

## PROMOTING JAPANESE CULTURAL TOURISM THROUGH APPRECIATION OF AINU FOLKTALES AND ANIME

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### ABSTRACT

*Japan ranks fourth out of ten favourite countries visited by Indonesian tourists after Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand. Promotion of airline ticket prices and tour packages through travel fairs and promotion of Japan to host the 2020 Olympics are contributing factors that will continue to make Indonesian tourists visiting Japan increases. Japan has always been famous for their natural tourist attractions such as Mount Fujiyama and Sakura flowers. In terms of culture, Japan is known as a country with a homogeneous culture. In fact, Japanese culture is heterogeneous as indicated by the existence of Ainu indigenous people who traditionally lived in the Hokkaido Islands, North Japan. Later, the Ainu ethnic group make use of their unique cultural and tradition to promote an ethnic tourism that attracted many domestic tourists. This article introduces the diversity of Japanese culture as a promotion of Japanese cultural tourism. This qualitative study began by selecting three Ainu folktales and Ainu-based story anime to be shared with 10 Japanese students, teachers, and lecturers in Denpasar. They were asked to choose and read three of the ten stories provided and watch the anime, then fill out questionnaire to indicate their response on Ainu culture and tradition. The study shows that the teachers gained new knowledge about the Ainu culture and understood the heterogeneity of Japanese culture. They were interested in spreading it to their students and fellow students. While the impact of the appreciation of folktales and Ainu-based story of anime in increasing Indonesian tourists to Japan remains to be awaited, the introduction of the diversity of Japanese culture through Ainu folktales contribute to the promotion on how the Ainu people in Hokkaido promote their ethnic tourism and to the introduction of various type of cultural tourism that Japan has to offer.*

**Keywords:** Ainu culture, cultural tourism, folktale, Japanese subculture

### INTRODUCTION

This paper introduces the Ainu culture based on oral traditions which form the basis of the rich cultural tourism appeal for Japan. Ainu are Japanese natives who were hundreds of years marginalized and not recognized as natives. Ainu's efforts to fight for their rights as indigenous people had been done for a long time, and were successfully recognized as an ethnic minority on May 8, 1997 when the enactment of the Ainu Culture Promotion Law by the Japanese Government (Hiwasaki 2000). Before that, they were forced to assimilate with Japan, in other words their existence did not recognized. Since its recognition, Ainu has increasingly been promoting their ethnic identity, among others through arts and culture including through the field of tourism. The focus of this paper is how readers of Ainu folklore in Indonesia can understand Ainu culture as a window to get to know the variety of Japanese cultural tourism.

Hunter (2013) outlines the Ainu strategy of developing cultural tourism by making their music and dance an attraction so that it is labelled with ethnic tourism. Hiwasaki defines as "a form of tourism in which the cultural exoticism of the host population and its" products, "such as clothing, music and dance, are the main attractions for the tourist" (Hiwasaki 2000: 395).

Akan Village is one of the Ainu tourist destinations in Hokkaido that offers beautiful scenery and beautiful gardens around Akan Lake. The Ainu legend is staged into music and

dance as an attraction to complement the beauty of nature. Promotion of Ainu tourism can be seen as part of efforts to advance culture-based tourism of Japan.

Japan is famous of its manufacture industry, but in recent decades began to seriously work on the tourism sector. Japan's success in developing tourism can be seen from its achievement of fourth place in 140 countries in the 2019 World Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index. The top ten are Spain, France, Germany, Japan, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Italy, Canada and Switzerland (WTTC 2019).

The promotional effort paid off with the increasing number of tourists visiting Japan. Data from the Japan National Tourism Organization (JTB 2019) shows that in 2017, the number of foreign tourists coming to Japan was 28.6 million, while in 2018 it increased to 31.2 million. By 2019, until July, the number of tourist visits to Japan had reached 19.6 million. In 2020, Japan will host the Olympics, and from there it is expected that tourist visits to the Land of the Rising Sun will increase, with a target of 40 million tourists.

Data for July 2019 shows that Indonesia ranks 8th in the top 10 list of foreign tourists visiting Japan. The first to seventh ranks are Korea, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Thailand, Singapore, and Malaysia. The number of Indonesian tourists visiting until July is 25,200 (JTB 2019). The 8th order and the number of visits shows that Indonesia is a potential market for the Japanese tourism industry. For this reason, the Indonesian market needs to be informed more about Japanese culture so that their experience as tourists to Japan can be more impressive.

Japan's main attractions are twofold namely, nature and culture, and these are promoted under the slogan "Japan Endless Discovery" (Liaryora 2019). For natural attractions, it can be mentioned the popularity of Mount Fujiyama which is snowing in winter and cherry blossoms in beautiful blooms during the spring. In addition, Japan has parks containing hot springs and attractive bamboo forests as a nature-based tourist attraction, and of course snow in winter. For cultural appeal, it can be mentioned the sturdy old temples, cultural arts festivals such as dances, and Japanese cuisine. As for July 2019, Japan has 23 World Heritage Sites, including Himeji Castle, Historic Monuments of Ancient Kyoto and Nara (Wikipedia Japan 2019).

