

# The History of Topattumi (Night Raid) in Saru

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## The Oral History of Topattumi in Saru

One often-overlooked aspect of Ainu history passed down through *upaskuma* is that of the *topattumi*, or night raids. Folklore of these raids have been told throughout Hokkaido, detailing the acts of violence and looting between groups of different regions.

Many of these stories depict the struggle of people living along large rivers, and specifically to the Saru region, we have tales about raids by groups from Tokachi, Kushiro, Kitami, and Ishikari (table 1). It should be noted there are no records of night raids conducted among those who lived along the same river streams (table 2).

*Chashi*, which are defined as important structures such as forts, fences, or other enclosures, usually have been significant settings in stories about *topattumi* (table 3).

According to archaeological and historical study, most of these *chashi* are believed to have been created and used around the 17th century.

Orally passed down stories can also clue us into the history of such *topattumi* (table 2). In a tale told by Nibutani's Kunimatsu Nitani (1888-1960) passed down to him through five generations is such a story. Considering a generation is equivalent to roughly 30 years, this story is speculated to have taken place around 1738.

## The Scale of Topattumi as Understood Through Oral History

The scales of these raids are important in understanding the militaristic relationship between the groups at the time.

The Oral History of Shiunkotsu-chashi (Watanabe, Kono, 1974), states that "the group of night raiders



**Photo 1** The Nioi Chashi Ruins located on the left bank of Nukabira River (taken from the Northwest). It was burned down during a night raid of those who came from the Tokachi area. Takeshiro Matsuura drew this *chashi* in 1858.

### Table 1 On the Territorial Populations along River Basins

Those who live along the same river basin call themselves by the name of the river. Outsiders used the river as a moniker for a group of people as well.

For example, the people who live along Saru River are called Sar-un-kur (the people of Saru River), Ainu along the Mombetsu River are Mopet-un-kur, and those who lived along Atsumagawa were called Atpechi-un-kur. These are the names by which the Ainu referred to themselves, and also referred to by outsider.

Such areas were territories. The intrusion of outsiders without the permission of the residents was not allowed. These distinct areas are called *iwor*. The common use of the word *iwor* was in combination with the aforementioned names of residents.

(Izumi, 1952)

### Table 2 The Period in Time of Topattumi in the Oral History of Saru Ainu

In the *iwor* as a territory, or, at least in the Saru-un-kur-*iwor*, there was no single authority regulating the residents of the river as a whole. However, in cases of conflict between those outside, the residents along the same river unified and elected a leader. The most recent case of unification along the Saru River occurred in the age of Kunimatsu Nitani's family five generations ago, when his ancestor, Pikun, was alive.

Back then, Yayoturi, a scoundrel from then-Nioi-kotan, was banished from his village. Out of spite, he lured the Tokachi Ainu to raid Saru by telling them that Saru Ainu had lots of treasures. They came in droves from beyond the mountains. Pikun, who was the kotan-kor-kur of Niptani, was pressured into lead the Sar-un-kur because of his eloquence and leadership. In order to display his might to Ikouwe (ancestor of Maetaro Kaizawa), Pikun proceeded to enter the Tokachi army and engaged in a ferocious *uko-charanke* (official debate), and won, which resulted in the retreat of the Tokachi army.

At this time, Pikun was the one to lead the Sar-un-kur, and during the state of emergency in the Sar-un-kur-*iwor*, he regulated the transportation, hunt, and everything else.

(Izumi, 1952)

marched south along the Saru river in dozens and hundreds, in an endless line, whose length spanned the distance between Tumorpesinay\* to Tapkopsara\*\*. The distance between the Shiunkotchashi to the estuary of Saru River is about 1500m. We can assume that the distance mentioned in the tale, "from Tumorpesinay to Tapkopsara" was roughly the same.

Walking the actual distance from the *chasi*, along the left bank of Saru River, to the Sir Estuary, one can experience the massive scale of the army that marched in the night raid. These raids are presumed to have been quite significant considering the massive scale of the opposing army brought together the disparate groups who lived along Saru River.

\*Opposite bank of the Saru River viewed from the current Saruba

\*\*The name of the marsh near the border between Shiunkotsu and Saruba.

