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**Traditional Ecological Knowledge in the Beliefs  
of Japanese Fishing Villages:  
With Special Reference to Yoriiso (Miyagi)  
and the Sanriku Region**

The fishermen looked at the *yama* when they went fishing, looked at the *yama* when they couldn't go fishing, looked at the *yama* when they abandoned a tool, they spent a life looking at the *yama* all the time. When a splendid *sendō*,<sup>1</sup> known for his excellence, looked at the *yama* the undulations on ground of the sea unfolded like a nautical chart in his mind. ... Considering a fisherman gazing at the *yama* could, at the same time, bring about another fisherman to reach a fishing spot before or after him ... and this way, days go by and then years; a fisherman's life ended up in hardship with the *yama* since his fatherly ancestor's times. (Utsumi 1990: 69-70; transl. by author)

These poetic words by a scholar of Japanese folk-culture indicate that *yama* seems to mean more than just “mountain,” the colloquial meaning of this word in Japanese. *Yama* is an empirically observable feature of topography as much as specific knowledge about the environment. If using a metaphor, *yama* is rather a mirror in a fisherman's mind that, more or less, tells him things about his surroundings. In case of *yama*, “the physical environment is infused with meaning, it is transformed into a landscape where the selected elements work metonymically for the whole.” (Kalland 2002: 149) In this sense, we can speak of *yama* as a fundamental element that constitutes a fisherman's worldview. We can observe *yama* in many aspects of beliefs and customs in Japanese fishing villages, so we may assume that *yama* as concept is rooted in local beliefs from which this worldview is derived. Such a conception of environment in relation to belief is one basic element that has been addressed in a scientific field that is referred to as *traditional ecological knowledge* (TEK). TEK can be defined as

... a cumulative body of knowledge, practice and belief, evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment. (Berkes 1999: 8)

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1. The *sendō* 船頭 (lit. “boat head”) is the chief of a fishing vessel and a very experienced fisherman with a high reputation in a fishing village but not a captain in the sense of western crew hierarchy.

Kalland already touched on the concept of *yama* (1995a: 247-248), but, *yama* in connection to fishing is not mentioned, and a detailed analysis of *yama* as concept in Japanese fishing culture is missing in Western languages. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to fill this blank field by examining aspects of beliefs in Japanese fishing villages focusing the *yama* as concept to show interdependencies and relationships between several levels of analysis in TEK.

As it is difficult to single out *yama* without referring to other concepts of fishing people, especially those that are rooted in local beliefs and customs, the paper follows a path from the general to the specific aspects related to *yama* in three steps. First, background information about theoretical concepts, basic terms and their interrelationships in the discourse on *environmental knowledge* are outlined. In addition, basic features and problems of Japanese coastal fisheries are put into the preceding theoretical context in order to understand the paper's objective. After this introductory part, the paper proceeds with beliefs of fishing people, beginning with the most popular "fishing deity," the *Ebisu-sama* 恵比寿様. Here, basic features of Japanese fishing people's beliefs, whose way of life is characterized by a rough nature with its uncertainties, are demonstrated. Then, we will focus on beliefs and ceremonies in Yoriiso 寄磯, a typical fishing village in Miyagi Prefecture 宮城県. In this section, social organization of a fishing village and some ceremonies and festivals (*nenchū gyōji* 年中行事) around New Year are picked up, to show several aspects and layers that are related to the concept of *yama* 山 (mountain or forest) in beliefs. To avoid confusion, the paper concentrates on this single case study as much as possible; yet, at some points it was unavoidable to refer to other examples, such as those from surrounding areas of the Sanriku coastline 三陸沿岸. The third part is a description of the land-sea dichotomy in Japanese fishing culture to reveal basic characteristics of the *yama* concept. We will see that *yama* is not only essential for the cognition in coastal waters, but also serves as metaphor of boundaries, both, in real world (fishing rights or village boundaries) as much as boundary to the religious world (world of *kami* 神). The paper is concluded by a recapitulation of the major outcomes of this inquiry.<sup>2</sup>

2. Data for this paper were collected through library research and direct observation (fieldwork and short-term visits) by the author (Nov. 2002–Feb. 2003 and Sept.–Oct. 2003). During fieldwork, qualitative interviews rounded out the data collected in libraries. It is noteworthy, that there exists a large pool of studies about folk-culture and fisheries of the Sanriku region, and these preceding studies were very helpful for the author's own research. Yet, he is aware of the fact that many aspects of "Japanese fishing religion" could not be handled without being unprecise at certain points. Therefore, he is responsible for any reader's inconveniences caused by incompleteness and would like to be excused for this. The author would also like to express his gratefulness to the following people: Arne Kalland (Oslo), whose critical advise was an inspiring source for the completion of this paper. Donald Wood (秋田), who kindly made the proofreading, which must have been a tough job due to the insufficient English vocabulary of the author. The always kind Yoshioka Kazuo 吉岡一男 (Sendai 仙台) initiated the author to study Yoriiso. He introduced the author to Ishida Shōkō 石田正孝 who unexpectedly left us last December. Ishida was author of most parts of the excellent OHI (1998, 2002 and 2005), and his detailed knowledge of local people and customs was invaluable during fieldwork. Last, but not least, the author is in great debt to the people of Yoriiso.

Though the beliefs outlined do not completely determine an individual's action and thus, do not have direct conservation effects on marine resources, they are capable of providing a normative matrix for orientation and action. In this sense, the given examples show how worldviews affect the way villagers operate in their surrounding environment. Much of contemporary resource management practices in Japanese coastal fisheries are rooted in a customary and sophisticated conceptualization of nature derived from beliefs. Therefore, the need to study resource management using methods of social sciences gives the study of local beliefs, i.e. religion, a prominent task.

## Theory and Approach

In the last decades, ecological problems have gained attention worldwide. As a particular response, the scientific community has mirrored this trend in a discourse that addresses questions concerning the relationship of natural resources management and religion that is closely linked with problems about human and environment relationships. One outcome was the emergence of numerous papers dealing with indigenous or traditional management systems in contrast to, often willfully enforced “scientific” natural resources management neglecting local traditions that were *a priori* seen as inappropriate. This new approach reflects “the growing awareness that there is a legitimate field of environmental expertise known as traditional ecological knowledge.” (Freeman 1992) Berkes (1999: 13-14) considers TEK as a *knowledge-practice-belief complex* that can be analyzed on four interdependent levels, yet, Kalland (2000) proposed a similar one that is made of three levels (Fig. 1). These “levels” are not seen as hierarchical, but rather as interdependent, i.e. they partly influence each other and none of them is in any way to be seen “superior” to the other.

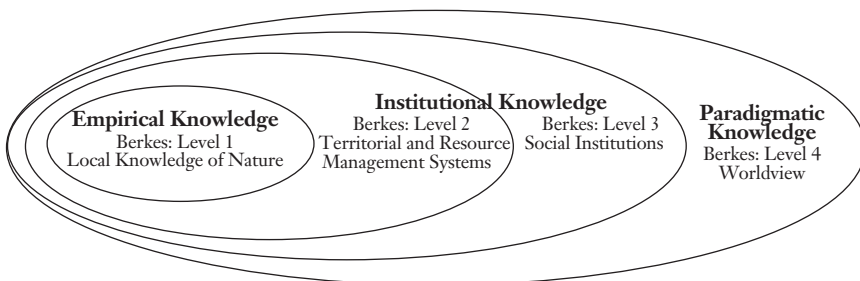


Figure 1: Scheme of analytical levels in TEK (Modification of Berkes 1999:13)

The first level is *empirical knowledge* that is “local knowledge of nature” (Berkes) acquired by empirical observations. It can be characterized as “practical knowledge,” a pool of information that has been gathered and seen to be useful (and sometimes even essential) for handling situations in real life. For instance, one knows it would be better to wear a raincoat or use an umbrella when going out on a rainy day. The

second level is what Kalland calls *institutional knowledge* meaning “knowledge embedded in their social institutions.” (Kalland 2000: 325) Institutions are “the humanly devised constraints that structure human interaction” (North 1994: 360), and in turn, these constraints can be formal (laws, rules, etc.), informal (self-imposed codes of conduct, “common sense,” etc.) and they can be the ways or the bodies that enforce them (courts, customary village groups, etc.). Coastal fishing rights in Japan as much as the local Fisheries Cooperative Associations (FCAs) that assign sea territories (by using *yama* and other landmarks) as much as enforce local decisions are one good example. Village groups that manage local common lands or common property (the *Allmende* in German or *iriai* 入会 in Japanese) represent more informal cases. Berkes differentiates between two levels, *territorial and resource management systems* (level 2) and *social institutions* (level 3), still, for the purpose of the paper they are subsumed as institutional knowledge. The third level is denoted *paradigmatic knowledge*, which is “the ways they [i.e. people] interpret practical knowledge and construct coherent cosmologies” (Kalland 2000: 326) and can be characterized as knowledge put into a larger context. It is what Berkes calls *worldview* by meaning a “larger conceptual complex in which ethics are embedded.” (Berkes 2001: 109) Kalland identifies “two different paradigms or ways of understanding and interpreting the environment.” (Kalland 2000: 326) One is science, the evaluation of empirical knowledge, in which data are collected by observations and put into a systematic order to make hypotheses that are falsified by experiments or inquiries based upon preceding hypotheses and theories. The other type of paradigmatic knowledge is local knowledge, which is “behaviour-based ... and contextual, or holistic” (Kalland 2000: 326-327). A geologist might see a mountain as layered formations of minerals whereas a native (or indigenous resident) might regard it as a special place considered sacred, dangerous or any other way infused with meaning that is derived from a local cosmology (or belief). We see that *yama*, which will be our main objective, can be attached to all levels, still, we are able to identify interrelations between these levels, which makes *yama* an interesting case that is suitable for such an inquiry.

Nevertheless, some comments are needed in connection to TEK, which itself emerged from a discourse about appropriate forms of natural resource use known as the *Tragedy of the Commons*. (Hardin 1968) There exists a popular notion that religion and beliefs have a positive impact on environmental conservation. However, religious traditions show poor performance in terms of sustainability or conservation of natural resources, especially concerning biodiversity. In fact, even if they had any kind of *direct* influence to sustainability or conservation, it would be marginal.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, the normative function inherent in religion (or beliefs) can

3. The term *conservation* implies a consciously planned use of renewable resources and must be separated from *sustainability*. The latter lacks the element of planning, i.e. it can be achieved by accident, such as poor technology or low population density. For this reason, Kalland (1995b: 5), referring to McGoodwin (1990: 108), defines *resource management* as “any people’s practice, whether conscious or unconscious, intentional or inadvertent, active or passive, recognized as resource regulation or not, that has the effect of limiting the mortality of natural resources resulting from harvesting efforts.” Kalland found out

produce potent cultural symbols by supplying values that influence the individual's decision in a given group (ethics). Berkes (2001: 118) remarks: "Religious traditions are important for the cultural internalization of traditional practices and for the development of worldviews and cultural values appropriate for them." Hence, religious traditions can surely have an *indirect* outcome, a qualitative impact on natural resource management.

