

## Chapter 5

# Gageodo, Dalian and Slavankya...Lively Matters in the Neighbourhood



**Abstract** While North Korea may certainly be unusual in contemporary politics, an outlier when it comes to the organisation of state, economy and society the author of this book believes it is a mistake to consider it unique or *sui generis*. North Korea its politics, development and no doubt lively matters cannot be separated from the wider streams of history, nor from the influence and connections with neighbouring nations. This is, of course, both true historically as much as it is true in the current era. While fishing practice and development as we will see in the next chapter is certainly difficult in contemporary North Korea and specific communities under Pyongyang's rule, communities and fishing geographies nearby to North Korea are themselves also beset by difficulties and challenges, of both environmental and political natures. It is important, therefore, for this book to engage with lively fishing matters and materials in these neighbouring or connected nations. This chapter engages in particular with three case studies, which the author of this book has completed fieldwork exercises in during the period of this book's production. First, this chapter journeys to the island of Gageodo, the most south-western island in South Korea and the closest South Korean community to China. Gageodo's fishing community has always been challenged by its geographic isolation and distance from the political institutions of Korea, whether contemporary South Korea, historical Chosŏn or colonial Chosen. Its community, however, has continued to fish, in spite of this isolation, the co-option of their efforts historically by tradition *Kaekchu* middlemen, and the pressure of tourist development (Gageodo is now very famous for sport fishing) in current times. Similarly pressured are the fishing communities nearby Dalian on the Liaodong Peninsula in China, just to the northwest of North Korea. Dalian city is subject to spectacular levels of speculative urbanism and attendant levels of pollution and environmental degradation. Whole areas of the city and its surrounding rural hinterland have been captured by the forces of new capital and speculation and reconstructed in such a way as to exclude less profitable and more old-fashioned enterprises as fishing. However, fishing communities continue to exist, as well as fish, reconfiguring their fishing geographies and infrastructures to take into account the new economic and social realities of twenty-first-century China. Finally, the chapter considers the case of Slavanka, in Primorsky Krai, Russian Federation to the northeast of North Korea. Situated in

political geography in some ways as challenging as that of China and North Korea, Slavyanka a fishing community since the 1860s was threatened by the developmental interests of regional politics in Russia, yet through an extensive repertoire of resistive and energetic actions managed to maintain its geography and fishing infrastructure. Through these three case studies, a complex meshing of lively political, environmental and economic matters generate and co-produce fishing geographies and landscapes which will certainly be useful in the next chapters' consideration of a particular North Korean fishing community.

**Keywords** Fieldwork · Gageodo · Dalian · Chinese fishing communities · Korean fishing communities · Russian fishing communities · Kaekchu

## 5.1 Gageodo, Dalian and Tong Shui Gou...Lively Matters in the Neighbourhood

This book's consideration of fish and fishing communities in North Korea cannot entirely focus on the spaces and places of that nation's territory. Fishing communities in our age are focused on watery spaces beyond the bounds of the national territory, and as much as the United States and Japan have attempted in the past to transform fish populations into national subjects, fish are beyond nation and national territory. However, it is best that any study of North Korean matters does not make the same mistakes as past analysis and imagine that the nation and territories are themselves separate from the wider world or region in which they sit. As this author has sought to make clear throughout his work and certainly in this book, North Korea is not a unique nation with a *sui generis* social and political system, in fact to think of it like that is not helpful for a real and coherent understanding of it as a real place. North Korea is not simply an aberration, outlier or freak of the political weather, it is a product of history of local, regional and international relationships, of changes in economic and social forms and of developing environmental challenges, which in a sense we all face, but that are certainly faced by fishing communities and fish themselves globally. This book does not really have the time or intention to delve deeply into the fishing histories of every nation that sits close to North Korea. In the English language, if background and history on the interactions between state and society in the realm of fishing in historical China is needed I suggest the work of Micah Muscolino<sup>1</sup>; if the same is true of Imperial Russia and its interests in fishing and marine mammals then I suggest the work of Ryan Tucker Jones.<sup>2</sup> However, it is extremely important for this book to connect to some of the places and communities near and connected to North Korea. This fifth chapter, therefore, will as the title suggests, examine the

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<sup>1</sup>Muscolino (2009).

<sup>2</sup>Jones (2014).

lively fishing matters in North Korea's neighbourhood. It will primarily do this not through extensive historical analysis, or statistical review, but through that most Geographic of methodologies, the fieldwork exercise. The chapter will certainly get to Chinese places and spaces, for they are and were utterly fascinating to the author, especially given the nexus of cross-border exchange, support and interaction between North Korea and the People's Republic of China. However, first this chapter will explore a fishing community mentioned earlier in this book, Gageodo (가거도) in South Korea. There is an industry in making comparisons between North Korea and South Korea of course, comparing economic and political development since the division in 1945/48, often pointing out the failure of northern efforts in comparison to apparently miraculous achievements of the south. This isn't the ambition of this author or this section of the chapter which seeks to place this South Korean fishing community in the context of a similar sea to those of North Korean fishing communities, and certainly very similar environmental and climatic problems.

Gageodo is the most southwestern island in the whole territory of South Korea. This book considered a little of its fairly unknown and unwritten history in the second chapter, but it is fair to say that Gageodo has always been peripheral to the institutions and governance of Korea. When Prof. Han Sangbok of Seoul National University first visited the island in the 1960s while he was completing his doctoral training it was almost as remote as it had been centuries earlier. The Professor reported to me the extraordinary journey from the mainland which was the only option at the time, a journey of some five days by steam ferry, staying overnight on the chain of islands that extends offshore from Mokpo port, itself the most southwestern port in South Korea.<sup>3</sup> Most of the trade and interest in this area it seems has settled for some time on the island of Heuksando, famous in Korea for its Hongo-heo 홍어회, incredibly strongly smelling fermented Skate (similar to the legendary Icelandic dish of Kæster hákarl, the putrefied and fermented flesh of the Greenland Shark). Gageodo at the time was still some 2 days sailing southwest of Heuksando (흑산도). This remote location meant that Gageodo was fairly undeveloped for many centuries. Even under the Japanese colonial administration, it seems there was no police force or military garrison on Gageodo, and the colonial era only left a lighthouse at the island's far southern tip...not even accessible by path or road from the villages on the island. In 1968, the fishing community in the main village of Gageodo had to rely entirely on the natural harbour created by the areas topography (a headland and a large island, presumably once joined to the island by a rock bridge which had long since collapsed), and as this could be problematic in a storm or change of current or wind direction, traditionally the fishers of the village had to haul their boats up and over the pebble beach for safety so that they rested on the seaward side of the main village street, opposite the narrow rows of houses. The steam ferry did not even actually berth on the island, and the Professor and anyone else who wished to visit had to be decanted into a

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<sup>3</sup>Han (1977).

smaller tender boat to get to shore. Gageodo in 1968 was even still under the thumb of the *Kaekchu* (꺨꺨주), commission traders who had kept the community and many other fishing villages under a curious private enterprise form of debt and credit bondage, which meant that its technological and economic development was highly compromised and restricted.

