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Ainu Ethnogenesis and State Evasion (12th-17th Centuries)

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Abstract: *Recent archaeological, anthropological, and historical studies have brought the relationships proto-Ainu/Ainu groups had with various neighboring states into light; notably the Yuan Dynasty, the Northern Fujiwara, and the Ando/Matsumae domains. In light of such scholarship, this article argues that Ainu ethnogenesis was marked by cultural practices of state evasion and resistance to state-like structures from emerging within. Moreover, it is argued that Ainu groups utilized their unique position to enrich their own culture by capitalizing on the productive capacities of neighboring states. By using other anthropological studies of state-evading cultures as a theoretical framework, this article examines different elements of Ainu cultures and their relations with states.*

Keywords: *Ainu; ethnogenesis; state evasion; trade; chief; orality*

Introduction

The Ainu and their culture have been a subject of interest from scholars across the globe for more than a century and a half now. Their unique lifestyle, cosmology, language, history, and more have been at the center of much debate. Such interest has greatly compounded from the late 20th century, with more Ainu voices beginning to appear in political, academic, and cultural settings. However, the sociopolitical complexity of Ainu ethnogenesis has not been thoroughly investigated. With growing advocacy and attention that centers the Ainu voice and perspective, it is also necessary to review the literature and theories on their ethnogenesis that provide the Ainu with renewed agency, autonomy, and political awareness.

As of now, one theory on the ethnogenesis of the Ainu prevails, although it is no more than a literal reading of the archaeological evidence than a theory that takes into account the why's, what's, and the how's. Apart from this, Mark Hudson (1999a) provides us with a unique perspective on the ethnogenesis of the Ainu.

The prevailing academic consensus is that Ainu ethnogenesis is understood as the mix of the Satsumon and the Okhotsk cultures up to the 12th century. The Ainu culture is signified by 4 major changes in the archaeological record: 1) Shift to surface dwellings with a central hearth; 2) Replacement of locally produced ceramics to those obtained by trade; 3) Decline in plant cultivation (not entirely) and significant change in economic activities; and 4) The development of "sending-back" rituals, culminating into the famous *iyomante* (bear ceremony) (Hudson 1999b, 209-210).

Apart from this, the most extensive attempt to theorize the specifics of such change comes from Mark Hudson (1999a). Hudson argued that the growth of the Northern Fujiwara (1094/1104~1189) at Hiraizumi greatly influenced the changes seen in the archaeological record, kicking off the "Ainu

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period" which chronologically coincides with such political change down south. By utilizing historical, ethnographic, and archaeological evidence, Hudson convincingly illustrates the influence such changes would have had on their trading partners up north.

This article will expand upon this relationship between these two groups, however, by refocusing the lens and looking at it from the perspective of the non-state peoples. It is argued here that the growth and encroachment of Japanese states into the northern frontiers pushed "proto-Ainu" populations to run away, seek refuge, and keep state projects at a manageable distance.[1] In contrast to the ecologically and politically restrictive understandings of the Ainu as a culture *without* large-scale agriculture, written language, or state-like political entities, this article argues that the Ainu were societies *against* the state (Clastres 1987). Furthermore, it is argued that not only did the Ainu culture evade the state and culturally keep a state from emerging within, it also maintained a delicate relationship with states to enrich its spiritual, economic, and social status.

Who are the Ainu?

It is first necessary to discuss who and what we are pointing to when speaking of the "Ainu" and an "Ainu culture." As in the case of many non-state peoples who were later colonized and incorporated into a state system, the exonym given to these diverse peoples literally means "man" in their language. Initially, the term "Aino" (later changed to Ainu) was not used widely until the early 19th century (Hudson 1999b, 208). The common words used to denote the diverse people living beyond the northern border of Japanese states were "*Emishi*" and later "*Ezo*," although both make use of the same Chinese characters (蝦夷). As discussed extensively by various scholars, this term was derived from the Sinocentric labels used by Chinese dynasties to denote non-civilized peoples beyond their borders (Hudson 1999b, 30; Yiengpruksawan 1998, 9). These labels were not used to denote any specific ethnic group, but simply to denote people who were outside the direct political reach of the state (Emori 2015, 12-13). The usage of the word "Ainu" can be seen in a similar light, although the continued use of the word by Ainu people themselves significantly complicates our understanding of the term.

Beginning in the early 20th century, various Ainu groups in Hokkaidō came together to fight for equal rights and create a political entity that could voice their opinions on a national scale. Various symposiums and meetings were organized under numerous names, such as "The Former Aborigines," the "Ainu," or as the "Utari" associations. These efforts culminated in the 1946 "Hokkaidō Ainu Association" that gained the approval of the state. However, 15 years later in 1961, the name was changed to "Hokkaidō Utari Association" due to the discriminatory connotations the word "Ainu" had to many in Japan. "Utari'' means 'compatriot' or 'brethren' in the Ainu language, signifying the attempt to be mindful of the degrading memories many people had from school, at the workplace, or in personal relationships. Yet in 2009, the name was changed back to "Hokkaidō Ainu Association," following the petitions to formally and legally recognize the Ainu as the Indigenous peoples of Japan being fulfilled. Notwithstanding the difficult memories and derogatory use of the word "Ainu," the leaders believed the term was best for global and local recognition (Takeuchi 2020; See the official website of the Ainu Association of Hokkaidō 公益社団法人北海道アイヌ協会). Even through the many efforts to revitalize Ainu identity and culture, the word continues to be used in a discriminatory way. Recently, a comedian came under fire for relating the word *Ainu* with *Inu*, which means dog in Japanese (Yoshigaki 2021).

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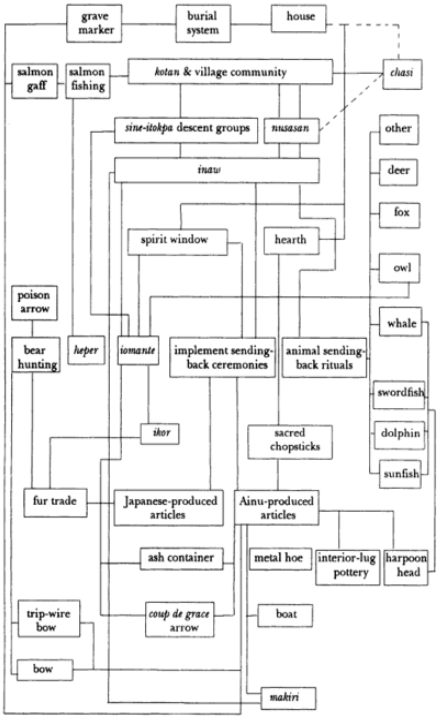
Such complexities of the relationship between the emic and etic understanding of Ainu culture and identity also make any attempt to define the culture an almost impossible endeavor. All in all, defining the Ainu and the Ainu culture has been a state project aimed to "invent the barbarian" as opposed to the "civilized" (Scott 2009, 104).

