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Special Theme: Family

In this issue of the Newsletter, four authors introduce a project exploring *Family Potential in Uncertain Times*. The first author, A. Mori, leads this international, collaborative project and invited participants to contribute here.

Family Potential in Uncertain Times: Introductory remarks

Akiko Mori

National Museum of Ethnology

The project “Family potential in uncertain times: mobility, technology, and body” began in April 2021 as one among the Minpaku Special Research Projects. It includes 22 research members: 16 from Japan and six from abroad. The aim of this project is to explore the fluid way of being of contemporary families and to reflect on its meaning.

At present, families are far from being stable but are adaptable. Depending on a situation, a family can change its place of habitation, include others as its members, or request someone else to fulfill some of its functions. Therefore, families are able to make arrangements and adjustments as required, and the family unit is still regarded as the primary social group.

The project sheds light on how such adjustments are made in different contexts and how the material, institutional, and physical settings interact. Various institutions and technologies as well as infrastructure are linked to the subtle arrangements within families, such as care networking. If something goes amiss, the dysfunction needs to be addressed by an entire set of arrangements and adjustments. Recently, flexibility in arrangements and making adjustments to them are becoming increasingly critical.

This project considers the contemporary world as being uncertain. Since the second half of the 20th century, globalization and changes in the industrial structure have radically shaken the world. It has resulted in malfunctioning of the state-market-family linkage and unhinged social systems worldwide. Disaster, wars, and conflicts have displaced large numbers of people, many of them becoming refugees and asylum seekers. Most recently, periodic outbreaks of diseases and pandemics have occurred, and the armed invasions of large countries have terrified us.

The question of how people live their lives in such uncertain times is an important one. In this project, we discard the framework of the family as a group of closely related people. Rather, we are interested in what a family does than in what it is defined by. Through a family's action, we would like to know how the various issues related to it are intertwined.

Here, I will take an example of family networking. Family networking varies in duration and size—some networks are passing and others constitute large, durable ties. The ways in which these ties are initiated and developed are worthy of consideration. I would like to refer to a migrant family I met in Berlin.

Formation of the migrant family model

Jasmine grew up in a family with a

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Turkish–German background in Berlin. Her mother is Jasmine’s biological aunt (mother’s sister). Furthermore, two aunts live in Berlin with their respective partners. Together, they help raise Jasmine.

Jasmine’s grandparents came to Germany as migrant workers (*Gastarbeiter*) in the 1960s. At first, they left their four daughters in two relatives’ households in Turkey and later brought them to a small town in southern Germany, where Jasmine was born in the 1980s. When Jasmine was two years old, her biological mother divorced Jasmine’s father and remarried a man living in Turkey. Around that time, Jasmine’s grandparents retired from the company and moved to Turkey to live on pensions. Jasmine was taken in by her aunt in Berlin.

Here, we observe the formation of transnational family networking in child raising. It is worth noting that while the network spreads across borders and functions over long distances, daily care for child raising requires the assistance of someone who lives nearby. Therefore, family members highly value living in close proximity of each other, especially when they are abroad. This is evident in the case of the three aunts who moved to Berlin, one after another, to live close to each other.

For the care relationship to work

At 21, Jasmine moved to a distant city to live with her boyfriend while learning a job using a public vocational support system for young people. It meant that she needed to maintain a good relationship with the social educator at the office, but it was not easy for a young girl such as Jasmine. From her aunts’ points of view, Jasmine needed further family care and education. The aunts tried to help and teach her, but the distance prevented daily care from working.

Meanwhile, it turned out that Jasmine had a genetic disease. After receiving medical treatment at a few places, Jasmine moved to Berlin. With her aunts’ help, she started to live alone in an apartment and tried to build a way of life to frequent her aunts’ households for daily care. Having her own residence meant that she could participate in the care relationship of the family and its friends; daily care was not possible in a distant city. Public social service is, in principle, available everywhere, but it requires the receiver to produce results within a specified period of time. Without family help, it is very difficult to achieve these results.

About knowing

Since she was a baby, Jasmine has had a long lost relationship with her



Berlin in the street on a Sunday afternoon (Akiko Mori, 2008)

biological father. One day, she got some information about her biological father, and unexpectedly, she got a chance to meet him and his family. This event was important for her because first, she came to know that her biological father had always wanted to meet her. Second, she became acquainted with her half-siblings. They are special because they understand her disease. Her disease is genetic, and she apparently inherited it from her father. The half-siblings and most of their family had the same illness and reassured her that they know about it and that Jasmine needs to say nothing. These words gave her a special sense of security. Jasmine felt that she was accepted as herself for the first time in her life. Since then, they are all in touch with each other.

What I have described here are some aspects of migrant family networking.

Here, the three sisters constitute a relationship of daily care in Berlin, inclusive of caregiving, advice, and

financial assistance. This relationship covers raising a child and making a remittance to their parents in Turkey.

For providing daily care, they avoided living far away from each other and encouraged Jasmine to live in an apartment by herself as an independent adult.

However, there was a deficiency, which could not be fulfilled through care-giving. Jasmine's sense of deficiency was satisfied with the "knowing" shown by her half-siblings. This story moves our heart and makes us reflect on the invaluable feeling of being heard and understood.

In this project, we aim to observe the family's fluid way of being; the dynamic way of the family's connection with the local infrastructure, municipal office, and state institutions. We will observe how obligations, debts, rewards, and expectations emerge, through which the family's potential is brought out.

Family as a way of knowing

Felicity Aulino

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I am very grateful to the family-potential project. This framework has provided me with a new vantage from which to consider my ethnographic experience over the last twenty plus years in northern Thailand. As part of this group, I am trying to depict how family relatedness is, in a sense, always a potential in Thai social worlds. Such relatedness is not definitive nor mutually exclusive of other concurrent ways of relating. But again, family relatedness is a possibility with everyone, all the time – whether through relations originating now, in the past, or in the future. Such family potential affects how people care for one another, as well as how they know and what it is to know overall.

