ON THE FEEL OF *SHIMA*

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ABSTRACT:

This article explores how the author initially participated in small island cultural studies and then expanded his interest into the study of aquapelagos and aquapelagic assemblages. Although his ideas were nurtured while studying the performative cultures of Oceania during his early academic development in cultural anthropology, his more recent trajectory has been inspired by the Japanese archipelago, the place of his origin and where he currently lives. This is manifest in his early contribution remodelling small island cultural studies by introducing the Japanese concept of *shima* (which includes territory and human activity in island-like environments) and, thereby, expanding Island Studies through considering broader perspectives. These points are discussed with reference to the works of Epeli Hau'ofa and Yanagita Kunio. The following sections detail trajectories beyond the aquapelago, illustrating that the author's attention is no longer limited by geographical concepts of islands or waters. The article includes data from recent field research in Espiritu Santo (in Vanuatu) and argues that the key is to recognise water as an assemblage. Each section discusses individual topics within that, namely 'Bodily fluid and populated water', 'Flowing commons' and 'Aquapelagic installations.'

KEYWORDS: Aquapelago, Japanese archipelago, Melanesia, Vanuatu, *shima*

Introduction

I was born and raised in Zushi, a seaside town in Kanagawa prefecture with a small beach where I played and beachcombed. On weekends my parents often took me to Enoshima, the land-tied, tiny island with temples, shrines, a yacht harbour and a botanical garden, on the coast of Fujisawa. Although my childhood memories did not directly shape my interest in discussions developed later in *Shima*, their archetypal images occasionally resonate with me and help articulate certain arguments. In addition, my assumption of the role of a native anthropologist, using Japanese examples, is a deliberate strategy towards the journal. This is primarily because I have been somewhat hesitant to discuss examples from my Melanesian field data and to appear to represent native perspectives.

After reading *Sound and Sentiment* (1990), Steven Feld's ground-breaking ethnography of sound culture among New Guinea Highlanders and attending a sociolinguistics lecture on Tok Pisin (Papua New Guinean pidgin), I vaguely formed the idea that someday I would visit Melanesia and see its people with my own eyes. Since Feld developed his musicological study strongly with epistemological overtones – what he termed "acoustemology" – and given my own experience in music, I began to develop aesthetic communication as my core interest. Due to family matters, I returned to Japan after completing my Master's program in ethnomusicology in Canada and entered a doctoral program to re-do cultural anthropology

once again in Japan. I then went to Papua New Guinea (PNG) to conduct field research on contemporary music culture (Suwa, 1999). Around that time, I encountered Philip Hayward through his monograph on an Australian and PNG musical collaboration that included discussion of the contemporary musical scene in PNG (Hayward, 1998). Having been an ethnographer, my focus was upon people and culture, but Hayward's invitation to me to participate in SICRI (the Small Island Cultures Research Initiative) gradually opened a new academic interest.

At the first SICRI conference in Kagoshima in February 2005, organised by Daniel Long, Philip Hayward and staff Kagoshima University's Centre for the South Pacific, I presented a short paper about Yabob Island, just south of Madang city, where I had lived in PNG,. Although my impression of my own presentation is no longer very clear, the conference left me with the sense that living on an island itself can carry meaning. The Yabob people belong to coastal groups identified as Austronesian-speaking communities. As descendants of sea-faring Lapita people, their stringband songs often evoke the image of a sailing canoe accompanied by the sorrow of a dead spirit (Suwa, 2001). Still, I was not entirely sure how to proceed from there. The Melanesians certainly have an island identity, but seemingly only in a conventional manner, and it can be as vague as the Japanese one. Moreover, speaking about their islandness on their behalf seemed akin to Orientalism. They had given me oral consent to write about their music and life, but nothing beyond that. Such unresolved feelings warned me that I was heading into a quagmire. By then, I was no longer reluctant to write an academic article about Japan, but I remained wary of taking the role of a tour guide merely collecting trivia.

