

The Memory of a Whaling Catcher Boat: A Practice of Art and Research to Tie Two Images Found in Norway and Japan

ある捕鯨船の記憶:

ノルウェーと日本で発見されたふたつのイメージを結ぶアートとリサーチの実践

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1. Introduction: Art and Research Activities / アートとリサーチの実践



Publication Project "Ordinary Whales / ありふれたくじら"

BACK NUMBERS

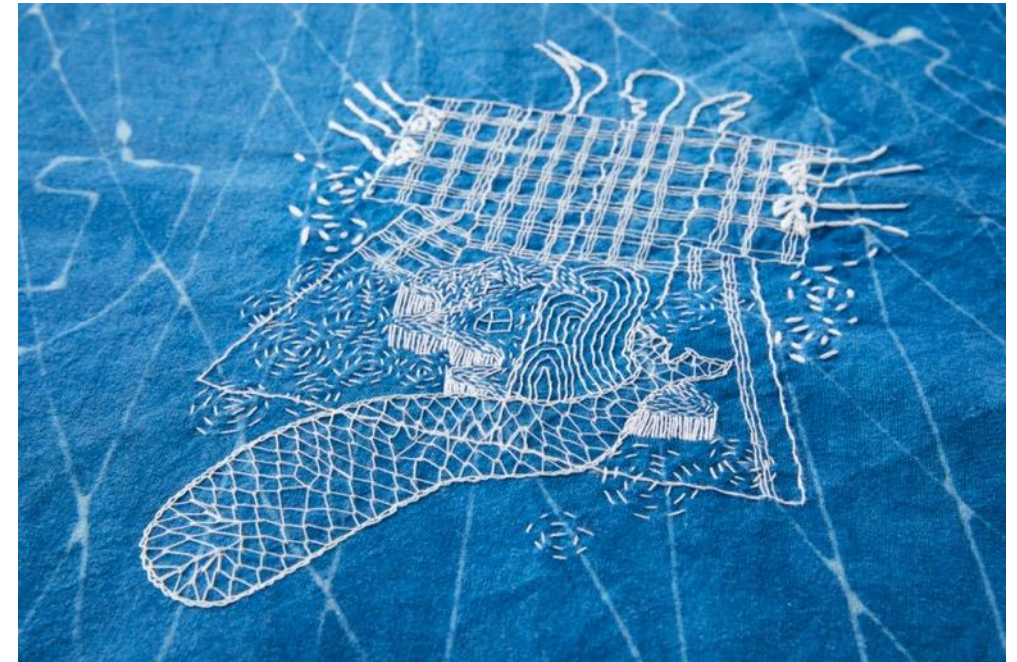
- Vol.1: Aji Island / Ayukawahama 網地島／鮎川浜 (2016) | 日本・宮城県
- Vol.2: Point Hope ポイント・ホープ (2016) | アメリカ・アラスカ州
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(Artwork: Sakura Koretsune / Photo: Isao Negishi)

"Ordinary Whales" is my publication project. I visit various places where whales appear around the world. I do fieldwork and ask people what they have seen, thought, believed, and experienced through whales (and other cetaceans).

This publication will be woven with texts and embroideries based on these stories. Someday, these collected words will cover the world like a patchwork quilt, revealing an unforeseen image of humans and whales together.

(From the preface of "Ordinary Whales")



Embroidered images inspired by stories of whales become illustrations for "Ordinary Whales" booklets.

2. From Fieldwork: Finding Connections in Sceneries with Whales

フィールドワークから鯨にまつわる風景の重なりと異なりを探る

Whale bone gates / arches have been found in many parts of the world. Many of them are found in areas where whaling activities were conducted.



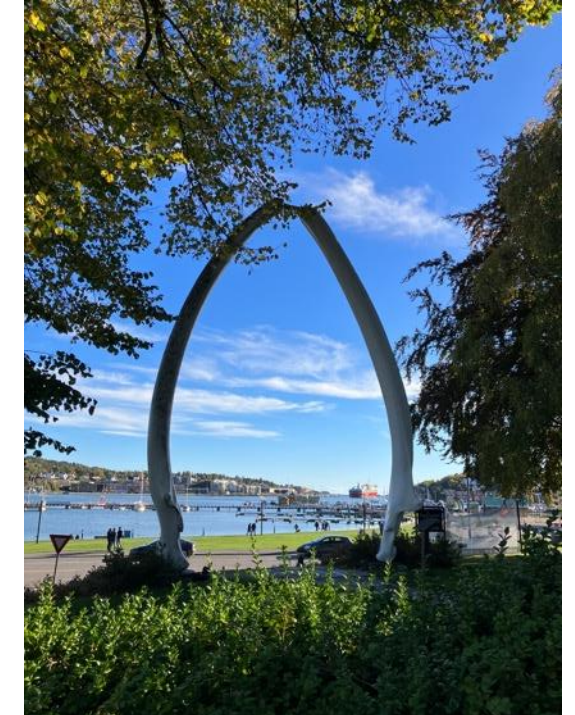
Whale bones stand at a festival ground. Point Hope, Alaska, U.S.A. (2016)



Whale bone *torii* at Ebisu Shrine, Taiji, Wakayama, Japan (2016)
和歌山県太地町
恵比寿神社の鯨骨鳥居



The Sag Harbor Whaling & Historical Museum, Sag Harbor, New York, U.S.A. (2019)



Whale bone arch in Sandefjord, Norway (2022)

2. From Fieldwork: Finding Connections in Sceneries with Whales フィールドワークから鯨にまつわる風景の重なりと異なりを探る



Whale bone arch erected by H. Henriksen to honour visit of King Haakon VII, 1906.
H. Henriksen Mek. Verksted A/S. Tønsberg, Norway. 2023.



