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The Fieldwork Ethics and Positionality of Tsuneichi Miyamoto: A Pioneer of Border Island Studies in Japan

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Abstract

Tsuneichi Miyamoto (1907-1981) studied the folklore and the "forgotten" history of rural Japan under the influence of Kunio Yanagita and Keizô Shibusawa. Miyamoto considered and introduced himself as a farmer of an island in the Seto Inland Sea, and was welcomed with enthusiasm by the rural people of the 4,000 communities he visited. He was very different from his contemporary fieldworkers in his fieldwork ethics, methodology of participant observation, and positionality as a scholar-farmer-social activist. The author of this article had a chance to meet with and be guided by Miyamoto in 1976, and experienced similar dilemmas in fieldwork ethics, social activism, and positionality during his stay on the Yaeyama Islands. As predicted by Miyamoto, on the border islands of Japan (in this case Tsushima and Yonaguni), ancient cultural traits may still be discovered because the islanders have often hid their friendly relationships with their trade partners living on the other side of the border.

Ethical Codes for Fieldwork and its Prehistory

This article aims to shed light upon ethical issues relating to anthropological/ethnological fieldwork in Japan with special reference to border islands. It focuses on Tsuneichi Miyamoto (1907-1981), one of the most prolific academic writers on rural Japan. During his lifetime, he visited 4,000 rural communities, about a third of the total villages in Japan, and 300 islands out of the 400 inhabited islands in Japan, and established personal ties with those villagers. He was one of the earliest in Japanese academia to publish examples of the inconveniences caused to local people by the conduct of researchers carrying out fieldwork. This was at a time when problems of fieldwork ethics were more or less ignored. The second purpose of this paper is to discuss his positionality of being both a scholar and a social activist, which made him a pioneer of applied anthropology in Japan. It will then describe some recent trials of mine to create ethical and participatory fieldwork with local inhabitants of Japan's border islands. Finally, it tests Miyamoto's hypothesis of the survival of ancient cultural traits on border islands.

The Society for Applied Anthropology (SfAA), formed in 1941, was the earliest to establish an ethical code in 1949.[1] Carla Pezzia describes the evolution of this ethical code: (1) In the 1940s it

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[1] "SfAA President's letter," *Newsletter for the Society for Applied Anthropology*, November 11:4 (2000): 2. http://www.sfaa.net/newsletter/nov00nl.pdf

did not attempt to change a culture or a society; (2) However, by the early 1960s it began to recognise that "rocking the boat" was often necessary for applied work; (3) In 1983 it revised its code again to meet the necessity of practitioners and data ownership. Current guidelines of the SfAA suggest that members have ethical responsibilities to the peoples they study and the communities they work with.[2] The U.S. government-sponsored secret research in Latin America (the Camelot Project in 1964) and during the Vietnam War pushed the American Association of Anthropology (AAA) to establish its first ethical code for anthropological fieldwork under the title of the Principles of Professional Responsibility in 1969.[3] Fluehr-Lobban provides a short history of ethics and professionalism within anthropology in the U.S. focusing on the changes that have taken place in the AAA.[4] It is notable that the SfAA included the need for informed consent in its code in 1983,[5] whereas the AAA did not add this until 1998.[6] In spite of all these endeavors and trials over the last forty years, professional anthropology associations in the U.S., have argued that they lack the power to regulate or sanction members who infringe professional ethical codes.[7]

In Japan, the academic societies for anthropological/ethnological studies began to draw up their ethical codes for fieldwork in the 2000s, about half a century later than the SfAA. For example, the Japanese Association of Cultural Anthropology (JACA) (formerly known as the Japanese Association of Ethnology) agreed to publish its code of ethics in 2008. These codes are much too simplified and vague, and seem to tell almost nothing meaningful to their members.[8]

The ethical code of the Folklore Society of Japan (FSJ) appeared in 2010, later than those of other societies, and it is much more detailed and pragmatic than that of JACA or the Sociological Society of Japan. It also has a preamble on the self-reflection of its members,[9] and guidelines to

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[2] Carla Pezzia, 2012, "Rocking the Boat: Our Professional Ethics." http://sfaanews.sfaa.net/2012/08/01/rocking-the-boat-our-professional-ethics/

[3] Code of Ethics of American Association of Anthropology, http://www.aaanet.org/issues/policy-advocacy/Code-of-Ethics.cfm

[4] Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban, "Ethics and Professionalism: A Review of Issues and Principles within Anthropology," in *Ethics and the Profession of Anthropology: Dialogue for a New Era*, ed. Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 15-35.

[5] "Ethical and Professional Responsibilities," *Society for Applied Anthropology*, http://www.sfaa.net/sfaaethic.html

[6] John R. Campbell, "The 'Problem' of Ethics in Contemporary Anthropological Research," *Anthropology Matters* 12:1 (2010): Note 7. http://www.anthropologymatters.com/index.php?journal=anth_matters&page=article&op=viewArticle&path[]=186&path[]=306

[7] Campbell, "The 'Problem' of Ethics."

[8] Its article 3, for example, is "We must not do any deed that may be regarded as harassment". The ethical code of the Sociological Society of Japan (2005) is not very different: "Article 5. Members must not subject people to harassment such as sexual harassment or academic harassment."

[9] The preamble says, "It has been pointed out that folkloric studies have caused actions excessing the local norms or deeds that may lead to the loss of trust in the research." As for harassment, to be compared with the previous note, it says, "Article 5. During our academic activities of research and education, we must never discriminate or oppress individuals or groups of people regardless of their race, gender, age, thoughts, sexual preferences, descent, religion, social status, profession, handicaps, or familial situation. And we must strictly avoid various harassments such as sexual harassment, academic harassment, and power harassment." http://www.fsjnet.jp/about_us/ethics.html

supplement it.[10] The FSJ also has a Standing Committee for Ethics for consultation on harassment and any other problems concerning fieldwork ethics.[11] In sum, the FSJ's attitude to ethics seems to reflect a serious engagement with its members' activities, the kind which Tsuneichi Miyamoto championed four decades ago (as will be described later).

Let us take a quick look at the prehistory of fieldwork ethics in Japan. Seiichi Izumi published one of the earliest commentaries in 1969, when he was a professor of cultural anthropology at the University of Tokyo. He wrote that when he was trying to conduct interviews with the Ainu people that had moved from Karafuto (today's Sakhalin) to Hokkaido after the Second World War, he was reproached with angry words:

> You must be totally ignorant of the hardships and the poverty we Ainu of Karafuto are suffering from! Coming nonchalantly all the way to investigate us living in misery, are you willing to make our shame open to the world? Or do you want to make money or get a PhD with our story!? [12]

These words deeply shocked Izumi, and he could not but apologise or withdraw from the place without being able to continue his research. He wrote that the shock was like a thunderbolt striking him, and that he began feeling reluctant to interview people since then. Although Izumi wrote that it happened in 1949, it was in fact 1953 according to Takao Sofue, who accompanied him as an assistant.[13] Anyway, Izumi changed his field to the archaeology of the Andes sometime after his encounter with the Ainu people.

Fieldwork Ethics of Tsuneichi Miyamoto and his Master, Keizô Shibusawa

In 1907, Tsuneichi Miyamoto was born in Suô-Ôshima Island, Yamaguchi Prefecture. Since

[10] About harassment, for example, the guideline of the FSJ says, "We must be conscious that sexual harassment, academic harassment, power harassment *etc.* are important issues concerning basic human rights, and make efforts to strictly refrain from any harassment. Especially, when teachers and seniors guide their students and juniors, they should keep in mind not to urge their thoughts or values, or allow personal sentiments to become involved in educational or other circumstances. During fieldwork and other research activities, we must take great care that we are in circumstances where severe teaching may easily tend to become power harassment."

[11] The guideline of the FSJ ends with the following remark: "Consult the Ethical Committee in case there is any violation of the ethical codes of the FSJ in research, writing, and all the activities of the society. The Ethical Committee must always observe privacy, obligation for keeping personal secrets, and faithfully meet consultations."

[12] Seiichi Izumi, *The Records of Fieldwork: the Practice of Cultural Anthropology* (Tokyo: Kôdansha. 1969), 4-5 (in Japanese). It should be added that, during World War II, Izumi did anthropological fieldwork in Manchuria and gave opium he had received from the Imperial Japanese Army to his informants. The use of opium during wartime fieldwork was carefully deleted from his collection of articles published after World War II (Kyung-soo Chun, "Opium and the Emperor: Anthropology, Colonialism and War during Imperial Japan," in *Frontiers of Social Research: Japan and Beyond* ed. Akira Furukawa (Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2007), 100-125.

