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AINU *PURI* AS A COMPASS: FROM *YUKAR* MUSICAL EPICS TO A CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT OF TRANSNATIONAL INDIGENEITY OF THE AINU

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Abstract: The objective of this paper is to analyse the approaches utilized by contemporary Ainu people when enacting Indigenous self-craft or becoming Ainu through musical expression. To achieve this, I connect music preservation and engagement with transnational Indigeneity to the music revival movement that has been active from the 1970s to the present. For the Ainu living in Japan, traditions have been heavily impacted by pressure to assimilate into mainstream society fuelled by a stigmatized identity. Considering the circumstances of this history, the preservation of Ainu musical traditions has been fraught with many challenges.

In an effort to gain a holistic understanding of the role of Ainu music in the reclamation of identity, I have reviewed early documentation of musical epics, performances of contemporary musicians, community engagement through music, and conducted interviews. The role of maintaining ancestral traditions through honouring Ainu *Puri,* which encompasses the extent of customs, is highlighted in this process as an essential cultural grounding. I conclude that traditional Ainu music in this case has a profoundly positive impact on identity construction and reclamation when approached through self-craft. This effect is reinforced through sustained contact with transnational Indigenous networks.

Keywords: Ainu, folk music, transnational Indigeneity, music revival, identity

INTRODUCTION

The Ainu are an Indigenous people of Japan and Russia, which inhabited Honshū, Hokkaidō, Sakhalin, and the Kurile Islands. Hokkaidō government surveys in 2013 found over 24,000 Ainu in Japan (UNHCR Refworld), and in the 2010 Russian census[1] 109 people identified as Ainu predominantly in Sakhalin.[2] Richard Siddle (2012 [1996]) asserts that the Ainu originate from the ancient Emishi who inhabited northeast Japan, with documentation as far

back as the fourth century, citing historical attitudes that had framed them as "barbarians". While is it widely acknowledged that the Ainu emerged as a distinct culture around the mid-twelfth century, their precise origins remain a point of contention. The social dichotomy of civilized and barbaric was also evident among the Wajin, or ethnic Japanese in the Edo period (1603–1868), linked to a belief of superiority of the Wajin based in part on their use of written language (Siddle 2012 [1996]: 75).

In the Meiji era (1868–1912) there was an increased interest among intellectuals to contextualize Japanese origins as a means of inventing or establishing a Japanese 'sense of nation' (Siddle 2012 [1996]: 82). The Wajin came to be identified with the ancient culture of the Jōmon (ca. 10 500 – ca. 300 BCE) of northern Honshū, while evidence connecting Ainu origins with the Jōmon was contested (ibid.: 80–82). Japanese nationalism has been expressed through the Wajin celebration of the Jōmon as their ancestors and as a historical means of justification for their dominance over Honshū and the surrounding territories which include traditional Ainu lands. Ainu traditions were heavily impacted by pressure to assimilate into Japanese mainstream culture. Historically, state policies have had an adverse effect on Ainu culture through the unilateral appropriation of traditional lands, the prohibition of subsistence practices of fishing and hunting, forced relocation, imposed agrarianism, and the barring of the Ainu language and practices which were enforced through assimilatory education (Gayman 2011: 19). Systemic discrimination has resulted in high rates of extreme poverty among the Ainu who may, in turn, reject their Indigenous heritage, or aspire to "pass", that is, to hide their identity to survive (ibid.).

In the context of this history, the preservation of Ainu music and traditions has faced many challenges. The Former Aborigines Protection Act of 1899 enshrined aggressive assimilationist policies into Japanese law by criminalizing Ainu ways of life and the very right to self-identify (Zaman 2020). This in combination with forced migration and drastic changes to subsistence living practices caused a sharp decline in the continuation of Ainu culture, including music. Despite these challenges, some Ainu found ways to persist and made bold efforts to preserve their traditions during the Meiji era (1868–1912). In her research on women's art ann-elise lewallen[5] (2016) presents Japan not as a postcolonial entity, but rather points to the continued colonial practices enacted by government policies.

Some progress has been made with the enactment of the Act on Promoting Measures to Achieve a Society in which the Pride of Ainu People is Respected, in April 2019 (Japanese Law Translation 2019). As a historic move, for the first time Japanese national legislation formally recognized the Ainu as Indigenous people of Japan. While this may have established a ban on the discrimination

of the Ainu based on ethnicity, it failed to provide recognition of their rights as Indigenous people as has been outlined by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (Uzawa & Gayman 2020). The UNDRIP is a Charter of the UN containing 46 articles recognizing the historic injustices of colonization/dispossession of Indigenous lands, affirming the equal rights of Indigenous peoples, and affirming that the exercise of these rights should be free from discrimination of any kind (UNESCO 2019).

This paper examines modes of holding space for the diversity of perspectives within contemporary Ainu communities in Japan. This requires a consideration for how they balance their engagement with "self-craft", or the construction of contemporary Indigenous identities, in relation to their ancestors. This will be further explored in terms of processes of "becoming" in the modern context of Japanese society. This paper pursues an inquiry of how historical expressions of Ainu music have changed over time in order to meet the needs of contemporary communities. This line of questioning will additionally aspire to ascertain the impacts of transnational Indigeneity in relation to the process of identity construction and expression through music.

As my research addresses the circumstances of historical and current trends in the music revivalist movements, I will combine in this study historical sources with the materials collected during fieldwork visits to Hokkaidō over two six-month periods in the summers of 2019 and 2022, consisting of interviews and participant observation at music events and in classes addressing traditional Ainu arts.[3] To historically contextualize contemporary processes, my primary source will be the translations of Chiri's works provided by Sarah M. Strong (2011), with accompanying excerpts regarding Chiri's family and their involvement in music preservation. Chiri Yukie[4] (1903–1922) translated thirteen musical epics known as *Kamuy Yukar* (Deity/Spirit epic song chants) from the Horobetsu Ainu dialect and transcribed them into the Latin alphabet with provided Japanese translations.

I draw upon the work of ann-elise lewallen[5] (2016), who examined how artists and musicians create cultural vitalization spaces in processes of "becoming Ainu" through their traditional crafts. The crafts discussed are connected with the cultural revival movement that included Ainu music. Lewallen defines "becoming Ainu" as a process of "fashioning an Indigenous identity and embodying this as a lived connection to ancestral values and lifestyles" (2016: 1). Spaces of cultural (re)vitalization such as embroidery workshops and song/dance ensemble rehearsals provide opportunities for negotiating from "being Ainu" through birth and actively constructing an identity through self-craft, thus "becoming Ainu" through an intentional dedication to an Indigenous way of life (ibid.). My analysis will include lewallen's broad application of transnational Indigeneity

in a contemporary context with consideration for transcultural encounters and their transformative impacts (lewallen 2016: 230).

While lewallen presents useful frameworks for understanding the construction of Ainu identity in her theories of self-craft and the act of becoming Ainu, this chapter introduces a visual representation of additional contributing factors and mechanisms guiding such processes. Discussions about the nature of the deeply personal journey surrounding identity formation arose during interviews with Ainu performers, which led me to begin exploring ideas about an analytical tool to aid in framing these experiences. Relating to something so personal as an internal mechanism of an artist or musician, that is to say, what inspires their engagement with their art, as a researcher presents challenges as to how such concepts could be framed with appropriate consideration for the diversity of Ainu musicians and their communities. One possible solution I will explore is a highly flexible and culturally grounded methodological research tool that, for the purpose of this study, I shall refer to as the Ainu *Puri* compass.

The Ainu *Puri* compass serves as a means of honouring diverse perspectives within Ainu communities. It is based on the maintenance of ancestral traditions as a guiding framework where Ainu *Puri* refers to an Ainu spiritual and philosophical way of being. Lewallen more specifically defines Ainu *Puri* as "proper comportment based on ancestral protocols" (lewallen 2016: 272). Rooting processes of becoming and self-craft through the traditional framework of Ainu *Puri* link the past to the present while projecting forward into imagined futures. The case of the Ainu people is particularly relevant to discourses of traditional music preservation in contemporary society, given their remarkable perseverance and their uniquely flexible approach in the maintenance of their musical practices.

The theoretical framework of this article includes several additional approaches to the Ainu revival processes of the twentieth–twenty-first centuries. Strong (2011) has documented the revival process with consideration for the early influences of Chiri. Ainu music revival emerged around the mid-twentieth century and really began to take hold as part of a greater cultural revival movement in the 1970s. As a great deal of Ainu culture was lost through processes of assimilation, the materials gathered and documented by Chiri's family have provided a considerable basis for Ainu revival work. Techniques of performing *Yukar*, which were preserved by the efforts of Chiri Yukie and her family, have been used by prominent figures in the Ainu music revival movement, such as Nakamoto Mutsuko (1928–2011) (Strong 2011: 9). Memories of Chiri's family are still alive in their hometown of Norboribetsu, and the broader Ainu community recognizes the value of their efforts to research and document Ainu language, culture, and traditions. Reviewing important biographic elements

of Chiri's story as presented by Strong (2011) aids in contextualizing the rich and complex history of *Yukar*.

