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The Sacred Landscape of Ainu Culture and its Cultural Landscapes: Case Study on the Conservation Strategy in Biratori City, Hokkaido

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ABSTRACT

The primary aim of this paper is to outline the cultural landscapes associated with the Ainu people and their culture, as well as the characteristics of tourism leveraging these landscapes, in Biratori Town in the Hidaka region of Japan's Hokkaido Prefecture. Such landscapes incorporate, as an integral part, sacred places of the Ainu, an indigenous people of Japan located mainly in Hokkaido. In particular, the Cultural Landscape along the Sarugawa River Resulting from Ainu Tradition and Modern Settlement has been designated as an Important Cultural Landscape by the Japanese government. Initiatives to preserve and utilize cultural landscapes associated with the Ainu as cultural properties enhance the value of local landscapes, and also have major significance as part of a regional promotion policy and motions for ethnic communities.

Section 1 begins with an outline of sacred places in traditional Ainu culture based on examples, and details previous relevant research and studies. This is followed by a summary of views regarding the meanings of the words "sacred" and "places" and related concepts. In Section 2, the overall initiatives taken to preserve sacred places and cultural landscapes, in consideration of the relationship between such places and development of the region's cultural landscapes, are discussed. Section 3 illustrates the involvement of local residents in cultural tourism leveraging cultural landscapes and details the prospects and challenges that lie ahead.

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It was only after the 1997 enactment of the Ainu Culture Promotion Act that national and local government policies on the Ainu began to change drastically from the forced assimilation implemented in the Meiji period to an approach involving Ainu cultural promotion. In addition, only relatively recently (2004) the Act on Protection of Cultural Properties was amended to cover cultural landscapes, and a limited research has been conducted connecting Ainu culture and cultural landscapes. As a result, sacred places and cultural landscapes of the indigenous Ainu people, which are based on their unique traditional view of nature (e.g., the concept that nothing descends to the earth from the world of the deities without a job to do), have rarely been highlighted as valuable cultural heritage sites either in Japan or elsewhere.

Against this background, Biratori Town seeks to implement its own measures and projects for the preservation of cultural landscapes associated with the Ainu in keeping with national policies. The town promotes cultural tourism programs, eco-tourism courses and other projects in which the Ainu culture's preservers play central roles, while working to improve the quality of local cultural resources in collaboration with the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, the Agency for Cultural Affairs, the Forestry Agency and other national government bodies. One of the main pillars of these initiatives is the preservation and utilization of cultural landscapes related to Ainu culture; other pillars include the revival of Ainu culture with focus on ways of living and the promoting the regional development, along with encouragement of active participation by Ainu, other local residents, and their collaboration with experts.

These initiatives form and expand the foundations of today's social environment for the preservation of religious activities involving sacred places (e.g., *ci-nomi-sir*) and sacred landscapes. This indicates the potential for traditional Ainu living spaces, which are based on the traditional Ainu spiritual culture, to support various forms of initiatives and relationships and to be sustained as ethnic harmonic spaces. The authors hope that cultural landscapes related to Ainu culture will come to be regarded as part of the major trend of international and interdisciplinary research and practice, and that research will progress in this area of study.

Keywords: Ainu; Cultural Landscape; Sacred Space; Iwor; Biratori

この論考は日本の北海道日高地方平取町域におけるアイヌ民族・文化に関わるカルチュラル・ランドスケープ（以下、C.L. と略）の概要とそれを用いた文化観光の試みの紹介を主な目的としている。北海道を中心に居住する先住民族アイヌの「聖なる空間」を重要な構成要素に含むこのC.L. は、＜アイヌの伝統と近代開拓による沙流川流域の文化的景観＞として国の重要文化的景観として選定された。アイヌ文化に関連したC.L. を文化財として保存・活用する試みは、景観の価値を高めるとともに、地域振興政策そして民族的コミュニティに対する政策としても有意義である。

1章ではまず、伝統的文化における「聖なる空間」について事例を通じて略説、あわせて先行の調査・研究を確認し、次には「聖なる」と「空間」が表すと言辞と概念の問題に

ついでの見解を提示した。2章では、「聖なる空間」と地域のC.L.形成との関係性をふまえた保全の取組の状況を俯瞰した。その上で3章では、地域住民を担い手とする主体が、C.L.を活かした文化観光にどう関与しているのかという問題について例示し、それらをふまえた上で、今後の展望と課題を探った。

明治以降の同化志向の基調からアイヌ文化振興へと、国・地方公共団体の政策がドラスティックに転換を始めたのは、1997年の「アイヌ文化の振興並びにアイヌの伝統等に関する知識の普及及び啓発に関する法律」制定以後だ。加えて、文化財保護法がC.L.を位置づけて改正されたのは2004年と比較的新しい。したがって、アイヌ文化とC.L.を関連付けた研究・実践に関する蓄積は未だ不十分な状況にある。そのため、「天から役目なしに降ろされたものは一つもない」とのユニークな伝統的自然観を基礎にした先住民族アイヌに関わる「聖なる空間」やC.L.が、国内外において価値ある文化遺産として紹介されることは今までほとんどなかった。

このような状況の中で平取町は、国の政策と調整を図りつつも、独自の施策・事業を加えて展開しようとしている。国の省庁、国土交通省、文化庁、林野庁などの各種事業連携によって地域資源の質的な向上を図るとともに、アイヌ文化の担い手を中心とした文化観光、エコ・ツーリズム等の企画を進めているのである。ここでは、アイヌ文化に関連したC.L.の保全・活用が主要な柱の一つである。また、生活文化としての側面を重視しながらアイヌ文化の再構築と地域振興を図ること、アイヌの人たちをはじめとする地域住民の主体的参画と専門家との協働を不可欠とすることが、共に原則として重視されている。

これらを通じ、チノミシリ等の「聖なる空間」「聖なる景観」に関わる精神的な営みが今日的な社会環境のもとで受け継がれる基盤が形成され拡充しつつある。アイヌの伝統的精神文化を基本としながらも、多様な志向や関わり方を許容し、共存できる空間として持続的に継承・発展していく可能性が広がっているのである。今後、アイヌに関わるC.L.が国際的・学際的な研究と実践の大きな潮流の中に位置づけられ、当該分野の研究が進むことに期待したい。

Keywords: アイヌ; 文化的景観; 聖なる空間; Iwor (イオル); 平取

Introduction

Scope and aims

The purpose of this article is to clarify the potential of tourism offered by cultural landscapes in the city of Biratori (**Figure 1**) in the Hidaka region of Japan's Hokkaido Prefecture, where many landscapes still incorporate, as an integral part, the sacred places of the Ainu, an indigenous people of Japan mainly settled in Hokkaido region. In particular, the Cultural Landscape along the Sarugawa River Resulting from Ainu Tradition and Modern Settlement has been designated as Japan's third Important Cultural Landscape by the Japanese government (**Figure 2**).

