



The Most Revered of Foxes

Knowledge of Animals and Animal Power in an Ainu *Kamui Yukar*

Kamui yukar (chants of spiritual beings) are one among over twenty genres of Ainu oral performance. Highly rhythmical, *kamui yukar* are sung in the first person voice of the spiritual being whose story is told. Normally these spiritual beings are natural phenomena, usually animals. This article examines and translates the third *kamui yukar*, the *Chant of the Fox About Itself* recorded by Chiri Yukie in her 1976 collection, the *Ainu shin'yōshū*. It looks at the general characteristics of foxes and the human-fox relationship within the Ainu world view and argues that the fox of this chant (identified as a black fox; Ainu: *shitunpe*) is a different and more powerful order of being than the red fox (Ainu: *chironnup*) that is the subject of most other Ainu fox chants and lore. It argues that the special powers seen in the *shitunpe* reflect the Ainu understanding of the connection between more powerful animal spiritual beings and the particular location in the landscape where they are understood to dwell.

KEYWORDS: Ainu—*kamui yukar*—Chiri Yukie—foxes—wind calming—culture hero

THE FOX that tells its story in the third *kamui yukar* recorded by Chiri Yukie (1903–1923) in her *Ainu shin'yōshū* (CHIRI Yukie 1976) is an engagingly graceful animal. It races with light steps and a supplely undulating spine up and down the coastal promontory that is its home. Lithesome though it is, the fox is also menacing. By its own account it possesses an “evil nature” (Ainu: *wen puri*).¹ When it catches sight of the culture hero, Okikirmui, far out at sea in his fishing boat with two companions, this evil nature is aroused. It uses its light, undulating gait, its devilish cry—vividly described as being like the “sound of hard sticks snapping”—and its forceful glare to call forth the evil spirit that brings foul weather. The ensuing storm wreaks havoc for those at sea, claiming the lives of the culture hero’s two companions and symbolically putting into question the future of fishing and sea trade as viable human occupations.² In short, the graceful fox also holds a magical and potentially menacing power over natural conditions and hence over the human capacity for survival. It becomes the task of the culture hero to confront and subdue that power so that it works in harmony with the environment and for, rather than against, the good of the human beings. This Okikirmui successfully does, and by the close of the chant the fox is no longer a threat but is instead a helpful mentor to other foxes, advising them against having an evil nature as it once had.

The third *kamui yukar* of the *Ainu shin'yōshū* is the focus of this study. As a reference to readers, I include my English translation of the complete *kamui yukar* at the end of this article. The *kamui yukar* is but one small part of the vast oral legacy of the Ainu people, an ethnic group indigenous to northern Honshu and Hokkaido in present-day Japan as well as to the Kurile Islands and southern Sakhalin. Traditional Ainu culture was based on hunting, fishing, gathering, and trade. Although it is correct to claim that the Ainu shared a common culture, it is also important to realize that language and cultural practice differed considerably from one region to the next.

The exceptionally rich legacy of Ainu oral tradition now largely survives only in transcribed form. By some estimates there were as many as twenty-seven kinds of oral performance genres (OHNUKI-TIERNEY 2005). The genre of the *kamui yukar* (referred to in this article as “chant of a spiritual being,” or simply “chant”) to which the fox narrative belongs, is rhythmic, consisting normally of short phrases of four to five syllables and interspersed with a set refrain called a *sakehe*, thought to imitate the call or movement of the spiritual being (*kamui*) portrayed. In comparison

to other Ainu oral performance genres, the *kamui yukar* are comparatively short, normally consisting of a few hundred phrases.

Donald PHILIPPI's (1982) translation of thirty-three *kamui yukar* (and the related genre of *oina*) introduced this oral performance tradition to English-language readers. Since then, the genre, as well as other Ainu oral performance traditions, has been little studied by scholars writing in English or other European languages.³ This reception mirrors a similar limited response to the Ainu oral traditions among contemporary Japanese scholars.⁴ The present study seeks to draw attention to the significant resources offered by the archive of transcribed Ainu oral traditions and to suggest, through the interpretation of a specific example of the *kamui yukar* tradition, the promise this material holds for illuminating and extending our understanding of the traditional Ainu world view.

The spiritual beings (*kamui*) whose voices in shamanic fashion sing their first-person stories in the *kamui yukar* are, with few exceptions,⁵ natural phenomena, animals for the most part, but also plants, thunder, fire, and so on, all of which are seen in the Ainu world view as possessing power beyond that of human beings (NAKAGAWA 1997, 23). When they appear in the human world, *kamui* are visible to humans as animals, plants, and so on, but at the same time they have a spiritual existence that includes cognition, emotions, and agency similar to that of human beings. This spiritual existence is ongoing and does not stop if the visible animal or plant dies. It should be noted that the Ainu understanding of *kamui* is similar, but not identical to, the general Japanese understanding of the cognate term *kami*. For example, in the Ainu world view most animals, plants, and natural phenomena are considered *kamui* in contrast to the Japanese where only exceptional phenomena are considered *kami*. Thus, being *kamui* is a common rather than an exceptional status.⁶

The linguist and ethnographer Chiri Mashihō, the younger brother of Chiri Yukie, has argued on philological and archaeological grounds that the *kamui yukar* were anciently performed as costumed dance dramas that imitated not only the voice, but the appearance and characteristic movements of particular spiritual beings—the bear, the striped owl, the orca, and so on (CHIRI Mashihō 1973a, 163). He posits that the ritual settings for these performances were ceremonies at landscape sites connected to the *kamui* being performed (such as ocean cliffs for the orca) (1973c, 34). Such performances invoked through shamanic means the presence and hence power of particular *kamui* in order to bring about an alignment between the powers of the *kamui* and the needs and goals of the human community.⁷

Such costumed dance performances of the *kamui yukar* are not a matter of living human memory or of ethnographic accounts. Within living human memory the *kamui yukar* were understood in most communities to be a genre properly chanted by women oral performers. This understanding of *kamui yukar* as a female performance genre is in keeping with the broader Ainu cultural understanding of the role of women as shamanic mediators within the *kamui* realm. While in living memory women chanters appear to have performed *kamui yukar* as they felt inclined at informal gatherings around the hearth, it seems likely that when

traditional lifeways were still intact, the chants were performed at specific times, especially before hunting and fishing parties set out.

As components of an oral tradition it is impossible to say with any exactitude how old a particular *kamui yukar* might be. However, Donald PHILIPPI posits that the majority of the Ainu *kamui yukar* date from between the tenth to the sixteenth centuries, an era he terms the “Middle Ainu Period,” and he believes that some are considerably older than this (1982, 10–13).⁸ When in 1922 in Tokyo Chiri Yukie recalled with nostalgia her grandmother’s familiar voice reciting *kamui yukar* in rhythmic tones, she imagined that voice as a river of words flowing forward in time from the ancient past and she understood her people’s history to be “thousands and thousands” of years old (CHIRI Yukie 1922). Philippi’s hypothesis and Chiri Yukie’s vision are helpful indicators of the antiquity of these traditions, but we need to modify the sense of historical clarity they offer with a measure of recognition of the adaptive and mutable nature of oral transmissions in general. Unfortunately, we cannot say what changes were made to the *kamui yukar* over time. We only know that they were experienced by their early twentieth-century audiences as having social, cultural, and physical contexts that belonged to a past way of life.

The adoption of a nonhuman subject position on the part of a human performer that takes place in the telling of a *kamui yukar*, and the assumption underpinning that adoption, namely that both nonhuman and human beings have a similar kind of subjectivity, are not unique to Ainu culture. As VIVEIROS DE CASTRO and others have pointed out, many indigenous hunting cultures in both North and South America understand humans and nonhumans to share a “spiritual unity” that stands in contrast to the diversity of their physical forms (1998, 470).

In adopting the subject position of an animal spiritual being the *kamui yukar* project for their listening audience not only a sense of the presence of that animal and its superhuman power, but also its embodied characteristics such as its cry and typical patterns of movement. In doing this the *kamui yukar* offer a particularly notable example of natural knowledge emerging from hunting- and fishing-based oral cultures. This knowledge is significantly different in kind from the information about animals culled from the empirically-based assumptions of western science. It is “participatory rather than objectively distanced” (ONG 1982, 45), and knit closely into the animistic world view of its culture. It is also based upon the observations and practices of the generations of hunters, fishers, and gatherers who collectively produced the tales and whose lives, and indeed survival as a people, depended upon the viability of their understanding of the natural world.