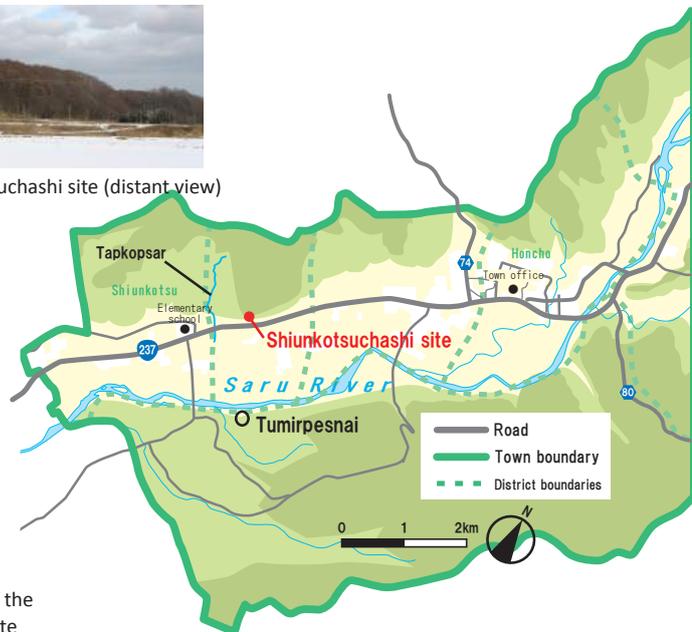
### Looking at the Oral History of Topattumi in Hokkaido

It is understood that these *topattumi* contributed to bringing together people from different regions to create familial relationships (table 4). Due to this evidence, we now know that Ainu people did not live in closed societies rooted in specific geographic regions, but rather were quite fluid in the mid-18th century. Varying kinds of relationships enhanced inter-regional commonalities, but also had the effect of enhancing regional specificity. This kind of specificity can be seen in conjunction with information about various *kotan* and *chashi* told through *upaskuma*, which scholars have been able to use to verify the meanings of many Ainu place names (table 3). Furthermore, the unified action of territorial populations faced with raids have taught scholars about how crisis management in Ainu culture.

This kind of in-depth analysis of non-written historical sources reveals a vivid portrayal of the inhabitants of Hokkaido, hundreds of years ago.



Picture 2 Shiunkotsuchashi site (distant view)



Picture Location of the Shiunkotsuchashi site

Table 3 The Oral History of Topattumi in Biratori's Chashi

Name (Location)	Site of Invasion
Shiunkotsuchashi Remains (Saruba) Also known as ①: Chashikot of Nuperun'nay Also known as ②: Chashikot of Tapukopusara	Tokachi-Kushiro district
Sarubachashi Remains (Saruba)	Unknown
Poromoichashi Remains (Nibutani) Also known as: Chashikot of Pon'ninatsumi	Unknown
Sukerebe Chashi Remains (Nioi) Also known as: Chashikot of Ukorei	Kitami Kushiro district
Unchashi Remains (Nukibetsu)	Tokachi
Nioichashi Remains (Nukibetsu)	Tokachi
Otariomap Chashi Remains (Iwachishi)	Tokachi

Table 4 An Account of Topattumi

The men of Kushiro Ainu have come to this village in Saru to raid at night. Many people came to raid at night from Tokachi as well, but the people of Saru village found out about it, so they all lost. Those who survived went home, and those who were killed were killed. And the women and men who survived stayed upstream of Saru village and became family with the people living there.

Then, upstream of Mukawa, men from Tokachi came to attack at night. But, those men were found in the mountains, so since then, they became family with the people who lived upstream of Mukawa. And so, there are offspring of people from Tokachi who live upstream Mukawa.

And then in this village of Saru, they found a woman who was pregnant. The men felt sorry for the woman, and so they let her in the village and gave her a husband.

Since then, in the area upstream of Saru, and those who live in villages further upstream (Nukibetsu), there are people who live there with origins in Tokachi. (Waseda University Language Institute of Education, ed. 1985)

"Cultural landscapes of the Saru Valley formed by Ainu tradition and modern development"  
Designated as Important Cultural Landscape as of July 26th, 2007

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