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**International Workshop**

**New perspectives on Asian Epistemologies: Japan**

**PANEL I – THE VALUE OF OUR LEARNING EXPERIENCE**  
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**Fieldwork deiriguchi (entrance and exit)**  
by

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## Fieldwork no deiriguchi (entrance/exit)

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International Workshop: New Perspectives on Intra- Asian Epistemologies  
Asia-Europe Institute, University of Malaya, 22-24 September 2003

Fuyu no nori, haru no ashitaba  
Natsu takabe, sasae, mekkari  
Aki sanma, jinen wa kusaya  
Shima no aji

Winter is nori, spring is ashitaba  
Summer is takabe, sasae, mekkari  
Autumn is sanma, all-year is kusaya  
Tastes in the island

Japanese create mnemonic devices to remember important dates, events, and other things. Japanese poetry is a kind of mnemonic device. *Shima no aji*, is pleasantly rendered as *shun no mono*, best produce of the season. The local names of shells, fish and vegetable bring nostalgic memories of my work in the island almost more than ten years ago. Today I share with you, like an extended family catching-up with each others lives during an annual reunion, what happened to me since I left for Japan.

### I. Introduction

1. My paper is about how one achieves 'literacy' in another culture. By literacy I mean: proficiency in reading and writing Japanese and knowledge of the theory and practice of the Japanese way of life. Knowledge about the Japanese culture is evident when a Japanese gives a compliment in a positive way- *jozu* (good) or in an ambivalent - *henna gaijin* (strange foreigner who speaks Japanese and knows Japan). For scholars of Japan Studies, competency in the final analysis as judged by the quality of data obtained from the field. How well a researchers understand Japanese culture and society is ultimately revealed in one's writings. I shall try to share with you my understanding of Japanese culture and society through this workshop.
2. There will be five sets of keywords that would summarize the content of this paper:
  - (1) *senso* (ancestor) – tracing one's academic lineage,
  - (2) *mane o suru* (imitating) – learning through imitation,
  - (3) *aruku, miru, kiku* (walk, observe, listen) – a method of observing,
  - (4) *deiri* (entering and living) – entering and exiting the community, and
  - (5) *memo o suru* (writing field notes) – a method of transcribing records of observation, informant work, etc.
3. My presentation will illustrate the process of literacy using personal experiences as a graduate student and fieldwork experience in Japan. As I have written before in the preface of my book (Zayas, 2000) ... *in Japan I lived first, then studied and wrote what I had learned and experienced*. Many scholars, perhaps including myself, romanticized our lives in Japan now. However, I would like to point out exactly an

ideal place to live and to do research in the 1980s. As a female researcher I, felt disadvantaged. As Filipina woman, I felt 'discriminated'. But these did not hinder my determination to learn more about Japanese culture through direct experience.

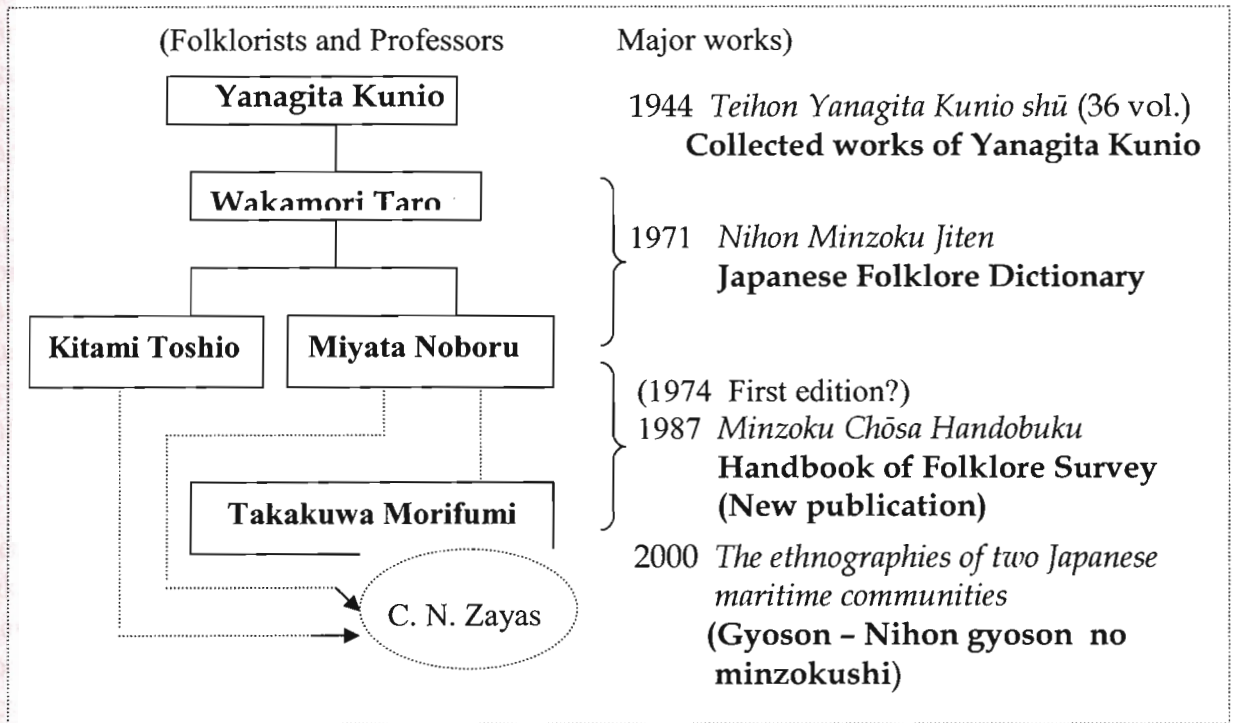
4. This workshop is an opportune occasion for me to utilize this experience as a heuristic device to illustrate the conventions of learning in a Japanese setting.