In this study I examine the information about, and the cultural response to, foxes suggested by this particular chant and by other Ainu *kamui yukar* in which a fox *kamui* is the speaker of the tale. I show that the knowledge about foxes emerging from this examination contributes to our understanding of the role of foxes within the Ainu animistic world view in which “all things around one were thought of as living beings just as one’s self” (CHIRI Mashiho 1974, 271) and were understood to possess a power beyond that of humans. Richard Nelson’s characterization of the view of the natural world of another northern hunting and fishing culture,

that of the Koyukon people of northern Canada, also serves well as a guide to understanding a similar response to the natural world in Ainu culture:

For traditional Koyukon people, the environment is both a natural and a supernatural realm. All that exists in nature is imbued with awareness and power; all events in nature are potentially manifestations of this power; all actions toward nature are mediated by consideration of its consciousness and sensitivity. The interchange between humans and environment is based on an elaborate code of respect and morality, without which survival would be jeopardized. (NELSON, 1983, 31)

It is a goal of this study to increase our understanding of the nature of animal spiritual power, particularly the fox's spiritual power, within the Ainu view of the natural world. It attempts to show how particular "real animal" qualities of the fox—its behavior, appearance, cry, and the locale in which it lives—play a role in shaping the kind of spiritual powers the fox *kamui* of the third chant is understood to have. More generally, this chant seeks to add to our knowledge of how the Ainu world view is structured and experienced, particularly with regard to the natural world.

THE ORIGINS OF THE THIRD CHANT

In order to understand what the third chant of the *Ainu shin'yōshū* can tell us about foxes, it is important to know something about its origins and the circumstances in which it came to be written down. The chant, like all *kamui yukar*, is expressed in a special "decorative" language (Ainu: *atomte-itak*) that was distinct from everyday language (CHIRI Mashiho 1973a, 164–65). In this case, the decorative language is that of the Horobetsu area of coastal southwestern Hokkaido. As a consequence of the forced assimilation policy of the Japanese government in the Meiji Period (1868–1912), Ainu language and oral performance traditions were rapidly falling into disuse during Chiri Yukie's girlhood in the first decade of the twentieth century. Today the Horobetsu dialect is no longer spoken and the chants are only performed in a reconstructed format. Yukie, however, was fortunate in learning both the Ainu language and a repertoire of oral performances in different genres in the Horobetsu dialect from her maternal grandmother, Monashnok, and aunt, Kannari Matsu (Ainu: *Imekanu*). At the urging of the Japanese linguist and ethnographer Kinda'ichi Kyōsuke, around 1921 she phonetically transcribed a version of the fox chant and other *kamui yukar* using the roman alphabet and translated them into Japanese. She then redid this for publication and added annotations. The book in which the fox chant appears, the *Ainu shin'yōshū*, was published in 1923, one year after her untimely death from congenital heart disease in September of 1922.

As a native speaker of Ainu, Chiri Yukie knew orally the chants she had heard since childhood. For her, each *kamui yukar* was not a static, memorized "text" but rather a living oral tradition, and her written versions possess qualities of oral performance. One feature of each chant that was clearly central to her experience of it was its refrain or *sakebe*. Because the refrain of each *kamui yukar* is unique to

the particular chant it was traditionally used as a way of identifying the chant. Both in the earlier notebook versions and in the *Ainu shin'yōshū* text Chiri includes the *sakehe* as a defining title after first identifying the animal spiritual being who is singing its tale. Thus, in the case of the third chant of the *Ainu shin'yōshū* she names the chant as that “of the fox (*chironnup*) about itself” and further identifies it with its unique *sakehe*, *haikunterke haikoshitemturi*. Although the *sakehe*, with its long phrases, might seem puzzling for readers unfamiliar with the tradition, for those within Ainu oral tradition it serves as an easy way to distinguish this fox *kamui yukar* from others about the same animal spiritual being.

Like any oral storyteller, Chiri does not tell her chant precisely the same way in each version. One significant difference between her telling of the *haikunterke haikoshitemturi* fox chant in the notebook and that in the *Ainu shin'yōshū* is that Chiri uses a slightly different terminology for foxes in the two versions. In both tellings she uses the familiar Ainu term for the fox, *chironnup*, to identify the speaker of the tale in the title and at the chant's close; however in the *Ainu shin'yōshū* telling, Chiri uses the word *shitunpe* in the body of the text, which is a different, less familiar term for fox, and both times translates it into Japanese with the word *kuro gitsune* or “black fox” (CHIRI Yukie 1976, 46–47).

Chiri's introduction of a different word for the fox spiritual being in the *Ainu shin'yōshū* telling is intriguing and immediately raises questions: Are the *chironnup* and *shitunpe* one and the same spiritual being or different entities? If they are different, does the speaker of the third chant change from a *chironnup* to a *shitunpe* during the course of the tale or does it retain the same identity throughout? In this paper I will argue that the *chironnup* and *shitunpe* are, in terms of the older tradition, distinct entities culturally and, at least to some degree, physiologically as well. I will also argue that the third chant comes out of an oral line that is concerned with the *shitunpe* in particular (rather than the *chironnup*) and that the identity of the speaker of the tale should be considered as the *shitunpe* throughout the chant. Finally, I will suggest that the fluctuation in Chiri's terms—her use of two words for the same fox spiritual being—reflects a growing uncertainty within the larger culture in the early twentieth century about the unique identity of the *shitunpe* and a tendency to merge that identity with the *chironnup*.

My reasons for these hypotheses will I hope become clear once we examine the text of the third chant. Before turning to the text, however, it would be helpful to know more about the *chironnup* with whom the *shitunpe* is so tightly intertwined.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHIRONNUP/RED FOX

The Ainu word *chironnup* is generally understood to refer to the Hokkaido red fox (*Vulpes vulpes schrencki*; Jp. *kita kitsune*), a variety of red fox found throughout this northern island (CHIRI Mashiho 1962, 143). This Hokkaido red fox is slightly larger in size than the red fox found throughout the rest of Japan, the Hondo *kitsune* (*Vulpes vulpes japonica*), but like it, and indeed, like other red foxes around the world, it is highly adaptable and capable of living successfully in

close proximity with humans. The Ainu word *chironnup* glosses as *chi* (we), *ronnu* (kill), and *p* (thing), literally “thing we kill” (KAYANO 1996, 319). Unlike the more revered animals such as the bear (*nupuri kor kamui*, literally, “spiritual being who governs the deep mountains”), or orca (*repunkamui*, literally “spiritual being of the off-shore sea”), the *chironnup* was not seen to be remote from human settlements, but close at hand. Also, as Yamada Takako notes in her study of Hokkaido Ainu cosmology, animal *kamui* whose names have no spatial reference and are purely descriptive (such as *chironnup*) are the least powerful among the *kamui*. While they are *kamui* (spiritual beings), they are not *pase kamui* (powerful spiritual beings) and are generally not the subject of veneration (YAMADA 2001, 52–54).

Chiri Mashihō notes that the red fox was grouped with other small mammals, such as the raccoon dog (Jp. *tanuki*), marten, weasel, hare, river otter, and striped squirrel that were “killed in large numbers in the mountains near the village.”⁹ This remark makes clear that the fox was counted among the expendable species, or at least as an animal that could be taken in large numbers (Jp. *dossari to*) without endangering the web of life and power that supported the human community. The animals on Mashihō’s list were killed more for their fur rather than as a food source and, at least in the case of such animals as the red fox, to protect the store of dried fish and meat.

