

Some figureheads represent sea creatures:



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Women on figureheads may have been divinities or were thought to have a calming influence on the ocean







Anything which could be potentially linked to causing increased danger would be of concern. This is the "cause and effect" bit with magic.

In religion, probably the most famous story is that called "Jonah and the Whale" which occurs in the book of Jonah in the Old Testament.



One can in fact quibble over the word used in the story for the animal which is sometimes called "a great fish" and sometimes called "a whale". For many cultures, whales and fish are lumped together under a term loosely translated as "fish" which appears to mean some sort of vertebrate water living sea animal. Sakana for example in Japanese is often used for "fish" although there is another word "uo" that means "fish" (same character 魚) means something to have with Saki and can be either fish or whale meat.

The plot centers on a conflict between Jonah and God. God calls Jonah to proclaim judgment to Nineveh, but Jonah resists and attempts to flee. He goes to Joppa and boards a ship bound for Tarshish. God calls up a great storm at sea, and, at Jonah's insistence, the ship's crew reluctantly cast Jonah overboard in an attempt to appease God. A great sea creature, sent by God, swallows Jonah. For three days and three nights Jonah languishes inside the fish's belly. He says a prayer in which he repents for his disobedience and thanks God for His mercy. God speaks to the fish, which vomits out Jonah safely on dry land.

1:1 Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,

1:2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.

1:3 But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

1:4 But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.

1:5 Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.

1:6 So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.

1:7 And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.

1:8 Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?

1:9 And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land.

1:10 Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him. Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.

1:11 Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous.

1:12 And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.

1:13 Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them.

1:14 Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee.

1:15 So they look up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging.

1:16 Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows.

1:17 Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

2:1 Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly,

2:2 And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice.

2:3 For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me.

2:4 Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.

2:5 The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head.

2:6 I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God.

2:7 When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.

2:8 They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.

2:9 But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.

2:10 And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.

Here prayer (and human sacrifice), rather than magic is involved, but clearly the interaction with a divinity makes this a religious act rather than a magical one. The ocean also supplies food to a large portion of the population. Hence fishing (in a most general sense -i.e. getting food from the ocean whatever it may be - animal or vegetable and whether the animal is invertebrate or vertebrate regardless of whether it is a clam, a lobster or sea cucumber as an invertebrate or a fish or mammal as a vertebrate) is very important to people who live on the shores of the ocean. The food can be important to the people as something they themselves eat, or it may be traded or exported for money. The ocean is a major economic resource for many people.

In places like Japan, there are problems with the small amount of arable land. There are many mountains and areas unsuitable for farming and many of the areas that might have been usable were sufficiently flat that cities were built on them. As a result, the Japanese have used the ocean as the Americans used the Plains. Rice farming is the major food source, but food from the sea is found everywhere. Many Buddhists who are largely vegetarians will eat fish and other animals from the sea.

FOOD TABUS

Some food tabus cross the line between food and religion, although there are non-religious rejections of certain items as food (technically, these are not tabus). Everywhere in the world, there are edible materials that the people normally do not eat. Some restrictions on eating are religious and some are not. In America, by and large insects are considered inedible, although other cultures eat them with no problems: grasshoppers, water bugs and so on are all potentially food. Chinese avoid milk and many milk products. Chinese report that milk is something excreted by the body like sweat which Americans would doubtless find unappealing as well! (Despite this, Japan has a soda with the rather unpleasant name (to Americans) of Pocari Sweat. (To the Japanese the metaphor seems to imply "sports"

Most, if not all, mammals are edible but people in different cultures do not eat them. Americans do not eat dogs, cats or horses. Generally, Americans do not eat snakes, although for some people the eel, snake like in general appearance is OK. Shellfish may be avoided. Many Americans are unhappy about eating squid, while other cultures think it fine. Some foods are just culturally not identified as "food" whereas others are tabooed by religion.

Some are suggested not to be eaten (no meat on Fridays) or during Lent (Carnival is from Carne Vale – Farewell to Meat).

The prohibition against eating pork by Jews and Muslims is another example. The book of Leviticus deals with the notion of cleanliness and uncleanness. It details the kinds of animal sacrifices to be made to remove an unclean state. It deals with uncleanness caused by illness. Probably, the most famous injunctions for us are those from the book of Leviticus in the Bible. This book deals largely with ritual behavior and the concepts of cleanliness and lack thereof. In chapter 11 contains the prohibitions against the eating of pork. The prohibition against eating pork applies not only to Jews but Muslims as well. In addition, Leviticus prohibits the eating a large number of food items some of which come from the ocean (verse 9) Leviticus prohibits the eating of things from the waters, which do not conform to a rule that says:

9 Many creatures live in the water of the oceans and streams. You can eat all those that have fins and scales.

10 Treat as “unclean” all the creatures in the oceans or streams that do not have fins and scales. That includes all those that move together in groups and all those that do not.

11 Treat them as “unclean.” Do not eat their meat. Treat their dead bodies as “unclean.”

12 Regard as “unclean” everything that lives in the water that does not have fins and scales.

Here is Chapter 11 in its entirety in two translations

CHAPTER 11

1 The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron. He said to them,

2 “Speak to the Israelites. Tell them, ‘Many animals live on land. Here are the only ones you can eat.

3 You can eat any animal that has hooves that are separated completely in two. But it must also chew the cud.

4 Some animals only chew the cud. Some only have hooves that are separated in two. You must not eat those animals. Camels chew the cud. But their hooves are not separated in two. So they are "unclean" for you.

5 Rock badgers chew the cud. But their hooves are not separated in two. So they are "unclean" for you.

6 Rabbits chew the cud. But their hooves are not separated in two. So they are "unclean" for you.

7 Pigs have hooves that are separated completely in two. But they do not chew the cud. So they are "unclean" for you.

8 You must not eat the meat of those animals. You must not even touch their dead bodies. They are "unclean" for you.

9 Many creatures live in the water of the oceans and streams. You can eat all those that have fins and scales.

10 Treat as "unclean" all the creatures in the oceans or streams that do not have fins and scales. That includes all those that move together in groups and all those that do not.

11 Treat them as "unclean." Do not eat their meat. Treat their dead bodies as "unclean."

12 Regard as "unclean" everything that lives in the water that does not have fins and scales.

13 Here are the birds you must treat as "unclean." Do not eat them because they are "unclean." The birds include eagles, vultures and black vultures.