In 2017, when the author of this book travelled to Gageodo with Prof. Han Sangbok the steam ferry and overnight stops on Heuksando and other islands had been discontinued. Gageodo was now reached by a hydrofoil from Mokpo which while still making quite a large number of stops at various islands (even the express service), including Heuksando, in some 5 h of sailing. South Koreans who the author has mentioned this island to, still often exclaim at this point how can it take 5 h? South Korea today is an extremely well-connected nation courtesy of its highly developed high-speed railway network, the KTX which means that one can travel from Seoul in the far northwest of the nation to Busan in the far southeast in around 2 h. A five-hour journey in South Korea is highly unusual in the twenty-first-century. Gageodo's hydrofoil service is provided by a boat actually named '*Utopia*', but fishing communities have never been utopian in East Asia and certainly not in Korea. Fishers and fishing communities, including Whalers were among the lowest and unclean classes of the population, problematic and stigmatised people. In Korea, historically the sea and the ocean itself was considered dangerous and in some way morally dysfunctional. The Sea Dragon King held sway over the waves and fishing communities were forced to seek cosmic mitigation of this danger through a complex landscape of ritual and spiritual performance in which fishers engaged in complex rituals at particular rocks and small islands. Gageodo in 2017 is still not any form of utopia but is considerably more developed than when visited in the early 1960s.

*Utopia* arrives next to a large concrete harbour wall, which was in the middle of having an even larger concrete berth built connected to it in 2017 by Samsung Heavy Industries so that cruise ships and larger pleasure boats could dock at Gageodo rather than just sailing by. When Prof. Han Sangbok visited in 1968 the notion that this tiny remote island might become in any way connected to tourism would have seen fantastical and outlandish. At the time there was only one guest house on the island, owned by the head of the village in the largest village on the island. Gageodo's position far out to sea and in the middle of some of the strongest currents of the West Sea meant of course that the fishing was good, the reason for the communities on the island in the first place. When sportfishing developed as a leisure activity in the 1970s and 1980s in South Korea, newly adventurous leisure fishers sought out all sorts of interesting landscapes on South Korea's jagged western coastline in order to find the best and most interesting places to access the more energetic of ocean fishes. Gageodo became actually quite famous for fishers' potential access to Tuna and larger sea and ocean fish. It appears there was a boom in accommodation providers for these sport fishers, although nothing so far very luxurious as such sportspeople seem to minimise their costs for overnight stays, and even small shops for sustenance and fishing equipment. Thus by 2017, a number of the houses on the front street of Gageodo's primary village were guest houses and

there were further guest houses and accommodation providers further up the mountain. Quite what will be the impact of larger cruise ships and tourist boats in the future is unclear but it surely won't be long before a more conventional hotel is opened somewhere on the island. Along with the extensive harbour development which allows the hydrofoil to stop in the harbour, South Korean government money had supported the fishing community to install a large mechanised boat lift and to build new birthing spots for larger boats. The community has built a freezing and prep facility on the right side of the harbour next to the fishing community hall. Gageodo's main village is connected by small roads to two further small hamlets on either side of the island. Both of these communities were in 2017 declining in population and have many derelict and unused houses, but both have had new harbour infrastructure built to support initially whatever fishing enterprise remains there, but in more recent years to support the sport fishers.

When the author of this book arrived, staying with Prof. Han Sangbok as he had done in 1968 in the guest house of the village head one of the first things I noticed at the head of the harbour was a large series of shipping containers filled to the roof with bottled water. Interesting environmental times it seems were afoot on Gageodo, drought had arrived for what was said to be the first time in living memory and had come for several seasons. Gageodo's many water storage tanks and bores were dry and no serious rain had fallen for many weeks, even though dense fog would regularly roll in. The village head had engaged in extensive negotiation with the regional administration on the mainland in Mokpo and they had agreed to support Gageodo and neighbouring islands with drinking water until the end of the drought. No one knew when this strange weather situation would end as it really had never been seen before. So at this moment of real institutional and governmental interest in Gageodo, unlike many centuries of neglect prior to the 1960s, the island was beset with new problems, surrounded by water, but with no water to actually drink. The village head and other fishers I met on the main street and who talked to my colleague the helpful and sprightly Han Sangbok (even though he is an Emeritus Professor and in his late 70s), insisted that while there were still plenty of fish, the types and sizes of fish caught on the island had begun to change and the time of the year they were caught had also begun to shift.

I set out a number of times to walk across the island, as of course there is no public transport on Gageodo, so if one wanted to get from the main fishing village to the two further small hamlets one would have to walk out of the village, up the mountain past the ROK Navy Marines base. At the shoulder of the mountain 400 m above the largest village, the road splits in two. One road follows the contour lines into a deep wood and heads to the west side of the island. Another road heads straight up the mountain and eventually weaves, turns and then descends fast down to the eastern side. Extraordinarily, and in a way which Han Sangbok could not have imagined in the 1960s, Gageodo is as digitally well connected as nearly every other place in South Korea. Korea Telecom and SK Telecom, the two largest South Korean telephony and mobile telephony services decided that rather than install a brand new copper wire network across the island in the internet age, they would

install broadband Wi-Fi routers on old telephone poles all across the island. The visiting tourist or academic can, therefore, now be as connected as anywhere else, I found myself walking through the paths up Gageodo's highest peak streaming BBC Radio 4 on my phone while using an Olleh mobile broadband 'egg'. Although in one of the most distant and foreign places, I had ever visited I felt as enmeshed in the global digital nexus as I have ever felt in Korea.

