coast entered into vastly different relations with the Japanese once merchants began

converting the trading posts into contract fisheries in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, responding to a growing demand for herring meal fertilizer and dried fish for food in Honshu (Howell D. 1995, 1). These fisheries operators were specially license by the Matsumae domain and therefore enjoyed a variety of economic and administrative powers, including the right to supervise Ainu labor (Howell D. 1995, 2). In return they paid a contract fee to the domain, negotiated on the basis of productivity. The jump in average fee per fishery indicates the rapid establishment of contract fisheries from 1786 with an average fee of 71 ryō to 1854, when the average fee had increased to almost 470 ryō (Shirayama 1971, 98).

Operators of contract fisheries used Ainu labor whenever possible because they were afforded the privileges by the domain and it was cheap and available locally. The Ainu entered into communal labor agreements with the contractors who employed them, in which the head of an Ainu community offered to supply the labor of the people under him in exchange for a seasonal wage (Howell D. 1995, 48). In contrast to the very small populations and loose political organization of the inland *kotan*, the dozens or even hundreds of people in the Ainu camps on the coast lived under a hierarchical authority structure designed to supply labor to the fisheries as efficiently as possible (Howell D. 2005, 174). This new form of Ainu leadership, predicated on receiving privileged treatment in return for providing steady supplies of Ainu workers for Japanese fishing operations, was not native to Ainu society, but rather corresponded more strongly with the structure of self-governing Japanese agricultural villages (Kaiho, 228-29). From this it is clear that Ainu social structure was further changing with the introduction of fishery systems.

In addition to changing traditional Ainu social structure, expansion of the fishery drew Ainu from a broadening geographical base into wage labor. Japanese traders had preempted the

most desirable lands in southern Hokkaido and overfishing at the mouths of rivers undermined Ainu's traditional salmon-fishing activities upriver, thereby forcing able-bodied workers to seek employment at Japanese-run fisheries (Kikuchi I. 1991, 313-15). This work merely further undermined Ainu independence because labor in the various fisheries – herring and dace in the spring, cherry salmon in the summer, and chum salmon in the fall – precluded participation in traditional hunting and gathering activities (Takakura, 287-314). In other words seasonal patterns of wage work in contract fisheries conflicted with traditional hunting and gathering routines and so the Ainu faced a choice between wage labor or retreating to the mountainous areas where resources and traditional food-getting practice proved insufficient at meeting basic subsistence needs. A number of inland *kotan* disappeared entirely as workers left to join contract fisheries and those that were left were inhabited by people too old or sickly to work at the fisheries and therefore often unfit to perform traditional subsistence practices (Uemura, 117).

As Ainu moved from inland areas to the coast to work in fisheries, the infiltration of Japanese commodities into the everyday lives of Ainu throughout Hokkaido increased (Howell D. 2005, 117). As trading posts were converted into contract-fisheries, it became impossible to obtain Japanese commodities, on which Ainu subsistence had come to rely, without working for fishing contractors. Even Ainu with no immediate economic or subsistence need for dealings with the Japanese were often drawn by cultural imperatives, as Japanese commodities had become integrated in Ainu ritual and social hierarchy.

In essence, the Ainu had no choice when it came to entering the wage labor workforce under the contract fishery system. After the Wajinchi-Ezochi border was closed in 1672, the Ainu could not leave the Ezochi to seek employment elsewhere. Moreover, their formal freedom of movement within Ezochi was constrained by their inability to enter into economic relations

with anyone other than agents of the domain. In other words, the Ainu could only trade with (or work for) the vassal holder of the nearest trading post or his agents (the contractors) (Howell D. 1995, 45). And these contractors took full advantage of the vulnerability of the Ainu, subjecting them to systematic and even institutionalized abuse. Far from protecting the native people, contractors and their agents, particularly interpreters, used their power to cheat them in trade, appropriate women as concubines, and terrorize them into working harder (40).

The commercial fishery industry decisively integrated Hokkaido and its entire people into the broader Japanese economy and Ainu workers became as dependent on wage labor as the Japanese members of Hokkaido's seasonal proletariat (Howell D. 2005, 125). However, with the steady decline of the Ainu population and increasing labor needs to meet market demand contractors turned to workers from Wajinchi and Tōhoku (Howell D. 1995, 48). The switch from Ainu labor to Japanese labor was gradual, but the number of seasonal Japanese workers employed grew particularly rapidly after the Tenpō famine of the 1830s in northeastern Honshu pushed thousands of peasants into the Hokkaido labor market and thereby facilitated the deployment of large nets (pound traps), which could be manned by unskilled and semiskilled workers (Howell D. 2005, 116). But by this time, the contract-fishery system had already irrevocably changed Ainu economic and social existence.

### **The Introduction of Foreign Contagions**

In 1590, before the intensification of trade between the Japanese and the Ainu, epidemiological trends in Hokkaido were distinct from those on the Japanese mainland. At this time contact between the Japanese and the Ainu was neither regular nor widespread enough to completely transform disease patterns in Ainu communities, which remained isolated except for

a few elite Ainu traders. But by about 1800, following two centuries of war, cultural exchange, trade, and other economic development, Hokkaido was firmly within the realm of Japan's disease ecology (Walker 2001, 178). Most of this exchange of communicable diseases in Hokkaido was a direct byproduct of growing commercial activities between the Ainu and Japanese as hidden pathogens were transmitted along with material commodities of trade (187). As Japanese penetrated Ainu lands, they introduced such contagions as smallpox, measles, and syphilis, which decimated Ainu populations in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries following the creation of the Matsumae's trade-fief system.

Before smallpox and other contagions introduced by Japanese contact became a definite part of Hokkaido's disease ecology and cultural order, the Ainu vigorously contested Japanese expansion in southern Hokkaido on nine different occasions between 1456 and 1536 (Takakura, 26). However high mortality from foreign contagions did not only affect Ainu demographics; it also led to loss of Ainu elders and ritual leaders who were the repositories of collective cultural knowledge, disrupted Ainu seasonal subsistence, and led to social dissolution. All of these disastrous effects of disease weakened the ability of the Ainu to withstand Japanese economic and military pressure (Walker 1999, 102).

During the pre-modern period smallpox remained the most common cause of premature death among Japanese on the mainland (Jannetta, 386). Japanese settlers came from cities in Japan where smallpox had become largely endemic, and established Japanese towns in southern Hokkaido where the disease did not yet exist and therefore there was no tolerance. Even before the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, there were epidemics reported in Japanese towns in Hokkaido and the disease quickly spread beyond Japanese settled areas to Ainu communities, as early as 1624 (Walker 2001, 179).

In the 1670s, an early reference to the Ainu population of Ezo placed the number at 20,000 which probably only approximates the population in southwestern and eastern Ezo but does not include much of the north and the inland areas which remained largely unexplored by the Japanese (Shirayama, 29). In 1807, officials estimated the total population of Hokkaido Ainu at 26,256. Forty-seven years later that number had been reduced by close to 32% to 17,810 (Emori, 103). This population decline most likely had other contributing factors, but Japanese records show that mortality rates for Ainu who contracted the disease were often over 60%, making the rate of recovery less than 40%. In some recorded epidemics, 34.1% of total Ainu village populations died (Walker 2001, 186). And although Japanese traders and officials witnessed this high toll on life, during this time there was a lack of medicine and medical care in Ezo and no attempts were made by Matsumae officials to comfort infected Ainu or prevent the spread of contagion from village to village so long as the infected Ainu were isolated from Japanese communities (Walker 2001, 171).

With such a high mortality rate a smallpox epidemic had the ability to wipe out an entire generation of Ainu village leadership, making unified military resistance to Japanese intrusion nearly impossible (186). The premature death of village elders weakened not just the political vitality of Ainu communities, but also their social and economic self-sufficiency. In fact, in a society like the Ainu that had a solely oral language and therefore no written records, village elders acted as important repositories of information and oral traditions and played a critical role in preserving social and cultural autonomy (185). Therefore, with the premature loss of elders to disease the Ainu lost much of their collective cultural knowledge, becoming unable to transmit cultural traditions, including hunting and fishing techniques. This led to social change and the weakening of their autonomy and their ability to subsist independently (185).

Not only was Ainu health and life threatened, their faith in their traditional cosmology and the ability of their elders and culture to protect them were also damaged by the introduction of epidemic disease. The Ainu believed that diseases, especially smallpox, were caused by the vengeful *payoka kamui* that possessed a personal and spiritual existence that could “think, will, and act” (Batchelor 1901, 108). In Ainu society shamans played an important role in exorcising the contagion spirits from the bodies of the afflicted and protect them from disease (Munro, 99-102). However, as traditional medicines proved unable to stop the spread of smallpox, Ainu began to question the abilities of their shaman, traditional medical practices, and the ability of their elders and ceremonies to find accommodation with the gods. Ainu soon gave up on nursing the sick with traditional ceremonies and as soon as smallpox symptoms showed, Ainu abandoned the infected and scattered into the mountains where the infected would fall in place and die and others would suffer from exposure and starvation (Walker 2001, 190). This scattering in turn would spread the epidemic to nearby villages.

Finally, during smallpox epidemics, when the only recourse was to scatter to the mountains, all subsistence activity necessarily ceased. This disrupted essential seasonal work, including the harvest of local herring and salmon fisheries that remained one of the Ainu primary food sources. This meant that Ainu villages infected during critical hunting and gathering periods faced the threat of starvation, which weakened them to secondary infection even if they survived the initial smallpox epidemic (Walker 2001, 187).

The increased commercial contact between Japanese and Ainu in the seventeenth century also facilitated the emergence of infections other than smallpox. In particular commercial growth in Japanese trading ports located in southern Hokkaido led to a rise in prostitution and sexually transmitted diseases such as syphilis, which may have been introduced to Hokkaido from Japan

as early as the mid-sixteenth century through early trade and contact with Japanese prisoners banished to Edo (188). Syphilis was definitely present in later part of 18<sup>th</sup> century (188). Once introduced, syphilis spread quickly through Hokkaido as Japanese prostitutes entertained Ainu men who came to Matsumae ports to trade. Ainu women then, through both prostitution and rape, introduced syphilis to the general Ainu population (188).

The spread of syphilis, like the smallpox epidemic, severely hampered the Ainu's ability to resist Japanese encroachment by crippling the Ainu's ability to reproduce (Crosby, 231). If a mother has primary or secondary syphilis during pregnancy, one out of three infected fetuses are either miscarried or stillborn (Stannard, 73). Even if the fetus survives the birth, there is virtually no chance that an infant will be born normal and healthy. This meant that not only did birthrates decline, but also that children were born susceptible to other diseases, weak and malformed. These children either died young or were unable to participate fully in required subsistence activities. This inability to bear healthy children was a factor in the weakening of Ainu autonomy in Hokkaido by making it so that Ainu could never recover from other diseases or from the crippling influence of trade (Walker 2001, 190).

### **Setting the Stage for Systematic Subjugation**

Trade was a fundamental part of Ainu culture and Japanese goods had been incorporated into Ainu domestic, ritual, and social life as tools, ceremonial items, and treasures of prestige. However, this early trade with the Japanese had two important characteristics that set it apart from the trade during the Edo Period. First, the Ainu remained fairly autonomous and free to negotiate deals, often bypassed Kakizaki trading houses to trade directly with traders in northern Honshu. Second, this trade was not an everyday occurrence, but rather a long, annual trip made



only by those powerful Ainu wealthy enough to leave off subsistence activities for an extended time.

During the Edo Period, the nature of Japanese-Ainu trade relations underwent fundamental changes that tipped a mutual balance in favor of the Japanese domain. As the Matsumae consolidated their control over Ainu trade routes, the Ainu lost their ability to move from Ezochi and to negotiate rates of exchange. Furthermore, the expansion of trade and Japanese encroachment with the rapid construction of trading posts throughout the late seventeenth century brought Japanese trade to the doorstep of Ainu communities. As Japanese commodities became more readily available Ainu dependency on Japanese goods increased and the nature of these goods changed from that of treasures and items for the *kamui* to that of items for everyday necessity. Japanese trade became a part of Ainu livelihood. Because the Ainu came to depend on daily trade for their livelihood, they overexploited animals and fisheries that were critical to their survival in order to procure Japanese imports through trade. As the Ainu exhausted their immediate natural resources, the Ainu became reliant on Japanese trade for basic subsistence, including grains and fabrics to feed and clothe their families. As some animals became scarce, and formerly self-sustaining chiefdoms felt the squeeze of the trading post, they pushed outward in search of new resources, breaching neighboring chiefdom borders and causing political tension between Ainu groups that further undermined their autonomy as a cohesive ethnic group.

By the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Hokkaido Ainu had fallen into a state of crisis, as Japanese domination had undermined the social, economic, and demographic foundations of their culture. In particular, the growth of the herring fishery during the Tokugawa (and Meiji) period placed Hokkaido firmly within the proto-industrial economy of greater Japan. These fisheries developed as an element of two overlapping regional economies: a labor economy that

encompassed all of Hokkaido (and included its Ainu and Japanese residents) and a marketing economy that extended to mainland Japan. These regional economies matured before the birth of the Meiji regime and its colonial policies; indeed their ultimate origins lay in medieval trade and communication networks (Howell D. 1995, 14).

Ainu, seeking employment at fisheries operated by Japanese merchants, moved to the coast, disrupting indigenous society in a number of ways. The system brought Ainu from inland to the coast where they had increased contact with Japanese merchandise and customs, which only exacerbated the dependency on Japanese goods that had developed earlier in the period. The move away from inland villages and trade to wage labor also meant the abandonment of traditional hunting and fishing lands, and with them the loss of traditional subsistence practices. With the new economic structure, came a new social structure, as fishery villages accumulated Ainu with no hereditary ties and with larger, numbers than traditional chiefdom villages. The leaders of these new large coastal communities tied their social position to the Japanese economic system. Even Ainu who did not move to the coast were affected; the shortage of able-bodied people upset hunting and gathering routines and the introduction of Japanese commodities by workers returning home after the conclusion of the fishing season disrupted the local economy. In short, by the time Meiji officials arrived on the scene no Ainu community remained untouched by economic relations with Japanese (Howell D. 2005, 175).

By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the 17,000 Ainu on Hokkaido accounted for only around 2 percent of the population of the island and most of these Ainu were sunk in chronic destitution and only barely managing to survive (Emori, 126). Poverty and isolation, coupled with the lack of education, money, or any other resources, hampered the Ainu from mounting any concerted response to the social stresses created by rapid change in the new colonial situation (Siddle, 72).

This led to an almost complete loss of traditional ways of life under the assimilation efforts of the Meiji government. However this loss of culture, in particular the changing economic and subsistence activities of the Ainu, had begun years before during the Edo Period, setting the stage for systematic subjugation during the modern period. In fact, the decline of Ainu culture and society was as much, if not more, a byproduct of centuries of economic dependency during the Edo Period than a consequence of the Meiji state's aggressive policy of assimilation through deculturation, which sought to eliminate the Ainu language, religion, and other manifestations of native culture.

Although they had been subjected to political, economic, and ecological pressure for hundreds of years, the pressure the Meiji state applied to the Ainu was too strong and the pace of change too rapid for the Ainu to adapt readily given their weakened position at the end of the Edo Period. Unlike the Matsumae domain, which had needed the Ainu in order to have a distinct identity to define their political authority and economic livelihood, the Meiji regime sought to break down the relatively autonomous sphere of identity that the Ainu had occupied in early modern society. However, the immediate impact of policies on individual Ainu communities depended on two intimately related conditions: the extent of pre-Meiji economic contact and the authorities' sense of the imperative for immediate change (Howell D. 2005, 176). It is indicative of the extent to which Japanese encroachment and trade destroyed traditional Ainu culture and ways of life, that in the early years of the Restoration Meiji officials practically ignored the majority of Ainu who lived in coastal towns outside of fisheries, and who through years of contact with the Japanese and integration into the state economy would have proved the easiest to convert to the Meiji vision of a Japanese subject. Meiji officials generally saw the greatest need for policies in the most isolated Ainu communities where the devastating effects of

Japanese trade on traditional cultural practices had been felt the least. These concentrated efforts on the interior can then be viewed simply as clean up, the conversion of a few stray villages after Edo Period pressures had already forced most Ainu to abandon traditional subsistence and ways of life.

Having now shown how archeology and a careful use of Japanese-biased historical sources paint the picture of the changing Ainu food practices and cosmological beliefs during the Edo Period, I will use a comparison of Ainu oral traditions to show an indigenous perspective on these same changes. Through this combination of historical analysis and literary analysis of historical material in oral narratives, I hope to put to rest the long-held belief that traditional Ainu culture remained unchanged until the implementation of Meiji Restoration policies of assimilation.