14 They include red kites and all kinds of black kites.

15 They include all kinds of ravens.

16 They include horned owls, screech owls, gulls and all kinds of hawks.

17 They include little owls, cormorants and great owls.

18 They include white owls, desert owls and ospreys.

19 They also include storks, hoopoes, bats and all kinds of herons. 20 Treat as "unclean" every flying insect that walks on all fours.

21 But you can eat some flying insects that walk on all fours. Their legs have joints so they can hop on the ground.

22 Here are the insects you can eat. You can eat all kinds of locusts, katydids, crickets and grasshoppers.

23 Treat as "unclean" every other creature with wings and four legs.

24 You will make yourselves "unclean" if you eat these things. If you touch their dead bodies, you will be "unclean" until evening.

25 If a person picks up one of their dead bodies, that person must wash their clothes. They will be "unclean" until evening.

26 Suppose an animal has hooves that are not separated completely in two. Or suppose an animal does not chew the cud. Then these animals are "unclean" for you. If you touch the dead body of any of them, you will be "unclean."

27 Many animals walk on all fours. But those that walk on their paws are "unclean" for you. Anyone who touches their dead bodies will be "unclean" until evening.

28 If a person picks up their dead bodies, that person must wash their clothes. They will be "unclean" until evening. These animals are "unclean" for you.

29 Many animals move along the ground. Here are the ones that are "unclean" for you. They include weasels, rats and all kinds of large lizards.

30 They also include geckos, monitor lizards, wall lizards, skinks and chameleons.

31 These are the animals that move around on the ground that are "unclean" for you. If you touch their dead bodies, you will be "unclean" until evening.

32 Suppose one of them dies and falls on something. Then that thing will be "unclean." It does not matter what it is used for. It does not matter whether it is made out of wood, cloth, hide or rough cloth. Put it in water. It will be "unclean" until evening. After that, it will be "clean."

33 Suppose one of these animals falls into a clay pot. Then everything in the pot will be "unclean." You must break the pot.

34 Any food that could be eaten but has water on it that came from that pot is "unclean." And any liquid that could be drunk from it is "unclean."

35 Anything that the dead body of one of these animals falls on becomes "unclean." If it is an oven or cooking pot, break it. It is "unclean." And you must consider it "unclean."

36 But a spring or a well for collecting water remains "clean." That is true even if the dead body of one of these animals falls into it. But anyone who touches the dead body is not "clean."

37 If the dead body falls on any seeds that have not been planted yet, the seeds remain "clean."

38 But suppose water has already been put on the seeds. And suppose the dead body falls on them. Then they are "unclean" for you.

39 Suppose an animal you are allowed to eat dies. If anyone touches its dead body, they will be "unclean" until evening.

40 If they eat part of the dead body, they must wash their clothes. They will be "unclean" until evening. If they pick up the dead body, they must wash their clothes. They will be "unclean" until evening .

41 Treat as "unclean" every creature that moves along the ground. Do not eat it.

42 Do not eat any of these creatures. It does not matter whether they move on their bellies. It does not matter whether they walk on all fours or on many feet. It is "unclean."

43 Do not make yourselves "unclean" by eating any of these animals. Do not make yourselves "unclean" because of them. Do not let them make you "unclean."

44 I am the LORD your God. Set yourselves apart. Be holy, because I am holy. Do not make yourselves "unclean" by eating any creatures that move around on the ground.

45 I am the LORD. I brought you up out of Egypt to be your God. So be holy, because I am holy.

46 These are the rules about animals and birds. These are the rules about every living thing that moves around in the water. And these are the rules about every creature that moves along the ground.

47 You must be able to tell the difference between what is "clean" and what is not. You must also be able to tell the difference between living creatures that can be eaten and those that can't.'?"

And a different translation

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses and to Aaron, saying unto them,

2 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, These are the beasts which ye shall eat among all the beasts that are on the earth.

3 Whatsoever parteth the hoof, and is clovenfooted, and cheweth the cud, among the beasts, that shall ye eat.

4 Nevertheless these shall ye not eat of them that chew the cud, or of them that divide the hoof: as the camel, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you.

5 And the coney, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you.

6 And the hare, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you.

7 And the swine, though he divide the hoof, and be clovenfooted, yet he cheweth not the cud; he is unclean to you.

8 Of their flesh shall ye not eat, and their carcase shall ye not touch; they are unclean to you

9 These shall ye eat of all that are in the waters: whatsoever hath fins and scales in the waters, in the seas, and in the rivers, them shall ye eat.

10 And all that have not fins and scales in the seas, and in the rivers, of all that move in the waters, and of any living thing which is in the waters, they shall be an abomination unto you:

11 They shall be even an abomination unto you; ye shall not eat of their flesh, but ye shall have their carcasses in abomination.

12 Whatsoever hath no fins nor scales in the waters, that shall be an abomination unto you.

13 And these are they which ye shall have in abomination among the fowls; they shall not be eaten, they are an abomination: the eagle, and the ossifrage, and the ospray,

14 And the vulture, and the kite after his kind;

15 Every raven after his kind;

16 And the owl, and the night hawk, and the cuckow, and the hawk after his kind,

17 And the little owl, and the cormorant, and the great owl,

18 And the swan, and the pelican, and the gier eagle,

19 And the stork, the heron after her kind, and the lapwing, and the bat.

20 All fowls that creep, going upon all four, shall be an abomination unto you.

21 Yet these may ye eat of every flying creeping thing that goeth upon all four, which have legs above their feet, to leap withal upon the earth;

22 Even these of them ye may eat; the locust after his kind, and the bald locust after his kind, and the beetle after his kind, and the grasshopper after his kind.

23 But all other flying creeping things, which have four feet, shall be an abomination unto you.

24 And for these ye shall be unclean: whosoever toucheth the carcase of them shall be unclean until the even.

25 And whosoever beareth ought of the carcase of them shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even.

26 The carcases of every beast which divideth the hoof, and is not clovenfooted, nor cheweth the cud, are unclean unto you: every one that toucheth them shall be unclean.

27 And whatsoever goeth upon his paws, among all manner of beasts that go on all four, those are unclean unto you: whoso toucheth their carcase shall be unclean until the even.

28 And he that beareth the carcase of them shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even: they are unclean unto you.

29 These also shall be unclean unto you among the creeping things that creep upon the earth; the weasel, and the mouse, and the tortoise after his kind,

30 And the ferret, and the chameleon, and the lizard, and the snail, and the mole.

31 These are unclean to you among all that creep: whosoever doth touch them, when they be dead, shall be unclean until the even.

