

### Part 3: Maritime World and Multi-sited Ethnography

#### *Mono-kenkyu* and a Multi-sited Approach: Towards a Wise and Sustainable Use of Shark Resources at Kesennuma, Northern Japan\*

AKAMINE Jun\*\*

### Introduction

Traditional socioeconomic history focused mainly on major agricultural products, such as cotton, indigo, tobacco, sugar, rice and so on, namely those utilized for trade in the international commodity market. The late Professor Murai Yoshinori however is one of the few socioeconomic historians who was interested in marine products such as shrimps, shark fins, pearls, tortoise shells, sea cucumbers etc., and besides, he displayed keen interest in things that may appear trivial with regard to the national economy, but yet are vital commodities for Southeast Asian people, as for example second hand clothes and charcoal made from mangrove trees. Some of the items that Murai had an interest in have a long history of trade, whether between islands or across national boundaries. After the nation-states were established at the close of World War II, those trades were declared illegal, and were viewed as forms of smuggling. Hence, there is no explicit data available in the national statistics, on those animated undertakings. Thereafter Murai conducted fieldwork within the eastern islands of Indonesia in quest of those trades, whereby he described the

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\*\* 赤嶺淳、一橋大学大学院社会学研究科地球社会研究専攻教授；Professor, Institute for the Study of Global Issues, Graduate School of Social Sciences, Hitotsubashi University

everyday lives of the people and criticized the armchair social scientists.

Professor Murai's research method is known as *mono-kenkyu* (commodity study) within the Japanese academia, and I personally am a follower of this *mono-kenkyu* in accordance with his style. I have worked on coconut palms in the Philippines [Akamine 2005] and sea cucumbers in Southeast and East Asia, including Japan [Akamine 2013]. In pursuing a commodity chain, it is natural to travel from production to consumption sites in order to obtain a bird-eye perspective of the commodity distribution. This approach involving multi-sites is another characteristic of *mono-kenkyu*.

The scope of *mono-kenkyu* differs in accordance with the type of commodities dealt with, as well as the aspect one focuses upon. Through his research on shrimps, Murai revealed the unequal nature of the political-economic relationship that exists between Southeast Asian nations and Japan, and he called out for social reform within Japan. *Mono-kenkyu* aims at making Japanese consumers notice *invisible* entanglements in their pleasant and convenient daily lives, and calls upon Japanese consumers to take action against the unequal relationship that exists between producers and consumers. This study takes up the shark issue in Kesennuma City, Miyagi Prefecture, located about 480 kilometers north of Tokyo, an area that was severely devastated by the March 2011 tsunami. Shark has been a controversial creature with regard to consumption. Those who consume the flesh of sharks are often treated with contempt, especially by shark conservationists. For example, by a curious coincidence the UK newspaper, *The Guardian*, carried an article on February 11, 2011, just a month prior to the striking of the tsunami, entitled, "Shark Fishing in Japan: A Messy, Blood-spattered Business" [McCurry 2011]. Notwithstanding Murai's work on shrimps, it is clear that Japan imports huge amounts of seafood from all over the world, and Japanese foodways disrupt environments in many parts of the world. This is the reason why Japanese should consider it a responsibility to consume diverse varieties of seafood including sharks in a balanced manner, from the standpoint of food security. Kesennuma aims at revitalizing the shark industry after the tsunami, and is currently encountering hardships due to the global campaign against sharks and shark fins.

This article first explores the anti-shark fin campaign and the situation of shark fisheries both around the globe and in Japan, in order to display current trends in shark fisheries, while the second part of the article analyzes the history of shark fisheries and its related industries in Kesennuma. Before the tsunami, Kesennuma was even known as 'shark fin town,' but on account of the post-tsunami rehabilitation process it is currently seeking to establish an identity as a "shark town" (*same no machi*) rather than a shark fin town. This article reveals the linkage between the city's Slow Food Movement that emerged in the early 2000s and its transformation as a shark town, and finally discusses its ongoing efforts to develop its identity as a shark town, and the collaborative ties formed between urban and local citizens towards rebuilding the city. It concludes with an appeal for collaboration by researchers and stakeholders, towards seeking a solution to the problem. This happens to be the basic stance of the *mono-kenkyu* of Murai, or the multi-sited approach by the US based

cultural anthropologist George Marcus [Marcus 1995].

