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## Article

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# The Inuit of Greenland: Doing Area Studies on the Compromise between Reciprocity and Utility

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## Abstract

*It has been pointed out that the concept of the relationship between humans and nature held by Greenland's Inuit, in comparison with Alaska and Canada, contains a strong utilitarian perception that seeks to maximize, and which exists in compromise with, a reciprocal attitude towards nature. However, almost no work has been done to unravel the process in which, so to speak, such a mixture was created. This paper summarizes the joint research that posed the question why such a relationship between humans and nature, which is a compromise between reciprocity and utilitarianism, was formed. We focused our attention on three factors that have been addressed in previous research only partially and have not been examined thoroughly enough: A. fusion with Christianity, B. the processes of modernization and secularization, and C. the cultural and social role of elders in the Inuit society.*

**Keywords:** Greenland, Denmark, Inuit society, reciprocal view of nature, utilitarianism

## 要旨

グリーンランド・イヌイト社会の人間—自然関係は、アラスカやカナダに比して、効用の最大化を求めていくような功利主義的なパーセプションを色濃く内包し、互酬的な自然への処し方との折衷で成り立っていることが指摘されてきた。しかし、そのいわば混濁性の生成過程の解法を探求する積み上げはほとんどなされてこなかった。本稿は、グリーンランド・イヌイト社会における互酬性と功利性の折衷による人間—自然関係はなぜ醸成されたかを問う共同研究プロジェクトの要点をまとめたものである。先行研究において断片的に指摘されながらも、十分に検討されることがなかった、①キリスト教への習合、②近代化/世俗化、③イヌイト社会における長老の文化社会的機能という主に3つの要素の相関に着目している。

キーワード：グリーンランド、デンマーク、イヌイット社会、互酬的自然観、功利主義

## 1. Introduction

*At present*, in attempts to grasp the typical features of indigenous peoples in the Arctic, the following notions often serve as a kind of an ideal type:

1. The nature of the interaction between humans and nature (other than humans) among indigenous people is reciprocal, i.e., symbiotic.
2. This cycle between humans and nature and the various customs and taboos that form it are understood as *rules for survival* in the form of dichotomies.
3. The traditional knowledge of indigenous people forms a contrast with science (scientific knowledge), which separates the natural environment from humans and objectivizes nature. Indigenous people's view of the relationship between humans and nature is understood as uniting the two and therefore monistic, as well as holistic, intuitive, experiential and spiritual. As opposed to that, science is regarded as viewing humans and nature dualistically as separate entities, and as being reductionist, objective, analytical and mechanical.

This common understanding of Arctic indigenous peoples, which, as its template, has ethnological journals as media that report results of the textualization of various practices by indigenous peoples, has formed 'our' mindset by shaping our collective knowledge of what indigenous people should be and of their actions, such as taboos, rituals and festivities (Clifford and Marcus 2010). Since the above is an ideal type, its 'distance' with reality has constantly been debated.

The following remark which anthropologist Henry Stewart, whose research focused on the Canadian Eskimos, made based on his fieldwork stretching back to the 1970s illustrates this point well. While striving to position the livelihood of indigenous people Stewart makes an honest 'confession' as a researcher in relation to the Netsilik Inuit, who lived in the Kugaaruk village (former Pelly Bay) in Canada:

While I was writing a paper which emphasized how vital livelihood activities were in terms of subsistence in the Far North based on the

argument that, while the culture and society of the Netsilik Inuit were undergoing change they possessed a unique tradition, I started having doubts that I may have adopted that discourse uncritically [...] During my research I had seen and heard of many phenomena that differed greatly from the ideal image of hunter-gatherers, such as excessive hunting or the abandonment of the catch. I struggled how to interpret such phenomena and would leave them out of the argument in my papers, dismissing them as exceptions or aberrations [...] I was ignoring what I had seen and heard and kept portraying hunter-gatherers ‘as they should be.’ (Stewart 1996: 131).

Stewart’s description is already a quarter of a century old. Nonetheless, it contains a point of view that is still relevant for us when we are thinking of how to process and put into words, or how to achieve a fine balance between the knowledge gained from fieldwork, that is, experience and the understanding and discourse concerning indigenous peoples summarized above. The case of overfishing of Greenland halibut during winter in the northwest of the island reported by Sumito Matoba and Tetsuhide Yamazaki resembles those mentioned by Stewart (Matoba and Yamazaki 2018: 51-54). The examples presented by Matoba and others invite doubt regarding the extent to which the perception of indigenous people, according to which hunter-gatherers, including the Inuit, “do not hunt more than they need, strive to utilize the catch as much as possible, and live in harmony with nature without excessive consumption” (Stewart 1996: 125), reflects reality.