It is important to note, that human behavior is not determined by religious beliefs alone, but as well by many other things in real life. In a similar way, Kalland (2002: 147) argues: "We should not *a priori* assume that people's perceptions and norms toward nature are mirrored in their actual behaviour." There exists a strong notion in contemporary environmentalist argumentation that, for instance, assumes a general harmony between human beings and nature in Asian worldviews, such as in philosophy and religious traditions, i.e. "people in the industrialized world are increasingly looking elsewhere for explanations and solutions to environmental problems." (Kalland 2000: 319) In fact, there is no proof that the "nature loving Japanese" are better in preserving the natural environment (Kalland 1995a). A simplistic comparison or assessment of worldviews that are labeled Western, Eastern, and/or Native American is beyond serious debate and can be dangerous, too. That is why Berkes (2001: 116) insists on a qualified discussion of TEK and indigenous conservation.

However, it has been proposed that TEK, if carefully studied, can surely be an alternative complement to a rather "reductionistic" scientific approach in natural resources management. Berkes contends that an implementation of TEK into scientific methodology of resource management could lead to a "stewardship of nature, rather than its domination and control." (Berkes 1999: 164)<sup>4</sup> Thus, he concludes:

Perhaps the most fundamental lesson of traditional ecological knowledge is that worldviews and beliefs do matter. ... Almost universally, one encounters an ethic of nondominant, respectful human-nature relationship, a sacred ecology, as part of the belief component of traditional ecological knowledge. (Berkes 1999: 163)

At this point, it seems useful to turn our focus to some considerations about contemporary Japanese fisheries. There exists a variety of publications that touch on, though not always intentionally, several aspects of TEK in Japanese Fisheries.<sup>5</sup> But, one can observe that nearly all address institutional knowledge (fisheries administration, fisheries rights and licenses etc.). Some of them also deal with aspects

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that most premodern Japanese efforts to regulate resource use can be characterized as "passive," meaning resource management was practiced as outcome of measures without conservation as intentional motive (1995b: 313).

4. The aspect of "controlling the nature" by a rigid regime that controls access to natural resources has been a crucial point in the initial concept of Hardin (1968), and it has been *ab initio* inherent in the discourse on *common property resource management*. See Feeny et al. (1990) or McCay and Jentoft (1996) for overviews and problems related to the discourse on management of common property out of which awareness for TEK evolved.
5. These are for instance Kalland (1996) or Ruddle (1987) just to mention two them.

of empirical knowledge (e.g. Igarashi 1974), however, we can say that paradigmatic knowledge in studies about Japanese fisheries has been addressed in a rather rudimentary way; may be due to the “language barrier.” (Kalland 1990: 188)<sup>6</sup>

A basic feature of modern Japanese fisheries is that legislation and administration are based on a blend of customary and formal laws. Japan’s postwar fisheries law delegates many parts of local marine resource management to local fisheries cooperative associations (FCAs) and thus to its members, the fishermen. The Japanese-style delegation of decision-making is seen as a representative model of successful co-management,<sup>7</sup> “probably ... the world’s most sophisticated system of inshore fishery management.” (Cordell 1989: 333) Rich and detailed historical records make Japan a fortunate case for specialists to explore the emergence and change of maritime institutions, which can “contribute both theoretically and methodologically to social anthropology in general and to applied anthropology in particular.” (Kalland 1990: 190)

Japan’s fisheries production is among the highest worldwide, but catches decreased since its peak phase around 1985. There are several reasons for this, such as the implementation of the United Nations *Law of the Sea*, but also diminished marine resources and socioeconomic changes. Yet, in this process, the coastal fisheries sector (including aquaculture) grew in terms of relative importance. Recently, however, Japanese coastal fisheries are facing serious socioeconomic problems. Japan’s fisheries underwent a substantial transformation due to the country’s rapid economic shift to a high-tech country in the last few decades. This did not spare the coastal society where over aging is one important issue.<sup>8</sup> Local institutions, such as FCAs, were originally founded on traditional village-based groups; however, next to younger generations also money tends to outflow causing financial difficulties. Today, FCA-mergers are part of policy directives by the national fisheries administration, yet, these will probably further enhance the corrosion of traditional management practices that comes along with growing social anomie of the rural society. An intact system of social institutions at the local level is

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6. A nice study including aspects of folk-religion related to fishing activities is Akimichi (1995), and also in Kalland (1995b) we find some notes about religion and its effects to fishing efforts in “Tokugawa Japan.”

7. The Japanese term for *co-management* is *shigen kanri gata gyogyō* 資源管理型漁業, which can be translated as *resource management oriented fisheries*. This is a bit confusing, as a closer look at the definition reveals that *shigen kanri gata gyogyō* rather refers to co-management than resource management. “Fisheries co-management is defined as the sharing of responsibility and authority between the government and the community of local fishers to manage a fishery.” (Pomeroy and Berkes 1997: 466)

8. For instance, in 2003, when the data for the latest Fishery Census in Japan were collected, 41.7% of the total coastal fishing population was older than 65 years and those over 75 years increased by 45.6% since the last census in 1998. In the same period, marine fishery households decreased by 12.1%, which means that the coastal areas are moving toward depopulation. All data are taken from the preliminary report of the 11th Fishery Census published by the MAFF on August 30, 2004. (<http://www.maff.go.jp/www/info/bun08.html>; as of Feb. 10, 2005)

a premise for Japan's unique blend of traditional and modern management practices. Despite the fact that measures to stop the current socioeconomic development are urgently needed, no substantial improvement can be observed by authorities. Their response to the problem of corroding local societies is only marginally implemented into policy guidelines resulting in halfhearted and rather ineffective revitalization measures.<sup>9</sup> Kalland states: "small-scale fishermen are often the losers. ... Their pleas are seldom heard, not necessarily because of ill intent from the authorities, but because of ignorance" (Kalland 1990: 189) and therefore

Rural people are to an increasing extent losing influence over the natural resources on which their way of life depends. ... What is needed when it comes to management of natural resources is therefore management bodies through which local interests, customary law ... and knowledge of the environment can be articulated. (Bruun and Kalland 1995: 18)

Responding to such emerging questions we now shift to this paper's main objective, i.e. an inquiry into aspects of the beliefs in Japanese fishing villages to show interdependencies and relationships between several levels of analysis in TEK. We will see, that *yama* is a metaphor for a boundary, a "zone of transition" (Kalland 1995a: 248), enabling fishing people to comprehend their surrounding world by splitting up different spheres or domains.

## Aspects of Japanese Fishing Religion

Generally, religion plays a vital role in everyday life of Japanese fishing villages.<sup>10</sup> First of all, manifold *kami* are venerated in local Shinto shrines (*jinja* 神社) or special places. Temples (*tera* 寺) are also important places of worship, especially for the dead. However, village groups that are mostly structured by gender and age or affiliation to a certain generation are inevitable part of religious as much as everyday life of village society. On days of festivals, it is common to stop all fishing activities, and often, such festivals mark days of ceremonial "opening" or "closing" of access to a specific sea territory or a particular species. Another characteristic of beliefs in fishing villages is the existence of manifold taboos. Most of them stand in relation to ritual impurity that is associated with menstruation, death, or childbirth.<sup>11</sup>

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9. Efforts of such policy measures can be found in a publication by the statistical division in the bureau of the minister of agriculture, forestry and fisheries (Nōrinsuisanshō daijin kanbō tōkei-bu 2003). A closer look reveals that most of them can either be characterized "green tourism," named "*roman-topia*" (p. 153) and the like, to enhance local economy or represent *bakomono* 箱物, new buildings of questionable need that mostly benefit local construction companies.
  10. The author refrains from an exact definition of the term *religion* in this paper. The term is used to mean a set of beliefs and (ceremonial) practices of human groups that address a superhuman or divine being or power.
  11. Taboos are only marginally covered in this paper. For details see e.g. Ōtō (1969).

When freely associating the deities of Japanese fishing people one commonly thinks of *Ebisu*, *Konpira* 金毘羅, *Ryū-jin* 龍神 and many more.<sup>12</sup> However, their characters vary by region. Here, we will pick up probably the most prominent one of them, *Ebisu*, to explore deeper layers in the meaning and functions of Japanese fishing religiosity that lay beyond the popular image of this deity.

*Ebisu* is enshrined all over Japan as the deity of merchants and fishermen but also simply as a deity that brings fortune for anyone. Most manifestations or illustrations show this deity in the kind of *Ebisu Saburō* 恵比寿三郎 (Illustration 1-a), i.e. as a voluminous laughing man with a fishing rod in one hand and a red fish in the other.<sup>13</sup> *Ebisu* is often enshrined in pair with the *Daikoku* 大黒 as both are associated to the so called *Shichifuku-jin* 七福神 (seven deities of fortune). However, the *Ebisu* in most fishing villages differs significantly from this rather folksy iconography.

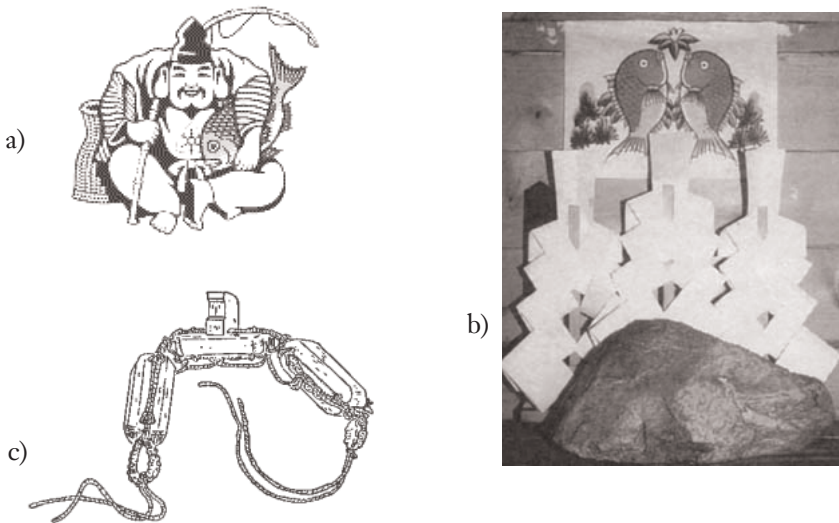


Illustration 1: Types of *Ebisu*

(a) A common *Ebisu* in the manner of *Ebisu Saburō* 恵比寿三郎 on a label of a known Japanese beer. (b) An *Ebisu* stone in Miyako. (c) An *Ebisu apa* (“*Ebisu*-float”) made of three parts tied together. Each part’s length is about 20cm. The *shintai* is placed in the middle float that has the form of an *eboshi* 烏帽子 (hat of noblemen in ancient Japan). Sources: a) label of Yebisu beer, b) Kawashima (2003: 13) and c) Makita (1954: 133).

12. Japanese transcriptions of deities can vary. To avoid confusion the author only mentions the common ones.

13. The name *Ebisu* is seen to be rooted in *ebisu* 夷 and *emishi* 蝦夷 (also *ezo*), both ancient words for *foreigner, stranger, savage* of the north-eastern region (today Tōhoku 東北). However, the etymology of the name *Ebisu* has not been made clear (Naumann 1974: 14). Saburō is a common Japanese male name.

