

Ethics in the Anthropocene

- Intangible Cultural Heritage for Sustainability

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The concept of 'ethics in the anthropocene' is explored through a specific example of the cetacean hunt by Japan, its history and related cultural heritage. Ethics and sense of obligations to the natural world is argued to be the essence of spiritual heritage that forms a foundation of sustainability. It also enhances a community's identity and social-cultural capital critical to sustainable development of a place. It is hoped that this discussion contributes to the theoretical development of sustainability generally and specifically to theories of sustainable tourism, as the thesis is directed by the idea of the anthropocene, an era when anthropogenic climate change and other human-caused catastrophes are being witnessed, thus human obligations are critically challenged. Commitment to sustainability has an even greater significance and urgency today, especially in the aftermath of the 3.11 East Japan Earthquake, which has revealed the vulnerability of humans despite their technological power.

Keywords: Ethics, Anthropocene, Sustainability, Spirituality, Intangible, Cultural heritage

1. Introduction

The concept of the anthropocene¹⁾ -an era when anthropogenic climate change and other human-caused catastrophes are being witnessed -challenges human ethics regarding our place in this world. The fundamental question of whether we can be 'a plain member of the land community' raised by Aldo Leopold over 60 years ago is even more pertinent today, as ethical concerns tend to be overshadowed by political, economic and social imperatives. It is in this context that this article will argue that the core issue of sustainability lies in the ethical orientation founded in human spirituality, which is often expressed in the cultural heritage associated with human interaction with the natural world, especially natural resource use. This is illustrated through an example of the cultural heritage associated with the cetacean hunt in Japan: while controversy surrounding the issue extends into socio-political-economic spheres, its true essence lies in the associated spiritual heritage that carries a strong sustainability orientation. This case is relevant to the ethical debate today because the place-based identity grounded in its heritage is at the core of sustainability fundamental to various forms of place development in regional communities especially in Japan such as local revitalisation and tourism.

2. Environmental Ethics in the Anthropocene

In presenting human ethics as the core of sustainability, the aim of this paper is three fold. First, as reflected in the title, it aims to reaffirm human ethical obligations to the changing environment today. Leopold (1949: 251) introduced us to the concept of *ethics* applied to the ecosystem, the well-being of which is manifested in its *integrity, stability, and beauty* and to which humans have moral obligations. Integrity, stability, and beauty are closely connected to resilience, biodiversity and finally sustainability, and human obligations result from adaptive and transformational capabilities. Closely related also is the notion of *cultures of habitat* (Nabhan, 1997) that calls for compassion for others and humbleness of the human self. These elements can be integrated in the idea of socio-ecological systems that suggest the importance of human ethical awareness as part of ecosystem resilience, adaptability and transformability. Dallmayer (2003) argues that environmental ethics enable us to find appropriate methods to articulate ecosystem values. This calls for nonlinear complex thinking beyond traditional scientific methods. Today, the devastating effects of the anthropogenic climate change are clear, but rich and diverse means exist simultaneously for knowing, understanding, valuing and taking

action. In the Anthropocene, the obligation extends to every part of human existence, calling for the establishment of ethics as a fundamental common ground.

The second aim is to present human spirituality as a cultural heritage that is intangible and invisible yet fundamental to all human activities today. In my previous work on subsistence communities harvesting from the ocean (Kato, 2007b), I proposed that the knowledge, skills, rituals, festivities, stories, songs, and visual symbols express the community's spiritual sense of connection with and ethical responsibility to the natural world. I also suggested that ethics and the sense of connection may be defined as a spiritual heritage, and fundamental to such spirituality is a capacity or desire for reciprocity. Research on spirituality tends to be avoided for the complexity and intangibility of the subject, which is much more difficult to identify, measure and evaluate than quantifiable areas of research. Such investigation, however, is a desirable and necessary challenge today.

