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BEARING THE 'BARE FACTS' OF RITUAL. A CRITIQUE OF
JONATHAN Z. SMITH'S STUDY OF THE BEAR CEREMONY BASED
ON A STUDY OF THE AINU *IYOMANTE*

TAKESHI KIMURA

Review article

Summary

A few years ago, Benjamin Ray criticized Jonathan Z. Smith's study of the bear hunting ritual. In this article, I further examine and develop a criticism of Smith's theory of ritual. Since he presents the Ainu bear ceremony as the exemplar case and bases his theory of ritual on his interpretation of it, I review and examine the available ethnographies of the Ainu bear ceremony *Iyomante*. My reading of them calls into question both Smith's presentation of the ethnography of the bear ceremony and his interpretation of its meaning. Smith's focus on the ritual killing as the core of the Ainu bear ceremony as the perfect hunt to resolve incongruity between the mythical ideology and the hunting practice is based upon his not taking into consideration the Ainu religious world of meanings. From my study of the Ainu bear ceremony, I maintain that the ritual dismemberment of the bear and the ritual decoration of the bear's skull constitute the core of the meaning of the ritual. To interpret the religious meaning of this ritual, I point out the necessity for considering the Ainu view of personhood and ontological understanding of the "bear." In my interpretation of this core part of the bear ceremony, the material form, that is the bear, of the Ainu deity is ritually transformed into its spiritual mode and then sent back to the mountain whence from it originally came.

Recently a newspaper reported the amazing discovery of some cave drawings in Chauvet, near Marseilles in France, dating from 30,340 to 32,410 years ago. Interestingly, the newspaper article also mentioned an astonishing ritual remain found in the cave, "a stone slab with the skull of a bear placed on it, as though it were an altar."¹ What the bear skull of the Chauvet meant to the people who used it is no longer clear to us, but the ritual killing of bears has attracted the attention of many anthropologists and scholars

¹ New York Times, June 8, 1995: A4.

of religions since A. Irving Hallowell's classic study.² Among historians of religions, Jonathan Z. Smith used a Siberian case of ritual killing of a bear in order to investigate the paradigmatic significance of this ritual action for the mundane practice of the hunting.³ His theory remains influential and is appealed to in a recent article on Aztec human sacrifice.⁴ However, a few years ago another historian of religions, Benjamin Ray, criticized Smith's interpretation.⁵ After critically reviewing these two scholars' studies of the ritual killing of a bear, I have found that there are serious methodological and interpretive problems with them. In this essay, I will challenge these scholars' interpretations by a close analysis of the Ainu bear ceremony (*Iyomante*) which both Smith and Ray take to be a typical example.⁶ By focusing on the *Iyomante* and interpreting its religious meanings in detail, I will show that Smith and Ray both ignore a fundamental religious aspect of the *Iyomante* which calls their interpretations into serious question.

In his article entitled "The Bare Facts of Ritual," Jonathan Z. Smith views ritual as "a human labor, struggling with matters of incongruity."⁷ He uses ethnographic reports of Siberian hunters' ritual hunting and killing of a bear as his exemplum of ritual. The ritual hunt may be divided into four main parts. First, the hunters perform the ritual "preparation for the hunt" designed to insure the success of the hunt, including mimetic dances "prefiguring" the hunt, the stabbing of an "effigy" of the animal, invocations to the Master of the Animals, purification of the hunters, and learning a ceremonial hunt

² A. Irving Hallowell, "Bear Ceremonialism in the Northern Hemisphere," *American Anthropologist*, n.s. 28, no. 1 (1926): 1-175.

³ Jonathan Z. Smith, "The Bare Facts of Ritual," in *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1982): 53-65.

⁴ David Carrasco, "Give Me Some Skin: The Charisma of the Aztec Warrior," *History of Religions* 35, no. 1, (1995): 2-3.

⁵ Benjamin Ray, "The Koyukon Bear Party and the 'Bare Facts' of Ritual," *Numen* 38, no. 2 (1991): 151-176.

⁶ Smith refers to pages 106 to 135 of Hallowell's article which mainly describes the bear ceremonies of the Gilyak and the Ainu. By referring to Hallowell, Ray writes that "In the view of Hallowell and others, this festival [a periodic bear festival] 'clearly differentiates the people of this district from other tribes of Asia and America' who do not perform this rite." *Ibid.*, 156.

⁷ Smith, *op. cit.*, 57.

language. Secondly, the hunters perform a transitional rite as they move from the human social world into the forest realm of animals and spirits. They ritually ask permission from the forest to hunt the animals. At this juncture, Smith points out that “the complex of host/guest/visitor/gift comprises the articulated understanding of the hunt,” in which the forest is treated as a host, the hunters as a guest, and the animals as visitors and gifts.⁸ Thirdly, the hunters ritually kill the bear according to strict rules of etiquette. The animal should be killed in hand-to-hand, face-to-face combat. Fourthly, the hunters strategically and ritually retreat from the world of the forest and return to that of the human, bearing the corpse of the slain animal. The villagers perform a ritual purification for the hunters on their arrival at the village.

After summarizing the ritual scenario of this hunting ritual, Smith points out that in practice most hunters do not fight the bear face to face. Rather, they use traps, pitfalls, self-triggering bows, snares, and, recently, shotguns. Noting the discrepancy between the ritual prescription and the practical realities of hunting bear, Smith argues that these incongruities hold the key to the meaning of the ritual action.

Smith suggests that the hunters perform the bear ceremony as a means of resolving the incongruity between the hunters’ ideological statements of how they *ought* to hunt and their actual behavior. In the bear ceremony, the hunters can “get it right,” as it were, by following the ritual prescription for killing the bear. Smith summarizes the generalized ritual scenario of the bear ceremony as follows:

A young, wild bear cub is taken alive, brought to a village, and caged. It is treated as an honored guest, with high courtesy and displays of affection, at times being adopted by a human family. After two or three years, the festival is held. The bear is roped and taken on a farewell walk through the village. It is made to dance and play and to walk on its hind legs. Then it is carefully tied down in a given position and ceremonially addressed. It is slain, usually by being shot in the heart at close range; sometimes, afterward, it is strangled. The body is then divided and eaten with ceremonial etiquette (the same rules that pertain to the consumption of game). Its soul is enjoined to return to its ‘Owner’ and report how well it has been treated.⁹

⁸ Ibid., 59.

⁹ Ibid., 63-64.

In short, Smith regards the bear ceremony as the performative representation of the perfect hunt, which the hunters do not and cannot realize in normal practice. Hence, he concludes, "Ritual is a means of performing the way things ought to be in conscious tension to the way things are in such a way that this ritualized perfection is recollected in the ordinary, uncontrolled, course of things."¹⁰ Smith's general theory of ritual emerges from his interpretation of the bear ceremony. Thus, if his interpretation of the meaning of the bear ceremony turns out to be tainted by serious problems, his theory of ritual will have to be reexamined critically.

The Ritual Text of the Iyomante

The Ainu *Iyomante* is a very complex ceremony, consisting of a variety of rituals, myths and symbols which vary from area to area in history.¹¹ For my presentation of a summary of the *Iyomante*, while I acknowledge the recent scholarly debate concerning the authority and objectivity of ethnographic text,¹² it is sufficient to point out that there are three main chronological groups of ethnographies: those from the pre-Meiji era,¹³ those from the Meiji era

¹⁰ Ibid., 63.

¹¹ Before the deterioration of the Ainu social structure, the *Iyomante* was carried out by a local territorial society, the *Shine itokpa* group, which was composed of several villages along the river. The *Shine itokpa* group was a patrilineal kin group and shared the common design of *ikashi itokpa* and the common ritual procedure, *kamuy nomi*. They shared a common head of the group, a common territory of salmon's spawning area, the salmon ceremony, and an obligation to cooperate in building new houses. Watanabe Hitoshi, "Ainu no kumamatsuri no shakaiteki kinou narabini sono hattenni kansuru seitaiteki yoin," *Minzokugaku Kenkyu* 29, no. 3 (1964): 208-216.