[13] According to Takao Sofue's personal communication, although Izumi wrote that he was rebuked by the old man who he was trying to interview, in fact it was a woman living in the neighborhood that ran to protest against Izumi and Sofue's investigation.

his family, as small-scale farmers, could not afford him a higher education, he left home at the age of 15, and began working as a mail carrier in Osaka. In 1926, he became a teacher at a primary school, and visited villages to collect their oral traditions. Shinichi Sano wrote a biography of Miyamoto and his patron-supervisor Keizô Shibusawa (1896-1963) in 1996, which brought about a boom of interest and a reevaluation of the works of Miyamoto in Japan.[14] He succeeded in creating an image of a tireless fieldworker, who was passionately welcomed by rural people and worked hard for their welfare (Figure 1).

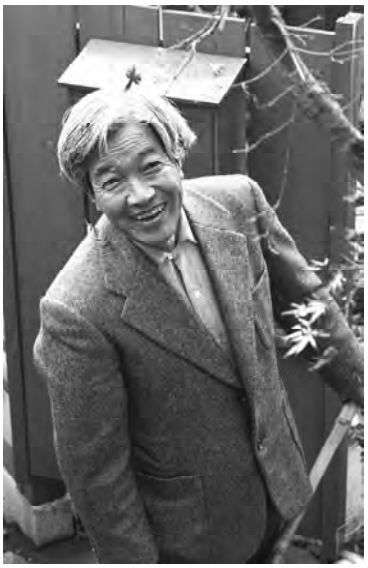

Figure 1: Tsuneichi Miyamoto in 1977

A concise introduction to his methods of fieldwork can be read in English in the author's preface of the "Forgotten Japanese."[15] Further, the translator of the book, Jeffrey Irish, wrote an introduction to the works of Miyamoto, and made a translation of the ten teachings of Tsuneichi's father, Zenjûrô Miyamoto. Zenjûrô loved to travel during low seasons in the cultivating calendar, and had a keen sense of the importance of travelling for encountering new things and people that may help develop and improve his village. When Tsuneichi moved to Osaka at the age of 15, his father advised him with some codes of conduct for travelling. Later Tsuneichi wrote down his father's advice in the form of ten rules, which came to be his guidelines for fieldwork. The guidelines of Zenjûrô, consisting of 10 articles, not only gave Tsuneichi the basis for his future fieldwork methodology, but also guided and even predicted his lifestyle. I will explain some of them with my translation:

> When you travel by train, watch through the window carefully to see what crops are grown in the fields, whether they are growing well or not, village houses are big or small, their roofs are slate or grass, and so on. When you arrive at a station, pay attention to the passengers, their cloths, and their baggage in the station's deposit. Such observations will help you to realise if the place is rich or poor, and whether people work hard or not (article 1).
>
> Earning money is not so difficult; far more difficult is using it. Don't forget this (article 5).
>
> I cannot afford you a higher education as you have wished it. So, I ask you nothing; do whatever you like. But take care of your health. Until the age of 30, you may behave as if you were no more my son. When you become 30, remember, however, that you have your parents (article 6).

And the last, article 10 overlapped with what Miyamoto later would learn from his lifetime

[14] Shinichi Sano, *The Travelling Giants: Tsuneichi Miyamoto and Keizô Shibusawa* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjû, 1996) (in Japanese).

[15] Tsuneichi Miyamoto (trans. Jeffrey S. Irish), *The Forgotten Japanese: Encounters With Rural Life and Folklore* (Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 2010).

supervisor, Shibusawa:

> Make it a rule to look at what others have overlooked. You may expect that there always exist important things left in them. You don't have to make haste. Step steadily along the way you have chosen (article 10).

Thus, he started his lifelong journey as a scholar freed from the competitiveness of academia, and as a farmer keeping firm ties with his home, Suô-Ôshima Island, wherever he lived. In 1930, however, Tsuneichi Miyamoto was obliged to remember his father's precautions after becoming sick with tuberculosis: his father had said,

> In case you should fall ill, or encounter troubles you could not solve yourself, come back home. As your parents, we will be always waiting for you (article 7 of Zenjûrô's guideline).

He returned home from Osaka for two years and rested until he recovered his health, although tuberculosis would recur whenever his work became an overburden on his health. During his sick leave, he wrote manuscripts on the legends of Suô-Ôshima Island based on his memory of the talks with his grandfather Ichigorô and sent them to Kunio Yanagita (1875-1962), founder of Japanese folklore studies. To Miyamoto's delight, Yanagita sent him journals, and encouraged him to continue his fieldwork. In 1934, Miyamoto met Yanagita in Kyoto, and the next year he was introduced to Keizô Shibusawa,[16] a banker and patron of scholars conducting research in folklore/ethnology/anthropology; and in 1939, just after his marriage, Miyamoto was invited to work as a full-time volunteer in Shibusawa's private institute of folklore that was named *"The Attic Museum"* (later renamed as *Jômin Bunka Kenkyûsho*).

Shibusawa advised Miyamoto against applying for a post of lecturer at the newly founded Kenkoku University in Manchuria, but to study the Seto Inland Sea where his home island was, and for comparison, to see the rest of Japan. Miyamoto lived in Shibusawa's residence in Tokyo, and travelled and did fieldwork as much as he wished, while his wife Asako and their children lived in Osaka. Miyamoto lived for 22 years with Shibusawa's family. Shibusawa always enjoyed listening to him and learning from his fieldwork. When Shibusawa's private museum began studying the artifacts of rural people, Miyamoto curated a collection of more than ten thousand items. Miyamoto also compiled a detailed bibliography of Japanese folklore studies for Shibusawa's institute.

Miyamoto walked 16,000 kilometers in four thousand days and visited 4,000 rural communities that corresponded to a third of the 12,000 communities of Japan. He conducted fieldwork in about 800 of the communities that he visited, and explored the ways of life and the

[16] By request of his grandfather Eiichi Shibusawa (1840-1931), an entrepreneur that founded 500 enterprises and economic organizations, Keizô abandoned his dreams of becoming a zoologist, and succeeded the work of the Shibusawa family as one of the economic leaders of Japan. In fact, he was more famous as a scholar than as a banker when he saw Miyamoto for the first time in 1935.

"forgotten" history of the Japanese.[17] Through his fieldwork and publications of some 200 books, he became one of the most renowned and prolific writers in Japanese folklore studies that succeeded the generation of Kunio Yanagita. Out of his abundant publications, only one, "*The Forgotten Japanese*," has been translated into English.[18] A French author, Alexandre Mangin, also wrote a dissertation on Miyamoto, and is continually publishing on his work in French, English and Japanese.[19]

There were several offers for Miyamoto to take positions in universities including the Imperial University of Tokyo. Shibusawa, however, strongly advised Miyamoto to decline such offers. He expected that Miyamoto would play an indispensable role in empowering rural communities to rebuild themselves in post-war Japan, for which purpose university professors seemed incompetent. Three years after the death of his supervisor Shibusawa, Miyamoto at last became a professor at Musashino Art University in 1965, and retired in 1977, three years before his own death in January 1981.

In 1972, Miyamoto published his definitive article on fieldwork ethics in Japan. It was an essay entitled "Damages to the field of research: Various nuisances of being researched."[20] It contained many examples of the unscrupulous behaviours of fieldworkers he had met not only in folklore/ethnographic studies, but also from many other disciplines such as history, economy, sociology, journalism and others. Soon after its publication, I read it, just before embarking on my first fieldwork in Yaeyama, Japan's southern border islands. I realised that it could be used as practical guidelines for students beginning anthropological fieldwork. It is still a useful teaching tool, and I recently published a textbook for fieldwork with Miyamoto's essay as its first chapter.[21] He concluded this article with the following remarks:

> In many cases, what you call "research" does not give benefits to local people. Instead, it gradually enforces the powers of the central government. Not a small number of researchers are despoiling local people of their natural and cultural heritage, taking advantage of their generosity.[22]

He wrote in this essay that he was always trying to observe the advice of his supervisor Shibusawa. Miyamoto quotes the "three golden rules" for fieldworkers given to him by Shibusawa, which are seemingly easy to observe, but quite difficult to practice:

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[17] Tsuneichi Miyamoto, "The Islands Where I Dreamt of the Yonder Continent: The Islands of Tsushima, Gotô, and Tanegashima," in *Tsuneichi Miyamoto: A Travelling Folklorist* ed. Shinichi Sano (Tokyo: Kawade Shobô Shinsha, 2005), 34 (in Japanese).
[18] Miyamoto, *The Forgotten Japanese*.
[19] Alexandre Mangin, *Miyamoto Tsuneichi: A Renewed Method for Human Sciences*, 2005 http://iatj.wordpress.com/2009/08/01/miyamoto-tsuneichi-a-renewed-method-for-human-sciences-i/
[20] Tsuneichi Miyamoto, *The Damages to the Researched - Tanken to Bôken* 7 (Tokyo: Asahi Shuppan. 1972) (in Japanese).
[21] Tsuneichi Miyamoto and Yuji Ankei, *The Bothers of Being Researched: A Book you must read before doing your fieldwork* (Suô-Ôshima: Mizunowa Publishing, 2008) (in Japanese).
[22] Miyamoto and Ankei, *Bothers*, 34.