The conference reminded me, once again, that even after the era of postcolonial social change, people remain deeply attached to the surrounding waters – an attachment that resonates strongly with what Hau'ofa described as "our sea of islands" (Hau'ofa, 1994). Hayward kindly invited me to present another paper at the 2nd Conference on Island Cultures in Transition in the Asia-Pacific Region, held in Hong Kong in November 2006. I revised that paper for publication in the inaugural issue of *Shima* (Suwa, 2007). In this article, I eschewed the field data from Yabob and focused instead on discussing the Japanese folk term *shima*.[1] This became a critical turning point for me because I decided not to participate in any broad regional studies. Writing about Japan allowed me to engage freely with the conference's theme.

My proposition regarding *shima* was a rephrasing of Hau'ofa's original concept, and within the *Shima* project I no longer felt confined to Oceanic studies or the anthropology of music and performance. Instead, I defined my role as a native anthropologist who introduces cases and issues through Japanese sources. This made sense because I felt that many materials were accessible and holism had always been my strength as an anthropologist. So much for my earlier displacement as an Asian anthropologist writing about Asian cultures during my youthful days. To fulfill this self-imposed role, I no longer insisted on ethnographic data or citations whenever I felt they were not necessary. The best example is the *ningyo* article I wrote during the COVID outbreak (Suwa, 2018). It is interesting that this new orientation has taken shape only within Anglophone scholarship, whether inside or outside Japan, at least at the time of this writing. The following sections will cover a variety of topics and places from Japanese archipelago and ideas from Melanesian islands, particularly Vanuatu. The trajectories – some of which are additional notes to previous papers, while others

[1] I later learned that the journal's title was directly inspired by my presentation - hence my article being selected to open the first issue.

explore rather new interests – are loosely grouped into sections but do not necessarily discuss any specific islands.

Recapitulating *shima*

As I have stated above, my engagement with the aquapelago is largely inspired by the Japanese archipelago. While I do not wish to essentialise its components as categorically 'islands,' I found the ways in which people on these islands conceptualise and grasp the idea of an island to be particularly interesting. For this reason, islands initially became a geo-linguistic space for me when I began writing.

I offered a definition of the word *shima* in the inaugural volume of the journal:

> *In the lexicon of Ryukyuan/Japanese languages the word shima – usually translated into English as "island" – has a dual meaning: island as a geographical feature and island as a small but densely cultured territory … The idea of shima, in this regard, becomes a key for exploring the idea of island as embedded in cultural formations. Islands are, in this sense, "cultural landscapes" where imagination takes forms of reality.* (Suwa, 2007, p. 6)

Let me add that there has been an argument that *shima* as 'territory' was the original meaning, and shima as 'island' came later. Ethnologist and the founder of Japanese folklore studies, Yanagita Kunio, points out that inland pieces of land, such as a hill, can be called *shima*. Drawing on a case from Okinawa, he continues:

> *In the Nansei Islands,* shima *did not mean islands… For islands there has been the word* hanare (*detached or remote), and more recently a new lexicon ritō (remote island) is also used …* Shima *meant a village where people lived together in compounded houses. Since such villages could be located on a remote island, it was sufficient to use the* kanji tō (*island)… Even in the case of relatively large islands, where villages are connected with each other, they conduct rituals called* shimami *(farewelling* shima) *or* shimawakare *(*shima-*departure) when someone dies and departs to* anoyo *(the world of the dead). The* shima *in this case is always* washima *(my* shima*), or the* shima *where the deceased lived with family and neighbours. After a long period of confusion, the distinction between the two meanings is no longer questioned today.* (Yanagita, 1989, pp. 527–528 – author's translation)

Of course, Yanagita's argument remains hypothetical, as there is no clear evidence indicating that *shima* as 'island' precedes shima as 'settlement.' Etymologically, the word *shima* has no identifiable origin, and it may simply refer to any enclosed or insular two-dimensional space. Still, *shima* can denote conditions, shapes or spaces not confined to geographical morphology, and – as in the case of *washima* – it can articulate the core of territoriality.