The initiatives to preserve cultural landscapes with the Ainu as cultural properties highlight the regional association and therefore enhance the value of local landscapes, and the major significance as part of regional policy in relation to landscape preservation and utilization.



Figure 2: Biratori and Nibutani, a focal point of Ainu culture

Source: personal picture

Located on the south-central part of the Pacific Ocean side of Hokkaido, Biratori is a basic municipality with a population of over 5,000 people. Woods, pastureland, paddies and crop fields, as well as villages and urban areas, extend along the Sarugawa River, which runs through the central part of the town. The first settlement in the lands of Biratori is believed to have occurred during the Paleolithic Age, which was then followed by the Jomon culture, the Satsumon culture, and the medieval and early-modern Ainu culture in subsequent periods. In contrast to other parts of Hokkaido, this region is known for its rich Ainu culture and traditions that have been passed on for

generations due the large local Ainu population, among other factors. With residents of Ainu descent accounting for 30 percent of the total population, Biratori is also set apart from other localities in Hokkaido by its range of recent Ainu-related administrative measures and associated activities.

Focusing mainly on the Biratori Town area, this paper begins with an outline of sacred places in traditional Ainu culture based on examples, and discusses previous research and studies. This is followed by a summary of views regarding the meanings of the words “sacred” and “places” and related concepts. The overall initiatives taken to preserve sacred places and cultural landscapes in consideration of the relationship between such places and development of the regional cultural landscapes, are then discussed. After that an outline of the involvement of local residents in cultural tourism leveraging cultural landscapes comes. The final part presents prospects and challenges based on the current state of initiatives in Biratori.

Few academic papers have addressed the relationship between sacred places associated with Ainu culture and related cultural landscapes, and the area of study covered by this paper is new in Japan and elsewhere. The authors hope that Ainu culture will come to be regarded as part of the major trend of international and interdisciplinary research and practice, and that research will progress in this area of study.

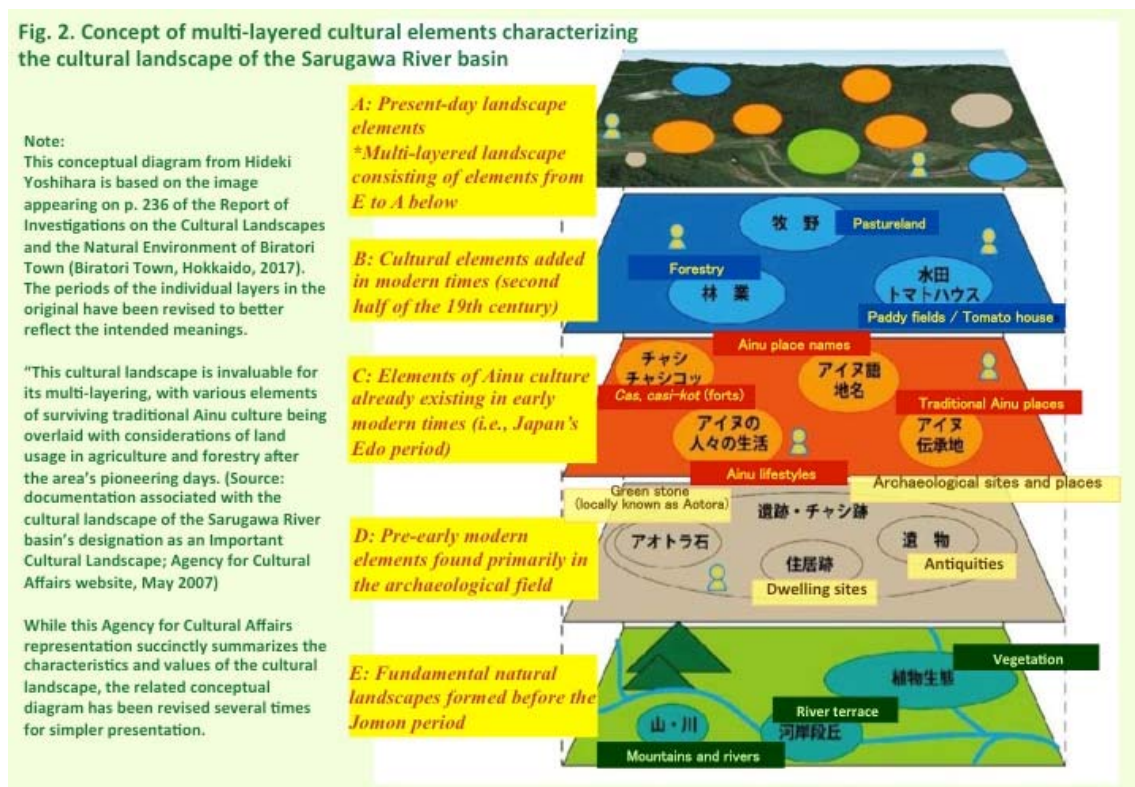


Figure 2: Concepts of multi-layered elements charatizing the cultural landscape of Sarugawa River basin
Source: personal picture

1.2 Image of sacred places in Ainu culture

Up until the 21st century, sacred places and cultural landscapes of Japan's indigenous Ainu people were rarely highlighted as valuable cultural heritage sites, especially outside Japan. However, the various aspects of Ainu cultural heritage are seen extensively in the northern part of the Japanese archipelago in places such as Hokkaido, the Kurile Islands and Sakhalin. The Ainu cultural heritage exhibits regional variety, and this paper focuses mainly on that of Biratori Town. Due to the presence of numerous sacred places within the town, this section focuses on the four described below. These are considered to most closely represent the distinctive characteristics of sacred Ainu places.

