

# Structure Narrative of Anime *Golden Kamuy*

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**Abstract.** Anime *Golden Kamuy* is a very popular anime among the younger generation. This research aims to analyze the narrative elements found in the anime *Golden Kamuy*. The analysis uses structural methods to discover the narrative elements built in the anime *Golden Kamuy*. The story in this anime is full of Ainu life and cultural elements, and the depiction of these two things is arranged clearly through its narrative elements. This is an exciting element considering that one of the supporting factors for an anime to become very popular is the exciting visuals to watch. Using the structural research methods supported by narrative structure theory as the leading theory, this research examines the anime *Golden Kamuy* as its material object. As a result, it will be known how the description of “narrative structure of space”, “narrative structure of time”, and “narrative structure of “three-structure phase” contained in the anime. Based on the results, anime *Golden Kamuy* story shows that the narrative elements studied can be the basis not only for an in-depth understanding of the story content, but also a guide to better understand the elements of Japanese war history and reflections on the culture and life of the Ainu tribe which forms the background of the story in the anime *Golden Kamuy*.

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## 1 Introduction

The existence of *Golden Kamuy* as a literary work cannot be separated from the presence of the Ainu tribe in Hokkaido. After the Japanese government and the world recognized the existence of the Ainu, many efforts were made to introduce the Ainu tribe to Japanese society and the world, through various media that can reach all levels of society, especially through manga and anime, as literary works media which favoured by the younger generation. The term anime is an absorption word from the English language, "animation", which is then shortened to "anime". The term anime itself in Japan refers to all types of animated films regardless of the origin of the animated film. But outside of Japan, anime is often explicitly associated with Japanese animation [1].

*Golden Kamuy* was originally the title of a second manga series created by Satoru Noda in 2014 and published on August 21, 2014. *Golden Kamuy* has become a popular manga with 16 volumes and 204 episodes [2]. The popularity of *Golden Kamuy* in Japan and even the world, giving rise to an adaptation of the story into anime form. This adaptation process is often known as ecranization. According to Damono, literature works transfers include translation, adaptation, and transfer from one type of art to another. In addition to translating books, ecranization is often carried out by converting novels into films. Not only limited to books or novels, any type of art can be transformed into a film: dance, singing, literature, drama, and even writing [3].

The anime *Golden Kamuy* is the work of director Hitoshi Nanba which was released in 2018 and is still running today [4]. *Golden Kamuy* has many objects and events closely related to Japan's history in the Meiji era. Events such as the Russo-Japanese war that occurred in 1904-1905 to the Mukden battle that occurred in 1905 are the historical setting for this anime. Not only the historical setting, but the anime *Golden Kamuy* also introduces many Hokkaido Ainu culture, from Ainu language terms to traditional ceremonies [5]. With the various uniqueness contained in the anime *Golden Kamuy*, this research aims to better understand the structure elements of the anime through a study of its narrative elements. However, until now, the broadcast of the anime *Golden Kamuy* is still ongoing, this study limits the study of the narrative elements contained in the anime *Golden Kamuy* season 1 episode 1 to 12 only.

## **2 Result and Discussion**

### **2.1 Film Narrative Structure**

Experts have put forward many theories to define and limit concepts related to narrative structure. The narrative structure is a theory used to examine the building blocks of a film, including anime. From various narrative theories, for this research, the researcher will use the concepts of narrative elements in a book by Himawan Pratista (2017).

