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メタデータ	言語: eng 出版者: 公開日: 2009-04-28 キーワード (Ja): キーワード (En): 作成者: 山田, 孝子 メールアドレス: 所属:
URL	https://doi.org/10.15021/00002817

Gender and cultural revitalization movements among the Ainu

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Introduction

The notions of maleness and femaleness were first shown to be culturally determined in the pioneering works of Simone de Beauvoir and Margaret Mead. Since then various questions about gender differences among cultures have been studied not as biological but as cultural - namely gender - issues from ecological, political, sociological and symbolic viewpoints, among others. Since the 1970s, criticism of male-centric interpretations and theories in anthropology have been made especially by feminist anthropologists in particular, and critical examinations have been actively pursued of the cross-cultural universality of the division of labor by gender, and of male dominance (Reiter 1975: 15-16; Ortner 1974: 69-71; Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974: 3).

The background to the supposed universal gender-division of labor - that men hunt while women gather among hunting and gathering societies - was shown by Slocum (1975) and Friedl (1975). Rubin (1975) also comments critically on Lévi-Strauss' theory of kinship structure, in which the 'exchange of women' in marriage transactions in some sense constitutes human society. Rubin (1975: 166) further discusses the varying ways in which 'sex as we know it - gender identity, sexual desire and fantasy, concepts of childhood' is socially produced and culturally organized.

It has also been pointed out that the binary opposition of female and male gender roles is symbolically related to that of nature and culture (Ortner 1974), of self-interest and social good (Strathern 1980: 202-203), and of domestic and public life (Rosaldo 1974: 23-35). In the majority of cultures, the differences between men and women are in fact conceptualized in terms of sets of metaphorically associated binary oppositions, which are derived from the same central sociological insight (Ortner and Whitehead 1981: 6-7). It can be said that in early gender studies, the gender differences in a culture were regarded as a 'binary opposition', a conceptual structure which supports the general idea of male dominance. Based on these presumptions, gender studies aim to find an ideal model for gender roles in the future.

The differences between men and women cannot be clearly defined even from biological and physiological perspectives; rather, the ranges of the potential abilities of men and women overlap a great deal. The ultimate difference between men and women can be attributed only to the difference between genitor and deliverer. In this sense, sexual differentiation is nothing but a culturally and socially constructed idea - an idea of gender.

Not all cultures, however, have elaborated the notions of maleness and femaleness in terms of symmetrical dualism. The notions of 'dominance' and 'obedience' themselves originate in the terms of animal ethology, which are based on dynamic differences. It is in reality ambiguous, especially among human populations, by what criteria a society can be judged as a 'male dominant' one. We cannot deny the possibility that the interpretation of a society as 'male dominant' is a view based on the modernist ideology of modern hierarchical societies (cf. Rubin 1975: 15-16). Namely, the perspective used to define gender differences as a binary opposition or as male dominance can itself be considered to be biased by modern feminist anthropologists.

Moreover, it is uncertain that traditional peoples dichotomize their world into power domains. Coming from an extremely hierarchical cultural milieu, we tend to construct categories to contain social differences, and then rank them in terms of power. We build master theories out of such notions of difference, but we do not know if the oppositions and hierarchies we construct are universal or simply reflect our own experience in a class-stratified society (Reiter 1975: 15). In addition, much of the debate within feminist theory has centered on the acceptance or rejection of Engels' interpretation of the role of women in differing modes of production (Reiter 1975: 18).

Social differences do not always signify social injustice and opposition. Studies show that cooperative work by wives is indispensable for men's social activities, allowing men to obtain prestige and fame among other males (Strathern 1972). Recently, the theory of the binary opposition of nature and culture has begun to be reexamined in anthropology. It has been shown that it is important to view both nature and culture as part of a larger integrated whole, and as complementary to each other (Ridington 1994). Further, through investigations of exercises of power in daily life by Chipewyan women, Sharp (1990) has pointed out the following: the concepts of 'male dominance' and 'oppression' are no more than reductionistic rigor from animal ethology, which, lacking a perspective on the exercise of power by the weak, has overlooked the complexity of human social behaviors as well as reciprocity between female and male genders.

Thus, by reviewing the history of gender studies, we know that it is necessary for us to investigate gender problems objectively by describing the realities people experience and their explicit statements of their everyday lives. Here, I will show - based on Ainu materials - that the symbolic opposition of male and female genders does not always signify social opposition, but is rather a device to symbolize gender differences and stress their complementarity. Moreover, through the examination of cultural revitalization movements among the Ainu, I will show that traditional gender ideology is transmitted among contemporary Ainu and functions effectively in cultural revitalization movements.

Gender ideology: from myth to the present

As shown in other papers (Yamada 1990; 1994a: 90-104; 1994b: 88-93), the traditional idea of gender is symbolically expressed by *kamui* (deities) in Ainu myths. *Kamui*, who are embodied not only in plants and animals but also in the firmament and inanimate objects, are characterized according to gender. Therefore, plants and animals metaphorically represent gender ideology. For example, *Nupuri-kor Kamui* (Master of the

Mountain), who is embodied in the bear, is a male deity whose role is to rule over mountainous areas. Deities whose roles involve controlling a certain area are generally male with animal origins. The fox, which is good at hunting, is also regarded as the incarnation of a male deity. On the other hand, those trees, such as the elm, the oak and the yew, which are useful for Ainu subsistence are deified in female form. The Fire Deity, the Tree Deity, and the Water Deity are also female. Thus, natural species such as plants and animals are the symbols of female and male in gender categories, as well as of gathering and hunting in subsistence activities.

In Ainu myths, gender characterized deities behave just as human males and females do (Kubodera 1977; Kindaichi 1923; 1925). The gender of a *kamui* is generally suggested implicitly by certain phrases. For example, phrases such as 'always does embroidery without looking aside, toward one side keeps looking' suggest the femaleness of a deity (Kubodera 1977: 43), while 'carves the sheath of a knife, carves an heirloom sword, only does this work' suggests maleness (Kubodera 1977: 231). These narratives show that embroidering is symbolic of women's work, while carving symbolizes men's work.