There are many Ainu artists and researchers who have done remarkable work in Ainu and Japanese, which provides invaluable insights for them as members of their communities, such as Shigeru Kayano, Toyokawa Yoko, Umeko Ando, and the members of the female vocal group MAREWREW, to name just a few. Other influential researchers have contributed important ideas on subjects relating to Ainu music. This includes contributions from Yurika Tamura (2013), who explored the intersection of intercultural performance and belonging, and Nathan Renner (2012), who examined Ainu ceremonial music and dance. My current work draws upon the above-listed sources in my efforts to provide an accurate and balanced representation of the topics addressed in this paper.

THEORIES FRAMING HISTORICAL NARRATIVES OF AINU MUSIC REVIVAL

The revivalist movement that has emerged among Ainu artists and musicians has been led by artists who are engaged with innovative interpretations of traditional music. Endeavouring to gain a greater depth of understanding regarding this history requires theoretical framing. The art of the revivalist movement was framed by lewallen as an approach that combines contemporary lifestyles and ancestral repertoires which she termed as "self-craft" (2016: 1–2). The presence of this movement forged an alternative space where modern Ainu identities can exist and be expressed as contemporary subjectivities (lewallen 2016: 46–47).

Establishing a connection between self-craft and Indigenous modernity arises out of the necessity to address prevailing beliefs that frame Indigeneity as frozen in time. According to Diamond Szego and Sparling (2012), Indigenous modernities "emphasize the fragmentation, deterritorialization, and struggles for reclamation" as these issues tend to be central to the Indigenous experience around the world. This has been presented in contrast to typical developmentalist narratives of Western cultural perspectives. There is a multiplicity of Indigenous modernities which are tribally subjective, trans-Indigenous, cosmopolitan, and transnational in nature (Brown 2021). According to lewallen (2016: 47), the key components of Ainu modernity and their negotiation of identity within contemporary Japanese society hinge on the centrality of choice, agency, and self-determination.

Ainu self-craft is the actualization of the synthesis of Indigenous modernity and the act of becoming Ainu (lewallen 2016: 58). The connection of self-craft

with Indigenous modernity was made clear by lewallen who asserted that Ainu cultural self-determination within contemporary settler-colonial Japan takes place through a celebratory form of Indigenous self-craft. Cultural production thus becomes a space of radical critique of the various contested and unresolved tensions regarding Ainu in contemporary Japan (lewallen 2016: 39). In further expanding upon Indigenous modernity among other groups and how it incorporates flexibility, lewallen refers to writings by Waziyatawin and Yellow Bird (2012), asserting "[i]ndigenous agency and the capacity to exercise self-determination, the denial of which has long reinforced mental, spiritual, and emotional colonization" (lewallen 2016: 58–59).

Self-craft embodies an identity that utilizes a globally minded approach and is neither limited by concepts of tradition nor is it necessarily tied to ancestral places; rather it is comprised of those values which have been espoused by both. To emphasize this point, lewallen discussed the importance of what Ainu artists described in Japanese as *chi ga sawagu* or a clamouring of blood. In this example *chi ga sawagu* is a deeply embodied sensation that compels an individual to take meaningful action. For the Ainu lewallen collaborated with this, engaging in ancestral rites, speaking the Ainu language, and singing ancestral songs (2016: 117). Much like an invocation, *chi ga sawagu* appears to manifest through the drive to obtain access to what lewallen calls "ancestral space" encompassing "the complex of ancestral ways, revitalized heritage and material practices, and restored physical, spiritual, and affective links to land and territory" (2016: 117).

As a form of Ainu identity, self-craft is "sufficiently flexible to adapt these values to meet the needs of the present, including asserting shared identity and solidarity with Indigenous peoples elsewhere" (lewallen 2016: 2). Examples of these specific values as named by lewallen include ancestral repertoires as they combine with contemporary lifestyles in the construction of Ainu identity. Lewallen continues by emphasizing how these conscious choices defy structures of settler colonialism, racialization and extinction discourses contained within assimilation rhetoric (lewallen 2016: 10).

In addition to actualization through self-craft, lewallen discussed the process of "becoming Ainu in connection with movements to 'reclaim modernity' as a cultural category, pushing majority-Wajin society to expand its conceptualization of the modern in contemporary Japan" (2016: 58). Despite that Ainu are self-aware of their Indigenous modernity, it may still be necessary to assert the reclamation of modernity within the context of contemporary Wajin society which often categorizes them as frozen in the past or extinct.

It is necessary to further contextualize Ainu modernity regarding the history of governmental frameworks dictating standards and expectations relating

to heritage economy. Historically speaking, heritage-based tourism, or ethnotourism, has been a means of survival and in certain periods the only legally condoned way of expressing Ainu culture and practices. While the commodification of Ainu culture for mass consumption through tourism has a reductive and tokenizing impact, it also creates space for the incubation of traditional knowledge (lewallen 2016: 89). An excellent example of this is the Akanko Ainu *Kotan* community and complex on the shores of Lake Akan. While there is evidence of Ainu families living in the region in the mid-nineteenth century from the *Complete Medicinal Diary* of Matsuura Takeshirō (1861), the *Kotan* (Ainu community) as it exists today developed in the 1950s of the postwar tourism boom in Hokkaidō. During this period the Ainu from other parts of Hokkaidō migrated to form the basis of the current Akanko Ainu *Kotan*, which is now heralded as one of the largest established Ainu *Kotan*s (see Upopoy National Ainu Museum, Main Exhibition). This continues to impact representations of Ainu culture particularly in regard to concepts of authenticity as it may be presented by governmental programmes and heritage institutions versus how these manifest organically within the Ainu community. Many contemporary Indigenous peoples throughout the world struggle to maintain ancestral ties and are living in diaspora in urban settings. As lewallen (2016: 47) has pointed out, to engage with and represent the reality of Indigenous modernity requires the suspension of essentialist paradigms that portray premodern sensibilities.

Meaningful research on Ainu music has been carried out in official and unofficial channels for many years. Other Ainu who contributed to early documentation and research beyond the works of Chiri Yukie and her Aunt Imekanu (1875–1961), included Chiri's brother Chiri Mashiho (1909–1961), who was the first Ainu to enter into university studies and become a linguist and anthropologist specializing in Ainu topics. It should be noted that many Ainu people and ensembles have been engaging with in-depth research into musical traditions to build and expand their knowledge base and repertoire. One such example is that of the ensemble Team Nikaop, which has incorporated ethnographic videos, monochrome photographs, images of traditional items, and maps projected on a large screen during their musical performances. Many of the 12 members attended university and one member, Mokottunas Jirota Kitahara, has become a professor at Hokkaidō University. Another individual who has been active in the realm of Ainu research is Kanako Uzawa, who is an Ainu scholar, artist, activist, and founder of a global online platform called AinuToday,[6] supporting Ainu culture and communities. Notable Wajin scholars, such as Kochi Rie and Chiba Nobuhiko, have also made contributions to the cataloguing and research of Ainu music.

Yurika Tamura, who has done extensive research on the intersection of gender and activism in Ainu music, referred to a mode of international postcolonial collaboration practiced by many Ainu activists and musicians, which she termed as "transnational Indigeneity" (Tamura 2013: 40). Transnational Indigenous exchange was employed by Indigenous feminist Danika Medak-Saltzman (2010), to contextualize historical interactions of Ainu with other Indigenous peoples in the development of transnational critiques of the empire. Medak-Saltzman examined representations of cross-cultural exchanges between Ainu people and other Indigenous peoples during the 1904 World Fair that took place in St. Louis of the United States. Native American and Ainu peoples sought one another with great intention. In the words of Medak-Saltzman, "when we recognize the theoretical spaces that encounters and exchanges such as these occupy in the minds of the participants, this mutual interest ceases to be merely anecdotal". She continues by describing transnational Indigenous encounters as nuanced engagement imbued with complexity through processes spanning political, economic, and diplomatic issues (Medak-Saltzman 2010: 602).

Transnational and intercultural Indigenous exchange has unquestionably been a lived reality for the Ainu for centuries. The Ainu were actively engaged with trade among neighbouring groups in the Sakhalin regions, such as the Nivkh and the Uilta, in addition to other Indigenous communities on the mainland of Asia, and the Amur region of Russia (Morris-Suzuki 2020: 5). These dynamics shifted following World War II, after the majority of the Ainu were forcibly relocated to various regions of Hokkaidō. This severed contact with many of the communities with which the Ainu had once been connected. The intensive assimilationist policies of the Japanese government caused further isolation of the Ainu not only from other Indigenous people, but it pushed Ainu identity to the extreme margins of society.

Pressure from the international community combined with internal efforts of preservation and activism for recognition slowly began to establish space for an Ainu identity within Japanese society. With increased communication and travel starting from the end of the Meiji period (1912), transnational Indigenous exchanges have obtained new forms and venues allowing for the deepening of relations between geographically distant communities. These trends have had a prolonged effect on contemporary Ainu cultural movements. Transnational encounters have been immensely impactful on Ainu musicians who then incorporated newfound elements into their own works. Some performers and ensembles branched out internationally to share and educate regarding Ainu culture and the challenges they face within Japan. Beyond musical movements and performances, the instruments played by Ainu musicians, some of which are going to be discussed in this paper, are themselves often transnational

in nature, developing over periods of trade and intercultural exchange with peoples of Siberian regions.