On the other hand, it has also been said that the approach which points out the difference between ideas and reality by addressing the extent of the disparity between the two in a dualistic manner is not in agreement with local contexts. Namely, while it is true that the difference between the two can be observed, the ideal type, as indigenous people’s strategy for survival as minorities has currency in their societies, and scholarly discussions have been put forth which vigorously appraise its meaning and effectiveness. Among such studies are those that claim that folklorization is an approach that is effective in terms of enabling indigenous people to preserve their culture and have their say and thus avoid complete assimilation into nation states or a gradual fade-out of their cultures.

Regarding the basic layer of Greenland's autonomy and the process of its change, I have endeavored for a diachronic and interdisciplinary empirical study of various issues in Greenland, from the methodological standpoint of area studies that belong to the lineage of political science. However, Greenland is an indigenous Inuit society and I have repeatedly gone through trial and error in an attempt to incorporate into my analytical perspective the influence that the Inuit worldview has, to a greater or lesser extent, on both the microlevel (human actions) and macrolevel (the process of transformation generated through the interaction of different human actions) analysis. That made me search for a broader social science approach that goes beyond the field of area studies of the political-scientific extraction. More concretely, a need arose to mobilize the expertise from the fields of anthropology, religious studies, Danish Christology, historical science, study of literature and ethnology, to overcome parochialism (mutual disinterest) between them and connect them in an organic way, so as to form an integral knowledge of the present-day worldview of the Inuit. This paper presents how far I have gone in that research.

My immediate interest is to consider how to view 'our' perception of indigenous people and the fact that their worldview as described by researchers is linked with the worldview of indigenous people produced by specific theories and theoretical models and strongly influences the development of the indigenous people's own discourse on folklorization and self-representation. This paper will only indicate the outline of the project<sup>1</sup> and will thus not go beyond the scope of a mid-term report. Nonetheless, it is positioned as a manifest and aims to describe a portion of the current state of the research.

## **2. The Interaction between Humans and Nature**

It is said that a symbiotic relationship between humans and nature which is based on a reciprocal worldview forms the foundations of Arctic Inuit societies. For example, Kishigami (1993: 1) points out that the world in which the Inuit of North Alaska live is a product of the interaction between the natural environment such as the land, sea, mountains, snow and various animals, and the social environment built by humans in which numerous spirits, ghosts and monsters also intervene. So, how should we define the relationship between humans and nature and understand the interaction between the two? Regarding this, Kishigami argues on the premise

that in the Alaskan Inuit society humans have a close relationship with nature and are enveloped by it (Caulfield 1997: 82). His explanation is framed in terms such as “Inuit cosmology”, “indigenous knowledge” and “traditional ecological knowledge”, which is in opposition with science, which objectifies nature and separates it from its relationship with humans.

‘Nature’ has been understood in close connection with terms such as natural environment, virgin ground and laws of nature. That understanding clearly suggests that nature is something that has not been touched by human hand. Thus, the above terms can be regarded as attributing primordality to nature.

On the other hand, the Inuit word *pinngoritat* has often been used to signify ‘nature’. That term denotes nature in a broad sense, and is not only used in everyday life but has also been utilized as an administrative term for the names of various institutions. At the same time, *nuna*, which means ‘earth’, has been understood as having a meaning that resembles *pinngoritat*. The difference is that *nuna* implies a bond between humans and nature and tends to be closely linked with subjective human notions such as ethnicity and identity. According to Redclift and Grasso (2013: 292), both *pinngoritat* and *nuna* imply dynamic entities that are created through processes such as becoming or coming into existence, and not still objects possessing primordality untouched by humans, such as virgin ground and unmodified species of animals. Thus, nature is interpreted as something that possesses a subjective meaning and forms a space for coexistence together with humans. In the sense that they view *pinngoritat* as a place that comes into being together with humans, Lennert and Berge (2018) present a similar argument.