1. Do not bother others
2. Do not assert yourself: in case people have no more need of you, keep so quiet that nobody around you should be aware of your presence
3. Share heart-felt rejoicing when others are happy[23]

Shibusawa told Miyamoto that any fieldwork is only performed thanks to the generosity of local people. Miyamoto narrates a hidden history behind a multi-disciplinary survey of Tsushima Island in 1950-51 conducted by the League of the Eight Academic Societies of Japan (which soon grew to nine societies in 1951).

Shibusawa was the head of the research team, and after their field research in Tsushima Island was over, he asked Miyamoto what could be done for the islanders in compensation for their devoted cooperation and troubles. Miyamoto first proposed the idea of constructing better roads to connect the villages, but Shibusawa responded that it would surely not be possible until a new law was enacted. As a second option, Miyamoto suggested that half of Tsushima Islanders, depending on oil lamps at night at that time, would be happy if they could have electricity. Having listened to his proposal, Shibusawa said that that project would be feasible only if the Nagasaki branch of the Central Bank of Japan, for which he had been president in 1944, collaborated with a local bank. On his way to Tokyo, he stopped by in Nagasaki City, and obtained a loan from the Bank of Japan to a bank in Tsushima Island. Thanks to this, all Tsushima Islanders came to enjoy electricity soon after but Shibusawa kept his contribution a secret and told it to nobody except Miyamoto.[24]

Miyamoto confessed that he himself was guilty for having been unable to return many historical records he had borrowed in rural communities for a project in the Seto Inland Sea from 1949 to 1955.[25] It was sponsored by the Fisheries Agency of the government, and a new project was started in 1952 in collaboration with the joint research of the League of the Nine Academic Societies of Japan in Noto, Ishikawa Prefecture. The project members had planned to collect historical records of traditional fisheries, but it soon became evident that the enormous amount of the manuscripts exceeded their ability to make a catalogue of them. When Yoshihiko Amino, a member of the project, at last set to work on returning all of the historical records, three decades after the project began, Miyamoto called Amino shortly before his death, and said, “Thanks to your service, I can at last crawl out of this *jigoku*, pit of hell.”[26]

The Positionality of Tsuneichi Miyamoto during Fieldwork

Two years before his death, Shibusawa wrote an essay introducing his best disciple’s

[23] Miyamoto and Ankei, *Bothers*, 14.
[24] Miyamoto and Ankei, *Bothers*, 14-15.
[25] Miyamoto and Ankei, *Bothers*, 30.
[26] Tôru Sakano, *The Post-war History of Fieldwork: Tsuneichi Miyamoto and the League of the Nine Academic Societies of Japan* (Tokyo: Yoshikawakôbunkan, 2013), 95-103 (in Japanese).

personality and his works.[27] That was when Miyamoto got his PhD through his study of the Seto Inland Sea. The following is an extract from Shibusawa's appraisal of Miyamoto, and it explains Miyamoto's positionality as a secret of his fieldwork during which he was so passionately welcomed by rural people.

Regarding his positionality as a fieldworker, "Miyamoto is not a mere scholar," wrote Shibusawa. Back home in Suô-Ôshima Island, Miyamoto had his family cultivating rice and oranges, or collecting firewood from the hills. He went home to work during the high season, and worked himself as a farmer. Thanks to this background and practices as a hard-working farmer, a bite of an orange was enough for Miyamoto to identify what kind of fertilizing elements were deficient in the soil on which its tree was grown. That was why farmers always welcomed him in every village he dropped into. At first glance, they saw a farmer in Miyamoto, and began sharing their experiences with him. Thus, he had so many close friends everywhere in Japan, who, in turn, provided a firm background for his learning.[28]

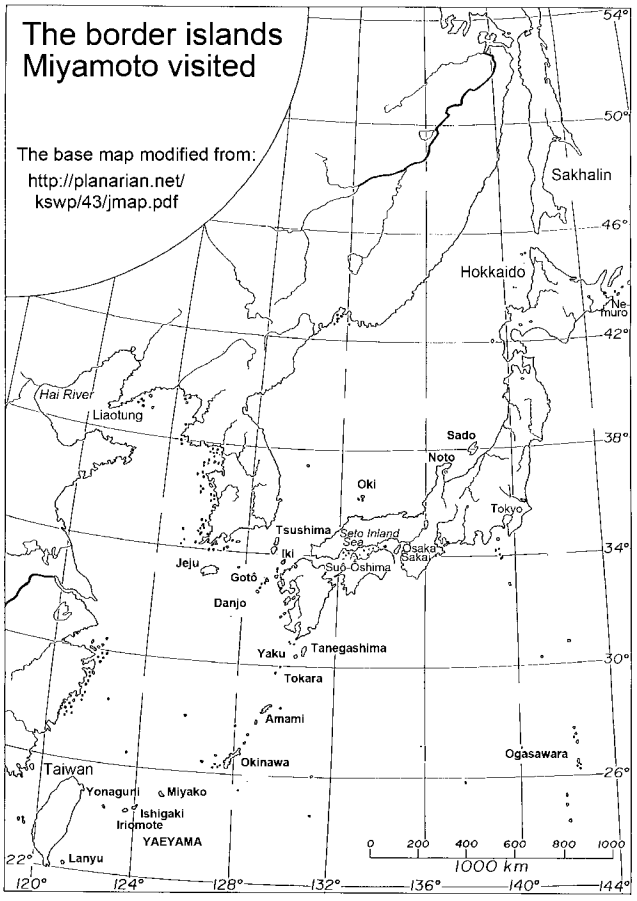

Figure 2

When Miyamoto encountered rural people, he made it a rule to introduce himself as a farmer rather than a scholar. There is one episode that highlights his fieldwork methods. Tarô Wakamori (1915-1977), a university professor of history and folklore visited a village and carried out his research. Villagers asked old people to attend the interview by him held in a big room of an inn. They were totally exhausted when the daylong interrogation ended. Soon after this, the villagers knew that another scholar of folklore, a bigger name than Wakamori would come to their village. They asked additional elders to participate in the interview so that they could be prepared for any unexpected questions. However, Miyamoto did not come to the inn, which made the villagers wonder

[27] Keizô Shibusawa, "My Dependent is Japan's No. 1," *Bungei Shunjû*, Aug (1961) (in Japanese), reproduced in Shinichi Sano, ed., *Tsuneichi Miyamoto: A Travelling Folklorist* (Tokyo: Kawade Shobô, 2005), 78-84 (in Japanese).

[28] Shibusawa, *My Dependent*, 78-84.

where he was, and they started looking for him. They found him chatting with a fisherman, sitting on the shore helping him to repair a fishnet.[29]

Miyamoto always looked for ways to participate in the activities of the people he met, and we may well call him a pioneer of participant observation in Japan. After he participated in the joint research of the League of the Nine Academic Societies of Japan in Tsushima and Noto, he gradually diverged from the traditional methodology of Japanese folklore studies that used a questionnaire standardized by Yanagita. Miyamoto was more and more interested in the ethnographic records of daily life with a special focus on the innovative changes in the technologies that improved the subsistence and commercial economy of rural peoples. Probably influenced by the ecological study team in Tsushima's joint research, Miyamoto started to bring with him handbooks on local flora and fauna, which made him definitively different from other former disciples of Yanagita.

As Roger Goodman writes, we can never neglect the presence of the fieldworker in any anthropological fieldwork, "because in anthropology the anthropologist is so directly the research tool."[30] Regarding the positionality of the fieldworker, after having experienced the recent political conflicts in Kenya, Bachmann notes "a fieldworker's identity does in fact impact upon the research process and product, challenging notions of researcher objectivity and neutrality."[31] In this context, this article examines the secrets of the fieldwork of Miyamoto, who was so passionately welcomed in communities he visited. The following section outlines how Miyamoto's habit of "participation before conversation" was also a basis for his education.

A Personal Encounter with Tsuneichi Miyamoto

In 1974, I had a chance to meet with Tsuneichi Miyamoto for the first time in a workshop called *Idô Daigaku*.[32] The workshop was a camp, held at the foot of Mt. Daisen, Tottori Prefecture. The 108 participants and staff lived in an agglomeration of large tents. I chose a spot commanding a fine view somewhat remote from them, and began pitching a tiny tent there. When I was working, an elderly man approached me with a shovel, watched me pitch the tent, and suddenly began digging a ditch around it. He talked while digging,

> Drainage is the most important factor you should consider when you pitch a tent. People in the Jômon period (that ended 3,000 years ago) preferred to live on the edge of a highland just like you, and they threw away all their waste under the hill. That's why archeological relics are found in places remote

[29] Takao Sofue, personal communication.

[30] Roger Goodman, "Fieldwork and Reflexivity: Thoughts from the Anthropology of Japan," in *Anthropologist in a wider world* ed. P. Dresch, W. James and D. Parkin (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000), 151-152.

