

## 1. Description

### 1.1 Name of society, language, and language family:

Ainu, Ainu language, language isolate. At one point, there were at least 19 dialects. [Source 6]

### 1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com):

ain

### 1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):

The island of Hokkaido, which is home to most of the Ainu, is located from 42 to 45 degrees north and from 141 to 145 degrees east. [Source 7]

### 1.4 Brief history:

Recent evidence from genetic, morphological, and cultural studies are beginning to suggest that the Okhotsk people, a hunter-gatherer group from the Amur river basin, migrated into northern Hokkaido around 900–1600 BP bringing significant genetic and cultural contributions to the preexisting Jomon, and subsequently gave rise to modern Ainu people as well as their culture. [Source 4, page 1] The Ainu are an indigenous people who originally lived in Hokkaido, the southern part of Sakhalin, and the Kuril islands. The Ainu sustained a relatively independent society and culture until the Meiji period (1868–1912 AD), maintaining relationships with neighboring groups and societies including the Japanese government, the Chinese dynasty, and the Russian empire. [Source 1, page 278]

### 1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:

The Ainu chose to specialize in hunting due to the increasing modernization of their neighbors. [Source 1, page 279] In the first half of the Edo period (1603–1799 AD), the Tokugawa shogunate allowed the Ainu to be indirectly governed by the Matsumae domain, a local government which was entrusted with the administration of the Hokkaido area. Towards the latter half of the Edo period (1799–1868 AD), however, this form of administration was replaced by a direct one. This has largely resulted in the destruction of Ainu culture and their assimilation into Japan. [Source 1, page 280]

### 1.6 Ecology:

The Ainu habitat was a transition between the subarctic and temperate zones. [Source 5, page 208]

### 1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density

The Kamikawa Ainu can be roughly divided into three sub-groups, each with its own villages. One reason for the three Kamikawa Ainu subgroupings may be ecological. Spring water is an important factor: where the temperature of spring water is relatively constant, salmon lay their eggs. Thus, each group has salmon spawning beds in its own territory and is part of an assemblage of settlements which cooperate to share and administer salmon spawning beds. [Source 1, page 283] The majority of settlements were small, comprising on average only five huts. Only in southern Hokkaido were settlements up to thirty houses. Ainu living in the coastal regions and the Kurile islands were more nomadic than other Ainu, and moved between several houses seasonally. [Source 5, page 217] In 1873, the Japanese government registered 18,644 Ainu individuals as Japanese citizens. In 2008, only 23,782 Japanese citizens identified themselves as Ainu, although at least several times more mixed-blooded Ainu were estimated to be living in Hokkaido and Tokyo. [Source 2, pages 149-150]

## 2. Economy

### 2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

Ainu women collected a fairly wide variety of edible plants such as seaweed, wild anemone, wild garlic, cow parsnip, skunk cabbage, and lily roots were collected by the women. The southern Ainu also sometimes grew foxtail millet, wheat, vegetables, greens, and root plants in small garden plots. [Source 5, pages 202-203, 210] Agriculture was not a principal subsistence strategy for the Ainu until the Japanese colonial government prohibited their traditional subsistence and forced them to change to farming in the late nineteenth century. [Source 1, pages 278-279]

### 2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

Salmon constituted a staple source of food surplus which made possible sedentary, permanent villages, an unusual pattern in hunting and gathering societies. [Source 3, page 20] Meat was obtained from deer, foxes, otters, hares, and bears. [Source 5, pages 202-203] Ainu along the coast also hunted seals, and sea lions, and whales. [Source 5, 211]

### 2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

Bows and arrows were the most common weapons of the Ainu. Ainu men would hunt in the mountains equipped with a quiver, bow, hunting knife, smoking kit, fire kit, snowshoes, and a heavy fur robe that doubled as sleeping gear. A staff was used to clear underbrush, vault streams, and give protection against bears or wolves. [Source 5, page 209] Several poison recipes were used, but one of the main ingredients was usually the monkshood plant. The tubers of the plant were dug up, dried in the shade for several months, then peeled and ground up into a pulp. A bear hit by a poisoned arrow could walk only two to three hundred yards before dying, and if a human was hit they only way to prevent death was to immediately cut out the affected spot and thoroughly wash the wound. Meat affected by the poison was perfectly safe to eat, because the poison was only deadly upon entering the bloodstream. One common method of testing the poison was for a hunter to apply a small amount to his tongue or between two fingers and measuring the resulting degree of numbness. [Source 5, page 212] During the fall, hunters erected wooden fences with poison arrow traps. When a deer attempted to move through an opening in a fence, it would set off the trap and be shot. Men also regularly hunted deer using a deer call, made from the bladder of a frog or salmon. [Source 5, page 209]

