

## Polysynthesis in Ainu

Anna Bugaeva

(National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics)

Ainu is a typical polysynthetic language in the sense that a single complex verb can express what takes a whole sentence in most other languages. A single verb form may include more than one heavy element: up to two applicative prefixes (out of three), two causative suffixes (out of five), two incorporated objects, one lexical prefix (out of two originating in nouns ‘head’ and ‘bottom’), one verbalizing suffix (originating in the verb ‘make’), as well as reciprocal, reflexive and general object (=antipassive) prefixes and agreement affixes for the first/second person subject and object. The degree of combinability of various voice markers and noun incorporation is spectacular. For instance, in (1), a transitive verb *suy-pa* ‘sway sth (PL)’ contains one incorporated object, one verbal modifier, two reflexive and two applicatives prefixes.

- (1) *usa-oruspe a-e-yay-ko-tuyma-si-ram-suy-pa*  
various-rumor 1PL.INC-about.APPL-REFL-to.APPL-far-REFL-heart-sway-PL  
(lit.) ‘We keep swaying our hearts afar and toward ourselves over various rumors.’  
= ‘We wonder about various rumors.’ (Chiri 1974 [1936]: 169)

Nevertheless, it has been claimed that Ainu deviates from more typical polysynthetic languages such as Mohawk in that it has less freedom of word order, interrogative phrases in situ, and unrestricted morphological causatives (Baker 1996). The present paper aims to distinguish what Ainu shares with other polysynthetic languages from what is truly unique to Ainu.

### References

- Chiri Mashiho (1974 [1936]). *Ainu gohō gaisetū* [An outline of Ainu grammar]. In:  
*Chiri Mashiho chosakushū*, v. 4, 3–197. Tokyo: Heibonsha.  
Baker, Mark (1996) *The polysynthetic parameter*. Oxford: OUP.