An inspiration for my work here comes from the feminist comparative philosopher Vrinda Dalmiya. In her monograph *Caring to Know: Comparative Care Ethics, Feminist Epistemology, and the Mahābhārata* (2016, Oxford University Press), Dalmiya proposes nothing short of a new basis for what counts as knowing. The book begins like this:

Caring and knowing are thought to be independent of each other. Indeed, the typical Enlightenment

knower is trained to be careful not to care for the object of knowledge. She knows most effectively when she knows non-affectively, dispassionately, and impartially. Subsequently, an analysis of *what it is to know* is kept separate from an analysis of *what it is to care*. (Dalmiya 2016: 1).

Dalmiya is a philosopher thinking about philosophical traditions born of liberalism and the enlightenment. And she is addressing the burgeoning field of care ethics, where care ethicists claim to be providing a different voice for moral theory. In response, she says that is not enough. We have to rethink what it is to know, to get out from under the "axiomatic structures of liberalism," including "independent autonomy, abstraction, universality, and impartiality," which are generally assumed to be the basis of *knowing* well.

Anthropology surely inherits some of these dominant assumptions about knowledge. So I am drawn to Dalmiya's project in comparative philosophy, particularly as she looks to South Asian philosophy for alternative reference points. Anthropological work can

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invite us to think with longstanding philosophical traditions emanating from and vital to the locations of our ethnographic engagements. I try to think with Pali philosophical tracts along with contemporary social worlds in Thailand as a route to opening up otherwise obscure epistemological and ontological possibilities.

Thinking ethnographically about epistemology prompts me to ask certain questions, such as: What counts as knowing in different contexts? How is it that people come to know? And how are people moved to act through the ways that they know?

These questions parallel the questions that I have asked about care as well. In my book *Rituals of Care: Karmic Politics in an Aging Thailand* (2019, Cornell University Press), I loosely define care simply as “providing for others.” This then invites ethnographic exploration of *what counts* as providing adequately, for whom, and in what contexts. By homing in on repetitive embodied actions – at bedtimes as well as in board meetings, between individuals and within groups – I trace the social training of awareness toward particular forms of care and the lived experience that results from habituated attention to their worlds.

It seems a truism that family is a fundamental and complicated site of care. It is from this vantage that I approach our collective’s call to investigate the potential of the family. I offer the notion of “family as a way of knowing” to open up exploration of what constitutes family, care, and knowing in Thai contexts to help consider possibilities of a care-based epistemology amidst ever-present and multi-directional relationality.

So what counts as family? Thai pronouns provide one way into this exploration because they pull people into familial relations in casual communication. There is ubiquitous use of kinship terms as pronouns in everyday interactions between non-blood relatives throughout Thailand. People rarely use “I” and “you,” formal first and second pronouns, and instead choose an appropriate kinship marker for the interaction. You call a shopkeeper auntie. Your neighbor, uncle or grandma. Your professor, mother. Familial pronouns are constantly deployed: as markers of respect and politeness, as expressions of genuine affection, and as tools of social maneuvering. People are constantly scanning their environment for cues in order to utilize the correct words when referring to themselves (the “I” or first person pronoun choice) and their interlocutors (second and

third pronoun choice). My point is simply that these are common ways of bringing people into familial type bonds, even if just temporarily.

Other family relations are more haunting. I am also here considering *jaogamnaiwaen* (เจ้ากรรมนายเวร), sometimes translated as “an enemy from a former life” – a type of karma that can take material form in a multitude of ways. People sometimes feel that their tumor or a pain in their body is a *jaogamnaiwaen*. Sometimes a person has to interact regularly with one. And sometimes one’s child is a *jaogamnaiwaen*, a karmic debt to work out in the family. Through this project, I consider how I personally resonate with the possibility that my own child could be a *jaogamnaiwaen* and how friends describe such relations – again, not as definitive or all-encompassing truths, but nevertheless present. So a woman I call Gina, for instance, can relate to her daughter at times as a *jaogamnaiwaen*, and can thus see her acts of motherly care as helping rid herself of karmic burdens. This view does not fix their relationship, it is not one way or another, but it does encourage her to keep her cool, to greet her child with equanimity and so forth.

“*Jaogamnaiwaen*” are certainly not synonymous with family here. But that category of being is a way to start grappling with that which is karmic about kinship in this context. Cause and effect entangle people across lifetimes. As a Thai friend recently surmised: “once family, always family.” And not. Called-family-but-not family also fits circulating logics. Could-be-family rings true as well. And not. And yet, also.

While I have not done so in this short newsletter column, in my work for the family potential group, I have tried to be very personal and introduce my own experiences along with those of my interlocutors, as I shy away from old anthropological forms and take my cue from feminist scholars who resist the “god’s eye view” of social science and insist on situated knowledges. I am trying to think with and from places where a daughter is simultaneously a great aunt and a *jaogamnaiwaen*. I am trying to think with and from places where a dream of your mother would necessitate a trip to a Buddhist temple to make merit on her behalf. Where an encounter with a spirit would oblige one similarly. Where a beloved professor is called mother. Where a shopkeeper is uncle. These are situated acts of care and of family making; they are also ways of knowing the world. But to make strong claims about such

relations and the intersecting worlds they engage would be to miss the point, would flatten more than accurately describe.

Can *jaogamnaiwaen* offer another kind of knowledge, about another kind of world(s), through another kind of relatedness? Thinking about relationships across time and across

material/immaterial divides may be useful for rethinking the potential of the family. Though these relationships are perhaps less stable than kinship studies might ordinarily allow, in Thai and other social worlds, they are just as common sense. Perhaps they can lead anthropology to think and care differently too.