Ainu Cultural Complex

Most attempts to define the Ainu have been a loose discussion of their geographic spread, material culture, sustenance practices, spiritual practices (notably the sending-back ceremonies), oral culture, and importantly, their involvement in trade (Utagawa 1992). However, "[i]n many other ways the Ainu are not who much of the literature claims them to be" (Crawford 2008, 457). Furthermore, due to the derogatory and heavily romanticized views held by early ethnographers, anthropologists, and frontiersmen, the great diversity of the Ainu people is not and cannot be properly understood. Although it is doubtful that the various people held an emic understanding of themselves as a single ethnicity that spanned across *Ainu-moshir*,[2] there are some key elements of the culture that seem to serve as a useful definition of what we can call the "Ainu culture." However, it must be stressed again that the diversity and internal complexity of the many Ainu groups and settlements are great (Ohnuki-Tierney 1976). Although a thorough investigation of such heterogeneity is beyond the scope of this article, comparisons of different groups will be discussed throughout later sections.

The most extensive and useful analysis of such key elements is Hiroshi Utagawa's "Ainu cultural complex," borrowing from Watanabe's "*iyomante* cultural complex" which centered the bear ceremony as the nucleus of the Ainu culture (Utagawa 1992, 256-260). However, Utagawa argues that since the *iyomante* seems to have taken form around the 18th century (approximately six centuries after the Ainu period began), this cultural complex needs to be refocused.

Utagawa elaborates on Watanabe's idea but instead puts the worship of *ape-kamuy* (fire spirit) at the center. There are two main reasons for this: 1) *ape-kamuy* is among the most important spirit/deity in the Ainu pantheon, as seen from both their oral stories and the central position *ape-kamuy* takes in all prayers and ceremonies; 2) and the central open hearth – in which the *ape-kamuy* dwells – is one of the key shifts seen in the Ainu period. Furthermore, many other elements of the cultural complex were connected in one way or another to *ape-kamuy* and the central hearth (Utagawa 1992, 260-263).



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Ainu Cultural Complex (Utagawa 1992, 262)

Most importantly, it can be argued that the three other main shifts into the Ainu period seen archaeologically (replacement of local pottery, change in economic activity, and the sending-back ceremonies) are related to the central position that *ape-kamuy* and the open-hearth plays. Notably, the cyclical relationship these four key elements have is a negative cycle that diminishes the authority one can have as a chief or as a state attempting to extend its influence over an Ainu settlement or groups.

In the following sections, we attempt to see the "hidden but compelling negative dialectic, that rests between the lines of mainstream history" (Yiengpruksawan 1998, 10) and create a new perspective towards the ethnogenesis of the Ainu culture. However, before we dive in, a brief discussion is necessary to define what we mean by state-evasion and resistance.

State Evasion, Resistance, and Being a Barbarian to the State

Throughout the vast literature on the Ainu and their culture, the active and bold rebellions led by various Ainu chiefs and groups gained much attention in the past few decades,[3] notably the large-scale rebellion led by Shakushain.[4] In addition, the various ways the Ainu have resisted and remain resilient continue to gain widespread attention.[5] In contrast to such direct confrontations and rebellions, this article turns our attention to forms of state-evasion/resistance that James Scott names "everyday forms of resistance." Scott writes:

> The easiest way to highlight the distinction is to contrast paired forms of resistance. The first in each pair is "everyday" resistance in my definition of the term while the second is a more direct, open confrontation having the same objective. Thus, in one sphere lies the quiet, piecemeal process by which peasant squatters or poachers have often encroached on plantation and state forest lands; in the other a public invasion of property that openly challenges property relations. Each action aims at a redistribution of control over property; the former aims at tacit, *de facto* gains while the latter aims at formal, *de jure* – recognition of those gains. In one sphere lies a process of cascading military desertion; in the other an open mutiny aiming at eliminating or replacing officers. In one sphere lies the pilfering of public and private grain stores; in the other an open attack on markets or granaries aiming at the redistribution of the food supply (Scott 1989, 34).

In essence, it is a form of resistance that evades not only the power of the state but also the pen of the state. This article continues the academic legacies of such scholars who reversed the dominant narrative of state-creation, putting into perspective the intentionality that certain cultures can become "totally invested in the rejection of power" (Clastres 1987, 44). Again it must be stressed that this analysis of Ainu culture is not meant to be exhaustive and totally encompassing, but to add on to our efforts and understanding of human history from the perspective of those outside the state and looking in (Bronson 1988, 200).

In addition, the creation of non-state peoples must be understood as the "dark twin" of states. As Scott writes:

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> Put clinically and structurally, "barbarian" is best understood as a position vis-à-vis a state or empire. Barbarians are a people adjacent to a state but not in it (Scott 2017, 227).

As such, our understanding of who the Ainu and their culture are cannot be isolated from neighboring states and empires. This is not to suggest that the flow was a one-way street from state to non-state, but was a dialectic and complex process that shaped all parties involved. Although this article will focus on how the Ainu culture evaded and resisted the state, readers are encouraged to keep in mind how such cultures are reflected or contrasted in the "agrarian fundamentalist" state ideologies (Amino 2012).

The following sections will attempt to show, first, that it was a rational possibility and choice to run away from early Japanese states; second, how the Ainu culture – as seen through the central elements of the Ainu cultural complex – served to deny any autocratic leader or state-like structure in extending coercive power; third, propose ideas as to why *not* cultivating agriculture (especially wet-rice) and instead entering trade/tributary relationships can be attractive to populations nearby – but not incorporated into – states; and last, propose a further hypothesis on the Ainu oral culture, gender roles, and a potential "tradition of state-evasion" on the Japanese archipelago.

The Northern Fujiwara and the Need for Distance

It is first necessary to address a simple question: Was there a need to run, avoid, and keep the Japanese states at a distance? This question, although seemingly straightforward, requires us to restrict the discussion to a particular time and space. For the sake of brevity, we will be keeping our discussion to the time from the Ōshū Wars (1051~1087) until the fall of the Northern Fujiwara (1189). Further possibilities of inquiry will be addressed in the final section.

A brief reading of the state history of northeastern Honshū denotes a sense of constant chaos, war, rapid cultural development/change, and importantly, ambiguous identities in relation to the homogenous ideal of Japanese state historiography (Oguma 1995). These impressions are especially pronounced during the timeframe that preludes the development of two important periods that are of concern to this article: the Northern Fujiwara reign and the beginning of the Ainu period, both occurring in the 12th century.

The Ōshū Wars, which began in the mid 11th century, began as a form of conquest initiated by Abe no Yoritoki to expand into the neighboring Mutsu province (Yiengpruksawan 1998, 35-38). The following string of conflicts coincides with movements seen in the archaeological record on Hokkaidō:

> Through a complex process of warfare, exchange, colonization, and the establishment of political and economic affiliations, socio-political and cultural developments in the northeast were not static. The circumstances in the northeast were ultimately so hostile that the Emishi (the name applied to all non-Japanese in the region at the time) left Honshu for Hokkaidō. This event marks the beginning of the Hokkaidō Satsumon period (Crawford 2011, 338).