While listening to streaming services or networking on social media, the visitor on the western side of the mountain would continue down to the second Gageodo fishing village. Gageodo 2, as the villages of the island are marked on maps, was located in a topographic bowl underneath the mountain and with a promontory to its west. Essentially the village had no coastal strip or beach and has never had one, steep cliffs about the sea, but the shape of the coast means that the water below is very calm and presumably very safe for boats to be moored. Historically fishers of Gageodo 2 used to tie their boats close to the cliffs and the scale them using a steep ladder and walkway. This was apparently the case until the early 1970s when funding from regional authorities in Mokpo and from central government under the control of the Park Chung-hee regime enabled new infrastructures to be built across the island. Gageodo 2 received a new powered boat lift to raise fishing boats from sea level up the cliff to a new prep and freezing building. This boat lift was built on quite a substantial concrete base, large enough to take the catch and equipment of several boats and to allow those boats to berth alongside. This boat lift and base also enabled a brand new and dramatically shaped concrete set of steps to be constructed alongside the boat lift. Sat on the concrete base the water at this point is extraordinarily clear and pristine, as idyllic a scene as can be found in Asia. It is abundantly clear however that very little organised conventional fishing still occurs from this place, even though on the occasions that the author of this book was there, a number of sportfishing boats surrounded the boat lift and base racing off with their eager cargo of holidaying South Korean businessmen out to catch a big fish and not let it getaway. The head of the village, and unofficial governor of the whole island informed me that in fact there were only three actual fishing boats fishing properly out of Gageodo 2's harbour. This small village had begun to decline in the late 1980s and now only a few of the small houses on the hillside above the cliffs were inhabited and apparently not by families but by single older men, three of whom were the remaining fishers. These small dwellings hunkered down into the landscape, connected by small cobbled pathways, not unlike mountain villages I had visited around Nagarkot in Nepal, timeless but more than a little lost.

Thinking back up the mountain to the road junction, the visitor interested in fishing should turn to the east and climb further up the small mountain following the tiny road. Before the peak, a further trail climbs away from the road to the highest point of the island. Instead, however of being able to sit at the top of the summit and look out across the seas below for whatever fishers might be plying their trade, visitors are not really alone at this place. There is a very substantial listening post and radar station on top of the mountain from which the Republic of Korea Navy and Intelligence Agencies survey the shipping lines and watch for

Chinese breaches of the 2001 China-South Korea Fisheries Agreement,<sup>4</sup> infiltration or other threats in the water.<sup>5</sup> Heading back to the road and up through the forest the mountain drops away dramatically on the northeastern coast of Gageodo, the road itself twisting and turning to Gageodo 3, the smallest of the villages. This remote place was only reached by road within the past decade and instead of being formed of a ribbon of houses along the road, the community clumps along a slope down to the sea. Gageodo 2 may feel quite traditional, but Gageodo 3 resembles those peripheral villages first encountered by British adventurers on Jeju in the nineteenth century, low bound small buildings which appear to all surround a courtyard, with rooms facing directly onto that courtyard. Often there would be a collection of organised or less organised work focused material and tools and this was certainly the case at Gageodo 3. While there was a lot of fishing and maritime detritus scattered throughout the area of the village, the Head of Gageodo's main village insisted that there were no longer any boats at all registered to this small village, no families or even single fishers still based there, and only a few older ladies still lived in some of the houses. Despite the fact that Gageodo 3 was not only inaccessible by road from the main village and very small, even historically, money from central government also reached its small harbour facilities in the late 1970s. This village landed boats on a small natural rock shelf at the bottom of a fairly steep cliff. Funding from the Park Chung-hee government had allowed new steps and access routes down to the boat landing area to be constructed in concrete. The village had also been enabled to build an elaborate if a little rickety wire lifting system to ferry crates of fish and crustaceans up to a small preparation shed. The boat landing area itself had also been extended, connecting some small rock formations offshore to the concrete shelf and making further space for boat births. One of the older female residents of the village even came out of her house upon seeing my arrival to show me that their little lift mechanism still worked. She told me it had been some years since the last fisherman left the village, prompted by the arrival of the road which in her opinion should never have been built. Finally, it had never been possible historically to continue along the coast to the far southwestern tip of the island. The only piece of construction built during the colonial period was a lighthouse, cottages and resupply store built on the remote tip of the island. It had only been accessible via a dangerous path from the summit of the mountain. When I arrived in 2017, builders were hard at work completing what surely must have been one of the last roads to be built in South Korea. Although the road was still not entirely finished, I could pick my way past the piles of bitumen and the collections of prepared tree trunks with which the builders were underpinning it and walk along to the lighthouse, perhaps one of the last places in the country to be touched by the nation's developmental aspirations. This lighthouse with accompanying cottages and storehouse built in a familiar colonial style has beamed out its light of safety for nearly one hundred years (it was built in 1921), but the waters this light shines upon

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<sup>4</sup>Gao (2019).

<sup>5</sup>Kim (2017).

are in a substantially different geopolitical and environmental world from that of its birth.

All of the Gageodo villages and the islands other infrastructures may have had quite a degree of financial and other support dispersed upon them over the decades since South Korea's birth in 1948, enough to maintain and develop fishing communities and practices which would have dissipated and disappeared elsewhere. However, the waters surrounding the island have transformed similarly since the colonial era. While whaling boats and motherships may no longer ply the nearby seas, as this book has already asserted, the maritime landscapes and the fish themselves that travel the currents and school amongst unseen underwater topographies have been extraordinarily denuded by the technologies, economics and practices of industrial fishing in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As fishing technologies and capabilities have developed what is done to the sea and to its inhabitants as only spiralled downwards in impact. Global societal notions of what is a large fish or what is a large number of fish have transformed, so that earlier literary descriptions of the size of particular species or the density of a shoal are regarded as fantastical. A cod could never surely be the size of a man, the waters could never really be so full of fish that a human could also walk upon them to reach land, it is though, the writers who said so were being hyperbolic or absurdist. Yet recent more careful maritime archaeology and consideration of the genome of fish species suggests that in fact it is very likely that these seemingly rather far-fetched stories were true.<sup>6</sup> It is not the reality of the past that has changed or become cleared or smaller in the present, it is the fish and their numbers, and that is the fault of humans and their technologies. The impact of this is felt as heavily at Gageodo as elsewhere across the globe in changing fish size, population density, ease of catch and time of migrations and schooling. Even in spite of the investment from central and regional government fishing has not been good and the number of fishers and fishing boats has declined over time.

