
DZIEDZICTWO KULTUROWE I PRZYRODNICZE JAKO ATRAKCJA TURYSTYCZNA

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AINU – TOURISM IN THE SERVICE OF AUTARCHY?

AJNOWIE – TURYSTYKA W SŁUŻBIE AUTARKII?

Introduction

The presented paper, based on desk research of the materials collected by Polish, English and Japanese researchers, is showing the history, culture, daily life and rituals of Ainu – autochthonic inhabitants of Hokkaido, which origin is still the anthropological mystery. Ainu was once proud and self-reliant people, however, with the passing of time, they became comedown and assimilated to Japanese nation, which almost caused loss of their own identity. The ethnic revival of Ainu, which was, undoubtedly owed by its origins to the tourism interest, caused the renewed desire to become the autarchic people once again. Thus, it is worth to consider how the tourism may be treated as an useful tool that renews the ethnic identity?

The loss of independence

The term “Ainu” refers to the small ethnic group that nowadays lives only in Hokkaido. In the past, they were self-reliant group, which connections to the other ethnic groups are still unsolved mystery. In the sixteenth century the Ainu folk was estimated to 40.000 people. They lived on a wide territory, from the south part of the Kamchatka, Kuril Islands, Sakhalin, Hokkaido to the region of Tohoku in the Honshu Island. They significantly differ from the most common in this region Mongolian type. Ainu has brighter skin colour, did not have the slant eyes, characteristic to this region, long heads, flat faces, and what is the most interesting, abundant facial hair (in is thought that they are the most hairy people in the world). Although small in numbers, Ainu was a centrepiece of interest in

the ethnography, anthropology and linguistics during the end of the nineteenth and the twentieth century.¹

According to the archaeological research, Ainu were inhabitants of Hokkaido form, at least 7.000 years, so it was much earlier than Japanese, who settled there in the fifteenth century. There are many theories that tries to explain the origins of this unique in its anthropological characteristics group. Although there were many disputes among scientists (which tries to assign the origin of Ainu to South-Eastern Asia, Australia, Siberia, Europe, Africa or even... eastern counterpart of Atlantis) finally, it was impossible to introduce firm proofs that could acknowledge any of those theories. Recently, despite of impossibility described above, most of the anthropologists qualifies Ainu as an entirely different race – so called Kuril or Ainu anthropological type. It is worth to mention, however, that Ainu themselves connects their origin with the extraterrestrial issues and claims that their ancestors were space travellers that sends spaceships to Earth.²

The word “Ainu” itself means human being. As in many other tribes, behind this ethnonym there are hidden beliefs of the excellence and superiority of the Ainu people. Only other Ainu could be “human being”. For other ethnic groups they have different terms. For example, Japanese, which unfortunately significantly contributed to acculturation and extinction of the Ainu, were called *Shisham* (Outlanders), Russians were called *Nucha* (Noble lords), and the other newcomers which were not well known by Ainu, were called *Repunkur* (Outlander from beyond the sea). Despite of those terms, Ainu had few other, neutral words to describe other people: *Kur*, *Utar*, *Enchu* or *Kuru*.³ On the other hand, Japanese called them *Ebisu* (Savages), Russians named them the Hairy Kuril People, and their nearest neighbours – Orocs and Nivkh people called them *Kui* and *Kugi*.⁴ Although Ainu people were very proud of their name, the continual harassment and discrimination from Japanese caused that the, once beautiful and independent in its meaning, word “Ainu” became the source of troubles and shame. In the 1905 Waclaw Sieroszewski, who conducted with Bronisław Piłsudski ethnological explorations among Ainu, described their poor situation with the quotation from one of their Ainu guides: “We do not know where we can find help... Nobody will give us anything... We are Ainu... The Japanese hates us. They laugh at us”.⁵ Many examples that was described in Sieroszewskis memories, caused the loss of Ainu identity, tradition, language and finally the autarchy. The long-range process of acculturation and assimilation with Russians and Japanese led to the extinction of Kurilian and Sakhalinian Ainu. As Alfred Majewicz wrote:

The fate of the northkurilian Ainu was (...) tragic. When Japan, in 1875, took possession of Kuril Islands there were 106 Ainu, concentrated for better «protection» from new Japanese government in the west part of Shumshu shore (...) in the 1887

¹ Vide A.F. Majewicz, *Dzieje i legendy Ajnów*, Iskry, Warszawa 1983, p. 5.

² Ibidem, pp. 7–14.

³ Vide A.F. Majewicz, *Ajnu. Lud, jego język i tradycja ustna*, Wyd. UAM, Poznań 1984, p. 14.

⁴ Vide idem, *Dzieje i wierzenia Ajnów*, CIA-Books-SVARO, Poznań 1991, p. 10.

⁵ W. Sieroszewski, *Wśród kosmatych ludzi*, Wiedza Powszechna, Warszawa 1957, p. 27.