It is not difficult to imagine such migratory movements away from political instability and war. Additionally, during this time on the

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archipelago, running north was a much safer bet than running south if the goal was to avoid being caught up in such events (Lee 2015). In the end, the Kiyohara family ended the war as the region's leaders and "would become the foundation of the Hiraizumi Fujiwara house and its domain" (Yiengpruksawan 1998, 39). Although the precise date is debated, the rise of the Northern/Hiraizumi Fujiwara house brought great change to the northeastern region of Honshū.

Hudson (1999a) highlights the massive growth in the trade of market goods such as gold, horses, eagle feathers, silk, and more brought about through the rise of the Northern Fujiwara. This trade included large quantities of goods likely to have originated in Hokkaidō, such as eagle feathers and seal furs; suggesting the involvement of proto-Ainu/Ainu groups, which partly serves as an explanation for the material shift in the archaeological record. As previously commented on, this trade overseen by the Northern Fujiwara state provided an incredible economic and cultural change to the previously "state-less" parts of northern Honshū. This growth was so great that after the Minamoto had taken control over most of Honshū in 1189, they were in awe of the cultural efflorescence of the Ōshū region. This revelation was a major factor in eroding the conception of Ōshū =Barbarian/Frontierland and brought Ōshū into the "field of life" for the new Kamakura shogunate and beyond (Lee 2015, 78).

However, what often gets overlooked are the downsides of such economic growth. Running counter to the growth in the pace of trade and wealth accumulation, were the many disadvantages of being a subject to such centralized power and authority: tax, labor, servitude, debt, famine, disease, large scale war, etc (Scott 2009). Following the Ōshū Wars, which no doubt pushed populations to flee north in attempt to avoid being swept up in the chaos, such introductions of extraction and control would have alarmed many. A precise image of what life was like for people subject to the Northern Fujiwara rule is difficult to reconstruct, especially as documents of northeastern Japan from this period are scarce. However, we can theorize and imagine what may have occurred by looking at three interrelated features that marked this period: population change, disease, and famine.

William Farris (2009) offers us a look into these three features through his analysis of the situation on Honshū from 1150-1280, overlapping with the time period of our concern. He writes:

> Prior to 1150, western Japan had been depleted while eastern and northern Honshu showed substantial growth. By 1280, these trends had been reversed, with sizable with sizable increase taking place in Kyushu, little or no expansion in western Honshu and the Kinai, and demographic contraction in the northern archipelago (Farris 2009, 114).

These shifts are most likely the product of rampant disease made worse through the growth of urban areas, and importantly for the Ōshū regions, famine (Amino 2012, 106). Farris further notes how by the 1150s, three pathogens were especially lethal: smallpox, measles, and influenza. In addition to these, the colder climate of the north created an extra problem to this plague:

> The sharp drop-off in the number of inhabitants in eastern and northern Japan may have been another result of the wintry climate. The prevalence of Hansen's disease was yet a third. Spread by close contact, Hansen's disease took root during

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> the cold, wet weather that encouraged hosts to huddle together with susceptible friends and relatives (Farris 2009, 114).

Such disease, coupled with the economic and urban growth seen through the rise of the Northern Fujiwara, may have encouraged people to flee and seek refuge elsewhere. However, disease alone cannot account for all such demographic changes. The need to feed these growing urban populations was another problem. Such difficulties were exacerbated by famine, and importantly, war. Farris continues his analysis:

> The famines during 1180–1280 were particularly deadly because they extended over multiple years, giving commoners and others reliant on agriculture no chance to recover…. [W]ar exacerbated the famine in Kyoto, as hostile armies surrounded the capital and denied urbanites food and supplies…. By 1182, so many city dwellers had left the capital to find food in the mountains and on seashores that Kyoto became a ghost town, eerily silent and vacant (Farris 2009, 115-116).

This emphasized difficulty faced by urbanites in the face of famine and war is also noted by Amino (2012), who showed how it was the "city dwellers – the ones who had to buy their food – who first went hungry" (Amino 2012, 106). In reflection of this, let us return to the Northern Fujiwara.

The Northern Fujiwara state's incredible wealth was not based on rice cultivation – as their southern rice-paddy state counterparts were – but on trade (Hudson 1999a, 76). Although other forms of agriculture certainly existed, large parts of the urban societies were more likely to have purchased their food and specialized in producing market goods. The difficulties the new urbanites faced are only imaginable, and so are the countless people who fled just like those in Kyōto did when times got hard. However, it is certainly conceivable that many people headed north, possibly across the Tsugaru strait into Hokkaidō.

The purpose of this analysis is not to simply show the difficulties northern urbanites may have faced in the time before and during the Ainu period, but how clear choices needed to have been made in response to the changes on northeastern Honshū. A rich aristocrat may have been able to maintain a certain level of comfort, while others down the pecking order may have been encouraged to flee. However, the clear connection between the beginning of the Ainu period (12th century) – which was marked by significant growth of influence from the south – and the socio-political circumstance of Japan cannot be overlooked. Additionally, it must be clearly noted that it is not suggested that the Ainu consist of groups solely originating from northern Honshū. The argument is that the great inflow of southern influence seen in the shift into the Ainu period is also marked by a growing awareness of state operations on Honshū, possibly relayed by people involved in trade with the Northern Fujiwara or those who fled. Finally, it is also not suggested that the entire reason for the movement into Tōhoku and beyond was solely for evasion, but was one large factor in a myriad of purposes. Some may have entered Tōhoku to take advantage of the North Fujiwara's trade network, others may have gone into Hokkaidō initially to obtain goods to trade. There are examples of Wajin individuals staying and marrying into Ainu families, one being discovered by the Matsumae soldiers after Shakushain's revolt in the 17th century (Kiyama 1979, 68).

If the above proposal is at least imaginable, there are additional questions that arise: If

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people wished to avoid states, why continue to interact with them through forms of trade or tribute? Additionally, how and why did some Ainu groups not form a Northern Fujiwaraesque state themselves based on their incredible trade connections? The following sections will look to address these questions by showing how almost every part of the Ainu culture served to evade and deny state incorporation and creation. Furthermore, it is argued that the Ainu culture utilized the productive capacity of neighboring states to enrich their own lives and culture.



Painting in ink and colors on linen of the Ainu iomante, bear spirit sending ceremony in Hokkaido, Japan by Hirasawa Byozan, 1875. アイヌ、イオマンテリムセの踊り、北海道。平沢屏山（1875年）。**(Source: Wikipedia Commons).**

Uymam (Trade), Ikor (Treasures), and Power

We will begin our analysis by focusing on the triadic relationship seen between trade, sending-back ceremonies, and local economic production which will be argued as a negative cycle that "constantly keeps power apart from the institution of power [and] command apart from the chief" (Clastres 1987, 154).

First, it is necessary to understand what exactly being a "chief" means across various Ainu groups and regions. Unlike the coercive power that leaders of states held over their subjects, the Ainu chief's main function is similar to that of what Pierre Clastres (1987) saw among various South American societies: being a peacemaker, a good orator, and a man generous with his goods, with an additional dimension of being skilled in trade (Godefroy 2017). It is also important to point out that "no position of authority represented full-time specialization" (Ohnuki-Tierney 1976, 312).