Looking at other *kamui yukar* traditions about the *chironnup* can help us to understand the cultural implications of this animal spiritual being. In two *chironnup kamui yukar* performed by female chanters Hiraga Etenoa and Hirame Karepia in the mountainous Saru County in south central Hokkaido in the early 1930s and recorded by the linguist and ethnographer Kubodera Itsuhiko, the *chironnup*¹⁰ is portrayed as a raider of human food stores (KUBODERA 1977, 141–42 and 149–54). These two *kamui yukar* make clear the relatively low status, proximity to the village, and problematic behavior of the *chironnup*. In the chant sung by Hiraga Etenoa, a *chironnup* visits a human village and hears someone give instructions to pile the fish in the storehouse so that the poisoned ones are on the top and the ones without poison are on the bottom. The *chironnup* hears this and comes back at night to make a successful raid. On another evening, it again stops to listen and hears someone say that the fish should be piled so that the poisoned ones are underneath and the ones without poison on top. The *chironnup* then raids the storehouse but starts to die from poison when it eats the fish on top of the pile. Obviously, the *chironnup* has been tricked. It then warns other young foxes never to steal from the humans as it has done (KUBODERA 1977, 141–42).

Both the Saru area chanter Hirame Karepia and Chiri Yukie give versions of a *kamui yukar* about a female *chironnup* (not identified as *kamui*) who has failing eyesight and who investigates what she thinks are various human affairs, such as two men performing a ritual act of railing against fate, or two women weeping together in lamentation as they stand in a stream. But, because of her poor eyesight, the *chironnup* inevitably misunderstands what she is seeing. The two “men” are in fact two cormorants contracting and thrusting their long necks as they sit perched on a rock by the seashore, while the two “women” are in fact two stakes in a fishing weir bobbing in the current. These chants allow the audience to enjoy

some humor at the fox's expense. Humans are in a position of superiority with respect to the visually impaired *chironnup*, who has abuse heaped upon her head as the story unfolds, and whose curiosity about human affairs is barely tolerated.¹¹

Yet another *chironnup kamui yukar* chanted by Hirame Karepia in the 1930s and recorded by Kubodera portrays the *chironnup* as a shape-changer who takes on the form of a young man in order to seek a human bride. The *chironnup* as man wins the bride and impresses the community by his skill in jumping, but he has his identity exposed when his tail slips into view and he is killed (KUBODERA 1977, 143–45). It is not only male foxes who perform shape-changing in order to pose as a potential marriage partner. Females, too, attempt this and, like the male fox in Karepia's *kamui yukar*, are foiled when a distinctive aspect of their original fox body (their tail) comes into view (SARASHINA and SARASHINA 1976, 302). Human contact, and especially sexual contact, with shape-changing foxes is often portrayed in Ainu folk stories (*uepeker*) as dangerous, and potentially deadly in its consequences (BATCHELOR 1927, 433; KAYANO 1993, 143–54). Ethnographic accounts from the early twentieth century indicate that many Ainu considered that fox spirits could possess humans, most especially women, causing an altered mental and emotional state called *tusu* (BATCHELOR 1927, 423–32; MUNRO 1963). These beliefs about the red fox are consonant with patterns of fox belief in other East Asian cultures including those of premodern and early modern China and Japan where the cult of the fox frequently functioned in response to tensions arising within the patriarchal family system and hierarchically structured society.¹² In Ainu culture, however, they are specific to the *chironnup*—confirming its close-to-human-but-not-human liminal nature and its habit of insinuating itself unwanted into human affairs—and, as we shall see, have little to do with the Ainu understanding of the fox as *shitunpe*.

While the position of the *chironnup* in *kamui yukar* is not one of great power and is clearly seen as a menace to the peaceful workings of human society, the chants nonetheless register a keen and admiring awareness of many qualities of the *chironnup*: its haunting cry, lightness of gait, the extraordinary length of its bound, its ability to pass beneath thorny thickets impenetrable to humans, and to approach the human village unseen. It is important to note that the keen awareness of the *chironnup*'s qualities that is conveyed in these *kamui yukar* is very different from the kind of taxonomic information about animals that one might find in a field guide to mammals. Ohnuki-Tierney has commented as follows on the awareness of animals among the Sakhalin Ainu:

The Ainu do more than perceive their universe cognitively. They also feel, touch, hear and... smell it. Therefore, a bear, a crab, and all other beings of their universe are not zoological and botanical species in Western scientific schema. They are Ainu bear, Ainu crab, and so on, which are experienced through auditory, thermal, tactile, and olfactory senses, as well as through vision. (OHNUKI-TIERNEY 1981, 52)

Some of the richly sensorial nature of the Ainu experience of the *chironnup* is captured in the refrains (*sakehe*) of the *kamui yukar* about them. As noted above,

each refrain is generally unique to a particular chant and can be used to identify the chant. The regularly repeated rhythmic phrase is thought to imitate the cry or other signature sound (such as the gnawing or slithering) of the animal spiritual being who speaks the story. It may also imitate behavior such as the twisting movement of a snake moving through grass. While the literal meaning of most refrains is unknown, they nevertheless give the listener “a sense of the spiritual being that is talking” (CHIRI Mashihō 1973a, 167). One of the *chironnup kamui yukar* recited by Hirame Karepia has a refrain that begins with the sound *pau*, the traditional onomatopoeic rendering of a fox’s cry in Ainu.¹³

THE NARRATIVE OF THE THIRD CHANT

The fox of the third chant of the *Ainu shin’yōshū* shares many of the same sensorially experienced qualities of the foxes of the other *chironnup kamui yukar*. As noted above, the fox that sings this *kamui yukar* is both fleet of foot and graceful. While the fox has qualities in common with the foxes of the other *chironnup kamui yukar*, it also possesses a significantly greater power, the consequences of which extend through a large area and have the potential to affect the larger community of human and nonhuman beings. In its scope and implications this is a power not seen in other songs about *chironnup* and it strongly suggests that right from the start of the tale this fox is a different order of spiritual being, that it is something other than a “thing we kill.”

Once it spots out at sea the boat carrying the culture hero Okikirmui¹⁴ and his two companions, the fox becomes bent on causing harm. It races up and down its home area at the top of “the place that juts from the land, the august cape” (*moshiresani kamui esani*)¹⁵ until it arrives at a spot where it stares at “the river’s source,” a place of spiritual power in Ainu tradition. Then with its bark and its glare, it summons up the spirit that creates foul, stormy weather:

With a devilish cry, “*pau, pau*,” a sound like hard sticks snapping
I stared and glared at the river’s source, calling the evil one
who brings foul weather.

The results are both instantaneous and profound:

...Then right away from the river,
from its very source, a raging wind, a whirlwind,
came blowing forth. It reached the sea, and in no time at all
the ocean’s surface became its lower depths,
and its lower depths became its surface. The fishing boat of
Okikirmui and his fellows...
was in dire straits, spinning in circles... (CHIRI Yukie 1976, 38–39)

When it sees that the three humans in the boat manage to stay afloat in the raging waves, the fox again runs and barks in order to summon yet more foul weather and increase the force of the storm. It performs this ritual of storm making a total

of five times until only the culture hero, Okikirmui, is left alive in the storm-tossed boat. Even he seems to be in serious trouble since the sole remaining paddle hangs useless in his hands, having broken under the force of the waves.

At this point the narrative is at a critical juncture. As in many archaic cultures it is the role of the culture hero to make the world “habitable and safe for human-kind” (LONG 2005, 2090). As noted above, Okikirmui’s presence in the tale creates the sense of an earlier time for the audience, one at the start of human society. But while Okikirmui’s powers are greater than those of subsequent generations of humans, he is nonetheless recognizably human both physically and socially. He lives in a human village and engages in cultural activities, such as fishing, that support human life. As a culture hero of a society dependent, at least in part, on sea fishing for its sustenance Okikirmui understands the threat foul weather poses, a threat that exists both for the humans in the mythic time frame of the tale and for the human community of later generations who are listening to it. A storm-conjuring fox is a loose cannon on the deck in dire need of being secured. It is not the animal per se, but the power it wields and, above all, its will to use that power against humans, its “evil nature,” that must be subdued.

