Felt Knowledge: Ecologising Art and Samani Ainu Cooking

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ABSTRACT

Over seven months between 2020 and 2021, I lived in Samani, Hokkaido in Japan. Learning indigenous Samani Ainu cooking across different seasons from Ms Kane Kumagai, I questioned how an art practice can explore 'felt knowledge' of the more-than-human world. My everyday presence with local people's lived experiences and multi-species encounters in Samani was an act of artistic experimentation that could acquire a different way of exchanging knowledge. Across these relationships I learned how our sensory knowledge-based engagement with both people and nature can contribute to a diverse ecosystem.

This book is a record of my time in Samani and is itself a form of art, which documents and shares the process of making and translating intangibles into tangibles. In it, I seek to show how the practice of art can observe, unfold, work with, and share in a compassionate way a felt knowledge that is part of the human world. Documenting this way of living and working can unpack social, historical, political, and economic backgrounds to reveal reasons why Ms Kumagai and natural species are facing a critical moment in Samani. Recording the Samani Ainu cooking that Ms Kumagai wishes to share with future generations also resists forgetting a facet of Samaini Ainu community. Here, I offer values askance from social norms shaped by colonial, imperialistic, misogynistic, and capitalist modes of society. Through this body of works, I practise knowledge production supporting a compassionate, inclusive, and value-diverse approach for people, non-human species, and culture.

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INTRODUCTION

This book is about 'felt knowledge', paying attention to how it connects emotional and natural landscapes that contribute to understanding relationships within a diverse ecosystem. Through learning Samani Ainu cooking, taught to me by an Ainu elder, Ms Kane Kumagai in Samani, a town in Hokkaido, Japan, I have explored how the practice of art can carefully reach towards unfolding, embodying, and sharing stories of ecological practice in the more-than-human world (Kirksey and Helmreich 2010). Through inter-generational learning and exchange, I sought ways of living and inhabiting the planet through non-human-centric awareness and transcultural perspectives.

I interpret felt knowledge as information that triggers the senses; physical and emotional experiences that a body holds fluidly. Whether the information is tangible or intangible, it resonates between beings – such as bodies, objects, plants, and space. Gestures are crucial for felt knowledge to be communicated, both for the knowledge holders themselves and others from facial expressions to trees turning yellow and red. We cannot experience directly what other bodies know or feel, therefore attentive observation of gestures become important. Reciprocal translation of felt knowledge requires a multi-sensorial and linguistic process, else it can cause misunderstandings. That said, felt knowledge also includes opacity – being open to the unknown and unexplainable.

I am particularly interested in the idea of *iroka* (色香) – colour and scent (see Chapter Iroka) within a multisensorial context (Classen 2012). In exploring this, I have sought to move away from social norms imposed by imperialistic, capitalistic, and misogynistic cultures and their unhealed traumas.

Ms Kane Kumagai is the last person to hold what people call 'genuine' knowledge of the indigenous Ainu culture in Samani. Ms Kumagai and I relied on our felt knowledge to produce Ainu meals. The traditional method of Ainu cooking involved hunting, fishing, and foraging, and natural phenomena had a significant impact on human life. Therefore, the subtle

changes in nature were taken as indicators of life (Fukuoka 1995).

Cooking with Ms Kumagai starts from following animal trails, seeing colour and sheen in nature, feeling the temperature in the air, knowing who will eat the food, and speaking to plants and animals that might become cooking ingredients. Ms Kumagai has knowledge about what plants and species have disappeared or just barely survive – plants even local researchers are not aware of. Showing me her skills and knowledge, she taught me how to build reciprocal relationships with non-human beings. Within the more-than-human values of Samani Ainu cooking is an ecological approach that respects the liveliness and autonomy (a synergetic and self-regulating system) of all beings. At the same time, an awareness of the entanglement of life and death is at the forefront of each gesture. Lived experiences and the reciprocal relationships between peoples as well as with non-human beings, needs to be seen as part of the composting of the knowledge of the wider community (Haraway 2019).

Across this work I consider cooking as a site for art to exchange empathy, spirit, mutual effort, insights into ecosystem diversity, and lived knowledges. It has been part of a process to embody a culture and a relationship with nature that simultaneously nourishes my body, gives me life, and an understanding of the environments where I situate myself. By moving to, and living in the town, I became part of the everyday life of Ms Kumagai and the Ainu community for seven months and beyond.[2] The passage of my work and time was navigated through the cycle of nature. I followed the growth of mountain and sea plants, fish, and the weather as the timeline of my stay in Samani across different seasons.

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1 When I refer to someone with a specific gender and race, I follow the way in which the person refers to themselves.

2 The Ainu community includes people of Ainu heritage and their partners and non-Ainu people who work with and are friends with Ainu people. In order to work on a revival of the Ainu culture, in the recent past collaborations between the Ainu, the Japanese, foreign researchers and friends have become the norm. (Fujimura 1982; Siddle 1996; Nakagawa 2010; Gayman 2018)

Focusing on basic human sensory ability through interaction within the community kept me outside of conservative frameworks often guiding engagement with Ainu. During my past communications with Ainu friends, I became aware when there were contradictions between my existing academic knowledge and the direct understanding that arose through communication with people who were in front of me. I saw how colonial legacies are still practised on an everyday basis through cultural habits, languages, and institutional structures. The Ainu have been seen through the lens of 'the primitive' and 'the past' by the colonial and top-down hierarchy within homogeneous Japan for more than a century. The point of view of traditional anthropology is also still embedded in the language used to communicate about the Ainu. The relationship between this social hierarchy and those who hold knowledge needs to be questioned.

My senses acted as both an active and a passive space for a different understanding before my preconditioned mind took over my awareness of experiences (Howes 2012, 2021). Sensory ethnography and the senses have been studied by anthropologists such as David Howes, Tim Ingold, and Sara Pink, who have demonstrated historical engagement with the area and its involvement with a variety of different cultures.[3] However, keeping the existing theories at a distance, it has been important for me to find a personal way of working and seeing in Samani with Ms Kumagai and her community, learning what is right and wrong in their context. I seek to speak through connection and familiarity, rather than comparison and dichotomy. This book demonstrates how the practice of art can lead to finding theory in the field.

Further creative analysis was needed to offer a deeper understanding of the senses within the ecological world. In this thesis I argue that art can be more than a stand-alone area or used as a tool to deliver interdisciplinary and scientific research. Ingold demonstrates in his book, *Making* (2013) how paying attention to the production of things such as a handaxe or a house, and the experience of the process, is important as an ethnographic methodology. His idea of learning and thinking through making overlaps with the way that artists practise. However, making something that already has set rules and values within the culture differs from making something that has been created through the makers/ artists' own imagination without knowing the end result.

Ms Kumagai was not only practicing and reproducing the traditional culture of the Ainu, but she was also constantly experimenting, reinventing, reflecting, and articulating her own ideas. She was pursuing her beliefs even when some apprehensive elements of the Ainu community were resentful of what she was doing. In considering Ms Kumagai as an artist/ creative practitioner, my relation to her knowledge became a collaborative space for resilience and interactive processes for felt knowledge to become palpable information.

This is a crucial aspect to shed light on, as it might seem as if the academic conversation has moved in recent years towards a more liberal and progressive approach. However, the physical senses remain research subjects or are discussed in a language that does not reach their community's everyday experience, especially where research is done in non-English speaking communities. Ainu elders often told me how they met many academics and outsiders who came to them and took away their knowledge, but they rarely saw what happened afterwards, or saw the people again. Seeing my time in Samani as a research-led art practice, respecting Ms Kumagai as an artist, and finding ways of working with the local knowledge over a long period of time, I made sure that the community could witness and provide responses to my work. Felt knowledge could therefore remain a part of the reciprocal process of knowledge production. I could also stay open to the idea of there being a fluid boundary between my personal and professional life while I unlearnt my own social norms.

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3 Ingold wrote *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description* (2011), Howes wrote *The Cultural Life of the Senses* (2012), and Pink wrote *Doing Sensory Ethnography* (2015).

Personalising these processes has also helped me challenge hierarchies within fine art education that taught me to look at existing theoretical terms to validate my questions and imaginations. Using photography and creative writing, I have documented how I recognised 'felt knowledge' as the tangible resonance of my experiences in Samani and how I valued its existence as part of a bigger picture of our social constructs. Engaging with felt knowledge through the practice of art became a source of poetic understanding and the unfolding of a complex set of situations that are politically, historically, and culturally charged.

Focusing on 'felt knowledge' also revealed how the dissonance caused by colonisation and unhealed trauma has prevented people from being free from historical and cultural oppression. This social norm produced a neglectful attitude towards Ainu people, women, younger generations of every gender, non-human species, and the natural world.[4] As a result, a sense of hope became difficult to sustain among the Samani Ainu community. To this account it felt important to document Ms Kumagai's knowledge and skills by transforming them experimentally into tangible materials from oral and everyday practices in Samani. By doing so, I aimed to displace the fixing of transcribing oral culture. I carried out my project with an aim of exploring compassionate (by which I mean connecting with things that are hard to experience and take time to see) and nuanced expression. To support this, I sought to work with strength and values of subtlety, slowness, and experiential knowledge. I hope to contribute to conversations about transferable knowledge and skills, and diverse and inclusive communities of both humans and nature – where individuality and equity are respected for all living and non-living things.

4 The work of constructing contemporary Ainu values continues to be largely done under the Japanese government's top-down system. Japanese systems are significantly influenced by Western social values and are capitalistic and city-centric. Furthermore, Ainu people have been educated in Japanese systems without being given much information about the Ainu.

Traditionally, Ainu culture has developed through negotiations with nature, in a way that is specific to their lived environment, and through an awareness that humans live equally among other natural species and divine beings. This awareness involves a number of ritualistic gestures and the practice of addressing appreciation towards the natural environment.

The present social system does not align with the Ainu's traditional values, hence the Ainu's spirituality struggles to stay at the core of people. Much of the effort to revive Ainu culture has been navigated by tangible elements and Ainu people are continually placed in a narrative fixed in the past, despite their efforts to raise awareness of this false stasis. As Ainu culture has been affected by tourism and commercialisation and the majority of the Ainu people never engage with it natural development and change has been thwarted.

ENCOUNTERING RESONANCE

'Wow you've already bloomed! Thank you for being here', Kane-san said to the chives growing on the slope of Na Nashi no Yama -Nameless Mountain (名無しの山). She would carefully but quickly sit next to wild plants and flowers and enjoy a moment of reunion with them in early spring.

I call Ms Kane Kumagai (熊谷カネ) 'Kane-san' sometimes. She was born in 1942 as a thirteenth child of Mr Sokichi Okamao (b.1887-1960) and Mrs Yumi Okamoto (b.1896-1990) in an area called Okada (岡田) in the town – which used to be called Shamani in the Ainu language, but is now Japanised and pronounced Samani (様似) – in Hokkaido, Japan. Okada was an area where a *kotan* (Ainu settlement) used to exist. My encounter with Ms Kumagai brought me to the town, where I came to have a sense of her Ainu spirit – energy and the foundation of her life. She continues to practise some Ainu cultural activities such as kimono making, cooking, prayer, and dancing, for the sake of sustaining the traditional values that she learnt from her parents; she calls them 'something ordinary' while she lives her life as a Japanese citizen.[5]

My meeting with Ms Kumagai was an incidental encounter in Samani where I smelled an intense and unusual scent of the sea and seaweed – as though my face was hit by the smell. My understanding and navigation of Samani's geography started with the smell, and then the image of the sea being lit by the sunshine sparkling on the surface, merging into the blue of the sky. The sight was so bright I wanted to close my eyes, but the landscape kept my pupils wide open. A way of understanding the place through sensory navigation continued through subtle observations and the movements of everyday life. The encountering of people also kept my movement fluid and led me to unexpected places. The day when I met Ms.Kumagai, I was initially visiting Samani to see a Japanese elder, Ms Eiko Tomina (b.1934). I first met Eiko-san in 2016 in Nibutani.[6]

When I first saw Ms Kumagai, I felt something. The sensation of 'feeling something' was delicate but clear and resonated through my body as if the smell of the sea opened up my sensory perception. It was an effortless feeling, yet it requires so many words to explain it. It was a sensation that could easily be

5 Ms Kumagai's lifestyle strikes a balance between contemporary Japanese society and the traditional Ainu culture that was passed down by her parents. Her father, Mr Okamoto was the last Ainu hunter in Samani, and her mother, Mrs Okamoto was an Ainu storyteller. Ms Kumagai thinks that her parents were bilinguals who spoke both Ainu and Japanese. It was unusual back then for those of her parents' generation to practise Ainu traditions, at a time when the majority of Ainu believed that it was better to forget about Ainu culture and live the Japanese life. Most parents did not teach their children the Ainu language and told them not to mention the word 'Ainu'. Ms Kumagai's parents spoke in Ainu when they talked about things that they did not want their children to understand. Ms Kumagai grew up speaking Japanese. However, seeing her parents practise Ainu culture privately and looking after her elder Ainu neighbour who only spoke the Ainu language, Ms Kumagai was exposed to Ainu cooking, storytelling, and kimono-making. She once said, 'I think my father was the last true Ainu. I have lived a Japanese life, so there are many things I don't know about the past' (October 27, 2020). She said humbly that it was only when she became an adult that she consciously started practising Ainu traditions. After she retired from having part-time jobs in the fishing industry – common in Samani – she spent her time relearning and practising Ainu culture as much as she could in her everyday life.

6 Eiko-san was born on Sakhalin island and was married to an Ainu man in Hokkaido. In Nibutani, she sang a song in Russian for me, after she told me the story of how she travelled from Sakhalin to Hokkaido as a child. She was kind to me and I wanted to say hello and hear more about her stories.

In Spring 2019, I carried out fieldwork and interviews in Shiraoi, Nibutani, South and East coasts of Hokkaido. I focused on Ainu women's oral history and continued to look at the Ainu instrument, the *Mukkuri*. Through my fieldwork, I became interested in understanding how generations of Ainu women and a marriage between Ainu and Japanese people lived with the complex social and cultural changes after Japan's invasion in the 19th Century.

ignored or pushed down to my unconscious as I carefully folded my legs, compacted them with my body, and quietly sat down in front of Ms Kumagai. This polite mannerism is embedded in my unconscious as the automatic gesture of a Japanese woman who has learnt to behave humbly and respectfully.

Ms Kumagai spoke gently, kindly, and politely, yet in a firm and clear manner. As we spoke, she mentioned her parents and she was tearful, remembering how tough their life was. She did not explain why, so I sensed that it was a sensitive conversation. I wondered if she referred to the hardship of her parents being the first generation in the family to be born being given Japanese names. Since 1868, when the Japanese government started controlling Hokkaido through the Meiji restoration, the Ainu language was outlawed, and the Ainu livelihood, naming systems, and many other cultural practices were restricted.[7] The Ainu have been described and read through a narrative of 'minority' and a gaze of 'other' for over a century.

On the same day, Ms Kumagai invited me to her home and cooked me some surf clams – Samani's local delicacy. While Ms Kumagai and I walked side by side to her house, she told me how she spent many years working to protect Ainu culture but that there was still something she wanted to do: She wanted to leave behind her knowledge of Samani Ainu cooking. Ms Kumagai's cooking is unique, partly because despite regional and individual diversity, Ainu culture and traditions have been recorded and introduced in a mono-cultural manner.

'Ordinary' has become 'extraordinary' in regard to Ainu life/ custom/ culture. Ms Kumagai used to have a group of friends who worked together to practise traditional Ainu activities, but these friends have passed away or are no longer well enough. There is also no one available from whom Ms Kumagai could ask for help in Samani.[8] Over the course of my time with her, she mentioned that passing on the knowledge does not necessarily mean to the next immediate generation. She wanted to leave the knowledge so in fifty or even in two-hundred-years, there might be documentation for those interested in knowing about the Samani Ainu.

I asked what documenting her cooking would involve, and how long it might take to cover all the meals. Ms Kumagai told me how Ainu cooking starts with foraging on a mountain and by the sea, and there are different cooking methods

7 Japan has a number of indigenous cultures, and the archipelago was made up of different kingdoms until the late 19th century. Through the unification of the country during the Meiji restoration and the Industrial Revolution, Japanese culture radically shifted through the influence of Western culture, which brought in foreign workers, technology, and social systems such as education. The people of the north (the Ainu) and the south (the Ryukuans) were subsumed under one dominant culture that both aimed to assimilate and to exoticise and commodify difference (Howell 1994: Siddle 1996; Yonetani 2000; Okada 2014)

Ainu people were displaced and banned from practising many of their cultural activities including tattooing and fishing. They also experienced physical violence and bullying, which continues to this day.

8 Ainu communities in rural areas of Japan consider themselves to be the minorities of the minority. People in Samani consider their town to be forgotten. Globalisation and the city-centric desires of people further escalated the situation where it became difficult to find people who would participate in activities of the Ainu culture. It also made the situation more difficult after the Hidaka Main Line, a railway line operated by the Hokkaido Railway Company was suspended in 2021 due to damage to the railway caused by a natural disaster in 2015. There is only one bus a day to go to Sapporo.

9 Sapporo is the largest city in Hokkaido, about three and half hours by car from Samani. It is about a one-and-a-half-hour flight from Tokyo.

throughout the year. I asked if it would be helpful for me to document her cooking by taking photographs or filming videos. The word 'help' in English is not quite the right translation – giving her support meant a reason to spend time with her and receive an informal, alternative education while also serving her needs, knowledge, and interesting ideas. She looked amused, then slightly concerned, and said 'Mmm, but it's complicated because there is a lot to do. Foraging and cooking happen organically according to the weather. I can't just call you to come over from Sapporo or Tokyo on the same day.[9] I am also not confident about my fitness. I could go anywhere and do anything by myself when I was younger. But not anymore.' I appreciated her gentleness, her careful and slow speech, but even more her insistence on protecting her Ainu culture as being just ordinary life. I paused for a few seconds then suggested, 'I could live in Samani close to you for a year. I can ask my friends to give us a hand too.'

We spent some time together over the next two days. Throughout the conversation, we carefully measured the distance between us, gently watching each other's gestures to see how they resonated. Ms Kumagai's wish to document Samani Ainu cooking met with my interest in exploring sensory knowledge-based engagement with emotional and natural landscapes. Our meeting became more than just a casual encounter. It was like a scent I had never smelled before and I needed to figure out what was getting my attention.

I could not have captured the resonance between Ms Kumagai and myself if I had set the research question for my project in advance. It had to start from a mutual interest that excited both of us, outside any formal ontology. Our encounter gave a clearer shape to the work I was about to carry out, yet at this stage I could not imagine the weight of the work and the unlearning of social and cultural norms to come, even as I was open and ready for it.

MAKING FRIENDS IN A MORE-THAN-HUMAN WORLD

While Ms Kumagai and I communicated in Japanese, I was often struck by unfamiliar gestures during her communication with non-human beings. For instance, in order to address appreciation towards things around her, she spoke to objects, species, and space as if she was speaking to friends. She even told off a salmon. I see such relationships between human and non-human beings resonating broadly with the Japanese animistic practice. It implies the kind of cosmos where animals, plants, things, and spirits, all exist as autonomous entities with intention and agency (Nakazawa 2016; Todd 2017; Århem 2017; Yoneyama 2019). The Ainu culture has a belief in *kamuy*, often translated as 'god' – spiritual beings include animals, plants, the weather, and even human tools, which are equal to humans. Ainu people used to believe that the pursuit of happiness in human life was to develop a reciprocal relationship with this range of spirits (Fukuoka 1993; Nakagawa 1995).

When I asked Ms Kumagai if her gestures were something that were passed down by her parents, she laughed and said, 'I don't remember my mother talking to crabs while boiling them in hot water.' I wondered if her gesture had anything to do with the influence of Buddhism. Almost every elders' home, including that of Ms Kumagai, in Hokkaido had a small Buddhist altar, as it had become a common culture in Hokkaido in the 20th century. However, where such gesture came from seemed fluid as the Ainu and Japanese cultures both existed in Ms Kumagai's life.

Making friends with non-human beings is a work of physical sensory awareness in order to engage knowledge both within and outside of human language. I came to see this attention, energy, and time-demanding way of appreciation as left behind in our contemporary city-centric world. Global, modern, efficiency, and productivity focused societies have been favouring data and numbers, pushing away the spiritual and subjective. My journey became full of translations between different modes of communication, with both human and non-human beings. It involved different types of information in Japanese, Ainu, and English – in speech; in-person, over the phone, and digitally or sensorily. Felt sense became the centre of a complicated web of knowledge.

Translating languages between Japanese, Ainu, and English, as well as conveying felt knowledge into images and written text, required ongoing reflection on modes of representation. Responding to the entanglement of historical and contemporary environments through felt sensation within the local meant careful reflection on translation processes. These have played significant roles in this research and included shifts in lingual inflection, an interest in vagueness and a troubling of the colonial legacies of translation.

I initially wrote my thoughts, observation, and notes in Japanese to stay close to my emotional landscape, particularly as the original experience had happened using the Japanese language. Japanese onomatopoeia and repetition occurred often, especially in the transcript of the cooking process. My Japanese to English translation experience involved considering how each languages hold subtle nuances differently. I examined the rules of writing to work better with felt knowledge, and not to be dictated by the power that the English language holds politically and culturally. In order to shift the hierarchy of the text layout, I kept my embodied experiences in the main body of the thesis and moved all existing academic research or historical information studied by other people into footnotes.

I did not make a direct translation from Japanese to English but followed my embodied experience of the social and cultural environment that each language interacts with. For example, the Japanese onomatopoeic words can express physical sensation. However, I did not keep them in the final text as detailed explanation in English would distract from what I want to communicate in this book.

I have already mentioned that felt knowledge includes opacity. Being part of the community required a certain vagueness, jokes, gestures and use of imaginative language. In particular, to translate my experience of Ms Kumagai and her Ainu communities' values, I focused on stories of agency that female elders taught me, how they used joy, curiosity, and care as their tools for survival rather than aggression, extraction, or invasion. This choice was a part of my strategic translation process even if this meant that I was not sharing the socially structured oppression and marginalisation that I witnessed.