Additionally, it must be noted that there were rigid delineations between the roles taken by a man and a woman, where the role of chief seems to have been exclusively in the realm of men. The Ainu culture is not egalitarian in essence (as some may be prone to imagine when thinking of 'non-state peoples') although certain speculations remain regarding this hierarchy of gender and age seen across Ainu groups. Such discussions of gender roles and gender coalitions will be discussed in the final section.

Becoming Chief

An Ainu man becomes a chief not exclusively through kinship ties, but by showing that he has the "capability to handle the job" (Ohnuki-Tierney 1976, 312). The role of the peacemaker and orator is straightforward; when conflict erupts – both internal and external – the chief (or sometimes a group of leaders) is called upon. Therefore, the chief is often a skilled hunter who has good relations with various *kamuy* (spirits) that provide spiritual, psychological, and religious comfort and safety. In addition, as seen through folktales and ethnographic studies, it seems that a man's relation to *ikor* (treasures obtained through trade) and *uymam* (trade) are fundamental in achieving chieftainship.

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Sakata (2011) introduces us to several fascinating oral histories originating in Hokkaidō, although the author does not specify what region each story originates from. The island of Hokkaidō offers substantial ecological differences that have an influence on the regional diversity of culture and tradition.[6] However, as noted earlier, much of the diversity among the Ainu is not well understood. Here, we will restrict our analysis to comparing the variation seen between Hokkaidō Ainu and Sakhalin Ainu. Regardless of such limitations, Sakata's analysis of various Hokkaidō Ainu stories with the motif of *uymam* (trade), becoming a chief and/or hero, and the danger associated with these activities enlightens us to the complexity and negative cycle of achieving chieftainship within the Ainu culture.

Let us first look into what Sakata sees as two typical story patterns of trade: "(1) the trade-difficulty pattern: to encounter a difficulty in the *Wajin* town, but to solve it and become wealthy; and (2) the trade-murder pattern: to be slain in the *Wajin* town" (Sakata 2011, 178). In these stories, the hero (most Ainu stories are told from the first-person perspective) attains heightened status within a settlement if trade is successful and the protagonist is not killed. Either the hero starts a new village or becomes chief. In addition to the danger of embarking on trade expeditions, preparing for trade itself also poses life-threatening situations. Although no definitive quantitative data exist, hunting and fishing are reported to have taken the lives of many men (Ohnuki-Tierney 1976). This mortality rate no doubt was increased by the individual nature in which hunting was conducted.

This individualism of the man (in both trade and hunting) - also highlighted in Clastres's analysis - is a crucial point that inverses the power relation from centering its locus with the successful hunter/trader to the culture/society. In other words, chiefs are replaceable, but the social unit is not. The man does not become chief by simply hunting well or trading successfully, but also by offering the material goods gained through such endeavors to the *kamuy* (spirit) through sending-back ceremonies or prayers. In this stage of the triadic cycle – the sending-back ceremonies – all the *ikor* (treasures) obtained through trade and hunting are either symbolically given to the deities or physically redistributed among the group in the case of Sakhalin Ainu (Ohnuki-Tierney 1976, 319; Ohnuki-Tierney 1974). However, as such ceremonies are done periodically, the man must return to the hunting grounds and Wajin towns, put himself in danger again, and offer the goods obtained to the *kamuy* and/or community as a whole. Through such acts of generosity (of material goods and/or time), the Ainu man may ensure his respect but not coercive authority.

Furthermore, the Ainu worldview of how one becomes a good hunter adds to this negative cycle: the hunter is not the agent of his own success. The Ainu believe that *kamuy* present themselves in the cloak of animals (such as bears) in front of worthy hunters to be caught and presented with lascivious sending-back rituals, which were of higher quality if endowed with a great variety of traded goods such as Japanese lacquer pots, swords, and rice products (Yamada 2001). So even within the highly individualized act of hunting, the authority to govern one's success is thrown back into the cycle of relationships with the *kamuy* and utilizing traded goods to keep these ties healthy.

As such, the authority of a chief is negated and undermined in many ways. First and foremost, the material and subsistence provided by a single Ainu man are not necessary for a group's survival or success. The wealth of knowledge women possess in fishing and gathering can support a family, as well as the intricate kinship networks that provide for flexible transitions of households and families between

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villages/settlements (Ohnuki-Tierney 1974). In relation to this, if conflicts emerge, Ainu groups are seen to fission and disperse. Such fissions of groups would simply serve to undermine the authority a chief has, as there is no more overseeing necessary. Such dispersal of people can be a powerful "weapon against states," (Scott 1985) as will be seen in the following section. And lastly, the cost of becoming or staying a chief may be outweighed by the benefit of stepping down or not attempting to be become a chief. The heavy demand of time and facing the dangers of achieving chieftainship is not the utmost priority for Ainu men in the stories relayed by Sakata (2011). Contrary to such "success" stories, Sakata also shows a case in which an Ainu man refrains from trading with the Wajin due to the possible danger to his life and "continues his uneventful lifestyle as before and never travels to the *Wajin* town from then onward. This outcome means that he is not of chieftain's lineage nor will he become a new chieftain" (Sakata 2011, 17). However, this does not indicate that the man would have been perceived as a failure. As Ohnuki-Tierney writes in her analysis of the Hokkaidō Ainu:

> With the self-sufficiency of a hunting-gathering economy, in which the basic necessities of foodstuffs, clothing, and material for housing were readily available, there was little need for the Ainu to engage in trading for basic necessities (Ohnuki-Tierney 1976, 317).

In other words, although the *ikor* obtained through trade were important to various Ainu cultural practices, they were not a necessity nor an utmost priority to obtain.[7] Becoming a chief was not as desirable as becoming a *nispa*, a respected elder within their group or locale. In accordance with this, some chiefs did step down to commit more time to leisurely activities (Ohnuki-Tierney 1976, 311). As such, the power and respect associated with the chief within the Ainu cultural complex are not coercive and not exclusive to a "chief." Earning respect from a group can be done periodically and sparingly depending on the economic tradeoffs of risk and honor.

All in all, it may be possible to reflect upon another insight Clastres drew from his own studies of South American groups: "Perhaps the song of the Aché hunters is nothing else but their individual myths" (Clastres 1987, 126). Could the various Ainu hero stories told from the individual perspective be seen through this light?

Punishment

Another mechanism in which one's authority, influence, or status is undermined is the tie punishment has with traded goods. After conflict erupts or one is convicted of a crime, people will debate and decide upon the verdict. These debates, called *ukocaranke* (to mutually let words fall), "requires the talent to argue with logic and the physical strength to sit in debate for days" (Kayano 2018, 11). What happens after such debates is discussed by Ohnuki-Tierney:

> If a defendant unrelated to the plaintiff is found guilty upon trial, he must make amends for his crime either with payment, often in the form of imported goods which the Ainu called "treasure," or with his own life. From the Ainu point of view, the payment of treasures endangered the welfare of the defendant's soul. Since Ainu treasures were offerings to the deities, their loss would weaken the defendant's relationship with the deities and thus threaten his spiritual well-being (Ohnuki-Tierney 1976, 312).