32 And upon whatsoever any of them, when they are dead, doth fall, it shall be unclean; whether it be any vessel of wood, or raiment, or skin, or sack, whatsoever vessel it be, wherein any work is done, it must be put into water, and it shall be unclean until the even; so it shall be cleansed.

33 And every earthen vessel, whereinto any of them falleth, whatsoever is in it shall be unclean; and ye shall break it.

34 Of all meat which may be eaten, that on which such water cometh shall be unclean: and all drink that may be drunk in every such vessel shall be unclean.

35 And every thing whereupon any part of their carcase falleth shall be unclean; whether it be oven, or ranges for pots, they shall be broken down: for they are unclean, and shall be unclean unto you.

36 Nevertheless a fountain or pit, wherein there is plenty of water, shall be clean: but that which toucheth their carcase shall be unclean.

37 And if any part of their carcase fall upon any sowing seed which is to be sown, it shall be clean.

38 But if any water be put upon the seed, and any part of their carcase fall thereon, it shall be unclean unto you.

39 And if any beast, of which ye may eat, die; he that toucheth the carcase thereof shall be unclean until the even.

40 And he that eateth of the carcase of it shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even: he also that beareth the carcase of it shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even.

41 And every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth shall be an abomination; it shall not be eaten.

42 Whatsoever goeth upon the belly, and whatsoever goeth upon all four, or whatsoever hath more feet among all creeping things that creep upon the earth, them ye shall not eat; for they are an abomination.

43 Ye shall not make yourselves abominable with any creeping thing that creepeth, neither shall ye make yourselves unclean with them, that ye should be defiled thereby.

44 For I am the Lord your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

45 For I am the Lord that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.

46 This is the law of the beasts, and of the fowl, and of every living creature that moveth in the waters, and of every creature that creepeth upon the earth:

47 To make a difference between the unclean and the clean, and between the beast that may be eaten and the beast that may not be eaten.

People for a long time have recognized that there must be some reasons for these tabus.

The famed Jewish scholar Maimonides (Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, born 1135 or 1138, died 1204) was one of the first to look for a reason for the

prohibition against eating pork in the real world. He thought that the pigs eating habits made it unclean.

Others argued was that pork contains a parasite a round worm (nematode) which causes trichinosis. That can be passed on to humans. His argument, while interesting had problems in that there are other animals not tabooed in the area that have parasites that are much worse. He feels that pigs supply only meat whereas sheep supply wool as well as meet.

More recently, noted anthropology Marvin Harris proposed that ecology and economics are at the root of the problem. Pigs are omnivores as eat similar food to people and hence are in competition for the same foodstuffs. So the keeping of pigs is detrimental. In addition, aside from pork, pigs produce no other useful products. Sheep produce wool; goats produce milk and so on. So the prohibition against easting pork makes it likely that people will not raise pigs. Since then it appears that there are some people in the area that raise pigs and seem not concerned about the competition. Nonetheless, the process of raising them may be edgy.

Others have pointed out pigs are not unclean unless they are starved, there are far worse parasites to be found than trichinosis in animals which are not tabued. Some people in the Middle East DO raise and eat pigs.

Similar arguments have been made about the idea of eating fish on Fridays. In Europe, grazing land is scarce and as a result, large herds of cattle are not easily maintained. The injunction to eat fish on Friday has some relevance to the fact that red meat would have perhaps been put under a strain without such a prohibition.

Mary Douglas in her book on Natural Symbols makes further argument, one of which is that there are people in the middle east that do deal with pigs and that this is a symbolic way of being different.

Mary Douglas, another anthropologist approached the problem symbolically and points out that people classify animals based on a number of things. Generally, for example, things that live in the water are called "fish". Her argument is that "fish" become the "proper kind of animal" and things which lack the criteria of "fish" - gills, fins etc. are seen as "improper' hence unclean and should not be eaten. There is little doubt that the debate is not yet over.

Interestingly enough, many animals are rather "picky" eaters and have rather restricted diets although this is obviously not seen as cultural.

Although not having to do with water, other cultures, like some in places like India, reject the killing of cattle and there is also a lively debate about why this should be. These arguments are often based around the idea that culture is "adaptive" and there seem to be many places where it seems maladaptive (until someone finds a way to show it is adaptive). So the arguments continue and so the battle continues on.

Some might argue that the shorter term prohibitions, like restriction of specific days of the week (meatless Fridays) or seasons (like lent) when certain foods should not be eaten might be good for preserving the animals population.

Similarly, there are many things in the ocean that are edible, but people do not want to eat.

Other problems with food deal with matters outside (to some degree) of culture. In the Viking case, the weather change is outside of Viking control, but the religious problems complicated the issue.

Mini Ice Age and the Vikings. 1300 – 1850 (alternately some feel it was from the 16th to the 19th centuries) temperatures in Greenland dropped about 7 degrees F or 4 degrees C. This led to longer periods of sea ice making travel and trade difficult. Shorter growing seasons impacted the food supply and fish moved south into warmer waters. Eskimo did OK fishing through the ice. Vikings couldn't learn because they had become Christians and Eskimos had rituals to animals they were about to kill or killed which seem to have been anathema to the Christian Vikings who went to church, prayed and died, while the pagan Eskimos did OK.

Movement of fish in Greenland is not the only problem of this sort based on weather change. The Greenland one was rather long lasting and came once. Others are more complex.

So prohibitions might involve a day (try not to eat meat on Friday) to a couple of weeks (Lent) or a few months. In America there is a nice saying that indicates a cultural (but not religious) prohibition against eating oysters in months without the letter "R"

DON'T EAT OYSTERS IN MONTHS WITHOUT THE LETTER "R"

Other forms are dangerous only at certain times. The phrase "Do not eat oysters in months without 'r's" may sound silly but has some validity. R-less months are in the summer when algal blooms are likely. Many of these contain a toxin and oysters filter feed on the algae, thus becoming somewhat toxified themselves. Through "bio magnification" (in which a toxin, for example, increases in the body as each higher animal up the food chain eats the one below) can cause serious illness in humans eating oysters with high levels of toxicity.

So, while religion is also involved in tabuing food, no culture has been found where all edible resources are utilized. Some aversion seems to be just cultural in the sense that the object is not seen as food. In America, insects are not considered food, but in other places in the world, they are. There are no supernatural proscriptions against eating insects, just an aversion that insects are not food.

