

## The “Sending-Back” Rite in Ainu Culture

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### *A Proposal for an Ainu Cultural Complex*

#### KAMUY AND AYNU

The central religious ceremony of Ainu culture was the “sending-back” ritual, in which the spirits of animals, plants, and implements were returned to the heavenly realm, the dwelling place of the ancestral spirits. The ceremony comprises an expression of gratitude towards the spirits for the things they have bestowed upon mankind, and may be seen as a respectful “return gift” from humanity to the heavens. The “sending-back” ritual thus exists within the context of a dualistic *weltanschauung*, comprised of the realm of the *aynu* (human beings)<sup>1</sup> on one side and the realm of the *kamuy* (spirits) on the other.

The Ainu, in the words of KITAKAMAE Tarō (1985, p. 71), “did not view humanity as the world’s sole major constituent” — existence was conceived of in terms of what might be called a “balanced symbol model,” composed of an interplay or reciprocal communication between *aynu* and *kamuy*. KITAKAMAE goes on to say, “The term *kamuy* is often translated as ‘god,’ but what the concept really represents is a spiritual being that appears in the *aynu* world clad in the outer form of animals such as bears, owls, and salmon, plants such as monkshood, diseases such as smallpox, and natural phenomena such as fire and lightning” (1985, p. 72).

The outer form of something is hence simply a disguise (*hayokpe*) adopted by the *kamuy*. Even smallpox is treated as a manifestation of the

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\* This article comprises an edited version of chapter 6, “Ainu bunka to shite no okuriba” アイヌ文化としての送り場 [Sending-back ceremony sites in Ainu culture], in UTAGAWA 1989, pp. 103–19.

<sup>1</sup> The term “Ainu” (*aynu*) means “human being.” This usage, which predates the incursion of the Japanese into Ainu territory, reflects the custom among many northern peoples of referring to themselves with the word for “human.”

*kamuy*, troublesome an “entity” as it may be for mankind. KITAKAMAE, citing the existence in the Ainu pantheon of *pirka kamuy* (good or beautiful spirits) and *wen kamuy* (evil or enemy spirits), writes, “The *kamuy* concept is fundamentally dual in nature . . . with, as CHIRI Mashiho [1955] points out, an original meaning similar to that of Japanese *ma* 魔 [demon]” (1985, p. 72). Indeed, the term referring to the dwelling place of the deities, *kamuy-kotan*, can be equally understood as indicating the dwelling place of the demons (CHIRI 1956, p. 40); the five places in Hokkaido having names based on the expression *kamuy-kotan* are all located on rivers near violent rapids (YAMADA 1984), demonstrating the danger-fraught dual significance of the *kamuy* concept.

The *kamuy* were thus beings deserving of cautious treatment, and it is within this context that the dignity of the sending-back rite is to be understood. Let us consider in greater detail the precise location of the sending-back rite within the *aynu kamuy* “balanced symbol model” of Ainu culture.

THE IOMANTE CULTURAL COMPLEX

What are the defining characteristics of Ainu culture? This has formed a persistent question for scholars since the beginning of Ainu studies.

WATANABE Hitoshi has attempted an interdisciplinary response to this problem incorporating the perspectives of archaeology, history, and folk studies (1972). Watanabe locates the axis of Ainu culture in what he calls the “bear ceremony cultural complex” (fig. 1), composed of the cere-

