

The Existence of Ainu Tribe's Women in Japanese Patriarchal Society (Study of Feminism in *Golden Kamuy* Anime)

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Abstract. *Golden Kamuy* anime is one attempt by the Japanese government to introduce the Ainu as a minority tribe to young Japanese people. As a literary work popular with the young generation, the story in *Golden Kamuy* anime is full of Ainu life and cultural elements. It reflects the existence of the main character of the Ainu tribe's female named Asirpa. As a representation of Ainu women, the character Asirpa is described as an Ainu woman who is determined to fight for her people. This is an interesting element considering that the Ainu is a tribe that adheres to traditional principles as a patriarchal society which is also a characteristic of Japanese society. By using the research methods of literary sociology and feminist studies as the main theories, this research examines the *Golden Kamuy* anime as its material object. The efforts made by the figure Asirpa in the Ainu patriarchal society were analyzed with qualitative research. As a result, it will be known what efforts were made by the character Asirpa to show her existence as a tough woman in her community. Based on the result, the *Golden Kamuy* anime story shows that the spirit of feminism can emerge even in traditional societies such as the Ainu tribe.

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1 Introduction

1.1 The Ainu Tribe Amid Japanese Society

Japan is a homogeneous society that upholds togetherness and homogeneity in culture, race and ethnicity. However, on Hokkaido island, there is an ethnic minority known as the Ainu. According to Choongwoo, The Ainu people are an indigenous population of Hokkaido, a northern island in the Japanese archipelago, and the southern part of the Sakhalin islands [1]. As a minority ethnic group, the Ainu had been discriminated since the Meiji era when the Japanese government imposed various rules that limited the Ainu's daily activities. The Meiji era rules not only impacted the life of the Ainu themselves but resulted in the lack of recognition of this tribe among Japanese people, especially the younger generation. Discrimination, restrictions on Ainu life and rules that further marginalized the Ainu continued until the world's attention emerged to this tribe.

In June 2008, before the G8 summit in Hokkaido, twenty-one indigenous groups from all over the world gathered for the first Indigenous Peoples Summit. There, they discussed the gaps in policy-making, education, environment and economics and submitted a declaration to the participating nations of the G8 asking to be heard. This summit and many other efforts led to the Japanese government's 2008 recognition of the Ainu as an indigenous people for the first time in history and the passage of a resolution to create a new law to help them recover their status, regain their culture, and rebuild relationships between Ainu and non-Ainu people in Japan [2].

Since then, the Japanese government has made many efforts to introduce the existence of the Ainu tribe to Japanese society and the world. They introduce Ainu life and culture through various media that can reach all levels of society. One of them is through literary works favoured by the younger generation. One of the literary works is the anime entitled "*Golden Kamuy*".

1.2 Anime *Golden Kamuy* as The Ainu Tribe Introduction Media

Anime *Golden Kamuy* is the work of Hitoshi Nanba, and it is an adaptation version of the manga with the same title. *Golden Kamuy* has

many objects and events closely related to Japan's history in the Meiji era, such as the Russian-Japanese war in 1904-1905 and the *Mukden* battle in 1905. Both war is the essential historical setting in this anime. Besides the historical setting, *Golden Kamuy* introduces many Hokkaido Ainu culture, from Ainu language terms to traditional ceremonies [3]. *Golden Kamuy* is the story of the journey of a Russian-Japanese war veteran named Saichi Sugimoto in his search for Ainu gold which a group of people has hidden. On his way, Sugimoto met an Ainu girl named Asirpa, whose father was also involved in the search for Ainu gold. Although they have their purpose, finally, they agree to work together on the journey. This is where Sugimoto and Asirpa's adventure begins.

The story of the anime *Golden Kamuy* is dominated by conflicts and battles between male characters. However, the exciting thing is that in the world of Japanese patriarchy, this anime presents a young female character as a medium to share information about the life and culture of the Ainu tribe. Through the behaviour and events experienced by the Asirpa character in this anime, *Golden Kamuy* viewers get a clear picture of the Ainu tribe. The formidable figure of Asirpa amid the battles and disputes of the patriarchy shows the critical role of Ainu women in their society. This is the author's interest in examining the existence of the Asirpa character in Japanese society, which is thick with a patriarchal system. However, until now, the anime of the *Golden Kamuy* season is still ongoing. In this study, the researcher only observes the existence of Asirpa in the anime *Golden Kamuy* season 1, episodes 1 to 12.

2 Result and Discussion

The existence of a female character in the anime *Golden Kamuy* who is tough amid battles and conflict in which male dominates encourages researchers to find out more clearly about the existence of the Asirpa character in the patriarchal domination of Japanese society. For this purpose, in this study, the researcher will use the sociology of literature as a research method to recognize the community described in the anime *Golden Kamuy* story. According to Ratna (2004), the sociology of literature analyzes literary works about society. The analysis model includes three types, (1) analyzing social problems in the literary work, then connecting them with the facts in the community, (2) analyzing social problems in literary works by finding the relationship between their structures; and (3) analyzing the literary work with specific purposes to

obtain certain information, by particular approach [4]. Before discussing the result of this research, there is an explanation of the theory that will be used in analyzing the existence of female characters in a literary work. To analyze Asirpa's character in anime *Golden Kamuy*, the researcher uses the theory of Feminism.