Other taboos may be related to objects associated with fishing and specifically the foods involved. On the NW Coast, fishing equipment is stored indoors during the winter. This brings with it a tabu about having sex in the houses since the equipment is stored there. When spring arrives and days become warm enough, people have sex outdoors and hence the birth rates are much higher starting 9 months after the first warm days a spring.

FOLKLORE

Folklore is another aspect of culture. Any bit of folklore is generally defined as not having an "authentic" version. That is to say there is no known "author" or definitive version which can be cited as correct or not.

Generally, folklorists may make technical distinctions between different kinds of narratives (called "oral literature"). For example, some folklorists define three types "myths", "tales" and "legends".

Technically, myths are stories which are believed to be true and sacred (thereby making them something quite different than the dictionary use of the word where it means something untrue).

Legends are stories believed (more or less sometimes) to be true about real people but are not sacred (George Washington and the Cherry Tree).

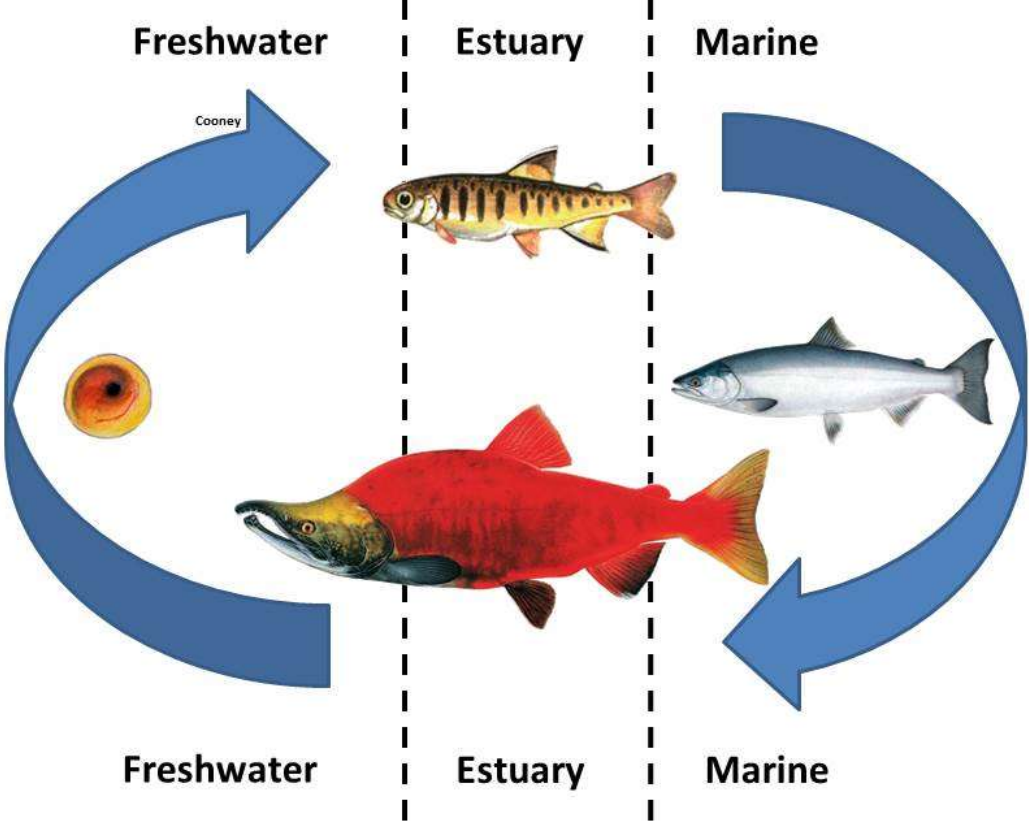
Tales (as in fairy tales) are stories not believed to be true at all. Many of these have specific forms. For example, in the West, Fairy Tales begin "Once upon a time", and end "and they all lived happily ever after". In Japan they begin "mukashi, mukashi" "A long time ago, a long time ago"

Within different cultures there are many folkloric stories about the ocean and the creatures (real and imaginary) that live in it. The idea that the manatees inspired the concept of the mermaid is not a narrative, so it isn't any of the three. But stories about mermaids catching people and drowning them are. The Japanese have a critter called a Kappa that looks something like a turtle with a dish on its head. There must always be water in the dish or it will die. There are stories about these creatures drowning people.

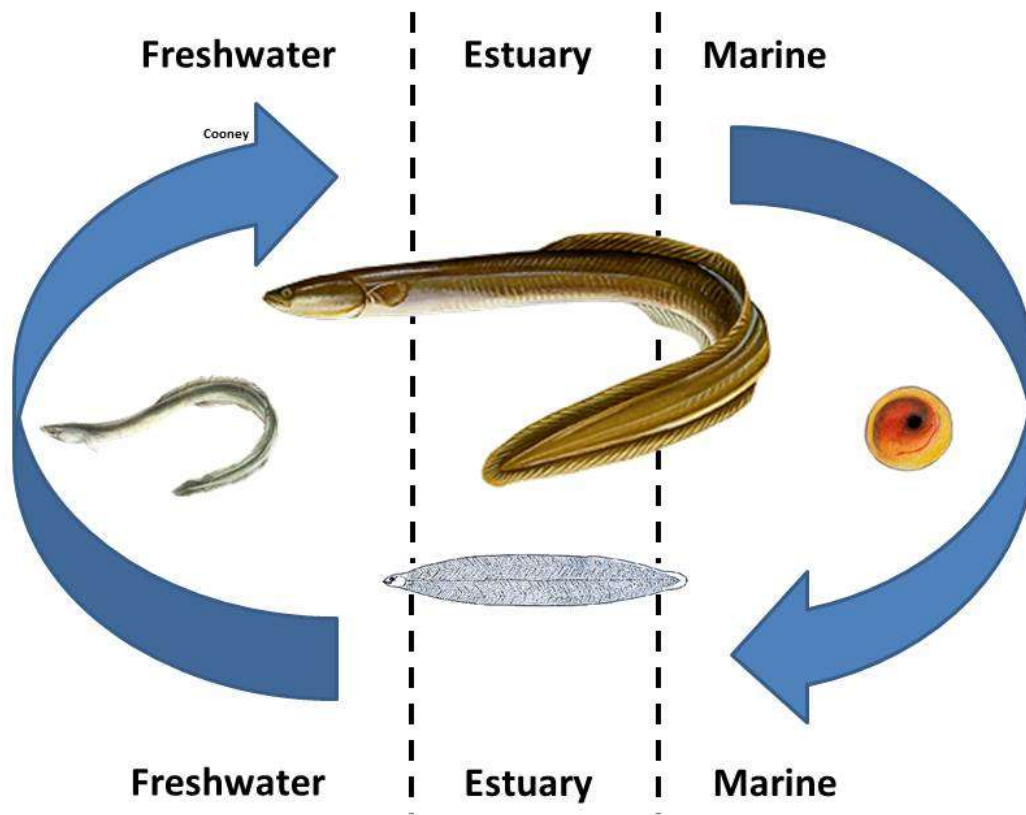
The indigenous people on the NW Coast have a belief about animals. Each animal is a kind of person – salmon people, otter people who dress in the skins of that animal. Salmon people swim up the rivers from the ocean where they are caught. The fishermen must be careful to return all the bones of the fish to the river so that they may return to the "salmon home" where they redress as salmon fish and can return up the rivers again. In some stories all the bones are not returned and a person appears in a village, who is missing some body part. The people recognize the person as one of the animal people all of whose bones have not been returned to the water and are now missing the part of the body which lacks the bone. There is often a frantic hunt to locate the bone and return it to the water. Once done the animal-person disappears and can regain their full body.