In many cases, a *ci-nomi-sir*, meaning "place where we worship," is a characteristic rocky mountain, rocky cliff or similar type of terrain that stands out from the surrounding landforms. **Figure 3** shows a *ci-nomi-sir* on the right bank of the confluence between the Nukabira River and the Shukushubetsu River in the Sarugawa River system. The term *ci-nomi-sir* also denotes a type of sacred place, as many places with similar names and characteristics are found in Hokkaido. It is used both as a proper noun and as a common noun.

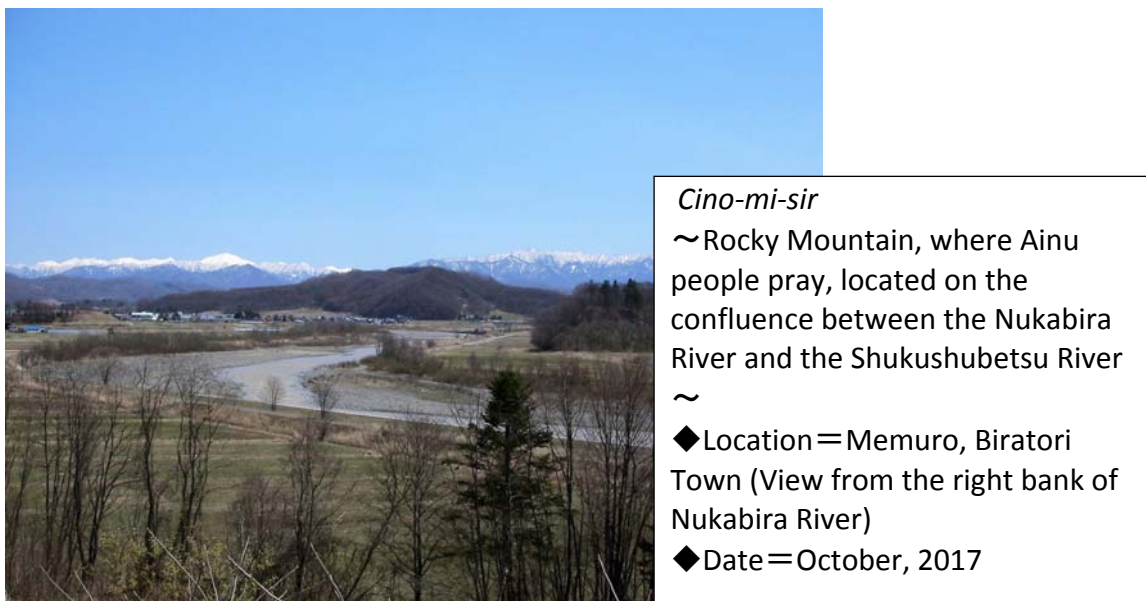


Figure 3: *Ci-nomi-sir* (we / worship / place)

Source: personal picture

There are many folk tales about the *poro-sir* (**Figure 4**, shows a view from the Nukibetsu District's Nioi Honson, an old kotan-village), including one detailing a mysterious mountaintop lake inhabited by sea creatures and another in which water flowing down the mountain, likened to breast milk, helped to subdue regional disputes. The Ainu people considered it a taboo to climb the mountain. It was an object of worship and awed those who lived in areas along the Sarugawa River and in places

where the mountain could be viewed from afar. It is the highest peak in the Hidaka mountain range, and is one of the 100 Famous Japanese Mountains.



Figure 4: *Poro-sir* (large / land [mountain])

Source: personal picture

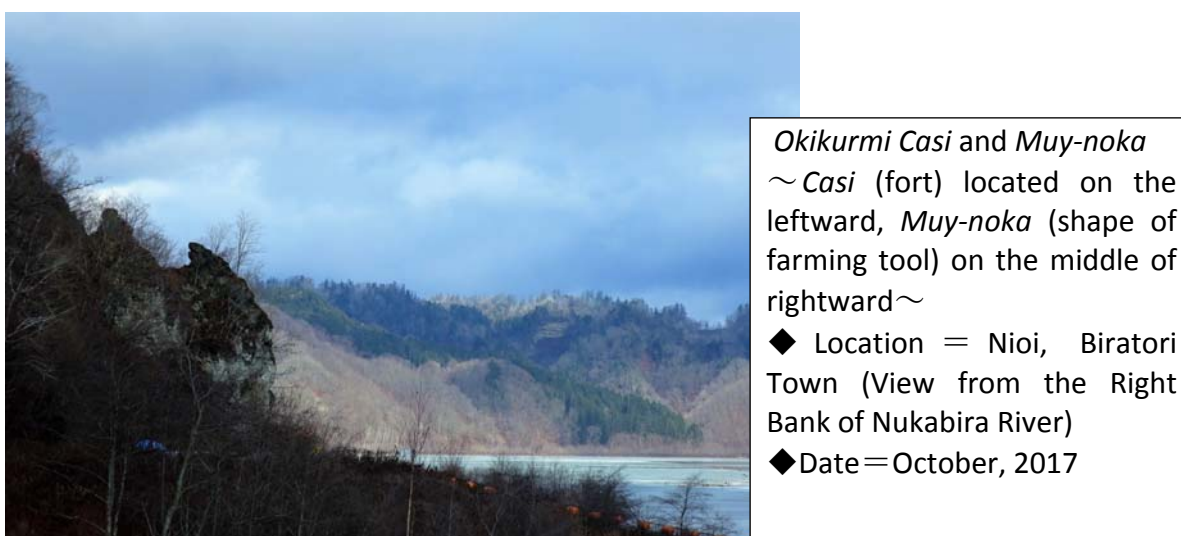


Figure 5: *Okikurmi-cas* ([deity name] / fort) and *Muy-noka* (winnow [farming tool]) / image]

Source: personal picture

Okikurmi Kamuy is a deity and a cultural hero believed to have descended from the land of deities to the land of the Ainu in olden times to teach people survival skills such as how to grow grain. The Figure 5 shows the place where *Okikurmi Kamuy's cas* (fort) is believed to have been located. Images of the farming tools his wife used, such as a winnow, a sickle and a mallet, were left on the surface of the cliff (*pira*), hence the Ainu term *muy-noka* (winnow). The **Figure 5** shows a view from the opposite bank of the

Nukabira River, a tributary of the Sarugawa River: Nukabira is derived from the Ainu term *noka-pira*, meaning a cliff image.

