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### Recordings, Crafts and Patterns with Sounds in Reviving the Ainu Culture (Japan)

This paper will report on the research project which explored the revitalisation of the Ainu language from the perspective of the use of archival sound recordings and craft creations. The Ainu are the minority of Japan, living mainly in the geographical setting of Hokkaido. In the past, they also inhabited territories of Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands. Assimilation policies developed since the beginning of the 19th century actively discouraged the Ainu cultural practices and the use of Ainu language. In response to this, the process of revitalisation of the Ainu language has begun in the early 1980s.

The key concept of language revitalisation calls for work which will affect the vitality of language engendered by loss. The nature of the restoration of language use is inscribed into the relationships between language speakers and the place they live in. The Ainu people developed language with their own unique phonological characteristics, but not a writing system to match it. Nowadays, the Ainu archival sound recordings offer a wide range of phonetic materials and can aid to the process of language revitalisation with the restoration of lost sounds of Ainu language. Against this background, the Ainu created very unique patterns and original motifs applied to production of crafts objects, clothes and wooden works. However, the conventions for the use of crafts are more articulated on the basis of visual signs. This specific cultural behaviour has led to the inception of the ultimate inquiry: Is the production of crafts relevant to language revitalisation?

Drawing on my doctoral study conducted in Japan, this paper attempts to take an integrated perspective on the materiality that represents differentiated sensibilities and meanings – the Ainu archival recordings with preserved sounds of linguistic patterns, and ‘unspoken’ craft objects with visual patterns. In conclusion, the paper argues that the use of sound recordings and crafts exemplify related strategies needed for language revitalisation due to their capabilities of generating the aesthetic experience and creating aurally evocative sounds in response to the encounter with objects, producing patterns with sounds which empower the process of restoration of values and symbols, individual and place-related identities, and the making sense of continuity.