The third is to present an ecohumanities approach to environmental studies³⁾, which is, in its interdisciplinary capacity, relevant to all environmental investigations, especially those containing intangible complexities. Although environmental devastations are real, the power exists in human ethics to value nature's positive qualities (i.e., *beauty*, *strength*, and *resilience*) and engender an enhanced awareness and understanding of harmony, balance, and grace. Aesthetic appreciation and expression will inspire and instruct and also foster emotional interest and intellectual curiosity, which in time will evoke the human capacities for exploration, discovery, creativity, compassion and transformation. Ecohumanities scholarship, while clearly respecting scientific investigation, does not shy away from creativity in thinking and expression, nor from the intangible quality of spirituality, love and compassion. As Robin (2007) puts it, with an ecohumanities approach, '[r]ather than Earth scale, we want to consider the human scale. We don't speak of managing for maximum output—the idea of production for production's sake— but rather managing our lives for effective dwelling in the world, managing ourselves to live integrally with non-human others, rather than fashioning them to suit our priorities... how we actually live our

lives, is central to this'. A number of cases with similar humanities perspectives, specifically in Japanese context and focusing on human senses and knowledge, are discussed in Akimichi (2012) providing further scope for this discussion.

This writing, and adherence to the above rationales, is motivated by my belief that today, while efforts are being made in many disciplines to mitigate the environmental crisis and adapt to it, the foremost task for us living in the anthropocene is to witness changes occurring in the living world and its elements, and within the compass of our ethical responsibility, and to develop compassion for life within academic communities, leaders and policy makers and society at large. This belief resonates more strongly now in the aftermath of the 3.11 East Japan Earthquake, which calls for a radical shift in our thinking and behavior globally.

3. Spirituality and Reciprocity as the Core of Sustainability

Today, with a series of landmark events, conferences, and conventions calling for a sense of ethical and moral obligation to the well-being of future generations, other species and the entire ecosystem, a global rise in consciousness about sustainability is undeniable. Rio+20 (20-22, June, 2012) with 'The future we want' as a common mission, renewed a commitment to sustainability made 20 years ago at the UN Conference on Environment and Development or the Rio Earth Summit. At the same time, however, as Low suggested earlier, there has been 'a host of conflicting interests and demands whose resolution requires a conception of environmental justice -not least among them the conflict between human interests and those of the rest of nature' (Low, 1999: 1). Issues surrounding natural resource use often present such conflicts. I propose a sense of ethical obligation held by users, not laws and regulations, will play a critical role; such ethical sense here is defined as spirituality.

In exploring the core quality of sustainability, spirituality expressed in practices and associated cultural properties is pertinent. One fundamental quality of this spirituality proposed here is a sense of reciprocity. Reciprocity, as Abram defines, is 'the ceaseless give and take, the flow that moves in two

directions' and is 'the foundation of any real ethics: give unto others as you would have them give unto you' (Abram, 2004: 81). Further, Abram suggests that reciprocity cannot be attained if humans remain external to the natural world. It seems then that a reciprocal human–nature relationship would contain a quality that is dialogical, sensory/experiential, and place specific.

First, as Plumwood suggests, a dialogical quality contained in spirituality is 'a certain kind of communicative capacity that recognizes the elements that supports our lives' (Plumwood, 2002: 229–230). The communicative paradigm suggested is to make 'ownership in the essentially narrative terms of naming and interpreting the land, of telling its story in ways that show a deep and loving acquaintance with it and history of dialogical interaction' (Plumwood, 2002: 230). Such a sense of reciprocity may be expressed as a form of offering, conceptually or physically. Offering, as Booth and Harvey maintain, is 'a fair exchange for what had been taken, to maintain the balance. In this way, the idea of reciprocity emerges.... For everything that was taken, something had to be offered in return (Booth and Harvey, 2001: 136). What may be returned to nature by humans may be spiritual rather than material -care, gratitude, offering and prayer, especially for a permanent loss of something such as in the destruction of a species.

Second, reciprocity contains sensory and experiential qualities. Rose, while referring to the Australian indigenous peoples' relationship with their country, writes, 'Country is not a generalized or undifferentiated type of place.... Rather, country is a living entity with a yesterday, today, and tomorrow, with a consciousness and a will toward life' (Rose, 1996: 7). Clearly, 'country' is not only about biodiversity, habitats, and ecosystems but also languages, senses, emotions and other timeless connections with the earth other. As Abram suggests, 'Our bodies have formed themselves in delicate reciprocity with the manifold texture, sounds, and shapes of an animate earth -our eyes have evolved in subtle interaction with other eyes, as our ears are attuned by their very structure to the howling of wolves and honking of geese' (Abram, 1990: 38–39). Sensory experience is both sensing and responding to the surrounding environment, which in itself is dialogical.