The gestures that I describe earlier in this chapter, can be considered animistic. Animism is a way of being as well as a locally situated knowledge. In everyday conversation there is no active articulation about what and how things are animistic. In Ms Kumagai's life and among the community, this knowledge is suggested, and normal, I experienced their presence without the necessity to discuss epistemology, however I kept reference to these experiences in records of conversations and diaries. The relationship between animism and felt knowledge is expressed throughout my book. This way, I sought to avoid categorisations common to colonialised cultures, continued in the practice of researchers as they 'study' ethnic groups. The idea of animism appears again in my Conclusion, for I see it as a helpful value in thinking about my experience with Ms Kumagai in the context of intellectual communication, seeing the connection of Samani with other cultures and global environmental concerns.

IROKA 色香

Scent became one of the most important elements of my exploration, and an ally in Samani. It drew my attention to things that I would not have noticed otherwise, helped navigate my research process, and became an access point to my memories. Most importantly, it gave me a sense of healing throughout different stages of my time in Samani and after.

As American anthropologist Anna Tsing has said, it is difficult 'to put much about smell into words, even when our reactions are strong and certain' (Tsing 2015). I agree with Tsing, however, and my overall journey of working with Ms Kumagai in Samani can be characterised in one Japanese world, *iroka* (色香). It is not a commonly used word now. *Iro* (色) means colour and *ka* (香) means scent and they are used as single words separately. The word describes an experience of being seduced by the charm of a person, it is often used for women, or by the attractive atmosphere of a thing, place, or nature. It also describes a state of losing one's mind because of the attraction. I could say that I was taken by the *iroka* of Samani – the kelp; the flowers; a bear; a deer; Ms Kumagai; dark stories; and the beauty of Mt. Apoi. I immersed myself within these things deeply, it became difficult to draw myself out of Samani towards the end of my stay.[10]

Different types of scent opened up unexpected realisations and conversations that ran through my navigation of 'felt knowledge' and connected across information. For example, in the beginning of my stay in Samani, I told some people how I thought the smell of the sea was different from other beaches that I knew. Locals all said 'Oh really? This is our norm, so we didn't notice.' This kind of conversation was often followed by their kind comments; they said, 'people coming from outside let us realise what we have.' The locals would teach me the unique geography and richness of kelp in the area, then often the conversation extended to some local gossip. My research process involved the accumulation of subtle conversations as an exchange of knowledge and a way of building friendship.

Another important aspect of scent study involves different linguistic approaches towards the experience of it. In English, scent is something to 'smell.' In Ainu culture, scent is something to 'listen to', sensing and hearing what the scent tells.

10 Mt. Apoi (Mt. Apoi: 810 m; Mt. Pinneshiri: 958 m) is a significant presence in Samani's landscape and people's psyche. The mountain can be seen from almost every place in Samani. Ms Kumagai said that Mt. Apoi is the Mt. Fuji of Samani. Apoi is an Ainu name and has Ainu tales, and with its rare species of flora and fauna, became a UNESCO Global Geopark. The pure peridotites on and around the mountain contain valuable information as it arose from 60km deep in the inner core of the earth and came out on the surface 13 million years ago. Its unique natural condition allows for many varieties of mountain flowers to grow.

In Ainu language, *húra* means 'scent' and *nu* means 'to listen/hear (voice/sound), to hear/know by listening/obey by listening (story/thing), to sense (one's physical condition), or to feel (smell/odour).'[11] *Húra* and *nu* are often put together in a sentence. Making a linguistic shift from 'to smell' to 'to listen' (not 'to hear') suggests an attitude not just about the work of the nose or passive experience; one has to reach out or be actively involved in order to respect the cause of the smell as intentional being and agency. I imagined something like the way Ms Kumagai communicates with space, objects, plants, and animals to build an equal relationship with them, showing them the gestures of respect.

There is a similar approach to engaging scent in the traditional Japanese art called '*kōdō* (香道) – way of fragrance.'[12] This is the formalised act and practice of appreciating the scent of a tiny piece of wood. It emerged as an art in the latter half of the Muromachi period (1336 to 1573). The main practice in *kōdō*, is to 'listen to' the scent (Hata 2011). An act of focusing on the scent brings a group of people to sit together in a room, sharing a story and playing a game. In Japanese arts such as *kōdō*, tea ceremony, and flower arrangement, shared gestures and mannerisms were important (Tsurumi 1999). A sense of ethical and philosophical values were expressed and learned through them, while they also functioned as spaces for political and religious knowledge exchange.

Scent has long played an important part in storytelling and offers insights into cultural knowledge. A chapter in *The Pillow Book* (1002) by the Japanese poet Sei Shōnagon (清少納言, c. 966 – 1017 or 1025) includes her experience of fragrance in documenting emotional and social life during the Heian period (794 to 1185):

> Things That Make Your Heart Dance:
> Keeping baby birds as pets. Passing by people playing with their babies. Lying down alone in a room with incense burning. When you look into a foggy mirror from a foreign country. When you see a man of high rank stop his wagon and get his servant to ask someone something. When you wash your hair, do your make up, and wear a nice-smelling kimono. Even if no one sees you all dressed up, your heart dances, and it's a nice feeling. The sounds of rain or the rattle of the house when the wind blows while you wait for your lover to come. Those sounds make your heart skip a beat.[13]

11 National Ainu Museum Ainu Language Archive: https://ainugo.nam.go.jp/search/word?word=nu&typeDict=on&dictCd%5B%5D=田村&dictCd%5B%5D=萱野&dictCd%5B%5D=知里&typeCont=on&typeText=on&person=&matCd=&minLineCd=&maxLineCd= (Accessed on 18th January 2022)

12 *Kôdô* (香道) – Yoshimasa Ashikaga (1436–1490), the eighth shogun of the Higashiyama culture, loved incense and became the founder of the systematisation of it as an art form.

13 There are several English translations of *The Pillow Book*. I chose the translation in *Enjoy Simple English*, published by NHK in April 2019. Different translations in both modern Japanese and English offer varieties of interpretations. For example, instead of using a phrase 'heart dances', Yuko Shimauchi (Chikuma Gakugei Bunko, 2021) used words 'premonition, subtle anxiety while things that cause a sense of suspense' and Ivan Morris (Penguin Books, 1971) used the phrase 'heartbeat faster'.

Shōnagon enjoyed lying down alone in her room with incense burning – being healed by the scent, while she revealed her different emotions and thoughts. I read her writing while lying alone in my cold room in Samani. This poem triggered familiar feelings and helped to engage the unfamiliar knowledge, understanding social conditions and cultural norms, and issues experienced by a woman almost 1,000 years ago (Yamamoto 2017). When Ms Kumagai said that she wanted to leave information about Samani Ainu cooking for people in 200 years time, I initially felt overwhelmed however, Shōnagon gave me a hint about how to document Ms Kumagai's skills, knowledge and socio- cultural context. Writing prose and poems about personal and subjective experiences of scent can offer information for people in the far future. Engaging with Shōnagon's work and Ms Kumagai's wishes expanded my understanding of time and imagination about possible readers of the book.

The French anarchist geographer, Elisée Reclus, also often used smell to describe geographical and political relationships to nature, such as in his writing *Du sentiment de la nature dans les sociétés modernes* ('The Feeling for Nature in Modern Society') which was published in *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, 63 (May–June 1866). Through reading the text of a work like Reclus', I observe a link between the sensory knowledge of nature and the modernist devaluing of these faculties. Looking at ideas of scent helped me broaden my sensations of time and space. Tsing, also, demonstrates in her book, *The Mushroom at the End of the World* (2015), how scent can create a transcultural and interdisciplinary research process and offer interspecies storytelling. For example, in the chapter 'Interlude/Smelling', she brings together unexpected connections of people from different fields by referencing an American composer John Cage and mycologist Alan Rayner, and working with her Japanese colleagues and Australia's Yolngu people. The scent unfolds geographical restrictions, conditions, and allows for fluid navigation and inter-relationships of human life, just as scent can move around things that might come in its way.

Considering *iroka* as part of my navigation in Samani, I could stay open to intangible aspects of the social milieu. For example, even though I was Japanese and not Ainu, the understanding of what smells and tastes good or bad were easily agreed upon when cooking. The good smell of food could also bring together different types of people over an Ainu meal with Ms Kumagai, even if people had conflicting ideas about culture, politics, or research ethics.

Food provided opportunities for non-verbal or pre-verbal connections (Van Daele 2013).

The cooking experience, including sourcing ingredients, smell, taste, and communal eating, kept reminding me how both the Ainu and the Japanese, as well as many different cultures, developed through interactions with neighbouring towns and countries through human connections beyond national borders. Cultures develop and thrive by changing the form of gestures and practices in adapting to and producing contemporary life, despite any state's effort to create strict national borders and programmes to 'preserve' culture.[14]

14 While post-colonial and imperialistic social norms apply, Ainu culture continues to change within a structure and mode of communication that is both in line with the top-down approach of the Japanese government's and bottom-up community efforts outside of a formal system.

In 2019, some people mentioned how researchers at state-funded museums such as the National Ainu Museum visit rural areas and collect knowledge and information from Ainu elders. These researchers then take those materials back to the museum and organisations. The elders' knowledge and skills such as dancing, singing, storytelling, wood carving, and cooking get performed by the younger generation. As a result some elders in rural areas feel left out. However, this does not suggest that the younger generation is ignorant, rather it shows the ways in which Ainu culture changes. These young people also interpret Ainu culture through their own personal passion and pursue knowledge from elders independently.

COMPASSION WITHIN COMPLEXITIES

In order to engage Ainu culture through Ms Kumagai, it was crucial to constantly question my possible biases and romanticisations. As Trinh T. Minh-ha pointed out in her ethnographic film *Reassemblage: From the Firelight to the Screen* (1982) made in Senegal, which challenges conventional documentary filmmaking and the lens created by the idea of otherness, we need to watch out for our 'habit of imposing meaning to every single sign'. For example, when I could not understand where Ms Kumagai's gestures of speaking to non-human beings came from, I was tempted to see them as part of the Ainu culture. However, she could not even tell me where or how she started doing this. There were things that did not fit into a pattern of the cultural characteristics. It was important to see things as they are without having to categorise them.

My connection with Ms Kumagai became pivotal as it raised a question about how an Ainu and a Japanese could build a relationship when we pay attention to our historical and cultural backgrounds.[15] Ms Kumagai and I got along personally. However, we could not avoid awareness of the complex situation arising because of our racial identities, politically, and socially. Many Ainu people and their descendants continue to face discrimination. Generational trauma, the empowerment of the culture, and internal conflicts continue for the Ainu. As for the Japanese, there are still many people who have no awareness about the Ainu and Japan's history with them, while Japan itself tries to survive within the idea of the Global North. My transcultural background, being educated in two countries, Japan and England, that have both taken on the role of coloniser, added another layer to the complexity.

I had been questioning the social norms of countries that are considered 'developed' and their idea of 'civilisation' and 'progress.' How can those brought up in, and conditioned by, a culture dependent on the written word, understand the worldview of indigenous people like the Ainu, who were traditionally centred on oral communication until they were forced to learn Japanese? In order to tackle such questions, I took the approach of working closely with Ms Kumagai as an individual, so that I could pay close attention to her needs and gestures, intangible details, and securing enough time and resources to have good communication in a compassionate manner.

15 When I first travelled in Hokkaido in 2015, I was sometimes asked 'Are you *wajin*?' by different people involved in the Ainu community instead of being asked if I was '*Nihon-jin* [a Japanese person]', which is a more commonly used word outside the context of the Ainu. The word *wajin* is a way of naming a Japanese person from the Ainu's perspective and refers to a person with a hint of 'coloniser or an outsider'. This experience made me think more carefully and deeply about my positionality; I am often considered 'not Japanese anymore' when I am in Tokyo and 'very' Asian when I am in Europe.

Although I had Samani Ainu cooking as a shared interest with Ms Kumagai, my work also involved an open process inviting countless unknowns. I faced ambiguity, confusion, and opposing opinions in order to try to overcome societal and culturally constructed assumptions and restrictions. To focus on reciprocal empathy and mundane gestures as a map to walk unknown paths I started by learning the local gift economy. My fridge was often overflowing with fresh salmon, clams and fleshly baked bread, and people picked me up by car if they saw me walking. It was important to know creatively what I could give back, and to my surprise, I used my sensory understanding to figure out a good balance between my own resources and each person's preferences and norms. I needed to *kuuki o yomu* – a Japanese phrase literally meaning 'read the atmosphere (sensing someone's feelings).'

I also worked with unanticipated events and people including cultural and science researchers and curators, people working at the town hall, and deer hunters, to construct a new way of perceiving knowledge and value systems. In doing so, I aimed to develop a compassionate language for the ecological and environmental conversation in interdisciplinary perspectives.

Throughout my time in Samani, I valued the approach taken by the scholar, writer, and artist, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson. Through the voices of elders and knowledge holders among her Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg ancestry, Simpson is respectful of cultural values as they become her 'tools, strategies, values, processes, and intellect' (Simpson, 2011). Her storytelling resonates with how Ms Kumagai often mentioned her family members and made sure to point out when the story and knowledge belonged to a specific person or a region. Ms Kumagai also talked about the importance of communicating about food in a way that shows diversity – identifying the person, regional characteristics, and knowledge of the area. Such a style of sharing knowledge showed respect towards the individual within the community while showing the position of the storyteller, which was the form of oral record keeping.

Simpson also warned, 'western-based social movement theory has failed to recognize the broader contextualisations of resistance within Indigenous thoughts, while also ignoring the contestation of colonialism as a starting point (Simpson 2011).' The values and worldviews of indigenous communities have not been part of mainstream education and theories in western-centric

countries, including Japan. Having seen the complex political hierarchy of types of knowledge production in the past, I appreciated the kind of values that Ms Kumagai holds. I witnessed her fragile process of sustaining traditional wisdom and humanity-driven values. She often said 'I am just a human before I am an Ainu.' When Ms Kumagai and I spent time together alone, we often questioned how and why such simple things – we are all humans with many more similarities than differences – must be so complicated. I have sought to go back to this point despite the seriousness and deeply problematic social constructions of global politics.

Seeing the world as an interconnected place of social, mental, and environmental ecology only appears new amid western 'modern' education systems and for influential figures such as Félix Guattari, who wrote *The Three Ecologies* (1989). I agree with Guattari and similarly argue for the necessity of a radical reconstruction of both social and individual practice within an ecosophy – ecological-based philosophical thinking from an artistic perspective. However, Guattari's view leads to totalising approaches and systematises region-specific and locally-generated knowledge making. What is described as 'radical' by Guattari might be basic to both Simpson and Ms Kumagai, who consider intangible, fleeting, and spiritual elements as part of the social norm. Seeing the world as an interconnected place of social, mental, and environmental ecology is not new outside of the masculine, linear world.

I started my work in Samani, interested in connection, and found focusing on scent a powerful way to work.

ACKNOWLEDGING NOISE

During my time in Hokkaido, I came to realise that vague memories, ambiguous stories, and mental and emotional blocks could be clues to important insights, veiling the understanding of things that are considered taboo or difficult to talk about. Personal and subjectively biased thoughts and memories are important information. Just as Sei Shōnagon 'almost always illustrates her categories by long anecdotes and reminiscences […] her own likes and irritabilities (Waley 2019),' I felt it was important I remained non-hierarchical in regard to information, knowledge, and emotions, to stay away from historical prioritisation of details in representation (Sekula 1984, 1989–1995).

As my understanding developed, it became as important to engage the elusive nature of human affairs (Taussig 2011), as it was to document the knowledge and gestures displayed through Ms Kumagai's cooking and the values that were crucial to her worldview. I have included qualities that might normally be considered 'noise' throughout my writing and photographs. In *Ocean of Sound* (1995), David Toop describes noise as something embraced in free improvisation music, citing Roland Barthes's *Mythologies* (1957), '"illegitimate" instruments, elements of theatre, non-hierarchical organisation and the change interventions of environmental sounds.' I needed to acknowledge this sense of noise within my experiences so as to hold an inclusive attitude. I also valued and followed in my work the quality of free improvisation that Toop describes: 'freely improvised aesthetic seemed not only to accommodate different attitudes and approaches but it actually produced better results if you had that.'

Trying to achieve a non-hierarchical and balanced collaboration was challenging, especially between people from different economic, societal, educational, and generational backgrounds. Even though I am Japanese, there are enormous cultural differences with both Hokkaido and the Ainu and I was constantly questioning my situatedness (Mukherjee 2019). The research in the field inevitably involved my own emotions and those of locals in Samani. These emotions were complex and personal, as a temporary resident who eventually became both an outsider and insider. I listened carefully to what people wanted to say and faced challenges that were beautiful, and others that were painful.

Some of the vague memories and ambiguous elements occured when the stories entailed the context of normalised oppression, such as racism and sexism. For example, I often heard a Japanese phrase used by women and Ainu people – '*shikataganai*' meaning; 'there is nothing we can do about it.' It is a phrase which makes it reluctantly OK to give up on something. If I raised questions about the norms that put down the voice of women and Ainu people, it distressed them. I opened a box that locals were not aware of, wanted to avoid, or found surprising. I witnessed and experienced a complex social landscape through which I was able to learn stories of disvalued knowledge and a social and knowledge hierarchy that was embedded in the culture in Samani. The whole process required a resilient physical and mental ability to experience rhizomatic information and work with non-linear thoughts and emotional processes. If I tried to rationalise or sustain solid and clear information and thought, sometimes this acted against understanding and being part of the community.

Noticing and paying attention to ambiguity or confusion meant that these became indicators to wider social contexts such as patriarchy, racism, and capitalism. Such moments involved nuances of people's facial expressions and gestures, silence, and an uncomfortable atmosphere in the air. Often the patterns of the conversation included a dysfunctional presence of power, money, or discrimination. I gained a better sense of the social norms that have been imposed by imperialistic culture, the after-effect of colonisation, and post-colonial education. While I have many examples I hesitate to articulate them as there were reasons why things needed to remain ambiguous within the community to sustain the peace. Hence, I will tell a story that multiple people openly spoke of in similar ways.

Mt. Apoi was initially rejected from becoming a UNESCO Global Geopark because the presentation given by the Samani local government did not include any Ainu culture, which is crucial to the area and the mountain. They then hired a Japanese man from outside of the town who was an expert on the Ainu culture to include information about it. This story was casually talked about as negative local gossip. A sense of ignorance and arrogance was exemplified by a comment made by a local government official who said, 'There is no one in town who can talk about the Ainu culture.' His sense of 'talk' was a presentation based on knowledge documented in publications and spoken in an 'academic'

manner, and not that of those elders who have rich lived experiences.[16] These experiences contrasted with elders whom I met and had a lot to say. When I asked Kane-san and other Ainu women about such comments, they showed some frustration, but only said, 'That's what people with power do. We don't count in formal occasions.' They already knew too well how they were treated and positioned in their social context. The conversation had to end there so as not to cause further upset.

There were many occasions where taking notes, filming, or photographing would have been inappropriate or difficult. Especially during the cooking, if I was focusing on the technical aspects of a recording device, I could not pay attention to my sensory experience or what was happening with people and in the space. Working with equipment would have distracted me from engaging with people and the moments. When Agnes Varda, a Belgian-born French film director, and artist, made the film *The Gleaners and I* (2000), she included scenes in which she pointed a camera down to the ground. This image and her gesture suggested that the situation required some privacy or she was focussing on her personal experience. Holding a pen or a camera created a sense of difference, positioned me as an observer rather than being part of the everyday community. Although we all knew my reason for being in Samani, a subtle suggestion like that reminded people that I was going to leave at some point. Such underlying conditions sometimes made me feel sad. Furthermore, although my perceptions were welcomed or unwelcomed, and perceived to be refreshing by many locals, sometimes I saw things that the locals wanted to avoid. Doing something different caused me to be seen as 'other.' The feeling of being an outsider could also cause hidden exhaustion. Therefore, I valued and allowed for some vagueness to be part of the work and appreciated how the locals sustained their peace.

Working with elders – the age of the people I engaged with ranged between mid-seventies and nineties – I listened to the same abstracted stories again and again. Although I knew that I had heard the stories before, if I remained patient and depended on people who joined the conversation, new information arose each time. It also gave an opportunity to ask a new question or develop new emotions that revealed something more concrete and allowed me to form a fuller picture. Oral repetition also helped me to embody the story without

16 There is a movement towards young Ainu people becoming academics to study and speak of their own culture. While Ms Kumagai is respectful of the young generation, she is concerned that Ainu culture cannot be sustained through academic research; rather, it is something to practise on an everyday basis with the community.

making notes. This experience created an insight into the different ways of holding knowledge between physical and technological perceptions.

Through this experience, I gained insight into how the oral tradition of the Ainu culture valued repetition, and preciseness of information about the narrator's position within the story, as well as the space where the story is being told. This experience gave me a better understanding about how the language can embody nuanced relationships. For example, my friend Mayukiki avoids using the word 'us' unless she has a deep connection with the other person. She said that in the Ainu language, the 'we' changes depending on whether it includes or excludes the other person you are speaking to. My place among the Ainu community in Samani was fluid and I knew it depended on whether people included me in their 'us' or not. It was an emotional process to understand relationships with people and non-human actors in the landscape. It is difficult for efficiency-focused technology, including formal writing or photography, to hold such subtle nuances. My contact with the elders also made me think about forgetting/not remembering. Forgetting seems to play an important role in human life but technology never forgets unless it breaks down.

The use of media, like memory and experience is also in flux. The way I photographed or filmed changed throughout my time in Samani rather than being preconditioned aesthetic choices. As I spent more time with Ms Kumagai and her friends, our relationship changed and this was reflected in how I made documentation. At first, my emotional and physical distance to Ms Kumagai and her community was somewhat similar to the relationship that Varda had with her neighbours in her film *Daguerréotypes* (1976). Varda's relationship with them was intimate yet distanced through everyday activities without a judgmental lens. Documentation of such engagements showed the culture of her street.

By the mid-phase of my time in Samani, the way I used the camera became reminiscent of the Japanese filmmaker, Naomi Kawase in *Katatsumori* (1994). In this film, Kawase kept pointing the camera at her grandmother's face, so her grandmother said that she was too close, but Kawase did not stop and the film shows her grandmother laughing and allowing Kawase to continue. I too gained confidence and comfort in pointing the camera at Ms Kumagai. By spring, while I continued to ask the community if I could photograph them, there was no longer a sense of nervousness or strictness in people's faces. Everyone eventually just said 'Fine, fine.'