¹² Here I refer to works by Johannes Fabian, *Time and Other, How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), James Clifford and George E. Marcus, ed., *Writing Culture, The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), and Talal Asad, *Anthropology & the Colonial Encounter* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1973). I acknowledge that to read the ethnographies of the *Iyomante* critically, it is necessary to discuss the motivations of those who traveled to Hokkaido and reported their observations of the Ainu society, the political and epistemological stances which determined their perspective on the Ainu life and the Ainu people's socio-historical situation at the time the ethnographies were written.

¹³ Pre-Meiji studies include: Matsumiya Kanzan, "Ezo Danhitsu ki" (1710); Sakakura Genjiro, "Hokkai Zuihitsu" (1739); Matsumae Hironaga, "Matsumaeshi"

to the end of WWII,¹⁴ and those from the post-war period.¹⁵ While I as-

(1781); Hezutsu Tosaku, "Toyuki" (1784); Sato Genrokuro, "Ezo Shui" (1786); Mogami Tokunai, "Ezo Zoshi" (1789); "Kai Akakuma no satsuri no koto" (1790); Hata Awagimaro, "Ezo Kenbunshi" (1790); "Ezo Shima Kikan"(1799); Ouchi Yoan, "Tokaiyawa"(1861); and Matsumae Tokuhiko, "Ezoshima Kikan Hochu" (1863). Frazer cites an earliest published account from 1652, but I have been unable to locate it, see James G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, 1 volume, abridged edition, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1950): 590-93.

¹⁴ These include: Scheube, "Der Bärencultus und die Bärenfeste der Ainu" in *Mittheilungen der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Natur-und Völkerkunde Ostasiens* 3, Heft 22 (1880): 44-51; Isabella L. Bird, *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan, an Account of Travels on Horseback in the Interior including Visits to the Aborigines of Yezo and the Shrines of Nikko and Ise*, 2 v. (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1880); Edward Greey, *The Bear-Worshippers of Yezo* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, Publishers, 1884); Sawada Sesshu's drawings of the *Iyomante*, "Hokkaido dojin kumamatsuri" in *Fuzoku Gaho*, 23 (1889): 11-13 & 28 (1891): 11; Mitsuoka Shin'ichi, *Ainu no Ashiato* (Hakuro: Miyoshi Shoten, 1962), originally published earlier; Sasaki Chozaemon, "Ainu no Kumagari to Kumamatsuri" in Kono Motomichi, ed., *Ainushi Shiriyoshu* 5 (1980), originally published by Sasaki Hoeido in 1926; John Batchelro, *Ainu Life and Lore: Echoes of a Departing Race* (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 1927); Yoshida Iwao, "Ainu to kuma," *Minzokugaku Kenkyu* 1, no. 3 (1935): 50-73; Inukai Tetsuo's "Ainu no okonau kuma no kaibo," *Minzokugaku Kenkyu* 1, no.3 (1935): 74-82; Inukai Tetsuo and Natori Takemitsu, "Iyomante no bunkateki igi to sono keishiki (1)" *Hoppo Bunka Kenkyu Hokoku* no. 2 (1939): 237-271 and "Iyomante no bunkateki igi to sono keishiki (2)" *Hoppo Bunka Kenkyu Hokoku* no. 3 (1940): 79-135; Natori Takemitsu, "Sarunkuru Ainu no Kumaokuri ni okeru kamigami no yurai to nusa," *Hoppo Bunka Kenkyu Hokoku* no. 4 (1941): 35-112, and *Funkawan Ainu no Hoge* (Sapporo: Hoppo Bunka Shuppansha, 1945); and Neil James, *Petticoat Vagabond in Ainu Land and Up and Down Eastern Asia* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1942). A German scholar of religion, Hans Haas, wrote an article on the Ainu, "Die Ainu und ihre Religion," *Bilderatlas zur Religionsgeschichte* (1925): 1-18.

¹⁵ These include: Joseph M. Kitagawa, "Ainu Bear Festival (Iyomante)," *History of Religions* 1, no. 1, (1958): 95-151; Neil Gordon Munro, *Ainu Creed and Cult* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963); Ifukube Muneo, "Saru Ainu no kumamatsuri (1)" *Gakuen Ronshu* 8 (1964): 1-32, "Saru Ainu no kumamatsuri (2)" *Gakuen Ronshu* 9 (1965): 29-56, "Saru Ainu no kumamatsuri (3)," *Gakuen Ronshu* 10 (1966): 1-21; Sato Naotaro, "Kushiro Ainu no Iyomante (kuma okuri) (1)-(23)," *Dokushojin* 4, no. 2 to 6, no. 3 (1955-57); Iyomante Jikko Iinkai, ed., *Iyomante, Kawakami chiho*

sume that it is crucially important to interpret the *Iyomante* in its historical context, for the purpose of this paper, I choose to present the general ritual contexts of the *Iyomante* here.¹⁶

On the preparation day, the Ainu men get together to create prayer sticks (*inau*) for the alter (*nusa-san*),¹⁷ for the god of fire (*ape-fuchi-kamuy*),¹⁸

no Kumaokuri no kiroku (Tokyo: Shogakukan, 1985); Fujimura Hisakazu, "Ainu no rei okuri (1)-(18)," *Gakuto* 88, no. 1 to 89, no. 6 (1988-89) and Sasaki Toshikazu, "Iyomante ko-Ainu shi jojutsu no kanosei wo saguru," *Oto to Eizo to Moji ni yoru "Taikei" Nihon Rekishi to Geino* 14 (1989): 145-208.

¹⁶ From my review of the ethnographies of the *Iyomante*, it is possible to say that, even if the ritual structure of the *Iyomante* remained largely unchanged due to the conscious effort of some Ainu to retain or restore the ritual, the "meaning" of the *Iyomante* ritual performances changes over time with the shifting political, economic, social and religious circumstances of the Ainu. The meaning of the ritual is not uniform across time and space nor is it to be found by simply analyzing the structure of the ritual process. Rather, one must analyze the performative contexts and occasions in history. I will take this issue up on another occasion.

¹⁷ According to Munro, the fundamental Ainu religious concepts are *ramat*, *kamuy* and *inau*. The nearest English equivalents of *ramat* (literally, "heart") are "soul" or "spirit." When living things such as men, animals, trees, and plants, die, *ramat* leaves them and goes elsewhere, but it does not perish. *Inau* is usually described as whittled and shaved wooden sticks and solid stems of wood which resemble batons or wands. *Inau* embody *ramat*, credited with power, whether derived from the ancestors or from the spiritual potency of impressive natural phenomena. It is ritually addressed as messenger between human beings and *kamuy*, or between *kamuy*. Neil G. Munro, *Ainu Creed and Cult* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963): 7-15.

¹⁸ The term *kamuy* refers not only to the Ainu deities, but also to numerous independent spirits of lesser degree. This term is also applied to anything remarkable, incomprehensible, or even exceptionally beautiful. *Kamuy* are loosely classified as good or beautiful, bad or hostile, and mischievous but not necessary malevolent. According to Munroe there are eight classes of *kamuy*: 1) Remote *kamuy*, called *pase kamuy*, are counted as high gods. They include, *Kando-koro kamuy* (Possessor of the Sky), *Kamu Fuchi*, *Oina Kamuy* and others. Most of the *pase kamuy* are believed to have descended from the sky and will return there in the fullness of time. 2) Among the accessible and trustworthy *kamuy*, the nominal chief of them is *Shiramba kamuy*, Upholder of the World, *Kamuy Fuchi*, the Supreme Ancestress and also known as *Abe Kamuy*, *kamuy* of fire, *Nusa-koro Kamuy* and others. 3) These *kamuy* are invoked after prayer to *Kamuy Fuchi* and *Nusa-koro Kamuy*. They are *Mintara-koro Kamuy* (Possessor of the precincts) and *Ru-koro Kamuy* (the *kamuy* of

the god of the threshold (*apa-cha-kamuy*), the god of the house (*chise-kor-kamuy*) and others, and to make ceremonial arrows with decorations (*eper-aiii*), ceremonial gifts for the bear (*eper-shike*), and finally to prepare liquor and other ritual necessities. Then, they offer prayers to the god of fire (*ape-fuchi-kamuy*) for the success of the *Iyomante*. In the *Iyomante*, prayer (*kamuy nomi*) is offered to the god of fire (*ape-fuchi-kamuy*) as in other religious occasions, because *ape-fuchi-kamuy* is a mediator between humans and the *kamuy* in the *kamuy* world. Men and women perform various dances and songs and recite sacred stories of the cultural hero (*oina*), as well as other sacred and non-sacred stories (*yukar*).

