

THE WASTER OF THE WILDERNESS, THE BEAR, LIVES
IN THE UPPER PART OF OUR HOWE

House and World-view of the Ainu

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By Nold Egenter

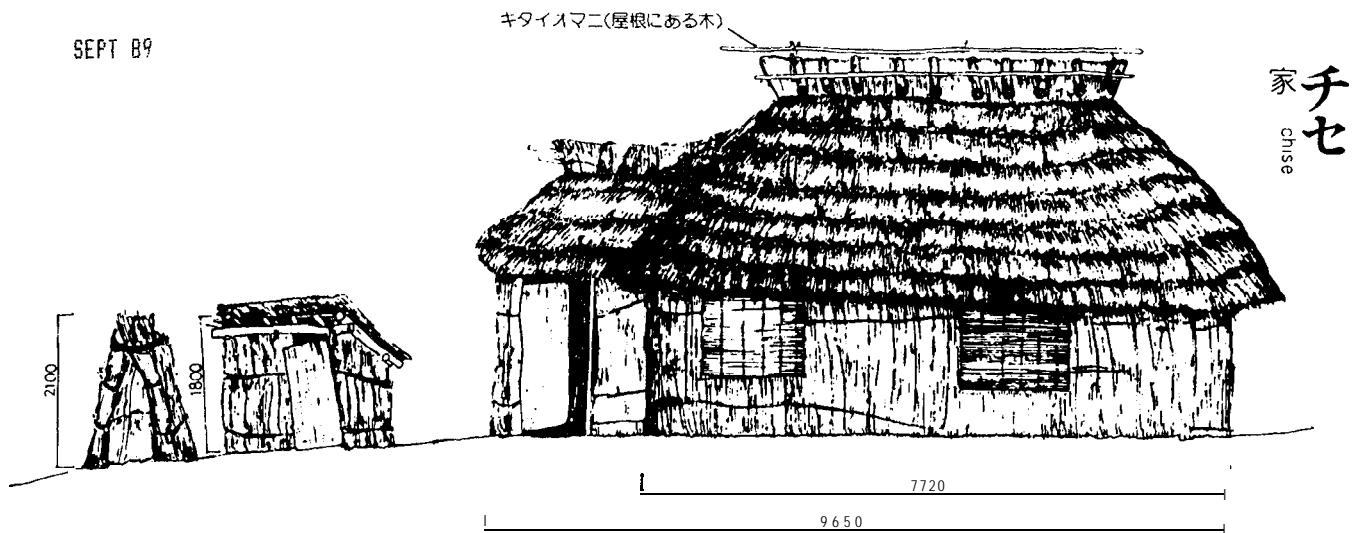
From our standpoint, it is rather strange to share one's
livingroom with a wild bear. But precisely this was the custom
among the Ainu of northern Japan, probably for thousands of
years. Half of their house remained empty most of the time. The
upper part, the most honorable seat, was reserved for their most
important guest. He came to visit them at their main feast, which
focussed on the bear, the master of the wilderness. A lot has
been written about this bear-festival of the Ainu, mostly
sensational, emphasising its primitive traits. Recent research
has revealed its deep-rooted philosophy. This tells us a lot
about how the Ainu regarded their house and its spatial organi-
sation in the frame of their harmonious ecological world-view.

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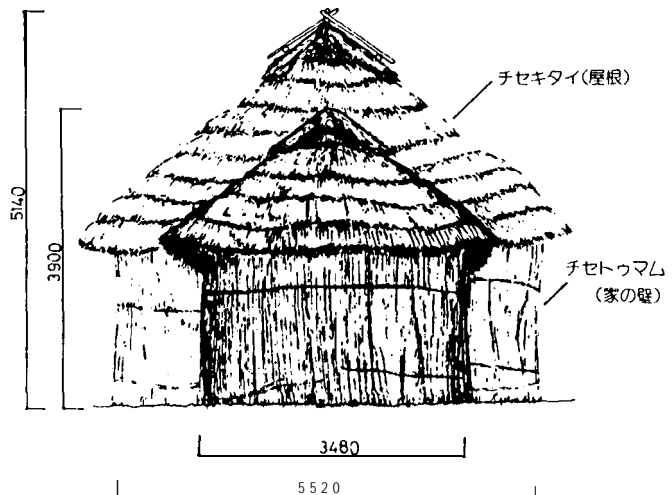
家チセ
chise

1a

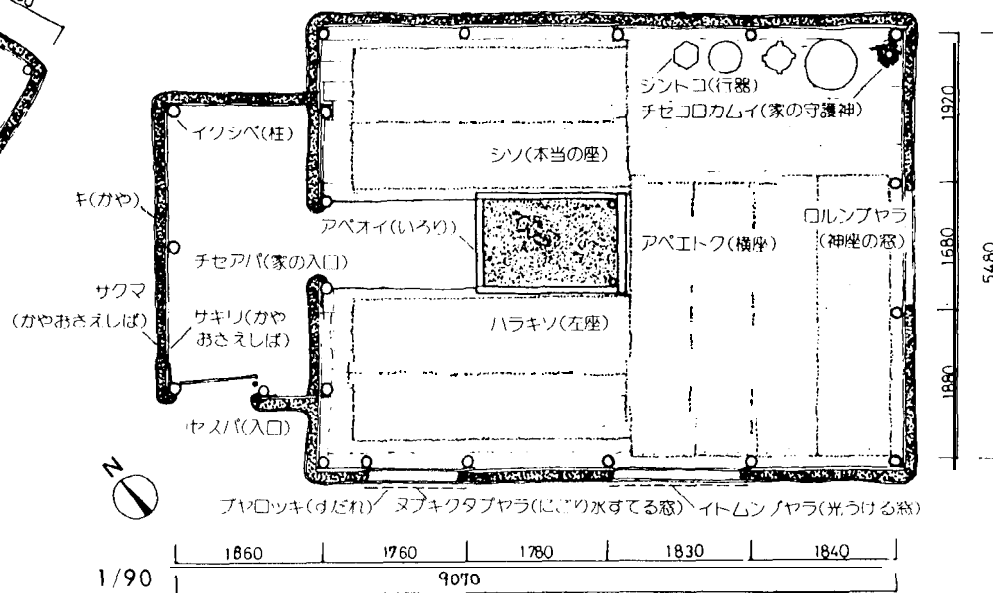
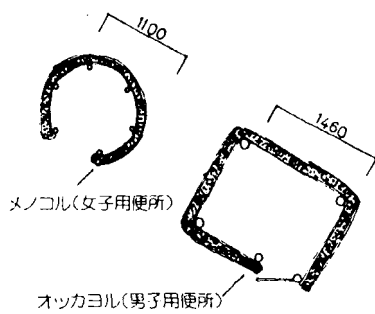
Fig. 1: Ainu summerhouse of southern Hokkaido
(Kayano 1980)

Fig. 1s legend

- a southern facade of main house with Porch, left toilets for men and women
 - b western facade with Porch and main house
 - c floorplan of main house, porch and toilets
- For details of internal designations see fig. 5



1b



1c

INTRODUCTION

The hunting and collecting culture of the Ainu has conventionally been noted for its primitive traits. But many of its characteristics may be understood in the context of intercultural processes. Like any other culture it has received absorbed and developed influences from neighbouring cultures. Consequently Ainu culture cannot be considered to be as simple as the term 'primitive' suggests; rather it has to be interpreted as an accumulation in terms of ethnological theory (Mühlmann 1962). This is particularly valuable in regard to the traditional types of the Ainu house (see fig. 2: some other types of Ainu houses).