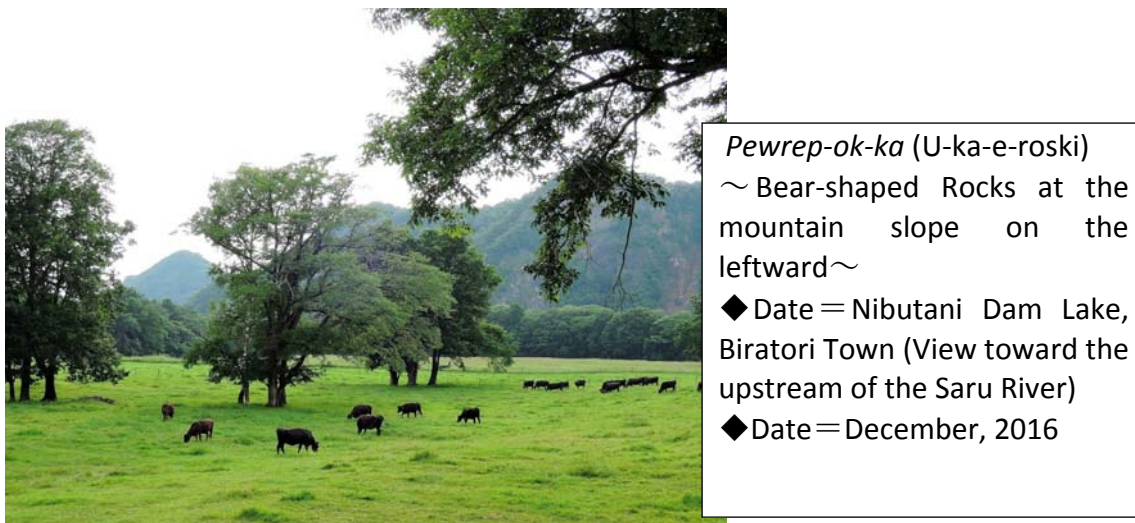


Figure 6: *Pewrep-ok-ka* (bear cub / neck / top) / *U-ka-e-roski* (one another / top / toward / stand)

Source: personal picture

The **Figure 6** shows a group of three bear-shaped rocks, which, according to folklore, were formed when a bear and its cubs refused to succumb to arrows shot by Okikurmi Kamuy to welcome them and were turned into rocks as punishment. The Ainu welcomed animals and sent back their spirits to the heavenly realm in the well-known bear spirit-sending ritual called *iomante* (bear festival). This cultural landscape also helps to raise awareness of the Ainu spiritual culture of welcoming domestic animals and sending back their spirits.

Of the above, the places (**Figure 4, 5 and 6**) may fall under the category of the *Ci-nomi-sir* (**Figure 3**) because they were also objects of worship. The Japanese government designated the places (**Figure 4 and 5**) as part of a group of Pirka Noka scenic spots in 2013 and 2014, respectively. The Figure 5 and 6 have been recognized as part of the Important Cultural Landscape selected by the Japanese government. Regarding the Figure 5, many other *ci-nomi-sir* are also within or close to the scope of Important Cultural Landscape designation.

1.3 Previous research and studies

As with sacred places, the discussions on sacred things, phenomena and related symbolism have also been held in various academic disciplines in Japan and elsewhere. Previous research in the field has included analysis¹ of Buddhist temples, Shinto shrines, gardens and other man-made sacred spaces in relation to Buddhism and other religions, and studies² highlighting sacred places such as Mt. Fuji and the Uji River in relation to elements of the natural environment.

It was only after the 1997 enactment of the Ainu Culture Promotion Act (the Act on the

Promotion of Ainu Culture, and Dissemination and Enlightenment of Knowledge about Ainu Tradition, etc.) that national and local government policies on the Ainu began to change drastically from the forced assimilation implemented in the Meiji period to an approach involving Ainu cultural promotion. It was also only relatively recently in 2004 that the Act on Protection of Cultural Properties was amended to cover cultural landscapes. Accordingly, only limited research has been conducted connecting Ainu culture and cultural landscapes. Against this background, Biratori Town's ongoing trial-and-error initiatives to preserve local cultural landscapes are truly valuable, and the positive results were outlined in reports on cultural surveys (e.g., 2006, 2007)³ conducted in the Sarugawa River basin with subsidies from the Agency for Cultural Affairs providing a basis for the future research. Recent enquiries and studies on Ainu culture in the Sarugawa River basin have included surveys on the Project for the Preservation of Ainu Cultural Environments (published since 2006)⁴ conducted by Biratori Town. The work relating to this paper includes a 2015 study on the relationship between Ainu culture and tourism by Junko Uchida of the National Museum of Japanese History and a series of research initiatives on heritage tourism by the Hokkaido University Center for Ainu and Indigenous Studies. Papers published by Hideki Yoshihara (e.g., 2009, 2011, 2012) have also focused on the strong relationship between sacred places and cultural landscapes in Biratori.

The achievements made by earlier scholars who helped to promote research on traditional Ainu culture also provided a wealth of useful insights, but did not reference sacred places, cultural landscapes and related terms/concepts (discussed in the next chapter) because they had not yet been established. In particular, this paper advanced greatly from the works of Kyosuke Kindaichi (1882 –1971), Mashiho Chiri (1909 – 1961) and Shigeru Kayano (1926 – 2006), which served extensively as reference and information resources.