Okikirmui rises to the challenge by fixing the fox from far out at sea with his glare and shooting it with a mugwort arrow shot from his mugwort bow. The herbaceous and aromatic mugwort (Ainu: *noya*; Jp. *ezoyomogi*; Latin: *Artemisia vulgaris*) is a plant with magical efficacy in Ainu lore. While the fox scoffs at the sight of the puny arrow, it finds to its chagrin that the arrow first brings it down and then causes it to run over the headland howling with pain. It loses consciousness and wakes to find itself sitting between the ears of a large inert black fox. The nature of the fox’s experience at this point is highly conventional. In virtually all *kamui yukar* in which animal spiritual beings are killed, the spiritual being sees itself as distinct from the body that, after all, was only a temporary suit, put on because it was venturing into the human world.¹⁶ Its enduring spirit sits between the ears, in other words in the skull, until it decides to leave or is invited elsewhere. This formulaic act of self-perception on the part of the fox also serves to disclose the identity of the first-person [speaker] to the listening audience. The speaker declares itself to be not a *chironnup* (“thing we kill”), but as a *shitunpe* (literally, “thing that dwells upon the ridge”) spiritual being:

After awhile I regained consciousness and looked and saw
that I was in the space between the ears of a large *shitunpe*.

(CHIRI Yukie 1976, 46–47)

When Okikirmui arrives to gaze on the fox’s lifeless body, its spirit being invisible to him as a human, he makes the same identification. He addresses the fallen fox as *shitunpe kamui*:

“Ah, what a gorgeous sight! *Shitunpe kamui*, guardian
of the crest of this cape, the place that juts from the land, the august cape,

it is surely because you possess a pure heart, a godlike disposition,
that, although you died, you died in such a beautiful way.

(CHIRI Yukie 1976, 46–47)

Given the struggle between Okikirmui and the fox that has unfolded until now, the repeated mention of the fox’s “evil nature,” and the pain inflicted on the fox by the magic arrow, Okikirmui’s exaggeratedly respectful address here is likely to strike modern readers, at least, as sarcastic; we understand that the fox does not have a “pure heart” (Ainu: *pirka puri*) and it did not die in “a beautiful way.” The question of whether or not the fox now has a “pure heart” rather than an “evil nature” is critical to our understanding of the magic efficacy of the chant and of the kind of power possessed by *shitunpe* as a category of animal spiritual being. I would like to bracket for the time being the question of whether or not this passage is deliberately ironic, and observe that although Okikirmui states that the *shitunpe* has a “pure heart,” the next actions he takes are ones that assume the fox’s “evil nature” is still a potential risk.

To keep the *shitunpe*’s “evil nature” at bay and to guarantee that no foxes in the future will disturb the elements as this *shitunpe* has done, Okikirmui carries the skull of the fox home. His attention to the bones of the “dead” fox is typical of the treatment of animal remains in Ainu culture. Although the body and spirit of the animal are generally seen as independent, with the spirit the ongoing entity, they are linked through the bones, most especially the skull.¹⁷ Manipulation of the skull influences the animal spiritual being. Okikirmui buries the upper jawbone of the fox’s skull as a foundation stone under the toilet reserved for use by men, and the lower jawbone under his wife’s toilet. This strategy of deterrence is successful. The proximity to filth and the foul odor¹⁸ is so unpleasant to the fox spiritual being that it warns those foxes that come after it: “make sure you do not have an evil nature.” The separation of the two pieces of the jaw also seems to magically guarantee the fox’s silence. Since its cry was one of the principle means by which it exercised its power over the storm god, this is a reassuring point.¹⁹

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SHITUNPE/BLACK FOX

When she transcribed and translated the third chant of the *Ainu shin’yōshū*, Chiri Yukie provided some information about *shitunpe* (black foxes) in a footnote. She clearly considered that the special status of *shitunpe* in contrast to other foxes needed explanation. The distinctions she offers are not taxonomic in nature, but rather are couched within the Ainu animistic world view. She describes the reverence the *shitunpe* elicits in humans as well as its location in the landscape and behavior as an animal spiritual being (CHIRI Yukie 1976, 46):

Among foxes, the black fox is the most revered. A promontory jutting out into the ocean is generally considered the black fox’s domain. They say that barring a considerable crisis, the black fox does not make its voice heard by humans.

There is much about Chiri's description here that accords with the portrayal of the *shitunpe* in the chant; the first-person speaker claims an ocean promontory as its domain, it cries out and that cry occurs before and during a time of crisis. However, there are ways in which Chiri's description appears to diverge from our understanding of the *shitunpe* of the chant. Most significant in this regard is Chiri's indication that the *shitunpe* is an honored spiritual being. Although, as noted above, Okikirmui does indeed address the fox of the third chant in respectful terms, he treats it not as a focus of deferential admiration but rather as a dangerous, indeed frightening being in need of very forceful subjugation. In light of Okikirmui's treatment of the fox of the third chant, Chiri's statement that the *shitunpe* is the most revered of foxes seems puzzling.

The reason for this divergence between the fox as narrated and the fox described appears to spring from the fact that in providing her explanation of the *shitunpe* Chiri Yukie is clearly drawing on her knowledge of the *shitunpe* as the focus of cultic practices carried out by communities and individuals,²⁰ and not referring specifically to the *shitunpe* portrayed in the *kamui yukar*. This cult of the *shitunpe* appealed to this special fox spiritual being as a guardian. Specifically, the *shitunpe* was invoked by communities as a protector that, through running about and crying, gives a lifesaving warning in advance of a natural disaster such as a tsunami, flood, or violent storms at sea. We know from ethnographic accounts that *shitunpe* veneration was actively carried out into the twentieth century (MONBETSU-CHŌ KYŌDOSHĪ KENKYŪKAI 1966). We also know that it was practiced in Chiri Yukie's hometown of Noboribetsu where a black fox was said to live in the mountains behind the village. Villagers understood that if anything significant were about to occur, this black fox would warn them with its cry. If this cry was heard while the fox was moving back and forth two or three times between the mountain and the shore it was considered a sign that bad weather was approaching (CHIRI Mashiho 1973b, 409).

SARASHINA and SARASHINA have pointed to the agency of "real" fox behavior in shaping the Ainu understanding of the *shitunpe* as a spiritual being who gives warning of imminent disasters:

It [the fox] lives near the *kotan* [village] and it feels right away weather disasters in the natural world that cannot be immediately apprehended by human senses.... The life sphere of the fox is the same as that of humans—on river banks near the spawning grounds of the chum salmon and cherry salmon, and ocean beaches where the fish are abundant—and so when they became aware of natural disasters and howled to let their fellows, who were not human beings, know, from long experience the humans noticed, and this was helpful in avoiding disasters. (1976, 298–99)

While we can think that all foxes have a superhuman awareness of changes occurring in the environment and cry in response to those perceptions, a fox that noticeably exhibited that behavior was considered exceptional and singled out for particular veneration as a *shitunpe*.

The *shitunpe* as a community guardian was considered to be “good” and helpful to human beings (SARASHINA and SARASHINA 1976, 295–306). It does not have an “evil nature.” Apart from this clear difference in its intentions with regard to human beings, the *shitunpe* of the third chant has many characteristics in common with the *shitunpe* as community guardian: its place of residence; capacity for superhuman perception; practice of crying especially while moving back and forth through its terrain; and use of its cry to communicate. Indeed, the *shitunpe* of the third chant can be seen as a darkly empowered mirror image of its kindly counterpart. In what follows I will consider these specific traits of the *shitunpe*, adding to them one more: the understanding that the *shitunpe* has a dark coloration. We will consider how these traits are connected to the manipulation of negative (from the perspective of human beings) power by the *shitunpe* of the third chant, and to the employment of positive power by the *shitunpe* as guardian spiritual being.

The gloss of *shitunpe* as *shitu* (ridge or cape), *un* (exists in or on), and *pe* (thing, that is, “thing that exists on the ridge”) alerts us immediately to the *shitunpe*’s more elevated status in comparison to the *chironnup* in terms of the Ainu world view. The presence of the intransitive verb for existence in the second syllable of the name for this animal *kamui* places it squarely in the middle category of Yamada Takako’s tripartite categorization of *kamui* according to their names. The *shitunpe* is not one of the most powerful (*pase*) *kamui* who “rule,” “possess,” “create,” or “receive” the locale with which they are associated, but it does belong to the second most powerful group, those whose names indicate that they are dwellers in a place. For this group of *kamui*, YAMADA tells us, “locality is primary” (2001, 54). She sees the relationship between the natural object that the *kamui* embodies (in this case a black fox) and the locale mentioned in its name (in this case the ridge or cape) as metonymical.²¹ While such *kamui* do not necessarily control all that happens in their designated locale, they live in a coterminous relationship with it, and with influence over its natural forces. As this story of the third chant and accounts of the cult of the *shitunpe* make clear, this group of spiritual beings can wield considerable power; they command human awe. The *shitunpe*’s capacity for influence is in contrast to the *chironnup* whose harm to humans is done through behavior typical of the fox as a species, that is, stealing food stores and insinuating itself with too much intimacy into the human community.