Fig. 2: legend

- 1 a-d various types of pit dwellings of Sachalin Ainu (houses used during winter-time)
2 e-f various types of Sachalin Ainu summerhouses

Thus the pit-dwelling of the Ainu, once inhabited during wintertime, clearly shows close relations to the pole-tents of Siberian peoples inhabiting the Northern Eurasian belt (Yamamoto 1970, Levin 1961, 1964). The summer house of the Sachalin-Ainu is generally covered with bark outside and reinforced with heavy poles against snow-storms (Yamamoto 1970). On the other hand, in

¹Montandon (1937) studied a wide spectrum of the materials and social elements of Ainu culture in relation to neighbouring cultures and, in a wider context, of cultural areas. According to Montandon, Ainu culture is of a very heterogeneously composite character, showing accumulations of Northern (paleosiberian) and Southern (austronesian) elements.

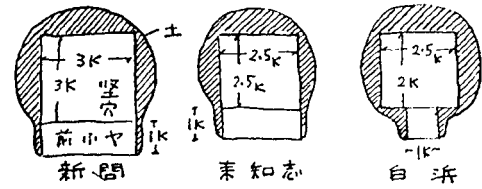
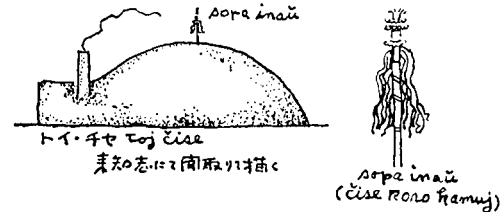
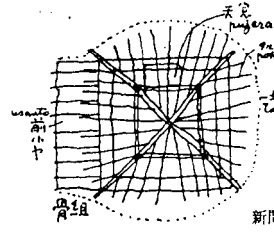
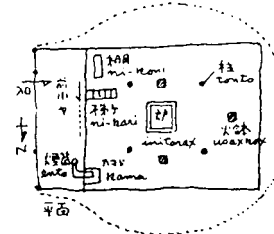
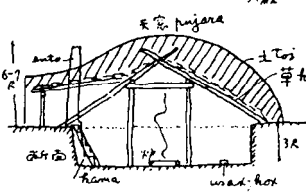
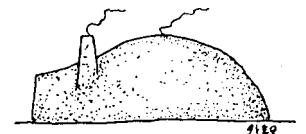


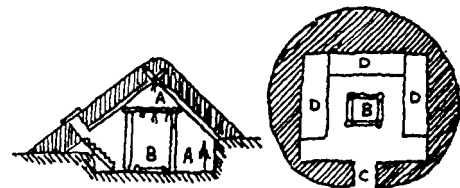
図8 トイ・チセの大きさ



2a

図10
新聞におけるトイ・チセ
(山本復原・作図)

2b

図7 ナヨロ村イト・チセの図 鳥居博士論文挿入図
A幣, B炉, C入口, D寝床

2c

regard to its extended rectangular plan and its reed covering (Takabeya 1939a, 1943a, Kayano 1976, 1980), the summer house of the Hokkaido-Ainu shows close relations with Japanese domestic house traditions. Obviously the roof-form was taken over from the Japanese farmhouse of the iriwoya-type, but the internal structure remained true to Ainu tradition (Takabeya 1939b, Obayashi 1956)². The heavy wintry roof-load is supported in an absolutely irrational way by two 'primordial huts' (Takabeya 1939a, Munro 1963, Kayano 1976, Egenter 1989). There are well-founded reasons to assume that the Ainu were the original population in northern and central Japan (Nishioka 1937, Slavik 1969, Chard 1970). And - maybe for centuries - they had close contacts with the agrarian Japanese population that immigrated from the south. This is clear from sources of the agrarian Shinto in northern Japan (Kokuritsu-

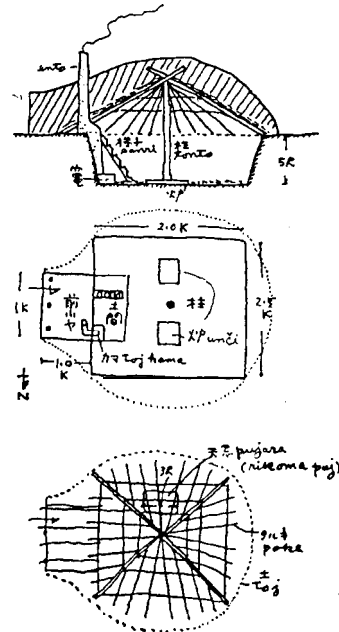
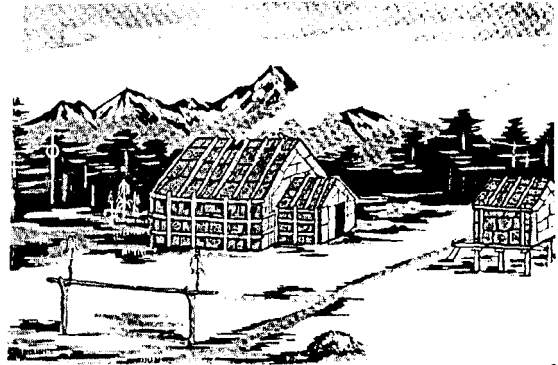


図11
白浜におけるトイ
・チセ
(山本徹郎、1980)

2d



2e

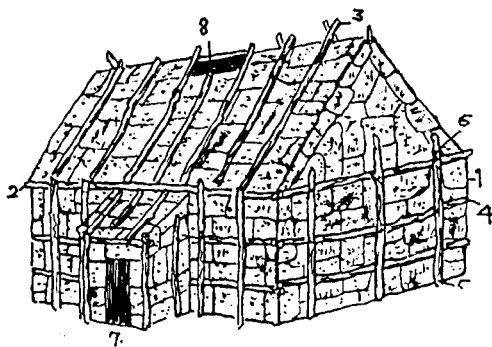
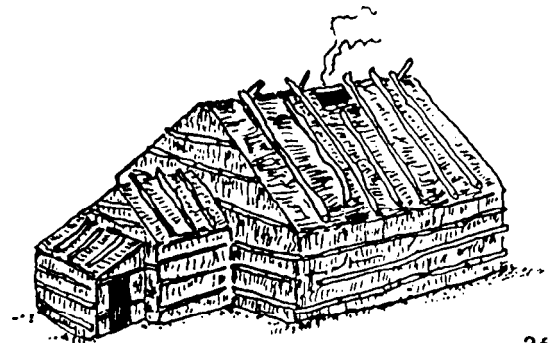


図29 樺太アイヌの夏の家（サハ・チセ）外観

2g

図13
越年
に使用
するサ
ハ
チセ



2f

²Obayashi relates the tripod of the Ainu house-foundation-rite and their tripod-roof construction to Northern Eurasian tripod-tents.