According to Ainu myths, male deities go hunting and fishing, build good houses, cut down big trees to make dugout boats, and go trading abroad in their boats as Ainu men do. Female deities do all kinds of housework, such as preparing food and wine, fetching water and firewood, weaving mats, doing all kinds of needlework, and collecting edible plants, just the same as Ainu women. Further, we can see from such myths that, among Ainu societies, the principle way of promoting social interaction was to host a wine feast and entertain guests. In such social interactions, it is a male deity who occasionally invites neighboring deities for a feast, while his female deity partner prepares the wine and entertains the guests by serving wine and dancing (Kubodera 1977: 218-220, 287).

Mythical narratives also elucidate other aspects of gender roles. One goes like this: 'For those who are women, what they should not do is to shave wood for making an *inau* (a shaved stick that is indispensable for offering prayers, *kamui-nomi*)' (Kubodera 1977: 250). Another states that 'The goddess living in a place of Shinotpet is thus a superlative *tus-kur* (shaman), (then) can see through everything by performing *tus* (shamanic ritual)' (Kindaichi 1923: 41). Yet another myth narrates ongoing scenes of competition in *tus* between the Fire Goddess and the Water Goddess (Kubodera 1977: 43-47). It is suggested that men are responsible for religious rituals such as *kamui-nomi* (praying to the gods) and act as representatives of other people in communications with the deities, while women have the supernatural power to perform shamanic rituals (*tus*).

Thus, Ainu myths ideologically certify gender-related roles so that men's work is closely related to social, political and religious affairs, while women's work is limited to domestic and shamanic affairs. The gender-related roles of Ainu deities provide a framework for ideal human gender roles, a framework which can function as an ideological justification for gender-based differences in human roles.

On the other hand, some Ainu deities are composed of a pair of male and female, and always accomplish their roles in pairs. For example, *Apa-sam-un Kamui* (Guardian of

the Entrance) is identified as a pair consisting of the male deity *Apa-kunrari-kur* (Man Sitting Behind the Entrance) and the female deity *Apa-kunrari-mat* (Woman Sitting Behind the Entrance). Trees used for making *inau*, such as the willow tree, the black alder, the maackia tree, the Japanese lilac and the elderberry, are all considered to consist of a pair of male and female deities. It is believed that these trees, after being made into *inau*, turn into a pair called *Shutu-inau Kamui* (Ritual Stick Deity) and protect human beings from evil deities. *Shushu Kamui* (Willow Tree Deity) is identified as a pair - the male deity *Kami-rettar-kur* (Man with White Flesh) and the female deity *Kami-rettar-mat* (Woman with White Flesh). The Black Alder Tree Deity, *Kene Kamui*, is identified as a pair of *Kami-hure-kur* (Man with Red Flesh) and *Kami-hure-mat* (Woman with Red Flesh), while the Maackia Tree Deity, *Chikupeni Kamui*, is identified as a pair of *Kami-kunne-kur* (Man with Black Flesh) and *Kami-kunne-mat* (Woman with Black Flesh). These deities symbolize the unity and harmony of male and female genders.

The context of Ainu myths also suggests an essential character of the female gender as a mediator between the human and divine worlds (Yamada 1994a). In fact, in every ritual the Fire Goddess is the first deity to be addressed by ritual prayers, in order to request her mediation between men and the deities. The Fire Goddess is also believed to play a role as a mediator in hunting. One myth relates that the Fire Goddess sent her messengers to the Bear God to invite him into the human world: her mediation produced a successful hunt (Yamada 1994a). Still another myth tells of the role of the Goddess of Hunting and Fishing as a mediator. In this myth, the Goddess of Hunting and Fishing, invoked by human beings, hosts a wine feast to which she invites the Deer-Owning Deity and the Fish-Owning Deity, together with all the other deities of the divine world. She lavishly entertains them with wine and dances, and finally urges the Deer-Owning Deity and the Fish-Owning Deity to provide their deer and fish to the humans (Kubodera 1977: 341-344). It is clearly shown in this myth that it is not the Goddess of Hunting and Fishing herself who controls animal food such as deer and fish, but that it is the male deities, such as the Deer-Owning Deity and the Fish-Owning Deity, who do so. Thus, like the Fire Goddess, the Goddess of Hunting and Fishing - whom people generally worship for a successful hunt - simply plays the role of mediator. The female gender as mediator is also one of the essential characteristics of Ainu gender ideology.

The traditional gender ideology of the Ainu thus described does not seem to deviate much from the universal characteristics of gender views revealed by gender studies. Even though there are some important female deities, such as the Fire Goddess and the Goddess of Hunting and Fishing, the fact that important deities are mostly male seemingly indicates that even the divine world is colored by an idea of male dominance. It has often been suggested that in Ainu society it is men who are socially and politically in a higher position, and that the Ainu have an idea of male dominance. In fact, Batchelor notes that women are more or less treated as inferior human beings, and that for their whole lives women are mostly relegated to working arduously like slaves (Batchelor 1901: 175). It can be said that the Ainu have a male-dominant gender ideology as is shown in their myths.

However, for the Ainu a dualistic view of gender does not always signify

oppositions, but may instead demonstrate the unity and complementarity of the two genders. In reality, it is women themselves who explain proudly the importance of women's roles in Ainu society even today. An aged woman in Shizunai district agreeably admitted the importance of female deities, referring to the belief that human beings can live only thanks to the Fire Goddess and the Water Goddess. She also said proudly that it is the duty of a man to perform *kamui-nomi* (ritual prayers to deities), and that it is assuredly the duty of a woman to look after her family, without her husband having to worry about food. For this lady, to work diligently was the major characteristic that represented femaleness. She even felt that only by living in such a way could the importance of women be properly appreciated. In her mind, the importance of women in Ainu society mirrored that of the Ainu female deities. Importantly, the Ainu division of labor by sex in everyday life did not necessarily signify to her the inferiority of women.

Another woman described the traditional images of men and women as follows:

The idea that women should take care of their family should be transmitted even among contemporary Ainu women. Women's work included all kinds of activities such as fetching firewood, collecting a wide variety of raw materials, and weaving ropes and mats. On the other hand, men, who only went out for hunting and fishing according to the seasonal schedule, seemed just to spend the rest of their time in idleness.

