

Examining the Traditional Land of the Furi

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The Cliff of the Legendary Giant Bird

When looking at the left bank of the Saru River, when looking from the village of Saruba, one can see a cliff called *Kamuyeroskihi*.

This cliff is said to have been the nest of the Huri, the legendary monster bird. It has also been an important site of worship and prayer for the people in the *kotan* (village).

The male Huri is said to have lived in *Kamuyeroskihi*, whereas the female Huri lived in *Santunupuri* (current day *Biraga* in *Hidaka-cho*). Legend has it that the female Huri kidnapped a mother and child from *Pitarupa*, and therefore was exterminated by the chief *Kayushipinna* of *Sarpa*. The male Huri disappeared after this incident as well.

Continuing the Legacy of Important Places

That there were Huri, which have both been exterminated by humans and helped humans is a fascinating case to be examined. The male Huri has been revered as a benevolent *kamuy* who helped man:

“After the Huri left, a fox took its place to warn the villagers of impending danger.” (Yamada, 1984).
“People pray for an absent god at the *Chikappoi* peak.” (Ogiya & Shimada, 1988).

Reading this, it is clear that the male Huri continued on as a special presence for those who lived in the *Saruba-kotan*.

This sentiment is represented in the various names that people have given to the Huri (table 1).

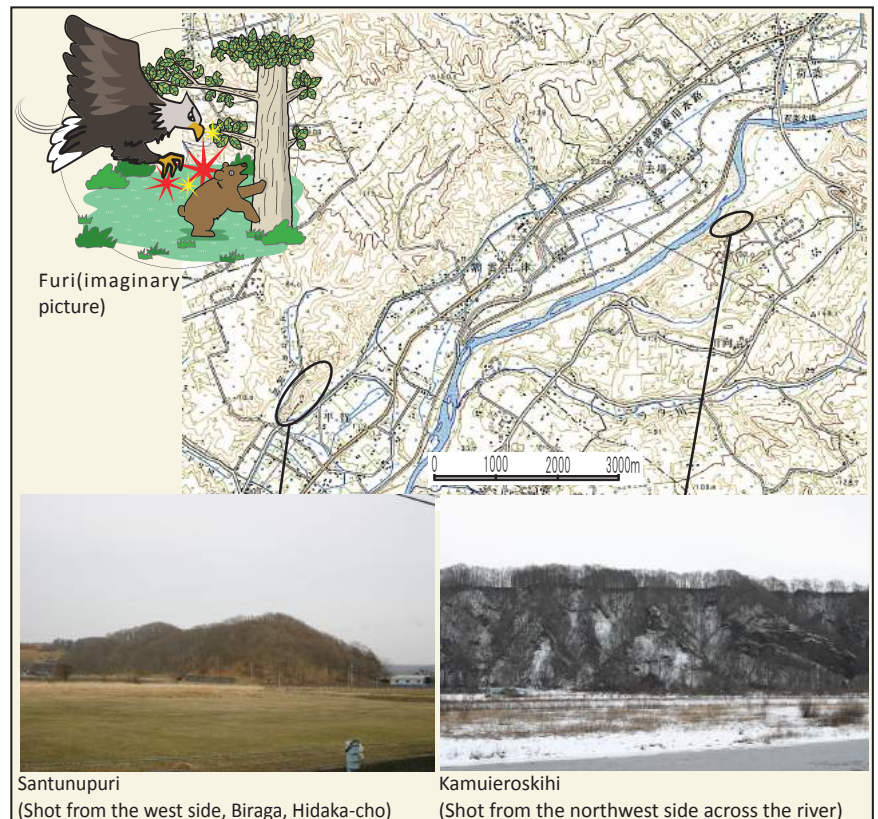


Figure 1 These are the locations of the legendary sites of the Huri.

Table 1 The Various Names of *Kamuyeroskihi*

- ① kamuy e ros ki hi: god, there, is standing, place
 - ② ci = nomi sir: we, worship, mountain
 - ③ sarpa rerke: Saruba's, place on the other side
 - ④ cikap oi: bird, is, place
 - ⑤ kamuy ewak sir: god is, enshrined, mountain
 - ⑥ kamuy kor si ke pe: god is, possess, true, place
- ※ ① ~ ⑤ can be found in Yamada, 1984, ⑥ is from the 1896 Land Surveying Department Hokkaido a portion of "Nibutani" Provisional Map Scaled 1/50,000

Table 2 The Legends of *Kamuyeroskihi*

This is the name of the large cliff, which sits on the opposite shore of Saru River, as seen from the village of Saruba.