[31] Viet Bachmann, "Participating and Observing: Positionality and Fieldwork Relations during Kenya's post-election Crisis," *Area* 43 (2001): 362–368.

[32] It means the "Mobile University," and was a fortnight camping workshop held in rural Japan. The idea was created by anthropologist/geographer Jirô Kawakita (1920-2009), and the movement attracted young people disappointed with the institution of universities at that time.

> from the site of their houses. Your tent, camera and tape-recorder are so small and seem easy to carry on your back, and attract me to begin walking again…

These words helped me to identify this person as Tsuneichi Miyamoto, who was invited to the workshop as a lecturer. After having worked together to pitch the tent, I asked him for some advice on my post-graduate study of ethno-archeology that I had just begun in Iriomote Island near Taiwan. I asked him about a series of detailed statistical documents concerning some 40 villages in the islands of the Yaeyama Archipelago, which were recorded at the end of the nineteenth century and only three volumes could be found. Although Miyamoto had stayed in Okinawa for only a short time, he replied instantly:

> Those documents you found belonged to Keizô Shibusawa, and the author's name was Antei Tashiro, who presented his reports to the cabinet of Prime Minister Aritomo Yamagata. It was donated to Shibusawa's *Saigyodô* Library by sociologist Hiroshi Tamura, a friend of Shibusawa. When Tamura was sent to Okinawa by order of the government, he complained that he was like an exile in islands so remote from Tokyo. Shibusawa encouraged him to make use of that rare chance to do a study others could never do. Tamura later published a volume that made his name well known in the academic world, *The Study of Communist Villages of the Ryukyus.*[33] As for discovering other volumes by Tashiro, it might be quite difficult, but steadily continue your effort to try to find them.

During his long stay in Shibusawa's house and his private museum, he read and put in his memory the contents of every volume in the library, and that was why he could identify the document so quickly. Later I compiled bibliographies of Yonaguni Island,[34] and of Iriomote Island,[35] but could not discover the whereabouts of the remaining volumes by Antei Tashiro (1857-1928). However, in 2011, I at last found an almost complete collection of the manuscript for his reports in the Library of Taiwan National University although most of the original reports seemed to have been destroyed and lost by the Great Kanto Earthquake of September 1923 in Tokyo, and the Battle of Okinawa of April 1945 in Naha. After his somewhat academic talk of Tashiro's collection, Miyamoto added the following remarks, and I noted them in my field notebook, although they did not attract my attention much at that time:

> Any plans for community development should be based on the ideas found and promoted by local people. If you think of the case of Okinawa Islands that is now depending on sugarcane, you might

[33] Hiroshi Tamura, *The Study of Communist Villages of the Ryukyus* (Tokyo: Oka Shoin, 1927) (in Japanese).
[34] Yuji Ankei, "A Bibliography of Yonaguni Island," in *Rice Cultures of Southern Island with Special Reference to Yonaguni Island*, ed. Tadayo Watabe and Shigeru Ikuta (Tokyo: Hôsei University Publishing, 1984).
[35] Yuji Ankei, *A bibliography of Iriomote Island (part 1), Nantô Bunka 8* (Urasoe: Okinawa International University, 1986); Y. Ankei, *A Bibliography of Iriomote Island (part2), Nanto Bunka 9* (Urasoe: Okinawa International University, 1987).

> introduce some medicinal plants. I may suggest *Rauwolfia serpentina*[36] for example. Then, if you need some grant from the government, first apply to the Ministry of Home Affairs; its budget is much smaller than that of a big project of Ministry of International Trade and Industry, but its officers listen very well to what local people want.[37]

Fifteen years later, these remarks proved to have been the seeds that grew in to my positionality of being a practitioner/activist rather than a scholar when I collaborated with the organic rice movement of Iriomote Island. Miyamoto used to tell young people that gathered around him to write for local people, never to academic readers. He even told his young colleague that the fieldwork they were engaged in was an unreal activity if compared with the work of farmers in their real field. This again has its roots in the philosophy of Shibusawa, who warned of a chasm between scholars and practitioners, which had been a problem for Japan since the Meiji Restoration in 1868.[38]

In 1975, one year after our encounter at Mt. Daisen, he travelled abroad for the first time in his life. He attended a study group that visited Kenya and Tanzania for 44 days. He was much moved by the Africans who so warmly welcomed him. Although he could not talk either in Swahili or in English, he found many friends and took abundant pictures of African livelihood. He wrote that Africa was not a remote world from Japan as he had imagined. It provided him many occasions to reflect on the Japanese way of life more objectively. He felt brotherly sympathy with the African people he met. He wished he could understand and speak their languages, so that he could exchange ideas with them, hand in hand, patting each other's shoulders like close friends or relatives. Miyamoto found that his fieldwork methodology should be still applicable in Africa although it had become more and more difficult in rural Japan, which had experienced dramatic social changes due to the rapid economic development since the 1950s.

The Positionality of Tsuneichi Miyamoto as a Social Activist

Fieldwork and study in Shibusawa's museum was no longer possible at the end of the Second World War, for fieldworkers were suspected as spies. In January 1944, Miyamoto left Tokyo, and returned to Sakai City, Osaka to join his family. The bombardment of the night of 9 July 1945 killed 1,800 citizens, and burnt 18,000 houses in Sakai. He lost all of his 100 field notebooks, 12,000 pages of unpublished manuscripts, films, and books. Thus, the war deprived him of all the research materials he had collected over the last two decades,[39] but it could not erase his memories and the personal ties with people living in the 4,000 villages that he had visited.

Shortly before this bombardment, Miyamoto had begun working on a project that aimed at feeding urban inhabitants during and after the Second World War. In July 1945, he was invited to

[36] This was Mahatma Gandhi's favourite tree, and belongs to the Apocynaceae family.
[37] Miyamoto and Ankei, *Bothers*, 8.
[38] Keizô Shibusawa (edited by Yoshihiko Amino) *Collective Works Volume 5* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1993), 265−277 (in Japanese).
[39] Shibusawa, *Works*, 201.

work for the Imperial Japanese Army to be in charge of establishing local networks for self-sufficiency of food because the governmental system of nation-wide rationing would collapse by the end of August 1945, when Japan surrendered. He was appointed as a scholar that had visited and knew all the rural areas of Japan. Shibusawa advised Miyamoto to accept such offers. He said, "Japan will be soon defeated, and the capitalists like myself will go bankrupt and fall, but the farmers will stand up and join the front of rebuilding Japan anew, and you should work with them."[40]

Since the final orders from the Imperial Army did not successfully arrive to him, Miyamoto went to work for Osaka Prefecture instead. He narrated his experience on the willingness of farming communities to participate in his project:[41]

> In July 1945, the supply of vegetables totally stopped, and I was quite at a loss how to feed the urban people of Osaka. Then, farmers gave me an idea of providing stems of pumpkins and shoots of sweet potatoes, which had not been recognised as vegetables by urban people. My question was who could collect the plant and teach them how to properly cook them. I visited those innovative leaders that had been responsible for raising vegetable seedlings for other farmers. They knew very well where pumpkins and sweet potatoes were grown, and farmers, who would never listen to the orders of the officers, agreed to cooperate with those leading fellow farmers. As you may know, potato leaves are harsh to be digested and may cause diarrhea, but the farmers provided a handful of lime powder with each bundle of leaves to be boiled together, to the effect of neutralising their harshness and assuring the safety for consumption. It was important that those farmers did that work on their own initiatives: individuals and communities in rural Osaka were proud, independent, and difficult to manipulate from outside or from higher authorities.

In October 1945, Miyamoto was ordered to guide 80 families of 300 people moving from Osaka to an uninhabited place in Hokkaido. It was a part of the governmental project of mass migration, planned to move 200,000 people to Hokkaido, where population density was relatively low. Although one hectare of farmland for each family and tools for cultivation were promised, neither food nor land was provided except for one-way tickets. After having parted with the people he accompanied, Miyamoto visited the settlements of migrants from mainland Japan, and realised that the hidden purpose of the project was to create vacant spaces for the 7 million Japanese returnees from the former territories of Japan. The migrants to Hokkaido had brought electric bulbs and radios with them, but there was no electric power supply, and the horses they purchased for cultivation were mostly killed and consumed by wild brown bears. Miyamoto was badly shocked to have participated in such a project to abandon 9,000 refugees in hopeless camps in Hokkaido. He blamed himself for not having accompanied the 80 families from Osaka to their final destination to check the conditions of their camps in the wasteland under a snowstorm of winter that had already begun there. During his stay of three weeks in Hokkaido, Miyamoto's diet was a substitute of bread made of dried and

[40] Shibusawa, *Works*, 196-197.
[41] Tsuneichi Miyamoto, "A Narrative of Tsuneichi Miyamoto," *Kikan Jinruigaku* 9:3 (1978): 1-26 (in Japanese).

pounded stems of sweet potato that he brought from Osaka. He wished to share, in his way, the hardships of the migrants he had accompanied, and he decided to fast and took only water in the train from Hokkaido to Tokyo that took six days. In Tokyo, Shibusawa warmly welcomed Miyamoto, who was exhausted with sorrow and hunger, with freshly cooked rice. “I could not help shedding tears on the rice while I ate it,” wrote Miyamoto. Later, this experience pushed him to zealously volunteer his time and skills for the people living on remote islands that were underdeveloped.[42]

Miyamoto resigned from his office in Osaka Prefecture on the 31 December 1945, because he knew that only one thousand people from a population of one million that lived in urban Osaka now suffered from malnutrition, meaning the accomplishment of his mission that had seemed impossible before.