Many miles to the north of Gageodo is the Liaodong Peninsula. A long thread of land which follows the estuarial course of the Amnok/Yalu (압록강/鴨綠江) River, just across the water from North Korea and the community of fishers at Sindo. Liaodong has like many places on the coast of China colonised by many other nations. At one point, the peninsula had a settlement named Port Arthur at the end, a British colony. Port Arthur soon became a Russian colony and was connected to the China Eastern Railway, another ice-free port for the Empire. Just to the north of the port the Russian's built a dramatic new city, Dal'niy, planned in a similarly Haussmannian style familiar in other cities nearby. Dal'niy would become Dairen in 1905 following Russia's defeat to Japan in 1905 and the area would become the Kwantung Leased Territory, combined in the later years of the Japanese empire with Manchukuo.<sup>7</sup> The Russians would arrive back in Dairen in 1945, this time as the Soviet Union, defeating the remaining Kwantung and Japanese forces following

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<sup>6</sup>Barras (2018).

<sup>7</sup>Hess (2006).



the Manchurian Strategic Offensive.<sup>8</sup> The Soviet Union would hold the territory in collaboration with the forces of Communist China until 1950, handing it back to the People's Republic of China without compensation and with goodwill.<sup>9</sup> The People's Republic of China and the developmental power behind the Chinese communist model have continued to develop Dalian over the decades. Dalian is now one of the largest ports in northeast China, building aircraft carriers for the PLA Navy and Port Arthur now known as Lüshūn (旅顺), has one of the largest PLA Navy bases in the area, just down the street from the preserved railway station from the China Eastern Railway. Under the mayorship of the infamous Bo Xilai, Dalian found itself with the worlds' largest planned square and some fantastical architectures on hills around the city.<sup>10</sup>

While certainly not uncommon in the contemporary People's Republic of China, Dalian has one of the most extraordinary proliferations of examples of the physical and architectural outputs of what has been called speculative urbanism. Within the highly active economy of contemporary China, there is a great deal of capital flowing around, generated by the normally extremely high levels of economic growth, high profit margins and the unusual liquidity of money.<sup>11</sup> People with capital are always looking to invest and make a profit in China, and one way of doing so is urban development. While China's politics has a peculiar set of restrictions, known as the Hukou system (户口) designed to protect agricultural land holding, maintain public order and control the mobility of the public, modern Chinese people are still essentially quite mobile.<sup>12</sup> There are a number of ways in which restrictions, which prevent citizens from moving to new districts and buying and selling land are circumvented, often leading to greater speculation.<sup>13</sup> Large population transfers have occurred in China in recent decades as the western coastal region developed economically into the industrial powerhouse it is known as today. Wages in these industrial areas, while extremely competitive on a global scale, completely outpaced the value of pay and trade-in non-urban areas to the east.<sup>14</sup> This created a huge drive towards population transfer from the rural areas to the urban areas like Dalian. Under post-Deng Xiaoping housing policy, the supply of public housing was restricted and privatised to a degree, so that property developing companies, often in tandem with arms of or connections to state institutions like the PLA, became the key provider of new housing.<sup>15</sup> Coupled with an autocratic and radically ambitious approach to urban and developmental planning that privileged economic growth over personal property or rights, such companies, backed by the

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Bo and Chen (2009).

<sup>11</sup>He et al. (2009).

<sup>12</sup>Chan and Zhang (1999).

<sup>13</sup>Huang et al. (2014).

<sup>14</sup>Knight and Song (2003).

<sup>15</sup>Huque (2005).

state in both its' organisational and legal capacities, and powered by the huge capital flows would completely reconfigure areas of urban and rural landscape.<sup>16</sup> While this has been for the most part successful and contemporary China has managed to navigate these huge population transfers without extensive political or public revolt, there have been glitches and fractures in the system. Famously these involve situations where incomplete or unsatisfactory planning has failed to map the potential population flows and public demand in the right way and been further enabled by an overheated market for capital and investment.<sup>17</sup> Academia knows the results as China's 'ghost cities', huge and unlikely new urban conurbations built often in very remote or peripheral places because of a sense that development would reach even the furthest outreach, or that there was a resource to be extracted nearby and workers would be needed to obtain it.<sup>18</sup> These have been the subject of intense debate in the literature and often ridiculed as examples of the weakness of China's model of development.<sup>19</sup> There are also examples of where developmental capital has gone through a process of diffusion, so that primary builders, sell on to secondary buyers, tertiary buyers and then even fourth-level buyers all of whom are highly focused on extracting a profit. Because there are so many rings of profit, the primary builders and secondary buyers are essentially protected from risk. It does not matter whether people will actually live in these developments or not, as their equity stake in them will have been sold on well before anybody even thinks about buying them. It is only tertiary and fourth level buyers who might be exposed to the reality that perhaps the location is unlikely or will not be popular enough to turn a profit as has been the case with many of these secondary developments.<sup>20</sup> Large sets of urban high-density tower blocks attempting to take advantage of the new power of the city, trying to second guess its growth and the growth of its transport infrastructure. There is also a great deal of speculative urbanism in the area which connects to leisure pursuits or the aspirational desire of newly middle-class Chinese to move either further out of the city or to be in an attractive landscape, particularly by the coast.<sup>21</sup> These developments cannot always be successful or appropriate, but they are powerful stores of capital and almost impossible for people who are not part of this new development/capital matrix to compete with. Traditional ways of life and ways of making a profit such as fishing and other maritime enterprises, which the area is, of course, famous for, are subject to intense pressure for space.

The author of this book engaged in fieldwork around the Dalian/Lüshūn region, which included a number of visits to various examples of such speculative urbanism, including the hotels north of the record-breaking square in the middle of the city which resemble fantastical Disney creations. The old fishing harbour of

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<sup>16</sup>He and Wu (2009).

<sup>17</sup>Yu et al. (2011).

<sup>18</sup>Yu (2014).

<sup>19</sup>Sorace and Hurst (2016).

<sup>20</sup>Wu (1999).

<sup>21</sup>Jiang et al. (2017).