## Chapter 5: *Kamui Yukar* and Traditional Ainu Food Culture

### Characteristics of the Genre and its ‘Traditionalism’

Ainu epic narratives can be grouped loosely into two categories based on their style of delivery. The first of these two categories are those stories recited in a cadenced ‘grace voice’ (*atomte itak*, *sakoro itak*, *kamui itak*) (Ogihara, 274). This class of metered narratives includes the *yukar* (heroic epics about human protagonists), *oina* (tales of the culture hero, or human-like demigods), and *kamui yukar* (tales of gods) (Strong, 6). The present study will focus on the last of these metered narrative genres, the *kamui yukar*, which is characterized not only by its specific meter, but also by its *sakehe* or refrain. These tales relate in first person the exploits of various deities, especially in their relations with humans, and provide a window into traditional Ainu cosmology. These deities are most often animal spirits but can also sometimes be the spirits of plants or natural phenomena and elements such as wind or fire (Honda, 89).

*Kamui yukar* are performed in lines of four beats, each with five syllables (Kitamichi, 321-322). In general each line is recited according to the following pattern:

5 syllables:  $\frac{1}{2}$  beat +  $\frac{1}{2}$  beat + 1 beat + 1 beat + 1 beat (4 beats)

In this way it is usual to have the line contain a different number of syllables than beats, so that some sounds have to be shortened to fit the four beat meter. Although five syllables is the norm, there are times when lines contain a different number of syllables that when recited would be extended or shortened in order to fit into the four beat meter. In other words, in lines with more than five syllables (such as 7 syllables), some sounds are recited in half beats:

6 syllables: ½ beat + ½ beat + 1 beat + ½ beat + ½ beat + 1 beat (4 beats)

In lines with fewer than five syllables (such as 4 syllables) some sounds are extended (321-322):

4 syllables: 1 beat + 1 beat + 1 beat + 1 beat (4 beats)

There is no intentional rhyme to these lines, but the strictly metered recitation is very rhythmic in its delivery. Other forms of Ainu oral traditions, such as the long *yukar* epics, are typically accompanied by the rhythmical beating of a short stick, *repni*, or clapping of hands (Howell R, 362). In the case of the *yukar*, this rhythmic accompaniment is not performed only by the reciter, but also by members of the audience, who shout *het! het!* as both encouragement and as pacing for the narrative and the reciter (Oginaka, 278). Although there is no clear evidence that the *kamui yukar* were similarly performed, it is likely that at least the reciter would keep time while delivering these tales.

The most salient feature of *kamui yukar* recitation is the repetition of a refrain, called a *sakehe*, after each line of the narrative. According to tradition, each phrase of the story is followed by this call that is also in a four-count meter (Kitamichi, 321). The *sakehe* often mimic the natural cry or characteristic sound of the animal deity that serves as narrator (Chiri M. 1973a 166-167). Thus, they are often epithetic in function, emphasizing one particular characteristic of the narrator and shaping its role in the meaning of the story. Although the meaning of some of these epithetic *sakehe* can be identified, there are many for which the origin of the call is unknown (Kitamichi, 320). This use of archaic, even forgotten language speaks to the old origins of these narratives. Furthermore, the fact that this old language has persisted through retelling speaks to the consistency of the content of the story and the delivery. This trend is seen not just in the *sakehe*, but elsewhere in the delivery of *kamui yukar* as well. In metered forms such as the *kamui yukar*, more than other unmetered narrative genres, there appear archaic words and

phrases, intelligible only to older generations and those with a special knowledge of Ainu language (Howell R, 361).

According to ‘great divide’ psychodynamic theory, the more “mechanical” or restricted the transmission of the narrative the more “trustworthy” or consistent the tradition (Vansina, 3). In other words, the more limits to the imaginative improvisation of the reciter, the less mutable and more homeostatic the narrative becomes. This means that ritually defined and metered forms lend themselves more towards the use of formulas and memorized phrases by the reciter and therefore historical facts and themes remain more constant through each retelling.

The existence of mnemonic devices in oral cultures... offer some resistance to the interpretive process. Formalized patterns of speech, recital under ritual condition, the use of drums and other musical instruments, the employment of professional remembrances all such factors may shield at least part of the content of memory from the transmuting influence of the immediate pressures of the present. (Goody and Watt, 31)

From this we understand that the more restrictions on recitation, such as meter, rhythm, or set phrasing, the more conservative and consistent an oral tradition tends to be. In this way, the *kamui yukar* genre with its rigid meter, rhythmic beat, and repetitive *sakehe* is, more than any other Ainu oral genre, restricted in its recitation and is therefore more resistant to the modernizing tendencies felt by other forms of oral narrative. One can say that the *kamui yukar* narratives are, by rule, less open to modernizing changes and therefore more historic than other forms.

Not just due to its metered recitation, but also due to its more concentrated religious content, the genre of *kamui yukar* is considered to be one of the oldest in the Ainu tradition (Kindaichi 1992, 101). The worldview represented in the *kamui yukar* and their intense focus on the relationship between the human world and the many deities that inhabit the Hokkaido ecology appear to reflect the religious ideology of the Early Ainu period, the time spanning from

the 6<sup>th</sup> century to about the 10<sup>th</sup> century when expansion of trade with the Japanese saw pottery of Satsumon people replaced with imported iron and lacquered products (Philippi, 10). The *kamui yukar*, at least in their origin, were almost certainly performed not purely for entertainment or for didactic purposes but for reasons of religious efficacy (Strong, 7). It is speculated that these narratives have their origins in female shamanistic ritual, in which the narrating deity would inhabit the body of the female medium and speak through her (Kindaichi 1942, 373). It is because of its more ritual nature that some scholars have gone so far as to categorize *kamui yukar* as a sacred rather than a literary genre (372).

This ritual nature of *kamui yukar* recitation also contributes to its traditionalism and consistency through time. Psychodynamic theory and other studies of oral traditions have shown a strong correlation between ritual recitations and regularity of storytelling, including even word-level agreement (Vansina, 107-108). This is because recitations for religious purposes often have a specific function that must be fulfilled by the story or a particular message that must be understood by the audience each time the story is told. For this reason, reciters must fit together certain required pieces, or even memorize whole sections of the story, so that each retelling contains the same teachings. This is one reason why religious oral traditions tend to use formulas and epithetic language more often than other forms of oral narrative. This rigidity in wording is not apparent in other genres where the primary goal of recitation is entertainment or simply the transference of communal knowledge.



### ***Kamui Yukar of Famine***

The categorization of *kamui yukar* as a sacred rather than literary genre is reinforced by the fact that these narratives are most likely recited in conjunction with longer epic *yukar* at religious events, in particular at the sending-off ceremonies of animals (Akino, 248). These sending-off ceremonies consist of a banquet held in the honor of the spirit of the game animal so that the spirit returns to the world of the gods laden with *tonoto*, *inau* and other offerings. In the case of the sending-off ceremonies, the ritual function of the performance of *kamui yukar* is deeply connected with the humans' desire to guarantee the availability of game animals and prevent starvation. In fact, Chiri Mashihō argues that the meaning of the word *yukar* is not "to sing" as it is often glossed, but instead originates from the combination *yuk-kar*, meaning literally "to make game" (1973b, 210). From this interpretation, one could say that the genre of *kamui yukar* narratives is inextricably linked to the cosmology of hunting and gathering and that food collection was as much a religious act as it was a subsistence activity.

In other words, the primary purpose of reciting *kamui yukar* stories is not for entertainment as with some other types of storytelling, but is instead ritual and didactic. The recitation of the story itself is seen as an offering to the animal spirit being sent home, and reminds the deity of its reciprocal relationship with the humans and its duty to return to *ainu moshir* and provide protection and food. This may help explain why there is such a large number of these narratives concerned with famine and the availability of game animals such as deer and fish.

*Ainu kamui yukar* of famine, although great in number, are very similar not only in terms of language, but also in terms of themes and story lines. Although the stories often have a different narrating deity, they follow, with only slight variation, the same standard narrative

outline and use the same thematic motifs. The general format of the *kamui yukar* of famine can be outlined in the following way:

- 1) There is famine in the human world, highlighted by a lack of the staple meat sources in the Ainu diet, deer or fish.
- 2) The humans use the last of their millet wine, *tonoto*, as ritual offerings to the narrating deity. With this gift the humans request that the god mediate on their behalf with the deities that control the animal food supply, namely the Keeper of the Game (*Yuk-kor Kamui*) and the Keeper of the Fish (*Chep-kor Kamui*).
- 3) The mediating god takes pity on the humans and on their behalf beseeches the deities to return the animals to the human world. This is usually done by first placating them with a drinking banquet using the *tonoto* received from the human offering.
- 4) The Keeper of the Game and the Keeper of the Fish explain that they have withheld food because the humans have not been adhering to the proper hunting and fishing rituals and thereby mistreating the animals that they kill.
- 5) The mediating god either convinces or tricks the Keeper of the Game and the Keeper of the Fish into returning the food to the human world.
- 6) The mediator god teaches the humans how to treat their kill properly and how to thank the gods with ritual. In this way, harmony is restored and the humans learn how to avoid angering the gods and prevent famine in the future.

In addition to the similar if not identical narrative structure of the *kamui yukar* of famine, the stories share common themes, moral lessons, and motifs. Because these stories served to teach humans how to observe proper rituals and how to live according to traditional ways of life, there were particular pieces of the tale that had to be told practically word for word to ensure that the message was communicated in each telling. Therefore the recurrence of certain epithetic phrases is also common.

### **Reflections of Early Ainu-Japanese Trade in *Kamui Yukar***

Many *kamui yukar* tales, of famine or otherwise, contain commentary on early trade with the Japanese and other peoples. Even when these tales do not have trade as their main theme, a majority of them mention goods obtained through trade as regular domestic or ritual items. This

makes it clear that early trade and the goods obtained therein had been completely incorporated into the traditional Ainu lifestyle. In particular, almost every *kamui yukar* talks about offering sake or traditional millet wine, *tonoto*, to the gods. As has already been mentioned, these were either directly obtained or brewed from ingredients like *kōji* obtained only through trade with the Japanese.

One especially telling story on early trade relations is the “Song of an Old Boat Goddess” (Philippi, 175-184)<sup>1</sup>. In this story, the narrator is a boat created by the culture hero Okikurmi for trading expeditions. The boat talks of how the culture hero takes her on a long journey to trade with the Japanese:

He came down again,  
Bearing on his back big bundles  
Of articles traded with the Japanese,  
Deer furs and hides,  
And bear furs and hides...  
We went on and on until we came  
To the land of the Japanese.  
The young Okikurmi  
Decorated my bosom beautifully  
With those things he had promised me:  
With wine, with vessels.

This passage speaks not only to the fact that there was early trade with the Japanese, but also hints at exactly what goods were traded. The Ainu sold furs and hides of animals that they hunted in exchange for religious and domestic items such as wine (probably sake) and vessels (probably lacquerware utensils and containers used not only for everyday life but also in religious ceremonies). Even though these items have been adopted into Ainu practices, these items are clearly presented as prestigious rarities or treasures (*ikor*) rather than mundane articles (Philippi, 178).

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<sup>1</sup> This is an English translation of *kamui yukar* selection 69 in Kubodera’s *Ainu Jōjishi-Shin’yō, seiden no kenkyū* (319-326).

It is important to note that this tale also comments on how arduous and long the journey is. In fact, many years pass before the culture hero is able to take the time to travel again to the land of the Japanese to trade. This speaks to the fact that early trade with the Japanese was conducted only at the southern tip of Hokkaido or on the northern coast of the mainland in the Tōhoku area and only as often as once a year. The sheer effort and time required for these trading expeditions meant that early trade between the Japanese and the Ainu was very limited and not part of the daily life of either community.

### **Affirmation of Traditional Cosmology**

Traditional Ainu cosmology stresses the reciprocal relationship between the deities on *ainu moshir*, and human beings. The Ainu believed that only through daily ritual interactions with the messenger deities on *ainu moshir* could the Ainu communicate with the great, removed deities that inhabited *kamui moshir*, the world of the gods. In particular, the cosmology and ritual of food collection involved daily observance and respect toward the spirits that inhabit the game, fish, and plants that the Ainu consumed. These spirits were seen as sacrificing their flesh for Ainu subsistence in return for ritual offering, prayer, and *tonoto*.

In the traditional worldview, these spirits, or *ramat*, are pervasive in the Ainu environment, inhabiting most living creatures and even some inanimate things such as rocks, fire, and water. However, many of these spirits do not remain indefinitely in *ainu moshir*. In particular, the animal spirits that live in the human world report to the Keeper of the Game and the Keeper of the Fish who control the supply of food sources. These deities live far removed in *kamui moshir* and cannot be communicated with directly. Because of this, human beings had to

besech the help of a deity living in *ainu moshir* to serve as mediator between the human and god worlds.

The *kamui yukar* of famine reflect both the hierarchical structure of the traditional Ainu pantheon of deities and the reciprocal relationship between the gods and the humans inhabiting *ainu moshir*. These themes of traditional cosmology are seen most dramatically in (I) the nature and cause of the famine that highlight the traditional belief that food is cycled between the world of the gods and the world of the humans; (II) the restoration of order at the end of the story that highlights the mutual partnership between humans and gods; and (III) the dutiful position of the narrating god.

### **(I) The Nature and Cause of the Famine**

The nature and cause of the famine in the *kamui yukar* stories reflect traditional cosmological views of food as spirits that take form and cycle between *kamui moshir* and *ainu moshir*. The narrations of these stories begin with human beings suffering from famine because there are no fish or game animals to be found and also no vegetation for traditional gathering. In the *kamui yukar* “The White Weasel Goddess,” this lack of all food sources in *ainu moshir* is clearly presented. The human beings pray to the narrating god for help and through their messenger say,

This year the human village has been beset by horrible famine.  
In the mountains there is not even one rabbit, and  
In the rivers not so much as one small fish can be seen  
It turns out that even the nuts and berries on the trees  
Even the grasses are gone.

The humans beset by famine pray to the deities of *ainu moshir* to serve as mediator between them and the gods of *kamui moshir* whom they cannot contact directly. Asking the deities of *ainu moshir* to mediate their contact with the gods of *kamui moshir* makes it clear that the famine

is caused by the deities of *kamui moshir* withholding the spirits of the food that should cycle between the human and god worlds.

Therefore, the cause of the famine in these narratives illustrates the traditional belief that food comes from spirits that cycle between *ainu moshir* and *kamui moshir*. These animal and plant spirits descend to the human world to give their flesh for human sustenance in return for prayers and ceremonial offerings. In the traditional Ainu view, these spirits will continue this cycle of give and take as long as human beings do not disrespect the spirits while hunting, fishing, gathering, cultivating, or consuming food. Therefore, if the humans remain faithful in their observance of hunting and gathering ritual, they will be well fed. However, if they fail to keep their end of the reciprocal bargain, they will be punished with famine. So in this way, *kamui yukar* narratives of famine not only portray the cycling of spirits, but also speak to the importance of the reciprocal relationship between deity and human in traditional Ainu cosmology.

In the *kamui yukar* of famine, the humans have always done something to disrespect the food spirits and bring on divine punishment from the deities of *kamui moshir*, in particular the Keeper of the Game and the Keeper of the Fish; famine is always a deserved consequence of the humans' bad actions. For example, in the "White Weasel Goddess" story, the Keeper of the Game explains that he has stopped the flow of deer because the humans have disrespected the game animals that they kill and have not decorated the skulls of the deer with ceremonial *inau* offerings:

In the old days, humans had pious hearts  
And no matter what animal they killed  
They were courteous to it.  
At that time, our companions  
Holding in their mouths decorated arrows,  
Holding in their mouths *inau*

Would return to us with great glee.  
Whereas the hearts of the humans have worsened,  
Even though they kill our companions  
Because they use things like decayed wood  
Our companions holding in their mouths dead wood  
Return to us in tears.  
Because this is, to us, not amusing  
We thought to punish the humans a little  
And so I stopped the root of the deer.

Similarly, the Keeper of the Fish explains that he has likewise stopped the flow of fish because the humans have not been using the traditional carved stick, *isapakikni*, to kill the salmon.

