

Investigation on the Ainu Indigenous Peoples' Hunting and Fishing Tools at Hokkaido University National History Museum, Japan

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The Ainu are an indigenous people who live in Hokkaido, Japan, as well as in Russia. Approximately they appeared in the Japanese history at the end of the 12th century AD. Hunting, fishing and gathering are the main subsistence patterns for them to obtain food and other necessities. The Ainu material culture consists of the physical objects made by them for the satisfaction of their needs. It includes hunting, fishing and gathering devices, ceremonial articles, attire and form of settlements. Even if some anthropological studies have been published about the Ainu culture, there is lack of researches about their material culture in terms of ethnoarchaeology. The hunting and fishing tools collection of the Hokkaido University National History Museum (Botanic Garden) was selected for this study as an approach to investigate the Ainu material culture. Furthermore, this investigation is influenced by some anthropological and ethnological data from previous studies of the Ainu living tradition, and field observations during the Hokkaido University Short-Term Exchange Program (HUSTEP) 2013 – 2014, Japan. In order to determine the importance of their rich material culture, this investigation is based on reliable data which are collected during the analysis of the hunting and fishing tools like fishing spears (*Marek*), harpoon heads (*Kite*), bows, arrows and the long spear (*Op*). According to their materials, morphological features and function, new classifications for each and every tool have been presented with relevant illustrations as a result of this investigation. These results lend to draw conclusions about their past as a primitive society even if they lost the cultural awareness in 3 the contemporary Japanese society. In an archaeological perspective, the relationship between the Ainu and their material culture can interpreted beyond the study of artifacts left behind in sites by seeking clues to their behavior. Even if the modern Ainu indigenous people adapt to the subsistence economy of the contemporary Japanese society, there are evidence to infer that, this material culture was in full function a long period ago.

Keywords : Ainu, Hokkaido, Ethnoarchaeology, Hunting, Fishing