

Possibilities of Reality, Variety of Versions: The Historical Consciousness of Ainu Folktales

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Introduction

The Ainu, the indigenous people in Japan, have historically had their own language, the Ainu language, and a rich repertoire of oral literature. However, as a result of assimilation policy since the late nineteenth century, most of the Ainu in contemporary Japan are Japanese speakers and do not use their ancestral language.¹ Thus Ainu oral literature now exists in the form of written texts or audio recordings. Most of these texts have been recorded by Japanese scholars or Ainu practitioners since the early twentieth century.² They are fixed as texts but still show us many different versions of the same tales, told by many different informants until recently in real oral tradition.

In this article, I illustrate how a variety of versions of Ainu oral literature can be read, and what the relationships are between one version and the others. To consider these topics, the idea of traditional referentiality that John Miles Foley (1991) has proposed is quite helpful: each story or performance has an immanent context, which storytellers and audiences share. Traditional phraseology, motifs, or narrative patterns ubiquitous in a tradition summon other stories or performances, and in doing so these cues help the audience to access the implicit whole, “ever-immanent tradition.” On the other hand, the strategies of reference are diverse, depending on the culture. In Ainu oral tradition, for instance, genre-dependency remains an open question, as will be discussed later.

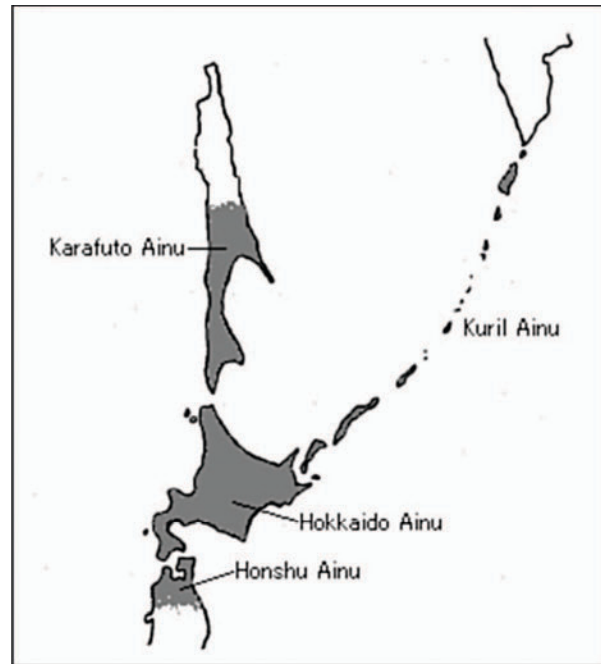
To read the Ainu oral tradition in the context of its traditional referentiality, and among many themes appearing in Ainu oral literature, I focus on *uymam*, the trade between the Ainu and the *Wajin*, ethnic Japanese. Although Ainu oral tradition does not indicate the exact era of what

¹ In recent years, the proportion of the Ainu who learn Ainu as their second language is increasing. This trend is more a part of a revival movement of Ainu culture by the Ainu themselves than the result of a change of official education policy.

² Recording of the Ainu tradition was actually started by scholars as an activity that was not inconsistent with assimilation policy. It was thought that since the Ainu would be soon assimilated, Ainu language or traditions should be recorded before they became extinct. However, the motivation of Ainu practitioners seemed to be different. While they chose to be Japanese speakers for practical reasons, they wrote down their repertoires by themselves or told stories for scholars in order to transmit their tradition to future audiences. In this sense it might be said that textualizing activity was chosen by the Ainu as a new mode for their tradition.

happens in tales, according to historical discourse it is said that trade between the Ainu and the *Wajin* continued from the fourteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century. Most of the stories mentioned in this article were recorded in the twentieth century, when the public language of the Ainu had converted to Japanese and trade was not conducted in everyday life. Therefore, in the time of textualizing, Ainu oral literature was a sort of medium through which the modern Ainu got to know what the past was like. In short, it was their history (Sakata 2005). So at the end of this article I will mention their historical consciousness, which can be seen in their oral literature. This consciousness is different from history as modern scholarship, however. It amounts to their mode of configuring and transmitting the past.

The Ainu oral literature discussed in this article consists of the traditions of the Hokkaido Ainu. While they used to live in the region consisting of present-day southern Sakhalin, the Kuril Islands, Hokkaido, and Aomori prefecture (northern Honshu) (see the map above), they now live mostly in Hokkaido as a result of an intricate historical process.³ These Ainu in the four areas above had different dialects, cultures, customs, and histories. However, records of traditions we can access today are chiefly attributed to the Hokkaido Ainu and the Sakhalin Ainu.



