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The Aborigines of Japan.

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DURING the summer of 1897 it was our privilege to spend a few weeks on the island of Yezo, or Hokaido, the home of the Ainu, the aborigine of Japan. While enjoying the salubrious climate at Sapporo, Mororan, and Hakodate, we saw a great deal of this most interesting people and lost no time in learning all we could of their domestic life and customs. Although they have inhabited these islands long before the Japanese, yet our knowledge of them is very meagre. The most ancient book of which the Japanese can boast was written in 712 A.D., and in it the following statement occurs: "When our exalted ancestors came from heaven in a boat they found numerous barbaric races on these islands, among whom the fiercest were the Ainu." It is evident that the Japanese first came from the mainland and effected a landing on the southern islands; for the Ainu were gradually driven by them from the southern part of the land to the north. At present only a small remnant of about 17,000 souls exists on the island of Yezo, but even these are hard pressed by the aggressive Japanese. Eight years ago there were over 800,000 Japanese on the island, gradually driving the Ainu farther into the dense uninhabited forests of the island.

Hokaido, like the other Japanese islands, is doubtless of volcanic origin, mountainous and densely covered with pine, oak, chestnut, beech, linden and magnolia. Nature has been lavish here in strewing her gifts; everywhere the scenery is enchanting, in mountains and valleys, in plains and on hills. The interior is a primitive forest which only the aborigines enter in search of game. There is an abundance of water in the form of mountain rills, waterfalls, small streams and lakes.

Zoologically, Hokaido seems to belong to another period than the other islands of Japan. Among the larger animals are the bear, deer, wolf, otter, and hare, but no monkeys or pheasants; however, a kind of grouse that wears a sable ruff around his mottled neck is found. The bear is said to be quite different from those on the other islands and the birds are also of a

different variety. The fish upon which the Ainu chiefly subsist are trout, herring, swordfish, whale, and seal.

The hairy condition of the Ainu has been exaggerated by travellers who have visited them. There are, it is true, individuals whose bodies are quite covered with hair, but such are hardly sufficient in number to justify the appellation of "the hairy race." I saw a few old men in Sapporo and Horobetsü and several boys in the school at Hakodate whose bodies were covered with hair, but not so thickly that the skin could not be seen.



AINU WOMEN WEAVING.

In appearance they can hardly be called a prepossessing people. They are short, corpulent, strong and broad-shouldered. Their long, unkempt, heavy, full beards and small bead-like black eyes, their filthy garments, and should they happen to come near one, the peculiar offensive odour which they emit from their person, all these make an unfavourable impression. Any one desirous to make their acquaintance must perforce close his eyes and olfactory organ. It seems few foreigners have cared to form a close acquaintance with this degenerate, unwashed, and unkempt race, consequently the few remaining good qualities which are hidden under the rough exterior are not appreciated.

The Rev. J. Bachelor of the Church Missionary Society has laboured among them for nearly thirty years. He has lived with them in their huts, has joined them in their pleasures and sorrows, has been present in their sickness and death, has seen them in all their religious rites and performances.

This noble man declares that a more patient and sympathetic people is scarcely to be found. They, like so many other ethnic races, require only sympathetic treatment to bring their better qualities to the surface.

As for washing and bathing—these are luxuries seldom resorted to, and much less do their clothes come in contact with water. It is not surprising, therefore, that certain small insects thrive on their person and garments. Having been held in subjection by their conquerors during these hundreds of years, they show a slavish manner and air of dejection which cause them to be objects of pity and disgust.



AN AINU FISHERMAN'S FAMILY.

do. The wife is considered his slave. It is her duty to fulfil all his wants and supply all his needs through the labour of her hands. Hence while the poor women are toiling in the fields, the men trifle away their time by fishing and drinking. Under such depressing slavery, it is but natural that the women are far from beautiful, thoroughly dejected in appearance, wretched, filthy, pitiable, and unattractive. On both lips they have tattooed figures and frequently a line or two of this hideous ornamentation on their foreheads, and their coarse hands are covered with grotesque tattooed figures. Their matted hair reaches to the shoulders, and at the back of the head is cut in the shape of the crescent moon. The whole expression of their faces is one of discontent and sadness. It would, however, not be fair to say that none of these hard-labouring women were beautiful. Their complexion is rosy and more pleasing than the sickly, bilious colour of the Japanese women.