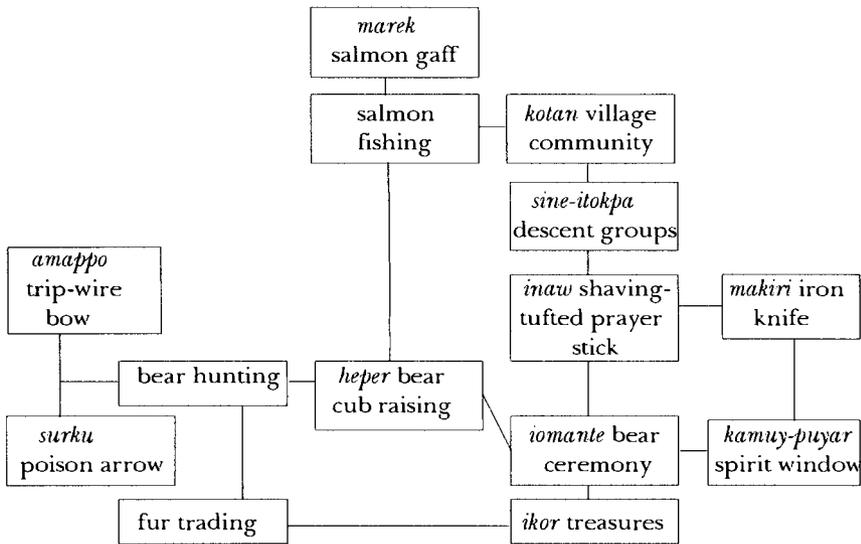


Figure 1. Bear Ceremony Cultural Complex

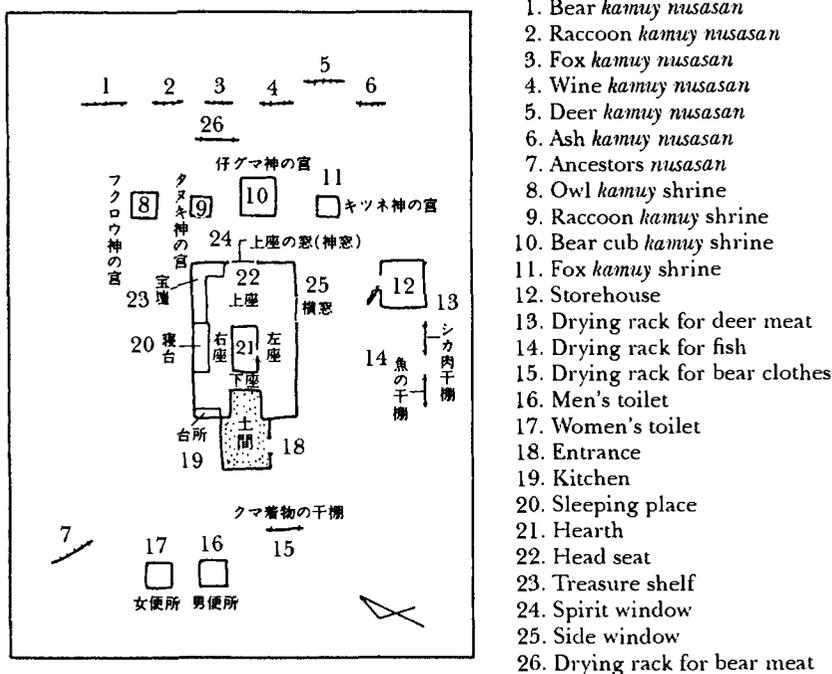


Figure 2. Layout of a typical Ainu dwelling

mony itself and the various cultural elements associated with it. The bear ceremony referred to by Watanabe is the ceremony in its narrow sense, known as the *iomante*: the ceremony in which a specially-raised bear cub is put to death and its spirit sent back to the *kamuy* world. It does not refer to bear ceremonies in their wider sense, usually known as *opunire*, in which sending-back rituals are performed for bears killed in the wild.

The various elements comprising Watanabe's model encompass a broad spectrum of interconnecting activities and objects central to Ainu life, as a review of the terms in the above diagram demonstrates. The "spirit window" referred to in figure 1 refers to the Ainu dwelling's sacred window (called the *kamuy-puyar* [the spirit window] or the *rorun-puyar* [the window near the head seat of the hearth]), situated opposite the entrance used by the structure's human inhabitants (see fig. 2). This window was for the special purpose of welcoming or sending off the *kamuy* of the bear, and in traditional houses is said to have always faced upstream with respect to the river on which the village (*hotan*) was located.

The mention of *heper* (bear cub [raising]) testifies to the former prevalence of the bear ceremony on the one hand, and of bear hunting on the other. Bear hunting was, as might be expected, more common in

inland communities than in those on the coast. The hunters, who sought their quarry every year at a set time in specific areas near the headwaters of the rivers, were given special positions and roles during the *iomante*. The *amappo* (trip-wire bow)<sup>2</sup> and *surku* (poison arrow)<sup>3</sup> represent the basic tools of the hunter's trade.

Fur trading formed an important link in the Ainu's system of obtaining goods from other peoples; Ainu in coastal areas bartered the furs of seals and other marine mammals, while those from inland communities traded the pelts of animals like bear and deer. Through fur trading the Ainu obtained *ikor* (treasures: swords, personal ornaments, lacquerware, etc.), which comprised important ceremonial paraphernalia during the performance of the *iomante*. The *inaw* (prayer sticks with tufts of shavings) [fig. 3], also indispensable to the *iomante*, are thought to have been gifts directed to the *kamuy* of the bear. Carved with *makiri*, short iron knife, they were marked with non-totemic animal crests (*ekasi-itokpa* [fig. 4]) that comprised the symbols of the family's male descent line.

