

Herring Fishery Lodge as a Tangible Cultural Asset of Hokkaido Government

Nishin Goten (Herring Fishery Lodge) was originally built in Tomari-village, west of the Shakotan Peninsula, on a narrow beach between the cliff and sea water's edge. It was relocated to its current location in Otaru during 1958 by The Hokkaido Colliery and Steamship Company. The company originating from western Hokkaido later donated *Nishin Goten* to Otaru City.

On 31st May, 1960, *Nishin Goten* was selected as a "Tangible Cultural Asset of Hokkaido Government: Herring Fishery Construction." This Herring Fishery Lodge was the first residential building in Hokkaido to achieve such status. Inside the Lodge, many valuable pictures and artifacts are exhibited, including fishing tools, equipment for the processing of fish as well as an assortment of house goods used by fishermen while living in this Lodge.



▲ Pictures and household goods

History

The Herring fishery's most prosperous period was during the 19th century, and it ended during the early part of the 20th century. Many herring lodges were built along the coastal regions surrounding Hokkaido, in particular on the Japan Sea side, centered in the vicinity of the Shakotan Peninsula.



▲ Mr. Fukumatsu Tanaka

Nishin Goten was one of these herring lodges and built by Mr. Fukumatsu Tanaka, a Herring fisheries Owner along the west coast of the Peninsula. The construction of this Lodge took seven years, and it was finally completed during 1898. Among the existing lodges, *Nishin Goten* is a large-sized lodge, retaining its original architectural style in that of the Meiji era (1868 to 1912). *Nishin Goten* is a precious herring fishery structure that reflects the architecture and conditions that would have been experienced during the prime time of the Herring era.

Fishing Situation

90% of the herring caught were not used as food but were processed as fertilizers. *Nishin-Kasu* (herring fertilizer) was of great quality and traded at a high price.

Nishin-Kasu was produced by pressing pre-boiled herring. Herring fertilizer was commonly used in cotton and indigo fields, but it was also found useful with other crops throughout, in particular, western Japan.

At its busiest during the heyday of *Tanaka-gyoba* (fishing grounds managed by Tanaka), around 120 migrant fishermen lived in the Herring Fishery Lodge. As many as 30 fishermen remained in this house even during off-season. Tanaka also owned other fishing places. The fixed nets were called *Tateami*. Each fixed net required 35 to 40 fishermen to handle. Tanaka owned 15 to 18 fixed nets and therefore needed to employ over 500 people at any one time during the herring fishing season. Tanaka also employed local workers to fulfill his requirement when necessary.



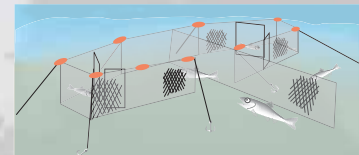
▲ Fertilizer being prepared as a gift for the royal family of Japan

Founder

Mr. Fukumatsu Tanaka, who built this Herring Fishery Lodge, was called *Nishindaijin* (Herring millionaire) and one of the leading fishing owners in the area of the Shakotan Peninsula. He was born in the north end of the main island of Japan. At the age of 17 years old in 1854, he came to Hokkaido to work for his uncle as a fisherman. He soon became independent of his uncle and started his own business. He gradually shifted his fishing method from the gill net to the fixed net fishery. As a result, the herring catch reached 7,500 tons.



▲ Gill net (Sashiami)



▲ Fixed net (Tateami)

Building Structure

Nishin Goten is a split level two-story construction with a total area of 611.9m². The architectural style of this Lodge is *Kiritsuma-zukuri* (gable roof), which would have been a typical style in the north-east area of Japan for residential houses during that period.

This Herring Fishery Lodge has many unique characteristics. For example, you can see a chimney with *Irimoya-zukuri* (combination of *Kiritsuma-zukuri* and a hipped roof) built nicely on the center of the large roof. On the whole, the Lodge reflects the architectural style similar to that of temples, which is a particularly unique feature for residential buildings. Equally interesting is the fact the owner and his fishermen lived together in this Lodge, though their rooms were separated and the atmosphere and the quality of each room was also different.



▲ Inside of Herring Lodge

Building Materials

Nishin Goten is constructed from approximately 540 tons of timber. Timbers such as *tamo* (Japanese ash), *sen* (castor aralia), *todomatsu* (fir) grown in Hokkaido and *hinoki*, which grows in the north end of the main island were the main building materials. It would be possible to build over 20 standard sized houses using the amount of materials used within this Lodge. Although wood was in abundant supply during that time, the sheer volume used for this historic residence reflected the power and wealth of the fishing magnates during the prime time of the herring fishery.