Salmon by the way are known as anadromous (anadromous) fish (as opposed to catadromous fish). Anadromous fish live in the ocean but spawn in fresh water. Catadromous (catadromous) fish reverse the process and live in fresh water but spawn in the ocean. The American eel is catadromous.

Anadromous Life Cycle



Catadromous Life Cycle



The salmon are born in the streams and then head out to the ocean where they live most their lives. They finally return to the stream of the birth where they spawn and die.

Some comparative psychologists (animal behaviorists) have thought that the chemicals in the bones of the fish may clue the offspring later as to which stream to come up to spawn, since the salmon return to the streams of their birth.

The Mohawks, an Iroquoian speaking nation located in upstate New York and Canada have stories in which creatures that are half human and have fish appear – a kind of mermaid. In the stories they can be dangerous and often lure men into the water. In some cases the men turn into mermen (or whatever male mermaids are called – merbutlers?). The creatures are usually female but occasionally they are male.

There are also many stories about ghost ships and mystery ships. Ghost ships are generally supernatural, like the Flying Dutchman which appears and disappears. The story has many forms as expected in folklore, but in general it involves a captain who swears to round a stormy cape if it take all eternity. For a kind of blasphemy he is punished for having to sail forever and it is considered very unlucky to meet the ship. The story has become the subject of an opera by Richard Wagner (Der fliegende Holländer) and of some films like Pandora and the Flying Dutchman. An excerpt from the overture to the opera can be heard on the web site for the course.



In Chile, a ghost ship called the Caleuche.



There are stories that deal with it carrying the people who have died at sea and who now revel in constant parties. The workers are deceased sailors (no rest for the weary). It is one of the most well known legends of the Chilota mythology of southern Chile describes the Caleuche, a ghost ship that appears every night near the island of Chiloé. According to local legend, the ship is a kind of conscious being that sails the waters around the area, carrying with it the spirits of all the people who have drowned at sea. When spotted, the Caleuche is said to be strikingly beautiful and bright, and is always accompanied by the sounds of party music and people laughing. After appearing for a few moments, the ship is then said to disappear or submerge itself under the water. According to Chilota mythology, the spirits

of the drowned are summoned to the ship by the Sirena Chilota, the Pincoya, and the Picoy, three Chilota "water spirits" who resemble mermaids. Once aboard the phantom ship, the drowned are said to be able to resume their life as it was before they died. It is unusual in that the ship is thought to be conscious. People are invited on board

A glow on ships can be caused by "St. Elmo's Fire" an atmospheric condition that cause as "glow" on masts and yard arms.



Another famous “phantom ship” is the Mary Celeste which left the East River in NYC bound for Genoa.



A ship, the Dei Gratia, which had also left NY (before the Mary Celeste) found the Mary Celeste sailing with no crew and everything on board as though the crew had suddenly vanished. The captain, his wife and daughter and crew members were never heard of again. The story was made famous by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle J. Habakuk Jephson's Statement, which veered off from the facts and led to much of the confusion about what actually happened. Recently it has been concluded that the ship had only one chronometer (clock) on board – which appears to have been in error. Most ships carried many – up to 20 and more. Why would this have been? What problems would a damaged clock be to the Mary Celeste?

Also involved in folklore are interesting “creatures” like Mermaids, Giant Krakens and Sea serpents.

Mermaids are thought to be the result of sailors (being at sea so long) seeing manatees and believing them to be women.



It seems to me you would have to be at sea a pretty long time to mistake these for this:



On a more realistic note, however, the sailors may have seen or heard about manatees from other sailors who sailed along the coast of Africa where they are also found. More significantly though, there are many half animal half human critters in western mythology: Satyrs (1/2 goat 1/2 human), centaurs (1/2 horse 1/2 human), minotaurs (1/2 bull 1/2 human) and so on.

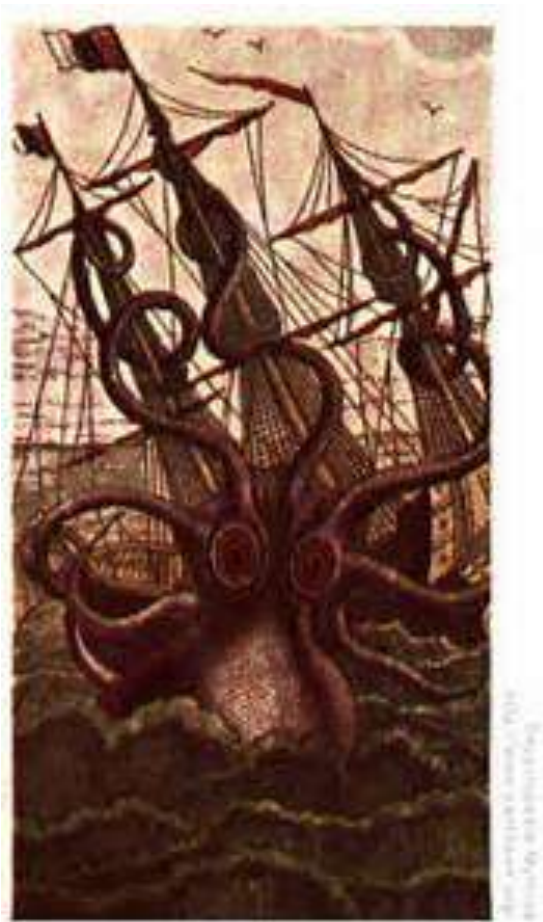


There are many cultures in which there are these mixed human/animal creatures. The Apache have a deer woman who is human (upper) and deer (lower). Mohawk has a kind of mermaid that inhabits the St. Lawrence River. Transformers or shape shifters who can alter their appearance often from human to animal as happens with werewolves, and the occasional vampire who seems able to change into a bat or other animal are also found in many cultures.