*Ebisu* is usually enshrined in the *kamidana* 神棚 (Shintō house-altar) of virtually every household in a fishing community. Here, the deity can be represented as an illustration of the popular Saburō type or by small rocks or stones (Illustration 1-b), and “invisible” or “discarnate” *Ebisu* are possible, too. The stone, for instance, is seen as *shintai* 神体 (lit. “deity’s body”; object, symbol or medium in which the spirit of a *kami* is believed to reside) of *Ebisu*. Aside from such “private” veneration in households, *Ebisu* is also worshipped by a community. Such *Ebisu* was for instance a small rock that had been taken from the seabed, caught by incident in a net or a bottle that had been washed ashore.<sup>14</sup> This can be contrasted with a third type, the *Ebisu aba*. An *aba* 浮子 or *apa* (Illustration 1-c) is a wooden float that is tied to a fishing net, so that in this case it is more likely to be a *ōdama* 網霊 (spirit of the net; Sakurada 1980: 151). Replacement of such an “*Ebisu*-float” or “object-*Ebisu*” is possible when catches decline or when it has been stolen. Whales and sharks are also in many places regarded as *Ebisu*, because they often hunt schools of fishes or are surrounded by them (Yanagita and Kurata 1938: 165). An interesting aspect of belief in Japanese fishing villages is that drifting corpses found at sea “were regarded as deities – quite often manifestations of *Ebisu* – that brought luck to the fishermen if they were treated properly.” (Kalland 1995b: 45) Thus, they were carefully venerated as *Ebisu* and buried in the village’s graveyard. Drifting corpses attract fish (especially carnivorous species), but it is also known that artificial reefs (i.e. relatively huge rocks, concrete blocks or even scrapped ships etc.) do as well. The “outstanding expert on Japanese fishery-folklore” (Naumann 1974: 3) Sakurada Katsunori 桜田勝徳 tells a related anecdote:

One day, a friend of mine visited a fishing village, where he was picked up for a ride on a boat for mackerel scoop-netting. By coincidence, the crew made a very nice catch that day. Hereafter, the nice catches prolonged for the next two or three times the boat went scoop-netting. The people in the village heard of this and considered my friend an *Ebisu*. ‘Please take a ride on my boat!’, he was asked again and again by many and so spent a quite busy time over there. (1980:154-155; transl. by author)

We see that *Ebisu* is a deity with a complex character. First, *Ebisu* can be seen as a “visiting deity” (*marebito* 稀人, a “stranger as god”; Yoshida 1981). The second characteristic is that of a “reverential designation of that power who grants the fishermen successful catches.” (Naumann 1974: 4)<sup>15</sup> Here we can speak of *Ebisu* as a *yorigami* 寄神 (lit. “attracting deity”) inhibiting the function of a *yorishiro* 依代 (a kind of “Himmelpfeiler,” where deities can descend to the real world) that attracts marine resources bringing wealth. This latter feature can also be read into the manifestation as a merchant’s deity of commerce. We could, of course, simply see this as a kind of sympathetic magic, a method to call for good catches. This can also

14. It is noteworthy that legends about the origin of fishing villages are often related to objects that were washed ashore.

15. Naumann refers here to an interpretation by Sakurada (1963).

be observed in other parts the world because fishermen are dependent on migrating fish that behave only conditionally predictable. Yet, is it really that simple? There are also other interpretations of fishermen's rituals and taboos (Kalland 1995a: 41-42). Naumann compares the *Ebisu* worship with hunting ceremonies, an interpretation that is worth referring to at this point, because we will deal with related aspects later in this paper.

By isolating one basic component of the *Ebisu* belief, Naumann attempts her investigation through consulting ceremonies that can be characterized as "sending back" of (animal) spirits. One example is the erecting of memorial stones for killed animals such as those for bears inscribed *yama no kami* 山の神.<sup>16</sup> Here, the *yama no kami* is conceptualized as guardian deity, i.e. as "owner and master of the hunting animals ... who grants or refuses the game to the hunter ... [and] appears in the shape of an animal" (Naumann 1974: 7). Hunters, as much as fishermen, often make ceremonies, in which the heart (or other entrails) that is thought to be the "seat of life" is offered to the "master and owner" of the killed animal. One example is ceremony of "first catch" (commonly called *batsuryō* 初漁), in which the "first fish" that is caught in the fishing season or within the cycle of New Year's ceremonies<sup>17</sup> "is first offered to *Ebisu* and then consummated [*sic!*] by a certain group of persons." (Naumann 1974: 6) This, she argues, is a common motif of the hunting and fishing customs of North Eurasia and North America and "directed by the belief that the properly treated animal in its next existence gladly will place itself at the hunter's disposal" (Naumann 1974: 9). There are, for instance, the several ceremonies of Ainu, such as the *iomante*, in which a bear (worshipped as deity) is "sent home" in hope of his return. Another example is the use of "head knocking sticks" (*isapa-kik-ni*; lit. "wood to knock his head") by Ainu to kill the caught salmon. Salmons are believed to prefer being killed by the ceremonial *isapa-kik-ni* rather than by a stone or usual stick. In this way, "they would return later to be caught and killed again." (Naumann 1974: 11) By interpreting this conception of a "spirit of a species" to several aspects of *Ebisu* as "stranger deity" Naumann comes to begin concluding her investigation:

... stories ... tell of the visit of an unknown man who admonishes his host to drop fishing by poisoning the pond or stream as the host was preparing the following

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16. A similar memorial for fish is also mentioned by Naumann, in which "a feast had to be given and a stone or a post had to be erected if within one year a certain number (1000 or 10000) of salmons, bonitos [*sic!*] ... or the like had been caught" (1974: 5-6). In terms of marine resource management this is an interesting point: the erected posts can be regarded as symbols to commemorate subtraction from a resource stock.
17. Nauman interprets the offering of "first fish" to the deities as offering to the "collective guardian-spirits ... of each species" (1974: 12) rather than to the soul of an individual animal and refers to the *Artgeister* of Paulson (1961). "First fish" ceremonies are quite common among tribes of the North Pacific region (1974: 10). In case of the anadromous salmon, i.e. a fish that will return to its "home" river after setting off for the sea, the concept of "sending home" is interesting regarding the relationship between paradigmatic and empirical knowledge.

day, or he asks the host to spare a certain big fish when fishing in a certain place. When acting against this advice it is found that the biggest fish caught is nobody else but the visitor of the day before, his belly still full of the food given to him on that occasion. And in some instances ... the rash deed was followed by a curse of the killed fish. (Naumann 1974:13)

Also whales and sharks will chase schools of fish to the fishermen's fishing grounds if treated with proper ceremonial respect, however, if not following these ceremonies they would become angry and chase away fish or do other harm. Therefore, "these are the very facts held to be responsible why whale or shark are called Ebisu or identified with Ebisu." (Naumann 1974: 14) Hence, Naumann concludes that these

conceptions and customs ... lead us far back as ... into prehistoric and protohistoric periods ... . Therefore we are permitted to unconditionally interpret Ebisu as a functionary deity of fishing who has been associated with conceptions sprung from the mentality of genuine hunters and fishermen. [The] animals themselves – individual beings provided with souls as well as collectives of the species under the protection of the species-spirit – were the oldest object of worship of the hunter and the fisherman." (Naumann 1974:14-15)

Although the mentioned types of *Ebisu* worship do not directly affect people's ecological behavior by means of resource management, we can say, that *Ebisu* as a archetypical metaphor expresses a specific attitude of fishing people toward nature as a religious conceptualization. Using the terminology of resource management one could say that withdrawing fish from a resource pool is metaphorically compensated (and commemorated) by the ceremony of "sending home" the spirit of a resource, which, through this, is believed to come back for the benefit of the resource user (fisherman).

Yet, one aspect, the *Ebisu* as drifting corpse, remains unanswered in Naumann's nonetheless enlightening paper. It is possible that Buddhist thought influenced the veneration of corpses as much as funerals for whales (Naumann 1974: 4-5). After investigating possible links to beliefs about ghosts and phantoms among fishing people, Sakurada concludes that these beliefs are also very old, however, he leaves this question deliberately unanswered for further research (1980: 166-169). We may come closer to an answer to this question later in this paper after investigating particular characteristics of the *yama* as concept in beliefs.

## Beliefs in a Fishing Village

An essential factor in the beliefs of Japanese coastal fishing culture is the concept of *yama*. For instance, in many fishing villages a *yama no kami* is worshipped near an adjacent forest or inside a shrine, and often, these are located at boundaries of a settlement. Generally, the *yama no kami* in fishing communities is believed to be a female deity affecting numerous aspects of everyday life. For example, in many

communities she is associated with the forest and thus to fire (wood). She is said to bring easier childbirth to women but is worshipped by male (foresters and rangers), too.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, however, the *yama no kami* is regarded to be a very jealous deity and dislikes the presence of other women in her territory.<sup>19</sup> At occasions such as pregnancy, when villagers have to “meet the goddess,” it often happens that exclusively men are allowed to perform the ceremonial duties to avoid angering her. In addition, reverential installation of male phallic symbols in the *yama* is a common custom that can be found in many regions.

In the following, *yama*-related aspects of beliefs and customs in a typical fishing village (Yoriiso, Miyagi Prefecture and surrounding areas) are described. We will see that *yama* cannot be reduced to a topographic feature, but as concept rather symbolizes a “turning point.”<sup>20</sup> Another feature of *yama* as concept is femaleness that is woven into a complex system of beliefs and ceremonies.