2. Meanings and Concepts of Sacred Places

2.1 Views on the term sacred

An Ainu proverb that highlights traditional Ainu views of nature goes: “Nothing descends to the earth from the world of the deities without a job to do”. Such traditional views of nature are widely accepted by Ainu of all ages, including the younger generation, as the essence of their traditional spiritual culture. However, the Ainu religious activities have changed significantly since pre-modern times. The Ainu people have developed increasingly diverse religious beliefs⁵, including atheism, and their religious differences from Japanese people as a whole are largely negligible, at least superficially. Yet, many Ainu people maintain their ethnic identity. Under these changing social conditions, how should the tangible and intangible Ainu cultural heritage – notably, sacred places and cultural landscapes – be valued, preserved and utilized? To answer this question carefully in consideration of the characteristics of the Ainu culture, views presented in previous research are discussed below.

It is challenging to present systematic views on the traditional spiritual culture of the Ainu by going beyond the classic image associated with the terms “deities,” “souls” and

“spirits.” To help clarify such views, it is useful to discuss the past basic stances of the aforementioned three scholars, who have continued to exert significant impacts on the Ainu cultural studies, based on their discussions in the religious field.

Renowned linguist Kyosuke Kindaichi wrote numerous papers not only on Ainu language and oral literature but also on folklore, religion and other subjects. Now that the living environment consisting solely of the Ainu language and *Ainu puri* (Ainu customs) is gone, the information left behind by Kindaichi and other scholars of similar generations is of crucial importance. In relation to the Ainu religious life, Kindaichi essentially argued that the perception of the Ainu recognition for the divinity of all things in nature is nothing more than an academic generalization⁶. He was cautious or critical of blanket conclusions arguing that the Ainu are pantheist or animistic.

Mashiho Chiri, an Ainu linguist who studied under Kindaichi, also showed a strong interest in the Ainu folklore. In his *Ainu ni densho sareru kabushikyoku ni kansuru chosa kenkyu* (Study on the lyrics and music of songs and dance passed on by the Ainu), published in 1960, he made an assumption regarding the original significance that Ainu people placed on their song culture. Chiri maintained that, rather than being for the enjoyment, the songs represented serious efforts for the survival because they were used to intimidate and keep away various life-threatening evil spirits and call for the help of the benevolent deities⁷. After analyzing, classifying and systematizing the Ainu songs and dance, Chiri explained the origins and development of the entertainment in the relation to prayer and the religious beliefs. However, like Kindaichi, Chiri did not categorically define the souls, spirits and deities or schematize their concepts.

Shigeru Kayano, born Ainu and naturally with this ethnic culture, devoted himself to the collection and recording of huge volumes of the Ainu folk tales and everyday items, studying such resources and working to keep them available. While Kindaichi and Chiri elaborated on their views, Kayano expressed his views on the deities and other aspects of the culture in a more straightforward manner: “We [the Ainu] worshipped whatever benefitted us as a show of our gratitude...It’s not that the deities possess absolute authority; they stand on an equal footing with us, or we may actually have the upper hand...However, we can manually create or discharge such deities as necessary...We constantly revere the natural deities, such as those of the mountains, rivers and forest trees, but see ourselves on an equal footing with them.” Based on these views, Kayano maintained that such relationships with the nature formed the root of the Ainu belief system⁸.

The above are a brief outlines of the views of Kindaichi, Chiri and Kayano. A common weak characteristic of their studies is that they did not readily base their analysis of the traditional Ainu spiritual culture on the generalized assumption that the countless phenomena and everything else in nature have a spirit.

2.2 Discussion of places

As with the divinity in Ainu culture, a variety of Ainu words and concepts cover the idea of places, and the generalization of such concepts remains challenging. This section examines the Ainu terms *sir* and *iwor*, which are viewed as particularly important in

their relations to cultural landscapes.

First, *sir* is part of *ci-nomi-sir* (we / worship / place) and *poro-sir* (large / land [mountain]) as discussed above. According to *Chimei ainugo shojiten*, a brief dictionary of Ainu place names by Chiri (1956), *sir* has various meanings: (1) land, the earth, ground, place; (2) mountain; (3) forbidding mountain near water, precipitous cliff, precipice; (4) space as far as the eye can see, everywhere, ubiquitously; (5) night and day; (6) weather; (7) temperature; and (8) calm. The examination of these entries shows that *sir* means “a place” and also connotes the landscape and environment of the place⁹.

The term *iwor* was widely examined in academic surveys conducted in the 1950s. It is defined in Ainu dictionaries in various ways. The *Bunrui ainu-go jiten ningen-hen* (classified Ainu dictionary, human) by Chiri (1954) defines it as “fields and mountains; a joint hunting territory of kotan (villages)”. The *Chimei ainugo shojiten* (a brief dictionary of Ainu place names) by Chiri (1956, p.38) describes it as “a hunting or fishing ground, or an area deep in the mountains or out at sea where day-to-day items (e.g., clothes, food, fuel, construction materials) are collected”. The *Ainugo Saru hogen jiten* (a dictionary of the Saru dialect of the Ainu language) by Suzuko Tamura (1996, p.255) defines it as “a relatively flat area between mountain ridges, a mountain valley (a place for bear hunting, a hunting ground, etc.), an area deep in the mountains.” The *Kayano Shigeru no Ainu go jiten* (Shigeru Kayano’s Ainu dictionary) by Shigeru Kayano (1996, p.44) describes the *iwor* as (1) “a place deep in the mountains, a secluded mountain” and (2) “a hunting ground (a hunting territory, a favorite intermontane area)”.

The existence of the *iwor*, as well as the term *iwor* and its intrinsic concept, was first highlighted in a research report on regarding Ainu culture in the Sarugawa River basin conducted around 1950 by a joint team (including Eiichiro Ishida and Seiichi Izumi) of the Japanese Society of Ethnology (today’s Japanese Society of Cultural Anthropology). The subsequent developments were summarized by Osami Okuda (1998)¹⁰ as follows:

“The *katakana* notation *ioru* was first introduced by Mashiho Chiri in the early 1950s, and appears to have taken root because it was cited by other scholars such as Izumi (1952) and Shinichiro Takakura (1969, 1972). In the field of Ainu language studies, as Chiri corrected the spelling to *iwor* in the mid-1950s, *iwor* or *iworo* has become the standard. In the fields of the ethnology and the cultural anthropology and historical science, however, *ioru* remained in use long afterward (Okuda, 1998).