Patrilineal relatives having the same crest were known as *sine-itokpa* descent groups. These groups formed the primary unit during the performance of the *iomante*, the largest communal ceremony of Ainu society; the *iomante*, in turn, served to maintain the solidarity and social organization of the *sine-itokpa* groups. The regular performance of *iomante* ceremonies presupposed the existence of stable, sedentary village communities, which generally depended upon river fishing for salmon and trout—these fish could be dried and hence formed a valuable source of long-lasting,

storable food. Fishing was usually carried out near spawning grounds (*ichan*),

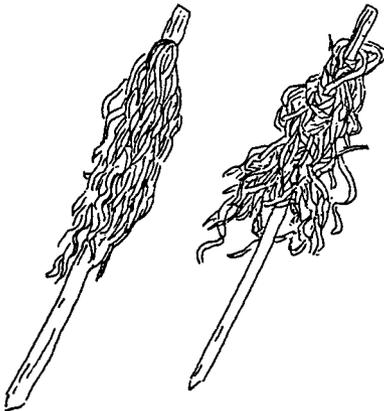


Figure 3. *Inaw*

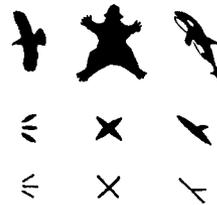


Figure 4. *Ekasi-itokpa*

<sup>2</sup> Actually a set gun.

<sup>3</sup> The Ainu used aconitine poison, derived from the dried root of the Japanese monkshood (*Aconitum chinense*).

so villages were generally located in their vicinity. The tool most used in salmon fishing (and thus most representative of it) was the *marek*, a singularly-shaped gaff made of iron (fig. 5).

The above comprise the interrelating elements of the "*iomante* cultural complex" that, in Watanabe's model, forms the central framework of Ainu culture. From this he derives three fundamental principles underlying the culture's structure. The first relates to the social aspect: the sedentary village community comprised the foundation upon which the *sine-itokpa* descent groups and their communal ceremony, the *iomante*, were formed and maintained. The second relates to the religious aspect: the *iomante*, centering upon the ritual sacrifice of a specially-raised bear cub, constituted the basis of the culture's religious life, and its establishment therefore marked the solidification of Ainu religious culture. The third relates to the aspect of trade and economics: imported goods such as metal implements played a fundamental role in the economic implications of the *iomante*.

Let us examine the cultural origins of these three principles. Sedentary communities, the first element of Watanabe's *iomante*-based Ainu culture, can be traced back to similar groups seen in the Satsumon culture.<sup>4</sup> So too can the third element, the spread of metal implements. The *iomante* ceremony proper, however, appears to have come into existence at a much later period, with the available archaeological evidence pointing to an origin sometime during the latter half of the eighteenth century. The animistic ceremonies evidenced by the bone mounds in

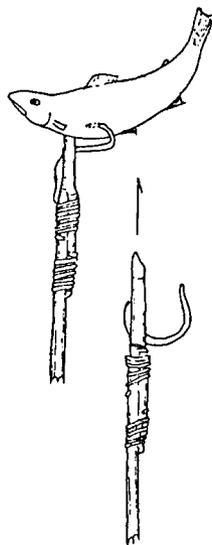


Figure 5. A salmon gaff  
(*marek*)

<sup>4</sup> "An iron-tool-using culture that flourished in Hokkaidō and the northern Tōhoku region between the 8th and 12th centuries [8th through 13th centuries, according to some scholars]. . . . Satsumon culture developed from the influence of Kofun culture (ca 300–710) on the so-called [Epi-]Jōmon Culture (vestiges of the earlier Jōmon culture which survived in the far north for many centuries after its demise in central and southern Japan) and is distinguished by the following traits: the exterior of Satsumon pottery was finished by wood-scraping (hence the term *satsumon*, or 'scraped design'), as was Haji ware; modified versions of Kofun-period mounded tombs were built for some burials; spindle whorls were used in making cloth; iron swords and other iron implements such as axes and spades were in use; and interior hearths were constructed against one wall of the square pit houses." (*Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*, vol. 7, p. 30)

Okhotsk culture<sup>5</sup> pit dwellings were clearly animal “sending-back” rites, but these cannot be linked directly with the *iomante*.

Hence if we follow Watanabe’s hypothesis and designate the *iomante* as the defining element of Ainu culture, we must conclude that Ainu culture arose only at the end of the late eighteenth century, during what I have in an earlier work termed “New Ainu culture” as opposed to the previous “Proto Ainu culture” (UTAGAWA 1988, p. 320).<sup>6</sup> Watanabe has not clarified his position on this point, although he does comment, “A clear distinction should be recognized between the ‘Ainu Period’ and ‘Ainu culture,’ as defined by the disappearance of pottery” (WATANABE 1972, p. 58).

#### THE AINU CULTURAL COMPLEX

In an attempt to more clearly define the characteristics of Ainu culture, I earlier proposed a model that I refer to as the “Ainu cultural complex” (see UTAGAWA 1980, pp. 162–68). This model, an elaboration of Watanabe’s “*iomante* cultural complex” based on a primarily archaeological approach, sees fire worship as the central element of Ainu religious life.