On the second day, the main ritual is performed. Prayers (*kamuy nomi*) are offered to various important *kamuy* both within the house and outdoors. Inside the house, *kamuy nomi* are offered to *ape-fuchi-kamuy* (the *kamuy* of fire) and *chise-kor-kamuy* (the *kamuy* of the house). Outside the house, a ritual space is constructed and the treasures are placed beside the altar.¹⁹ Sitting in front of the altar (*nusa-san*), a group of men offer *kamuy nomi* to *kotan-kor-kamuy* (the *kamuy* of the village), *shiranba-kamuy* (the *kamuy* of the earth), *nupuri-kamuy* (the *kamuy* of the mountain), and other important *kamuy*. After these prayers are over, the people attach a rope to the bear's neck and take it out of its cage. Women sing and dance in a circle around the bear. Some food is given to the bear and a prayer is

the male privy). 4) All animals have *ramat* but not all are *kamuy*. Those theriomorphic *kamuy* include some animals such as a bear, a wolf and a fox, some birds such as an eagle owl, a black woodpecker, and a crow, a spider, and some aquatic creatures such as a fresh-water crab. 5) Spirit helpers and personal *kamuy* include the skulls of certain *kamuy* in an animal form. The skulls are smoked, cleaned and partly wrapped in curled shavings (*inau kike*), which are stuffed into the cranial cavity, eye sockets, and mouth. Among many types, the skull of a good fox is favored. 6) Mischievous and malicious *kamuy* include many malicious and malignant spirits that haunt the wilds. Threatening spirits lurk in the woods, crags, gullies, marshes, and in the pools and eddies of rivers. 7) The *kamuy* of pestilence are also held to be malignant, but one was so overwhelmingly frightful that no Ainu dared to call it an evil spirit. 8) Among the things of unutterable horror, the most noteworthy is the caterpillar. Ibid., 16-27.

¹⁹ The treasure at the ritual scene is a key to the Ainu perception of space. Matsumae Hironaga already mentioned the existence of the treasure at the ritual scene in 1781. Matsumae Hironaga, "Matsumaeshi," in *Hokumon Sosho*, ed. Otomo Kisaku, vol. 2, (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankokai, 1972): 116.

offered to the bear. They then drag the bear around, exciting him. The men, women, and children present become excited, too. Then, the men shoot the decorated arrows at the bear. The ritual master shoots the fatal arrow into the bear. His wife, who has taken care of the bear cub, weeps, as do other women. The men then strangle the bear to death, using two branches placed around its neck. They next take the dead body of the bear to the altar, give gifts to the dead bear, and sit next to each other. The women sit behind the men. Again a prayer is offered to *ape-fuchi-kamuy* (the *kamuy* of fire) and *eper-kamuy* (the *kamuy* of the bear cub). Before they dismember the body of the bear, a prayer is again offered. Then, under the guidance of the elders, the bear's body is dismembered by several men. The bear's head (*maratt*) attached with skin is brought into the house through the east window. Prayers are again offered to *ape-fuchi-kamuy* (the *kamuy* of fire) and the bear (*maratt*) inside. A feast is held. The sword and crane dances are performed by the men, singing and recitation of *yukar* and *oina* follows, and women's dances (*upopo*) are performed. The bear's flesh is then boiled and shared by the people in a communal meal.

On the last day of the *Iyomante*, the main part of the ritual inside the house is called *um-memke* (skinning the head and decorating the skull with *inau* and gifts). Smith and Ray both completely ignore this most important part of the ritual. Prayer is offered to *ape-fuchi-kamuy* (the *kamuy* of fire) and the bear's *kamuy*. The decorated skull is placed facing east on a Y-shaped tree and a ritual to send the *kamuy* off to the mountain is performed. Again, a communal feast is held. The *Iyomante* is concluded by turning the skull toward the village, indicating the *kamuy* has returned home to the *kamuy* land.

Theoretical and Methodological Arguments

Benjamin Ray, in his article entitled "The Koyukon Bear Party and the 'Bare Facts' of Ritual," severely criticizes Jonathan Z. Smith's presentation of the bear hunting ritual and his interpretation of it.²⁰ Ray makes the following points: (1) Neither Irving Hallowell's comparative study of the bear ceremony nor Lot-Falks' study of Siberian hunters, upon which Smith constructs his interpretation of the bear hunting ritual, reveal any contradictions

²⁰ Ray, *op. cit.*, 151-176.

between the words and the deeds of the hunters as Smith suggests are found there; (2) the bear ritual is not intended to be a “perfect hunt” as Smith suggests, but is, rather, “a celebration to which the bear is invited before being ritually dispatched;” (3) since the bear ceremony is performed only among a few East Asiatic people, it can hardly be assumed that the rite influences the collective mind of the northern hunters; and (4) because Smith’s view of the bear ceremony treats only one aspect of the ceremony, the killing of the bear, and deals with only selected statements about bear hunting, his view is “intentionally partial and hypothetical.”²¹

In the second part of his essay, Ray uses Richard Nelson’s study of the Koyukon bear hunting ritual and bear party, in order to evaluate the validity and applicability of Smith’s theory of ritual.²² Ray points out that Smith’s theory cannot be applied to the best ethnographic data on the Koyukon hunting ritual. Finally, Ray asserts that Smith’s theory is based on an outsider’s perspective, which he confuses with the hunter’s view of the world:

²¹ Ibid., 153.

²² In his treatment of the Koyukon bear hunting ritual, Ray does not pay any attention to any changes in the political, economical and religious spheres. A similar lack of attention to historical change is also evident in Joseph M. Kitagawa’s study of the Ainu bear ceremony. The Ainu appears to be very static in Kitagawa’s portrayal. “Despite uncertainties about actual Ainu identity, scholars believe that the Ainu inherited a form of religious belief and practice common to prehistoric peoples of the arctic area. Thus historians of religions can learn something from the Ainu about prehistoric arctic religion, to which we otherwise have no direct access.” Joseph M. Kitagawa, *The History of Religions: Understanding Human Experience* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987): xvi. A few archaeological challenges have been mounted against such a naive historical diffusionism. The archaeologist Utakawa Hiroshi, for example, goes so far as to argue that the archaeological evidence indicates that the *Iyomante* was created in the mid-eighteenth century. Utakawa Hiroshi, *Iyomante no kokogaku* (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1989): 99-102. Watanabe Hiroshi, for his part, suggests that the probable origin of the *Iyomante* is to be found in the culture of the Okhotsk. Watanabe Hitoshi, “Ainu Bunka no Genryu, tokuni Ohotsuku Bunka tonon kankei ni tsuite,” *Kokogaku Zasshi* 60, no. 1 (1974): 72-82. Recently, Sato Takao reported that archaeological evidence was found in the Otafuku Rock Cave in eastern Hokkaido in the period of the Satsumon culture (c. 8th-12th cent. C.E.): Sato Takao, “‘Kumaokuri’ no keito,” *Kokuritsu Rekishi Minzoku Hakubutsukan Kenkyu Hokoku* 48 (1993): 107-126.

The problem lies in confusing the two, in giving priority to the outsider's view of reality, "the way things are," and in assuming that the natives must share this view so that their rituals become merely forced "ideological" statements about the way "things ought to be."²³

While Ray criticizes Smith's analysis of the bear hunting ritual, he does not extend his criticism to Smith's interpretation of the bear ceremony. Therefore, I will develop my critical analysis of Smith's interpretation of the bear ceremony.

In extending Ray's critique, I find the following problems in Smith's treatment of the bear ceremony: (1) his "brief, highly generalized description" of the bear ceremony does not cover the whole bear ceremony; (2) in constructing this generalized description, Smith selects one reported case among many and then represents it as the crucial constitutive element in his generalized description of the bear ceremony; (3) Smith's neglect of geographical and cultural differences, coupled with his proffered generalized description, implies that so-called "primitive" people are the same everywhere; and (4) Smith's generalized description is constructed in such a way that, not surprisingly, the resultant picture matches his own theory.