The distinctiveness of Japanese culture that has been seen from the lifestyle, food, and Japanese letters written everywhere, makes Japan famous as a cultural tourism attraction. Although the automotive and electronics industries are advanced in this country, Japan has a strong cultural identity. It's just that cultural identity is single, there is no variation. However, reality shows that Japanese culture is heterogeneous, marked by the existence of the Ainu culture as a Japanese subculture (Hasegawa 2010; Cheung 2003).

This paper aims to introduce Ainu culture through their folklore. In addition to showing the diversity of Japanese cultural treasures, also to offset the dominance of popular culture and Japanese animation that captivated the world including Indonesia through anime films, manga, and Pokemon games. The introduction of Japanese culture through the Ainu culture is also a way to introduce the attraction of Japanese cultural tourism in accordance with the slogan "Japan Endless Discovery".

## METHODS

The introduction of Ainu culture is done by introducing students, teachers and lecturers who study Japanese. Their number is ten and in the data analysis, they are given a number with Reader or R: 01-10. Those who were chosen purposively were given to read three Ainu folklore and an anime to get their reception about Ainu art and culture. The three folklore are "Little Pot with Free Time", "Pukusa Plant Soul", and "Brothers Who Turn into Cabbage Birds", while the anime is titled "Golden Kamuy" (especially episodes 1 and 2 of 12 episode). The story was chosen because it strongly represented the Ainu culture, especially in terms of the belief system, the harmonious relations of the Ainu people with nature, and the art of the Ainu people. For the anime "Golden Kamuy", besides containing a belief system, this anime is quite popular in Indonesia, meaning that it is included in the list of '35 anime that must be watched' by fans in Indonesia. After reading, they were asked to fill in a questionnaire that explored their reception of the contents of the story

and anime, as well as the contribution of the story to their knowledge of Japanese culture. This study uses a qualitative approach by collecting qualitative data in the form of connoisseurs' comments on Ainu folklore and anime.

Data is analyzed with Reception theory or also known as reader response. As the name implies, this theory provides 'power to reader' in understanding literature. In his book, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (2008), Eagleton asserts that:

In the terminology of reception theory, the reader 'concretizes' the literary work, which is in itself no more than a chain of organized black marks on a page. Without this continuous active participation on the reader's part, there would be no literary work at all (Eagleton 2008: 66).

Reception Theory or Reader Response considers the reader as an active leader in giving meaning to the existing text. Text does not exist if it is not read and given meaning by the reader. Therefore, the reader is considered as important as the writer who created the text. This is in line with what Cuddon said that "A literary work is not an object which stands by itself and which offers the same face to each reader in each period. It is not a monument which reveals its timeless essence in a monologue" (Cuddon 2013: 339).

The use of reception theory in this paper aims to get the respect of readers who are the subject of research. The relationship between the reader and the story enjoyed will build an image of the place and culture that exists in the story. How is the reception of the reader and their enjoyment in relation to the understanding of the images that are read and the desire to tell others become part of the analysis of this paper.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The stories and folktales-based of anime 'Golden Kamui' chosen to introduce Ainu culture has an intertextual relationship. The story of 'Golden Kamui', for example, has an intertextual relationship with the story of "Brothers and Sisters Turning into Cabak Birds!" because both of them contain scenes about making *citatap* food. In addition, "Golden Kamui" is also has thematic relationship with the story of "Little Pot with Free Time" because both present bear characters as special animal, pricely as god. The story "Pukusa Plant Soul" also has similarities with other stories, especially in terms of the Ainu belief system that gods can manifest in objects and plants, and gods can sanction humans who do not respect nature.

The audience response to the three folklore and the anime "Golden Kamui" shows that this story gives them additional new knowledge about Japanese subculture. Nowadays, Japan often easily associated with popular TV stories such as *Momotarou*, *Urashima Taro*, *Kasajiso*, *Kintaro*, *Usagi to Kame*, and *Kasa Jisou*, *Akezugirai no Amageru*. After reading the Ainu stories, the subject of this study learned a new story from Japan. They feel there are similarities, but also differences. Japanese folklore generally tells a lot about "Sun God", while Ainu tells "God of the Bear". The difference between the Ainu story and Japan is reflected in the R-07 comments in the following quote:

*The themes and characters in the Ainu story are unique because they carry stories that I had not expected. For example, the story "A small pot that has free time" and the story "Pusuka plant souls". The story features unexpected objects that can be used as characters, for example pots, which I have never read in Japanese or Indonesian stories.*

The "Golden Kamui" audience can clearly capture aspects of the Ainu culture contained in the Golden Kamui. This happened because the word Ainu serign was mentioned in the dialogue. In addition, also because the character Asirpa, the cute little girl, is aN Ainu girl. The main male character, Sugimoto, is Japanese. The story line exentensively introduced Ainu culture, starting from belief, livelihood (hunting gathering), how to process food, crafts making skill such as weapons decoration (*makiri*), and expressions that are conveyed as gratitude before eating.