Minzokugaku-Hakubutsukan 1981:177).³

In addition to these clear hints of intercultural processes there is an astonishing continuity with regard to the internal spatial organisation of the Ainu-house, a simple scheme which can be traced through the whole of Ainu house tradition;: the linear relation of entrance, sacred hearth, holy window and external altar. In the north (Yamamoto 1970) as well as in the south (Takabeya 1939a, 1941b, 1943a, Munro 1963) we always find an explicit contrast between that part of the single room which is the scene of the daily life of the family and another part which is only used for ritual purposes, beyond the upper end of the hearth' the Ainu-dwelling remains empty. The holy window serves for communication with the outer cult-place and the outer altar,

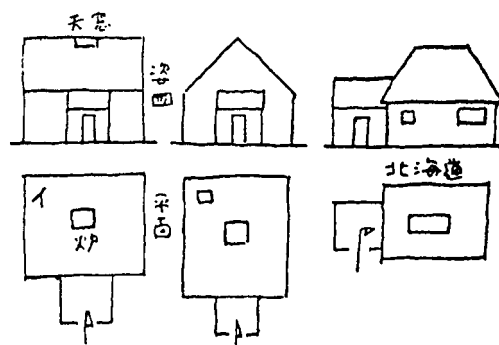


図19 サハ・チセの外観

2h

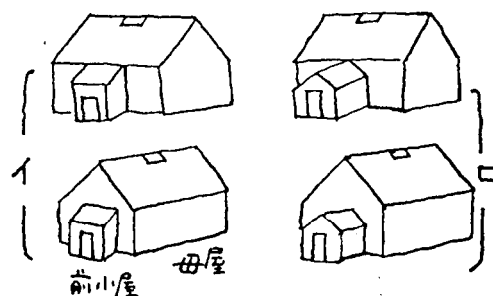


図20 前小屋の形式

2i

³Within agrarian Shinto traditions of Northern Japan sacred objects of the yorishiro-type (sacred seats of Gods, see Egenter 1980, 1982) are traditionally preserved in popular cult; which technically show their close relation to the inau of the Ainu. They are produced by shaving wooden poles and are generally called kezurikake 'thing made by shaving'. This implies that Mongolian farmers immigrated from the south had settled - maybe for many centuries - side by side and in close contact with the Ainu until the centralised state with its Euddhistically educated elites started to conquer the north and integrate local settlements into the Japanese state. Among the farmers in central and southern Japan! binding and bundling, not shaving, is the general method of making sacred cult-markers in popular Shinto. On the other hand, the Ainu may have borrowed the more developed Japanese terminology (kami <jap. kami 'god' and nusasan <jap. nusa, 'sacred altar') in referring to things for which they had an object tradition and a concept of their topological meaning, but not the spiritual ideology.

⁴For the designation of locations we use the traditional terminology of the Ainu. It looks down from the mountains towards the sea.

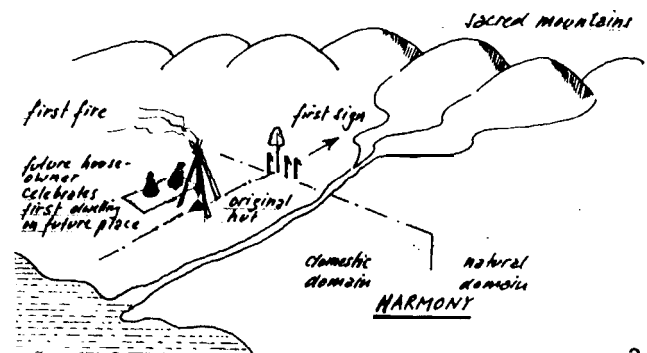
3.5 a passage-way for sacred objects, particularly the head of the ritually-killed bear.

Gustav Rink has studied this astonishing continuity of spatial organisation throughout the Northern Eurasian belt. His extremely important two-volume work, >The System of Space-Organisation of the Dwellings of North-Eurasian Peoples (1949/1951) provides a wealth of plans illustrating such phenomena as the >holy backcorner<, the >holy soul-window< and the placement of shrines and sacred objects at the back of the main or single room of the house. But Rink remains rather vague with regard to explanations of this astonishing continuity, mainly because he restricts himself to the discussion of floor-plans. The ritual aspects are not considered in his wide context.

For a long time the Ainu remained relatively undisturbed in the former northern areas of Japan (Ezo, including Hokkaido, Sakhalin, Kuriles, Kamchatka). Their domestic traditions are reliably researched and their rites are well known. Consequently the Ainu can be considered an ethnos which may shed new light on the 'system of space-organisation' presented by Rink. The whole complex is the subject of an architectural-ethnological dissertation by the author. This presentation offers a short outline of the results.

THE SPATIAL ORGANISATION OF THE AINU-HOUSE

Among the Ainu the basic nature of their spatial concept mentioned above is revealed by the rites performed on the occasion of purifying the lot for construction and at the house-warming ceremony. Both ceremonies are extensively described for the Ainu of the southern coast of Hokkaido (Takabeya 1943a, Munro 1963). Before the house is built, its 'plan' is marked out with the simplest means: a tripod (*kenru*) with suspended pot-hook and an initial fire marks the 'prototype' of the future house. The hearth-goddess receives her first sacred sign. The outer altar, with a set of signs of elementary form, constitutes the second part of this 'installation', and indicates the direction towards the holy mountains. Finally there is a little ceremony which - still amidst the natural grasses - probes the future of dwelling in the traditional spatial organisation. This foundation ceremony, with its 'primordial hut', alludes in advance to spatial, social and cultic concepts that are central to Ainu tradition. It was done in this way since time immemorial (s. fig. 3: 'earth-calming ceremony').

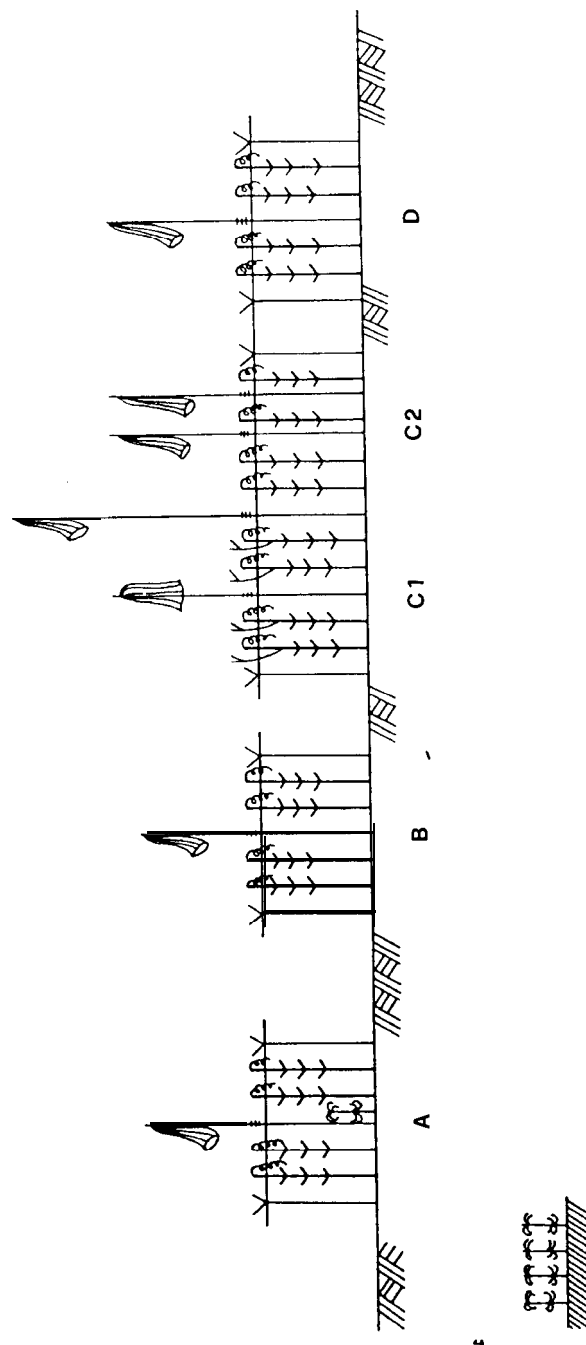


3

When building has been brought to a successful conclusion, the house will be consecrated. The igniting of the first (and from then on continuously maintained) fire will transform the

