

SHINGŪ

Japanese fishing community

ARNE KALLAND



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SHINGŪ

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ARNE KALLAND

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III.1 A retired fisherman on the way home from the harbour with fish for supper.

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A Japanese fishing community

Arne Kalland

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PREFACE

The field work on which this book is based was financed by a scholarship given by the Japanese Government, Ministry of Education. Thanks to a grant from the Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies I was able to re-visit the field in May-June 1978. The Norwegian Research Council for Science and the Humanities has contributed funds for the publication of this book.

I have received valuable help from many persons and institutions. At Kyūshū University where I was affiliated, I thank Prof. Nakamura Masao who helped me to get into Shingū, the fishing community in which my wife and I lived for almost a year from May 1975. I also thank Prof. Naito Kanji and Kuroda Yasuo.

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During our first month in Kyūshū when we were looking for a suitable community to study, we lived at the Norwegian Seamen's Mission in Moji, Kitakyūshū City, and I take the opportunity to thank the manager Kjell Hodne and his lovely wife Else for their kindness both in the difficult initial period, and later when we visited the mission.

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Finally, I wish to thank my wife Momoyo M. Kalland who helped me both in Shingū and later. This book would never have been written without her help.

Shingū, March 1980.

Arne Kalland

PROLOGUE

The following short essay was written by a fisherman's daughter as homework for the school where she attended the sixth grade. Her father is one of the most industrious fishermen in Shinū, and he became one of our very best friends.

MY FATHER

by *Kirishima Kaori*

My father is forty-one years old and he is a very healthy father. Father is the centre of the family and helps everybody.

A long time ago, they say, my father was a head clerk in a shop somewhere. He worked there for some years, and then he started to work at Hakata city-office. After that, I heard, he became a fisherman in order to take over the house. My father is still working as a fisherman. I am very glad that my father is a fisherman.

My father's hands are always working with things like thick ropes; his hands are hard and thick, his fingers thick. When it's really bad the fingernails sometimes come off. His face is dark the whole year round so I have never seen my father's skin peeling off during the summer.

Father drinks *sake* (rice wine) very often.

I don't know for sure why my father became a fisherman, but I know one reason. That is because father is the first son of this house, so I think he became a fisherman in order to take over the house. But I don't think he became a fisherman only for that reason. I think I'll ask my father another time.

Whenever he speaks of his past, he always tells me that he had a good head and was good at sport when he went to elementary and middle school.

My father, who is kinder than my mother, used to buy me picture-books when I was a child. But when such a kind father gets angry, I get very scared.

If my brother and I quarrel, he often says: "Why do you quarrel? If you quarrel that much, get out of here both of you!"

Or if I make a mess on the desk, he hits my head and says: "Why do you make it so untidy? And you're a woman!" Father always lets me do anything because, he says, I am a woman. Sometimes I dislike father behaving in this way. Sometimes I think it's strange that I both like and dislike my father.

My father's cooking speciality is roast meat. He is better at frying meat than mother. Father often plays games and *sumō* (Japanese wrestling) with my brother and me, but I strongly dislike father coming home after drinking *sake*. Because the smell of *sake* is strong and makes me feel bad, and because he then quarrels with my mother. I also sometimes drink beer offered me by my father, but I don't like *sake*. Then my mother says: "You should never marry a drunkard". I think that if he didn't drink *sake*, he would be a very good father.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Japan's fisheries can be divided into three categories: (1) Pelagic fisheries which operate in far-away waters all over the world. (2) Offshore fisheries which are conducted by fishing boats being on the fishing grounds outside the archipelago for about a week at a time. (3) Coastal fisheries which are operated by small craft leaving and returning to their home bases every day. Though the coastal fisheries only amount to a fraction of the total catches, they engage the majority of the fishing enterprises.¹ The majority of the fishermen are engaged on these small craft which have their bases in small fishing communities spread all over the Japanese coast. This book will discuss one of these communities, namely Shingū.

Although Japan, with her annual catches of more than ten million tons, is the largest fishing nation in the world, little is known about the sociology of the fisheries, Borgstrom (1964) treats the Japanese fisheries in a global perspective and has little space to discuss the men behind the catches. The same is true regarding a large range of essays about specific Japanese fisheries, usually of the offshore or pelagic kind.