Anthropologists Victor Turner points out that some African masks exhibit creature which are half human and half other animal and in some cases half human half plant or thing. He suggests that this is a "questioning" of

boundary categories – in what ways are humans like other animals and in what ways different?

Other mystical sea beasts include the “kraken” an animal believed to have been inspired by the appearance of a giant squid.



The idea that the squid could actually reach up into a ship and pluck sailors off the masts seems far fetched. The squid uses buoyancy from the water for support. Once out of the water the ability to raise its arms up would be very limited.

Sea Serpents



Video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6oUkMJE_ko

The sea serpent may have the "oarfish" – the largest bony fish – as its inspiration.

Aside from food tabus and the like there is the ability to move something through religion into a sacred realm through a sanctification process. This is in effect what Abraham Lincoln says when, in the Gettysburg Address he says:

We are met on a great battle field of that war. We come to dedicate a portion of it, as a final resting place for those who died here, that the nation might live. This we may, in all propriety do.

But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate we cannot consecrate we cannot hallow, this ground The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have hallowed it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here; while it can never forget what they did here. Here the idea of consecration or sanctification is through deed – not somebody simply saying something. Religion allows for the process of moving things into the "sacred" realm. There are several rituals both here and in other cultures in which this can happen:

The use of water in a ritual.

Western Baptism: spiritual cleansing. Since water is a kind of universal solvent and cleans things, then symbolically it can clean as well. Hence

water frequently plays a part in religions often "cleaning" the profane" realm from the "sacred".

Baptism is a ritual which Christ ostensibly went in Jan 6th – epiphany and on that day Orthodox Christians celebrate. In Tarpon Springs Florida and a few other places in the world, a crucifix is thrown into the water and young men dive for it. The person who recovers it is supposed to have good fortune thereafter.

VIDEO

The actual baptism of people today may involve simply the sprinkling of water on the person, or full immersion. In some sects of Baptism, especially in the South, the baptism takes place in a river, paralleling the baptism of Jesus.

This is a powerful event and has been turned into dance form by Alvin Ailey in his signature dance piece "Revelations"

Video of Revelations

Discussions of religion have led us to questions of food and non food taboos, mythical stories and mythical animals, ghost ships and mystery ships. Now we look at some rituals that have to do with baptism, purification and changes of status – rites of passage or transition

Japanese Misogi: Not all religions have a moral base, or, more importantly, a revealed text. Judaism, Christianity and Islam – three religions seen as separate, but all having a shared history (Judaism predicts a messiah; Christianity produces one and Islam sees Mohammed as the last of the prophets, but regards Jesus as a great prophet as well). All of them have a divinely inspired text to which one can refer – The Old Testament, the New Testament and the Koran.

In Japan there are 2 major religions: Shinto, an indigenous religion and Buddhism which arrived in Japan some 1300 years ago, It is not regarded as "alien" the way say "Christianity" is.

According to one set of figures, there are about 120 million people in Japan of whom 92 million are Shintoists and 89 million are Buddhists. This often

confuses people who realize that 91 million and 89 million add up to 180 million not 120 million. The puzzle is easily resolved when one realizes that most Japanese practice both. Shinto is generally involved with forces of life, while Buddhism deals with death. A Shinto priest may have funeral services performed by Buddhist priest, while a Buddhist priest may be married by a Shinto priest or have the construction of a new temple protected by a Shinto ritual

The Kojiki – the oldest book in Japan tells of the creation of the universe and hence many Americans and Europeans equate it with the Bible. But in fact, it is the work of the court of one of the early rulers who was concerned about the fact that everywhere he went in Japan there were different stories about how the world came into being. So he asked to court to conduct an investigation into how the world began. The members of the court went around and finally produced the Kojiki – “The Writing of Ancient Things”. This they gave to the emperor with the statement that they have no idea how the world came into being, but this is what people say. So rather than a resealed text, the Kojiki is a sort of Senate Subcommittee Hearing on the origin of things. While the book is important since it documents much of what was going on in the religious thought at about 600 AD it does not count as “divine revelation”. If you recite the opening in Japanese to many Japanese they think it sounds odd, but don’t know what it is. Compare that with asking Americans where does the line come from that says “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”.

Now in the Kojiki two of the kami (a word that translates as “sacred” or “divine” or “god” and is known to most Americans in the phrase “kami kaze”) are involved in a story in which one dies and the other goes to the afterworld to bring her back (this is a common story found in many many cultures) Although he fails, on his return he must purify himself from his contact with dead things and proceeds to wash himself. From various parts of his body spring the pantheon of the Japanese gods – or kami. People when they die become kami so there are a lot of them in Japan. Several million in fact.

Today, people in Japan do a kind of ritual purification with water called “misogi”. This is often done in the winter in the cold ocean water or by standing under a cold waterfall while in effect, detaching one’s self from the mundane world.

Video of Japanese misogi ritual

Sanctifying by salt: Salt is what remains after sea water evaporates. In Japan, salt is used ritually for purification.

In Japan, there are several stratified classes of people, the lowest of which are called "The Eta". These are something akin to the untouchable caste members in India and like them have been involved with dead bodies (often animals) which can be polluting.

In pre WWII Japan the Eta lived in separate parts of the city known to be where Eta lived. They are physically indistinct from the other Japanese (Unlike the Ainu – an aboriginal population somewhat akin to American Indians here).

If an Eta came into a shop, it was not unusual for the owner to put a small pile of salt by the entrance way to purify the place.

During the war, extensive bombing caused a good deal of dislocation and people were forced to move quickly. Often Eta moved from an Eta neighborhood to a non Eta neighborhood in another city, before anyone could check where they lived previously. With enough moving around, many Eta simply blended in with the rest of the Japanese and lost their identity as Eta.