In fact, my grandmother did most of the work, including fetching firewood and collecting grasses for the repair of the house. Grandfather hunted bears, caught fish, and even went on trips to catch sea otter in Kamchatka, but did not do any housework. Ainu women were self-supporting, and never needed their husbands' help. Men were needed only because they brought deer, birds, and bears for their families. Because of the bear hunt by men, their families could perform the bear ritual.

Around 100 people would come to participate in the bear ritual. It continued for three days. In my family, my grandmother used to manage the preparations for the ritual, cooking food and making wine. The preparation of the wine had to be started as much as 10 days before the ritual performance. Thus, women were responsible for almost all the housework, which made them able and self-reliant.

Formerly, a ritual called *iwakte* had to be performed in every family since this was a sending-off ritual for any broken utensils or tools. It was a strictly preserved tradition that only men could perform the *kamui-nomi* (ritual prayers) that were necessary for any religious rituals. Therefore, women could not perform an *iwakte* ritual for broken utensils and needed to ask men for its performance. In this respect women could not live without the help of men.

I cannot deny that there is some aspect of male chauvinism in Ainu culture. However, the Fire Goddess is considered the most important of all deities, and therefore Ainu culture may have another aspect that cannot be regarded as male chauvinism.

The Ainu way of living ideally makes the utmost of each individual's abilities. Formerly, people lived separately from their parents after marriage, although the youngest child used to live together with his parents after his marriage. Even though aged parents lived with their youngest child, they never depended on him for their

living. They supported themselves as long as they could manage to do so.

The Ainu have the idea that every individual except a child should feed him/herself. Therefore, even for women it is fundamental to fulfill their own roles in subsistence activities. This is because we have the idea that every individual is a part of nature, which is also related to our worshipping of nature deities. Therefore, we women are on average more powerful than men.

Here, we notice that while Ainu women are independent enough to obtain their own food, they must sometimes ask for men's help, especially when performing religious rituals such as *iwakte*.

Ainu people are clearly conscious of a complementary relationship between men and women. The idea that both men and women should play their roles respectively, and be equal, self-reliant individuals is also fundamental among the Ainu today. Moreover, female deities who play important roles as mediators between the human and divine worlds are for women symbols of the indispensable roles women play in integrating Ainu society, roles based on complementary reciprocity between the human and the divine. Even today, women are convinced of the essential equality of the sexes by the existence of these female deities.

Thus, those phenomena that we may identify as male dominance are nothing but the division of labor by sex. The contrast between male and female deities confirms not an opposition between the two genders colored by male dominance but a complementary relationship between them. Moreover, the traditional view of gender, which is based on definite gender roles and their complementarity, is handed down even today.

The growth and current situations of cultural revitalization movements

Ainu cultural revitalization movements are by no means unrelated to Ainu political movements after the Second World War. A significant factor in contemporary Ainu movements is the transformation of the Ainu identity from a negative to a positive one. Ainu identity has historically changed from generation to generation. The first generation that came into direct contact with the Japanese in the Meiji Era starting in 1868 retained their identity as Ainu and maintained the Ainu culture. Ainu of the second generation, the children of the first generation, denied their ethnic identity as Ainu, although they were intimately familiar with Ainu culture. They were bicultural and bilingual. However, they did not pass on the Ainu culture, and especially the Ainu language, to their children. This stemmed from a belief that it was best for their descendants to be fully Japanese, and that the Ainu culture was useless in this endeavor. The children of the second generation (that is, the third generation) also supported assimilation. They learned Japanese in school but did not learn Ainu at home from their parents. Although they may have picked up some Ainu words from their grandparents, who could speak only Ainu, most of them abandoned their Ainu heritage. They had neither Ainu cultural experiences nor an inherited Ainu identity (Irimoto 2000).

Ainu political movements developed through several phases after World War II (Irimoto 2000) and, paralleling this, the development of Ainu cultural revitalization

Table 1 Ainu cultural revitalization movements since the 1950s

1956	A group for handing down Ainu culture was established in Shizunai town.
1961	The change of the name of CHAA into CHUA A protest by CHUA against the Tourist Association of Shizunai town.
1971	The establishment of Nibutani Museum for Ainu Material Culture.
1976	The establishment of the Association for the Transmission and Maintenance of Ainu Intangible Culture (ATMA).
1977	The First Memorial Festival for Shakushain and the First Meeting for Cultural Exchange.
1978	The performance of <i>chise-nomi</i> (a completion ceremony for new houses) at Shizunai.
1979	An Ainu language class was held for the first time in Nibutani.
1980	An Ainu language class was held for the first time in Urakawa.
1983	<i>Kotan-kor Kamui Iomante</i> (a sending-off ritual for the Blakiston's Fish-owl) was restored in Kussharo.
1984	CHUA agreed on a draft for a new Ainu law at 1984 general meeting. The acknowledgement of Ainu traditional dance as one of the intangible cultural properties of Japan.
1987	Opening of Ainu language schools in Biratori and Asahikawa sponsored by CHUA.
1988	The First Ainu Cultural Festival was held in Sapporo.
1989	The First <i>Shishirimuka</i> (Saru River) Ainu Cultural Festival was held in Biratori.
1990	<i>Iomante</i> (a sending-off ritual for the bear) was resurrected in Shiraoi.
1997	The enactment of New Ainu Law and the establishment of the Foundation for Research and Promotion of Ainu Culture (FRPAC). The opening of an office in Sapporo and the Ainu Cultural Exchange Center in Tokyo.

movements, which is summarized in Table 1, can be divided into three phases.

The first phase: a movement towards ethnic independence

The first phase started around 1961. Prior to that, in 1946, the Shadan-hojin Hokkaido Ainu Kyokai (Corporation, Hokkaido Ainu Association or CHAA) had been established to promote general improvement and the improvement of the welfare system for the Ainu as shown in the Association's charter. In 1961 the Association officially changed its name to Shadan-hojin Hokkaido Utari Kyokai (Corporation, Hokkaido Utari Association or CHUA). The term *utari*, literally 'the fellow' in the Ainu language, was preferred when referring to the Ainu. It was a cultural construction used to avoid the racially-biased view contained in the term '*ainu*', which connotes 'dog' in Japanese (CHUA 1996b; Irimoto 2000: 212).