Smith uses the bear ceremonies of "a number of these circumpolar peoples" in order to argue his general point concerning ritual.²⁴ In a note he refers to pages 106 to 135 of Hallowell's study, in which Hallowell discusses the bear ceremonies of the Gilyak, the Gold, the Oltscha, the Orochi (a people along the Amur river), and the Ainu.²⁵ As Ray points out, these are not all circumpolar people. The Japanese anthropologist Obayashi Taryo thinks that the bear ceremony developed only among people living between the littoral zone and Hokkaido, where the ecology is characterized by a deciduous broad-leaved forest.²⁶ Facing Smith's misrepresentation of the ethnography, one begins to suspect Smith's "generalized description" of the bear ceremony to be a fabrication woven out of the earlier ethnographic descriptions.

The first part of Smith's generalized description of the bear ceremony covers the period from the capture of a bear cub in the mountains to the

²³ Ray, *op. cit.*, 172.

²⁴ Smith, *op. cit.*, 63.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 144. See Hallowell, *op. cit.*, 106-35.

²⁶ Obayashi Taryo, "Kumamatsuri no rekishi minzokugakuteki kenkyu-gakushi teki tenbo," *Kokuritsu Minzokugaku Hakubutsukan Kenkyu Hokoku* 10, no. 2 (1985): 446-447.

ceremonial division of its body and its consumption. Smith describes the hunting aspect of the bear ceremony in detail, yet as Ray points out, this is only one aspect of the whole bear ceremonial complex. Smith presents his generalized description of the bear ceremony by assuming that the hunt and the ritual killing are the most important elements of the ritual complex. Thus, he describes the bear ceremony in such a manner that a reader has the impression that the killing is the essential element.

The second part of Smith's generalized description of the bear ceremony seeks to demonstrate that this ceremony represents the "perfect hunt." The perfection of the hunt in the bear ceremony is found, he claims, in the ritual manner of killing the bear:

The bear was treated correctly as a guest. It was constrained to rejoice in its fate, to walk to its death rather than run away, to assume the correct posture for its slaughter, to have the proper words addressed to it (regardless of length) before it is killed, to be slain face-to-face, and to be killed in the proper all-but-bloodless manner.²⁷

Those who know little or nothing about the bear ceremony might be persuaded by Smith's argument, but a careful reading of this part of his generalized description of the bear ceremony raises a serious question concerning his representation of the ethnographic sources. The last portion of the quoted description, "to be killed in the proper all-but-bloodless manner," is intended to stress the perfection of the bear ceremony. Yet, in checking Smith's reference to Hallowell, one finds that Hallowell mentions this manner of killing the bear in a footnote, yet omits it from his own general description of the bear ceremony.²⁸ Significantly, it is omitted by Hallowell precisely because it does not constitute a general element. Hallowell mentions the single such case among the Gilyak reported by von Schrenck and another case from the Tahltan of North America. Thus, this element is exceptional rather than common, let alone, a necessary or crucial element of the bear ceremony.

There is a report concerning the blood-shedding of the Ainu bear ceremony which is directly in conflict with Smith's interpretation. Isabella L.

²⁷ Smith, *op. cit.*, 64.

²⁸ Hallowell, by referring to von Schrenck, writes, "the blood which is lost is immediately covered with snow. It may be remarkable here that the Tahltan, after killing a bear 'gather the remains and the blood that is not required and cover it if possible.'" *Op. cit.*, 115. See note 484.

Bird, who traveled through the Yezo islands (present-day Hokkaido) from 1878 to 1879, reports on the Ainu bear ceremony,

Yells and shouts are used to excite the bear, and when he becomes much agitated a chief shoots him with an arrow, inflicting a slight wound which maddens him, on which the bars of the cage are raised, and he springs forth, very furious. At this stage the Ainos run upon him with various weapons, each one striving to inflict a wound, as it brings good luck to draw his blood.²⁹

Clearly, at least among the Ainu, the bear ritual is not bloodless. It seems clear that the Ainu do not perform the bear ceremony to present “the proper all-but-bloodless manner” in Smith’s sense.³⁰ Therefore, one cannot rely on Smith’s interpretation of the bear ceremony for its religious meanings. One has to go back to the original ethnographies.

While I accept Ray’s criticism of Smith, his interpretation of the bear ceremony represented by the Gilyak and the Ainu also has serious problems. Ray writes:

The stated purpose of this rite [a periodic bear ceremony] is to convey a request for continued provision of game to the spiritual powers via the sacrificed bear ‘messenger.’

In another place, he repeats almost the same thesis,

the purpose of this ceremony is to kill a bear that has been held in captivity so that it will act as a spokesman to the spirits, asking them for a continued supply of game.³¹

Ray makes at least four serious mistakes here, if reviewed based on the Ainu bear ceremony, which he includes. First, he implies the bear cub is “a captive.” Second, he calls the ritual killing of the bear a “sacrifice.” Third, he calls the bear “a spokesman” or “a messenger” to the spirit. Fourth, he mistakenly assumes that the spirit of the bear carries gifts given by people

²⁹ Isabella L. Bird, *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan, an Account of Travels on Horseback in the Interior including Visits to the Aborigines of Yezo and the Shrines of Nikko and Ise*, vol. 2 (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1880): 100.

³⁰ Smith does not pay enough serious attention to the issue of how a historian of religions goes about generalizing with intellectual integrity from various ethnographic data, including contradictory accounts.

³¹ Ray, *op. cit.*, 156, 159.

and shows them to the gods, and that, as a result, the spirit of the bear promises to return to the human world.

From the Ainu point of view, humans do not capture the bear cub, depriving it of its freedom or autonomy. Rather, they take care of the bear cub, as they are charged to do by the *kamuy* of the mountain. What seems crucial here is a temporary domestication of the bear which belongs to the mountain in the habitual space of the human life. When the bear cub is brought into the village, the bear is welcomed as a guest. Moreover, Ray uncritically applies the category of sacrifice to the bear ceremony. Yet, among the Ainu, the bear is not “sacrificed” in the usual sense of the word:

A truly essential element . . . is that the recipient of the gift be a supernatural being (that is, one endowed with supernatural power), with whom the giver seeks to enter into or remain in communion. . . On the other hand, it is indeed essential to the concept that the human offerer removes something from his own disposal and transfers it to a supernatural recipient.³²

³² I think that it is appropriate to cite Henninger’s summarizing view of sacrifice in order to show that the notion of sacrifice cannot be applied to the Ainu *Iyomante*. Joseph Henninger, “Sacrifice,” *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Mircea Eliade, ed. in chief, vol. 12 (New York: Macmillan Company, 1987): 545-546. I cannot develop a whole theoretical argument concerning sacrifice here. Edward B. Tylor’s theory of sacrifice as a gift of bribe cannot be used since it is the *kamuy* who carries his gift (i.e., animal flesh) into the human world in the first place. (Edward B. Tylor, *Religion in Primitive Culture* [New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1958]: 461-478.) W. Robertson Smith’s theory of sacrifice as a communal meal can be applied to the communal meal of the *Iyomante*, but it does not offer a full interpretation. (W. Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites, The Fundamental Institutions* [New York: Meridian Books, 1956]: 239-240.) Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss’s theory of sacrifice as a connection of the sacred world and the profane world presupposes a clear distinction between the sacred and profane world. As the *kamuy yukar* shows, an animal is a form of a visiting *kamuy* in the human world, so that the sacred and profane world are fused and merged. Furthermore, a sacrificed animal is not a victim in the Ainu *Iyomante*, as they would assume. (Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function* [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964]: 97.) Adolf E. Jensen’s theory of sacrifice as a reenactment and repetition of killing in primordial mythic time is useful, yet Jensen cites Kindaichi’s view that the ceremonial killing of a bear has nothing in common with sacrifice. (Adolf E. Jensen, *Myth and Cult among Primitive People* [Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1963]: 141.)