Their voices are pleasing. Indeed, the best singing we heard while in Japan was at an Ainu service in Sapporo. If the hideous custom of

Much like the American Indians the men abhor manual labour, as tilling of fields or gardens. Drink excepted, they like nothing more than hunting and fishing. Drunkenness is not considered a disgrace or crime, but rather an ideal state of the mind. Mr. Bachelor declares that ninety-five per cent would become inveterate drunkards, if they had the opportunity. No man will do the work a woman can

tattooing were prohibited, and a free use of soap and water with scrubbing brushes introduced, the appearance of this people would be greatly improved. This, however, is contrary to their manner of thinking.



AINU IN SUMMER.

have two meals a day, but at their evening meal they eat two or three times as much as they do in the morning. After gorging themselves, they rest a while and begin again. Then they retire for the night with the blissful consciousness of having partaken of a full meal.

During the summer months they are busy weaving and preparing garments. In the autumn peas and millet are harvested and chestnuts and wild violet roots gathered. These roots are washed, cooked and made into paste. Of this small cakes are made which are dried in the sun and stored away for winter use. Their manner of agriculture is exceedingly primitive. A small piece of land is worked for a few years and then allowed to rest a year. Should the harvest fail they manage to exist by the natural product of the soil, hunting and fishing. After the work in the field is over they dry

How these poor children of nature have to toil! From one year to another nothing but drudgery and slavery, no change except as the seasons of the year bring it about. The women carry the heavy burdens and perform the hardest labour without being thanked or receiving any kindly recognition on the part of their husbands. In spring they go up the mountains for the elm bark. Out of this a cloth is woven which is quite durable. Then the work in the field begins. Old and young rise early each morning, eat a hastily prepared breakfast of a little cooked vegetable and possibly a piece of dried fish, shoulder their farming implements and depart to the fields. After sundown they return home tired and weary. Usually they

and smoke the fish and preserve the game. Of the so-called kitchen work there is very little to do, not necessarily because of the scarcity of utensils, but for the reason that the Ainu considers it absurd to wash anything. He says: "The plate only contains food upon it, why should it be washed, it will be used again, therefore let it remain as it is." Of scrubbing and cleaning he is blissfully ignorant.

The Ainu mothers are said to be unkind and cruel to their children. They place the little ones when but a month old in a cradle and suspend it to a beam of the roof and leave them hanging the whole day. This heartless custom has been described by some to be their method of early physical culture, being the means of developing their lungs. But who would ascribe this to unkindness, or a lack of parental love, when we think of the domestic burdens forced upon them by their worthless husbands?

Marriage is considered an affair which concerns the young people themselves. Both the bridegroom and the bride must decide the all-important question. If the young man has decided upon his chosen one, he asks his parents to visit the parents of the bride; but should the young woman have made her choice first, then her parents are requested to call upon those of the bridegroom. If both parties give their consent, the wedding can at once be celebrated. Should, however, the parents of one or both parties object and the young people persist in their determination, they can build for themselves a hut and dwell there, without any ceremony and their nuptial relation will be considered legal in Ainu society. If the bridegroom and his parents were the first to promote the alliance, then the bride is taken into his family; but if the bride and her parents were the first, then the bridegroom erects his hut near that of his parents-in-law. Should a woman marry a man from another village, he will be taken into her village, if circumstances are agreeable. The inhabitants of one village are called "blood relations," while those of other villages are distinguished as "distant relatives." The wedding feast consists of millet, rice-cakes, and wine, on which occasion the bride presides. The fathers of the contracting parties present the bridegroom with gifts of old family treasures, while mothers present the bride with ornaments of beads and earrings. The father of the bridegroom gives expression to his great happiness, while the father of the bride tells how proud he is. The various gods are worshipped and the feast ends with songs and dances.