An photo of whale bone torii, Katta Shrine, Noboribetsu, Hokkaido, Japan.
Date is unknown. 2021.
北海道登別市・刈田神社にあった鯨骨鳥居

A Japanese scholar, Yoshikazu Uni of Tokyo University of Agriculture has reported that the Japanese whale bone *torii* is a variation of whale bone arch brought from Norway during the whaling technology transfer.

Whale bone *torii* is constructed with a pair of jaw bones or ribs of whales.

In Norway, whale bone arches and gates have been built as symbols of whaling stations and at places relating to whaling. In Tønsberg, a whale bone arch was erected to honor King Haakon VII's first visit to the town in 1906.

In Japan and other countries near Japan, whale bone arches were built in whaling stations where Norwegian captains/gunners worked in the early twentieth century. Whale bone *torii* began to appear in overseas *Shinto* shrines in relation to Japanese whaling operations and later in local shrines in Japan. Today, some shrines in Japan have whale bone *torii* and locals continue to replace them as they become weathered.

参考 / Reference : 宇仁義和 「『鯨骨鳥居』は西欧の鯨骨門から転化した」 日本セトロロジー研究 (29):15-20.

Uni, Yoshikazu. 2019. "Whale bone torii is a variation of the Western whale bone arch." *Japan Cetology* (29):15-20. (in Japanese).

https://doi.org/10.5181/cetology.0.29_15

3. Whaling History of Japan and the World／日本と世界の捕鯨史

Outside of Japan

After 16th century: Whaling Activities of Europeans and Americans expanded.

17th to 18th centuries: Commercial whaling began in the Atlantic and spread to the Pacific and Arctic oceans.

Early 19th Century: Abundant whale population discovered in the seas near Japan.
Whaling ships rushed to the seas of Kuril Islands, the Kamchatka Peninsula, and the Bering Sea.

In Japan

Up to 15th Century: Hand-harpoon whaling (突き取り式捕鯨) had begun.

Late 17th Century: Net-whaling (網取式捕鯨) by an organized group, *kujiragumi* (鯨組), began in Taiji, Wakayama. The method expanded to Shikoku and Kyusyu.

After 1820s: Whaling groups experienced extremely poor catch of whales.
The expansion of Japanese whaling and the whaling activities of Americans and other countries near Japan are thought to cause drastic decrease of number of whales.

Japanese attempted to transplant net-whaling to new fishing grounds and introduce the American style of whaling, but both did not turn out well.

4. Whaling History of Japan and Norway / 日本とノルウェーの捕鯨史

Norwegian system of whaling / ノルウェー式捕鯨

A Norwegian pioneer in seal hunting and whaling, **Svend Foyen** (1809-1894) introduced a steam-powered whaling boat and grenade harpoon. The method was patented in 1870. The innovative method enabled whalers to catch fin whales, which were difficult to catch as they swim fast and sink when they die.

In 1889, Russian started the Norwegian system of whaling in the water of northeastern Asia. The whaling ground extended from the Sea of Japan to the Korean Peninsula coast. Early Japanese entrepreneurs attempted to introduce the Norwegian system of whaling in Japan but failed.

In 1899, a Japanese entrepreneur **Jūrō Oka 岡十郎**(1870-1923) succeeded in introducing the Norwegian system of whaling to Japan. Oka traveled to Norway and visited manufacturers of whaling boats and equipment. Oka observed the whaling in Finnmark, Norway.

参考 / Reference:

神長英輔「北東アジアにおける近代捕鯨業の黎明」 スラヴ研究 (49) 2002 / KAMINAGA Eisuke, «The Dawn of Modern Whaling in Northeast Asia», Slavic Studies No. 49.

東洋捕鯨株式会社 [編] 「明治期日本捕鯨誌」 1989 / Toyo Hogeï Kabushiki Kaisha, *Meijiki Nihon Hogeishi* ,1989.



“HARPUNKANON, Type H. Henriksen, Tønsberg”
Kabelvåg, Norway. 2023.
Old harpoon cannons are often exhibited in coastal
areas of Norway.

4. Whaling History of Japan and Norway: Jūrō Oka／日本とノルウェーの捕鯨史：岡十郎



Jūrō Oka sent postcards from Norway to Japan. The postcards tell Oka stayed in Grand Hotel in Kristiania (Oslo) and Smebys Hotel in Bergen.

One of the postcards was sent from Finnes, Ingøya of Finnmark, in northern Norway on the edge of the Arctic Ocean, Barents sea.