After the WWII it was illegal to discriminate against Eta. While many had simply "passed" into Japanese society, some Eta demanded some sort of action on the part of the government. As a result, they were given special status in terms of things like the handling of dead animals. This presented a problem that will be discussed later relative to whaling

Most commonly now, the use of salt as a sanctifying device can be seen in Sumo matches. Sumo is a form a Japanese wrestling. It is done on a raised platform and the action is confined to a circle or ring on the top. (Boxing in America claims to be done in a ring, but in fact is done in a square!)

At any rate, Sumo wrestling is very old and has links to the religion. Before an actual bout begins, the wrestlers throw salt around the ring, purifying it before the bout.

Video of throwing salt in Sumo

Crossing the line ceremonies: A rite of passage or transition marking a change of status. These transitions may be marked on the body in things like tattoos.

Among individual rituals are tattooing as well (One song says "A sailor ain't a sail til a sailor's been tattooed"). Tattooing falls under a number of categories – religious, artistic and practical.

At one level, it is a symbolic marker of a rite of passage. The subject of body modification has received a lot of attention.

Several kinds of body modification are defined:

Note that the same modification can be symbolized in different ways:

Accidental – a scar resulting from an accident (a fall, a car crash - even a dueling match)

By product – a scar resulting from an operation

A deliberate act: ritual scarification to mark status or achievement (runner has a road running on his leg; military person gets a tattoo when he completes basic training, goes into a specialized unit). Some sailors crossing the line get tattoos.

There is a tradition to tattoo a compass on the shoulder - these are often personally done rather than required by the organization. In a sense, one's life history is written on the body. People have written about corporal punishment as the state writing the punishment on the body.

Tattoo as a word comes from Polynesia, a place known for its elaborate tattoos.

This photo is an old one showing an elderly man with complete face tattooing.



This is more current - there has been an increase in the return to the old custom:



Some men get full body tattoos that are more elaborate:





There is some sexual differentiation in that women tend to tattoo only the chin and lip areas:



The Latin word is "Stigma" and its feeling of negativity still comes through in that word in English.

Tattoos were learned from the Persians who used them to mark slaves so they could be identified if they ran away. The Greeks and Romans seem to have followed this tradition and tattooed

“barbarians” who had been brought into the Roman armies to identify them if they deserted.

Ancient Roman sailors did some tattooing since it was a kind of identification of the body in the sense that if a sailor drowned at sea, the readily identifiable parts of the body might be destroyed but a body part with a tattoo might be usable to identify the person.

When Western seafarers picked up the art form (believed to have been on Cook's voyages, the idea was borrowed from the Polynesians, but the style of the art was western.





Tattoos can also be considered an art form. We have talked a bit about some "sailor arts" before like scrimshaw – the etching on ivory. For seafarers it is usually on sperm whale teeth and walrus tusks.



In the crossing of the equator rituals, Poseidon/Neptune holds court and "pollywogs" or "tadpoles" (who have not crossed the equator) are hazed by shellbacks (who have crossed the equator). Hazing is a kind of testing during an invitation. You can see it in the misogi as well as here.

These rituals often do a kind of role reversal where the Traditional social structure is overturned. This happens in some Lenten festivals as well for example. There is generally a good deal of playing with social categories - cross-dressing; a particularly dense or somewhat retarded person being made mayor; and a general reversal of the social order.

Sailors who have already crossed the Equator are known as Shellbacks, and those who have not are nicknamed as Tadpoles or Pollywogs. A Golden Shellback is a person who has crossed the Equator at the 180th meridian (the International Date Line). If a person crosses the Equator at the Prime Meridian, they gain

status as a Royal Diamond Shellback (aka Emerald Shellback in the USA). Similar 'fraternities' in the US Navy and have been adopted by many others. Various sources indicate that these include:

- – Order of the Blue Nose for sailors who have crossed the Arctic Circle.
- – Order of the Red Nose for sailors who have crossed the Antarctic Circle.
- – Order of the Golden Dragon for sailors who have crossed the International Date Line.
- – Order of the Ditch for sailors who have passed through the Panama Canal.
- – Order of the Rock for sailors who have transited the Strait of Gibraltar.
- – Safari to the Suez for sailors who have passed through the Suez Canal.
- – Realm of the Czars for sailors who crossed into the Black Sea.
- – Order of Magellan for sailors who circumnavigated the earth.
- – Order of the Lakes for sailors who have sailed on all five Great Lakes.

The ritual is a ceremony presided over by King Neptune (the ancient ruler of the seas) who wears a gold crown and holds a trident. Sitting beside him is his wife Queen Amphitrite.

A villainous surgeon, a barber, guards and people dressed as bears, surrounds them. The form and make-up of the ceremony is far from standardized, and the cast can include a wide range of Characters, depending on the experience and imagination of the participants. The cast of characters in the 'play' usually includes:

King Neptune

Queen Amphitrite

Herald

Secretary

Judge

Davey Jones

Chief Police
Chief Bear
Doctor
Barber
Trident Stamper
Policeman
Bear

Video of "Crossing the Line"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B719EplQrYU>

People crossing the line get a certificate like this one:



Crossing the line deals with special places in the ocean. There are a number of areas of the ocean which appear "supernatural" - The Bermuda Triangle; The Sargasso Sea and the Devil's Triangle. Doubtless there are others

