

# Hokkaidō Ainu *susam* and Japanese *shishamo*<sup>1</sup>

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## 1.

It is traditionally assumed that the etymology of the Japanese ichthyonym *shishamo* シシャモ or ししやも ‘smelt (*Spirinchus lanceolatus*)’ rests on the Ainu side, the point of departure being the expression *susú hamú* ‘willow leaf’. This is the most common solution to be found in Japanese dictionaries (including those that, here and there, provide philological commentaries, e.g. NKD: s.v. *shishamo* or Daijirin: s.v. *shishamo*). The specifics of the Ainu etymology usually run along the following lines:

- a) There is no mention of Ainu *susám* ‘smelt’, a word very much resembling Japanese *shishamo* (let alone Ainu *susú hamú* itself). At all events, it is implicit that *shishamo* comes directly from Ainu *susú hamú*.

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- b) Both *susám* and *susú hamú* are quoted, but there is no attempt to figure out what the exact terms of the relationship are between them, or with Japanese *shishamo*.

As for *shishamo*, the lack of internal etymology and the kanji version 柳葉魚, lit. ‘willow-leaf fish’, seem both to favour its foreign origins, appealing at least on an intuitive level. The goal of this paper is to put this linguistic hunch on more solid grounds by answering the questions posed in b) above. At the very same time, it is my intention to offer some thoughts on the implications of working with an isolated, moribund (if not dead by now) language. Given the multitude of factual questions and potential answers it generates, the case under scrutiny in this paper may be of some interest for historical linguists in general.

## 2.

**2.1.** Ainu *susú hamú* is a noun phrase based on the izafet construction which can be found, for instance, among Turkic and other Eurasian languages:<sup>2</sup> The possessee follows the possessor and the former receives a possessive marker. Generally speaking, we can say that *susú* ‘willow’ (AHJ: 201[45] < Proto-Ainu \**susu*, RPA: 140<sup>3</sup>) is the “specific” member, and *ham* (< AHJ: 197[13] < Proto-Ainu \**hrA-*, RPA: 93), the “generic” one. The generic member adopts the so-called “possessive” or “belonging form”. In order to do so, the possessive or belonging marker *-V*, *-hV* and *-VhV* is attached (the quality of the vowel and the exact distribution of each variant is a matter of current discussion and should not concern us

<sup>2</sup> The term actually comes from the Turkish-Persian grammarian tradition, from which it extended to the rest of the Turkic languages. Only during the last decade has it come to be of common usage in Ainu philology.

<sup>3</sup> Proto-Ainu reconstructions, always according to RPA (note that Vovin’s ⟨A(A) E(E) O(O)⟩ are rewritten ⟨a(a) e(e) o(o)⟩ for typographical convenience), are only provided if a given word is registered in both Hokkaidō and Sakhalin Ainu. Pan-Ainu refers to words registered in most dialects (sometimes including those spoken in Sakhalin) but which are not necessarily part of the parental language lexical stock, e.g. loanwords. \* stands for ‘reconstruction’, and †, for ‘expected form’.

here). *Susú ham-ú* can therefore be analyzed in the following terms: *susú Ø-ham-ú* {willow 3sg.-leaf-possessive}, lit. ‘the/a leaf of the/a willow’.

**2.2.** Ainu *susám*, on the other hand, is an opaque lexical item with no transparent, self-evident etymology.

### 3.

The actual distribution of Ainu *susám*, and by extension of the noun phrase *susú hamú*, is restricted to Hokkaidō: there are four dialects along the southern coast, i.e. Horobetsu (Chiri 1953/1976: 73–74), General Saru (Tamura 1996: 687), Nibutani (Kayano 1996: 281), and Kushiro (Ōtsuka 2007: 286a), and one located in the central region, namely Asahikawa (Ōta 2005: 209b).<sup>4</sup> There seems to be no trace of the word *susám* or the noun phrase *susú hamú* in dialects spoken in Northeastern Hokkaidō, Sakhalin or the Kurile Islands. Although it is possible to argue that the lack of information may be the result of poor documentation, and not to any real loss or replacement of vocabulary, I believe that it follows naturally from the discussion below that this is not the case: *susám* and *susú hamú* are most likely a localism within the Ainu linguistic (and folkloristic) domain.

### 4.

**4.1.** There are two traditional accounts for the etymological relation of *susám* and *susú hamú*:

- a) “*Susám* is a fish for which one heads to the river (*sam*) after having put a pot (*su*) on the fire, so easy was it to catch.” (told by Kayano Shigeru = Southern Hokkaidō Ainu tradition, Katsuichi 1993/2000: 29–30)

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<sup>4</sup> The word *susam* appears in Batchelor’s dictionary (AEJ: 431b, s.v. *shusam*). Although it is true that this dictionary contains a wealth of Sakhalin items, the origins of these cannot be ascertained unless a second testimony can be brought along, something unviable in the present case.