There are many different and strong opinions among the community-orientated environment of Ms Kumagai and Samani Ainu. Listening to diverse voices meant it took me some time to digest them, but it also provided me with different dimensions of the story and created a bigger picture of social phenomena. It made sense to document such experiences with poetic writing for it can show the multi-dimensional realities of different people and their emotional landscapes. For example, when listening to emotionally charged stories, I often thought of a poem entitled *Matsuoka's House* (1987) by Yukio Tsujio.

I was six,
a knapsack on my back.
Every time I set out for school
and passed Matsuoka' s house
I felt like crying.
It was a very small house
four doors down from mine
and I always felt like turning around
and going home.
Though I was reluctant I didn't cry
and I went on to school.

My younger brother was six,
a knapsack on his back.
From the window I watched him
go off to school
wearing his floppy school cap.
I was in junior high.
He walked
slowly away,
slump-shouldered,
and all at once
started crying out loud.
It was in front of Matsuoka's house.

Even now
when I go somewhere
for the first time
Matsuoka's house looms up in my memory.
I am suddenly overtaken
by sadness and helplessness.
"I could cry easily
I could easily
cry out".
So thinking,
I just go along
without a word.

Tsuji's poem removes boundaries in how people's memories can be held, changed, and told. Similarly, catching subtlety and paying attention to noise in the field reflects in my photographic works. In these works, I often explore a relationship between the process and final image. For example, everytime I accumulated five to six film negatives, I asked Mr Nobuyasu Teraya at the Grain House in Tokyo to develop them. When I received the processed film negatives back, I scanned them using a small digital scanner. The scanned images revealed white dots and lines on the photographic images on my computer screen. I carefully held and examined the surface of the films and saw dust and remains of the processing liquid – it felt like having a conversation with the dust. Learning what I was seeing on the screen, Mr Teraya told me that if the photographs were printed in a dark room the specks of dust and hairlines do not show, but digital scanning shows every detail on the negative. The conversation taught me a condition of what we see or do not see, and what we chose to keep or remove. He told me that I could carefully wash them away. However, I felt that if I washed the negatives, it was denying the journey they had taken to be processed by Mr Teraya.

It was a particularly important process as I knew Mr Teraya since I met him in my early 20s. When I first went to Hokkaido, where he is from, Mr Teraya introduced me to a book by Isabella Bird called *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan*, first published in 1905.[17] It was important for me to include the trace of him in my journey, as part of my methodological choices, as he was always part of my creative and intellectual curiosity. Therefore, I kept dust and hairlines that are normally considered as noise in photographic terms to be more inclusive, rather than trying to achieve a polished artwork as an end product. Such a decision aligned with my conscious choice to have worked with vague memories, ambiguous stories, and mental and emotional processes.

Furthermore, I was taking photographs with an Olympus mju ii, which is a compact camera that could fit in my pocket and was easy to use because of its decently fast focusing function. I could respond relatively quickly when I felt something on the spot, whether it was a smell, noticing changes of natural environment, the appearance of animals, or Ms Kumgai's teaching.

By trying to keep information on noise, I came to think much more deeply about how the world we live in consists of a lot of boundaries and hierarchies. This creates an idea of what is valuable and more important than other things. As a result, we have things and qualities that do not fit in or are marginalised, and we end with a lack of diversity. Through my process, I aim to welcome and bring back noise and smell to a sanitised world.

17 Bird was one of the first women from the west to travel by herself to Hokkaido and meet Ainu people, and she is still regarded highly among the Ainu community now. She wrote letters to her sister often which contained meticulous documentation of her experiences in Japan. As a result, it has become ethnographic documentation that took different approaches from mainstream foreign anthropological practices dominated by male figures in the 19 th and early 20th century. They included: Eastern Studies academic, August Pfizmaier (1808-1887) from Austria; Nikolai Aleksandrovich Nevsky (1892-1937) from Russia; an English missionary, John Batchelor (1854-1944), and Bronisław Piotr Piłsudski (1866-1918) who was an ethnologist born in Lithuania.

好きな量のお米を、ボールにいれて一晩水に浸ける。

次の日、米をつく2時間ほど前に米を笊に上げ、水を切る。

臼さんに「よろしくね」と声を掛ける。

Place the desired amount of rice in a bowl and soak it in water overnight.

The next day, about two hours before cooking, pour rice into a strainer to drain the water.

Greet the mill and thank it in advance for its work.

シト
Sito

半分の量の米を臼に入れ、米をつく。

米が粉っぽくなって匂いがたってきたら、もう少しつく。

2〜4人くらいで、順番につくと良い。

「ヘッサーオーッホイ、ヘッサーオーッホイ」と、声を掛け合いながら突くとリズムが出て良い。

「臼でお米をついていると、ご先祖様が手を叩きながら喜んで、周りを囲んでいるんだって、聞いたことあるわ。」と熊谷さん。

Put half the rice into the mill and pound it.

When the rice becomes powdery and smells good, pound some more. Ideally, two to four people should pound the rice in turn.

It is encouraging while working to sing together, 'Hessa-oh-hoi, Hessa-oh-hoi' to get a rhythm going.

Kumagai-san says, 'I've heard that when you pound rice in the mill, your ancestors surround you, clapping their hands in joy.'

全体的に粉っぽくなってきたら、「あなたの番よ」とふるいさんに声をかけてから、ついたお米をふるいにかける。

片方の手でふるいを持ち、もう片方の手はグーにする。

グーにした手にふるいを当てて粉を落とす。

ふるいにかけて落ちた粉は、ボールからだして別のボールに集めておいておく。

粉に、「休んでいてね」と言って寝かせておく。

ふるいに残った大きな粒は、臼に戻して、またついて細かくする。

粒が小さくなってきたら残りのお米を足し、粉になるまで(声を掛け合いながら、)また繰り返しつく。

ふるいの中に残った荒めの粉は、最後とっておく。

終わったら、臼に「ありがとう、ヤイヤイケレ」とお礼をする。

Sito

Once the rice becomes powdery, tell the sieve, 'It's your turn' and put the rice flour through it.

Hold the sieve with one hand and make a fist with the other. Tap your fist with the sieve and let the flour go through.

Take the powdered flour out of the bowl and keep it safely in another bowl.

Tell the fine flour to 'take a break' and leave it to rest.

Return the large grains which remain in the sieve back to the mill and pound them again.

When the rice in the bowl runs low, add the other half of the rice and continue pounding.

Repeat the process and encourage one another until most of the rice has become a fine powder.

There might be some coarse powder still, keep that too.

When the work is done, thank the mill by saying '*iyayraykere* [the Ainu word meaning thank you].'

粉になったお米は、今後の料理のために保管する。

荒く残った粉は集めて、別に団子にする。

荒い粉に水を足し、手に粉がべっとりとつかないのを目安に、一つにまとめる。

必要があれば、細かい粉か水を足して調整する。

好きな大きさに丸くし、親指の付け根を使って平たく形どる。

弱火でゆっくり、表面に焦げ目がつくまで焼く。

料理により、茹でて食べることもできる。

Keep the fine flour to make the next recipe.

With the coarse rice flour make rice cakes as follows:

Add enough water to make the rice cakes, they should not stick to your hands.

If necessary, add fine flour or water to adjust the consistency.

Shape into rounds of any size you like and flatten them using the base of your thumb.

Grill slowly over low heat until the surface is charred.

They can also be boiled, depending on the dish.

使用をした道具を綺麗に洗って、キッチンも丁寧に掃除をし、それぞれに感謝をする。

Wash the cooking tools well, clean the kitchen, and thank them.

CASSETTE SUN

ヤマウ、コンブシト
Yamaw, Kombu Sito

ヤマウ 1

鍋にはった水に、昆布を多めに入れ茹でる。

鍋底から泡がプツプツ出てきたら、沸騰する前に火を止める。

お湯に色がついた頃に、昆布を取り出し冷ます。

乾燥わかめを水でもどす。
柔らかくなったら、一口大に切る。

ぼうだら(たらの身)をちいさく一口大にむしって、水につける。
この水は後で使う。

Yamaw 1

Wash the *kombu* (kelp). Then, put a lot in a pot of water and boil.

When bubbles appear from the bottom of the pot, take the pot off the heat before the water boils.

Once the water is coloured, take the *kombu* out and let the water cool down.

Soak the dried *wakame* seaweed in water.

Once it is soft, cut it into bite-sized pieces.

Cut the *boudara* (dried codfish) into bite-sized pieces, and soak them in water.

This water will be used later.

コンブシト 1

沸騰してない熱めの湯を、米粉に入れて練る。

まとまってきた米粉を外から内に、下から起こしながら練ると、ボールの底にたまらずに、丸くなってまとまってくる。

粉が足りなかったら足して、まとめる。

滑らかになるまで、空気を抜く様に力を入れて練ったら、丸めて寝かせる。

「少し休んでちょうだい」と声をかける。

Kombu Sito 1

Pour hot water that is not boiling onto the rice flour and knead it.

Knead the rice flour from the outside to the inside, so that it does not stick to the bottom of the bowl.

Add extra flour or water if needed. Knead until the ball becomes smooth, letting the air out of the dough.

Tell the dough, 'Please rest for a while.'

鍋に油を入れる。

油を温めている間に、昆布を開き、綺麗に拭いたら小さめに切る。

さいばしを入れて、泡がいっぱいたったら、昆布を一気に入れて、揚げる。

昆布にいっぱいコブが出てきたら、焦げない様、すぐにザルにあげる。あぶらは、ヤムオハウに使う。

揚がった昆布をキッチンペーパーや新聞紙に包んで、叩いて砕く。

砕くのは、力が必要なので、仲間と一緒に励まし協力する。

ある程度くだけたら、手でもんで粉にする。

終わったら、新聞紙を包んで、「ここで休んでいてね」と昆布に声をかける。

しのさんの参加で、仲間が増えて楽しく、助けられている事に感謝をしながら皆でおしゃべりをし、粉を作る。

寝かせて置いた米粉団子の生地で、団子を丸く形取っていく。

お供え物の時は、手のひらくらいに大きめに作る。

皆で食べる時は、食べやすい好みの大きさに作る。

Add oil to the pot.

While the oil is heating, pick up some new *kombu*; open each piece, wipe it, and cut it into small pieces.

Put a chopstick into the oil, when you can see bubbles on the stick, add the *kombu* pieces and fry them.

When bubbles appear all over the *kombu*, take it from the oil fast and place it on a strainer. It can burn easily. Left-over oil can be used later in *yamaw*.

Wrap the fried *kombu* in kitchen paper or newspaper, and beat to crush it.

Crushing fried *kombu* requires a lot of energy, so work with friends and encourage each other.

When the work is done, wrap the powder in newspaper and say to the *kombu*, 'Stay here and rest, please.'

After the *kombu* is crushed to a certain extent, continue pounding by hand to make a powder.

寝かせて置いた米粉団子の生地で、団子を丸く形取っていく。

お供え物の時は、手のひらくらいに大きめに作る。

皆で食べる時は、食べやすい好みの大きさに作る。

沸騰したお湯に、団子を全部入れる。

下から混あげると、団子同士がくっつかなくて良い。
茹であがったら、団子が浮いてくる。

茹で汁は捨てずに、とっておいて、後で昆布のタレに入れる。

団子は茹で上がったら水で洗っても良い。

昔は洗うこともしなかったし、茹で汁も飲んでいた。

お団子は休んでもらう。

ヤマウ 2

さめた昆布だしの汁に、ぼうたらをつけ汁ごと入れる。

わかめ、多めに刻んだネギ、昆布を揚げた油を少し(スプーン一杯くらい)入れる。

昔、カネさんが子供の頃、油はたらの油(たらの肝臓をフライパンでいって)を入れていた。

味をみて、塩を足す。

隠し味に醤油を入れても良いが、昔は入れなかった。

本当は、サメの油が一番美味かったとカネさんのお母さんは言っていた。

夜までおいておくと、出汁がでて味が良くなる。

アイヌ料理は、何グラムなどの正確な分量の決まりはないので、経験者に習いながら、目、鼻、舌、耳、と触りごごちと相談しながら決めていく。

作る人の好みと食べる人の人数でバランスを拝領する。

共に料理が出来る人に感謝をしながら、作業をすすめる。

Yamaw 2

Put the *boudara* and the water in the kombu stock.
Add *wakame* seaweed, lots of chopped spring onions, and about a spoonful of the oil from the fried *kombu*.

When Kane-san was a child, codfish oil (oil extracted from the cod's kidney) was used.

Add salt to taste.

You can also add soy sauce as a secret flavour, but Kane-san did not do this in the past.

If you leave it until nighttime, the flavour of the stock will increase.

In Ainu cooking, there are no fixed amounts for ingredients, so you need to learn from experienced cooks using your sense of sight, smell, taste, hearing and touch. After that, it is up to you to find the right balance based on your taste and the number of people eating the meal.

Appreciate people with whom you can cook together.

コンブシト 2

黒砂糖に、団子を茹でた湯を適量入れる。

黒砂糖が溶けたら、砕いた昆布を入れる。

かき混ぜると色が変わってくる。

焦げやすいので気をつけながら、ジャムくらいの硬さになるまで、かき混ぜる。

しるや砂糖がたりなかったら、味をみながら足していく。

艶が出て、黒っぽくなるまで煮詰める。

「光ってきたー!」のタイミングで、火を弱めて、団子を全部入れて混ぜる。

砂糖がなかった時代は、砂糖を入れないで作っていたのかもしれない。

使用をした道具を綺麗に洗って、キッチンも丁寧に掃除をし、それぞれに感謝をする。

Kombu Sito 2

Add your desired amount of brown sugar to the water used to boil the rice cakes.

When the brown sugar dissolves, add the crushed kelp.

Stir and the colour will change.

It can burn easily, so stir the mixture well until it is the consistency of jam.

Add water or sugar as necessary.

Simmer until it becomes glossy and dark.

At 'The source starts to shine!' timing, lower the heat and stir in all the rice cakes.

In the days when sugar was not available, *kombusito* may have been made without sugar.

Wash the cooking tools well, clean the kitchen, and thank them.

NO RECIPES IN AINU COOKING

‘There are no recipes in Ainu cooking.
Consider who is going to be eating.
See and respond to the different qualities of the kelp.
Experiment many times until you know what’s right.

‘There are no recipes in Ainu cooking.
What is right is up to the person who is cooking.

‘There are no recipes in Ainu cooking,’
Kumagai-san told me as we were cooking *kombu sito*.

‘Look now, you see the kelp has got bumps all over it.
‘It’s black now. Good colour.
‘Now you can take them out of the oil.’
Bumpy, crispy, and oily kelp kept slipping out of my chopsticks.

‘Quick! They are going to get burnt fast… Oh no. I’m going to give you a hand.’ Kumagai-san removed all the kelp out of the oil quickly before I could pick up a second one.

Kumagai-san and I sat down to sip a cup of *ento* tea – crested late-summer mint.

‘I tried many different ways, I tried white sugar, no sugar, and eventually I settled on black sugar – you know the dark kind from Okinawa. I think they give mildness and depth in taste. No sugar was ok, too. I think that’s how people ate *kombu sito* when sugar wasn’t available or precious,’ Kumagai-san told me and continued. ‘I also tried very different ways to crush kelp. I tried machines, a grinder... but I thought about the time when there was no convenient technology, when we didn’t have many things, my mother talked about women using their hands… I thought, that’s it! I tried crushing kelp just with my hands and it worked,’ Kumagai-san said.

Traditional methods producing organic forms involve more effort. However, such a slow and effortful process let me pay attention to details such as smell, colour, and texture – each *kombu* had slightly different colour, thickness, and curves as if they had different personalities.

Kumagai-san told me that when she first started consciously practising Ainu culture, she was 60 years old. It was when she finally left her job and had time to revisit memories of her mother, but her mother was no longer around. She could only follow memories as a map to have a sense of her own Ainu culture, to make the Ainu culture hers, and to pass down recipes to someone who might want to know about Samani Ainu cooking in 50, 100, 200 years time.

Kumagai-san’s practice could be a conversation between her and her mother.

‘Nowadays, people in different regions introduce *kombu sito* as Ainu food. When I went to Nibutani, I was served *kombu sito*. I was surprised because Nibutani Ainu are ‘the culture of the mountain’. People said they learnt how to make it from an American academic. This academic had come to Samani and I cooked her *kombu sito*. She filmed it and later showed it to people in Nibutani… I believe that she did it casually and with good intentions. I told them that that was my recipe...’

I thought about how culture and information spread and are adopted casually, causing significant change. Technology has allowed material knowledge to travel fast without recognition of human connections, while previously region specificity was crucial to sustaining the community and natural resources. Scarcity of practice escalated lost attribution to single individuals.

I told the story to a man who works at the Samani city government as we were walking in the mountain. He was surprised to know that Kumagai-san had played such a significant role in spreading Ainu culture. I was surprised that he did not know about it until I told him. He asked me if I would give a talk about the Ainu culture in Samani to tell people how wonderful and important it is. I declined his offer by saying, ‘You should ask Ainu people in Samani to do that. Ask Kumagai-san to talk.’ He remained polite, ‘Sometimes it is better if people from outside talk about it.’ I remained silent, kept walking but felt frustrated.

I thought something was not right but I needed to understand the situation in Samani better.

In my imagination, I have revisited the day when I cooked *kombu sito*. I could smell the oily and salty smell of *kombu* while my eyes were gazing at purple flowers that were still blooming.

> The Ainu people relied on nature for 'food', and received it as a blessing of nature, thanking the gods of nature – the god of grains, the god of wilderness, the god of mountains, the god of water, and the god of the sea. They prayed for the food to become available next year, and while caring for nature, they received only the amount that they needed from nature (Haginaka, Fujimura, Muraki, Hatai, and Kohara 1992).

The Ainu's cooking involved relationships with natural species in the immediate environment and knowledge to sustain the cycle of nature (Keira 1995). These kinds of knowledge require practice – experiencing and understanding the specific conditions of the place and showing respect towards the people and the other species who inhabit the landscape. During my time in Samani, I only saw such approaches embodied by Kumagai-san and Mr Shuji Kikuchi, who is a fisherman and a chairman of the Ainu Preservation Society.

In the past, there were Ainu people who lived closer to the mountains, people who lived near the sea, and people who moved back and forth between them following the changes of seasons. The Ainu, who cooked and made things with ingredients obtained from their environment, considered the regional characteristics of where they lived. However, the Ainu's fishing rights and the use of bows and arrows to hunt have been taken away, and the mountains are now owned by private companies. There are hardly any opportunities for the Ainu to practise the traditions that led to their food culture; people cook Ainu food often only for special occasions such as the state-funded Ainu cultural preservation activities. The sense that humans live among other natural species, time, and space is now talked about as a utopian ideology that makes the Ainu 'other' and 'past'.

Mr Ōno Tetsuhito, a Japanese man who works for the Samani city government and with the Ainu community, drove Kumagai-san and I to a location where

Kumagai-san knew that *ento* grew. Ōno-san stopped the car in the middle of the concrete road where I only saw weeds. 'Argh, there isn't much growing this year. Well, let's go and see,' Kumagai-san said. We got out of the car. She picked a small bunch of *ento*, I didn't know how to pick them. 'We don't pick too much; they need to come back next year. We don't pick them before the flowers make seeds, they need to grow back next year.' Most of the *ento* were cut when the road management cleared the plants away. Those people do not know that *ento* can be delicious, mint-like, used to make floral tea - those people do not know how *ento* were drunk by the Ainu in the past. *Ento* are not available in supermarkets.

BEAR-SAN

The Ainu used to catch bears in spring and look after the cubs with care.

After spending a year or two with the cubs, the cubs' spirits were sent back to the *kamuy mosir* (the land of the gods).

Cip-keri (salmon shoes) were made to be used as offerings.
Chestnuts were picked to be used as additional offerings.
Urashicise (structure) was built.
Tonoto (sake) and *epereai* (decorated arrow) were prepared.
The community prayed, danced, sang songs, cried, and ate food together.
Prayers were made for bears to come back to the *aynu mosir* (man's land).
The cub's head was placed on a *nusa* (an altar).
The ritual was called *iyomante*.
So told the texts and accompanying photographs. (Iyomante Executive Committee 1985; Ainu Life and Culture Reproduction Manual 2004; Fukunaga 2020)

During the 20th century, iyomante was criticised for being cruel.
So I have read.
By the 21st century, iyomante was no longer practiced.
So I did not see.

30 October 2020 – Sunny

'Did you eat bear when you were little?' I asked Kumagai-san.
'No, my family didn't eat bear even though my father was a *matagi*, Ainu hunter. When he caught a bear, the villagers came around, so he gave all the meat to them. Back then, we didn't have a fridge or a freezer, so the meat had to be shared and eaten straight away. We didn't really have anything left to eat,' She replied.

'So, we don't have to cook bear meat for our cooking experience then?' I prepared my mind for any answer and asked. 'We won't eat bear meat.' I felt relieved. 'But my mother used to make medicine out of bear fat, it's good for your skin if you get burnt. So, we can try working with fat if we get hold of any, but I'm not sure if we will.' I nodded my head without knowing what to say or think.

Kumagai-san continued, 'My father didn't catch bears that were hibernating. When the villagers said, "Okamoto-san, there's a bear causing trouble!" he went out with a rifle. He only fought against bears when there was a problem between bears and humans. Once there was a bear that kept destroying the graveyard. My father went out to look for the bear but didn't come back for days. My mother was worried and asked the neighbors and they told her where they had seen him. Then she felt relieved to know that he was still alive. During that time, my father hid in a tree and waited for the bear, but he couldn't get it because the bear could tell where he was by his scent.'

The sunshine of the clear autumn warmed us. We were walking to the mountain where Kumagai-san's family used to have a rice field.

'There was *nusa* [an altar – a bear skull placed on a spear and wooden structure to worship the god] by our house. So, I think my father used to pray privately. That's a man's thing to do, so my mother was not involved and I did not ask about it when I was a child. No one practised *iyomante* anymore.' One of the last *iyomante* was practiced in Samani during the Taisho-period (1912–1926).