The centrality of fire worship in Ainu culture is reflected in the exalted position the Ainu accord *ape-kamuy*, the fire spirit. This high status finds expression in the Ainu creation myth. As outlined by ŌGIYA Masayasu (1966), this myth holds that after the spirit *mosiri-kor-kamuy* created the world, *kanto-kor-kamuy*, the heavenly spirit, sent a number of lesser spirits to dwell in the human realm. Most important of these was *ape-kamuy*, who presided over the four other main subordinate spirits: *nusa-kor-kamuy* (the spirit of the *nusasan*, a fence-like row of sticks near the Ainu house that served as a ceremonial area from which animal, plant, and implement spirits were sent back to the spirit world [fig. 6]), *ram-nusa-kor-*

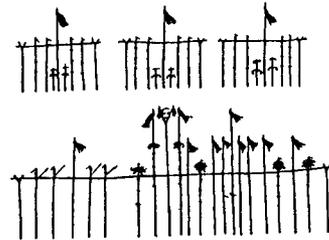


Figure 6. *Nusasan*

<sup>5</sup> “Deep-sea fishing and hunting culture that flourished during the 8th through 12th centuries [4th through 13th centuries, according to some scholars] in the coastal areas of southern Sakhalin, northeastern Hokkaidō, and the southern Kuril Islands, bordering on the Okhotsk Sea. Succeeding to remnants of the [Epi-] Jōmon Culture, . . . the Okhotsk culture was contemporary with the Satsumon culture of southern Hokkaidō and northernmost Honshū. . . . Within the pentagonal pit houses characteristic of Okhotsk culture, there were central hearths and special niches where the bones of both sea and land animals were placed for ceremonial purposes.” (*Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*, vol. 6, pp. 83–84)

<sup>6</sup> “New Ainu culture” developed in the latter half of the eighteenth century as a result of colonizing incursions by the Japanese into Ainu territory. It is of course possible that archaeological remains of the *iomante* from the Proto-Ainu stage will be found in the future.

*kamuy* (the low *nusasan* spirit), *hasinaw-kor-kamuy* (the spirit of hunting), and *wakka-us-kamuy* (the spirit of water). Under each of these were numerous lesser spirits.<sup>7</sup>

In this way *ape-kamuy*, the spirit of greatest importance to mankind, came into being. *Ape-kamuy*'s preeminent position meant that whenever prayers (*kamuy-nomi*) were to be offered during any of the various types of ceremonies it was necessary first to inform her and obtain her cooperation. This, of course, included the sending-back rites, typified by the *iomante*.

Figure 7 outlines the relationships between the various elements comprising my proposed Ainu cultural complex. A number of the elements are the same as in Watanabe's *iomante* cultural complex: the *iomante* itself, the *heper* (bear cub), the spirit window, the *inaw* (tufted prayer sticks), the *ikor* (treasures), the *amappo* (trip-wire bow), the *surku* (poison arrow), the *makiri* (short iron knife), the *marek* (salmon gaff), the *sine-itokpa* descent groups, the *kotan* (village communities), and the activities of salmon fishing, fur trading, and bear hunting.

In addition to these are the animal and implement "sending-back" ceremonies. Unlike the *iomante*, these ceremonies were not elaborate rituals of the *sine-itokpa* descent groups, but were nevertheless important elements of Ainu religious life involving *inaw* and the *nusasan* ceremonial area. Their performance is thought to have involved supplications to *ape-kamuy*, and hence to have begun by the side of the household hearth. Such articles of Ainu manufacture<sup>8</sup> as *iku-pasuy* (sacred chopsticks) were used as intermediary objects, and sacred sake was offered to *ape-kamuy* and the *inaw*. The implement sending-back rituals<sup>9</sup> involved both Ainu-manufactured articles and Japanese goods (obtained, like the *ikor*, through fur trading) that had become worn out or unnecessary. The spirits of the articles for which the rituals were held were believed to depart through the spirit window; a symbolic reflection of this belief can be seen in the *iomante*, during which the spirit window was used as a passageway for the Japanese-made ritual objects used at the *nusasan* ceremonial area.

Other archaeologically important aspects of the Ainu cultural complex include such elements as the distinctive Ainu burial system and grave markers. These were matters relating primarily to the individual,

<sup>7</sup> Spirits who descended to earth on their own, and not on the orders of *kanto-kor-kamuy*, became demons.

<sup>8</sup> "Articles of Ainu manufacture" are considered to be non-Japanese goods produced by the Ainu themselves. However, iron objects reworked into distinctive Ainu products are also included.

<sup>9</sup> This category includes sending-back ceremonies for plants and ashes.