Instead they have disrespected the spirits by using mundane tools for what should be a ritual killing:

In the old days, even though they killed our companions  
Because they would use a special thing called *isapakikni*  
Our companions would always  
Holding brand-new *isapakikni*  
Return to us smiling happily.  
Whereas, now because they kill with  
Rotted wood and small stones,  
Our companions, holding these things  
Return to us in tears.  
Because this is not amusing  
I also stopped the root of the fish.

From these explanations it is clear that the famine is a deserved punishment for the humans' bad behavior. The famine occurs when human beings have slighted the spirits by not practicing proper hunting and gathering rituals and etiquette. The humans have broken their part of the reciprocal relationship with the gods and are therefore punished for their wrongdoing.

The clear explanation of why the pantheon of gods has withheld the food is not just a feature of this story, but is a common, if not required, element of all *kamui yukar* of famine. A very similar explanation of the cause of famine is seen in "The Sacred Bird Spiritual Being [Fish Owl]

Sings About Himself” (Chiri Y. 2011, 227-230).<sup>2</sup> In this story the justification of the famine as divine punishment is given:

An almost identical explanation is given in the  
In the heavens the Keeper of the Game and the Keeper of the Fish  
Until now have not sent down the deer and have not sent down the salmon  
Because the human beings, when they go to hunt the deer,  
Hit the deer on the head with a wooden stick and kill it, and after they skin the deer  
They toss its head on the ground in the woods  
And just leave it, and when they go to take the salmon,  
They hit the salmon on the head with a rotten stick to kill it, and so  
All the deer return naked and crying  
To the Keeper of the Game, and all the salmon  
Return to the Keeper of the Fish holding rotten sticks in their mouths.

Not only is the nature of the famine as punishment explained, it is also important to note that the cause of the famine is very clear in each of these stories – the audience and the mediating god are told clearly what the humans have done wrong. In this way there is the promise that the famine can be resolved. Since the cause of the famine is known, it is easy to fix it. After hearing the explanation from the Keeper of the Game and the Keeper of the Fish, the White Weasel Goddess narrates:

I understood the origin of the famine in the human village.  
The anger of the Keeper of the Game and the Keeper of the Fish  
Was indeed a reasonable thing.  
However, because the humans do not know any better  
They do these things.  
If we politely taught them how it is  
From now on they would without a doubt kill correctly.

She clearly both understands the cause of the famine and understands exactly how to resolve it. She simply needs to teach the humans how to properly respect the animal spirits by decorating the deer’s skulls with *inau* and killing the fish with the carved *isapakikni* stick. Then the Keeper of the Game and the Keeper of the Fish will be appeased and order restored to the world.

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<sup>2</sup> For another English translation of this tale, see “Song of the Owl God” in Philippi’s *Songs of Gods, Songs of Humans* (108-113).



In “The Sacred Bird Spiritual Being [Fish Owl] Sings About Himself” the narrating god similarly understands that if the humans behave properly, then the famine will be resolved:

From now on,  
If indeed the human beings resolve to handle  
Both the deer and the salmon with respect, they [The Keeper of the Game and the  
Keeper of the Fish] will send down the deer  
And send down the salmon.

Because there is both a clear explanation of the cause of famine and a clear understanding that the Keeper of the Game and the Keeper of the Fish must simply be appeased to resolve the famine, there is the promise that not only will this famine be cured but also future famine will be protected against. In other words, the cause of the famine is known so a solution can be found.

## **(II) The Restoration of Order with the Resolution of Famine**

Along with the punishment for wrongdoing comes a lesson on how to properly treat food spirits and therefore prevent angering the gods and incurring famine again. The mediator god often appears to the chief in a dream and teaches him how to properly worship the spirits of the food and promises him that the food will be returned if the humans observe these practices correctly. In this way, not only is the famine resolved with the return of food spirits, but also future famine is prevented through proper instruction on religious rites for traditional hunting and gathering practices.

Each of these *kamui yukar* ends with the spirits of the food returning to the humans after they have learned their lesson. The human beings not only demonstrate that they now adhere to proper hunting and gathering practices, but also that they continue to offer the gods worship. This is apparent in the final banquet scene, common to most of these stories. The humans brew *tonoto* and carve *inau* for the gods in gratitude for the return of food and their continued protection. There is, therefore, affirmation at the end of the story that the human beings have

learned how to properly kill their game, respect the spirits of their food sources, and properly worship the gods to maintain the reciprocal relationship. In the “Song of the White Weasel Goddess,” it is said of the humans:

They sent off the deer  
With decorated arrows and *inau*  
They made beautiful *isapakikni*  
And with these came to kill the fish.  
So, holding decorated arrows  
And bearing *inau*  
The deer braced with happiness  
Returned home to the Keeper of the Game  
And so, the fish again carrying beautiful *isapakikni*  
Cheerfully returned home to the Keeper of the Fish.  
The Keeper of the Game and the Keeper of the Fish  
Were delighted by this, and  
One after another let out the deer and the fish  
So that it came to be there was  
No longer any trouble in the human village.

From this ending, it is clear that harmony between the human beings and the gods has been restored and that since the humans have learned their lesson there is no threat of famine returning. In other words, since the human beings are taught how to properly respect the gods, they are able to ensure a future sustained and protected by these deities.

This lesson learned and harmonious ending, which promises a life free from future famine or hardship on the condition that humans observe proper food rituals, is not only seen in this story, but in most if not all *kamui yukar* of famine. Another tale, “The Sacred Bird Spiritual Being [Fish Owl] Sings About Himself” ends in a strikingly similar manner (Chiri Y. 2011, 227-230). The mediating god narrates:

It was the case that the human beings  
Were treating badly both the deer and the salmon.  
Then, from that time on, I taught the human beings  
In their sleep, in their dreams, that they absolutely should not  
Do such things. The human beings too realized in their hearts  
This was bad, and after that

They made beautiful head-striking sticks that were like *inau*  
And used them to take salmon, and when  
They went to hunt deer they beautifully  
Decorated the head too with *inau*. And so  
The salmon went joyfully to the Keeper of the Fish  
Holding beautiful *inau* in their mouths, and the deer  
Returned joyfully to the Keeper of the Game  
With their heads freshly dressed. That made the Keeper of the Game  
And the Keeper of the Fish glad, and so  
They sent down lots of salmon, and sent down lots of deer.  
The human beings are now living  
Without any cares, without any hunger.

The humans will now live without hunger, so the famine is ended, and it is clear that they will also not need to worry about famine in the future. The parallels between the conclusions of these stories are immediately apparent. The *kamui yukar* have a definite resolution and promise for ease in the future.

It is also important to note that it is not just the humans who benefit from this return to order, but also the deities. Because the relationship between the gods and the humans is reciprocal, the deities rely on human beings for respect and ritual offerings, especially alcohol. In the “Song of the White Weasel Goddess,” this mutual reliance is presented clearly when the narrator reminds the Keeper of the Game and the Keeper of the Fish that if the humans all starve then the gods will no longer receive offerings. She explains:

If you, in this way, forever make the humans cry,  
It will be that every last one will die and  
There will be no more gods who receive  
Sake and *inau* made by the humans.  
Isn't this a very lonely thing?  
Wouldn't it be better this time  
If you just warn them and then forgive them,  
Then all the gods without exception  
Will be thanked by the humans  
And will receive in showers  
Gifts of *inau* and sake.

From this it is clear that both the gods and the humans benefit from and rely on a continued reciprocal relationship. The humans require the gods and spirits for food and protection against the natural elements while the gods require veneration from the humans.

Another story, “The Ocean Spiritual Being [Orca] Sings About Himself” also ends with a drinking party in which the gods enjoy the offerings of the grateful human beings (Chiri Y. 2011, 231-236)<sup>3</sup>. In this story, the narrating Orca sees the humans suffering from famine and brings them a whale. The humans then divide the whale according to proper ritual using their precious heirloom swords and thank the Orca with offerings of *inau* and *tonoto*, millet wine. The story ends with the Orca holding a drinking banquet for the gods in which he explains how he has restored balance to the world and this is why he has been blessed with many gifts:

At the height of the feast I stood up and spoke in detail  
Both about how there had been a famine in the land of the humans  
And I had felt sorry for them and pushed up game, and about...  
How the headman  
Of Otashut village with various words [and gifts] had expressed thanks...  
The spiritual beings in unison voiced their praise  
And approval again and again.

From these stories, it is clear that in the *kamui yukar* it is not just the famine that is resolved at the end of the story with the return of food spirits to the human world, but there is also clearly a restoration of order and balance to the Ainu world. Furthermore, this genre of narrative emphasizes the importance to both the humans and the gods of the traditional cosmological reciprocity.

### **(III) The Dutiful Position of the Mediator**

It is clear from *kamui yukar* narratives that humans and gods shared a reciprocal relationship. Traditional Ainu cosmology says that this relationship was established from the

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<sup>3</sup> For another English translation of this tale, see “Song of the Killer Whale” in Philippi’s *Songs of Gods, Songs of Humans* (89-98).

creation of the human world, *ainu moshir*. Traditional Ainu origin narratives tell how *ainu moshir* was created by deities in the world of the gods, *kamui moshir*. As the human world came into being, some deities descended from *kamui moshir* to oversee the animal and plant spirits that manifested themselves in the environment of *ainu moshir*. These *kamui* that came to inhabit *ainu moshir* were invested with the duty to watch over the land and the humans that resided in it. At the same time, other deities remained removed in *kamui moshir* and never visited the human world (Yamada, 84).

In this way, the *kamui* in Ainu cosmology have an inherent hierarchy of both rank and proximity to the human world. Only some of the gods lived in *ainu moshir* where they could communicate and interact with human beings. Traditionally the Ainu directly worshiped only the accessible gods in *ainu moshir* while the pantheon of gods living in *kamui moshir* could only be reached through the mediatory efforts of other gods. In everyday life, the most important mediator was the fire goddess, *Ape Kamui*. She is believed to have been the first deity to descend from *kamui moshir* to watch over the human world. She functions not only as protector of each household, but also as an interpreter between the gods and human beings (86). As fire is a fundamental source for all human nourishment, it was believed that prayers should be offered to this deity first in almost every ritual activity (Kindaichi 1925, 259-260).

The role of the fire goddess as mediator, especially on matters concerning food collection, is clearly illustrated in one *kamui yukar* of the Bear God (Kubodera, 61-72). In this story, the Fire Goddess sends the Aconite Goddess (*Shurku Kamui*) to the bear god to entice him to visit the world of the humans and give his flesh in return for a sending-off ceremony that includes entertainment by way of storytelling and feasting. At the end of the story, the bear god is sent back laden with presents from the human world and has been treated so kindly he is happy to

return again. This clearly illustrates the role of the Fire Goddess as mediator, especially when it comes to sustenance, and the nature of the reciprocal relationship between god and human when each party holds up their end of the bargain.

It is important to note that the bear, unlike the salmon and the deer, is not simply a spirit, or *ramat*, controlled by the greater pantheon of Ainu deities in *kamui moshir*. Instead, the bear is believed to be the animal form of a *kamui* himself. This is why the mediating god speaks directly with the bear, instead of petitioning the Keeper of the Game and the Keeper of the Fish. As a character, the bear occupies a different spatial and spiritual status than the deer and fish and so the exact relationship with the human beings and cycle of give and take is slightly different. The importance of the reciprocal relationship between the bear *kamui* who sacrifices his flesh to human subsistence in return for ritual offerings, however, parallels the importance of the reciprocal relationship between the deer and salmon spirits in other *kamui yukar* of famine.

In *kamui yukar* of famine, other deities can play the role of mediator on behalf of the humans. Like the Goddess of Fire, most of these deities are closely linked with sources of life and are often female. These goddesses include the Goddess of Water (*Wakka-ush Kamui*), the Earth Goddess (*Shir-kor Kamui*) manifested as a tree and the Goddess of Hunting and Fishing (*Hashinau-uk Kamui*) manifested as a jay (Yamada, 84). Like fire, water is essential to sustain life, the earth and its trees provides many materials necessary for life, and hunting and fishing are the traditional basic subsistence activities. In addition to these common mediators, birds are also often seen in the position of mediator because their ability to fly allows them to travel to *kamui moshir*, which is believed to be situated above *ainu moshir*, and because their songs were taken to be a sign of great eloquence needed to persuade the gods.

In the “Song of the White Weasel Goddess,” the mediator as a stoat (white weasel) god is rather atypical. Although only speculative, perhaps this has to do with the association of this species (*Mustela erminea kanei*) with the mountains and winter months. These animals produce a thick white coat and, much like the deer and bear hunted by the Ainu, move into the mountains during the winter months. In this way, their seasonal migration patterns mirror the subsistence cycles in traditional Ainu hunting and gathering practice. Furthermore, the remote mountains were considered close to *kamui moshir* because they reached high into the sky (Yamada, 95-96). Although one can only speculate why a stoat god may be able to communicate with *kamui moshir*, it is clear that this narrator serves the same purpose as other mediating gods in similar *kamui yukar* tales of famine.

At the opening of the story the narrating stoat deity is said to live in the lower regions of the upper world of the gods and was sent to the world of humans to protect *ainu moshir*. She is referred to as a “goddess who protects the lower world.” From this it is clear that it is the duty of her existence close to *ainu moshir* to watch over and protect the humans. As a less remote goddess, she is in the conventional position of a mediating deity, one that can be worshipped by humans and then relay these prayers and offerings to the other gods. It is exactly according to this typical view of Ainu cosmology that the weasel goddess is contacted in the story. The human beings, through traditional prayer and libation offerings with a *kikeush-pashui* beseech her aid in placating the gods and she is, by her position and her benevolent nature, obliged to respond and act in the humans’ favor.

## **Conclusion: An Autonomous Subsistence with Limited Trade**

From the content of these conservative and older *kamui yukar* narratives it is clear that during the early Ainu period, there was concern about famine and the idea that humans must constantly work to placate the supernatural forces that control the food supply, particularly fish and deer (Philippi, 10). These narratives clearly reinforce the more traditional cosmological views surrounding food, such as the belief that all food contains a spirit, which dons a corporeal form to gift the humans with its flesh in return for ritual offerings. The *kamui yukar* of famine also highlight long-established beliefs that the performance of the hunting and fishing rituals is necessary to placate these food spirits so that they will return happy to their masters in *kamui moshir*. However, should the humans mistreat these spirits, the Keeper of the Game and the Keeper of the Fish will punish them by withholding the flow of life-giving food.

Even though the famines in these stories are real, they always end with balance restored and the promise of a bright future for both gods and humans as long as both parties participate appropriately in their mutual partnership. There is the sense that, now that human beings have learned their lesson and properly respect the spirits of the food, they will continue to prosper. This bright outlook and faith in the traditional cosmology is also seen in the fact that the humans, even when beset by famine, are never without a friend among the *kamui*. The mediating gods who live on *ainu moshir* live in order to protect and instruct the human beings and their traditional ways of life.

In this way, the *kamui yukar* paint a picture of the traditional Ainu communities as living in a balanced and sustainable way with their environment. Although the stories include references to the presence of trade in Ainu life, this trade is limited to ceremonial and prestige items, such as sake and ingredients for brewing *tonoto*. Although the Ainu take some furs and



skins from the animals that they hunt, the animals are viewed primarily in terms of their nature as a food source. These animals, the manifestations of *kamui* or *ramat*, are therefore respected for their gift of sustenance and never overexploited. There is no suggestion that early trade was a major part of normal Ainu subsistence activity and also no indication that this trade disrupted the mutual relationship between the Ainu and the natural and cosmological space around them.

## Chapter 6: *Uwepeker* and Changes in Ainu Subsistence Practices in the Edo Period

### Characteristics of the Genre and its ‘Modernity’

The second category of Ainu epic oral narratives are those delivered in a normal speaking voice, *yayan itak*, without cadence (Ogihara, 274). This category includes *upashkuma* (accounts that provide practical information and teachings for a successful life) and *uwepeker*<sup>1</sup> (stories that recount interesting events) (Strong, 6). This study will focus on the second of these unmetred epic genres, the *uwepeker* because due to their unconstrained recitation they are the most inherently adaptable style oral narratives and for reasons that I will explain below are more likely to register and give expression to historical change.