A few notable exceptions exist in English. The first that appeared in 1954 is an extensive ethnographic account written by Norbeck. Takashima, as the village is called, is located in the Inland Sea well protected by islands. The inhabitants were originally farmers who turned to fishing only after the Meiji Restoration in 1868, and they were still part-time farmers in 1954. The second was written by Brameld (1968) and discusses a stigmatized fishing community which he called Ebibara. The book focuses on education and values in Ebibara and compares these with those of the *burakumin* outcaste and the majority populace. The last book to be mentioned here is written by Bernier (1975) and focuses on the religious life in a village called Sone situated in a bay in Mie prefecture.

The object of this book is partly to enrich the ethnographic knowledge on the Japanese fishing population, and thus contribute to the literature on what Casteel and Quimby call "maritime anthropology" (Casteel and Quimby 1975).

Shingū is situated in other surroundings than Takashima, Ebibara and Sone. Shingū faces the rough Japan Sea which has implications both for the climatic conditions as well as for the species caught. Furthermore, it has a long history as a fishing village (cf. Chapter III) and is not stigmatized as Ebibara. Whether Shingū is more "representative" than the others is on the other hand an open question. Historical documents indicate that Shingū might have been fairly representative in its way of fishing for the Northern Kyūshū area, and similar traits have been reported from the Kujūkurihama district in Chiba prefecture outside Tōkyō (Kujukuri Research Committee 1958). Moreover, the main fish caught by Shingū fishermen during this early period was sardine, and more than half the quantity taken around Japan before World War II was sardine (Moyer 1965:136n). This had far-reaching consequences for the social structure of the fishing villages because the sardine fisheries required big nets like the purse seine or beach

seine, which led to large management units (or net-groups) that are absent in Takashima, Ebibara and Sone. These management units were often owned by capitalists in the fishing villages, and this brings us to the concept of *amimoto* (lit. the origin of the net, i.e. net owner). As Takashima and Ebibara did not have net-groups, they did not have *amimoto* either.

This book will focus on these net-groups and other forms of management units found in Shingū, i.e. those based on independently operated small fishing boats. More specifically, I will focus on the structure and leadership of these units. To be a successful leader “is to gain access to more resources than one’s opponents and to use them with greater skill” (Bailey 1969:36), and the leadership can thus be regarded as being generated from some basic factors within the village, namely access to and control of the following resources: (i) capital, (ii) labour, (iii) fishing rights, and (iv) markets.

Profound changes have occurred in Japan since the industrialization started after the Meiji Restoration. These changes have led to: (1) Increased economic opportunities and a wider range of objects available for investments. (2) Increased physical and social mobility, and Shingū’s proximity to big industrial centres is important here. (3) Changes of the laws and administrative apparatus. I will argue that the changes (1)–(3) have affected seriously the access and control of the resources mentioned above, which in turn have led to changes in the leadership patterns both on the boats and in the net-groups. I will try to show how the resources i–iv could under certain conditions be monopolized in the hands of a merchant. As an *amimoto* he controlled by definition the capital and labour and frequently the market. The village headman had also a crucial position as had likewise the district headman over a number of fishing villages. The district headman had the decisive power over a fund made available from which the fishermen could borrow money for boats, nets and houses. Judicial authority was given to both the village and the district headmen, and both had influence over the fishing grounds. Where the *amimoto* and the headman were the same person, this person came to control all the resources mentioned, and he exercised a profound influence over the fishermen.

After the Meiji Restoration the situation changed on the lines given in (1)–(3) above. I will try to show that the merchants lost control over the resources. Consequently, their dominant position in the fisheries declined and gave way for a more egalitarian organization of the fisheries and to the establishment of fishing associations which got control over three of the resources, namely the capital, the market and the fishing rights. I will further argue that environmental changes have strengthened this tendency. The sardine which was the basis for the large net-groups with big and expensive nets, disappeared and is no longer hunted. The new species caught did not give rise to such large structures. The net-groups today mean less to the total income than previously, and the “functional importance” (Davis & Moore 1945) of the leaders has declined. Anybody is able to fill this position at present. Equal status in the net-groups has been institutionalized by the leadership being rotated among the members, or in some cases the leaders are elected by secret balloting. Such practices are old and well-known in Japan and are thus not attributable to diffusion of “modern democratic ideas” from the West. In fact, the rotational system has been used in Shingū at least since the beginning

of the nineteenth century when the position as village headman seems to have changed in this way. It was natural that the fishermen looked to this kind of institution when they formed their new egalitarian net-groups in the 1930s.