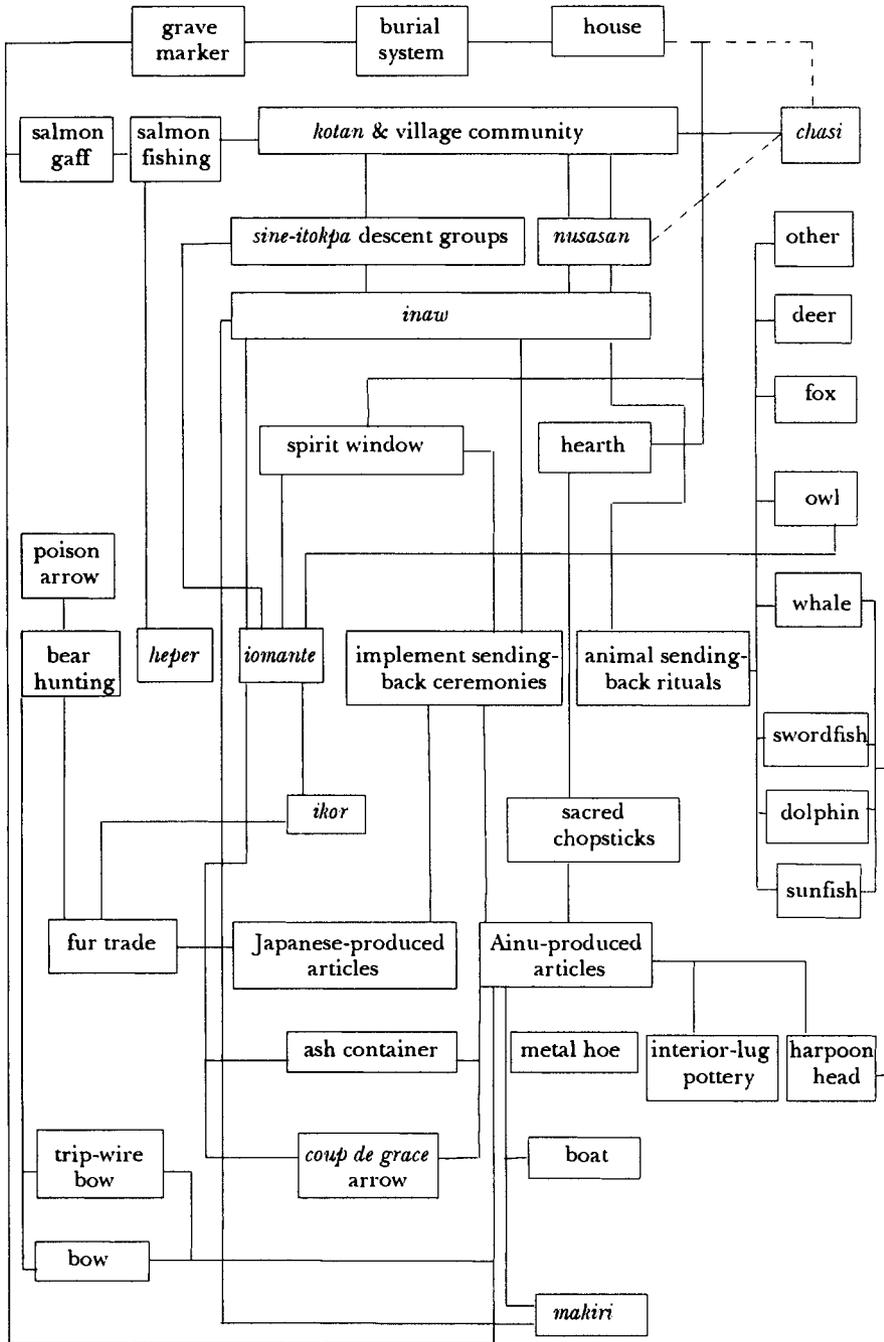


Figure 7. The Ainu Cultural Complex

but also involved the household and the village as a whole. Also of importance are the deep connections between *nusasan*, villages, and *chasi*.<sup>10</sup>

The above comprises an outline of some of the basic elements comprising Ainu culture as seen from the perspective of archaeology. Together these elements form, with the other elements in figure 7, the interconnecting structure I have labeled the “Ainu cultural complex.”

### *Within the Ainu Cultural Complex*

#### THE SENDING-BACK RITUAL

What precisely was the location of the sending-back ritual within the Ainu cultural complex I outlined above?

The various sending-back rituals—the *iomante* and the rituals for animals, plants, and implements—were performed for the purpose of sending the spirits of the creatures or objects back to the heavenly realm. Hence the rituals invariably commenced with supplications to *ape-kamuy*, who, as mentioned above, was the most important of the spirits that descended from the heavens to the human domain. These supplications took place at the side of the hearth inside the Ainu house, and required *inaw* and sacred chopsticks; also indispensable was the spirit window, through which the spirits passed in and out of the dwelling. Following the hearthside prayers to *ape-kamuy*, the ritual moved outdoors to the *nusasan*. Here, too, various types of *inaw* were displayed.

In this way, a constant dialogue took place between the *aynu* and the *kamuy*. This communication between *aynu* and *kamuy*, *kamuy* and *aynu*—Ainu culture’s “balanced symbol model”—was most clearly expressed in the *iomante*, but was symbolized also in the chain composed of the hearth (*ape-kamuy* dwelling place), the spirit window, the *inaw*, and the *nusasan*. The religious sending-back rituals provided the underlying support for this communication.