⁵Kayano uses the Japanese term jijinsai, 'earth-calming ceremony! earth breaking ceremony.

hearth into a living being and the hearth goddess moves in. At the traditionally defined place in the upper part of the hearth she again receives her special sacred sign of shaved wood. Then her male partner! the house-owner-god is installed. He takes up his continuous seat in the right upper angle? where the treasures are also kept. He receives a libation of holy rice-wine and is asked for protection. Outside the house the holy fence is completed. Four altars are set up in a line. They represent the four existential domains of the Ainu: firstly, the settlement and the ancestors (continuity); secondly, collected plant materials; thirdly, the hunting domains and fourthly, the fishing ground; . Culture and human tradition is implied by the first; the wilderness, the outer domains by the others is. Fig. 4: outer altars: acc. to Kodama 1969, *Ainu Minzokushi*).



E

Fig. 4: legend

A	Musakoro kamui	ancestors, place
B	Shirambe kamui	plants
C1	Hashineu kamui	hunting

C2	Netotush kamui	bear
D	Nakkaush kamui	fishing
E	shinurappa ushi	small ancestors altar

By virtue of these installations, a house is not only erected in the environment: its whole ideology is structurally defined. The hearth in the one-roomed main house forms the vital centre, the focus of existential continuity, the threshold between the higher and lower realms. The higher realm consists of the sacred areas of the holy mountains, the upper river, the outer altars, and, within the house, of the holy window and the sacred seat for the bear. The signs for the hearth-goddess are set up in the upper part of the hearth. The lower part of the room is inhabited by the family. The father and mother sit on the 'upper seat' at the upper right edge of the hearth close to the treasures and the 'house-owner-god'. The children and servants are placed below near the entrance for humans. The holy window is the entrance for gods and sacred objects. During everyday life the upper part remains empty. The corresponding seats are reserved for gods and honorable guests (see fig. 5: spatial organisation of the Ainu-house; acc. to Munro 1963).

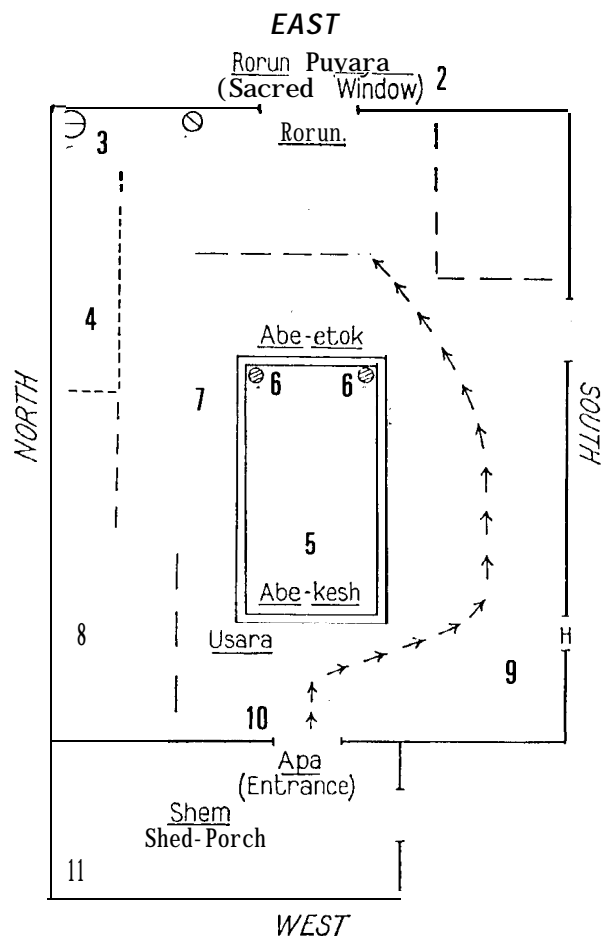
Fig. 5: legend

1	Sacred fences for sacred signs	2	sacred window
3	sign of houseowner god	4	treasures
5	hearth	6	wokkbenches for shaving sacred signs
7	'upper seat' of houseowner and his wife		
8	sitting place of houseowner and wife	9	children
10	entrance	11	shed-porch

The differentiations are continued outside in the courtyard,

HEARTH AND HOME

Sacred Fences for Inau
dedicated to various Kamui



TEXT FIGURE —Plan of Ainu house.

in the same field of energy. In addition, the whole Ainu system of moral values is related to this polar concept,

Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney caused a sensation in the field of Ainu studies when she published her research on the temporal and spatial "world-views" of the Ginu of the Northwest-Coast of Sakhalin (1969, 1472, 1973). Their time concepts are structured in polar terms: night and day, moonless phase and full moon, cold winter and warm summer (only two seasons! see fig. 7: *polar time concepts of the Sakhalin Ainu*).

Course of a day		<table><tr><td>N</td></tr><tr><td>i</td></tr><tr><td>D</td></tr><tr><td>e</td></tr><tr><td>n</td></tr><tr><td>y</td></tr></table>	N	i	D	e	n	y		
N										
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D										
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Lunar month		<table><tr><td>1st half</td></tr></table>	1st half	<table><tr><td>2nd half</td></tr></table>	2nd half					
1st half										
2nd half										
Year		<table><tr><td>Cold season</td></tr></table>	Cold season	<table><tr><td>Warm season</td></tr></table>	Warm season					
Cold season										
Warm season										
Life span of the universe	<table><tr><td>Beginning</td></tr></table>	Beginning	World of today			<table><tr><td>End</td></tr></table>	End			
Beginning										
End										

These polar concepts are enclosed in a cyclic system of beginning and end, once and now. Within these temporal classifications, the Ainu Performed their work with the help of further topological and social distinctions in an astonishing complex manner. Similarly the spatial concepts of the Ginu show a clear systematical structure (see fig. 8: *polar spatial concepts of the Sakhalin Ainu*). Ohnuki-Tierney shows the opposing aspects of land and sea! mountain and coastal areas, Roods and grassy fields, culminating in the binary oppositions around and within the house and in the final anchor-point of the Ainu world-view: the heat-th.