Third, reciprocity contains a place-specific

quality, an orientation toward genius loci (spirit of place) -the authenticity of a place, integrity sustained over time,⁴⁾ which may be expressed in forms such as 'care, sentiment, concern, warmth, love, and sacredness' and may be seen as place-based spirituality. Plumwood explains this in reference to the Australian indigenous culture and their identity:

Identity is not connected to nature as a general abstract category but to particular areas of land, just as the connection one has to close relatives is highly particularistic and involves special attachments and obligations not held to humankind in general (Plumwood, 1990: 531).

Plumwood further accounts that in complete contrast to Western views of land and nature, the land is 'conceptualised as just as essentially related to self as kin are, and its loss may be as deeply grieved for and felt as the death of kin' (Plumwood, 1990: 531). Place-based spirituality may be expressed as a commitment to conservation - to care for and maintain the specific quality of a place.

Reciprocity in Japanese Thoughts

In the Japanese context, one example of cultural practice that expresses reciprocity through offering is the Buddhist concept of *kuyō*, a concept central to the spirituality expressed through the cultural properties, which is discussed in this article. *Kuyō* literally means offering and nurturing in honoring Buddha, deities, and spirits of all beings. Offerings can be in the form of things (flowers, food, incense, and candles), prayers or religious training.⁵⁾ *Kuyō-tō*, or *kuyō* monuments, seen throughout Japan, can be dedicated to spirits of all types of being. While the monuments are most typically dedicated to humans,⁶⁾ they may also be erected for nonhuman beings (fauna and flora). For example, a monument for rats is located in a temple in Tokyo (Shōen-ji Temple, est. 1623–1668), erected in 1903 after two years of an epidemic during which rats were eradicated because they were thought to be the cause of the disease. An example of *kuyō* monuments dedicated to flora is *somoku kuyō-tō*, or a monument for plants and trees. Words such as *sansen sōmoku shikkai jibutsu* (peaceful rest for all beings: mountains, river, plants, and trees) are inscribed on this monument. *Kuyō* as a ritual is

also seen in daily life in Japan and may even be conducted for a number of non-living objects, the most representative of which is the one performed for sewing needles.⁷ Many hunters also carry out *Kuyō* rituals. As Japanese agricultural scientist Sato (2005) explains, hunter-gatherers do not discriminate between flora, fauna, and their surroundings and hunters in particular rely upon an intimate understanding of the entire ecosystem; consequently, they maintain a profound consideration for all beings, including insects and plants, which are normally excluded in Western thinking because of their assumed low level of suffering.

These spiritual connections that contain ethical obligation, gratitude and reciprocity may be considered to be part of an intangible cultural heritage. As defined in the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, intangible cultural heritage means 'the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills -as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith- that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage', which may be expressed as oral traditions and expressions, performing arts, social practices, rituals and festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe, and traditional craftsmanship. Intangible cultural heritage is interactive, dynamic, and cohesive in that it is 'transmitted from generation to generation' and is 'constantly recreated by communities and groups, in response to their environment, their interaction with nature', and their historical conditions of existence. It also promotes a sense of identity and cultural continuity and thus its safeguarding promotes, sustains, and develops 'cultural diversity and human creativity' (UNESCO, 2006). Maintaining a spiritual heritage today has a strong implication for the understanding of sustainability, and with this consideration, we now turn to the specific issue of cetacean hunting in Japan. Japanese cetacean hunting, specifically the hunting of whales and dolphins, is controversial politically, economically, culturally, and environmentally, which makes the ethical debate more pertinent. I will, however, leave details of the controversy and debate elsewhere (e.g., Kato, 2009) and focus here on the spiritual heritage maintained in a former

whaling community.

4. Spiritual Heritage-related Whaling

Kayoi (Kayoi-ura) is a small fishing village located at the easternmost point of Omijima Island, Nagato City, Japan.⁸ Omijima's perimeter is approximately 40 km and that of the Kayoi area approximately 14 km. The island is the third largest in the Sea of Japan after Sado and Oki islands.⁹ The current population of Kayoi is 1,519, with 620 households, approximately 40% of which are engaged in small-scale fishing and related industries.¹⁰ The Nagato-ohashi Bridge completed in 1969 connects the island with the mainland and the rest of the city. Before the construction of the bridge, the ferry was the only means of transport to the mainland. The island can be circumnavigated by boat in about an hour and a half. Steep cliffs, caves, and various rock formations are visible from the boat, indicating the small amount of agricultural land available on the island. The surrounding area is often dubbed *Ocean Alps*, as expressed by a writer Yokoyama Kenzo.¹¹ The region is indeed spectacular and has been designated as the Kita-Nagato Coast Quasi-National Park. The northern part of what is now Yamaguchi Prefecture had been called Chōshū-Kitaura (northern coastal area of Chōshū Clan) since the reign of Lord Mori until the Meiji Restoration (1868).