Dalian, familiar to the Russians and Japanese is buried beneath the dramatic construction site of a new Langham Place development. Further along the fishing area, Dalian now sports an enormous series of faux-European townhouses, meaning that one can walk along the shore past imagined versions of Bruges, Venice, Florence and Paris, architectural styles changing every few hundred metres. Away from the shore and the new thrusting city centre, the Russian old town built around a turn of the century town hall sits derelict with its paint peeling. There was little to be seen of Dalian's fishing traditions within the centre of the city or in the main area of Lüshūn, which is complicated to visit and restricted somewhat by the security presence around the PLA Navy station. To the southwest of the city is the Bangchui Island area. Historically famous for being one of Mao and Deng Xiaoping's favourite CCP guest houses (it was recently visited by Xi Jinping and Kim Jong Un),<sup>22</sup> before it was cordoned off to become a VIP area this shore was important for fishers. Little remains of their facilities and architectures, nothing of course in the guest house area, but the power of speculative capital has displaced whatever was left of fishing communities along this coast. Middle-class residents of Dalian can now even be found sipping coffee in a giant coffee shop and restaurant named 'fishing harbour' at Xiaoping Island. Accompanied by a guide, fellow academic, translator and a driver we set off in search of the remains of Dalian's fishing communities.

Travelling along the coast road towards Lüshūn, we first visited the fishing market at Yanchangxincun (盐场新村). Here the market on the coastal side of a dual carriageway highway is overshadowed by an army of 30–40 storey apartment blocks. The market was one of those dream places of China, if a little dishevelled with all manner of sea product, some completely indescribable, scattered in a mix of tiny stalls and other sales outlets right at the end head of a beach, on which a few small powered boats had been hauled out of the water. Perhaps this would have been proof enough that amidst all the speculative urbanism it was possible for the vestiges of a past fishing community to carry on, if it were not for what we saw next in the distance. Behind the market, connected to a small promontory that stuck out into the sea were an extraordinary network of wires, pulleys and metalwork that were fixed into the ocean. These various haphazard pieces of technology connected to a disorganised flotilla of boats as well as to facilities on the shore which appeared to billow with steam and smoke. A short walk up a path to the edge of the promontory revealed that all this steam was, in fact, the sign of an unexpected industry, seaweed boiling. Kelp is made ready for storage and cleaned by vigorous boiling and the networks of wires allowed the various small businesses along the coast to pull bundles of kelp directly from their boats to the boilers. Here, a group of at least four men per site would make sure the kelp was kept on feeding into the boiler, poked and prodded it while inside the machine and then made sure it emerged properly at the end of the process. These were extraordinary workplaces, hot, wet and uncomfortable, jets and bursts of boiling steam spraying out on

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<sup>22</sup>Benjamin (2009).

occasion, the workers protected in white overalls and protective suits. We walked all the way down the promontory counting at least 14 such businesses working in the same field of work. Surely this is complicated and dangerous work with little profit margin in contemporary China, but proof at this point that along with the various tower blocks and apartment complexes, value could still be extracted from the sea and life could be had at its edge.

On the other side of the Dalian urban region, Jinshitan (金石滩) was a fishing village known for its deep-sea fishing prior to the colonial periods. The Jinshitan now visible from our car appeared to be an interesting mixture of apartment architecture from the 1970s and 1980s, shopping centres and leisure facilities connected to the area's new identity as a seaside resort and golf resort, including Discoveryland Theme Park and the Golden Pebble Beach Golf Club. The Canadian owner of the famous Suzan Pizza restaurant in the middle of the more down at heel apartment complexes, who has lived in Dalian for more than 20 years told me that when he first moved to the city the apartments were primarily owned by fishers and that the coast had been radically reclaimed to make space for the golf resorts which had impacted not only on the physical space available for fishing infrastructure, but also on the sea currents which travelled around the headland. Behind the golf resort and down an unmetalled road, dodging the trucks and wagons you could make your way to the new fishing area. Having taken his advice, we did find the new area for the huge number of wooden and metal boats of the Jinshitan fishermen's cooperative. Here in the waters of Changjiang bay, the fishing community and its infrastructures appeared to have found a functional new home. In the manner familiar to developmental communities across the globe who are busy with work and not necessarily hugely focused on beautification, Jinshitan's fishing area is a little chaotic and messy, but the extensive buildings around the fishing administration office and cooperative hub suggest that investment from the Dalian area authorities had not been wasted. The cooperative also had extensive preparation and freezing infrastructure and that looked as if they had been built for wet fish, though I never did see any fish being landed or transported at the time. Around the corner from these places explicitly focused on fish, I found a street-facing directly onto the sea with a series of undramatic low-roofed factories with extensive courtyards. This area belonged again to seaweed preparers and boilers. Out on the quayside in front of these facilities trucks disgorged wet cargoes of kelp and other vegetation from the sea, cargoes lifted up by cranes and placed into wire mesh cages. These cages disappeared into the courtyards and later the steam began to rise as the boiling and processing got underway. The prevalence of such industry focused on seaweed suggests that besides wet fish, crustaceans and other shellfish, this might be the real focus of Dalian's still extant maritime enterprises. Future fieldwork undertaken by others should surely seek out the location from whence all this seaweed came from, whether it be directly from wild sea forests or enormous kelp farms offshore. It would also be fascinating to read an anthropology of the seaweed boilers and their lives amidst this steamy, hot, messy way of life.