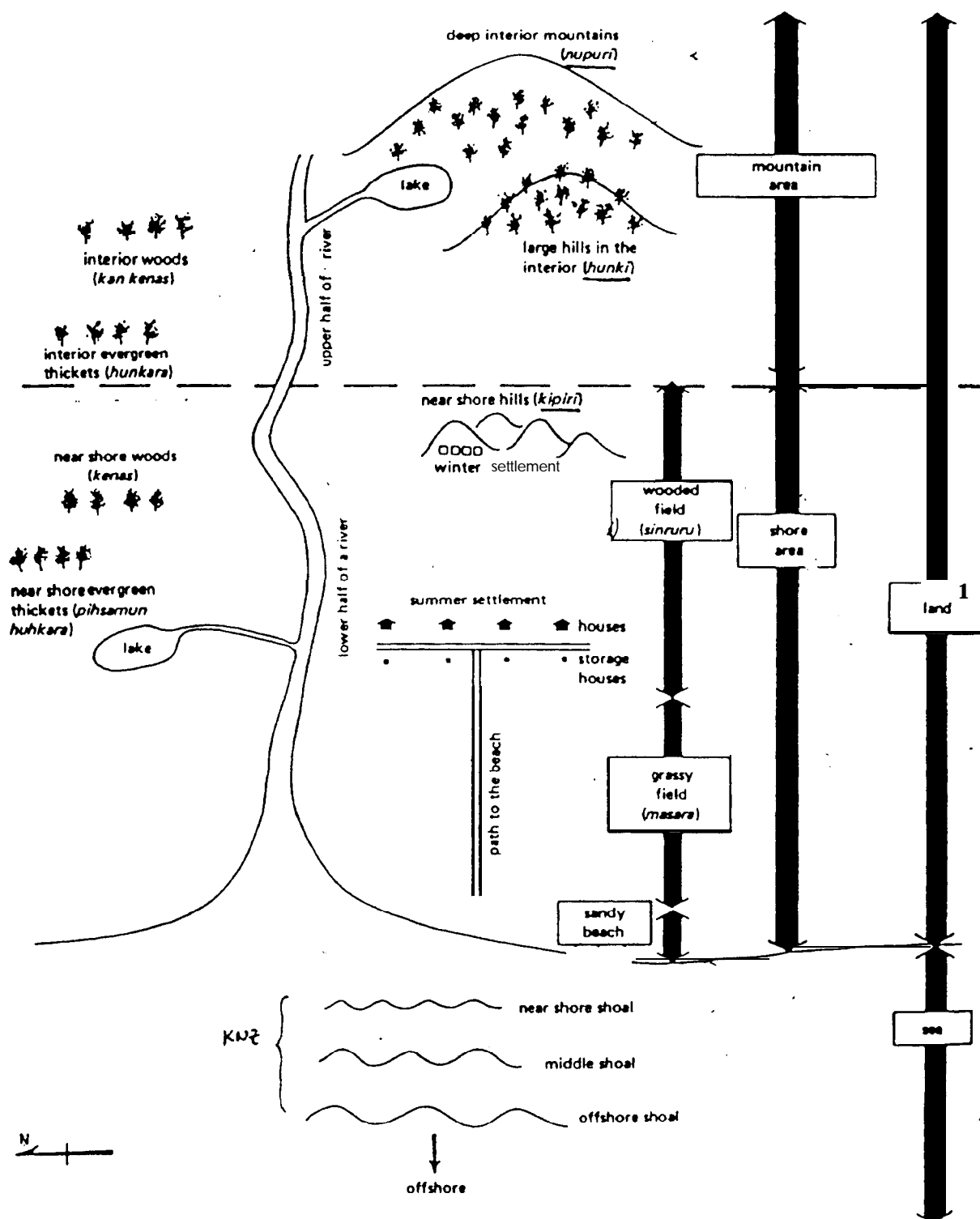


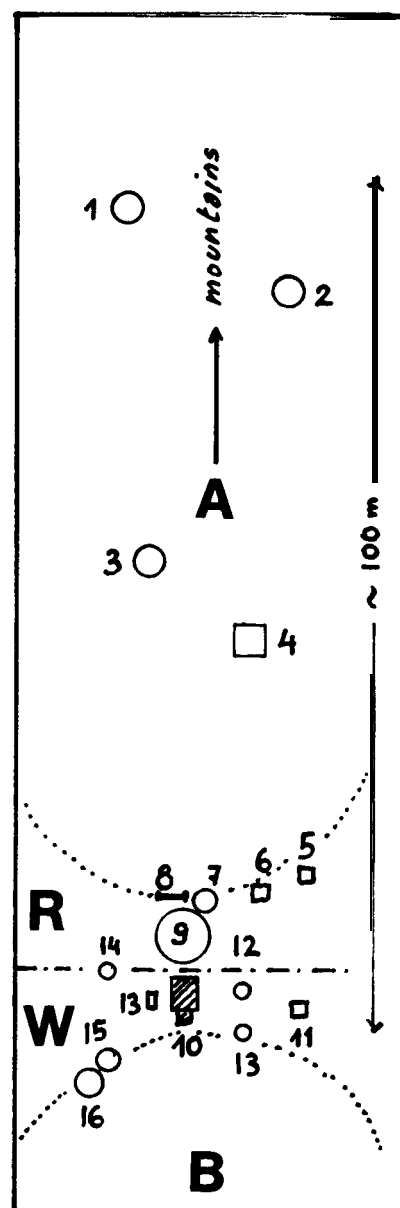
Figure The horizontal plane of the universe.

between the holy window and the outer altar, the cult place for the bear-festival is marked by the bear-cage and the sacred pole, to which the bear is attached before being killed. In the lower area we find the entrance and storeroom, an addition to the main house. Below the entrance there are places of work, structures for drying fish and - beyond the settlement oath - the storehouse (see fig. 6: situation of the Ainu house; acc. to Watanabe 1973).

Fig. 6: legend (R = Ritual, W = Work, A = Above, B = Below)

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------------|-------------|
| 1 skinning spot | 2 skin dump | 3 bon. dump |
| 4 store house for tool, and crafts | | |
| 5 dead trees set up for drying fresh meats and skins | | |
| 6 cage for the bear cub | 7 ash dump | |
| 8 outdoor altar | 9 ground for the bear-ceremony | |
| 10 dwelling house | 11 stove hour. for meat | |
| 12 drying frames for • rat | 13 same (fish) | |
| 14 store house for fish | 15 water | |
| 16 rite for the preparation of fish | | |

Thus in this case the whole linear arrangement lies parallel to the river! with its upper or sacred parts oriented towards the holy mountains.⁶ Thus the orientation of the Ainu house is like a system of smaller and larger magnetic needles, all settled down



⁶Orientation towards the east is not what counts, contrary to the claims of many authors. Yamamoto's typology of house orientation for the Eastern and Western coast of Sakhalin (1961, 64) clearly proves the contrary. These orientations are diametrically opposite! Not orientation in the sense of the modern compass system counts! the houses are situated parallel to the river, with the sacred upper part towards the sacred mountains. Eastern orientation is a persistent error in the whole literature of Ainu studies, its persistence can only be explained by the fact that important studies have been made in the southwest of Hokkaido, where the rivers run more or less toward the west,

This polar system also forms the basic concept for **economic** activities. Traditionally it defines what is hunted, fished or collected where and by whom. Social criteria are also structured in polarities: old and young, women and men, etc.

But Ohnuki-Tierney is not without problems. She mainly interprets from the outside inward, thus coming into conflicts with traditional structures which obviously developed from inside outwards, from the domestic domain towards the wild and non acculturated. Her lack of conceptual clarity stands in contrast to the work of Hitoshi Watanabe (1973). His study starts from ecological perspectives. He is interested in Ainu relations and adaptations to the environment. In pursuit of this interest, he has done extensive **fieldwork** in the Saru area of southern Hokkaido, and to this work we owe detailed knowledge about the complex hunting, fishing and collecting activities of the Ainu (see fig. 9: the river-group territory of the Saru Ainu).