One limitation of using the Japanese lexicon to conceptualise islands is that the language does not grammatically distinguish singular from plural. If one wishes to emphasise plurality, as in the case of an aquapelago, terms such as *shimajima* or *guntō* are available; however, these forms are not grammatically required. Suppose several islands are visible through binoculars: saying *shimajima* or *guntō* would sound awkward because of their

lyrical or literary connotations. If there is a need to stress plurality, one would say *Ikutsuka shima ga mieru* ('I can see some islands'). The effect of this grammatical characteristic is that, until the topic of a sentence is clearly indicated, the number of islands remains ambiguous. This poses difficulties for translators of classical Japanese poetry when, for instance, either a single snipe or multiple snipes taking flight determines the entire nuance of a metaphor (Saigyō, 1991). Similarly, in discussions of aquapelagos or aquapelagic assemblages, the distinction between singular and plural becomes blurred, since the waters surrounding islands extend territorial dimensions beyond the horizon. At that point, whether an island is singular or plural loses importance; the core issue becomes how islands are connected, not how they are isolated. This does not mean, however, that the distinction between single and plural islands is irrelevant to aquapelago studies, nor that island thought should be constructed through the linguistic characteristics of Japanese, as in theories of linguistic relativity (the Sapir–Whorf hypothesis). As has been alluded to throughout this journal, examples from Japan or the Japanese language are offered as allegories of islands. *Shima* is not an island but an allegory of one, in that a culturally specific entity can illuminate other contexts. If there is any successful element in the discussion of *shima*, it is that it has been able to portray the aquapelago. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis can be overcome as we get accustomed to a culturally specific epistemology or system of symbols. Therefore, it is possible to adopt ideas from Japanese or other lexicons.

The final remaining question regarding *shima* is that it is the only term that overlaps a geographical feature with human interaction. Other words for mountain, hill, river, lake, bay, sea, flatland, and so forth never connote, nor derive from, sociocultural entities. In addition, the article on *ningyo no mira* in the mermaid issue of *Shima* (12[2], 2018) was intended to depart from a lingocentric view of the aquapelago, since these creatures were material entities –mummified, enshrined in temples, and mythologised within the context of waterway civil engineering (Suwa, 2018).

The 'Wunderkammering' of islands

When I initially joined the *Shima* project, there was one concern I felt strongly and wished to avoid. In a sarcastic and audacious critique of ethnographic practice, James Clifford declared that "'cultures' are ethnographic collections" (1988, p. 230). In brief, he argued that anthropologists – together with museum connoisseurship and Orientalism – had essentialised cultures to the point of creating fetishes. It seemed to me that *Shima* could fall into a similar predicament by essentialising 'islands.' Geography itself can become an essentialising apparatus when it defines an island simply as any piece of land smaller than Australia. Once that definition is accepted, the collecting of islands begins. Clifford warns: "Anthropological culture collectors have typically gathered what seems 'traditional' – what by definition is opposed to modernity" (1988, p. 231). Today's anthropology, after nearly three decades of critique, is no longer so naïve. Yet I felt that the same problem could arise if *Shima's* editorial direction did not remain vigilant against turning islands into collectable fetishes.

If we were to become innocent bystanders to mere empiricism, journalistic articulation, or cataloguing impulses, we would risk becoming what Lévi-Strauss ironised as "butterfly collectors" (1962). His criticism was directed at banal categorisation in kinship, totemism, and mythology – activities that are meaningless without classification: description for its own sake. I would call this tendency 'Wunderkammering,' after the chambers of wonder that became fashionable among European aristocrats during the colonial era. Just as the

Wunderkammer was designed to impress visitors (indeed, the sense of wonder was directed toward those invited to view the collection) Wunderkammering carries a nuance of arrogance and hubris, regardless of intention. Its most serious consequence is the re-colonisation of the subject. The only ways to avoid this have been articulated by various authors: through bricolage (Lévi-Strauss), thick description (Geertz), constellation and passage (Benjamin), polyphony (Bakhtin), chiasm (Merleau-Ponty) and others. In this regard, the idea of the aquapelago and aquapelagic assemblage (Hayward and Joseph, 2026), along with Hayward's undaunted efforts to expand aquapelagility beyond banal and naïve classifications of 'island,' provided a crucial safeguard.