Ainu was resettled by force to Shikotan, where they were outnumbered by diseases caused by change of the environment – tuberculosis and beriberi. (...) In the 1956 the last of northkurilian Ainu died in Hokkaido from tuberculosis.⁶

The same fate happened to the Sakhalinian Ainu. When Japan took possession of its part after war with Russia in 1905, Ainu, as it happened in Kuril Islands, were subject of particular “care” from new governors. Ainu were resettled and concentrated in one place where they were hurriedly Japanised, in many cases with the use of force. After the world war II, when Soviet Union repossessed the Sakhalin, all Ainu people were relocated to Hokkaido. It is estimated, that the last Ainu who remembered the Sakhalinian Ainu language died in the 1975.⁷

The main territory, however, where Ainu still remains is Hokkaido. Until the sixteenth century, when Japanese immigrants came to the island, it was named *Ainu mosiri* – the land of Ainu. The most critical and, unfortunately tragic moment in the history of contact with the Japanese, was the 1631, when they discovered gold in this land. The rapid inflow of Japanese emigrants and the depredation of natural goods, destroyed the ecological balance. The new governors banned also the traditional ways of food gathering such as salmon fishing, bear or deer hunting, which was not only the important nutrition part, but also was essential part of the rituals and beliefs. Although Ainu tried to liberate themselves from the influence of invaders, they failed and were experienced with more and more restrictions. When, in the 1868, Hokkaido eventually become part of the Japan Empire, their life changed once again. From now on, Ainu were treated as the Japanese citizens which led to the ingestion of Japanese customs, beliefs and language. At the same time, discrimination and racial segmentation from the governors such as lack of access to education, better job or social rights caused situation in which Ainu themselves tried to discard their distinctive features. Parents, where children were around, stopped using Ainu language, they often forced them to marry handicapped and disabled Japanese to gain social acceptance in the future generations. What is more, the spiritual and religious identity, because of hunting prohibition and necessity of agricultural cultivation, had also gone. Which is worth to mention, the discrimination of Ainu did not end even after the world war II. In the 1980's the Japanese government still claimed, that Japan is a single-nation country.⁸ We cannot be very surprised with the prognosis from the 1980's which claimed that Ainu would extinct. It was stressed that the modern Ainu were not interested in the scientist disputations about themselves, which they may watch in the high-tech Japanese television in their modern Japanese houses. Despite of the ethnographical tragedy caused by Japanisation, it was bitterly admitted, that from the political point of view, the situation of that time was beneficial. The problem of distinguished minority was solved.⁹ Although,

⁶ A.F. Majewicz, *Dzieje i wierzenia...*, op. cit., p. 22.

⁷ Ibidem, pp. 24–26.

⁸ Ibidem, pp. 27–38.

⁹ Vide A.F. Majewicz, *Ajnu...*, op. cit., p. 82.

during that time, the interest of Ainu appeared from time to time, but it was thought that the autarchy of Ainu, lost in the beginnings of the twentieth century was impossible to regain.

Daily life, beliefs, practices and the Ainu language

To understand how much Ainu differ from Japanese, it is worth to concentrate on their former, traditional way of life, which, because of mentioned actions from Japanese, was almost forgotten. The lost autarchy of Ainu can be seen only in times when they were fully independent from Japan.

Despite of characteristic appearance of Ainu, their outfits were also different from their Japanese neighbours. The traditional outfit of Ainu was *attush* – kimono alike, made from elm tree grains, half-calf length, belt bonded, with wide sleeves and without fastening. Daily, it was worn without any ornaments, however during meetings and important occasions Ainu wore its ornamented version. The ornaments of *attush* had another, important role – it informed about membership in a particular Ainu village – *kotan*. What is more, the traditional outfit also guarded Ainu from evil spirits. Women also wore *attush* as an underwear. Another important parts of the Ainu outfit were socks and special kind of gloves. During important ceremonies men wore wooden crowns and long swords. Sometimes Ainu also used leather clothes. Because of the impressive hair, Ainu had different form others ethnic groups hairdos. Hair were cut on shoulder length, and were split in two even parts.¹⁰

The basic Ainu food was meat from hunted animals, fishes, collected plants and clams. Ainu were afraid of the hunger during winters, so they always collected food to household garners. They hunt during summer and autumn, usually in small groups, although sometimes, women accompanied men during bigger hunting expeditions. Around wide hunting areas Ainu built supply huts, where they could rest during the night. The hunting equipment was mainly bows with poisoned arrows (the components of poison were hunters secret), and traps which location was marked on trees because of safety issues. Knives and swords was also used. The excellent knowledge about animals habits, patience and courage made Ainu perfect hunters. They hunted mainly deer, foxes, birds, but also bears. A part of take was carried to the supply huts, and the rest was taken to *kotan*. Sometimes, in situations when the hunt took place in other tribe territory, Ainu shared meat with hosts of the area. Different kind of hunt was organised during spring, when hunters task was to capture young bear, that was raised in a cage for one of the most important Ainu festival – *Iomante* (Bear Festival). Ainu also hunted on the sea – mainly seals. Fishing was also common, which also was connected with spiritual practices. For example, blood and some part of fish were given to the sea gods. The prow of boat was also decorated with something that brings luck. This practice was described in Sieroszewski memories: “Youth took the take to the house, were Spanram and joyous Nentasik also went. Nentasik took a bag made from bear leather, in which was fox head, killed year ago. The bag was always

¹⁰ Ibidem, pp. 62–63.

hung on the boats prow, because it brings luck”.¹¹ Although the hunting and fishing was a men job, women and children also took part in food collecting process – they collect clams, and threw on the shore fishes.¹²