In the third chant the *shitunpe*’s location on the coastal high ground allows it to look out far over the ocean. With its extraordinary powers of vision it is able to pick out clearly the small boat in which the culture hero and his companions are riding. Once the *shitunpe*, through invocation of the evil spirit of foul weather, begins to conjure up the storm, the fox’s high seat in the landscape appears to have a magical impact on the storm’s influence, causing it to roil the ocean all around.

Also, in accounts of the *shitunpe* as a guardian spiritual being, the *shitunpe* is invariably said to live on a high place, most often one near the sea. One informal account given by the male elder Kashimoto Masajirō in Saruwarabe in Nikappu on the south-central coast of Hokkaido and recorded by Sarashina Genzō concerns a large crag jutting out into the sea at the mouth of the Nikappu River.

Kashimoto explains that the present name of the site is Hōgandachi but “the Ainu people of long ago called this crag Poronupuri (large mountain or parent mountain) and used to treat it respectfully and offer saké to it. This is because a black fox lived there” (SARASHINA 1971, 63). Kashimoto’s statement makes clear the close relationship between the headland and the animal presence that exists upon it; to honor the crag is at one and the same time to honor the black fox that dwells there. The emotional responses of humans to the striking qualities of the headland, such as its height and commanding vista over the surrounding sea, would be associated with its guardian spiritual being as well. In contrast, the *chironnup*/red fox has no particular spatial association apart from making frequent appearances within the human village.

Modern readers of the third chant and other *kamui yukar* are often struck by the violent struggles they portray. Such struggle is typical not only of *kamui yukar* but of oral culture in general and has prompted Walter J. ONG to list being “agonistically toned” as one of the characteristics of orally-based thought and expression (1982, 44). Chiri Mashiho has pointed out the prevalence of the ritual enactment of violent struggle in Ainu wind-calming ceremonies, some of which were carried out until recently.²² He states that rituals to subjugate the wind so that fishing could be safely carried out were performed in ancient times by a shaman who was the chief of the village. He further conjectures that the original form of these rituals was a costumed dance carried out by a female shaman called the “younger sister,” who played the role of the unruly wind, and a male shaman, who ritually performed the subjugation of the wind. As evidence for this pattern he cites, through paraphrase into Japanese, a *kamui yukar* in which the speaker is the north wind. She dresses in rags and dances to conjure up a storm that causes distress to the culture hero who is fishing with his companion at sea. After his companion dies from the storm, the hero, while still at sea, shoots the marauding wind with a magic arrow. Even wounded, the wind continues to dance and thus cause the wind to blow. It takes three arrows to finally subdue her (CHIRI Mashiho 1973c, 8–9).

Chiri Mashiho argues that in earlier Ainu culture this story would not simply have been chanted but performed with a female shaman in the role of the dancing wind and a male shaman, who was also the village headman, in the role of the culture hero. If Chiri is correct, the violence of the struggle would have been not only a matter of narrative event but of magically efficacious performance as well. Positioning the site of this ritual on a promontory with a vista of the sea would have allowed the performers to tap the suggestion of spatial power over its environment that the landscape form possessed.

The parallels between this story of wind subjugation and the narrative of the third chant of the *Ainu shin'yōshū* are striking. Following Chiri Mashiho’s thinking regarding the classic structure of the shamanic rituals that he posits as the origin of the *kamui yukar*, it seems possible to see the role of the *shitunpe* in the third chant as one that would have been played, at least originally, by a female shaman who used dance steps to evoke the storm-conjuring movements of the fox.²³ Movement is certainly a key element in the dark magic that the fox with its “evil

nature” performs, and the connections between the leaping fox and the “evil one who brings foul weather” very close. Movement back and forth along high ground is also characteristic of the *shitunpe*’s behavior as guardian *kamui* warning humans of disaster.

While, as noted above, the *kamui yukar* about the *chironnup* sometimes register an awareness of the animal spiritual being’s light gait, the attention to movement is much more pronounced in the case of the *shitunpe* of the third chant. The fox in this chant initiates each of the acts of storm-making by bounding over its terrain:

On the cape, the place that juts from the land, the august cape,
over the crest, to the very top, to the very bottom
my back arching at each light bound, I went running...

(CHIRI Yukie, 1976, 38 and 39)

The phrase that I translate as “my back arching” (Ainu: *chikoikkeukan matu-nitara*) is part of the key formula expressing the fox’s movement but it is not fully understood by scholars. The phonetic elements can be glossed as *ko* (together with), *ikken* (now normally rendered as *ikkew*: hips, lower back, or back bone), *kan* (upwards), and *matu* (to raise up high) (KITAMICHI 2003, 79–81; KIRIKAE 2003, 292; KATAYAMA 2003, 290). CHIRI Yukie renders it in Japanese as *koshi yarawaka ni* (“with smooth hips”) (39), and KATAYAMA sees the posture as like that of a short distance runner poised to start a race, only repeated with each leap (2003, 155). Attention to leaping is also suggested by the *sakehe* (refrain) of the third chant. Like many *sakehe* its literal meaning is unknown, but the presence of the word for “leap” (Ainu: *terke*) in the first part of the refrain (*haikunterke*) suggests that leaping with a fluid motion of the back is experienced as something particularly noteworthy about the animal spiritual being, a phenomenon by which it exercises its power within both the natural and supernatural realms.

It seems likely that this leaping motion of the *shitunpe* was connected to, and seen as causal of, the motion of the storm waves that it sought to call up. This power of the leaping back of the fox is further reflected in the manner in which it is subdued; Okikirmui makes the jawbones of the vanquished fox the foundation stone of his toilet and that of his wife, but it is significant that the Ainu word for “foundation stone” is the same as that for “back,” *ikken*. The culture hero’s actions in this chant thus magically transform the dangerous undulating back (*ikken*) of the leaping *shitunpe* into a helpful and stationary foundation stone (*ikken*).

Apart from this chant of the *Ainu shin’yōshū* I am unaware of other *kamui yukar* recorded in the Ainu language that feature a *shitunpe*; however, there are several Japanese paraphrases of narratives that appear to derive from *kamui yukar* about *shitunpe*. One of these, recited by Sugimura Kinarapukku of Chikabumi *kotan* (village) near Asahikawa and recorded by Sarashina Genzō, is very similar in its narrative events to the third chant and identifies the first-person narrator as a “bad fox.” The story places particular emphasis on the magically menacing power of the fox’s movements. In it a fox looks out to sea from a mountaintop and spots the

culture hero and his companion in a boat. The sight prompts the fox to race about and cause a storm. In the fox's own words it says, "I curled my back [Jp. *senaka o marumete*] and bounding [Jp. *pyon pyon*] I quickly aroused a fierce wind that became a big storm" (SARASHINA 1963, 74–75). The storm claims the life of the culture hero's companion and the fox then runs about to make the storm fiercer. At this point the culture hero shoots the fox from far out at sea with a mugwort arrow and the fox dies. The culture hero then rips off the hind legs of the bad fox and thrusts one leg under the men's toilet and the other under the women's toilet. The fox warns other foxes not to bother humans.

The mention of the fox curling its back as it bounds over its terrain confirms our understanding of the movement of the fox in the third chant. A steeply-arched back is the familiar posture of a fox when pouncing on its prey. Also, the fact that the hind legs, rather than the jawbones, are buried as a means of securing control over the fox suggests that the culture hero sees a significant source of its menacing power to be located in its legs, the means by which it leaps about. Presumably these leg bones, like the jawbones in the *Ainu shin'yōshū* chant, are rendered into *ikkeu* (foundation stones), but because the text is a paraphrase and the Ainu words are not given we cannot definitively confirm this.