This history and theoretical grounding provide an important framework which centralizes Ainu autonomy in processes of Indigenous self-craft. Self-craft with consideration for transnational Indigenous engagement can be utilized to achieve a deeper understanding of the factors impacting Ainu musicians and their goals. The examination of processes of Ainu self-craft with consideration for transnational Indigeneity aids in understanding the position of those engaged with the music revival movement and the distinct manner in which they carry themselves as conscious, empowered, and interconnected.

THE CULTURE-BOUND COMPASS AS GROUNDED THROUGH AINU *PURI*

Ainu *Puri* is a culture-specific ancestral concept and way of living that refers to the maintenance of ancestral traditions through spiritual and philosophical ways of being. Lewallen defines Ainu *Puri* as "proper comportment based on ancestral protocols" (lewallen 2016: 272). This multifaceted Indigenous approach that weaves tradition with fresh interpretations and expressions encompasses what lewallen designated as 'becoming Ainu'. "An approach centred on becoming Indigenous allows for the requisite flexibility," including the continuously adaptive, selective behaviour incorporated by individuals and communities as they remake themselves (lewallen 2016: 58).

When asked in surveys in 2008, collected by Sakurai Yoshihide with Hokkaidō University to define Ainu *Puri*, the majority of Ainu respondents described it as "remembering/practicing traditional culture, customs in everyday life, etc., among Ainu people", "Ainu characteristics such as coexistence with nature", or "living as part of the Ainu community" (Sakurai 2008: 111). This was also emphasised as a certain approach to interpersonal and community life through an integrated Ainu lifestyle. To adequately explain the practice respecting ancestral lifeways through Ainu *Puri*, it is relevant to address the *shinnurappa* or ancestor worship that is a vital element of Ainu spiritual traditions. The tenets of *shinnurappa* teach that ancestors live in a different world or realm which can be interacted with through reciprocal ritual practices upheld through Ainu *Puri*. The belief holds that ancestors are aware of their descendants and wish for them to be protected. These principles have been described as the foundation of Ainu ethical standards (Sakurai 2008: 109).

Ainu *Puri* and *shinnurappa* can be observed in historical accounts and contemporary practices. Medak-Saltzman's (2020) Indigenous recentring of Ainu

peoples in her historical analysis of the 1904 World Fair is one such example. She highlights that those departing their communities bound for the United States were mournfully prepared with funerary rites due to the significant distance and time demanded of the journey. While in transit to the fair and during the event itself, Ainu people eagerly engaged with transnational Indigenous exchange. Upon returning home, the community gathered and a representative faced the traveller and began to sing. The traveller in turn narrated their journey through song and the representative would respond by singing what had transpired in the village during their absence. In this instance music becomes a rendezvous point marking the traveller's return to their community and symbolically reconnecting them with Ainu *Mosir* (home realm of the Ainu). This rendezvous point is one of numerous interconnecting moments of import pertaining to the evolution of Ainu traditions.

Due to the transnational nature of the encounters of Ainu with other Indigenous peoples beyond Ainu *Mosir*, I suggest shifting the focus from the precise geographical positioning, and to rather emphasize the importance of ascertaining the direction of the individual in relation to the cultural practice as it exists in space as a more abstract concept. This can thus be examined through the Ainu *Puri* compass as the space being considered spans temporal, corporeal, ancestral, spiritual, community oriented, and generational landscapes. The purpose of examining these factors in relation to the individual is to hold space for the diversity of interpersonal realms of heritage and identity,[7] and how they might be projected into imagined futures tracing through plotted contemporary and ancestral heritage paths.

Through the design of the Ainu *Puri* compass I endeavour to create a framework to aid in understanding processes of identity formation. Ideas relating to temporality, space, heritage, and identity are culturally grounded through Ainu *Puri.* The compass is presented as a visual diagram including the various contributing elements that can potentially impact identity formation (Fig. 1). While this diagram is by no means a fully comprehensive model, it provides a basic outline that aspires to map the landscape in which these processes take place in order to provide context. While the compass is not intended to be applied broadly in ways that risk generalizations, it is a tool that I plan to implement, with the appropriate cultural adjustments, in forthcoming publications that will be linked to this study as part of my doctoral research.

For the case of this study, the action of identity formation is positioned in the centre of the Ainu *Puri* compass surrounded by culturally distinct factors impacting engagement with the music revival movement. The surrounding factors are hyperflexible to accommodate the individual's unique situation, identity, and needs as they grow through their personal experiences. This

metaphorical space accommodates the reality of lived minoritized experiences by integrating liminal and intersectional actualizations. This is intended to centre the individual as an autonomously empowered and consciously engaged actor rather than an object of study. I developed this model through the process of autoethnography while navigating experiences and expressions of diverse identities with my own communities mostly in Jewish spaces. The model aids in framing the context of my interviews by illustrating my understanding of the positionality of my fieldwork collaborators. Thus, the contributing factors I offer here are merely suggestions to provide an example, one that may not reflect the outlook of all individuals. This model could be extended beyond music revival into other creative modes of expression by maintaining an emphasis on the (re) interpretations of ancestral formulas grounded in cultural tradition. Similar to what lewallen has highlighted through her research, in this approach the negotiation of marginalised identities within contemporary spaces highlights agency and determination.

In order to create a visual representation of this space and the potential contributing elements, I use the structural arrangement of the ancient astronomical instrument used in regions of both ancient Asia and Europe, representing a celestial globe (see Fig. 1). The celestial globe is a sphere consisting of several rings representing celestial bodies revolving around the Earth in the centre. The rings comprising the spherical framework can rotate freely around its axis. As a tool this can be used to demonstrate the movement of celestial bodies at differing times and positions depending on the location of the observer on the globe. The intension is to map constellations on the celestial sphere (Salev 2022). By utilizing this framework in the application of the culture-bound compass, in this case the Ainu *Puri* compass, it is possible to visually model potential contributing factors as cultural constellations in the construction of diverse identities. The actor is centralized in order to chart their cultural universe and plot possible heritage futures as influenced by ancestral pasts and other contributing factors.

The components of the culture-bound compass correlate to the constructive elements of heritage and identity. The actor is centred, surrounded by concentric spheres representing potential impactful factors and realms. It is important to note that the ring representing identity actualization intersects with the actor to emphasize how the two are intertwined. The visual design is multidimensional, with elements arranged on the rotating spheres, allowing for the fluidity demanded of the highly complex processes involved in identity construction. The temporal horizon denotes the present moment where the space below comprises past realms including components such as cultural memory and ancestral grounding (in this case Ainu *Puri*) while those above house the

present and future realms of lived spaces such as the social sphere. In this study the *Kotan* Ainu village/community within contemporary Japanese society represents the social sphere, and those that are being moved towards encompassing imagined futures. The manifestations of heritage and identity traverse space and time. Representing the pinnacle of these combined elements is the cultural zenith which would be embodied through idealized heritage identities including the space to house, explore, and celebrate such expressions. Rather than focusing on purist or essentialist notions of cultural expressions that have the potential to cause harm, this high point corresponds to empowering and positive aspirations for the individual and their community.

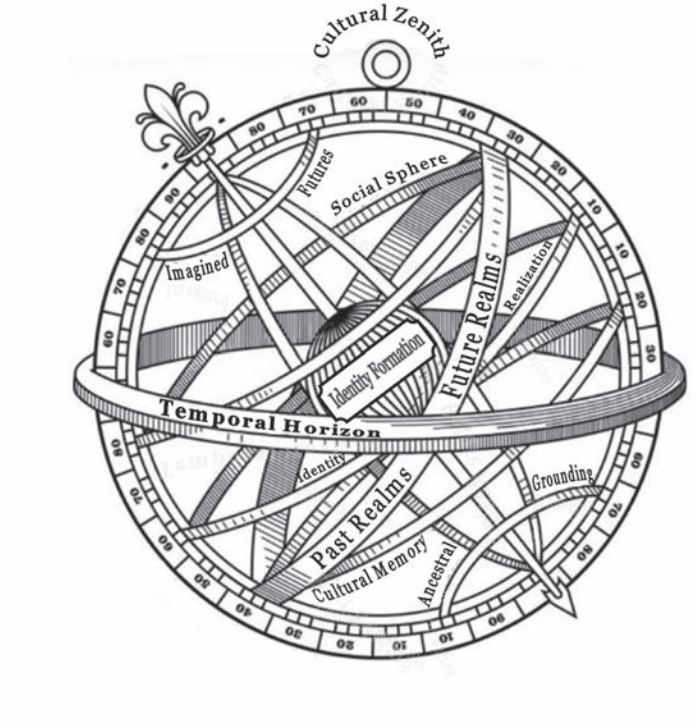


Figure 1. *The culture-bound compass.*

The concepts included in the Ainu *Puri* compass harken to those presented by Henry Glassie, regarding tradition as the basis of creation to ultimately fashion the future out of the past. Glassie argues that this is a "continuous process situated in the nothingness of the present, linking the vanished with the unknown, tradition is stopped, parcelled, and codified by thinkers who fix upon this aspect or that, in accord with their needs or preoccupations" (Glassie 1995: 395). This definition acknowledges the multiplicity inherent in the concept of tradition, opening the possibility for compelling contradictions to arise. Although it may seem counterproductive for a process to embrace contradiction, Glassie explains that this allows for expansion to include the diverse ways in which individuals interpret the past in order to convert the old into something new. This openness to multiplicity allows not only for diversity in the expression of traditions, but also in the expression of identities. Tradition thus "spreads into association with adjacent, related, equally indispensable terms" (ibid.). This process maintains an element of continuity, progression, and evolution, as has been determined by those who created the tradition. Much as is suggested by the ideas put forth by Glassie, the culture-bound compass accounts for various components based on their value in the process of identity construction as it is intertwined with diverse mobilizing visions for the future.