Mom and kids in 1950,
from the family archives



The family nearly fifty
years later, from the
family archives

Family Change and Caring for Piety among Hui Muslims

NARA Masashi

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NARA Masashi, PhD, is Associate Professor at the National Museum of Ethnology. He specializes in cultural anthropology. He has carried out field work with the Hui people, a Muslim minority in China, especially focusing on Islamic revival in the post-Mao era. He recently also conducted fieldwork on the relationship between mobility and religiosity among Sinophone Muslims in Taiwan. His recent publications include *Diversification of Muslim communities in Taiwan* (in Japanese, the Center for Islamic Studies, Sophia University, 2021, editor), *Anthropology of Things and Media* (in Japanese, Nakanishiya Shuppan, 2021, co-edited with FUJINO Yohei and KONDO Shiaki).

In China, the government has vigorously enforced birth-control policies. The low birth rate resulting from these policies has brought about a transformation of the family structure. This also had a significant impact on the Hui people, a Chinese Muslim minority with whom I conducted fieldwork in Yunnan Province, China.

In the post-Mao era, a rapid revival of religion occurred among many groups owing to an abatement of religious policies of the Chinese government. The communities of the Hui people also experienced such a revival. The Hui are one of the ten ethnic Muslim minorities in China. Their culture and society have been shaped through historical intermarriages between foreign Muslims, such as the Arabs, Persians, and Turks who migrated to China mainly from the Tang dynasty until the Yuan dynasty, and with Chinese Han people who converted to Islam. As a result, their religious practices became Sinicized. This is illustrated by their practice of visiting the graves of their ancestors during the *Eid al-Fitr* (Festival of Breaking the Fast).

However, the Islamic revival that has occurred since the 1980s has brought about changes in Hui religious practices. Mosque reconstructions and Islamic activities accelerated with the Islamic revival. This led to an "Arabization" among Hui Muslims, who have become negative about Sinicized Islamic elements. Mosques in Hui Muslim communities were traditionally Chinese-style buildings but "Arab-style" mosques are now on the rise. Simultaneously, rigid Islamic discourse, such as the Salafi discourse, has become more influential among Hui Muslims. Consequently, the Islamic revival has tended to make Hui Muslims practice Islam more rigidly. Some of them often criticize the less pious Hui people as follows, "They are Hui people but not Muslim. They only avoid eating pork. They don't know anything about Islam."

However, the social basis of the religious life of Hui Muslims has been undermined by rapid social change since the 1980s. Hui Muslims have traditionally formed tight knit

communities around mosques where Islam is socially embedded. Traditional Hui Muslim communities were to some extent autonomous from the Han society. For example, the authority of the clergy was far reaching in the community, as seen in incidents such as the enforcement of a penal system based on Islamic law. However, the social structure of the Hui community was basically dismantled through a decline in the proportion of Hui people living together around mosques in rapidly developing urban areas, especially since economic reforms were enforced. Hui Muslims have become increasingly estranged from their mosque-centered lifestyle. According to the clergy, worshippers at mosques in urban areas are declining in number.

The family has also been a social foundation for Hui Muslims continuing their religious practices in China. For example, when a Hui family has more than one son, the patriarch tends to have at least one of them study Islam at the mosque. This family member, who studies Islam in the mosque, cares for other family members' religious practices. Moreover, it has traditionally been a common practice that when a Hui family member passes away, the bereaved family members offer charity in the name of the deceased and practice his virtue on his behalf. This practice is believed to be influenced by the ancestral worship of Han Chinese. Thus, piety was embedded in family relationships. However, these practices have become difficult to maintain in contemporary China. One reason for this is that with the Islamic revival, there has been an increased emphasis on practicing Islam strictly on one's own. Another reason is that the Chinese government's birth control policies have changed the Hui family. Although it varies from region to region, the urban Hui family is now basically a one-child family. This has made it difficult to have a member of the family study Islam professionally and support the piety of family members.

Thus, there are contrasting trends in the Hui Muslim communities in the post-Mao era. The social foundation of religious life for Hui Muslims has been undermined, even though religious

morality has strengthened with the Islamic revival. It has become more difficult for many Hui Muslims to be devout and routinely perform pious behavior.

In this situation, religious "sisterhood" and "brotherhood" have grown in importance among Hui Muslims. Hui are seeking new forms of religious care through the establishment of "family-like" relationships based on "sisterhood" and "brotherhood" among Muslims.

Hui Muslims, after becoming dispersed in urban areas, have organized loose groups for voluntary and recreational purposes since the 2000s. They address each other as brothers and sisters, and have

developed reciprocal relationships for religious care within these groups. Hui Muslims living in contemporary China face many problems for maintaining their piety. They are forbidden to wear hijabs or worship at work, and must attend banquets for business relationships with Han people. In this context, pious Muslims who practice Islam strictly tend to seek jobs with entrepreneurs in the aforementioned Hui Muslim groups, while Hui entrepreneurs expect religious care from the pious Muslims they hire.

Thus, as the family structure has changed, religious "sisterhood" and "brotherhood" have played a role to help maintain cohesion in Hui Muslim society through religious care.



A newly built "Arab style" mosque in Yunnan province (NARA Masashi, 2010)



Recreational activity of Hui people in Kunming (NARA Masashi, 2011)

Families and kinship in the turmoil of history

Roberto Beneduce

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One can say that social anthropology began with the study of law and the family and that, as long ago as the mid-1800s, the devastating consequences of colonialism had already been observed by pioneering anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan in his studies of the Indian peoples (the Iroquois and the Seneca in particular). Generations of anthropologists have continued, with infinite commitment, to meet the challenge of classifying the various kinds of kinship or marriage beyond the model of the European nuclear family. Like Morgan, other scholars have made decisive contributions, whatever the definition of 'family', to the analysis of those ideas that *meet* within it, namely: progeny, parenthood, exogamy, alliance, inheritance and motherhood.