#### LOCATION AND OUTLOOK

If my above proposal for an Ainu cultural complex is accepted, the question arises as to whether all of its constituent elements are necessary before an “Ainu culture” can be recognized. This is, in point of fact, a quite difficult issue; let it suffice to note that Ainu culture is too complex a subject to permit any all-encompassing definitions or norms. Many aspects of Ainu culture not considered in my primarily archaeological approach

<sup>10</sup> *Chasi* were fortifications built by the Ainu at the tops of cliffs, hills, and other strategic points. They were generally used for defence, but also employed in surveillance, negotiations, and ceremonies.

are of great relative importance in Ainu culture, particularly those pertaining to the provinces of folklore and ethnography: nonmaterial elements of ritual and daily life such as songs (*yukar*, *upopo*) and dances (*rimse*); technological aspects such as toolmaking and construction methods; and elements relating to the various rites of passage. At this point we must be content with a limited approach, though it is hoped that with the advance of Ainu studies this will not always be the case (see the final section of this article).

I would like now to return to an issue brought up before, the Proto-Ainu sending-off rituals that preceded the *iomante* of New Ainu culture, and consider in more detail the nature of the animal worship involved. In an earlier work I analyzed the remains of various animal designs recovered from prehistoric sites in Hokkaido (UTAGAWA 1983). When the designs are categorized according to animal type—bears, waterfowl, seals and other marine mammals, etc.—it is found that in the Jōmon period bears and other land animals accounted for about half of the total, while in the Epi-Jōmon period the breakdown was approximately 57% bears, 13% marine mammals, 0% waterfowl, and 30% other animals. Meaningful analysis for the subsequent Satsumon culture period is difficult due to the scarcity of remains, but Okhotsk culture material yields percentages of 38% for bears, 29% for marine mammals, 11% for waterfowl, and 22% for other animals.

These figures indicate that the bear was the principle object of worship during the Jōmon and Epi-Jōmon periods, while during the time of the Okhotsk culture an increasing diversification occurred, with bears, marine animals, and waterfowl being more equally represented (fig. 8).

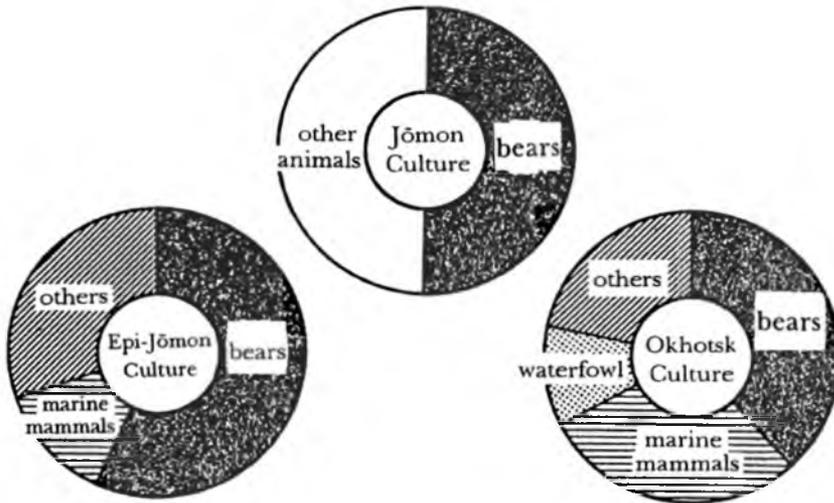


Figure 8. Objects of Animal Worship

The latter phenomenon is similar to the conceptual division seen in Ainu society between *kimun-kamuy*, the bear spirit of the mountains, and *repun-kamuy*, the orc or dolphin spirit of the sea.

There are, incidentally, some interesting points in common between the patterns of animal worship in Okhotsk culture and the *ekasi-itokpa*, the non-totemic animal crests used by the Ainu to symbolize male descent lines. KŌNO Hiromichi (1936) sees the origins of the *ekasi-itokpa* crests in representations of animals, with the clearest examples (fig. 4) being the bear, the bird, and the orc or dolphin—the very three animals most commonly worshipped in Okhotsk culture.

As WATANABE has pointed out (1974), there are three aspects of Okhotsk culture that are the possible precursors of elements found in the Ainu *iomante*. These three aspects are:

- 1) The indoor accumulation of the bones of bears and other animals;
- 2) The production and use of bear carvings;
- 3) The use of a waistband as a costume for the *iomante* bear cub.