- b) “Long ago, an elder prayed while dancing, and willow leaves (*susú hamí*) turned into fish. The willow tree continually shed its leaves into the river and people gathered under the tree and cooked and ate the leaf-fish without reserve. This angered the gods, so now there is a smaller supply.” (told by Aoki Aiko = Central Hokkaidō Ainu tradition, Katsuchi 1993/2000: 30, fn 29).

They are very common and well documented. For the sake of illustration, during her stay at Nibutani, M. Inez Hilger was told the same two stories:

Ainu in Nibutani, just across the hills from Mukawa area, told us a story about the *shishamo*: “In general, Ainu stories are based on actual life experiences, not on fanciful thinking. But this is the story: We call the *shishamo*, *su-samu*, ‘fish-in-the-pot.’ It is said that the Ainu built a fire and placed a pot of water on it before they left home to catch *shishamo*. By the time the water boiled, the Ainu were back with a mess of these small fish.” Another added, “*Sussu-ham* is an older name for this little fish; it means ‘willow-shaped leaf.’ Leaves of the willow dropped from the skies into the river and turned into *shishamo*. But this story is also too fanciful, too poetical, to be an Ainu one.” (Hilger 1971: 26)

The legend in b) above is expanded in Chiri Mashihō’s invaluable collection of Ainu folk tales (1981: 205–208). In one of the tales on ghost apparitions, we are told about an elder who prays to a spirit called *Pawci-kamuy* and a river, into which willow leaves are shed, called *Susu-ram-pet*, lit. ‘river of the willow-souls’ or ‘river of the *susam*-soul’, if the compound is made up of †*susuham*-*ram*-*pet* (where *ram* ‘soul, heart’ and *pet* ‘river’), as proposed in Ōta (2005: 209b).

**4.2.** It may now be appropriate to explain that the willow plays a key role in Ainu folklore. It is said that there is a group of “good trees willing to help men”: willow, dogwood, oak, spruce, spindle tree, *prunus*, hornbeam, black alder, lilac, birch, etc. Willow trees are very frequently portrayed in *tuytak*, lit. ‘two speaking’, stories about the men and the nature. In these stories the willow helps people by informing men about recent or ancient events, or just by sharing its wisdom with them. This is done in exemplary dialogues usually involving the willow and the elm

(see *susu newa cikisani ukoitak*, lit. ‘the willow and the elm talk together’, in *Tuitak*: 67–125).<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, willow trees appear there where new life is created. At the beginning of time, a willow stick is used by the divine Aeoina to form men’s backbone. When a child comes into the world,

[...] the father, or, as a rule, the grandfather, will go to the bank of a river, where he will seat himself upon to ground and pray to his gods. That done, he will cut a nice green stick of willow about a foot in length. This he will reverently bring home and, sitting down by the hearth, whittle into a fetish [= *inaw*, JAAF]. When finished, he will worship it devoutly, offer prayers to the Goddess of Fire [= *Ape-huci-kamuy*, JAAF], and then, carefully taking it in both hands, carry it to the sleeping place and set it up there as the tutelary god of the new baby.

Note the similarities of the child-birth ceremony and the legend in b) above.

The *inaw*, ritual sticks with shavings, are made of willow, since the willow is said to be the only wood which can be offered to gods (vide i.a. Bachelor 1927: 115, 183–193, 352).

From a reductionist viewpoint, the importance of willow trees in Ainu culture stems from the abundance of willows in Hokkaidō and the very practical nature of its wood.

## 5.

Coming back to linguistics, the account in a) can be called “the folk etymology of *susám*”. It shows nothing else but the natural, transparent desire to figure out what the origin of the word *susám* is. In sharp contrast to b), it is obvious that Kayano’s version is much too transparent, while the legend contained in b) is opaque. Moreover, note that in Hilger’s account b) is said to be “an older name”. This scenario is typical of

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<sup>5</sup> The most common name for the elm is *atni* (AHJ: 201[41]). The name *cikisa-ni*, lit. ‘tree to make fire’ (elm wood is used especially for producing fire, see explanation in AEJ: 68a), is used instead because it underlines in clearer terms its cultural role.

doublets where only one of the possible explanations actually reflects the elaboration based on folk etymology, the other one, hopefully, retaining the correct etymology. Although I agree with Poruciuc (1991: 54) in that, when dealing with potential folk-etymological products, today's clarity does not automatically mean “diachronical correctness”, it is my understanding that there could be a grain of truth to the validity of the folk etymology of *susám*.