In summary, the *iwor* can be considered to represent a spatial concept meaning places for human living.

In discussions of places considered sacred by the Ainu in relation to cultural landscapes, such locations can be considered to exist in all areas accessed in day-to-day life, such as the woods, riparian zones, houses and areas around the hearth. It should be understood that the sacred places can also be created anywhere via the offering of ritual implements to the deities or various other techniques.

3. Sacred Places and Cultural Landscape Preservation

3.1 Policy measures based on the Ainu Culture Promotion Act

In line with the amended 2004 Act on Protection of Cultural Properties and a 2007 request from Biratori Town, the Japanese government designated a cultural landscape in the Sarugawa River basin for a preservation based on state law. According to the investigation report on which the designation was based, the cultural landscape of the Sarugawa River basin underwent a transformation when the *iwor* along the basin changed due to Ainu oppression, to their enforced engagement in the agriculture and other circumstances. Despite these changes, the landscape retains elements clearly showing its association with Ainu culture. The chief among these is the natural element known as *ci-nomi-sir* (places of worship) already described.

The *ci-nomi-sir* are found in various places in Hokkaido: they remain on the characteristic rocky mountains, hill ridges and elsewhere. The Sarugawa River basin is also the home to many *ci-nomi-sir*, due to a number of factors. The unique and characteristic terrain and vegetation of the Sarugawa River basin and the abundant ecosystems within the Hidaka mountain range formed the foundation of worship places; while these places were preserved and remembered for generations by families, they became diverse as numerous groups of people lived in and around the *iwor*. Even in modern times, Ainu people engaged in agriculture and forestry, cutting down trees and transforming land into the paddies, fields or pasture, as well as cutting the wood for the fuel/charcoal and raising the horses, and took up new vocations. All these factors supported the preservation of Ainu culture.

To preserve these cultural landscapes, the measures for the protection of Ainu culture are imperative above all else. Article 3 of the Ainu Culture Promotion Act, which was enacted only in 1997, states:

The national government shall endeavor to implement measures that support the promotion, etc. of Ainu culture, including the nurturing of those who will inherit it, the improvement of publicity activities concerning Ainu traditions, etc., and the promotion of research and studies contributing to the promotion, etc. of Ainu culture (Ainu Culture Promotion Act, 1997, Article 3).

The Act also provides that the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology shall formulate basic plans to ensure the promotion, etc. of Ainu culture, and designates the Foundation for Research and Promotion of Ainu Culture (FRPAC) as the juridical body implementing projects for: (1) promotion of comprehensive and practical research on the Ainu; (2) promotion of the Ainu culture, including the Ainu language; (3) revival of traditional Ainu living spaces (*iwor*); and (4) awareness raising for Ainu traditions. Among these, the revival of traditional Ainu living spaces was considered of paramount importance in terms of the promotion of areas closely associated with Ainu culture. Presently, the Japanese government has agreed with seven municipalities satisfying the requirements for service as regional centers for Ainu cultural promotion and elsewhere

in Hokkaido to promote the revival of traditional Ainu living spaces, including the potential development of cultural tourism.

After years of efforts to restore traditional Ainu living spaces, the government decided to establish the Symbolic Space for Ethnic Harmony in the town of Shiraoi in Hokkaido based on the 2009 Final Report of the Advisory Council for Future Ainu Policy. Within this space, the Agency for Cultural Affairs plans to build the National Ainu Museum and is preparing for its opening in 2020. The development of the National Park for Ethnic Harmony by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism is also under way. While the implementation of these measures is expected in effective coordination with those for the revival of traditional Ainu living spaces, the related coordination has not always been smooth. Against this background, Biratori Town seeks to implement its own measures and projects in keeping with national policies based on the preservation of cultural landscapes related to Ainu culture, to revive Ainu culture with focus on ways of living, and to promote regional development. Thus, the town engages in ongoing efforts to preserve Ainu cultural landscapes and endeavors to develop a multicultural model region.

3.2 Landscape Act and Act on Protection of Cultural Properties

Primarily the Landscape Act governs the tangible elements of the Sarugawa River basin's cultural landscape¹¹ and the Act on Protection of Cultural Properties, particularly in terms of the concept and scheme¹² for the protection of cultural properties based on Article 2. Under the 2004 Landscape Act, the local governments designated as the landscape administration bodies may determine landscape-planning areas, formulate landscape plans and impose restrictions to support the formation of favorable landscapes. Under the scheme for the protection of cultural landscapes, the national government designates important cultural landscapes within related planning areas designated by associated administration bodies if the appropriate protective measures have been taken in line with the Act on Protection of Cultural Properties. Local governments implement the protective measures, with the national government providing financial assistance and ensuring implementation of these measures.

Basic municipalities undertake the landscape administration duties. While landscape-planning areas do not necessarily cover entire spaces under their purview, the whole of Biratori is designated as a landscape planning area. Another characteristic of Biratori's landscape administration duties is that woods are designated as primary restricted areas. The town's landscape development ordinance also acknowledges the need to improve the natural environment, specifying regulations on tree felling and recommending the tree transplants and the wetland maintenance as necessary¹³. The previous research¹⁴ has not always explicitly covered how the cultural background of the preservation and utilization of woods should be dealt with under the Landscape Act, but this is an important aspect of landscape preservation in Biratori. At the site where a dam is being constructed, initiatives being undertaken to protect Ainu culture include the transplant of culturally useful plants in line with the concepts and direction of cultural landscape preservation. These initiatives are producing positive results in

helping to enhance the quality of the regional environment in combination with the various nature restoration efforts outlined below.