Jinshitan and Yanchangxincun while in some ways thriving and managing to continue in the midst of so much urban and leisure development, with all of the

pressures of both space and capital around them are examples of more urban fishing communities in the area. These were not entirely traditional, and East Asian examples more generally of fishing places are more peripheral and rural, so it was important for the author to find whether in the hinterland of Liaodong, such places still existed. For this, we apparently needed to head north out of Dalian City area to Wafangdian district (瓦房店市). In 2017, this journey involved driving along a series of large dual and triple carriageway highways (with remarkably few cars after having left Dalian City limits), and then turning off into the countryside along increasingly smaller and remote roads. Having passed an extraordinary example of a ghost tourist resort, complete with a series of hotels, bus station for coach and touring companies, potential restaurants, a bowling alley and a series of unfinished golf courses, the roads traversed a series of salt farms. There is perhaps a book to be written on salt farming in this area, as these facilities took up miles and miles of ground and presumably displace other agricultural efforts, but as a low input, reasonable output industry they are perfect for the landscape of the area. Finally, beyond the salt farms and over a series of low hills we glimpsed the coast and the road essentially gave out to pebbles and compacted mud, here, at last, was Tong Shui Gou (通水沟). The gateway to the village, complete with faded party slogan from the local office of the CCP was followed by what can only be described as a tower of broken and disused lobster and crab pots. Further down the main village street was a huge pile of what looked like anchors and the metal posts used to fix buoys to the ocean floor. Tong Shui Gou is certainly not a pretty fishing village, it is not picturesque in any sense, it is impossible to imagine speculative urbanism weighing the investment potential of this land. While the days we visited were perhaps not the most auspicious for its appearance, the sky a slate grey, light mist rolling in, a stiff breeze in the air, amplifying the essential dullness of the water, tourists or citizens of modern China will be unlikely to come here, my fixer and academic colleague from Shanghai was amazed that somewhere like this still existed in the greater Dalian region. If the village is a mess, it is at least functional and practically every building and patch of ground nearer the coast was dedicated to fishing or the storage of fishing equipment. The harbour itself was host to a huge number of boats, perhaps more than 50, both wooden and metal hulled, both small two or three man-day boats and a series of larger trawlers and purse seiners with which a crew could go to sea and spend a few nights at work. Whether any of these larger boats had seen service recently was not clear. The ice house, the prep building and what looked like a packaging facility looked as if they had not been used for some time. But as we approached the quayside with its weigh station and fisherman's rest house, it was clear that there was a small crowd in attendance, not for us visitors but to receive a boat due to arrive with a catch in the next 20–30 min.

We decided to wait, with an invitation of course, in the rest house for the fishermen and to see if any of those at work with their stout and lengthy wellington boots would talk to us. It was apparent that they had all been at work throughout the early morning and were of few words at the best of times. But the conversation such as it did tell us that Tong Shui Gou was still in business, yet did not as a community focus on wet fish or larger shellfish anymore because they simply could not be

found in quantities worth seeking. There was some talk of who they had to sell to as well, that it was hard to find a market for the products, so jokingly the market came to them...an aside which was not elaborated on in any great detail, but later the meaning of which became abundantly clear outside in the drizzle and wind. Mainly, our small group and the fishermen watched an episode of the globally famous TV show 'If You Are the One' 缘来非诚勿扰 (Fei Cheng Wu Rao) in which single men attempt to win the favour of a phalanx of women by detailing their capabilities and attributes, as well as a giving a little performance of sorts. While the British version ('Take Me Out') of this programme is much more focused on comedy than the rigorous, serious Chinese version, it would be no less bizarre to watch in a fishermen's rest up surrounded by the detritus of lives at sea. The bright lights and cacophony of the studio in Nanjing seemed very far away from this dank, blustery coast.

After several men and numerous women had failed to impress or be selected movement outside the hut alerted everyone that the incoming boat, now later than anticipated due to the stiff wind, was not far off the harbour. Outside I noticed the arrival of a small group of men dressed in leather jackets, better shoes than everyone else in the village and with rather purposeful expressions. At the same time, four women dressed very colourfully in padded jackets and hats also arrived with a set of large boards and coloured plastic buckets. The women set up their boards into a set of large tables and the men loomed about above them smoking furiously and trying to keep warm in spite of the noticeably cold wind. These men with commission tradesmen, responsible for buying whatever the catch was, setting the price and finding a market elsewhere for it. Similar to *Kaekchu* in historical Korea such tradesmen would also extend credit and supply necessary resources or arrange repairs to boats, nets or other equipment. Naturally, the relationship between such people in a peripheral community like Tong Shiu Gou is problematic and not entirely comfortable, but, given the distance of Tong Shui Gou to the nearest fishing markets, the need for the fishermen to spend as much time at sea as possible and the presumed connections between the salesmen and the regional markets themselves, they are fairly essential. I have described the historical impact of *Kaekchu* on fishing communities in Korea and the restrictions their place in the web of relationships around fishing places on the practical level of development of these communities in a previous chapter. I do not claim that such restrictions are necessary in play at Tong Shiu Gou and any other fishing villages of the Dalian region. These communities in previous times in the People's Republic of China sold their fish through a more centralised and bureaucratic system of fish marketing. The appearance of these men in leather at the quayside essentially is a product of China's economic liberalisation and peculiar approach to free markets, as well as the withdrawal of institutions of the state from smaller scale developmental interests such as these. It is more likely that while they cannot be generous with their pricing and certainly will extract a profit which would otherwise go to the fishing community, their continued interest in this place makes it possible to continue fishing here in these difficult contemporary times.

So with the men in leather jackets, the women and their boards and our small group of academics and helpers all looking on, the black wooden boat for about potentially four or five crew flying the red flag of the People's Republic rounded the breakwater and entered the inner harbour. When it arrived at the quayside the four crew on board attempted to scramble off at the same time as two of the buyers tried to get on to make sure of what was on board. Essentially, it was a meagre catch, three crates of mixed specimens of the sea, not really full, but somewhere between two-thirds and three-quarters full. I have learnt a lot about the state of our seas and oceans in recent years for the research behind this book, the impact of fishing technology, climate change, warming sea temperatures and pollution and I was on the quayside shocked and more than a little horrified by what was in those crates. A polite and academic way of saying it would be 'shrimps and assorted other crustaceans,' there are of course innumerable less polite ways of referring to it. Essentially much of what had been caught looked undersized, sick or broken, as well as interspersed by an enormous percentage of waste, both plastic and paper. At this village, we were some distance from urban centres or landfill, but it was patently clear that wherever this boat had been to dredge or net this catch, the sea was not healthy or clean there.

As the catch was hauled out of the boat the women sat next to their boards waiting, before the boats crew unceremoniously dumped the contents of each of the crates onto them. Faced with a seemingly vast pile of mixed waste and slowly wriggling small fish and shrimps the women got to work. Moving very fast the women began to make several piles, one for waste, one for things that were shrimp or looked like shrimp and things that were fish or looked like fish. The waste pile grew and grew, at least a third of the catch, while the fish pile remained fairly small and bizarrely the least attractive of the piles as at least some of the waste had colour, whereas these fish were also entirely grey and appeared fragmented and damaged in almost every case, often with skin lesions and other malformations. The shrimp pile became towering, and while grey, had some of the pinkish colour so famous around the world, almost a single mass still moving occasionally. When the piles were initially complete the women scraped the waste pile and the fish pile to two other boards, each with a single person tasked with its further investigation, while two women focused on the mass of shrimp.