#### 2.4 Food storage:

Preservation of food for lean winter months via drying and smoking was crucial for survival. [Source 5, page 202]

#### 2.5 Sexual division of production:

There was a strong division of labor: hunting and fishing were almost exclusively male tasks, while gathering was largely reserved for women, children, and elders. [Source 5, page 213] While women prayed, men had the main responsibility for praying and sending messages to the gods during ceremonies. A young boy had to memorize prayers by listening to his older relatives at every ceremony until he had mastered them. [Source 5, page 235] Women and children could participate in salmon fishing and deer hunting, but only men were allowed to hunt bears. Women mainly stayed near the village, gathering and processing plants and drying and storing wild game brought in from the fishing and hunting sites outside the village. [Source 5, page 200]

#### 2.6 Land tenure:

While the land did not exactly count as property, members of a territorial group did possess exclusive rights to exploit an areas' resources. Outsiders had the right to trespass on public ways, but they were not allowed to hunt or fish without paying the local group some compensation. [Source 5, pages 218-219] A recent anthropological theory is that Japanese commercial interests caught salmon en masse with a drift net when they started to fish in coastal areas, greatly reducing the number of salmon going upriver, and thus exhausting resources. As a result, Ainu society probably became far more rigid and structured regarding the concepts of territorial and property rights. [Source 1, page 280]

#### 2.7 Ceramics:

There is good evidence that the Ainu manufactured ceramics. [Source 1, page 279] It is noticeable that Satsumon period assemblages are generally dominated by ceramic containers; other materials, including stone tools, are very rare in comparison with the former periods. Stone tools were made by striking or rubbing together stones from the dry riverbed, or simply breaking obsidian. It is assumed that people in this period did not make or have standardized stone tools. Other artefacts have also been found at Satsumon sites in the Kamikawa basin, notably iron tools. Typical findings from those sites are small knives known as tosu. Iron tools were not locally produced in the Satsumon period. It is believed that huge quantities of basic tools, mostly made of iron, were brought in from the Japanese mainland. [Source 1, pages 287-288]

#### 2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

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#### 2.9 Food taboos:

While not a food taboo per se, during bear hunts certain words, such as the word "seal," were to be avoided. While hunting sea mammals, it was forbidden to bring several specific species of plants on boats into the open sea. As with bear hunting, some words were also avoided, including "to row" and "boat." [Source 5, pages 220-221]

#### 2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

The Ainu did possess watercraft. Some groups of Ainu living close to the ocean hunted sea mammals such as seals and sea lions. These were hunted using harpoons with detachable tips fastened to a long line held by the hunter. Fish were caught by rod, line, and hook, nets, or with fence traps. The most important fishing device was the marek, a long spear with a pivoting iron hook at its end. These spears were sometimes used from a boat. [Source 5, page 211] There is evidence that the people in Hokkaido have hunted whales since at least the late Jomon era (roughly 4000 to 2000 years ago). The Ainu frequently traded whale meat and oil to the Japanese. However, it is not clear to what extent the Ainu deliberately hunted whales, as opposed to finding them washed up upon the shore or trapped in shallow water. [Source 5, page 222, 225]

### **3. Anthropometry**

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):

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3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

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### **4. Life History, mating, marriage**

4.1 Age at menarche (f):

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4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):

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4.3 Completed family size (m and f):

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4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

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4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):

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4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:

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4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

Among most Ainu groups, a few prominent males in the community practice polygyny. However, the vast majority of the population is monogamous. [Source 8]

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?:

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4.9 Inheritance patterns:

When parents passed away, the father's possessions and entitlements were usually inherited by the oldest son, who then assumed most of the family's economic and political power. The mother's accessories, clothing, and work tools were handed down to her daughters. [Source 5, page 232]

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

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4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

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4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):

Young men typically settled in within their childhood village, while young women usually married men from a different village. [Source 5, page 232]

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized?

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4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows")

The Ainu believe that gods can be animals (including humans), plants, minerals, tools, or other geographical and natural phenomena. When a spirit is ready to be reincarnated, it forms a capsule inside the mother which grows into a child. [Source 5, pages 193-194]

4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?