Whaling, specifically community-based coastal whaling (*koshiki-hogei*, or old-style whaling), began in the Chōshū-Kitaura region in 1672, having been initiated by the 13th Lord Mori of the Chōshū Clan to establish whaling groups. It is generally believed that Taiji in Wakayama is the birthplace of the net-harpoon whaling method, which spread gradually to the western regions including Chōshū-Kitaura. With this method, nets were thrown to slow and weaken the whale being chased and driven toward the shore. Documents held by a local whaling family in Kayoi show that a whaler named Hayakawa Seibei devised a new net method in 1672/73 using O-plant, having realized that the straw ropes initially used were too weak. Whaling by this method was first conducted in 1677 by the Oami-gumi (O-net group) formed that year.¹² Fifteen whaling groups were initially formed in the region, which were later reduced to just three: the Kujira Tsuki-gumi (whale

harpooning) group (1672), Okiura group (1681) and Kawauchi group (1698).¹³⁾ The methods used initially was the tsukitori or handheld harpoon method, which made it the first form of active whaling, as opposed to the passive form of taking drift or beached whales. Later, harpooning was aided by the use of nets, as described above.

Whaling groups operated in this region until 1897, when modern methods using various sorts of explosive devices were introduced. The foremost of these was the Norwegian Method. The first modern whaling company equipped with the Norwegian Method, Nihon Enyō Gyōgyō (Japan Far Sea Fishery), was established in Setourazaki in 1898; however, the transitional period had already made pre-modern methods unviable and the Setourazaki Group dissolved in 1894. The Kawajiri Group followed suit in 1897 and the Kayoi Group in 1888. Today, more than a hundred years after the end of pre-modern whaling, the region is scattered with temples, shrines, and monuments related to traditional forms of whaling. In Omijima and the Kayoi area in particular, various cultural properties exist, including a whale tomb (Important Historic Sites, National) in the Seian-ji temple garden and a mortuary tablet and funeral register books for whales (Tangible Folk Cultural Properties, Yamaguchi Prefecture) housed in the Kōgan-ji Temple overlooking Kayoi Bay.

5. Whaling-related Intangible Cultural Heritage

Today, the Kōgan-ji Temple is central to this fishing community, not only for its important cultural heritage but also because worship and dedication remain part of the community's everyday life. The temple belongs to the Jōdo-shū, or Pure Land Buddhism, beliefs of which center on the prayers.¹⁴⁾ The practice of holding an annual memorial service (*ekō*¹⁵⁾) in May dedicated to whales and all sea life still continues at the temple, providing an opportunity for the community to express their dedication. Also significant is a nunnery, Hōsen-an, where daily prayers dedicated to the spirits of whales and other sea life has long been a practice.

The temple contains three volumes of funeral register books, a mortuary tablet, and a *jizō* statue for whales. The tomb and tablet together with the register books were introduced by the fifth head

priest of the temple Shōyo Shōnin in 1692. This priest built a Kannon altar in Seigetsu-an, where he retired in 1679, at the age of 51 years, and started conducting memorial services for whales. For 13 years he preached the need to commemorate whale spirits. When he passed away in 1734 (at the age of 106), the tablet and annual service were transferred to the temple. The five-day service is now reduced to one day, and fishing is forbidden on that day. When the IWC annual meeting was held in Shimonoseki in 2002, the conference delegates attended the memorial service.

Kakochō (funeral register book) for whales

In Buddhist practice, one traditionally received *kaimyō*, a Buddhist name, after having gone through the required training; today however, because not many follow the training, it is commonly understood that *kaimyō* is given to the deceased as a posthumous name. *Kakochō* is a register book of those buried at a particular temple, in which names (both Buddhist and personal) of the deceased are recorded, along with the date of burial. The same practice was maintained for whales caught in the region, and hence a set of funeral register books for whales, *keigei kakochō*, was kept. These *kakochō* are believed to be the only ones specifically dedicated to non-humans.