As Chiri Yukie's description of the *shitunpe* makes clear, the cry of this animal spiritual being plays an important role in its function as a guardian *kamui* for human communities. The Ainu were, as noted, deeply attentive to the sounds made by animals; one ignored these communications from the natural/spiritual realm at one's peril. In the third chant the cry of the *shitunpe* also plays a significant role but its effort at communication is not directed at humans. For the *shitunpe* of the third chant with its "evil nature," the intention is not to warn humans of the crisis of an impending storm but, instead, to cause that crisis; it directs the magical influence of its voice not towards humans, but towards the evil spirit that possesses the power to cause storms.

These differences in spatial association and in degree of power wielded make it clear that the *shitunpe* (in both its manifestation as a storm-causing fox spiritual being and as a guardian *kamui*) and the *chironnup* are different spiritual beings within the Ainu animistic world view. The most concrete evidence for a literal difference is not in these behaviors but rather in the black fox/*shitunpe*'s different coloring from the red fox/*chironnup*, the redness of which is vividly described as like the "color of blood" (*kem*) (CHIRI Mashiho 1962, 143).

Although the *shitunpe* of the third chant is not specifically identified as a black fox within the narrative, nothing in the story rules out its having this distinctive coloration, and Chiri Yukie's note indicates that she understands the *shitunpe* who speaks the chant to be a "black fox" (Jp. *kurogitsune*). While most ethnographic accounts of the *shitunpe* as community guardian identify the *kamui* as a black fox, it should be noted that there are also a few accounts of white fox *shitunpe*.²⁴

Many cultures treat differently-colored animals as having exceptional spiritual power. This is true of Japanese tradition, for example, in which white animals are frequently identified as the messengers of the gods or even as a god (*kami*) them-

selves.²⁵ Differently-colored foxes, especially white foxes, are sometimes cited in fox lore from China and Japan (KANG 2006, SMYERS 1999). The understanding that animals of the same species that have different color patterns also have different spiritual characteristics and related spatial associations is deeply rooted in Ainu culture. It is seen, for example, in the Ainu response to the bear (*Ursus arctos yesoensis*). As Chiri Mashihō notes, the Ainu divide bears into two basic groups. One group has black fur, is considered to have a good disposition, and is understood to live in the deep mountains. The leader among these good bears is called, among other respectful terms, *nupuri kor kamui* (as noted above, this means “spiritual being who governs the deep mountains”). The second type of bear has irregular coloring, being brown from the lower back up and black from the stomach downward. This type of bear is considered to have a bad nature and is thought to do harm to humans. It is considered to live in the lower mountains and is referred to as *wen yuk* (bad bear) rather than a more respectful term (CHIRI Mashihō 1962, 152). Drawing on this response to the bear, we can hypothesize that the Ainu on occasion experienced differently-colored foxes, particularly black foxes, and that they considered such individuals to be exceptional in nature with powers greater than those of the *chironnup*, which they understood to be both more numerous and less powerful.

The Ainu experience of differently-colored foxes, and especially of black foxes, raises the intriguing question of whether such foxes were present in Western empirical terms in Ainu lands. While a full answer to this question is beyond the proper scope of this paper, it is worth noting that the red fox does have a fairly common color morph as a silver fox. This color morph includes individuals with black coloration. While I have found no documentation of silver-phase red foxes being present on Hokkaido, there are records of black and white fox pelts being traded from Sakhalin (WALKER 2001, 145) and of “silvered black foxes” (VON SIEBOLD 1842, 40) present on the Kuriles. The *Moshiogusa*, a Japanese-Ainu wordlist printed in 1792 that drew heavily from information from the Kurile Island fisheries, includes an entry for *kurogitsune* giving the Ainu equivalent as *shidunpi* (a rendering of *shitunpe*) (UEHARA, 1972).²⁶

Regardless of what arguments we might choose to make about the possibility for the existence of “real” black-colored foxes in Ainu lands, the fact is that in Chiri Yukie’s time, just as is the case today, black-colored foxes were not ordinarily encountered. The cultural experience of the black fox in oral narrative is thus not reinforced by a corresponding experience in the natural world. This absence of literal black foxes perhaps explains some of the confusion regarding the identity of the *shitunpe* that Chiri Yukie and others apparently felt.²⁷

CONCLUSION

More important than any zoological information it might suggest, the story told by this “most revered of foxes” gives us access to a world view in which the web of life and power connecting humans to their environment were immediately

and deeply felt. In order to better grasp the dynamics of this world view and the role of this *kamui yukar* in mediating between human needs and the fox's spiritual power, let us turn again to consider Okikirmui's seemingly ironic address to the vanquished *shitunpe*. The reader will remember that after acknowledging the *shitunpe*'s role as guardian of its proper seat, the cape, and praising that cape as "august" (*kamui*), Okikirmui states that the fox died "in a beautiful way" because it possesses "a pure heart, a godlike disposition" (*pirka puri kamui puri*). The Ainu word translated here as both "heart" and "disposition" is *puri*, sometimes also rendered as "character," "nature," or "temperament." The Ainu word for "pure" is *pirka*, a widely-used adjective that connotes purity, but also beauty and moral goodness. The opposite of *pirka* is *wen*, or evil. This of course describes the kind of disposition (*puri*) that the tale until now has repeatedly assigned to the fox, and is the reason why the fox causes trouble.

Okikirmui's speech to the fox has the deferential tone of a hunter addressing his fallen prey. Rather than reflecting scorn, it seems to express the respect that humans must necessarily show the animal spiritual beings in order to survive in harmony with them. By stating that the fox has "a pure heart, a godly disposition," Okikirmui uses the power of words to make things so; he converts the fox's character from evil to good while according it the full measure of reverence that the animal spiritual being commands.

It is worth remembering at this point that it is not really Okikirmui who speaks these words, but the *shitunpe* itself as the first-person narrator of the tale. Briefly adopting Okikirmui's position, the *shitunpe* uses the culture hero's voice to address its own self. The effect is both powerful and reassuring; the *shitunpe* itself declares that it possesses not an evil nature but a good one. It is still a powerful spiritual being but is now no longer disposed to use its power to the detriment of humans or to create disharmony in the environment. Once the speech is concluded, the *shitunpe*'s change of heart is guaranteed by having the jawbones buried beneath the toilets. It then further cements the good news and magical efficacy of the chant by using its authority as a significant *kamui* to influence the larger collectivity of foxes (*chironnup utar*) for the good. The world at the close of the *kamui yukar* is a vibrant one; foxes, both as *shitunpe* and *chironnup*, remain live spiritual presences within the vital Ainu world but their powers are now understood to be in harmony with the needs and goals of the human community. The "guardian of the cape" is now understood to be also the guardian of the human community.

CHANT OF THE FOX ABOUT ITSELF
(*HAIKUNTERKE HAIKOSHITEMTURI*)

Note: The following translation is based on the facsimile edition of the 1926 version of the *Ainu shin'yōshū* (CHIRI Yukie 1976, 28–49). In that edition Chiri gives the Ainu text and her Japanese translation on facing pages. Each line of the Ainu text includes on average three phrases of the sung chant. In the transliterated Ainu, Chiri indicates the division between these phrases with a double space.

We can assume that in oral performance the *sakehe* (refrain) would have been repeated after each phrase of this chant, although Chiri does not say this explicitly. Chiri's Japanese translation follows the Ainu very closely with the order of syntax preserved. She does not, however, insert spaces within each line of the Japanese to indicate visually the breaks between the phrases. In creating this translation I have consulted both Chiri's original Ainu and her Japanese translation. Like Chiri I do not insert spaces to indicate the breaks between the phrases that make up each line in the translation, but also like Chiri I have tried to allow the reader to "hear" those breaks by creating lines comprised of several shorter syntactical units. The four footnotes included here are translations of Chiri's Japanese language notes in the original.

