

## GRAMMATICAL PERSON IN AINU FOLKLORISTIC NARRATIVES

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It has been firmly established and widely accepted among specialists and those who used the results of their research that the Ainu epics constantly use the first-person narration. This has even been considered as a distinctive feature of exclusively the Ainu folklore. D. Philippi, who translated very competently a number of Ainu epics into English, admitted that he knew "of no other example in world epic literature where almost every song is told in the first person singular" (1979:27; note 56).

Philippi (*ibid.*) excellently explained this narrative technique: "(...) the entire story is told in the first person singular from the point of view of the 'speaker', who narrates his experiences subjectively using the pronoun 'I'. There is no attempt at an objective approach using third person narration, and we encounter no impersonal Muse or Spirit of Song which intervenes and takes over the narrative. Everything from start to finish is a monologue told by a single speaker. The only exception is in a few cases where there are shifts from one speaker to another (...). Even here, however, the diction remains in the first person singular; only the identity of the speaker is shifted".

The most important collections of Ainu folklore by Kindaichi (esp. Kindaichi-Kannari 1959-1976 presenting probably the most extensive and most exquisite pieces of Ainu narrative poetry) and Kubodera (1977) and the one already mentioned, by Philippi (1979) fully support this opinion.

Another famous collector of Ainu folklore, however, N. A. Nevski as early as 1935 published his observation (reprinted in his posthumous book of Ainu folklore of 1972) that although the most characteristic feature of the Ainu narrative songs (*uwepeker*) is "that the story is always presented in the first person and only at the end of the narration it is usually stated that 'thus such-and-such-a-creature said', (...) there are also Ainu stories narrated in the third person" (1972:17).

Nevski observed that the first-person narrator in Ainu stories very often is not a human being but some animal (like bear or fox, etc.), god or demon (*ibid.*). According to him, the first-

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person narration exclusively appears in the following genres of the Ainu folklore: *upaškoma* (in Sakhalin *učaškoma*) and *uwepeker* 'tales of tradition', *kamui-yukar* 'stories of gods' recited mainly by women, *menoko-yukar* 'stories of women' and *yukar* considered by Nevski to be the most developed form of Ainu folklore "usually representing epic works consisting of 2-3,000, more rarely 5-6,000, and exceptionally extending beyond 10,000 stanzas" (1972: 17-27) and "usually preserved in memory by elderly men, only rarely by women" (*ibid.*, p. 25).

Among third-person narratives Nevski classified "all sorts of stories about what has been seen or heard and stories about all sorts of facts that had actually occurred" (1972:17), *śam-uwepeker* - "old Japanese stories about the *samurais*, Buddhist monks, about pilgrimages to the Ise Province, etc. (*ibid.*, p. 18), stories of animals, or the cycle of stories labeled *Penembe-Panambe uwepeker*, i.e. "stories of Penampe (someone from the upper part of the river) and Panampe (someone from the lower part of the river), of the type of Russian right/honest-and-wrong [о правде и кривде] stories" (*ibid.*).

Leaving the above-mentioned collections of Ainu folklore aside, it is not difficult to find out that a considerable percentage of Ainu stories in other competent collections were narrated in the third person. In Kayano 1985, for example, out of 17 prose narratives 10 are in the first person and the remaining 7 are in the third person. Piłsudski 1912, in turn contains 27 Sakhalin Ainu *učaškoma* texts and, contrary to what one might expect sticking to the above quoted opinion by Nevski, only 13 of them are narrated exclusively in the first person; 10 of them are in the third person, 3 - in the third and first person and one - in the first and second person. In quotations, in the first-person narratives 3rd-person narration was used in one story, and in the third-person narratives 1st-person narration was used in two stories and 2nd-person narration - in four stories.

Piłsudski 1912 was used as a textbook for a seminar on the Sakhalin Ainu language in which I participated at the Hokkaido University in 1984. What astonished me was that during the analysis of subsequent Ainu-language texts from the book and their translation into Japanese not only all the forms translated by Piłsudski with the first-person pronoun "I" into English were rendered into Japanese with the first-person correspondents but also **all** the forms translated by Piłsudski deliberately with the English pronouns "he" or "she" were translated into Japanese as first-person expressions (emphatically, I should say, for the Japanese as a rule omit words corresponding to English personal pronouns whenever possible). My curiosity "why what Piłsudski evidently interpretes as third-person forms in contrast with what he interprets as first-person forms is consistently being translated into Japanese with emphatic first-person expressions" met with an even more astonishing answer - exactly the very first sentence of the present paper ! I found myself confronted with an obvious

vicious circle.