Oka told his wife that he visited the world's northernmost lighthouse, or Fruholmen lighthouse in Ingøya.

Several whaling stations ran in Finnmark around this time.

The image is provided by Kiichirō OKA and Hagi Museum.

画像提供：岡毅一郎、萩博物館

参考 / Reference : 伊佐奈新報 大正12年2月25日 / Isana Shinpo, 1923, February 25.

4. Whaling History of Japan and Norway: Changes in Japanese Whaling

日本とノルウェーの捕鯨史：日本の捕鯨の変化

In 1899, Oka established Nihon Enyo Gyogyo Kabushiki Kaisya. (日本遠洋漁業株式会社) in Senzaki (仙崎), Yamaguchi, Japan. It was the first Japanese company succeeded in the modern whaling industry using the Norwegian system of whaling. The company later became Toyo Gyogyo K. K. (東洋漁業株式会社) and Toyo Hogeï K. K. (東洋捕鯨株式会社).

Senzaki is in the area where the old net and harpoon whaling was conducted by the locals. Cultural and religious practices associated with the traditional whaling are found, including the tomb for whale fetuses that died with the mother whales (青海島鯨墓), the death register for whales hunted or died in the area (鯨位牌、鯨鯢過去帳), song for whaling (通鯨唄), and today's whale festival (通くじら祭り).



Whale Festival to re-enact the net-whaling of the past. 2022.

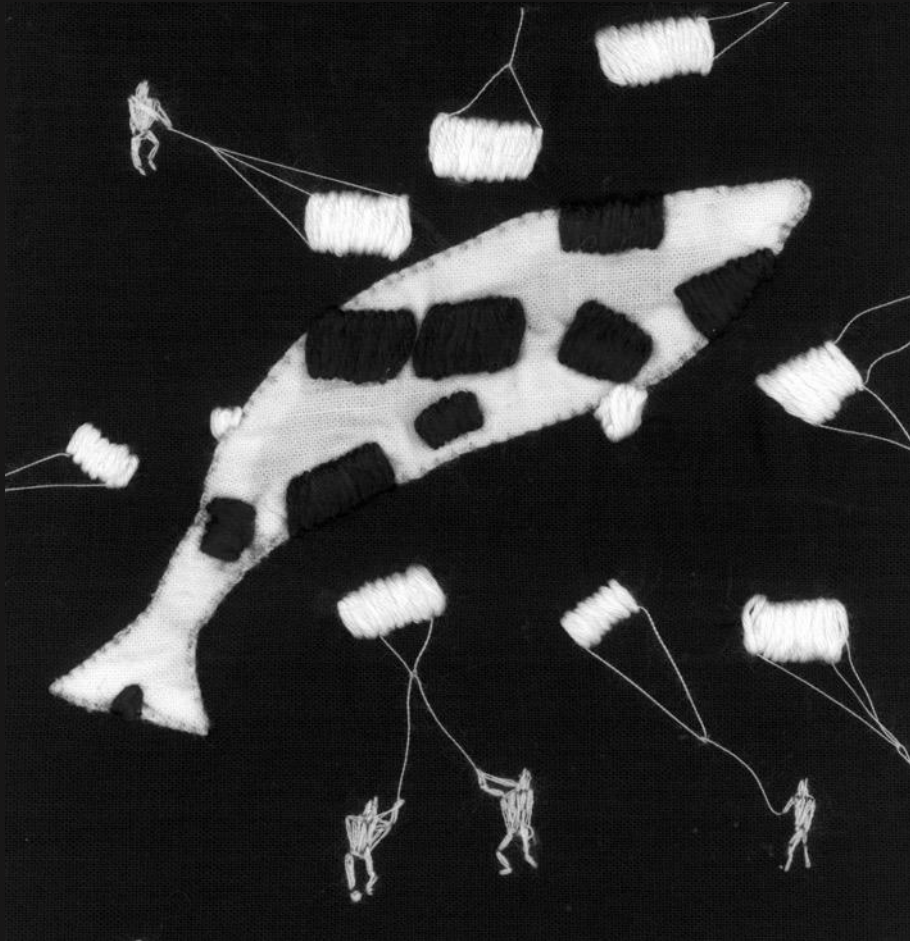


Whale Tomb in Oumijima, Nagato. The tomb was constructed in 1962 for whale fetuses that the local whaling association did not intend to kill. 2022.



Whaling songs sung during the labor of whaling and at banquets of the whaling groups and communities. The songs are taught to children even today. 2022.

4. Whaling History of Japan and Norway: Transformation of Whales and Whaling among Japanese 日本とノルウェーの捕鯨史：日本にとっての鯨と捕鯨の変化



Embroidered images inspired by stories of whales become illustrations for “Ordinary Whales” booklets. (Photo: Sakura Koretsune)

Studying the era of the technology transfer of whaling from Norway to Japan, the cultural process of how the local community's values changed while they adapted to the new whaling technology may be understood, and that may give us a clue to understand how today's Japanese view on whaling is shaped.

Morita Katsuaki argues that the technology transfer era brought up new whaling industries in Japan, and whales were transformed from a cultural entity to a natural resource.