Haikunterke haikoshitemturi

On the place that juts from the land, the august cape, at the very crest
I had my seat.
One day I went out and looked and saw
that the surface of the sea was beautifully calm, calm all over and on that sea
Okikirmui, Shupunramka, and Samayunkur,
all three in one boat, had set out to go fishing. The moment I saw that
my evil nature rose up within me.
On the cape, the place that juts from the land, the august cape,
over the crest, to the very top, to the very bottom,
my back arching at each light bound, I went running.
With a devilish cry, "*pau, pau*,"²⁸ a sound like hard sticks snapping
I stared and glared at the river's source, calling the evil one
who brings foul weather. Then right away from the river,
from its very source, a raging wind, a whirlwind
came blowing forth. It reached the sea and in no time at all
the ocean's surface became its lower depths,
and its lower depths became its surface. The fishing boat of
Okikirmui and his fellows, far out where the sea of the ocean folk
and the sea of land folk meet, was in dire straits, spinning in circles
through the waves. One rough wave as big as a mountain
was breaking over the boat. At that instant
Okikirmui, Samayunkur, and Shupunramka,
keeping time with their voices, paddled the boat, pulling hard.
The little boat was blown about like a withered leaf
and looked as though it would capsize at any moment, but,
to my surprise, the humans seemed to be
very strong because in the midst of the wind the little boat
went gliding over the waves.
When I saw that, my evil nature rose up within me,
and, my back arching at each light bound, I ran about.
With a devilish cry, "*pau, pau*," a sound like hard sticks snapping,

I did my best to urge on the evil one who brings foul weather.
 Then after a while I noticed that Samayunkur,
 bleeding from the back of his hands, from the palm of his hands,
 was dead from exhaustion.
 The moment I saw that I smiled to myself.
 And then again, with all my might,
 my back arching at each light bound, I ran about,
 and with a devilish cry, “*pau, pau,*” a sound like hard sticks snapping,
 I urged on the evil one who brings foul weather.
 Okikirmui and Shupunramka, exchanging words of encouragement
 between the two, kept pulling stoutly
 on the paddles. Then after a while Shupunramka,
 bleeding from the back of his hands, from the palm of his hands,
 was dead from exhaustion. When I saw that
 I smiled to myself.
 After that, again, with, my back arching at each light bound,
 I ran about and cried my devilish cry with all my strength,
 “*pau, pau,*” a sound like sharp sticks snapping.
 However Okikirmui seemed not the least bit tired.
 With his body wrapped in just a single, thin robe
 he was continuing to paddle the boat, pulling hard,
 when all of a sudden his paddle broke into pieces right in his hands.
 When that happened, he leapt onto Samayunkur,
 dead from exhaustion, and grabbing hold of his paddle, rowed
 the boat all alone.
 When I saw that, my evil nature rose up within me.
 I cried my devilish cry, “*pau, pau,*” a sound like sharp sticks snapping,
 and with my back arching at each light bound, I ran about
 trying my best to urge on the evil one who brings foul weather.
 In the meantime, Samayunkur’s paddle, too,
 broke into pieces. Then Okikirmui leapt onto
 Shupunramka, grabbed the paddle from his hand,
 and pulled with all his might on that oar.
 However that paddle, too, broke from the water’s force.
 With that, Okikirmui stood firmly planted
 in the middle of the boat, defying the fierce wind, the wind all around.
 Although truly, I never dreamed that a human being
 would spot me on the crest of the place that juts from the land,
 the august cape, he glared right into my eyes.
 His fierce, furious nature now showed clearly on his face
 which until now had worn a kindly look, and he reached
 into his pouch²⁹ and pulled something out. I looked and saw
 he had a small mugwort bow
 and a small mugwort arrow.
 When I saw that, I smiled to myself.

“What could the likes of a human being do that would possibly scare me?
 Just what could he hope to use that puny mugwort arrow³⁰ for?”
 I thought to myself, and then over the crest of this cape,
 the place that juts from the land, the august cape,
 to the very top, to the very bottom, with my back arching smoothly
 at each light bound, I ran crying my devilish cry,
 “*pau, pau,*” a sound like hard sticks snapping,
 and I sang the praises of the evil one who brings foul weather.
 But while I was doing this, the arrow that Okikirmui shot came flying
 and sank deep into my neck.
 And that was that. What happened next I could not tell.
 After awhile I regained consciousness and looked and saw
 that it was really beautiful weather and the ocean
 spread in a broad expanse but nowhere on it was Okikirmui’s fishing boat.
 And for some reason, from the top of my head
 to the tips of my toes I was like burning birch bark, curling and twisting.
 Surely a tiny arrow shot by a human being really couldn’t cause me
 such pain I thought, but after that, flailing my arms and legs in agony
 over the crest of this cape, the place that juts from the land, the august cape,
 to the very top, to the very bottom, howling
 I ran, writhing with pain, day and night, sometimes living
 sometimes dying, until I ceased knowing
 what was happening.
 After awhile I regained consciousness and looked and saw
 that I was in the space between the ears of a large black fox.
 After two days, Okikirmui, looking most godlike,
 came and said with a smile,
 “Ah, what a gorgeous sight! Black fox god, guardian
 of the crest of this cape, the place that juts from the land, the august cape,
 it is surely because you possess a pure heart, a godlike disposition,
 that, although you died, you died in such a beautiful way.”
 With these words he picked up my head
 and brought it to his house. He used my upper jawbone
 as the foundation stone for his toilet,³¹ and my lower jawbone
 as the foundation stone for his wife’s toilet.
 And as for my body, it rotted into the earth.
 After that, day and night,
 I was assaulted by the smell of feces, and so my death
 was a poor one, a bad one indeed.
 My status as a god was not low
 but because I possessed a heart bent on evil
 I died a mean and awful death. And so,
 you foxes who come after me, I warn you,
 make sure you do not have an evil nature.
 This is the story the fox spiritual being told.

NOTES

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1. In current Japanese publications Ainu words are usually transcribed using the *katakana* syllabary. When roman alphabet transcription is used, the system favored does not overtly indicate aspirates such as *chi* and *shi* (which are rendered as *ci* and *si*). In this article I follow the original transcription style used by Chiri Yukie in the *Ainu shin'yōshū*. This style includes indications of aspirates and employs the alphabet in ways familiar to English-language readers. This is also the transcription style used by Kubodera Itsuhiko in his highly regarded *Ainu joji-shi shin'yō, seiden no kenkyū* (1977), one of the largest collections of transcribed *kamui yukar* and *oina*.

2. The text of the chant is given in Ainu (transcribed using the roman alphabet) and in Japanese translation. In this article all references to the *Ainu shin'yōshū* are to CHIRI Yukie 1976. All English translations of the *kamui yukar* are my own.

3. Exceptions include TSUSHIMA 1996 and MILLER 2002.

4. The Japanese linguists and ethnographers, Kinda'ichi Kyōsuke, Chiri Mashiho, and Kubodera Itsuhiko, published extensive translations and transcriptions of Ainu oral traditions in the first half of the twentieth century. In the second half of the twentieth century up to the present Kayano Shigeru and others have continued to collect oral traditions as recorded sound as well as transcription, although many stories are now related by informants in Japanese only. In addition to Kayano, scholars currently writing in Japanese about Ainu oral traditions include, among others, Haginaka Mie, Katayama Tatsumine, Kirikae Hideo, Kitamichi Kunihiko, and Nakagawa Hiroshi.

5. The most notable exceptions are valuable tools such as boats. Also, in some areas chants in which the culture hero or his small (child) version are the speaker are termed *kamui yukar*, although such chants are more commonly called *oina*.

6. KINDA'ICHI has argued that the word *kamui*, along with several other terms related to religious practice, entered Ainu from the Japanese, rather than being brought from the Ainu into Japanese (1992, 73–74). I prefer to use the term “spiritual being” to translate *kamui* rather than the more commonly used “god” or “deity” because I feel it avoids a potentially confusing association with other, very dissimilar, religious traditions.

7. An alternative word for *kamui yukar* is *yukkar*, a term understood to mean “to make game.” This name for the chants is indicative of the kind of magical efficacy they were understood to possess. See CHIRI Mashiho 1973a, 161.

8. While many traditions carried forward in time by the Ainu undoubtedly date to the tenth century and indeed much earlier, it is helpful to keep in mind that historians consider that “the culture complex we know as Ainu” came into being around the late thirteenth century, drawing on influences from the Okhotsk and Satsumon cultures. See, for example, SIDDLE 1999, 68.

9. CHIRI Mashiho believes that the word *chironnup* originally had the flexibility to refer to any animal that was killed in large numbers (1962, 143).

10. From this point on I use the word *chironnup* to refer to the Ainu experience of the animal including its spiritual dimensions and the term “red fox” to refer to the western cognitive sense of the animal.