Perhaps the most poignant aspect of the culture-bound compass is the way it centralizes Ainu performers in their personal journeys of identity actualization. The importance of self-reflection on identity was emphasized by singer Toyokawa Yoko when I inquired during an interview if and how music might connect with her sense of Ainu identity:

> *More than half of my music is about being Ainu and raising awareness about Ainu culture. I hope that people who listen to it are able to deepen their understanding about the culture and music. This includes Ainu history, Ainu lives, what the current situation is, all that we have suffered as well as everything that we experienced. Most of it is about sharing Ainu things and having the audience deepen their understanding… But I don't think of my audience when I am writing my music. It is for me mostly. At first, when I started writing music, it was like a healing process for me. I felt like if I didn't write this and share it, what am I supposed to do with the situation I have found myself in? And then gradually I began to write the music that I like, and sometimes the performances are actually a story… Often with the band we'll think about a concept first and make the music towards that.* (Toyokawa, personal communication, 8 November 2022)

Toyokawa spoke of what she hoped to represent or communicate through her music not only for her audience, but also for herself. These ideas align with Glassie's comments on the role performance in creating and maintaining tradition. He frames performance as a temporal event in which transmission and communication coincide, positioning the performer at a "complex nexus of responsibility" as a "potential link in the chain of transmission" (Glassie 1995: 402). Glassie asserted that performers navigate to balance between the past and present, a process which includes audience members. However, performers must also keep faith in themselves and their own internal visions for the future as this relates to their sense of identity. For Ainu people this can be a particularly complex process as it relates to their understanding of Ainu identity as can be seen in Toyokawa's reflections on the interrelationship of Ainu music and identity:

> *When I was a child, I would hear my grandmother singing Ainu songs, but I wasn't really interested in it then. However, after my grandmother passed away, I would hear Ainu songs sung in the same voice as hers. So, when I came into my 30s and found recordings of Ainu dancing and music in archives, I became incredibly interested and felt a deep connection with the music. At that point in my life, I still wanted to hide my Ainu identity, but music was so important to me that it went further than that feeling of wanting to hide. Because when you sing Ainu music, you have to be living as an Ainu person, you have to be out as an Ainu person. And it was that important to me that it made me want to change my way of living. It made me want to live as an Ainu person, like out and proud. If there wasn't music, if I didn't find Ainu music, then I would probably still be living hiding my identity and just passing as Japanese.* (Toyokawa, personal communication, 8 November 2022)

Archival recordings played an essential role in Toyokawa's process of becoming Ainu and how she came into her identity as Indigenous in relation to her ancestors. In some cases, the past realms represented in the Ainu *Puri* compass may be populated by prominent ancestors such as Chiri Yukie and her family who contributed to the growing base of cultural knowledge relating to music and *Yukar*. While the archives certainly played a central role in this process for Toyokawa, it was the memory of her grandmother that established the essential connection to her sense of Ainu identity. She explained that although she was not open about her Ainu identity in the past, it was Ainu music that brought her into a space of realization. The intangible memories of Toyokawa's grandmother singing Ainu songs materialized in the present through the voices

of the archives and those singing the same songs around her in the present. By bridging the past and present, the music opened up a new possible future realm in which it was acceptable to embrace and celebrate her Ainu identity. The visual representation of these contributing factors and important cultural and historical figures aids in understanding of the components impacting Ainu singers such as Toyokawa, and their complex processes of constructing Ainu identity.

Toyokawa appears to embody a varied approach as a performer, with music as the continuous thread linking her to Ainu identity and the creation of tradition. She is continuously (re)accessing contributing factors to determine which traditions in her concentric realms are worthy of reformulation and thus revitalization as part of the greater Ainu music revival movement. Toyokawa is a practitioner and an ambassador of tradition, based on her positionality within these realms. Much as Glassie has explained, these adaptive urges to becoming exist in the meeting point between the culture of the past and present where the actor accesses and epitomizes tradition (Glassie 1995: 409).

The realms outlined in the Ainu *Puri* compass are a means of illustrating the Ainu cosmovision in which processes of identity formation occur. The factors outlined there are mere suggestions as possible contributing factors in the overall stories woven by and for the performers in their personal journeys that may venture well beyond the point of origin. Experiences that occur beyond the reach of Ainu *Mosir* when anchored through the lens of Ainu *Puri* may thus be shared as stories told through song. Much as those who ventured far from Ainu *Mosir* back in 1904, music appears to remain a potent meeting point where diverse perspectives and experiences of Ainu identity and tradition can be negotiated and actualized.

AINU RESILIENCE: PRESERVATION OF *YUKAR* TRADITIONS AS GUIDED BY AINU *PURI*

Practice and maintenance of traditions through keeping Ainu *Puri,* which draws upon ancestral tenets, has been framed by many contemporary Ainu artists interviewed by lewallen, as a means of survival rather than being viewed as a form of activism or resistance against colonial structures. Lewallen's research highlighted the central role of women as prominent leaders in Ainu communities. Kinda'ichi Kyōsuke (1942), along with Tanaka (2000) and other scholars, has also recognized that women have been central in the processes of transmission of traditions surrounding ritual, performance, and the preservation of Ainu oral literature. During my fieldwork among the Ainu communities of Hokkaidō,

I likewise noticed women leading in performance and musical spheres with an emphasis in their activities on the continuation of Ainu traditions.

The central role of women in the transmission of lore is clearly illustrated in the work of Chiri Yukie's *Ainu Shin'yōshū Yukar* (Collection of Ainu Chants of Spiritual Beings) which was compiled into a book following her death. *Yukar* are Ainu epics typically sung or chanted in a rhythmic pattern. Some *Yukar* are narrated by the *Kamuy* which are sacred Spirits, Animals, or Deities.[8] Strong (2011) found that *Kamuy Yukar* were not performed merely for entertainment but religious efficacy and didactic purposes, thus comprising a sacred category of music. At the beginning of the twentieth century, it appears that the context of *Yukar* performance had already begun to shift towards entertainment and as a means of reinforcing community cohesion and heritage.

Chiri Yukie was of Ainu descent, from the Noboribetsu region of Hokkaidō, and bilingual in Ainu and Japanese. Chiri spent part of her childhood with her grandmother Monashnouk (1848–1931), who was well known locally as one who could recite *Yukar* with a large repertoire. The collection of *Kamuy Yukar*, which Chiri learned from her grandmother, makes up the foundation of Ainu oral traditions and animistic worldviews. By 1921 Chiri had completed her first transcription of oral epics in the Latin alphabet which she had learned in mission school.

It appears that the female members of Chiri's family played a central role in the transmission of ancient traditions. Chiri's aunt Imekanu (1875–1961), who was also bilingual, transcribed Ainu oral genres including *Yukar* into the Latin alphabet following Chiri's death in 1922, compiling a large volume of over 150 *Yukar* and *Uepeker* or folktales. In 1956 she was designated as a living intangible cultural asset by the Japanese government and awarded for her contributions with a *Shiju Hōshō* or Purple Ribbon Medal (Strong 2011: 21).

It is relevant to consider the nuanced role of the church, predominantly through the influence of the missionary John Batchelor (1855–1944), on the lives of Chiri and her aunt Imekanu. At the time that Imekanu began her transcriptions in 1927, after Chiri's death, she had retired as a Bible woman. The home that Imekanu lived in with Chiri and Monashnouk had also served as an Episcopal mission building. Although many Indigenous experiences with the church have often been contentious as they could at times be discouraging of the practice and preservation of Indigenous traditions, in this case, this partnership appears to have provided some support and tools for such an endeavour among the Ainu.

Chiri's family was residing in a Japanese-style mission structure rather than the traditional Ainu-style home and their education was heavily influenced by the church, which likely created a blend of traditions. Strong asserted that

based on her research of Chiri and her family, the two elements did not appear to conflict with one another. Imekanu simultaneously ran a Sunday school and an Ainu women's centre out of the same building in which the family resided. Chiri documented Ainu traditions and *Yukar* while regularly attending church and recording prayers along with Bible passages in her diary (Strong 2011: 23). Conditions were favourable for Chiri and her family to engage with the preservation and documentation of Ainu musical oration. This may be due to the fact that Batchelor, who had heavily influenced Chiri's family along with many other Ainu, was an Anglican English missionary, meaning he was aligned with an approach that supported literacy and the collection of folklore.