Miyamoto always introduced himself as a farmer when he visited rural communities. Local farmers often asked him for advice on how to solve the problems they were confronting. For example, a farmer in Fujiidera, south of Osaka, asked him the reasons for the disease that affected his rice crop when he was visiting villages to collect vegetables for rationing in 1945. Miyamoto’s diagnosis was a sclerotal disease caused by some fungus attacking the rice plant growing in the soil with iron deficiency. Because of the shortage of materials in wartime, introducing red soil to supply iron in the paddy fields seemed the only answer, but evidently this was not easy. During the harvest season in autumn, Miyamoto was urged to come back to see the field he had left with despair. To his happy astonishment, the rice of the farmer miraculously recovered from the disease, and the harvest seemed quite successful. The innovative farmer explained to him that he had begun thinking very seriously of “Iron, iron, iron…” day and night after he got Miyamoto’s advice, and that he finally remembered that human blood contained iron. He understood that there was not much difference between human and animal blood, and asked the owner of a nearby butchery to give him the blood that had been thrown away as waste, and he applied it to his field as an enrichment of iron. Such was an episode to tell us of Miyamoto’s positionality as a farmer that empowered the rural people to take advantage of his knowledge and field experiences.

As I mentioned above, Miyamoto attended the joint fieldwork on Tsushima Island in 1950 and 1951. He walked and interviewed people in the day, and copied historical manuscripts at night, wrote ten field notes and published many books. This experience of joint fieldwork with scholars in different disciplines was a great intellectual stimulus for him.

At the same time, he encountered the villages’ underdevelopment because of their remoteness from mainland Japan, and because of the location of Tsushima Island on the border with Korea. The Japanese Imperial Army had converted it to a fortified island. Taking pictures, drawing sketches, and engineering works were all prohibited unless special permits were obtained. Foreigners and fieldworkers were suspected to be spies. In such a situation, economic and cultural development of the villages was quite difficult, and it became an underdeveloped area like most border islands of Japan after the Second World War.

He also began working very hard to make a new national law to support the development of

[42] Sano, *Travelling Giants*, 219-227.

those remote islands. When the Remote Islands Development Act was at last enforced in 1953, Miyamoto agreed to work as a voluntary secretary general of the Council for Remote Islands Development that served to make the new act work efficiently. Although his tuberculosis had recurred before his fieldwork in Tsushima, he devoted himself to the council for four years without receiving any salary. He furiously fought against the officers or politicians that did not understand the importance of the Act. However, after 18 years, he wrote that changes in the islands had been rather disappointing; islands having larger populations monopolised the budget, while the smallest, remotest islands that needed the most help, remained as poor as before.[43]

Miyamoto's Hypothesis of the Antiquity of Cultural Traits on Borderlands

In 1949, Miyamoto met with an old man on the southern shore of Osaka, who told him a story of his adventures of freely crossing the borders when young. From 1875 fishing rights in the sea were no longer divided among the feudal clans, and fishermen could now travel without any license. The old man set out for fishing with a friend in his small fishing boat when he was a teenager around 1880. He could not find any "red lines" on the ocean as were drawn on the map. When he arrived at Kyushu, he saw Iki Island and went there to fish. He then went to Tsushima Island. There he saw Korea, and decided to go there without any documents such as a passport. He and his companion fished and exchanged fish for their necessities, and this way moved along the shore until they arrived in Liaotung, China. He moved around the peninsula and arrived at the mouth of a very big river. There he met with a Japanese man, who told him that going up the Hai River to Peking needed a special permit. One year and half had already passed since he had departed from home. The fisherman, giving up going northward to the capital, asked the Japanese in return where he would arrive if he continued to sail southward. Since the reply was India, he wished to arrive there. Advised to go home first and to prepare a bigger boat to arrive safely in India, he at last set to return home. So long as he caught fish wherever he went, he could obtain everything he needed by exchange with his catch. He was illiterate and could not understand foreign languages, yet he could make himself understood everywhere he went.

Listening to his story, Miyamoto's imagination jumped to compare the old man's adventure to ancient people's migration, in which they had freely crossed linguistic, cultural, and political borders between Japan and the rest of the world. On the deserted rocky hills of the Danjo Islets, being the westernmost end of Kyushu, there existed uncountable number of flat stones, which were tombstones for those unnamed argonauts from long ago, who had died on these far-off islets, said Miyamoto.[44] In another essay, he noted a narrative of a fisherman that went to sea in a tiny one-man boat to Korea, China, and at last to the Indian Ocean to fish, and stayed there for 40 years. When the fisherman returned home, he had been regarded as dead for a long time.[45]

[43] Tsuneichi Miyamoto, *Japanese Remote Islands 2* (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1970 [1987]): 7, 22 (in Japanese).
[44] Miyamoto, *Travelling Folklorist*, 55.
[45] Sano, *Travelling Giants*, 12.

Miyamoto also knew very well the difficulties of migration, as mentioned above, and especially to foreign countries. In fact his father Zenjûrô went to Fiji in 1894 as one of the 250 immigrant workers from Japan. They worked in sugarcane plantations there, and only 115 men of them could survive and return home mainly because of tropical epidemics. Nevertheless, many families in Suô-Ôshima Island later sent immigrant workers to Hawaii, and were well off because of financial support from those immigrants.[46]

Miyamoto has been very often misunderstood as only a fieldworker who walked a lot and published numerous volumes of ethnography. It might have been because most of his published works were in the form of a collection of the materials directly collected in rural Japan, as narratives or written records discovered during his fieldwork. He seemed to have refrained from developing theories based on his abundant data. Moreover, historian Ryûichi Narita argues that Miyamoto did not refer to border problems although many of the islands he visited were on the borderlands.[47] In fact, Miyamoto published his experiences on the islands of Tsushima, Gotô, and Tanegashima in the context of remote border islands,[48] and had formed a hypothesis concerning the antiquity of cultural traits on such islands.

In 1950, during his stay in the northern part of Tsushima Island with Seiichi Izumi, he heard the roar of cannons of the Korean War that had just begun. This was the earliest occasion in which he vividly realised the existence of a border.

In Tsushima Island, Miyamoto found many elements of life that might have been handed down from the Kamakura era that ended in the mid-fourteenth century. He visited families of the descendants of local *samurai*, who lived on the same residential plots and cultivated the same fields (of probably the same shape) as their ancestors. Many of them owned historical documents given to their ancestors by feudal lords that proved their authentic ownership of their land dating back to the fourteenth century. Miyamoto identified many traits surviving from that time (the medieval era of Japan) in Tsushima Island in spite of drastic political changes that happened in the Edo (1603-1867) and Meiji eras (1868-1912): farmlands and their irrigation systems, roads and ports, vocabulary and place names that reflected ancient social classes, and some religious practices. In addition to Yanagita's contribution to the discovery of surviving folklore dating back to the Edo era, Miyamoto's fieldwork unveiled cultural remnants from the medieval era in the borderlands of Japan, Tsushima and the Gotô Islands in Nagasaki Prefecture, and Noto Peninsula in Ishikawa Prefecture.[49]

Miyamoto also wrote on the extreme scarcity of historical records in most islands in Japan.[50] As for the islands of the outer sea, only Sado, Tsushima, and Gotô Islands retained rich historical

[46] Sano, *Travelling Giants*, 18-19. In Suô-Ôshima Island, there exists the Museum of Japanese Immigration to Hawaii.
[47] Shigenori Iwata, and Ryûichi Narita, "Beyond the Journey of Tsuneichi Miyamoto: A Discussion," *Gendai Shisô* 39:15 (Tokyo: Seido Sha, 2011), 35 (in Japanese).
[48] Miyamoto, "The Islands Where I Dreamt," 35.
[49] Tsuneichi Miyamoto, *The Survival of the Medieval Era* (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1987).
[50] Tsuneichi Miyamoto, *Articles on Remote Islands by Tsuneichi Miyamoto, vol. 5* (Suô-Ôshima: Mizunowa Publishing, 2010), 105 (in Japanese).

records and memories as mentioned above, while all other islands had very few cultural remnants dating back to the Kamakura era. Some argued that such a loss occurred due to the poverty of the islanders, but that might not be true, thought Miyamoto. In Nakadôri Island of the Gotô Islands, Nagasaki Prefecture, for example, there was a family named Aokata that had preserved documents of the Kamakura era, although archeological evidence was missing. Thanks to these documents, Miyamoto could understand the islanders' lifestyle in the medieval era, and find connections between old and contemporary place names. After having examined how rulers had erased historical documents and sites for political reasons, Miyamoto found that Tsushima Island represented a rare example; its history was not erased or rewritten by the feudal lords, *damiyô*, which happened frequently in the Edo era. Instead, the Sô clan that had already existed in Tsushima in the twelfth century, and monopolized trade with Korea in the fifteenth century, and the shogunate of the Edo era continued to allow the clan to govern the Tsushima domain (comprised of Tsushima Island itself and supplementary paddy fields in Kyushu). The existing historical documents of the Sô clan amount to more than 14,700 items, and are now restored in the National Kyushu Museum.