My interest is not, however, in adding to these works and tracing yet another anthropology of the family, with its Oedipus, and so on. Rather, in drawing upon them I seek to analyse, to remember, not the "cultural differences" of family structure but the ongoing impact that historical events – as well as colonial and church institutions, the racial question and class status – have had on family ties and structure; something that only a 'dynamic' anthropology (Balandier 1955, *Sociologie actuelle de l'Afrique noire*) may be able to grasp in its complexity by bringing to light the often-invisible connections between political, symbolic and psychological dimensions.

Research carried out in the 1970s provides an extremely lively overview of these connections, for example by analysing the families of the American working class (Sennett & Cobb 1972, *The Hidden Injuries of Class*) and of subaltern groups in Southern Italy where the dominant logic was that of sacrifice, passionate temperaments that constantly blurred into violence, and the solitude of the mothers without any real institutional support (Belmonte 1977, *The Broken Fountain*).

The racial question offers an equally incisive prism for analysing the family. In the age of slavery, maternity and reproduction among black women became a place of violence and degradation, and the superb fiction of Toni Morrison illustrates how the spectre

of racism penetrates the mind (*The Bluest Eye*, 1970), as well as the twists and turns of private relations, even the love between a mother and daughter born with skin that was *too dark* (2015, *God Save the Child*). Referring to Afro-Americans families, other scholars stress the crisis and adversity of mothering while black. Referring to Afro-Americans, Sarah Clarke Kaplan (2015, *The Black Reproductive*) has taken up the theme of racism (past and present) and concludes that racial melancholia is to be thought of not as a pathological condition but rather as protest and a desire not to forget.

I would like to briefly refer to some of these connections with the aim of conceiving the family as a territory wherein all the social and political contradictions of time and place merge and are reflected. The colony, where an epistemology of [white] ignorance was welded onto the coercion of violence, has certainly been one of the most painful theatres of such merging and reflecting (Mills 1977, *The Racial Contract*; 2017, *Black Rights/White Wrongs*).

Marxist-inspired analyses of equatorial Africa underlined the importance of 'wealth in people' (children, wives, slaves etc.) and not just 'wealth in things' (goods) in defining power. They have, nevertheless, neglected an equally decisive tie: that between family structure and knowledge – that wealth can also be measured as 'wealth in knowledge'. The possession of knowledge and techniques directly influenced the construction of families and alliances, as well as the choice of wives – who were identified on the basis of technical expertise in fishing, harvesting or farming with the aim of increasing family capital. Wealth in people, sharing of knowledge and family relations thus went hand-in-hand, and interest in the control and acquisition of techniques and talents determined the perception and production of individual differences. In Fang societies (Gabon), for example, people were classified into 'knowledgeable people', 'people who know things', and 'simple and ignorant people' (Fernandez, quoted in Guyer

& Belinga 1995, *Wealth in Knowledge*). Similar designations can also be found in other areas.

Another idea of family, different from that which anthropology has accustomed us to, also emerges from the analysis of an epic Cameroonian Bulu text. This tale of a hero's feats depicts his violent conflicts with his father, the constraints on the possibility of contracting marriage, as well as the shadow of the sale of slaves to traders. What comes to the surface is a portrait of an age of uncertainty, economic precariousness, and suspicion, which is analysed starting from the concept of 'pawnsip' (Lovejoy & Falola 2003, *Pawnsip, Slavery, and Colonialism in Africa*). Geschiere has explored this more recently through the ghosts of witchcraft and the violence characterizing family relations in Africa and elsewhere (2013, *Witchcraft, Trust, and Intimacy*). Not only is the family a place where social tensions and conflicts re-emerge, changed in their expression, it is also a hub of heterogeneous temporality, and the two overlap with each other persistently and enigmatically.

In 1830 a veritable *bureaucratic assault* struck the Algerian family with the beginning of French colonization: it produced a psychological apocalypse, whose consequences are still recognizable today. The use of traditional patronymics was forbidden because it was incompatible with the French administrative system, and people had to suddenly abandon the names that till then had been used in their own families and their own clans. This infliction of symbolic and political aggression against the local tongue and system of identification made people strangers unto themselves. Deprived of his kin name, his rights conceded to the French colonists, and dispossessed of his past and future, the 'Muslim subject' would become an individual cut in half, a 'non-citizen'. Thus, to the crisis of traditional hierarchies was added a painful fracture from both parent and progeny (Weil 2005, *Le statut des musulmans en Algérie coloniale*). The reputation of the *harki* – those who collaborated with the French army in repressing the struggle for independence – remains a still-open wound (Crapanzano 2011, *The Harkis: the Wound that Never Heals*). Moreover, as Kortenaar recalls, in the 'African colony', unlike in Europe, 'fathers have a power that must be overthrown but not a power that can be inherited' (2007, *Oedipus, Ogbanje, and the Sons of Independence*). To whom does the memory of a humiliated past and an

excluded knowledge belong? More generally, colonization, and the civil wars that often mark its end, are at the origin of a complex transformation that sees the familiar morph into the 'unheimlich' (Freud 1919 [2003], *The Uncanny*). Authors such as Begoña Aretxaga (2005, *States of Terror*) and Karima Lazali (2021, *Colonial Trauma*) use Freud's concept to interpret the metamorphosis of friends, neighbours and family members into strangers in such contexts.

Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2015, *Incarcerated Childhood and the Politics of Unchilding*) and Samah Jabr (2021, *Sumud*) recall another *metamorphosis*: that which the Israeli penal system works upon children and adolescents ('unchilding'), defining them as dangerous terrorists and subjecting them to punishment and torture of every kind. Another clear expression of unchilding is that of 'child soldiers' in Africa: this has seen children become actors of death, threat and terror in a complex reversal of traditional roles and customary hierarchies.

Under the coercive violence of the colony, the introduction of colonial norms and of new educational systems (the 'schools of the whites', C. Hamidou Kane 1961, *L'Aventure ambiguë*) set off an inexorable crisis of family and social relations that authors such as Hamidou Kane in Senegal, or Fanon in Martinique (1952, *Peau noire, masques blancs*), would describe in all its implications.

