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This paper aims to reveal the actual situation of pole-and-line bonito fishing in the period of Japanese-style wooden vessels by analyzing “Katsuo Ippon-zuri Ema,” votive pictures of pole-and-line bonito fishing dedicated to temples and shrines. Image materials play an important role when written materials and interview surveys have limits to what they can discover. Especially, votive pictures concerning occupations are considered likely to reflect actual situations and conditions since they were dedicated by those involved in the occupations in hopes of their prosperity. Therefore, these votive pictures should be positively used in research while taking into consideration the possibility of formalization, exaggeration, and festive expression.

In Kochi, compared to other prefectures, more votive pictures of pole-and-line bonito fishing remain. These pictures are considered to have originated from Osaka, with which Kochi had built strong economic ties through distribution of dried bonito against a background of the growth of pole-and-line bonito fishing in the early modern times supported by the fishery policies of the Tosa domain (the government of Kochi). The evidence can be found in the design of votive pictures of pole-and-line bonito fishing which is similar to that of votive pictures of vessels produced and sold mainly in Osaka.

This article uses the votive picture of pole-and-line bonito fishing offered to Tenmangu Shrine in Kami-kawaguchi, Kuroshio-cho, Hata-gun, Kochi Prefecture, in 1865, not as support for information gathered by interview surveys, but as primary materials to investigate pole-and-line bonito fishing in the period of Japanese-style wooden vessels, including fishing places, fishing tools, working organizations, attires, physical techniques, and folk beliefs. Although the scope of discovery does not significantly extend the information in the picture, the result breaks new ground beyond conventional surveys centered on documentary and interview studies and reveals the understanding of local people about the scene in the picture as well as fishing techniques and attires. These outcomes also prove the worthiness of votive pictures as historical materials.

Keywords: Votive pictures, pole-and-line bonito fishing, Japanese-style wooden vessels