The key aspect of Ainu life was however, their beliefs based on animistic system. Every action, even unimportant one, was connected with particular ritual, which, if was not donem may bring the wrath of gods. Gods, called *Kamui*, lived in everything that surrounded Ainu. Presence of gods were seen in every action. *Kamui* demanded worshipping, so every single action was connected with prayer and gift for the gods. Ainu divided their gods to “close” and “far” ones, “heavy” and “light”, or “good” and “evil”. The “good” spirits should be welcomed, and after worshipping should be send away, while the “evil” ones should be, as quick as possible, chased away. However, it was essential to remember that, even the “evil” spirits should not be angered, which was also connected with the prayers and prays. Otherwise they could bring misfortune. The prays were usually made from food products, especially form *sake*. The need of gods worshipping was an excuse for an excessive alcoholism, that had malign influence on the tribe in the edge of extinction. Despite of described rituals, the most valuable pray was *inau* – decorated small piece of wood, that made connection between people and gods. They were placed in every areas considered as sacred. Mainly, the prey with *inau* was combined with another pray, placed in front. The theft of *inau* was the worst crime, and accusation of not having *inau* was the biggest insult. *Inau* was made only by men, however, women were not totally excluded from religious life. Although young women, because of menstruation which was considered as an impurity, could not participate in rituals, the elder ones had this honour. Special role in Ainu beliefs was reserved for bears, that was considered as gods messengers that brings luck in a hunt. Killing of a bear were not only treated as kill of the messenger. Ainu believed that they only took his gifts – meat and fur, while soul of bear was returned to the god, that sent the messenger. The mentioned above, *Iomante* Festival was the most important in Ainu beliefs. It took place in autumn and was very glamorous event. To the host, who raised bear, came many ceremonial-clothed guests, with many *inau* and *sake* made for this occasion. The Festival started with an apology for killing the bear, and reassurance that the messenger will be sent back with all necessary goods. Ainu also asked for the return of messenger with another plentiful gifts. After that, bear was taken out of cage, and was leaded to fence made of *inau*. Then it was shouted by blunt arrows (to leave the fur of bear unharmed) which were also kind of *inau*. When the host shouted sharped arrow in bears hart, the others shouted arrows in the sky, which supposed to help messenger in his return. Regardless of the fact, if the arrow was lethal or not, the bear was pin down with a wooden bar. Then its fur was whipped of, and its head was cut and placed in a special venue in host house. After time, the skull was placed on *inau*. The amount of bear skulls decided about fortune of the host and his family. The Festival ended with huge feast (of

¹¹ W. Sieroszewski, op. cit., pp. 59–60.

¹² Vide A.F. Majewicz, *Ajnu...*, op. cit., pp. 77–78.

course with a lot of *sake*), singing of women, and also dances. It is worth to mention, that Ainu also organised other animal festivals, such as salmon or fox festivals, however they were not as well-known as described *lomante*. Important part of the spiritual contact was also shamanism. Shamans, called *tusu-kuru*, did not, however, possess such influence as in other primal tribes. Their role was strictly pragmatic – they were only called in case of serious disease, when it was necessary to expel an evil spirit from the body of ill person, in case of unsuccessful hunt or in thief search. As well as men, women could also become shaman, although marriage between shamans never took place. The position of shaman was also not inherited. Every shaman service should be paid, however, shamans never were rich group in the Ainu society.¹³

Another very important and distinctive feature of former Ainu culture was also practices connected with building and maintaining a house, which was not only treated as a place of living, but also as an sanctuary and habitat for good spirits. That is where the father and keeper of a household – *Chiseikoroekashi* and the caregiver of fire and mother of the household – the goddess of fire, *Fuchi*, were living. The main priest of the house was a male host, whose task was to, among the others, choose appropriate ground for the future home. To do that, he was preparing special kind of *inau*, which he embedded in the ground. Then he was starting to pray to the good gods. If place was inappropriate for some reason, *Kamui* were bringing on him bad dreams, otherwise house was built with the help from whole *kotan*. After the construction host was organising a party for the folk members. What is interesting, Ainu built their houses when they had already few children. Homesteads usually had only one room, although they were much bigger than the Japanese houses. There were three windows in the Ainu hut: first one, placed near roof was a chimney, second one was for letting the sunlight into the house, and the third, which was the most important one, directed to the east, was for the gods to help them to visit their believers. The centre part of a household was reserved for fireplace, which was believed as a holy place. The same role was assigned to the storage of *Chiseikoroekashi inaus*, located in the furthest left corner from the entry of a house. The spots in the house taken by family members were also determined. Spot nearest fire was taken by the host and his wife, the rest were sat farther. During important ceremonies the spots taken by guest were also strictly determined. Before entering to the Ainu household, guest must signalize his entering with loud grunt. Although Ainu were naked in their own house, it was treated as an insult to get undress in other households.¹⁴

Despite of its small size, the Ainu *kotan* had specific class structure. There was a village chief, in most cases the richest man, called *nispa*, who, along with elders, was deciding about important issues related to *kotan*. What is interesting, among Ainu, there also were poor people, and even slaves. You could become slave in a several ways: mainly as a prisoner of war, however, also in situations where Ainu were unable to pay his debts,

¹³ Vide A.F. Majewicz, *Dzieje i legendy...*, op. cit., pp. 66–74.