Thus, *pinngorit* and *nuna* possess a fluid character which is recreated every time humans and nature dynamically interact. In Arctic indigenous societies, in a space that possesses such fluidity, diversity in the basic human attitude towards phenomena has been fostered. Omura (2013: 5) opined that *nuna* is “not just a resource base for livelihood and industry in areas where wildlife exists, but also the cultural foundation for their existence as a people, that connects individuals in Inuit societies and embodies the link between the past, present and future”. Indeed, the traditional understanding which regards humans and nature as being in a close relationship is propped up by such a worldview. Honda (2018), based on his experiences from fieldwork in the Arctic Canadian village of Kugaaruk that

spanned over the period of more than forty years, argues that especially *nuna* possesses a broad meaning that goes beyond the scope of the English word nature, as it denotes the entire Cosmos (the Universe, order, harmony) and encompasses a close relationship with the bodies and souls of humans.

Of course, considering the postmodern anthropological criticism of the perspective which views human societies as still and fixed and warnings that such a dichotomy can fall into extreme essentialism, there was a need to reserve our judgement concerning the effectiveness of the dichotomy between scientific thinking, which is said to objectify nature, and traditional thinking, which is said to view nature as an agent that causes interaction. Despite that, the dual conceptual scheme regarding scientific and traditional knowledge has continued to be an important framework for understanding not only knowledge itself, but also indigenous peoples and their societies, attaching itself to issues such as the differences between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples, the West and non-West, and the relationship between modernization and specific cultures. It has been demonstrated that this dualism gradually became more pronounced as it was narrated and dispersed and that it has become a supporting foundation for the identity of the indigenous peoples themselves.

### **3. How to Understand the Presence of Utilitarianism in the Reciprocal View of Nature?**

The Inuit society in Greenland, Denmark, which is one of the Arctic indigenous societies, has been studied as a place where local practices are based on traditional knowledge, similar to the Inuit societies in Canada and Alaska. Particularly in the context of the identification of the relationship between sea mammals and humans, the existential meaning of traditional practices such as rituals, festivities and folk beliefs has been emphasized in the sense that these practices are not just physical acts but also acts of spiritual significance for Greenland's Inuit (Caulfield 1997). Their contrast with scientific knowledge has been pointed out, and they have also been used as a stepping-stone for Greenlanders to express themselves in external relations.

However, to understand the concept of nature in Greenland's Inuit society, another important element should be taken into consideration. That is the utilitarian approach to nature, which Kalland and Sejersen (2005: 267) have pointed out. Utilitarianism here denotes the approach in which the process leading to certain outcomes is decided based on the extent of the benefits that can be obtained as a result of it. According to Kalland and Sejersen, the reciprocal relationship between man and nature in the Inuit society in Greenland forms a plus-sum relationship with the utilitarian approach to nature, which is Greenland's distinctive trait that is not present in the extreme North of Canada and Alaska.

Ritual acts, such as conventions and taboos, inform the reciprocal relationship between nature and humans and are shared as the common understanding of morality and faith and regarded as norms that need to be observed by humans. Kalland and Sejersen (2005: 267) point out the possibility that these ritual acts have been lost or simplified in the Inuit society in Greenland due to the interference of utilitarianism. That is, they look at the contemporary rituals in that society focusing on the extent to which the utilitarian outlook has permeated it, while also expressing a reservation by noting that the Western perception of marine mammals is "only a part of the contemporary picture" (Kalland and Sejersen 2005: 146) in Greenland.

In fact, it was Helms, Hertz and Kapel (1997: 80-81) who had previously mentioned the possibility of the loss and/or simplification of Inuit rituals. They had pointed out that, while oral folk tradition did exist in Greenland, ceremonies and feasts that were normally held before and after whale hunts could not be found. Indeed, although the relationship between rituals and ethnographic record is not necessarily straightforward, it is a fact that, if we focus on ritual acts involving marine mammals in Greenland, particularly whales and whaling, we can see that an ample amount of records by researchers (observers) concerning them can be found between the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century. After that, there is a significant drop in the prevalence of such records (Honda 2021).

And yet, past research has not at all addressed the question of why it is so. In that sense, the above study by Kalland and Sejersen deserves a special mention here. However, even it does not offer a concrete analysis, the approach the study took was to try to understand the history of the relationship between humans and nature in Greenland by contrasting the Inuit perception of marine mammals with the



corresponding Western perception. The discussion, however, stops at presenting the questions. While the authors do mention that the livelihood activities of the Greenland Inuit have been changing due to the influx of market economy thinking (Kalland and Sejersen 2005: 140) and refer to the influence of the Christian notion that creatures such as sea mammals have been created so as to be used by humans (Kalland and Sejersen 2005: 144), they do not present concrete examples that could empirically substantiate those statements.