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- 4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape
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- 4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin)
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- 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?
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- 4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring
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- 4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?
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- 4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females
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- 4.22 Evidence for couvades
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- 4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)
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- 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?
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- 4.24 Joking relationships?
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- 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations  
Ainu society was based on both male and female genealogical lineages. Paternal lineage determined family crests and specific rituals to deal with the gods. Maternal lineage also passed down specific rituals, including the precise design and construction of a special woven belt worn by women underneath their clothes. The Ainu believed that without this belt a woman could not find her rightful place in the afterlife. [Source 5, page 231]
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules  
The most important issue in deciding marriage was to assure that the ancestors of both parties had not been married several generations back. [Source 5, page 272] Additionally, in some Hokkaido Ainu groups, individuals are prohibited from marrying a cousin on their mother's side. [Source 8]
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?
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- 4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?  
Newborn babies were usually given temporary, repulsive names until the age of seven or eight. The temporary name was due to high child mortality. Making the name repulsive or offensive was supposed to ward off evil spirits, who might otherwise become fond of the child and take away its spirit. [Source 5, page 270]
- 4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)  
Young men typically settled in within their childhood village, while young women usually married men from a different village. [Source 5, page 232]
- 4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?  
There were various types of marriage: a child might be promised in marriage by its parents before or after its birth, or a young man and woman might have met growing up. [Source 5, page 272]
- 4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:
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### **Warfare/homicide**

- 4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:  
The Ainu in general were non-aggressive, although Ainu men were described as reckless while hunting. [Source 3, page 23]
- 4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:
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4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:

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4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):

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4.18 Cannibalism?

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## **5. Socio-Political organization and interaction**

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

The majority of settlements were small, comprising on average only five huts. Only in southern Hokkaido were settlements up to thirty houses. [Source 5, page 217]

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

Ainu living in the coastal regions and the Kurile islands were more nomadic than other Ainu, and moved between several houses seasonally. [Source 5, page 217]

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes):

When a village consisted of only one clan, its leading elder became the chief. If a village had two or more lineages, the elder who was most eloquent and who had the best judgement became the chief, after mutual agreement among the residents. This was not a hereditary position. The leader held considerable respect and influence, but did not possess autocratic power. His main duty was to confer with other elders about issues involving diplomacy and administration. [Source 5, page 232]

5.4 Post marital residence:

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5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

There were defined boundaries, which belonged to distinct lineages or even individuals. However, outsiders could travel freely, and there was little attempt to defend territory by force. [Source 5, pages 218-219]

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):

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5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

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5.8 Village and house organization:

Until the Epi-Jomon period, settlements were built on river terraces, whereas riverside wetlands were used for a variety of activities but did not contain houses. In contrast, in the Satsumon period all sites, including settlements with house pits, are built on riverside wetlands on the flood plain. [Source 1, page 285] Houses were built with their orientation determined by the location of the sacred window, which was placed facing toward the source of the town's main salmon river. Allocation of space inside the house was determined by the placement of the sacred window and hearth (which housed the fire goddess Fuchi).

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):

Outside the sacred window of a house was an altar (nusa) used for ceremonies. Every sacred place was marked by inaw, sacred shaved sticks. Small structures were also built far away from the village to temporarily house men during hunting and fishing seasons [Source 5, pages 199-200]

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

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5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc:

To become a member of a kotan or village, a person had to gain the unanimous consent of all heads of the residing families and join one of the patrilineal kin groups. [Source 5, page 219]

5.12 Trade:

After the introduction of weaving techniques, clothing in Hokkaido Ainu was produced from plant fibers rather than fur or hides. Kurile Island Ainu either traded for this clothing or relied on furs and bird skins. [Source 5, page 216] In the Satsumon period, it appears that subsistence strategy began to focus on salmon fishing in rivers, which is believed to be why people established settlements on riverside wetlands on the flood plain. These choices cannot be explained simply by the need to produce food for their own consumption. Some Japanese archaeologists have suggested that Satsumon society caught

salmon as a trade commodity in order to import iron and other essentials from the Japanese mainland. [Source 1, page 290] -Small game hunting for fur was completely under the control of the Tokugawa shogunate (1603 AD—1868 AD), the central government since the beginning of nineteenth century AD. The Ainu were made to catch furbearers, and the Tokugawa shogunate compulsorily purchased all the furs and exported them to, for example, the Qing dynasty, last of the Chinese dynasties. The Tokugawa shogunate even sent each settlement very detailed orders, including demands for certain quantities of specific furs by a set time. [Source 1, page 280]

#### 5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

The Ainu did have a social hierarchy, with leaders and elders holding influence but little autocratic power. [Source 5, page 232]