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Again, we see the stripping of one's influence and power – through the form of traded goods – as a punishment for misdemeanor and crime. However, punishment was not limited to the loss of material goods (as we see in sending-back ceremonies), forms of capital punishment are also known.

In a rare study of suicidality among an Ainu group, two stories are recorded of capital punishment (Tomikawa 1959). These stories are different from other records where we see higher levels of leniency and use of animals in place of humans. Here, people are seen to take their own lives after being confronted by their guilt or through others within their community.

The first story is about a slave who became attracted to his owner's wife. He misguides his owner towards a cliff and stabs him from behind. After returning home, he tells the now widowed woman that it was the owner's will for her to become the slave's wife. However, after a few days, the slave's guilt takes over and he confesses. He then ties a string high onto the ceiling with a sword attached to it facing down. Cutting the string loose, the sword fell towards the man, and he died (Tomikawa 1959, 10).[8]

In the second story, a man is convicted of a crime and is given two options: have him be killed or face his own death. The man chooses the latter. He then places a dagger upright on the ground, loudly confesses his wrongdoings, and then throws himself onto the blade (Tomikawa 1959, 10).

These two stories illustrate a unique dimension of punishment within Ainu communities. It is again the individual nature in which such actions are taken, a form of "self-execution" (Manning 2020). Although we see elements of coercion in the second story, the two men approach their wrongdoings and confessions voluntarily. As such, while chiefs and groups of leaders may come together to discuss how to manage a crime – as seen in Kayano's account – it seems as if disputes, conflicts, and even punishment were taken up on a much smaller and individual scale, again undermining the power chiefs may wield over communities. Such individualistic actions to resolve conflicts will be further examined in the next section, where we see groups fissioning and dispersing in response to disputes or trouble.

Mobility and Keeping the State Away: Positioning, Tribute, and Rice

This section will discuss the mobility of different Ainu groups, the role fissioning played in keeping state power away, and the political savviness Ainu groups display in the historical records kept by neighboring states. This discussion will further include why Ainu groups did not cultivate large-scale agriculture, especially wet-rice cultivation, and how such practices worked to further manage relations with states.

Mobility, Positioning, and Dispersal

The nuclear family (sometimes extended into the elderly) was the basic unit of Ainu groups, while settlements or local groups often consisting of about five families. Some larger-scale settlements existed, especially in southern Hokkaidō, yet these groups did not constitute one single political entity (Ohnuki-Tierney 1976). Although the population size was not kept intentionally, a variety of cultural practices kept groups small and on the move.

First, we can point to the prolonged periods between pregnancies and male-female separation. As Ohnuki-Tierney writes:

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> Prolonged intervals between pregnancies also meant that women functioned for a longer period in their subsistence economic tasks during their fertile years.... The above-mentioned use of hunting huts, which was observed by all the Ainu but most extensively by the Hokkaidō Ainu, also served to separate the men from the women, thereby reducing the number of pregnancies.... The taboo against menstrual and parturient blood also prohibited copulation during a woman's menstrual period, post-partum period, etc.; however, during these periods women are not fertile. Of course, the rate of accidental death was quite high for males who engaged in hunting and fishing. Above all, disease claimed many victims among the population, and infant mortality was quite high (Ohnuki-Tierney 1976, 310).

To balance these population levelling or decreasing events, Ohnuki-Tierney further suspects that the Ainu ideal of a larger population seems to have stabilized the population level. The loss of members may have also been compensated through the adoption of external members into the family, as seen in more recent openness of Ainu families taking in unwanted Japanese children (*kuchiberashi*) and/or escaped Korean laborers during the Japanese Imperial rule (Siddle 2012; Seok 2017).

Second, Ainu groups often split either due to internal conflict or marriage. Such group splitting not only serves to undermine the authority of a chief of a group, but can also make efforts by neighboring states to subjugate such groups difficult. As seen historically, especially within Japanese state creation, keeping populations within a manageable core was key to state stability and a precursor to state expansion (Barnes 2007; Bassino and Takashima 2014; Hudson 1999b).

Third, although unique to Sakhalin Ainu, seasonal changes in settlements meant more movement by Ainu groups. Due to the climatic and ecological differences between Hokkaidō and Sakhalin, groups on Sakhalin moved between coastal settlements and inland settlements as the season and availability of resources shifted (Ohnuki-Tierney 1976). Such additional mobility may have contributed to the late incorporation of Sakhalin groups into state authority compared to that of their sedentary counterparts in Hokkaidō.

Last, one unique practice conducted when Ainu groups move comes to mind. It is well known that whenever a family or settlement moves out of an area due to illness, death, or other reasons, they break all material goods that will be left behind (Ohnuki-Tierney 1974; Yamada 2001). Although spiritually, such practices were believed to keep demons from entering the goods and later haunting the Ainu, it also has some practical value in avoiding raids and state incorporation. Not only did such practices leave Ainu groups light and mobile, they also periodically decreased the material accumulation within, again, stripping anyone who attempts to wield excess material power of their authority.

Tribute

In addition to such population control and movement of Ainu groups, their use of tribute also requires our attention. Although tribute is often portrayed as a sign of non-state inferiority and subjugation, this is often only representative of one side of the coin. Tribute can be seen as a form of political accommodation for the prosperity of both groups involved. The Ainu tributary relationship with the Yuan Dynasty offers an interesting example.

The Ainu “subjugation” to the Yuan Dynasty after decades of conflict is often explained by

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the imbalance of manpower and military might. However, it is curious to see how little attention has been given to the "non-state problem" the Yuan had at their backdoor and how this coincides with the Yuan-Ainu relationship.

It is now generally acknowledged that the "*Guwei*" seen in the recorded history of the Yuan Dynasty designates the Sakhalin Ainu (Hudson 1999b, 226; Emori 2005, 46). According to these records, the *Guwei* (or *Ku-yi*) caused many problems to the various peoples in Sakhalin and further inland along the Amur River. These disturbances were raids directed by Ainu groups to obtain goods – such as eagle feathers – to trade with the newly appointed Ando family at Tosaminato. By this time, the Yuan had attempted to control the various nomadic groups here by instituting methods such as banning the use of bows to hunt and dispersing social units. As Emori (2005) discusses, such efforts were most likely to prevent rebellions erupting from a place that has historically been a point of conflict for the Mongols.

In 1264, responding to the Ainu raids, Kublai Khan sent military support to fend off such attacks and subjugate the Ainu. After failing to quell the Ainu attacks due to the lack of cohesion among the various groups in the Yuan army, the lack of climactic understanding of the region, and the military might of the Ainu (who also made ties with some local groups), in 1286, they sent a larger army of "10,000 troops and 1,000 ships" (Emori 2005, 49) to put an end to such chaos. It is recorded that it took another two decades of conflict for the Ainu groups to "submit" themselves to the Yuan in 1308. A few interesting ideas can be suggested through this 44-year conflict between the Yuan and the Ainu.

Following these events, it is questionable if the Ainu – and the various peoples in the area for that matter – were actually subjugated and/or incorporated into the Yuan state polity. The constant mobility of the nomadic groups was the problem at the back of the Mongol frontier and later Yuan as they continued to expand towards the southwest (Emori 2005, 61). In contrast, it seems that the Ainu and Yuan came to some form of an agreement for hunting and trade in the form of tribute.