#### **4. What is our task?**

The task undertaken by this project is to respond to that. Although this may sound a bit naive, the project's starting point is the following suspicion. If the traditional thought according to which humans and nature are engaged in a reciprocal relationship is an important element shaping the view of nature among Greenland's Inuit, should not that view be different in character from utilitarianism? Is not the thinking that the utilitarian attitude, which pursues the maximization of benefits, can function in the space of traditional knowledge<sup>2</sup> logically untenable since the utilitarian perception sees the aforementioned traditional practices, such as religious rituals and festivities, as "irrational superstitions" (Kalland and Sejersen 2005: 152)? Of course, traditional knowledge cannot exist in a pure form as a closed sacred space. We need to understand the space of traditional knowledge as that in which humans and nature sometimes achieve synergy and harmony and sometimes contradict each other, and, in that sense, it is perhaps possible to think that there is no particular need to pay attention to the influx of utilitarian elements.

However, it should be noted that, incorporated in the space of traditional knowledge generated from the reciprocal relationship between humans and nature are also identity and ethnic representations (i.e., self-representations) of indigenous peoples that resist scientific knowledge and Western political thought. As a concrete example of this, the traditional Inuit knowledge of the Canadian Inuit, *Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit* (IQ), is often cited. IQ is a general term that denotes traditional knowledge passed down for generations, such as values, social relationships and life skills. Limited autonomy for the Canadian Inuit was established in 1999, and IQ was included in the clauses of the Autonomy Act. The IQ is the ideational foundation of all the policies in the territory of Nunavut, which are made on the premise that they stand in opposition to scientific knowledge and the values based

on it. Of course, this instance is a consequence of redefining traditional knowledge as political principles and does not explain all traditional knowledge. However, despite that, it does illustrate the point made by many scholars that traditional knowledge, to a greater or lesser extent, implies a conflict with scientific knowledge and that the two are incompatible.

It would be too simplistic to address the view of nature of Greenland's Inuit, which is based on a synergy of reciprocity and utilitarianism, only by referring to limited local examples. If the above view is one of the distinctive features of Greenland's Inuit in comparison to Canada's extreme north and Alaska, as Kalland and Sejersen point out, then I think that it would make sense to identify and explore the concept of nature held by Greenland's Inuit by mobilizing different fields within social sciences and by examining the historical body and spatial orientation of the indigenous peoples of the North, taking into account their spatial migration from Siberia to Greenland (from East to West) and focusing on the history of the relationship between humans and nature.

## **5. Three points of argument**

But, how concretely shall we do it? In this project we will consider the creation and development of the hybrid view of nature that contains reciprocal and utilitarian elements in the Inuit society of Greenland by focusing on the following three issues that have only been mentioned in a piecemeal way and never properly addressed in past research, as well as on the correlation between them. The project aims to achieve a valid understanding of the concept of nature in Greenland by carefully examining the correlation between these various factors, using an interdisciplinary approach and accumulating knowledge about facts while also occasionally resorting to indirect evidence. The three issues listed below do not preclude one another and do not negate the existence of other factors.

### **5.1 The fusion of the local worldview with the Christian thought and the influence of denominational differences**

Greenland became a colony of Denmark-Norway in 1721. This project will consider the possibility that the conversion to Christianity that ensued may have planted the seeds of the utilitarian thinking into Greenland's Inuit society.

Christianity posits a hierarchical relationship between humans and animals and among its articles of faith is the belief that nature and animals were created only to serve Man. First, it should be noted that, as far as we know, there were no forced conversions in Greenland. With regard to that, it is necessary to carefully examine various aspects of Christian proselytization and conversions. Second, in traditional Inuit beliefs, such as shamanism, there is no monotheistic teaching. Also, during the proselytization conducted in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, an atmosphere existed in which the locals voluntarily accepted Christianity. In that sense, it is possible that the fusion of Christianity and local religious beliefs and rituals served as the basis for the development of the view of nature which is a compromise between reciprocity and utilitarianism. Third, in order to comprehend the influx of utilitarianism inherent in Christianity, differences between various Christian groups must be considered. Fourth, in the broader Scandinavian context a Protestant worldview exists which views the unlimited exploitation of maritime resources as unjustifiable greed and shows a tendency which is different from what is generally regarded as the influence of Christianity on environmental ethics (Kalland and Sejersen 2005: 144). In that sense it is also necessary to look back at the Middle Ages when Christianity established itself in Europe, on how it spread through the continent and how it was introduced to Scandinavia and Greenland.