## 6.

The only meaning known to us of *su* (in Sakhalin *suu*) is ‘(sauce)-pan’ (AHJ: 118[21] < Proto-Ainu \**suu*, RPA: 141). It has several verbal derivates, e.g. *suye*, *supa*, *suke*, whose semantics always revolve around cooking or boiling. There are, however, intriguing clues which seemingly point to the possible existence of an Ainu word \**su(u)* ‘fish’. They can be classified in two groups:

- a) Internal: a group of marginal Ainu words, among which Voznesenskij’s *súnta* ‘the muzzle of the fish’ (RPA: 206) and Southern & Central Hokkaidō *supún* ‘roach, dace’ (Tamura 1996: 686, Ōta 2005: 209a, cf. AEJ: 430b, s.v. *shupun-chep* ‘*Leuciscus hakuenensis*’ or Watanabe 1972: 51 *Triboloden spp.*) deserve special attention.
- b) External: a group of terms attested in languages which historically have been in contact with some Ainu populations (especially Southern Tungusic):
  - I. Nivkh: Amur & Pan-Sakhalin *cʰo* / -*so* ‘fish (generic term)’ (NRS: 450, Tangiku 2008: 32[89]) → accusative *cʰo-**χ* (this is the lexical source of the numeral classifier -*s* referring to fish, fishery instruments, etc., cf. Gruzdeva 2004: 317).
  - II. Tungusic: [1] Proto-Tungusic \**sugbu* ‘fish skin’ (Cincius 1977: 115–116) > Eastern Ewenki *siwgu* ~ (Nep, Podkamennaya Tunguska) *səwgu* (Vasilevič 1958: 366a, Doerfer 2004: 740[9978], 742[10006]), Oroch *subbu* (Avrorin / Lebedeva 1978: 225a), Orok *subgu* ~ *sugbu* (Ozolinja 2001: 317b, 318a), Samagir *sogu* (Schmidt 1928: 235b), Ulcha *sugbu* (Schmidt 1923a: 281a), Naykhin Nanay *sogbo* (Onenko 1980: 371a), Kili *sobgo* (Sunik 1958: 189b), Udihe *sugbu* (Kormušin 1998: 288), Manchu *sukū* ‘Pflanzenwuchs’ (Hauer 1952–1955/2007:

430, Mongolian loanword?); [2] Proto-Southern-Tungusic \**sugdata* ‘a k. of fish’ (Cincius 1977: 118) > Ulcha *sugdata* (Schmidt 1923a: 281b), Naykhin Nanay *sogdata* (Onenko 1980: 371a), Orok *sundatta* (Ozolnja 2001: 321b), Manchu *sunggada* ‘Fisch mit rotem Schwanz und roten Flossen’ (Hauer 1952–1955<sup>2</sup>/2007: 432, in WQWJ 2.975b [4466] it appears *sub* “birai nimahai hacin”, i.e. ‘river-fish section’, intra-Tungusic loanword?); [3] Common Tungusic \**sugjansa* ‘salmon’ (*ibid.*) > Eastern Ewenki *sugjanno* ~ *sugjandə* (Vasilevič 1958: 366b, Doerfer 2004: 732[9857], 743[10024]), Eastern Ewen *hijinri* (Novikova 1980: 228b), Negidal *sogjana* (Schmidt 1923b: 33a), Kili *sogjana* (Sunik 1958: 189b), Oroch *sugjasa* (Avrorin / Lebedeva 1978: 225a), Udihe *sugjehä* ‘fish’ (Kormušin 1998: 288), Hailar Solon *siigjanda* ‘burbot’ (Poppe 1931: 67b); and [4] Manchu *sohoco* ‘dem Schwertstör ähnlicher Seefisch’ (Hauer 1952–1955<sup>2</sup>/2007: 423, in WQWJ 2.981a [4492] it appears *sub* “mederi nimahai hacin”, i.e. ‘sea-fish section’).

III. Mongolic: Middle & Classical Mongolian [1] *soqosun* / *soyosun* ‘fish (apparently a generic term)’ (Haenisch 1939: 135); and [2] *soyosu* ‘a k. of saltwater fish’ (Lessing 1960<sup>2</sup>/1995: 724).

#### Responses:

- a) Unless one is open to accept that *sunta* is the contraction of a phrase like \**su-an ta* ‘in the pot’,<sup>6</sup> which from an Ainu structural viewpoint is odd at best, other explanations must be contemplated. For instance, *sunta* could actually be segmented \**su.n-ta*, with \**-m* as a sort of “classifier” typical of long and small objects, e.g. *ram* ‘scales’, *amam* ‘rice’, *ham* ‘leaf’, *am* ‘(finger)nail’, *yam* ‘chestnut’, etc. (Dettmer 1989.1B: §220), therefore \**su-m* ‘fish’, and the locative *-ta* (for the phonetics, see *tuntu* ‘pillar, stake’ < \**tum* ‘in (the middle of)’ + locative *-ta*). The idea of classifiers as a radical component of basic lexical bases in Ainu remains, however, largely unaccepted among specialists. As for *supun*, see below.

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<sup>6</sup> Curiously enough, *suat* ‘a pot handle’ (as discussed in Shiraishi 1999) contains *at* ‘elm-fibre’, whose metaphorical meaning is ‘handle’, while in its turn *suatni* ‘the angelica tree (*Aralia sinensis*)’ (AEJ: 427b) contains *suat* this time used “metaphorically” to describe the leaves of the angelic tree, which apparently remind the Ainu of pot handles.