There are very few rules when it comes to telling *uwepeker* narratives; there is no set beat or meter and no set number of syllables per line. This means that the tale is recited much like a written prose narrative, with sentences or phrases of varying lengths and with great freedom of word choice. Although the general story may be known to the audience, the way in which the tale is recited, the episodic structure, and especially the particular phrasing are left up to the imagination of the reciter. This allows the reciter greater room for creative license, so that the content of these stories could vary widely with each retelling. This means that anyone with an interesting story to tell can recite and pass along an *uwepeker* (Howell R, 366). Unlike the more

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this study I have followed Kayano Shigeru’s spelling of the genre name *uwepeker* as I feel it is the more authentic spelling (1996, 91). However, it should be noted that many if not most Japanese scholars of Ainu language and culture spell the name with a final e so that it does not end in a consonant: *uwepekere*.

prescribed genres like the metered *kamui yukar* that require extensive training in traditional epithetic language, motifs, and chanting style, these tales require no specialization or particular skill to tell.

Psychodynamic theory suggests that the less regimented the manner of transmission of an oral tradition, the greater the number of divergent versions and the greater the impact of modernizing influences (Vansina, 3). In other words, free narratives that leave room for the reciter's own interpretive genius can be more easily altered to incorporate references to the current social, political, and historical environment of each recitation. Therefore the unmeasured *uwepeker* is more 'modern' since reciters can more readily modify the story to discard old, irrelevant details and fit the story to the present conditions surrounding the audience.

The style of conversational delivery and the origin and aim of these tales promotes this genre's homeostatic tendencies and the immediacy of content to the current social, cultural, and political environments of the times. Although the origin of these tales is uncertain, many scholars have noted the shift of Ainu oral traditions from religious genres, such as the *kamui yukar*, to more secular epics, like the *yukar* (Kindaichi 1931, 16). Following this shift to its conclusion, one could view the *uwepeker* genre as the final and most secular product of this shift. This genre, which saw its highest level of development from the 17<sup>th</sup> century on, can then be seen as a genre of the Edo Period in both origin and content (Philippi, 14).

It is most likely that *uwepeker* stories originated from direct experiences that were then transformed through recitation into tales that instruct or reveal some kind of wisdom about everyday life (Honda, 90). The word *uwepeker* itself can be glossed as "mutually inquiring after news" (Chiri M. 1973b, 279). This suggests that the content of these stories evolved out of everyday conversation or current events and thus tended to be more immediate to the current

social and cultural environment of the audience. Therefore, since these myths speak most closely to the time period in which they are transmitted, and since the *uwepeker* genre saw its greatest period of refinement and recitation during the Edo Period, we can use these myths as a ‘modern’ source that reflects the cultural and social environment of the Ainu during this time – as they were increasingly influenced by the expanding Matsumae settlement and control over trade. These stories not only demonstrate the gradual loss of traditional Ainu ways of life and cosmological views during the Edo Period, but also show the introduction of Japanese themes and even characters (Philippi, 14).

Through comparison between these ‘modern’ *uwepeker* and ‘historic’ *kamui yukar*’ tales of famine, I will show that traditional Ainu hunting and gathering practices as well as their cosmology of food were irrevocably changed by increased Japanese pressures during the Edo Period, before the implementation of Meiji assimilation policies. Unlike with the *kamui yukar* tales of famine, which all follow the same basic storyline and even share common phrasing, the *uwepeker* about famine share no common structure. However, they do share a few thematic motifs that speak to the loss of traditional Ainu subsistence practices and beliefs in the face of growing Japanese encroachment and trade during the Edo Period.

### **The Effects of Japanese Trade on Social Structures and Subsistence Practices**

Increased reliance on trade with the Japanese during the Edo Period impacted Ainu society in three main ways: (I) It caused increased competition among Ainu social groups over resources; (II) Ainu subsistence came to rely more heavily on imported food items, especially rice and other grains; and (III) the object of the hunt changed from primarily providing food and clothing for the family to primarily procuring furs and meat for trade. Whereas the traditional

*kamui yukar* tales tell of a more traditional hunting and gathering lifestyle when Ainu subsistence was self-contained and based on the relationship between the deities of the natural world and the humans that lived off of their flesh, the more modern *uwepeker* tales speak to changes in Ainu trade and food practices during the Edo Period.

### **(I) Evidence of Increased Competition among Chiefdoms**

The basis of traditional Ainu social structure was the generally self-sufficient, patrilineal settlement. These settlements were connected with other settlements into local groups, which were in turn more broadly and loosely connected with other local groups within a river basin region to form a river group. These river groups existed primarily to define and defend hunting and gathering territories, *iwor*, against trespass by other Ainu groups. Although these groups were protective of their territories and unauthorized trespass could result in conflict, more commonly there was trade and cooperation between the groups. If an individual Ainu or a settlement party desired to hunt or gather in another group's territory, they could request permission of the headsman of this other group and come to an understanding without bloodshed (Watanabe 1973, 13).

During the Edo Period, however, as vital natural resources dwindled due to overhunting by both the Ainu and Japanese for trade, competition among these river chiefdoms became heated and conflict became more common than cooperation. This competition was fueled by inequalities among the separate groups. Villages in river basins with greater access to salmon and furs desired by the Japanese managed to maintain a comfortable standard of living through trade and some chiefs even gained great influence and power through the accumulation of treasure, or *ikor*. On the other hand, river basins and smaller hunting areas that had been depleted of resources by overhunting or whose ecosystems were damaged by Japanese mining techniques

or overfishing at the mouth of the river found themselves on the brink of starvation. This disparity led to conflicts such as that between the Shibuchari and Hae Ainu that became the impetus for Shakushain's rebellion (1669-1672). As infighting between Ainu groups increased, communities began building *casi*, or fort-like structures on the periphery of their territories (Walker 2001, 123). These *casi* were most likely built to protect accumulated treasure and to defend resources needed for subsistence and trade (124).

Evidence in the *uwepeker* tales supports this theory. One *uwepeker* tale tells how the Akkeshi and Nemoro Ainu jointly attacked the Uraike *casi* hoping to plunder the abundant treasure hidden inside, most likely accumulated through trade with the Japanese (Utagawa, 143-144). Although the accumulation of treasure through trade and the associated social prestige were not new developments in Ainu culture, the increased fighting and stealing of these treasures among Ainu groups was a product of the precarious position of Ainu communities under the growing pressures of the Matsumae clan and zealous Japanese traders.

In addition to attacks on *casi* to gain treasure, Ainu chiefdoms threatened by famine attacked the borders of neighboring chiefdoms demanding supplies of dried salmon and venison. Another *uwepeker* describes how Ishikari Ainu were forced to defend one of their *casi* from Kusuri Ainu "who assaulted it demanding food" (Utagawa, 23). Another *uwepeker* recounts the use of *casi* to defend resources from rival chiefdoms. This narrative tells how the Ishikari Ainu and their comfortable standard of living was resented by other groups such as the Tokachi Kitami Ainu, because "the Ishikari region was known as a land rich in natural resources" (24). The Ishikari Ainu were therefore forced to construct *casi* to protect their land from encroachment by other less fortunate Ainu chiefdoms. In the end of this particular story, the Ishikari Ainu capture all the Tokachi Ainu and steal the entirety of their treasure.

Traditionally chiefdom boundaries tended to be elastic or overlapped to accommodate game migration and to allow groups to access uncommon and precious resources, such as aconite for poisoned arrows (Walker 2001, 82). These fluid and poorly defined boundaries meant that sometimes the rights to resources were disputed, but chiefdom wars rarely erupted until the animals and fish had been hunted into scarcity and trade goods had become a part of basic nourishment. The great number of *uwepeker* tales of Ainu conflict illustrate that the expansion of Japanese trading posts during the Edo Period aggravated Ainu border relations by increasing the value of the resources that lay within chiefdom boundaries and by exploiting the disparities between the regions. The stories also comment on how increased conflict led to the construction of *casi* to defend treasure, territory, and resources for trade. Essentially, Japanese influence interrupted and drastically altered the traditional power dynamics, values, and even the physical presences of Ainu villages.

## **(II) Evidence of Trade as a Necessary Form of Food Collection**

During the later Edo Period, the Ainu traded according to two basic systems: the direct exchange system and the seasonal credit system (Walker 2001, 96). Under the direct exchange system Ainu brought goods to trading posts to be immediately bartered for Japanese goods; whereas in the seasonal credit system Ainu purchased items such as fishing gear, rice, and clothing from the trading post on credit, without bringing actual “harvests” and were then expected to repay their debts the following season once they had procured the necessary trade goods (Kushihara, 492-494). During the later Edo Period, the Ainu came to rely more heavily on this seasonal credit system for basic sustenance. Initially this system allowed the Ainu to procure food and clothing while working under the contract wage system or during off seasons of the traditional hunting and gathering cycle. However, once an Ainu had started to trade on this

system it became very hard to break the cycle of debt and repayment. Ainu who had received food, clothing, and other goods on credit were forced to later repay with most if not all of the harvest of their hunting and gathering season, leaving them with no surplus and forcing them to again borrow food on credit. This vicious cycle not only led to increased Ainu dependence on Japanese trade, but also to hunting and gathering practices geared solely towards repaying debts with merchants instead of towards personal subsistence.

We can see the influence of this seasonal credit system in the *uwepeker* story of main interest to this study, entitled “The God who Governs Famine Tells the Story of his own Experience” (see translation in Appendix II). In this story, the narrating god of famine saves the people of the village from starvation by giving them rice. This is the same role that the Japanese traders played when they first lent starving Ainu food and clothing on credit. In the story, once the Ainu have eaten the rice procured from the narrating god – metaphorically the Japanese – they regain their strength and send out a hunting party. Continuing the seasonal credit system allegory, this hunting party can then be seen as the Ainu using their traditional hunting and gathering practice for exchange rather than personal consumption, or in other words to repay the narrating god, or metaphorically the Japanese traders, for the advancement of rice as a food staple.

As the Ainu began to trade more heavily for their own subsistence, rice became a part of the Ainu diet. Although the Ainu had traditionally cultivated some grains such as millet and had sometimes traded for rice for ritual purposes, it was not until the Edo Period that increased trade and depleted resources, especially traditional food sources such as fish and deer, saw the introduction of imported rice into everyday Ainu subsistence.



This growing dependence on rice for food is also evident in “The God who Governs Famine” *uwepeker* story. When the narrating god first arrives at the village, he immediately notes not only the lack of preserved fish (a traditional staple of the Ainu diet and a major trade commodity with the Japanese), but also the lack of grain, *amam*, in the house. This term *amam* is a generic word for any type of grain or cereal, including rice. The fact that the visiting deity takes notice of the lack of grain along with the lack of fish seems to imply that this grain, which at the time of the Edo Period was obtained primarily through trade with the Japanese, has become a staple food and would be expected in a healthy Ainu home.

This is not the only appearance of grain in the story. The visiting god staves off the famine threat by making rice. Here it is clear that the god gives rice and not any other grain, because the word used in the story is “*meshi*,” a loan word from the Japanese. The god, by giving rice and not a more traditional staple, makes it explicit that the famine is not resolved by traditional hunting, gathering, or even agricultural practices, but is instead prevented by the consumption of rice, an import and staple of the Japanese. This seems to speak to not only the fact that new foods such as rice have become more common features in everyday Ainu sustenance by this time, but also that trade has become integral and necessary for continued subsistence.

### **(III) The Commodification of Hunting**

This story not only provides commentary on how trade in rice became an important part of Ainu sustenance, but also provides insights into how Ainu traditional food collecting practices, in particular hunting, lost their traditional meaning and became commodified. In other words, these ‘modern’ *uwepeker* stories no longer highlight the relationship between the humans and the

spirit of the animals that they kill. Instead, they focus on how much meat and skins the humans can procure and what price they might fetch in the market.

In one tale, Nr. 22 in Pilsudski's collection *Materials for the Study of the Ainu Language and Folklore*, a man kills a god of famine who has made him unable to catch any fish (193-199).<sup>2</sup> When he survives the famine and has vanquished this famine spirit, he is blessed with abundant catches. He rejoices not that he has enough food to survive, but instead that this abundance of fish will bring him prestige and treasure through trade. He ends the story:

From all the country (round),  
The wealthy people came to buy food of me  
And with various precious things,  
Various swords,  
Did they pay me well for the food. (198)

He does not pray to these fish as a gift from the gods and he does not mention how he will use the fish to feed himself and his family, instead he treats them as objects for market that will bring him other commodities in trade. It is clear that this man's interest in his salmon is not basic subsistence; he is instead interested in catching enough to trade with the Japanese. This behavior is extremely different from 'traditional' beliefs that are presented in the *kamui yukar*, showing a shift in how Ainu prioritized and perceived food.

Another example of this changing Ainu culture is shown in "The God who Governs Famine." In this *uwepeker* story, after the villagers are strengthened by the gift of rice, they go to hunt deer. Traditionally Ainu hunted using poisoned arrows shot either from a hand bow or from a spring bow trap set up along migration paths. However, there is evidence that some villages used a method, like the one used in the story, in which the villagers corral the deer and force them over the side of a cliff (ABHTK, 337). The use of this less common method of killing deer

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<sup>2</sup> As a note to the reader, Pilsudski's studies and stories were collected from Sakhalin Island so this story does not originate from Hokkaido, the study's main area of interest

is interesting in itself, but what is of more interest is not the method, but the sheer volume of the deer killed in the story. Traditionally deer meat obtained this way would have most likely been preserved and eaten, but the large number of deer was well over that necessary for basic subsistence. The description is that the hunted deer “piled like a mountain” at the bottom of the cliff. In addition, the story notes that the deer were flayed for their skins, a common commodity of exchange between the Ainu and the Japanese. This greater volume of slain deer speaks to the practice of overhunting animals for trade that developed from expansion of trade posts into Ezochi and increased demand from Japanese traders during the Edo Period.

### **Deteriorating Faith in Traditional Cosmology**

In the more modern *uwepeker* tales we see the influence of Japanese encroachment and trade on Ainu hunting and gathering practices. In addition to these commentaries, we also see a changing Ainu worldview and belief system, one that abandons the traditional belief in reciprocity between the Ainu and the deities of food and the natural world. In its place we see a darker, bleaker view that reflects growing uncertainty in traditional Ainu beliefs and ways of life under the pressures of the Japanese during the Edo Period.

During this period, especially after the defeat of Shakushain and his rebellion, the autonomous Ainu lifestyle was altered by the encroachment of Japanese settlers and traders. As traditional hunting grounds were depleted or appropriated for Matsumae use, it did not take long for traditional Ainu subsistence practices to prove inadequate, despite efforts by elders who prayed to the gods to once again bring food to *ainu-moshir*. In addition to depleting resources, pathogenic diseases ravaged Ainu communities and proved immune to traditional Ainu medical and shamanistic prevention. These changes shook Ainu faith in the power of their traditional

cosmology. In fact, it was generally believed that the leading pantheon of deities, including *Aeoina kamui* who had taught the Ainu their traditional ways of life, had abandoned their duties in protecting human beings and had left *ainu moshir* (Philippi, 9). The Ainu felt that the deities were no longer answering their prayers and traditional rituals. They are simply left to fend for themselves in a world inhabited by evil demons.

This darker tone and abandonment of the traditional worldview can be seen throughout the *uwepeker* tales, but are especially prominent when one compares, (I) the nature and cause of the famine, (II) the resolution of the famine, and (III) the intention of the savior hero or god as portrayed in the *uwepeker* to how they are portrayed in the historical *kamui yukar*.

### **(I) The Cause of Famine**

In *kamui yukar* tales, famine is caused by the Keeper of the Game and the Keeper of the Fish withholding the cycle of animal spirits to punish the humans for wrongdoing. In these stories, famine is the direct result of the humans breaking their end of a reciprocal bargain made with the natural world – protected and inhabited by a myriad of deities. In other words, in these stories the traditional pantheon of deities simply exacts divine retribution for being mistreated in accordance with the traditional Ainu cosmology of food and subsistence practices.

The cause of famine in the *uwepeker* stories, however, is different and more complicated. First, in the *uwepeker* stories, there is neither a Keeper of the Game nor a Keeper of the Fish and therefore famine is not the result of something so tidy as divine retribution. Most often, famine is brought by demons that do human beings evil without provocation. In other words, there is no indication that the famine is deserved. The famine and the demons that bring it upon the humans are portrayed as nothing more than evil caprice.

Nr. 22 in Pilsudski's *Materials for the Study of the Ainu Language and Folklore* tells of a man who is known throughout the land as a skilled and pious fisherman (193-199). According to traditional cosmological views, this man should be continuously rewarded for his dutiful observance of fishing ritual. In other words, fish spirits should willingly give him their flesh in return for prayers, *inau* offering sticks, and libations of *tonoto*. This would be the traditional *kamui yukar* story. The more modern *uwepeker* story tells another tale where the man goes to fish everyday as usual, but one day he finds himself unable to catch any fish. He grows hungry, but continues to fish everyday, observing proper rituals. One day a fish bites his hook and speaks to him, explaining the reason for his unsuccessful angling. It says, "I am the god of famine. Being so, I have, on purpose (and) in jest not shown a single fish" (197). It is clear that this man is not being punished for any wrongdoing as he has observed all proper ritual. Instead it is simply the evil whim of this fish that has brought on the famine.