Another mutation, no less profound, was created by Christian evangelization. In Cameroon, centres called *Sixa* constituted an unmistakable social experiment: young women were invited to move there to learn the art of ménage following the model of the European family. The subjectivation created in the missions even worried the colonial administrators, who feared they would lose the relative collaboration obtained from the local peoples. In practice, the centres also welcomed married women who had abandoned their families before getting divorced. As if that were not enough, the missionaries responsible for the *sixa* refused to let them leave when their husbands demanded their return. It was in this climate that the assassination of a priest, Padre de Maupeou, took place, which put an end to the experiment. Joseph Tonda (2021, *Modern Sovereign*) has called this state of confusion and crisis in family relations, which struck first of all at the role of parents in bringing up their children, 'unparenting'.

The 'family' is, then, a *hinge area*, or rather a space of transition that reflects and *transforms* (and often conceals) economic, social or political conflicts in private violence or in a crisis of intergenerational relations (Sayad refers to this when he analyses the Algerian immigrant family in France: 1999 *La double absence*); Sabr notes its spasms in the contemporary Palestinian family, and Eng and Han (2019 *Racial Melancholia*, *Racial*

Dissociation) recall a particular expression of it while exploring 'racial melancholia' in the Asian immigrant population in the USA).

What I have recalled here is no more than an outline of an enormous archive that provides the material for a research agenda that is certainly ambitious, that imagines the analysis of family worlds in structural connection with the events of history: *the psychic life of history*, if you prefer.



An enslaved family picking cotton in the fields near Savannah, circa 1860s. Creator: Havens, O. Pierre, 1838-1912. Data of Original: 1850/1859. Holding Institution: New York Historical Society (NYHS) (courtesy of NYHS)

Column

Searching for a new bridge between environment and the human mind

Tetsuo Nishio

National Museum of Ethnology

Tetsuo Nishio is professor at the National Museum of Ethnology and the Graduate University of Advanced Studies. He is a linguistic anthropologist of the Arab world who has been carrying out ethnographic field research among Bedouin people. He is also interested in narratology, with

In troubled times, fantasies become popular. They did so during the French Revolution and after the Great Kanto Earthquake of Japan in 1911. This probably also applies to the present day and the widely popular *Kimetsu no Yaiba* (Demon Slayer) anime series. A French translation by Antoine Galland of *the Arabian Nights* was published in 1704-1717, but it is believed that the original text, which did not include the famous tale of Aladdin, was based

on narration by a Maronite Christian in Syria. In Japan, Mt. Fuji went into violent eruption in 1707, releasing ash into the atmosphere. In the following year, a famine and social anxiety appeared in Syria, and the Maronites, who represented French interests, sought protection from King Louis XIV, dispatching the above-mentioned Maronite to Paris. In France, a wave of extreme cold weather claimed many deaths. We don't know exactly how

Galland met the Maronite, perhaps by chance, and how the tale of Aladdin as a fantasy was written – prompting the birth of children's literature, which soon helped form modern ethical views. Nevertheless, we can suggest that a succession of interrelated events linked macroscopic environmental changes to microscopic states of the human mind or mentality.

In my studies, I have been interested in clarifying how humans recognize the natural environment; how, in the interaction between the two, relationships between individuals and between individuals and their community were formed; and through what mechanisms these relationships continued from generation to generation and underwent changes. I faced the question of the inner life of human beings on the assumption that the environment (including nature, society, and mass media) represents a variable involved in the universal cognitive and physical abilities of human beings. While looking at the methodologies of area studies, I came to see relationships between the microscopic inner life of human beings and macroscopic regionality in global society. Then I finally came to address the question of why social underdevelopment exists. To answer this, we need a fundamental and comprehensive understanding of the circle of interactions between human beings and nature – the links between environment and mentality in global society.

My studies began with the “Cultural Value of Water in the Bedouin Society”, an international academic research project on the Bedouin living in a desert environment. I then moved to linguistic anthropological studies of relationships between individuals and their communities, which often arise through interactions with natural environment. And then to studies of sound culture as an environment and studies of narratives coming into being – with environment (nature, society, and mass media) as a variable. These studies led to interdisciplinary area studies of relationships between the civilized environment and historical mentality. Now I am exploring prelinguistic, narrative environmental recognition mechanisms that existed before verbal communication became actual in the history of mankind. I approach this from the viewpoint of cognitive science by tracing the human as a living creature in the natural environment back to the site where the activity known as literature came into being.



Illustration from *Fairy Tales from the Arabian Nights*. E. Dixon [ed.] J. D. Batten [ill.] New York : G.P. Putnam's Sons. c.1915 (Wikimedia Commons 25th October 2022).

The network-based project “Modern Middle East Studies”, supported by the National Institutes for the Humanities (NIHU), employed an ambitious methodology that connected natural resources and cultural resources. The project was favorably evaluated in international academic circles. The area studies project “Global Mediterranean” (hosted by Minpaku) constitutes part of an ongoing “Global Area Studies” program and aims at elucidating regional characteristics as they relate to the environment and mentality by furthering and reconstructing studies started by Fernand Braudel.

At Minpaku, I led development of new West Asia exhibits as part of Minpaku's project to implement the “Info-Forum Museum” [see issue 54 this Newsletter – ed.]. The forum-based approach involves collaboration between three parties, namely the community of researchers, local societies targeted for research, and the general public as a receiver of research results. I have thought about possibilities and problematic points for this approach. More broadly, a role to be played by the study of humanities in the future is to depict a vision of the future from an integrated point of view. How are we going to build a forum of academia and society as a space to think together about globalization, global society and environmental change? How can or should we as individuals be involved in co-creating a global society?