- b) While it is widely recognized that Classical Mongolian *soyosu* is a Manchu loanword, the relation with other words in surrounding languages is unclear, although most specialists seem to agree that Mongolic forms are ultimately of Tungusic origin (Rybatzki 1996: 9–11 and 15). In modern Mongolic languages *soyosun* and *sugas*, apparently the Khalkha historical continuation of the latter (Hangin 1986: 306), is used as a generic term for fish, e.g. *marma soyosun* ‘a k. of fish’, where *marma* is nothing else but another fish name of unclear origin, but usually considered to be again of Tungusic pedigree (Doerfer 1985: 91[256]).

Austerlitz’s assumption on Nivkh *o* is that at least in some cases it goes back to Proto-Nivkh \**u*, see for example in Tungusic loanwords, e.g. Manchu *ulgiyan* /*ulgjan*/ ‘pig’ ← Proto-Nivkh \**ulgan* > Nivkh *olŋŋ* ‘id.’ (cf. Tangiku 2008: 33[99], s.v. *olŋŋ*), but Proto-Tungusic \**muri.n* ‘horse’ (Doerfer 2004: 556[7266]) → Proto-Nivkh \**murVn* > Nivkh *moryŋ* ‘id.’ (ethno-historical considerations favours the Tungusic → Nivkh route). Vovin (RPA: 161) proposed some Nivkh-Ainu comparisons involving identical sound correspondence, e.g. Proto-Nivkh \**tu* ‘lake’ (NRS: 362a, s.v. *tu*) ~ Pan-Ainu *to* ‘id.’, Proto-Nivkh \**no-* ‘to comb’ (NRS: 212b, s.v. *no--j*, cf. Austerlitz’s Southeastern Sakhalin Nivkh *no-* ‘braid, plait’, vide i.a. 1990: 24) ~ Pan-Ainu *muy-kar* ‘to comb’, lit. ‘to use a comb’, but Vovin could not reach any definite conclusion about the direction of the borrowing. On the other hand, well-known cultural borrowings containing *s-* in the donor language are rendered in Nivkh with *cʰ-* ~ *s-*, e.g. *cʰafq* / -*safq* ‘chopsticks’ (cf. Tangiku 2008: 146[1447], s.v. *cʰafqŋ*) ← Mongolian & Tungusic \**sabka* ~ \**sarpa-kV* ‘id.’ (Janhunen 1998: 16), due to the synchronic rule in Nivkh that no initial fricatives may appear in *An-laut*. The reconstruction of \**cʰ* or \**s* to Proto-Nivkh is a vexing problem in historical and comparative Nivkh linguistics, and Austerlitz struggled with it all his life, without reaching any conclusive solution (vide i.a. Austerlitz 1982: 82–83, 1990: 20). Therefore, although it could be assumed that Nivkh *cʰo* / -*so* comes from \**so* ~ \**su*, allowing the tentative connection to the segment \**su(u)* in Ainu *sunta* or *supun*, there is no way of proving definitively the route of borrowing. It is worth noting that Nivkh *-s* is a very productive noun classifier for fish names and fishery terms, whose origin is obviously *cʰo* / -*so*

(Gruzdeva 2004: 317). This seems to point out that *cʰo* / *-so* is actually a pretty archaic item in the Nivkh vocabulary, in opposition to the more than residual nature of the hypothetically same element in Ainu. Again, this is inconclusive. The Pan-Nivkh accusative *cʰo-χ* could be the departure point for latter borrowings. Of course, it cannot be denied that Proto-Nivkh speakers could have reinterpreted the hypothetical root \*/*sug*/ = [suX] as \*[su-X], however this seems to me unlikely.

All the Tungusic forms seem to share the very same root: \*/*sug*/, again easily relatable to Mongolian *soyo-sun*, etc. Tungusic [2] & [3] are to be found under the same *lemma* in the Cincius' comparative Tungusic dictionary, even though their "suffixal" components are markedly different. Unfortunately, I am unable to assign a meaning to it, basically because I am not sure about the exact function of the resulting segments \*-*bu*, \*-*data* and \*-*ja-nsa*. As for Ainu *supun*, there are undeniable formal similarities with PT \**sugbu* 'fish skin', once the consonant cluster is simplified. The unexplained final *-n* in Ainu and semantics, however, must prevent us from making quick conclusions.

It seems undeniable that we are dealing here with Kulturwörter well spread across the Northeastern Eurasian region. Unfortunately, there is no way to describe the borrowing routes which could connect those words with Ainu. The vocabularies of the northwestern Hokkaidō Ainu dialects, Rayciska and Kurile Islands do not contain *susám*. This is most suspicious, because whatever the direction of the borrowing (from Ainu to "Northern Eurasia" or from "Northern Eurasia" to Ainu), those dialects are the point of departure or the closest destiny. Furthermore, if we accept that Ainu *susám* contains \**su(u)* 'fish', there is still the insurmountable obstacle of identifying the second segment, i.e. *sam* (which could not be the same word as in Kayano's version).