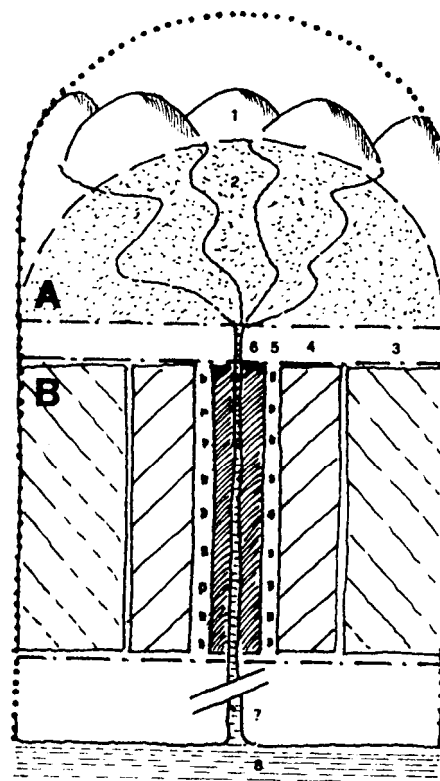


Fig. 9: legend

A	upper territories	B	lower territories
1	area of sacred mountains (iworu tapka, taboo)		
2	upper territory (kimun iworu bear-hunting grounds of men)		
3	lower hunting grounds of men (mainly deer)		
4	mainly area of collecting for women		
5	settlement area	6	fishing grounds
7	river, castal area	8	...

Watanabe's research is based on various types of social group. He describes units that are spatially and economically characterised as >household<, >settlement<, >local group<, >river group< or the

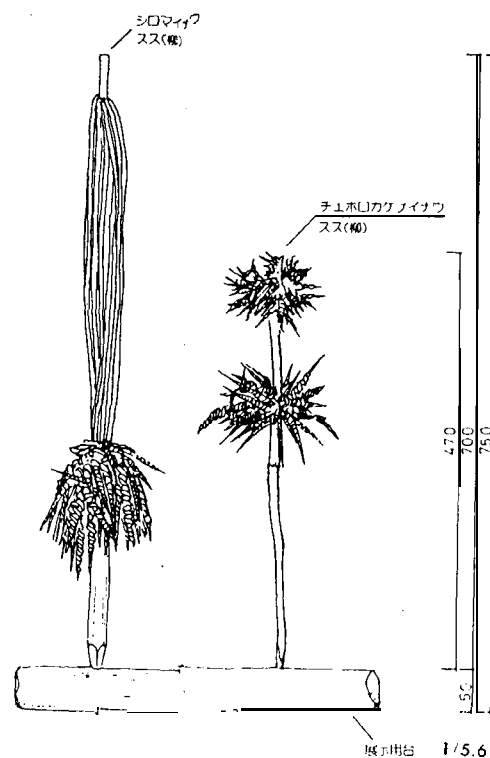
more genealogically structured kinship group and, finally, group5 owing their cohesion to particular signs. He impressively shows how the binu reached a high degree of food-security by using extremely simple but multifunctional devices. This was achieved by applying complementary combinations of spatial, temporal and social categories. Polar coordination also played a decisive role in their cooperation and division of labour. Finally, Watanabe shows the reliable basis of the whole structural complex. He describes the territory of the Ainu and how they carried out their activities of hunting! fishing and collecting in various areas. Again, the astonishing thing: areas are clearly defined by positive impulses and negative taboos. The territory (iwar) is an extended version of their one-roofed house. The bear dwells in the uppermost part. The hunter is forbidden to enter this domain. At the lower end of the territory, the dwellings of the Ainu are located close to the lower part of the river. Between these polar extremes again there is a complex system of complementary classifications, structured physically and toponymically according to the river and its ramifications.

Unfortunately, Watanabe also interprets his results in a theological sense. His system of social solidarity between man and nature become; questionable. Nature is represented by spirits and deities conceived anthropomorphically by the Ainu. This interpretation may be conclusive for Watanabe because he mainly works in the outer domains. The house is only schemati-

cally considered. Thus its central importance is overlooked.

INAU, THE TRADITIONAL KEY TO THE SPATIAL ORGANISATION OF THE AINU

Hilly Krenp (1928), an Ainu researcher hardly known (because he wrote in German) reports a meeting with an Ainu elder who showed complete resignation, sitting in his hut, which had partially fallen into ruin. The house-owner god had decayed, "Why should I carve sacred signs (*inau*)," the old man said, "there are no more deer left." There is hardly a better way to describe the meaning of the sacred signs of the Ainu. Batchelor, the missionary who lived 40 years among the Ainu (faithfully to the proselytizing tradition!! considered the Ainu signs to be primitive fetishes. Munro, also considered to be an authority in Ainu studies, described the *inau* used in Ainu rituals as sacrifices to theologically interpreted gods and spirits. Krenp classified the *inau* objectively according to their waking, form, position and permanence. He further distinguished permanent signs related to house and courtyard from temporary signs used in the outer domains. He concluded that the former were of primary importance. In his >sacred topography< he further elaborates on the meaning of hearth, house and courtyard, referring to permanent signs, such as the hearth-goddess, the house-owner-god and the deities of the external altar. In the latter case he clearly recognises the representational character of the signs for the four existential



シロマイナウ

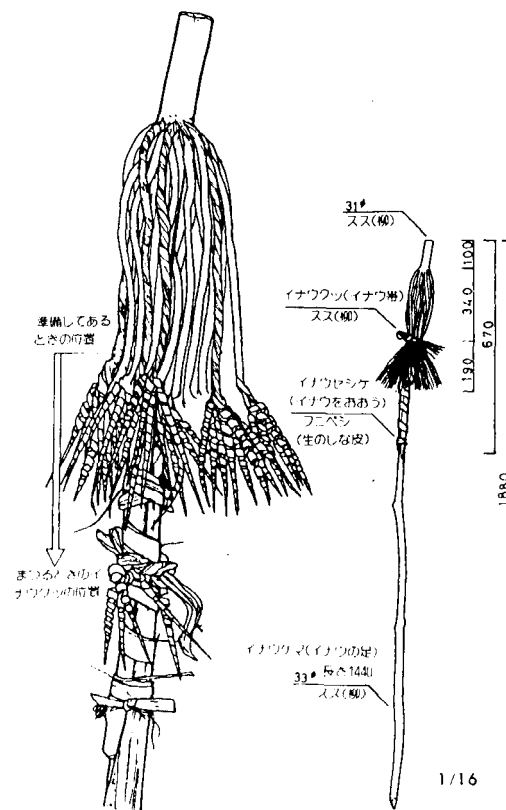
Shiro-mai-naw
大穂 入る イナウ

domains described, but then allows himself to be influenced by Batchelor, which leads him to rather questionable interpretations. Referring to an older study (Hitchcock 1891), he takes the external altar as a fragmentary survival of a formerly complete fence encircling the whole house for protection against wild animals. This is a rather superficial (or, in its simple functional outlook! eurocentric) approach towards the cultic tradition of a cyclic society! For the rest, Kremp falls back into the theological line, describing religious beliefs concerning living and non-living nature and using rather outdated theories of pre-animism (Maret/Preuss) in his interpretation. Thus, here too the ergological part of Kremp's work is of most interest to us,