Kumagai-san and I were walking and talking as we had a mission to find some chestnuts. We started to sweat by the time we got to a slope where Kumagai-san used to go up and down in a horse carriage to work at a family farm.

I saw yellow and orange trees
shining strawberry farm greenhouse
plastic bags in the backpacks just in case we find anything to harvest
mountain grapes at a height that we cannot reach
two pairs of eyes to search for kokuwa – hardy kiwi – on trees
empty chestnut shells on the side of the road

'I don't see any *mikko*' – Hokkaido dialect for the edible part of meat and fruit. Adding 'ko' at the end of a word in Japanese often makes a word mean '- child of'. *Mikko* sounded like 'child of fruit'. I had a flashback to when she called silkworms 'O-kaiko-sama.' 'Sama' is often used as a respectful title for humans like Mr. or Mrs. She adds 'O' and '-sama' to express a double appreciation toward silkworms that produce precious silk. I understood the value of the silk back then. Kumagai-san said *mikko* does not mean a child of a chestnut.
I realised I was dealing with the different languages of Tokyo, Samani, and the Ainu.

'This year isn't great for chestnuts,' said Kumagai-san.

I saw the mountain in the distance where Kumagai-san's father hid in the tree.

'What did it mean for the Ainu when they practiced *iyomante*?' I asked Kumagai-san. 'I know that Western people and people outside think we practiced something cruel and gruesome but it wasn't like that. The only way I can put it is that 'the Ainu were sending *kamuy* back.' She replied, looking at the air.

I imagined a spirit flying into the sky, but I still did not understand what she meant. She would not explain in more detail, that there were no more words to add.

a small gust of wind above my head
the sound of bird song
an empty flute

It was Kumagai-san trying to whistle.
'I have to let bear-san know that we are here', I whistled, too.

the sound echoed into the sky above the mountain
I felt a sense of connection and distance to the trees and the sky
gentle breeze brought the smell of autumn trees

3 November 2020 – Sunny

My phone rang at around 8:40am. It was a local hunter that I had met some weeks ago and asked if I could see him field dress a deer when he catches one. It was a worry that I was asking for something against animal welfare, but I did not want to impose my social norm over what was happening in Samani. It was important for me to see a deer's body, as cooking with Kumagai-san included deer meat and intestines.

'I got a bear. Come over,' he said. 'Bear?!' I jumped out of bed and packed my camera, but it would take forty minutes by bicycle to the farm. I worried that I could not make it, but it was a matter of the life of a bear. I had to go.

My neighbor, Yuuka, was working at a strawberry farm near the farm.[1] I took a chance and she answered my call. 'My mother is driving me to work in two minutes.' I knocked on their door in less than two minutes.

A farm in the Tashiro area,
the bear placed in the back of a small truck,
it was wobbling like a giant jelly,
the eyes of the bear staring at the world between where I stood and the cosmos,
the tongue hanging out of the mouth.

They tied the bear's arms and hung the body from a crane truck,
I could not believe what I was seeing,
I had no time to know my true thoughts,
the bear's fur was covered in a plastic bottle cap and leaves.

One of the men who rushed to see the bear slapped the bear's nose,
I felt really bad,
I did not dare to touch the bear even if it could not hurt me.

A straight cut was made in the belly of the bear lying on its back,
a line in its arm was straight and white, the fat showing through,
there was no blood,
there was no smell.

The colon spilled out from the bottom of the belly,

1 Ms Yuuka Yoshii was in her 20s, my youngest friend in Samani, and my closest neighbour. She came around my home for a cup of tea once a week as she wanted to practice English with me. As an exchange, I shared my knowledge and thoughts about the Ainu culture. She responded with her insightful knowledge and observation of social norms about the Ainu in Samani. After getting to know her better, I invited her to join the cooking day with Ms Kumagai. They had never met before, but after five minutes of meeting, they found out that they were distant relatives. Ms Kumagai's grandmother was a sister of Yuka's great grandmother. Yuka told me that this encounter resolved her long-term mystery about her facial features and some family knowledge. She said that knowing that she was an Ainu gave her confidence about who she was. She was also pleased to have experienced the Ainu cooking that changed her mind about handling of deer meat and eating it. In a town where everyone knows about each other, it was special to witness such an encounter.

one of the men asked if the bear was female or male,
'It's a lady' one of the men answered,
'Well, I love women but this one is too big to do "it"',
he laughed and looked at me,
I was the only person who did not laugh, keeping no emotions in my eyes.

Next was the stomach,
the intestines and stomach were full of food,
the stomach was as big as my upper body,
muscles appeared under layers of warm white fat,
the whiteness of the fat made me think that the word 'pure white' suits it.

Moisture of the body was evaporating,
more layers of fat under the muscle,
it was a body that was getting ready for hibernation,
I was looking at the magic of the wilderness,
I apologised to the bear in my heart 'I'm really sorry you had to die.'

Skillful hands worked fast, and the fur was removed,
it smelled a little,
it smelled greasy,
black crows surrounded us.

The gallbladder was carefully stored to be sold as an expensive medicine,
the fat and meat were cut off cleanly,
men said that the removed hands and feet looked like gloves and slippers.

Organs and unwanted body parts were wrapped in fur,
the head was placed on top,
'Recently, fur isn't worth anything.'
'What are you going to do with all the remains?' I asked,
'I can't say it too loud, but these have to be taken to the valley of the mountains.'

I regret standing in front of the men and putting up with the gross and sexist comments they made throughout the day. 'Is this what I have to experience in exchange for understanding the life of the bear?'

I felt uncomfortable while trying to imagine the backgrounds that led to the men's behaviour and wondering at my righteous perspective.

The nails were cut off and the men handed them over to me, 'The nails with white lines are more valuable.' I could not say that I did not want the nails, being surrounded by those men who knew how to kill such big animals.

I pulled my courage together and asked the men, 'Can I please take some fat? So I can try making ointment for burnt skin with Kumagai-san?' They handed me a large chunk of fat.

We were surrounded by a big group of crows, waiting for us to leave,
30, 50, maybe 100,
so I have seen, smelled, felt, and heard.

I went home and took a bath twice,
still smelling of the bear,
not knowing what I was feeling,
having many thoughts,
and losing the words to articulate myself.

In my head, there were voices of both animal rights activists, and locals who were offering me meat after I told them that I was a vegetarian,
I was covered in the spirit of the bear – I could not tell if it was the smell or something else,
I only wanted to hear the voice of the bear, but I could not hear it,
the bear belonged to the deep end of the mountains where humans should pay respect,
feeling deeply sorry for the bear,
praying for the bear's peace until I fell asleep,
and being desperate to share my experiences and feelings with friends, someone, anyone.

I got crushed by unnamed emotions, reaching out to friends who had not seen the bear felt wrong,
I had never wished I was not alone at night in this way,
I wanted to celebrate the life of the bear,

I felt guilty,
the bear's life ended for almost nothing,
the bear died for the demands of humans,
I needed friends to cry with.

The man had said, 'That bastard-bear saw me in the mountain and immediately ran towards me. So, I shot it.'

For the first time, I felt I understood why *iyomante* existed,
it made sense to me,
physically and emotionally,
outside ethical or rational understandings I have learnt.

There are no longer people who know how to practice *iyomante* in Samani.

4 November 2020 – Cloudy then snow

Kumagai-san sat next to me in the backseat of the car that Ōno-san was driving to Shiraoi. We were going to see the Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park.

'I saw a bear being dressed yesterday,' I told Kumagai-san.
She made a surprised, troubled, yet gentle face.

'Did you at least take some *sake* to the bear?' She looked worried.
'No I didn't. I should have. Sorry.' I was sad.
'It's a sense of gratitude. It's a gesture of appreciation.'
The Ainu used to prepare the best *sake* for the gods.

'You know, there is a bear at Upopoy. I saw it in the newspaper. I'm really looking forward to meeting the bear.' I was relieved to hear Kumagai-san's cheerful voice. As we arrived at the museum, I spotted a bear. 'Is that the bear?' I pointed at a stuffed little bear covered in celebratory costumes. Kumagai-san walked quickly to the bear. 'I've always wanted to meet you. I'm glad to see you.' She was speaking to the stuffed bear as a friend in the street. Behind the bear, there was a reproduced wooden pole crafted by Sakhalin Ainu. It was easy to recognize the skills of a good craftsman by looking at the beautifully carved

and treated wood.

Snow was falling,
winter in Hokkaido is going to be cold,
I could feel that my body was getting ready for the winter,
like the bear I saw, its stomach full of food.

5 November 2020 – Sunny

Kumagai-san and I were having lunch together at the local restaurant called Ominaishi. She had a guest who studied Ainu geographical names.

We were talking about a bear, again. Kumagai-san told us, 'Once, I saw a huge mark on the ground where a bear had been sleeping. But I've never encountered a bear. Once when we all went to the mountains, I began to walk along a small path and heard a growling voice. So, I said that I was sorry. I went back to everyone right away. The bear was telling me that I should not walk any further, but I didn't see the bear.'

Since I saw the bear, the locals I met in the week all mentioned, 'I heard that you saw a bear, Soga-san!' In Samani, I often wondered if the locals' gossip was faster than the internet.

'I believe that my father is protecting me.' Kane-san said.

'Do you think your father was scared when he was hiding on top of a tree to wait for the bear?' I questioned out loud.

'Why should you be scared?' Kumagai-san looked confident.

My sense of social norms fluctuated again. Then, I remembered that Professor Nakagawa wrote that, in the old days, because the Ainu people lived surrounded by the gods of nature – trees, plants, and birds - even when they walked alone in the mountains at night, they were not afraid, because they were protected by the gods of nature.

28 December 2021 – Cloudy or was it another snowy day?

Kane-san told me that the hunter once called in the office and asked if the office could organise *iyomante*. But Kane-san rejected the request. I asked her why. 'It is a matter of gods, we cannot handle it lightly, we haven't done *iyomante* in a long time, we are so out of practice.' She said it in such a clear and firm way, I did not say anything more.

Later, Kikuchi-kaicho said exactly the same thing. 'The hunter once called in the office and asked if the office could organise *iyomante*. But we rejected the request. It is a matter of gods, we cannot handle it lightly, we are so out of practice.' He said it in such a clear and firm way, I did not say anything more.

What if people could spend as much time and energy to practice appreciation towards nature and people as needed, and this was a central aspect of society's function?

What if commodification of natural materials and cultural objects lost their capitalist values?

What if needs for the healing of suffering were given priority?

What if differences simply caused joy and curiosity?

What if all the gods, spirits, and deities in the world had a meeting together?

What would the future look like?

SIDE BY SIDE

Kane-san and I stand in front of a chopping board
Side by side
We hold a leg of a deer and cut fascia
Side by side
We remove meat off a bone
Side by side
An axe and layer of fat lay on a low table
Side by side
We check bubbles of water boiling meat
Side by side
Kane-san holds meat with chopsticks, and I pour out hot water full of fat
Side by side
Our thoughts exchange
Side by side
Smell of boiled deer meat and steam drift
Side by side
Our curiosity to experiment keeps us moving
Side by side
Kane-san's knowledge and my learning
Side by side
Potatoes and onions are in a pot
Side by side
Yuk ohaw and *sito* are placed on a table
Side by side
Kane-san and I sit down
Side by side
'*Itadakimasu*' and 'Thank you for teaching me how to cook' are said
Side by side
Families of deer stand between the mountain and main road at night
Side by side

DIFFERENT PERSONALITIES OF NAMES

I address Kane-san in various ways depending on the situation.

Kumagai-san or **Kane-san** – 'san' is an honorary title. I use them regularly.
Kane-chan – 'chan' is a friendly and casual version of an honorific title with a sense of cuteness; it is often used for intimate friends or children. I only use it when I joke.
Kumagai-sensei or **Kane-chan-sensei** – 'sensei' means a teacher and is an honorary title. When I am learning Ainu kimono making, and joking, I sometimes use them.
Kuma-san – 'kuma' means a bear which is in her surname.
Huci – 'huci' is an honorary title in Ainu for a respected elder woman.
Ainu baba – 'baba' means an elder that Kane-san uses when she devalues herself for being an old woman. I only call her 'baba' when I am joking but want to remind her to see the power of elders.
Ms Kumagai – 'Ms' and 'elder' are used when I speak formally in English.

I observe and sense the atmosphere of the situation when I talk about Kane-san or when I am with her. Kane-san's relationship with people, how I feel at a time, how people might understand or interpret the information, and what is appropriate, are carefully considered.

In November, Ms. Kumagai was invited to Sapporo for a meeting on Ainu geographical names. Many of the place names in Hokkaido and some of the Northern part of Japan are Ainu, while there are many areas where the Ainu names have been converted into Japanese sounds and given Chinese characters by the Japanese. I often do not know how to pronounce place names in Hokkaido.

Kane-san invited me to go to Sapporo with her. Before informing the organisers that I was going, Kumagai-san called me to reconfirm my attendance.

'Can I give them your name, Soga-chan?'

I replied, 'Of course, please.'

'Are you sure?'

'Eh?' I felt surprised, thinking – what is the big deal about giving my name?

'Yes, it's fine, thank you.' As I replied, I thought about the importance of names in Ainu culture being different from Japanese or western names. When I arrived in Samani, Kane-san told me that she could not call me Eiko-san because there was Tomina Eiko-san already in Samani. I was often called Soga-san or Soga-chan. I then remembered that, in the Ainu culture, if there happened to be a person with the same name in town, the person who came later had to change their name (Nakagawa 1995). It was also absolutely taboo for a wife to tell her husband's real name to a stranger.[1]

About two months later, I met Kane-san at East Samani Seikatsukan – a community office where she goes every day to work on her Ainu practice.[2] She was looking at a calendar on the wall. 'Hey, Soga-chan, do you know what it means when it says "rain-water" here on the calendar?' Kane-san asked. I stood next to her and looked at the calendar, on the 18th of February it said 'rain' and 'water' in a symbolic way. I knew the meaning of each letter, but I did not understand their meaning together.

There are things that I feel like I know, but I actually do not. I feel there are many things in the world that I will never know in truth. Even if I had learnt them, there are many things I will forget.

Later, I read on the internet that February 18th is one of the 24 seasons. It is a day when the snow turns into rain as it falls from the sky.

'Oh, by the way, Kumagai-san, I have a question. Do you remember when we were supposed to go to Sapporo, you asked me several times if you could give my name to the organisers of the event?' Kumagai-san replied, 'Yes...' She was a little surprised but said she remembered.

‘I just remembered something I read in Nakagawa-sensei’s book about the names of the Ainu people in the past. I was thinking about the importance of protecting your real name from strangers.’

She replied in her usual calm tone, ‘It’s nothing to do with that. The event was only for the members because of Covid-19. That’s why I was checking with you, so the organiser can make you a one-time member.’ Kane-san always clearly tells me what she knows, what she does not know, and what is irrelevant. She does not pretend to know things that she does not. Was I imposing meaning on the ‘sign’ of Kane-san’s gestures?

‘I thought it might have something to do with the traditional values that you might have unconsciously inherited.’ I was a little disappointed that my imagination was wrong.

‘In my parents’ time they already used Japanese names. My grandparents had Ainu names. Even people who had tattoos around their mouth also had Japanese names. When I was a child, I used to see a house of a woman called Tekisan on my way home after helping in the fields. One day I asked my mother if ‘san’ was added to the name ‘Teki’, so her name is Teki-san, but my mother told me that the woman’s name was Tekisan. I was surprised and said, ‘Heeeeeeeh [really?]. So, she was Tekisan-san!

‘I conjectured that Teku means “hands” and San means “to be skilful” in Ainu. I thought to myself that perhaps she was given such a name because she was good with her hands. I don’t know. I didn’t learn it from anyone,’ Kane-san told me.

The Japanese government outlawed *sinuye* – Ainu tattooing – in 1799. After the refusal of Ainu women to cease, even stronger laws were introduced in 1871. A few people paint *sinuye* today, but they only do so on special occasions (Hachiya 2019).

We were chatting over 3 o’clock teatime.

I thought about my name and said to Kane-san, ‘I used to dislike my name. I remember when I was in primary school, whenever a woman was arrested on the morning news, her name would appear as “A子” sounds like my name Eiko,

so I was teased at school that day for being ‘B-ko.’

‘I used to not like my name either,’ Kane-san responded. ‘I used to be called Kane-ko by my parents and relatives. But when I looked at my family register, my name was Kane without “ko”. My sister was called Teruko with “ko” at the end. I think the town office may have mistaken my name and removed “ko”. In the past, that kind of thing used to happen a lot, apparently.’

She said she still has old friends who call her ‘Kane-chan’, so she has come to like her name ‘Kane’. She looked nostalgic and added, ‘What I know is that my parents loved me very much.’

‘Kaneko and Teruko.’ I said the sisters’ names out loud to see how it feels.

‘My sister, Teruko.’ Kane-san said.

‘Teruko-san.’ I said again and thought about how Kane-san often talks about her sister. I have been feeling the presence of absence.

Kane-san started telling me the story of Teruko-san.

‘One Sunday.

‘A chicken was crying “cocke-ko-koooo” in the morning at the stable feeder. I thought it was laying eggs, so I went to have a look, but I found a snake. It was about to swallow an egg, but my sister walked up so it stopped swallowing an egg. My father then tied a cigarette on a stick and pointed it at the snake. The snake gave up the egg and disappeared, so I wondered where it went. It was going towards the river slithering and was gone. The next day, my sister got sick, so the hospital doctor came to see her.

‘My mother then consulted with a psychic. She told my mother to bring Teruko to her. So, my mother put Teruko in a handcart and went with her brother and someone else.

‘When the psychic saw my sister, a snake appeared to her. The snake said that he had been hungry and wanted to eat, but Teruko interfered, so it decided to stop

1 There are several examples of how the Ainu value names differently to Japanese and Western norms. Traditionally, the Ainu people had several names throughout their lives. When a baby was born, they would call the baby with a nasty name to protect it from the devil. When the child's personality became stable, it was given a real name. If the child got sick or had some other misfortune, a more suitable name would be given. People also had different names for public purposes or for non-intimate relationships. A sense of flexibility and adaptability can be often found in principles of Ainu culture, including oral storytelling.

2 Several Seikatsukan were built to promote the improvement of the lifestyle, educational activities, and welfare of the Ainu people and the surrounding residents in Hokkaido. Institutionalised since 1973, they were built in towns where Ainu *kotan* existed, and are managed by the local governments.

her from eating too.

'My mother did what the psychic told her to do. When everyone returned home, they prepared eggs, salt, small fish, and sake. Teruko apologised and asked to be forgiven, and she threw the food into the river. Then she got better.

'The snake was the guardian of the *nusa*. It was my father's *nusa*, hidden at the back of the house.'

Our conversation was suddenly interrupted by someone realising the time: 'Oh, it's already 4 o'clock.' I was brought back from where I had been caught up in the images of this story.

Tea break was over, so I went to my computer to make a DVD copy of a documentary program of a Taiwanese chef called André Chiang. He came to Samani to learn *kombu-sito* from Kane-san. She often told me how kind and cool he was. I liked how Kane-san's eyes sparkled and looked like a young woman for a brief moment when she talked about Chiang-san, but we always forgot his first name.

In the evening, I was at Kane-san's house, and she was trying to remember Chiang-san's name. She was flipping through the files of the documents of his project, but it did not mention his first name. It only said Chiang-san, everywhere. This increased our urge to remember his name.

'Where are you, Chiang-san? Come out, I am looking for you,' Kane-san said, talking to the books and papers on her shelves.

'I'm looking for you' she said, searching for a document with Chiang-san's name on it.

I imagined Chian-san's name being its own entity, hiding away from us in a corner of the house.

Our conversation was often like a game of *shiriitori* – a Japanese word chain game.

A word that came out of our mouths or an image that came into our eyes stimulated us to talk about something that may have seemed random to other people but continued from the previous conversation. It was natural for us to spend time and communicate in this way. Our conversation was subtle but matured over a long period of time. It was like knowing what to do by following the smell and colour of food being cooked rather than following a recipe.

GoTo トラベル
北口2位 連覇逃す
道内ト
食事券 道内来月にも
ぼんの湯 営業再開へ

DANCING AINU KIMONO

One day in December 2020 – Snow

Women in the Samani Ethnic Culture Preservation Association team started working on the Ainu Kimono Project. They were commissioned by the local town government to make replicas of old Ainu kimonos made in Samani. They would be displayed in the Samani Kyodokan (a hometown museum).

It had been almost three months since I started living in Samani. Days full of conversation, time spent in silence, and walking long distances had built my new lifestyle. It had become a daily activity to sit by Kane-san, Makiko Furudate-san, Yoko-san, Sa-chan, and Toshiko-san and make my *hanten* (a short kimono) with them. They came to East Samani Seikatsukan, on a daily basis when they had an Ainu project to work on. One stitch meant a little progress, there were no shortcuts when making a kimono.

We checked one another's advancement and encouraged each other.

We said a lot of 'Oh that looks good', 'Good job!', 'Oh my god you progressed', 'Mmm, maybe you could try this way', 'That's your style, don't worry' and 'Ok, it's time for a break. Let's have tea and biscuits'. When Kane-san complimented Yoko-san's stitches, you could hear in Yoko-san's voice how pleased she was.

At 3 o'clock we stopped for a break filled with the smell of coffee and green tea, both distinctive in their own ways. Normally, Furudate-san would have offered to make a cup of tea for everyone. She was a staff member of the office. Everyone always said 'Makiko-san, don't worry! We make our own cup of tea,' but she often prepared some. Such conversation was our ritual at 3 pm, but just before Christmas, Furudate-san looked restless and had no time to offer tea. She was struggling with making a pattern for her kimono's embroidery.

Traditionally, kimono-making was a woman's job. A woman made kimonos for her loved ones, her husband and/or children – all hand stitched and embroidered. In the past when textiles were hard to obtain, people patchworked different fabrics together, which made old kimonos more unique and interesting. More recently, people buy new textiles and thread which make kimonos look more uniform.