Chiri and her family's relationship to their identities as Ainu and the influence of the church through Batchelor's involvement appear to be distinctive of this period, considering the unique role of the church in the community at the time. John Patric's (2005 [1943]) examination of earlier works by Batchelor, who lived in Hokkaidō from 1877 to 1941, among Ainu communities, reveals why this relationship may have appeared beneficial to some degree for Indigenous peoples. At the time Batchelor was extremely critical of Japanese government policies and attitudes, which he found to be deplorable (Patric 2005 [1943]: 72). After Chiri's untimely passing in 1922, Batchelor worked directly with her aunt Imekanu to document Ainu traditions starting from 1926, including many *Yukar*.

While this did benefit the Ainu community, Batchelor did not always act in the best interests of the Ainu people in mind. Returning to Medak-Saltzman's (2010) historical re-examination of the Ainu people in the 1904 World Fair, it was documented that Frederick Starr, the man tasked with "collecting"[9] Ainu people for the event, had great difficulty finding Ainu people interested in participating. There was in fact a great deal of reluctance until Starr obtained the support of Batchelor, who at that time had already been interacting with Ainu communities for decades through his missionary work (Medak-Saltzman 2010: 606). Although Batchelor does appear to have had some concern for Ainu welfare, his central role as a missionary reverend was to spread Christianity. After offering his home as a safe haven for the Ainu in need, they felt they could not refuse his request that they depart with Starr for the World Fair. Despite the manipulative elements of this interaction, the Ainu ultimately acted based on their cultural conventions.

Another individual who played a supportive role in preserving Ainu heritage was the Wajin scholar Kyōsuke Kinda'ichi (1882–1971). The role of external actors, such as Batchelor and Kinda'ichi, who encouraged Chiri to document Ainu epics, is ultimately quite complex in the progressive story of the Ainu. Kinda'ichi met Chiri in 1918, when she was fifteen years old. He was making visits to the area during a research trip under the recommendations of Batchelor. After their meeting, Kinda'ichi and Chiri exchanged letters between 1918 and 1922.

Through these correspondences, Kinda'ichi convinced Chiri that the oral traditions needed to be documented and preserved in written form, thus recruiting her for the project (Strong 2011: 28–31). Beyond the emphasis on literature in his approach, Kinda'ichi was driven by the sense of urgency imbued in the colonialist doctrine of the Ainu as a "backward and hence vanishing race" (Strong 2011: 29). This all occurred during a period of aggressive assimilation programmes implemented by the Japanese government, and through correspondence from 1918–1920 Kinda'ichi conveyed his belief that Ainu culture would soon cease in practice, thus instilling a sense of urgency in Chiri regarding the project (Strong 2011: 32). Although Chiri had the capacity to pursue the transliteration and translation of the oral traditions, it appears that support from the Tokyo-based Wajin linguist Kinda'ichi was critical in the completion of the project. As a respected scholar, Kinda'ichi had the status and connections necessary to make publishing a possibility, something that would otherwise be unobtainable for a young Ainu woman from Hokkaidō during that period (Strong 2011: 28).

Strong translated *Ainu Shin'yōshū Yukar*, collected and transcribed by Chiri from 1921 up until her death in 1922. In assessing the *Yukar* as outlined by Strong, following the activities of Chiri's family, it is clear that there was a degree of gender-coding of these traditions depending on the region and dialect, thus historical trends must also be considered from a gendered perspective. Regional trends had already begun to shift for many Ainu communities in the Edo (1603–1867) and Meiji (1868–1912) periods when traditional forms of subsistence were disrupted, and men were forced to leave home for work. Accounts by Ainu residents in Chikabumi (now Asahikawa) suggest that Imekanu and Monashnouk began reciting *Yukar*, an activity in which women in the region did not typically engage in at that time. They then began to encourage other women to do so as well to ensure the continuation of the tradition (Strong 2011: 22).

Twentieth-century ethnographic accounts of *Kamuy Yukar* found the style to be a predominantly female performance genre with links to female ritual specialists who channelled spirits through possession (Strong 2011: 7). During a 2019 interview with Ainu singer Yuki Kōji he explained that some Ainu regard *Yukar* as a male recitation genre in certain areas, which is likely representative of the ways that Ainu traditions have varied regionally. Ainu self-craft evolves as it is adapted to the needs of the people and their communities in order to preserve the tradition.

Contemporary Ainu musicians often face anxiety regarding traditional practices stemming from concerns as to whether their expression of traditions such as *Yukar*, within the broader context of Ainu *Puri,* would be extolled by their ancestors or if it would offend them (lewallen 2016: 57). As many Ainu now live in urban diasporas and engage with global Indigenous movements, approaches to maintaining ancestral ties will surely continue to evolve. The direction of

this evolution is determined through individual interpretations of Ainu *Puri* as an incubator for the many contributing factors suggested in the culture-bound compass. Ancestral legacies act as guiding stars among cultural constellations within the context of the Ainu cosmovision, and the magnetism of Ainu *Mosir* grounds their vision for the future in contemporary space.

Although Kinda'ichi asserted in a letter to Chiri that her writings would be a "gift left behind for future generations of scholars", she viewed the undertaking as a way of honouring "the ancestors of [her] people" and her audience as extending beyond Japan to "all the countries of the world" (writings of Kinda'ichi and Chiri translated by and cited in Strong 2011: 32). While it is impossible to say for certain, one way to understand Chiri's approach to the preservation of *Yukar* could be as guided by Ainu *Puri.* It is clear through entries in her journal that Chiri considered the future of her people and hoped for balance between the preservation of "Ainuness" and an expression of "modernity" enabling equal status in society (Strong 2011: 35). Here we find early expressions of Ainu self-craft despite efforts by the Japanese government to suppress such traditions. Chiri's writings became known nationally in the 1970s, in the period of the Ainu cultural revival movement. Artists and performers such as Yuki Kōji draw inspiration from Chiri who is still well known among Ainu communities, and her work is extremely influential in present-day processes and practices of Ainu self-craft. While the foundations of identity may be established through Ainu self-craft, the continued embodiment of intergenerational aspirations is guided by Ainu *Puri* as a compass.

EVOLUTION OF MUSICAL TRADITIONS: FROM COLONIZATION TO EDUCATION

Since Chiri's time, practices surrounding *Yukar* recitation have continued to be impacted by the dispossession of Ainu lifestyles through processes of colonization. The settler colonial mindset has dominated the discourse around what it means to be an "authentic" or "real" Ainu person. Through these frameworks the Ainu have been presented as being "incommensurable with Japanese modernity" (lewallen 2016: 47). Even the early twentieth-century Chiri could imagine Ainu people balancing tradition with modernity. The belief of the two being incompatible does not reflect the reality for two-thirds of the world's Indigenous peoples who live in urban diasporas with the continuous struggle of maintaining ancestral ties (ibid.: 58). Indigenous modernity requires the integration of flexibility and agency to exercise self-determination. However, integrating

these concepts into the Japanese government and society that has continuously sought to "civilize" the Ainu through assimilation presents quite the challenge.

Traditional Ainu communities have been disrupted with many people being assimilated into Japanese society. *Yukar* practices have suffered due to the shift in the vernacular life of the Ainu people. These epics had to be committed to memory and it has become more difficult to find a person capable of performing *Yukar*. In the traditional execution of *Yukar*, the audience played a central role by aiding in rhythm keeping, using their *repni* rhythm sticks and joining the leader of the recitation for the accentuation of the more exhilarating passages. The loss of an audience with the capacity to understand and participate in *Yukar* oration has had a devastating impact on this practice (Macé & Curtiss Gage 1998: 36–37). Although I have witnessed several performances of *Yukar*, only few have had much participation from the audience.

In 2019 I had the opportunity to interview Yuki Kōji who has played an active role in the Ainu revival movement as a visual artist, musician, creator, and performer of *Yukar*. Yuki is the leader of the Ainu Art Project, which is an internationally active collective of artists, musicians, and dancers. Yuki explained that *Yukar* are intended for both men and women to perform and observe, each with different story types. The audience of *Yukar* are meant to be the *Kamuy* and the people, with the intent to entertain, bring joy, and teach. He argued that the Ainu consider music to be sacred and utilize it as a tool to communicate with the *Kamuy*. The Ainu Art Project has held performances throughout the world as a way of raising consciousness and engaging with transnational Indigenous movements.

The Ainu Art Project uses music as a form of education in the community and at educational institutions from kindergarten up through the university level. Their music and performances are a combination of ancestral traditions and modern innovations, which Yuki describes as Native rock. Yuki engages with maintaining the tradition of *Yukar* by creating new story material. He explained that "repeating the same style means that the tradition and culture have stopped. Making new *Yukar* means we are creating new periods" (Yuki Kōji, personal communication, 13 August 2019).

Yuki conveyed that *Yukar* reveal the power of vernacular life by depicting otherwise mundane subjects on a monumental scale. He provided the example of one *Yukar* which describes a majestic dragon moving between strips of clouds in the sky, used to tell how one would make embroidery with this dragon-like being representing the needle and the clouds as the fabric. Size changes magnitude in the story told through the *Yukar* in a manner that instils divine power into the otherwise ordinary task of sewing. Embroidery and cloth work are central to Ainu tradition and the process of becoming which was described

by lewallen as a way of "fashioning an Indigenous identity and embodying this as a lived connection to ancestral values and lifestyles" (2016: 1). This *Yukar* dignifies the tradition of embroidery through a musical epic framing the practice in grand splendour.