Another example is a story that tells how a narrating hero comes to a village to find it completely razed by demons of famine. These demons have killed all of the villagers and intend to eat them. The story opens with the villagers already dead, with no explanation as to why they may have been targeted and no indication that they deserved any suffering (Chiri M. 1973b, 376-378). In a traditional *kamui yukar* tale, a reason for the village slaughter would have been given, showing how they were themselves responsible for their deaths, but in this story the villagers are portrayed simply as victims of the evil of the demons with no reason given.

In the "God who Governs Famine" story, the famine is caused by the work of three demons. The first demon is the evil uncle of the narrator, who begins the famine by simply leaving his home one morning to swallow up all of the spirits of the stored food in the village. Again, there is no indication that the people of the village have done any misdeed that would

deserve punishment. In fact, the village chief, the paradigm of the other villagers, is portrayed as nothing but respectful, proper, and kind. After being courteously invited into the chief's home, the narrator notes how unfair the suffering of the humans is:

Due to my bad uncle,  
They are so piteous! The humans  
Feel so hungry and the chief  
Tries to help his companions  
By dividing up everything he possesses  
But even the people here in this house  
Are still very hungry

This reasonless punishment is not present in any traditional Ainu orations and does not coincide with their traditional ideology. This demonstrates a whole new set of beliefs, developed in response to changes to their surroundings during the Edo Period.

In the same story, the other two famine demons keep the Ainu hunters from catching any deer or game animals. The nature of the famine is not that there are no deer or game animals (the issue in traditional *kamui yukar* stories); it is instead that the Ainu are unable to catch any of the game that roams the hunting grounds. In the traditional *kamui yukar*, famine occurs when the deer and salmon fail to run, but in *uwepeker* there is a second kind of famine, one in which there are plenty of deer and salmon, but they cannot be caught. In the *uwepeker* story of main interest to this study, the young men of the village return from the hunt only to recount "There are many animals, but no matter what we do the arrows cannot get close." It is revealed later that this is the work of the two demons, *iwa-posoingar*<sup>3</sup> and *pe-posoingar*, who run with the herd of deer and

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<sup>3</sup> The Ainu have a word, *iwaposoinkara* ("seeing through the mountain"), which refers to exceptional deer with popping eyes who guide the herd away from Ainu hunters (Kindaichi 1943, 123). Among fish too, there are such popeyed individuals called *kemuramu kamui* (famine deity) (123). These deer were most likely once considered nothing more than discerning spirits that ran at the head or rear of the herd to steer the game animals only to those hunters that were the most pious and deserving of the gift of *kamui* flesh. However, in the *uwepeker* they appear in the form of a demon or evil human being, no longer just a benign animal spirit. In one *uwepeker* story a *iwaposoinkara* demon appears to do battle with the cultural hero Ainu Rakkur, who must defeat the demon to save the humans from famine (123).

protect them from the arrows of the humans. Again there is no indication that the hunters have done anything that deserves this sort of divine punishment.

The *uwepeker* stories show a worldview that no longer accepts the traditional, balanced give-and-take between the humans and the gods that inhabit the natural space around them. In these modern, bleak tales the humans have done nothing to deserve famine; instead, humans are just the victims of famine (and disease) brought by evil demons. And because there is no explanation or reason for the famine, there is no way to learn from it, to fight it, or to protect against it.

## **(II) The Resolution of Famine**

Another motif that is presented differently in the *kamui yukar* and *uwepeker* tales, and can be used to demonstrate changing Ainu culture is the resolution of famine. In the end of traditional *kamui yukar* tales of famine, human beings are told why they were punished and are taught how to properly respect the gods so that it won't happen again. In this way, the story celebrates the restoration of balance between the humans and the natural deities and promises that if humans behave responsibly they will be free from future hunger. They always end with a scene that celebrates the restoration of balance and reciprocity between the humans and the gods and a future free from suffering. The end of an *uwepeker* story gives no such promise for a better future.

In the *uwepeker* the cause of famine is inexplicable and therefore in its resolution there is no lesson learned and therefore no way to prevent future suffering. Although in these tales good triumphs and the famine is ended, there always remains the threat that another evil demon will come and that the people will endure famine anew. In this way, even in the resolution of these myths, there is no sense of a restoration of order and no promise of safety in the future. This

echoes the dark tones of victimization and deterioration of faith in traditional Ainu cosmology during the Edo Period.

In “The God who Governs Famine” *uwepeker* tale, where the uncle demon devours the animal spirits and the other two demons make it impossible to hunt, again there is no reason for the suffering, no lesson to be learned, and no way to prevent famine in the future, because it was not caused by something the Ainu could control. Near the end of this story, the narrating god appears to the village chief in a dream much like the deity narrators of *kamui yukar*, but instead of teaching the humans how to live according to traditional cosmological views, the *uwepeker* narrator only reveals the perpetrators of the famine without giving any other explanation. The famine was simply caused by the caprice and evil of the narrator’s uncle without provocation.

The final lines of the *uwepeker* story are not words of celebration or comfort. The final words only highlight the eminent danger of famine that still lurks everywhere in the Ainu world. The evil uncle is rebuffed, but he has already permanently disrupted the natural cycle of food spirits and there always remains the threat of his return or the return of any other evil-minded demon. In this way, the distinct contrast in resolution of *kamui yukar* and *uwepeker* tales show a dramatic shift in the beliefs of the Ainu after contact with the Japanese. The more modern *uwepeker* stories show how the Ainu have lost faith in the power of their traditional rituals and mutual cosmological relationship to save them from famine; instead these stories show how the Ainu of the Edo Period viewed the world as malicious and felt abandoned and helpless.

### **(III) The Intentions of the Savior**

The third motif common to famine stories that demonstrates changing Ainu culture and worldview is the character and motivations of the ‘hero.’ In the *kamui yukar* stories, the traditional benevolent relationship and reciprocity between the humans and gods guarantees the



humans the help of the mediating god and the prevention of famine should they uphold their ritual end of the bargain. In these stories, the narrating god always speaks to how it is their duty as a deity living on *ainu-moshir* to protect the humans around them. They respond to the traditional prayers and offerings of the humans and decide to mediate with the other gods to restore order. So basically it is a certainty that the narrating deities in *kamui yukar* tales will protect and provide for the Ainu if the Ainu properly revere them. The protagonists in *uwepeker* stories, on the other hand, do not respond to prayers and seem to have no sense of duty. These rectifiers, who are generally not members of the traditional Ainu pantheon, simply happen by the scene of misfortune or decide, on a whim, to do battle with the demons assaulting the Ainu.

In the tale of the demon-ravaged village, the hero and his party just happen to be passing by the village when they notice that it has been attacked (Chiri M. 1973b, 376-378). Although the hero stops the demons and revives the slain villagers, there is no guarantee that he will be there to stop the next group of demons who choose to attack. The listener is left with the sense that, should another demon bring suffering to the village there is little chance that the hero will be there again to save the humans. Although the protagonist gives help once, no help is guaranteed for the future. He has no duty to protect the Ainu and the Ainu have no way to ensure his continued protection.

In “the God who Governs Famine” story, the narrating god is not a “god to be worshipped,” not “a god that receives *inau* from humans.” This means that he is not a member of the usual group of gods worshiped by the Ainu and he is therefore not prayed to for help. The narrator in this story discovers the misfortunes of the human beings only because he is curious about his uncle’s habits and chooses to venture out of his home. Once he notices the humans’ plight, he takes pity on them. However, there is no sense of duty to the safety and wellbeing of

the human beings. His choosing to help the village is a product of chance and whimsy. He simply wakes up one day and decides to go down to the village.

Furthermore, although the narrating god finds himself a place on the offering fence, or *nusasan*, of the village he is not a god that participates in everyday reciprocity with the village. He does not receive *inau* from the villagers and therefore is not bound by the traditional relationship between protecting deity and pious human. Therefore, there is no guarantee that he will continue to protect the village.

Famine in *uwepeker* stories is not solved by dedicated gods who consider it their place on *ainu-moshir* to protect human beings in exchange for ritual offerings. Instead famine is often resolved only when an arbitrary hero happens to take notice of the humans' plight. Just as the famine is not the deliberate work of the Keeper of the Game or the Keeper of the Fish (it is the chance work of petty demons), the resolution is not the deliberate work of the great pantheon of traditional gods (it is at the whim of a lesser god still inhabiting *ainu-moshir*).

It is clear that the gods that appear in the *uwepeker* narratives of famine are lesser gods than those of the great pantheon that narrate the *kamui yukar*, because they do not receive *inau* offerings. By the Edo Period, faith in these great deities had faltered under increasing hardship. Many Ainu came to believe that these greater, benevolent gods had abandoned them and left only fickle, unpredictable lesser gods to inhabit *ainu-moshir*. These lesser gods and their counterpart demons were not bound by the strict, traditional relationship of reciprocity. Instead they could bring evil or good upon the people at any time, without warning or explanation. The Ainu lost faith in their traditional rituals, which could not stave off contagious disease, greedy Japanese merchants, and voracious Japanese settlers. Their world became one not of reciprocal respect but one of undeserved suffering and uncertain salvation.

## Conclusion: Pressures from the South

From these *uwepeker* stories, it is clear that the force that brought irrevocable change to Ainu social structures, subsistence practices, and cosmological views came from the Japanese to the south. From the south came Japanese traders and settlers who encroached on Ainu lands and exploited their natural resources. It was the increased trade and settlement during the Edo Period that broke down traditional Ainu hunting and gathering practices and the cosmology that surrounded food collection. A great example of this is present in the last lines of the *uwepeker* “God who Governs Famine”:

Then, my bad uncle,  
Was very angry  
And went off to the very far south.  
This bad uncle,  
Is an evil demon of famine, so  
From now on, if there is famine in the human land  
It begins in the south.

The story ends with the evil uncle demon, bringer of famine, being banished to the “south” and a warning that all future famine (from which there is no guaranteed protection) will come from this direction. During the Edo Period, to the south of the Ainu there was only Wajinchi, the stronghold of the Matsumae domain, and mainland Japan.

Furthermore, the uncle demon’s action of swallowing all of the food spirits of the village can be seen as the destruction of the cycle of *ramat*, or spirits, between the human world and the world of the gods. In the *kamui yukar* narratives of famine and in traditional Ainu cosmology of food, the cycle of fish and deer animal spirits is a central motif. In these tales, famine is caused when the traditional Ainu pantheon temporarily stops this cycle as a form of divine punishment. However, in “The God who Governs Famine” *uwepeker* story, the cycle of the food spirits is not

halted, but is instead completely destroyed. The spirits of food are stolen so that they will never recycle to the human world:

From the top of this village to past the middle  
The spirits of the stored food, everyone,  
Rose from the windows  
And all these spirits of the food  
Descended into the mouth of the man.  
So it seems that when he went out the time before  
He removed half of the food spirits of the village  
Then today again,  
It seems that he took the other half of the food spirits of the village.

This implies that the number of spirits, and therefore the amount of food, in the Ainu ecosystem has been permanently diminished. Because of this, the bleak threat of another famine at the end of the story is coupled with the threat of continued hunger and hardship due to dwindling food sources. The fact that the uncle demon steals away the spirits of the food from the ecosystem of the Ainu is consistent with the demon as a metaphor for the Japanese. Increased trade with the Japanese during the Edo Period and the resulting commodification of hunting and gathering practices led to an overexploitation of Hokkaido's natural resources and the number of fish and deer on the island declined sharply. As Ainu communities were ravaged by hunger and disease, they hunted the animals on which they had traditionally maintained a self-sufficient subsistence, not for use as food, but to trade to the Japanese. Just like the food spirits of the village are taken to feed the evil uncle demon, the resources of Hokkaido went to feed and clothe the Japanese elite on the mainland. In this way, this *uwepeker* story tells, from an Ainu perspective, the negative pressures on the Ainu way of life during the Edo Period, long before the forced assimilation policies of the Meiji government.

Through careful analysis of the adaptable and modern *uwepeker* stories, it is clear that the Ainu culture was already greatly altered by contact with the Japanese even before Meiji

assimilation policies were put in place. Simply through the effects of encroaching Japanese settlers, the Ainu traditional culture had already started to adapt its hunting and gathering practices as well as its cosmological views. Thus, by the end of the Edo Period, Ainu subsistence practices could no longer be called “traditional.” Admittedly, Meiji assimilation policies systematically refashioned Ainu culture and society, but I argue that through these stories it is clear that assimilation policies were not the first or singular cause of this change. It was instead the increased contact with Japanese traders and settlers during the Edo Period and their effect on the delicate Hokkaido ecosystem that instigated the alterations of Ainu food culture.

## Conclusion

I have shown through the comparison of two genres of Ainu oral narratives of famine that both the traditional Ainu subsistence lifestyle and faith in traditional cosmological views were already deteriorating during the Edo Period and that this deterioration did not begin with the Meiji forced assimilation policies as has been previously claimed by historians. The first of the two genres, the *kamui yukar*, is a collection of more conservative tales with a defined structure and recitation that speak to the traditional subsistence practices and cosmological views of the Ainu early on in their history. The second of these genres, the *uwepeker*, is more modern because of its free and mutable narration, and shows how increased reliance on trade and contact with the Japanese in the Edo Period coincided with a decline in the traditional Ainu faith in conventional food practices and cosmologies.

Using both ‘great divide’ theory and literary analysis, I have ‘dated’ the *kamui yukar* genre to an early period in Ainu history in which the culture subsisted relatively autonomously. This genre remains conservative because of its strict ritual recitation –including the use of many memorized formulas, repetition, and rhythmic meter – and can therefore be used to paint a picture of traditional Ainu worldviews and cultural practices. The *kamui yukar* of famine in particular depict the human world as one teeming with spirits, who inhabit every animal, plant, space, object, and even natural phenomena. These spirits are ruled by a hierarchy of *kamui*, or deities, some of whom live in the immediate world of the humans and others who live removed in *kamui moshir*, the world of the gods. From the *kamui yukar* narratives of famine, it is clear

that originally Ainu cosmology focused on the reciprocal relationship between human beings and these gods. In this relationship, humans are required to perform proper rituals, especially in food collection and consumption activities, and in return they receive the protection of the gods and the bountiful natural harvests of their immediate ecosystem. If humans do not properly observe these rituals, however, the gods will punish them by stopping the cycle of food spirits between the world of the humans and the world of the gods, causing famine in *ainu moshir*.

Although these *kamui yukar* stories depict hardship, they are not bleak. The cause of the famine – divine punishment for the disrespectful and impious behavior of the human beings – is well known and therefore it is clear how to resolve the famine. Working within the framework of the hierarchical traditional cosmology, the human beings pray to a god of *ainu moshir* to intercede on their behalf with the ancient, upper pantheon of deities that control the animal food sources: the Keeper of the Game and the Keeper of the Fish. Because the humans and gods have a mutual contract of worship and protection, this mediating god is obliged not only by pity for the humans' plight but also by duty to reconcile the situation. This mediating god learns from the Keeper of the Game and the Keeper of the Fish that the humans have not been performing the proper hunting and gathering rituals and restores the natural balance by teaching the humans proper food collection and ritual practice. Because the humans learn how to properly respect the gods and the spirits of the animals and plants that they consume, the story ends with the promise of a future without famine or hardship in subsistence. It is clear from these tales that if the humans continue to live within the reciprocal relationship with the gods, meaning according to traditional cosmological views and with traditional ritualized hunting and gathering practices, they will not go hungry.

Compared with the traditional *kamui yukar* stories, the *uwepeker* tales can be viewed as much more contemporary, reflecting the social, economic, and political environment of the Edo Period. These tales that are recited freely and mainly for the purpose of entertainment and information sharing, are as a result more homeostatic and therefore more likely to reflect current events and opinions. In particular, the *uwepeker* genre, which saw its greatest development and sophistication during the Edo Period, speaks to the present loss of traditional subsistence activities to trade with the Japanese and to the loss of faith in traditional cosmology in the face of hardship and disease during this time.