Yoriiso (Map 1) is located on a cliffy headland at the eastern, pacific side of the Oshika peninsula 牡鹿半島 (the southern vertex of the Pacific Sanriku coastline 三陸沿岸). The Kinkasan 金華山 island (449m above mean sea level) dominates the Pacific side of the whole area. The landscape is characterized by cliffs and a rocky coastline with many small fjord-like bays and thus, there are natural limitations of space for settlements. Today, the administrative district of Yoriiso includes the hamlet of Maeami 前網 (about 100 inhabitants in 25 households) adjacent to the western side of Yoriiso. However, natives regard both villages as different units as much as there are different FCAs in each with their own fishing rights. The main settlement of Yoriiso is located at the southern slope of the Azumamoriyama 東森山 (Map 1, A), which is the highest elevation on the cape-like Yoriiso peninsula (153m). Since 1984, the Onagawa nuclear power plant (Map 1, O) had operated just a few hundred meters east of Yoriiso. The installation of this power plant resulted in enormous compensations paid to the surrounding communities as much as to each household. The payments not only

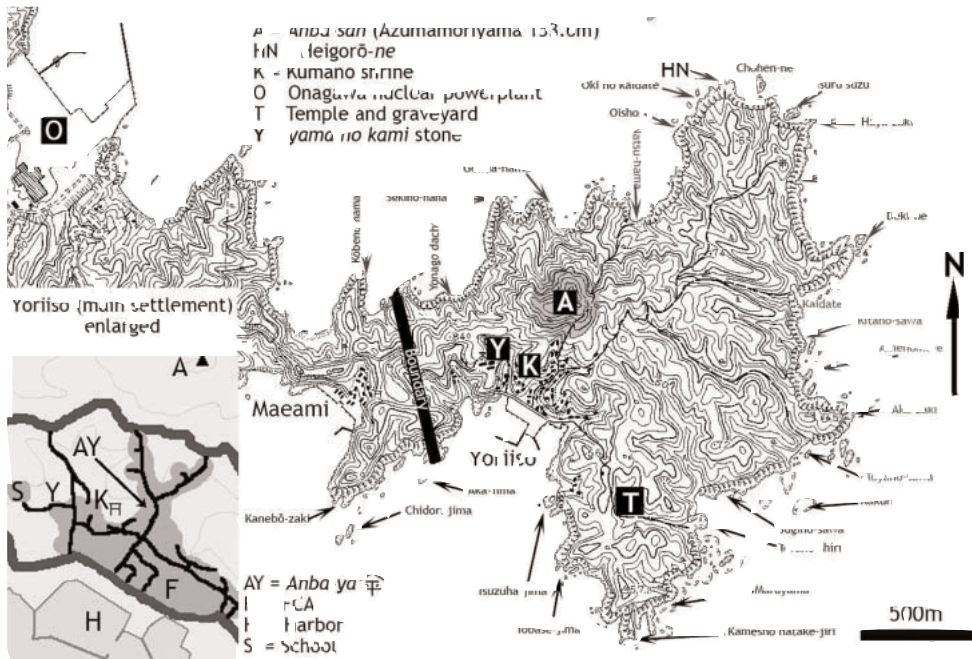
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18. There are in fact many facets of the *yama no kami*. Shibusawa comprehends *yama no kami* as a multi-layered deity that can be a “mountain spirit” or a deity of hunting, fishing, agriculture, sericulture, forestry, pharmacy or even one with explicit territory and power to rule (Shibusawa 1959: 172). Although, not focusing on the *yama no kami* in fishing villages, Naumann (1963/1964) presented a detailed study on several traditions of this deity. For the purpose of this paper, however, the *yama no kami* is simply seen as found during fieldwork in Yoriiso and other places by the author, i.e. as an important deity in village life that is in several ways related to the mountains.

19. According to contemporary legislation women older than 18 must not work in tunnel construction (Japanese Labour Standards Law 労働基準法 64, 2; <http://www.houko.com/00/01/S22/049.HTM> as of Feb. 15, 2005). Administration insists that this law is to secure pregnant women from hard and dangerous work, but a closer look at the history shows that menstruating women were banned from such work at least since the Edo period because they were “ritually unpure.” This can be seen in connection to beliefs of the *yama* as female deity.

20. *Yama-ba* 山場 (lit. “place of *yama*”) denotes a “turning point” in Japanese and not a “mountain place.”

provide a stable income, but give the communities and their inhabitants opportunities to invest in more efficient enterprises, such as capital intensive aquaculture<sup>21</sup> in the fisheries sector. The installation of the plant has also meant that traditional customs (including traditional social institutions) could “survive” in contrary to many other Japanese regions without such third-party compensations. The latter enables us to study local and in most parts traditional fishing culture and society even today.



Map 1: Area around Yoriiso

Yoriiso is a hamlet of about 110 households and nearly all of the 500 inhabitants are engaged in fisheries or related occupations; exceptions are the teachers at the local elementary school (Map 1, S) and the Buddhist monk’s family of the local Sōtoku-ji temple 崇徳寺 (Map 1, T). The oldest historical records mentioning Yoriiso date back to the end of 14th century. A legend tells of a rock that was washed to the village’s beach when the community was founded (*yoru* 寄る means “approach” and *iso* 磯 is a rocky shore; OHI 1988: 883-884). The rock had been venerated for a long time (TRS 1984: 40-41), and surely we can interpret this as “stone-*Ebisu*.”

Society in Yoriiso is structured by a relatively intact system of age-grade-groups (*nenrei kaitei-sei* 年齢階梯制; Table 1) that is historically traceable to mid-18th century (OHI 1988: 978). For instance, women of bearable age are associated

21. These used to be abalone and seaweed after WW II and changed to scallops and especially ascadian in the 1980s.

with a specific group called *yamanokami-kō* 山神講.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, women become members of the *jizō-kō* 地蔵講, the group of the children's guardian deity. Together these groups are called *jo-kō* 女講 (women's group) to which the women belong until the age of about 42.<sup>23</sup> The *fujin-kai* 婦人会 (women's association) is a much newer social institution and is not directly related to the *yama no kami*. Today, most of these women in Yoriiso are associated with both groups, the traditional *jo-kō* and the modern *fujin-kai*; i.e. no clear distinction of membership is drawn between the groups. We often find such overlays between traditional and modern social institutions in Japanese fishing villages. Regarding male villagers, adolescents belong to the youth group (*seimen-dan* 青年団) until the age of 15. Then, they become members of the men's association, *jitsugyō-dan* 実業団 (business group), however, in many communities only the head of a household is allowed entrance, yet, membership is in many cases differentiated in senior (full) and associate members. At the same time there is the volunteer fire brigade (*shōbō-dan* 消防団), which is constituted of elder members of the *seimen-dan* and young members of the men's association (TRS 1984: 48).<sup>24</sup>

Age	Male		Female			
	Traditional	Modern	Modern	Traditional		
above 60	<i>kōshin-kō</i> 庚申講	Full FCA members	<i>fujin-kai</i> 婦人会 Women's division of FCA	<i>nenbutsu-kō</i> 念仏講		
60	<i>jitsugyō-dan</i> 実業団	Junior members of FCA		<i>shōbō-dan</i> 消防団	<i>kannon-kō</i> 観音講	
42					<i>seimen-dan</i> 青年団	<i>jo-kō</i> 女講 = <i>jizō-kō</i> 地蔵講 <i>yamanokami-kō</i> 山神講
37						
Marriage	<i>kodomo-gumi</i> 子供組			<i>anegodachi</i> 姉子達 <i>kodomo-gumi</i> 子供組		
15						
7						

Table 1: Scheme of traditional and modern groups in Yoriiso  
(Based on OHI 1988:979 with added data collected by the author during fieldwork.)

22. *Kō* 講 in most cases denotes a social institution found in most Japanese villages that can be characterized as “cult groups,” yet, the term *kō* can also denote a day of veneration for a specific deity or *kō*-group, such as the *Ebisu-kō* found in many fishing villages. They originate in Buddhistic seminars in ancient times. During the Edo-period (1603-1867) they became a widespread social institution in many villages and can be characterized as gender specific age or generation groups. These have also been characterized as *age-grades* (e.g. Norbeck 1953). To avoid confusion, these are simply called *groups* in the following.
23. Although in Yoriiso the *yamanokami-kō* and the *jizō-kō* are regarded more or less the same, days of worship can differ. There are communities on Oshika peninsula that clearly make differences between the two, i.e. younger (married) women belong to the *jizō-kō* and later join the *yamanokami-kō*.
24. Membership restrictions in village groups has become more penetrable in the last decades. The main reason is the lack of potential members due to social change. If there is only a female *major domus* left, admission to the village's core group is usually not rejected, yet, patrilineage is most common. Even cases of women in fire brigades are reported.

The *jo-kō* can be regarded as female counterpart of the *jitsugyō-dan*. Members of the *jo-kō* become members of the *kannon-kō* 観音講 at the age of 37 and later join the *nenbutsu-kō*, that both represent groups of retired women. Through a special farewell ceremony male above 42 retire from the *jitsugyō-dan* and become members of the *kōshin-kō* 庚申講. Yet, retirement from the groups of seniors does not necessarily mean a loss of influence or status in village life. However, it can be characterized as “leaving the active group” while opinions of the elders are often regarded important and their influence (through their household or other institutions) can carry weight in local decision making.<sup>25</sup>

The *jitsugyō-dan* is the backbone of Yoriiso’s village self-management, especially in ceremonial matters (TRS 1998: 50). Other important functions are activities for mutual aid (at childbirth, funerals, shipwreck), management of common property (common land and forests) and local public services (for instance, concerning education of children = local school and related matters) and also at certain degrees financial aid in form of a mutual credit association (*tanomosbi* 頼母子, in which credits are allocated by lottery) for impoverished members or those needing capital for investments such as for building or renewal of a house. The *jitsugyō-dan* was called *keiyaku-kō* 契約講 (“contract group”) until 1878, then (possibly under the influence of state *Shintō*, but this is questionable) renamed *jinpū-kō* 神風講 (“group of the divine wind”) and since 1923 named *jitsugyō-dan* (OHI 1988: 978). A memorial stone in Yoriiso documents that the local *keiyaku-kō* was founded in 1808 (OHI 2002: 514), however, as has been noted above, it is possible that there existed a preceding group with similar functions since mid of 18th century (OHI 1988: 978) or even before.<sup>26</sup> There used to be two annual meetings of this group held on February and November 11, yet, these days, it convenes only once after the ceremonial cycle of New Year on January 20 (TRS 1984: 50).

We can see that everyday life in Yoriiso is structured by social institutions that can be characterized as gender-specific age-grade groups. Each of these groups is assigned a specific domain of ceremonies. The *keiyaku* acts as core institution and is therefore the most important group among all. In Yoriiso, labor at sea was until recently exclusively done by males. An exception was the collection of seaweed and other benthic species from the shore, which was mainly done by women and

25. This is rather obvious in FCA fisheries management, where in most cases only elders as senior members have a vote in important decisions.

26. In the following, this group is denoted *keiyaku*. An interesting point to be mentioned is that the foundation of *keiyaku-kō* in this region approximately correlates with one of the major famines that hit the Tōhoku region during Edo period in the following years 1642-1643, 1691-1695, 1732, 1753-1757, 1782-1787 and 1833-1839. We will refer to this phenomenon later. For Yoriiso, it is unclear to what extent the *keiyaku-kō* as organization for mutual aid influenced local decision-making. *De facto* all village activities relied on the benevolence of the village’s headman and donations of prosperous merchants. It is known, that headmen paid for festivals and the *keiyaku-kō* carried expenses for infrastructural measures (e.g. construction of streets) in feudal times (OHI 1988: 978).

children. Women were traditionally also doing agricultural work in fishing villages. This division of labor by gender can still be observed in most fishing villages all over Japan today.<sup>27</sup> On days of village festivals it is usual to stop working (including fishing) as village collective.