This notion of sacrifice cannot be applied to the Ainu bear ceremony because the bear is not regarded as something which the human offerer removes from his own disposal and transfers to a supernatural recipient. The bear is itself the animal form the *kamuy* assumes when visiting the human world, i. e., it is the supernatural being in a temporary form. As early as 1929, Kindaichi repudiated the interpretation of the killing of the bear as a sacrifice by arguing that these observers' presumptions explained away the religious meaning of the *Iyomante*.³³ I will return to his theory later.

If anything, Ray's theory of gift exchange should be reversed. The bear flesh represents the gifts the *kamuy* carries from the *kamuy* world to humans. The *kamuy* is sent back to the *kamuy* world with the gifts given in the ritual by the humans. That is, the gift exchange of flesh is the other way around from the conventional notion of gift-exchange adopted in modern sacrificial theory. In this regard, it is clear that the bear is not a messenger to a higher god in the mountain sent from the human world to ask the *kamuy* for a renewed supply of game. The bear is the *kamuy* who is expected to return to the human world later to be hunted by a morally upright hunter precisely because it had been well treated in the human world and given a lot of gifts.

Up to this point, my own criticism has centered on the corpse of the bear following the lines of Ray's criticism of Smith. I will now shift my attention from the issue of the purported discrepancy between the ideal and the real deeds in the ritual bear hunts and the bear ceremony to the issue of determining the fundamental core of the ritual complex. First, one must ask whether the killing of the bear constitutes the fundamental core of the ritual hunts around the world and the *Iyomante*? Clearly Smith thinks it does. He bases his judgment on two implicit and unexamined assumptions: 1) an animal is an animal everywhere, to adapt Gertrude Stein, that "a bear is a bear is a bear"; and 2) a human action toward an animal means the same thing everywhere it is found. These assumptions depend upon a preconceived notion of the animal-human or the hunted-hunter relationship: the human is the agent who kills the animal, while the animal is the victim to be killed. However, these assumptions ignore the crucial issue of different cultural understandings of personhood and the ontological status of animals.

³³ Kindaichi Kyosuke, "Kumamatsuri no hanashi," in *Ainu Bunkashi* (Tokyo: Sanseido, 1964): 95. The article was published originally in 1929.

Questions surrounding cultural notions of person or self have been raised by Marcel Mauss³⁴ and Clifford Geertz,³⁵ among others, but their scope of investigation is limited to human beings. In the study of the bear rituals, it is essential to go beyond this limit and to take seriously the issue concerning cultural notions of personhood which is shared by humans, animals, and spirits, pointedly raised by A. Irving Hallowell in his "Ojibwa Ontology, Behavior, and World View."³⁶ It is absolutely necessary to take into full consideration the Ainu notions of personhood and agency in order to understand the *Iyomante*, rather than to impose uncritically the conventional modern Western categories of human, animal, plant, and world on the Ainu materials.³⁷

Recovering the Religious Contexts of the Iyomante

Many scholarly works on the history of the Ainu under Japanese colonialism are available today.³⁸ According to the authors of these studies, tremendous political, economic, social and religious changes have occurred in Ainu communities. Even if certain structures and forms of the *Iyomante* have survived largely intact, it is still necessary to consider the religious dimensions of the Ainu religious world that have been lost in order to locate the religious meanings of the *Iyomante* in the contexts of the Ainu religious world. For instance, shamanistic practices disappeared from public view and

³⁴ Marcel Mauss, "A category of the human mind: the notion of person; the notion of self," in *The Category of the Person. Anthropology, Philosophy, History*, ed. Michael Carrithers et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985): 1-25.

³⁵ Clifford Geertz, "Person, Time, and Conduct in Bali," in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1973): 360-411.

³⁶ A. Irving Hallowell, "Ojibwa Ontology, Behavior, and World View," in *Culture in History. Essays in Honor of Paul Radin*, ed. Stanley Diamond (New York: Octagon Books, 1981): 19-52.

³⁷ Kitagawa considers the notion of personhood in his study and develops the notion of correspondence between the human world and the *kamuy* world. However, he does not pursue the full significance of this.

³⁸ To mention a few: Kayano Shigeru, *Ainu no sato, Nibutani ni ikiru* (Sapporo: Hokkaido Shinbunsha, 1977); Kikuchi Isao, *Bakuhau taisei to Ezochi* (Tokyo: Yuzankaku, 1984); Okuyama Ryo, *Ainu suiboshi* (Sapporo: Miyama Shobo, 1966); Shinya Ryo, *Ainu minzoku teikoshi* (Tokyo: San'ichi Shobo, 1972); and Utagawa Hiroshi, *Iomante no kokogaku* (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppan Kai, 1989).

went underground, especially after the Meiji era, as Buddhism and Shinto were introduced into the lives of the Ainu. Along with them, Christianity also was introduced.³⁹ In addition to the disappearance of shamanistic practices, four important aspects of the traditional Ainu religious life changed dramatically in the wake of cultural contact with the Japanese: 1) the traditional house or *chise* disappeared; 2) the practice of tattooing the face and arms of young women was abandoned; 3) practices of burning the deceased's house and of avoiding the tomb ceased; and 4) the *Iyomante* was no longer performed in some areas.

According to Kindaichi, in the pre-contact period, most women functioned as a shamaness (*tusu*) when people sought a reason for uncommon happenings.⁴⁰ He suggested that *kamuy yukar*, mythic narratives about the experience of the *kamuy* in the human world, originated in shamanistic possession, because they were usually narrated in the first person singular. *Kamuy yukar* are characterized by a special refrain which might imitate the voices or sounds of animals who were believed to be the visible figures of *kamuy* in the human world.⁴¹ *Oina yukar* (legends of cultural heroes, *Ainu okkuru*) and *ainu yukar* (legends of the adventures of human heroes) evolved from *Kamuy yukar*.⁴² Chiri adds that *Kamuy yukar* also came from the oracles of *kamuy* received in dreams, from magical spells, and from ritual masked dancing at certain ceremonies.⁴³ Chiri, the Ainu linguist, hypothesized that shamans performed a masked dance du-

³⁹ John Batchelor, a missionary and scholar, went to an Ainu *kotan* (village) and converted several people to Christianity. Ainu informants such as Chiri Sachie, who recited many *yukar* for Kindaichi, were converted Christians. No scholarly attention has been paid to the fact that these Ainu women who recited *ainu yukar* for Japanese scholars were converted Christians. Nor has the significance of the fact that the Japanese scholars were men while the Ainu informants were women been considered.

⁴⁰ Kindaichi Kyosuke, "Ezo no utaimono ni mieru fujo," *Ainu Bunkashi* (Tokyo: Sanseido, 1964): 245.

⁴¹ Chiri Mashiho, "Ainu no Shinyo (1)," *Collected Works of Chiri Mashiho*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1973): 165-69.

⁴² Kindaichi Kyosuke, "Genshi Bungaku to shiteno yukara-Ainu no minzokuteki jojishi," *Ainu Bunkashi*: 290. He repeats this point in many places of his writings.

⁴³ Chiri Mashiho, "Majinaishi to kawauso," *Collected Works of Chiri Mashiho*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1973): 210.

ring the *Iyomante* in prehistoric times, but there is no firm evidence for this.⁴⁴

Shamanism also seems to have been associated with the vertical cosmology of the Ainu. Sueoka Somio, in his study of Ainu astrology, classified *kamuy* in terms of their function on the vertical and horizontal axis.⁴⁵ At the intersection of the vertical and horizontal axis, there was *ape-kamuy* (*kamuy* of fire). On the horizontal plane, one found *kamuy* to whom the *inau* were dedicated. These included *pase-kamuy* (another name for the *kamuy* of fire), *nusa-koro-kamuy* (the *kamuy* who owns *nusa*), the deity who controls crops, *sir-ampa-kamuy* (the *kamuy* who owns earth), the deity who rules four-legged animals and plants on earth, and *has-inau-kor-kamuy* (the *kamuy* who owns branches and *inau*), and the deity who rules winged creatures and is the *kamuy* for hunting. *Kim-un-kamuy* (the *kamuy* of the mountain or the bear) is subject to *sir-ampa-kamuy* while *kotan-kor-kamuy* (the *kamuy* who owns the village or the owl) is subject to *has-inau-kor-kamuy*. *Kim-un-kamuy* and *kotan-koro-kamuy* are two deities for whom the *Iyomante* was performed. On the vertical axis *kamuy* were known through shamanistic forms of communion. They included *oina-kami* (the *kamuy* who practice shamanism), *okikurumi* (one wearing glittering skin clothes), the culture hero, and *samayekur* (the *kamuy* who brings oracles). These *kamuy* belong to the category of *mosir-kar-kamuy* (the *kamuy* who created the world).⁴⁶

The importance of the house as a religious space can be seen from the fact that in 1984, when an Ainu man named Kawamura tried to restore the *Iyomante* and to record it on film in 1984, he started his preparations

⁴⁴ Chiri Mashihō, "Yukara no hitobito to sono seikatsu, Hokkaido no senshi jidaijin no seikatsu ni kansuru bunkashiteki kousatsu," *Collected Works of Chiri Mashihō*, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1973): 10-11.

