



Our Land Was A Forest: An Ainu Memoir (Transitions--Asia & the Pacific)

Kayano Shigeru, Mark Selden, Kayano Shigeru

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This book is a beautiful and moving personal account of the Ainu, the native inhabitants of Hokkaido, Japan's northern island, whose land, economy, and culture have been absorbed and destroyed in recent centuries by advancing Japanese. Based on the author's own experiences and on stories passed down from generation to generation, the book chronicles the disappearing world—and courageous rebirth—of this little-understood people. Kayano describes with disarming simplicity and frankness the personal conflicts he faced as a result of the tensions between a traditional and a modern society and his lifelong efforts to fortify a living Ainu culture. A master storyteller, he paints a vivid picture of the Ainu's ecologically sensitive lifestyle, which revolved around bear hunting, fishing, farming, and woodcutting. Unlike the few existing ethnographies of the Ainu, this account is the first written by an insider intimately tied to his own culture yet familiar with the ways of outsiders. Speaking with a rare directness to the Ainu and universal human experience, this book will interest all readers concerned with the fate of indigenous peoples.

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