The existing *kakochō* at the Kōgan-ji is believed to be the second volume of the four that once existed and is registered as Yamaguchi Prefecture Tangible Folklore Property.¹⁶⁾ The book, covering the years from 1802 to 1842, lists 243 whales. It is one piece of paper with silver backing, folded into thirty-four pages, each of 23.8 cm width. The front and back covers are made of black varnished wooden boards, and the inscription on the front cover, '*Keigei Kakochō*', is in black on gold paper.

The register follows the same format as the human register: *kaimyō* consisting of four characters selected by the priest of the temple; the date and location of the catch; the whaler's name; and the whale's type, size and sex. It is customary that those who have gone through a five-day training (both male and female) receive the character that means honour in their *kaimyō*, and the character meaning graceful is often used for females. Characters frequently used in *kaimyō* are those meaning large, sound, shore, ocean, blessing and prayer as well as those indicating seasons (winter,

spring, snow) and time (morning).¹⁷⁾

On May 25, 2006, a four-meter female Minke whale was tangled in the fixed net owned by a local fishery group. A service was held and a new register book was started by the young priest at the Hōgan-ji Temple, who explained his reasons thus: I visited the site several times and consulted with the prayer book thoroughly before deciding on a name: chigu myōshin. It is adopted from one of the Jōdo Scriptures (Tetsu Sentaku-Shu Vol. 2, Jōdo 2) from the saying that an infant should never leave its mother. It implies, and I hope it reflects my wish, that the whale's soul would not leave Buddha's side and remain in his care.¹⁸⁾

Whale tombs and mortuary tablets

At present, 54 tombs are recorded in Japan as specifically designated for whales, nine of which are undated. Among them, the Kōgan-ji whale tomb is specifically designated for fetuses found inside mother whales. Such tombs dedicated to the unborn are rare and only few examples exist elsewhere.¹⁹⁾ On this tomb, (granite; height: 2.4 m, width: 46 cm), a sutra and names of the donors are inscribed on the front, and names of the three whaling captains and the priest are on the side with an account why this tomb was erected:

Although your life as a whale was terminated with the mother's life, it was not our intention to take your life. We'd rather have freed you into the ocean, but you'd not be able to survive on your own in the harsh environment. Therefore, we pray that you receive the virtue of impermanence like us human beings.²⁰⁾

The mortuary tablet for whales (height: 77.5 cm, on a base of 22.4 cm x 15.2 cm) carries the same inscription on its front. On the rear side are inscribed the date (May 12, 1693) and names of the contributors: two priests and three donors (Genroku Era, 1688–1703). The tablet is situated within the main altar of the temple where the annual memorial service is held.

It is worth noting that most of the monuments and tombs were erected during the Genroku Era (1688–1703) with the oldest tomb dated as 1671 (Kumano, Mie). This period coincided with the transition from handheld harpooning to the more efficient net method, which also served to fix the territories occupied by each group. Further, most

tombs were erected during the nineteenth century when whale stocks suffered a serious decline. This was also the time the jizō was erected in Kayoi.

Decline of whaling and a jizō statue

Within the graveyard of the Kōgan-ji Temple, a jizō sits with a slight smile. The inscription on its base (height 74 cm, width 80 cm) reads: Jizō for the spirits of whales and fish. Only two such jizō exist in Japan, and the other is believed to be in Ikutsuki, Kyushu. Jizō (Japanese name of Kṣiti-garbha) is a popular Mahayana Buddhist Bodhisattva, drawing on the earth's power to offer unlimited mercy to those who suffer. Jizō today may be seen along the roadside or in temples dedicated to unborn infants and those who died young (mizuko, water child). The jizo statue in the Kōgan-ji Temple was erected in 1863 by the thirteenth head of the Hayakawa clan, one of the village's major whaling groups. It was during the late pre-modern whaling period in Japan when the decline of the stock became evident, starting sometime around 1844–1848. In Kayoi, the peak of the whaling was in 1846, when five right whales were caught on November 29 and a total of 24 whales were caught within six months. The estimated price of one whale at that time was ten silver kan.²¹⁾ The number of recorded right whales caught in Chōshū-Kitaura declined: from 50 between 1831 and 1840 to 20 between 1851 and 1860 and none between 1861 and 1870. In the Western region (Kyushu) as well, the decline was evident: 148 (1845), 85 (1846), 74 (1847, 1848) and 25 (1849) (Nakazono, 2001).