⁴⁵ Sueoka Sumio, *Ainu no hoshi* (Asahikawa: Asahikawa Shinko Kosha, 1979): 52-54.

⁴⁶ On the vertical dimension, there are three dimensions: *nis* (heaven), *ainu-mosir* (human world), and *polna-mosir* (underworld). There are six layers in *nis*: *rikunkantomosir* (heavenly land located at high place) where *kanto-kor-kamui* (high god) rules, *nociw-kanto* (celestial heaven), *sinisi-kanto* (true sky heaven), *nisi-kanto* (heaven of cloud), *ranke-kanto* (under-heaven), and *urar-kanto* (heaven of haze or mist). *Ibid.*, 44-46.

by building the traditional house,⁴⁷ even though today most Ainu people live in Western-style houses. Yet, as Kitagawa notes, "the original hut had descended from the *kamuy mosir* with the *kamuy* of fire, and no matter how humble the hut was, it was regarded as *kamuy kat tumbu* (the room which the *kamuy* built)."⁴⁸ Ideally, the village, which consisted of a group of the houses, was built with its back toward the mountains. The east window was the most sacred space after the hearth. The *inau* (whittled wooden wands), bear, deer, or gifts for *kamuy* were carried out and in through the east window.⁴⁹

As Ohnuki-Tierney has pointed out, the Ainu people employed bodily metaphors for symbolizing spatial orientation.⁵⁰ The house and landscape were conceived as something bodily. Chiri wrote that the roof was called *chise-sapa* (the head of the house), the walls were called *chise-tumam* (the body of the house), the interior of the house was called *chise-upsor* (the bosom of the house), the triangular hole in the pole of the roof was called *etu-pok* (under the nose), the cover over the window on the east side was called *puyar-sikrap* (the eyelashes of the window), and the *inau* placed in the hole above *puyar-sikrap* was called *chise-noyporo* (the brain of the house).⁵¹ Outside, the river and mountain were regarded as living and were also named according to the parts of the human body. The source of a river was called *pet-kitay* (the head), the middle *pet-rantom* (the breast), the bend of a river *sittok* (an elbow) and the mouth of the river *o* (the genitals).⁵² Moreover, the summit of a mountain was called *nupuri-kitay* (the head), the mountainside *nupuri-kotor* (the chest), the foot of the mountain *nupuri-ohonkes* (the abdomen) or *nupuri-onto* (the rump).⁵³ Thus, the Ainu percep-

⁴⁷ Iyomante Jikko Iinkai, ed., *Iyomante: Kawakami chiho no kumaokuri no kiroku*, (Tokyo: Shogakukan, 1985): 12-13.

⁴⁸ Kitagawa, op. cit., 86.

⁴⁹ John Batchelor, *The Ainu and Their Folk-Lore* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1901): 123-124.

⁵⁰ Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, "Spatial Concepts of the Ainu of the Northwest Coast of Southern Sakhalin," *American Anthropologist* 74 (1972): 426-457.

⁵¹ Chiri Mashiho, "Ainu jukyo ni kansuru jakkan no kousatsu," *Collected Works of Chiri Mashiho*, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1974): 228.

⁵² Chiri Mashiho, "Ainugo Nyumon," *Collected Works of Chiri Mashiho*, vol. 4 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1974): 256.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 260.

tion of space was close to what Maurice Leenhardt called a cosmomorphic view.⁵⁴

As to the constitutive relationship between the house and the ritual space of the *Iyomante*, the Ainu experience of the interior of the house is important. "Treasure" was placed in the ritual space in the east-north corner of the house. The people always sat in the house with their backs toward the treasure. The space between the human and the treasure is called *seremak* which, in a religious sense, meant a guardian spirit.⁵⁵ The treasure represented the material presence of the guardian spirits. The Ainu's experience of the human body helped to form the sense of front and back in the house, which was closely related to vision. Visibility/ invisibility, visual illusion, and visual transformation were important mythic motifs in the Ainu *kamuy-yukar*.

Tattooing on the face and arms was practiced only by young women as a sign of adolescence.⁵⁶ In addition, a kind of chastity belt (*upsor-un-kut*) was given to adolescent young women. Most often an elder woman tattooed the young woman.

After the introduction of Buddhism into Ainu life, the funeral rites conducted by Buddhist priests were widely adopted. By 1956 in the village of Niputani, there were only three elderly people who knew how to perform the funeral in the traditional Ainu manner.⁵⁷ As the funeral practices were changed, attitudes toward the dead also changed. Traditional Ainu were said to have feared the ghost of a dead person and, as a result, the living never

⁵⁴ In his study of Melanesian religious mode, Leenhardt wrote, "[A Melanesian] does not have an anthropomorphic view, but on the contrary submits himself to the effects of an undifferentiated view that causes him to include the whole world in each of his representations, without dreaming of distinguishing himself from that world: we might call it a cosmomorphic view." Maurice Leenhardt, *Do Kamo: Person and Myth in the Melanesian World* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1979): 20.

⁵⁵ Chiri Mashihō, *Bunrui Ainugo Jiten, Ningen-hen, Collected Works of Chiri Mashihō*, Suppl. 2 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1975): 627. Yamamoto Yuko, *Karafuto Ainu, Jukyo to Mingu* (Tokyo: Sagami Shobo, 1970): 52-53.

⁵⁶ Segawa Kiyoko, *Ainu no Kon'in* (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1972): 11-16.

⁵⁷ Kayano Shigeru, op. cit., 64.

returned to the cemetery to visit gravesites. However, a recent book contains a picture of an Ainu woman standing by a gravepost in a cemetery.⁵⁸

The *Iyomante* itself ceased to be performed regularly a long time ago. Kashiwagi Bentsuji, who was eighty-two or eighty-three years old in 1961, said that she saw the *Iyomante* for the last time when she was sixteen or seventeen years old in 1895 or 1896.⁵⁹ Inukai and Natori wrote that they had observed the *Iyomante* performed in Nijibetsu village in 1949 where it had not been performed in the preceding thirteen years.⁶⁰ Kawamura's *Iyomante* in 1985 was the first performance in twenty-eight years.⁶¹

Mythic Narratives and Symbols of the Ritual Dismembering of the Bear's Body and the Decorating of the Bear's Skull

The bear hunting ritual in the mountains and the *Iyomante* had a cyclical relationship. For example, when a bear cub was caught after its mother bear was killed, the humans were charged to take it down to their village and to take care of it. At the edge of the village, a welcoming ceremony for the bear mother and cub was held. The dead bear and the alive cub were taken into the house through the east window. Thereafter the cub was domesticated and well taken care of by the people.⁶² In a sense, the *Iyomante* is a ritual which reverses this directionality. It is a ritual to send the *kamuy* back to the *kamuy* world from the human world. In this religious context, the deep religious meaning of the *Iyomante* is found in the *um-memke* (decorating the skull), the ritual dismembering of the bear and the decorating of its skull. Inukai and Natori note that the Ainu could not perform the *um-memke* rite in a short and abbreviated manner even on the mountain.⁶³ Before I interpret the religious significance of these ritual acts, several additional remarks concerning the Ainu religious world are necessary. These concern the ritual manner of sending off spirits from the phenomenal world to the *kamuy*

⁵⁸ The picture shows the woman moving around the tomb of Dr. Munro. See Sugano Kosuke, *Gendai no Ainu-Minzoku Ido no Roman* (Tokyo: Genbunsha, 1966): i.

