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B. Piłsudski, Phonograph Wax Cylinders, and Sakhalin Ainu

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In the United States, Thomas Edison, a very famous engineer, invented a machine for recording the human voice which was called the "Phonograph." After 10 years of improvement, this phonograph, using wax cylinders, became very popular. These wax cylinder phonographs were distributed all over the world during about 40 years from 1887 to 1930, and they were used for various purposes. Not only were they used for recording the voices of famous people, but also famous music and songs. In addition, these phonographs were also used for the academic purpose of recording the various languages of, in particular, minority people.

Using the phonograph over the years from 1902 to 1905, Bronisław Piłsudski, a Polish anthropologist, recorded onto wax cylinders the tales and songs of the Ainu people in Sakhalin and Hokkaido in order to study their culture. These wax cylinders were brought back by him to Poland, but they were preserved in poor condition. As a result, the cylinders were so severely damaged that the reproduction of sounds from them was too difficult using only a traditional phonograph. Finally, it was requested that the wax cylinders be deciphered in Japan using modern technology. Following the arrival of Piłsudski's wax cylinders at Hokkaido University, two-types of reproduction systems were developed. The first-type was a stylus-type reproduction system with a very light pressure stylus along the lines of the traditional phonograph, by which sounds were reproduced for some cylinders which were in relatively good condition. The second-type was a non-contact and non-destructive reproduction system using a laser beam, by which sounds were reproduced successfully for the cylinders in bad condition (cracked or in pieces).

In parallel with the studies on reproduction systems, an international research organization for restoration and assessment of B. Piłsudski's works was founded. Under this organization, reproduction and analysis of the contents of the wax cylinders was started in the form of interdisciplinary cooperative research projects among Japanese and foreign scholars in the fields of ethnology, folk music, linguistics, cultural anthropology, science, and engineering. As a result of these interdisciplinary research projects, three international conferences were held in Sapporo (September 16-20, 1985), Juzno-Sakhalinsk (October 31-November 2, 1999), and Cracow (August 30-September 2, 1999). These conferences were particularly

focused on the following subjects: the life and career of B. Piłsudski, technical aspects of the restoration of wax cylinders, Ainu folklore and language, other northern languages, and the culture of the Ainu and other northern minority peoples.

The life of B. Piłsudski is divided into four phases: 18 years in Lithuania (1866-1885), 2 years in St. Petersburg (1885-1887), 19 years in Sakhalin, Vladivostok, and Japan (1887-1906), and 12 years of wandering around Europe (1906-1918). While Piłsudski was a student at St. Petersburg University, he was involved in an abortive conspiracy to assassinate Alexander III of the Russian Empire and sentenced to 15 years deportation in Sakhalin. While he was in Sakhalin, he became interested in the native minority peoples the Oroks, the Giliyaks, and the Ainu, and he collected ethnographic samples of the cultures of these peoples. In particular, he collected many Ainu materials and recorded Ainu folklores and old tales by using an Edison phonograph and wax cylinders. The more he got acquainted with the Ainu culture, the more he felt it necessary to continue with this study. He then settled in the Ai Kotan Ainu settlement, on the eastern shore of Sakhalin. He became such a close friend of the Ainu people, regarded as both their teacher and defender, that he received the nickname "The King of the Ainu." However, he left Sakhalin in 1905 and returned to Cracow in Austria (now in Poland) in 1906 after traveling in Japan and the United States. Due to mainly a lack of financial acumen and the occurrence of World War I, he spent the last years of his life wandering around Europe and he was finally found drowned in the River Seine in Paris.

The wax cylinders that Piłsudski recorded while he was in Sakhalin contain a variety of Sakhalin Ainu material: mythic epics, heroic epics, love songs, dance songs, throat games, lullabies, shaman's prayers, the five stringed harp, informal songs, party songs, old tales, word game songs, and others. This material was consequently studied by many scholars working in the fields of ethnology, folk music, linguistics and cultural anthropology. As a result, the lost words of the Sakhalin Ainu people were revived to the extent that the Ainu culture has been revealed vividly to us in our modern world, indicating the important meanings of the language for human beings.

<Contents to be presented>: (1) Introduction: phonograph and wax cylinders
 (2) Wonders of the laser beam: re-creating sounds and words (3) Life of Bronisław Piłsudski and his study of wax cylinders (4) Sakhalin Ainu living preserved in wax cylinders: revival of their lost words (5) Voices to our heart and their message