参考 / Reference:

森田勝昭 『鯨と捕鯨の文化史』 名古屋大学出版会 1994年

Morita, Katsuaki. 1994. *Kujira to hoge no bunkashi (Cultural History of Whales and Whaling)*. Nagoya: The University of Nagoya Press. (in Japanese).

5. Whaling Relations of Japan and Norway: Records from Technology Transfer Era

日本とノルウェーの捕鯨の関わり:技術移入時期の記録

During the technology transfer era of the Norwegian system of whaling, the whaling catcher boat was multinational workplace. However, only a few details are known from this era.

In 2016, Yoshikazu Uni of Tokyo University of Agriculture found a collection of glass negatives taken by Henrik Govenius Melsom (1870-1944) around 1900 in Slottsfjellsmuseet, Tønsberg, Norway.

Uni examined the glass negatives and identified scenes on whaling catcher boats as well as whaling related sites in Japan and Korea. The result is in an explanatory note:

"Explanatory notes for The Sigrid Govenius Melsom Glass Negative Collection Shoot by Henrik Govenius Melsom in China, Japan, and Korea» - available online at:

«Hjelp fra Japan – gamle fotografier identifisert»

<https://vestfoldmuseene.no/samlingsforvaltningen/hjelp-fra-japan-gamle-fotografier-identifisert>



H. G. Melsom was a well-known whaling captain, gunner, and shipowner who served on board Japanese whaling ships until 1912.



The collection of glass negatives was kept by Sigrid Govenius Melsom (1903-2001), the second daughter of H. G. Melsom. Sigrid was born in Nagasaki, Japan.

Source: Glass negative from Henrik Govenius Melsoms Collection / Vestfoldmuseene.

5. Whaling Relations of Japan and Norway: Glass Negatives by H. G. Melsom

日本とノルウェーの捕鯨の関わり:H・G・メルソムのガラスネガ



The whale catcher Main. 捕鯨船メイン号



On a boat. A Japanese woman is in the center.



This seems to be in Korea, Melsom's family and local people?



This seems to be in Japan.



Jangsaengpo (長生浦 장생포) whaling station of Nagasaki
Hogei K. K. in Ulsan (蔚山 울산), Korea

Source: Glass negative from Henrik Govenius Melsoms Collection / Vestfoldmuseene.

Reference: "Explanatory notes for The Sigrid Govenius Melsom Glass Negative Collection Shoot by Henrik Govenius Melsom in China, Japan, and Korea»
<https://vestfoldmuseene.no/samlingsforvaltningen/hje-lp-fra-japan-gamle-fotografier-identifisert>

5. Whaling Relations of Japan and Norway: H. G. Melsom

日本とノルウェーの捕鯨の関わり:H・G・メルソム

Henrik Govenius Melsom Short Bio / 略歴

(1870-1944)

1870 Born in Stokke, Norway

Early career - experienced seal hunting and whaling in northern Norway

1894 Worked on his first whaling boat with Kejzerling (ケイゼリング) on

Korean Peninsula coast. (太平洋捕鯨会社。朝鮮半島沿岸にて操業)

1897-1912 Worked for Russian, Japanese, and Norwegian whaling companies.

(*1904-1905 Russo-Japanese War / 日露戦争)

1912 Returned to Norway for good

1919 Established Melsom & Melsom in Larvik, Norway (with his cousin of the same age, Magnus E. Melsom)

→ Led the era of whaling factory ship / 母船式捕鯨の時代を拓く

* 1934 Helped Shibuya Tatsusaburō (渋谷辰三郎) of Nippon Suisan K. K. (日本水産株式会社) and others who visited Norway for the purchase of the Norwegian factory ship Antarctic (later renamed to the Tonan Maru (図南丸)).

参考 / Reference: Notes of Erling Melsom, 渋谷辰三郎 捕鯨回顧 私家版 昭和42年 / SHIBUYA Tatsusaburō, *Hogei Kaiko*, 1967. (in Japanese)



A photo including Shibuya Tatsusaburō (渋谷辰三郎) and another Japanese visitor to Tønsberg. The photo is kept at H. Henriksen AS, and the family is the descendent of H. G. Melsom. 2023.

5. Whaling Relations of Japan and Norway: H. G. Melsom

日本とノルウェーの捕鯨の関わり:H・G・メルソム

H.G. Melsom and Japan

- During his time as a whaling captain and gunner with the Japanese whaling industry until 1912, and even after his return to Norway, he appears several times in Japanese books and magazines alongside Svend Foyn.
- In 1906-1907, a Japanese novelist Suiin Emi went on board whaling boats, made observations, and wrote detailed essays on Melsom's work. Melsom was mentioned as "the best gunner in the world".
→ 江見水蔭『捕鯨船：実地探検』博文館 1907、「捕鯨少年」『少年世界』12(9) 博文館 1906
- To what extent was he known?
→ Searched in the Digital Collections of the National Diet Library (NDL) / 国立国会図書館デジタルコレクション with different combinations of misspellings and variety of spellings:
H. G. Melsom: Melsom、Melson、メルソム、メルソン
Norway: ノルウェー、ノルウエー、ノルウェー、ノルウエー
→ Melsom appeared not only in whaling-related books and specialized magazines but also in magazines and books for children and social studies materials.