Traditional territories of the Ainu. Redrawn from the map in Ainu Minzoku Hakubutsukan (1999:3).

Genres of Ainu Oral Literature

Although Ainu oral tradition includes all aspects of verbal art and activity in Ainu life and culture in the days before they were annexed to Japan in the late nineteenth century, prominent genres include the epic (*yukar* or *sakorpe*), the myth (*kamuy yukar*), and the folktale (*uwepeker* or *tuytak*). These categories are distinguished mainly by their form. Both the epic and the myth consist of verse sung to melodies, distinguished by the latter having refrains constantly repeated before every verse. On the other hand, the folktale is prose. It is thought that these modes of performance correlate more or less in terms of their contents. The epic consists of stories of heroes who are human beings but also have supernatural power, and the focus is war against enemies. The myth consists of tales of gods (*kamuy*). In Ainu cosmology, *kamuy* are non-

³ It is said that the Honshu Ainu had been assimilated gradually during the mid-eighteenth through the early nineteenth century (Namikawa 1992). The Kuril Ainu, after being forced to move to Shikotan Island near Hokkaido in 1884, saw its population rapidly decreased (Malgorzata 2009). The Sakhalin Ainu migrated to Hokkaido or other areas of Japan after the Second World War (Tamura 2008).

human species, including natural phenomena, living creatures, plants, and so on that surround and affect in many ways the life experiences of the Ainu. Folktales are stories about humans, and were accepted among the Ainu in the past as more realistic than other genres (Okuda 1996, Nakagawa 1997, Sakata 2005).

Genre-dependence or correlation between content and form, has been stressed especially in discussions over the historicity of the Ainu tradition (Nakagawa 1989, Okuda 1996, Kojima 2010a and b). Scholars have concentrated on the typology of genres and have made efforts to define the nature, functions, or specific motifs or narrative patterns of each type.⁴ However, in my estimation what was revealed in these discussions was the fact that narratives cannot be classified into genres so smoothly because of recurrent motifs or story-patterns shared among genres. And this fact should be emphasized more. In addition, definition of genres has itself been problematic in Ainu oral literature (Okuda 2002) and does not seem to be established enough to confirm genre-dependence. There are, for example, numerous exceptions that are not applicable to the present definitions given above. There are stories of humans sung in the mode of *kamuy yukar* or gods' stories in prose. Yoichi Otani (1996) points out that some narratives are recognized as different genres depending on the informant. Hisakazu Fujimura (1980:137) suggests that in Ainu elders' typology there are only two categories of traditions: narratives and the other.

For these reasons above, I focus on narrative patterns or recurrent motifs shared among stories beyond genres, or the relation of inter-genre referentiality. We shall find that these clues might make it possible to deepen our understanding of what the Ainu oral literature tells us. For the purpose of this article, I refer to stories connected by similar motifs from four genres. For convenience, I label these types as E (epic), M (myth), F (folktale), and L (lullaby).

Types of Trade Theme Stories

Trade with the *Wajin* is one of the major motifs ubiquitous in Ainu oral literature regardless of genre. Most generally, it appears in the expression that introduces a chieftain as a main character. The traditional meaning of conducting or having the capability to trade is that the person is a chieftain or a rich person of a village or a candidate for a chieftain. If an annual trade expedition to the *Wajin* town appears in a description about a man's daily life, he should be understood as a rich man or a chieftain without any specific notation concerning his wealth or position. Because the products that the Ainu exchange with the *Wajin* stem from hunting or

⁴ Nakagawa (1989) suggests that there might be a range of contents, themes, or narrative patterns depending on the genre. Since the folktale is based on poetic justice, it cannot depict incidents such as the Ainus' defeat against the *Wajin*, which is not appropriate to Ainu ethics—rewarding good, punishing evil. On the other hand, it can be said that a special emphasis on the Ainus' defeat is the very characteristic of Japanese historical documents but not of the Ainu oral tradition. We should take into account the ideological aspect of Japanese documents. In this sense, the fact that Ainu oral literature does not share this emphasis with historiography is significant. Kojima (2010a, 2010b) proposed a typology of representation of trade with the *Wajin* depending on the genre. In the epic it is heroic activity; in the myth it means to gain products necessary for religious ceremonies; in the folktale it is an activity that brings both wealth and possible danger. However, as the author admits, these three models are not exclusive to one genre but are seen also in other genres.

fishing, an ability to trade also means that he is a good hunter, which is one of the most important abilities for Ainu men in their pre-modern society.

