



The Ainu of Japan; The Religion, Superstitions, and General History of the Hairy Aborigines of Japan

John Batchelor

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This historic book may have numerous typos and missing text. Purchasers can usually download a free scanned copy of the original book (without typos) from the publisher. Not indexed. Not illustrated. 1892 edition. Excerpt: ... CHAPTER XII I BEAR-HUNTING The Ainu consider bear-hunting the most manly, exciting, and useful way in which a person can possibly spend his time. It was certainly a very brave act to go and attack a bear with the very poor weapons the Ainu formerly used, and it must have been very exciting. Think, for instance, of attacking a she-bear, which had her cubs with her, with nothing but a long knife and a bow and a few arrows! It is quite true the arrows were poisoned, but the poison takes time before its effects are felt; and to wound a bear is no small matter at the best of times. Even a good shot, with a trustworthy rifle, a steady aim, and a cool head and heart, runs a great deal of risk in following a bear. The Ainu feel that a bear-hunt is a great and serious undertaking, and before they set out they always have a meeting of the elders of their village, for the purpose of asking the favour of the gods. They ask the gods of the mountains to bring them upon the track of the game; they ask the goddess of the rivers to carry them safely over the ferries; they ask the goddesses of the springs to nourish them when they drink ; and they beg the goddess of fire to comfort them, keep them from sickness, cook their food, dry their clothes, and warm their bodies. And, wherever they rest upon their journey, they never forget to worship and ask the favour of the local deities. The Ainu say that the Yezo bears spend their winters in holes and caves, and that when they first come out in the spring their feet are very tender, so that they cannot move far away from their winter home. They do not, however, remain all this time in a torpid state, because they come out of their holes quite fat in the spring. Some say they store up fish and...

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