A narrative is a series of events related to one another and bound by causal logic (causality) that occur in a time and money environment. Everything that happens must be caused by something and bound to each other by the law of causality [6]. The narrative element consists of three main components: the narrative relationship with space, the narrative relationship with time and the structure of the three phases. Narrative relationship with space refers to the place where the actors of the story move and act. A film generally takes place in a place or location with precise spatial dimensions, that is, it always points to a precise location and area. Narrative relationships with time include time sequence, time duration and time-frequency. Time sequence shows the pattern of the passage of time in the story. These patterns are divided into two types, namely linear and non-linear patterns. A linear pattern is a pattern where time flows according to the action of events without any significant time interruptions. Linear patterns are usually shown with A-B-C-D-E patterns aligned with the storyline sequence. A non-linear pattern is a time sequence pattern that has been manipulated in which the causal relationship between events becomes unclear. If the story in a linear pattern is A-B-C-D-E, then in a non-linear pattern, the time sequence can be A-D-B-C-E. Non-linear patterns make it difficult for the audience to follow the film's storyline. Time duration is the time span shown in the film. The average duration of films is only around 90 to 120 minutes, but the duration of film stories generally has a longer span of time. Stories can span hours, days, weeks, months, years, even centuries. Time-frequency is the re-appearance of a scene in a film at a different time. Generally, a scene in a film is shown only once throughout the film. However, something can be displayed repeatedly according to the demands of the story, such as flashbacks.

The three-phase structure consists of three stages which include the preparation stage, the confrontation stage and the resolution stage. In the

preparatory stage, the main and supporting actors are usually identified; the protagonist and antagonist; problems and goals; and the story's space and time aspects. The confrontation stage also called the middle stage, contains the efforts of the main character to solve the problem that has been determined in the initial stage. At this stage, the plot begins to change direction and is usually caused by unexpected actions by the main or supporting characters. This action will lead to conflict. The last stage is the resolution or closing stage, the story's climax, the culmination of the final conflict or confrontation. At this stage, the story reaches its highest point of tension. After the conflict ends, a problem resolution, story conclusion, or resolution is reached.

## **2.2 Narrative Structure of Anime *Golden Kamuy***

The popularity of anime *Golden Kamuy* has caused the story to arrive in season 4 of the broadcast. In Japan, the popularity of *Golden Kamuy* and its character Sugimoto were then used as branding for tourism promotion and trademarks, such as beer. Between May-July 2018, the Hokkaido government promoted tourism by using the *Golden Kamuy* story to promote its area [7]. In the real world, the Ainu people occupy most of the island of Hokkaido. They are a group of people with their own life and cultural characteristics. The existence of the Ainu has been recorded in various historical records and literature regarding the life of the Ainu. For example, in *Jakka Dofuni Umi no Kioku no Monogatari*, written by Tsushima Yuko [8].

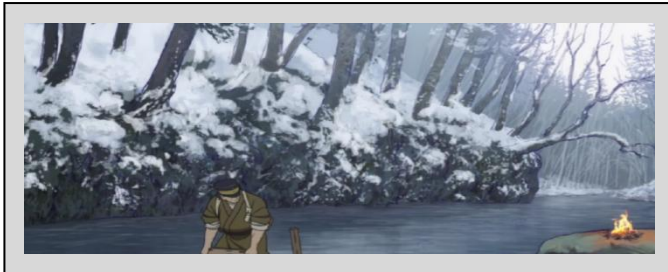
To better understand the depiction of the building elements of *Golden Kamuy* anime, the following explains the narrative elements in *Golden Kamuy*.

### **2.2.1 Narrative Structure of Space**

*Golden Kamuy* season 1 is set in Hokkaido, with various settings, including forests and cities. Many places become elements of space in these two places, but the main narrative spaces include the forest around the mountain, Otaru and the village of the Ainu tribe.

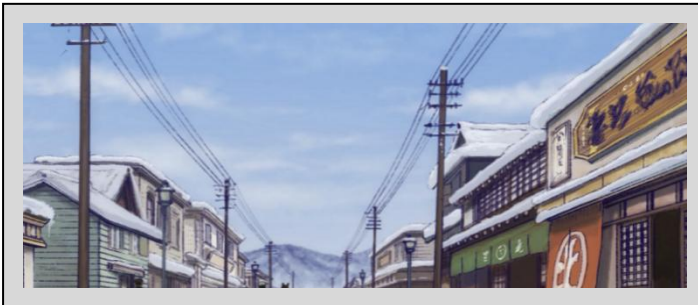
Most of the stories in anime *Golden Kamuy* take place in the forest around the mountain. This forest is described as covered with snow and flowing by rivers. Since it is located in a mountain area, there are several wild animals, such as bears, squirrels, rabbits, wolves and deer. Many main events in the story take place in this forest, e.g. the conversation

between Sugimoto and an unknown man who tells about the gold treasure of the Ainu tribe. This incident became the starting point of Sugimoto's journey. In addition, the forest around the mountain became the first meeting place between Sugimoto and Asirpa (episode 1), the meeting between Sugimoto-Asirpa and Shiraishi, who later became Sugimoto's travelling companion (episode 2), as well as being the setting for the depiction of Asirpa's dexterity in hunting for food (episodes 1-4, 6).