Making a kimono for the Samani Ainu Cultural Preservation meant making a copy of an old Ainu kimono that originated in Samani. There are hardly any old kimonos surviving in Samani. Ainu kimonos were not appreciated until very recently, so kimonos were sold or simply not kept. In most cases, the names of the people who had made the kimonos could not be traced or found. There are one or two names recognised in Kyodokan. The kimono which Furudate-san was assigned to make was protected in a glass case at Upopoy Ainu Museum in Shiraoi, two hours away by a car, and she only had access to a picture of it. I asked her why she did not have access to the kimono, and all she said was 'There was nothing I could do about it.' I waited for the right moment to offer to help to make a pattern from the picture. We had to print out the picture and enlarge it.

In return for my support, Furudate-san gave me a box of the finest quality Samani kelp.

5 January 2021 – More Snow

Thirty days' worth of stitches meant the foundation of the kimono was finally done. Furudate-san called me in the morning:

'I've been feeling really pressured to make the *Chijiri* style stitches straight and to copy the original beautifully. You know, nowadays, many people can remake Ainu kimonos in a very straight and beautiful way. I have become unsure if I am qualified enough to work on making the kimonos. My heart felt heavy over the new year.

'But, you know, I was looking at the pattern on the original kimono. I realised that none of the lines are straight. And I also realised that the base of the

kimono needs to be finished first before I can add the embroidery. This is different from other Ainu kimonos that I've made in the past. When I realised these things, I realised that it was more important to imagine and try to understand the feelings of the person who made the original kimono. I felt humbled towards the person, even though I've never met her, and I was able to put my feelings into each stitch. I really enjoy making the kimono now.'

When Furudate-san said 'See you tomorrow', her words were full of positivity. The box full of kelp she gave me became the amount of joy that she gained.

I sent some of the kelp to my friends in Tokyo and the UK.

14 January 2021 – Everyone has had enough of snow

Kane-san, Furudate-san and I sat together over morning coffee and had a look at each other's progress before we made a start on the day's stitching.

Kane-san said, 'I believe that there's no right way to go about making an Ainu kimono. But, if you hang the kimono up and stand a little distance from it, a good kimono will start dancing. Lately, many people make kimonos in a strictly neat way, but I think that everyone's got different hands, so that's why each kimono is unique. And I think that's good. There is no character if everything has to be perfect in the same way. Everyone has different hands.'

When a kimono starts to dance, that's what makes a good kimono.

My mind's eyes briefly saw an image of a scroll painting titled *Tsukumo Kami* (*Gods of Tools*, 964–968 AD) – which included abandoned tools such as a pan and a pot, planning their revenge on humans.

I remember a story that Kane-san once told me. A group of indigenous performers from Taiwan once visited Urakawa – a town next to Samani. Kane-san saw them sing. She learnt how those performers found the tunes naturally suited to their voices instead of trying to force their voices to fit pre-existing tunes. This way, each voice was appreciated and they could all make the best of their natural ability.

An idea of good is created by listening to each voice and each hand.

焼きシャケ、チポロシト（いくらもち）、メフンの塩辛（腎臓や内臓）、チェプ•オハウ（さんぺい汁）、チタタプ、エント茶、焼きしらこ
Grilled salmon, Ciporsito (salmon roe rice cake), Salted mehun (entrails and kidney), Cep ohaw, Citatap, Ento tea, Grilled Milt

焼きしゃけ 1

シャケを譲ってくれた漁師のしのさんのおじさんと、しのさんに感謝を伝える。

シャケに、「ようこそきましたね、あなたどこから来たの？ありがとう」と感謝を伝える。

皮の状態をチェック。

「このシャケは海から来たからまだキラキラしてて、皮が薄いから靴にできないわね。もう少ししたら黒くなってたわね」と、熊谷さん。（川のシャケは黒くなり、皮が厚くなるので、靴を作ることができた。）

シャケの下に新聞を引いて、鱗をとる。

エラに丸みに沿って包丁をいれて、頭を切り落とす。

下顎、えら、目を切り取って、氷頭だけにする。

「ごめんね、あなたを美味しくいただきますね」と言いながら、切り落とした部分は塩をしておいて、後でお汁にいれる。

軽くゆすいで「ここで待っててね」と水道場の近に置いておく。

シャケに入っているいくらを傷つけない様に、尻尾側のお腹から包丁を入れる。

いくらを取り出す。

いくらに「休んでてね」と声かける。

チタタプはしらこで、作るのでこの日は、前日に取り出して置いたしらこを使う。

しらこが多く手に入ったら、炭火で焼いたり、汁にいれても美味しい。

いくらは、チポロシトにする。

Grilled Salmon 1

Expresses gratitude for the salmon given by Shino-san's uncle, a fisherman, and to Shino-san for arranging the fish.

Show appreciation to the salmon by communicating, 'Thank you for coming all the way to us, where did you come from? Thank you.'

Check the condition of the skin. 'This salmon is from the sea, so the skin is sparkling. The skin is still thin so we can't make a shoe. If we waited a little longer, the skin would have gone darker', said Ms Kumagai. (A salmon that return to the river would get a thicker skin, and could be used to make a shoe.)

Place newspaper under the salmon and remove the scales.
Insert a knife into the gills, follow the curve and cut off the head.

Cut off the lower jaw, gills, and eyes to separate the marrow.

Tell the salmon, 'I'm sorry, but I'm going to have you with appreciation.'

Salt the gills and put them in the soup for later.

Wash and ask them, 'Please wait here for a while', and leave them by the sink.

The salmon has roe, so cut the belly from the tail side so as not to damage them.

Take out the salmon roe.
Tell the salmon roe to take a rest.

Citatap is made with milt, on this day, we used milt kept for this occasion.

If you get many milt, you can grill them over a charcoal fire or add them to soup.
The salmon roe is used to make *ciporsito*.

メフンの塩辛

内臓とメフン(血合い)は、小さいザルに入れて、塩水できれいに洗う。

塩を多めにかけ瓶詰めにし、塩辛にする。

通常は11月ごろの寒さの頃に、１０日間ほど塩漬けにしているが、まが暖かさが残る10月にも試しに作ってみる。

肝は焼いたり、塩をつけて食べる。

「昔の人はいろんな方法を試して食べていたんだね」という事に感謝を捧げる。

Salted Mehun

Put the entrails and kidney in a small strainer and clean very well with salty water.

Salt the entrails and kidney and put them in a jar.

Usually, this salting process is done in about 10 days during cold weather; around November.

October is still too warm, but we tried it.

The liver can be grilled and eaten with a pinch of salt.

Appreciate how people have tried many different methods to eat food.

チポロシト 1

いくらを作るためのお湯を沸かしておく。

Ciporsito 1

Boil water to make *cipor* (salmon roe)

焼きシャケ 2

包丁に「切れて頂戴ね、お願いします」と声かける。

シャケの尻尾を切り落とす。

背の側から、骨の上に包丁をいれて、身を切り落とす。

骨の下に包丁をいれて、反対側の身を切り落とす。

骨がとれたら、身をきれいに洗う。骨と尻尾とエラは、大きめにきって、汁にとっておく。

串に刺して焼くので、シャケを大きめに真っ直ぐにきる。

美味しい身の部分も少し、汁のためにとっておけたら取っておく。

シャケの表と裏に塩を少し振っておく。

Grilled Salmon 2

Ask the knife, 'Please cut well.'

Cut off the tail off the salmon.

Cut off the flesh from the back side of the salmon by inserting the knife over the bone.

Cut off the other side of the flesh by cutting under the bone.

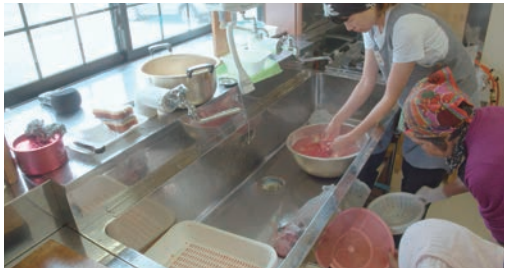
Once the bones are removed, wash the flesh with water.

Cut the bone, and the tail, and the gills into large pieces, and save them for *ohaw*.

Cut the flesh into large, straight pieces for skewering and grilling.

Save some for the *ohaw*.

Sprinkle a little salt on the front and back of the salmon.



チポロシト 2

お湯がわいたら、大きめのボールにお湯をいれて水を足す。

塩を大きくふたつまみほど、お湯にいれる。

いくらの膜を開いて、ぬるま湯の中で、いくらを軽くしごきながらほぐす。

もう少し硬いすじこだったら、ちょっと熱いお湯で白くなるけれど、水にもどせばまた元に戻る。

ばらばらになったら、細かい目のザルにあげる。

ボールに水をはって、そこにまたいくらを入れて、汚れをとる。

ザルに通して、ゴミをとる。

シャケが金ピカだから、いくらもまだ柔らかい手触りで綺麗。

いくらも、シャケの成長が進んでいるとだんだん硬くなっていく。

硬くなると手触りが全然変わってくる。

綺麗ないくらの色と光に見惚れつつ、作業を進める。

小さめのボールに上げて、醤油をかけておく。

Ciporsito 2

When the water has boiled, put the hot water in a large bowl and add water.

Add a large pinch of salt to the hot water.

Open the membrane of the salmon roe in the lukewarm water,

and gently separate the roe into individual eggs.

If the salmon roe is a little hard, put it in some hotter water.

It will turn white, but if you put it back in the cold water again, it will return to normal.

When the eggs are separated, place them in a fine-mesh strainer.

Fill a bowl with water, put the eggs in the bowl again and remove any unwanted bits of membrane.

Repeat the process until the eggs are clean.

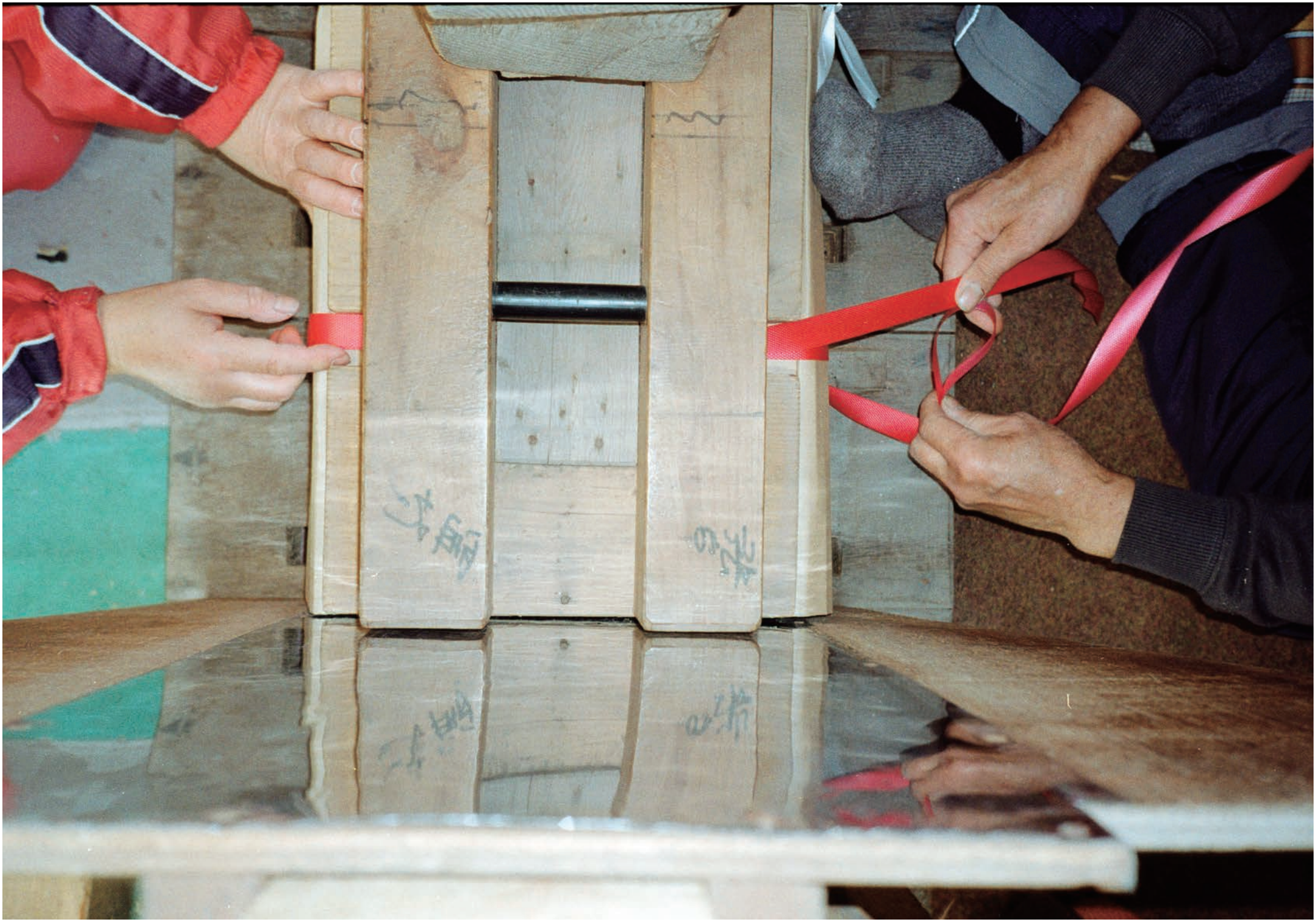
If the salmon is shiny, the salmon roe will still be soft and beautiful.

As the salmon grows, its roe become harder and harder.

When it becomes hard, the texture changes completely.

Appreciate the colour and sheen of the beautiful salmon roe while proceeding with the work.

Put the eggs in a small bowl and pour soy sauce over them.



END OF NARRATIVES

‘What I want,
what I would like to eat,
I live day to day without thinking of such things,’
Kumagai san told me, in Ainu folklore,
stories often end this way.

‘I’ve come to really appreciate that way of life too, now,’
Kumagai san said,
on the way back from Ominaishi,
where the two of us had gone to have lunch,
we had a birthday celebration,
for Kumagai-san who had turned 79.

When in 2019 I was going around various places in Hokkaido,
listening to the stories of Ainu women.

The elders all said,
‘I’m living the happiest time of my life now,’
all the smiling faces they showed me,
came to my mind.

KANE-SAN'S AINU VOICE APPEARS WHEN I AM NOT AROUND

Kane-san, Marenka Thomson-Odlum (Research Associate at the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford) and I met over video chat to discuss the possibility of Kane-san making an Ainu kimono for the Museum.

Marenka and I asked Kane-san about the gender roles of the Ainu. Kane-san mentioned there were Ainu kimonos that did not differentiate gender styles. She told us her father used to wake up in the morning first and prepare the hearth. After he placed a pot of rice on the fire, he woke his wife. He also had a glass of sake every night. He prepared a cup for the fire *kamuy*, too, and he prayed before he drank. The fire was the most important *kamuy* and it was female. Kane-san believed her father was a good husband to her mother and respectful of women.

Marenka was appreciative, the type of social norms she experienced made it a women's duty to wake up first and prepare breakfast for the family.

We all laughed and sighed then Kane-san continued.

'There is something I would like to introduce you to. My father used to pray to the fire *kamuy* even before he drank only one cup of sake. He said simple words; "I live in the village of Tomiesanpet; even if you are a god in heaven, please watch over my village well and protect it."'

'Did he say that in Ainu?' I asked.

'I'm trying to remember the Ainu words, but they don't come out well.' Kane-san looked slightly disappointed. So, I responded 'I'm going to translate what you just said for Marenka now. If you remember the prayer in the meantime, please let me know.' I wanted to leave her time to think.

While Kane-san was tuning into her memory, Marenka mentioned that she liked the sentiment and does not know anyone who prays before drinking. I agreed. Kane-san jumped back into the conversation and said that all traditional Ainu people prayed before drinking.

'I used to remember the prayer in Ainu, but when I was sick, I forgot a lot. Especially because I don't have much chance to speak in the Ainu, right?' I was sitting to her right, facing a computer screen where we could see Marenka's face. Kane-san turned her face away and seemed to be tuning her focus to the Ainu part of herself. It looked difficult. I felt bad that I was next to her, watching her closely. I asked her if the prayer was documented in the book that she wrote about her father, which was titled *Matagi Soukichi Okamoto; Samani ni Ikita Ainu no Kiroku* (*Sokichi Okamoto, an Ainu Hunter; A Document of An Ainu Who Lived in Samani*, 2012). She said yes. I was relieved, as it gave me a reason to leave the room.

'I'll go get it.' I said and left. To Marenka, in Japanese, Kane-san said 'I'm sorry, I have just remembered the words.'

I heard some Ainu words, from the next room I could hear Kane-san's voice speaking in Ainu.

I found the book immediately, but picked it up slowly. When I returned, her Ainu had stopped. I felt as if I had stepped in and interrupted something, a precious space.

Flicking through the book with Kane-san, she said, 'I remembered about half of the player .'

Kane-san was speaking Ainu in a quiet voice. Her tuning was continuing, it seemed a sensitive process. I caught myself smiling, happy to see Kane-san embodying and attuning to her Ainu space. It was different from the times when she taught me Ainu words and explained their meaning.

She said the first line but then she forgot again. 'I had been able to say it so easily earlier,' she said. I understood that she found it harder to tune into the Ainu part of herself when I was with her.

Kane-san's Ainu prayer continued quietly.

'I live in the village of Tomiesanpet [...] That's what it means. Something like this.'

Kane-san's body found an access to the Ainu language and control. This was the first time I had ever heard her speak in Ainu in full sentences. I thought it indicated she enjoyed her time with Marenka.

During the past five months, Kane-san has taught me some words in Ainu and lent me some of her old tapes. I listened to a radio show she participated in to teach the Ainu language. She also told me stories her parents had passed down. I offered to assist her in recording her spoken prayers or Ainu songs, but she looked reluctant saying with a microphone pointing at her, Ainu words will not come out. Whenever we had this conversation, I felt I was being an ignorant and intrusive outsider-researcher.

I heard music in my head, happy, dancing people singing, shouting in joy, and clapping their hands. These were the voices of Kane-san's mother, uncle, auntie, neighbour, and their kids. These sounds were from several pasts; from when I still called Kane-san Kumagai-san, and she had played me a tape she had recorded, telling me how she used to carry a recording device whenever she met relatives with her mother and they would sing and dance in Ainu for themselves. Hearing Ainu songs was a rare opportunity. Kane-san had been inspired by seeing a professor who came to record her mother's singing. Thinking she too wanted to record the voice of her mother, she used a tape recorder she had as her daughters were learning English at a junior high school.

'Kane-san, did you know that your mother sang songs from a young age?'

'Yes. Well, yes, I knew she sang, but I didn't have much chance to listen to her sing. She never sang in front of her children. But I sort of knew that my mother had a good voice. Also, I had left home after I got married, so I had no idea what kind of people came to my parents' house to record or listen to their singing or telling stories. But at some point, I learned that they had been in contact with Nakagawa-sensei, and that they had also been in contact with Fujimura-sensei.'[1]

1 Professor Hiroshi Nakagawa and Professor Hisakazu Fujimura are leading researchers of the Ainu studies in Japan.

‘Did your mother sing when she was with her old friends, too?’ I asked.

‘Yes. She wanted her songs to be listened to. She wanted people to know such songs existed. She wanted to tell.’ Kane-san replied and played some more cassette tapes.

When I pressed play, *Enka* – a Japanese folk song played. I was surprised and laughed.

Kane-san responded, ‘In the old days, you couldn’t buy tapes easily. That’s what happens when you accidentally recorded on top of the previous recordings.’
I put another tape in the player, the Ainu *Yaesama* – a genre of Ainu song - came on.

I had heard some Ainu songs in museums and in online archives, but Kane-san’s tape was filled with a warmth and joy that I had never heard before. A sense of happiness was transmitted from the recording even if it was not the best quality in terms of the technical standard. I could hear the fire in the hearth, people talking and laughing in the background. Kane-san was also laughing, clapping her hands on her knees and keeping the beat. The warmth was not simply for the granularity of analog recording, it was something more about a sense of joyous spirit that came through.

‘This tape is the first recording I did,’ Kan-san looked happy.
‘Can you tell who is who by the voices?’ I asked.

‘Well, the one singing is my mother, and the one laughing is my mother’s sister. The one laughing now is my sister’s voice. The people who sang there were mainly my mother and the neighbor’s grandmother. A sister of that grandmother barely knew the Ainu song, but she was happy to listen to my mother sing. She didn’t speak the Ainu language.

‘I barely spoke, because I was seriously recording.

‘I’ve never heard this kind of song in other places. I wonder if it exists elsewhere?’ Kane-san asked if I had heard something similar before. The song had a tempo I had never heard before. Uneven and comforting. I said ‘No’, and asked, ‘What do you think is different about the songs of Samani to other regions?’

Kane-san replied, ‘Well, I don’t know. My mother was the only one who sang in this way in Samani. There were other grandmothers who sang simple songs but they were short. I don’t know how that compares to other places.’ A lot of understanding was already lost for Kane-san’s generation.

‘There are no lyrics for this song,’ Kane-san mentioned.

‘Is she making the sound in her throat?’ I asked as I heard a sound that I cannot make myself.

‘Yes, from the throat.’

We listened to the next song. ‘This one was sung by another woman, who wanted to introduce a different type of *Yaesama* of Samani,’ Kane-san added.

‘If I ever release these songs to the world, I couldn’t name anyone but my mother. They are no longer around, and I think some of their children don’t want their names to be mentioned. In fact, one of the grandmothers told me she married a Japanese man, and she didn’t want him to divorce her because she was Ainu, so he didn’t know that she was Ainu. I don’t think those descendants want to listen to those songs anyway. They are people who have no interest in Ainu culture. But since I have those recordings, I can’t waste them. Those women sang songs.

‘I don’t think there is any recording of singing like this left anywhere.’

I felt Kane-san’s sense of appreciation for the recorded women and sadness in the air.

I could hear her mother laughing on the tape.

Kane-san laughed, too and said, ‘Just listening to her laugh makes us happy, doesn’t it?’

I agreed with her.

‘You know, it’s not like a broadcasting station setting up a recording system and asking you to sing. You know, they’re singing naturally and enjoying themselves. I think that’s what I like about them these days. That’s why I’d like to release these recordings to the world someday.’ Kane-san looked determined and continued, ‘It’s totally different when it’s done in a fun environment where you can really laugh.’