The bride does not take the name of her husband, but retains her own name, or is called the wife of Mr. So-and-so. Like the ancient Israelites, the Ainu have no family names. Each child receives his own name between the age of one and ten years, frequently derived from a peculiarity in his character.

Children are considered as gifts from the gods. To have none is the greatest curse of the gods. A man may cast off his wife if she is childless. Home comforts are almost unknown and would be considered a useless luxury. They are happy and content if they possess the absolute necessities of life. Their villages are built near the sea-coast or by brooks and rivers. Viewed from a distance they appear attractive, but several days' residence in one is quite enough to dispel any charm and suffices the most inquisitive traveller.

In building their huts they invariably begin with the roof. When the sides of the hut are finished they lift the frame of the roof bodily and place it in order, and then cover it with thatch. Immediately under the roof of each hut there are two apertures which serve as windows. One of these faces the east, the other the south. It is considered impolite to peep through the south window, but an absolute insult to gods and men to look into the east window. This superstition is significant, the reason of which will be mentioned later. The men pray with their faces to the east, looking through the east window. They are very careful that nothing unclean is thrown out of this window, for the place is considered holy and would become desecrated through such

abuse. In the middle of the hut is the hearth over which the kettle is suspended from the crossbeam. A chimney is not considered necessary as the windows and other crevices are deemed sufficient to emit the smoke. The entrance of the hut is always on the west side. A short



AN AINU GIRL.

distance from this stands the barn, not a temple as some have supposed. This little building is erected on poles upon which a broad board is laid to prevent rats gaining entrance. Here peas, millet, beans, melons, and other commodities are stored away. On the east side of the hut, about twenty feet from the sacred window, stands the temple of the Ainu—a sanctuary without a building. It consists of several long

poles driven into the ground on which the skeletons of the heads of deer, bears, and foxes, and other animals killed in the chase, are hung. Small willow-sticks, called *inao*, are also hung on these poles. The bark of the upper and lower end of these sticks is carefully peeled off and left hanging at the middle. These are not worshipped, but are an offering to the gods. Twice a year at least, in spring and autumn, the owner of the hut and his relatives and friends gather to worship here. The members of a family also worship here when a birth, sickness, or death occurs. Drink offerings of wine are frequently offered. According to their belief, the souls



FIRST AINU CHRISTIANS.

of the animals slain in the hunt dwell here and will reward the worshipper, who liberally sacrifices to their souls, with luck in the chase. The Ainu are inordinately afraid of fire, hence every hut is surrounded by a garden. All the huts are small and of the same size usually; only the hut of the chief is larger than the others. However, the length of the hut may often be determined by the number of years of married life of its owner.

These people are exceedingly conservative, certainly not less so than the Chinese. It is almost impossible to induce them to change their habits. Even in such a simple matter as the nailing on of a few boards in his hut, the owner must first have the consent of his friends, which is only secured after wine has been freely served. A wealthy fisherman in Horobetsü desired to build in Japanese style. A deputation of his neighbours called upon him and declared if he did not construct his roof in Ainu style he would be cast off by his people. Needless to say that to-day his hut is covered with thatch.

When the hut is completed and the family has moved into it, the owner makes a feast called the "warming feast." Millet, cakes, and brandy are served. The various gods are worshipped and a drink offering of brandy is made. After the ceremonial part is over, the men begin to drink *sake* and do not cease until they are thoroughly intoxicated. The women, who sit back of them, are allowed a taste occasionally and that grudgingly. This feast is an important one in the daily monotony of Ainu life. Lest the gods might revenge themselves, their favour must be secured by carefully chosen words and obeisances. Besides the three principal gods whom they worship, they believe in a Supreme Power which rules over all gods and men, and upon which their daily life depends and whose favour they seek by giving thanks at every meal. One of their prayers is said to be: "O God, the preserver of our lives, we thank thee for this gift, bless it to the nourishing and strengthening of our lives."