## **5.2 Secularization and Modernization**

If one is to consider the joining of traditional thought and utilitarianism, the question of secularization and modernization cannot be avoided. Secularization and secularism have been seen as having a strong affinity with the process of modernization, that is, with the process of the world's disenchantment, and as having influence on the relativization of traditional practices, such as folk religion, rites and rituals. Furthermore, also in relation to Christianity, the problems of secularization and the privatization of religion have often been brought up in deliberations of the relationship between individuals and religion. The Danish missionary work from the eighteenth century onwards can be viewed in correlation with secularization and the formation of utilitarianism.

In addition, it will be necessary to again address the issue of modernization. In Greenland, policies aimed at modernization were implemented by Denmark after the Second World War at an accelerated pace. It is often said that modernization is

in an inseparable relationship with utilitarian thought. We shall consider the possibility that the utilitarian thinking, which forms the source of incentives for the pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain, was brought to Greenland by Denmark's modernization policies. This further leads us to think about the possibility that the modernization drive caused changes in the perception of livelihood and work and spurred the weakening of traditional practices in Greenland. Furthermore, looking at the impact of domiciliation is a simple but important approach in the context of modernization. It is not difficult to imagine that livelihood activities of the Inuit, who, as hunter-gatherers, until then migrated in accordance with the seasonal cycle, changed as a result of domiciliation - we need to look not just at its impact on the livelihood itself but also on the change in the thinking of the Inuit concerning nature (*pinngorit/nuna*), that is, at the process of distancing between humans and nature.

### **5.3 A Look at the Inuit Society**

Although it belongs to a different layer, there is another factor that is indispensable for the project's argument concerning Greenland. I am referring to elders, who have an established social status and are widely known in Inuit societies. We shall focus on the fact that the institution of elders has become ambiguous among the Inuit in Greenland. 'Elders' here does not mean the elderly, but what is referred to as *isumataq* in the Inuit language – leaders who possess integrity and people's approbation, have rich experience and knowledge and connect the past and present by transmitting old customs and rituals. For instance, in Canada there is a council of elders in each hamlet, which conveys to the young, who are ill-acquainted with old customs, the traditional culture, particularly respect for and gratitude to captured animals. Old tales and moral lessons by the elders have been included in the official school curriculum there.

In contrast, in the Inuit society in Greenland instances of elders or elderly playing the role of transmitters of old customs and ritual conventions can hardly be seen. It is especially difficult to regard elders in Greenland as an institution, or the carriers of social order. Past research on the reasons why elders are so conspicuously absent in Greenland is extremely scarce and that question is, so to speak, a veritable missing link in the scholarship on Greenland. In this project we will address it through the lens of the influence of utilitarian thought on the traditional view of nature.

## **6. Three research phases concerning the mixing in Arctic Indigenous Societies: The position of this project**

The gist of this project is to track the creation and development of the hybrid view of nature consisting of reciprocity and utilitarianism in Greenland Inuit society through the three elements mentioned above and their mutual interaction. That, however, does not mean digging deep into isolated issues. Rather, this project aims to connect with the body of research called Eskimology or Inuitology, which aims to achieve a broad understanding of Arctic indigenous societies. Below I shall indicate its lineage graphically and also show the position of the project.

### **6.1 Phase No.1: The modern vs. the savage**

In the body of research which aims to grasp the hybridity in Arctic indigenous societies, either explicitly or implicitly, the framework of the study has continually been shaped by contrasting the modern and the primitive and projecting the social character that was lost in modernity into Eskimo societies (Ota 2009: 25). Furthermore, based on such concepts, the degree of acculturation, i.e., the transformation of the primitive into the modern, was debated. Here I wish to point out that such dualistic understanding was buttressed by the thinking in which the side of modernity was attempting to create an angle for comprehending primitiveness by objectifying it. In other words, the side of modernity was, by taking Eskimo societies as an object of study, trying to understand them from within, but also to, together with grasping the essence of those societies, not only comprehend the differences with 'self', but also define itself. As a mechanism for achieving that, the savages were attributed with social primitiveness (primordially) and, from thereon, the degree to which they were maintaining that human primitiveness (primordially), or in other words, the degree to which they had preserved the character humans should possess, would be assessed. Based on such view, the prototypical humaneness was arbitrarily assigned to the side of the savage, fixed and, further, made into an ideal (Clifford 1988). Texts reflecting such notions, aside from those that were eventually eliminated by readers through strict checks, were given authority as collections of objective facts and have shaped our mindset (or, in other words, have become natural). Fienup-Riordan points out that the view that Greenland's Eskimos, who were modernizing, were polluted or corrupted by civilization came to be shared to a certain extent among Europeans and North Americans in the nineteenth century (Fienup-Riordan 1990: 16).

