The Origins of Shimao Toshio's "Japonesia" Ideas

Ishikawa Norio

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Introduction

From 3 to 7 October 2008, I had the opportunity to visit the Amami Islands for the first time. While I did not go on the trip to view material related to novelist Shimao Toshio 島尾敏雄 or to engage in a field survey, when doing pre-travel background research, one cannot avoid coming across his writings. Also, I decided to stay in Naze 名瀬 (part of the City of Amami since 2006), and ended up naturally following the footsteps of Shimao when traveling around to see Amami's history and culture. There were many things that I saw and heard for the first time, and this led me to reread Shimao's works. After my trip, I gave presentations at a private literature study group and other places on points that I came to realize about Shimao's work. Although I also had the opportunity to give a talk in Odaka 小高 (Minamisōma 南相馬, Fukushima) on 6 December of the same year—coincidentally the land of Shimao Toshio's ancestors—at the invitation of the Association for Modern Japanese Literary Studies, eight years went by without penning an article related to my travel experience and Shimao Toshio's writings. However, when discussing views from the margins of the Japanese archipelago, my experiences of 2008 come together with the writings of Shimao the author to form a distinctive image inside of me, and I want to take this opportunity to write this down.

In Japan, most people have heard of the Amami Islands yet few people can immediately bring their location to mind. The Amami Islands are located basically right between Yakushima 屋久島 and Okinawa, and they are part of Kagoshima Prefecture. Perhaps due to them having been part of the prefecture's Ōshima 大島 district, it appears that within the prefecture they are normally called Ōshima. While the islands

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to the south of Kagoshima are lumped together in people's minds as "tropical southern islands," they are in fact each unique. For example, Tanegashima 種子島 is where guns first arrived in Japan, and it has a space center. Yakushima to its south has the Jōmon Sugi 縄文杉, an ancient tree. Ever since the latter was designated as a World Heritage Site, sightseeing tours of the island have been flourishing. Some people probably think of famous Amami products such as Ōshima *tsumugi* 大島紬 weaving, and brown sugar *shochu* (*kokutō shōchū* 黒糖焼酎), a kind of alcoholic drink. However, its other cultural heritage and customs are not very well known. While more and more attention is being paid to the increasingly popular *shima-uta* 島唄 folk music, the majority of Amami's cultural heritage remains fairly minor, even in tourism industry advertisements. Without any flashy development or advertising of Amami as a southern island tourism resource, most tourists tend to visit neighboring Okinawa. In other words, there is an abundance of untouched nature that seems to embody the image of "the southern islands" (*nantō* 南島) themselves. Although island life and lifestyles changed around World War II, Amami's appearance and the essence of people's lives have largely remained the same since the time Shimao Toshio lived there—at least that was the impression I had when I visited the island.

Shimao Toshio's Relationship with the Amami Islands

First let us review chronologically Shimao Toshio's relationship with Amami. In November 1944, twenty-seven-year-old Shimao was posted to Kakeromajima's 加計呂麻島 Nominoura 呑之浦. This was his first encounter with the Amami Islands. Shimao was waiting for an order to embark on an attack mission when the war ended on 23 August the following year, and he then left. During his time there he had met Ōhira Miho 大平ミホ, and married her at the age of twenty-nine in March 1946. Subsequently they lived in Kobe, where his father's house was, and he began self-publishing his writings. However, in 1952, they moved to Tokyo. As is well known, his three years of living in Tokyo until moving to Naze in October 1955—just after Amami was returned by the United States to Japan on 25 December 1953 (before Okinawa)—would form the background for his novel *Shi no toge* 死の棘 (The Sting of Death, 1960). Shimao's second time living on Amami spanned the twenty years from October 1955 to April 1975, when he would then move to Kagoshima's Ibusuki 指宿. Interestingly, this time was both one in which he would examine and reflect on his self during and after the war, as well as attempt, from the Japanese archipelago, to "retake" Japan's southern islands, particularly the Amami Islands, in the context of the Pacific Rim's East Asian culture. In other words, while on the one hand his interior dialogue came to fruition in the form of the writing and publication of *Shi no toge* and *Shuppatsu wa tsui ni otozurezu* 出発は遂に訪れず (The Departure Never Came, 1964), on the other

hand, we also find his tenacious repeated creation and expansion, as well as sharing, of concepts: the southern islands, the Ryūkyū Arc (*ryūkyū-ko* 琉球弧), and Japonesia (*yaponeshia* ヤポネシア).