¹⁴ Ibidem, pp. 75–79.

or in case of being convicted for serious crimes. All residents had to obey the unwritten, however strictly executed, laws of Ainu village. Everyone that broke the law was punished, but, what is worth to mention, until there was no complaint, there was no crime. If victim decided to exact his rights, there was organised special discussion with both sides of the conflict, called *caranke*. The punishment depended on the scale of crime. Sometimes compensation was enough, but there were also heavier punishment such as canning or slavery. In many cases, Ainu also shaved head of the convict, or, when he committed very serious crime, the may even cut his nose, or tendons. The trial could be continued for days. If sides decided to solve their argument with *caranke*, the society could not interrupt. Sometimes, however, when argument was continued for too long, the elders could decide about the punishment, and in case of luck of agreement after that intervention, they could punish both sides of the conflict with ritual caning. During *caranke* Ainu could also get a divorce. The other aspects of Ainu life was also regulated with tradition and religious customs. Marriage was acknowledged when newly-weds shared food from same bowl. Although there were marriages arranged with parents, in the most cases marriage was decided by couples in love. As a wedding gif husband was giving her wife something carved by himself, and she was giving him something weaved by her. Then, there was gift exchange between families of newly-weds, and a wedding reception. What is interesting, married couples, for a long time, were living with parents. Of course, in Ainu society marriage between members of the same family was strictly forbidden. Man could marry couple of wives, especially when former one could not bear a child. What is worth to mention, after loss of her husband, woman also could marry another man, however only a brother of her late husband. Men in that case could marry any woman. There are also some interesting facts about childbirth – the whole process was proceeding in very hygienic conditions. Much better than in neighbouring societies. The good conditions of a childbirth was caused by relatively high social position that Ainu women had. Childbirth was conducted at home, with a company of other women. Mother of a birther (or one of hers sisters) had a special role during the birth. She was supposed to calm down and give instructions during the process. There are known some cases, when that kind of assistant was a man, but usually they just sat in the hut and did not participate in the social life. A young child was raised by mother. The name was given to a child not until seven or eight year of life, however, after becoming an adult, the name was changed to more appropriate, adult alike one. In the age of 12 or 13, boys started to learn traditional men roles, on the eye of a father. Depending on progresses they made, boys were changing clothes and hairdo to more adult alike. They also obtained the right to participate in ceremonies. However the main factor that confirmed full adulthood was a growth of an abundant beard. Girls were treated as a women after the first menstruation. On this occasion young women had their lips tattooed with characteristic ornaments, which meant that woman can get married, and which was attracting potential candidates. Tattoo was renewed in the 40 year of life, to protect women from evil spirits and to prevent irregular menstruation. Ainu women also tattooed their hand and arms. Unfortunately, Japanese

recognised this tradition as a barbaric one, and abolished it. The traditional tattoo perished between the 20's and the 30's of the twentieth century. A new-borns child were welcomed with the words: "Welcome new old man!". Described custom is connected with Ainu belief, that children are sent from underground world of deceased ancestors, identical to ours. After childbirth women did not leave her bed for about five–seven days, and for about two or three weeks, she was prohibited from approaching to the fire place, and meals preparation. The intercourse was prohibited for about 30–40 days. The sexual abstaining was also recommended after seventh month of pregnancy – it was believed that foetus could be blinded by semen. What is interesting, pregnancy was not connected directly with sexual contacts. It was believed, that only regular sex contacts with-life partner could bring pregnancy, which was the main reason that young Ainu women were not afraid of temporary sex contacts. The Japanese newcomers used this belief to proclaim licentiousness of Ainu people.¹⁵

The rituals connected with death and afterlife was also very important in Ainu society. It was believed, than spirits of the ancestors were living in the similar to ours world. A body of a death person was compared to empty shell which ought to be thrown away. It does not mean that Ainu were not afraid of death – they considered it as a punishment from *Kamui*. In the urgent cases of death, there was a necessity of expelling the evil spirits. Not infrequently with the beating of a family members of dead person. When an Ainu died, he was placed on a mat, while the rest of society were waiting for possible return of the spirit. If nothing happened, they started funeral preparations. The family were informing neighbours, preparing greave on a graveyard, and also clothes for deceased parson. Women had to prepare shoes, hats and gloves, while men were preparing outer clothes and sepulchral sign. The elders of Ainu village had to declaim speech for the soul of deceased parson, and to dress him. It was also forbidden to enter into the house of dead person without family members permission. In case of obtainment, men firstly greeted with mourners, then with the spirits of a house, and then sat near the fireplace and continue the sorrow expression. Women after greeting, were touching the body of a dead person, and after that they were sitting next to other women. After all visitors came, hosts were supposed to serve a meal, also for deceased person. The ceremony ended with the bringing away the body of dead person (legs should be on the front) through the knock out, for that occasion, wall. The funeral procession was leaded by a man who carried the sepulchral sign (its shape depended on the sex of dead person), then walked a woman who carried water in a can, which she was supposed to put on a sepulchral sign, people who carried deceased person body and personal belongings, mourners and the rest of society. Preparing a grave was also very important aspect. It cannot be too small, because the deceased person could try to get out from it, but also the grave cannot be too wide – in that case there was a fear, that someone else will also die. Along with the body, personal belongings, which were crushed or broken by the mourners, were also put in a grave. Then, the dead person was

¹⁵ Vide A.F. Majewicz, *Ajnu...*, op. cit., pp. 71–74, 76.

buried, and the sepulchral sign, on which can with water was put, was placed. After end of this part of ritual, everyone were heading towards village. It was important not to cry or turn back during the comeback procession, because a dead person cannot go away peacefully. In case of the dead of a women, in very former times, Ainu were burning her household with all belongings, but later they started to build, especially for this occasion, small hut, where they transfer all of her belongings, and then burning it. In that way they assured dead person to have all important items in her afterlife. The mourning could last up to three years. It is worth to mention, that Ainu were taking care of their greaves very diligently. Near the grave, there were always sake, meal or other gifts. Unfortunately with the proceeding process of Ainu extinction, the greaves had been left without care. The devastation of Ainu greaves was not only the work of time. Many newcomers, without any sign of respect for Ainu people and their deceased, significantly put their hand to the devastation processes.¹⁶