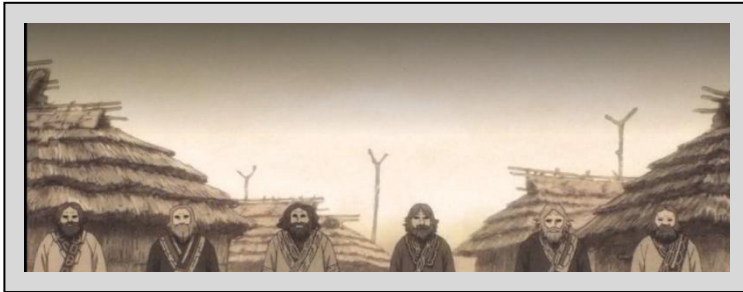
**Fig. 1**The forest around the mountain [9]

The second central place is Otaru. Otaru is described as a city that combines traditional Japanese architectural styles with Western architectural styles, as seen in the buildings that already use brick walls, but not a few still use wood. Residents are seen still wearing traditional kimono, especially the female population. However, some workers wear Western-style clothes, such as soldiers or bank employees who wear suits complete with ties. An essential event in Otaru was the first place Sugimoto went to get information on tattoo prisoners. In this place, Asirpa also experienced discrimination by the local man (episode 2).



**Fig. 2.** Otaru

The third central place is the Ainu Village. This Ainu tribal village is the place of Asirpa which is described as a village with wooden house buildings which are still relatively primitive when compared to Japanese buildings at that time. In this Ainu village, many pictures show the Ainu people's life, culture, and beliefs. Apart from that, it was also in this place that the two main characters had conversations about their plans, one of which was about the life of Asirpa and the Ainu tribe and Sugimoto handing over a bear cub that had lost its mother to be cared for and would later be 'returned' to the gods through a series of traditional Ainu ceremonies called *Iomante* (episode 3).



**Fig. 3.** Ainu Tribe Village

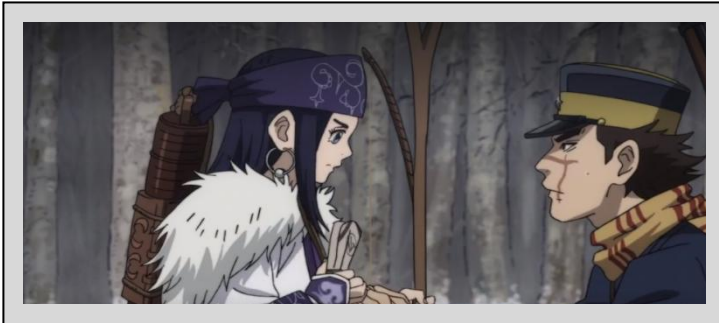
### 2.2.2 Structure Narrative of Time

Regarding the relationship between narrative and time, judging from the time sequence, the story in the anime *Golden Kamuy* uses a linear pattern with an A-B-C-D-E plot. The sequence of events in the story takes place sequentially from the scene of Sugimoto and Asirpa's journey to Abashiri prison. Although there are five flashback scenes, the events do not affect the whole story. The five flashback scenes indicate the time-frequency in the anime *Golden Kamuy*. The five flashbacks are first, the scene when Toraji surrenders his wife, who has an eye disease, to Sugimoto on the battlefield (episode 1, 07:03); second, the scene where Asirpa is left by Retar (episode 4, 08:14), third, the scene when Nihei Tetsuzou tells Tanigaki how he ended up in Abashiri prison (episode 6, 16:10); fourth, the scene when Lieutenant Tsurumi leads his troops to occupy hill 203 in Port Arthur (episode 7, 14:58), and fifth, the scene when Henmi Kazuo who is in Abashiri prison tells Shirashi about his younger brother (episode 8, 12:27). Of the five scenes, none of them interrupts the storyline significantly. Based on that events, anime *Golden Kamuy*'s plot is still categorized as a linear pattern plot.