## I . Shark Fisheries around the World and Global Campaigns against Shark Fins

The issue concerning conservation of sharks appeared on the agenda of CITES (Convention on the International Trades in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) for the first time in 1994, and since then the topic has held the notice of environmentalists [Kraemer 2013]. Notably, five star hotels have recently stopped serving shark fin soup, and international airlines and shipping companies have stopped carrying shark fins, indicating thereby the rise in popularity of campaigns against shark fin trade and consumption [Barker and Schluessel 2005; Clarke *et al.* 2007; Edwards 2007; Ferretti *et al.* 2010; Passantino 2014]. In some US states such as Hawaii, California, Oregon, Washington, and New York possessing shark fins is unlawful [Tatum 2012; Techera 2012; Dick and Jefferies 2013].

There are around 1,100 species of shark and rays (known as Elasmobranchii) in the world [Dulvy *et al.* 2014], and according to the statistics of the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), 765,422 metric tons (mt) of shark and rays were caught globally in 2012, with 19 countries accounting for 79% of the global catch. The top catching nation was Spain (105,340 mt), followed by Indonesia (102,054 mt) and India (75,757 mt) [FAO 2014]. Japan occupies the 5<sup>th</sup> place, with a catch of 34,718 mt [Fisheries Agency of Japan 2014].

**Table 1** Sharks and Rays Catches in the World from 2003 to 2012 (MT)

Country	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	10 year average
Spain	50,656	53,330	42,807	48,129	49,597	57,634	63,521	79,101	98,430	105,340	64,855
Indonesia	117,559	108,944	100,037	110,528	108,539	91,247	107,658	94,318	103,245	102,054	104,413
India	63,771	79,825	61,056	66,367	103,246	87,254	79,747	60,313	70,994	75,757	74,833
USA	35,372	30,732	29,793	32,004	34,287	36,906	37,069	37,214	39,331	41,333	35,404
Japan	25,810	25,361	36,037	38,096	34,628	37,437	37,818	38,209	28,339	34,718	33,645
Taiwan	67,432	43,797	45,948	49,949	48,707	41,042	29,401	25,202	44,776	32,330	42,858
Mexico	34,429	37,540	35,832	34,976	35,080	29,503	30,305	37,662	31,589	32,031	33,895
Argentina	31,691	32,039	37,161	40,323	44,359	46,461	40,199	39,707	36,095	28,482	37,652
Malaysia	27,948	25,053	25,094	22,240	21,764	22,988	22,342	20,563	18,995	22,148	22,914
Iran	15,963	18,318	17,443	15,015	13,187	11,678	13,342	13,615	12,032	21,882	15,248
New Zealand	18,459	16,647	18,032	16,783	17,409	15,965	16,745	18,022	16,171	19,449	17,368
World Total	884,133	835,649	781,022	757,510	792,003	734,351	752,290	733,379	773,406	765,422	780,917

Source: FAO [2014] and Fisheries Agency of Japan [2014]

The statistics of the FAO are the only ones available to assess the state of affairs regarding global shark and ray fisheries, but there are regrettably two main problems associated with them, that have reference to the present study. First, they do not distinguish between sharks and rays [Eriksson and Clarke 2015]. The actual volume of sharks caught in the world should be smaller than what the FAO's statistics reveal, and furthermore the first problem will naturally give rise to the second, for the FAO statistics do not tell us in detail

what species of shark are caught in the world. The latter problem is a much more serious drawback to the present study, because fisheries management should be species-based.

For example, environmentalists often argue saying “sharks are susceptible to over-fishing as they tend to be long-lived, they are slow growing, and have late sexual maturity and low reproduction rates, making it difficult for depleted stocks to be re-built” [Techera 2012: 600]. Such discourses remind me of the “super-whale myth” coined by Norwegian anthropologist Arne Kalland in the early 1990s. He argued that environmental activists had created a myth about whales by speaking solely about them: the whale is the world’s largest living animal, with a large brain, it is social and friendly, it sings, looks after its young etc. However, a *single* whale possessing all these characteristics mentioned above never existed. It is a mystical creation, a super-whale with human attributes [Kalland 1993a, 1993b, 1994a, 1994b].

Similarly, the debate on shark conservation should be species specific. However, a question then arises. What types of shark are in danger of extinction? There are about 500 species of shark in the world. Some may be endangered, but not all sharks face danger. The IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature), one of the largest environmental NGOs, reviewed 523 shark species of extinction risk. Among them, 239 species (45.7 percent of the total reviewed) were categorized as Data Deficient (DD). Excluding those DD species, according to the IUCN Red Lists (ver. 3.1), 73 species of shark (25 percent of a total of 284 species) fall under the *threatened* categories, with 10 Critically Endangered (CR), 15 Endangered (EN), and 48 Vulnerable (VU)] [IUCN 2014]. Although the results of the review may alter as the review progresses, one should bear in mind the fact that at this point, not all sharks are endangered.