In Japan, New Year (*shōgatsu* 正月) is, next to the ancestor's festival (*bon* 盆) in summer, the most important part of the annual ceremonial cycle, the *nenchū gyōji*. A cycle of New Year ceremonies usually continues until *ko-shōgatsu* 小正月 (lit. "small New Year") on January 15. In Yoriiso, on the first day of a year there is the obligatory *genchō mairi* 元朝参り (commonly known as *batsu mōde* 初詣) at the local Kumano shrine 熊野神社 (Map 1, K), and the first sunrise (*batsu hi no de* 初日の出) is regarded to be best seen on top of Azumamoriyama. Also *kuzen* 供膳 (ceremonial food offerings) are prepared by female members of a household in advance for these days of ritual renewal at the turn of a year. This ceremonial food is placed by male members in front of a household's *kamidana* and later removed from there (also done by male) to be eaten by the family. The *go-nensho maruari* 御年始回り, the "first day visit" to several households of the community, is also customarily done in Yoriiso by the *major domus* of a household.<sup>28</sup> Also, division of actors by gender can be observed, however, there are other ceremonies in which this is more evident.

The "first ride on a boat" (*nori some* 乗り初め) is celebrated on the second day of a year. One important part of this ceremony is the veneration of the *funadama* 船霊 (or 船玉; Illustration 2), the guardian deity of a vessel. Its *shintai* is usually a small wooden box with female hair next to *sugoroku* 双六 (dice), old coins or even puppets and other objects inside (TRS 1984: 41, Yoshida 1981: 93), and on modern vessels it is also possible that there are two of them aboard, for example, one at front deck and one in the cabin each venerated at ceremonies, and, at last, "invisible" *funadama* are also known. Yet, on old style sailing boats, the box is mostly located below the mast of a vessel, where the shipbuilder installs the *shintai* – in some cases secretly – before the launching. This place aboard is often called *mori* 森 (lit. "where many trees are" = forest or mountain) or *muro* 室 (room) (Sakurada 1934: 148). In many Japanese fishing villages, people consider the *funadama* as a spirit that is embodied in female human beings, and there are even cases, in which women are considered to be the manifestation of a *funadama*

27. Statistics show that a typical fisheries household's income is only by half composed of fishing-related income. Other economic activities are agriculture, forestry, seasonal work at other places and work in the service sector (tourism etc.). Another important note observed valid is that the amount of women working as "fisherwomen" is increasing notably in the last couple decades. According to the Fisheries Census in 2003 (conducted by Japanese government in intervals of five years), a bit more than a half of all women belonging to fishing households were exclusively working on shore. This shift in gender-labor relationship is mainly caused by the absence of younger men willing to work as fishermen. On the other hand, one can say that the gender barriers in Japanese fisheries are gradually opening.

28. Some fishermen join the New Year procession to the Kinkasan island on this day.

deity.<sup>29</sup> For this reason, a female's hair – containing elements of the *yama* (i.e. wood [fire] and the soil) – is believed to protect a vessel from being shipwrecked. In other places of Japan, the *funadama* is also said to bring good wind direction or even attract fish (Sakurada 1934: 162), an interesting analogy to *Ebisu*.<sup>30</sup>

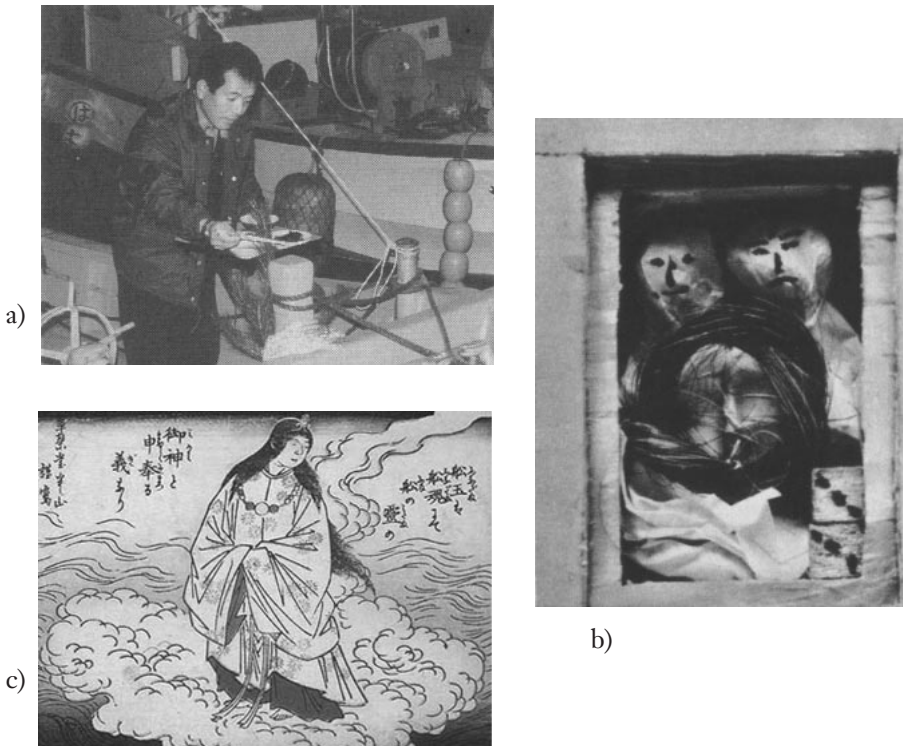


Illustration 2: *funadama*

The photograph (a) shows a *funadama* ceremony in Tsukihama 月浜 (Miyagi Pref.) at New Year. A typical *funadama* (b) is a wooden box with objects inside. An illustration in the navigation guide *Dai-Nihon senro saiken-ki* 大日本船路細見記 of 1876 (the iconography is older) shows the *funadama* as goddess (c). Sources: a) Kawashima (2003: 115), b) Sakurada (1970) and c) <http://www.lib.kobe-u.ac.jp/directory/sumita/orgdata/00023620/P0005.jpg> (as of May 5, 2005).

29. Interestingly, fishermen, on the other hand, often avoid taking a single women aboard a vessel. (Makita 1954: 224-225). See also Sakurada (1934: 134) and Yoshida (1981: 91-92). In the Sanriku region, especially pregnant women play an important role in ceremonies concerning fishing vessels. Yoshida translates *funadama* as “guardian spirit of the boat” (1981: 92).
30. The *Ebisu* is enshrined in every *kamidana* of a net-shed (*naya* 納屋), too (TRS 1984: 40-41). A special ceremony for the *Ebisu* is held in Yoriiso on the 20th of January and October. In these ceremonies *Ebisu* is worshipped by offering rare crops from the *yama* and the sea together with sake 酒 in front of the *kamidana* and the *funadama*.

As for Yoriiso, descriptions of *nori some* is rudimentary, we instead refer to the one in Kesenuma 気仙沼 (about 50 km north of Yoriiso) as described in Kawashima (2003: 71-73). The *nori some* in Kesenuma begins with a ritual purification of the vessel. Among others, the fishing vessel is turned to southern direction so that the ship-owner (or *sendō*) can look at the mountains from starboard, while praying words like “Shall the *yama* at *hakari* be visible!” or “Please show the *yama* soon!” to the *sai no kami* 幸神 (deity of luck), which is regarded as metaphor of the *yama no kami*. A piece of *kiri mochi* 切り餅 (cut rice cake) is offered as ceremonial food, which is dipped with a hook into seawater thrice. After a recitation to the *oki no kami* 沖の神 (offshore deity), this piece of *mochi* is denoted *oki no mochi* 沖の餅 and it is said that this consecrated *mochi* helps people suffering illness in the mountains. In analogy, there exists a *yama no mochi* 山の餅 that helps when suffering from seasickness consecrated at the *wakagi mukae* 若木迎え (lit. “greeting the young tree”; described below). The *nori some* continues with a first ceremonial catch (*batsuryō*). Some of the caught fish are offered at the *kamidana*. The rest of the fish is sold at the first, rather ceremonial, sale.

The *shishi-buri* 獅子振り (lit. “*shishi* swinging”), celebrated for three days beginning January 5, is probably the most important festival in Yoriiso.<sup>31</sup> *Shishi-buri* can be observed as “living tradition” in many communities of the Oshika peninsula, yet, a particular feature of the one in Yoriiso is its close relationship to the belief of *Anba-sama* 安波様, the “deity of safe waves.”<sup>32</sup> *Shishi-buri* can be traced back to around 1833, when Yoriiso was hit by a severe famine.<sup>33</sup> For this, the *keiyaku* decided to invent a new ceremony to make prayers for good catches and a safe sail as much as for well being of the families. A representative of the *keiyaku* was sent to

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31. The *shishi* is a mythical animal and commonly translated as lion. There are legends in this region that tell stories of a deity found at sea riding on the head of a *shishi* (Onodera 1991: 126). In Yoriiso, this festival was originally celebrated on Jan. 16, but shifted to Jan. 5 in 1951. The shift might be due to changing labor conditions. Native people who are living and working in other areas and regularly come to visit their *honke* 本家 (head family) during New Year. Yet, in the last decades it became unusual to have holiday until *ko-shōgatsu* (January 15). See also OHI (2002: 508-509). The *shishi* in Yoriiso is also seen as *Gongen* 権現 (TRS 1984: 48-49). A detailed description of the *Gongen* would lead too far in this paper. However, it is noted that the *Gongen* refers to a manifestation of the Buddha in folk-belief. He is believed to appear in form of a visiting deity (or human being) to bring salvation. January 16 was the original date of the festival until it was shifted to January 5 in 1952.

32. *Anba-sama* is a very interesting topic in regard to the dynamic characteristics of TEK. Yet, this must be handled in a separate paper.

33. According to historical records, there were 295 villagers living in Yoriiso 1774 and 277 persons in 1828 (OHI 1988: 921). The death-register of the local temple counts 103 persons between 1831 and 1835 of which 7 were related to accidents at sea, which means that the total population decreased by more than 34% during five years (OHI 1988: 902-903). This mortality-rate seems to be accurate when compared with valuable statistical data concerning historical demography (collected from primary historical sources) and famines in this region that is found in OHI (2005: 1037-1067).

the near Aji island 網地島 to borrow a wooden mask of a *shishi* to be used for a *shishi-mai* 獅子舞 (lion-dance). In 1835, the *shishi-buri* was celebrated for the first time. For this occasion, the villagers made musical instruments (drums, flutes etc.) and composed special songs (TRS 1984: 45-46).<sup>34</sup> Still in these days, the *shishi-buri* is organized and carried out by the male members of the *jitsugyō-dan* (succeeding institution of the *jinpū-kō*) or associated volunteers aged between 16 and 42 years. During *shishi-buri*, a group performing the *shishi-mai* visits all households. They first gather at the house of the *Anba-ya*, who takes care of the colorful *shishi* mask, which is borne by two young men for the *shishi-mai*. Then, the group in form of a procession first, heads to the shrine for *Anba ōsugi daimyō* 安波大杉大明 (lit. “the magnificent light at the large cedars of *Anba*”) on top of the Azumamoriyama. The procession there makes prayers and offerings to the *Anba-sama*. After this, they descend to the main settlement to make offerings at the main shrine of Yoriiso, the *Kumano* shrine 熊野神社, and then head to the harbor near the local FCA (Map 1, K, H and F), where a symbolic *hama okuri* 浜送り takes place.<sup>35</sup> Finally, all households are visited by the *shishi*-group during following days until January 7. A related aspect that should be noted is another “visiting performance” at households