Other than cases above, there are stories that feature trade with the *Wajin* as their setting. Generally there are two story-patterns in this case: (1) the trade-difficulty pattern: to encounter a difficulty in the *Wajin* town, but to solve it and become wealthy; and (2) the trade-murder pattern: to be slain in the *Wajin* town. Both of them refer to danger resulting from trade expeditions; the difference is whether the main characters can deal with that danger or not. In the former, problems are solved and the protagonists survive and succeed in winning a wealthy life. In the latter, some of main characters are slain, but there is one survivor who is expected to continue their ancestral line.

First of all, I consider the former pattern. There are three stories of this type as far as I can recognize: that is, Ashihiro Kannari's *Gin no yanagibayashi kin no yanagibayashi* ("Silver Forest, Golden Forest") (F1),⁵ Turushino Kaizawa's *Kurogitsune no inaw* ("An Inaw of a Black Fox") (F2),⁶ and Yoso Kimura's *Kori no ido* ("The Well of Ice") (F3).⁷ These three folktales have similar plots, with differences in detail.

F1 seems to be the richest in its length and content of story as compared with the two others. The main character is a young man who was raised by himself and has no parents or family. There are six brothers who are the head of his village and have conducted annual trade with the *Wajin*. The young man asks them to take him to the *Wajin* land for trade. They agree at once but deceive him. He follows them by himself with his boat. On the way, there is an island where travelers stay one night in the middle of their journey. He also lands there, following the six brothers. He prays to the god of the cliff on the island, and the god tells him that his father was a chieftain in his village; but because his wealth became an object of envy to others, his parents went to the gods' land early when he was very small. The god gives him two small branches of willow as charms to ward off danger that he might suffer in the *Wajin* land. In the *Wajin* town he meets a samurai who knows and respects his father. They become good friends. Although the Samurai is not in an elevated position within the hierarchy, he promises to purchase all of young Ainu's products, and to be his client forever. However, one day, a lord who is a client of those six brothers sends an angry message that the Ainu young man is staying at the samurai's residence without any greetings or gifts to the lord. He offers a game to compare the value of their treasures; if the young Ainu man loses the game, he will be slain. The Ainu accepts the challenge, assuming that it might be the six brothers who prompted the lord. Thanks to the charms from the god of the cliff, the young Ainu man wins the game and gains a huge amount of compensation from the lord. The six brothers then confess that they are not from his village. They were banished from their home village Kusur because of their vice and came to his village and behaved as the head. The young man orders them to go home to their own village, and he becomes a chieftain as his father was. He maintains good relations with the samurai and conducts annual trade with him. Finally, he marries a beautiful Ainu woman and lives happily ever after.

⁵ Dictated by Ashihiro Kannari, written down by Matsu Kannari in 1932 (Hokkaido Kyoikucho 2000).

⁶ Performed by Turushino Kaizawa in 1965, translated into Japanese by Shigeru Kayano (1988:115-23).

⁷ Performed by Yoso Kimura in 1961, translated into Japanese by Shigeru Kayano (1988:67-73).

F2 is a similar story in which a young Ainu man who does not have his parents and is deceived by evil villagers wins a game against a lord through the power of an *inaw*⁸ that the black fox god gave him during his travel to the *Wajin* land. As a result, he becomes wealthy. This story lacks an episode explaining his parents' early death. After his return, bad people in the Ainu village are slain by the black fox god, and only young women and children are spared. He rehabilitates the village with them. This ending implies that he became the new chieftain in his village.

F3 is similar in plot but the main character has good parents—a difference from the two stories above. The young Ainu man and his parents “do not want anything to have or eat.” This phraseology has the traditional idiomatic meaning that they are wealthy and satisfied with their lifestyle. Whether the main character is a lonely young man or not is an important element, since a boy without parents conventionally tends to have heroic character in Ainu oral literature. Therefore, this story is not a heroic narrative. Nor do people in his village take him on a trade expedition, although it does not mean that they are inimical toward the young man. He goes to the *Wajin* town to trade by himself and meets a good samurai who becomes his client. When he goes to see a festival at a shrine in the town, he makes an *inaw*. Notwithstanding the fact that it is a Japanese shrine, the god there is pleased with it and gives him a charm in case of difficulties he is supposed to suffer. Thanks to this charm, he goes through the test that a bad samurai poses to him. The friendly samurai says to the young Ainu that he should not to come to the *Wajin* town from now onward because it is dangerous. The lesson of this story, as told in the ending, is the importance of belief and the power of an *inaw*. The young Ainu man continues his uneventful lifestyle as before and never travels to the *Wajin* town from then onward. This outcome means that he is not of chieftain's lineage nor will he become a new chieftain.