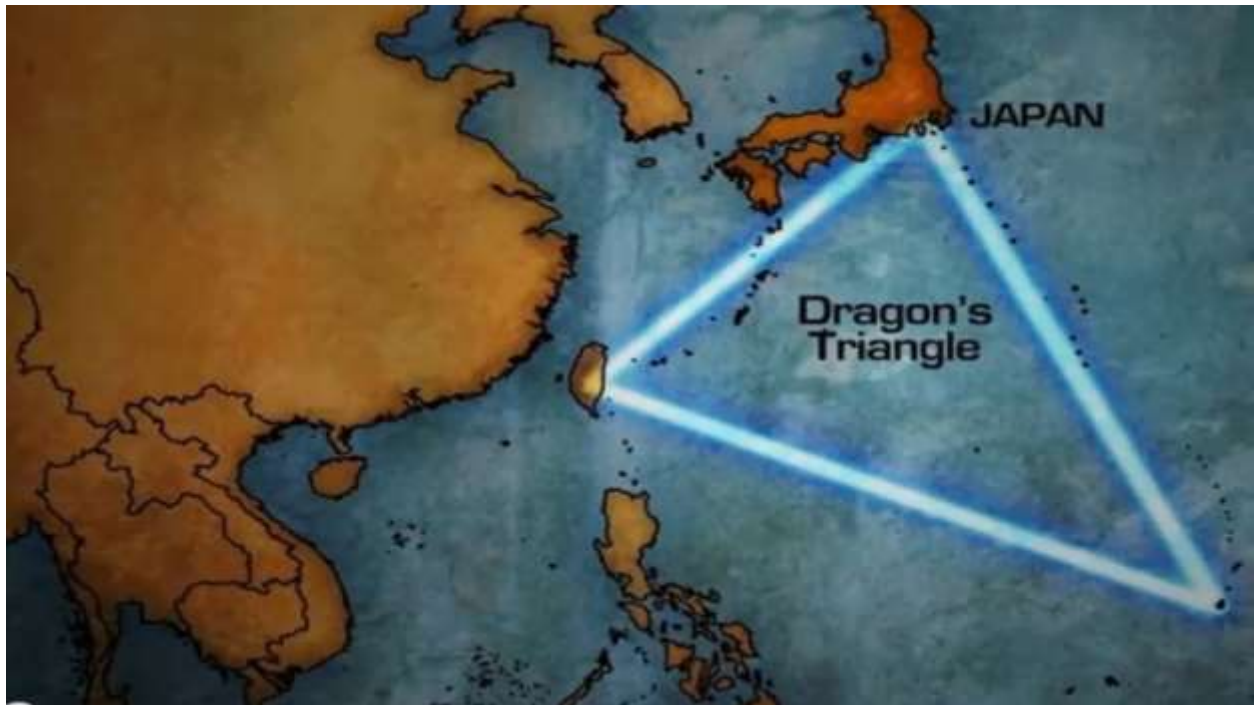


The Bermuda Triangle is a loosely defined area in which ships, planes, people and the like seem to have disappeared in what are thought of as abnormally high numbers. This view is not shared by the insurance companies who do not raise your rates if you are travelling through the area, nor by the US Coast Guard whose records show no abnormalities. It is true there are a large number of ship which have sunk there, but given the fact it is intensively traveled this is not odd.

The triangle expands to include anything mysterious and was even extended far enough to include the Mary Celeste mystery, which is no longer a mystery,

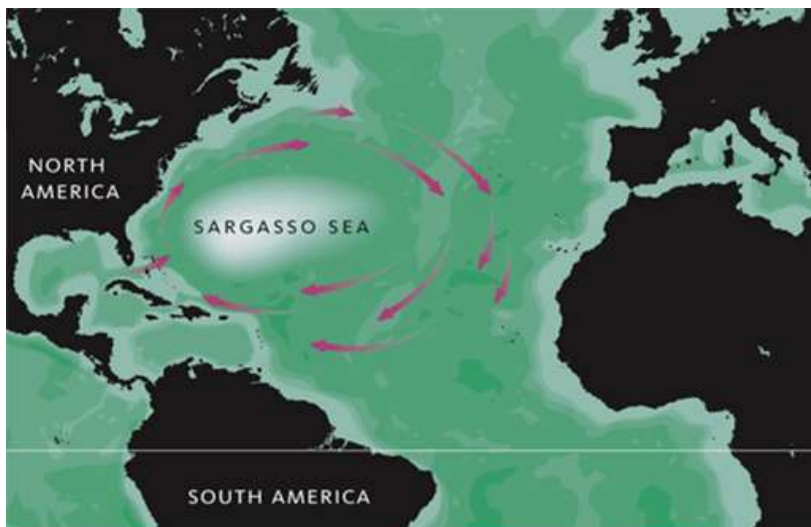
A similar area has been “located” near Japan called “The Devil’s Triangle”. The word “Ma” (魔) is basically “an evil spirit” It sometimes occurs as “Maoo” (魔王) where the “oo” means “king”

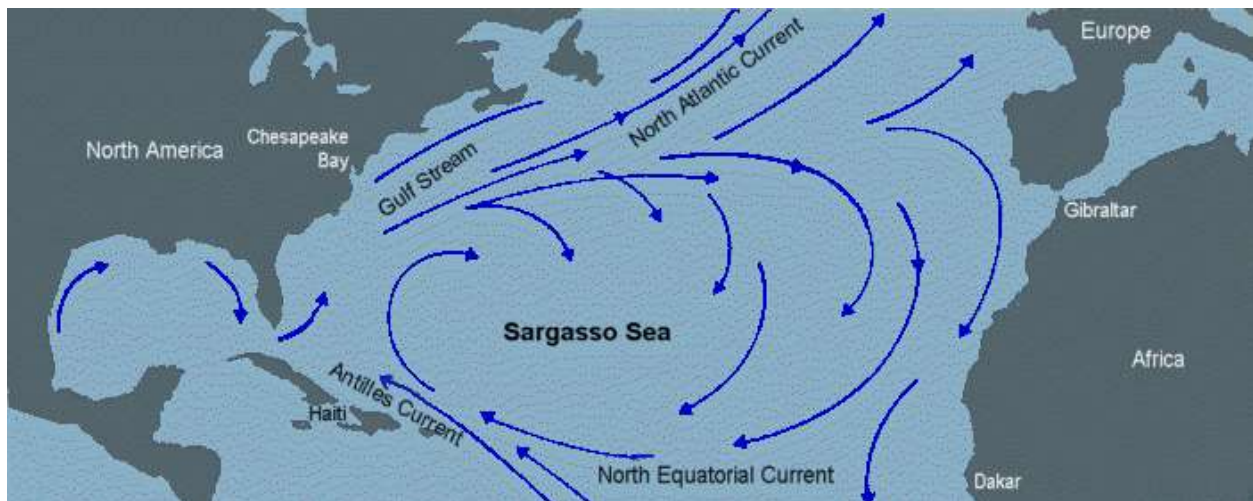




This is an area which is prone to undersea earthquakes and volcanic activity so there is some geological activity here. It seems no more dangerous than the Bermuda triangle and many of the "reports" of happenings here are grossly misrepresented – and many happened well outside the area. Like the Bermuda triangle is can be increased in size to include some new event.

Finally there is the Sargasso Sea – the only sea with no land boundary.





The Sargasso sea is named for a kind of sea weed called "sargassum". It is basically a "gyre" It lies in the "horse latitudes" (about 20-35 degrees N) and often has little or no wind. It has become popularized in horror stories as a place where ships have been becalmed for generations. Actually it poses no threat to navigation or shipping. Because of the currents it has a high degree of plastic pollutants in it.

Ecologically it is important since it is the spawning place for many catadromous eels.