### 6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

#### 6 Time allocation to RCR:

The kamui (gods) were propitiated and their aid solicited before embarking on any major task, and they were especially important in ensuring a successful hunt. Due to this, a significant amount of time was allocated to RCR. [Source 3, pages 20-21]

#### 6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

Shamans were called upon to read gods' minds if regular ceremonies failed. [Source 5, page 195] The Sakhalin and Hokkaido Ainu possessed very different shamanistic practices. The Sakhalin shamans were chosen and initiated after surviving a disease early in life, which was taken as a sign that the spirits had chosen that individual as a vessel. Their role ranged from healing to divination to protection of the community. Most reported shamans were men, and each shaman created a custom wooden effigy called a nipopo, which represented spirits. In Hokkaido, shamanism seems less established, and all shamans were female. [Source 5, pages 262-263]

#### 6.2 Stimulants:

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#### 6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):

All rituals began with a hearth ceremony. [Source 5, page 199] A dead body was not supposed to be moved for 24 hours because a dead spirit could try to revive inside it. [Source 5, page 197] After that, the body was wrapped in ceremonial clothes, and the family, similarly attired, gathered to mourn the deceased at home. After a suitable period, the body was carried to the grave site in a funerary procession. Rituals were conducted, and the body was buried. [Source 5, page 270]

#### 6.4 Other rituals:

The Ainu believed that Human words are feared by gods, because human words can become a curse that eternally binds a god, object, or other human. This curse can only be lifted by the words of the one who initially placed it. It was possible for humans to argue with and even sue a god. This could lead to a god being temporarily banished, forced to give a testimony defending its actions, the taking back of sacrificial offerings, compensation for damages, or in extreme cases, the god might be deprived of its status by a fellowship of other gods. [Source 5, page 196] The Ainu also possessed a very important bear festival called the iomande. In preparation for the bear ceremony, the Ainu captured a very young bear alive. It was brought back to the village and raised to maturity with tender care; it was treated much like a member of the family, even to the extent of being addressed by kin terms and sometimes suckled by Ainu women. The ceremony took place during the wintertime, when there was an abundance of food. The bear was led from its cage and tethered to a post in an open area. It was then driven around in circles and blunt arrows shot at it until both it and the Ainu had been worked into a frenzy. The archery was performed by males; the attitude of the women has been described as either weeping or dancing jubilation. In some areas, the bear was dispatched by shooting it with a sharp-pointed arrow. In other areas, its skull was slowly crushed between two pieces of wood or it was throttled to death in the same manner. It was immediately butchered, and certain parts (the heart, liver, and eyeball) were eaten raw on the spot, by both men and women. The rest of the meat was cooked and a great feast ensued. When a bear was killed during the course of a hunt, a frequent occurrence, the Ainu merely begged the bear's forgiveness for having killed it. Seemingly a primary function of the iomande ritual is to provide a socially acceptable outlet for extremely

aggressive impulses. It is significant that the victim of this aggression is to some extent adopted into the community and treated like a kinsman (more specifically, like a child). [Source 3, page 23]

#### 6.5 Myths (Creation):

Ainu myths are vague when it comes to the origin of human beings. In one tale, the creator god carved man from an elm tree. In another, the Ainu sprang from a woman who married a dog. Bears were created by black soot from a god's pipe, yellow smoke created smallpox spirits, and the flint, which was tossed into the ocean, became a whale and a sea lion. [Source 5, page 275]

#### 6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

Ainu men carved prayer sticks, called inaw, up to seventeen inches in length. There were hundreds of different types of inaw, each with a different purpose. Each inaw was only ever used once. [Source 5, page 297] The Ainu believed that drawing or representing an animal or person in art might trap or anger its soul. For this reason, it is taboo to feature designs of animals on clothing. [Source 5, page 292] This taboo does not apply to men's ceremonial headdresses, which typically had carved totem animals and were worn during bear ceremonies. [Source 5, page 297] Even simple utensils such as stirring spatulas and serving platters were often decorated with intricate carvings. [Source 5, page 204]

#### 6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

Women, even female shamans, were expected to be very passive during religious ceremonies, rather than lead them. [Source 5, pages 262-263]

#### 6.8 Missionary effect:

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#### 6.9 RCR revival:

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#### 6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