Miyamoto speculated on the reasons of such political and cultural conservatism in Tsushima Island as follows:[51]

> Tsushima is an island on the border, and we can see Korea across a channel. Because of this situation, islanders have been put in a kind of continuing stress; they had to be always prepared to defend their island for themselves, since they could not expect military aid sent from mainland Japan without delay. Such stress may have resulted in the conservation of the old heritage of the island.

Since new trends tend be introduced first in political centers, older cultural traits such as dialects remain in remoter areas, forming circles around Kyoto. This was a hypothesis established by Yanagita through his study of local names for land snails.[52] And, from the very start of the League of Nine Societies, the border island Tsushima was chosen as its first target of study. There existed an implicit intention, shared among the coordinators, of proving that this island had belonged to Japan and not to Korea, and it was exactly what Tsushima Islanders expected of the academic societies. They purported to find blood types, cranial morphology, linguistics, oral traditions, and written historical records that coincided rather well with other regions of Japan rather than Korea.

Miyamoto's hypothesis of the antiquity of cultural traits in Tsushima Island was, as a matter of course, in accordance with the assumptions of other scholars such as Yanagita. However, Miyamoto was a pragmatic fieldworker, and was least influenced by theoretical presumptions.

Many plants, both cultivated and wild, were closely affiliated between Tsushima and Korea. In fact, ethnobotanist Sasuke Nakao found that the rather archaic varieties of rice and barley in Tsushima were introduced from Korea, and not from mainland Japan.[53] Miyamoto also underlined

[51] Miyamoto, *Remote Islands*, 108.
[52] Kunio Yanagita, *Kagyû-kô: Speculation on Land Snails* (Tokyo: Tôkô-shoin, 1930) (in Japanese).
[53] Miyamoto, "The Islands Where I Dreamt," 37-38.

that there were 7,000 traders from Osaka and Kyoto in Tsushima that engaged in unauthorised trade with Korea in the beginning of the Edo era. Due to the "closed door" policy of the shogunate from 1638, the "smugglers" were expelled. In spite of this policy, the Sô family was allowed to have friendly interchange and trade with Korea. The feudal lord of Tsushima invited Hôshû Amenomori (1668-1755) as his officer, and made him learn Korean. Amenomori opened a private school in Tsushima to train young translators who could work as protocols for trading with Korea and welcoming the Korean dynasty's courtesy missions to Edo.[54]

All these historical facts can only be understood as a very dynamic process of internal and international politics, economics, and ecology in this border island. Regarding it only as a marginalised place remote from Kyoto or Edo, as Yanagita did, would be misleading.[55] In this sense, Miyamoto's fieldwork methodology of studying written historical records, remembered oral traditions, and archaeological sites in their actual environment would be best suited to illuminate its hidden dynamics of history.[56]

Succeeding Miyamoto's Philosophy and Fieldwork Ethics

Shinichi Sano's biography of Shibusawa and Miyamoto[57] served as a trigger for the boom of interest in Miyamoto. However, Sano now writes, that there seems to be enough appraisals of Miyamoto. We should stop abusing Miyamoto by kneeling down to him and to his works without carefully reading them. We should, instead, succeed his philosophy and actions. Miyamoto used to say, "Folklore is a science with which we can create our future, but not something to look back to the past."[58]

After the fieldwork in ethno-archeology, I studied traditional rice cultivation in Iriomote and other islands of Yaeyama,[59] for which Miyamoto sent me a post card. It arrived in August 1980, five months before his death from cancer in January 1981. He wrote the following message on the post card, which still encourages me to continue a multi-disciplinary approach to the learning of humanity and nature:[60]

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[54] Miyamoto, "The Islands Where I Dreamt," 40.

[55] Vernacular names for animals having economic value as fish may have different distribution patterns from those of snails.

[56] For additional information, consult the DVD made in 2011, *Unknown Tales from the Border Island: Tsushima* available at http://www.borderstudies.jp/en/news/index.php?y=2011&m=06&log_id=112

[57] Website of the Tsuneichi Miyamoto Database, Suô-Ôshima Centre for Cultural Exchange; Sano, *Traveling Giants.*

[58] Shinichi Sano, "What Miyamoto Entrusted to Us," *Bessatsu Taiyô,* 148 (2007): 2-5; Shinichi Sano, *The Japan Seen by Tsuneichi Miyamoto* (Tokyo: Tsukiji Shobô, 2007), 366 (both in Japanese).

[59] Yuji Ankei, "Rice cultivation in Iriomote Island: Nature, Humans, and Rice with Special Reference to the Change of Subsistence Economy," *Kikan Jinruigaku,* 9:3 (1978): 27-101 (in Japanese).
Available in Yuji Ankei, *et al*., *The Rice Culture of Iriomote Island* (Tokyo: Hôsei Daigaku Shuppankyoku, 2007) (in Japanese).

[60] For example: Yuji Ankei, and Masanao Toyama, ed., *A Sourcebook of the Environmental History of Amami and Okinawa* (Kagoshima: Nanpô Shinsha, 2011) (in Japanese).

> I was so moved by your article on rice cultivation in Iriomote that you sent me. I wished to write a letter, but soon realised that you were in Africa at that time. I thought that you would soon be back, and then your post card informs me now of your safe return. On my part, I cannot accomplish my work, I am too often aware that there are so many important things I have missed studying, and this summer is nearly over. Be greedy enough to bite and absorb as many different things as possible when young.

From the very beginning in 1974, Iriomote islanders have continually taught me fieldwork ethics, telling me their mostly unhappy experiences with researchers. Since then, I have made it a rule to purchase as many copies of my articles or books as possible with whatever income I may get from my publications or awards for the study of the island, and donate them to the islanders and the community halls.

In 2006, Akihiro Iwashita of Hokkaido University decided to donate half of his award of the 6th Jirô Osaragi Memorial Prize that he received for his book on the Northern Territories of Japan.[61] He denoted 1 million Japanese yen to Nemuro, the city next to the Northern Territories of Japan, and the fund was used to create a library for local citizens to provide reading materials on border issues. Iwashita's initiative, suggested by Kinsei Ishigaki's idea about Iriomote Island in our book, has now spread to other border regions such as Tsushima, Yonaguni, and the Ogasawara Islands under the same nomination of Etopirika Libraries, named after the tufted puffin.[62]

Under the influence of Miyamoto's fieldwork ethics, my wife and I gradually changed our style of fieldwork in Japan from questioning to conversations, and from writing academic articles to publishing first for local communities. We encouraged local people to write their own ethnography of Iriomote Island. We edited the manuscripts, and found a publisher to make three volumes of ethnographical record of abandoned villages in Iriomote Island.[63] We learned many things through the collaboration with local people: they learned how to write their experience for publication, and my wife and I learned their cosmology and spirituality that had seldom appeared in our questionnaire. These volumes then served as a database for our scientific papers to be compiled with other findings.

In 1990, I was invited to be a member of the 2nd Committee on Research Ethics in the Japanese Association of Ethnology. Then in 1992, I published a narrative about the nuisances caused by being researched based on a woman living on a border island – the English version appeared in

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[61] Akihiro Iwashita, *The Issues of the Northern Territories: Neither 4, nor 0, nor 2 Islands* (Tokyo: Chûô-Kôronsha, 2006) (in Japanese).

[62] http://borderstudies.jp/museum/etupirka/

[63] Takeo Yamada (edited by Yuji Ankei, and Takako Ankei), *My Village Anturi: The Folklore and Songs of Amitori Village, Iriomote Island* (1986): http://ebookstore.sony.jp/item/BT000018511500100101/

Eibi Kabira (edited by Yuji Ankei, and Takako Ankei), *The Home of Sakiyama Bushi Folk Song: Songs and legends of Iriomote Island:* http://ebookstore.sony.jp/item/BT000018511400100101/

Yukiko Yamada (edited by Takako Ankei, and Yuji Ankei), *Living in Iriomote Island: Grandma's Notebook for Natural Life* (1990): http://ebookstore.sony.jp/item/BT000018511400100101/

These three volumes were reviewed by Hidemi Nishimura, *Minzokugaku-kenkyû* 60:1 (1995): 111-114. http://ci.nii.ac.jp/naid/110001100474

2006.[64] It was striking that what happened in a small island corresponded precisely to what Miyamoto pointed out two decades before its publication.