#### Setting the frame - *senso* (ancestor) – tracing one's academic lineage

Japanese social interaction begins with *jikoshokai* (self-introduction). Part of this ritualized communication is to tell one's *susshin* (origin e.g. school, hometown, work place, etc.) and *senmong* (field of specialization). Knowing each the other's *susshin* and *senmong* will establish each one's status. For instance,

*My name is so and so. I am from the Philippines. My field of study is cultural anthropology. I am graduate student of University of Tsukuba Doctoral Program in History and Anthropology<sup>1</sup>. My research topic is social transformation of fishing villages in Japan.*

The unsaid part of the conversation looks something like this:



<sup>1</sup> The Anthropology specializations are Cultural Anthropology (Bunka jinryui gaku), Folklore (Minzokugaku) and Archaeology (Kokugaku). Let me point out two things here: (1) I majored in ethnology (Bunka jinryui gaku) while I sat in the classes of our folklore professors. This paper will only discuss folklore aspect of my training. I would like to make it known that I am double grateful to my professors in ethnology, Professors Ushijima, Onozawa, Satoh, Kakeya and Seki. After I graduated in 1990, Prof. Ushijima with Professors Takakuwa and Seki came to the Philippines and practice with me the Maritime Anthropological Studies in the Visayas, Central Philippines. This project of ten years produced 3 volumes of work on various aspect of maritime life in the Visayas.

Read as: C. N. Zayas, was a student of illustrious professors in folklore - Kitami Toshio, Miyata Noburo, and Takakuwa Morifumi, who were under Wakamori Tarō who was also working under Yanagita Kunio, the founder of Japanese folklore.

The folklore movement in Japan began as a reaction to the demise of the life ways of the common people during the first quarter of the last century. The spirit of the folks was the concern of the intellectuals and artists as Japan adopted the engine of Western civilization: technology, educational system, justice system, etc. Led by Yanagita Kunio, the Japanese Folklore Society was established in 1929. The use of the term 'folk' or *minzoku* was derived from the German notion of *Volkskunde* (cf. The Japanese Society of Ethnology, 1968:3). The popularity of folk life studies was due to the rapid modernization of Japan. The growing militarism provided the backdrop of the Japanese sense of nationalism. The results of folk life surveys became the source of the Japanese sense of identity. Yanagita Kunio a bureaucrat turned scholar, provided the needs of the times.

Yanagita Kunio (1875-1962), the acknowledged founder of modern Japanese folklore studies, authored a 36-volume selected works, *Teihon Yanagita Kunio shū* (1944), delving on various aspects of folk life. This epoch-making work centered on Japan's distinctive national character, which later became the major pillar of *Nihonjinron* 'folk theory of Japaneseness'. Part of the results from this collection began in 1934 when Yanagita Kunio headed a project to collect information in 50 villages all over Japan. He provided the researchers with a printed guide as a 'plan' for information collection (Fukuta, Azio, 1987:591). The raw data was supposed to have been entered in cards to be sorted out for analysis according to Yanagita, this was not done. Note, however, that the succeeding generation of folklorists continued this practice of archiving data with the use of a data card. This enormous collection of data became a valuable source of information about the Japanese people that to this day is quoted by the Japanese scientists, writers, scholars, and even ordinary people.<sup>2</sup>