The Edo Period was a time when the Matsumae clan, with their economic monopoly on trade with Hokkaido, expanded their trading posts into Ezochi, which had previously been traditional Ainu territory. These trading posts brought Japanese goods to the doorstep of Ainu communities and this proximity led to an increase in trading activity. Trade, which had been limited and aimed toward the procurement of ritual and prestige goods from early in Ainu history, changed during the Edo Period to be heavily relied upon for obtaining grain and other foodstuffs for basic sustenance. The purpose of hunting and gathering therefore changed from providing the Ainu with basic subsistence in balance with the natural world to procuring as many commodified goods as possible for the sole purpose of trade. This led to overexploitation of natural resources and as a result hardship in obtaining food for many Ainu communities. This hardship was exacerbated by encroaching Japanese merchants and settlers who employed techniques such as large net fishing and placer mining that destroyed the Ainu river basin ecosystems. This loss of autonomy and control over their own nourishment left the Ainu vulnerable to exploitive trade practices, and overwork and hunger left the Ainu open to new epidemic diseases and fueled competition among once cooperative river groups.



This increased reliance on trade for sustenance and the changing nature of Ainu food collecting practices is clearly seen in the differences between the *kamui yukar* and the *uwepeker* tales of famine. *Uwepeker* stories depict grain, in particular rice, as a normal part of the Ainu diet, yet these foodstuffs were not traditionally cultivated or gathered by the Ainu and could only be obtained through trade with the Japanese. In scenes of hunting, the *uwepeker* stories highlight not the traditional relationship between the pious hunter and the spirit of the animal target, but instead the volume of hide and meat obtained and how much it will fetch on the market.

The *uwepeker* tales of famine not only depict these modern changes and loss of autonomy in subsistence, but also show how the Ainu viewed them with fear and despair. In the face of continuing hardship and disease, these stories display how the Ainu lost faith in their traditional cosmology and felt abandoned by the gods who had protected them in earlier times. In the Edo Period *uwepeker* stories, there is no explanation or cause for the famine; it is seen simply as the caprice of evil demons that roam the earth unchecked. Because the gods have abandoned the human world, there is no mediating god whose duty is to answer the prayers of the humans and protect them from hardship, so the Ainu are helpless against these capricious and evil demons. Although there is a savior or hero that ends the famine, this savior is not part of the dutiful pantheon of Ainu deities so there is no guarantee that this he or she will rescue the humans the next time. And, yes, there will be a next time. Unlike the traditional *kamui yukar* tales that promise a balanced future free of hunger if the humans maintain their relationship with the gods, the *uwepeker* chapters only end with a temporary resolution. There is no protection or end to the threat of demons that bring famine and disease. It is clear that the Ainu no longer held faith in their traditional cosmological relationship with the gods, but instead felt forsaken.

Ainu oral traditions are a relatively well-recorded wealth of knowledge that have for many years been celebrated and studied to better understand Ainu language and culture. Ainu oral narratives have thus been recognized as sources for cultural study but have yet been underutilized as sources for other types of academic analysis, especially historical analysis. It is true that these stories, due to their orality, change over time and therefore cannot be reliably dated. For this reason, many historians have rejected these narratives as sources for historical analysis in favor of fixed, written documents. However, in the case of the Ainu, who had no written language, these documents are always from the perspective of an outsider to Ainu cultural practices and ways of life. For this reason, much of these documents are distorted by the bias and worldview of the author looking in.

In particular, most information available on Ainu trade and food practice from the Early Modern Period is gleaned from accounts of Japanese merchants and domain officials. These authors were in a position to benefit both socially and economically from the exploitation and subjugation of the Ainu, and this agenda colored how they viewed and wrote about the Ainu people. Because of this, I claim that the long-held belief that the Ainu maintained a static traditional way of life through the Edo Period, which was established primarily through historical analysis of these accounts, is not an accurate picture. While recent work in fields such as archeology has begun to rewrite the Japanese history of the Ainu into simply an objective history, less colored by bias, there has been little effort given to telling the history of the Ainu through the eyes of the Ainu. In other words, it is high time that historians seek to piece together an Ainu history from the words of the people themselves.

This approach is not without its limitations since the Ainu had no written character system so there are no written Ainu records. To complicate the issue, most of the Ainu oral traditions

preserved today were transcribed by non-Ainu and exist only in Japanese translation, without the original Ainu words. Therefore these documented and translated traditions have their own foreigner bias. In order to reduce any continuing outsider presumption in my analysis, I chose to use texts recorded by two bilingual Ainu, Chiri Yukie and Chiri Mashiho. For the *uwepeker* story, I was fortunate enough to also have the original Ainu language written out phonetically in roman characters along with the Japanese translation and I referred to this whenever possible.

While I recognize the limitations in this endeavor – mainly that historians and cultural scholars have relatively few Ainu language documents – I believe that even if a solely Ainu account of Ainu history cannot be pieced together, scholars need to be more aware of the biases that have existed throughout the collection and analysis of Ainu history. I claim that the best source for information on the state of the Ainu during any period is through the words of the Ainu themselves. Ainu oral traditions speak to the gradual loss of traditional food practices and cosmological views during the Early Modern Period under the exploitive trade practices of the Matsumae domain. Using Ainu oral traditions, as historical sources that promote an indigenous perspective on the social, political, and economic environment of the Edo Period, I have shown that Ainu traditional hunting and gathering practices as well as their cosmology surrounding food were irrevocably changed before the introduction of Meiji assimilation policies. Historians must not only understand and analyze the content of sources, but must pay close attention to the circumstances and motives of the writers. My hope is that my analysis helps to redefine the accepted historical account of the Ainu, and just as importantly, that it draws attention to the fact that history is recorded by people with motivations, biases, circumstances, and opinions. The Ainu should have a stronger voice in recounting their own history.

## Appendix I: Translation of a *Kamui Yukar*

This myth was translated into Japanese by the Ainu-Japanese linguist and ethnologist, Chiri Mashihō (1909-1961). Chiri Mashihō was born an Ainu during a particularly difficult time for the indigenous people. This was a time when, under the ‘Law for the Protection of Former Aborigines of Hokkaido’ (1899-1997), many of the traditional cultural practices of the Ainu were banned by the colonial Meiji government, which adopted a strict assimilation policy. Under these restrictive laws, Ainu children were forced to attend schools that taught exclusively in Japanese, so many lost their Ainu language fluency. Chiri Mashihō was no exception; he was educated with Japanese as his first language. However, he realized that the loss of Ainu fluency also meant the loss of the rich oral tradition of the people so he dedicated himself to the study of Ainu language and culture, capturing the narrative voices of the past. He recorded Ainu oral traditions for future generations. However, since he lacked fluency in Ainu, which also had no writing system through which to record and preserve the stories, Chiri Mashihō preserved the texts in the medium of written Japanese (Sato-Rossberg, 135-148).

Chiri Mashihō’s lifetime commitment to Ainu studies preserved a large number of myths. However, many of them have never been translated and disseminated into other languages. So I am excited to present this text for the first time in English. This story of famine, of the metered *kamui yukar* genre, is narrated by a white weasel goddess<sup>1</sup> with the refrain, or *sakehe*, *Hōrimurimu*. In order to save space and not distract the reader from the narrative content, I have

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<sup>1</sup> Chiri Mashihō identifies this ermine or stoat as the species *Mustela erminea kanei* (1962, 146).

followed the convention of listing the *sakehe* only with the title of the story and not repeating it after each line as it would have been recited. Chiri Mashiho's Japanese translation was published in paragraph form so it did not preserve the line breaks of the original Ainu. However, to remind the reader that this text was originally delivered orally, I have decided to break up my English translation into lines following Chiri Mashiho's extensive punctuation. But I must caution that there is no original Ainu text or recording accompanying the Japanese translation, so these line breaks may not exactly correspond to the original Ainu telling of the story.

I have also tried to avoid translating the names of Ainu cultural implements into English. I chose instead to, where clear, translate back from the Japanese to the original Ainu. As a final note, I have preserved both onomatopoeic sounds and original Ainu words in italics. However, to differentiate the two I have placed single quotations around the onomatopoeic sounds and have explained the meaning of each Ainu word the first time it appears with a footnote.

### Song of the White Weasel Goddess

#### *Hōrimurimu*

I, while protecting the lower world,<sup>2</sup>  
Day in and day out  
Was engrossed in embroidery.  
And, one day, because by the upper seat window,  
There appeared the shadow of something,  
I raised my eyes and looked.  
And there was a metal<sup>3</sup> sake cup filled to the brim with sake  
On top of this, there was a *kikeush-pashui*<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The upper world of the gods, *kamui moshir*, has many layers. The highest layers houses only the most elite gods and human prayers often do not reach these removed deities. So humans pray to gods that inhabit the lower regions closer to the world of the humans to mediate on their behalf with the upper levels of *kamui moshir*.

<sup>3</sup> In Ainu, the word for "metal" is often also used to mean "magnificent." So this could also be read as "magnificent sake cup" (Philippi, 70).

<sup>4</sup> A *kikeush-pashui* is a carved offering stick embellished with sacred shavings (*kike*), sometimes used to offer drops of sake as libation to the gods (Fosco, 329). Chiri Yukie notes that it is used when sacred wine is offered to the

Moving up and back, up and back  
It relayed a message.

“Oh goddess who protects the lower heaven  
Please listen carefully to what I say.  
The truth is, even though the humans and the gods both were very pleased  
With the yearly bountiful hunt that continued  
This year the human village has been beset by horrible famine.  
In the mountains there is not even one rabbit, and  
In the rivers not so much as one small fish can be seen  
It turns out that even the nuts and berries on the trees  
Even the grasses are gone.  
Because humans are currently weak  
We are about to topple over one by one.  
Even though we beseech the various gods  
Not one has been kind enough to pay attention to us  
Goddess, please have pity on the land of the humans  
And help them come to be able to eat.  
If you were to do this, honorable goddess,  
We will forever more worship you as *sanke-kamui*.<sup>5</sup>  
Now, because we have but a little food,  
We have used it to make only a meager amount of sake  
And beg of you.  
Later on, when food (again) grows in the human village  
We will readily bow to you.  
Please help us  
--- Said the chief of *Urashipet* village  
Through me”

Because the *pashui* spoke thus,  
I turned around and saw,  
Without a doubt, the human village was beset by famine, and  
There the humans were suffering unbearably.  
With that, I got up  
And took up the metal sake cup  
I raised it high and lowered it down

---

gods. The spirit of the *pashui* was itself a mediator god that would accompany the sake to the home of the god being offered the libation and then relay the prayers of the humans (Philippi 94) (Chiri Y. 2011, 234).

<sup>5</sup> Nakagawa Hiroshi in his Japanese-Ainu dictionary defines *sanke* as former, previous, or forward (204). This resonates to some degree with Chiri Mashiho’s use of Japanese literally translating to ‘god of the foremost-seat.’

I filled six<sup>6</sup> *shintoko*<sup>7</sup> casks, pouring just a little in each,  
 And then placed the cup on the windowsill.  
 Then, the *pashui* danced, fluttering, back down to the lower world.  
 After two or three days,  
 The inside of the house was filled with the aroma of beautiful sake<sup>8</sup>  
 Thereupon, the great gods and the lesser gods,  
 All of them I invited  
 And held a banquet  
 I got dressed-up in my finery  
 And circled among the banquet quests looking after their needs<sup>9</sup>  
 The gods were in very good spirits,  
 And were talking together only of precious gossip.  
 At this time, the leader of the winter wrens<sup>10</sup>  
 Thought to take advantage of their captured interest  
 And I was no sooner aware that it had dashed out  
 Than it returned with one salted salmon egg,  
 Dancing in circles around the casks,  
 This gathered salmon egg, '*potton*'  
 Fell into the cask.  
 At this the many gods, in amusement  
 Clapped their hands, and laughed,  
 And the sound was so great the heavenly realm  
 Was on the point of collapse.  
 And, this time I was no sooner aware that  
 The leader of the mountain jays<sup>11</sup> had dashed out

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<sup>6</sup> The number six in Ainu oral tradition has a variety of meanings. It is considered a 'perfect' or 'sacred' number, but is often used in narrative to mean 'many' or 'innumerable' (Philippi, 31). So here the audience would understand that not only is the god of high status to have so many *shintoko* treasures, but is also receiving many drops of sake in gratitude.

<sup>7</sup> Lacquerware containers, obtained through trade with mainland Japanese, used to hold sake and millet wine. They were considered great treasures and were displayed on a shelf to symbolize the status of the household.

<sup>8</sup> The Ainu believed that the drops of sake offered as libation would multiply in the home of the god. So here the few drops received in each cask produce full containers of sake.

<sup>9</sup> At a drinking party, it is the women's role to circulate among the guests pouring sake and making people feel welcome and satisfied.

<sup>10</sup> The scientific name for the species is *Troglodytes troglodytes fumigatus* (Japanese: *misosazai*). There are a number of ways to call this bird in Ainu, one of which is *tosirpokun-kamui* which means 'the god who goes into/under holes in the river bank' (Chiri M. 1962, 190). The Ainu generally associated both the dark and damp with evil, so it would appear that this was a species of bird that was not seen as particularly benevolent.

<sup>11</sup> Chiri Mashiho claims that this bird is not actually a jay, but a different species of bird, the Nutcracker (*Nucifraga caryocatactes*) (1962, 182). However, this same animal appears often in Ainu myths including Chiri Yukie's *Ainu Shin'Yōshu*, where she explains that the Ainu name indicates that it is a jay that is associated with mountains and I

Than it returned with the nut of an oak tree  
Dancing around the casks,  
And this again, ‘*goton*’  
Dropped into the cask.  
Thereupon, increasing as before the gods’ laughter and  
The sound of clapping hands  
Rose to the point of tearing the house apart.  
At this time, I was no sooner aware that  
An uncle crow,<sup>12</sup> with a mischievous look in its eye,  
Had dashed out than it  
Came back with a large mass of dung  
And began to dance around the casks.  
The faces of the gods became cross, but they remained silent.  
I was surprised,  
And as I was about to say something,  
‘*Topon!*’ The mass of dung fell into the cask.  
Just then, the gods all stood up at once,  
Ganged up on the uncle crow and killed him.  
And threw him outside in the dust pile.  
They also carried out the cask in which the dung had fallen  
And completely emptied the sake inside.  
Because in the upper world of the gods, sake is extremely scarce,  
The gods regretted the loss terribly,  
    If the winter wren and the mountain jay  
    Had not done such a thing in the first place  
    Then the crow would not have brought back the mass of dung  
Raged and cursed the gods.  
Inside, there were still many gods with short-temper  
And at last they got up all at once,  
And clamoring  
Stepped, kicked, and knocked each other about  
And the banquet turned into such a riot.

---

have followed this identification here (Strong, 274n23). The scientific name for the species Chiri Yukie identifies is *garrulus glandarius pallidifrons* (Japanese: *miyamakakesu*) (Chiri M. 1962, 181).

<sup>12</sup> Chiri Mashiho’s note says this is a raven of the species *Corvus corax kamtschaticus* (Japanese: *oogarasu* or *watarigarasu*) (1962, 178). However, its role in the story makes it seem more likely that it would be a crow of the species *Corvus leuillanti japonensis* because the Ainu name for this animal was *si-paskur* or ‘dung crow’ (179). So I have used this connotation to motivate my translation.



I was very much surprised and  
Moving about in confusion,  
I strained to soothe everyone,  
However, there was not even one person who would listen  
And the riot was on the brink of turning all the more nasty.  
Wherein, I turned to the shrew, and  
    “Now, it’s already all over for us.  
    Please go call the leader of the snipes<sup>13</sup> and come back.  
    Quickly, quickly!”  
I implored and  
The shrew hastily dashed outside.

**The story that has up until now been told stops. Now, a shrew becomes the first-person speaker and the *sakehe* (refrain) also changes to *Hankirikiri*.**

I am being sent on a mission by the white weasel goddess  
I run at full speed beneath grass, and  
Sometimes, the roots of the grasses  
Hit against my snout too much  
I somersaulted high  
Maybe around the time it takes to hang a pot  
Or even longer than that,  
I fainted and  
My senses would return and  
I would once again dash on.  
I died three times; I died four times  
And a long time passed  
And I at long last arrived at the snipe god’s dwelling.  
I looked and the snipe god  
Was seated on the raised seat  
Engrossed in carving the sheath of a treasure sword.  
While clearing my throat I crept in,  
But the snipe did not turn around.  
I sat in the left seat, and  
I related the message I had been used to bring  
And the snipe raised his face for the first time

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<sup>13</sup> This appears to be the snipe of scientific name *Gallinago hardwickii* (Japanese: *oojishigi*) (Chiri M. 1962, 210).