That Piłsudski, who spent many years in Sakhalin, had an Ainu wife and children, personally knew practically all the Ainu living on or visiting the island and was said to be very fluent in the Ainu language, and his 1912 book are the ultimate authority on the Sakhalin Ainu language and oral tradition is patent to every serious specialist. Three factors contribute to the uniqueness and superiority of the 1912 book in the discipline: (1) the material for the book is the richest and most competently collected of all the field data accumulated in the times when the Sakhalin Ainu still cultivated their original way of living, their customs, rituals, their language and their tradition; (2) the compiler of the book was fortunate to work under one of the best scholarly supervisors available at the time of its compilation; (3) no attempt to collect data comparable in standard to what the 1912 book offers had been made before the Sakhalin Ainu underwent the process of almost complete acculturation losing their language and desperately striving to melt with and disappear among the surrounding Japanese (cf. Majewicz 1988). It is, therefore, hardly possible that Piłsudski could be so very much in discrepancy with the truth.

The problem seems to be in the ambiguity of homophonic forms with the incorporated personal affixes *an-/an* (subjective) and *(-)i-* (objective) which in Murasaki's grammar of the Sakhalin Raiciška (Raychishka) dialect (1978:49, also 1978a:15) are described respectively as the first-person-plural-subjective (*an-* for  $V_1$ , *-an* for  $V_i$ ) and the first-person-plural-objective (*(-)i-*). Murasaki pointed that all three could be used in the function of the first-person-singular personal affixes "in polite style, by old people" (ibid.). Refsing in her description of what she labeled as the Shizunai dialect of Ainu, from southern Hokkaido, classified the *an-/an* affixes as "the morpheme designating the 'indefinite person', the basic meaning of which "has to do with an unknown executor of an action ("somebody did...") or with people in general (German *man*, French *on*). (...) this affix also covers the function of the passive voice" (1986:218). *(-)i-* "is used to denote that somebody or something is the object of the verb which" it "precedes". *(-)i-* "is also the objective case of the indefinite pronominal affix, so that when this is used in lieu of the 1st person (...), *i-* may also mean "me" or "us", according to context" (ibid., p. 181). Refsing indicated the following six interpretative (contextually conditioned) possibilities of *an-/an*:

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|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| a. Indefinite person        | (French "on")   |
| b. 1st person singular      | ("I")           |
| c. 1st person plural        | ("we")          |
| d. 1st person in folk-tales | ("I/we")        |
| e. 2nd person honorific     | ("You")         |
| f. Passive marker           | (ibid., p. 219) |

and observed that the "indefinite person" is rigorously used in-

stead of the colloquial 1st person *ku-* in the *yukar* epics (ibid., p. 214, cf. also Hattori 1961, Tamura 1970, and the extensive overview in Dettmer 1989:413-53).

Piłsudski in his 1912 work, however, clearly stated that "*an* is a formative of a verb in the **1st and 3rd pers.**, standing before or after it" (p. 28, note 3; bold - A. F. M.) and that *(-)i-* is the categorial marker denoting "acc. of pers. pronoun, first and third persons, sing. and pl." (p. 57, note 165). Piłsudski's texts have been translated into Japanese at least three times from the Ainu originals and the participants of the seminar mentioned above were not aware of either that there was a clear distinction between the first-person and the third-person narration in Piłsudski's English translations or the existence of the grammatical comments just quoted. Thus, it comes out that a reanalysis of Piłsudski's texts may be necessary to check the accuracy of the existing descriptions of the structure of the Ainu language in this particular fragment and eventually to amend them, and a multifunctional index prepared for the texts (Majewicz-Majewicz 1986) should be of assistance here.