But what was the ‘real situation’ of the primitive side portrayed based on the dichotomy of the modern and the savage? This question has been posed widely since ‘Writing Culture’ first attracted international attention (Clifford and Marcus 1996: 540).<sup>3</sup> Questions were raised about the narrators, i.e., the positionality of modernity, about how they were lacking awareness regarding the power inherent in the act in which ‘I’ observes, writes and textualizes ‘objective facts’ or, at least, how they had not discussed it seriously. That is, light was shed on the power that inherently lies in, or the single-directional asymmetry that informs the act of observing, which implies that there is an object of observation, and in the act of writing, which implies an object of writing.

The problem is that an array of issues remains, because even if there is awareness of such asymmetry, that still does not necessarily mean that the facts addressed in the act of writing and being written about are objective - rather, they are just ‘partial truths’ that the writer has selectively chosen to bring up.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, there is the question of the speaking position: whether ‘we’ even have the right to write about ‘them’.

## **6.2 Phase No. 2: Indigenous People as Narrators**

In recent years, work on relativizing the understanding of reality which rests on such multilayer asymmetry has been actively undertaken. The international joint research project ‘The Meaning of Ice, Siku-Inuit-Hila (Sea Ice-People-Weather)’, implemented between 2007 and 2009, is representative of such efforts (Gearheard et al. eds. 2013). The project conducted surveys of the expansion, contraction and movement of sea ice that encompassed Greenland (Qaanaaq), Alaska (Barrow=Utqiagvik) and Nunavut (Clyde River=Kanngiqtugaapik), involving exchanges of hunters, elders and researchers. Furthermore, the project included scholars from both humanities and natural sciences and enabled locals to participate in it all the way from the planning phase and to act as agents in its implementation. The project attracted attention for its mechanism in which, unlike in conventional projects where outsiders interview (observe and write about) the locals, an interview form in which locals ask questions to other locals was adopted. In the project, as a consequence of sharing the common goal to enable indigenous people to identify their own current positionality by focusing on the concrete issue of sea ice, the nuances in the meaning of words were explored by native speakers

themselves and a two-way communication was established, resulting in a detailed report on what indigenous people as participants think and how they narrate. At the root of the project was the criticism of reductionism in modern scientific research, and I believe, the intent to rethink indigenous people by moving from a fixed image of them as possessing the assigned primitivity (or primordality) to them as agents with more fluidity.

This evolution from the dichotomy of the modern and the primitive to the project 'The Meaning of Ice', to a greater or lesser extent, illustrates explicitly the trends in the research on Arctic Inuit societies. However, the latter bears a certain resemblance with the former in that it presents an argument which contains the character of a single-directional approach within the dichotomy of the modern and the primitive. This is because at the root of the project 'The Meaning of Ice' a stance could clearly be seen which, as a protest against reductionism as a subset of modern science, confronts science by resisting the scientists' practice of presenting the local narrative on behalf of the indigenous people and, in doing so, neutralizing and subsuming it. 'The Meaning of Ice' project provided us with an example of the so-called post-colonial criticism. However, it led to the following dilemma: does not the approach in which the side that has been objectified gets to claim own legitimacy by clearly defining its differences with the ruling side, in fact, contribute to the reproduction of the already existing dichotomy?

### **6.3 Phase No. 3: Mixing, articulation, becoming and folklorization**

In relation to the above, a view has developed which does not take a dualistic approach of the modern and primitive, but pays attention to the mixing, or to put it simply, the mutual relationship between the two (The 'relationship' here does not necessarily connote a harmony but may mean contradiction too). For example, James Clifford has put forth an argument in which he looks at the dynamism of indigenous people using the word 'becoming' (Clifford Kindle ver.: Prologue, sec.4, para.1). That word does not just mean the creation of something new but also "adapting and recombining the remnants of an interrupted way of life" (that is, articulation) and connotes "the creation of new pathways in a complex postmodernity by reaching back selectively to deeply rooted adaptive traditions" (i.e., becoming) (Clifford Kindle ver.: Prologue, sec.4, para.1). When something selectively pulled out of the past connects with the present-day context and

something new is created, that something is not only used to explain the created practice of the indigenous people but also becomes detached from them and becomes the object of consumption by outsiders, changing the character of their relationship with the indigenous people, infiltrating it and attributing meaning to it (Hafstein 2018: 127).