It is known that one of the main reasons for these Ainu raids was to obtain goods to trade with the Japanese states. Such goods included feathers, live eagles, otter pelts, dried fish, etc which were increasing in value among the Japanese aristocrats (Emori 2005, 56). In contrast to this, the Yuan needed such conflicts at their back to subside, so greater focus and resources can be devoted to other endeavors (Rossabi 1988; Weatherford 2004). After nearly half a century of battles and the expenditure of various resources, it is likely that the Yuan was eager to stop such raids. Could it be that the Ainu reversed the method of forcing a state into trading relations, just like Kublai Khan himself and his predecessors did for generations? By agreeing to a "tributary relationship," both parties gained what they wanted.

As such, the Ainu were a politically savvy society that utilized the productive capacity of states to enrich their own lives and trade relationships with others. They kept the state projects away from encroaching into their lives through various cultural methods that maintained their small and mobile population, while entering trading relationships to take advantage of the state manpower themselves.

Using the State: Rice and Production

As seen in the section above, the Ainu utilized the productive powers of the state by conducting trade to obtain valuable goods for further economic and religious activities. However, among such traded goods, rice and

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rice products (such as *sake*) are worth focusing on separately. The widespread consumption of rice among Ainu groups – as seen through ethnographic studies and various sites where flotation and other archaeobotanical analysis have been conducted (Crawford 2008; 2011) – offers another unique perspective into the relationship between Ainu groups and the Japanese state.

Rice, especially rice wine (*sake*), held a key position in much of Ainu activity. In sending-back rituals, prayers, and even before hunting or gathering, rice wine was offered and/or drunk (Ohnuki-Tierney 1976; Segawa 2019). Archaeological sites dating back to the Satsumon indicate that such products were not locally cultivated but obtained through trade with the Japanese state (Segawa 2019).

The importance of wet-rice cultivation to early state creation and the Japanese worldview are well known (Amino 2012; Ohnuki-Tierney 1993; Scott 2007). However, as Ohnuki-Tierney (1993) shows, rice was not widely consumed by non-elites within the Japanese state hierarchy. Furthermore, rice was almost exclusively consumed by elite and upper-class merchants until the 20th century in northeastern Honshu (Ohnuki-Tierney 1993, 40). As such, "rice has been a dominant metaphor of the Japanese [state] but *not* because rice was *the* food to fill the stomach" (Ohnuki-Tierney 1993, 4-5).[9] In reflection of such history, we will attempt to address two questions: 1) Why did the Ainu not cultivate rice or large-scale agriculture? 2) And what could be inferred from the role rice played in the Ainu worldview in reflection of the elevated status it played within the Japanese state?

The lack of large-scale agriculture and an assumed "state-like" political structure associated with it has often been highlighted in the analysis of Jomon, Satsumon, and Ainu cultures (Hudson 2022, 17). A variety of arguments are made as to why this is the case.

Some have argued that the climate and ecology simply could not accommodate large-scale agricultural societies,[10] although such claims have been thoroughly refuted by Crawford (2008; 2010). What is notable among such claims is the "rice-centric" definition of agriculture, which no doubt is deeply connected with the relationship of Japanese self-identity, state-creation, and rice (Ohnuki 1993). Alternatively, Takahashi Ryuzaburou (2009) offers an interesting perspective in the analysis of Jomon populations that did not partake in the growing rice paddy agricultural systems from the Yayoi period onward:

> [I]t is possible that the introduction of a new agricultural economy was perceived as a threat to the maintenance of leaders' social rank and authority. The two political systems – Jomon and Yayoi – were too different to assimilate into one system, suggesting that Jomon leaders may not have been willing to accept the transition until they found a compromise solution. In my opinion, this solution is likely to have taken the form of introducing paddy-field farming as one among the many existing diversified Jomon subsistence activities (Takahashi 2009, 88).

Although such theoretical developments in understanding the sociopolitical complexity of Jomon groups are exciting, a far simpler proposition is put forward here: wet-rice farming was simply not worth their time. To borrow from Pierre Clastres's classic idea:

> [S]ome peoples did not acquire agriculture even though it was ecologically feasible, it was not because they were incompetent,

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> technologically backward, or culturally inferior, but, more simply, because they have no need of it (Clastres 1987, 201).

Jomon groups did not need to center their lives around agriculture, as they could simply trade with such wet-rice societies to obtain their produce (Barnes 2007). A similar argument can be made for the Ainu. As observed through various ethnographic studies, the Ainu spent a substantial amount of time on leisurely and spiritual activities.[11] What time would they be willing to give up for a "useless excess?" (Clastres 1987, 195) Additionally, by not cultivating large-scale agriculture - especially rice - it makes state subjugation and incorporation more difficult as they are not rooted in place throughout the year taking care of the crops. However, although the Ainu did not cultivate large-scale agriculture, they took advantage of the productive capacities of neighboring states.

In an analysis of the change in chieftain status among Hokkaidō Ainu groups, Godefroy (2017) shows how Ainu chiefs (or people involved in trade with Japanese states) were aware of the complexity of Japanese authority, hierarchy, and most importantly, how to gain the most out of such trade or tributary trip. If we are to take this socio-political awareness seriously, it is possible to further suggest that the symbolic and spiritual importance of rice was no accident. Could it be that Ainu chiefs or leaders used rice to elevate their own status to that of the Japanese elite?

Further Hypothesis: Orality, Gender Roles, and a Tradition of State Evasion

In this final section, additional cultural and historical dimensions that could further enrich our understanding of the Ainu culture and its ethnogenesis are explored.

Orality and Names

Let us begin by revisiting a classic idea from Claude Levi-Strauss:

> Writing appears to be necessary for the centralized, stratified state to reproduce itself.… Writing is a strange thing… The only phenomenon with which writing has always been concomitant is the creation of cities and empires, that is, the integration of large numbers of individuals in a political system and their grading into castes or classes… *It seems to have favored the exploitation of human beings rather than their enlightenment.* (Levi-Strauss 2012, 391-393, emphasis added).

What can be learned from this? Is it any coincidence that states use writing and those at their periphery did not? Are we to ignore the state and colonial ties of the perception that writing and literacy is a marker of general intelligence? Here, like this entire article, we will borrow from Scott's suggestion that people once considered barbaric and backward are "*post*-literate" and that "there was an active or strategic dimension to this abandonment of the world of texts and literacy" (Scott 2009, 220). There is no need to reiterate Scott's analysis of an oral culture in response to state encroachment and evasion. Instead, we will discuss how the orality of the Ainu culture seems to be an oral culture by choice, not because the Matsumae or other Japanese states did not allow them to learn to read or write.

Taking inspiration from Levi-Strauss again, let us turn to the folklore and myths of the Ainu. In a collection of stories from the Sakhalin Ainu, we see a rare story that deals explicitly with writing and orality:

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> At the beginning of the world, Yayresupo, the culture hero, had a rabbit as a messenger. There also was a deity who created the world, although he was neither an Ainu deity or a Japanese deity.