He also worked in a public capacity on the Amami Islands, becoming an employee of the prefecture of Kagoshima in 1957 and working as the director of the Amami Japan-US Culture Institute (Amami Nichibei Bunkakaikan 奄美日米文化会館). This institute appears to have primarily been for the sharing of US culture. It held movie screenings, had US magazines available for reading, and so on. In 1958, he also became the director of the Amami branch of the Kagoshima Prefectural Library. At the branch he established the Amami Local Research Group (Amami Kyōdo Kenkyūkai 奄美郷土研究会; first called the Amami History Discussion Group, or Amami Shidankai 奄美史談会). The latter, which is still active today, has played a major role in informing islanders and others about the value and significance of Amami's history and culture. Its work particularly deserves our attention for constructing a foundation for historical and folklore research by working to collect textual materials related to Amami's history, interviewing elderly people about oral traditions, and so on. Shimao continued to engage in these activities until leaving his post as branch director in April 1975.

The View from the Amami Islands: The Southern Islands, Ryūkyū Arc, and Japonesia

Above I have presented a chronological overview of Shimao's relationship with Amami. However, it appears that, separate from this, Shimao himself continually pursued an internal momentum which drew him to Amami. This first appeared when he was a history researcher specializing in Eastern history and Chinese cultural history. We can see that he was filled with excitement about excavating the history of the Amami Islands, which were placed under the rule of the Ryūkyū Kingdom in the thirteenth century, had a massive amount of wealth extracted via sugar cane cultivation after falling under the direct control of the Satsuma 薩摩 domain in the seventeenth century, and then were placed under US military rule after World War II.

> Poverty is part of daily life on the island. Young women want to abandon the island and go to Yamato [the Japanese mainland]. If they leave, they probably won't try to come back. No—they won't be able to. It even appears that islanders are cursing the dead-end street life on the island. This island only has its history of being subordinate to the Ryūkyū Kingdom, exploited by the Shimazu 島津 domain, and then, again, just until recently has been under the United States' forsaking direct rule. No—actually, the island does have its people's lives, but historical materials have completely disappeared and the

> compilation of history has been completely forgotten. To think that the only history of this island that has been written is a melancholy introduction to Minamoto no Tametomo and the Heike legends!
>
> However, these things actually excite me. Here is unknown territory. The treasures buried there are waiting to be excavated.[1]

However, what appeared in the gaze of twenty-seven-year-old Lieutenant Shimao Toshio when he faced the Amami Islands for the first time in November 1944? He had been posted with 183 subordinates as the commander of the eighteenth Shin'yō 震洋 Squad to a base in Kakeromajima's Nominoura—in other words, to a suicide corps base. How did the natural environment appear to this commander and his squad waiting to die in battle in the surely not so distant future?

> When I went to this port [Naze] ten years earlier in a thirty-ton hot bulb fishing boat, with what kind of feeling did I look upon its radio tower? While I can no longer outline it precisely, for me at the time Amami was cut off in an ancient mist. It appeared that Buddhism and Confucianism had been unable to permeate it. In the bottom of my relocation wicker trunk I had the Iwanami Bunko edition of the *Kojiki* 古事記, and rereading it on Amami I forgot it was a book from ancient times. I thought that a spitting image of the world written therein was alive in the island's reality and enveloping us.[2]

Shimao says that upon rereading the *Kojiki*, he felt that the reality of Amami was the same world as the ancient one therein in which neither Buddhism nor Confucianism existed.

His second trip and relocation to Amami after the war was based on the marital/family relationship depicted in *Shi no toge*. These were very private circumstances, and this must have been the extent to which he was determined to live out his life with his family—a determination that was the complete opposite of that of the suicide corps. Did his failure to construct a family life on the Japanese mainland strengthen his heart and mind's inclination towards the southern islands? Shimao's interest did not stop at the Amami Islands 奄美大島 but spread to Okinawa and Miyako 宮古. It would be driven towards the "area in the world of Japan" called the "southern islands":

> I like the name *nantō*, which means "southern islands." People have given various names to the[se] islands that are loosely connected, like flower decora-

1. "Amami Ōshima kara" 奄美大島から, December 1955, STZS vol. 16, p. 31.