Generally speaking, they have quite a variety for meals, but they are wretched cooks. They are fond of a certain mixture of vegetables and badly dried fish, all boiled in one pot. This, as has been stated before, hangs suspended in the middle of the room over the hearth, and all the family sit around it at meals. The housewife serves the food to each from the boiling kettle, thus Ainu meals are served hot. Besides the vegetables and fish there is much game, which, however, is becoming more scarce each year. We have spoken of the uncleanness at meals and the neglect of washing pots and plates. It is suggestive that the index finger in Ainu language is called the "plate cleaner."

The system of Ainu education is most primitive. Their children are not burdened either with schools or studies. Primeval simplicity is their motto. Mountains, rivers and seas constitute their school rooms; necessity their instructor. Their inclination and the weather are the only powers that force them to work. The chief duty of the children is based on "the first commandment with promise," obedience to parents, consideration of the older brothers and reverence for the aged in the village. They may only speak when addressed and under no condition may they ever interrupt the conversation of their elders. The men are responsible for the training of the sons, the women for the training of the daughters. The boys are taught to hunt and fish, make bows and arrows, set traps, and to judge the weather by wind and clouds. They are also taught the names and forms of mountains, and the courses of the principal streams, so they may not be lost while hunting. They learn the shortest and secret paths between the high mountains. They also have some religious instruction; they must learn to prepare the sacrifices and prayers used at the various ceremonies. They are taught polite forms and old

legends which all seem very childish to us. The mothers teach their daughters to care for the little ones, prepare the fibre of the elm, do field labour, sew, mend, cut wood, and prepare thatch for roofs. They are also instructed in the art of tattooing their lips, hands and arms, and how to weep and lament at the graves. Early instruction is given how to reverence and serve men and when meeting them to cover their mouths with their hands and uncover their heads. Upon entering a hut they must always stand facing the men, and upon going out walk backwards. Never may they turn their backs upon a man. The prohibitions, as a rule, apply to the women, and the privileges to the men.



A PLEASURE GAME.

For art we look in vain among them, and their recreations are few. Their only pleasures are a few plays and dancing. Their music is devoid of melody and their only instrument is the jew's-harp. Some of the women possess really good voices and when trained in mission schools sing pleasingly. At dancing, unlike the Westerner, the men and women dance alone; but the accompanying songs are, as a rule, vulgar in the extreme. Without brandy they cannot perform at all. Playing games is almost unknown among them. The stern necessity of life forbids any recreation. The men indulge in a game which has more the appearance of a punishment than pleasure. They beat each other with a club and the one who can endure the greatest number of blows is the hero. Their methods for extorting confessions from criminals are cruel.

But, however barbarous, they have some forms of etiquette which all are compelled to observe. They have various modes of national propriety which they most carefully maintain in their intercourse with each other. Personal deportment is esteemed of great importance and early taught and impressed upon the children. Their manner of greeting each other is peculiar. When visiting, the guest announces himself by a slight cough before he enters the hut. Should no one advance to receive him, he enters the hut and uncovers his head and crosses his feet, seating himself at the right of the hearth. He gives another slight cough, when the master of the hut appears, and then placing the fingers of one hand into the palm of the other rubs them up and down while the master of the hut greets his guest in the same manner. Then follow questions upon questions, first concerning each other's health, then blessings are invoked upon the housewives, the nearest relatives and the beloved country. According to the importance of business, these greetings are of short or long duration. Each strokes his own beard and then the guest proceeds to announce the object of his call. During this he continually rubs his hands, while the host listens respectfully, also rubbing his hands together. After the conclusion of the business, each strokes his own beard again, and conversation is carried on in a natural tone until the guest takes his departure. The women do not greet each other, but when desiring to speak to a man they perform a most unique ceremony. Entering the hut, she throws her head-cover over the left arm, brushes back the front locks of her hair, and then places her right hand over her mouth. If she has succeeded in attracting the man's attention, she draws the index finger of the right hand slowly over the left hand up the arm and shoulder, then across her upper lip to the right shoulder while she brushes back her locks once more, and patiently waits for permission to speak.

When the women have been separated from their relatives for some time, and happen to meet suddenly, they embrace each other loudly weeping. While in this embrace they inquire and answer each other concerning their mutual experience during the time of separation.