In April of 2019 I visited the Nibutani Ainu Culture Museum which had been established in 1992 to showcase Ainu culture of the Saru Valley, to view the permanent exhibition addressing Ainu music. Museum exhibit materials explain that *Yukar* contain a distinct melody and *sakehe* – repeating phrases. The melody and the *sakehe* intertwine as separate elements in a simultaneous pattern that creates a unique rhythm.

During fieldwork in the village of Urakawa in June of the same year, I had the opportunity to experience this musical syncopation during a workshop led by the local community. Using sticks we had collected from a nearby riverbank, we learned an Ainu song and dance about a rabbit. The dance contained a syncopation created by simultaneous movement of the arms holding the stick while stepping with the feet in a counter-rhythm. Many of the participants struggled to properly execute these steps. Singing the song while moving appeared to aid in understanding and embodying the correct rhythmic movements.

Through this workshop, it was made clear why it is said that the songs and dances of the Ainu are inseparable from one another. The sharing of dance based on ancestral traditions harkens to lewallen's concept of self-craft and the idea of becoming via the fashioning of an Indigenous identity (2016: 1). Through the workshop this approach is expanded to include others beyond the Ainu community in the process of affirmation of cultural practices. These processes occur on individual and interpersonal levels as heritage practitioners construct and perform their identity through traditional music and dance. Becoming and self-craft require a somewhat studious self-dedication that can be enacted and woven through song and dance.

FROM THE ARCHIVE TO THE STAGE: MUSICAL EXPRESSIONS AND CULTURAL LEGACIES

Some Ainu ensembles have focused on the recovery, documentation, and preservation of Ainu music through research based on historical documents. One such example is Team Nikaop. The ensemble members have worked with educational institutions and cultural organizations based in Hokkaidō. Team Nikaop has brought traditional Ainu music to contemporary environments to reshape its significance in a positive manner (Renner 2012: 216). Researcher Nate Renner examined vocables of traditional Ainu singing with the culturally specific names

of *rekte* of *Ku rimse* (Bow Dance) and *Emushi rimse* (Sword Dance). Examples of these musical patterns have been integrated into Team Nikaop's performances. Much like the patterns found in *Yukar,* these songs contain complex and layered rhythms. In this style, however, these rhythms are achieved through breath control and the use of throat muscles to rapidly shift from falsetto to normal registers. Examples of these patterns can be seen in Figures 2 and 3 authored by Renner (Renner 2012: 220–221). Renner explained that the opening pattern depicted in Figure 2 does not employ the use of the falsetto register, but rather presents a pulse between two vocal parts created through meticulous syllabic articulation.

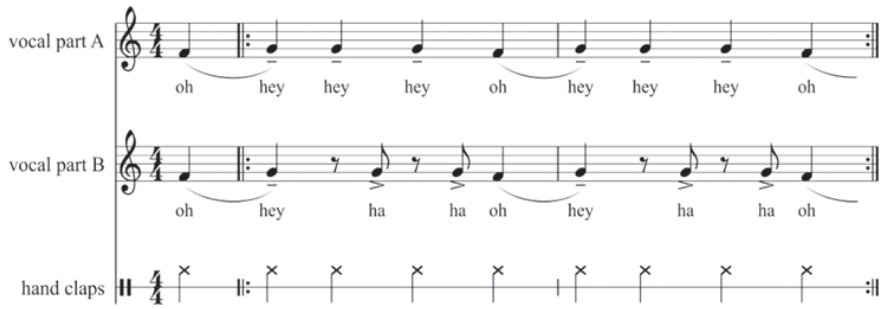


Figure 2. Rekte *(Renner 2012: 220–221).*

Continuing with Renner's explanation, the music maintains a steady seventy-six beats per minute moving into Figure 3 after approximately fifty seconds.

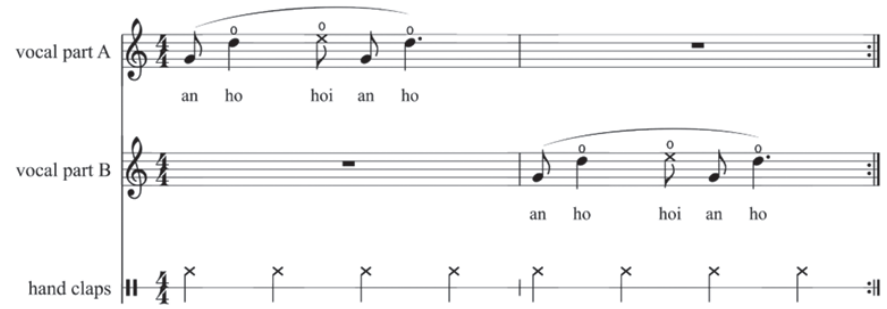


Figure 3. Rekte *vocables. Second pattern. Glottal stops at the highest pitch are transcribed with an x while falsetto notes are marked with 0 (Renner 2012: 220–221).*

Through their own independent research, Team Nikaop integrated historical expressions of Ainu traditions in performance, such as those outlined through Renner's research. By referencing archival records, the band developed a rich repertoire of multimedia content representing the artistic legacy of Ainu expression to contemporary audiences.

Another Ainu band composing and performing music based on traditional songs from archival recordings is Nin Cup. In 2022 I interviewed Toyokawa Yoko who is the lead singer of Nin Cup. Toyokawa is renowned in Hokkaidō for her traditional singing style which is capable of achieving complex vocal patterns, such as those by Renner notated above, with relative ease. To accomplish this, Toyokawa listened closely to archival recordings and practiced diligently to try and replicate sounds from the past. Toyokawa began to realize that in her efforts to sound authentic, she began to sound like an old woman despite being relatively young. This highlights the possible limitations of archival records as the vast majority of material is of older women singing, although it is also possible that the singing style from earlier periods maintained a different sound quality. Either way, this style of Ainu singing became so engrained in her that it became imposed onto any song she would sing. She additionally explained that the lyrics of the *Yukar* she studied from the archives were at times difficult to understand due to differences in the Ainu language of the past, such as regional variants or alternative grammar forms. Despite these challenges Toyokawa has come into her identity as Ainu through processes of reconnection in her own journey. Her vast repertoire of original songs and traditional *Yukar* are a testament to the continually evolving traditions of Ainu music.

One such example of archives referenced by Ainu music revivalists is maintained by the Ainu Archive of the Hokkaidō Museum. In September of 2022 I met with Kôchi Rie, who is a senior researcher on Ainu music and a curator in the museum. The digital archives which are available online contain 756 recordings of Ainu stories, interviews, and music dating from 1934 to 2022. Many archival records include details about the singer, location where the material was collected, song type, and the date it was recorded. Kôchi has published extensively on Ainu music, predominantly in Japanese, and curated a detailed section within "The Culture and Recent History of the Ainu" exhibit in the Hokkaidō Museum addressing music titled "Ainu Oral Tradition" (see Hokkaidō Museum, Main Exhibition). Within this section is a display dedicated to the history of recording and researching the Ainu language and music (see Fig. 4). Among the noted researchers are Chiri Yukie (second panel from the right) and her brother Chiri Mashiho (third panel from the right).

Beyond these archives and state-managed heritage institutions, Ainu singers and ensembles record, maintain and share recordings amongst themselves as was explained to me during fieldwork in Sapporo and Shiraoi in 2022. This sharing of songs has given rise to structural stylistic changes of certain songs as they move beyond their communities into the broader Hokkaidō regions and beyond. Natural and intentional transformations of the music serve to meet the needs of expression for contemporary Ainu people. It would seem that to some degree Chiri's hopes for an active and contemporary Ainu tradition have indeed been achieved. As can be seen through the actions and attitudes of Ainu musicians such as Toyokawa and Yuki, these traditions are indeed alive and evolving to meet the needs of contemporary Ainu communities.

Figure 4. *History of recording and researching Ainu language, Hokkaidō Museum. Photograph by Savannah-Rivka Powell 2022.*

BECOMING AINU THROUGH SELF-CRAFT AS A SHARED EXPERIENCE

Although deeply personal, processes of becoming and self-craft can be strengthened through community expressions and as shared experiences. While this may occur internally for Ainu communities, there are also many efforts for outreach. These often combine an approach to preserve and educate regarding traditional Ainu knowledge systems. One such example is the Ainu Ecotour,

which I attended in June and July of 2019, and which took place at the Hokkaidō University Botanic Garden as it represents a reclamation of the environmental landscape controlled within the context of cultural institutions. The tour was led by a woman who is Karafuto (or Sakhalin) Ainu. This individual acts as a guide in different locations around four times a year. These day-long events, which include detailed information on local Indigenous knowledge, are typically offered free of charge. The event has received sponsorship from the city of Sapporo and the Cultural Foundation that has repeatedly requested the tour.