For example:

〈…ノルウエー人の**メルソン**という人が、海の上だけで陸にたよらないで作業ができれば、どこの国にもさしさわりがなければかりでなく、今よりもきつと多くの鯨をとることができるに違いないと考え、そこで造られたのが「浮かべる工場」と呼ばれる捕鯨母船なのです。〉

“A Norwegian man named **Melson** thought that if he could work on the sea and not on land, there would be no conflict with other countries, and he would be able to take more whales than he could now. It was called a ‘floating factory.’” (my translation from the Japanese text above.)

(月刊 私たちの社会科 [2] (1) 日本研究社 1949年 / Monthly Our Social Studies [2] (1) Nippon Kenkyusha, 1949)

H. G. Melsom and Roy Chapman Andrews

Roy Chapman Andrews (1884-1960) : an explorer, paleontologist, and a well-known figure at the American Museum of Natural History / アメリカ自然史博物館.

Andrews and Melsom met during Andrews' whaling expedition.

- Excerpt from Andrews' activities
1910: Japanese Whaling Expedition (Japan)
1911 - 1917: Named Assistant Curator of Mammalogy
1911 - 1912: Andrews Whaling Expedition to Korea (Japan and Korea)

*Toyo Hogeï Kabushiki Kaisha (東洋捕鯨株式会社) helped Andrews' research in Japan and presented skeletons of all the large Japanese cetaceans to the museum.

“I cannot mention, individually, all the gunners who have entertained me ashore and afloat, but the kindness of Captains **H. G. Melsom**, Fred Olsen and Y. E. Andersen I shall never forget. **Captain Melsom** has also read portions of the manuscript of this book and in criticism has afforded me the benefit of his long experience and keen observation.”

(Roy Chapman Andrews, *Whale hunting with gun and camera: A naturalist's account of the modern shore-whaling industry, of whales and their habits, and of hunting experiences in various parts of the world*. Kindle Edition. July 9, 2023 / First Edition published in 1916.)

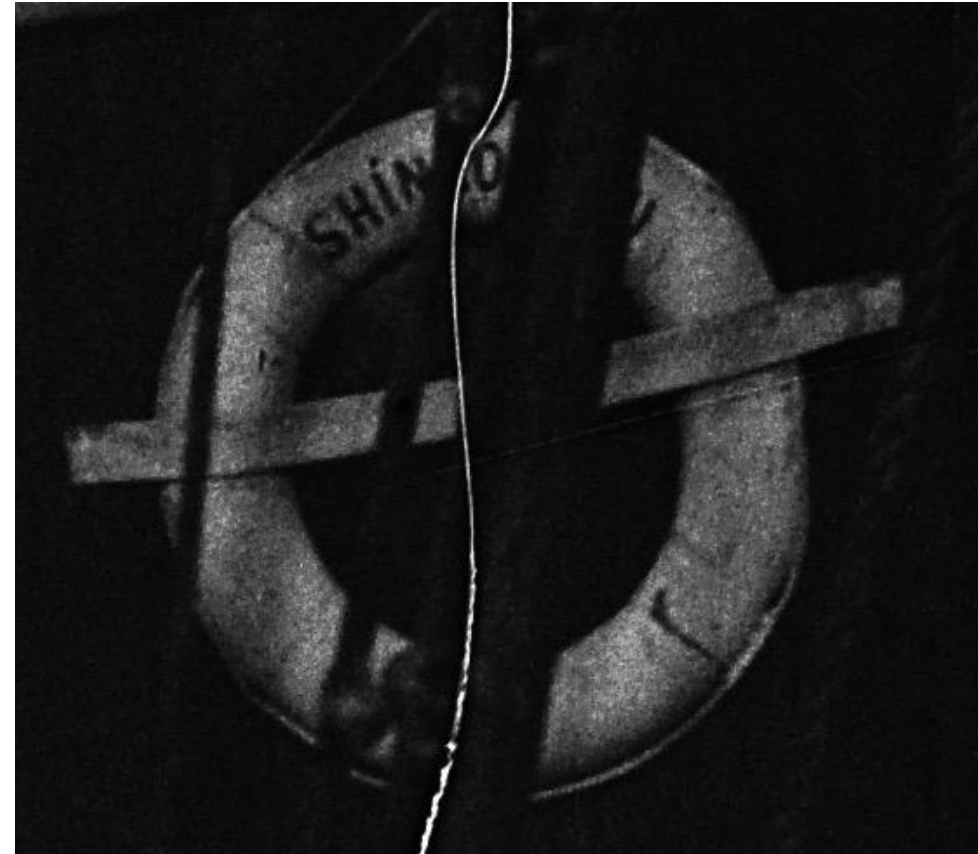
Reference: American Museum of Natural History

https://data.library.amnh.org/archives-authorities/id/amnhp_1000042

4. Whaling Relations of Japan and Norway: Glass Negatives by H. G. Melsom

日本とノルウェーの捕鯨の関わり:H・G・メルソムのガラスネガ

Source: Glass negative from Henrik Govenius Melsoms Collection / Vestfoldmuseene.