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34. However, another source (Hagiwara 1969: 357) reports that in 1835 a man called Watanabe Heigorō 渡辺平五郎 run aground in shallow waters, but was luckily saved. Heigorō regarded the *Anba-sama* as his savior, and therefore, he decided to become steward of this deity and invented a magnificent celebration for this deity on January 16 of the lunar calendar. Heigorō is also said to have initiated the founding of the local *jinpū-kō* as organizing institution for this festival. The *shishi-mai*, according to this version, had been introduced by an islander of nearby Aji island 網路島 to give the festival a bustle. Yet, this version contradicts with that mentioned in TRS (1984: 45-46), and in OHI (1988: 978) it is mentioned that there existed a *keiyaku-kō* in those days that was renamed *jinpū-kō* in 1879. On the other hand, evidence for Hagiwara’s version is a small cap on the northern end of the cape of Yoriiso denoted Heigorō-ne 平五郎根 (Map 1, HN), where he is said to have run aground (TRS 1984: 24). Also, the current *bettō* 別当 (steward) of the *shishi-buri* carries Watanabe as family name as much as a household mark (*ie-jirusbi* 家印) resembling Heigorō: a 平 under a *yama* 厶, which is usually read *yama bei*, however, in Yoriiso it is denoted *Anba-ya* 安波屋 (Map 1, AY). Possible is therefore the founding of a group by Heigorō in 1835 that was initially named *jinpū-kō* and then, in 1879, merged with the *keiyaku-kō*, which at this occasion was renamed, yet, this is not documented anywhere and rather speculative. The truth might be somewhere in the middle of both legends, and we put this question aside for now.
35. The *hama okuri* is a ceremonial “sending home to sea” that can be found in most Japanese fishing villages. Interestingly, “sending home” ceremonies are usually carried out at village boundaries that can be understood as ritual “sending away” of negative elements out of a village. A ceremony, explicitly denoted *hama okuri*, takes place on May 20, the official festival of the *Kumano* shrine. In many places at the coast of Sanriku, *Anba-sama* ceremonies include a *hama okuri*. For more on *hama okuri* in Sanriku region see Onodera (1991: 135-142).

on the last day of *shishi-mai*, the *Daikoku-mai* 大黒舞い (*Daikoku* dance), is carried out by the children's group (*kodomo-gumi* 子供組).<sup>36</sup> In fact, the organization of the *Daikoku-mai* by the *kodomo-gumi* (OHI 1988: 979-980) can be seen as instruction and preparation (socialization) of the next generation for activities in the *jitsugyō-dan* as there are many similarities between them. For instance, donations given to the children performing the *Daikoku-mai* are – after withdrawal of the expenses for the performance – donated to the local school, i.e. as much as the *jitsugyō-dan* is an institution that is organized for the common good of a village, the children do so in *Daikoku-mai*. Until the turn of the 1970s, members of the *seinen-dan* instructed participating children. However, drug abuse (alcohol and tobacco) among children rankled villagers so that today, parents join the preparation for the performance.<sup>37</sup> Elders of the *kodomo-gumi* instruct the younger members, and the older children are trained by members of the *seinen-dan* under surveillance of parents (members of the *jitsugyō-dan*). Yet, part of the tradition is to maintain autonomy of decision by the *kodomo-gumi*. In this sense – though, not related directly to ecological knowledge – it is a nice example how cultural transmission of tradition, as stated in the definition of TEK above, can work in practice.

The *wakagi mukae* is a ceremony on January 6 that ritually opens the mountain for woodcutting. Male villagers cut down twigs and sticks from several trees and bushes. These are bundled and offered with *kiri-mochi* to the *yama no kami*.<sup>38</sup> Until 1951, this was the first time in a year to enter the *yama*, because the *shishi-buri* shifted from January 16 to January 5 in 1952.

A similar ceremony to the *wakagi mukae*, the *yamanokami mairi* 山神参り (lit. “procession to the *yama no kami*”), is carried out on January 12 by women of the *yamanokami-kō*.<sup>39</sup> The *yama no kami* is worshipped at a “sacred stone” (Map 1, Y)<sup>40</sup> serving as *shintai* beneath a tree located at the eastern boundary of Yoriiso to the forest that leads to the neighboring settlement of Maeami. There, the women make offerings and pray for an easy and safe delivery. After this, the group convenes at a member's house and enjoys a feast-like banquet for the rest of that day. On days of *yamanokami-kō*, all members of the group are freed from profane work and

36. It is interesting to note, that the date of *Daikoku-mai* was shifted from January 14 to the present day around 1952 (OHI 1988: 979). Though, this is the author's assumption, it is possible that *Daikoku-mai* is a “tradition” that emerged after the *shishi-buri* in 1835. The *Daikoku-mai* is regarded as a cultural treasure by Yoriiso villagers, which might be caused by increased public interest due to coverage in mass media.

37. Ironically, the author of this paper observed the explicit attendance of many senior villagers or citizens organized in groups denoted “group against juvenile delinquency” or the like at many Japanese festivals where virtually no youth was present.

38. This *yama no mochi* is inscribed with the character for *yama* 山 in Kesenuma (Kawashima 2003: 72-73; also see below).

39. The same ceremony is held on March 12 and October 12, too. These are the only days women are allowed to worship the *yama no kami* by entering the deity's territory.

40. According to OHI (1988: 892) and (2002: 514) this stone was erected 1808, the same year the *keiyaku-kō* was established in Yoriiso.

obligations. The *yamanokami mairi* is therefore the only occasion, women are allowed to meet the deity.

However, another similar ceremony to the *waka-gi mukae* used to be the *iwaimashō-gi kiri* 祝いましょう木伐り (cutting trees for *iwaimashō*) on January 13, it is not practiced anymore (OHI 2002: 509). Male villagers went into the mountain to each cut down two longer and two shorter sticks from the *katsu no ki* 勝の木 (*Rhus javanica*).<sup>41</sup> Later that day, these sticks were decorated by peeling and shaving their skin and then put in front of the *kamidana* as so called “celebrating sticks” (*iwai-bō* 祝棒 or also called *iwaimashō-gi* 祝いましょう木). At night (January 14 to 15), the *iwaimashō* (lit. “Let us celebrate!”) was celebrated. Male villagers, between about 8 and 50 years of age, first knocked the *kamidana* and the New Year’s decoration with their *iwai-bō*. After this, they headed toward the harbor to do the same with the *funadama* on their vessels. On their way, the men were shouting: “*Yō, yō iwaimashō!*” ヨー、ヨー、祝いましょう (“Hey, hey, let’s celebrate!”). Then, each household was briefly visited for “knocking” and singing “*Mame ni nare. Mame ni nare!*” (Become a bean! Become a bean!). It was believed that this will keep away bad spirits, such as illness etc.<sup>42</sup> The smaller *iwai-bō* were used for the children’s *tori oi* 鳥追い, which is a common *ko-shōgatsu*-custom in Japan to “send away birds” or other parasites. The act of “knocking” is in fact an interesting parallel to the *isapa-kik-ni* used by Ainu at salmon ceremonies. The ceremonial use of “knocking sticks,” especially in salmon fishery, can also be found elsewhere in northern parts of Japan (Onodera 1998).<sup>43</sup>

We could see that the *yama* is given a prominent place in Yoriiso’s New Year ceremonies. The symbolical *hama okuri* at *shishi-buri* as much as the attributes of the *funadama* and the *yama no kami* as female spirits (that also stand in relation to childbirth) clearly point us to a complex worldview structured by local beliefs in which *yama* serves as basic element. The cycle of annual ceremonies (*nenchū gyōji*) that are carried out by village groups can be attached to the level of institutional knowledge, and to further specify, this corresponds to level 3 (social institutions) in Berkes (1999: 13). Not only gender roles seem to be interrelated with these beliefs,

41. The common Japanese name is *nurude* 白膠木, which refers to the use of this tree as source for lacquer. The *nurude* also serves as host tree to an insect species that is utilized as source for medicine and colours. *Nurude* is also used as timber for *aba* net floats (OHI 2002: 535). An etymological study of *katsu* as found in *katsu no ki* and *katsuo* 鰹 (*Katsuwonus pelamis*; Engl. bonito or skipjack tuna) is not known to the author. However, as bonitoes have a tendency to school under drifting objects, such as whales or sharks, this could have a connection to *Ebisu* beliefs.

42. The use of beans to chase away bad spirits can be observed in such ceremonies as the *mamemaki* 豆撒き, a popular custom in spring. The ceremonial “chasing away” or “sending away” of bad spirits that cause illness is commonly known as *yakubyō okuri* 厄病送り or *yakubyō harai* 厄病祓い. It should be noted that such “sending away” ceremonies are often performed at village boundaries (Onodera 1991: 166-176).

43. The author received a valuable comment by Kalland that “knocking sticks against the boat is an ancient way of driving fish (and dolphins) towards nets or the shore.”

but also places are infused with special meanings. The “sending away” or “sending home” is an element in many other Japanese folk-ceremonies, yet, we can observe similar motives to the “sending back” of animal spirits that were mentioned in connection to *Ebisu*-belief.

### Mindmapping the Sea

At this point, it might be useful to turn our focus to generally consider the relation of fishermen to the *yama*, which is remarkably “special.” Mountains and other striking elevations are, for instance, valuable landmarks for orientation and positioning at sea and for searching for suitable fishing spots or identifying and memorizing these. The myth of the competing brothers Hoori 日遠理命 and Hoderi 火照命 in the *Kojiki* 古事記 (compiled 712 A.D.) is a good example for describing this unique relationship.<sup>44</sup>

As pointed out, the *yama* is not simply a topographic aid to locate fishing grounds or one’s position but more a constituting element of a fisher’s worldview. This can be observed in a variety of words and phrases in the “fishermen language” in which *yama* serves as term in relation to space, skill, luck, or safety at sea among others.

For instance, experienced fishermen having an instinct for good fishing spots are said to be *yama ga ii* 山が良<sup>い</sup> (lit. “his *yama* is good”), *yama ga katai* 山が固<sup>い</sup> (lit. “his *yama* is hard”), *yamagokoro ga ii* 山心が良<sup>い</sup> (lit. “he’s got a nice mind for *yama*”) or *yama ga komakai* 山が細<sup>い</sup> (lit. “his *yama* is detailed”). In analogy a less talented fisherman is said to be *yama ga warui* 山が悪<sup>い</sup> (lit. “his *yama* is bad”), *yama ga nai* 山が無<sup>い</sup> (lit. “he’s got no *yama*”) or *yama ga arai* 山が荒<sup>い</sup> (lit. “his *yama* is rough”). The observation for fishing spots is called *yama o tateru* 山を立てる (lit. “put up” or “arrange a *yama*”) referring to a certain position at sea or to the topography of a seabed.