3.3 Cultural landscapes in other countries

The idea of preserving cultural landscapes as cultural heritage items was adopted by the World Heritage Committee, and examples of initiatives for preservation in an Ainu context are seen in Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere. While the introduction of the idea in these nations has helped to clarify various issues faced by individual regions and ethnic communities, it should be noted that the governments had previously promoted indigenous policy and that a rich body of related research results was already available. Concerning the relationship between cultural landscapes and Ainu culture, research has clearly lagged behind in Japan.

The first set of cultural landscape protection initiatives undertaken by Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs after the legal amendment highlighted that such landscapes are inseparable from the daily lives of locals in terms of creative work, livelihoods and religious, cultural and other activities, and clarified how these landscapes are formed via the combination of tangible and intangible elements of daily life. However, the scope of regions covered by related policy discussions was limited, and no explicit considerations were made for Ainu or other cultures. Against such a background, Biratori's initiatives and its ongoing studies for the preservation of its cultural landscapes have highlighted the indispensable value of the cultural information provided in landscapes for the preservation of Ainu culture. In the future, the enhanced the public access to these landscapes through cultural tourism and the ensuing dissemination of their appeal are expected to support the promotion of research on Ainu culture, creating a win-win situation in terms of cultural landscape preservation and studies on Ainu culture.

4. Current Situation of Cultural Tourism in Biratori Town and Related Issues

4.1 Cultural landscapes and cultural tourism

Against the backdrop of the various issues discussed above, this section outlines the characteristics of cultural tourism based on cultural landscapes as a consideration that sets Biratori apart from other municipalities in Hokkaido. Here it should be noted that the Biratori's cultural tourism is not simply associated with relics of the past, such as archaeological sites related to culture and traditional dance of Ainu.

The core concept of the Biratori Ainu Culture Promotion Basic Plan (referred to here as "the Basic Plan") is related to the concept of *iwor*, whose presence in the Sarugawa River basin today highlights the region's status as the home to a variety of animals, plants and associated habitats along the river, as well as clusters of residential areas. It also conveys how *ci-nomi-sir* (which become targets of worship) and other elements of Ainu culture will continue to exist in large numbers in years and decades to come.

Biratori Town has two policy frameworks for *iwor* preservation, essentially representing preservation of the region itself. One is based on collaboration between the town office and the central government to preserve tangible elements of cultural landscapes (i.e., the aforementioned comprehensive enhancement of the regional environment, including natural conservation efforts for rivers, woods and other areas). The other is based on collaboration between the town office and practitioners of Ainu culture to preserve intangible elements of cultural landscapes. These include the preservation of skills necessary for the production of daily necessities (traditional craft items) and the passing on of rituals and festivals, as well as knowledge of edible plants, Ainu place names and other considerations. These frameworks are interrelated, and the maintenance of mutual relations is essential for the development of *iwor*. Today, Biratori promotes national, municipal and private forestland and other areas to provide opportunities for people to walk in natural surroundings (e.g., woods, rivers, riparian forests and fields of lilies of the valley) and to learn firsthand about the relationship between the natural environment and local culture. In the 19th century, the English writer Isabella L. Bird (1831 – 1904) began travelling to recuperate from unspecified ailments. During a trip to Japan, she went to Hokkaido and walked 15 kilometers along the Sarugawa River to the central area of present-day Biratori. The records she left behind include various accounts of Ainu culture and serve as valuable related insights. Today, footpath courses follow the route she took, underpinning the appeal of cultural tourism in the town. The promotion of tour programs in which people visit Biratori and learn about the relationship between the natural environment and Ainu culture has the potential to support the development of *iwor*, which have been passed on for generations.

Many Projects were elaborated for preserve the tangible and intangible elements of cultural landscapes. The collaboration between the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism and Biratori Town promote: the Biratori *Iwor* Restoration Project; the Project for the Preservation of Ainu Cultural Environments. The collaboration between the Agency for Cultural Affairs and Biratori Town endorse: Project for the Protection and Promotion of Cultural Landscapes. Finally, the collaboration between the Forestry Agency and Biratori Town support: the 21st Century Forest for Ainu Cultural Tradition Project; the Projects to preserve intangible elements of cultural landscapes.

The Ainu language, oral literature, traditional dance, traditional food, culture and rituals, architecture (e.g., *cise*, traditional Ainu house), plants and animals used, place names (Biratori Town Office documentation).

4.2 Challenges of cultural tourism promotion

Biratori must address a number of challenges to cement its globally distinctive role in the promotion of Ainu culture. This section summarizes the issues that the town may face in the years ahead.

The first challenge lies in maintaining the relationship between Ainu culture and the development of cultural landscapes. As such, landscapes associated with Ainu culture

are unique to Japan, the characteristics and value of the vast, rich natural environment (including rivers and woods) should be highlighted both locally and via international exchanges. However, Biratori depends relatively strongly on national policies for the preservation of Ainu culture, such as initiatives based on the Act on Protection of Cultural Properties, and needs to enhance and clarify the position of Ainu policies within its comprehensive measures. Currently, an ongoing lack of coordination between forestry/agriculture policy makers on one side and individuals responsible for the preservation of Ainu culture on the other has resulted in failure to provide enough impetus for cultural tourism to take root as a local industry.

Another challenge lies in sustainable preservation of the area's vast, rich natural environment, which is home to traditional Ainu living spaces (*iwor*). The usage of rivers and forests in the Sarugawa River basin today differs significantly from that for *iwor*, which were supported by the rich culture of the Ainu. As the basin covers a wide administrative bodies should essentially manage swath of land, its natural environment, but it is important to establish a management system involving public-private collaboration via the ongoing usage of rivers and woods. Biratori's Basic Plan stresses the importance of restoring and maintaining the rich natural environment that has deteriorated since the Meiji period (1868 – 1912) and using it to promote tourism. In fact, the town has developed a variety of cultural tourism programs and steadily implements them, albeit on a small-scale pilot scale. However, most of these initiatives are run by public-sector bodies, and the involvement of the private sector remains limited.