The heart of structural analysis is not to induce or deduce formulae that essentialise subjects as if a mathematical treatise, but to recognise such constructions as arbitrary representations. 'Island' is an arbitrary representation of geographical morphology. Therefore, there should be no restriction on discussing mermaids, icebergs, waterways, vapours, performative arts or even mycology in terms of structures intuitively extracted from discussions about islands. Hau'ofa's proposition of "our sea of islands" is neither metaphor nor allegory. Rather, it is a reality in which islands are performatively sea. Hau'ofa's islands stand for themselves precisely because they refuse to be categorically collectable. This is the point at which we disembark from Wunderkammering islands.

Shimaguni

The word *shimaguni* is a compound of *shima* and *kuni*, meaning 'island nation,' and is largely a modern idiom (Suwa, 2026). When ancient Japanese aristocrats translated the Chinese kanji *guo*, meaning 'country,' they adopted *kuni*. By the 8th century CE, however, the etymology of *kuni* had already been lost. The original Chinese character derives from a pictogram of a spear enclosed within a walled space. As in other Eurasian polities, Chinese states were identified with military power and walls. These walls protected residents from invaders and, in some regions, blocked sand from desert provinces. The Great Wall had symbolic significance, inculcating the power of the state in both its subjects and neighbouring nomadic tribes. The ancient Chinese state expressed its territory through walled parcels of land.



Figure 1 – *Guo*, in antique Chinese font

Japanese *kuni*, however, may have been different, since Japanese cities were rarely constructed with walls. The idea of *kuni* entailed a more ambiguous sense of borderlines. Even the ancient cities of Nara and Kyoto – designed after Chinese imperial capitals such as Chang'an – were devoid of walls. In Kyoto, the main gate, known as Rashomon, stood at the southern end of the city, and beyond it stretched (literally) wilderness. Highways to the

provinces were unpaved, passing through wetlands, grasslands, and forests. Rice paddies and agrarian communities (*mura*) existed, but they were small, impoverished and isolated.

The *saku*, literally 'fences' in Japanese, were administrative centres in the northern provinces, functioning as offices, military bases, and markets for dealing with non-Japanese groups (the Ainu and, possibly, branches of Tungus peoples). Today's city of Akita developed from one such fort surrounded by *saku*. In the medieval era, warlords enclosed forts and castles with trenches (*hori*) and earthen mounds (*dorui*). Mortar and stone walls were built only for defensive purposes and thus did not create a strong sense of territorial boundary. The closest equivalents to walls were the main gates (*seki*) constructed along major highways. In the Edo period, these gates acted as checkpoints controlling traffic. The Tsugaru domain built the Ikarigaseki gate to defend against potentially hostile neighbouring domains.

Villages, by contrast, marked their boundaries with landmarks such as large straw statues of Dōsojin (the god of roads) or Bodhisattvas (enlightened individuals), stone slabs inscribed with Sae-no-Kami (the god of boundaries), or the mane of Sarutahiko (a god of travellers), along with those associated with Daoism and folk Buddhism. As they are placed near rivers, ponds, bridges, paths and other landmarks, they generated the atmosphere of thresholds. The archetypal image of *kuni*, therefore, resembles the village boundary rather than the walled state. *Kuni* was likely associated with a sense of territory not visualised through fences or walls, but through more ambiguous or animistic spaces. *Kuni* does not enclose or sever land, nor does it map territory through lines. Instead, *kuni* spreads into a space where sensory experience of anthropic symbols – statues of Shinto gods or Bodhisattvas – interact with geographical features and landmarks.