I could feel joy in my body and imagine the scene although I have never met those people.

‘Because everyone is having fun,’ Kane-san said.

The clapping of hands and laughter continued.

It was Kane-san and Marenka laughing, too.

FREE HEARTS

In response to Kane-san's request, Marenka emailed me some pictures of Ainu kimonos at the Pitt Rivers Museum.

One of the kimonos surprised me. For a second, I thought I could smell the old kimono, then it made me laugh. It looked as if two kimonos had been cut in half and put together. Pre 1900 and until it became common to buy textiles in a shop, people obtained pieces of Japanese textiles such as indigo and cotton through the exchange of goods, and made things out of off cuts. As a result, old Ainu kimonos were interesting patchworks. I had seen unique combinations of fabric in museums but this kimono was so incomprehensible, it made me laugh. I wondered how it ended up like this. How did these two distinctive pieces of kimonos find each other? One with damage on the top and the other with damage on the bottom, was it organised so that the clean parts of half of each kimono could be united? Perhaps, someone came across some rare and beautiful cloth and wanted to use them to their fullest. She maybe did not see them as ending up in a mismatch. I imagined different narratives, but I could not know the truth, nobody could.

I went to Kane-san's house to borrow an iron to hem the *hanten* and I told her the story of the kimono that made me laugh.

We agreed that it was joyful to see a kimono with a free and fun spirit.

Speaking of freedom, I told her that I liked the Ainu grandmothers I had met, because they were not formal, but rather casual and fun while maintaining a sense of dignity and being full of wisdom and kindness. Kane-san agreed and said, 'Even Japanese elder women, farmers in the countryside, tend to be free-spirited and joyful, too.' We both agreed that it is better if the heart is full of joy and free spirit.

'Many Ainu grandmothers had a free heart even when they had to go through hardship,' Kane-san said and continued: 'I know it because I have read many books.' She once told me she had read all the Ainu-related books at the Samani library. I believed her as I know how fast she can read. Among the few Ainu-related books that exist, there are a few memoirs written by Ainu women (Keira 1995; Ukaji 2011; Toyama 2019).

We imagined the old grandmothers whose hearts danced freely, like the old Ainu kimonos. We agreed with a glance at each other, by this time our eye contact was enough to know what each was thinking.

A free heart.

'But freedom doesn't mean free from working hard and responsibilities, does it?' Kane-san added at the end.

Old kimonos were made with the limited amount of what was available; making their colours, designs, and combinations mysterious and unique. Old kimonos were not neat, straight, clean, or tidy, but they danced. I tried to imagine such freedom, creativity, and uniqueness as qualities of people. I then thought back to the day when Kane-san's Ainu prayers eventually came out of her mouth freely while we had conversation with Marenka. Kane-san's words were dancing out of her body.

Kane-san pulled a box out from her closet and showed me a picture she took when she went to a museum in America. 'When you go abroad, there are kimonos that you can't see in Japan. Ainu kimonos weren't considered of value until recently, but some journeyed abroad so we can see much older kimonos outside of Japan.' Picking up a kimono can open complex issues of past politics affecting social values, the conditions for protecting artifacts, and each individual peoples' economic situation and stories. I suddenly felt guilty as I remembered about the book my friend Charlotte lent me called *The Stories Clothes Tell – Voices of Working -Class Japan* (2016) by Tatsuichi Horikiri. The book told stories around politics and culture in Japan through old kimonos and is accompanied by beautiful images.

WHOSE STORY?

One day, I was sitting next to Kane-san who was making a kimono. I was editing video on my laptop and I asked her how I could be helpful in delivering her knowledge to people both in Samani and outside.

Kane-san said, 'I believe that true folklore doesn't have to be done by gathering a large number of people, but can be done by passing the knowledge on to one person who is willing to listen seriously. This is true if you look at what the Ainu grandmothers did in the past. It was the same for Professor Nakagawa, wasn't it? He went alone to visit Ainu grandmothers. If you share knowledge in good faith with a person you trust, that person will tell another person. That's how it gets passed on. That is what I think a true cultural transmission is all about.'

Warmth welled up in my body, and the muscles in my shoulders and back relaxed. I felt relieved and realised that my body had been tense for a while. 'How did I get here? I was just an outsider,' I asked myself. In Samani, there is a long-standing sense of discrimination and friction against the Ainu people. As I was taken care of by many people in the town and they opened up to me and told secrets which they could not reveal to the locals, I felt pressured to know that my position was no longer simply as an outsider. I also felt the weight of Kane-san's knowledge and skills that I was learning.

Kane-san sighed then smiled and said, 'If only I had met you ten years ago, I had more energy to do more things with you.'

'Well, if I was your daughter or a grandchild, I could have learned more,' I replied. Kane-san immediately said, 'No, that wouldn't have worked. The relationship that we have is probably the best way.' I was reminded of the fact that being a child does not mean they will practice their parent's work or be interested in what they do.

'What does trust mean to you?' I asked Kane-san. I thought it was a basic question, but it has become my habit by then to ask simple questions. Kane-san often had surprising answers.

'It's not like I trust anyone. I have relationships with people I really trust… through different types of connections. It's not like I can trust someone because I want to, but if there is a trust, you know it. People can understand each other without saying it. I think we can communicate about trust through gestures.'

This conversation made me think about written contracts which have enormous power in capitalist society, and the consent form that institutions tell researchers and interviewers to prepare. These I have found often cause distrust and suspicion among people I have worked with in Hokkaido.

'Kane-san, you once told me that you only tell people you trust about mountain plants,' I mentioned.

'That's right, you can't teach people if they just take whatever they want. People might think I'm mean. But I don't want to bully the wild plants, because I want them to come out properly every year. Important stories and knowledge can't be interpreted in a way that people want them to be.' Trust needs to be earned through gestures over time.

She went on: 'My cousin's aunt was an Ainu. I talked about her to a man before, and he posted about it on the internet or something. I thought to myself, "Why are you just announcing it like this in text?" I didn't complain to him; it was a small matter, and it was my fault that I told him the story, but I worried how she might have felt if she was alive.

'The person probably just thought it was an interesting story and wrote it on the Internet.

'Well, I will probably never see him again. It wasn't a complicated story anyway. My cousin was a drinker, and she drank all the time, so she wasn't very popular, but I didn't dislike her, so whenever she came around to my place, I asked her if she had eaten food. She would normally say no, so I invited her to eat together.

‘One day, she told me a story. My aunt was walking in town as she had something to do and she saw this lady walking drunk. She finally realised this was what she had been doing all of the time, looking like a disgrace.

‘So, then she went home and decided to ask the fire god for help. The Ainu people ask the fire god when there is something to wish for. She piled up a lot of matches in an ashtray and set them on fire, and then she asked the god of fire to let her become a person who brings joy to others because she had been drinking and showing people a disgraceful sight enough. After that, she started doing *imu*. Do you know what *imu* is?

‘*Imu* means… for example, if someone says, “You should hit that person” then they make a big fuss and do the opposite. If someone says, “You should slap that person”, they would make a big deal out of it and imitate as well. *Imu* is a word for Ainu women.’ She told me the story, while remembering her aunt fondly.

‘Is *imu* a woman’s role or something shamanistic that people did?’ I asked.

‘The fire god listened to her wish, she stopped drinking, and started doing *imu*. This is the story that I told to the man. I told him that there are people like that. He posted the story on the Internet without asking me.’

Kane-san continued, ‘I don’t see that person anymore, but I regretted what I did. But it’s a real story, but I don’t know how to describe it.

‘Anyway, *imu* is something a woman does – imitating what people say and doing the opposite. It is kind of funny.’

I thought that I knew what she meant, but I was still not sure. Although Kane-san said that it was funny, I was worried whether it was a traditional value which showed a lack of understanding of mental health, but I did not want to interpret Ainu culture through my own common sense. It was like when I was learning about *iyomante*. My mind drifted off, defining my ethical relationality to the entanglement of knowledge, colonisation, and technology (Todd 2017; Puig De La Bellacasa 2017).

‘Aunt said that she prayed to the fire god, so the god must have given the ability to her,’ Kane-san continued. ‘It may be a silly story, but I think you’ll come to understand it gradually.’

「秋の鹿だから美味しいよー、すごいねー。」

「立派な大きな鹿だったんだね。」

「肉の色が綺麗で新鮮だ。」

かねさん、柚華ちゃん、ハルピンと私は、鹿を仕留めてもってきてくれた佐々木さんと、大きく立派な鹿に感謝。

'It's a deer in the fall, so it's delicious.'

'You were a big deer.'

'The meat is beautifully colored and fresh.'

Kane-san, Yuka-chan, Harupin, and I thanked Sasaki-san for catching a deer and bringing it to us, and paying respect to the deer.

まめごはん、ユクオハウ、ラタシケプ
Bean Rice, Yuk Ohaw, Rataskep

まめごはん 1

とら豆を(花豆でも良い)、水の入った鍋に入れる。

沸騰したら一度湯を捨て、新しい水を入れる。

沸騰したら、びっくり水(コップ一杯)を入れる。

煮ながら、2、3回びっくり水をする。

吹きこぼれない程度の火にして、固めに煮る。

Bean Rice 1

Put tiger beans (or runner beans) in the pot of water.

When the water comes to a boil, pour out the water and refill.

When the water comes to a boil, add a cup of cold water.

While simmering add a cup of water again, two or three times.

Reduce the heat to a simmer, cook until the beans are cooked but firm.

ユㇰオハウ 1

しかの足肉の脂肪、肉、筋膜を確認しながらバラす。

骨に少し肉を残しながら切る。

脂肪は別に取っておいて、後に油にする。

足骨を12cmくらいの長さに、骨を回しながら叩き切る。(短く切りすぎると、骨の中の髄が出て溶けてしまう。)

水を鍋にいれて、沸かす。

肉は斜めに包丁を入れて、大きく四角に切る。(切り方に決まりは、ない。)

肉と骨を沸騰したお湯に入れる。

Yuk Ohaw 1

Check and separate the fat, flesh, and fascia of the deer's leg meat.

Cut them while leaving a little meat on the bone.

Save the fat separately to make oil.

Cut the leg bones to about 12 cm in length by pounding while turning the bones. (If cut too short, the marrow inside the bone will melt.)

Bring a pot of water to a boil.

Cut the meat into large square and rectangular pieces.
There is no rule on how to cut these.

Place the meat and bones in the boiling water.

まめごはん 2

米を洗う。

いなきびも洗って置いておく。

米に煮豆といなきびを入れて、炊く。

Bean Rice 2

Wash some rice.

Wash and set aside some millet.

Add the cooked beans and the millet to rice and cook them in a rice cooker.

ユクオハウ 2

お湯に肉をさっと入れて、少し煮立ったらお湯からあげる。

アクが出てきたら、もう一度お湯を捨てて 水を入れ替える。

鍋の蓋をして、強めの中火で煮る。
アクは、こまめに取り除く。

じゃがいも、大根と長ネギを切る。

食べる人の数で、量を決める。

大根から入れる。

弱火にして、煮続ける。

Yuk Ohaw 2

Put the meat in the hot water; when it comes to boil, drain the water.

If foam comes out, drain the water and replace it with new water.

Cover the pot and cook over a strong medium-high heat. Remove the foam frequently.

Cut potatoes, radish and Japanese leeks.

Decide the quantity according to the number of people who will eat.

Put the radish in the pot first.

Reduce the heat to low and continue cooking.

ラタシケプ 1

乾燥しておいたシケレベを、一晩水でもどす。

かぼちゃは、種と皮を取る。

種は乾かしてたべる。

かぼちゃを一口大に切る。

かぼちゃを先に鍋に入れて、ひたひたになる位まで水を入れて煮る。

形が残る位に煮るのが良いが、その人の好みによる。

Rataskep 1

Soak dried shikerebe (fruit of the amur cork tree) in water overnight.

Remove the seeds and skin from a pumpkin.

Dry the seeds and eat later.
Cut the pumpkin into bite-sized pieces.

It is better if the shape of the pumpkin cubes remain after boiling, but it depends on the taste of the person.

Put the pumpkin in the pot and add enough water to cover it.

まめごはん 3

炊けたら蓋をして蒸らし、お米を混ぜ、
塩を足しまた蒸らしておく。

Bean Rice 3

Once the rice is cooked, leave the lid on to steam, mix the rice, add some salt, and leave it to steam further.

ユㇰオハウ 3

肉が煮えてきたら、じゃがいもを入れる。

弱火にして煮続けたら、ネギを入れる。
味を見て、塩で味を整える。

冷凍しておいた、タマピロ(あさつき)を入れる。

Yuk Ohaw 3

When the meat starts to cook well, add potatoes.

Lower the heat and continue simmering, then add leeks.

Taste and season with salt.
Add chives frozen in the spring.

ラタシケプ 2

人数に応じて、この位あったら良いなという分量で進める。

かぼちゃの硬さによって、煮る時間は様子見る。

やわらかくなったら、蓋で鍋をおさえながら、お湯を捨てる。

とうきび（今年はとうきびが手に入らなかったのでスーパーで買った）、とら豆を入れる。

弱火にかけて、かぼちゃを少しずつ潰しながら混ぜる。

上新粉を少し入れ、すぐに混ぜる。

かぼちゃの具合をみて、シケレベの水を切っていれる。

シケレベによって、入れすぎると苦くなるので気を付ける。

塩はかぼちゃの甘味を確かめながら様子を見て入れ、全体的にまんべんなく混ぜる。

「柔らかいかぼちゃだったから、形がなくなったね、でもいいの。」と熊谷さん。

Rataskep 2

Cook the amount you desire, taking into consideration of people who will be eating.

Depending on the hardness of the pumpkin, watch how long it needs to simmer.

When the pumpkin is softened hold the pot, with the lid drain the hot water.

Add sweet corn (we could not find fresh corn this year, so we bought it at the supermarket) and the cooked tiger beans.

Stir over a low heat, mashing the pumpkin a little.
Add a little of the rice flour, mixing immediately.

Drain the water from *shikerebe* and put it in the pumpkin.

Be careful not to add too much *shikerebe* as it can become bitter.

Add salt to the pumpkin, balancing its sweetness, mix everything evenly.

'The pumpkin was soft so it has lost its shape, but that's okay', said Ms Kumagai.

「親は、マタギだったけど、肉を煮込んで食べたのは、年に一回くらい。仕留めても村の人に皆あげてしまうから、家では残った骨をよく煮込んで、昔は冷凍庫もないし、干し肉を作ってたみたいだけど、私の子供の頃はもうやってなかった。畑もしてたし。食が変わったのね。

私の親もね、腸なんかは、うち木造に一部二階建で、茶の間の上に２階があったの。だからそこにね棒があったから、そこに腸とか干してたの。それでおまえちょっと行って切ってきてくれって言って、マキリを渡されて、2回に行って、10センチくらいきって、火箸にさしてストーブの所で、じゅーっと焼いて食べてた。あんまりからからじゃなくて、半生位いで。生でたべてたのみたけど、心臓、フイベって言うんですけど、肝臓かなんかも合わせて。私は食べれなかったけど。」

使用をした道具を綺麗に洗って、キッチンも丁寧に掃除をし、それぞれに感謝をする。

Ms Kumagai said: ‘My father was a matagi (hunter) but we only cooked meat and ate it once a year. Even if he caught many deer, he gave them away to the villagers, so we only had leftover bones to stew at home. We didn't have freezers in the old days. People used to make dried meat, but they didn't do that anymore in my time. We had farms, eating habits had changed.

‘We lived in a two-story wooden house with a little room above the dining room. There was a stick there, we used to put the intestines on it. My father used to ask me to go upstairs and cut some. He passed me a knife, so I went upstairs, and cut about 10 centimeters of intestines. He would put them on the tongs and roast them on the stove. Not too cooked, but half-raw. I have seen them eaten raw; hearts, livers, and other organs too, but I couldn’t.’

Wash the cooking tools well, clean the kitchen, and thank them.

SOUNDS THAT I DID NOT RECORD, SOMETIMES I WISH I DID, BUT THE SOUNDS HAVE ALREADY PASSED

Big wind of a typhoon.
Waves on a stormy day.
The sound of seagulls eating food on a beach.
The high-pitched cry of deer in the mountain's valley – some say a deer is being territorial, others say it is looking for a partner.
Kane-san's singing voice.
The rustle of *shimaenaga* – the long-tailed tit – as it circled me.
The sound of snow falling from a pile and becoming a snowball.
The ice floes melting and crashing together at the river mouth.
The breeze in the fields when each plant is covered in ice and shining.
Stories that do not make Kane-san's face brighten.
The chorus of frogs before they lay their eggs.
The call of a fox family.
The evaporation of mist into fog.
Melting snow on the field.
The secrets of people who prioritise the community's harmony.
The deep breath in when people smell something nice.

I could not ask the sea, the mountains, the birds or the insects if I could point my camera or recorder at them. I did not want to unsettle or interfere with their activities, just living their lives and minding their own business.

During the winter, I heard the voices of a large group of swans echoing all over Samani as they migrated back. Many of them had learnt humans would feed them. They came towards me, so I tried holding a camera. They were not put off by lens shining at them.

SIX VISUAL CUES; THREE SOUNDS; TWO MUSCLE SENSATIONS; ONE SMELL

End of summer
The ocean creating waves again and again without beginning or end
A group of gulls alert to my presence
Parent and Child Rocks that saved people from the Tsunami in 2011
Old and modest – but big – houses, getting rusted by the sea wind
Purple flowers
Kelp being washed up on the beach

Waves
Cars
Wind

Getting ready for a long cold winter
Tight shoulder

Smell of Nishimachi (West Samani)

Late autumn
Orange and yellow trees standing out among green trees
Empty concrete street
Kane-san walking joyfully
Green field
Deer
Clear blue sky

Wind
Sparrows
Footsteps

Warm sunshine
Slightly dry mouth

Smell of Okada

Winter
Snow covering everywhere in white
The sunset colouring the mountain in purple and pink
Swans
Old man driving alone, wearing a mask
Plastic flower on the corner of the street
My neighbour, Miki-chan and Akihiro-san laughing and waving at me as they drive past

My feet squashing snow
Cars
Podcast presenter's voice in English

Cold nose
Muscle pain in my legs

Dry Samani air

End of winter
Kane-san's kimono progressing
Low tables in the office
The ocean outside of the windows
Vapour coming off a steamer
Cup of powdered coffee
Tomina Eiko-san's handknitted socks

Women discussing their frustration
Japanese folk song from a cassette player
Someone walking up the stairs – probably Sa-chan.

My eyes hurt
Shallow breathing

Something smelling fishy

Early spring
Tatami floor
Futon Yoko-san rented to me
My hanten almost done
Ceiling
Closed curtains
Closed sliding doors

Heater
Black crows outside
Futon cover moving

Heavy chest
Sickness in back

Geranium aromatherapy oil

Whenever I focused on my experience in a moment and explored hierarchy and prioritisation of my bodily knowledge, visual cues always scored high instantly. Then I could count two to three different sounds and two and a half muscle sensations. I could not count more than one smell at once; it was as if the scent could summarise the moment, requiring time to articulate the details. I felt as if time flows differently throughout the body.

鹿の脂肪を、フライパンの上で、焦がさない様に弱火でじっくり焼く。

溶けてきたら、網でこす。
脂肪の塊がなくなるまでこれを繰り返し、型に入れて冷ます。

汁物をつく時などに、油を入れることで味に深みを与えたり、栄養を補ったりすることができる。

使用をした道具を綺麗に洗って、キッチンも丁寧に掃除をし、それぞれに感謝をする。

Slowly cook deer fat over a low heat using a frying pan, don't let the oil burn.

When the fat melts, pour it into a strainer.

Repeat this process until there are no lumps of fat, pour the oil into a container, and let it cool down.

When making soup, use a small chunk of oil to add flavour and nutrition.

Wash the cooking tools well, clean the kitchen, and thank them.

鹿油
Deer Oil

工事名
平成24年災第1号 様似川災害復旧工事

NATURE RULES

While living in Samani I had to be respectful and aware of the weather a few days in advance and each day. Pre-planned schedules had to work flexibly around how nature decided to behave.

The sound of waves; drops of rain; humidity when the sun came out after a storm; the smell of snow; light reflecting on ice; birdsongs; the movements of stray cats; a condition of my body; and Kane-san's knowledge. All of these signals gave me clues to tentative plans I could make for the coming days.

Storms and heavy snow often interrupted the plans Kane-san and I made. If an interruption was caused by nature, we just needed to take a break and wait until the right time. If an interruption was caused by people, this was a more difficult thing that took time and emotional work to resolve.

In autumn I was determined to walk or cycle a bike that Yoko-san rented me so I did not have to rely on local people. Every day I politely declined people's offers to give me a lift. It became a ritual.

'Soga-san, get in my car,' locals said.
'No, thank you! I need to exercise so I will walk back home.' I often replied.

Soon after, winter came. I had no choice but to rely on Yoko-san who gave me a lift with her car almost every day, even to go to a supermarket. The harshness of Samani's winter was severe, I could not have survived without her help. I also had Furudate-san, Sa-chan, Atsuko-san, Miki-chan, and Akihiro-san who supported my day-to-day necessities. A culture to protect each other had developed over many years, deeply embedded among the community. Everyone knew my effort to say 'No, thank you' would not last long.

FIRST IS FOR THE BEAR, FOURTH IS FOR THE FOX, AND SIXTH IS FOR THE OWL

When I first started living in Samani, Kane-san said I should pay a visit and say hello to Mr Shuji Kikuchi. Everyone called him Kikuchi-kaicho which means chairman. As I got to know him a little he let me film him and his wife, Harumi-san, pick *kombu* on the beach, dry them, and pack them to ship away. He also sometimes invited me to his place where his wife cooked delicious dinners. I was grateful to taste a meal so unique to a fisherman's family. I was served seafood I would not find anywhere, even at an expensive restaurant – fresh, best quality and simply cooked. My attempt to practise a vegetarian or a vegan diet could not last long after arriving in Japan. I had to be flexible: understand the regional specificity of food resources; find a good balance between environmental concerns and Samani traditions; appreciate receiving new experiences, and re-establish my relationship with a different sense of ethics.