Perspectives which aim to grasp such two-way influences resemble folklorization, in which subjects selectively extrapolate a certain social practice and, by making it visible, redefines their own position (Ayaydin and Akgönül 2020: 391-409). I have already touched on folklorization in the introductory part of this paper – ‘folklorization’ refers to the practice which preserves own folklore and presents it to the outside world, thereby avoiding complete assimilation by the state or the fate of fadeout, i.e., gradual disappearance. In the research by Ayaydin and Akgönül (2020), who examine the process of folklorization by focusing especially on tourism, instances are described in which indigenous people have, by reinterpreting the values and things brought to them by the state or a higher-level actor against their own standards and creating new cultural patterns, reflectively redefine their own position (Hafstein 2018: 127-149).

That is where this project comes in. It may be said that the project serves and can make a contribution as an accumulation of case studies that can increase the visibility of indigenous peoples (societies) that we are endeavoring to understand through diverse perspectives such as mixing, becoming and folklorization. This has to do with the fact that the strained dialectical relationship in the process of mixing, including becoming, which captures the dynamism of indigenous people, is still not fully understood.<sup>5</sup> How can returns, which Clifford used to comprehend articulation and becoming, be understood? Returns from where and to what? It is obvious that what is meant by that are not simply revivals of traditional culture or social or cultural practices. Also, as is indeed the case with Greenland, there are areas that cannot be fully explained by the restoration of rituals based on strategic essentialism or acts, such as performances, exhibitions or the preparation of folklore material. Neither should we strive to link up with reductionism by smoothing out the differences between the variables and formulating a model of some sort. Rather, this project seeks to connect border areas between the self and the other and capture the process of becoming.



## **7. Conclusion: Current Research as a Step from Descriptive to Causal Inference**

This paper has sketched the outline of the interdisciplinary research project which is currently in progress and aims to grasp the interaction between humans and nature in the Inuit society in Greenland, while aspiring to connect with the body of research on mixing and becoming. We may say that the dualistic relationship between the indigenous cosmology as represented by traditional knowledge and scientific knowledge has been relativized to a considerable extent. Despite that, interdisciplinary work on tracing facts in the context of the Inuit society in Greenland, whose distinctiveness has been pointed out in relation to Alaska and Canada, has been remarkably scarce. The project, first and foremost, aims to use various information to ascertain what is really going on. In that sense it may remain confined within the scope of descriptive inference. However, without a proper understanding of ‘reality’ derived from it, it is impossible to arrive at the phase of drawing conclusions regarding causal relationships.

\* Research in line with this interest is currently under way as a joint study supported by the Incipient Interdisciplinary Study Project ‘How Should We Understand the Interaction between Humans and Nature: Christianity, Secularization/Modernization and the Inuit Society’ (Principal investigator: Minori Takahashi), which falls in the category of “undertaking intended for supporting the community of researchers” implemented by the Japan Arctic Research Network Center: J-ARC Net.

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<sup>1</sup> ‘How Should We Understand the Interaction between Humans and Nature: Christianity, Secularization/Modernization and the Inuit Society’ (Principal investigator: Minori Takahashi).

<sup>2</sup> Kalland and Sejersen (2005) point out that in recent years there are indigineous people who do not conduct ritual acts based on such a worldview, while on the other hand there are those who are not indigenous people but practise them out of respect for such a worldview.

<sup>3</sup> *Writing Culture* does not simply address the act of writing, but rather problematizes the process of turning fieldwork into text. In fact, in case of any plan in contemporary fieldwork, deep at the heart of the organization lies the process of cultural production called writing. See Clifford and Marcus eds. 1996: 540.

<sup>4</sup> This is why in recent years the view that advocates the dialogue and multiplicity of voices has been increasingly important.

<sup>5</sup> Of course, we should take into account sufficiently internal and external critique regarding reflectivism, beginning with the criticism of positivism.

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