Does the Tradition of Pit Dwellings Still Survive in Various Parts of the Country?

—The Correlation between the Existence of Fishing Huts to "Wait" for Salmon, Fishing Techniques and Customs in the Use of Fishing Grounds—

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The fishing hut dealt with in this paper lies somewhere between the close-to-main-house type and remote-from-main-house type of hut. The hut in question is connected with fishing (especially the fresh-water fishing of salmon). Although the hut is located relatively close to the main house, it is rather comfortable to live in, and is used as a base camp during a certain period. However, the fishermen do not settle in the hut, nor use it as a main house. This paper examines what influence actual activities, including the special techniques of salmon fishing, and the use of fishing grounds, had on the basic form of the traditional salmon hut as well as its creation, maintenance, and how it was used.

Since salmon is caught only in the cold wintertime, the salmon hut is built to keep the heat in and the cold out, including pit house type structure and a fill beside the hut. All salmon huts are simple, and temporary structures. These features of the salmon hut are closely connected with fishing methods and customs regarding use of the fishing grounds. This kind of hut is incidental to small-scale, fixed, and individual fishing activities, that is, "waiting" fishing. In group fishing involving a large number of people, even where fixed fishing techniques are used, such as “Yana” (fish-trapping), a small salmon hut is not big enough; a larger, more permanent structure is required. With regard to fishing grounds, a salmon hut is generally constructed where each fisherman occupies a specified territory throughout the season under a fishing-ground allocation system, but he may not necessarily occupy the same territory next season.

The lack of mobility during the season, and seasonal migration require a small and temporary structure. A salmon hut is not a structure built at a distance from the village like a “Dezukuri Goya” (Farming hut, remote-from-main-house), or “Hunting hut” of the Matagi (hunters living in the mountains of the Tōhoku District); it is rather one demanded by the interrupted continuity of the time involved in the fishing activity.