The main goals of CHAA were to raise the economic and welfare standards of the Ainu and to promote the education of their children. Along with the official name change, CHUA definitely declared as one of its purposes that 'cooperation' promotes the preservation, passing on and progress of Ainu culture. Consequently, in accordance with the change of its name, CHUA publicly began to initiate political movements to preserve

the ethnic culture and identity of the Ainu.

The active members of CHUA at that time were the so-called 'third generation' of Ainu who had learned Japanese in school but did not learn Ainu at home from their parents, most of whom had abandoned their Ainu identity. Therefore, this served as the turning point in Ainu movements; from that point on people strategically took on a new Ainu identity and changed Ainu policy from assimilation to ethnic independence. Cultural revitalization, such as the maintenance and transmission of Ainu culture as well as the revival of ritual festivals, became an important issue for political movements. The Ainu started to openly demonstrate their cultural identity.

In 1956 a group was formed in Shizunai Town to preserve the Ainu culture. In 1961 CHUA protested to the Tourist Association of Shizunai Town that the Shakushain Festival, which until then had been sponsored by the Tourist Association, was nothing but a ridiculous public farce. Shakushain was a 17th century hero who revolted against the Matsumae feudal clan under the Tokugawa Shogunate, and is a symbol of Ainu identity. CHUA finally came to an agreement with the Tourist Association that when performing the festival they would sincerely value the opinions of Ainu groups.

The second phase: a movement towards the revival of language and rituals

The second phase of cultural revitalization movements started in 1971 when the Ainu established the Nibutani Ainu Cultural Museum in the Nibutani area of Biratori Town. This period coincided precisely with CHUA plans to establish a welfare fund for the Ainu, to be funded by the National Government. During this period their major socio-political aim was to gain a welfare budget for the Ainu to improve their living standards.

The establishment of the museum was an epoch-making event for the Ainu, since it was built to exhibit Ainu material culture collected by the Ainu themselves. The Ainu formerly considered themselves to be treated as merely objects of study by non-Ainu scholars, and the collection of Ainu material culture by Japanese scholars was regarded as mere exploitation. However, being awakened to the importance of their material culture, they created a new cultural revitalization movement to restore and exhibit their culture by themselves.

Accordingly, in 1976 the Zaidan-hojin Ainu Mukei Bunka Densho Hozonkai (Association for the Transmission and Maintenance of Ainu Intangible Culture, or ATMA) was legally established as a foundation. The foundation has actively promoted (1) the audio-visual recording of Ainu culture, (2) the utilization of recorded materials for cultural transmission, (3) the researching of both the material and intangible cultural properties of the Ainu, (4) the publishing of records of oral tradition, and (5) the popularizing of Ainu culture among non-Ainu peoples. Thus, from that time Ainu people started to participate positively in the maintenance of their culture without leaving it to non-Ainu scholars.

In 1977 the Shakushain Festival was renamed officially as the Memorial Festival for Shakushain, and held in Shizunai Town together with the first Ainu cultural exchange Programme under the sponsorship of CHUA. This event has been held annually since then. The cultural exchange Programme was held so that people from different districts

could gather to meet each other and deepen their friendships by exchanging dances and songs indigenous to their district. By providing such occasions for its members, CHUA plans to popularize Ainu culture, with which most CHUA members lack contact in their everyday lives.

During this phase, not only official organizations but also private groups in different districts began to participate actively in the revival of Ainu language and religious rituals. In Nibutani in 1979 and in Urakawa in 1980, classes for learning Ainu were held for the first time. In 1978 a religious ritual called *chise-nomi*, which was once performed as a completion ceremony for new houses, was performed in Shizunai at the completion of the Memorial House for Shakushain. In 1983 at Kussharo, *Kotan-kor Kamui Iomante* (a sending-off ritual for the Blakiston's fish-owl, *Kotan-kor Kamui*) was restored according to their tradition. Thus, the religious rituals of the Ainu were publicly restored. In addition, a new attempt to fuse jazz and Ainu music was planned, which resulted in the jazz festival, *Kamui Turano*, held on the shores of Kussharo Lake in 1983.

The last phase: a movement towards the enactment of a new law

The third and last phase covers 1984 to the present. At a 1984 general meeting, CHUA agreed on a draft for a new law concerning the Ainu. Consequently, a private advisory group to the governor of Hokkaido - including the president of CHUA and other associated individuals - was established in 1984. Political, economic and cultural demands were all integrated into the issue of establishing a new law to replace the 1899 law: the Former Aborigines Protection Act. CHUA clearly included the promotion of Ainu culture in the proposed new law (Utari Mondai Konwa-kai 1988).

Seemingly in response to such political movements, the National Government acknowledged Ainu traditional dance as an important, intangible cultural property of Japan in 1984. In what was a landmark event of the period, Ainu ethnic dance was publicly declared to be one of Japan's national cultural properties. This signified that the Ainu culture, after long being regarded as inferior, worthless, or trivial, was openly granted cultural value by the Japanese.

Eight groups for the maintenance of Ainu ethnic dance, including those from Asahikawa, Shiraoi, Biratori, Shizunai and others, were admitted as authorized dance groups for conservation in 1984. In 1994 nine additional groups, including Sapporo, Chitose, Mukawa and others, were further acknowledged as authorized dance groups. Today, most districts that have branch offices of CHUA have organized ethnic dance groups for the conservation, preservation and popularization of Ainu ethnic dance.

Ainu political movements have actively advanced since 1986, and have demanded the enactment of a new Ainu law to influence the development of cultural revitalization movements. Further, international events have influenced Ainu movements, especially the International Year for the Indigenous Peoples of the World in 1993, and the Decade for the Indigenous Peoples of the World which started in 1994. Owing to these world-wide movements, CHUA began to promote cultural revitalization movements more and more actively in different areas of Hokkaido.