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44. This myth is known as *Umisachi to Yamasachi no shinwa* 海幸と山幸の神話. The element of competition as part of the *yama no kami*’s characteristics can be found in the Sanriku folktale of *yama okoze* 山オコゼ (Kawashima 1986 and Shibusawa 1959: 137-173). In this tale, the *umi no kami* 海の神 (deity of the sea) and the *yama no kami* compete by talking big about their properties. The *yama no kami*, as owner of “only” 80.000 (八万 = *yamaman* 山マン; *Benthamidia japonica* Hara), turns out to be the loser, whereas the *umi no kami* owns *okoze* or *oku* 億 (= 100.000.000). In folk-belief, it is good to tell the jealous *yama no kami* one would show her an *okoze* before a *tanomoshi* lottery. *Okoze* in Japanese denotes a fish (lumpfish or devil stinger; *Inimicus japonicus* Cuvier et Valenciennes) with toxic pricks. Still, Shibusawa considers the name originating in ancient Japanese *okosbi*, that had been used to mean many different fish species (sea breams, sharks, salmon, bonito etc.) and he also points out that neither *okoze* nor *okosbi* have ever been used in plural (1959: 137-138). This not only suggests the idea of an *Artgeist* behind the *okoze*, which would have interesting implications for TEK by means of interdependencies between the levels worldview and empirical knowledge. An inquiry to this (possibly very deep) topic must be dealt with in a separate paper.

One interesting etymology of the term *yama* in fisheries is *yoma* (also *yomazuno* or even *yama*; both written in *kana*), which denotes a “fishing line” or “hemp yarn for nets” (Yanagita and Kurata 1938: 174 and 215). Therefore, *yama* in Japanese fishing culture could originally denote different things, and we should carefully distinguish them. Utsumi notes that: “Even if it’s called *yama*, it doesn’t always mean mountain. Everything at land that could be used as markation is called *yama*.” (1990: 66; transl. by author)

A method of positioning a specific place at sea by triangulation is (maybe worldwide) commonly done by a fisherman, who

watches a fixed landmark or a pair of landmarks which are familiar to him and observes how the landmarks look from his boat to enable him to know his present position. With the help of two pairs, if available, he can bring his boat, with considerable accuracy, to a given spot, where the two position lines intersect as a result of lining up one landmark behind the other. (Igarashi 1974: 3-4)

Orientation utilizing the visible coastal surrounding above the surface of water at sea is called *yama bakari* 山測り (lit. “mountain measuring”; Kawashima 1986) in the Sanriku region or more commonly *yama ate* 山あて (lit. “mountain addressing” or “assigning/allocating a mountain”). There are many names of this method to define a position or distance, and we subsume all as *ate* to avoid confusion.<sup>45</sup> The definition of space through *ate* is also a common way to define coastal fishing territories and fishing rights, which are well documented (for instance, Kalland 1996), and thus, we refrain from discussing this aspect. However, it is noted that contemporary coastal fishing rights in Yoriiso are to most extent the same with those defined using *ate* as method in the Edo period. *Ate* as “a cognitive grid created by sets of position lines” (Igarashi 1974: 3) can be characterized as vector from empirical knowledge to a more paradigmatic level of knowledge.

Basically, we can identify two types of *ate*. One is more a rough positioning and the other is a very exact definition of space, in which also capes, rocks, small islands and the like are used. As we can see in Map 1, fishermen have a detailed vocabulary for landmarks. The “lining-up” of these enables fishermen to define a specific fishing spot with high accuracy, especially at the cliffy Sanriku coastline. Even today, this method is very common not only because it is cheap and practicable; its

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45. A clear definition of each *ate* is difficult due to lack of systematic studies and different use in existing literature. Yanagita and Kurata (1938: 51-54) explain as follows. The *ate* itself is the target of which three are defined and put into a relationship (e.g. this position is where X and the extension-line from Y to Z are crossing). The *yamaate* is the most common type of the *ate*, yet, there are many other names and slightly differing methods that are mentioned.

“During *yamabakari* one first defined a *yama* as basic point of definition. This was denoted *modoyama* [元山; basic *yama*], and by overlapping landmarks at the coast one could estimate a direction. By using distant mountains that were denoted *oku* [奥; lit. “behind”] as points of definition one could estimate a distance.” (Koyama 1973: 136; transl. by author)

accuracy can be even to positioning with radar or other technologies when practiced by an experienced fisherman. Also, *ate* can be useful as strategy to “hiding” one’s knowledge about good fishing spots to other fishermen. Through combination of the latter method with measuring depth “the undulations on ground of the sea unfolded like a nautical chart.” (Utsumi 1990: 69; transl. by author) With fishing lines, “hand lining” is common because it makes the seabed more “palable,” a spot can be assigned a specific depth. Though this method, a fisherman, step by step, acquires knowledge about the topography of a seabed in a specific area, which is empirical knowledge put into a larger context and therefore vectors to a more paradigmatic knowledge, however, this is no worldview itself. We can agree with Kawashima (1986: 78-79) that *ate* does not directly ennoble a mountain as object of worship. Though, there are exceptions. At last, the etymology of *yama* originating from *yoma* (fishing line) seems plausible considering the described method to measure depth.

The *ate* during the traditional bonito fishery in Yoriiso, which had been practiced aboard *katsubune* 鰹舟 (wooden bonito fishing vessel) at least until 1910, is well documented and can serve as an example of *ate* and veneration of a *yama*. This kind of fishery was carried out at the Sanriku-*oki* 三陸沖 fishing ground, which is a large sea-area east of the Sendai Bay. In this area, the Kinkasan is visible up to 45 nautical miles (ca. 83km) offshore on clear days. Therefore, the existence of a shrine on top of the island dedicated to *Ōwatatsumi* 大海祇神 (deity of the grand sea) is no surprise. The sacred places on this island have had a function similar to village shrines in many settlements of the vicinity. For instance, an obligatory ritual of a crew heading to fish for bonito was the *obimachi* 御日待ち (lit. “waiting for the day”) that included a procession to the Koganeyama shrine 黄金山神社 on the Kinkasan island.

The Sanriku-*oki* fishing ground is one of the richest fishing grounds worldwide due to the collision of the warm Kuroshio 黒潮 sea current from south and the cold Oyashio 親潮 sea current from northern waters. Before the invention of radar and other technologies that enabled easy positioning, fishermen operating in Sanriku-*oki* relied on *yama ate*, in which the Kinkasan, marking the northeastern tip of the Sendai Bay, was surely the most important landmark. The distance to the coast could be estimated by observing the level of the Kinkasan “sinking” into the sea. There were several names to express the position from the coastline.

When the coast of Kinkasan could be seen, the position was called *ichi no goden* 一の御殿. The greater the distance from Kinkasan, the positions were named accordingly *ni no goden* 二の御殿 and *san no goden* 三の御殿. When only the tip of Kinkasan was visible this was called *nio boshi* 乳穂星.<sup>46</sup> At *yama nasbi* 山無し (lit. “no mountain”) Kinkasan was no longer visible. Therefore, this was also called *dainan oki* 大難沖 (lit. “dangerous offshore” = rough sea) (Sakurada 1980: 203). The orientation at *yama nasbi* was completely depending on the *sendō*’s experience and

46. The exact transcription of *nio boshi* is unclear. The *ni no goden* is the name of a height (318m) that is located on the southern-side slope of Kinkasan and visible from sea.

instinct. Stellar constellations at night, the sun position at day as much as the sea currents and wind direction were important indicators in *yama nashi* situations (Sakurada 1980: 211), yet, the position of stars and daylight also served as indicator of time (Koyama 1973: 133-134). The observation of wind aboard a *katsubune* was not only for the practical purpose of moving the vessel but to give it the needed nautical stability at catch, too. Another important aspect of wind observation was the prediction of weather. For instance, when the wind blew from an easterly direction or changed from south to southeast, fishermen around Kinkasan forecasted stormy conditions (TRS 1984: 35; Koyama 1973: 128). Also, observing cloud formations at the top of mountains (their sudden disappearance, or similar) allowed a forecast.

A very interesting phenomenon that can be noted in regard to TEK is the *narikiki* 鳴り聞き (lit. “hearkening of sound” or “hearkener”) and *hiyorimi* 日和見. In times without TV, both these were very important methods to observe and forecast weather. The *hiyorimi* (also known as *hiyourimî*) denoted the observation of clouds and other meteorological phenomena at daytime, whereas the *narikiki* was “hearkening” in its literal meaning. For the Sanriku region it is documented as ritual held at the night before a ship left the harbor. People, often elders, gathered nightly at a fixed place, often a cape or a height with good view and “earmarked” specific sounds to be rising, falling and the like, and some of these elder fishermen considered themselves hearkening tuna splashing far away on the ocean (Yanagita and Kurata 1938: 108). However, a native fisherman noted that *nari* 鳴り can be the hearkening of the sea and the tide (*za-nari* 座[?]鳴り or *iso-nari* 磯鳴り), yet,

*nari* in its essential meaning denoted the *nari* of the *yama*, the sound of far away mountains that was sometimes was like a *zawazawa* or more a *gōgō* or even longer sounds like *gōōō*. Depending on indicators such as direction or amplitude or even the changes that were hearkened, the weather for next day was judged and so it was determined whether fishing at sea is going to be carried out. (Koyama 1973: 127; transl. by author)

In other places, *narikiki* used to be a very important activity assigned to male senior villagers, and next to forecasting weather they gave particular instructions for the coming catch (Kawashima 2003: 79). *Narikiki* and *hiyorimi* represent rather distinctive cases of empirical knowledge that can even be denoted paradigmatic knowledge if *narikiki* is seen as a kind of séance, yet, the fact that *yama* were “hearkened” obviously indicates that, again, *yama* obviously denotes more than just “mountain” in Japanese fishing culture.