8th April 2021 – Sunny but cold

On my way home from the office working with Kane-san, I went to see Kikuchi-kaicho at his office. I wanted to show him the progress of the *hanten* that I was making. Kikuchi-kaicho told me a story.

'The Ainu are now so caught up in the local economy and society where making financial profit is the priority, and they treat money as if it's a religious faith.

'When I was a child, I think it was my homeroom teacher at elementary school, and I didn't know whether she meant it in a discriminatory or respectful way, she told me a story that I now think was good and easy for children to understand.

"If salmon come back to the river, the Ainu people
don't take the first one,
it was for the bear,
the second was for the Ainu,
the third was for the family,
the fourth was for the fox,
the next was for other humans,
after that, the owl."

'This is what my teacher taught me.'

After he told me the story, I thought about another story that he told me, another day.

While he was carefully removing the fish from the fishing net, Kaicho said 'I have become a fisherman. I'm in the business of taking lives. I'm going to end up in hell.'

I did not know what to say to him.

When I went outside, I saw that the wall of a building a few doors down had been graffitied with the word 'Ainu'. It has been painted over, but the paint that had erased it was fading.

SUBTLE YET LARGE

Kane-san and Furudate-san were making a *tamasai* (glass beaded necklace worn by Ainu women on special occasions). They seemed excited about it but were struggling.

'Even though it's a reproduction, this *tamasai* string is better than that one', Furudate-san said, holding a thinner string that she found in storage and comparing it with the old chunky dusty hemp rope she had been provided with. Kane-san and Furudate-san had been granted an 'opportunity' to make an exact copy of an old *tamasai* from a photocopy image provided by the Ainu Cultural Preservation Project in Samani and funded by the Japanese government. They were given instruction by a male Japanese project manager and a young Japanese female assistant who work at the Samani town hall.

Kane-san and Furudate-san were examining the picture and discussing how they could best make the reproduction. Their struggle continued the whole morning as they looked for the right string in a storeroom. The glass beads were already sourced outside of Hokkaido and provided. Finding materials in Samani is hard, so local people reuse materials from previous projects.

It was not my place to step in so I was observing from a distance while working on my *hanten*.

'A long time ago, my mother's *tamasai* had two chains and was heavy, so I took it apart and made it into two single chains. I remember now that, at that time, I saw that the string was a fisherman's rope,' Kane-san said.

I was excited about Kane-san's memory. I could not stop myself and asked them, 'Could you possibly use a fisherman's rope? It makes total sense. This *tamasai* is from Samani, a fishing village.' Kane-san and Makiko-san both got excited, too. Makiko-san said, 'Maybe the rope can be found in my brother's storeroom! I can ask him.' Her brother was a fisherman.

Later, this idea was declined by the project manager because a fisherman's rope did not fit with the image in the photocopy. I asked him if he did not find Kane-san's story interesting and important for the story of Samani. He replied, 'You might find it important, Soga-san, but this state project is to make a replica of the *tamasai* you see in the picture.' Kane-san and Makiko-san became quiet and said, 'Let's just finish making it in the way he says.'

The regional specificity Kane-san often spoke of was right there in front of us. However, the state guidelines and people who support them treated a photocopy as more concrete and necessary evidence than knowledge of a living person. The fact that the artefacts were made by 'Ainu people' with their name attached seemed to have brought the value into the project and not the effort, and quality, and story behind the makers.

On the way home, Kane-san said quietly, 'I'm not even granted the right to make a reproduction *emus-at* (sword sash) because of the rules. But I'm the only person who knows how to make them in Samani.' She was frustrated but remained cool because she is used to the rules the Japanese have made. She has experienced enough injustice, frustration, and disappointment in her life. She often said she has no more energy to get angry or fight back.

'But I'm an Ainu' she continued. Then she said she just wanted to get on with completing the project, as the least she could do. I witnessed similar incidents multiple times.

All the women I met in Samani had devoted their lives to putting men and their husbands first. Their life revolved around men's needs and order. Kane-san, being a leader within the Samani Ainu community and a knowledge-holder in Ainu culture, was respected. However, she was also used to a situation where her voice was not given serious consideration. If I got upset when things like this happened, Kane-san said '*shikataganai* [there is nothing we can do about it].' If I kept getting upset, it made Kane-san uncomfortable, partly because she worried about possible conflict and partly because she was respectful of the fact that people have different opinions. That they could have a voice was stressful to many of the women I met in Samani.

I imagined how many incidents like this have happened before, when the voices of people who are marginalised have been dismissed. That they continue to be dismissed. I saw how the narrative gets rewritten by power and money. It was a subtle moment of conversation, but these incidents started to accumulate into something large through emotional evidence. Although each incident was not a significant traumatic event, my body became a carrier of stories that I witnessed (Van der Kolk 2015). I saw how easy it is for people in power to dismiss the voice of others and how difficult it is for them to see the influence of their choices and behaviours.

I have seen several moments when women neglected their own needs and desires because of a fear of institutional power and men in their personal lives. This kind of self-censorship has been normalised, and I feel I witnessed people make choices based on their traumatic pasts.

I have seen *ento*-plants removed where Kane-san goes because the town officials see these plants as unwanted weeds and they prioritise the maintenance of concrete roads.

I have seen the rocks being extracted from the mountain to make metals for cars.

I have seen a sense of hope being given up.

My sense was to embody Kane-san's knowledge, our hopes, my own clear head – to not let the pressure crush them. No one can take away or deny the knowledge and information once they have been absorbed by my body. I imagined this embodiment of knowledge as being like sunshine which nourishes us and revitalises nature as it rises again and again.

THE MOUNTAIN-TO-SEA

fresh green wild plants in the mountains
shiny green-red-purple seaweed in the sea
they bloomed
they bloomed at the same time, gradually, slowly, and fast
as if they were having a conversation so they can flourish together
I could feel my body beginning to bloom, too
a physical sensation that could not be described in any other way
people's smiles seemed to be blooming, too

In autumn, Kane-san and I headed for the mountains, because there were *kokuwa* – hardy kiwi growing on trees. The tiny kiwis looked cute on my palm.

In winter, the snow covered the roads, the beaches, and plants and people stayed nested. It was so long.

When spring came, it was cheering to see the buds of the wild plants appearing. I wondered how my body could react to even the smallest buds looking so shiny. How does the human body know that plants look fresh and energetic?

Kumagai-san and I went to Nameless Mountain in Okada to check if the *asatsuki* – chives – had appeared.

We saw some *fukinotou* – butterburs – already quite grown at the bank by the river where we didn't see any salmon coming back last autumn.

Fukinoto is the sign of spring. That is what I learnt at school, and I remember making a drawing of. An act of a drawing helped me remember about *fukinoto*, that I could find them in Tokyo when I was a child.

the spring has come round
the mountains were still brown with dead trees and grass
the green and lush blooms of the morning glory stood out

At the foot of the mountain, which is so steep that it made me secretly think 'Argh, I have to climb it again.' The *kokuwa* tree was still there standing without leaf and fruit. Kane-san walked up the mountain fast, as always. It was hard to believe that she had just broken her arm slipping on the icy path where the snow had melted and frozen again. It was as if she had forgotten about her arm, but her muscles and blood were working to recover slowly and quietly.

Kane-san saw the *asatsuki* and ran to them.
'Thank you for blooming here,' she said to them.
She was happy reuniting with *asatsuki*.
As she greeted the plants, she sat next to them.

I was out of breath when I finally reached the top of the slope.
Kane-san was talking to *asatsuki* with a bright face.
Asatsuki are her old friends, I thought.
I approached them gently and asked if I could join them.
'You've already grown. Thank you for being here.' She was still talking to them as she finally realised that I was next to her.
Next moment, she pulled a little knife out of her bag, carefully.
'I'll have a little of you,' Kane-san said and put the knife under the root skilfully.
She cut the plants effortlessly.

'I take only a part of the area where it grows. Don't take all of it,' she said and returned the roots to the mountain.

'Don't take it all,
don't take anything too small,
don't take anything too big,
only the ones that are just green enough,
just enough for us, a few friends and my daughters.'

Some Ainu elders who I met and an Ainu hunter, Mon-chan, all use the word *itadaku* when they hunt and forage. Similarly, I have learnt to say '*itadaki-masu*'

before eating a meal as a child. Where '*itadaku*' literally means 'to receive', '*itadaki-masu*' is an honorific version of the verb 'to eat' and the '-masu' registers politeness. I learnt this gesture to show appreciation to the person who grew the ingredients and/or cooked the meal. Most importantly, it shows gratitude to the life of plants and other sources that nourish. My Ainu friends each said at one point that 'we cannot live without '*itadaku*' whether it is a plant or an animal.' When they say this, they are acknowledging they take the life of other living things. When I ran up the hilly bushes, got covered in mud, and saw Kane-san reuniting with them, my '*itadaki-masu*' extended the meaning by the fact that the source and joy of life which I was receiving was connected to the earth. I could only find these distinctions regarding the word '*itadaku*' by being close to Kane-san. I thought about life and death as different sides of the same coin when I heard Kane-san saying '*itadaki-masu*', as she cut *asatsuki*.

Words were few, but there were an overwhelming number of visual cues, smells, textures, sounds, and emotions. I felt Kane-san's sense of gratitude by practising cultural gestures intimately, doing this next to one another in her context and using my body to understand.

I wondered if such resonance had a scent.

It became clear to me how having an opinion about ethics and the logic of other people's culture is difficult without experiential knowledge.

right under our noses
at our feet
the flowers were blooming and looking so pretty
the sun was shining
our feet kept moving

'So, let's have a few butterbur sprouts, too.'
Kane-san's energy seemed endless when we were in a natural environment, engaging with the Ainu practices.
One by one, we check the growth.

'Don't take it all,
don't take anything too small,

don't take anything too big,
only the ones that are just green enough,
just enough for us, a few friends and my daughters.'
Kane-san's voice echoed in my head.

I thought I was going to get only *asatsuki*.
Now we have *fukinotou*, too.
Our plans often got diverted by nature.
Nature rules us.
'Let's look a little further,' Kane-san said in an uplifting voice.
When we come to Okada, our feet move faster and faster.
Our legs hesitate to turn back.

'Oh!' Kumagai-san was surprised.
Hawasabi was growing. She called the plants *hawasabi*. They were growing at the place where the water flows around a rock at the bottom of Nameless Mountain.

We walked down to the foot of the river.
There was also *hakkuri*. I was not sure if this was a Samani name for the plant. I could not find a Japanese or English name. The leaves were green with beautiful yellow dots scattered over them. Their roots were small and round. We left the roots and covered them with soil to keep them warm, it may snow again and it will be cold.

'Don't take the ones that are too small,
don't take the ones that are too big,
only take two roots and leave two or three back in the soil.'

We finally went down to the foot of the mountain where the water flows.
We walked along the river and headed for the beach.

The sea came into view.

We went to check on the *ponkombu* seaweed.
Kane-san consulted with the lunar calendar and the sky in the morning.
She said it would be fine, so we headed there.

In the distance, we saw fishermen taking *iwanori* seaweed.
'We'll get into trouble if we take it,' Kane-san said. After we glanced at the fishermen out of the corner of our eyes, we went in search of *ponkombu*.

I had a hard time walking because the rocks under our feet were so muddy. The seaweed-covered rocks were lumpy and slippery.

Well, Kane-san is quick on the beach, too. 'Of course,' I thought.

'Too much growth is bad,
not too overgrown, not too white.' Kane-san taught me.
It was not easy to distinguish the reddish-brown *ponkombu*.
To my eyes, all the seaweeds looked the same.
Kane-san was very skillful in plucking the kelp.

Paskutto shellfish
Mimi seaweed
Iwanori seaweed
Funori seaweed
Aonori seaweed

These are all seaweeds which are restricted. We do not have fishing rights to pick them.

Our goal was to find *ponkombu* that no one else picks.
It was there, growing. It is not often considered edible and is hard to commodify because of its fast-changing texture.
Kane-san suddenly made a mischievous face.
She turned a big rock around.
There were many crabs hiding under it.
She smiled at the crabs running away in a hurry.
'How cute!' We laughed. Then we apologised to them.
Kane-san never forgets her mischievous games.
'What are you guys doing here?' she asked the crabs.
'You know the saying "let go of the spider kids," it's really like that. They just scatter around and disappear.'

'There's a starfish!' I said loudly. A bright orange star was stuck on a rock.
Kane-san came over to take a look. She pretended to look at the starfish, but also checked the condition of the *funori* seaweed. 'These are not for us,' she said loudly and looked away smiling. Her hands were doing something else. We both had a good laugh. 'Eiko, don't take them,' she said, so we laughed more.

'This used to be the land of the Ainu, you know.' Kane-san looked serious.
'But now, if you take away the *funori*, you will be fined.'

The tide was coming in, so we quickly headed back to Kane-san's house.
The two of us fell asleep in the warm afternoon light.
Sleep that goes around and around.
How many moons have I slept in Samani?
Our sleepiness came back again and again like the waves I see outside.

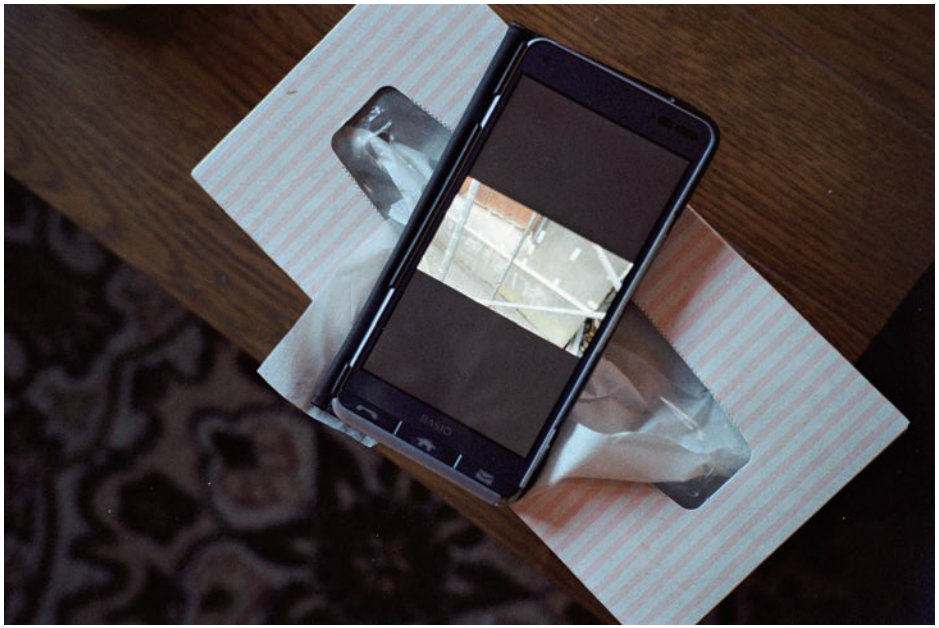
After we had a nap, we still needed to work while the plants and seaweeds were fresh.

Clean and process the *ponkombu*. As I did so, insects and small crabs came out of it. Kane-san made a pile of cut seaweed and chased the bugs away into it. She was telling the bugs off: 'Wait here for a while and don't come out! I will take you back to the sea tomorrow.'

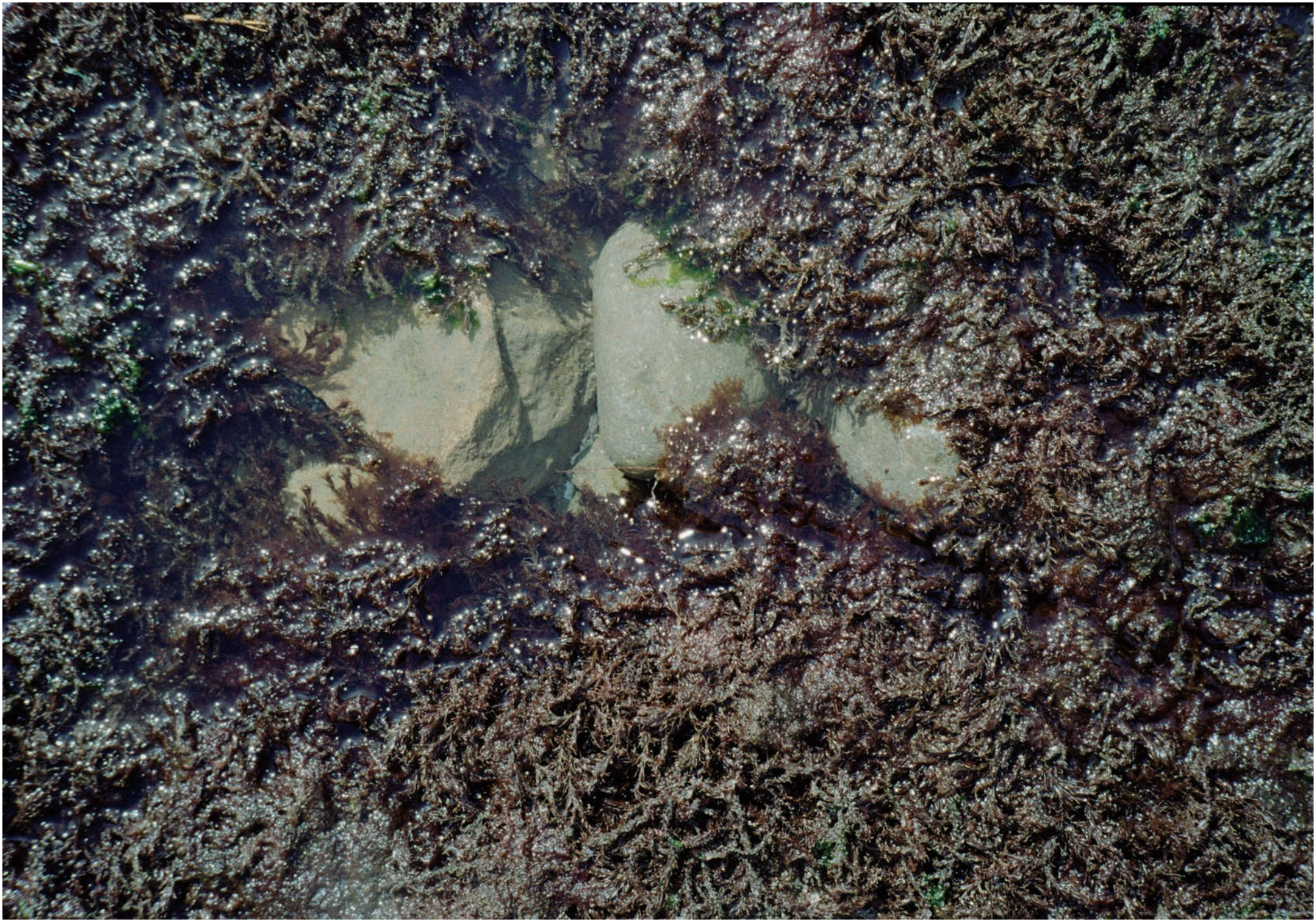
I was laughing and told insects-san, 'I will return you to the sea tomorrow.'
Kane-san taught me to keep all the cut pieces and left-overs and return them to the mountain and the sea.

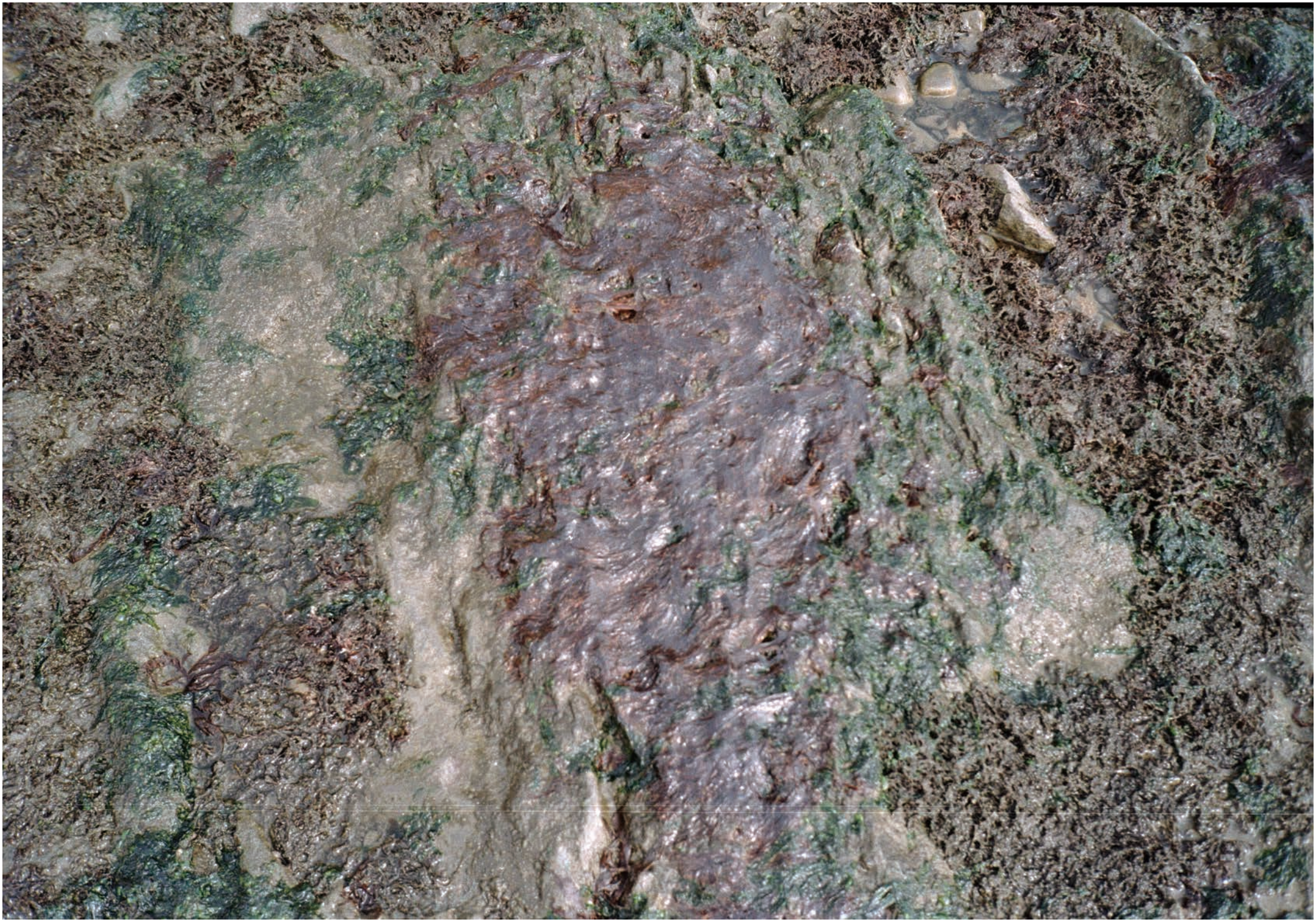
There was nothing to be trashed.
There was nothing to be ignored.
So that the species can return to nature and come back to us again.