One time the creator deity wanted to teach the Ainu writing and tell them to use coal for fuel. He wrote the instructions on a note which he gave to the rabbit to deliver to the Ainu. On the way to the Ainu, the rabbit rested in the sun and then started to masturbate. Then another deity went behind him and shouted at him. The rabbit was surprised and ran away leaving the note behind. While running the rabbit said, 'The Ainu are supported to make fire with coal; the Japanese are supported to make fire with wood' (Ohnuki-Tierney 1969, 164).

As additional commentary, Ohnuki-Tierney contrasts this story with the Gilyak version of why they do not have writing:

> A Gilyak, an Orok, a Japanese and a "Kiren" were in a boat. A storm started suddenly and they quickly pulled their boat to the shore. As they landed, the sun came out. Then, each of them took from his bosom a notebook with writing on it, but a strong wind blew away all three notebooks, leaving only the notebook of the Japanese. This is why only the Japanese kept the knowledge of writing, whereas others no longer have it (Ohnuki-Tierney 1969, 165).

First, it is intriguing that the Ainu cultural hero – who is said to have taught the Ainu all necessities of life, including trade (Godefroy 2017; Sakata 2011) – was not the one who decided to provide the Ainu with writing, but it was relayed through an external deity. Additionally, using the rabbit – who is often a trickster – to transmit the teachings of writing and coal seems to foreshadow a twist at the end of the story. As such, this story shows the Ainu culture as a non-literate society in contrast to being illiterate; if the Ainu hero did not teach it, they had no use for such practices. This sense of non-literacy (or orality) is expanded into a post-literate society with the Gilyak story. In this tale, the four people can be seen to all possess forms of writing, and all lost it except for the Japanese.

What are we to make of such oral societies who see writing as something not important or lost in the past? Let us explore this question through the names the Ainu gave themselves and their environment in contrast to the Japanese.

One key way the ritsuryō state maintained its records was by providing paddy fields with two-character names that reflected the legal owner (Amino 2012, 8). Naming a place provides powerful means of creating "entities that did not previously exist" (Scott 2009, 229). In contrast to such naming practices, the Ainu names given to land, mountains, rivers, and others are extremely ambiguous. Some common examples are "*Poro-pet*" (Large River), "*Yam-pet*" (Cold River), or "*O-to-i-nep*" (Place Where Ramps Grow). These names were taken on by the Japanese as they colonized Hokkaidō, such as Sapporo, which means "Dry Large River" (Segawa 2019). Such ambiguous and fluid names are even given to people.

Unlike the Japanese, who often took on the legal names of paddy fields as surnames that remained unchanged (or as Scott puts it, creating an orthodox), the Ainu naming practices are highly fluid. Children continuing the name of their parents is considered taboo (Ueda 2019), and people took on different names at various stages during their lifetime.

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Batchelor tells a unique experience he had of being a name-giver for young children as well as to a young girl who was sick. According to Batchelor, people change their name when it is believed to have brought bad luck, sickness, or when two people held the same name (Batchelor 1971, 229-242). In addition, some names were taboo to pronounce, such as of a husband or people of old age, "and the Ainu resort extensively to teknonymy" (Ohnuki-Tierney 1974, 81). However, such descriptive names are also used widely to refer to other people, regardless of the taboo.

As seen in the various naming practices of the Ainu, such orality allows for great fluidity and ambiguity. This can be expanded upon into the various hero epics, origin stories, and folktales that we see a great diversity of among various Ainu groups. Unlike the myths of Japan that were quickly written down alongside the creation of the state, the Ainu myths greatly fluctuated within a given structural system that utilized similar ideas, characters, and settings to convey various stories fitting for the occasion (Scott 2009, 232). As such, the oral nature of Ainu culture can be used as a partial explanation as to why defining the Ainu culture is always lacking in a perceived "authenticity."

Unlike a literate culture that inevitably creates a division between those who can write an orthodox, rigid, and demanding history, the oral culture of the Ainu discourages such historical centralization. As Scott writes:

> How much history a people have, far from indicating their low stage of evolution, is always an active choice, one that positions them vis-à-vis their powerful text-based neighbors (Scott 2009, 237).

Gender Roles

A fundamental aspect of the Ainu culture not examined up to this point in this article is the delineation of gender roles and how this impacted the sociopolitical structure of various social units. The role of women in the more recent resistance to Wajin encroachment, colonization, and cultural revitalization has been extensively reported upon.[12] However, examining the role such gender division played (other than the exclusivity of chiefdom to men) in state evasion and resistance is beyond the current capacity of the author. Therefore, only a preliminary analysis of gender, specifically women and their roles will be done here.

As noted earlier, women and men were distinctly divided between the roles they took on within an Ainu society. From sustenance, religious, and even linguistic practices, the split was quite clear. Furthermore, gender and age were used to divide physical placements within homes and during ceremonies, as well as the names one took on.

Although the hierarchy seen in the seating within a house, ritual practices, and patrilocal (parti-matrilocal in Sakhalin) marriages seem to undermine the agency of women within Ainu settlements (Ohnuki-Tierney 1974; 1976), there are other cultural practices that seem to have created a coalition of women that may suggest otherwise.

The divide between roles in production and subsistence seems to be the most evident of functions. As a general rule, men hunted and traded, while women and other people who did not hunt stored food and gathered plants. This division created extended periods of time where the two genders were separated. Men would go live in remote hunting huts while women (as well as children) would remain together as a group (Ohnuki-Tierney 1976, 309). Again, this stark contrast between individual men and the group is striking.

Among such divides, the practice of tattooing can also be seen through such lenses of

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solidarity and coalition creation. The tattooing of an Ainu woman has been long recognized as a crucial symbolic cultural practice among various Ainu groups. Most notably done around the mouth, but tattooing was also done on different parts of the body such as the forearms. Furthermore, tattooing was also done on men, although the purpose seems to be quite distinct. The mouth tattoo has had various reasons attached to it; however, this article will focus on one particular reason: to have divine protection by inserting *ape-kamuy*'s ashes. As it can be inferred, tattooing was done by pricking the skin and inserting ashes of bark to color the skin underneath. Although variations do exist, such as utilizing material obtained from trade, *ape-kamuy* played a significant symbolic role of the tattoo. The completion of the tattoo signified womanhood and beauty, especially in relation to marriage. It was even considered taboo for a man to marry a woman whose tattoo was not complete (Segawa 2019). The tattooing of a woman can be seen as a form of initiation into womanhood, especially as the tattooing process is said to be quite painful. Or as Clastres (1987) puts it, "in the initiatory right, society imprints its mark on the body" (184). However, it is further suggested here that tattooing – and other forms of activities exclusive to women – were used to create greater solidarity among women in a group. This, in turn, thwarts the dominance men may wish to exert.

Lastly, it must be noted that this division of labor was not a divisive mechanism, but a form of collaboration that ensured the success of the community. If the women prepared the clothes and food for a man to go hunt, we cannot attribute all the success solely to the man (cf. Bodenhorn 1990). This codependence certainly was an equalizing force, especially when the whole participation of everyone in such small Ainu communities was vital (Ohnuki-Tierney 1976, Scott 2009).