I got interested in this photo.
The detail of this photo was unknown. On the
Lifebuoy, letters "SHIN...O...U" can be recognized.
Possibly the name of this boat was on the lifebuoy.

6. Tracing the History of Whaling: Whalers' crafts, scrimshaw

捕鯨史を辿る:捕鯨船乗りたちの工芸、スクリムショー



Whaling ships went to the Antarctic Ocean from Ayukawahama. It took a one month voyage to come back to Japan; thus, whaling sailors killed time by carving the teeth of sperm whales. They made penguin-shaped ornaments, small *kannon* goddess statues, pipes, and so on. Carpenter's tools such as knives, files, and sandpaper were provided on whaling ships. A man who knows about the olden days says, "Whaling sailors could think out a method with what they had, as long as they were willing to make something."

(An interview at Ayukawa, Miyagi Prefecture, Japan. From "Ordinary Whales Vol.1 Aji Island / Ayukawahama", 2016)

A penguin of sperm whale tooth made by Henrik Henriksen

"I went to the Antarctic with a whaling ship at the age of 18. I wanted to work in the whaling industry and go on a voyage. I was the youngest among 18 men on board. It was 6 months voyage, and I had plenty of time. I made this penguin with a sperm whale tooth. I used a file and sandpaper."

(An episode I heard from Henrik Henriksen /born in 1937. Tønsberg, Norway. 2023.)



Left: Penguins of sperm whale teeth at the Whaling Museum, Sandefjord, Norway



Right: A penguin of sperm whale tooth In Taiji, Wakayama, Japan.

6. Tracing the History of Whaling: Whalers' crafts, scrimshaw 捕鯨史を辿る:捕鯨船乗りたちの工芸、スクリムショー



Hvalbarde, dekorert. Japansk tekst på baksiden.
IDENTIFIER: HS.00322 / PART OF
COLLECTION: Sandefjordmuseene
INSTITUTION: Kommandør Chr. Christensens Hvalfangstmuseum
<https://digitaltmuseum.no/011025269059/barde>

Decorated baleen with Japanese text on the back side, in the collection of Hvalfangstmuseum, Sandefjordmuseene, Norway.

- Front side: The catcher has the Norwegian flag on the stern,; the catcher belongs to a Norwegian owner. The funnel mark is of Toyo Hoge K. K.
- Back side: The Japanese text says: 「長崎縣南松浦郡 有川村 高井良之 畫」 “Painted by Takai Yoshiyuki, Arikawamura, Nagasaki Minamimatsuragun”

This particular baleen was painted by a Japanese person and is in the collection of a Norwegian museum.
I wish to find out how this painted baleen got to Norway from Japan.

Elderly women in Ayukawahama said they painted baleen when they were young. They painted illustrations of whaling boats on baleen with oil-based paint, as watercolor would peel off. Painted baleen were displayed on ceiling beams, or sold to visitors as souvenirs.
(An interview at Ayukawa, Miyagi Prefecture, Japan. From “Ordinary Whales Vol.1 Aji Island / Ayukawahama”, 2016)

Long-term voyages of pelagic whaling provided whalers extra time to create crafts from whale materials. The crafts are also called scrimshaw or folk art of whalers. Norwegian and Japanese whalers painted baleens as decorative objects, and the similarities in painting styles and motifs can be found.

7. The Memory of a Whaling Catcher Boat: Baleen Ema

ある捕鯨船の記憶:クジラヒゲ絵馬

Question: If Japanese whalers painted whale baleen, would they use such craft only as ornaments? They might have dedicated the baleen painting to *Shinto* shrines as "ema" (votive paintings). I asked museums and researchers, and found some examples of baleen paintings dedicated to shrines as "ema". Among them, I encountered an ema dedicated to a *Shinto* shrine in Hagi, Yamaguchi, in Japan.



Whale baleen Ema / Votive painting found in Hagi, Yamaguchi, Japan



資料提供：椿八幡宮、萩博物館

The image is provided by Tsubakihachimangu and Hagi Museum.

7. The Memory of a Whaling Catcher Boat: Baleen Ema

ある捕鯨船の記憶:クジラヒゲ絵馬

The whaling ship depicted on the ema was "Shinkomaru."

1906 - **SHINKO MARU** / 神功丸 was built by Akers mek. Værksted, Kristiania to replace a whaling catcher **Regina** that sank in December 1905. **Regina** was owned by a Norwegian company and chartered.

The new catcher, **SHINKO MARU** was chartered by Toyo Gyogyo K.K..

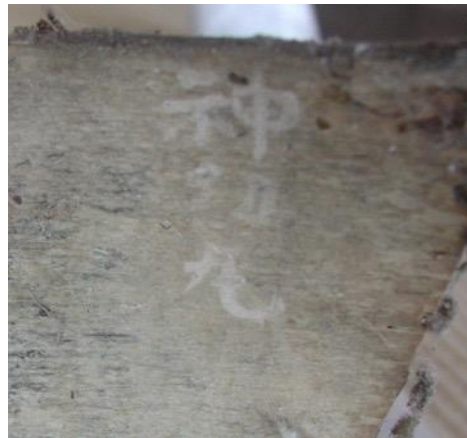
H.G. Melsom was the gunner on it for three years.

