



# Natural Resource Utilization and Mobility in Rebun Island

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Workshop “The Politics and Pitfalls of Maritime Governance” (U of Aberdeen, June 19, 2019)



# Summer fish camp in Rebun?

- Conversation with Prof. Hirofumi Kato
  - A local family who live adjacent to the Hamanaka 2 site used to spent the summer on the western side of Rebun Island.
- My first impression
  - “Central-based wandering”? (cf. Beadsley et al. 1956)
  - Seemingly similar to indigenous hunter-fishers in Alaska
  - Why is there this type of mobility in northern Japan?



# Questions

- Why did people practice this type of mobility in Rebun Island?
- How did local fishermen in Rebun Island adapt to social and environmental change?

# Rebun International Field School

- Organized by Prof. Kato since 2013
- General anthropological research and education (as of 2018)
  - Archaeology; physical anthropology; public archaeology; ethnography

**Today's talk: Preliminary results of the ethnographic research section**





# Brief History

- Record of Ainu people in Rebun
  - A northwestern settlement (*refutatomari*) as good place for abalone
- 17<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> Century: seasonal operation of fishing industry
- 1846: Mannosuke Yanagiya established a fishing station in southern Rebun
- Arrival of Japanese settlers
- Herring fishing industry (until 1950s)
- Kombu seaweed and sea urchin industry (since 1950s)



# Ms. Miyako Mitani



- Born in 1933 in Akaiwa, Rebun
- Her late husband was born in 1930 in Meshikuni (western side).
- When they got married (around 1958), they lived in Meshikuni all year round. After their children started going to school (1960s?), they bought a house in Hamanaka.
- Seasonal migration between Meshikuni (March - October) and Hamanaka (November - February). Their children stayed in Hamanaka during the school sessions.
- Shift from a permanent settlement to a fish camp due to social change

# Ways of Living in Meshikuni

- 8~9 households (most)
- **Commercial fishing** for kombu seaweed and sea urchin,
  - shipped to the neighboring community and then Fisherman's Cooperative
- **Highly self-sufficient lifestyle**
  - Sea-mammal hunting (Stellar's Sea Lion; seals)
    - shooting a sea lion from dining room & clubbing a seal
  - Home garden (potato, corn, beans, cabbage, and cucumber)
  - Seaweed gathering
  - Driftwood for firewood



“mimiko”  
Ginnan-so,  
Mazzaella  
japonicua

Local name	Japanese standard name	Scientific name
Mimiko; Akahata?	Ginnan-so	Mazzaella japonicua
matsubo	Matsumo	Heterochordari a abietina
funori	funori	Gloiopeltis spp.
iwanori	Uppurui nori?	Porphyra pseudolinearis

# Social Change and Migration

- Dilemma: Necessity of school education (eastern side), yet they own a fishing place in the western side.
- Solutions
  - Buying a house in Hamanaka (close to the school and the entrance of the trail). Older children taking care of the younger siblings
  - Asking their relatives to take care of the children.
  - **Buddhist temple**: 60 kg of rice (1俵) a month
    - Strong ties with Jodo Shinshu denomination for immigrants from Toyama
- Effects of motorization
  - Outboard engine introduced during the late 1950s and 1960s
  - Commuting became much easier
  - Using an outboard engine to pull multiple boats





# Seaweed Harvests and Land Tenure

- Drying place (*kamba*) and weather as crucial components of producing high-quality kombu, unlike other commercially important species (cf. Iida 1996).
- Land tenure in western Rebun communities shifted from large business owners to individual settler families, who lived here permanently until the 1960s.
- “Central-based wandering” pattern in Rebun as a product of recent social change (e.g. school education).
- This pattern is selected partly because of limited availability of land suitable for drying kombu.



# Acknowledgement



- The fieldwork for this research/ education project is made possible by JSPS Core-to-Core projects.
- I would like to thank Prof. Hirofumi Kato for inviting me to conduct research in Rebun. My gratitude also goes to Yu Hirasawa, Takayuki Hashimoto, Yoshinori Tsubota, Mayumi Okada, Akiko Maeda, Tomonari Takahashi, Haruna Tamoto, and Istada Aliman for their support regarding the research/teaching activities in “Community Research Section”
- Last but most importantly, all the activities of “Community Research Section” in Rebun Field School are made possible through generous support, kindness and patience of the people in Rebun Island. I would like to thank, especially: Sakae Aihara, Miyako Mitani, Aihara-san (Ikkon), Yanagiya-san (Rebun-so), Shizuo Tawara, Akemi Hasebe, Akiyo Ishikawa, Kazuo Okamoto, and Hamashita Fukuzo.