

German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ)
DIJ Social Science Study Group

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Harmony with Nature? *Satoyama Satoumi* and Its Impact on Local Communities in Japan

Japan has been infamous for its focus on economic growth and its relative disregard for the consequences rapid economic development may have on the environment. Incidents such as the Minamata disease or the melt-downs in several reactors at the Fukushima nuclear power plant in 2011 are often cited in support of this view. Yet, in recent years it seems that the country is stepping up efforts to reinvent itself as an environment-friendly nation. In particular, the concept of *satoyama satoumi* (literally: village and forest/sea) has been receiving growing attention from ecologists and policy-makers around the world as it not only includes the objective of environmental conservation but at same time aims at revitalizing rural areas suffering under depopulation, population ageing, and a weak economy. This presentation looks at the case of *satoyama satoumi* in the Noto Peninsula, Ishikawa Prefecture from an anthropological perspective and sheds light at the underlying reasons for the emergence of this new “green” Japan concept. The Noto *satoyama satoumi* was designated Japan’s first “Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System” (GIAHS) by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations in 2011. *Satoyama satoumi* represents the idea that the Japanese countryside has traditionally been very ecological and in the case of the Noto Peninsula includes traditional local agricultural and fishery practices which lead to high biodiversity, sustainable resource management, and the preservation of ecosystem services like local festivals. Although virtually unknown to most inhabitants of Noto prior to the designation, the official recognition by the FAO made them powerful and omnipresent keywords for local revitalization projects. In the presentation, I trace *satoyama satoumi* activities in Noto since 2008 and discuss how they impact the lives and work of local people who are widely perceived as being particularly representative of the concept, i.e. *ama* (female divers) and oyster farmers.

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The DIJ Social Science Study Group is organized by S. Heinrich, P. Holdgrün and D. Kremers.
All are welcome to attend, but registration (heinrich@diptokyo.org) is appreciated.
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