The duration of anime *Golden Kamuy*'s story is not explicitly explained, but taking the background of 1907, the adventure of Sugimoto-Arsipa in season 1 is estimated to be no more than three months, marked by the beginning of the story, which starts in winter and ends when spring almost come based on the scene of the adonis flower blooming (episode 10, 11:08), and the appearance of a red fox (episode 12, 04:43). Then, judging from the time duration, anime *Golden Kamuy* season 1 consists of 12 episodes with a total duration of 4 hours 8 minutes 17 seconds.

### 2.2.3 Three-Phase Structure

The preparatory stage in the anime *Golden Kamuy* begins with introducing the characters Sugimoto Saichi and Asirpa as the story's main characters. At this stage, the Hokkaido area is also described as the primary setting, with the atmosphere of winter as the setting. During the preparation stage, the inciting incident occurred when Sugimoto was mugged by an old man who had previously told him about Ainu gold. This robbery happened because he thought Sugimoto had heard too much. This event triggered the first turning point in the form of Sugimoto's action of taking the old man's tattooed skin, making Sugimoto one of the parties wanted because he had some clues to the gold of the Ainu tribe.



**Fig. 4.** Sugimoto and Asirpa as anime *Golden Kamuy*'s main character

The confrontation stage in the anime *Golden Kamuy* begins in episode 2, minute 08:30, which shows Sugimoto's confrontation with the Japanese Imperial Army's Seventh Division under Lieutenant Tsurumi for competing for a copy of a tattoo containing a golden Ainu map. Sugimoto also contends with the Hijikata gang, who want Ainu gold to revive the Republic of Ezo. Shiraishi was introduced at this stage and

later became Sugimoto's second travel companion. This Shirashi character has a role in helping Sugimoto find information about tattooed prisoners. On the way to Abashiri, Sugimoto cannot complete his objective due to the presence of Division Seven and Hijikata's gang, who also wants tattoo copies of prisoners who escaped from Abashiri prison. Another surprise at this stage comes with Shiraishi secretly working with Hijikata and the unexpected information from Kiroranke that Nopperabou is Asirpa's father. These surprises made Sugimoto's conflict even more complex. At this stage, Sugimoto hit rock bottom after seeing how the Ainu villagers greatly loved Asirpa, which made him guilty of endangering Asirpa in his quest for gold. The second turning point came when Sugimoto returned to his feet after being held captive at the Seventh Division headquarters and rescued by Asirpa and Shiraishi.

The resolution stage begins at episode 11, minutes 01:55, which is the resolution of the conflict between Sugimoto and Division Seven. At this stage, the conflict between Sugimoto and the Hijikata gang was also resolved, marked by the scene of Ushiyama being buried under the hotel's rubble. At this stage, the character Ienaga has an important role where he is Sugimoto's opponent and the leading cause of the deadline element at this stage. The deadline element that limits space and time can be seen in the scene when Ienaga is about to kill Sugimoto's comrades and the hotel building that collapses because of the explosives lit by Shiraishi. The collapse of the Sapporo World hotel that hid Ienaga's body, thus saving Sugimoto and his colleagues from Ienaga's pursuit, is the end of the resolution stage.

### **3 Conclusion**

From the results of the analyze, it can be seen that in the narrative structure, perspective anime *Golden Kamuy* is not only clear about the description of the adventures of the main characters but also gives a clear picture of the state of society in the Meiji era which was coloured by Japanese war era and the existence of the Ainu tribe in the Hokkaido area. Through visual descriptions and narrative elements, we can also see elements of Japanese history related to Japanese society's life in the Japanese military occupation era. Apart from that, from the spatial narrative elements and the structure of the three phases, it can be seen that in the Meiji era, there was a current of westernization which played



a significant role in the development of the Japanese nation towards modernization.

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