The last of the distinctive characteristics of Ainu was their language, that is, unfortunately, nowadays completely unused. It is thought, that there are no living people who could freely communicate in it. Nowadays, the Ainu language is ousted by Japanese. Its origins were never discovered – it is thought, that it is unrelated with any other language. Because of vast territory in which Ainu lived, and its illiterate character, the Ainu language had many dialects. It is estimated, that there were 13 different dialects from Hokkaido, and six from Sakhalin. Its morphological structure had an agglutinative character with features of polysynthesis. The oral tradition in Ainu culture was extremely important, because of, as it was mentioned above, lack of writing abilities among Ainu. Bronisław Piłsudski – the distinguished researcher of Ainu people, during his stay among Ainu, collected many of their legends and myths, not only by writing them but also with recording techniques. Mostly thanks to his work, a part of the oral tradition of Ainu survived. During his study about Ainu folklore, Piłsudski classified it in eleven different kinds: *Ucaskoma* – passed between generations, history of Ainu, that described real historical events, and also events in which magic or gods occurred; *Tuita* or *Uwepekere* – every kind of fairy tales with an informative moral; *Oina* or *Kamui yukara* – so called gods hymn, telling about adventures of the first people of Ainu, who were half gods and half humans; *Houki* – hymns about heroes deeds, and wars; *Yaikatekara* – love songs; *Snoticia* – improvised songs sung during carousals and parties; *Ihunki* – lullabies; *Yaiyukara* – sung during travel; *Cipo hau* – oarsman songs; *Sinot itak* – jokes; *Urehreku* – riddles. Among Ainu society, there also were tellers of tales, who travelled from hut to hut during evenings and told selected stories. They were commonly popular. They were called *konupuru yara ainu* – which may be translated as “people who impel other to like them”. Unfortunately, during the beginnings of twentieth century, when Piłsudski conducted his study, this occupation was already extinct.¹⁷ None of the Ainu oral traditions survived to the present times. As a majority of Ainu culture, it was ousted by the

¹⁶ Ibidem, pp. 74–76.

¹⁷ Vide A.F. Majewicz, *Dzieje i legendy...*, op. cit., pp. 99–111.

Japanese culture. Without researchers who visited Ainu during the beginnings of the twentieth century we probably would not know anything about their former culture and traditions.

Daily life, culture, beliefs and the Ainu language described in this paper should be treated only as an introduction to this topic. Polish readers who wish to extend their knowledge about Ainu, should refer to the books written by Alfred F. Majewicz (listed in references) – probably the only source of knowledge about Ainu in Polish language.

The road to ethnic revival

Not long ago, the only chance to practice Ainu tradition was to present them as a tourist attraction. The integration and assimilation with Japanese was the priority. At the beginnings of the second half of the twentieth century, it was forecasted, that that Ainu independent culture will gone. The danger of extinction was primary noticed by the researchers of Ainu, who decided to alarm the world about their dramatic situation. What is paradoxical, they did not gain Ainu trust, who accused them of stealing their heritage and items of sacral value. Ainu claimed that researchers were stealing not only their daily use items, but also religious ones and considered as sacred, for example *inau* or even bones of their ancestors. During this essential for Ainu survival period, the tourism interest (which was often criticised by scientists as a source of unauthentic way of presenting the Ainu culture) turn out to be the key factor. Tourists who visited Japan, and also the Japanese tourists themselves, stopped the process of the extinction of the Ainu heritage. Although allegations of its unauthentic forms were justified, the performances for tourists, sale of souvenirs or opportunity to visit “authentic” *kotan*, created chance to preserve Ainu traditions in those difficult times. Even if those traditions were in their sanitized forms, it was the only way to stop processes of the extinction. Although, because of the difficult Ainu situation during that time, there are no official surveys that describes the influence of tourism to the preservation of Ainu culture, we can refer to the writings of Majewicz, who, among other things, noticed that kind of correlation. Thanks to his field studies, we can name some functions of the tourism in the preservation of the Ainu culture, and their future chance of gaining an cultural autarchy. Despite of the described above allegations, the main function of the tourist movement was the creation of the demand for the Ainu culture. It may sound obvious, however if we put a closer look on this issue, we can reveal deeper mechanisms that are standing behind this statement. First of all, when there is a demand for any good (and as a good, we may also understand a culture), there will always be someone who want to provide that kind of good to the masses. As we understand, this kind of action is not connected with the need of filling a demand, but it is more likely concerned on the future profits for providing the good that is currently demanded. After some time, when the first wave of a demand is filled, the provider of a certain good, to sustain a demand, must present upgraded, better version of that good. It is only matter of time, when there will be another need to improve this good, and to once again fulfil the demand. This simple economical law was, at first, applicable for only material goods and products, but if we consider it more closely, we may agree, that