**Table 2** Sharks in the IUCN's Red Lists and their status in 2013

Order	number of families	number of genus	number of species	CR	EN	VU	NT	LC	DD
CARCHARHINIFORMES	8	47	263	7	10	21	37	68	120
CHIMAERIFORMES	3	6	46	0	0	0	3	18	25
HETERODONTIFORMES	1	1	9	0	0	0	0	4	5
HEXANCHIFORMES	2	4	5	0	0	0	3	0	2
LAMNIFORMES	7	10	15	0	0	10	1	2	2
ORECTOLOBIFORMES	7	12	41	0	0	7	12	8	14
PRISTIOPHORIFORMES	1	1	6	0	0	0	1	3	0
SQUALIFORMES	7	24	119	0	1	6	13	35	66
SQUATINIFORMES	1	1	19	3	4	4	1	2	5
Total	37	106	523	10	15	48	71	140	239

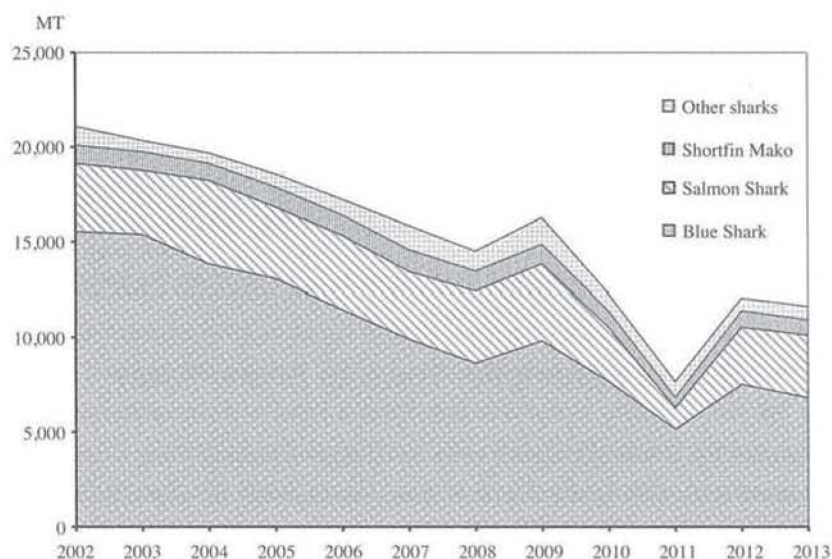
Source: IUCN [2014]

In this sense, the present discussion concentrates on very specific cases of blue shark (*Prionace glauca*, *yoshikiri-zame*) and salmon shark (*Lamna ditropis*, *moka-zame* or *nezumi-zame*) fisheries in Kesennuma, and it does not discuss general shark conservation in Japan as well as in the world.



## II. Shark Fisheries in Japan and Kesennuma City

Although the FAO statistics provide insufficient information, it is a fact that Japan is one of the world's major shark fishing nations. Among shark landings in Japan, blue shark has accounted for 66.7 percent of the total landings over the last 12 years, while salmon sharks and shortfin mako sharks (*Isurus oxyrinchus*) hold second and third places, accounting for an average of 21.8 percent and 6.0 percent of all shark landings in Japanese fishing ports [Fisheries Agency of Japan 2014].



**Figure 1:** Shark Species Landed at the Major Fishing Ports in Japan from 2002 to 2013 (MT)  
Source: Fisheries Agency of Japan [2014]

According to the Kesennuma Fisheries Cooperative Association (KFCA), almost 80 to 90 percent of the volume of sharks caught by Japanese fishing vessels land at the Kesennuma Fishing Port (KFP), because a wide range of shark processing factories exist around the port, including those producing shark fin products, skin sharks, fish paste, and collagen, out of the skin and bones. Due to the rich operating conditions and industrial environment, the price of sharks offered at the KFP is higher than that of other fishing ports, such as the Choshi Fishing Port (Chiba Prefecture) and Kii Katsuura Fishing Port (Mie Prefecture), and this is the reason why many shark fishing vessels prefer to land at the KFP.