Collaboration between the Forestry Agency and Biratori Town is viewed as highly important for usage of the town's woods. These organizations and another made up of Ainu people are working to implement the 21st Century Forest for Ainu Cultural Tradition Project. In the development of eco-tourism courses using woods/rivers and cultural landscape footpath courses for live experience of Ainu culture, the question of how to use national forests and other woodlands is a noteworthy issue for the preservation of cultural landscapes and the promotion of cultural tourism.

Conclusion

As Ainu culture exists minimally in written form, it is necessary to comprehensively promote its tangible and intangible aspects. Tangible aspects include archeological sites, landforms and vegetation, and intangible aspects include place names, oral literature, legends and folk traditions. The preservation of cultural landscapes that contain a wealth of information and resources on Ainu culture is expected to support the promotion of Ainu culture itself. Today, Biratori Town is growing plants needed to preserve traditional Ainu culture and preparing to establish an Ainu botanical garden. Rather than being focused on simple cultivation, this work is intended to help reconstruct the relationship between everyday Ainu life and the natural environment, including plants, as elements of local landscapes. From this viewpoint, it is also considered necessary to restore and use the extensive wetlands shown on Meiji-era Sarugawa River area map resources and to cultivate cereal crops in the surrounding

areas.

Biratori prioritizes learning and hands-on experience as important aspects of cultural tourism in addition to displays of traditional dance and focus on places of worship. The active participation by Ainu and other local residents and their collaboration with experts lie at the heart of this idea. Promoting such collaboration as an important principle, Biratori has implemented the “Project for the Preservation of Ainu Cultural Environments” as a pilot program since 2003 and accumulated significant primary resources in the field, which lacked prior research. This collaboration is achieved via the participation of numerous Ainu and other people, including participants in cultural tourism programs. This indicates the potential for *iwor* in the Sarugawa River basin, which is based on the traditional Ainu spiritual culture, to support various forms of initiatives and relationships, and to be sustained as spaces for ethnic harmony (Figures 7-13). These initiatives¹⁵ form the foundations for the preservation of religious activities involving sacred places (e.g., *ci-nomi-sir*) and sacred landscapes.¹⁶



Photo 7: Monitor Tour at planned site of the Herb Garden of the Ainu People (tentative name)

~the Herb Garden is being planned for not only education site but also preservation site where traditional herbs and trees are relocated evacuated from dam construction~

◆Location=Memuro, Biratori Town (View from the right bank of Shukushubetsu River)

◆Date=July, 2016



Photo 8: Opsunupuri (Mountain with a hole on the left) and Pon Kan casi (fort site on the right) ~According to the legend, arrow made a mountain hole. A hole was used to be perfect round window~

◆Location=Nibutani, Biratori Town (View from the right of the Nibutani Dam Lake)

◆Date=April, 2017



Photo 9: *Cip-Sanke* (Launching Ceremony)
~Traditional ceremony for launching new dugout canoe. Now it becomes the special feature of summer not only for the local people but also visitors~
◆Location = Nibutani, Biratori Town
(View from the left bank of the Saru River, nearby estuary of the Sikerepe)
◆Date = August, 2017



Photo 10: Ainu Traditional Dance for *Cip-Sanke*
~Mostly expression of Ainu traditional dance and songs are originated from their worship. There are variety of “folk dance”, which is beginners friendly~
◆Location = Nibutani, Biratori Town (View nearby reconstructed Ainu traditional houses, Biratori Town Nibutani Ainu Museum)
◆Date = August, 2015



Photo 11: The Raptors flying among the forest located between middle and downstream of the Saru River
~Back scene of the forest is river terrace of the Saru River where also many legend related giant birds remain. Ecologists says that it is rare to observe many rarity birds nearby residence area~
◆Location = Nina, Biratori Town (View from the left bank of downstream of the Saru River)
◆Date = March, 2016



Photo 12: Ainu Ceremony by the Lake Akan, Eastern Hokkaido
~The Lake Akan located in the Akan Mashu National Park is one of the biggest tourist spot. There is a village where the Ainu people engaging tourism industries live. Now they play more important rule of introducing Ainu culture. Akan will be the site where we conduct a comparison study with Biratori case~
◆Location = Lake Akan, Kushiro (View from a pier toward Osu-Akan Mountain)
◆Date = July, 2017



Photo 13: Lake Kussharo, Eastern Hokkaido

~Lake Kussharo, a famous caldera lake, is also remarkable in terms of “Sacred Places” and Cultural Landscape, and Heritage tour. Atuy, an Ainu musician residents nearby the lake says there are archaeological sites dated back 10,000 years ago. Also oral tradition tells us there are scared mountains where the gods of Eastern Hokkaido and the Kuril island gather~

◆Location = Bihoro Pass, Eastern Hokkaido (View from a border pass between Kussharo Town and Bihoro Town)

◆Date = August.2017

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⁵ This refers to mosaic-like multilayered religious credos characterized by mixed indigenous beliefs, Shintoism, Buddhism, Christianity, emerging religious sects, pantheism, atheism and/or other beliefs.

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⁹ Mashiho Chiri (1956). *Chimei ainugo shojiten* [A brief dictionary of Ainu place names]. Hokkaido Publication Project Center. p. 122.

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¹¹ <https://www.mlit.go.jp/crd/townscape/keikan/pdf/landscapeact.pdf>

¹² *Our Treasure Cultural Landscapes to Future Generations, Cultural Landscape Protection in Japan*. Agency for Cultural Affairs, Government of Japan.

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¹⁴ Ex. Hisako Koura (2008)

¹⁵ Although this paper covers cultural landscapes associated with the Ainu in Biratori Town, located in the Sarugawa River basin in the Hidaka region of Hokkaido, the author also studied cases in other regions, including Kushiro in eastern Hokkaido and Asahikawa in central Hokkaido, because the regional diversity of Ainu culture mandates comparative study. However, space limitations do not allow reference to these studies other than the inclusion of photographs showing Lake Akan and Lake Kussharo in Kushiro (Photo 7 and Photo 8). The cultural landscapes of other regions will be reported in future work.

¹⁶ I am indebted to Dr. Mayumi Okada at the Hokkaido University Creative Research Institution for providing related resources, revising the text of this paper and checking the translation for accuracy among other things.