Ainu language schools have gradually been established in different places - in

Kushiro and Urakawa in 1986, in Biratori and Asahikawa in 1987, and in Sapporo and Shiraoi in 1990, for example. In April 1997, Ainu classes were started in 14 different areas in Hokkaido supported financially by CHUA. CHUA has also opened classes for learning Ainu embroidery, weaving meshed bags and making netted cords for carrying goods. Thus, the transmission and popularization of Ainu traditional crafts has also been forwarded.

Further, CHUA held the first Ainu Cultural Festival in Sapporo in 1989, and since then the Ainu Cultural Festival has been held once every year in different places. The principal themes of the festival are 'to hear (*nuyan*), to look (*nukaran*) and to propagate or to popularize (*pirasareyan*)' the Ainu culture. Though participants in the festival differ year by year, the program is almost similar and planned according to main themes, including presentations of Ainu ethnic dances, a short drama in Ainu, ethnic music and ethnic costumes, and the recitation of Ainu oral traditions such as *yukar*. CHUA has held the festival yearly to offer a broad opportunity for Ainu people to become familiar with their own culture.

Each branch office of CHUA has begun to promote actively the revitalization of Ainu culture, especially since 1990. *Shishirimuka* (Saru River) Ainu Cultural Festival was held in 1990 in Biratori by Biratori Ainu Bunka Hozonkai (literally, the Group for the Maintenance of Ainu Culture in Biratori). In Shiraoi in 1990, the *iomante* (a sending-off ritual for the bear) was resurrected by the members of the Foundation for Ainu Cultural Maintenance of Shiraoi. The Chitose branch also held a small-scale cultural festival presenting a short drama in Ainu, ethnic dance and songs and the recitation of oral traditions in 1995. Moreover, cultural revitalization movements have been forwarded by the revival of ritual ceremonies by each CHUA branch office. In 1996, actually, twenty-two branch offices held their own traditional religious ceremonies such as *chip-sanke* (a launching ritual for a dugout canoe), *ashir-chep-nomi* (first salmon ceremony) and *icharpa* (a form of ancestor worship) (CHUA 1997b: 6-7).

Finally, Ainu political and cultural revitalization movements have resulted in the establishment of a new law. In May 1997 the 'Law Concerning the Promotion of Ainu Culture and Dissemination and Enlightenment of Knowledge about Ainu Tradition (the New Ainu Law)' (Law No. 52) was enacted. In June 1997 the Foundation for Research and Promotion of Ainu Culture (FRPAC) began to prepare to act on the law, and started its operations by opening an office in Sapporo and the Ainu Cultural Exchange Center in Tokyo, which will perform activities stipulated by the new law.

The transmission of culture and gender roles through cultural revitalization movements

As summarized in Table 1, since 1961 the revival of Ainu culture and language has been promoted by the Corporation, Hokkaido Utari Association, in conjunction with political movements (CHUA 1996b). Ainu cultural revitalization movements have been advanced principally by the generation that was educated as Japanese, a generation that once possessed a Japanese identity. In reality, after having discarded their Ainu culture and language, they came to understand the importance of forming a new Ainu identity

and transmitting their culture to future generations, which is considered to be the fundamental reason for these movements. Moreover, the increasing prominence of these movements since 1971 has openly demonstrated that the Ainu are an indigenous ethnic group with their own language and culture, and corresponded with political movements for the establishment of a new law (Irimoto 1998). To declare their ethnicity is consequently to signify that they have their own culture and language. Ainu culture and language will therefore inevitably be revitalized.

How were the Ainu able to revive their culture in a situation in which it had almost been discarded and forgotten? A few elders remained who still possessed knowledge of Ainu cultural traditions, though most of them were women. They actively cooperated in recording their knowledge of Ainu culture. As transmitters of lively cultural traditions, they taught younger generations every detail of Ainu culture that they could recall. So, how did men and women take part in actual activities for handing down Ainu culture, and how did they differ in their participation?

Cultural elements that have been revived in Ainu movements include language, ethnic dance, oral traditions, ethnic music, ritual ceremonies based on their worldview, and traditional crafts such as embroidery and carving. These aspects of Ainu culture have become the fundamental bases for the formation of awareness of belonging to and being part of the Ainu ethnos.

These different aspects of the revived culture are connected with each other. Concerning Ainu ethnic dance, there are many varieties, including working dances which imitate activities such as making *sake* (wine), ritual dances such as the 'sword dance' and 'bow dance', dances imitating animals such as the whale, crane and sparrow, and of course purely entertaining dances. Most of the dances are performed moving in a circle (*rimse*). Each variety of dances is always accompanied by its own song (*upopo*): women sing *upopo* and men keep time with a shout. People can easily learn the Ainu language by singing *upopo*. Further, to perform dances they have also had to revive the making of ethnic costumes as well as the necessary properties for each dance, besides reconstructing the choreography and songs. The restoration of ethnic dance has thus resulted in an associated revival of traditional handicrafts and other aspects of traditional culture.

In the past, ethnic dances were generally performed during religious ceremonies and ceremonial feasts, such as rituals for sending-off the bear and the Blakiston's fish-owl, collecting water chestnuts and the first catch of salmon, as well as special festive occasions for each family. It is thought that most of the dances had their own religious meanings. By reviving ethnic dance the Ainu also learn their worldview.

Although men perform the 'sword dance' and 'bow dance', women perform most other dances. Accordingly, most members of each Group for the Maintenance of Ainu Ethnic Dance are women, and they are fully responsible for handing over dances and songs. In addition, each woman, by learning Ainu embroidery through copying the traditional patterns and colors of old ethnic costumes preserved in museums, makes her costume by herself and becomes an expert in Ainu handicrafts as well.

On the other hand, men usually initiate religious performances. Every ritual ceremony should be started by *kamui-nomi* (prayers to deities), according to Ainu

tradition. The restoration of these prayers is shouldered by men, since *kamui-nomi* may only be prayed by men, as mentioned above. The phrases used for *kamui-nomi* differ depending on the character of the deity. Men can thus learn the Ainu language through the rote memorization of prayer phrases. Moreover, it is also necessary to prepare a variety of *inau* (shaved sticks to be offered to deities) for every ritual. Consequently, Ainu men are principally involved in the transmission of their culture to younger generations through the teaching of various prayers and the technique of carving a variety of *inau*.