At the KFP in 2012, 63.4% of their total catch of 8,764 metric tons was blue shark and 28.4% was salmon shark [Kesennuma Fisheries Cooperative Association 2014]. The sum of these two species accounts for more than 90% of the total landings in the KFP. The IUCN Red List reviewed blue shark as NT (Nearly Threatened) and salmon sharks LC (Least Concern) in 2014 [IUCN 2014]. Since the IUCN does not consider either NT or LC as *threatened*, the sustainability of blue shark and salmon shark is currently not critically problematic. The blue shark is also one of the most productive pelagic sharks [Cortés et al., 2010: 29], and this scientific information is a basic principle for Kesennuma's city planning. To enforce more rigid resource management, the Kesennuma Pelagic Fisheries Cooperative

Association applied for the MSC's *eco-labeling* certification, for sustainable shark fisheries in March 2014. The second review is currently under process after the preliminary audit.



**Photo 1:** Blue sharks landed at the KFP (Dec. 2014 taken by the author).

### III. From Shark Fin Town to Shark Town

Kesennuma City, whose population is about 67,000, is located along a deeply indented ria, saw-toothed coast facing the Pacific Ocean, and behind its coastline are beautiful mountains. The world's famous Sanriku Fishing Grounds, which are rich in marine resources, is just a few miles away, where a cold and warm current interface. Blessed with a good environment, both onshore and offshore pelagic fishing developed in Kesennuma. For example, the KFP is well-known nation-wide for landing tuna, skipjack, shark, and Pacific saury (*Cololabis saira*). Wild abalone and sea urchin are harvested along the complex ria coastline in and around Kesennuma, and high quality farmed oysters, scallops, and *wakame* seaweed (*Undaria pinnatifida*) from the region are also popular all over Japan. However, as for tuna, there are several competing fishing ports. It has the same situation as skipjack, Pacific saury, abalone, sea urchin, and oyster. The KFP is by far the largest shark landing fishing port, and thus shark fin has become Kesennuma's specialty, advertised in magazines, TV programs, and websites featuring travel and local gourmet products.

Shark fisheries began in Kesennuma around 1900, when fishing vessels started to enlarge with motorization. Those fishing vessels seasonally searched for offshore skipjacks in the south and salmon and trout in the north, during summer. Shark fisheries began as an off-season activity for skipjack, or salmon and trout. During the same period, an industry processing shark meat into *chikuwa* (traditional tube-shaped fish paste cakes) emerged in Kesennuma. Shark meat in Japan had long been an important ingredient for preparing traditional fish paste (*surimi*) products such as *hampen* (pounded fish cake) and *kamaboko* (boiled fish paste), to add a smooth and elastic texture. Shark fisheries and the *chikuwa* industry in Kesennuma grew in the 1910s, with the aid of technical innovation in both the fisheries and fish paste processing industry.

After World War II, tuna fishing by long lining emerged in Kesennuma. In the beginning swordfish and shark were merely by-products of such tuna long-line fishing, however the volume of tuna caught declined due to resource problems, and so the Japanese Fisheries Agency as a policy reduced the number of tuna fishing vessels. Thereafter swordfish and shark became relatively major target species. Those changes occurred during the 1980s. Coincidentally, that was a time when China propelled economic reform and shark fin markets in China had just started to expand, and so China's demand for shark fin served as a tail wind for Kesennuma's shark fisheries. Processed shark fins were not only exported to Hong Kong and China, but also consumed by tourists travelling to Kesennuma.

#### IV. Slow Food Declaration and Registered Slow City

Kesennuma is unique in its city planning, based on food and foodways. In order to conserve the local food culture and invent or reinvent local dishes for boosting tourism and industry, Kesennuma officially made a Slow Food Declaration (SFD) in March 2003, and became the first municipality in Japan to have done so. Kesennuma is famous not only for its wonderful seafood, but also for land produce such as *matsutake* mushrooms (*Tricholoma matsutake*) and other diverse local mushrooms and edible plants. There are many local home recipes that use local food ingredients. The city's SFD aims at conserving such local foodways and the natural environment, and in developing human resources capable of appreciating the spirit of Kesennuma's SFD. The SFD of Kesennuma consists of the following five items: 1) Conserving the natural environment that produces rich food to pass on to the next generation. 2) Safeguarding traditional foods, and also foodstuffs and cooking techniques. 3) Respecting people who produce safe and high quality foodstuffs. 4) Conveying the joys of food and the importance of a sense of taste and spiritual wealth. 5) Promoting mutual understanding and peace in the world [Slow Food Kesennuma 2007].