In 1907, **SHINKO MARU** was sold to Nagato Hogeï K. K. of Japan.

Reference: Tønnessen, Joh. N. (Johan Nicolay). *Den moderne hvalfangsts historie: opprinnelse og utvikling. 2 D. a : Verdensfangsten 1883-1924 1883-1914.* xx:Aschehoug, 1967

SHINKO MARU / 神功丸 could be named after 神功皇后 (Empress Jingū, Jingū-kōgō).

- Empress Jingū has been widely worshiped in Yamaguchi Prefecture, where whaling took place.
- Empress Jingū is worshiped as the goddess of fishing.
- The whaling was conducted near the Korean Peninsula, thus the industry may admire Empress Jingū, who is known for the invasion of the Korean Peninsula.



資料提供：椿八幡宮、萩博物館
The image is provided by
Tsubakihachimangu and Hagi Museum.

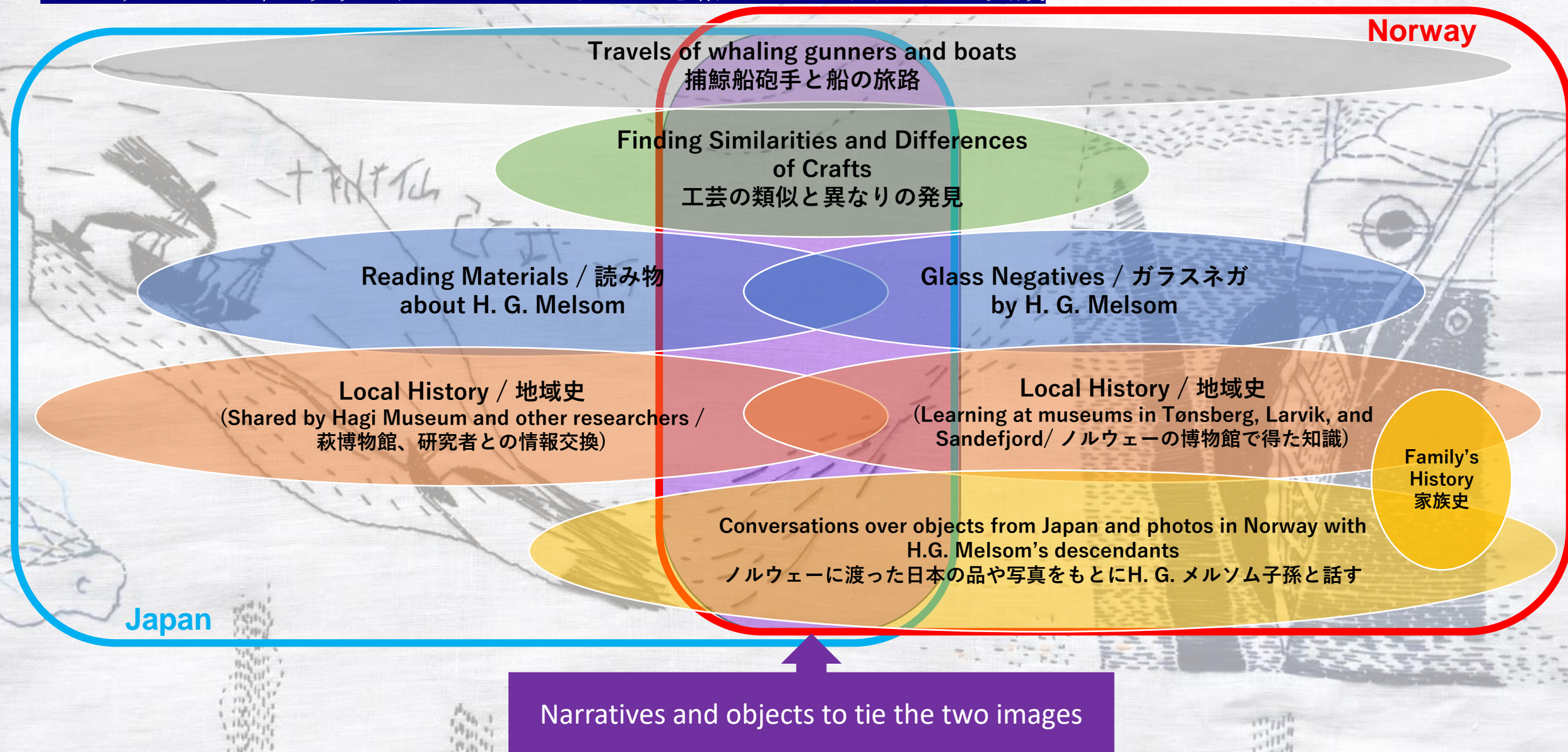
The baleen ema is weathered, but the Japanese flag on the stern can be recognized. The flag on the stern show the country of the ownership. The image may be painted after the purchase of Shinko Maru.



Source: Glass negative from Henrik Govenius Melsoms Collection / Vestfoldmuseene.