Thus, the compound noun *shima-guni*[2] indicates a space that is marked and enclosed. Because *shimaguni* carries a strong sense of insularity, regardless of the homogeneity of its residents, its nuance differs from *shima*, which evokes the idea of 'seas of islands.' The gap between *shima* and *shimaguni* reveals the limitations of discussing islands merely as pieces of land. In terms of geographical imagination, the aquapelago risks becoming geocentric. This tendency arises because discussions of people inevitably involve discussions of the land with which they interact. Water remains a void space – an interpretation that misreads Hau'ofa's "our sea of islands." What is needed is a radically different view of water, one that has long gone unquestioned. For an aquapelagic assemblage, what truly matters is the water, not the land, and here deterritorialisation becomes necessary for further discussion.

Water as an assemblage that we live by

If the aquapelago is truly an assemblage, there must be a point of departure. To begin, we might imagine water as analogous to dark matter filling cosmic dimensions. The physical reality is that marine territory is difficult to visualise because, unlike land, it cannot be shaped by humans to produce common landscapes such as cities or farms. Ports, canals, bridges and beaches are technically built on land. Mangroves, wharves, marine oil wells, cables, overwater houses, and houseboats are structures in, under, or over water, but they are typically extensions of land-based structures – mangroves being a variety of forest, for example. To treat these structures as exceptional risks reproducing a *Wunderkammer* of

[2] The 'g' and 'k' sounds and romanised symbols signify the same word/word sound in Japanese.

butterfly collections. Therefore, to advance the argument, we must push beyond accepted notions of water and land. This requires close attention to territoriality, meaning that water (and land) must no longer be treated as passive assets or resources to be managed, exploited, or disturbed. Water must be understood as an actant, in the same way that humans or cultural artifacts can be actants. In this paradigm – however absurd it may initially sound – a swimmer can swim in the water just as the water can 'swim' in the swimmer, shaping the swimmer's body and mind. This idea is not far from Hau'ofa's "sea of islands." The following are rather fragmentary passages intended to introduce trajectories. All of them will treat 'islands' not as geographical entities but extensions of watery territory capable of generating aquapelagic assemblages. Although these three sections are related to each other, I introduce them as separate ideas. Also, they are rather rough sketches and, hopefully, discussions will follow in the coming issues of *Shima's* successor – *Shimaqua*.

Bodily fluid and populated water

Following recent volumes of *Shima*, it is no longer adequate to treat the idea of 'people as islands' as a mere metaphor. Humans and other biological entities can be understood to be as populated by water as watered islands. In the aqua-percussive "water music" performed by women from Merelava Island in Luganville, Vanuatu, for instance, the performers articulate the concept of *nebei*, or 'water,' in their local language. *Nebei* is not conceived as separate from other landforms or entities such as the sea; rather, it encompasses clouds, rainwater, rivers, underground water and drinking water. It circulates through the environment as an ever-transforming assemblage of the environment itself. *Nebei* is not simply dihydrogen monoxide but a composite of phenomena in its surroundings – thunderstorms, forests, marine organisms and ways of life (Suwa and Grigore, forthcoming). In this sense, *nebei* is both the idea and materiality of water, reflecting people's attitudes toward communal sustainability and global awareness of climatic and social change. It also contains an inherent sense of change, as water is conceived as a formless, circulating substance. The substantivity of *nebei* is sustained – almost in an animistic sense – as assemblage, and islands can be regarded as states of *nebei* in broader terms. Bodily fluids sustain human assemblage not by remaining fixed but by circulating through the environment. This notion of circulation, *nebei*, aligns closely with aquapelagic assemblages.