People in Kesennuma made several efforts to achieve the SFD's objectives, and school lunch was one way of teaching the importance of local foodways. For example, a grade school hosted a famous Japanese chef of French cuisine, Mikuni Kiyomi, for a lecture and cooking lessons in July 2003, and in April 2004, owners of *ramen* (soup noodle) shops in Kesennuma developed *Kesennuma Ramen* as a local specialty, whose main ingredients are the fin of blue shark and flavored oil made from Pacific saury. They even use locally made salt. In June 2004, a representative delegation from Kesennuma took part in the first Slow Fish event in Genoa, Italy, to make a presentation on the current situation in the fishing industry and local seafood culture in Kesennuma, and exhibited 13 types of processed foods made from shark, skipjack, and Pacific saury. According to Sugawara Akihiko, the representative of the delegation, one of their objectives in joining the Slow Fish event was to introduce ordinary everyday fish dishes, aside from the world famous *sushi* and *sashimi*, such as *nitsuke* (boiled fish with soy sauce and sugar), *tsukudani* (preserved fish boiled in soy), and fish cakes and fish balls. They also exhibited whole blue shark skins. In March 2006, caterers and lunch box (*bento*) stores in Kesennuma developed a special lunch box



using locally produced land-based and marine foodstuffs, such as cooked tuna with *kombu* kelp by soy sauce, shark fin, shark steak, and steamed chicken with *fuki-miso*, etc. Furthermore, in February 2007, Kesennuma City for the first time in Japan held a two-day National Slow Food Festival, authorized by the International Slow Food Association. It proved very successful, with over 1,200 visitors attending. The next successive event, namely the Kesennuma Slow Food Town and Life Event of Autumn 2010, was held in November 2010. It attracted over 20,000 visitors over a period of two days. For these activities, Kesennuma City was awarded a membership in the Slow City (*Cittaslow*) movement in October 2012, during its restoration from the tsunami.



**Photo 2:** Leaflets of the Kesennuma Slow Food Festivals 2007 (left) and 2010 (right).

Source: Kesennuma Chamber of Commerce and Industry

These food-related movements in Kesennuma have a history. Even in the 1980s, Kesennuma was interested in fisheries and fish-based foodways. For example, in September 1986, it made a declaration of *gyoshoku kenko tosi* (fish-eating healthy city), and since then, its city-planning has been based on developing the local fisheries industry and fish-based foodways. Behind this local movement, there were international political affairs. In 1977, the USA and the then Soviet Union declared their 200 nautical miles exclusive economic zones, and as a result pelagic fisheries in Kesennuma faced hardships, because they lost their fishing grounds in the north Pacific, and to make matters worse it was about the same time that the tuna catch declined.

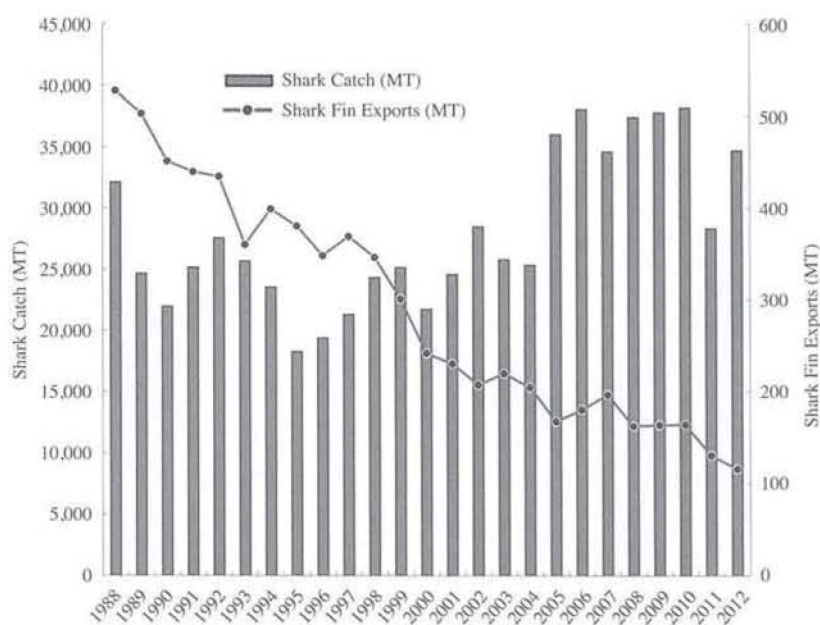
In 1983, the Kesennuma City government and certain interested fisheries persons organized a “Civic Forum” to address this economic adversity. The Civic Forum discussed how to develop and reconstruct their city’s fisheries industry, and it organized a National Fisheries Symposium in September 1985, inviting key persons in fisheries from all over Japan. Even after the Civic Forum broke up following the symposium’s successful closing, participants to the Forum unofficially got together to further discuss problems concerning fisheries. Among these grassroots movements, the “fish-eating healthy city” declaration was made. These movements continued and propelled the Slow Food Declaration in 2003, and they persisted even during the restoration activities after the tsunami.