Wakamori Tarō ( - ) of the Tokyo University of Education was the leading student of Yanagita. He guided the folklorists from his University as president of the Otsuka Minzoku Gakkai (Otsuka Folklore Society), which produced volumes of folkloric studies, among others. An important outcome of which was the publication of *Nihon Minzoku Jiten* (Japanese Folklore Dictionary) in 1971. Later, Tokyo University of Education was reformed, to quash the bastion of student activism in the 1960s, which led to a more rightist-oriented, pro-Ministry of Education, University of Tsukuba. It later acquired a sarcastic nickname of "Imperial's Imperial University".

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<sup>2</sup> There are only 4 Imperial Universities during the pre-war Period, Tokyo, Kyoto, Kyushu and Hokkaido.

Nihon Minzoku Jiten was edited by a board headed by Wakamori. Kitami Toshio and Miyata Noburo were part of this board. I had the chance to be under them while I was in the University of Tsukuba (1984-1990). A manual for research, Minzoku Chōsa Handobukku (Handbook of Folklore Survey) was published in 1974, its latest edition 1987, and co-authored by folklorists belonging to the same *nakama* or in-group. Miyata and Takakuwa Morifumi, two of the four, were my teachers, as well.

When I passed the entrance examination at the Doctoral Program, I chose to major in cultural anthropology. I was advised to take courses in minzokugaku (folklore) since my focus of study was Japan. Minzokugaku is a field of study dedicated to the understanding of the lives of the ordinary Japanese. The objective of minzokugaku is to comprehend the transitions (*hensen*) occurring in people's lives. I wrote a dissertation on the social transformation of two villages in the Kanto Region where the capital is located and where my university was established.

It became a practice for field survey in Japan to utilize a plan. When I was a student it was the handbook. Essentially, the handbook integrated the previous 'plans' of Yanagita, Wakamori, and Orikuchi Shinobu, another folklorists from the Kokugakuin University, a private school. Students of folklore in the past knew the plan of his/her teacher's school of learning by heart. These three blueprints are as follows (Otsuka Minzokugakkai, 1971:705-507):

## **I Yanagita Kunio**

### Part 1. Material culture

House, clothing, food, fishing, forestry hunting, agriculture, transportation-trade, zoutou-social-exchange, labor, village organization, family, marriage, birth, funeral, annual rites, ritual for the gods, dancing-ritual competition, children's games

### Part 2. Oral literature

Naming, words, child's language, sayings, riddles, folk songs (mingyo), folktales in song (katari mono), folktales (mukashi banashi), legends (densetsu).

### Part 3. Folk belief

Goblins (yokai)-ghosts (yure), omen (kijashi), -fortune telling (uranai)-taboo (kin)- black magic (noroi), folk medicine (minkanryoho)

## **II Wakamori Taro**

### Home economics life tradition

1. Basic tradition (clothes, food, house)
2. Productive tradition (industry, labor, transportation, trade)

### Home sociological life tradition

1. Social being tradition (village organization, household organization, group organization, age-grade)
2. Socialization tradition (birth, age of maturity, marriage, funeral ... rite of passage)

#### Home cultural life tradition

1. Knowledge cultural tradition (naming, words, discipline, technology, legend, medicine, education, ...)
2. Welfare cultural tradition (annual rites, folktales, folktales in song, folk song-dance, competition, folk arts)
3. Ethical cultural tradition (social exchange, gift exchange, village sanction, customary law ...)

#### III Orikuchi Shinobu

##### Cycle tradition

1. Class tradition
2. Creative tradition
3. Behavior tradition
4. Linguistic tradition

## II. Fieldwork - Gemba Chosa

### Step 1. Mane o suru - handobukku and jisshu

Collecting data from the field was not a large part of Yanagita's agenda. For him, field survey was only a method of gathering and recording data. However, the data obtained from the field became the foundation of knowledge for the folklore movement. During my time, *gemba chosa* (field survey) was the way to collect data. The publication of the data was considered to be enough contribution from young scholars.