After death, the spirits of both living beings and objects become dead spirits, which depart the world until their next reincarnation. There is no concept of different afterlives (heaven, hell, etc.) awaiting spirits based on their individual actions. Spirits always reincarnate according to their specific species and gender. The spirit of a male cat will always reincarnate as a male cat. The Ainu also believe in ghosts and possession, which according to them occurs when a dead spirit clings to the Earthly world and invades the body of someone or something to enact its wishes. Such possessing spirits are most often considered evil, and anyone subjected to possession will suffer tragedy unless the spirit is freed. There are apparently two types of people that can free an evil spirit: an expert in religious rituals or someone who is naturally earnest and reliable. [Source 5, pages 193-194]

#### 6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

The Ainu do not have fixed common names, but instead created names by combining various words that expressed the child's character or the parents' wishes for its future. It was therefore extremely rare to find two people sharing exactly the same name, sidestepping any potential taboo of naming someone after a deceased person. [Source 5, page 270]

#### 6.12 Is there teknonymy?

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#### 6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.)

The Ainu believe in animism: that gods can be animals (including humans), plants, minerals, tools, or other geographical and natural phenomena. [Source 5, pages 193-194] The orca was regarded as the highest-ranking god of the ocean, equivalent to the bear god on land. [Source 5, page 225] People, living beings, and things are all essentially good-natured, but sometimes grow confused and violent. If the being is not treated while alive, it will become an evil spirit after death. Spirits also determine the innate characteristics of things, such as emotional temperament and mathematic ability. [Source 5, page 194]

### 7. Adornment

#### 7.1 Body paint:

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#### 7.2 Piercings:

Ainu men and women would often wear small cotton strips, usually red, through slits in their ears as a sign of wealth and prestige. [Source 5, page 291]

### 7.3 Haircut:

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### 7.4 Scarification:

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### 7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):

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### 7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

Swords were not used as weapons, but only as ceremonial items or symbols of wealth. [Source 5, page 298]

### 7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

Other than length, there was no structural differences between the garments of men and women.

Innovation in designs was highly prized, and determined a woman's reputation for making clothes. The basic designs were passed down from mother to daughter. Early on, cotton was extremely rare, and only obtained by trading with the Japanese or Asian mainland. [Source 5, page 290]

### 7.8 Missionary effect:

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### 7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

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## 8. Kinship systems

### 8.1 Sibling classification system:

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### 8.2 Sororate, levirate:

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### 8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):

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## 9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

1. The Ainu possessed a ritual called charanke, which bore a close resemblance to the well-known Eskimo insult contest; the adversaries would harangue each other before an appreciative audience before one or the other conceded defeat. [Source 3, page 21]
2. A more violent ritual was called uraku, a duel with clubs. An arbitrator would witness and, by agreement, each would beat the other, in order to dispel resentment. Apparently, participants usually parted amicably. [Source 3, page 21]
3. The Ainu possessed no written language. [Source 2, page 149]
4. The Ainu are genetically similar to Arctic peoples, who generally have the largest crania of any human group. The Ainu seem to be the genetically closest surviving population to Kennewick Man, who lived off marine mammals in the coastal regions of North America. [Source 2, page 152]
5. On average, the IQ of the Ainu was 71.7, while that of the Japanese in the same regions was 82.6 when compared with the control subjects from the mainland (who possessed an IQ of 104). It is possible that the Ainu have relatively low IQs owing to poor education, which is consistent with their lower verbal IQs. Alternatively, the low IQs of Arctic peoples (like the Ainu are thought to be) might be related to the absence of historical eugenic selection. [Source 2, pages 151-153]
6. Close examinations showed that skull samples from three areas with the most Ainu inhabitants (Hidaka, Otoshibe, and Tokachi) had average cranial capacities (1582, 1538, and 1514 cc respectively), which were larger than the Japanese average. Ainu samples also showed larger standard deviations than the Japanese and the mean brain weight of the Ainu exceeded that of the Japanese. The large cranial capacity of the Ainu can be interpreted as evidence that they had some genetic admixture from the Siberian mainland (Okhotsk culture) and possibly from Alewt and Alaska. It is also possible, though, that the Ainu independently evolved their large skulls. [Source 2, page 152]
7. It appears that this culture had no technique for producing tools of regular form, such as stone knives and/or axes. This lost knowledge may have been the result of heavy trade with Japan and other more advanced societies. [Source 1, page 290]

8. It is undeniable from the archaeological data that farming was practiced during the Satsumon period, and, indeed, that Satsumon cereal cultivation was relatively common. Even so, farming was not the main subsistence activity; it more likely supplemented the foraging economy. [Source 1, pages 288-290]
9. The Ainu battled the Mongol army in 1264. [Source 2, page 1]

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