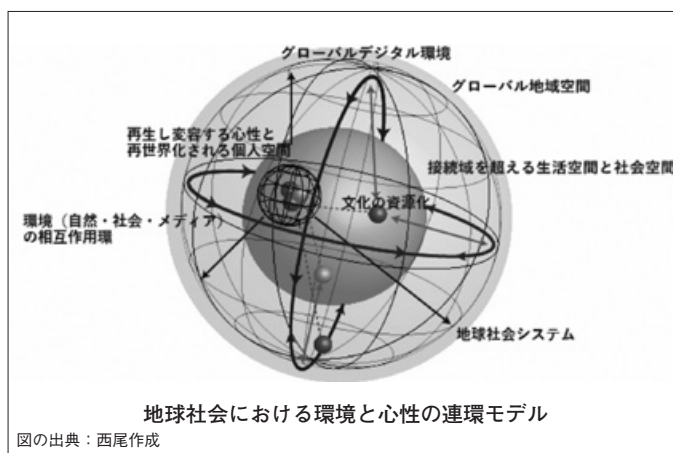
In a paper entitled “Toward Total Understanding of Human Beings, Society, and Nature,” [see T. Nishio

special focus on the Arabian Nights. He has recently published the Japanese complete translation of Antoine Galland's *Les Mille et une nuits*. His works also include *The Arabian Nights and Orientalism: Perspectives from East and West*, 2006, London: I.B.Tauris, and *Catalogue du Fonds Joseph-Charles Mardrus, traducteur des Mille Nuits et une Nuit*, 2022, Paris: Édition Abencerage.

& Y. Tonaga, *The 30 Doors to the Middle East and Islamic World*. 2021, Kyoto (in Japanese)] I stated, "In 2020 we experienced phenomena that fundamentally shook the connection between individuals and their community in the global society. The practices of individuals transcended local communities and national systems and had direct impacts on global society, causing global society and individuals to confront each other". I emphasized the need for global area studies to grasp the real facts of global society in terms of how they were felt intuitively by people.

transcends the *global-area-conscious space* that exists along the edge of the social space. All these relations must be recognized to map the present global society.

We can recognize the relationships between social and economic systems, and between natural and ecological systems, as a system of problems related to relationships between the environment and the universal cognitive system of human beings. From the perspective of human history, regionality is being taken over through the sharing of mind or mentality. The system of the global society involves the



Model of linkage between the environment and mentality in global society. This represents the global digital environment, regional space, and social space - all internalised by individual mentality, which in turn rebounds to the global... a circle of interactions of nature, society and mass media (our environment) with each other and the individual. Culture itself may become externalised as a "resource", while living and social spaces transcend the areas connected. (Prepared by Tetsuo Nishio)

Practical studies to solve today's problems of the global environment are complicatedly interrelated in temporal, spatial, and cross-sectional terms. We need to build a model of linkage between environment and mentality that replaces the previous Cartesian analytical model that positions society, regions, and the world around or external to individuals. The new model should elucidate culture, civilization, and the world as a system of relations and values that encompasses individuals.

In order to obtain a clear understanding of the linkage between the environment and mentality, it is also necessary to investigate the circle of interactions brought about by the global digital environment to which individuals are now exposed in an unprecedentedly innocent way. The digital environment transcends geography and the natural, social environment, and former mass media environments. It transcends the space created by human beings as individuals in their interactions with nature, in the living space in which natural resources and cultural resources are connected and involved, in the social space along the edge of the living space in which regional characteristics and civilizational values are involved. It also

circulation, regeneration and bridging of multi-layered (physical and cognitive) spaces. Viewing the world this way enables us to analyze environmental problems from a perspective not found in conventional ways of thinking about culture, civilization, and world systems. Collaborating with information science, cognitive science, and philosophy may help us to answer the question "How should people live?" in the Anthropocene. These new approaches to anthropology and environmental studies also have the development of AI and robotics in mind.

Michiko Ishimure, who squarely faced the most serious environmental problem in modern Japan, namely Minamata disease, reconfirmed that the greatest weapon that can be used by individuals to change society in our complicated modern times is literature. While literature maximizes individuality, science minimizes it, and while the former makes language subjective or emotional to the extreme, the latter makes it objective or reasonable to the extreme. She insisted that individuals must start by gazing into their soul and involve even the entire global society. If the environment is internalized in human beings themselves, collaboration between environmental science and

humanities must indeed be – or become – complementary. Creating scientific knowledge based on a global study of humanities is now our goal. Can the Western understanding of humanities

that underlies modern science be re-invented as a major story of sympathy and cocreation between human beings and nature? This is what we strive for as a dreamlike “global humanities”.

Exhibition

100 Years of Mongolia: Encounters through Photography

Special Exhibition
March 17–May 31, 2022

The special exhibition *100 Years of Mongolia: Encounters through Photography* was held to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Mongolia. As the name suggests, this special exhibition compared photographs from Mongolia 100 years ago and the present day.

Since more than 100 years ago, Mongolia has been photographed by foreign explorers, ethnographers and other visitors curious about the practice of nomadic pastoralism and fascinated by the unique city of its capital, Urga (today's Ulaanbaatar). At the beginning of the 20th century, the city developed around Buddhist monasteries and the monks, most of them very poor, proliferated alongside Chinese merchants.

Today, the city concentrates almost half the population of Mongolia, while mining capital flows in and boosts the tertiary economy. Images taken by foreign explorers including Russian scholars form an exceptional record of the religious and cosmopolitan life that animated the streets of Ugra before the country's independence and its integration into the Socialist

regime. These images were used at different points in the exhibition to show transformations of the country and to resituate what remains of the historical capital today in the form of traces scattered throughout the city.

Social and cultural change in 100 years was not limited to the city but extended to the steppe areas. Although Mongolia is best known as the country of steppe and nomads, only 9% of the total population is nomadic pastoralist today. Whether in urban or steppe areas, the living world was greatly transformed through socialist modernization in the 20th century and the recent transition to a market economy.