There are critical differences between F1, F2, and F3. In the first two, the main figure is an orphan; in the latter he is not. Actually, this turns out to be an important factor because the parents' early death is also a ubiquitous and meaningful motif in Ainu oral literature.

The Hidden Theme: Parents' Death Motif

F1 and F2 include the theme of parents' death. In the former the young man's parents passed away because of other villagers' jealousy. In the latter the main character does not have parents, but the cause is not explained. There is a clue in the ending of this story, however. Bad villagers are wiped out by the black fox god, while the young man rehabilitates the village with survivors who have good spirit.

To gloss this lack of description and to make the referent clear, we can solicit help from other Ainu narratives. There is a story called *Umi ni ukabu yama o oyoide hippatta otasut-jin no hanashi* (“The story of Otasut-lad who pulled an island”) (F4), for example, that is not a trade-difficulty narrative *per se* but includes an episode of trade.⁹ A boy, the main character, is raised

⁸ An *inaw* is a religious tool that is made of wood. It is thought of as a gift for gods or sometimes itself can be a god in Ainu cosmology.

⁹ Performed by Kinarabuk Sugiura in 1966 (Ainu Mukei Bunka Densho Hozonkai 1982).

by an old woman. One day his uncle visits him to take him to trade with the *Wajin*. The old woman gives him a charm, a belt. The uncle leaves him on the island on the way. The boy gets angry, passes the belt around the mountain island, and pulls it; this action results in a big tsunami that overturns his uncle's boat and kills him. After the boy's return, the old woman explains that she is a goddess of water, that his uncle is not a real relative of his but the person who killed his parents. She says further that she must go back to the land of gods and gives him power to kill bad villagers and to heal his village. He does as she indicates, making a new village and living happily ever after. With reference to the larger tradition, the motif of wiping out bad villagers implies that the main character's parents are slain and their village was invaded; this incident legitimizes the god's liquidation of bad villagers.

Pon Otasutunkur to sono musuko o tasuketa okami no kami no monogatari ("The Story of a Wolf God Who Saved Pon Otasutunkur and His Son") (E1) is also an epic that links parents' death with a trade motif.¹⁰ While in stories previously mentioned the episode of parents is merely a background for the main characters' activity or misfortunes they suffer, this story is mainly about the parents' generation, and therefore explains the relation between their death and trade. Pon Otastunkur is raised by an old man. When he grows up enough, the old man takes him to the *Wajin* town for trade. A daughter of the lord of the *Wajin* town falls in love with Pon Otasutunkur, marries him, and they go together back home to his village. Bad people from another village then attack him to steal the wealth that he gained by trade. He fights against many enemies by himself—typically as a hero in Ainu epic usually does. And his wife also helps in the battle, again as a female character in Ainu epic typically does. Nevertheless, they are slain and their son is likewise raised by an old man who is a wolf god. When the son grows up, an old man again takes him to the *Wajin* town for trade and shows him to the lord who is his grandfather. Promising that they will heal the village, the wolf god and boy leave from the *Wajin* town and succeed in their aim.

Although the Otasut lad and Pon Otastunkur are brought up by gods, the convention actually means that they are orphans. Main characters in F1 or F2 seem to be raised by themselves, but they survive through a god's indirect support. In F1, the god of the cliff told the young Ainu man that he had been able to make a living by himself through the god's protection (Hokkaido Kyoikucho 2000:65). Whether they are raised by gods or by themselves, the traditional meaning is the same: they are heroes who lost their parents quite early.

Actually, "parents' death" is a common theme in the epic. *Kotan Utunnai oma yukara* ("The Legend of Kotan Utunnai") (E2),¹¹ *Kyuryu gawa no onna ga jibun no tsukigami o shika ni shita* ("Chiwaspit un Mat Turned Her Guardian Spirit into a Deer") (E3),¹² *Shika otoko no yusha, watashi o tasukeru* ("A Deer God Saved Me") (E4),¹³ and *Yukar 1* ("The Yukar Epic 1")

¹⁰ Performed by Kuro Yae in 1949 (Hokkaido Kyoikucho 1994).

¹¹ Anonymous. Written down by John Batchelor in 1889 (Batchelor 1890).

¹² Written down by Matsu Kannari in 1929 (Hokkaido Kyoikucho 1988, 1989, 1990).

¹³ Written down by Matsu Kannari in 1931 (Hokkaido Kyoikucho 1983, 1984).