Summing up, in spite of the many look-alike words within and beyond the Ainu domain that contain what seems to be a common Northeastern Eurasian lexical base \*\**sU(gV)*, there is no convincing way to link *sínta*, *supún* and *susám* unless we go into wild speculation. As far as this case is regarded, Poruciuc's assessment mentioned above may be accurate after all. In what follows I will focus on the relation of: a) *susám* with *susú hamú*, and b) these Ainu words with Japanese *shishamo*.

## 7.

Contraction is the most logical and economic solution to explain the relation of *susú hamí* and *susám*. Internal motivations warranting contraction in Ainu are poorly understood. Intervocalic weakening is unknown, therefore we cannot invoke sound changes of the sort /VsV/ > /VhV/ > /V(V)/. Instances of haplology, though rare, are more common:

- a) *to* ~ *tottó* ‘breast; mother’ (AHJ: 12[102]) ↔ *tómom* ‘nipple’ (AHJ: 13[103]), if related to *mom* ‘adrift, afloat’ (?), otherwise just onomatopoetic;
- b) *mos* ‘fly’ (AHJ: 192[105]) ↔ *mosóspe* ‘maggot’ (AHJ: 192[106]), both perhaps related to *mos* ~ *mosos(o)* ‘to waken, rouse up from sleep’;
- c) *siyamám* ‘rice’ ↔ *si-amam* ↔ *sisam-amam* (AHJ: 203[57–58]), though it is unclear what has exactly happened to the second /s/;
- d) *rapuri* ‘a k. of dress mostly made from wing feathers of cormorant’ < *rap* ‘feather’ + *uriri* ‘cormorant’ (Kabanoff 1997: 48).<sup>7</sup>

If haplology is the explanation that accounts for the reduction of *susú* > \**su*- in *susám*, we still need to explain where the second /s/ comes from. Postulating the sound change /h/<sup>8</sup> > /s/ is a desperate measure: cross-linguistically (typologically) odd, /h/ > /s/ happens to be a very salient feature in the historical evolution of Sakhalin Ainu (-*h* [= perhaps /x/], at least in the initial stage] < Proto-Ainu \*-*p* -*t* -*k*).<sup>9</sup> However, it is

<sup>7</sup> Note that haplology is in contrast to reduplication, which is much more frequent in Ainu (vide i.a. Tamura 1988/2000: 201–203). It could be argued that *susú* ‘willow’ is the metaphorical extension of \**su* ‘fish’ based on the image of the willow containing many leaves, actually as many as smelt may be observed or caught. Parallel etymologies requiring similar semantic-metaphorical elaborations include Sakhalin Ainu *tamtam* ‘fish scale(s)’ < Proto-Ainu \**ram* ‘soul, heart, spirit’ (RPA: 130) > Hokkaidō \**ram* and \**ramram* ‘id.’ (AHJ: 169[57] & 182[22]). And yet, the origin of the semantic replacement ‘fish’ → ‘pot, pan’ would remain unclear.

<sup>8</sup> In Hokkaidō Ainu, *h* stands for a glottal fricative, which “[...] is hardly distinguishable in intervocalic position” (Bugaeva 2004: 12, see also Dettmer 1989.1A: §4[1–3]).

<sup>9</sup> The testimony of the “Moshiogusa” (1792), the oldest Hokkaidō Ainu vocabulary known to us, contains some examples of the sort *hida* ‘dog’ vs. contemporary Ainu dialects *sita* ~ *seta* ‘id.’ (AHJ: 186[45]). These are obviously Japanese phonological trends that have nothing to do with Ainu.

widely regarded as a case of palatalization, for it is clearly conditioned to contexts where /h/ is surrounded by the front vowel /i/, Proto-Ainu \**sik* > pre-Rayciska (≈ underlying form; Rayciska is the main dialect of the West Coast Sakhalin region) /sih/ > *sis* ‘eye’, also in Proto-Ainu \**sippo* > pre-Rayciska \**sihpo* > *sispo* ‘salt’ vs. Hokkaidō \**sippo* ‘id.’, the latter after assimilation, or Proto-Ainu \**ikka* ‘to abduct, steal’ > Rayciska & Kurile & Bihoro *iska*, Hokkaidō \**ikka* ‘id.’ (pace RPA: 40–41 and 96, where \*-*hk-* is preferred). Thus, the phonetic context required does not apply in the case of *susám* (which incidentally is not attested in Sakhalin, Kurile or Bihoro!).

Assimilation /s...h/ > /s...s/, with or without haplology (then /s...s...h/ > /s...s...s/ > /s...s/), makes a perfect example of an *ad hoc* solution, as does the intervocalic weakening, and deserves no further comments.