I was initiated formally to Japanese field survey by participating in a *jisshu* (practice). *Jisshu* is part of the course for undergraduate. Graduate students may join not only to gather their own data but also to act as guides or assistants to the younger students. The professors never really teach in a sense of explicitly telling the students what to do. A student simply *mane suru* (copy) what the teacher is doing. At most the student give a plan of action or a list of things to gather but the handbook is really the guide, after all. This activity is a practice to conduct and lead field surveys for the older ones. *Jisshu* is a yearly activity often undertaken in the same Prefecture or region. It last only less than a week. But with the sheer number of students involved in a *jisshu*, in fact, the accumulation of information is enough to write a village survey. The data collected are stored in the *shiryokan*, archive, to be accessed by the students, staff and faculty. For my M. A. thesis, my adviser suggested that I read the field survey reports of a class whose field area was right beside the town that I was going to study. It was very helpful. One of the students of that *jisshu* later accompanied me to my target community.

*Minzoku chōsa handobukku* is a manual for field survey. It was not as brief as Yanagita's 100 items nor Wakamori's thematic chapters. *Minzoku* tells one exactly what to collect or expect to find out in the villages. The handbook is an expanded version of

the founding fathers of Japanese folklore *plan of action*. The student simply copies or collects what others have done before then. This ritual is repeated over and over in many universities, museums or folklore societies around the country. One can write about Japan by visiting the archives of museums, universities with folklore or cultural anthropology subjects and make generalizations about Japanese culture out of the data gathered by students in the past. This is practice through the imitation of the work done by others. This is exactly what had happened in the 1934 surveys of 50 villages in Japan led by Yanagita Kunio.

For me, what to collect in a village study comes automatically – like a part of my being. This is what I mean when one has internalized the repetitions of imitating or following a manual. The concept *karada de oboeru*, literally to make the body remember, or like one's second nature is how this process of learning takes place.

## Step 2. Deiri - Entering and living the village

Doing fieldwork requires residence in a village for at least a cycle or a year. There is proper way, or protocol to be strictly observed when one enters a village. Entering the community required many *shokai* (introductions) from important persons like my teachers to the key persons in the village like the village head, heads of fishing cooperative association, the education board, shrine parishioner, etc. For every visit, giving gift is the proper way of introducing one's purpose.

Living in *minshuku*, an inn, would have been expensive if not for the kind understanding of the owners who were very much appreciative of a scholar in their midst. The innkeeper kept the bill to the minimum. On my part, I return the favor by helping in the chores of the inn whenever I have a free time. For instance, setting the table, bringing the dish to the dining room, washing the dishes and sometimes cooking the food. Consequently, I learned to cook regional cuisine, choose the proper china for a dish, and establish better rapport with the mistress of the house. Sometimes when the mistress isn't so occupied we would have time for a tea and a chat. This is a good opportunity to probe into the village "talk" of the week. If a researcher isn't sensitive she may never have a chance for a long conversation because the Japanese always appear to be busy or "pretend" to be working, having a longer conversation is only possible during holidays or when one is resting. Asking for an appointment is the proper way to get the time and attention of the informant.

A village study is quite difficult if the researcher is not familiar with the village plan or the village landscape e.g. where does so-and-so lives, the post office, the marker for such and such events, etc. *Aruku, miru, kiku*<sup>3</sup> (walking, watching, listening) literally

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<sup>3</sup> *Aruku, Miru, Kiku* (Walking, Watching, Listening) is a name of a magazine published from 1967-1989, totaling 263 issues. The magazine was published by The Institute of Japan Culture of Tourism from the funds of the Kinki Nippon Tourist Co. Ltd. The Institute was established by

requires the researcher to be highly perceptive in the geography of the area. One needs to be aware of the cultural meanings of particular spaces in the field. Informants need only little time to explain that part of information and thus the researcher could spend more time probing into more important topics. More than twenty years ago, time constrained face-to-face relations of people in Japan. I was always pressed for time just like the informant. Actually, the presence of the researcher is not in the agenda of the daily life of the villagers. A harsh statement but it might also be wrong.

Finally, all these activities in the field could not have been recorded if not for techniques in *memosuru* (writing fieldnotes). The process of remembering in writing changed my way of learning. As a Filipino who is basically in an oral mode, i.e. knowledge stored in memory as against written down, there was a shift in my approach from *oido* (from Spanish word *oir* meaning to hear) to *memosuru* (writing). Writing in various forms of papers, notebooks, many colors of pens, etc. was a great revelation. The use of different sizes and types of stationery was like knowing the proper china for a particular Japanese table setting.

### III Conclusion

It must be hard to study a people when there is anger in one's heart. I had an ambivalent feeling towards the late Emperor Horopito, when he died in the morning of January 7, 1989, I was in the field.