presentation of own culture is also a matter of demand. However we should not forget that culture is also different good than other material products, and a demand for culture is not only connected with the material income. This statement may be explained by the analysis of Ainu past situation. As it was mentioned above, the discrimination of the Ainu people, among other things, made them unemployment with lack of chances to get a regular job. The tourists that visited Hokkaido created an opportunity for them to improve their financial situation. Ainu just filled the demand for an exotic and mysterious culture. But it was only a first step. As it was in described economical law, they had to improve they performances to sustain the tourists interest. But how they could do it? Only by mastering the traditions of their ancestors. To widen their “offer” they had to remember and re-cultivate more and more of their traditions. As it was mentioned, it is impossible to “produce” a culture with a total isolation from it. The hidden function of the tourist interest and the need of sustaining the demand, was a preservation of the consciousness of being Ainu among the performers. To create an excellent performance for tourists they had to learn and remember their former traditions. The better they got, the more attraction they made. Even of being, at first, unaware of this fact, the tourism made Ainu preserve their culture and let them to remember and practice their traditions. However, there is another hidden function. Practising own culture, even if it was at first to fill a certain demand, produce, among performers, a need (which may be also called a demand) to be more into this culture. It turns out to be impossible to practise it without realising that it was their heritage, not something from outside, but their former source of pride and uniqueness. The tourism was also used as a basis for the future efforts for Ainu independency. After the first wave of the tourist interest, the Ainu situations began to being described in mass media, which caused another positive feedback. Thanks to the tourism, the interest in Ainu culture spread among not only Japanese citizens, but also among younger generations of Ainu who decided to participate in their ancestors traditions. As an conclusion we should agree, that without the tourism interest there will be impossible to achieve any of the current successes, described below. It was tourism that made a basis for any of the future Ainu activities on the field of regaining their independency.

Another important factor, that created a consciousness of Ainu presence among society, was the activity of young students, during the 70's, who created the “Ainu Liberation League”. It is interesting, that after arrest of its members, it turned out that among them there was no Ainu people. Although the activity of the League cannot be recommended as worth to replicate (they conducted more than 30 bombings), their actions made the public opinion to interest in Ainu rights once again. The media drew the society attention to the Ainu status, as an second category citizens, and what is even more important, their attention caused the revival of an dormant ethic self-awareness of a young people who share Ainu blood. Gradually, more and more book about Ainu were published, conferences were organised, and mentioned young people started to learn Ainu language. The international human rights organisations also started to interest about Ainu fate.¹⁸

¹⁸ Vide A.F. Majewicz, *Dzieje i wierzenia...*, op. cit., pp. 34–37, 234–253.

Although it is impossible to expect that Ainu will come back to their *Kotans*, start to hunt and live in a traditional ways, it is worth to note down, that there are some facts that indicates the reborn of their cultural self-awareness and independence. Although, the traditional Ainu festivals were cultivated (because of tourists interest) long before the revival of Ainu self-consciousness, their form began to change because of described reasons. Above all, they are becoming festivals for Ainu themselves, in where they have an opportunity to present their tradition and to emphasize their proud and affection to their heritage. As an effect of this unexpected revival, during the 90's, we can also include establishing of many groups that present Ainu folklore, songs, traditional dances and music. Despite of some concerns about momentary character of this phenomenon or objections towards Ainu that they were doing this only for money, this tendency nowadays still remains. The sceptical concerns were invalid. Ainu gained not only researchers interest, but also the mass-media one. They came back to the Japanese minds, who, at first, reluctantly, had to acknowledge the growing aspirations of this ethnic group. The Ainu chose, as we can presume, was one of the best way to achieve their goals. Having a cultural base (tourist shows), even though imperfect and far from its original form, they started to rebuild and put more effort to authenticity. What is more, we can assume, that even Japanese missed the moment when the "harmless play" for tourists became a huge social movement. A struggle for ethnic independency Ainu started and continue in a peaceful way. The ethnic self-awareness was reconstructed by the rebuilt of forgotten traditions and practices. Thanks to the mass-media interest many citizens of Hokkaido started to discover their Ainu descent. The end of Ainu discrimination in the Japanese society allowed people who discovered their Ainu descent (which was dissembled for described above reasons) to retrieve their forgotten traditions. Nowadays, at least officially, Ainu people are not the subject of the ostracism. What is more, the Japanese citizens welcomed their cultural manifestations with kindness and interest. We can assume then, that the convincement of the Japanese society that Ainu cultural manifestations cannot do any harm to their country, was the first, successful step in regaining their ethnic independency. Ainu did not protest loudly and did not exhorted to hate the Japanese for what they did to them. They decided not to rebuild their ethnic independency with the accusations and hateful declarations. The peaceful nature of their struggle led to gradual regain of their lost cultural difference, the better understanding between both sides, and what is the most important, declaration made by the Japanese government that Ainu are the autochthonic, native folk of Japan, in 2008.¹⁹ Described declaration is not a final capstone of Ainu struggle, but it shows that the way they chose was right. Although many traditions had been forgotten, or in some cases abolished by the Japanese government, Ainu decided to use the knowledge and memories of the oldest among them, who even though did not participate in traditional practices, known them from the stories passed by their parents or grandparents. Another important factor was the tour-

¹⁹ http://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2013/08/12/issues/ainu-fight-for-return-of-plundered-ancestral-remains/#.UupYILSI_JU [10.10.2014].