This place has always been venerated. People have always given the place libations whenever there is a *kamuinomi* on the river there, all the way to *Mukawa*.

Originally, a giant bird called Huri would rid the place of bad bears and so people began worshipping the *Hurikamui*. After the Huri flew away, a fox began house-sitting, warning villagers nearby of any impending danger. In cases of danger, an elderly man would cast a magic spell and prayed for it not to happen

(Yamada, 1984)

The Furi in Ainu Folklore

In *The Legend of the Huri of Sarupa*, the legendary bird is described as an eagle. Considering the reverence people gave to this giant, mythical bird, we can assume that the size of the Huri was far bigger compared to the modern eagle.

However, there have been sightings of Steller's Sea Eagles and White-Tailed Eagles around the Saru River region during winter. This suggests that perhaps the traditional folklore regarding the Huri represented the reverence people had of these large birds of prey.



Figure 2 The name "Kamoikorskepe" is circled on the map (1896 Provisional Map Scaled 1/50,000)

Table 3 The Legend of the Huri of Sarpa

Once upon a time, a large male bird called Huri lived opposite of Sarpa (on the opposite shore, above the Shiunkot). The female Huri lived in Santonupuri (behind the chip factory cape of Tanizaki Lumber) of Pitarpa. The female eagle of Pitarpa kidnapped a woman who was picking beans (aha) and her child on her back. The people of Pitarpa blamed the male eagle of for this and called for a *charanke* (negotiation). The eagle that you all hold *nomi* (prayer) for has kidnapped a *menoko* (woman). We were in trouble because they threatened to *topattumi* (raid) if we would not compensate them.

Kayuspinna, the Chief of Sarpa, offered to pay, but the Chief of Pitarpa did not take his compensation. They tell us to kill the male even though it was the female that wronged the woman. The two finally agreed to get rid of the female bird in the Santo mountain. They agreed that something like this should never happen again. With this, the Chief of sarpa agreed to exterminate the female bird. The Chief wanted to go alone, but the villagers convinced him to take some men with him. It is disrespectful to kill what we pray to. I will not take anyone with me, for I should die alone.

But then, Optattereke, a strong young man from Tokachi, offered to accompany the Chief. (He was named so because he hopped over the heads of six men holding spears in a battlefield.) The two borrowed forty sheets of deer hide, two swords, and one young man, and set out for Santonupuri.

The Chief instructed the young man to drop the deer hide from above just as we arrive at the Huri's nest. As the two descended to the eagle's nest, the deer hide came flying down from above. When the Huri came out of her hole to sprawl atop the deer hide, the two stabbed the body and sliced the wings and killed the Huri. (I did not ask about why the young man from Tokachi happened to be there.)

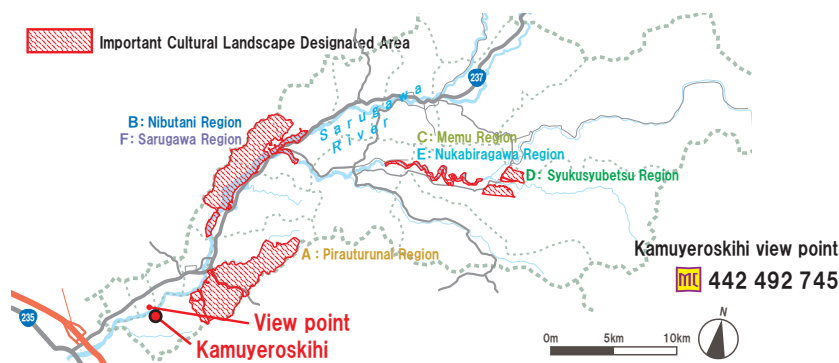
(Monbetsu, Mr. Katsumi Nabezawa)

(Hokkaido, Bureau of Education, Lifelong Learning Unit Cultural Division, 1996)

Table 4 What happened to the male Huri

...seven days after the female Huri was killed, the male Huri from Chikappoi, at a loss, began moving his *suop asike* (boxes) out of his nest, and then disappeared. For this reason, people pray to the absent God of Chikappoi peak.

(Ogiya, Shimada 1988)



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

For Inquiries
Regarding the Landscape of Ainu Culture
Nibutani Ainu Culture Museum
Nibutani 55, Biratori-Cho, Saru-Gun,
Hokkaido, 055-0101 Japan
Phone: +81-1457-2-2892
Fax: +81-1457-2-2828
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