My wife and I published a collection of narratives of border islanders in 2000,[65] and we have recently organised a team collecting narratives from islands south of Kyushu, and have so far published seven booklets. The most important thing is that we make it a rule to show the manuscript to its speaker for correction before publication, and to avoid any possible infringement of human rights, such as privacy and the appropriate use of their pictures.[66]

Promoting Organic Rice in Iriomote Island Based on Ties with Taiwan

As I wrote above, when I first met with Miyamoto in 1974, I was studying ethno-archeology of a village abandoned in the beginning of the twentieth century in Iriomote Island, and was not much impressed with his advice on community development and its financial origins. I then began studying traditional rice varieties and their cultivation systems in the Yaeyama Islands including Iriomote, and I found that the oldest varieties were genetically more related with Taiwan and Southeast Asian islands rather than with mainland Japan or Okinawa Island. In the 1980s, farmers from Yaeyama Islands visited Taiwan to find new rice varieties that might be more suited for their islands since the varieties officially recommended from Okinawa Island, 500 kilometers away, were seldom successful. In 1986, the government of Japan began a campaign to urge the rice cultivators in Okinawa Prefecture to use insecticide to raise their level to the Japanese standard system of quality grading rice. Since many Iriomote Islanders had no experience in the use of pesticides in their fields, their occurred cases of farmers poisoning themselves. Moreover, there was the danger of chemical contamination in creeks, mangrove forests, and the coral sea. Iriomote islanders collected and consumed a large amount of wild food resources in these habitats, and the wildcats' main feeding spots are around the paddy fields. I began publishing articles warning of the hazards of chemicals in an island like Iriomote, where people had lived much closer to their natural environment than other parts of Japan.[67]

In November 1988, Kinsei Ishigaki and I organised a multidisciplinary symposium in Iriomote, in which 200 islanders, about 10% of the total inhabitants gathered. I emphasised that in

[64] Yuji Ankei, "Are You Human?: A Narrative of a Japanese Islander on Field Researchers," *Bulletin of the Graduate Schools of Yamaguchi Prefectural University* 12 (2006): A1-A9. http://ci.nii.ac.jp/naid/110006203549

[65] Yuji Ankei, and Takako Ankei, *Messages from Islands: Narratives Collected during Trips to the Ryukyu Archipelago* (Fukuoka: Ashi Shobô, 2000) (in Japanese) http://ankei.jp/yuji/?n=126

[66] Of course, we sometimes experience a total refusal for publication by the speakers or their family. We also experienced a case of public contradictions on the authenticity of oral traditions in our collection of narratives that made publication difficult. And, in case somebody should plagiarize the narratives, editors are supposed to support the narrators to defend their copyright. Consult also, Yuji Ankei, "A Collection of Narratives as a Cause of Human Rights Violations: A record of the ten-year struggle against *Tatematsu* Wahei, a writer," *Bulletin of the Faculty of Intercultural Studies, Yamaguchi Prefectural University* 8 (2002): A69-A78, (in Japanese, with an English summary) http://ci.nii.ac.jp/naid/110001792002

[67] Yuji Ankei, "Pesticide Spraying Has Begun in Iriomote Island: A Hazard to the Health of the Islanders and Wildcat Conservation," *Ekonomisuto* 64: 39 (1986): 78-83 (in Japanese).

Yaeyama, the southern border islands of Japan, agricultural innovations used to be introduced from Taiwan rather than mainland Japan. I underlined the ecological and economic feasibility of organic rice production in Iriomote as opposed to the need to introduce chemicals to their paddy fields. From the next season of rice cultivation, which began just after the symposium, many islanders joined our movement of the "Iriomote Wildcat Safe Rice Cooperative." In July 1989, we collected 60 tons of rice, half of the rice produced on this island. Although it seemed to be a good beginning to our project, farmers encountered many economic difficulties and political obstacles, for which I was regarded as the first person responsible for finding solutions. For example, local branches of the Ministry of Agriculture would not acknowledge our wildcat rice as "Specially cultivated rice," for which direct selling to consumers was permitted as an exception. The local agricultural cooperative withdrew machines for cultivation for farmers who had debts to pay. Even fraudsters came to try and steal our rice.

From that moment, the fieldwork of my family in Iriomote turned out to be hard, working for months solely for the organic rice cooperative. For about two years, I was obliged to stop publishing academic articles and instead to publish reports in a variety of media mainly for advertising the rice of Iriomote. Meanwhile those islanders working for the local government called me "the Cancer of Iriomote," and others began treating our family in the opposite way, as *utuzamari* (family relatives).

My participation in this new business in Iriomote and the consequent status of being almost a close relative to some families soon put me in an unsolvable dilemma of positionality. As the demand for this rice increased, due to the success of its advertisement, my family was regarded as the first to be asked to stop consuming the organic rice of Iriomote Island, as the yield of rice fell short of the demand. So, the harder I worked for their organic rice as a volunteer, the less chance I had to purchase it. But my family felt attached to the organic brown rice that was very healthy.

How could we solve such a dilemma in our positionality? My wife and I decided to try cultivating organic rice at home, and to become independent of Iriomote organic rice. Since 1993, my family has continued to cultivate rice for self-sufficiency, and becoming a farmer gradually changed my way of fieldwork, and probably my lifestyle as well. For example, an old woman in Yaku Island, south of Kyushu, told me the way in which she prayed for the deities of the island. Seven years had passed since I first met her, and she said that she had kept the prayers untold for fear that islanders of younger generations would take it as superstitious. She professed why she decided to disclose the prayers to my family. She thought that my wife and I could understand the value of those forgotten prayers since we were practicing agriculture ourselves. Her prayers taught us the features of Japanese islanders' cosmology in life, and we made it a rule to utter the prayer aloud with the youngsters that voluntarily help us in the field before and after the work.[68] It was twenty years after my first

[68] This is an example of the evening prayer in the field in the traditional style of some families in Yaku Island: "Deities dwelling the soil, deities dwelling the streams, and *sanbô-kôjin-sama*, the deity in charge of fire and field, we are so grateful for the hard work you have participated in to help our work and to protect us from accidents and insect or snake bites for a whole day. We are not so greedy as to expect an extraordinary harvest. Please take care of the vegetables we have planted today until we can be rewarded with just an average yield like

encounter with Miyamoto that I began to realise the secrets of his fieldwork and positionality of identifying and introducing himself as a farmer rather than a scholar. Facing local people as their fellow farmer may be a clue to their spirituality and untold oral traditions.

A Test of Miyamoto's Hypothesis on Ancient Traits found on Border Islands

Until recently, Miyamoto's hypothesis of the survival of ancient cultural traits on border islands of Japan remained untested. He arrived at this hypothesis through his fieldwork on Tsushima Island in 1950-1951. After his first visit abroad to East Africa in 1975, he visited Jeju Island, Korea, in 1977, three years before his death. He intended to discover the traits of the Jeju Islanders shipwrecked in February 1477 in Yonaguni, the westernmost island of Japan just near Taiwan. Three survivors were sent to Iriomote Island, and then to other islands, met the Ryukyu King, and returned to Seoul in May 1479. Their narratives as recorded by the secretaries of the Korean King became the first historical record of the livelihood of the people in Yaeyama and Miyako, the southern half of the Ryukyu Archipelago. But, Miyamoto could not find any records or memories of those three shipwrecked men, either in Jeju or Yonaguni. In the following section I will attempt to test his hypothesis using the oral traditions I have studied on Yonaguni Island during my fieldwork since 1976.

Yonaguni Island is located only 111 kilometers to the east of Taiwan. Oral traditions recorded by historians and ethnographers on the Yonaguni side of the border have been quite scarce and concerned more or less with the hostile relationship before Taiwan became Japan's colony in 1895. Very few examples of cultural interchanges between the two islands have been discovered, in spite of their geographical proximity. In March 2007, a Yonaguni woman, Ms. N., from whom my wife and I had collected some narratives in 1990, began narrating a very rich oral tradition that had never been recorded before.[69] It was about three shipwrecked "men from elsewhere" *fuganutu* in the Yonaguni dialect. They were not from any of the worlds traditionally known to the people of Yonaguni: Ryukyu, Japan, China, Europe, Taiwan, Lanyu, or more southern islands. We can guess that they were from Korea or somewhere farther to the north. The oral tradition says that their home seemed to be a place with abundant citrus trees.[70] Since Jeju Island was exceptional in Korea, in that citrus trees were cultivated for fruits there, the narrative strongly suggests that they came from Jeju

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others. Deities and holy spirits of the island, forgive us for our greediness as to pray that you look after us during the night so that we can get up healthy, return to you, and take care of your field again tomorrow."