ism movement that during the years was the only motivation to preserve the knowledge about practices and traditions. It was probably the very last chance to revive the Ainu tradition and it was used well. Many folklore groups, created during those times, still exist and continue their cultural activity. What is particularly interesting, the Ainu tradition is cultivated mostly among young people, under their thirty. More and more bands are created and there is a strong need of telling about their heritage. The Ainu cultural activity is oriented in many ways. Apart from traditional forms of folklore, such as festivals and cultural events, which are cofounded by the Japanese government, it is worth to mention about another interesting idea, which is compatible with the world's ethnic trend – the *Ainu Rebels* band. The band, whose members are young Ainu (20–30 years old), is presenting a mix of the traditional Ainu music and dances with hip-hop and rock. Analysing the similar examples around the world we can see some similarities between them and *Buraka Som Sistema* – Portuguese-Angolan band that plays traditional Angolan music with techno. We can also observe, that that kind of forms of folklore are the most effective ones. What is more, they also allow to reach the listeners around the whole world. Even though *Ainu Rebels* are not yet well-known, the increasing interest of media (even from Europe) may help Ainu folklore to become world famous. The eclecticism that is characteristic for youth bands is much more interesting and easier to understand among the listeners from the whole world, who are, in most cases, in the same age as the performers. The interest in new forms of music can also lead to the incensement of the interest of Ainu culture itself. Of course, the revival of culture heritage is not only connected with music-stage activities. The scientific and the re-constructive activities are also very important. There are also published more, and more papers about Ainu not only as press articles but also books. Ainu are operating on the Internet. The most of the webpages that describe important Ainu events and their activity is in Japanese, but we can find few pages in English. The plurality of described actions shows, that finally, after years of struggle and discrimination, Ainu can show, without fear, who they are. It is also worth to mention about structuralized, institutional actions, such as activity of The Ainu Association of Hokkaido or the Hokkaido University Centre for Ainu and Indigenous Studies, description and monitoring of the current Ainu situation. There are also museums where you can learn about history and customs of Ainu, where it is possible to see the items of daily use, watch movies and pictures that show traditional rituals or see the reconstruction of *kotan*. Another important activity that rebuilds Ainu ethnic awareness is the rise of restaurants that serve traditional Ainu dishes. What is interesting, this kind of restaurants did not occur only in Hokkaido, they spread over the cities of Japan, for example in Tokyo. The synergy of those activities leads not only to the “accustom” of the Japanese, but also to solidification of Ainu self-awareness. The importance of that kind of actions can be related to Michael Billig's term – banal nationalism. The “ingrowth” of Ainu traditions and practices into the homogenous Japanese reality led to the natural and consensual acceptance of this group. For Ainu, expressions of their presence allow not only to confirm their difference, but also to share the sense of community with other group members. We must also mention, that process described by Billig is still in-

complete. We cannot see Ainu flag or emblem on Japanese streets – they will probably cause confusion and protests, but apart from institutions that associate Ainu, we can find people who wear components of Ainu traditional clothes, or try to interpolate some Ainu words during conversations. What is important, it is happening during daily life situations, not only as a tourist attraction. Referring to the Goffman way of thinking, we can say, that descendants of Ainu threw off the belief that they could only play the role of Ainu during the contact with tourists that want to see something exotic. Their definition of role-play exceeded imposed canons. Nowadays, the role of Ainu can be played in daily life situations: not only for members of alien groups but mostly for themselves. It does not mean however, that tourism, that helped to sustain the interest of this folk, is considered as unimportant – the situation is quite the opposite. Mentioned above restaurants, festivals or museums are visited also, if not mostly, by tourists. What is obvious Ainu did not decide to isolate from the rest of society, and to cultivate their traditions only among their group. The strong feedback between Ainu and tourists still exists, but the characteristics of this relation changed. Folklore and tradition presented by Ainu are caused by their authentic interest in showing their culture, they do not do this only for financial reasons, as in happened in the past. To understand how important this subtle difference is, we should refer to the former Ainu rituals or ceremonies, for example *iomante*. Extraneous people are no more invited to participate in this sacred Ainu feast. The right to cultural independency, won after years of struggle, is very important step for potential autonomy and autarchy of Ainu. We must emphasize however, that in this case, we do not consider any kind of territorial or economic autonomy. Despite of the impossibility of its enforcement, Ainu do not want it – they “only” struggle for their right to be ethnic independent. If we compare situation in Poland with the current Ainu status, we may find an example of similar situation. Kashubian people who are Polish citizens, preserved their cultural difference and language. Even though, the path which Ainu people chose will be long and difficult, if we consider their current achievements, we must agree, that their choice was right.

The ethnic revival of Ainu, did not however hold down only to cultural area. There are also some actions taken on the legislation field. We must accept that without actions, such as putting pressure on the Japanese government, taken by Ainu, international community, and what is particularly interesting, some Japanese citizens, current favourable for Ainu situation would not be possible. Effective actions taken on the culture field and the interest they made, led to the firm conviction, that after tens of years of silence, it is time to apprise with the injustice that happened to Ainu in the past. Favourable situations and negotiations between representatives of Ainu, some Japanese citizens sympathizing with them, and Japanese government led to some concessions. The traditional Ainu dances were acknowledged as a national heritage, Ainu festivals banned in the beginnings of twentieth century were allowed again, and what is the most important, the Japanese government accepted the fact, that Ainu are different ethnic group. The actions taken on legislation field led, finally, to the acceptance Ainu as an autochthonic indigenous folk of Japan, in 2008. Comparing this date to the beginnings of the revival of Ainu identity, we may be surprised