It is probably too much to compare the efforts of two women sorting shrimp in the wind in a down at heel Chinese fishing village to the synchronised movement of robotic arms in a complicated factory or a fully automated Amazon web fulfilment warehouse, but the extraordinarily fast fingers and arms of the two women at their board had a sort of balletic quality. The one enormous pile of shrimp very quickly transformed into three and the women through an obviously engrained and pre-existing set of mental guidelines were set fast in the task of sorting the greying mass into these three piles. Based on both size and width the women selected individual shrimp for each pile, the differences being not immediately apparent, but before long it was clear that there was a previously unseen homogeneity in their selected piles. Each set of shrimp really were discernibly different sizes and presumably weights and judging by the interest of the men in leather jackets also different

prices. As the women finalised the first sort, they then went through each pile, reallocating on the rare occasion that a particular shrimp did not meet the unwritten specification and had been placed in an incorrect pile. One of the tradesmen buyers was very much more hands-on in this process than the other and considered each case of misallocation very specifically and carefully, shrimp by shrimp, obviously not wanting to pay a single Yuan more than was strictly necessary.

On a neighbouring board, another woman had the job of sorting out the pile of fish and assorted other living sea creatures in a series of piles that seemed to equate to 'saleable,' 'unsaleable' and broken. These were, for the most part, sad collections of sickly, small looking creatures, the value of which could not really be clear to all but the most expert of fish pricers. Still it became apparent that there must be value in these little agglomerations of fishy life as the most interested of the tradesmen sought to set prices both for the pile of apparently saleable fish and the pile of broken and damaged creatures. There was even heated discussion about the value of certain species, which mainly focused on what looked like very juvenile dogfish and a species of very colourful guppy. For the pile of broken fish, there was less discussion, only a resigned expression from the sorting woman that this collection of once living detritus had some value, even if it was very small. Moving back to the shrimp piles, the discussion between the two women, a representative from the fishing cooperative and the two tradesmen took up some ten minutes of discussion over the three separate piles. Even at the last moment before final prices were set, there was some disagreement over the place of some of the shrimp in the middle pile between them, but eventually consensus was grudgingly reached and the tradesmen unceremoniously decanted off their boards their piles of shrimp and fish into separate black bags. If money changed hands I certainly did not see it, and neither did any of my colleagues and if a monetary price was come to, we certainly did not hear it, as the prices were discussed in fractions of an unknown whole. Large shrimps were sold for 8/10s, middle sized for 5/10s and small for 2/10s. When it came to the fish, reasonable specimens were sold for 6/10s and the pile of broken pieces for 1/10th. To this day, it is unclear what these tenths represented or how they were translated into a financial value.

Just as quickly as the men in leather jackets had appeared, they and their black bags from the catch disappeared back into their cars (which had been left running and with presumably the heating on during the entire process), and faster than we would have dared, drove up the rutted main street past the various piles of unused and unusable fishing equipment. The women who had spent such an effort sorting through the various piles seemed a little disappointed with the pricing and the exchange, though they were fairly taciturn and reluctant to engage my Chinese colleagues in detailed conversation surrounding what the prices had become and what they had hoped, save for a few utterances like 'what do you expect' and 'they are good and hard businessmen'. They seemed much more concerned to get out of the wind and like the cooperative representative were soon disappeared back into the fishermen's hut. My Chinese colleagues were also reluctant to hang around watching the boat head back out to sea and round the breakwater to carry on the task of wrenching their meagre catch from the sea.



As we left the harbor I was left to look back at the pile of plastic and other pieces of rubbish left behind on the ground having been dumped off one of the sorting boards. This pile had been greater in height than either the pile of shrimps or the pile of small and broken fish and really for me represented the primary catch of this boat. It brought home to me the degradation of the ocean and seas of the world that we are seeing in our century. This was Tong Shui Gou's own little Pacific garbage patch, not as dramatic perhaps as the enormous conflagration of material stuck out in the gyres of the mid-Pacific, but very much their own. This, in another sense was not a garbage patch at all, it was their home waters and the territory from which this small village was forced to ply and derive a living. In retrospect, I find it extraordinary that a community would carry on in the face of such environmental disaster and despoliation, but then what other choices did our sorters have? While it may have been meagre, the value of their small and denuded catch cannot have been so low as to make it either pointless for them or for their leather-jacketed tradesmen and buyers. Even in the midst of the obvious decline in the productivity of their particular little patch of sea it was still apparently worth it to carry on the effort.

The fieldwork for this book was also anticipated to have extended to the northeast of North Korea, past its complicated boundary with the People's Republic of China and the mouth of the Tuman/Tumen (두만강/图们江) River over the railway bridge between Tumangan and Ussurisyk. This border formulated following the treaties of Nerchinsk (1689), Aigun (1858) and Peking (1860) solidified the Russian Empire's control of its claims to the western coast of the Pacific, Chukotki, Kamchatka and the far east of Siberia.<sup>23</sup> Originally governed from the port of Okhotsk, the centre of institutional and bureaucratic power moved south to Khabarovsk and finally to Vladivostok at the far end of the Trans-Siberian railway.<sup>24</sup> Vladivostok is the administrative centre of Primorsky Krai and for most the end of the road or rails across the entire Russian Federation. However, to the south of Vladivostok is Khasansky district which runs right to the tri-point above the Tuman river where North Korea, the People's Republic of China, and the Russian Federation meet. Little known but famous in some circles for the Russia-North Korean Friendship Bridge, the only connection between the two countries, a single-track railway bridge across which traffic was banned for most of the 1990s due to a huge debt built up by North Korean railways to Russian Federal Railways after Pyongyang started to refuse to return Russian railway wagons shipped across the border, Khasansky has a series of ports and fishing villages along the shore of Peter the Great Gulf. Unexpectedly perhaps there are a series of ferry routes to North and South Korea and from ports such as Posyet and Zarubino as well as bulk goods facilities and transshipment to China taking advantage of the railway connection to the Trans-Siberian and to the North Korean and Chinese networks. Slavyanka is the district capital and was perhaps named by settlers of Ukrainian

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<sup>23</sup>Frank (1947) and Finkelstein (1978).

