The Tradition of “Iwomante” in Ainu Culture
—With the Special Reference to the Brown Bear Ritual
at the Otafuku-iwa Cave in Rausu, Hokkaidō—

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Discussing the tradition of “Iwomante” (the Bear Ritual in Ainu Culture), archaeologists have attracted much attention to the brown bear ritual of Okhotsk Culture than that of Satsumon Culture which was directly prior to Ainu Culture in Hokkaidō. This was affected by the fact that there was poor evidence of the brown bear ritual in Satsumon Culture, which restricts the comparison of cultural continuity on the ritual between the Ainu and Satsumon Culture. Recent Archaeological research of Otafuku-iwa Cave in Rausu, Hokkaidō, however, cleared existence of the brown bear ritual in Satsumon Culture. And zoo-archaeological analysis of the findings enabled to compare the brown bear ritual with “Iwomante” of the Ainu.

In this paper, firstly, I pointed out six features of acts included in the ritual were reconstructed from the excavated faunal remains. Then I compare each of these with archaeological evidence of Okhotsk Culture and ethnographical evidence of the Ainu. As a result, it becomes clear that these acts are much closer not to the brown bear ritual of Okhotsk Culture but to the Ainu in Hokkaidō.

It is conceivable that brown bear ritual of Okhotsk Culture gave some influence to the formation of “Iwomante” of the Ainu, but the major body of “Iwomante” which was ethnographically known has been organized by Satsumon people, the natives of the land of Hokkaidō.