## V. Promoting Shark Meat Dishes

Even before the tsunami in 2011, Kesennuma was searching for ways to make use of the shark as its symbol. There are many examples illustrating the above. For instance, in May 1997, Kesennuma opened the Rias Shark Museum where visitors could learn about the ecology of sharks and the shark industry, and have the opportunity to touch small sharks in a pool. More than a million tourists visited the museum in 2010.

There are two main reasons why fisheries stakeholders in Kesennuma became interested in making use of shark meat in the early 2000s. The first is the conservation of shark resources. Shark is a by-catch product from a long-line of tuna fisheries. Compared to tuna, shark meat has low commercial value, and so shark bodies were often discarded after the removal of the fins. However, in response to global shark conservation concerns, tuna related RFMOs (Regional Fisheries Management Organizations) such as the IOTC (Indian Ocean Tuna Commission), ICCAT (International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas) and IATTC (Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission) banned shark finning in 2005, and the Japanese Fisheries Agency banned shark finning in 2008. Hence the supply of shark meat rose since 2005 as Figure 2 illustrates, and it exceeded the traditional shark meat market for fish paste products.

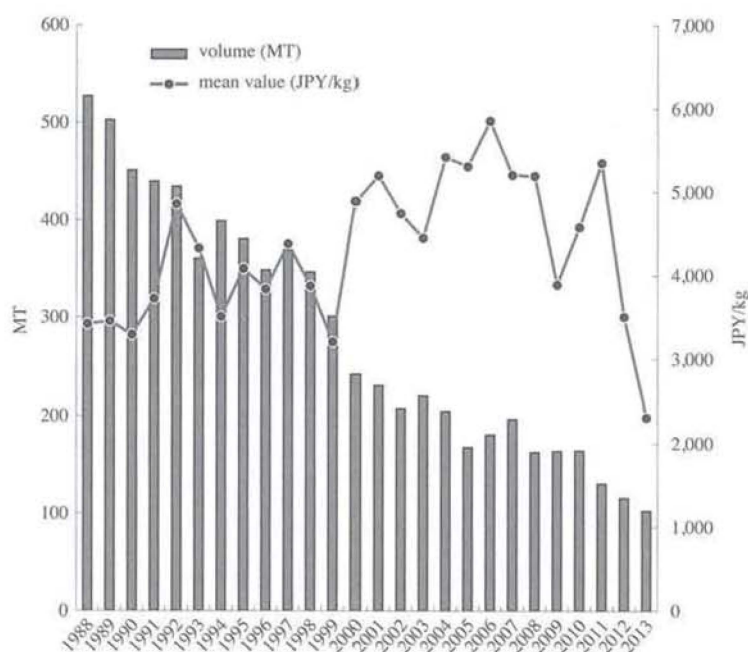


**Figure 2:** Shark Catch in Japan and Shark Fin Exports from Japan (1988-2012)

Source: Fisheries Agency of Japan [2014] and Trade Statistics of Japan

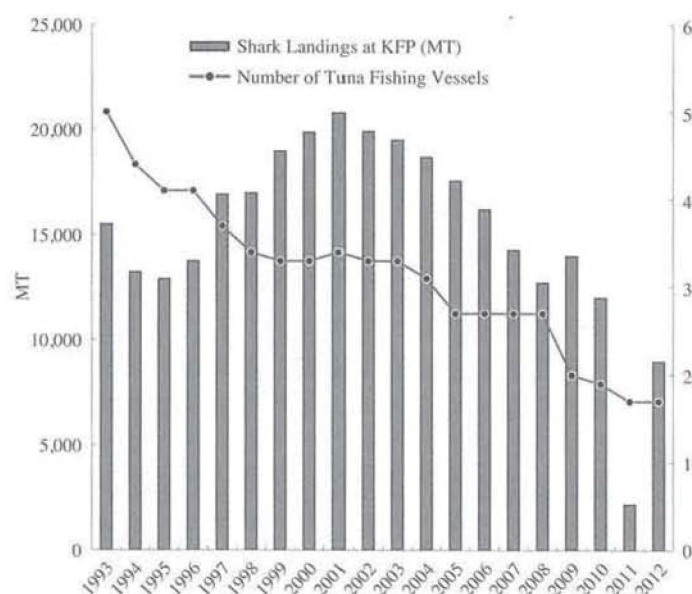
The second reason is the restructuring of the shark industry. After the 2000s, shark fin markets expanded. For example in 2006, the mean price of exporting shark fin from Japan rose to 5,855 JPY (about 50 USD) per kilogram, which was the most expensive in the history of the industry in Japan. This was partly because both the Chinese and Hong Kong

markets were overheated. Another reason, paradoxically enough, was the shortage of shark fins for export. As stated, most sharks were by-catches of tuna fishing long liners. If the number of tuna fishing boats is reduced for conserving tuna resources, the shark catches also will automatically decline. This is the main reason why the volume of shark fin exports has declined during the last 25 years (Figure 3 & 4).