Let us take a quick look at the sacred signs of the Ainu (see fig. 10: sacred signs of the Ainu, inau; acc. to Kayano 1980)

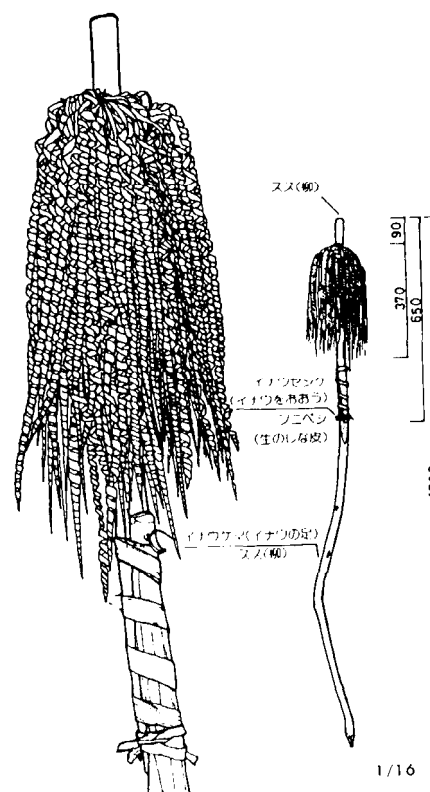
- a shirone inau (left: chiehorokakep)
 b kikechinoye inau (sign with twisted locks)
 c kikeparase inau (sign with freely moving locks)
 d chiehorokakep inau (sign shaven from upside down)
 e ponsuto inau (small inau made of willow)
 f inaukike (shavings without pole (fixed to various tectonic objects to make them holy objects)

Using a sharp knife, a wooden pole is freed of its dark bark, so that its bright white wood is brought to light in the upper part. With further precise cuts, locks and curls loosely



キケチノイエイナウ
 削りかけをよつたイナウ
 kikechinoye inau
 削りかけをよつたイナウ

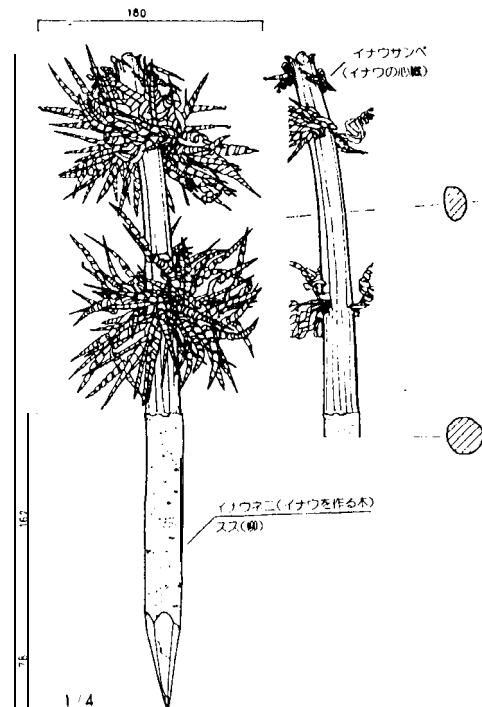
10b



キケパラセイナウ
 削りかけを散らしてあるイナウ
 kikeparase inau
 削りかけを散らしてあるイナウ

10c

pour out of the massive wooden stick. This pole is then firmly stuck into the ground at a particular place. It displays a stable vertical axis on which the shavings move freely with the movements of the surrounding air. The Ainu designations for these signs show that such categories as up/down, dark/white, mobile/stable etc. are of essential importance.⁷ by analogy with particular part; of the house (posts) and instrument; (treasure boxes or spoons) which are decorated in the same way, it can be concluded that this system of polar categories was of great importance in the once purely natural environment of the Ainu. This approach gains particular importance if! in analogy to the Chinese Yin-Yang symbol, we interpret these signs as morphological models of Ainu harmony. Thus, since its traditional first use by the cultural hero of the Ainu, these signs would have to be considered the most important model and Gestalt-principle of the Ainu world. It would have been the aesthetic nucleus of their world view. Everything, hearth! house and courtyard! the outer altar as interface towards the outer domains and! equally, all the territories, the valley of the river group, were structured accordingly. The harmonious totality of the environment was condensed in the sacred sign, *pars pro toto*: one could immediately understand its holy meaning. A presentday Ainu who, with high expenditure, devotes himself to the revival and explanation



チエホロカケプイナウ
逆さ削りのイナウ
Chie-horokake-
puinau
逆さ削り
の

10d

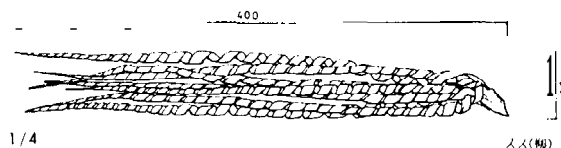
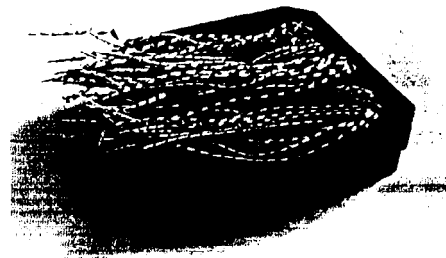
⁷In his classification, Kremp clearly showed the importance of categorial and aesthetic principles which distinguish the various types of sacred *inau*.

of Ainu culture! speaks of >making gods< when he describe; sign-shaving (Kayano 1976).⁸

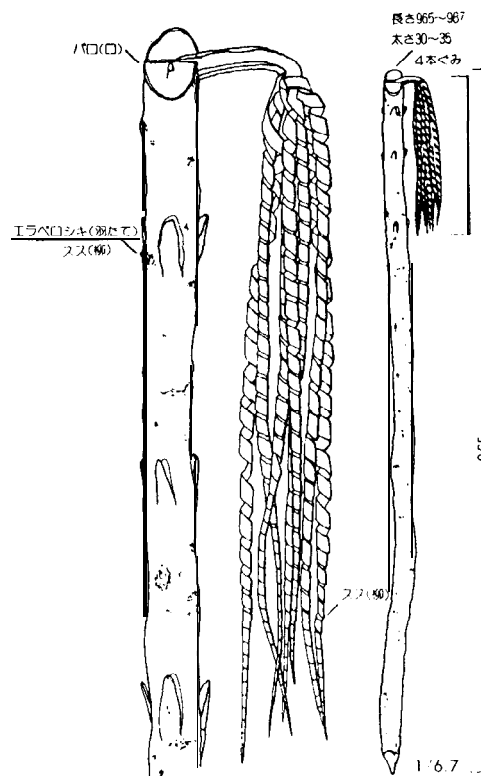
Finally, with regard to the explicitly semantic function of the *inau*, it is devoted to the territorial marking of domains. Each sign is personally characterised and, by its form, it typologically labels the area to which it belongs: dwelling, vegetation, hunting, fishing. In factual condition it is set up on an imaginary or concrete (riverbank) threshold between nature and culture implies two different, but correlated, areas at the interface of which some exchange takes place. The beyond, the wild, provides man with life, with food. The human side answers by sending honour beyond the threshold. In this sense, any type of cult activity in any type of domain and before any type of sacred sign is basically of analogous structure. It corresponds to those performed before the central interface between domestic domain and wilderness at the outer altar behind the house. The general motive is balance, harmony between culture and nature,

⁸This obvious connection between the structural and aesthetic character of the Ainu signs and their relation to territorial units was simply not appreciated because, formerly, eurocentric theological concepts dominated the analyses. In this context it is very interesting to see how the *chise koro kawui*, the 'house owner god' is persistently mistranslated. Batchelor interpreted him as the 'world-creator'!