With regard to point 1, the skulls of the sacrificed bears in Sakhalin *iomante* are said to have been placed at the head of the hearth for an entire week; in Hokkaido they were placed there only for a short time. The longer period observed in Sakhalin is believed to be connected in some way with the indoor bone mounds found at Okhotsk culture sites. The bear carvings mentioned in point 2 were not particularly prevalent in Hokkaido, but in Sakhalin they did comprise an element of the *iomante* ceremony in the form of *inoka*, wooden figures used in hunting rituals. The *inoka* are said to have had their origins in the Okhotsk-culture bear carvings. The use of bear waistbands in Okhotsk culture mentioned in point 3 is inferred from Okhotsk bear carvings, which frequently show engraved or dotted lines encircling the middle of the animal's trunk. Bands which looked quite similar were used during Sakhalin *iomante*; known as *kamuy kuh* (or *iso-kuh*),<sup>11</sup> they comprised one part of the bear's costume. The resemblance between them and the Okhotsk carvings' waistbands is so close as to indicate some definite connection between the two.

Thus clear elements of animal worship were present in Okhotsk culture, elements that moreover appear to lie at the source of the Ainu *iomante*. The development of the full-fledged *iomante* ceremony plainly occurred long after the demise of Okhotsk culture, but the pervading influence of that culture's animal worship is obvious. This historical process provides helpful guidelines when considering the emergence of the

<sup>11</sup> Among the Hokkaido Ainu this waistband, which formed part of the costume of the *iomante* cub, is known as a *ponpake* (short apron).

*iomante*-based Ainu cultural complex, and will comprise an important element in future analyses. It is still premature, however, to utilize this as a new vantage point on Ainu culture. The study of animal sending-back rituals in Proto-Ainu culture has only just begun.

### *The Meaning of Ainu Archaeology*

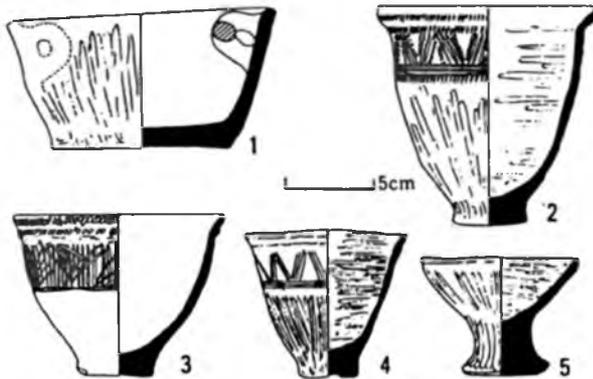
#### WHAT IS AINU ARCHAEOLOGY?

When archaeologists speak of the age of Ainu culture, they generally refer to the period subsequent to the disappearance of the Satsumon and Okhotsk cultures and prior to the modern era, that is, the period approximately between the fourteenth century and mid-nineteenth century. This corresponds roughly to what I labeled earlier the period of Proto-Ainu culture (fourteenth to late eighteenth century). The vagueness implied by my use of the word “roughly” is a problem inherent in the field of archaeology — archaeology takes it upon itself to reconstruct the history and culture of the past on the basis of artifacts, features, and sites, but has yet to determine the precise limits of “the past.” At one time archaeologists confined their investigations to ancient pottery and stone implements, but on Honshū the study of “medieval archaeology” has now emerged, and we are beginning to see a “modern archaeology” as well. The present age is the sole remaining frontier; we have reached the point where virtually everything left by those who preceded us is subject to archaeological examination. This complicates the demarcation of the period to be studied, particularly in cases like that of Ainu culture, which in Hokkaido is directly connected with the culture of the present within the unceasing flow of history.

In an earlier work I proposed that Proto-Ainu culture be divided into three phases: early, middle, and late, with the early phase (fourteenth-fifteenth centuries) being called the “Interior-Lug Pottery culture”<sup>12</sup> (fig. 9) and the middle and late phases (sixteenth and seventeenth-to-eighteenth centuries) the “*Chasi* culture” (UTAGAWA 1980). In my proposal, “Ainu archaeology” would center its attention on the age of Proto-Ainu culture, taking into account elements of New Ainu Culture as appropriate (as in the subject of this article, the sending-back ceremony, which has deep connections with New Ainu Culture).

FUJIMOTO Tsuyoshi, noting that “the concept of Ainu archaeology is

<sup>12</sup> So called because the pottery and iron vessels of that period had “lugs” (small protuberances with holes in the middle) located on the inside of the vessel. Cords were tied to these through the holes so that the vessels could be suspended directly over the hearth fire; by attaching the cords inside the vessel instead of outside the cords did not get burned by the fire. The Interior-Lug Pottery culture was, more properly, the Interior-lug Iron Vessel culture.



**Figure 9. Interior-Lug Pottery and Satsumon Pottery**

still somewhat underdeveloped" (1984, p. 75), suggests that a combination of the respective strengths of archaeological methodology and ethnoarchaeological research would enable the field to better fulfill its role of promoting the understanding of Ainu life. FUJIMOTO points to the ethnoarchaeological approach as one that provides concrete techniques for the study of Ainu culture, and notes that ethnological surveys might serve as a useful way of obtaining information on "the intangible aspects of Ainu life (household living patterns, tool use, social organization, thought, etc.), an area in which traditional archaeology is weak" (1984, pp. 77-78).