that it took so long, however, considering the amount of discrimination and difficulties that Ainu had to deal with in the past, we must agree, that it was a great success and very important step to gain the lost autarchy. Ainu also started to talk loudly about disservices they experienced in the past and to demand a compensation. They also started to monitor their current situation, to ensure that injustice from the past will not happen again. The discrimination problem, that lead almost to the acculturation of this folk, is now considered as one of the most important issues. It is worth to mention that according to the survey conducted by The Ainu Association of Hokkaido in 2006, there are currently 24.000 Ainu people.²⁰ They are conducting many activities connected with discrimination issues, such as informational campaigns or monitoring the current juridical situation. Another important initiative was to recognise the Ainu view. In, mentioned above, survey conducted in 2006 researchers focused on modern life conditions in Hokkaido, by asking, among other things, about education, social care or employment possibilities – the areas that for tens of years were unavailable for Ainu. The Hokkaido University Centre for Ainu and Indigenous Studies survey can be another important expression of own identity, pride and ethnic heritage. The survey conducted in 2008 (published in 2010)²¹ was asking about, among other things: awareness of own descent, pride about being Ainu, willingness to cultivate Ainu customs or ways of passing the Ainu heritage. Mentioned survey shows relevant changes in Ainu self-awareness. The majority of respondents declared that they are not ashamed of being Ainu (which was unthinkable barely several dozen years ago), quite the opposite, more and many people under their thirty declared that they do not feel any difference in being Ainu, or even was proud of it. There were also many respondents that declared volition to cultivate customs of their ancestors. We should agree with the conclusion of mentioned report, that despite of many years of discrimination and “custom” to hide their identity, Ainu started to recognise their cultural difference, and what is more important, they started to aim at it. We can assume, that cautious declarations from 2008 will be more courageous over time. If the recent tendency will be sustained, the pride of being Ainu can be as natural as in the grandness times of this folk. The braver and braver declarations about own ethnical self-awareness resulted in first legally Ainu political party, established in 2012. Although it is too early to evaluate their activity, form the Ainu perspective, the ability to talk with the Japanese government in official way, it is a great victory. It is also worth to describe recent activities focused on recovery of bones and skulls taken and kept, according to Ainu, illicitly, by Japanese universities and museums. The issue that stared in the 90’s was described by the Japan Times on August 2013.²² The paper describes Ainu struggle to recover important part of their own past. Although it is impossible to forejudge whether they will win this case or not, we may consider this action as an another important step to

²⁰ <http://www.ainu-assn.or.jp/english/eabout03.html> [10.10.2014].

²¹ Vide T. Onai, *Living Conditions and Consciousness of Present-day Ainu*, Center for Ainu & Indigenous Studies Publishing, Hokkaido 2010, pp. 23–31.

²² http://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2013/08/12/issues/ainu-fight-for-return-of-plundered-ancestral-remains/#.UupYILSI_JU [10.10.2014].

retrieve their own cultural difference and independence. This issue can be also treated as an attempt to revitalisation traditional Ainu gravesites and a try to ensure respect for the dead folk members. Perhaps, it is also an attempt to gain religion (which is significantly different from Japanese religion) independence.

It is worth to consider how the former Ainu independence has been restored and whether the autarchy (that Ainu had in the past) will be possible to achieve? It is difficult to answer unequivocally. On the one hand, it is impossible to restore former existence, self-sufficient economy or traditional ways of live. Along with the former Ainu territories in Sakhalin, Kamchatka, and especially in Hokkaido, those past elements are lost forever. In the modern, globalised world, the self-sufficient economy is out of reach for whole nations so we should also accept that Ainu cannot achieve it. Considering those facts, does that mean that autarchy (which in its definition contains described above aspects) is only utopia? Luckily not, however we should concentrate on aspects that are possible to implement. It refers not only to Ainu, but also to any ethnic minority in the world. In postmodern world it is impossible to exist in spite of the rules of global-economy processes. It seems that a field in which there is possible to achieve independence, and understood on that way autarchy, is culture and legislation activities. A struggle for the right to be different and to cultivate own traditions appears to be the best instrument for ethnic groups that were under the strong degradation processes during the whole twentieth century. Presented above opinion is also an answer for the second question of this paper, about the role of tourism in preserving own cultural heritage. The Ainu example shows, that even if it is happening in unrealised way, performances created for tourists can be important instrument to preserve former customs and traditions. As it frequently happens, actions calculated for financial profits at first, with the flow of time evolves into real construction of own identity and cultural difference. Although it is difficult to answer whether Ainu will achieve autarchy or not, we should acknowledge that for the first time from hundred years, their fate is in their hands.

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Abstract

The presented article is an attempt of introducing to the readers the Ainu people – an enigmatic tribe that nowadays lives only at Hokkaido island. The process of discrimination and obligatory assimilation with Japanese, for tens of years, caused loss of their independence. The article is also portraying the struggle of the Ainu people to regain their cultural heritage. The paper is also an attempt of answering the question about the impact of tourism on sustaining the perishing traditions of the primordial cultures.

Keywords: Ainu, cultural heritage, traditions of the primordial cultures

Streszczenie

Niniejszy artykuł jest próbą przedstawienia czytelnikowi sylwetki Ajnów – tajemniczego ludu zamieszkującego dziś jedynie wyspę Hokkaido, który za sprawą dyskryminacji i przymusowej asymilacji z Japończykami na dziesiątki lat utracił swoją niezależność. Autor pracy skupia się również na przedstawieniu drogi, jaką przebyli Ajnowie w walce o odzyskanie własnego dziedzictwa kulturowego, a także na próbie odpowiedzi na pytanie o możliwości wpływu turystyki na podtrzymanie ginących tradycji kultur pierwotnych.

Słowa kluczowe: Ajnowie, dziedzictwo kulturowe, tradycje kultur pierwotnych

NOTKA O AUTORZE

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