Although Ainu women are practically slaves, they are, however, not entirely devoid of means for revenge against insults of the men. No deception is too hideous, no action too degrading, if it only serves the purpose of revenge against the man who has insulted them. Like the Chinese women, they do not appeal to the gods to bring calamity upon the objects of their hatred, but use the vilest language. The men fear an angry woman, not merely for the hideous epithets which she uses, but rather for her revengeful deeds. She will steal the *inao* offering, the willow sticks, since having no part in the worship, she neither fears the gods nor man. In her rage she will open a grave, cut a piece of flesh from the corpse, take it home and cook it mixed with vegetables, and give it to the object of her hatred.



BEFORE A FEAST.

Death is to the Ainu a most dreaded event. They do not care to think of it, much less speak of it in conversation. As must be supposed, their perceptions of a future life are not clear; thus when the great change comes they possess no hope nor are they guided by a beacon of light from the other shore. When a death occurs in a family, all the relatives and friends are notified. A hot fire is kindled in the hope of reviving the dead. The corpse is clothed in the best garments and a feast is prepared. Millet, cake, and wine are offered to the gods. The goddess of fire receives special attention in worship; for to her is entrusted the guidance of the departed soul to its Creator. She is commissioned, when presenting the soul, to speak only of the merits it has accumulated while on earth. The corpse is



AINU HUT IN WINTER.

wrapped in matting and carried on the shoulders of two men to its resting place in the mountains. A few utensils are buried with the body, others are placed under the east window of the hut. The most useful are, however, returned to the hut and used as formerly. A piece of wood is erected beside the grave which in appearance is like a pair of scissors—the Ainu say it represents a ship or rudder which will serve as a barque to carry the soul across the “unknown sea.” After this, the mourners return to their hut, where the men make *inao*, worship, eat and drink, until they are again

besotted. A strange mingling of heart-rending grief and lamentations with drunken frivolity.

The Church Missionary Society is the only mission which has worked among this people. They began work in 1874. The Rev. J. Bachelor, to whom we are indebted for much information, has been most diligent in labour. He reduced their language to writing, wrote a dictionary and grammar, and translated the New Testament and a selection of hymns. In the first years he admitted a number of men to church relationship; but they all proved disloyal to their vows, they would not abstain from strong drinks. However, the women have proved themselves true and faithful Christians.



AN AINU FAMILY.

difficulties in our search from a historical point of view. They themselves have no knowledge of their origin, and in vain do we look for it in the annals of general history; for they never emerged from the patriarchal state sufficiently for history to notice them. No special knowledge of ethnology is required to be convinced that they are not of Mongolian origin. Their ruddy complexion, heavy beards, form of body, lineaments of face, disposition of mind craving for alcohol, and the absence of oblique eyes and depressed nose, makes the supposition possible

The Japanese wine merchants are bringing a destructive curse upon this people. Knowing the national weakness of the Ainu, they purchase of them the skins of wild animals, paying for them in wine instead of coin. It is naturally of advantage to their trade to keep the Ainu ignorant of the pernicious effect of these intoxicants. Through the influence of this unholy traffic, and other causes, the race is gradually dying out. Their fate is sealed. For men who will not rise in religion cannot rise in civilisation, and to be steeled against both dooms to ill fortune.

We have thus far considered this people analytically, which is comparatively easy, for much has been written about them in later years; but we are confronted with

that they belong to the Caucasian race. Their belief in one Supreme Being to whom they are indebted for all good, their custom of worshipping towards the east, the drink-offering sacrifice, and the absence of all idols and images, though they do believe in gods, strengthen the view that they are traceable to the Semitic family.

Another supposition forces itself upon us. A mysterious resemblance seems to exist between the Ainu and a certain class of Japanese. The general physique, and in particular the physiognomy, of some Japanese betray the fact that they are not of pure Mongolian origin, but are an issue of the aborigines and the early Japanese invaders of those islands. From this Caucasian and Mongolian combination we can also understand to what source the superiority of a few of Japan's present ruling class may be traced.