The audience said that the anime "Golden Kamui" gave it a number of aspects of the Ainu culture. This for example is represented by recipes from R-05 which convey:

*After watching, there are some Ainu cultures that I can know, namely naming Ainu people who are different from Japanese people, hunting, making handicrafts such as weapon decoration (makiri) which will then be given to women who are loved, and culture of expressing thanks (hinna, hinna).*

Regarding the craft of making makiri weapon decorations, other viewers also delivered it, as well as with a tattoo on the lips for women (R-02). The audience of R-02 also conveyed the expression of gratitude that was said before the food and how to cook a typical Ainu cuisine, namely *citatap*. In addition to cooking the fugitive animals such as bears and squirrels, R-03 also said that he could get to know the other side of the Ainu people's hunting work, which is processing their catches to make commercially valuable good, as stated in the following sentence:

*And their habit of processing their caught animals into food, even making money by selling it. For example, bear skin and the skin of squirrels and bear bile that are sold have high monetary value.*

In the story of two men who are condemned to become cabak birds, the scene of making *citatap* food is used to express the sons of disobedience, who do not want to share food with their parents. As a result of that disobedience, both are condemned to become birds, a clear message in Ainu culture that children must respect their parents who have raised them.

The audience comments were indeed revealed in the Golden Kamui anime. Of course in the brief and limited comments in the context of answering the questions in the questionnaire, not all aspects of the Ainu culture were revealed at the audience reception. For example, the concept of *wen kamui* (Evil Kamui) which is associated with the beliefs of the Ainu people does not want to eat bear meat that eats humans.

The audience felt there were some similarities in Ainu culture with Indonesian culture, for example the culture of cooking *citatap* together. The way to chop meat and process tupoi meat into *citatap* is considered by the audience similar to how to make *lawar* in Balinese gastronomy (R-02 and R-04). Audience R-04, wrote:

*The same thing seems to be in the culture of eating. Ainu tribe makes a food called 'Chitatap' which means something that is made together. In Bali, there is a culture of making food that is carried out cooperatively as well, namely 'bats' or making lawar.*

The similarity is indeed seen in the way of processing and cooperation. However, the difference is, in the anime, there are only two people making *citata*, while in Bali making *lawar* is usually done by several people.

Others, there is a cultural compatibility with the people in Indonesia, especially Java and Bali, the Ainu ethnic represents their beliefs, thoughts and views through narrative stories, clothing motifs and wooden crafts that are daily life (R-05).

The readers felt the Ainu story was unique, but the uniqueness did not make Japan automatically having heterogeneous cultural identity, as represented by the R-06 commentary:

*Judging from the Ainu story, Japanese society has the same homogeneous characteristics, namely believing in the existence of gods, believing in the meaning and philosophy of the past can be used as values that educate their generation to date.*

Different ways of looking at, different conclusions about whether Japanese culture is heterogeneous or homogeneous. Although it does not make the reader feel any striking difference, what is certain is that the reading of the Ainu story and the viewing of "Golden Kamui" make Indonesian readers who are subject to this study feel more familiar with the diversity of Japanese culture. They have the status of teachers and students feel grateful that they can read the new crita and wish to tell their friends or students.

The development of Hokkaido tourism has made Ainu culture a major attraction. The Ainu people develop ethnic tourism. In addition to natural attractions, they offer cultural

and artistic attractions such as presenting folklore or legend based shows, such as a staging initiated by mid-2019 known as "Kamuy Lumina", a nighttime laser beam show with a park background in Akan Lake based the legend of "Konkuwa", the Owl God. For the Hokkaido tourism authority, using the rich stories of Ainu people as tourist attraction means the importance of provisions for potential tourists to get to know the legend so they can have a better quality of tourism experience.

## CONCLUSION

Even though they feel the difference between Ainu and Japanese and even with Indonesian stories, readers feel that Japan is still a nation that has a homogeneous culture. The difference story, at the reception of the subject of this study, did not in itself change their view of the identity of Japanese culture. This happens because of the possibility of a strong Japanese cultural identity.

Readers of folktales and audience of Ainu folktales-based anime gain new knowledge about Ainu culture and also at the same time about Japan. This new cultural knowledge can be used as a suggestion to introduce Japanese culture to others outside popular stories such as "Momotarou", "Kintaro", "Doraemon", and "Pokemon". The new stories can become a provision for Indonesian tourists visiting Japan so they can get a deeper travel experience because they recognize Japanese cultural diversity.

There is a reciprocal relationship between making tourist attractions based on folklore with tourism development. The reciprocal relationship can be formulated that tourism can help in preserving folklore, and folklore helps present a unique cultural tourist attraction.

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