This period coincided with the time when intensive hunting was taking place in the so-called 'Japan ground' by American, British, and French whaling ships using technological advances such as the exploding projectile gun and the bomb lance (1846–1852). Among these ships were four vessels led by Commodore Perry who came to Shimoda between 1853 and 1854 to demand that Japan open up to the world, ending its 200 years of seclusion, and supply fuel, food, and other provisions to the American whaling ships.²²⁾ In 1854, the US–Japan Peace and Amity Treaty (or Kanagawa Treaty) was adopted (March 31). The year 1846 was also the peak year for American whaling, with 736 vessels, employment of 70,000 persons, and oil production of 43,884,000 liters. The industry eventually became obsolete following

the introduction of petroleum in 1859. It is believed that, being unaware of the extensive hunting around Japan, the Kayoi community had thought that the sudden decline in stock was caused by their own overexploitation and that they needed to plead for forgiveness and return of the whales. However, the stock did not recover until the eventual dissolving of the region's whaling groups between 1894 and 1898.

Prayers for the whales

In Ohibi village adjacent to Kayoi is the Hōsen-an Nunnery, established during the successive tenures of three head priests of the Saien-ji Temple (1779–1863) - now referred to as *sanshi*, or the three great masters in the community. These priests preached the need to plead for forgiveness for the killing, from which the establishment of the nunnery originated. Because this coastal village has little farmland, it has no choice but to hunt (fish) for its livelihood, as stated in the guiding hanging on the temple wall:

Although the intention of those whose livelihood involves killing is wrong, it is justifiable to beg forgiveness for killing. It is not justifiable to allow killing just because it is for livelihood. Such judgment of right or wrong would determine whether one reaches the Pure Land ... if one must kill, cruel killing must be avoided as much as possible. Methods such as large net fishing, fixed net fishing, and night fishing and shooting of birds must be prohibited (Ito, 2003).

In 2006, only two nuns resided in the nunnery.²³⁾ Both were 83 years old and were well respected in the community affectionately referred to as *obii-sama* (honorable nuns). Their holy names were Ejō (blessing purity) and Jikō (nourishing light). They received these names when they entered the nunnery with a certificate and a book of principles in a ceremony 'to bid farewell to this world.' The principles observed by the nuns included various prohibitions, including certain types of food; smoking; walking alone; and contact with males, even monks.²⁴⁾

The nuns were held in high regard by the community for their devotion and the meticulous service they offered to the ancestors of every villager. They held three services a day: at 4am, 9:30am and 1:30pm, each lasting one to two hours.

Jōdo Buddhism's central belief is devotion to prayer referred to as *nenbutsu zanmai* (i.e., total dedication to praying). Numerous prayers were recited at each session, including those dedicated to Buddhism and the Jōdo sect (Amida Nyorai; Shaka; the founder of Jōdo; the founder of the temple; and *kaimyō*, names of deceased nuns and trainees), the governing figures (Tenno or the emperors and the local lord Mori), parishioners and ancestors of the nuns themselves. In between each prayer *namu amidabutsu* was repeated ten times, but the prayers were somewhat 'simplified' for the villagers to understand and recite easily, starting with *amida* with a stress on the initial 'a' to achieve greater clarity.

The nuns offered prayers to whales (*keigei gunrei*),²⁵⁾ dolphins (*kōtō gunrei*), fish (*gyorin gunrei*), and all earth creatures that may have been killed as a result of farming practices (*nōkō-chu datsume*). In the anniversary part of the prayer, names of those buried on that particular day were read out. Among them, whales and dolphins were included, along with the humans. 'The whales', the nun recounted, 'I saw one coming into the bay when I was very small. I believe women felt close to them because they [whales] give birth and raise their young'. A succession of nuns' dedication extends over 300 years. The Hōsen-an nuns are believed to be the last nuns alive to have entered a nunnery in childhood.

6. Conclusion: Spiritual Heritage for Sustainability

This article has presented the cultural properties of a former whaling community as an important heritage that expresses the spirituality and ethics still valued by the current community. It is significant that although whaling in the community ceased more than 100 years ago, the importance of the associated cultural heritage is still evident. The spirituality of the whaling community is communicated and expressed as gratitude, sympathy, and guilt. The prayers in the nunnery reflect an ironic but undeniable reality of human dependence on other lives and sympathy and deep respect for the whale species in particular.