[69] Yuji Ankei, and Takako Ankei, "The Oral Tradition of the Jeju Shipwrecks to Yonaguni Island," in *A Sourcebook of the Environmental History of Amami and Okinawa*, ed. Yuji Ankei, and Masanao Toyama (Kagoshima: Nanpô Shinsha, 2011), 547-576 (in Japanese).

[70] (Narrated and sung by Ms. N.) One day, our ancestors brought two of the three men into the hills of Yonaguni, and arrived at a place where wild citrus trees were in full bloom. Then, suddenly the two *fuganutu* burst into tears, and the islanders understood they were homesick. Saying to each other that their home must be a place with a lot of citrus trees like Yonaguni, the islanders made a song to sympathize with their sorrow, and wept together. The words of the song were, "Fragrant, fragrant citrus blossoms deep in the hills, so fragrant is your heart longing for home."

Island. By comparing with the list of historical records of shipwrecks on the Ryukyu Islands, Koreans were recorded to have shipwrecked in Yonaguni Island only twice: in 1477 from Jeju Island, and in 1834 from Haenam, Jeollanam-do.[71] I therefore concluded that most of her narratives on these three men coincided precisely with the historical records of the Korean Dynasty of May and June 1479, and the narratives of three men from Jeju Island shipwrecked and rescued in Yonaguni Island in February 1477,[72] as Miyamoto wrote. This case may be regarded as the second case to support Miyamoto's hypothesis on the survival of ancient traditions and memories in the border regions.

In this five-century old oral tradition, Taiwanese people appeared as barter exchange partners of Yonaguni islanders. For example, according the oral tradition passed down to Ms. N., sometime after the departure of the three shipwrecked men to Iriomote Island, traders from Taiwan arrived in Yonaguni, and warned them. They told Yonaguni islanders that the Ryukyu King had just conquered Ishigaki Island and its nearby small islands of Yaeyama, and the islanders were suffering from severe taxation and forced labour. They advised Yonaguni islanders to be prepared for an invasion from the Ryukyu Kingdom.[73] Yonaguni islanders seemed to have had some time to be prepared for taxation from the Ryukyu King. They pretended to be too sick or old to work, hid their treasures, and concealed their barter ties with Taiwan. The practice of this mutual trans-border help with Taiwanese people continued until the border officially disappeared by colonization in 1895. Every time a ship of officers from Ishigaki Island was found approaching Yonaguni Island, someone on a 24-hour watch waiting on the eastern cape of the island would ride a horse to the village to alert people to the arrival of officers. Yonaguni islanders made it a rule to pack the excessive rice and alcohol in a canoe and hurriedly rowed it to the west of the island. They waited at a common fishing spot in the ocean between their island and Taiwan, and waited for their friends to find their SOS flags and come to bring them water, food, and fire to cook it. They tied their canoes, and a feast began on the ocean until they got the news of the return of those officers to Ishigaki Island. Such practices never appear in historical records, because they were carefully concealed and local officers received bribes to keep them secret.

During my study on traditional rice cultivation in Yaeyama, I was puzzled that an average bundle of rice in Yonaguni Island had been about twice as big as the one on Iriomote Island. After listening to the above oral tradition by Ms. N., we may now understand that the difference in bundle sizes helped to make tax collectors living in remote islands believe that the amount of rice produced in Yonaguni Island to be about half of the real production because they counted the yield of rice by the number of harvested bundles. The King of Ryukyu regularly sent his inspectors to Yaeyama in order to control the officers in Ishigaki Island. Their reports always complained that the production in Yonaguni Island was scarce because of the laziness of the islanders, and the officers should make all

[71] Studies by Shigeru Kobayashi *et al*. http://matsu.rcks.kyushu-u.ac.jp/past/2008/p/study/03hyoryu/(2)kmlist/km-list.html

[72] An abstract of this presentation is available in English at: http://www.borderstudies.jp/en/media/museum_exhibitions/pdf/3rd_Exhibition2.pdf

[73] Historical records tell us that the Ryukyu Kingdom sent troops, and occupied Ishigaki Island in 1500, and then Yonaguni Island in 1522.

their efforts to urge Yonaguni Islanders to devote themselves more to production and increased tax payment, in spite of the remote location of Yonaguni from Ishigaki. Although the Ryukyu Kingdom finally fell in 1879, the ancient tax system of capitation continued in the islands of Yaeyama and Miyako until 1903. In 1893, Gisuke Sasamori, an explorer from Aomori, northern Japan stayed in Yaeyama, and found the local people suffering badly from malaria, heavy taxes, and corruption. He also visited Yonaguni Island, and noted that their rice as tax had remained unpaid for two years because of poor harvests and ship accidents.[74] It is evident that the Yonaguni islanders regarded Sasamori as one of the officers sent from Ishigaki Island, and most probably they hid their excess rice and alcohol on the ocean with the aid of their partners from Taiwan as was remembered by Ms. N. Therefore, we can almost never expect to discover historical records regarding this practice of secret mutual help between Yonaguni and Taiwan islanders. Most researchers have been fooled by this ancient wisdom of Yonaguni local leaders pretending that they were hostile and had little to do with people living on the opposite side of the border.

In contrast to Tsushima Island, which has abundant historical records dating more than five centuries, Yonaguni islanders have scarcely retained such written records, but have kept instead, a rich oral tradition of their memories dating back 530 years or more. This difference may be partly explained by the fact that there was the office of the feudal clan on Tsushima Island, whereas in Yonaguni's case, the King of Ryukyu lived on Okinawa Island, and his headquarter for the Yaeyama Islands including Yonaguni, was on Ishigaki Island, respectively 509 and 124 kilometers away from Yonaguni Island. However, both Tsushima and Yonaguni islanders succeeded in turning their handicap of living on a remote island far from the political centers in Japan, into a hidden privilege of living on a border island next to Korea or Taiwan, their friendly partners.

Finally, readers might now question how Ms. N. became the last survivor among the keepers of the ancient memories of the encounter with the *fuganutu*, the three shipwrecked men from another world to Yonaguni Island, and why she recently began breaking the long silence about her memory? She explained it to me in this way: she was born with very fragile health, rarely went to school, and usually stayed with elders because the younger generations needed to work very hard, and did not have time to look after her in the daytime. Because of the rapid economic development and consequent social changes in the 1960s, elders found it more and more difficult to find youngsters that would be interested in listening to their oral traditions. At the age of six, when she learnt to write, an old woman asked her to write down a story of three shipwrecked men who arrived at Yonaguni Island a very long time ago. She showed the text to her parents, but they said, "You look happy inventing new fairy tales of your own as you play, don't you?"

When she often fell sick, the elders decided to give her a task so that she felt some responsibility that will help her to survive. Her "burden" given by the elders was to memorise all the versions of narratives on *fuganutu* which had been handed down independently among the old families of the island. The more completely she memorised the oral tradition, the more isolated from the generation of her parents she became. Few elders survived, and they asked her to share her

[74] Gisuke Sasamori, *The Exploration of the Southern Islands* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1982 [1894]) (in Japanese).

memories of *fuganutu* with reliable persons. Later, she tried to transfer her knowledge to someone on the island but it was always in vain. Since nobody except her knew of the *fuganutu* legend, the islanders simply disbelieved her, and accused her making the stories up. So, she looked for students, researchers, or journalists coming from outside of the island, but most of them seemed to conduct their research for their own sake, and not for the islanders, and hence were not reliable to her.

Discouraged by the people both inside and outside of her island, Ms. N. at last decided to seal her story. It was about 25 years before we first met in 1990. The *fuganutu* story was so firmly sealed in her that it took 17 years until she began narrating it to me and to my wife by phone, and the story was so abundant and diversified as it took about 3 years to narrate and draw illustrations. The gradual steps of the change in our research ethics and positionality until she decided to break the seal for her *fuganutu* stories were: (1) to listen to her mostly tragic experience with fieldworkers, and publish it as an article on fieldwork ethics, (2) to publish the narratives of her life history and spirituality, (3) to collaborate to protest, for more than ten years, against a well-known writer that plagiarised our publication on her life history, and lastly (4) to visit Jeju Island in 2007 to search for the memories of the three islanders that were shipwrecked on Yonaguni Island. When she finished narrating the *fuganutu* legend to us in 2010, she then participated in our rice cultivation by way of regularly sent message by phone of Yonaguni's seasonal prayers and special songs for helping our rice grow.

This process of accessing the deepest memories of the border island of Yonaguni might correspond to what I discussed of ethics, its practice, social activism, and the positionality of Miyamoto at the start of this essay. In short, fieldwork ethics and respect for the individual autonomy of those being researched, as outlined by Miyamoto, should not be regarded as something that restrains our fieldwork. Instead, ethically robust fieldwork may lead to deeper collaboration with local people, which in turn, may result in fruitful discoveries for ethnographical records. The positionality of a fieldworker is of crucial importance, and if he or she is accepted as a member of the local people, the vision of the fieldworker totally changes from the fixed positionality of the researcher/researched to something in between and beyond such superficial dichotomies.

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