And as a smile floated to his lips  
To what I had said he retorted,  
    “*Hanchipiyak*,<sup>14</sup> this village  
    ‘*Fuwaa*.’<sup>15</sup> When there are good times,  
    They forget me.  
    *Hanchipiyak*, does this village  
    ‘*Fuwaa*.’ If there are bad times,  
    Only then remember me?  
    This is as might be expected from only great gods  
    Only by themselves do they hold a drinking banquet,  
    This behavior crowns it all,  
    They are such very singular, splendid beings.  
    Gods like me have no need to attend, is that it!”

And once again, he concentrated on his carving,  
No matter how much I cried and begged  
He pretended not to notice, so  
Even I now gave up and  
Again, the same as before  
The roots of the grasses  
Hit against my snout too much, and  
I died three times; I died four times  
And a long time passed  
Until I at long last returned.  
Remarkably, from up ahead  
The sound of dancing gods, laughing voices  
The sound of clapping hands, etc  
Could be heard in the same way as earlier  
Mystified, I plunged into the house and looked and saw  
A long time in the past the snipe god had  
Donned his festival garments and marched in,  
And with his eloquence  
Had calmed the anger of the group of gods.  
The goddess very warmly thanked me,  
    “Thanks to you, the gods’ discord

---

<sup>14</sup> This seems to be the snipe’s own *sakehe*. Chiri Mashio notes that the one Ainu name for the snipe *chipyak* is imitative of the bird’s natural call (1962, 210).

<sup>15</sup> This is an onomatopoeic sound of a sigh.

Was calmed without incident”  
She said, and the many gods also  
Thanked me for my efforts, and  
Because they let me drink my fill of beautiful sake  
I too have now become quite merry.

**Here, once again the narration returns to the white weasel goddess. The *sakehe* (refrain) changes back to *Hōrimurimu*.**

In these kinds of circumstances,  
Because the discord among the gods too had become quiet  
I was relieved and  
I rose as a smile floated up to my lips  
And to the head and to the foot of the side seat  
I began to dance.  
My small white sleeves were decorated with gold butterflies  
Here and there strands of bells hung down,  
And if I moved, sound would beautifully ring out and resound.  
From the base of my throat, I wrung out beautiful song  
With a voice like thunder returning home to the sky.  
Even if I do say so myself, I thought it was beautiful.  
The gods were completely dazzled,  
*Hei-! Hei-!*

They, all at once, sent up a cheer.

In the middle of my song, what I said was,

“Oh Keeper of the Game please let fall the deer.  
Oh Keeper of the Fish please let fall the fish.  
The land of the humans has been beset by famine  
And the chief of *Urashipet* village came  
To ask me for my help.  
This sake too is for that purpose.”

I said this and, the Keeper of the Game and the Keeper of the Fish

Closed their eyes and stiffened as they listened,

But before long the Keeper of the Game said,

“The truth is, the situation is this,  
Oh goddess, we would like for you to listen.  
In the old days, humans had pious hearts  
And no matter what animal they killed

They were courteous to it.  
At that time, our companions  
Holding in their mouths decorated arrows,  
Holding in their mouths *inau*<sup>16</sup>  
Would return to us with great glee.  
Whereas the hearts of the humans have worsened,  
Even though they kill our companions  
Because they use things like decayed wood  
Our companions holding in their mouths dead wood  
Return to us in tears.  
Because this is, to us, not amusing  
We thought to punish the humans a little  
And so I stopped the source of the deer.”

He said and the Keeper of the Fish  
Flicked open his eyes and said,

“It is truly how the Keeper of the Game said.  
In the old days, even though they killed our companions  
Because they would use a special thing called *isapakikni*<sup>17</sup>  
Our companions would always  
Holding brand-new *isapakikni*  
Return to us smiling happily.  
Whereas, now because they kill with  
Rotted wood and small stones,  
Our companions, holding these things  
Return to us in tears.  
Because this is not amusing  
I also stopped the source of the fish.”

Now for the first time  
I understood the origin of the famine in the human village.  
The anger of the Keeper of the Game and the Keeper of the Fish  
Was indeed a reasonable thing.  
However, because the humans do not know any better

---

<sup>16</sup> A carved stick that served as a ceremonial offering presented to the gods at times of prayer (Strong, 98)  
Depending on the god to which they are being offered and the ritual setting, there are many traditions concerning  
the appropriate choice of wood, length, shape, and number (Munro, 28-43).

<sup>17</sup> A carved stick used to kill salmon by hitting them over the head. It was believed that if any other method of  
killing or an inferior stick was used, the salmon would become angry and would no longer come to give food to  
the human world (Nakagawa, 32).

They do these things.  
If we politely taught them how it is  
From now on they would without a doubt kill correctly  
I thought this and while continuing to dance beautifully  
I once again said,

“Oh Keeper of the Game, oh Keeper of the Fish,  
You are very angry but  
If you, in this way, forever make the humans cry,  
It will be that every last one will die and  
There will be no more gods who receive  
Sake and *inau* made by the humans.  
Isn't this a very lonely thing?  
Wouldn't it be better this time  
If you just warn them and then forgive them,  
Then all the gods without exception  
Will be thanked by the humans  
And will receive in showers  
Gifts of *inau* and sake.  
Go ahead, please let fall the deer.  
Please let fall the fish.”

I begged them as I smiled brightly, and  
The many gods all in one voice said,

“It is as the goddess says.  
If the famine should continue in the human village  
The humans will, every last one, starve  
And if it should be so,  
By the gods who go to work in the human land  
We in the upper world will be begrudged.  
Kindly, restore your good humor and  
Could you please let fall the deer for us?  
Could you please let fall the fish for us?”

They said and,  
The Keeper of the Game and the Keeper of the Fish also  
Seemed to think,

“Very well”  
And they stood up  
And the Keeper of the Game opened the door

To six deer storehouses and  
 From inside dashed out the male deer  
 The female deer, the baby deer,  
 Who composed innumerable groups.  
 They dove through the door in the sky  
 And landed on top of the forests<sup>18</sup> of the human world  
 And joyfully competed to stand.  
 Next, the Keeper of the Fish also  
 Opened six fish storehouses  
 And the salmon, the trout, the char<sup>19</sup>  
 In this way composed groups  
 And dove out through the door in the sky.  
 They descended to the rivers and oceans of the lower world  
 And swam about in boisterous, merry laughter.  
 Along with the many gods  
 I saw this with my own eyes from the door in the sky  
 Now at last, with feelings of relief,  
 To the Keeper of the Game and the Keeper of the Fish  
 I warmly give thanks.  
 Then, day in and day out  
 I was engrossed in embroidery.  
 And, one day, by the upper seat window,  
 There suddenly appeared a shadow,  
 So I raised my eyes and looked and  
 There was a metal sake cup filled to the brim with sake  
 And on top of this, there was a *kikeush-pashui*  
 Moving up and back, up and back  
 It relayed a message.  
     “Oh goddess who protects the lower world  
     We are in your debt  
     You have saved our village.  
     It is trifling, but this sake and these *inau*  
     We give to you as gifts of gratitude.  
     -- Said the chief of *Urashipet* village.”

<sup>18</sup> The ‘forest’ where the deer land is almost certainly *kenash* in Ainu, which means the marshy wooded areas usually near rivers that deer favor.

<sup>19</sup> This is the species *Salvelinus leucomaenis* (Japanese: *amemasu*) (Chiri M. 1962, 58). There are both sea-run and landlocked forms of this species, but it is unclear here to which of these the story refers.

Because the *pashui* said this,  
I rose and took up the metal sake cup  
I raised it high and lowered it down  
And in six *shintoko* casks, I poured just a little in each,  
And at this time from the upper seat window  
Things came in and kept coming in  
And lined themselves up on the treasure shelf.  
Next came cakes<sup>20</sup>  
And dried fish glittering like gold  
Came in large number and piled up in a mountain.  
I was greatly thrilled, and  
Invited all the gods without exception  
And even more lively than previously  
I threw a drinking banquet.  
When it came time for the gods to return home from the feast  
The *inau* made from human hands  
I gave two, three to each god, and  
To the goddesses I gave the cakes and sake lees  
And so everyone, straining his or her back, doubled over  
And expressing gratitude over and over  
Returned home.  
After this,  
I showed myself to the man of *Urashipet* in a dream  
And taught him how from now on  
He must not kill the fish and beasts poorly.  
And the man of *Urashipet* conveyed this message  
To his subordinates and  
To the many people of other villages.  
Then, they sent off the deer  
With decorated arrows and *inau*  
They made beautiful *isapakikni*  
And with these came to kill the fish.  
So, holding decorated arrows  
And bearing *inau*

---

<sup>20</sup> The Japanese word used in the text here is *shitogi*, which refers to a rice-cake or dumpling offered to the gods. Although it is unclear what the original Ainu may have been, this most likely refers to dried cakes made of heart lily root (Ainu: *turap*) that were used as ceremonial offerings (Tamura, 665).

The deer braced with happiness  
Returned home to the Keeper of the Game  
And so, the fish again carrying beautiful *isapakikni*  
Cheerfully returned home to the Keeper of the Fish.  
The Keeper of the Game and the Keeper of the Fish  
Were delighted by this, and  
One after another let out the deer and the fish  
So that it came to be there was  
No longer any trouble in the human village  
The chief of *Urashipet* is extremely thankful  
And as he had promised  
Honors me as a most upper god in all respects.  
With sake, *inau*, cakes and  
Any other thing that a god might want  
He worshiped me.  
And because of this I am living very happily.

---- So said the white weasel goddess who governs the lower world.



## Appendix II: Translation of an *Uwepeker*

This Ainu narrative was transcribed phonetically using a Romanized lettering system and then nearly completely translated into Japanese around the year 1920 by Chiri Yukie, the sister of Chiri Mashiho. Like her brother, Chiri Yukie grew up during a particularly difficult time for the Ainu, when the Meiji government forced assimilation into Japanese society and forced Ainu children to attend Japanese schools. Yukie, like her brother, complied with this law and so she also attended school in Japanese institutions. However, unlike her brother, she was raised in the same house as her grandmother, who spoke fluent Ainu and who reportedly had a great repertoire of Ainu oral mythologies. Therefore, she grew up educated and encultured in the Ainu language and spoke it fluently (Strong, 27). Thus, her Japanese schooling coupled with her Ainu upbringing to make her fully bi-lingual. At the age of 17, she was asked by Kindaichi Kyōsuke, a prominent scholar of Ainu culture, to transcribe Ainu oral traditions. She completed a number of notebooks (Chiri Y. 2002), including one collection of *kamui yukar* myths and their Japanese translations, the *Ainu Shin'yōshu*, that was published in 1923, almost a year after her untimely death (Chiri Y. 1978).<sup>1</sup>

This particular story, of the *uwepeker* un-metered genre, was one never published within her lifetime, but was included in her hand-written notebooks. The Japanese translation of this story was later completed by Haginaka Mie and published by the Hokkaido Board of Education along with Chiri's original Ainu transcription (Chiri Y. 1982–1986, 46-93) . Of all of the stories

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<sup>1</sup> I refer the reader to Strong's *Ainu Spirits Singing* (2011) for an English translation of Chiri Yukie's published collection of *kamui yukar* and for more on her life and contributions to scholarship of Ainu oral traditions.

she had heard from her grandmother, this is the story she chose to write down first. I interpret its foremost place in the notebooks as a sign of its importance to her as an Ainu during their time of cultural crisis. I am very excited to be able to share this story with an English-speaking audience.

For my translation into English, I have primarily used Chiri Yukie and Haginaka's Japanese. However, for a few passages, I have referred to Kitamichi Kunihiko's more recent Japanese translation of Chiri Yukie's Ainu language transcription (Chiri Y. 2004, 51-95). I have included discursive footnotes along with my English translation of the text. These footnotes are both my additions to help the English reader understand the cultural context behind the story and direct translations of Chiri and Haginaka's footnotes included in the Hokkaido Board of Education publication.

The God who Governs Famine  
Tells the Story of his own Experience

I am the god of famine  
And I live together with my uncle.  
This uncle of mine is always  
Sleeping by the hearth  
Doing nothing but warming his back.  
I am close by the treasure shelf  
On a raised seat  
I make my livelihood working  
On carving the sheaths of treasure swords.  
One day, my uncle  
Although he doesn't always do this sort of thing  
Woke up and went out, and after a short while came back in  
And again warmed his back and slept.  
From then, as long as one month passed  
But again, my uncle got up and left.  
I thought it mysterious, so after him

I too went out and looked.  
On the road that ran far out to the beach  
My uncle faced the direction of a far-away inlet  
He stood with large mouth agape  
Waving both sleeves in a fluttering motion.  
I looked and, at the far-away inlet  
There was a large village.  
From the top of this village to past the middle  
The spirits of the stored food, everyone,  
Rose from the windows  
And all these spirits of the food  
Descended into the mouth of the man.  
So it seems that when he went out the time before  
He removed half of the food spirits of the village  
Then today again,  
It seems that he took the other half of the food spirits of the village.  
I was completely surprised  
But all along, I gave the appearance of not knowing what he was doing.  
My bad uncle,  
With a full-stomach of food spirits  
And a lustrous complexion, came back to the house  
And again warmed his back and slept.  
After two or three days had passed  
One day, I went outside  
And descended to that village at the far-away inlet.  
Half the houses in the village  
Had no smoke, and from the remaining half or so  
Smoke rose only meagerly.  
Because there was a large, magnificent house around the center of the village  
I performed *shifumnuyaran*<sup>2</sup> outside this house,  
And so someone from inside the house came out.  
I looked and, did not know how to properly express what I saw,  
Covered to somewhere above chest height in mist  
There was a girl shining with light.

---

<sup>2</sup> In order to announce their presence when visiting the home of another, at the entrance Ainu would tap on things around them, stomp their feet, let out a breath, or clear their throats. Nakagawa gives the etymology of the Ainu word *shimnuyar* as follows: *si* (one's own) *hum* (sound) *nu* (listen) and *yar* (to let someone else do or to make someone else do) (220).

She saw me and, with an air of deep reserve  
 Retreated into the house; in a whisper  
 I heard what she was saying  
 It was this

“Outside, godly in appearance,  
 Is a young man.”

She said this and, there came the reprimanding voice of an elder

“You are a queer daughter, even if he is a god

He wished to enter my house

And so came to us. If you had, in silence,

Led him here it would have been good. Why,

Do you say such a thing in disregard of courtesy?”

So the voice said, and I could hear the sound of fine mats being set down.<sup>3</sup>

Then, that girl

Full of reserve, guided me in.

I entered the house and sat at the upper seat<sup>4</sup>

And exchanged greetings with the master of the house

I looked and, the person who governed the village

And his wife, everyone

God-like humans were sitting in a line, but

Everyone was feeling hungry

Thin, with lackluster complexion

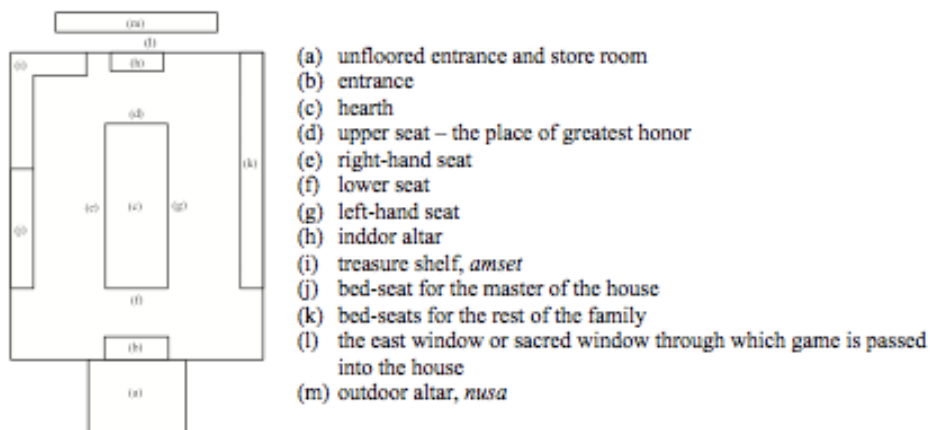
Even the young daughter

Although so very beautiful, was so thin

It was as if she no longer had a torso.

<sup>3</sup> When an honored guest visited an Ainu home, the basic mats covering the seating area were replaced with a special set of finely embroidered mats.