Spring was starting, mountain to sea.



トンネル内カーブ
路面凍結
通行注意





旧暦、西暦、カネさんの母との記憶を頼りに、そして天気を見ながら山菜と海藻の様子を見にいく。

Consider the balance between the lunar calendar, the western calendar, Kane-san's memories of her mother, and the weather, to see how the wild plants and seaweed are doing.

山菜（あさつき、ふき、ハックリ、葉わさび）
海藻（ポンコンブ）
Mountain plants (Chives, Butterbur, Hakkuri ((Cremastra appendiculata)), Ha-wasabi), Seaweeds (Ponkombu)

ポンコンブ 1

海からいただいてきた海藻を仕分ける。(ミミ、ふのり、青のり、パシクット((昔、ひより貝、一個食べたらお腹いっぱいになる位大きいのもあったけれど、今は小さいものしかない))、帆立のあかちゃん、海の虫が混ざっていることがある。)

ポンコンブは全部食べられるけど、根元の堅いところだけは切り取る。葉っぱが白くなっていたり、膨らんでいる部分があったら、切り取る。

若いものの方が、美味しい。

2、3日たつと、赤くドロドロしてくるから、食べられなくなる。
「ポンコンブは、山のアイヌには無い言葉と食べ物だね。」と、カネさん。

カニ、貝、虫がまざっていたら、切った海藻の中に寄せて「仲間と待って、がんばってなさい。その中だったら安心でしょ？海水も含まれているから。」と声をかけ、次の日海に返しにいく。

「ごめが一番最高だね、ウニをとって食べたり。私たちは取ったら怒られるけど。」と、またカネさん。

「来週山にいったら、カエルさんが賑やかに迎えてくれるよ」彼女はいつも動物や虫達の話を、人間の友達の事を話す様に聴かせてくれる。

ポンコンブをおすそ分けできる人々のことを考えながら、仕分けを続ける。

その時突然音がした。

「母親がみているかも。もっとちゃんとやれといっているかな？」と言ってカネさんは微笑んだ。

Ponkombu 1

Separating different sorts of seaweed – *mimi, funori, aonori, pasikut* – and clams. *Hiyori* clams used to be big enough to fill you up after eating one, but now there are only tiny ones. Young scallops and sometimes sea worms are also mixed in.

You can eat whole *ponkombu*, but cut off the hard root.

If you find any white or swollen parts on the leaves, cut them off.

Young *ponkombu* are tastier.

After a few days, they turn red and sludgy and become inedible.

'*Ponkombu* is a word that the Ainu of the mountains don't have', Kane-san told me.

If crabs, shellfish, or insects are mixed in, pull them over to a pile of the cut seaweed and tell them, 'Wait with your friends and do your best to stay there. You will feel safer, right? It contains seawater.' Return them to the sea the next day.

'The luckiest ones are the gulls, picking the sea urchins. We would get told off if we picked them', Kane-san said.

'When we go to the mountains next week, we will be greeted by a lively frog community.' She speaks about animals and insects as much as she talks about her human friends.

Think about the people who are to share the *ponkombu*, and continue sorting it.

Suddenly we heard a sound.

'I thought my mother might be watching us. Maybe she is telling me to work more properly', Kane-san smiled.

山菜 （はわさび、ふき、あさつき、ハックリ）1

山菜を丁寧にチェックする。
汚れた葉っぱや根の部分があったら、切りとる。

虫がいたら「あんたどこからきたの？」と聞いて、「あんたの住まいはここじゃないから」と、外に出してあげる。

それでもまだ虫がいっぱい出てきたら、「ちょっとおとなしくしててと」優しく叱り、自然の中へ戻してあげる。
しばらくしたら、虫は出てこなくなった。

山菜を丁寧に水で洗う。

Mountain Plants (Chives, Butterbur, Hakkuri (Cremastra appendiculata)), Ha-wasabi), Seaweeds (Ponkombu) 1

Carefully check the mountain plants.
If there are any dirty leaves or roots, cut them off.

If there are any insects, ask them, 'Where did you come from?' and tell them 'Your home is not here', and take them outside.

If more insects come out, gently tell them off, 'Please stay quiet', and guide them back to the scrap pile. After a while, the insects will stop coming out.

Wash the mountain plants carefully with water.

ポンコンブ 2

ポンコンブは、2、3度洗う。

鍋にみずを入れてぽんこんぶを入れる。

湯がプツプツとしてきて、ぽんこんぶが緑になってきたら出す。

茹ですぎるとドロドロになるので、お湯は沸騰させない様にする。

ザルにあげたら、水で洗う。

Ponkombu 2

Wash *ponkombu* two or three times.

Fill a pot with water and add the *ponkombu*.

When the water starts to make little bubbles and the *ponkombu* turns green, take it out.

Do not let the water boil.
If boiled too long, *ponkombu* will become sludgy.

Wash it in water after putting it in a strainer.

ポンコンブ酢味噌和え 3

同じ位の分量のお酢、味噌、砂糖をボールに入れ、味を見ながら混ぜて合わせ味噌を作る。

ポンコンブを合わせ味噌に入れて和える。

続けてあさつきを細かく切り、混ぜる。

茹でたものを、そのまま生姜醤油をかけて食べても美味しい。

Ponkombu Seasoned in Vinegared Miso Sauce 3

Put in a similar amount of vinegar, miso, and sugar in a bowl, check the taste and mix.

Put *ponkombu* in the sauce and mix.

Cut chives in small pieces and mix.

Boiled *ponkombu* can be eaten deliciously with ginger and soy sauce.

ポンコンブのじゃがいも味噌汁 4

鍋ちゃんに、水をはって昆布で出汁を取る。

じゃがいもの皮を剥き、湯の中のポンコンブと一緒に茹でる。

火を止めて昆布を取り出したら、味噌を入れる。

味噌汁が出来たら、あさつきを刻んで入れる。

ポンコンブは食べる直前に入れる。

Ponkombu and potato miso soup 4

Pour water into a pot-chan and make soup stock with *kombu*.

Peel potatoes.
Boil the potatoes in the water with *kombu*.

Turn off the heat, take out the *kombu*, and add miso.

Cut chives and put them in the miso soup after turning the heat off.

Put *ponkombu* in the soup right before serving.

山菜(あさつき) 2

沸騰した湯の中に塩を入れて、あさつきを湯掻く。

水を切ったら、あさつきを、ポンコンブ用に使った酢味噌に和える。

ぽんずをかけても美味しい。

Mountain plants 2

In a pot of boiling water, add salt and chives.

Drain the water and add chives to the vinegared miso used for the ponkombu earlier.

It is also delicious to eat chives with ponzu.

山菜(ふき、ハックリ、葉わさび) 3

山菜は洗って乾かし、天ぷら粉を緩める。

フキは葉を花の様に開いて天ぷら粉をつけ、油で揚げていく。

使用をした道具を綺麗に洗って、キッチンも丁寧に掃除をし、それぞれに感謝をする。

Mountain Plants (Butterbur, Hakkuri, Ha-wasabi) 3

Wash and dry butterbur, hakkuri, and ha-wasabi, and lightly coat them with tempura flour (flour, eggs, water).

For Japanese butterbur, open the leaves like a flower, dip them in tempura flour, and deep fry them in oil.

Wash the cooking tools well, clean the kitchen, and thank them.

HOPE

21 January 2022, 9 a.m. – UK time / 6 p.m. Japan time

I called Kane-san. It was the same as usual; we reported to each other what we were doing, not much had changed.

Kane-san said she was making Ainu legwear – *hos* – and handwear – *tekunpe* – in Samani. I was busy writing and teaching in England.

Kane-san told me that she was teaching someone new how to make a kimono. 'Oh, there is something new!' I thought. I wondered if someone younger had shown up, but it was 88-year-old Eiko-san.

Not much had changed.

Kane-san said, 'I may not be able to sew kimonos anymore.'

Not much had changed.

Kane-san always said, 'This is probably the last thing I make.' Then she went on to make something new.

I said, 'I would like to go foraging with you again.'
Kane-san replied, 'There are wild vegetables waiting for us, so we have to keep going.' She was talking about her friends.

Practising ordinary things. That is what Kane-san does.

As she was speaking gently and happily, I was remembering the time when Kane-san and I were put together to stay in the same room at a ryokan (Japanese style hotel) in Teshikaga. As we entered the hotel room, Kane-san bowed to the room and said, 'We will be staying with you for a night, please take care of us.'

'Mountain plants are waiting for us,' she said again, so my mind was focused back to Kane-san's voice. She then told me to take care of myself and not to work too hard.

She said, 'See you again.'

I replied to Kane-san, 'Please take care.'

Keeping a sense of friendship gently with people, plants, animals, spaces, objects, and *sinrit* [an Ainu word meaning ancestors and roots] in mundane everyday processes, through a cycle of seasons, is crucial to sustaining knowledge and our ecological environments. This is necessary for both people and nature.

What I mean by friendship is a symbiotic relationship that is not only harmonious and positive, but also a fluid and difficult negotiation involving pasts and invisible forces. Slow down, stay courteous, believe in things we cannot see – like a seed that grows after you plant it – and show humble appreciation towards the things around us. That is what Kane-san and her social and natural environment taught me.

'Bye for now,' Kane-san said.

'See you again,' I said while looking forward to our next conversation.

Conclusion

Over the seven months I lived in Samani, I considered my artistic practices as everyday living, cooking, and encountering multispecies – human and non-human – such as birds, stray cats, deer, bears, insects, seaweed, and kimonos, as well as landscape elements like the sea and mountains. This book also takes the form of an artwork. Through photography and texts, I have explored how sensory information in flux could become sharable work without fixity, and become an intercultural and creative method of acquiring knowledge. I also extend the ecological practices, lived memories, and the voice of Kane-san outside of Samani.

Kane-san's Samani Ainu cooking starts with knowing where food resources come from and how to maintain our relationship with them – whether provided by people or nature. During our meetings, Kane-san's communication through a sense of respect extended to making sure that we cleaned everything after cooking and sharing food with friends. We did not waste any ingredients and it did not cost us much money to cook big meals unless ingredients were not available within Samani's natural environment. A community of friends helped us with food resources such as salmon and deer. In order to bring these elements together – ecological practices and communications, and to deliver her knowledge, Kane-san uses joy to produce resilience whereby she is able to play, explore, and maintain what she knows is important to her – knowing what is good, and appreciating values such as 'the sheen and colour of food', 'a kimono that dances', and 'only taking what we need from nature so that the plants can come back next year.' At the core of such perceptions, a reciprocal sense of aliveness among human and non-human beings is crucial.

I also found that the felt knowledge in Furudate-san's description of how she learnt what was needed to make the kimono was crucial. In the chapter, *Dancing Ainu Kimono* I describe how imagining the woman who made the original kimono connected the knowledge in Furudate-san's body both with another's life and the social norms of the past, and the materiality of the

kimono. It was not just listening to the kimono, but meeting with the knowledge held in one's own body, while emotion was an important factor. Kikuchi-kaicho often told me stories in a similar manner when he was making a fishing net or removing seashells off the net. 'An act of making' (Ingold 2011, 2013) became more than an access to cultural understanding; it also produced intimacy and a space for different bodies to resonate with each other. Narratives became open to be heard, free from an emotionally charged body.

Furudate-san and Kikuchi-kaicho's creative practices were both responding to their environment, whether the knowledge was held in the community or their bodies. Some of their stories were repressed while the Ainu culture and social environment were changing. When it came to meeting a community of people, I found myself engaging most with people who were producing forms of creative practice and holding innovative thoughts but may not have been entirely articulating them. Instead of focusing on the purity of heritage, I was articulating forms of doing that were vital to location and people.

I was also drawing on a feature of art in Japanese society where gestures themselves are considered to be art and are enacted by public members who are not professional artists (Tsurumi 1999). Paying attention to every movement of the body in the space and a relationship to scent mattered and constructed the practice of *kōdō*. I was seeing art in gestures that advanced people's reality through their own work. It was a long process; 'the notion of embodiment' (Pink 2015) and the idea of 'senses as both object of study and means of enquiry' (Howes 2021) were to me not merely external ideas which I focused on as research methodologies, but were part of how I lived my life.

Following *iroka* – listening to smell and colour throughout the process of cooking – involved walking on animal trails in the mountain and slippery rocks by the sea, and heightened my physical sensory functions. Information experienced through different parts of my body interplayed and became a detector to observe and unpack the knowledge of the environment, both the natural and emotional landscapes. I realised how years of living in big cities had tuned down my senses to cope with noise and air pollution within densely populated spaces. Working with Kane-san was clearly a challenge to my own social norms, because of our different backgrounds. Moreover, it was a challenge to reconnect my mind and my heart after my education had taught me to

separate them in order to become an acceptable person within my society. Once I shifted my focus to sensory experience, qualities of attentiveness, flexibility, and creativity became strengths to navigate complex interrelated relationships of information while caring for the emotional well-being of myself and others.

The kind of emotional understanding that I experienced through smelling and seeing a bear being cut gave me an insight into why the Ainu and neighbouring cultures developed ritualistic gestures such as *iyomante*. The bear was not an exception; when foraging mountain plants, or cutting a deer leg or a fish, a sense of appreciation and fear towards the harshness of the natural world emerged from deep inside my body. I acknowledged experientially how my existence was a part of a huge range of relationships, connecting me to the lives of other species and the presence of people who had passed away. It offered a nuanced understanding of the complicated situations and disconnections that modernisation, globalisation, and industrialisation have created between cities and rural areas. I also learned that receiving the gift of nature and the friendship of people always invited a possible risk of pain and destruction. It also holds a multiplicity of voices (Boym, 2009-10). This does not necessarily appear at the scale of one person's lifetime; however, a collective acknowledgment of the presence of invisible forces, such as ancestors and the moon, keeps us grounded and aware of why we have life. Whilst in Samani, my imagination and inspiration did not suddenly occur within myself; I was being led by plants, birds, and rain which created a reciprocal understanding of our environment just like my neighbours speaking to me.

The thing I drew on most effectively was my practice as an artist. I found myself becoming aware of how work gets made by being directed, by being new, and by holding different perspectives. Fostering people's awareness and initiating conversations with people who wish to speak out and improve their social environment was part of what I did as creative practice in Samani. I was staying with their thought experiments through their own creative practice such as cooking and kimono making, rather than looking at the history of anthropology where I was meant to sit outside and observe or participate with objective distance. I was there with the locals inhabiting the space to create a new reality while also submitting to the agency of the Samani Ainu community.

Holding compassion within complexities opened new dynamics for me regarding relationships with people. In my sections on cooking, I show how I could form friendships with a wide variety of people based on mutual curiosity and support, and how my outsider position gave me access to relationships not limited by the sense of closedness and oppression that had built up in Samani over the years. This had been caused by factors such as the past trauma of conflicts between the Ainu and the Japanese; the ongoing discrimination against the Ainu; Samani being marginalised as a town, and Japan's misogynistic culture. Being free from the locals' social norms and bureaucracy meant that I could see every part of the social equation of the community, because I could move around them. This was something that the local women could not do. For example, I could invite Yuuka-chan to the cooking sessions where she met Kane-san for the first time. Our meetings became an opportunity for her to figure out her Ainu heritage and raise awareness about the culture without the social oppression she had embodied in the past. She could also share her findings with her friends in an insightful way, which led to small actions of unfolding tension about an idea of the Ainu in Samani amongst the locals by a local. As a result, one of her friends asked me if she could also join the Ainu cooking with Kane-san.

I also invited a local government official and a local woman to the Seikatsukan office. While the official had commissioned projects from the Ainu community before, he said he used to feel reluctant to visit the office in person. Both he, the woman, and Yuuka-chan said they had no idea what kind of valuable knowledge Kane-san held, despite living in the same small town all their lives. These new encounters between people afforded me insight into the conditions of people's lives, such as their economic, historic, educational, and cultural backgrounds. I also understood that, even though the elders talked about how many species had disappeared since their childhood, there was no sense of urgency to protect their natural landscapes in local awareness. Samani still has a rich natural environment compared to some other regions in Japan, and the locals said it was hard to sustain a fresh pair of eyes to see what they have and recognise changes. However, talking about it raised awareness about the climate crisis.

Kane-san's Ainu knowledge and cooking skills, as well as the remaining natural species in Samani, are facing a critical moment. There are many things that are considered by people in authority to be 'noise' – emotions and the lived-

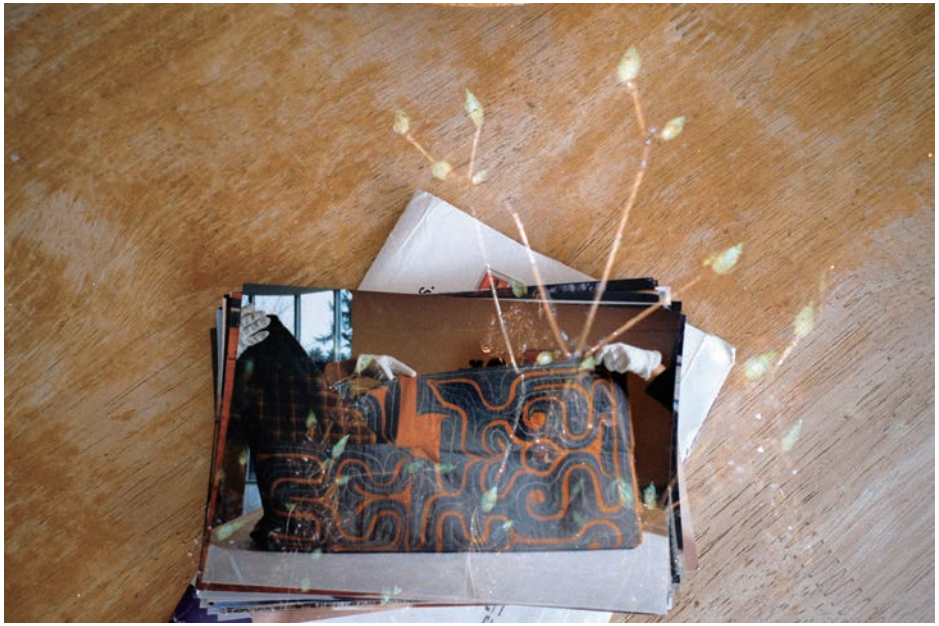
knowledge of people who are marginalised as well as nature. It has become clear to me how the top-down systematisation of western-centric, capitalistic, and patriarchal societies overlooks the nuanced and changeable nature of the ecology of both the human world and that of the non-human species. This is not a criticism of western methods. It is rather a call for more region-specific responses to nature; for equal work between knowledge holders of different backgrounds, removing the hierarchy between people, knowledge, and practice. The knowledge and understanding of how local ecology works requires a diverse range of people, including indigenous elders, hunters, and people such as conservationists and scientists who work at the forefront of nature. The wealth of knowledge that I learned in Samani was given by people who did not have formal higher education but were educated by nature and a continuation of their ancestral values. The existing conservative hierarchy of knowledge and the discrimination against any racial, sexual, and age differences causes oppression and does not help support a way of living that focuses on humanity and gentleness. Language and social norms need to be revised and improved to foster more compassionate and inclusive manners. Otherwise, people and non-human species will keep getting hurt, and the diverse quality of the world will be further diminished.

I asked Kane-san a few times, 'Sometimes you speak to a salmon and an object; is that something your mother did, too?' She thought for a while and responded, 'I don't know, it's something that I just do.' For Kane-san, such gestures are normal, it is something 'she just does.' I reconsidered the use of the English word, animism, that I mentioned in the chapter, *Making Friends in a More-Than-Human World*. It holds the everyday gestures of the vast range of cultures across different regions and continents, including the Ainu and the Japanese. In order to understand the varieties and nuances of different types of beliefs and gestures, translation between different languages as well as oral and written forms feels increasingly complicated and sensitive, especially with English being the dominant common language of the human world. Furthermore, to make friends with non-human beings requires intangible and non-human language communication, accompanying sensory abilities such as vision, hearing, taste, touch, and smell.

Kane-san would make gestures of appreciation and make friends with people, plants, animals, space, objects, and *sinrit* as autonomous entities with intention

and agency. I observed such a cosmos in her everyday life and cooking. Its nature of subtlety, intangibility, and fluidity require time and careful communications through sensory cognition or/and shared rituals. However, it leads to producing a space of elasticity and freedom to connect between ecological practices and emotional and natural landscapes. Updating the semantics of such a symbolic word, animism, in contemporary society could normalise the act of slowing down and showing respect for non-human species and invisible forces. Then the mundane actions of human life become an ecological practice. The word embodies diversities that should avoid simplification, systematisation, and formalisation. I cannot impose meanings on every single sign and what I saw in Kane-san, but it was helpful to use my sensory understanding to engage with and appreciate our natural world with flexibility in rhizomatic stance. I participated in shaping and assembling intangible information, in a way that maintained its unfixed nature. Unfolding knowledge production was something I felt I met with my approach as an artist.

Learning Kane-san's Ainu cooking has raised new questions for me: how can humans' social environment and everyday activities, including work and policies, centre on a sense of joy and aliveness? How can we respond to region-specific natural conditions as the starting point for the things we do? What kind of work can we produce if we place a value on animism at the center of art creation and education? To close this book, I open for consideration a new way of living among – and showing gestures of appreciation towards – humans and non-human beings as intentional subjects, as an essential part of ecological practice in contemporary society.



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