## 8.

The solution, I believe, is in the suprasegmentals. Some authors have already noted that trisyllabic words tend to become disyllabic when the syllables within the accent window<sup>10</sup> happen to contain the high vowels /u/ and /i/. Specialists consider that high vowels are inappropriate to bear the word accent due to their low sonority, so different processes are triggered to shift the accent to the next or previous syllables.<sup>11</sup> *Mittelsilbenschwund* is the process whereby an unstressed vowel in an open sec-

<sup>10</sup> In Hokkaidō Ainu (with the exception of Yakumo), the accent is strictly limited to the first two syllables of a prosodic word (iambic feet). The system is quantity-sensitive, thus the accent will fall on: a) the second syllable if the first syllable is light, i.e. (C)V., e.g. /a.pa./ → /a.pá./ ‘entrance’, b) the heavy syllable regardless of whether it is the first or the second, i.e. (C)VC., e.g. /ap.to./ → /áp.to./ ‘rain’, c) the first syllable if both are heavies, e.g. /kóy.sum./ ‘bubble, foam’. In a secondary development, in Yakumo the accent is shifted to the third syllable if the second syllable is open.

<sup>11</sup> This phenomenon cannot be linked to vowel devoicing. While vowel devoicing in Ainu targets vowels /i/ and /u/ in open syllables flanked by voiceless consonants, it is seemingly an important, although not unavoidable, prerequisite for the vowel to be unstressed (see further details in Shiraishi 2003). In our current state of knowledge, vowel devoicing is at best irrelevant.

ond syllable of a trisyllabic and longer word is systematically lost, especially if the vowel is /i/ or /u/. There are numerous instances of *Mittelsilbenschwund* in Ainu affecting inherited words as well as loanwords (see brief discussion in Dettmer 1989.1A: §13[g]):

- a) Saru Ainu *niske* ‘load of wood’ < *ni* ‘wood’ + *siké* ‘load’ (Shiraishi 2003: 247);
- b) Japanese *urushi* ‘laquer’ → Hokkaidō \*ússi (but Bihoro *upsi* ‘id.’, maybe after the influence of *upsi* ‘to turn upside down’,<sup>12</sup>) , Sakhalin *usi* < \*ur(u)si. (The so-called echo vowel after /r/ could actually be a consequence of this phenomenon, rather than an issue to be dealt with aside).

There are no variants †*niske* or †*uriúsi*, i.e. ones that would preserve the full vowel. According to this pattern, *susú hamú* would have yielded \**sus-hám*, -ú.

## 9.

A cursory examination of Ainu dictionaries will show that consonant clusters of the shape /Ch/, where /C/ stands in principle for any consonant (especially, but not exclusively, continuants), are highly infrequent. Only noun compounds where both members have not been contracted yet, may eventually present the sequence /C#h/ (vide i.a. Dettmer 1989.1A: §11, although his remark “[d]iese Tendenz ist in den Dialekten des Nordens besonders auffallend” is clearly an overstatement). However, this could have happened in the case of *susám* < \**sus-hám*, -ú. In support of this observation, I offer two cases where the *h* deletion took place:

- a) General Saru *kónam* & Asahikawa *kómam* ‘fallen leaves’ (Tamura 1996: 326, Ōta 2005: 94b, cf. Hattori 1967: 197[13]), from \**kom* ‘perennial’ and *ham* ‘leaf’ (Kayano 1996: 194, s.v. *konham* ‘leaf fall’). The first member of the compound survives in *komni* ‘oak’ < \*‘perennial tree’.

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<sup>12</sup> Consonant cluster \*-ps- otherwise is solved in Bihoro -ss-, e.g. *osstor* ‘bosom’ < Proto-Ainu \**opsor* ‘bosom’ (AHJ: 86[9], RPA: 119).

- b) East Coast Sakhalin *kesum* ‘creak’ and *ahkasum* ‘sound of footsteps’ (Pilsudski 1912: 236 [lines 64–66] 〈Otu-tó kasu okayanájne atuj sokúru káta, tu pón cíś keśum annu. Áu-ven tuesánhí níšpa àxkaśum makan húmhi annu.〉 ‘Having spent two days, I heard upon the sea the creaking (of oars) of a small boat. On my poor way I heard the sound of the footsteps of a man approaching.’) are explained as a contraction of *kes* ‘end, edge’, *ahkas* ‘to walk’ and *hum* ‘sound, noise, voice’ (Majewicz / Majewicz 1986: 6[42], 252[150], Ōtsuka 2007: 81a).

The *h*-deletion rule would account for the origin of *susam* < \**sushám*, as it does in b) above.

Summing up, we can conclude that *susú hamú* yielded *susám*, -*u* by means of two rare, though documented, phonetic processes: (1) *Mittelsilbenschwund* and (2) the *h*-deletion rule.

## 10.

There are three immediate questions that arise when Japanese *shishamo* and Ainu *susám* are confronted with each other:

- a) What is the origin of Japanese /i/?
- b) What is the origin of Japanese /e/ in the second syllable?
- c) What is the origin of Japanese /o/?