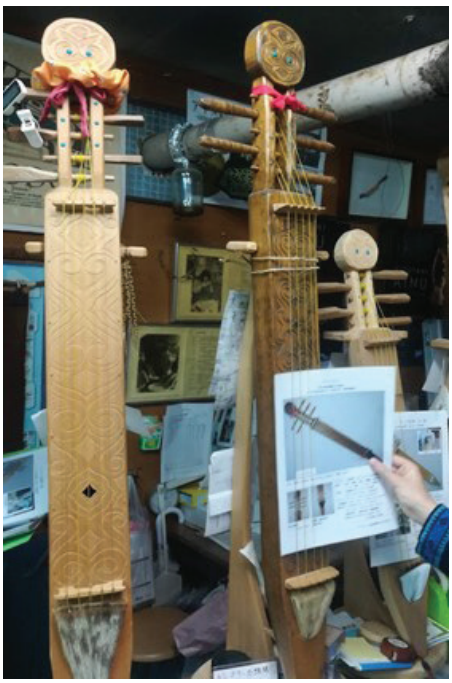
Although the content of the programme concentrated on Indigenous botanical knowledge, music was utilized throughout the day as a means of connection. The organizers had brought three instruments: two *mukkuri* (an idiophone like a jaw harp), and one *tonkori* (a plucked string instrument of Karafuto Ainu origin). One *mukkuri* was made of bamboo, while the other was made of metal, much as is commonly used in many parts of the world. The main guide explained that the metal *mukkuri* is used by the Karafuto Ainu who interacted with peoples of Siberia who played similar metal instruments. The metal variant of the *mukkuri* is representative of transnational Indigeneity through distinct cultural exchanges. The guides sang Ainu music throughout the day in a blend of Ainu and Japanese languages.

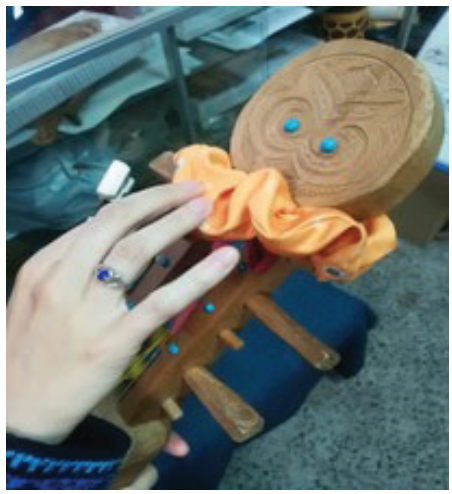
Nearly 20 students and community members gathered for the tour that began with viewing exhibits in the Northern Peoples Museum, while one of the guides played the *tonkori* and sang. The guides wore contemporary clothing mixed with traditional Ainu embroidery. Their presence in the exhibit space created a stark contrast against black and white photos and textiles fragile from age. Here were the living, singing Ainu presenting simply as they are in everyday life. The use of music, or self-craft, in conjunction with the sharing of traditional knowledge systems raises the visibility of Ainu in contemporary society, thus relating to lewallen's concept of becoming.

After exiting the museum, the tour continued through the gardens. As the tour meandered through the Northern Peoples Ethnobotanical Garden, the guide invited members of the group to pass around and play the *tonkori* as we walked, teaching a simple string-plucking pattern. She then began clapping and singing as we continued through the garden with the accompaniment played by different members of the tour. The Ainu hosts engaged the group so directly in the process of self-craft by creating traditional music *with* them rather than merely *for* them, which created a space for mutual or reciprocal affirmation of Ainu existence in contemporary Japanese society. This shifts away from the state-controlled narrative typical in many of the heritage institutions by allowing the Ainu hosts to freely express themselves and connect with the participants on their terms. The active engagement with Wajin and

other communities within Japan integrates the process of becoming Ainu by imbuing others with the embodied experience of their culture.

Although the *tonkori* originated in Karafuto, it has become popular among many Ainu throughout Japan. According to William Malm (2000 [1959]), both the *tonkori* and the *mukkuri* were traditionally played by women. A folktale passed down among the Karafuto Ainu describes the origins of the *tonkori* as a gift given from a husband to his wife for comfort after their baby had died. This was relayed to me during an Ainu Ancestral Remembrance event I attended in 2019, while I accompanied an Ainu musician who was preparing for a concert in the parking lot. She handed her *tonkori* to a friend who immediately started rocking the instrument like a baby. He then relayed the story explaining that the top of the instrument is made to resemble the head and face of a baby, and a stone or glass ball is placed in the hallowed section to represent the spirit or heart of the child (see Figs. 5–6). Considering the intercultural exchanges with peoples of northern Siberia, which may have influenced the Ainu *tonkori*, the instrument itself may be considered part of the transnational Indigenous sphere (Tamura 2013: 115).





Figures 5–6. Tonkori *made by master carver Shigeru Takano of Biratori in Hokkaidō, Japan. Figure 6 shows detail that is said to resemble the face of a baby. Photographs by Savannah-Rivka Powell 2019.*

As the Ainu Ecotour came to a close, I inquired with the guide about her *tonkori*. It was then that I learned that the Karafuto Ainu sing and play the *tonkori* at the same time, whereas the Ainu originating further south typically play the instrument while others provide vocal accompaniment. She sang in a mixture of Japanese and Ainu, which is common among members of the revivalist movement. The distinct musical style for those of Karafuto descent is evidence of considerable diversity among Ainu traditions. Unfortunately, these cultural nuances have been extremely difficult to maintain in contemporary Japanese society. Despite some loss of distinct dialects and regional variations, the linguistic blending presented in the guide's performances is a testament to the propensity of the Ainu people. The culture has been adjusted to accommodate individual processes of becoming that present the reality of the lived experiences of Ainu people in the modern context of Japanese society and their expressions of Indigenous modernity.

AINU SELF-CRAFT THROUGH THE REINTERPRETATION OF MUSICAL TRADITIONS

Some Ainu ensembles have re-configured cultural practices, traditions, and performances on the basis of their changed social circumstances, at times engaging with modes of community activism. One such group is the Ainu Rebels, which was founded in the Tokyo region and was active from 2006 to 2010. This group created a fusion of traditional Ainu music and dance with contemporary compositions which include new elements such as rap to convey a positive and empowering message for Ainu peoples. Yurika Tamura (2013) wrote about belonging, intercultural performance, and the sense of coexistence for Ainu musicians. She analysed performances of the Ainu Rebels in relation to the construction of Ainu identity with consideration for the impact of the band's activities. As Tamura made many insightful observations, I will draw upon her work to frame a concept of Ainu self-craft.

Due to lingering legacies of colonization and assimilation, many Ainu people grow up detached or even unaware of their Indigenous heritage. The members of the Ainu Rebels had to work to reconnect with their Indigenous heritage in their processes of becoming Ainu and to build their repertoire as there was a disruption in the transmission of heritage and traditions. Heritage institutions may aid in connecting source communities with traditions that had long been impacted by national and colonial powers; however, in the Ainu case, there is a movement to seek ways of connecting with ancestors directly. This represents a distinctly Ainu approach guided by Ainu *Puri* in their processes of reclamation and revitalization. The Ainu Rebels have actively engaged with activism in their work and sought to bridge connections with other Indigenous groups globally.

Processes of colonization and assimilation, which have intentionally and tactically framed Ainu cultural signifiers in a negative regard, are rooted deep in historical memory and can be traced through various art forms and expressions. One such example brought forth by Tamura involves the distinctly Ainu patterns of *Aiushi* representing a thorn design which has been appropriated by Japanese colonial and nationalist agendas as can been seen in one 1910 kimono design. This kimono appears to integrate Ainu and Korean elements with Japanese imperial symbols. In the words of Tamura, "the two cultures are beautifully presented in these artworks yet at the same time, they are paradoxically subjected as colonized subordinates…when worn this creates a body which dons a colonial and nationalistic ideology which is brought into daily public space" (Tamura 2013: 8). The *Aiushi* style has since been reclaimed by the Ainu people.

One such example of a very intentional and symbolic reclamation of this Ainu cultural symbol was in a performance by the Ainu Rebels in which the group's leader Sakai Mina would take centre stage and perform the act of putting on Ainu clothes that showcase *Aiushi* patterns and traditional make-up. According to Tamura, "[t]he piece reveals how one becomes an Ainu performance artist in appearance, but at the same time demonstrates the process of a person becoming a person visible for her ethnicity through the donning of the signs (needless to say, the robe with Ainu embroidery patterns) and through audience's gaze. Both Atsushi's rap and Mina's make-up piece look at the process by which Ainu subjectivity is donned and read on one's body … the issue being dealt with seems to be about being identified, being donned as a representation of ethnicity" (Tamura 2013: 47). By donning Ainu traditional clothes and performing in this way, this group asserts a reclamation of identity and autonomy while speaking out against discrimination and colonial oppression in connection with transnational Indigenous movements outside of Japan. The members of the Ainu Rebels openly embraced their Ainu identities by creating a celebratory kind of visibility.