The purpose of this section was to review the logic that the supposed chief/man centered rituals or divide of the Ainu culture undermined the agency of women, but in many ways, isolated the chief/man and undermined their potentially coercive intent.

A Tradition of State Evasion?

To expand the temporal and geographic scope of this analysis, let us explore the theoretical possibility that there is a long-standing tradition of state evasion on the Japanese islands. Such proposals have been put forth and explored extensively before. Most notable among is the work of Philipp Franz von Siebold, who made a connection between the people who opposed the colonization of Emperor Jinmu, the Jomon, and the Ainu (Hudson 1999b, 32; Siebold 1930). How this approach differs from such past speculations must be clearly stated.

Unlike the above arguments that see both an emic and etic continuation from pre-Jinmu aboriginal peoples to the Ainu, the argument here is that with the emergence of a state, the "dark-twin" of non-state societies was born. Such non-state peoples are not 'primitive barbarians,' but, as argued in this article, are people who intentionally positioned themselves in relation to the state to avoid subjugation while also benefiting from the increased productive capacity of states. As Owen Lattimore writes:

> From the moment civilization began to evolve… it recruited into civilization some of the people who had land and displaced others and the effect on those who were displaced [was] that… they modified their own economic practices and experimented with new kinds of specialization and they also evolved new forms of social cohesion and political organization, and new ways of

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> fighting. Civilization itself created its own barbarian plague (Lattimore 1962, 504; from Scott 2017, 249).

It is well known that the early Japanese states faced the same semiotic twin on the other side of their walls, rivers, or mountains. Crucial parts of the early histories of the Yamato kingdom were concerned with subjugating and quelling their Emishi neighbors (Friday 1997). It is almost impossible to reconstruct the sociopolitical tensions and unique cultures that existed outside the state at this time, however, it can be theorized that various groups labeled as "Emishi" positioned themselves in response to the state and their own needs. Some – such as those who became the Fushu[13] – ceded to the Japanese state, while others fled from the state due to various reasons we explored above. There was also constant internal tension, notably of rebellions, marooning (Steele, Paik, Tanaka 2017), and importantly, creating spaces of freedom inside state boundaries (Amino 1996).[14] The same may be hypothesized about the Okhotsk culture in relation to earlier Chinese dynasties (Vasilevski 2021), although less well documented archaeologically and historically, connections can be made between the various Siberian populations and their relations with various states.

In between these historical lines, there may have been a culture being rooted within and transmitted throughout various societies that systemically and culturally were "totally invested in the rejection of power" (Clastres 1987, 44). Furthermore, if we take into account the northern flow of state-evading peoples, the geographic area of *Ainu-moshir* may be considered a shatter-zone: a region of refuge from state control marked by geographic inaccessibility and cultural heterogeneity (Scott 2009, 7). Though it will be difficult to thoroughly back this claim through archaeological, historical, or ethnographic material, having this perspective when reading and evaluating the history of the Japanese islands will be a powerful tool in understanding the movement of early societies; state and non-state peoples alike.

Agency and Autonomy in the Modern Period

Although this article largely deals with the incipient and early Ainu period, it is fitting to briefly discuss ideas developed here applied to the modern period. There is no doubt that the Ainu have continued to seek out greater sociopolitical autonomy, notably from Shakushain's revolt which ended with many Ainu communities under heavy control by the Matsumae clan and even Wajin merchants (Kiyama 1979; Walker 2001). Further control was instated as the Meiji government rose to power at the end of the 19th century (Siddle 2012), alongside a reinforcement of narratives regarding the homogeneity among Japanese citizens (Befu 2001; Oguma 1995).

Although the process and method are different, the modern fight for further political autonomy, respect for human rights, and cultural revitalization continue the resistance of the Ainu people against the Japanese state (Hudson, lewallen, and Watson 2013; lewallen 2016; Nicholas 2022; Uemura and Gayman 2018). One recent example of such activity is the fight for fishing rights by Ainu leaders and the return of ancestral bones that were stolen from Ainu graves (lewallen 2007; Oda 2018).

See news coverage of an Ainu leader from Monbetsu regarding fishing rights here.

Conclusion

This article has argued that the ethnogenesis of the Ainu culture was intimately tied to the

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northern encroachment of the Japanese state. Such relations were not purely economic and transactional as previously hypothesized, but also triggered a large socio-politico-cultural shift towards state-evasion and resistance. From the structure of power, trade, economic production, conflict resolution, tribute, orality, naming practices, and more, it is argued that the Ainu culture is best understood as societies *against* a state, not without. Similarly, the difficulty in pointing to and defining the Ainu culture to a single historical period, religious activity, or cultural complex is difficult precisely because the culture itself rejects such rigidity and centralized theory.

As such, this proposal of a culture against a state itself is not all-encompassing nor meant to homogenize the great diversity of the peoples we call the Ainu. Furthermore, to clearly define a culture that continues to evolve, thrive, and resist the pen of the state, is feeding into the beast this article is precisely attempting to challenge. This written article too changes and fixates upon a flawed, inauthentic, and falsely orthodox view of the Ainu culture and history. The main idea here is that the Ainu culture has been an intentional choice against subjugation and exploitation; both internally and externally. Moreover, this culture has shrewdly positioned itself against a state to capitalize on its productiveness to enrich its own culture and lifestyle.

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Notes

[1] The same can be argued for Emishi/Satsumon groups, regardless of their ethnicity (Japanese or not).
[2] *Ainu-moshir* means "Land of the Ainu," which covers areas of Hokkaidō, Sakhalin, the Kurile Islands, Southern Kamchatka, and North Honshū.
[3] See Walker 2001 and Siddle 2012.
[4] Some examples that illustrate this is the "Shakushain Memorial Festival" held yearly in Shinhidaka Town. Additionally, it is common to see various depictions of Shakushain in arts, crafts, and gifts in Ainu themed shops.
[5] See lewallen 2016; Siddle 2012; Walker 2001; Watson 2014 for texts in English.
[6] See Ohnuki-Tierney 1976 and Eddy 2019.
[7] This generalization does not apply to all Ainu groups across time and space. Certainly, some Ainu groups seem to have grown dependent upon traded goods as the presence of the Wajin polity expanded in the 17th century (See Walker 2001).
[8] Tomikawa hypothesizes that these stories occurred sometime in the mid-Edo period, which may suggest a Japanese influence. There are other cases seen in Tomikawa's study with clearer signs of Japanese influence, such as Ainu men resorting to seppuku. See Tomikawa (1959) pages 11-21.
[9] The word 'state' is added to emphasize that it was the Japanese state which controlled and consumed rice – both physically and symbolically – while those at the lower ranks consumed other foods.
[10] See Bellwood 2004.
[11] Seen most explicitly in Ohnuki-Tierney 1976.
[12] See Hudson, lewallen, and Watson 2013; lewallen 2016; Roche, Maruyama, and Kroik 2018; Siddle 2012.
[13] Former Emishi who were captured or submitted to the state.
[14] See Amino 2007 for an English version of similar ideas.

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