(E5),¹⁴ are only a few such examples. The hero is a young man whose name is Pon Yaunpe or Pon Otastunkur. He is raised not by his parents but by another such as a sister, a brother, an aunt, or an uncle, in many cases not directly related to him. His parents were slain when he was very small by foreigners (Karapt or Santa) on the way back home from a trade expedition to the *Wajin* town. This episode is inserted in the scene, so that the person who fostered him reveals his background. Afterward he goes to battle continuously against enemies for revenge; successive battles and many ways of fighting against a variety of opponents are the main spectacles of Ainu epic.

A parents' death motif can also be found in myth. *Komochigatana* ("A Sword Goddess with a Child") (M1)¹⁵ is a story of Ainurakkur, a culture hero who is a demigod. It is said that it was he who gave the Ainu their way of living—hunting, fishery, gathering, woodworks, sewing, and every necessity in everyday life. Therefore, it is sometimes claimed that he is the ancestor of the Ainu. When Ainurakkur was a small child, he was always crying. One day in his dream, he goes up to a mountain. There is a big waterfall, in the basin of which a silver ladle and a silver bowl are whirling. He hears in the sound the words they scrape: "I want to drink what I used to drink. I want to eat what I used to eat." On the top of the mountain, he finds a big house seemingly vacant for a long time. Then a sword goddess with a baby on her back appears and tells him a story of his parents. His parents died because of the jealousy of bad gods and went back to the land of gods early. This house was theirs, and the ladle and bowl were used when they made drink for festivals. The goddess has a sword that was their treasure. She commands him to rehabilitate his parents' village. Waking up, he finds the sword and then succeeds as the goddess ordered.

The parents' death motif links the trade-difficulty stories to the genres of epic and myth. It summons epic heroes or the demigod of the Ainu culture. Thus, when an orphan embarks on trade it is understood as a heroic activity. F3 testifies to this built-in connotation in a different way. The young Ainu who has parents does not continue trade relations with the *Wajin*. Since he is not a heroic figure, his trade is nominal and not essential to his life. Thus, from that point onward he never travels to the *Wajin* land.

The parents' death motif is extremely widespread, regardless of genre. Thus it creates horizons of comparisons among stories including this motif, beyond difference of genres. We can assume an immanent story with a trade-difficulty pattern lying in the background. The implied chronological story of this pattern as a whole is as follows: (1) parents' trade, (2) parents' death, (3) hero's growing, (4) hero's trade, (5) difficulty, (6) retribution, (7) acquisition of treasures, and (8) village rehabilitation. Depending on the emphasis in each story, some components can be omitted or elaborated.

¹⁴ Performed by Suteno Orita in 1985, written down by Osami Okuda in 1991 (Hokkaido Shizunai-cho Kyoiku Inkai 1991).

¹⁵ Dictated by Yuki Nabesawa, written down by Kyosuke Kindaichi in 1923 (Kindaichi 1993/1931:212-14).

Another Axis: Parents' Death-Village Recovery Pattern

As mentioned above, parents' death is a motif that appeared in all genres of Ainu oral narratives. Among stories integrated by this motif, we can find another shared motif: the theme of village recovery found in F1, F2, F4, E1, and M1. Among them M1 seemed to be the most suggestive for our consideration of this motif, not only because this is a story of the culture hero who gave birth to Ainu culture, but because rehabilitation of his parents' village is the main theme. M1 is a story in which small Ainurakke, who lost his parents early, is awakened by a goddess' word that he should save his parents' village. It is a simple parents' death-village recovery story. We can also find this story-pattern in F1, F2, F4, and E1. F1 and F2 mix this story-pattern with the trade-difficulty pattern. F4 and E1 revise the explanation of the death as robbery by bad people instead of jealousy. Epics including the parents' death motif lack the village recovery motif because they are not interested in any theme other than battle. Besides, the motivation for the parents' death is trouble during a feast in foreign islands.

Robbery and jealousy can be thought of as having the same meaning in Ainu traditional thought. As previously mentioned, the traditional phrase "I do not want anything to have or eat" means that a character is both happy and wealthy. These notions are not necessarily segregated in Ainu traditional thought. Treasure in traditional Ainu society consisted of foreign products gained through trade with foreigners like the *Wajin*. The Ainu exchanged furs or dried fishes with them. To be good at hunting or fishing means that gods will protect and help an Ainu man as long as he is good-minded, as we already see in F1. Thus, in an ideal situation, the circle of the good mind-god's protection, hunting and fishing products, and treasure continues. Being happy materially presents no contradiction with ethics in Ainu traditional thought. Instead, material and spiritual goodness should coexist.