In order to show how men and women participate in the revival of rituals, I will briefly describe the process of the Memorial Festival for Shakushain. The festival is a memorial service held yearly for the Ainu historical hero Shakushain, who revolted against the Matsumae feudal clan in the 17th century and has become a symbol of the Ainu spirit of resistance.

Preparations for the festival start several days before: women prepare food and wine, while men carve a variety of *inau* and set up the sacred altar (*nusa-san*). On the day of the festival, the offering of prayers to Shakushain outside the front of his memorial statue, where a rather Japanese-style altar is arranged, commences the opening of the festival. Next is the offering of prayers to the nature gods. The *nusa-san* is set up outside facing the sacred window of the big house in order that men sitting inside can face the altar through the window. Men and women sit around the square, sunken hearth inside the big house, and in the Ainu manner the offering of prayers to the deities is performed. While the rest of the men and women remain seated, one elderly man who serves as a priest approaches the altar outside and begins to recite prayers offering wine to each deity one by one. After the prayers to all the deities enshrined in the altar are finished, a ritual of *shinnurappa* or *icharpa* (literally, ancestor worship) is begun in front of the *nusa-san*. The *shinnurappa* or *icharpa* is considered to be the only religious ceremony that women can take part in. Each woman brings food and *inau* as offerings to her ancestors, and sticks her *inau* in the ground at the left side corner of the altar, addressing her ancestors by their names and offering food to them. After completing the *shinnurappa*, several varieties of Ainu ethnic dance with *upopo* (songs) and *rimse* (circle dances) are performed one after another.

Thus, in taking part in cultural revitalization activities, both men and women in principle play parts according to their traditional gender-related roles. However, it is often said that it is women who support the cultural revitalization activities in each district. In reality, women generally surpass men in the actual number of individuals who participate in the cultural activity programs. Moreover, women are leading performers in the Ainu Cultural Festival held yearly since 1989. On the stage women not only perform Ainu ethnic dances and recite Ainu epics, but also are major actors in a short drama performed in Ainu. Nonetheless, this does not mean that men never participate in the festival; rather, it is common for men to play the role of stagehand, providing backstage support.

A common idea that women actively participate in cultural revitalization activities is also demonstrated by the way people participate in a meeting called the 'Gathering of Youths and Women'. This meeting is held for two days each year by CHUA: the first day

is for enlightening the young by showing a video on Ainu culture, and the second day is for discussing special issues. The purpose of this meeting is to promote a mutual exchange of opinions on the activities of CHUA and cultural revitalization movements among young men and women.

At the 'Gathering of Youths and Women' meeting held in February 1994, 39 out of 50 participants (78%) were women. The video for enlightening the young was played on the first day. Three sessions for discussing special issues were arranged on the second day; one session was on the proposed enactment of a new Ainu law, one was on the education of children and the practice of cultural transmission, and one was on the promotion of CHUA activities. It was reported that most participants had the impression that women had actively joined in the discussions. A complaint was also reported that, although women contributed greatly to the activities for handing down Ainu culture such as ethnic dance and embroidery, only a handful of women were official members of the central and branch offices of CHUA (CHUA 1994: 14).

At the meeting held in 1995, 44 participants out of 64 (about 69%) were women. The video 'Learning Ainu Culture' was played on the first day, and on the second day three sessions were arranged; one for discussing the enactment of the new Ainu law, one for brainstorming about education and cultural transmission, and one for thinking about the promotion of CHUA activities (CHUA 1995a: 13, 14).

In 1996, 65 participants (both men and women) took part in the meeting. The video 'What Takeshiro Matsuura Saw' was played on the first day, and on the second day the same three sessions were held as in the previous year (CHUA 1996a: 5).

In 1997, 68 people, again including both men and women, participated in the meeting. On the first day the video '*Kamui-chep: A Story of the Salmon*', which had been broadcast on the TV, was played. It being after the enactment of the New Ainu Law, only two sessions were held on the second day. In one session the education and cultural transmission issues were discussed mainly by women, while in the other session the vitalization of CHUA activities was discussed by men (CHUA 1997a: 6). The session programs clearly show a concept of gender roles in that the promotion of organizational activities is in the hands of men, while the education of children and the activities of cultural transmission are in women's hands (CHUA 1997a: 7). In other words, the concept that women are mainly responsible for cultural revitalization activities seems to be common among the Ainu.

Ainu people have thus promoted their cultural revitalization movements. Although there is a common understanding that the activities of cultural transmission are principally carried out by women, both women and men cooperate with each other in all cultural and ceremonial events. Moreover, in their cooperative works traditional gender roles are preserved: women practice dances, embroidery and cooking, while men practice *kamui-nomi* and carving. Among the Ainu the repertoire of activities of cultural transmission is divided between men and women based on traditional gender roles. The traditional idea of gender is thus also transmitted among contemporary Ainu.

Differences in motivations and attitudes toward cultural revitalization between the genders

What motivation does each Ainu person have for participating in cultural movements as an individual? Are there any differences in motivation between men and women?

Most of the acting members of the Corporation, Hokkaido Utari Association (CHUA) who have been promoting the cultural revitalization movements are men belonging to the third generation of the Ainu. They often confess that they themselves have not inherited the Ainu culture. One woman commented on the difficulties men of the third generation faced in inheriting their cultural tradition:

In our village it was basically taboo for about thirty years since the 1930s to perform Ainu ethnic dances and religious rituals, because elders at that time decided to live just like the Japanese. Since their youth, men would go out from the village for work and spend most of their time among the Japanese, so they did not learn much about Ainu culture. Now, thinking that it is shameful to show their poor knowledge of their culture to others, they commonly hesitate to participate in the cultural revitalization programs.

Another woman also said:

My mother is good at making Ainu handcrafts, especially at making mats (*itese*), and before women from other villages often came to her to learn. However, my father has worked away from home since his youth and did not properly learn even *kamui-nomi* (prayers to deities) from his father. Although he has a little knowledge of *kamui-nomi*, he does not know them precisely. Therefore, saying that he would feel sorry for the deities if he could not pray completely, he has never performed *kamui-nomi*.