Two aspects are particularly significant. One is that cultural properties and practices related to whaling are maintained and valued even by today's

community as their cultural heritage, acknowledging the ethics in the current fishery practice, even though they no longer engage in whaling. The whale-related culture provides the community with a clear sense of identity and some avenues for economic development, including tourism. Comprehensive tourist maps with detailed accounts of the whaling history and related cultural properties around the district are available for visitors. Volunteer guides are also available on request. The district has installed paving with whale illustrations to enhance its historical significance. This shows that tourism can play an important role in maintaining the intangible heritage at a grassroots level for both visitors and the community. Places and communities that project sustainability principles as their place-identity can develop a new form of tourism as a true form of sustainable development. Such theoretical development is critical to sustainable tourism, as already debated by many researchers (e.g., Weaver, 2006; Lansing and De Vries, 2006; Page and Connell, 2008; Tip, 2009). A firm place-based identity supported by sustainability imperatives can also avoid risks associated with, for instance, eco-imperatives (Carter, 1998) and negative types of destination life cycle (Butler, 1980).

The second significance is that pre-modern, community-based whaling did not survive the introduction of large-scale, technology-based modern whaling. However, its spiritual significance has survived. Furthermore, it contains a profound insight into the nature of sustainability with dialogical and reciprocal qualities. This is clearly reflected in the continuation of the nuns' prayers with their gratitude, sympathy, lament, guilt, and a plea for forgiveness. The prayers arise out of the hardship and emotional suffering of the former whaling community, and their expression of ethics is particularly significant because they show the conflicting but undeniable human reality of dependence on other lives: conflicts between livelihood needs and resource depletion, killing and respect for lives, and gratitude and guilt. These inconsistencies are not necessarily part of the present-day environmental debate but should underlie the concept of sustainability in this era of the anthropocene because it is time we recognize our foremost priority: to protect the integrity of the

entire ecosystem for which we are responsible. As Callicott puts it, 'We are uniquely privileged, and uniquely responsible,' and are thus obliged to show a 'collective moral sensitivity to the environment' (Callicott, 1994: 22). Such moral responsibility is acutely and movingly stated by Carl Sagan in his 1994 publication *Pale Blue Dot*: 'to underscore our responsibility to deal more kindly with one another, and to preserve and cherish the pale blue dot, the only home we've ever known'.

The ethics in the anthropocene should reflect a profound humbleness and appreciation of Planet Earth that allows us to maintain the ability to reciprocate -to respond to the invisible and intangible blessings we receive. This in turn enables us to form a strong place-based identity that supports the sound development of both place and community. It also indicates the direction research should take toward global interdisciplinary collaboration by all academic disciplines -the sciences, eco-humanities and the arts.

Post 3.11 thoughts

On March 11, 2011, an earthquake and tsunami overwhelmed over 500 km of the coastline of northeast Japan, devastating more than 40 towns and villages and claiming nearly 20,000 lives. Recovery from this unprecedented scale of damage will be a long slow process. What strikes me particularly about this devastation, every time I visit the affected areas, is the vulnerability of our energy and material-dependent society; the complex and in some cases unsuitable infrastructures of the built environment clearly exacerbated damage and is delaying the recovery, whereas fishing villages with more simple, naturally derived systems show an ability to reform quickly. The resilience and strength of humanity is also a striking feature and a ray of hope in the devastation -physical, mental and spiritual strength is slowly but steadily restoring places and recreating ways to live and sustain. This strength lies in the reflection, humbleness toward the natural power, gratitude for life and the compassion shown by the communities and those gathering to help.²⁶⁾ Humble reflection must remain the basis for reconstruction, to achieve better and more sustainable ways of living, politically, economically and culturally. For all of us living in the

anthropocene, it is a time for serious rethinking. The situation in Japan post 3.11 has added significant meaning to the title of this chapter -'Ethics in the Anthropocene'- especially in the care and compassion offered to both human and non-human worlds, and in the humble respect shown to the more-than-human.