As fish are migratory, fishing grounds can differ seasonally as much as luck can. The Kinkasan was therefore often only a passing point, where the crew always made prayers and offerings with *miki* and consecrated rice, still, it was also common to throw some of the offered food and wine into the sea. The offering of a bonito’s *boshi* 星 (the heart of the fish; lit. “star”) to the *funadama* or *yama* is another example found as ritual on boats of Sanriku fishermen (Kameyama 1969: 183-184) that

resembles rituals among hunters (Naumann 1974: 7).<sup>47</sup>

The deep religiosity aboard a *katsubune* was also expressed in several other ceremonies and rituals. For instance, at meal on a *katsubune* that had been cooked by the *kashiki*,<sup>48</sup> rice was first served to the *funadama* on the lid of the rice pot. There is another similar ritual called *otōmyō* お燈明 (lit. “torch light”), which is not documented for Yoriiso, but for many other fishing communities at the Sanriku coastline (e.g. Kawashima 2003: 172-175). The *otōmyō* was done when the crew had to stay offshore overnight, called *oki dome* 沖泊め<sup>49</sup> or *tome fune* 泊め船 (lit. “overnight stay at offshore” and “overnight stay on a boat,” resp.). When rice was cooked by the *kashiki*, he first ritually washed himself with seawater and then put some of the rice on the lid of the rice pot using a wooden rice spoon. The rice on the lid was then applied to a roughly prepared stick with shavings. This stick was then lit with fire and served as ceremonial torch. While holding up the torch, the *kashiki* climbed on a box near the mast of the vessel and began a recitation:

*Otōmyō* ... I offer this to *Gongen-sama* of Takuhi in the land of Iki. I offer this to *Benzaiten* of Kinkasan, to *Daimyō-jin* of the excellent cape of all capes ... [many other deities related to mountains follow]. Please let us meet with nice fish tomorrow, and give us a good wind. (Kawashima 2003:172; transl. by author)<sup>50</sup>

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47. Naumann (1974: 7) seems to confuse *tan* 胆 (gall, however, if read *kimo* then meaning inner organs (entrails) in general) with *kan* 肝 (liver). Both of her references do not mention liver. Seki (1949: 303) uses *tan* 膽 (today written 胆) and Makita (1954: 236-237) generally refers to *zōbutsu* 臍物 (entrails), *shinzō* 心臓 (heart) and *namagimo* 生胆 (also bowels).
48. The *kashiki* 鬻き colloquially denotes a young man serving as cook and doing chores aboard a vessel. Yet, a *kashiki* is more than that. He serves for *funadama* related ceremonies and rituals during a voyage. Even if shipwrecked, a *kashiki* is believed to survive (Yanagita and Kurata 1938: 285), and at the Sanriku coast a *kashiki* (here a boy aged 12 to 16) was regarded to be married with the *funadama* (Kawashima 2003: 170). It is interesting to note that he was sometimes seen as wife (!) of the *funadama*, which might be less grounded on gender specific religious concepts. As youngster at the bottom of hierarchy aboard and doing jobs that is done by wives at land, attributing femaleness could be understood as cheating, too.
49. *Okidome* also means pausing all fishing activities when written 沖止め (lit. “stopped offshore”).
50. We will not go too much into depth with each of these deities, however, their transcriptions should be noted. The *Gongen-sama* 権現様 is an avatar often venerated in costal areas as much as in mountains. *Takubi-gongen* 焼火権現 refers to a shrine on top of the Takuhi mountain (452m) on Nishinoshima 西ノ島 island (one of the Iki islands 壱岐島; Shimane Pref. 島根県), which is an important place of *funadama* worship. The *Daimyō-jin* 大明神 (lit. “grand *Myō-jin*”) is a “light deity.” In Yoriiso *Daimyō-jin* refers to the *Anba-sama* enshrined on top of the Azumamoriyama. In other oral traditions of the region *Ryū-jin* or *Ryūgū* are mentioned, too. Both are mythological fishing deities in the shape of a dragon. In this context it should be mentioned that *Ryūgū* refers to a mythical castle at the seabed as can be seen in the story of *Urashima Tarō* 浦島太郎 or the *Umisachi to Yamasachi no shinwa*. This is interesting regarding several taboos among

Almost all of the mentioned deities and spirits are related to the *yama* or landmarks. It is also remarkable to observe that the *funadama* and the *yama* are worshipped similarly, and most of the deities are female. Although not from Tōhoku, this veneration of *yama* as points of orientation as much as their shining and magical characteristics as guardian power at sea can be seen on an *ema* 絵馬 (votive board; Illustration 3) of a shrine in the town of Tsuyazaki 津屋崎 (Kyūshū).



Illustration 3: A boat in troubled waters

The anxious crew watches and prays to a clearly visible *gobei* 御幣 (Shintō ceremonial stick with attached paper) on top of a mountain. Photo by courtesy of A. Kalland, Oslo.

One very interesting feature of Tōhoku's culture is the existence of female shamans (*itako* イタコ, *okami-san* お神さん and other names), who also serve as advisors and mediators in fishing affairs.<sup>51</sup> Especially in *katsuo* fishery, when luck is fading (*man ga warui* 運が悪い) and catches decline, a *man naoshi* 運直し (lit. “re-arranging luck”) is carried out. There are several known types of *man naoshi*, however, in our case we specify two, the *taru ire* 樽入れ (lit. “putting into a barrel”) and the *ofunadama asobase* 御船霊遊ばせ (lit. “amusing the *funadama*”).<sup>52</sup> In both, we

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fishermen (Kawashima 2003: 37-70). *Hebi* 蛇 (snake), for instance, is a taboo word, which has to do with the notion of snakes as messengers of *Ryū-jin* (Kawashima 2003: 64) as much as the beliefs that the *funadama* abhors certain animals, like snakes and monkeys (Ōtō 1969: 116). Also, dropping metal objects into sea (that is what happened to Yamasachi) is a taboo among fishermen of Sanriku, which must be followed by an “apologizing ceremony” using *ema* (known as *use ema* 失せ絵馬 in *minzokugaku*), on which the fishermen themselves illustrate the lost object. The taboo of dropping metal objects into the sea can be observed in Yoriiso, too (TRS 1984: 52).

51. Even these days, in a metropolitan area like Sendai 仙台 (1 million inhabitants), it is common to call a *okamisan* after a death in family. The dead communicate through the *okamisan* with persons in this world. A famous place of shamanism is the Osorezan 恐山 (lit. “fearful mountain”) in Aomori Pref. 青森県.
52. The *ofunadama asobase* is also known as *kamisama asobase* 神様遊ばせ (lit. “amusing the deities”), *Ebisu naoshi* 恵比寿直し (lit. “re-arranging *Ebisu*”) and many other names.

can identify the efforts of fishermen to re-arrange or “turn” a certain bad situation by inducing a transition.

In Sanriku, the *man naoshi* is performed by the wives of a fishing crew, who make offerings (rice and sake) to the *obusuna-sama* オブスナ様 at the local shrine, which is often the place where ancestors are worshipped. In some cases a ceremonial “confinement” (*okomori* お籠り) is practiced, too.<sup>53</sup> The *man naoshi* can be associated with séances by *itako* shamans and can possibly be seen as a relict of times, when female shamanism was more common.

During *ofunadama asobase*, an *okami-san* serves as medium to communicate with the other world. This is believed to adjust things and phenomena in this world, i.e. declining catches. Before a vessel leaves the harbor, the wives of the fishing crew visit a local *okami-san* taking along an *omamori* お守り (guardian amulet) and some rice in a special paper. There, the *okami-san* performs a séance, in which the *omamori* and the rice are specially treated (purified) with a ceremonial paper. This can be an *ofuda* お札 (a paper or wooden amulet) or similar, too. During her séance, advisory words and prophecy about catches and nice fishing grounds as much as cautions to prevent disasters are given. When the séance is over, the wives receive the purified *omamori* and rice along with the paper (or *ofuda*) that the *okami-san* used for her ceremony. After returning home, the *omamori* and ceremonial paper (or *ofuda*) are installed near the vessel’s *funadama*, and the purified rice is eaten by the vessel’s *sendō*. The wives also report the *okami-san*’s prophecies. (Kameyama 1969: 188)

Summarizing this section, *yama* denotes more than just a topographic feature. *Yama* is rather a fundamental, though very complex, concept in Japanese fishing culture. *Yama* in belief (paradigmatic knowledge) is attached with femaleness that is woven into a complex system of belief elements. *Yama* can serve as point of orientation at sea, which points to the empirical component in TEK. However, *yama* is also institutional knowledge when used as *ate* in defining fishing territories and rights.

## Conclusion

One aspect of beliefs in Japanese fishing villages, the *yama*, was singled out to examine interdependencies and relationships between several levels of TEK. This involved also some basic features of religiosity among Japanese fishing people, which was done in a description of *Ebisu*. Beyond the common notion of *Ebisu* as a deity that brings luck and wealth, we found an understanding as guardian and species spirit (Artgeist) that is possibly traceable back to prehistoric times. The latter is a basic characteristic of many other forms of beliefs related to fishing, as

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53. This ceremonial “hiding from public” can be observed in customs related to ritual impurity of women during menstruation or childbirth, who usually go to a special “confinement hut” of a settlement to prevent family members and near persons from being “infected” with impurity.

could be seen in case of the *funadama* or the *batsuryō*. *Yama* is also given a prominent place in religious practices in a village, which was illustrated in Yoriiso's New Year ceremonies. *Yama* in local belief is not simply a place of veneration, but also involves social aspects such as affiliation to village groups. In case of *Daikoku-mai*, we could further see how the transmission of tradition to succeeding generations works in practice. A look at the special relationship of fishermen to the *yama* reveals that *yama* can be found at all three levels of TEK. *Yama* is empirical knowledge when serving as point of orientation at sea (*ate*), institutional when used to define fishing rights and paradigmatic in ceremonies and veneration. In addition, female attributes are often part of *yama* as paradigm. The dichotomy of sea and *yama* pervades the cognition of the physical world and space at sea. Yet, this dichotomy is observable in the *otōmyō* prayers or the allocation of gender-attributes such as the *kasbiki* as husband/wife of the *funadama* or the role of the fishermen's wives and the *okami-san* during *man naoshi*. At both realms, the profane and the sacred, *yama*, furthermore, serves as metaphor for boundaries from here to there or from ours to theirs. Boundaries can be both vertical and horizontal. *Yama* is a vertical boundary when considering its place that is closer to "the above" (*kami* 上) or even when measuring the seabed with fishing lines (*yoma*). However, the *yoma* etymology reminds us to differentiate between several types of *yama*. It is a horizontal boundary when looking at the *yama no kami*'s location in Yoriiso near the demarcation to Maeami. As Kalland stated, *yama* "denotes a zone of transition and is therefore potentially dangerous." (1995a: 248). For instance, women carry the ability to give birth (to the unborn coming from the unknown), however, they are "carefully stigmatized" with taboos to avoid danger. In this sense, the *other* beyond the *yama* can be regarded as realm of the unknown, a threatening place where both the dead and unborn reside. The veneration as *Ebisu* in case of corpses found at sea might point to a belief-concept derived from the "sea as *yama*," implying that the corpses found in a "transitive zone" needed an accurate treatment to maintain order between here (this world) and there (the world beyond). Through such maintenance of order in this world the wild and chaotic nature becomes to a certain degree controllable, and this is what Kalland characterizes as "taming nature" (1995a: 246-250). Thus, the concept of *yama* rather contains dynamic interdependencies of elements in the profane physical world with its counterparts in the sacred other world.

In terms of resource management, the conception of *yama* does not directly invoke resource conservation. However, festivals involving a stop of fishing activities accidentally decrease fishing effort so that this can be characterized as "passive" resource management (Kalland 1995b: 313). In addition, the distinctive empirical knowledge of local environment as seen in *narikiki* hearkening or *ate*-related operations, to a certain degree indicate a vector from empirical to paradigmatic knowledge. This suggests the existence of a value system in Japanese fishing culture, which is not simply utilitarian, but deeply rooted in a specific worldview. In such a sense, *yama* can serve as example of what Kalland characterized as "dialectic relationship" between paradigmatic and empirical knowledge (2000: 325). The fact

that *yama*, when defining fishing grounds, is also institutional knowledge can have far reaching implications for policy-making, too. Therefore, the author is convinced that further studies on beliefs of fishing people can surely contribute to formulate more efficient resource management policies in future. Recently, the importance of tradition in terms of marine resource management has been re-discovered by authorities to a certain degree (e.g. Watanabe 2004), still, we have to see if this trend will result in a true interest of bureaucracy for rural needs and customs. The author cannot hide being skeptical about this.

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