The band brought the process of becoming Ainu on stage through their positive reinterpretations of Ainu culture. While Tamura explained that the Ainu Rebels hoped to inspire a revolution in the hearts and minds of Ainu people to find pride in their identities, this too could be understood as an effort to create space for Ainu self-craft (Tamura 2013: 42). In the construction and expression of her Ainu identity Sakai struggled between the lingering imagery of the colonial era and the contemporary identity of the Ainu people (ibid.: 39). She had grown up in Hokkaidō where she was taught to feel ashamed of being Ainu, creating a kind of dissonance in her identity. Her whole view changed after participating in an Indigenous youth exchange programme that brought her to Canada where she witnessed Indigenous youth celebrating their cultures with pride through traditional dance performances. The transnational alliances

formed out of global Indigenous movements represent a mode of postcolonial collaboration. This experience of transnational Indigenous exchange awakened and enlivened Sakai's connection with her Ainu identity (Tamura 2013: 40). The transnational alliances formed out of global Indigenous movements represent a mode of postcolonial collaboration.

In her research on Ainu fibre artists, lewallen (2016) revealed how Ainu women engage in the process of becoming Ainu and obtain a sense of self that is Indigenous through similar transnational encounters with Indigenous people outside of Japan. Lewallen further emphasised this by sharing Sakai's explanation on how this high school exchange with Indigenous youth of Canada impacted her self-perception:

> *Strong dancing. A secure sense of identity. Bold expressions of pride in their ethnic identity. I was shocked. Next to them, I looked like a weak and tiny person. We Ainu, so full of shame at being Ainu, that we might be able to feel pride – this shifted my thinking 180 degrees….* [Two years later when we invited them to Hokkaidō] *we sang songs around the campfire and the me in that space was filled with a sense of deep contentment. This was the original me, I realized. To live openly as Ainu, this was the path for me.* (Sakai 2008: 13)

Lewallen (2016) emphasized the importance of Ainu youth interacting with Indigenous contemporaries outside of Japanese society as a means to affirm belonging through the sense of connection with a global movement that has the potential to encourage the reclamation of Ainu as a core identity from a positive perspective.

Sakai had to engage with a reconstruction process to reconnect with Ainu heritage practices in her journey of becoming Ainu. In the early stages of the band's formation in 2006 most of the members had not yet "come out" publicly as Ainu, as doing so would put them and their families at risk of discrimination. Ainu Rebel performances included testimonial stories shared by band members in the form of public statements which became a ritual of sorts for coming out as Ainu. The process of putting together performances had the impact of politicizing band members, yet it simultaneously affirmed their identities. In a way, the very experience of performing became therapeutic to a certain degree (Tamura 2013: 48). The landscape forged by the band's performances created a place of belonging for Ainu youth and people of other minoritized groups. These performances were not limited to concert halls; they were brought into schools and universities where the music was followed by a discussion regarding issues of racism and discrimination in Japan. They achieved not only the recovery of Ainu representation but additionally, multicultural educational content.

Sakai sought to perform traditional songs and dances to have a positive impact, a sort of celebratory performance that would challenge the stigmas attached to Ainu culture. Due to this stigma, she had to find a way to reconstruct the concept of being Ainu in a positive manner within a Japanese context. "Mina's methodologies on the initial reconceptualization of Ainu difference was [sic] thus aimed at the recovery of representation" (Tamura 2013: 42). The "coolness" Sakai sought to express through music can be related to a certain transformative element of traditional Ainu music linked with the group's engagement with multicultural and transnational movements.

The band's expression of Ainu music included hip-hop, rap, and contemporary dance, which would then be fused with traditional Ainu elements such as dance which had been inscribed in UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2009 (UNESCO 2019). Sakai's brother Atsushi had been deeply influenced by the African American black cultural production of ethnic pride in hip-hop and rap (Tamura 2013: 42). Presenting vernacular Ainu music with spiritual and sacred meanings alongside contemporary styles and elements offered a new and alternative form of Ainu performative arts. The group's innovative image of the Ainu as people who take pride in performing in their once forbidden language has influenced their audiences tremendously. Similar trends were confirmed by lewallen through her fieldwork among young Ainu artists who often choose to garner empathy for Ainu struggles by connecting with the global vernacular of hip-hop music, modern and hybrid dance, and multimodal performances as an alternative approach to political sloganeering or direct condemnation of imperialist history (lewallen 2016: 41).

The band Ainu Rebels is no longer active, but Sakai continues performing music with Ainu influences. In 2011 she joined with composer Hamauzu Masashi to form the musical group IMERUAT, which means flash of light or lightning in the Ainu language. Sakai has integrated her Ainu identity into her current work, regularly singing in Ainu and playing traditional instruments such as the *mukkuri* and the *tonkori*. Rather than introducing and representing Ainu culture, Sakai now embodies an approach that merges these elements as a natural accompaniment to her presentation and performances on stage. Sakai and Hamauzu have collaborated to create new interpretations of traditional Ainu songs, such as *Pattaki Upopo* or Grasshopper Dance, which IMERUAT performs as a song titled *Battaki*. The band produced a music video that tells the story of the traditional song and dance by following a long winding trail of folded paper origami grasshoppers (IMERUAT 2012).

By engaging with global audiences and maintaining connections with Indigenous movements outside of Japan, performers such as Sakai are enacting a transnational form of Indigeneity. These connections aid in garnering

visibility on international and national levels while energizing the Ainu music revitalization movement. Through continuous cultural exchange, these musicians are seeking out new modes of expression inspired by ancestral formulas, thus keeping their traditions alive by creating new performative forms.

CONCLUSION

Self-craft and the process of becoming Ainu have taken various forms from the time of Chiri Yukie, a young Ainu woman who began writing and translating the traditional Ainu epic *Yukar* in the early twentieth century, into the contemporary musical expressions of today. Certain traditional foundations, such as *Yukar*, remain central to musical practice and cultural identity. External actors may have provided some support in preservation efforts; however, it is essential to recognize Ainu resilience in these times of great upheaval. While some current expressions of *Yukar* may work to accurately recreate archival recordings such as the vocal expressions of Toyokawa, others such as Yuki engage in writing new prose based on the tenants of the practice to ensure the evolution of Ainu tradition as that of a living culture.

The Indigenous modernity expressed by Ainu musicians presents alternative perspectives that are founded in ancestral traditions yet relevant to their contemporary experiences. Unlike discourses of modernity among majority-Wajin or Western perspectives, "an ontological frame rooted in 'becoming' is not constrained by a quantifiable metric of achievement or a historical dialectic between primitivity and modernity, whereupon progress may be evaluated" (lewallen 2016: 58). Ainu communities have thus utilized music to reconstruct a positive Ainu identity, engage in educational outreach, and find empowerment. Messages conveyed through media produced by these musicians have addressed issues of diversity, identity, and language preservation. The themes presented in Ainu musical expression encourage solidarity on local and global scales among Indigenous peoples while establishing spaces for intercultural dialogues to take place.

Contemporary Ainu musicians balance between upholding ancestral traditions as they engage with self-craft in their processes of becoming by continuously seeking informed feedback within their communities, thus calibrating their internal guidance system or Ainu *Puri* as a cultural grounding. Understanding the contributing factors to identity construction and expression has been visually presented by the author through the model of the Ainu *Puri* Compass. This internal cultural dialogue is additionally informed by involvement with transnational Indigenous movements which serve to orient these smaller communities within the international context.

Ainu musical movements have employed various methods of multiethnic coding within their performances to promote the acceptance and inclusion of Indigenous identities and other marginalized peoples. An examination of these techniques has revealed an approach based on transnational Indigeneity in which performers establish and maintain international connections. These musicians have endeavoured to assert an identity that they have artfully encoded into their performances. The performers achieved empowerment for themselves, their communities, and other oppressed groups by establishing bonds of solidarity. These creative forces have displayed the potential to sway hearts and minds to garner support for the Ainu perspective.

NOTES

[1] The 2018 Russian census does not appear to address Ainu populations, and the results of the 2021 census are not currently available online.

[2] See http://www.gks.ru, last accessed on 11 October 2024. It should be stated that there are Ainu living in Russia and while their situation is one of great interest, it is beyond the scope of this paper as the Ainu communities in Japan have been the central focus of my study.

[3] My research in Japan was supported by Hokkaidō University and Jeff Gayman who expanded my awareness of Indigenous education, political issues, historical elements, and current Ainu movements. I have also been guided by Kochi Rie of the Hokkaidō Museum as an ethnomusicologist specializing in Ainu music.

[4] When referring to people from Japan, I will follow Japanese naming conventions in which the family name comes first, followed by the given name.

[5] This author chooses to use lower case letters to write her name.

[6] Available at https://ainutoday.com/, last accessed on 11 October 2024.

[7] I refer here to the interrelationship of heritage and identity as has been outlined by Laurajane Smith in her chapter on Heritage, Identity and Power: "Heritage, in either its intangible or tangible form, is intuitively understood to be about the assertion and reinforcement of identity – be that associated with social, cultural, national, ethnic, or other forms of identity" (Smith 2017: 15).

[8] I have intentionally chosen to capitalize those being referred to as *Kamuy* to convey respect for their position in the Ainu belief system.

[9] Medak-Saltzman used the word "collecting" in reference to Starr's actions. This may have been to emphasise the overall objectification of Indigenous peoples in this process. She also refers to a journal published and sold at the fair by Starr in which this same wording may have been implemented (2010: 595).

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