⁵⁹ Hayakawa Noboru, *Ainu no minzoku* (Tokyo: Iwasaki Bijutsusha, 1970): 20.

⁶⁰ Inukai and Natori, op. cit., 135.

⁶¹ *Iyomante Jikko Iinkai*, op. cit., 2.

⁶² See Smith, op. cit., 58-60, and Kitagawa, op. cit., 82-97.

⁶³ Inukai Tetsuo and Natori Takemitsu, "Iomante (Ainu no kumamatsuri) no bunkateki igi to sono keishiki (1)," *Hoppo Bunka Kenkyu Hokoku* 2 (1939): 241.

world, the relationship of astronomical designs in the *Iyomante* complex, and the sexual symbolic configuration.

What is at stake in these fundamental Ainu categories is the relationship between the visible material forms of things and creatures and their invisible spiritual forms. In order to examine this issue, it is absolutely necessary to recall that human beings are called “*ainu*” in this world and that the *kamuy* assume human (*ainu*) form in the *kamuy* world, while they take on animal forms when visiting the human world.⁶⁴

If we focus on the Ainu understanding of the ontological status of the bear in the *Iyomante*, (i.e., if we extend the notion of personhood to this “animal”), then we will come to recognize the central importance of the ritual transformation of the bear that the ritual is designed to effect. In most studies of ritual, the focus has been laid upon the kinds of transformation undergone by the human participants,⁶⁵ but in the Ainu *Iyomante*, the ritual transformation occurs to the “bear.”

In order to make this point clear, it is necessary to introduce a linguistic explanation of the Ainu hunting. The Ainu perceive animals, including bear, deer, salmon, and whales, to be the form of the *kamuy* visiting the human world (*ainu-mosir*). The hunting of these animals, thus, requires the Ainu people to host and entertain such a visitor and, then, to send him back to the *kamuy* realm. The Ainu used the terms *maratone* and *shumau-an* to describe the capture of animals. *Maratone* means “a *kamuy* becomes a guest” and *shumau-an* means there was *shumau* or, according to Kindaichi, “*kamuy*,

⁶⁴ To borrow a term from Daniel Merkur, *ramat* can be translated as the “in-dwellers.” Merkur discusses the soul dualism, involving free soul and breath soul among the Inuit. He goes on to say that there are “persons” of places and objects as well as “persons” of animals and other nonhuman creatures. The “persons” of animals are envisaged as having human form, whereas the free souls take the form of their respective species. See Daniel Merkur, *Powers Which We Do Not Know: The Gods and Spirits of the Inuit* (Moscow: University of Idaho Press, 1991).

⁶⁵ In two representative studies of ritual by Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner, their focus upon human participants are clear. Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960). Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process. Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969). Catherine Bell’s recent theoretical work on ritual is also focused upon human participants. Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

being helped by human activity, to restore his/her own spiritual body," "returning to the state of being *kamuy*," or "becoming *kamuy* [again]."⁶⁶ The same event, seen from the perspective of *kamuy*, is referred to as *shumau-ne*, or "*kamuy* becoming *shumau*" (i.e., assuming the role of a guest or visitor).

I will now turn to the issue of the relationship between ritual action and mythic narrative in the *Iyomante*. There are several *kamuy yukar* (first-person mythic narratives told by *kamuy*) collected by Kindaichi and Kubodera which narrate the experience of *kamuy* in the form of a bear in the human world.⁶⁷ There is an *oina yukar* which relates how an Ainu culture hero first learned the *Iyomante* from *kamuy* among their collections.

The *kamuy yukar* recounts in the first person the bear's experience of being dismembered and being restored to his own spiritual body. When the *kamuy* is shot by poisonous arrows, he becomes sleepy and loses consciousness. When he regains consciousness, he finds that his physical body has been dismembered and is hanging over a tree. Then he observes that the people have decorated his skull with *inau* and other gifts.⁶⁸ In the *Iyomante*, the spirit of the *kamuy* is said to sit on the bear's head between the two ears. The *kamuy*'s experience of being dismembered cannot be narrated in the *kamuy yukar*, because the bear was unconscious at that time.

According to the *oina yukar*, the human ritualist dismembers the bear's body just as the culture hero *Ainu-rak-kur* had first learned to do from the *Kim-um-kamuy*. However, the *kamuy yukar* and the *oina yukar* are regarded by the Ainu as being two different types of mythic narratives. Therefore, in order to interpret the relationship between the ritual action of the *Iyomante* and these mythic narratives, it is necessary to consider the relationship between the *kamuy*'s experience of being ritually dismembered in the *Iyomante* as this is narrated in the *kamuy yukar* and the relationship between the ritual actions in the *Iyomante* and those of the culture hero.

⁶⁶ Kindaichi Kyosuke, "Kumamatsuri no hanashi," *Ainu Bunkashi* (Tokyo: Sanseido, 1961): 93.

⁶⁷ Kindaichi Kyosuke, "Ainu no kami to kuma no setsuwa," and "Kumamatsuri no hanashi," *Ainu Bunkashi* (Tokyo: Sanseido, 1951): 75-99. Kubodera Itsuhiko, *Ainu Jijishi, Shinyo-Seiden no kenkyu* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1977) See especially no. 6 to 15: 61-119.

⁶⁸ Kindaichi Kyosuke, "Ainu no kami to kuma no setsuwa," 83. Inukai and Natori, "Iyomante (Ainu no kumamatsuri) no bunkateki igi to sono keishiki (1)," *Hoppo Bunka Kenkyu Hokoku* 2 (1939): 249.

There are three types of ritual manner perceived among the Ainu in terms of sending off the *kamuy* out of the phenomenal and material world to the *kamuy* world: *Iyomante*, *opunire* and *iwakte*. There are regional variations of usage and meaning of these terms. Generally, though, *Iyomante* is used for ritually sending off the *kamuy* of the most important animals, such as the bear and the owl. *Opunire* is used for the same purpose, but it takes place on a mountain. *Iwakte* is used for tools, cups, wooden boxes, and manufactured items and less important animals.⁶⁹ Behind these notions several related elements of religious orientation may be perceived. As Kitagawa points out, the human world and the *kamuy* world are corresponding.⁷⁰ In the *kamuy* world, the *kamuy* look like humans and live like humans. When the *kamuy* visit the human world, however, they wear temporary clothing called *hayokupe*, (i.e., an animal body). Other *kamuy* of minor rank become plants, human tools, and other objects in this world. What is important to note here is the religious notion that the *kamuy* become embodied in some material or other in the human world.

The Ainu notion of personhood plays a role in the formulation of an interesting point of correspondence between the *Iyomante*, astronomical signs, and shamanism. According to Munro, "There is some evidence that stars were associated with *kamui*; at the great festival when a bear is killed ritually the name of a star or star group connected with the Bear constellation is given to the spirit of the slain bear — Chinukara-guru (Visible Person)."⁷¹ The constellation connected with the *Iyomante* is *marattonokanociw*, which corresponds to the Western Harp constellation. Significantly, however, the Ainu view this constellation as having the shape of a bear's head.⁷² The V-form of the Western harp is seen as the bear skull (*marrato*) on the forked tree branch. The bear skull is placed on the lowest branch, called *yuk-sapa-oma-ni* (a tree holding the head of a bear) or *pakkay-ni* (the tree carrying a child). The star Vega corresponds to the bear skull. Despite the regional diversity in the precise manner in which the skull is decorated at the ritual, these three stars are uniformly referred to as *marratonokanociw* among all Ainu in Hokkaido. In the eastern part of Hokkaido, the two bright

⁶⁹ Chiri Mashihō, *Bunrui Ainugo Jiten, Ningen hen, Collected Works of Chiri Mashihō*, Suppl. 1 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1975): 565.

⁷⁰ Kitagawa, *op. cit.*, 74.

⁷¹ Munro, *op. cit.*, 14.

⁷² Sueoka, *op. cit.*, 187-188.

stars at the top of Gemini are called *asrupenoka-nociw* (stars of the bear's ears).⁷³ Other constellations are also apparently related to the *kamuy*, but unfortunately, these relationships are unclear at this time and require further study.