Curating the exhibition was very challenging because we took new approaches. The biggest challenge was to create a photo-exhibition in an ethnology museum. Although this was not anything new, it was the first time for Minpaku because we usually do not display many photographs – we usually display actual objects collected from areas of interest. In our planning, there was some discussion and concern about whether

it would be really alright to hold the exhibition with just photographs. Although Tadao Umesao, first general director of Minpaku, foresaw that the museum of the future would become a *hakujoukan*, or “information museum”, we had never previously held a special exhibition based on photographs.

The second major challenge was to focus on the city life of Mongolia because Mongolia's urban life is hardly known in Japan. We displayed photographs and some other items from Ulaanbaatar today and 100 years ago on the first floor of the hall, the main space of our exhibition. In Japan, Mongolia is often associated with “nomads”, “steppes” and “Mongolian Sumo”. Today, however, nomadic pastoralists account for only 9% of the Mongolian population, while about half (1.6 million) is concentrated in the capital, Ulaanbaatar. That is why we teamed up with B. Injinaash, a talented Mongolian documentary photographer, to exhibit the reality of the globalizing capital of this country.

People in Japan are neither familiar with contemporary

First floor of the exhibition, with a pair of panoramas: Urga, or Ulaanbaatar of 100 years ago (left side) and Ulaanbaatar today (right side)



urban life in Mongolia, nor with the urban life 100 years ago. At the beginning of the 20th century, Ulaanbaatar was the religious city of Urga, ruled by a high-ranked Buddhist, reincarnated lama Jebtsundamba khutgtu VIII. He was not only the spiritual leader of Mongolia but also the country's monarch: Bogd Khan, or Holy Emperor. In short, the exhibition focused more on the urban world of Mongolia than on the nomads of the steppes. Even though the Mongolian steppes are beautiful and the nomadic life is fascinating, I thought it would be academically and socially significant to convey information about the urban world of Mongolia.

The third challenge was to relativize the foreign explorers' gaze. To contrast photographs taken by Western explorers and local Mongolian photographers, we tried to show the differences between Western gaze and local gaze: the gaze of Western and other explorers 100 years ago on Mongolia as a 'frontier' and the gaze of contemporary Mongolians on their own society. This special exhibition offered an encounter of foreign and local photography across 100 years of time and space. Very new insights into Mongolia were gained by reflecting the sensibilities of a modern Mongolian photographer alongside the photographs taken by explorers from other countries 100 years ago.

Ippei Shimamura
National Museum of Ethnology

Cormorant Fishing in Contemporary China: Techniques of Fishers

*Collection Exhibition,
June 30 – August 2, 2022*

Cormorant fishing, in which cormorants are used to capture fish in rivers and lakes, has been practiced in England, Japan, China and elsewhere. In England, cormorant fishing, like falconry, was typically regarded as an aristocratic practice in the 16th and 18th centuries. In Japan,



A fisher returns a cormorant to his boat after fishing in Poyang lake, Jiangxi province (Shuhe Uda, 2008)



Fishers carrying cormorants on their boats to the fishing grounds in Weishan lake, Shandong province (Shuhe Uda, 2006)

cormorant fishing (*ukaï*) has a history of about 1,500 years, and was still carried out as a subsistence activity in more than 100 locations around the country before World War II. Today, cormorant fishing for sightseeing is practiced in ten locations across Japan. Japanese fishers have tamed wild cormorants and used them in fishing.

Cormorant fishing in China has a history of about 2,000 years and continues today as a subsistence activity. Chinese fishers breed cormorants in their homes every spring and raise baby cormorants for use in fishing. In the world, artificial breeding of cormorants is practiced only in China. Techniques of cormorant fishing also vary greatly depending on the region in China, a country that is more than 25 times the size of Japan.

The Collection Exhibition, *Cormorant Fishing in Contemporary China*, featured photographs and videos of cormorant fishing taken by the present author across China, as well as cormorant fishing boats collected by Minpaku. Through this exhibition, I intended to help visitors understand the techniques and

knowledge of cormorant fishing and the relationship between cormorants and humans in China.

The exhibition was divided into four sections. The theme of the first section was the diversity of fishing techniques in different regions of China. This section showed regional differences in fishing tools, fishing boats, and fishing methods on a map of China and in photos of cormorant fishing. The second section displayed an actual portable catamaran used for cormorant fishing. Fishers in Hubei province carry their catamarans and cormorants on bicycles or motorcycles when going out and returning home. This section featured photos and videos showing various aspects of cormorant fishing using catamaran boats, which is unique in China.

The theme of the third section was cormorant breeding techniques used by fishers. In China, all cormorant fishers use bred cormorants in fishing. They have completely domesticated cormorants and do not capture wild cormorants. This section showed the artificial breeding of cormorants, which is practiced only in China, through photos

and videos about mating, incubation, hatching, and rearing techniques. The fourth section featured techniques for fishing with cormorants. This section used photos and videos to show a series of fishing activities, from launching, fishing, resting, sorting the catch, selling, and distributing the catch income. In this section, visitors can understand the daily activities of cormorant fishers in Poyang lake in Jiangxi province.

In addition, books I wrote about cormorant fishing in China were displayed in the exhibition area. Books include: *Cormorants and Humans: An Ornithological Folklore Study of Cormorant Fishing in Japan, China and North Macedonia*, University of Tokyo Press (2021, in Japanese) and *Cormorant Fishing and Contemporary China: Ethnography of Humans, Animals, and Nations* in University of Tokyo Press

(2014, in Japanese)

Most of the photos and videos used in this exhibition were shown for the first time in Japan. Through this exhibit, I believe that Japanese visitors gained a better understanding not only of the techniques of cormorant fishing, but also of the diversity in natural environments and freshwater fish food-culture in China.