Ainu archaeology in northern regions parallels Honshū medieval and modern (Edo period) archaeology in many respects, and helpful cross-overs often result. For example, the archaeological analysis of Ainu-produced articles and the imported Japanese products characteristic of Ainu culture could provide important clues for chronological studies. Researchers should always keep potential benefits of this kind in mind.

#### A PERSPECTIVE ON NEW AINU CULTURE

Ainu culture is presently undergoing a major reevaluation in Japan, so much so that the issue is often referred to as "the Ainu problem." Though the term "problem" has certain negative undertones, the very fact that it is being used indicates the increasing interest the issue is attracting and the growing concern among the Ainu themselves to recreate what they can of their ancient culture. Within this modern "New Ainu culture," people are searching for ways to preserve and transmit

the "Ainu cultural complex," or at least its most basic features. At present there are efforts in many regions to pass on traditional Ainu dances, songs, and craft skills, and a movement has arisen to revive the performance of the *iomante* in accordance with the ancient rites. What, among all this activity, is of fundamental importance? The investigation of this issue will help determine the best way to support Ainu culture.

It might be helpful at this point to look back at the way Ainu society was organized in the past. KŌNO (1957) has given us an interesting picture of a type of harvest festival known as the *pekanpe*,<sup>13</sup> celebrated by the inhabitants of an Ainu community (*kotan*) on the shores of Lake Tōro in the Shibecha-chō area. Kōno reports that the division of labor and the allotment of the final harvest show elements of "primitive communism." The *pekanpe* is still celebrated in the village every September; it is not a ceremony intended for the eyes of outsiders, but comprises a form of prayer (*kamuy-nomi*) by the villagers to the spirits. The social unit underlying such "primitive communism" is the Ainu kinship community, though Kōno adds that the *nusasan* ceremonial site was placed in a fixed spot belonging to the entire *kotan*. As examples of this type of arrangement Kōno cites, in addition to the Tōro village, the Ainu *kotan* near Teshikaga (the Kussharo *kotan*) and Nijibetsu (the Shuwan *kotan*). Such kinship community-based primitive communism formed the starting point of Ainu culture. Its destruction was, as Kōno notes, brought about by the introduction of the private property system and the household-centered concept of social organization.

Kinship communities and primitive communism are no longer viable in a society like modern Japan's. The ceremonies associated with them, however, such as the *iomante* rituals with their roots in the communal consciousness of the *sine-itokpa* descent groups, may serve a vital role in preserving Ainu culture. Also important may be the determination of how the various cultural activities are situated within the context of the Ainu cultural complex as seen from either the archaeological or ethnological perspectives.

#### APPENDIX

In conclusion, I would like to present three prayers from the Kushiro district recited on the day before an *iomante* held in 1939 (SATŌ 1958, pp. 49–51).

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<sup>13</sup> The word *pekanpe* is thought to derive from *pe-ka-um-pe*, which means "that which is over the water," i.e., the nuts of the water chestnut.

PRAYER TO *APE-KAMUY*, THE FIRE SPIRIT

Among the many spirits revered and worshiped by our ancestors, you, *ape-kamuy*, are most hallowed and worthy of veneration. *Kimun-kamuy*, the mountain spirit, has given us a bear cub to enrich our lives. As *ape-kamuy* has seen, we have raised the cub with the greatest care under the guidance of the village elder (*ekasi*), providing it with food even when our own children have had to do without. The cub's healthy growth has been a source of great joy to us. Tomorrow, however, is the time when the law requires that the cub be sent back. The elder will carry this out with sincerity and in full accordance with tradition, but if we should err please grant us your forgiveness. We pray that the cub may be sent back in proper style, and to this end we offer you *inaw* and wine.

Blessed spirit of fire, we beseech you on behalf of all the Ainu to please convey our feelings and intentions to the other spirits, and escort the *heper* safely home to the ancestral realm.

PRAYER TO *CHISE-KOR-KAMUY*, THE HOUSEHOLD SPIRIT

*Ape-huchi-kamuy*, the spirit of fire, has already conveyed our message to you, so you are already fully aware of what we are about to say. Thanks to the help and protection of the spirits we have been able to raise a large and healthy cub, and tomorrow is the day when it will be sent back to the home of the ancestral spirits. Kindly favor us by providing what assistance you can in seeing the *heper* safely and pleasantly back.

PRAYER AT THE *HEPER-SET*, THE BEAR CUB'S CAGE

*Heper*, we have revered you as a deity and nourished you as though you were our own child. Tomorrow you will be sent back with many gifts to the realm of the ancestral spirits. Today let us dance together and pass the time in joy.

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