Responses:

- a) The change /u/ > /i/ is dialectal. As is well known, Northern Japanese dialects witness the systematic vowel merging of high vowels [u] and [i] to [i] (vide i.a. Genenz 1989: 85–86, esp. map 3). This automatically triggers the change /su/ > [eɪ], and hence the initial *shi-* in *shishamo*. Since the Ainu borrowing took place most likely between Southern Hokkaidō and Northern Honshū, this feature is to be mostly expected. Note that the very same feature of the Northern Japanese dialects may well account for Pan-Ainu pairs like *suto* ~ *sito* ‘club’ or *suma* ~ *sima* ‘stone’, where the second member has to be interpreted as a Japanized pronunciation of *suto* and *suma*, respectively.
- b) It is very common to find in Ainu grammatical descriptions that the pronunciation of /s/ shifts between [s] and [ʂ] ~ [ɛ], irrespective of the

dialect and the speaker. As a matter of fact, Ainu loanwords in Japanese reflect that alternation, even before the vowel /a/, e.g. *Sapporo* 札幌 <*sat-poro[-pet]*, lit. ‘dry-big[-river]’, but *Shakotan* 積丹 <*sak-kotan*, lit. ‘summer-village’. Thus, *susám* may accordingly have been pronounced [swsam] or [sweam].

- c) If the point of departure is Ainu *susám*, one would expect Japanese \*[suəamui] or \*[eɪəamui].<sup>13</sup> The most economic solution is to assume that Japanese borrowed the Ainu sequence *susámu*. This does necessarily mean that *susámu* contains the so-called “belonging form”. Many Ainu monosyllables have become disyllables by generalizing the “belonging form” after the reinterpretation of morpheme boundaries, e.g. General Saru *at* ‘string, cord’ → *at-ú* ⇒ *atu* → *atú-hu* (AHJ: 123[89], Tamura 1996: 31–32, 35). Thus, one could assume that in *susú hamú*, the second member at some point was interpreted as not containing the belonging marker, for the corresponding belonging form would be *susú hamúhu*. As a matter of fact, Chiri’s unpublished notes contain *susú hamu-hu* (1970, see facsimile reproductions on pp. 118–119), instead of *susú ham-ú*. I wonder why there is no trace of \**susámu* → \**susámu*, -*hu*, but only *susám*. I have no answer to this.

Be that as it may, the change /u/ > /o/ is explained as the result of unclear articulation in final, unstressed position. Actually, both Ainu /u/ and /o/ are slightly rounded (contrary to their equivalents in Japanese with which Ainu came into contact), so as Bugaeva notes, “[s]ometimes /u/ may be mistaken for /o/ by an untrained listener for their close articulatory characteristics [...]” (2004: 11). Notable examples include *áyno* ~ *áymu* ‘human being, Ainu’, *ináo* ~ *ináu* ‘ritual sticks with shavings’, *musé* ~ *mosé* ‘nettle(s)’. This phenomenon has

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<sup>13</sup> The final vowel in both variants is also problematic, since -*u* would be expected instead of -*o*, e.g. French/English *madam(e)* → *madamu* マダム ‘Mrs, housewife, mistress’, German *Trachom* → *torahōmu* トラホーム ‘trachoma’, English *drum* → *doramu* ドラム. The epenthetic vowel [o] in final position to avoid closed syllables has concrete phonological contexts to appear in, namely after *t* or *d*, cf. English loanwords like *semento* セメント ← *cement*, *konkurīto* コンクリート ← *concrete*, *chokoreto* チョコレート ← *chocolate*, *herumetto* ヘルメット ← *helmet*, *beddo* ベッド ← *bed*. (Note that in some Portuguese loanwords, e.g. *Toruko* トルコ ‘Turkey’ ← *turco*, コレジオ *korejio* ‘Jesuit college’ ← *colégio*, the final [o] is not epenthetic but a reflex of the very same Portuguese vowel.)

been reported by both Japanese and non-Japanese specialists (vide i.a. Chamberlain 1887: 57–63, Kodama 1970: 27–29, Dettmer 1989.1A: §1[I]).<sup>14</sup>

It is worth noting too that in †*susám-u* we assume that the belonging marker is *-u*, because this is the belonging form of *ham* ‘leaf’ → *ham-ú*. It is possible to find, however, examples of *susám-a*, with *-a* following the model of *sam* ‘near’ → *sam-á*, as in Chiri’s notes (1970: 118).

## 11.

Two well-known Ainu loanwords from the first half of the seventeenth century, i.e. the most likely period during which *susám(u)* made its way into Japanese, can be used to illustrate the phonetic issues discussed in the previous section.

Japanese *uimamu* ウイマム (NsD: s.v.), attested already in documents dating to the 1610s (Walker 2001: 205), and *omusha* オムシャ (NsD: s.v.) are the names of two ceremonies introduced by Matsumae lords in order to ease Ainu-Japanese trading relations. Both ceremonies played a central role during the *ijin raihei* 夷人来聘 (Walker writes *raiheki*, a word which does not exist) or “barbarian audiences” with Ainu from western Ezo.<sup>15</sup> The origin of these two words, apparently restricted to Southern and Central Hokkaidō dialects, is clear: Ainu *uymam*

<sup>14</sup> The Ainu word *samo* ‘Japanese’ (AHJ: 50[9], s.v. *Yakumo*) is said to be derogatory in comparison to the common and seemingly neutral Ainu *sisam* ‘the one living near by’. This term is usually interpreted as the Japanese pronunciation of *sam* (Kayano 1980/1994: 166, s.v. *shamo*, apparently with alternation [s] ~ [c]), but as we have seen, \*[samu] would be expected. It is highly unlikely that *samo* is the Japanese pronunciation of †*sam-ú* (belonging form), as *shishamo* is of *susám*, for the stress in Ainu *samí* would prevent the vowel change /u/ > /o/ (cf. however *kamii* ~ *kamói* in Dettmer 1989.1A: §1[I]). Katsuichi (1993/2000: 13, fn. 13) explains that *samo* is actually a contraction of *samor* ‘a place near’, from *sam* and *or* ‘place’ (Kayano 1996: 257, Tamura 1996: 602).