... January 10, 1989

*Before reaching the house of Y-obasan located at the back of the Branch Office of the Town Hall, she asked me if I have signed in the condolence book (for the Emperor). I didn't know what to say. I told her I was in Motomachi yesterday (where the Town Hall is). From the street I saw the branch office chief and two other men wearing black neckties and white shirts in a somber mood looking at us. Gracefully, without saying any word, I went to a slightly elevated platform inside the building. In the most formal way, I bowed very low, hands tucked in my ribs, I wrote official name in Japanese, *sinchiya neri zayasu*. Afterwards I told myself, history would know that I was in Habuminato on that day. I did a gesture condoling to the family of an old man. The controversial emperor had passed away. I had forgiven him.*

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Miyamoto Tsuneichi (1907-1981) a folklorist born in Suoh-Ooshima, Yamaguchi Prefecture. When he was a teacher of elementary school in Osaka, he started interviewing many elderly men and women in almost all the villages in Japan from Hokkaido to Okinawa. His collection and pictures (more than 5,000) will be exhibited in the Museum of Towa-Cho, his hometown in Suoh-Ooshima soon.



Experiencing life in other cultures can transform imagined things into reality. The point of the narrative is that in the field, a scholar's research work is not value-free. What I can say is that while in Japan I lived first, then studied and wrote what I had learned and experienced (Zayas, C. N. 2000, XV).

In retrospect, while studying in Japan, one studies the Japanese and learn their language. Thus, you should live and interact with the Japanese (as against living in a foreign student's dormitory). Participate and play your role within the 'community' of your institute. Observe relations such as: sempai-kohai, sensei-deshi, dokyosei, knowing students and teachers in the same field of study (imperative to attend gakkai) all over Japan, etc. In other words, being aware of one's extended family, one's academic predecessors: the founder of your senmong, and his students, their work, etc. Follow everything your teacher says.

The defining markers are like a rite-of-passage. It would be, of course, passing the entrance examination, accepting the role of a deshi (apprentice or student) of a teacher or master. It also means behaving as a kohai (junior), a sempai (senior), or a dokyusei (of the same grade). For an Asian to succeed in a Japanese academic setting one must also be determined, one must know his senmong.

The acquisition of a new language entails new sets of epistemologies. Learning another culture in the original language is a natural thing and provides a deeper insight about the people. More than diminished, the transfer of language enhances new sets of epistemologies. Learning another culture in the original language is more natural and provides a deeper insight of the people. Learning cultural anthropology or maritime studies from an Asiatic perspective makes one's life more real as it also talks about one's self. Learning is not distant but well grounded in one's specialization.

In summary, achieving 'literacy' in another culture involves human relations. Human relations is knowing one's role, position in the hierarchical and divisional labor of spreading and enriching the field of study. Inevitably, it also means being responsible for the next generation of scholars.

After saying a mouthful, I guess there is no time left for us. Very soon, we Asians must share our expertise together by dividing the task systematically and mentor the next generation of scholars. This is the way of the future, the way for this region to grow together in harmonious exchange like of the Age Asian Emporium.

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## Errata for: Fieldwork no deiriguchi (entrance/exit)

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- 00 In the program the title should read: Fieldwork no deiriguchi (entrance/exit)
- 01 Page 1, 1st paragraph, 1<sup>st</sup> line : Japanese create *mnemonic* \*(footnote with \*) devices. Footnote reads as: Here are some examples of mnemonic devices to remember historical events, i.e. date when Nara was established as the capital in 710, remembered as nanto, nan '7', and to '10'; date when Kyoto was established as the capital in 794, remembered as nakuya, na '7', ku '9', yo '4'.  
4th line: (delete) *almost*
- 02 Page 1, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph, 5<sup>th</sup> line: ambivalent (insert) *manner*
- 03 Page 1, last line: However, I would like to point out (insert) *that Japan is not an*
- 04 Page 4 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph 34<sup>th</sup> line: .... (delete) 1974,
- 05 Page 4 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph last line: (add) *A book of the same title and author was published in 1974. In the 1987 publication, the authors claimed that the present book is completely different from the last one.*
- 06 Page 7 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph: III Conclusion (add) – Leaving behind imagined anger
- 07 Page 8 4<sup>th</sup> paragraph 4<sup>th</sup> line: *Learning another ... people* (delete the sentence)
- 08 Page 8 last line: This is the way of the future, ... exchange (delete) *like of* (insert) *as in the Age* (insert) *of*
- 09 Page 9, 11<sup>th</sup> line: Yoshikawa Kōbundo, (add) *new book*.
- 10 Page 9 12<sup>th</sup> line: delete the line.