These two examples show the most common feelings and backgrounds of men of the third generation. They once chose a Japanese identity. Not only did their parents prevent them from learning the Ainu language and culture, but they also used to live among Japanese, apart from their families, and had few opportunities to be in touch with their culture. Compared with women of the same generation, they had fewer opportunities to come into contact with their language, oral traditions and *kamui-nomi*. Consequently only a few men can serve as transmitters of the Ainu cultural tradition.

On the other hand, women who participate assiduously in activities involving the transmission of Ainu culture, such as embroidery and ethnic dances, generally have said that through these activities they have recovered their ethnic pride as Ainu. One young lady expressed the deep emotion she had felt when heard Ainu songs for the first time:

I had not been interested in Ainu culture before. But the first time when I happened to hear Ainu songs and join in Ainu dancing, I felt something warm-hearted which I had never experienced before, and was deeply moved.

She also added that since then she had enthusiastically joined in every opportunity to learn songs and dances.

Another woman confessed that she was very shocked when she found out that one Japanese woman was working very hard at learning the Ainu language. She said that she had deeply and sadly reflected that she didn't know anything about her native culture, and that the shock she experienced motivated her to participate in learning Ainu culture. She continued:

Now, I have opened a school for Ainu embroidery. I first started learning embroidery with just a small piece of *matampushi* (a hair band), dreaming of being able to make an Ainu dress. However, it took much longer for me to be able to make a dress. Back when I started to learn the embroidery, my mother claimed that it would be useless to learn such embroidery. But she is pleased now from the bottom of her heart to know that the time has really come when I can open a school for Ainu embroidery.

A 57-year old woman, whose grandfather was a chief of Shiraoi Village, spoke of her initial efforts to learn the Ainu language as follows:

The Ainu dictionary which I had sold in my souvenir shop up to that point had gone out of print. I then simply thought that I could write a new Ainu dictionary, and began to collect Ainu vocabularies. This was when I began to become interested in Ainu culture. I was fifty years old at that time. Before that I believed that Japanese culture was superior to Ainu culture, and that we Ainu need not learn either the language or culture of the Ainu. I really hoped to be de-cultured from Ainu culture, partly because I experienced discrimination by Japanese people when I was young.

But now I really regret that I have been neglecting my culture. I have realized that Ainu culture is wonderful in many respects and hope to hand down the magnificence of Ainu culture to younger generations. Until I turned fifty, I was too busy to think of Ainu culture. However, since I started to learn about it, my view of the world has greatly changed. So, I really hope that young Ainu will learn their culture.

Regrettably, most young Ainu think that learning English will be more effective for finding a job than learning Ainu. Almost 100% of them feel that it is useless or even worthless to learn Ainu. But an important point is that by learning Ainu culture we can recover a rich mentality that cannot be replaced by anything else. Now my mind is at ease.

When I started to learn Ainu, I didn't even know the meaning of the term '*ainu*', although I am partly of Ainu blood. I didn't know until I learned Ainu at the age of fifty that the term '*ainu*' signifies human beings, and even more that it is an honorific for a respectable man. I understand by learning the meaning of each word that the Ainu have a very unique way of thinking. I no longer have a feeling of inferiority.

Still another woman, who has become a well-known narrator of oral traditions as well as a teacher at an Ainu language class, explained the process by which she began to participate in and to propagate cultural revitalization programs in her village as follows:

In 1979, when I was about fifty years old, I came back to settle down here where I

was born. A year after settling down here, I just felt like singing *upopo* (songs) and dancing ethnic dances together with other women, though singing *upopo* and dancing were forbidden here at that time.

So, when we first held an occasion for singing and dancing here, we all were very worried that the older men might complain about it. But we didn't hear any complaints. Then those who had joined in the first occasion wanted to dance and sing again, and I again planned to hold a similar event. Gradually the feeling spread among the Ainu in this area that it was good to perform Ainu songs and dances. Later the elders willingly helped even in performing the ritual of *chip-sanke* (a canoe-launching ceremony).

Since the people in this area could not live on tourism, they decided to discard the Ainu way of life and to live just like Japanese. Therefore, now hardly any aspects of Ainu culture remain. However, I have collected thirty pieces of *upopo*. When I perform, singing *upopo* and dancing, I really feel at ease. Our group for singing *upopo* includes only a few young women in their 30s and 40s. I am worried about whether dances will be handed down to the younger generation. But now I realize that if my grandchildren learn *upopo*, then it will be good.

Elderly women are now all pleased to teach us their knowledge about Ainu culture. Even their health is better due to the feeling of being depended on by the young.

The women mentioned above belong to the third or fourth generation of the Ainu. All of them were educated in Japanese schools and have lived as Japanese. In addition, they had not shown any interest in Ainu culture at all and had little knowledge about it until just before they started to learn their culture. On these points there are no differences between the women and men who are promoting the cultural revitalization programs as core members of CHUA. But for women, it is not an obstacle to learning Ainu culture to have known nothing about it whatsoever. Rather, not having known their culture allows them to feel moved or inspired by learning it. In addition, they generally recover peace of mind or open-mindedness through this learning, and sincerely wish to pass on what they learn about Ainu culture to younger generations.

Those who are knowledgeable about the Ainu language, oral traditions such as *yukar*, songs and dances, and handicrafts such as embroidery and weaving, are mostly older women. Most of them previously thought that it was worthless to learn Ainu culture, and showed rather negative attitudes at first to cultural revitalization programs, for example, they mostly refused to teach Ainu culture. However, when the younger generation eagerly showed their interest in Ainu culture and sincerely asked them to teach it, they began to feel pleased. Finally, it has become an important part of their lives to teach Ainu culture to the younger generation, and by such teaching their psychological well-being has improved. Now they are quite pleased with the contemporary circumstances in which Ainu culture is publicly accepted.