The circulation of *nebei* – water as assemblage or becoming-water – inevitably raises questions of territoriality. This concerns speed, volume, width of streams, accumulation of heat, and distance. An aquapelagic assemblage can be conceptualised as a state of *nebei* in which an assemblage becomes infinitely island-like. This generates an epistemology expressed through local discourse. The dichotomy between wet and dry, for example, extends to cultural artefacts, shaping how things are ordered. Such structural alignment, observed in *ningyo no miira* around Lake Biwako (Suwa, 2018) and in Japanese creation mythology (Suwa, 2021), indicates that the aquapelagic assemblage is epistemologically expressed as the density and continuum of water. Aquapelagic assemblage, therefore, is not a geolo-physical condition but an epistemological generator of the "sea of islands." Yet the concept of epistemology can be misleading, since the mythological structures of *nebei, ningyo no miira,* or *shimaumi* ('island-bearing') are not mere fantasies but agencies for assemblage. They are not metaphors or cultural 'images' of water or land; they are water and land in that they generate aquapelagic assemblages. We must move away from the assumption that 'culture' is simply a product of imagination. Instead, aquapelagic assemblage is a meshwork of territoriality in which actants incessantly draw lines – locomotive or conceptual movements (see Ingold, 2013).

Water is 'populated' in the sense that its state involves human activity, but this does not require visible structures such as boat houses on Tonle Sap or igloos on ice fields. Rather, it is a condition of aquapelagic assemblage in which water continually changes form and circulates through the environment. Bodily fluid resonates with the aquapelago in the way *nebei* in water-music performance expresses the connection between body, culture, and natural surroundings. The epistemology of bodily fluid does not differ from that of rain or seawater generating assemblage, since the *nebei* circulating in the environment also circulates within human bodies.

The Flowing Commons

Aquapelagic assemblage is not an asset or a form of capital; it is flowing commons. The aquapelago is populated water, and this water incessantly circulates – through underground streams, vapour forming Nimbostratus, or the slow drift of an iceberg. Traditional notions of the commons assume a fixed territoriality in which productive interactions occur. This model works only when the commons is imagined as a placed space, an asset or resource. Aquapelagos, however, are not real estate to be developed but actants that develop – or enculturate – any interactions involving them. Thus, the commons as aquapelagos constitute a flow of territoriality, not a matter of shifting ownership, production modes, or resources (which would fall within conventional frameworks).

Because commons are tied to actions situated in terrains, the flowing commons demands a shift in awareness. *Nebei* – the water circulating through the environment and continually changing form from vapor to liquid – implies that bodily fluids such as urine, blood, or cerebral fluid can be agents of clouds, streams or the sea. This extends to plant sap, meat juices or even the footprints of a bather on a boardwalk. While ownership of the commons may not be transferred, the substance of the commons always is. The water performed in the Merelava women's water music – the commons – shares the same substantivity as a glass of water served in the five-star resort where the performance takes place (Suwa and Grigore, forthcoming). The concept of the flowing commons raises not the issue of ownership but of how it is shared. Sound and water interact similarly: both are substantively shared, becoming assemblage and permeating their surroundings. Aquapelagic assemblage is akin to sound resonating through a landscape because water circulates through the environment. Likewise, the idea of the flowing commons resonates with the territoriality of musical sound. As musical sound articulates resonance, water articulates the "sea of islands."

The Iwami region of Shimane, Japan, stretches along the western mainland coast facing the Sea of Japan. Steep mountains, narrow coastal plains, and scattered basins shape the province. *Iwami Kagura*, a traditional musical drama still popular among locals, is performed by dozens of voluntary dance groups. Between April and December, they appear at Shinto shrine festivals, cultural events, and shopping malls. During *kagura* season, the sound of flutes and drums carries over the small mountains with the sea wind. Even when performers are unseen, their sound envelops the landscape, drawing curious crowds toward the performance. The resonating sound becomes shared across the terrain, reflected in the onomatopoetic descriptions of flute and drum timbres (Suwa, 2012, pp. 94–100).