**Figure 3:** Shark Fin Exports from Japan (Volume and Mean Value) from 1988 to 2013

Source: Trade Statistics of Japan



**Figure 4:** Shark Landings at the Kesennuma Fishing Port and a Number of Inshore Tuna Long line Fishing Vessels Based at the Kesennuma Fishing Port (1993-2012)

Source: Kesennuma Pelagic Fisheries Cooperative Association

According to a shark fin processor, namely Chuka Takahashi Inc. in Kesennuma City, in the 2000s, when the shark fin market overheated and demands for shark fin became strong, competition for shark fin among producers in the city intensified, and his company had to start making use of shark meat to increase profits. His company developed shark nuggets and shark *tatsuta age* (shark meat flavored with soy sauce and cooking sake, coated with cooking starch and then deep fried) [*The Asahi Shimbun*, October 29, 2006; July 7, 2007].

Since Kesennuma enjoys many varieties of seafood, local people do not care for shark meat, other than salmon shark hearts that are eaten raw. Thus the shark fisheries stakeholders now had to develop new markets for shark meat. Miyagi Prefecture supported this movement of using more shark meat. In 2006, Miyagi Prefecture organized a project to develop new recipes using shark meat, and it published a recipe book in 2008. The book contains 25 recipes: five Japanese, nine Chinese, seven Western, an original dish, and three for school lunches. These recipes were the result of trial and error, created with the assistance of local chefs from several Japanese, Chinese and French restaurants [Kesennuma Shark Dish Promoting Committee 2008]. The following year it published a concise book containing 12 recipes for households (that is, seven Japanese, three Chinese, and two Western).

## VI. Reconstruction of a New Shark Town

Shark stakeholders in Kesennuma City made various attempts to promote shark meat dishes. For example, in January 2010, Kesennuma City with the assistance of the Kesennuma Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) served a school lunch made of locally produced ingredients such as shark fin, shark meat, vegetables, soy sauce, salt, honey, yogurt, etc., to enable students and their parents get an idea of their variety of fine ingredients, as well as to encourage them to take pride in their living environment. This event attracted public attention to such an extent, that in the following month the KCCI were able to sell the food to the public, and all 7-Eleven stores in Miyagi Prefecture sold shark meatball lunch boxes on January 2011 [*The Asahi Shimbun*, January 25, 2011].

The Kesennuma Sushi Association (KSA) that is comprised of 19 members developed a shark fin dish called *Fukahire Don* ('Shark Fin Bowl,' *don* means bowl as in *gyu-don*, beef bowl) in July 2010. In this dish, shark fin, cooked and preserving its original shape was placed on top of a bowl of rice. Unlike the Chinese styled "Shark Fin Kesennuma Ramen," the shark fin used for the Shark Fin Bowl was cooked with Japanese *dashi* soup from dried skipjack (*katsuo-bushi*), with sesame flavor. Owing to its having been developed by the sushi association it is considered as having a "Japanese" taste, although shark fin is notably identified as a Chinese luxury food item. It is priced between 3,600 to 4,200 JPY (about 32 to 38 USD) per bowl, depending on the size of the shark fin. Despite its high price gourmets visited Kesennuma, and vendors sold 2000 Shark Fin Bowls during the first three days of the sale in July 2010 [*The Asahi Shimbun*, July 14, 2010].



The Shark Fin Bowl appeared again on July 2014, to mark the reopening of the Rias Shark Museum. This was very symbolic with reference to the reconstruction of Kesennuma City, three years after the tsunami. The Rias Shark Museum first opened in 1997 with seafood restaurants and souvenir shops, and over a million tourists used to visit the place annually before the tsunami. The new Shark Fin Bowl is served with blue shark meatballs [Mainichi Shimbun, June 07, 2014], because according to Shimizu Naoki, the president of KSA, they wanted to make use of blue shark meat.