<sup>24</sup>Mackinder (1904).

ethnicity in the nineteenth century (there is another Slavyanka in the Donetsk region of eastern Ukraine). For much of its existence Slavyanka has been focused on fishing and aquaculture, however efforts during the 1970s to develop Primorsky Krai by the Soviet Union sought to diversify the area's infrastructure and capabilities. While this impacted the communities at Posyet and Zarubino in a familiar way having already extensive port facilities, Slavyanka was to have an extensive new shipyard constructed.

Slavyanka's shipyard was a large piece of developmental infrastructure, which in its comparatively small harbour could only displace a fairly substantial proportion of local fishers. The extent of this practical displacement could not be evidenced by this book, as the records for this period in the Russian State Archive of the Economy's material on the Soviet Union and that from Vladivostok's branch of VNIRO or Gosplan could not be located. Anecdotal evidence garnered during discussions with academics focused on fishing in the Russian far east suggests that even during the mid-1970s in the Soviet Union there were community protests and upset about the plans reducing the amount of space for both fishing and the storage and stowage of fishing equipment, as well as potential ecological impacts on the fishing grounds nearby.<sup>25</sup> While the shipbuilding yard was constructed, space was left in the harbour for the traditional fishing communities until the turn of the twenty-first century. In the 2000s however, there was further pressure on Primorsky Krai from the government of Vladimir Putin's United Russia to extend development in the area, in part to counter the rise of China, but also to underpin Moscow's claim to institutional functionality this far away from the centres of power.<sup>26</sup> Yet another extension to the shipyard and shipbuilding facilities at Slavyanka, this time focusing on a new dry dock and bulk materials trans-shipment yard was envisaged.<sup>27</sup> Again the impact of this development on the local community and more traditional enterprise sparked local protests and petitions to both district and regional authorities. However, as readers can imagine complaining about such developments has always been problematic in the framework of Russian politics and this is no less the case in contemporary Russian politics under either Putin or Medvedev. Primorsky Krai in particular has proved a place of real interest to Putin, with huge infrastructure dedicated at Vladivostok for what is known as the annual Far Eastern Forum at which political leaders from across the region attend to talk economic development and security policy.<sup>28</sup> However, again the community obtained reconfiguration of the plans and developmental policies which meant there would still be space for fishing and fishing people at Slavyanka.<sup>29</sup>

This author due to the pressures of both time and bureaucracy unfortunately never made it to Slavyanka (or hasn't by this first version of the book). Regardless

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<sup>25</sup>Personal communication (2016).

<sup>26</sup>Korneyko and Latkin (2015).

<sup>27</sup>Ogai et al. (2017).

<sup>28</sup>Nemtsova and Anna (2012).

<sup>29</sup>Ogai et al. (2017).

of the community's success in fending off the categoric and existential challenge of the newly extended shipbuilding yard, Slavyanka and other communities on the shore of Peter the Great bay are also impacted by ecological degradation and damage. While the detritus, filth and plastic cannot be seen with one's eyes such as in the unfortunate catch of Tong Shui Gou, these Russian communities face extensive wastewater runoff from the Vladivostok metropolitan area. Numerous reports and papers also describe and detail frequent pollution incidents and outbreaks of bacterial infections in the water and in fish and other sea life in the area.<sup>30</sup> Even though the fishers of Slavyanka, Posyet and Zarubino may be able to continue fishing, in spite of all of the recent developments and infrastructural impositions, their catch may not be of anywhere near its historical quality nor saleable in foreign or distant markets.

Having explored in this chapter the history and some of the reality in the field of these fishing communities in South Korea and China, as well as the communities in the Russian Federation which are subject to many of the same environmental issues and some of the same pressures from political and economic forms, the penultimate chapter of this book moves away again from neighbours to North Korea itself. China, South Korea and the Russian Federation have all been part of the global developmental process, which has radically exploited and extracted life from the waters and oceans through extraordinary technological progress and statistical reconfiguration. Russia and before it the Soviet Union and before that Imperial Russia has long been a key player in the stripping of the ocean commons, both underwater and at its surface through the exploitation of sea mammals such as seals and the Stellers' Sea Cow. South Korea, of course, as this book has suggested has only recently become one of the global powers of the sea, its boats and ships present on many of the world's oceans, far from its coasts as had been the case for much of Korea's national history. Whether unsuccessful or successful on the waters, however these nations have also been deeply integrated into the global industrial and economic structures of production and consumption that have caused so much damage to the planet's ecosystems. In these, they are all responsible in some way for the impacts of climate change, sea temperature rise and pollution which has also heavily impacted on the lively matters that are the fish of the world's waters. This does not mean that they are any less impacted by these impending and developing changes than anywhere else, in fact as we have seen at Tong Shui Gou, often their communities are even more heavily impacted than elsewhere. The essential differences for communities around the globe focus on matters of resilience, adaptation and adjustment, practical matters which fishing communities are well versed in given what they do. In China, South Korea and the Russian Federation, we have seen resilient communities facing incredible levels of change and difficulty manage the processes unleashed by such changes in such a way that they can still survive as communities and still engage in the fishing activity which is at the centre of both their lives and work. Given the complexities and difficulties

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<sup>30</sup>Vashchenko (2000).

faced by North Korea more generally in its history and contemporary experience, how might fishing communities and practices there cope with such changes. While North Korea certainly has not been at the developmental vanguard which has stripped the world's oceans of life, filled the atmosphere with pollutants and CO<sub>2</sub> and fallen into the logics of consumption and production (though not of course for want of or desire for trying), it will certainly have been subject to these powerful impacts. As we have also seen in a previous chapter, in spite of its rather distinct political form and sense of itself in geopolitical history, North Korean fishing effort has been predicated on many of the same statistical and developmental presumptions as fishing nations elsewhere in the globe. The desire, energy and effort to follow these presumptions, regardless of its local ideological structures has had some truly extraordinary impacts on fishing and other communities in North Korea, the outcomes of which this book will only briefly mention, but which have haunted and will continue to haunt this author for some time to come. With all of this in mind, the next chapter attempts to root itself in the fishing communities of North Korea, both now and in the future, no matter how hard they are to conceive of or access.

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