

Research Grant Report

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The research funding serves as a signal that the university administration deems my research worthy and rigorous. This has been a psychological buoy to me during the final, intense phase of my dissertation effort. However, pragmatically, the research funded made two categories of research financially feasible: the obtainment of written material, and travel to a series of fieldwork sites.

My research concerns arctolatry, bear worship, in the context of the Japanese archipelago. The university library *does* have certain materials on the subject available, and institutional database privileges have permitted me access that matter that has appeared in scholarly journals. However, due to the specificity of my topic, there have been books, articles, and pamphlets that were *not* freely accessible. These funds permitted me to survey the extant literature concerning Japanese bears with greater breadth and depth. For example, in my dissertation I examine the religious affect experienced by wildlife photographers. I have been able to purchase a range of books produced by Japanese bear photographers, such as Michio Hoshino, and use the images and text therewithin as a type of primary source.

So too was I able to add a fieldwork expedition to Akita Prefecture to my research plan. I had previously spent time in Iwate and Hokkaido but had found the cost of visiting sites in Akita to exceed my self-funded budget. Yet this grant allowed me to expand the emic, lived religions perspective of my dissertation by allowing me to spend time in a region wherein the type of bear religion practiced by contemporary hunting communities persists. Stops at Matagi shrines, and a roadside station that sells game meat, offered useful insight. During my time in Akita, I was also able to visit Jōmon sites such as the Isedotai lithic circles. I wished to investigate the character of arctolatry as practiced during this ancient period. While this aspect of my research is not fully

conclusive or authoritative, it has had the dual benefit of providing the information requisite to add an appendix on the subject to my dissertation, and to suggest a potential lacuna in the scholarship that I may seek to fill in the future.