11. See CHIRI Yukie 1976, 24–36 and KUBODERA 1977, 146–48. There is considerable difference in content between these two obviously related chants. In the version collected by Kubodera and recited by Hirame Karepia, the female gender of the fox is clear, while it is ambiguous and seems to fluctuate between female and male in Chiri Yukie's telling. Other differences in content between the two allow us to see the ecological differences registering

between a tradition preserved in an inland mountainous area and one from a coastal area. The account here follows Chiri Yukie.

12. For studies of fox belief and fox narratives in Late Imperial China see CHAN 1998, HUNTINGTON 2004, and KANG 2006. For studies of fox lore and belief in Japan from pre-modern to modern times see BATHGATE 2003, SMYERS 1999, and DE VISSER 1908.

13. The complete refrain is *Pau chouwa chopu hum hum hum* (KUBODERA 1977, 149). The experience of a fox's cry as sounding like *pau pau* in Ainu is markedly different from the Japanese counterpart *kon kon*.

14. Okikirmui is the spelling used by Chiri Yukie to render the name of the culture hero in the chants of the *Ainu shin'yōshū*, and is understood to reflect the pronunciation used in the Horobetsu area. The culture hero is known in the Saru valley and other areas as Okikurmi.

15. The word *moshiresani* glosses literally as “place that sticks out from the country or world.” It is possible, as KIRIKAE indicates, that the word is used as a place name here (2003, 329) in which case it could be translated as “the Cape of Moshir,” but I feel the literal meaning is of significance to listeners and follow Kitamichi in making this gloss. Chiri Yukie translates the word into Japanese as *kuni no misaki* (the cape of the country). See KITAMICHI 2003, 79.

16. Chiri Yukie's explanatory note on the concept of *hayokpe*, the “armor” or “suit” that animal spiritual beings wear may be helpful in understanding the fox's state of being. “It is said that both birds and animals when they are in the mountains cannot be seen by human eyes, but each has a house like a human's house, lives with the same appearance as a human, and when they go out to the human village they put on “armor” before setting out. Thus, the dead body of a bird or animal is the armor. Its true body is invisible to the eye but is said to dwell in the space between the ears of the dead body” (CHIRI 1976, 12–13).

17. For information on the relationship between animal spirits and their bones see OHNUKI-TIERNEY 1981, 68–69. For accounts of the manipulation of fox (*shitumpe*) jawbones for purposes of divination and expelling possessing spirits, see BATCHELOR 1927, 263–79 and SARASHINA and SARASHINA 1976, 301. In a *kamui yukar* about a harmful swordfish spiritual being, the swordfish suffers the same posthumous fate as the *shitumpe* in this chant; its lower and upper jawbones are buried under the men's and women's toilets respectively (CHIRI Mashiho 1973a, 185).

18. OHNUKI-TIERNEY has commented on the Ainu sensitivity to odors and the particular abhorrence of the smell of feces and menstrual blood (1981, 64). It seems likely that by including the women's toilet here the story conveys the understanding that the fox spirit is exposed to the smell of menstrual blood as well as feces and urine.

19. I am grateful to Professor Christopher Robbins for this observation given in an email correspondence on 21 November 2006 in response to an earlier draft of this article.

20. This cult was common in southwestern Hokkaido but does not seem to have been practiced in communities in the northeast of the island. See CHIRI Mashiho 1973a, 364; SARASHINA and SARASHINA 1976, 299.

21. YAMADA, 2001, 57–61. With regard to the meaning of *shitu*, KATAYAMA states, “*S[h]itu* designates the extension of a ridge from a mountain toward a plain. When it extends towards the sea it corresponds to a cape” (2003).

22. He sites an example of a ritual subduing of the east wind which when it blows hard in autumn can keep the salmon from returning to the rivers from the sea. This ritual was practiced until recently in the Yakumo area of Chiri Yukie's home district of Iburi and involves the “bad” east wind (represented by a youth dressed in ragged clothing) leaping about and throwing sand and water on the “good” winds of the three other directions (represented by youths in fine clothing). The rambunctious east wind, however, is eventually corralled and chased into the sea by the other three winds. He emerges dripping to prostrate himself in

front of the other three winds as well as the gathered community. He then promises to refrain from violence in the future and begs for pardon (CHIRI Mashihō 1973b, 7–8).

23. The pairing of a brother and sister in connection with both a black fox and the conjuring of storms is seen in a *kamui yukar* paraphrased by Chiri Mashihō in Japanese. In this story the sister of a black fox (*kurogitsune*) dances in embroidered robes, thereby causing a storm so violent that it destroys the human village leaving no houses and no trees remaining. When the black fox discovers what his sister has done, he punishes her severely for her actions (CHIRI 1973b, 246–48). Because Chiri gives only the Japanese, with no mention of Ainu terms, the word “*shitunpe*” does not appear in this text.

24. SARASHINA and SARASHINA report the cult of a white *shitunpe kamui* in Yakumo (1976, 299) and Nabesawa gives an account of a white *shitunpe* in Monbetsu and the *pase onkami* prayers offered to it (MONBETSU-CHŌ KYŌDOSHI KENKYŪKAI 1966, 65–66).

25. For an early Japanese account of a white animal that is understood to be a *kami*, see the *Kojiki*'s (712) account of Yamato Takeru's encounter with a white boar that proves to be the *kami* of a mountain in PHILIPPI 1969, 246. With regard to the exceptional nature of differently-colored foxes in Japanese tradition it is worth noting that the *Engi shiki* 927 lists three types of foxes: white foxes, black foxes, and nine-tailed foxes, as “very lucky omens” (cited in SMYERS 1999, 77).

26. It is also possible that the Ainu experience of black- and white-colored foxes was informed by encounters with the arctic fox *Alopex lagopus*, including the arctic fox in its dark color morph as a “blue fox.” Ordinarily, the arctic fox turns white in winter and ranges from brown to gray to black in its summer coat. In its prized blue morph, however, the arctic fox remains dark year round, being a dark bluish-grey or brown in the summer months and a bluish-grey or bluish-black in winter. Such foxes were highly prized for their pelts (GEPTNER 1998, 276). The arctic fox is not present on Hokkaido except in isolated cases of escaped pets; however, VON SIEBOLD records the presence of the *isatis*, or blue arctic fox, in the Kuriles in the first half of the nineteenth century (1842, 40).

27. With respect to this registering of uncertainty, it is interesting to note that John Batchelor includes an entry for the word *shitunpe* (given as *shitube* or *shitumbe*) in the 1905 edition of his Ainu-English Dictionary, where he defines it as “A fox (principally the black fox),” but that he drops this entry from subsequent editions. He does however retain an entry for *shitumbe-marapto*, which he defines as “The ceremony of finding out a culprit by means of the skull of a fox” with no mention of the fox's coloration (BATCHELOR 1905, 424).

28. The onomatopoeic word for a fox's cry.

29. *Pushtotta*: something shaped like a satchel, used to carry fire-making tools, powders, and other small, necessary items when one is going out hunting on the ocean. Things with similar functions are *piuchiop*, *karop* (containers for fire-making tools), and so on, but they are made with rush or *atush* (wood fiber) weave and so are used on land. Because *pushtotta* are made with bear, seal, or other animal pelts, water cannot get in and hence they are taken to sea.

30. *Noya ai*: Mugwort arrow. Mugwort is a plant held in high esteem by the Ainu. If one is hit by a mugwort arrow one cannot float up and so it is said to be the thing evil spirits fear most. Thus it is included as one of the essentials one must take along when going on a trip.

31. Originally men's and women's toilets were separate. *Ashinru* and *eosineru* [a mistaken spelling of *esoineru*] both refer to toilets.

Among foxes, the black fox is the most revered. A promontory jutting out into the ocean is generally considered the black fox's domain. They say that barring a considerable crisis, the black fox does not make its voice heard by humans.

Okikurumi (Okikirmui), Samayunkur, and Shupunramka are cousins. Shupunramka is said to be the oldest and Okikirmui the youngest. Shupunramka is mild-mannered and bashful and so doesn't speak, but Samayunkur is short-tempered, not very smart, and impulsive, and

is a coward with a bad temperament. Okikirmui is said to be a great man who has a godlike intelligence, is compassionate and brave, and so there are an unlimited number of stories about him.

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