Increased capitalization has in many places been accompanied by changes in patterns of ownership, and frequently a centralization of capital has occurred. Firth, in his revised edition of *Malay Fishermen*, states that when the British came to the Malacca peninsula “social and economic ties between the peasant and the feudal lord tended to disappear. While this meant greater freedom, security and individuality of the peasant as a whole, it has facilitated economic differentiation between classes of peasants” (Firth 1966:296). The same process he observed among the fishermen as the capitalization of the business progressed. Fukutake (1972:10) points out that the number of tenants increased in Japan since the Meiji Restoration, as did the number who had to rent some of the land they cultivated. A similar development has not occurred in Shingū, and we have to ask why increased differentiation did not take place among the Shingū fishermen.

I think there are several reasons for this. First, the big net-groups based on expensive nets disappeared. Unlike the situation described by Firth, the merchants withdrew from the purse seine in Shingū at a time when no fishermen had the capital needed to invest in these expensive nets. For lack of outside capital they were forced to unite. Secondly, much of the fishing was best done by small units which encouraged many small boats into operation. Thirdly, the fishing grounds became an estate for a corporation of fishermen. Any member of the fishing association was allowed to fish with line though netting usually required additional licences. Fishing rights could not be mortgaged and lost as could the land. Fourthly, the harbour facilities in Shingū were inadequate for harbouring large vessels, and thus Shingū did not attract capital for these.

Fifthly, and this point I think is the most important, the pattern of recruitment to the fishing industry led to increased homogeneity. I will argue that during the Tokugawa period (1603–1868) the fishermen were a heterogeneous group. A few owned big nets, many more owned small ones, others used only lines which required a minimum of capital investment, and some did not own any capital at all. There was a place for everybody partly because the small mean household size (cf. Chapter IV) during this period made it necessary to hire crew-men in order to man the boats. I will further argue that today there is an occupational mobility among the propertyless fishermen. The same process has been going on in many fishing villages, but contrary to many of them, this has not caused depopulation of Shingū, a fact that can be attributed to its proximity to Fukuoka City. The improved opportunities for work outside the fisheries have also caused a downwards mobility of the fishermen on the very top. Due to lack of crews they have been forced to reduce their scale of operation and join net-groups on the same terms as the majority. I will try to show how the homogeneity (and the threat of finding other employment) influences the structure of the leadership both in the net-groups and on the boats. The control of the labour force has been lost both to the *amimoto* and the skipper.

To pursue my aims I intend to use some historical data which are of two kinds: oral tradition and written documents. Very often I became aware of this historical information through tales told me by the informants, and later I frequently was able to

verify their tales through documents unknown to these informants. Where this procedure has not been possible due to incomplete documents, the oral tradition has either been treated tentatively or has been omitted altogether. A further point should be mentioned: the documents found in Shingū do not give any complete picture of the community in the past, and I will thus supplement my data from Shingū with information from nearby fishing communities in similar ecological and societal circumstances.

My aims in using historical data are two. The first is to analyse and compare different management contexts in timeless settings. No fishing community shows all these forms at any time. A synchronic study could perhaps have been conducted if several communities with different technologies and economic structures were studied. In this way the shortcomings of the historical data could have been avoided. The method would on the other hand have required much more time or a team, and I had neither.

It would be clear from what I have mentioned so far, that fundamental changes have occurred within the fishing industry, and this brings me to my second object in using historical data, which is to analyse the development of the fisheries and their institutions. The shortcomings of my historical data are, I feel, balanced by my second object.