Focusing on the narrative pattern of parents' death-village recovery, we can find another correlation between this pattern and attribution to enemies. While in stories of this pattern the murderer tends to be an Ainu from another village on Hokkaido island (F1, F4, E1, M1), in stories lacking a village recovery motif (E2-5) the murderer is from other islands such as Karapt or Santa,¹⁶ which are not trade partners. Therefore, it can be said that the difference in the motif is parallel to the difference in the enemy. A village recovery story group can be divided into two sub-groups, one with the difficulty motif (F1, F2) and one without it (F4, E1). In the former, inland affairs grow into troubles in the *Wajin* town; in the latter the problems are only domestic. The parents' death motif, accompanying or lacking the village recovery motif, shows a range of dangers incidental to trade activity, such as wars against foreigners, attacks from inland opponents, and troubles in the *Wajin* town.

On the other hand, there is a common message among them, namely that a trade partner cannot be an enemy. In difficulty pattern stories, enemies are usually a pair: a bad *Wajin* lord and a bad Ainu who antagonize the main figure. The hero also has another *Wajin* trade partner who supports him. Therefore this relation is not a simple ethnic opposition between the Ainu and the *Wajin*. According to F1 and F2, it was Ainu opponents who prompted a lord to commit the evil

¹⁶ The names of Karapt and Santa remind us of the Japanese place-name Karafuto, present-day Sakhalin or Santan, which refers to peoples in Sakhalin or the lower Amur. However, it is uncertain whether the Ainu nouns Karapt and Santa can be concretized to a specific place or peoples as above.

plan, and they were the ones who invaded the hero's parents' village. So the trouble that the main characters suffer in this type of story is a kind of inland problem of the Ainu society involving the *Wajin* society. In other narratives without the pattern, opponents, whether Ainu or foreigners, are people or villages without any partnership in trade. In this way it can be said that trade activity indicates friendship in Ainu tradition, and, more remarkably, that ethnic division is no criterion for determining friend or foe in Ainu oral literature.

Trade-Murder Story

Now we turn to another story-pattern having a setting of trade with *Wajin*. *Ningen no musume no jijo* ("A Story of a Girl") (M2),¹⁷ sung by Karepia Hirame, is a trade-murder pattern story. Two brothers and a sister embark to the *Wajin* town for trade. On the way, they find a flock of birds. A bird flying at the head is crying and says: "I went to trade, but I was killed by a bad *Wajin* interpreter with poisoned wine. Do not go. Go home. Go home." However, they go to the *Wajin* town and the two brothers are murdered with poisoned wine. The youngest sister is saved by a big bird, which takes her back to her village. One day when she is crying on the sea shore, a big bird comes to her. It is her brother. He instructs her to get married in order to continue their ancestral line.

Thus the protagonists go to trade and are killed without an apparent reason. It seems at first sight that this story is based on ethnic opposition. Donald L. Philippi (1979:247) and Brett L. Walker (2001:212), for example, read an ambiguous feeling of the Ainu about the *Wajin* into this poetry: anticipation of trade and fear. And the former feeling implies economic reliance of the Ainu on the *Wajin*. These interpretations are partially relevant; however, they seem to be based more on historical discourse than Ainu traditional logic itself. So we should again refer to other stories having the motif in common with M2 to avoid a hasty conclusion.

The clue this time is a bird that is an avatar of the spirit of a dead figure. Let us consider digests of two lullabies. In both of these songs, the narrator is a wife of a man who is slain in the *Wajin* town.

L1: Karepia Hirame¹⁸

There came subpoenas many times from the *Wajin* town. Your father went out saying "they sent messages intending to kill me. If I am dead, blood rain will fall on the half of the land; the sun will shine over the other half of the land." In a few years, it happened as he said. When I was crying on the sea shore, a flock of birds flew from offshore. A bird at the head of the flock was crying and said "when I was about to be killed, my friend samurai asked for a pardon but it was not granted and I was killed. Do not mourn. Bring our child up and continue my ancestral line." You are too small to know this story yet, though; I tell you now because you are fretful and crying.

¹⁷ Dictated by Karepia Hirame, written down by Itsuhiko Kubodera in 1936 (Kubodera 1977:412-16); English trans. in Philippi 1979:247-53.

¹⁸ Dictated by Karepia Hirame, written down by Itsuhiko Kubodera in 1936 (Kubodera 1977:427).

L2: *Shimukani Shikada*¹⁹

There came subpoenas many times from the *Wajin* town. One day your father had decided to embark, saying “if I do not come home, a flock of birds will fly in. If you find a bird without a head, it will be me. So please make a meal and pray to the gods for me. Then I will be able to live with the gods.” Since then, I had been crying. One day, as your father said, a flock of birds appeared. Among them there was a bird without a head. I made many dishes and prayed. Your father might be with gods now, so stop crying.