**Photo 3:** Fukahire Don (Sep. 2014 taken by the author).

Earlier the tsunami shark fin processors used to compete with each other, yet in July 2013 they joined hands to form a council for reconstruction, referred to as the *Samenomachi Kesennuma Kousou Kyougikai* (CPSTK: Council for the Promotion of the Shark Town Kesennuma). With support from the national government, big businesses based in Tokyo, private funds, and universities, the council is leading the reconstruction of the fisheries industry with new outsider stakeholders joining. According to Usui Yusuke, vice president of the CPSTK, the council consists of young generation shark fin processors in their 30s and 40s, who wish to produce something new, something their parents were unable to do. Support from big enterprises is novel. For example, a pamphlet and a website created by those urban supporters from big corporations are simple, and yet fashionable and attractive. Through joint projects, members of the CPSTK can acquire the latest marketing skills and strategies from those urban supporters from big corporations.

Kesennuma City is open to all outsiders, both businessmen and tourists. They are aggressively absorbing any business information with regard to reconstructing the city. All comprehend the fact that Kesennuma needs to become independent in the near future, as government subsidies do not last forever. Although the Shark Town Plan is halfway through, yet Kesennuma's shark industry has confronted obstacles. The price of shark fin has dropped around 60% from its peak in 2006, and due to the global campaign against shark fin and China's policy of cleaning up the political corruption associated with luxurious banquets that serve shark fin soup, demand for shark fin has dramatically dropped, as also



the price of shark fins.

Although it is not easy to cope with animal welfare ethics, shark stakeholders in Kesennuma City try to be transparent, and place a high priority on the sustainability of shark resources. Since they earn a living by consuming sharks, they try to make wise and full use of almost every part of shark, namely the fins, meat, bones, and skins. This is one way of persuading those associated with animal protection ethics. The Slow Food Movement in Kesennuma City re-evaluates their wonderful natural environment and cultural heritage, and efforts towards obtaining the MSC's eco-labeling for blue shark fisheries should be placed in this rich socio-cultural heritage context. Kesennuma aims to hold the third Slow Food Festival in 2021 in commemoration of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the tsunami, and this event will be open not just to local people but tourists as well. In support of the reconstruction of the city, let us visit Kesennuma and enjoy its rich food culture and heritage.

## VII. Discussion: *Mono-kenkyu* as a Multi-sited Approach

This study introduced a brief history of shark fisheries in Kesennuma and related movements by shark stakeholders towards revitalizing Kesennuma's economy, as a kick-off sketch for my shark studies.

As the article in *The Guardian* mentioned, sharks may play a critical role in the ocean environment [McCurry 2011], and hence consumption of shark raises ethical issues. However, I personally believe in the necessity of the sustainable use of shark resources as food, and I respect shark fin and other shark related foodways as parts of the Asian food heritage. A balance between science and ethics would be a key towards perceiving the conflict between the *pro*- and *anti*- consumption of sharks and shark fins. Even though one uses all parts of the shark without any wastage, yet the volume of consumption is in need of scientific direction.

Although ethics regarding animal rights and animal welfare are beyond science and somewhat alien to Japanese and Asian views of nature, shark stakeholders in Kesennuma City as well as other Asian maritime people have to overcome their current conflicts. In the age of the Internet, a great deal of information spreads simultaneously, disregarding borders. Freedom of information is basic to promoting democratic societies, and in this sense, recipients of huge volumes of information need to investigate each value and act on the basis of their own convictions. Both the *pro*- and *anti*- consumption of sharks, are stances in need of dialogue and mutual respect.

*Mono-kenkyu* is not a hobby for a dilettante. Any research activity involves criticism of the present society, and intellectuals need to work for the betterment of society. This is what I learned from the writings of Professor Murai Yoshinori and from the conversations I had

with him. Unhampered by the attitude of traditional intellectuals, Murai was active in diverse fields, such as research and public campaigns for human rights. He had many faces. He was a splendid fieldworker, writer, editor, organizer, educator, and activist. His versatile and multiple stance is what George Marcus calls a multi-sited approach [Marcus 1995]. The fuller investigation of multi-sited ethnography or global ethnography lies outside of this study [Burawoy 2000; Falzon 2009; Lapegna 2009]. One only needs to mention here that Murai developed and practiced his “multi-sited” strategy since the early 1980s, when he organized a shrimp study group with participants from various backgrounds. The point of Marcus’s assertion, to my understanding, is not only to conduct fieldwork in multiple places in order to acquire a bird-eye view of the issue, but also to conduct research by collaborating with different types of stakeholders in order to solve social problems [Marcus 1998; Coleman and von Hellermann 2011]. There are merely a few things I can do with regard to shark issues at this moment. Yet I wish to work with and team up with other stakeholders towards their sustainable use from a food security standpoint, with a view to realizing the academic hopes of the late Professor Murai Yoshinori.

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