Shuhe Uda
National Museum of Ethnology

Conference

In Brief

The following mainly-online conferences were hosted by Minpaku this year.

Theoretical Issues in Sign Language Research 14 (TISLR14)

September 26 – October 1, 2022. Online and onsite sessions were held in parallel. See: www.tislr2022.jp/

The Seventh Online Meeting of the Special Research Project, Performing Arts and Conviviality

May 22, 2022. Online. Minpaku Special Research Project 'Performing arts and conviviality'. See: www.minpaku.ac.jp/en/post-project/6915

Re-evaluating Umesao's Theory of the Eco-Historical Perspective for Civilizations: Toward a New Epistemology for Mapping the Globalizing World

25th, April, 2022, Online. Minpaku Special Research Project "Global Area Studies: Toward a New Epistemology for Mapping the Globalizing World". See: www.minpaku.ac.jp/en/post-project/12027

Information

Award

Norio Yamamoto

Professor Emeritus
National Museum of Ethnology

Received the Daido Life Foundation Award for Area Studies (July 26, 2022) for highly original research and dissemination based on botanical and ethnobotanical fieldwork in the Andean highlands of South America for over 50 years, since 1968. In addition to his own eco-historical work, he has promoted regional studies by organizing research teams that integrate the natural sciences and humanities. His many publications include *The World of the Tropical Highlands: Toward the Discovery of "Highland Civilizations"* (Yamamoto ed., 2019, Nakanishiya Shuppan), and his monograph *Highland Civilizations: Discovering Another "Four Great Civilizations"* (2021, Chukoh Shinsho).

Shuhe Uda

Associate Professor,
Department of Modern Society and Civilization
National Museum of Ethnology

Received the Daido Life Foundation Incentive Award for Area Studies (July 26, 2022) to recognize outstanding

research and dissemination on the construction and development of an original theory of human-animal relations in East Asia. Uda's research on cormorant culture has embraced the totality of tangible and intangible cultural elements, including fishing techniques and knowledge, the ecology and behavior of cormorants, freshwater fish habitats, distribution systems, fish-eating culture, social systems, representations, and ideas. His publications include: *Cormorant Fishing and Contemporary China: Ethnography of Humans, Animals, and Nations* (2014, University of Tokyo Press), and *Invasive Species and Ethnography of Freshwater Fishing: "The Logic of Subsistence" of Lake Biwa fishers* (2022, Showado). See also his exhibition report in the present Newsletter issue.

Retirements

After many years at Minpaku, the following staff members will retire in March 2023.

Tetsuo Nishio

Professor, Linguistics, Arab Culture.

Akiko Mori

Professor, Cultural Anthropology, Ethnography.

Nanami Suzuki

Professor, Cultural Anthropology, Culture of Medicine.

In memoriam

With regret we note the following:

Toh Sugimura

Professor Emeritus.

A specialist in Islamic art, he conducted the Special Exhibition "Woven Flowers of the Silk Roads" held in 1994. Minpaku 1976–1997 (d. July 10, 2022).

Shuzo Koyama

Professor Emeritus.

A specialist in the Jomon archaeology of Japan, and the Aboriginal cultures of Australia. Director-General of Suita City Museum 2004–2012. Minpaku 1976–2002 (d. Oct. 26, 2022).

Overseas Visiting Fellow**Pei-Lin Yu**

Research Fellow, Center for Cultural Resource Studies



Pei-Lin Yu is an ethnoarchaeologist, Affiliate Professor at Boise State University, Archaeologist for the U.S.

Corps of Engineers, and Fulbright Scholar. She specializes in hunter-gatherer/

horticulturalists, indigenous archaeology and repatriation, and climate-change effects on cultural resources.

Research areas include Venezuela, Taiwan, and the Pacific Northwest, U.S. Publications include "At the Pacific Edge and Field's Margin: Edible weeds, the Ideal Free Distribution, and Niche Construction in Neolithic Taiwan," in *Archaeology on the Threshold: Studies in the Processes of Change* (J. Wardle, et al., eds, University Press of Florida, 2022); "Tempo and Mode of Neolithic Crop Adoption by Paleolithic Hunter-gatherers of Taiwan: Ethnoarchaeological and Behavioral Ecology Perspectives," in *Hunter-Gatherers in Asia: From Prehistory to the Present* (K. Ikeya and Y. Nishiaki eds, Senri Ethnological Studies, 2021). Her project at Minpaku is "East Asian and Austronesian Island Gardens in Evolutionary Perspective: Malthusian and Boserupian Models."

Publications

Online at: www.minpaku.ac.jp/en/research/publication

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Forthcoming Exhibition

National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka

Special Exhibition

Arte Popular: The Creative and Critical Power of Latin Americans

March 9–May 30, 2023



Photographs: Muda Tomohiro, Muda Haruhiko

Wood sculpture of Goat Nahual H0268518

Mola embroidery H0186497

Issue 1: R. Ono, "Material Cultural Studies on Boats and Fishing Tools Based on the Museum Collections and Fieldwork".

Senri Ethnological Studies

111: Y. Yagi (ed.) *Ethnografía Andina: Recorrido y Valoración Cultural*. 261 pp. (Spanish).

Senri Ethnological Reports

155: N. Sonoda (ed.) *Sustainable Collection Management*. 354 pp. (Japanese).

156: N. Kishigami (ed.) *Research Trends on Indigenous Cultures along the North Pacific Rim Regions*. 486 pp. (Japanese).

MINPAKU Anthropology Newsletter

The Newsletter is published in summer and winter. "Minpaku" is an abbreviation of the Japanese name for the National Museum of Ethnology (*Kokuritsu Minzokugaku Hakubutsukan*). The Newsletter promotes a continuing exchange of information with former visiting scholars and others who have been associated with the museum. The Newsletter also provides a forum for communication with a wider academic audience.

Available online at: www.minpaku.ac.jp/en/research/publication/research-publications/newsletter

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