The father left for the *Wajin* town in these lullabies, differently from M2, not for the purpose of trade but because of subpoenas from the *Wajin*. This motif brings us to another story, a folktale told by Haru Torao, *Tonosama no nandai* (“Difficulty from a Lord”) (F5).²⁰ As the title indicates, this story has a pattern quite similar to the trade-difficulty pattern. The main character is a chieftain who is a good hunter and does not want anything more more than he has. He accepted a letter from a lord in the *Wajin* town many times. When the bad lord threatened him by saying that if he did not come he would start a war, the Ainu man left for the *Wajin* town. On the way, he stayed on an island and met a god. This god saved him when the *Wajin* lord offered a test involving a sword-cut and survival. Having won the game, the Ainu man received compensation from the lord and returned home. He taught his children a lesson: “do not go to the *Wajin* town since the trouble there is terrifying.”

These stories focusing on an evil *Wajin* character seem to consist of simple ethnic opposition in contrast to trade motif stories. However, we should take into account that L1 mentions a “friend samurai” who tried to save the Ainu man’s life, and that is what the structure of F5 indicates as well.

F5 is not a trade story, but it shares a similar trade-difficulty pattern. Thus it opens the way to a comparison with them, and we notice that there are also subpoena motifs in trade-difficulty narratives. In F1 and F2, a bad lord sends a message to the main figure staying at another samurai’s residence in order to offer a game that is the beginning of the difficulty. L1 is also related to F1-3, in which there is always a good samurai friend. Thus the immanent whole of a difficulty-pattern story should be generalized as follows: (1) parents’ trade, (2) parents’ death, (3) hero’s growing, (4) hero’s trade, (5) subpoena, (6) difficulty, (7) retribution, (8) acquisition of treasures, and (9) village recovery.

Based on these examples, it might be thought that the subpoena motif is a specific expression to depict bad *Wajin* and their incomprehensible logic or cruelty. However, based on the whole story above, it is a question not of ethnic opposition but of alliance.²¹ In M2, Ainu brothers travel by their choice for trade and are killed without a definite reason. This outcome

¹⁹ Dictated by Shimukani Shikada, written down by Itsuhiko Kubodera in 1940 (Kubodera 1977:425).

²⁰ Performed by Haru Torao in 1983, written down by Setsuko Shiga in 2002 (Hokkaido Kyoikucho 2002).

²¹ I have discussed this unit as a “survival unit”—the concept described by Gregory Bateson (1972, 1979)—of the Ainu epistemology. In Ainu trade narratives, a main figure overcomes difficulty by the power of alliance with *kamuy* (gods) and samurai. The trinity of *kamuy*, the Ainu, and *sisam* (ethnic Japanese or the *Wajin*) is also a motif often found in Ainu oral literature (Sakata 2008a).

means that they could not overcome the difficulty. That is the reason why this story cannot involve a difficulty story-pattern that stems from the heroic narrative. Thus, through the motif of a bird as a dead man's spirit, M2 relates itself to a subpoena story-pattern that explains the *Wajin's* unreasonable cruelty. Besides obscuring the identity of an opponent, it ensures that a trade partner is always a friend, and in doing so ensures that trade activity remains forever heroic.

Historical Discourse of Ainu-*Wajin* Trade

This fact has significant meaning when we consider historical discourse about the Ainu-*Wajin* relations in the early modern period. Based on archives written by the Japanese, historians explain Japanese control over the Ainu society through ceremonial trade stemming from the seventeenth century. The Matsumae domain or Tokugawa shogunate called trade with the Ainu *omemie*, which means an audience with the Shogun or lords to confirm homage accompanying an exchange of gifts. On the other hand, it is also well known among historians that trade with the *Wajin* is referred to as *uymam*, meaning mere trade in the Ainu language. This asymmetry was explained as historical transition, in other words that although Ainu-*Wajin* trade began as friendship trade, their relations evolved to ruled and ruler. Accordingly, the terms followed suit: from *uymam* (trade) to *omemie* (political ceremony) (Inagaki 1985, Kikuchi 1991). It is also said that the long history of ceremonial trade through which the Ainu's political subordination and economic dependency toward the Japanese were enforced served as preparation for the conquest of Hokkaido by the Meiji government in the mid-nineteenth century without resistance by the Ainu.²² However, these two attitudes toward trade relations are not a matter of transition but of epistemological difference (Sakata 2008b). As we have seen, *uymam* is represented in narratives told in the twentieth century as a heroic enterprise. This situation suggests that two definitions of trade relations coexisted.