Notes

- 1) The term Anthropocene was coined in Cruzen and Stoermer (2000). The term acknowledges human impact on the environmental changes since industrial revolution.
- 2) As an example of ecohumanities scholarship, see Kangaloon Group for Creative Ecology www.kangaloon.org and Australina Humanities Review <http://www.australianhumanitiesreview.org/>
- 3) Norberg-Schulz in Hay (2000: 156).
- 4) Kuyo is translated from Sanskrit puja or pooja meaning reverence or worship in Hinduism (Encyclopedia of Japanese Folklore Culture, <http://www.bankoku-needle.co.jp/japanese/story/kuyou.html>)
- 5) eg., Hiroshima Peace Memorial erected in 1955.
- 6) Held on February 8 or December 18. Needles are placed in soft objects such as bean curd to give them a rest after hard work.
- 7) This section builds on the author's previous work, Kato, K (2007a). The author acknowledges the on-going support from Nagato Cultureal Heritage Advisor Mr Fujii Yoshifumi.
- 8) Omi-jima (Blue Ocean Island). The city of Nagato was originally established in 1954 (including Kayoi), and three towns were merged into Nagato in 2005. Nagato's current population is 17,865 (Nagato City). Extensive merger reflects Japan's highly aging and declining population in remote areas (*Kaso* phenomenon).
- 9) The Japanese archipelago consists of four main islands and 6,366 small islands.
- 10) The number of fishing households is 48; motorized boats 208; fishing business 176. Many of the privately owned boats are under 5 tons and classified as category 3 boats. Related industries are food processing (mainly dried fish product), net mending, and boat repairing (Nagato City, Data of Nagato, 2005). There is one grocery store and one guest house in Kayoi. Main fish species are squid, bream, yellowtail, sardine, and grunt, and fish products are mostly dried fish and fish cake. Other methods include long-line fishing, fixed shore net fishing, towed net fishing, and free diving.
- 11) Yokoyama (1872–1943) traveled through the region from 1915 to 1918 and published '*Travelling through Chōshū*' (*Chōshū Yuranki*, 1930), in which he wrote, 'Alps are not necessarily on land. They also exist in the ocean. We can call this spectacular

scenery *Ocean Alps*' (Nagato Historic Society, History of Nagato, <http://www6.ocn.ne.jp/omijima/yokoyama.htm>).

- 12) O-plant means karamushi or Chinese silk plant (*Boehmeria nivea*).
- 13) Okiura was a place name and Kawauchi was a shrine in Kawajiri Bay.
- 14) Established in 1175 by Honen. One of the major Buddhist sects in Japan. Prayers are *nenbutsu: namu amidabutsu*. It pays homage to Amida, the central deity of the Pure Land sects, Jōdo-shū, and Jōdo-shinshū. It is believed that those who have a deep faith in Amida and repeatedly recite *namu amidabutsu* can be born into the Pure Land. JAANUS, 2006, <http://www.aisf.or.jp/jaanus/> (accessed September 25, 2006).
- 15) *Ekō* in Jōdo-shū and *hōe* in Jōdo Shin-shū. *Ekō* may be commonly referred to as *kuyō*. In Jōdo-shū *hōe* is more commonly used.
- 16) Its first volume has been lost and the third and fourth volumes are replicas made in the Showa era.
- 17) Some examples of the names include: cold, honor, graceful, white (March, 1807), spring, honor, accept, good (January 6, 1810), fish, honor, prayer, west (February, 1812), heroic, belief, grand, male (March, 1834)
- 18) Personal communication.
- 19) One is in Enoshima, buried with the hazashi's clothes, and the other is in Muroto, buried with a child's clothes (Nakazono, 2001).
- 20) One of the three donors differs from those for tomb. The two families are closely associated, and this is considered to honor both families.
- 21) 170 ryo. Estimated to be approximately 34 million yen today.
- 22) Ships were referred to as *kurofune* (black ships). Yokohama celebrated the 150th anniversary of the treaty in 2004.
- 23) As of 2009, one of the nuns lives in a nursing home. 241 nuns are recorded in the temple history book. All comments are from the interviews held at the nunnery (2009).
- 24) Rules include restrictions on food with distinct smell such as onion, leek, garlic, and chives. Male visitors must be met at the front entrance by all nuns present and leave as soon as they finish their business; no males, even priests or the nuns' fathers, are allowed after 6pm (this applies to all visitors) not to mention staying overnight. Even today, the nuns prepare all meal themselves.
- 25) Kei-gei are male and female whales; gunrei are spirits of the group. The gei character is no longer in use today.
- 26) As of June, 2012, volunteer workers exceeded one million.

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