<sup>4</sup> A diagram of a traditional Ainu home (modified from Kindaichi 1941, 22)



I saw this and thought

“Due to my bad uncle,  
They are so piteous! The humans  
Feel so hungry and the chief  
Tries to help his companions  
By dividing up everything he possesses  
But even the people here in this house  
Are still very hungry”

I truly regretted.

Then, with the noble man

I chatted.

The modest girl at the left-hand seat,  
I put under my hypnotic charm, and so  
She stood up and lit a fire under a small pot.  
In the very far corner, a dried fish  
Half and one bowl  
Of grain<sup>5</sup> were visible to me, so  
Again I put the girl under my hypnotic charm, and so  
This child stood up  
Into the pot, this last remaining bit of grain,  
She put and made gruel.

After this, she noticed what she had done

“Why did I do something like that?”

She thought and cried.

The noble chief and

His lady both, in their hearts thought,

“Why did our daughter do such a thing?  
This last bit of grain we had been saving  
She is boiling up.

Is she planning to offer it to the august god?” This,  
They thought, but they said nothing.

Then, again with the master of the house

I began to talk, and the girl

I put under my hypnotic charm, and so

Crying, this child stood up

---

<sup>5</sup> The Ainu word I have here translated as ‘grain’ is *amam*, which is a general term used to mean any type of millet, cereal, or rice (Chiri M. 1953, 261).

And lifted the small pot from the fire, and in its place again  
Put another small pot.  
In here she put the half of the dried fish  
And made a simmering broth.  
Again I put her under my hypnotic charm, and so  
She lifted this pot  
Placed it by the lower seat  
And by herself, she sipped this fish broth  
And she ate the gruel.  
The noble man and his lady both,  
Saw this and the man  
Spoke to me, but  
In his heart he was weeping.  
The noble lady went to the lower seat  
And cried two<sup>6</sup> pure tears  
    “Truly, my daughter  
    Was well brought up until now  
    Or so I thought, but she has shown this impiety.  
    To my children, who have to the mountain hunt  
    Gone and will come back very tired,  
    I would like to let them eat even just one bite.  
    But this stupid daughter of mine has  
    Done this thing... now a long-awaited venerable god  
    Is resting in my home  
    But she does not give him anything.”  
This the noble lady thought, but full of reserve  
She could not bring herself  
To yell at her daughter.  
At that time, outside the house a person’s  
Footsteps sounded,  
Indicating that someone had come.  
I looked and, there were very good  
Young men, two of them.  
They had tired expressions, and greasy sweat running down their faces

---

<sup>6</sup> In Ainu oral traditions, the numbers two and three carry the meaning of many (Philippi, 32) (Chiri Y. 1982-1986, 60). I have preserved a more literal translation here, but this line is understood to mean that she cried “many pure tears.”

And from not having had a meal,  
They were regrettably very thin.  
They came in, and both  
In the truly politest manner, paid their respects  
And sat down along the left-hand seats.  
I told nothing but gossip stories of the gods, and so  
The noble man and  
The young men both were truly  
Pleased, and they joined in the spirit of things and responded accordingly.  
At this time, that girl  
Made an effort to lick the bottoms  
Of the soup pot and the gruel pot.  
Then, she realized what she had done  
And began to cry quietly.  
I again put her under my hypnotic charm, and so  
This girl  
For the meal-time preparations for the honored guest  
Took out a large pot with many handles  
And stooping under the weight carried it to the fire.  
Then, she scooped water  
And filled up the pot,  
All of the people were surprised,  
And thought they did not know what to do.

“What is our stupid daughter doing? She does not even notice  
That what she does is bad, how could this be?  
She eats by herself, and  
Even though it would have been better if she had not boiled the water,  
She boils it and does not offer it to other people sitting there.  
Why is she doing these things?”

The old married couple thought.  
The young men also, right then  
Wanted to severely scold their younger sister,  
But they held back in front of me,  
And without saying any strong words,  
Spilled tears on account of their piercing thoughts.  
The girl also thought  
“Why is it so?”

Up until now even if I did not eat  
I had my venerable father and venerable mother.  
Partake of food, and to my brothers, also, I wanted to give food.  
That is what I thought, but today,  
An exalted god is resting in our home,  
Yet, I wonder if it is because some evil spirit  
Has taken over me that I have done this.”

She thought, and in the lower seats  
Hiccoughed as she cried.  
From the beginning all along, the godly gossip  
I continued to tell, and from my breast pocket  
A half red and half white  
Single kernel of grain I pulled out  
This I flung into the large pot, but  
None of the people noticed.

I asked the young men for a story,  
“Are there any animals in the mountains?”

I said, and  
“There are many animals, but  
No matter what we do  
The arrows cannot get close”

They answered.  
“Why do you think that’s the case?”

I said, and then again  
While still talking about various things  
I lifted the lid on the large pot, and could see rice<sup>7</sup> at the bottom.

At this, what I said was thus,  
“Miss, only you have eaten so  
You have your strength. That pot, quickly  
Take it up and let your father, your mother,  
And your brothers eat. Then your friends  
Who can still walk  
Call them here and let them eat.”

I said this and, the people everyone  
Were surprised and came flying

---

<sup>7</sup> The Ainu word here is *meshi*, a loan-word from mainland Japanese meaning rice. The Ainu did not cultivate rice, but obtained it solely through trade with the Japanese.



They looked into the pot and  
The men over twenty times, over thirty times  
Prayed, and many times lifted their hands in worship.  
The women raised voices of gratitude  
And showed their joy.  
The girl lifted the large pot  
And to those hungry, wanting people  
Appeared to so effortlessly lift the pot.  
To everyone of the many people  
She gave food then rushed outside.  
Moments later to the doorway  
Half using canes and half  
Making an effort to crawl, men  
And women so thin  
That even now they seemed as though they would die  
The people came.  
The lady of the house and the girl  
Served the people half of the grain, which  
They put into bowls and  
Let them eat, and to the people who could not come  
They brought the food to them.  
Because things happened as I wished them to,  
The rice in the pot, no matter how often you divided it up  
Seemed to remain full, never decreasing  
So that among the people of the village  
There was not even one person who had not eaten once they divided the food.  
    "Tomorrow, let's go  
    Mountain hunting together" I said.  
    "The brave men of the village  
    Who can walk  
    Should come with me"  
I said this and, the young men were truly  
Delighted. That night  
The girl, below the sacred window  
Made my bed for me,  
And there I rested.  
The next day, the young people

Woke while it was still dark, and all of the healthy people  
They rounded up, and I  
Together with a large crowd  
Set off for the mountain hunt. We went and we went  
And arrived at the top of the precipice at the head of the village.  
I took a seat on top of a fallen tree, and  
    “I am going to be here, so  
    You all go chase the deer this way”  
I said, and so the people  
Separated into two groups  
And went off.  
A little while later, all the way from the east  
And all the way from the west,  
A flock of male deer, a flock of female deer  
Came rapidly.  
I looked and at the front edge of this flock  
There came the demon called *Pe-posoingar*<sup>8</sup>  
And at the back edge of the flock came the demon called *Iwa-posoingar*<sup>9</sup>.  
So, to my mugwort bow  
I notched a mugwort arrow.  
I shot *Iwa-posoingar* and  
He became bleached bones  
And toppled over. Then again,  
I shot *Pe-posoingar* and  
He became bleached bones and crumbled to the ground.  
Then on the male deer and the female deer,  
Of the flock, from the front to the back  
I blew and,  
They all descended from the top of the hill toward the cliff.  
On and on I blew, and  
Until not even one head remained, the deer all fell from the cliff.  
From there, to my house  
I returned.  
I glanced back and  
One young man from the right

---

<sup>8</sup> *Pe-posoingar* means “demon who can see through water.”

<sup>9</sup> *Iwa-posoingar* means “demon who can see through rock.”

And one young man from the left  
Both having become the head of their group  
And chased the deer to where I had been  
Met on the top of the cliff.  
But I was not there and there was not even one deer.  
They peaked below the cliff,  
And there the deer had piled like a mountain  
Nothing, not even a person's footprints were there.  
Then, they descended to the mountain of deer,  
And by its side they wept while  
Looking up to the sky they prayed and prayed.  
Everyone, only what they could shoulder  
They carried on their back and descended, the village  
Rang with excitement.  
To the village chief, I appeared in a dream  
Thus, I notified him of the circumstances,  
That I was not a god worshiped by humans, but  
I had thought the humans piteous  
And so had helped *Otashut*<sup>10</sup> village.  
This I said, and that my uncle  
With nothing but evil intentions, had caused this.  
The village chief, weeping, gave thanks.  
For the mountain of deer, a hunting cabin  
Was built by the whole village all together  
And they flayed and carried the meat home.  
And by spring, had finished everything.  
And, I had said that  
I am not a god to be worshipped, but  
The chief of *Otashut* village showed his gratitude  
By brewing sake for me.  
One day, at the window was  
A large sake cup, filled to the brink of  
Overflowing with sake.  
And on top of this, was placed a *kikeush-pashui*  
And this *pashui*, coming and going relayed

---

<sup>10</sup> *Otashut* means a 'stretch of sand extending from the sea's edge up to the grass upland' and serves as a common place name in both Hokkaido and Sakhalin (Philippi, 91).

The words of gratitude from the *Otashut* village chief  
 And *inau* also  
 Elegantly made and beautiful  
 Came one after another through the window.  
 After raising high and lowering down  
 The big sake cup, I filled six *shintoko* casks  
 Pouring just a little in each, and then gave back the cup.  
 From then, two, three days passed, and  
 The aroma of the sake filled the house with fragrance.  
 I decorated the inside of the house with *inau*  
 And a white mist glowed.  
 At first, the god who governs the meadow by the beach  
 I invited, and then from all over the land  
 I invited the various gods  
 And held a magnificent banquet. To this gathering  
     “I am not a god to be worshipped, but  
     Because of such and such circumstances  
     I have *inau* and sake,” I said, and  
 The gods were truly thankful.  
     “We did not notice anything.  
     That in this human land that we should protect  
     Something like this had happened  
     We had no idea.”  
 Was what they said.  
 Two, three days we drank together, and  
 To the returning gods, *inau*  
 One, I gave  
 Two, I gave and  
 All the gods, everyone, returned home.  
 From then, I have lived alone.  
 I look, and  
 The humans, even now live without worry  
 The chief<sup>11</sup> of *Otashut* village thought  
     “If I still thought that he was just an ordinary god  
     Who had honored us by coming to stay in our humble home  
     If he were only an ordinary god, my daughter

---

<sup>11</sup> Here the original Ainu is plural, reading “chiefs,” probably implying the past and present generations of chiefs.

Although not very beautiful,  
Could be sent to wait upon him at the lower seat.  
If he were just an ordinary god, but..."

And I understood what he was thinking.  
I too thought, "If it were that girl  
A human so like a god in her beauty  
If I were just an ordinary god,  
It would be alright to call her to my place."

But, there was nothing I could do about it.  
From then, I have lived without further incident.  
The people of *Otashut* village, give me prayers at festival time  
And I in return, secretly  
Watch over the people of *Otashut* village.  
In this way, a god that receives *inau* from humans  
I am not, but  
In this manner, I have also come to have a place at their *nusasan*.<sup>12</sup>  
This is the tale that I have told.  
Then, my bad uncle,  
Was very angry  
And went off to the very far south.  
This bad uncle,  
Is an evil demon of famine, so  
From now on, if there is famine in the human land  
It begins in the south.

---- So said the god who governs famine.

---

<sup>12</sup> An offering stand or altar-like collection of *inau* outside the sacred eastern window (Kindaichi 1941, 22).

## Glossary of Ainu Words

*Aeoina-kamui* – the deity said to have taught the Ainu ancestors the proper ritual and cultural practices; glossed as ‘divine tradition holder’

*ainu moshir* – the world of human beings; the ecological and cosmological space of Hokkaido

*amam* – a general term meaning grain, including millet, other cereals, and rice

*Ape Huchi kamui* – the fire goddess or the great grandmother

*atomte itak* (also *sakoro itak*, *kamui itak*) – cadenced ‘grace voice’ used in the recitation of metered narrative forms such as the *yukar*, *oina*, and *kamui yukar*

*attush* – the inner bark of the elm tree used to make cloth; also the word for this cloth

*casi* – fort-like structures built on the periphery of a local group or river group territory

*chep* – glossed as ‘thing we eat,’ this word is generally used to indicate fish, especially chum salmon (*Oncorhynchus keta*)

*Chep-kor kamui* – the Keeper of the Fish; the great deity of Ainu pantheon that controls the source of the deer animal spirits

*chipiyak* – snipe (*Gallinago hardwickii*)

*chirai* – carp (*Hucho perryi*)

*chironnup* – fox (*vulpes vulpes*)

*chise* – house, home

*esaman* - otter (*lutra lutra*)

*Haru kamui* – the goddess of barnyard grass millet

*hayokpe* – the animal form assumed by deities visiting *ainu moshir*; glossed as ‘armor’

*ichanui* – cherry salmon (*Oncorhynchus masou*)

*ikor* – treasures; fancy goods; prestige items obtained through trade with the Japanese such as metal swords and lacquerware vessels

*inau* – a carved stick that served as a ceremonial offering presented to the gods at times of prayer

*irektep* – deer decoy whistle that imitates the call of the doe

*isapakikni* – a carved stick used to ritually kill salmon by hitting them over the head

*isepo* – snowshoe hares (*lepus timidus*)

*iwor* – a hunting, fishing or gathering ground; glossed as ‘area where deity is’

*iyomante* – bear spirit sending ceremony

*kamui* – god, deity

*kamui moshir* – the world of the gods; the metaphysical plane that the upper pantheon of gods and ancestors inhabit

*kamui yukar* – tales of gods; metered narrative form that relates, in first person, the exploits of various deities, especially in their relations with humans

*Kemram kamui* – famine deity

*kenash* – the marshy wooded areas near rivers; lower area where the deer forage in the autumn and can easily be hunted

*kike* – sacred wood shavings

*kikeush-pashui* – a carved libation stick; when it is used to offer to the gods it is believed that it flies to the world of the gods and relays the prayers of the humans

*kotan* – village settlement

*Kotan-kar kamui* – the god credited with the creation of the land of the humans, *ainu moshir*; glossed as ‘land-making deity’

*marek* – a gaff-like fishing spear

*meshi* – rice (a loan word from Japanese)

*nusasan* – an offering stand or collection of *inau* outside the sacred eastern window

*oina* – tales of the culture hero, or human-like demigods

*pashui* – (see *kikeush-pashui*)

*Payoka kamui* – the god of disease, particularly smallpox

*petiwor* – loose river basin chiefdoms

*ramat* – spirit, soul

*repni* – stick used by both the reciter and audience to beat time during the recitation of *yukar* epics

*sakehe* – a call, refrain, or burden repeated after each line of a *kamui yukar* tale

*sanke* – glossed as ‘former, previous or forward’

*shifumnuyaran* – Ainu practice of trapping, stomping, breathing loudly, or clearing their throats to announce their presence at the entrance of a house

*shintoko* – lacquerware containers obtained through trade with the Japanese and considered to be treasures of great status; used to hold sake or millet wine

*Shir-kor kamui* – the goddess of the ground; glossed as ‘possessor of the Earth’

*Shurku kamui* – aconite goddess

*si-paskur* – dung crow (*Corvus leuillanti Japonensis*)

*supun* – dace (*Tribolodon* spp.)

*tonoto* – traditional millet wine brewed for offering to the gods

*turep* – the bulb of the heartleaf lily root; probably the single most important plant food collected, its starch was formed into cakes and dried for the winter

*Turep kamui* – the goddess of the bulb of the heartleaf lily

*Un-ko-tuk kamui* – pine resin goddess

*upashkuma* – a genre of unmeasured narratives that provide practical information and teachings for a successful life

*urai* – basket trap

*uwepeker* – unmeasured stories that recount interesting events; glossed as ‘mutually inquiring after news’

*Wakka-ush kamui* – the goddess of water; ‘deity of water’

*worun chise* – dark-hut or peep-hut; small enclosure built over the a stream with a hole in the floor through which someone could hold a torch and spear fish below

*yaroshiki ya* – bag net

*yash ya* – trawling net

*yayan itak* – a normal speaking voice; the style of delivery of unmeasured narratives like the *uwepeker* genre

*yuk* – general term for deer, meaning “game” or “prey”

*yukar* – heroic epics about human protagonists

*Yuk-kor kamui* – the Keeper of the Game; the great deity of Ainu pantheon that controls the source of the deer animal spirits



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