<sup>15</sup> Possibly Ainu chiefs from Sōya (see Walker 2001: 204–226). Curiously enough, the most recent vocabulary of the Sōya dialect (Tezuka 2007) includes none of them.

‘trade’<sup>16</sup> and *umusa* ‘greeting(s)’.<sup>17</sup> They contain the reciprocal marker *u-* (Bugaeva 2004: 212, fn. 19), though the non-reciprocal counterpart is attested only for the latter.<sup>18</sup> As for their phonetics, it is possible to mention the following:

- a) *uymam* → *uimamu*, reflects the regular epenthetic /u/ in final position. Thus, *susám* cannot be the origin of Japanese *shishamo*.
- b) *umúsa* → *omusha*, reflects /o/ in unstressed syllable and alternation of [s] ~ [ɛ]. /u/ has been preserved most likely due to the presence of the bilabial /m/.

Culturally speaking, these three words, namely *uymam*, *umúsa* and *susám(u)*, could easily belong to the same stratigraphic layer, and therefore share some common features, especially the treatment of the unstressed /u/. Note, however, that Japanese dictionaries do not provide a first attestation (chronology) for *shishamo*, pointing perhaps to its very recent origin. This actually suits very well the dialectal restriction of the Ainu words.

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<sup>16</sup> *Uymam* ‘to trade’ (General Saru: Tamura 1996: 819, Nibutani: Kayano 1996: 88a, Chitose: Nakagawa 1995: 51, Asahikawa: Ōta 2005: 242a, cf. AEJ: 476b). The semantic change from ‘trade’ to ‘audience’ is partially due to a linguistic misunderstanding, for from the very beginning the Japanese assumed that Ainu *uymam* was a corruption of Japanese *omemie* 御目見得 ‘audience’, so the Japanese saw the relationship as a tributary one in which the Ainu presented themselves before the lord in a display of submission and received gifts as signs of the lord’s munificence. In contrast, the Ainu word refers simply to trade, without any of the subservient overtones of the Japanese *omemie* (vide i.a. Howell 1999: 98). Walker (2001: 208) mentions other etymological connections with some enigmatic Japanese words.

<sup>17</sup> *Omusa* ‘a feast given in ancient times to the Ainu at the end of the fishing season and when officials were on circuit duty’ (AEJ: 315a) seems to be the same word re-entering Ainu from Japanese changes, the original being: 1. *umusa* (Nibutani: Kayano 1996: 117b, AEJ: 476a–b) ‘a general holiday; a feast; originally an assembly of the people by order at particular places so that they might be notified of official edicts; at these meetings rice, sake, tobacco and other things were distributed by the Japanese officials’, 2. *umusa* ‘to salute, to stroke the head as in congratulations’.

<sup>18</sup> *Musa* ‘to stroke the head of another person in salutation’ (AEJ: 274a–b).

## 12.

In previous paragraphs I have argued that Ainu *susám* may be derived from *susú hamú* by means of two internal phonetic processes: *Mittelsilbenschwund* and the *h*-deletion rule. As for Japanese *shishamo*, this word came into the Japanese lexicon via Northern Japanese dialects (the merging of /u/ and /i/, hence /su/ > [ɛi]) after having undergone two common Ainu-Japanese adaptations (alternation [s] ~ [ɛ] and unstressed /u/ > /o/).

The North American linguist of Hungarian origin Robert Austerlitz (1923–1994) once recognized the frustration that arose from working with isolated, moribund, poorly documented languages (1985). In his case, Nivkh (Gilyak) was the centre of his inquiries. Likewise, the Ainu case discussed in this paper shows a few frustrating points:

- a) Some of the internal processes described for Ainu, namely *Mittelsilbenschwund* and the *h*-deletion rule, are poorly understood, especially in its historical dimension.
- b) Potential ties with fish names among some areal languages, i.e. Nivkh, (Amur) Tungusic, and eventually Mongolic, will perhaps remain unexplained forever.
- c) Since Japanese dictionaries do not provide the earliest attestation of *shishamo*, we cannot be sure that *susám* belongs to the same borrowing layer with other words such as *úymam* or *umísa*.

Shedding some light on the internal processes that govern Ainu, even if sometimes these apply only to a handful of words, may help to understand the history (and prehistory) of a language where etymology, and historical and comparative linguistics in general, have been associated with the most basic and unscientific techniques for too long.

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