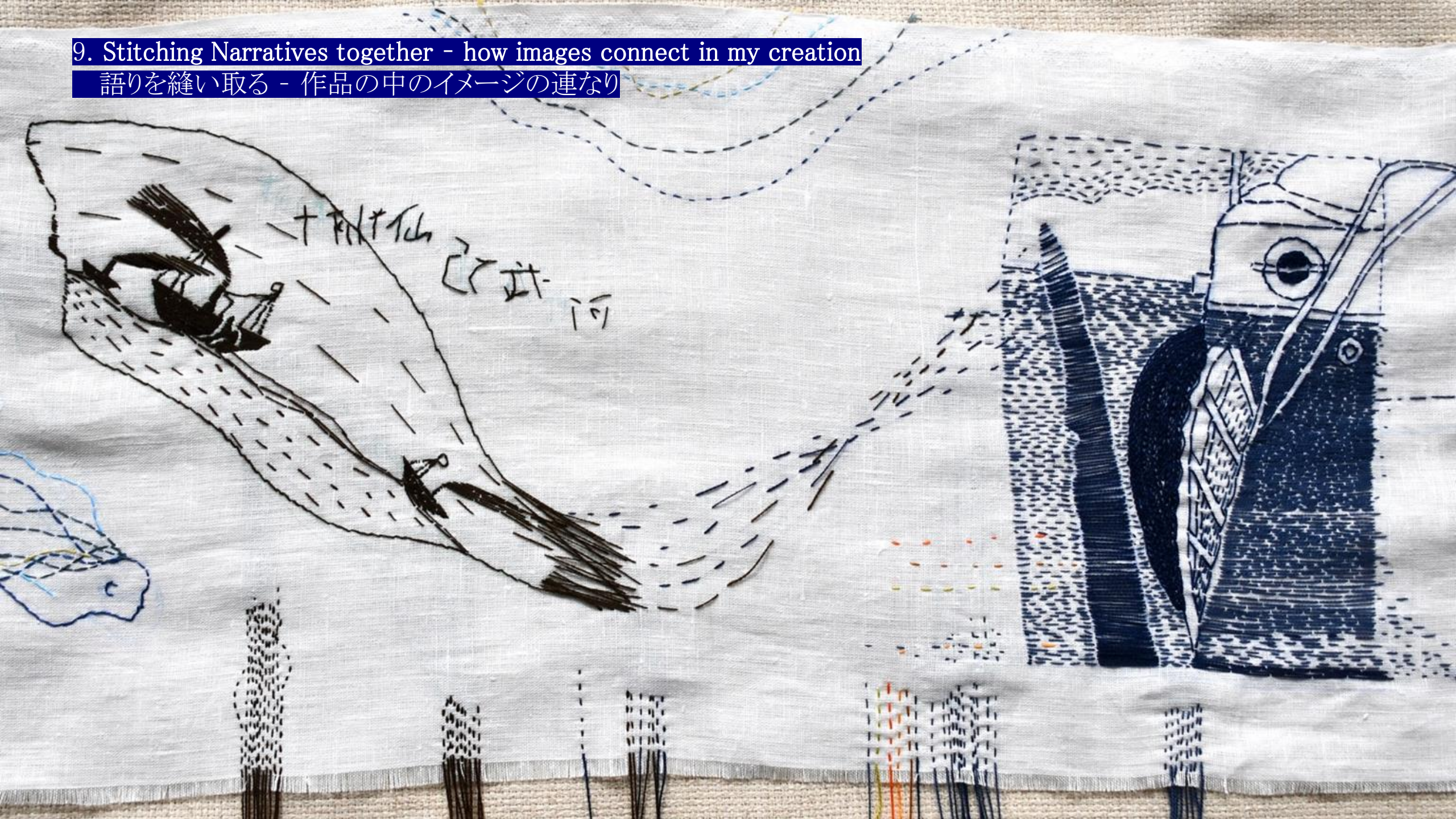
8. A Practice of Art and Research to Tie Two Images Found in Norway and Japan

ノルウェーと日本で発見されたふたつのイメージを結ぶアートとリサーチの実践



9. Stitching Narratives together - how images connect in my creation

語りを縫い取る - 作品の中のイメージの連なり





Embroidered images based on the research between Norway and Japan

10. Exhibition / 展示



Exhibition "Whales of Power" at HumSam-biblioteket, University of Oslo. 2023.

An exhibition combining art and research in cooperation with the research project «Whales of Power». Researchers introduced photographs and objects from their fieldwork. I exhibited my embroidery installation based on my research on the two images of the whale catcher in Norway and Japan. Selected books on whale-related topics were also displayed as part of the exhibition.

About this exhibition (in Norwegian): <https://www.ub.uio.no/kurs-arrangement/arrangementer/uhs/2023/utstilling-whales-of-power.html>

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Henrik Henriksen

Henrich Henriksen, H. Henriksen AS

Erling Melsom

Vestfoldmuseene

HumSam-biblioteket, University of Oslo

Whales of Power: Aquatic Mammals, Devotional Practices, and Environmental Change in Maritime East Asia