The origin of the unique first-person narration of the Ainu epics has been attributed to the Ainu shamanism practised by women (cf. Kindaichi 1931, 1941, Philippi 1979:27-8, Hatto 1970:16ff.). Kindaichi (1941:70) expressed the idea in the following way: "(...) as far as the Ainu are concerned, narrative literature and mythology are derived from the words of gods uttered by witches in days past". "(...) it is men's business to perform divine service, with which women have nothing to do. But women are prerogative with Shamanism or a kind of witchery" (pp. 66-7). "(...) Innumerable were these witch-songs chanted by the women possessed with the spirits of gods. Many of them have exercised great influence direct or indirect over the politics of the Ainu communities. From a social point of view they have also played an important part. They have, time out of mind, been committed to memory and orally handed down to posterity. It seems to us that these songs were the origin of the *kamui-yukar*. For this reason each of them is narrated by the first person; that is to say, they are believed to be the words of gods uttered through the mouths of witches" (pp. 69-70). This, or similar, opinion is also widely accepted (cf. e.g. Nevski 1972:29, Philippi 1979:27, Hatto 1970) but again some BUTs are inevitable. Nevski himself observed that the best of the Ainu folklore - the elaborated *yukar* - were preserved in memory by men rather than women (cf. above). Besides, the accepted Kindaichi's opinion that male shamans were exceptional in Ainu communities ("stories are sometimes told about male Shamans - especially in Saghalien; but in Ainu life it is rather exceptional. It is more generally considered that women alone are endowed with the supernatural power of being possessed with spirits or foretelling fortune", 1941:67) needs a revision. Piłsudski who witnessed many shamanic seances in Ainu communities at the beginning of this century and had

friends among Ainu shamans, and whom again we owe an outstanding study on the Ainu shamanism, wrote (1909:265) that "there can be both male and female shamans. Among the eight shamans known to me there were two women but both were regarded very unskillful and were not trusted to the extent male shamans were". Piłsudski admitted, however, that in oral traditions the female superiority in magic was acknowledged. Most of the Ainu storytellers who were Piłsudski's informants were men.

Piłsudski (1909-1910) demonstrated, beyond any doubt, that shamanism among the Ainu was much weaker than among other peoples in Asia: "with the Ainu, ancestor worship constitutes a considerable part of their religious beliefs (...). This is the reason why the shamans with the Ainu do not have the same significance as with the other peoples where individuals performing religious rituals have gradually formed special castes of priests aiming at the control over all aspects of social life" (1909:262). "(...) The much narrower sphere of activity of Ainu shamans in comparison with that of the shamans of other peoples of Siberia (...) where the shamans participate at funerals and rituals for the dead, makes it that the priests of the Ainu do not give up their ordinary way of life and do not devote themselves exclusively to the practising of mysteries" (ibid., p. 266). "From the description quoted (...), it can be concluded that the shaman's costume among the Ainu is very simple and this indicates that this costume proceeding from the west eastwards, grew simpler and reduced parallelly with the gradual weakening of the very cult itself" (1910:120). "Shamanism among the Ainu" thus "does not stand on this stage of development to allow the rituals of this cult in the course of its gradual improvement and perfection to become a separate branch of knowledge which can be acquired by systematic learning" (1909:262; cf. also Kato (ed.) 1984).

Hatto (1970:2-3) is right when he writes: "it is known that in some cultures the function of shaman and bard were united in one person and that in others their modes of utterance overlapped" but not necessarily right when he is "in respectful disagreement" with Arthur Waley's statement he himself quotes which among others states that "(...) this form of narration does not exist in other parts of the world where shamanism is even more extensively cultivated" (ibid., p. 14, note 67). In spite of all the argumentation - far from being groundless - presented so far, it still remains to be satisfactorily explained just **why** this 'unique first-person technique of narration, characteristic of the Ainu only, and allegedly so deeply rooted in shamanish were to originate in a society in which shamanism is so weakly developed and not with peoples who cultivate it in its extreme form.

According to the Ainu themselves, they did learn their tales from the gods: they believed that in the beginning it was the gods who were telling tales but when they left for the world of the gods, it was the people (i.e. the Ainu) who had to "lend" their mouths for it, especially those who were by the gods gifted

with special narrative skills (described as *pawetok*, 'eloquent'), no matter whether shamans - or women - or not.

The gods are believed to speak for themselves in the first person but not all words in Ainu traditions come from the gods. If Piłsudski was right, not every form considered so far to include the categorial meaning of the first person should continue to be considered as such.

The issues touched upon in the present paper are related to the general problem of reliability in Ainu studies, signalled elsewhere (Majewicz 1990).

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