This book is based on several sources of information. The historical data have been discussed at some length, but something has to be said about their character. The following documents have been consulted in parts: (1) Akaishi Documents (*Akaishi monjo*) kept at the library of Fukuoka Cultural Center in Fukuoka City. Akaishi was the district headman for fourteen fishing villages during a brief period of the nineteenth century. The documents comprise mostly correspondence between Akaishi and the village headmen. A few of the documents have been published (Komonjo o yomukai 1976, Kaneuchi 1978). (2) Kaneuchi Documents (*Kaneuchi monjo*). Kaneuchi was for a long time the leading house in Shingū, and was the district headman for the fourteen fishing villages before Akaishi. The family is now extinct, and the documents are scattered. Nonetheless, many have been traced and copies are kept at Fukuoka Cultural Center. The documents are in character similar to Akaishi's, and a few have been published (op.cit.). (3) Yamazaki Documents (*Yamazaki monjo*) are kept at Kyūshū University. Yamazaki was for a period village headman in Hakozaki fishing village (the same village as Akaishi's) and became the assistant of the district headman. Some of the documents are published in *Fukuoka-ken shi* (Fukuoka-ken 1963). These give valuable information on the administration and regulations in the fishing villages. (4) Isozaki shrine Documents (*Isozaki-gū monjo*) kept at the local shrine in Shingū. These documents mostly tell about the history of the shrine. (5) Yayama Documents (*Yayama monjo*) consist of five surviving documents telling about the Yayama family, a wealthy merchant house in Shingū during the Tokugawa period and the village headman and perhaps the district headman in the 1840s. Copies of the documents are kept at Fukuoka Cultural Center. (6) Books kept at the local temple. These books give some aid in tracing genealogies. (7) Some books kept by the hamlet headman give information about land ownership and residence, people holding hamlet positions, and events and regulations mostly around 1910.

Different kinds of sources were found at the town office (most of demographic character) and at the office of the fishing cooperative (mostly on income and quantities

caught). By far the most important source of information was, however, the fishermen themselves. My wife and I lived in Shingū from May 1975 to March 1976 and again for a brief period during May—June 1978. Our home was unfortunately situated at some distance from the main cluster of fishing households (see Map 4), but I feel this was compensated for by our living with the family of the manager of the fishing cooperative. The information was obtained both by informal chatting and by formal guided interviews.

In December 1975 we conducted a community survey of some 250 households. (This was the total number of households in Shingū, the fishermen lived in 30 of these households.) The objects of this questionnaire were: (1) To check the validity of the impressions obtained through the daily contacts with the inhabitants, and to see whether these impressions were representative. (2) To get a basic idea about fundamental aspects of the community and its inhabitants, such as house ownership, religious affiliations, education etc. (3) To compare the fishing population with the rest of the community. Though little of the information obtained has been directly used, I feel nonetheless more confident in many of the statements that follow.

CHAPTER II

THE SETTING

The Term “Shingū”