Compared with women of the same generation, men were more compelled to assimilate into Japanese culture and lost their Ainu identities earlier. Consequently, older men who are knowledgeable about Ainu culture are fewer in number than women of the same age. Therefore, it can be said that cultural transmission from older women to

younger women is easier than that from older men to younger men. This serves as a background for women's active participation in the activities of cultural revitalization programs and for men's participation in their promotion. Ainu men have chosen to become promoters of cultural revitalization movements in order to regain Ainu identities and to actively participate in the political and administrative activities of CHUA.

Now a deep interest in Ainu culture is spreading, even among young people. In 1994 one older woman made a proposal to CHUA to offer the younger generation opportunities to learn Ainu, *kamui-nomi*, dances and traditional crafts such as embroidery and carving (Ogawa 1994: 14-15). She noted that even if young men become interested in and impressed by *kamui-nomi*, they mostly fall into a dilemma knowing that they have little knowledge about Ainu culture. She also added that when young men begin to realize that they are Ainu, they are at first mostly embarrassed by the fact. She further commented:

Women, having grown up without knowing anything about Ainu culture, generally wish to get any information on Ainu culture to 'find out for themselves', that is, their roots. On the other hand, young men, after having had their hearts broken when they realized they were not able to perform *kamui-nomi* (ancestor worship) for their ancestors at the time of reburial, eagerly want to learn *kamui-nomi*.

Thus, although the aspects of Ainu culture that young people want to learn differ between the genders, such as *kamui-nomi* for young men and embroidery for young women, both young men and women are now interested in and positively want to learn their culture. Although they are fully educated as Japanese in contemporary situations, they feel dejected about knowing nothing of their original culture, and eagerly want to investigate their ethnic roots. Motivations for the revival and transmission of Ainu culture surely differ from generation to generation due to the historical background of each. However, in a situation in which Ainu culture was almost discarded, the Ainu are hoping to revive their culture to search for their roots. Consequently, their culture must be revived in order to forge a new Ainu identity.

Conclusion: gender ideology inherited

The Corporation, Hokkaido Utari Association (CHUA) has mostly promoted Ainu political movements since the Second World War. Their ultimate goal is for the Ainu to be justly acknowledged as an indigenous people in Japanese society. Therefore, from the beginning, cultural revitalization processes have been indispensable for demonstrating the ethnic uniqueness and aboriginality of the Ainu. Their language, rich oral tradition, ethnic dances, religious rituals such as *kamui-nomi* (prayers to deities) and *icharpa* (ancestor worship), ethnic costumes with fine embroidery, carvings and ethnic musical instruments have all been revived and have become the core means for creating a new Ainu identity. These cultural elements have been intentionally selected as the media for producing a positive image of Ainu culture.

The revival of Ainu traditional culture cannot simply be the revival of the tangible

aspects of that culture. For example, the revival of ethnic dance also helps people learn the Ainu language as they sing the song which accompanies each dance. Dances are always performed wearing ethnic costumes. To make these costumes women must learn a variety of embroidery techniques, including the appropriate patterns. Thus, Ainu women have become experts at embroidery work. The revived embroidery is not only confined to traditional costumes, but is also utilized now in making modern handicrafts such as tapestries. When reviving religious rituals, the traditional gender roles of men praying *kamui-nomi* while women conduct *icharpa* are explicitly preserved. To perform *kamui-nomi* men should learn by heart each word in the prayers. Men also have opportunities to become accustomed to pronouncing Ainu words, and can learn the Ainu language by performing rituals. Further, the revival of rituals has also resulted in the revival of techniques for making a variety of *inau* and carved objects. Ainu men have thus become experts at woodcarving.

Thus, men and women can cooperate in creating a positive image of Ainu culture. Moreover, it is characteristic of the Ainu that in the cultural revitalization processes both men and women play their parts according to traditional, gender-based roles. Very few women do woodcarving or *kamui-nomi*, and no men engage in embroidery. In performing dances, men and women take part strictly according to their traditions. In singing *upopo* (songs), women sing the main melodies with a refrain sung by men. Traditional gender roles are maintained unchanged in cultural revitalization activities.

The positive image of Ainu culture is reflected in their view of gender. For example, it is often pointed out that among Ainu people today there is an idea of male dominance or male chauvinism. However, at the same time it is also suggested that Ainu women are neither helpless nor dependent on men but are strongly self-reliant. The concept of male dominance can often be regarded as a negative image of gender ideology, while the importance of the Fire Goddess in Ainu religion contributes to producing a positive image of the indispensability or self-reliance of women. People say that, since the Ainu have an idea that each individual should live by doing his or her best, it is considered ideal for both men and women to be fully responsible for their own lives. It is also said that men and women should play their own roles and cooperate with each other to maintain their society. These statements emphasize that each person is an individual component of nature as a whole, and also that the whole universe can be united through cooperative and complementary relations between its different components.

It is pointed out that for the Ainu the division of roles by gender is a necessary deduction from the idea of complementarity, and is considered reasonable and just. Men and women participate in activities of cultural transmission based on the traditional concept of gender roles; men are actively engaged in Ainu political movements, while women participate mainly in cultural movements. The positive image of gender ideology as self-reliance and complementarity or cooperativeness between men and women is thus inherited even today, and functions to efficiently unite Ainu movements.

In this respect, it can be suggested that the traditional Ainu ideology of gender should be preserved through cultural dynamics. For women today, the division of labor by gender by no means signifies male dominance, but rather self-reliance or the

independence of women. Further, the complementary dualistic worldview based on an essential equality between the human and the divine worlds, which the Ainu as hunter-gatherers have created, is now considered to be an idea that modern Japanese society should learn. The Ainu world view is now becoming more and more positively valued, resulting in the inheritance of the traditional view of gender by Ainu people today.

The concept of dominance, which was originally a term from animal ethology can be determined only by a competitive relationship between two parties. If a niche for an individual is sociologically or ecologically determined within a society, there will not be any disputes about dominance. If the division of roles by gender is considered as providing some sort of niche for each gender, there will be neither a competitive relationship nor an idea of dominance between the genders. The idea of 'male dominance' has been created in modern societies where, due to changes in social ideology, men and women have come to compete with each other in every respect to find their own niche.

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