イナウキケ
削りかけだけのイナウ
イナウキケ
イナウキケ



10f



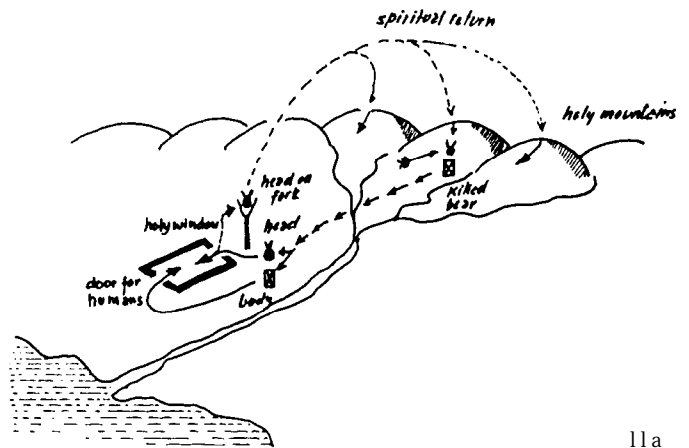
ポンストウイナウ
小さい柳で作ったイナウ
Ponsutunau
小さい柳で作ったイナウ

10e

THE BEAR FESTIVAL

The bear festival is one of the aspects of Ainu life most often reported on. The greater part of these descriptions, however! revels in its spectacular points. A bear! caught when still young, is reared in the wooden cage behind the house, is fed like a human for one or two years and then is ritually killed.

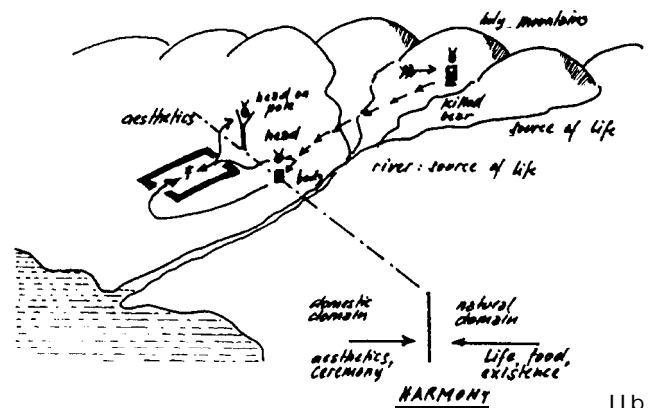
Seen in objective terms, the cult of the bear is a ritually heightened form of hunting (see fig. 11: structure of bear festival).



11a

Fig. 11: legend

- a former essentially spiritual interpretation of bear festival
 b our interpretation as gift • xc*.np. between nature and culture



11b

As the biggest of all hunted animals! the bear is socially projected outwards as the lord or chief of the hunting domain. On the other hand! he is the vital representative of all the animals hunted. On the domestic or cultural side, he is represented by one of the signs on the external altar. The ritual is thus not a slaughtering sacrifice as often interpreted! but rather a state reception for a king coming from another world. At the ceremonial level, the bear is received and cordially welcomed by the hearth goddess. She ritual also shows a polar organization into a more physical and a more spiritual part. First the bear is freed! let out of his cage, then fixed to the sacred pole and beaten

with bundles of leaves fixed to sticks to make him wild and finally killed with a poisoned arrow. Hunting is ceremonially reproduced in the domestic domain, the ceremony is celebrating a kind of rite de passage from powerful vital force into the immobile stage. The animal is now at man's disposal. This too is a categorial change which is essential for the hunter in the mountain;.

Then the animai is deprived of its natural appearance by separating its hide and head from the body. The meat is carried through the lower door to the hearth! put into a cauldron suspended over the fire. Head and hide are passed solemnly through the holy upper window and placed on the most honorable seat of the house. There the bear is lavishly decorated and prepared like an altar in the house, which thus becomes a kind of temple. In the cultural sense, head, hide and meat are united in the festive circle of the house. A new kind of unity is achieved. The bear is 'living' in terms of acculturation. The Ioro of the wilderness presides over the house and the community on the occasion of the festive banquet. Humans have taken the flesh of the vital animal? but in this same process the animai is brought within the cultural domain and provided with a ritual which! through the spatial and social concepts of the Ainu - that is to say by a non-verbal language - express highest honour, giving and taking are complementary.

Finally, the honorable guest receives a monument. Except for the ears, the skin of the head is removed. The white skull contrasts with the natural look of the ears. Further the skull is opened, the brain extracted and again replaced by something corresponding to the domestic domain: white locks of sacred signs. The skull thus prepared is fixed on a high wooden fork. Both of its ends are provided with sacred signs with flapping locks. This powerful symbol is brought to the outer altar and set up with great solemnity at the threshold between dwelling and hunting domains.

Now the second, more spiritual! part begins. Complementary to the aesthetic loss and the decay of the monument, there is the concept of a spiritual return to the uppermost region, to the tabooed zone inhabited by the chief of the bears. This is related to the idea that the gifts brought by the killed bear will delight the chief and his subordinates and that bears will enjoy visiting the Ainu again. Former reports focussed particularly on this aspect in their explanation of the Ainu bear festival. But this is only one and maybe a rather late and superseded layer of the rite. The first and more concrete part, the physical exchange of gifts, is more important and primary. The wilderness brings life, food, meat: a material exchange; cultural gifts. His presentations of gifts are accompanied by the highest ceremonial rituals.

The Japanese history of the Ainu clearly shows the high value they placed on their nearly absolute regional autonomy, Their high respect for the principle of balance and harmony, handed down from times immemorial! may be understood in new ways: it was a practical and vital philosophy of life which we may be about to understand again.

CONCLUSION

What we took to be a rather primitive reed hut on first sight is now revealed to be the nucleus of an extraordinarily complex system. The house of the Ainu is a point of crystallisation for an extended practical philosophy of life. This philosophy can only be understood if all available details of daily Ainu life are correlated. The essential point is that this philosophy does not want to rule against nature. On the contrary, it implants itself in the environment and develops a complex system in which! on various levels culture and architecture are more or less intensively amalgamated with nature, Domesticated nature' With basic categorial opposites, this world view forms polar units structured like magnetic needles which adapt themselves to the field of forces, If the sacred signs are taken as the traditional prototype of the system of 'magnetic needles', as harmonious models of a complex whole - like the Yin-Yang symbol in China - then the efforts of the Ainu do not only

consist in creating an environment in which inside and outside correspond at all levels: a **comprehensive** and vivid totality becomes visible, **This is the worldview** of the Ainu! Suddenly our eurocentrically-blinded mind discovers that the environmental world of the **Ainu was** beautiful. **Maybe**, by understanding and reinterpreting such archetypes of **harmony** and beauty, **we** might be able to restructure our present chaos.

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