The early modern international order in East Asia, which can be categorized as a tribute trade system, began in ancient China. China situated itself as the civilized center of the world, and other states sent envoys with gifts to the Chinese emperor. In return these emissaries could accept gifts. Trade was thus ceremonially organized with political implications based on Sinocentric international order, and tribute-bearing nations were regarded as subordinate countries to China.

However, what should be taken into account about this system is that it was not simply a unitary order, especially in the Ch'ing period. Korea, Japan, and Vietnam also harbored a "Sinocentric" world view in which each nation placed itself at the center (Hamashita 2008:15-21). In this way there were many "centers of self-consciousness" in early modern East Asia. Korea and Vietnam, for instance, provided tribute in their relation with the Ch'ing dynasty. At the same time, they also accepted tribute as a lesser civilized center of the world (Tashiro 1981, Furuta 1995). The Tokugawa shogunate built such relations with Korea, Rykyu (present

²² Walker states that two centuries of trade with the Matsumae domain "had unravelled the social fabric of Ainu communities and undermined their ability, not to mention their will, to resist Japanese claims to what was once their homeland" (2001:233).

Okinawa prefecture), and Holland. Ceremonial trade with the Ainu is also thought to be of this kind (Toby 1984, Arano 1988).

Pluralism of self-conception and disparities in attitudes toward trade relations were characteristic of early modern East Asia (Masuda 1995). This disagreement did not become a problem; on the contrary, it maintained their relations peacefully. In eighteenth-century Siam-Chi'ng relations, Chinese viceroys and merchants who intermediated between countries tampered with official diplomatic letters to make them acceptable to both sides (*ibid.*). Korea and Japan offer another example. While they formally built equal relations, as was the custom under the Sinocentric world order in which only China was superior, they also recognized themselves as more civilized than, and therefore superior to, each other (Toby 1984, Arano 1988, Miyake 2006[1993], Jung 2006).

Thus in early modern East Asia, it was ceremonial relations that were significant in maintaining the world order, regardless of the individual understanding each state really had of itself. However, as far as the Ainu are concerned, the gap of meaning in terms of trade between the Ainu and the *Wajin* has been little discussed. Rather, the semantic gap between *uymam* and *omemie* was integrated into the historical transition in the same way as the assimilation policy of modern Japan operated upon Ainu language, life, and culture (Sakata 2004, 2008b).

Conclusion: Variants, Realities, Historical Consciousness

I first suggested two story-patterns of trade theme narratives that seem to have opposite attitudes toward trade and relations with the *Wajin*. However, now it can be said that there is a single immanent story and each narrative is its partial avatar. Focusing on some motifs in trade narratives, we encountered corpora integrated by a certain motif regardless of genre. This insight led us to horizons of comparison on an important issue that we as readers/audience should consider. Since stories refer to other stories through common motifs, readers/audience remember related stories linked to the present narrative. In this way, even when focusing on a narrow theme from a certain viewpoint, any story always implies other aspects that should be understood as opening pathways to other narratives.

Based on this approach, we can see that throughout trade narratives, regardless of genre or story-pattern, and even in cases in which evil *Wajin* appeared, stories adhere to the recognition that trade expedition to the *Wajin* town is a heroic activity and that a trade partner should thus be a friend. In this way, it can be said that Ainu trade narratives are based on the principle of reciprocity as a mode of amity-building (Mauss 1925), in contrast to the *Wajin*'s "Sinocentrism."

As concerns the meaning of Ainu-*Wajin* trade compared with historical discourse, what is significant in Ainu oral literature is that variants representing multiformity are not a matter of transition. Rather, their coexistence conjures the historical reality of the period when this trade was conducted. The fact that narratives cited in this article existed in the twentieth century is important. It indicates what trade had been or what it should have been like for the Ainu society. Trade was ever a heroic enterprise and a means of friendship-building with the neighboring *Wajin* (in the Ainu language the *Wajin* is called *sisam*, which means "neighbor"). Based on this idea, they could establish and continue the relation with the *Wajin*. Such built-in ambivalence

maintained peaceful relations, as in other cases in East Asia. Although trade was ceremonially organized, participation in its activities did not mean political defeat or subordination to the Ainu. Rather, serious epistemological damage to the Ainu occurred when ceremonial trade was banned by the Meiji government in the mid-nineteenth century, because it meant the cancellation of friendships they had maintained over centuries. Even so, by maintaining their tradition, the Ainu are safeguarding a historical consciousness that can never be assimilated.

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