In Rahmah (2015; 58), Sugihastuti explains that the study of feminist literature is looking at a literary work with the awareness that there are gender differences related to culture and literature in our lives [5]. This difference influences the content of literary works on both the author, the reader, and the character in literary work. This is intended to obtain a clear picture of the existence of woman characters from a feminist perspective. Since this research will examine the existence of female figures in a patriarchal society, the feminism theory that will be used is Simone de Beauvoir's Existentialist Feminism theory.

2.1 Simone de Beauvoir's Existentialist Feminism

Simone de Beauvoir is a French philosopher known as one of the figures of feminism. Through his book entitled *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir discussed the status and position of women in society. Simone de Beauvoir developed Sartre's epistemology of existentialism in which the concept resides *Etre en soi* and *Etre pour soi*. *Etre en soi* means that anything has no consciousness and is unable to set its own goals in life can be considered as an inanimate object. Meanwhile, *Etre pour soi* has the opposite meaning: everything consciousness is the human being himself. Both of these concepts are about existentialist feminism. An existentialist feminism is a form of confirmation for the absurd life and the absence of humans as a 'desire of futility'. It means that their desire is something impossible. Therefore, women are only as *Etre pour les autres* (exist for other people). They are only as "other" for men [6].

Biological data shows many facts about women who are weaker than men, smaller muscles that allow women to lift heavier weights or women who cannot keep up with men's strength in fights. But there is no significance because muscle strength is not the basis for domination. According to Beauvoir, biological science is not enough to provide answers for the states that the problem of women as "the other" [7].

2.2 The Existence of Asirpa Character in The Anime *Golden Kamuy*

In the real world, the Ainu people occupy most of Hokkaido island. They are a group of people with their own life and cultural characteristics. In Anime *Golden Kamuy*, the Ainu land is depicted as a snowy place surrounded by forest with traditional thatched houses. The Ainu, also known as the Aborigines of Japan, are described as a group dominated by men. This confirmation is shown by depicting the men of the Ainu tribe, who are dressed in traditional clothing against the background of the houses of the tribe's inhabitants. The following picture is interpreted as a symbol of a traditional community under men's leadership. Pictures of Ainu village men with Ainu appearance clearly show the presence of a patriarchal system in the community.



Fig. 1. The Ainu Patriarchal Society [8]

Asirpa's character is described as a teenage girl. She has a petite stature typical of Ainu women. The clothes worn by Asirpa are filled with symbols and shapes of Ainu characteristics. She is described as a tough woman who can use various weapons for self-protection and as a hunting tool. The picture below shows Asirpa's existence as an Ainu woman tough enough to exist in a man's environment. In the anime *Golden Kamuy*, the picture below shows Asirpa's first meeting with Sugimoto. The firm, brave and robust image can be seen from the hardened expression on Asirpa's face and the firmness in his standing while holding the arrow. The courage of Asirpa's figure is supported by the background of the place depicted behind Asirpa's figure. The colour of darkness seemed to show that Asirpa

was not like ordinary women. She stood bravely, holding a bow and arrows, which men usually own.



Fig. 2. The figure of Asirpa

Besides the physical description of a tough woman, Asirpa's courageous existence can also be seen in several scenes in the anime, illustrating how she fearlessly confronts people who underestimate her existence. One of the scenes is when she confronts the male innkeeper.



Fig. 3. Big man showing his dominance in front of women

The figure below is the scene which shows Asirpa's existence. It was seen when she fought against the big man who intimidated her. In this incident, Asirpa showed that her trim physique, considered weak, could provide her resistance which the man could not avoid, and she screamed in pain.



Fig. 4. Asirpa's resistance to domination and intimidation

As a physically challenging woman, Asirpa is also described as intelligent and has good communication skills. This ability make her goals can be adequately achieved. This can be seen in several scenes that illustrate Asirpa's persistence and business intelligence when convincing the men around him to help achieve her goals.

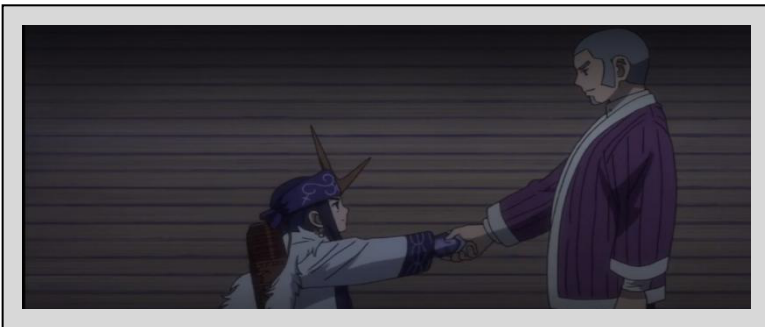


Fig. 5. Asirpa can convince Shiraishi to work together to reach her goal

3 Conclusion

As a result of the analyze, it can be concluded that as a female figure of the Ainu tribe, Asirpa can prove her existence amid the men's domination. With her hard work, strength and intelligence, Asirpa shows that the existence of women is not only an "other" for men. Asirpa's character proved that women biologically claimed to be weak creatures is not right.

Their intelligence and courage can show their existence as individuals who can compete and stand equal with men. Asirpa also can convince her community that her existence as a woman brought good changes to her tribe.

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