The last point to be made about the symbolic complex informing the *Iyomante* has to do with sexual symbolism. All reference to sex is forbidden during the *Iyomante*. Moreover, sexual intercourse during the four day period of the *Iyomante* is also forbidden. If any one violated this rule the night before the *Iyomante*, the suspected person had to be found and an apology made to the *kamuy*.⁷⁴ In addition, those who drank the blood of the bear in the *Iyomante* were forbidden to have sexual intercourse until the next new moon.⁷⁵ Celibacy was also observed by hunters before they went on a hunt.

During the ritual dismemberment of the bear, careful attention was paid to the removal of the sexual organs. After the genitals were cut off the body, they were placed under the head with skins. Sexual organs were regarded as powerful. For instance, in order to expel a malignant power, both men and women would expose their sexual organs to the evil power while reciting a magical incantation.⁷⁶ It is also reported that when a woman came across a bad tempered bear, she pulled up her dress and exposed her genitals, waved her dress, and said, "You came out to see what you want to see. So, look at it long and carefully."⁷⁷ It was believed that the bear would leave without harming her. The power of genitals to expel evil forces recalls *Ainu-rak-kur*, an Ainu cultural hero, who expelled evil spirits from the human realm.

There are five detailed ethnographic descriptions of the ritual dismembering of the bear's body. Inukai (1935),⁷⁸ Inukai and Natori (1939),⁷⁹ Ifukube

⁷³ Ibid., 84.

⁷⁴ Chiri, op. cit., 162.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 250.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 66.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 67.

⁷⁸ Inukai Tetsuo, "Ainu no okonau kuma no kaibou," *Minzokugaku Kenkyu* 1, no. 3 (1935): 74-83.

⁷⁹ Inukai Tetsuo and Natori Takemitsu, "Iyomante (Ainu no kumamatsuri) no bunkateki igi to so no keishiki (1)," 237-271, and "Iyomante (Ainu no kumamatsuri) no bunkateki igi to sono keishiki (2)," *Hoppo Bunka Kenkyu Hokoku* 3 (1940): 79-135.

Muneo (1964-65),⁸⁰ Sato Naotaro (1955-57),⁸¹ and Fujimura Hisakazu (1988-89).⁸² I will not go into any detail concerning the step-by-step ritual dismemberment of the bear. A few points of importance that emerge from these ethnographies deserve our attention.

According to Sato, in the Kushiro area, the term *kamuy-kara-kato* (“creating the *kamuy*’s figure”) is used to designate the ritual process of the *um-memke*.⁸³ The skull decorated with *inau* and three leaves of bamboo grass is called *riwak kamuy*, meaning the “returning *kamuy*.”⁸⁴ It is stuck on top of the Y-shaped tree planted in the ground. This is the last stage of the ritual transformation of the *kamuy*. The core of the *Iyomante* is the ritual transformation of the *kamuy*’s material body into its invisible spiritual body. The Ainu believe that they help to release the *kamuy* from its animal body and send it back up to the *kamuy* world.

The Ainu call the ritual dismemberment of the bear *hepere ari*, “unloading” or “unburdening the luggage.” By ritually dismembering the bear’s body, the Ainu help unload the gifts which the *kamuy* has brought from the *kamuy* world to the human world. While the Ainu accept gifts from the *kamuy*, in return they offer gifts such as a short sword, a decorated sword, decorated arrows, and dried fish to the *kamuy* to carry back to the *kamuy* world. Gift exchange here is not a one-way affair. In light of this, Ray’s

⁸⁰ Ifukube Muneo, “Saru Ainu no kumamatsuri (sono ichi),” *Gakuen Ronshu* 8 (1964): 1-32. “Saru Ainu no kumamatsuri (sono ni),” *Gakuen Ronshu* 9 (1965): 29-56.

⁸¹ Sato Naotaro, “Kushiro Ainu no Iyomande (kumaokuri),” parts 1-23. *Dokusho-jin*: 4 no. 2 (1955): 10-12; no. 3 (1955): 23-24; no. 4 (1955): 39-40; no. 5 (1955): 51-52; no. 6 (1955): 63-64; no. 7 (1955): 87-88; no. 8 (1955): 99-100; no. 9 (1956): 111-112; no. 10 (1956): 123-124; 5, no. 1 (1956): 135-136; no. 2 (1956): 11-12; no. 3 (1956): 9-10; no. 4 (1956): 13-14; no. 5 (1956): 7-8; no. 6 (1956): 15-16; no. 7 (1956): 9-10; no. 8 (1956): 13-14; no. 9 (1956): 7-8; no. 10 (1957): 11-12; no. 11 (1957): 15-16; 6, no. 1 (1957): 11-12; no. 2 (1957): 15-16; no. 3 (1957): 11-12.

⁸² Fujimura Hisakazu, “Ainu no reiokuri,” parts 1-18. *Gakuto* 88, no. 1 (1991): 42-49; no. 2 (1991): 40-47; no. 3 (1991): 44-49; no. 4 (1991): 38-43; no. 5 (1991): 36-41; no. 6 (1991): 36-41; no. 7 (1991): 36-41; no. 8 (1991): 42-47; no. 9 (1991): 42-47; no. 10 (1991): 36-41; no. 11 (1991): 42-47; no. 12 (1991): 46-51; 89, no. 1 (1992): 44-49; no. 2 (1992): 38-43; no. 3 (1992): 34-39; no. 4 (1992): 34-39; no. 5 (1992): 34-39; no. 6 (1992): 36-41.

⁸³ Fujimura, op. cit., 103.

⁸⁴ Kindaichi, op. cit., 94.

interpretation of the bear ceremony as a sacrifice and gift offering from man to the *kamuy* is misleading and one-sided.

Following this gift exchange, a feast is held. The gifts which the *kamuy* has brought from the *kamuy* world (the various products of the bear's body) are shared by the people. All such gifts from the *kamuy* have to be eaten during the *Iyomante*. This ritual consumption of the bear flesh constitutes a communion between the human body and the *kamuy*. After the *kamuy*'s animal form has been ritually dismembered, decorated with the *inau* and other gifts, the *kamuy* is believed to take invisible human form, and is expected to walk into the mountains, carrying these gifts on his back just as the humans do.

For modern man, killing an animal is viewed primarily as an act of violence. Yet, if one carries this understanding into the *Iyomante*, as Jonathan Z. Smith does, one misses the very core of the ritual. Only by shifting one's focus to the ritual dismemberment-as-ritual transformation and gift-exchange, can one recover the religious significance of the *Iyomante*.

Retrospect

Beginning with Hallowell's study, there have been numerous studies of the bear hunt ritual killing, which have assumed the bear ritual to be simply a sub-species of the larger category of hunting rituals. As I have demonstrated, however, it is dangerous to assume, as Smith and Ray do, that a bear is always a bear and is the same everywhere and at all time. In addition, a review of the relevant ethnographic data has revealed that what the Ainu do in the *Iyomante* ritual and what the Koyukon do in their ritual dismemberment of the bear are not the same *religious* acts. A number of significant differences immediately suggest themselves: 1) In the Koyukon ritual, unlike the Ainu, there is no idea of sending the spirit off to the world of the deities; 2) among the Koyukon, there is no idea that the spirit visits the human world in animal form; 3) the Koyukon have no belief that the ritual transforms the bear into an invisible spiritual form; 4) there is no idea of reciprocal exchange of gifts between humans and the spirit; 5) the Koyukon hunter "slit [the bear's] eyes so that its spirit will not see if he should violate a taboo. And he may take off its feet to keep its spirit from moving around." This suggests that the Koyukon

hunter feared the spirit of the hunted bear,⁸⁵ something the Ainu do not do.

In conclusion, one cannot help but ask what Smith and Ray were comparing when they compared bear rituals. The Ainu and Koyukon bear rituals belong to two different religious worlds of meaning, worlds that are so different that they cannot be conflated without doing damage to the very religious meaning one seeks to understand. A historian of religions cannot compare religious phenomena without first understanding them in their own rights. Only when this has been done, can fruitful comparisons be drawn.

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⁸⁵ Nelson, *op. cit.*, 180.