Aquapelagic Installations

Aquapelagic assemblage, as noted earlier, possesses a performative nature. This means it operates both as an analytical or descriptive concept and as a performative one. While aquapelagic assemblages can be discussed in scholarly writing, they can also articulate actual space through performances and installations. In the case of Vanuatu's water music, for example, aquapelagic assemblage emerges as any performative space that renders water the substance of sensory experience. The *suikinkutsu* (a Japanese garden ornament that produces resonant tones from dripping water) likewise has the potential to function as an installation of aquapelagic assemblage. Landscape design itself becomes an installation of aquapelagic assemblage, widening its expressive trajectory. Ultimately, the form such installations take will depend on the artists themselves. Yet aquapelagic installations do not represent the aquapelago. Rather, the artefacts are aquapelagic assemblages insofar as they interact – epistemologically or otherwise – with their surrounding environment. By installing aquapelagic artefacts, another aquapelago is shaped into being. At this point, writing the aquapelago acquires a new medium of description. However, aquapelagic installation requires an alternative regime of signs; one that departs from conventional artistic judgement and curation. The installation does not need to inculcate or visualise the aquapelago, nor does it function as a declarative statement about it; nevertheless, it must participate in creating it. This means an installation need not even be an artwork. It may be any object not originally intended as art. In this sense, aquapelagic installations align with what Tsurumi (1967) calls marginal art. Tsurumi's concept – often misunderstood because of the term "marginal" – does not refer to aesthetically peripheral works but to artefacts, including music, folkways, or oral literature, that were not initially intended as art yet operate effectually as artistic expressions.

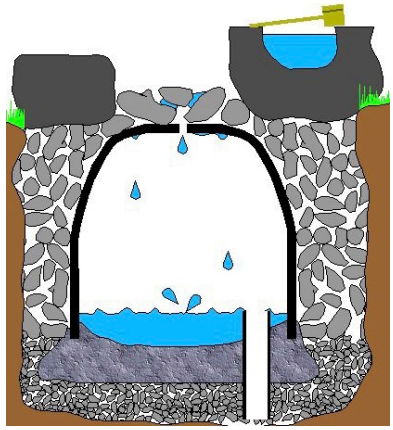

Figure 2 - Cross section of a *suikinkutsu* (Wikipedia diagram)

Aquapelagic installation may be effectually artistic, as in the case of the *suikinkutsu*, but its generative capacity is more important than whether it was conceived as an opus. By the same token, aquapelagic installations are not demonstrations of aquapelagos, because they are supposed to be interactive as an assemblage. In this regard, aquapelagic installation is liminal rather than marginal: it pushes creativity toward the edges of artistic expression, occupying the threshold where environment, artefact, and assemblage co-produce one another.

In conclusion

My inspirations come from seeing things from heterogeneous points of view. This is a radical type of thinking which C.S. Peirce called 'abduction' that spurns explanatory hypotheses. When I attended the first meeting of SICRI, I felt scents of Wunderkammering. It made me wonder how far attendees could go from there. I found the phrase 'Shima did not mean islands' by Yanagita in writing this article, but it precisely describes my first flash of thinking about this. The fundamental problem of this is that the word 'island' inevitably contains culturally specific connotations. This is totally different from, for instance, calling elementary particles 'quarks' (named after a passage from *Finnegan's Wake* by James Joyce to describe the cry of seagull) with six types of 'flavours' (perhaps inspired by an ice cream shop display. In the word of physics, there was initially unknown matter with unknown characteristics, and its name arose later. In the case of Wunderkammering, things would be discussed in the name of already established 'island'. My proposal has been to reobserve, rename and rediscuss the things in front of us as if they had never been named before. What happens if we call that thing *shima?* What can we learn about if we call that substance *nebei*? After incessant asking, if we could devise a new way to see the world - however modestly - that would be truly inspirational. This is the genuine process of grafting other linguistic traditions to alter the texture of event-experience, and *poiesis* in its truest meaning. If others feel that this is merely a wordplay of metaphors, it is they who are predicamental and displaced. Likewise, the last passage about aquapelagic installations opens the possibility of new media exchanging ideas not with words but through sharing artistic experiences. The aquapelago, the "sea of islands" and *shima* always welcome further arguments and certainly more radical, productive trajectories than outlined in this rough sketch.

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