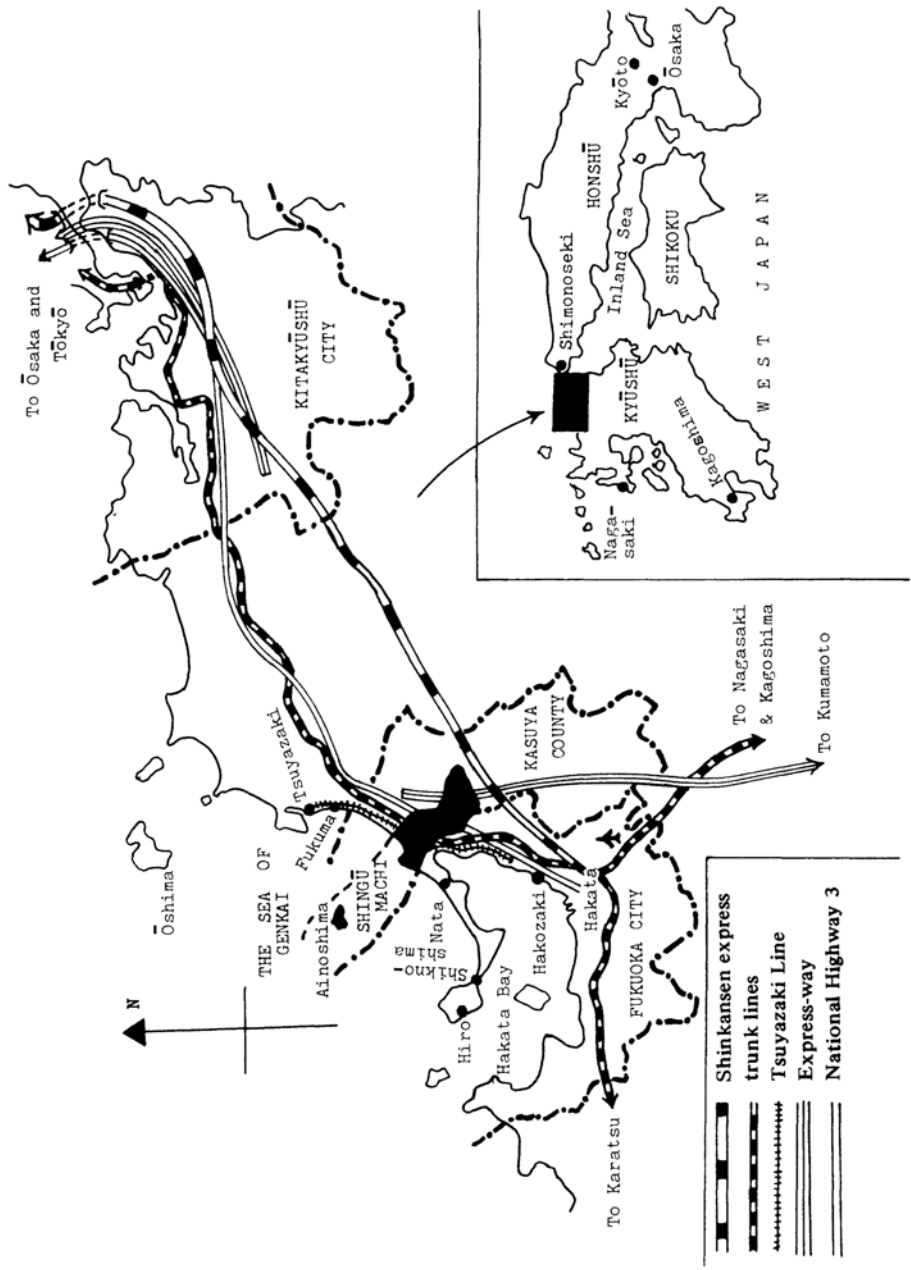
Shingū-machi (or Shingū-chō; “machi” and “chō” are two alternative ways to read the Chinese ideogram meaning “township”) is a result of several amalgamations of former independent villages. During the Tokugawa period the villages were to a great extent autonomous, based on one or a few hamlets. A distinction was made between farming villages *mura* and fishing villages *ura*. One fishing village was Shingū-ura. After the Meiji Restoration the distinction between these two kinds of villages was lifted, and our community became known as Shingū-mura. A sweeping reorganization of the villages was conducted in 1889, and five separate villages were merged to form the new Shingū-mura. These five were the farming villages of Shimonofu, Kaminofu and Minato plus the fishing villages of Shingū and Ainoshima. In 1954 the status of Shingū-mura was changed to township, and it became Shingū-machi. Finally, the next year Shingū-machi was merged with the neighbouring village of Tachibana-mura.

The old units from the Tokugawa period still exist, though they have no legal identity. The old *mura* and *ura* survive as *ōaza* (section), and this unit is again divided into *chiku*, *ku* or *buraku* (wards or hamlets). *Ōaza* Shingū consists of only one *chiku*, Shingū-ku.

The term “Shingū” is used by the inhabitants to refer to several different entities depending on the context. I will retain the term “Shingū”, however, for the smallest unit, i.e. Shingū-ku, *Ōaza* Shingū and Shingū-ura which all cover the same geographical area. When referring to the larger administrative unit, “Shingū-machi” or “Shingū-mura” will be used.

The Location of Shingū

Shingū-machi which covers an area of 19.05 km², is located in Kasuya County of Fukuoka Prefecture on the northern shore of the island Kyūshū. Fukuoka, with its 4.3 million inhabitants, is one of the most densely populated prefectures in Japan. This population is not evenly distributed, however. The capital of the prefecture is Fukuoka City which is located just west of Shingū-machi. The city has just under one million inhabitants and is an amalgamation of the former castle city of Fukuoka and the port city of Hakata, but is only second in size to Kitakyūshū City which has slightly more than one million inhabitants. Kitakyūshū City is located on the northeastern fringe of the island facing the Kannon Strait separating Kyūshū from the main island Honshū, and the city is one of the most important industrial centres in Japan. Until the end of the last century the area was only a collection of small villages centred around the castle city Kokura, but grew spectacularly when the Yawata Steel Mill started operations in 1901. Kitakyūshū City is connected with Shimonoseki City on Honshū via railway,



Map 1 Northern Kyūshū Region.