2. "Naze no machi, sono saisho no inshō to machi no sugata no aramashi" 名瀬の町、その最初の印象と町のすがたのあらまし, May 1957, STZS vol. 16, p. 293.

> tions, in the ocean between Kagoshima and Taiwan. I am unable to set aside the allure of wanting to bring together these islands and think about them as "one area in the world of Japan." In this case, I feel that the expression "southern islands" vividly comes back to life.[3]
>
> Now I have seen once the other four islands besides Ōshima—Tokunoshima 徳之島, Kikaijima 喜界島, Okinoerabujima 沖永良部島, and Yoronjima 与論島. I am filled with the expectations of wanting to grasp, while drawing comparisons with Ōshima, the "Amami" that is the northern part of the Ryūkyū Arc by depicting the outlines of each of these islands.[4]
>
> As can be seen by looking at a map, it is an inescapable fact that Japan is an island country. Island countries are surrounded by the ocean. The Pacific Ocean is a very large ocean, and there are various islands in it. In particular, there are many in the South Pacific. I think that the lives of the people who live on these islands are similar. Is not Japan one of them too? In the South Pacific there are the islands of Polynesia, Micronesia, Melanesia, and Indonesia, and I feel that, like them, Japan exists as a single group of South Pacific islands. So, I have named it Japonesia.[5]

Shimao's interest became more and more abstract as he moved from the concepts of "the southern islands" to "the Rykukyu Arc," and then, finally, "Japonesia." It was here that Shimao's ideas on "Japonesia" unfolded. It goes without saying that "Japonesia" would spread as a concept and term with a very strong political nature while increasing in content each time it was touched upon and referred to by scholars and other writers.

If we divide Shimao's life on the Amami Islands into the wartime period and postwar period, it is clear that there are differences in how he existed as a subject during them. In other words, the world of death was near in his gaze as a commander of the Shin'yō suicide corps, and a world of suffering—one in which he was crazy for his family life, yet had little signs of hope—lay in his gaze during the postwar time, when all he could do was leave the healing of Miho to the island's climate. The aim of this paper is to consider the "Amami Islands" that appear standing at the intersection of these two gazes.

3. "Minami no shima de no kangae" 南の島での考え, August 1959, STZS vol. 16, pp. 125–26.

4. Postscript, "Ritō no kōfuku, ritō no fukō" 離島の幸福・離島の不幸, April 1960, STZS vol. 16, p. 137.

5. "Watashi no mita Amami" 私の見た奄美, June 1962, STZS vol. 16, p. 217.

In the Context of the Southern Islands Discourse

The intellectual tide that highlighted, surveyed, and excavated the customs and folklore culture of the Ryūkyū Archipelago (primarily Okinawa) and Japan's various southwestern islands, thereby pressing people to reconsider their conceptions of Japanese cultural history, began with the pre-World War II work of Iha Fuyū 伊波普猷 (1876–1947; known as the "father of Okinawaology"), Yanagita Kunio 柳田國男 (1875–1962), Orikuchi Shinobu 折口信夫 (1887–1953), and others. Subsequently, against the postwar political backdrop of the return of the Amami Islands, and then Okinawa, from the US to Japan, this intellectual tide would be constructed under the influence of a push to rediscover one's own country. It was not long ago that Shimao's "Yaponesia no nekko"ヤポネシアの根っこ (The Roots of Japonesia, December 1961) was framed and came to receive attention as an Amami Ōshima resident's "theory of the southern islands." These ideas of Shimao gained momentum after being further developed by the sympathetic folklorist Tanigawa Ken'ichi 谷川健一 and Yoshimoto Takaaki 吉本隆明 (1924–2012). While pushing ahead towards the relativization of the culture, history, and country of Japan,[6] in the end they would be criticized for beginning a perilous "southern islands ideology" as well as for having a flimsy anti-state ideology, among other reasons. Put simply, criticisms held that these ideas were lacking as a theory of a state, and remained just the written personal impressions of a man of literature, that is, at the phase of "sensing" (*kanju* 感受), a term that Shimao himself used frequently. In the special issue of *Yuriika* ユリイカ (August 1998) on Shimao, many favorable views regarding his Japonesia writings were included. However, Ogura Mushitarō 小倉虫太郎 criticized the positioning of Shimao's work as follows:

> It should be emphasized that the combination of Shimao and his wife Miho in the development of postwar literary history up through today has often been subsumed into a classic imperial nostalgia or colonial narrative: "The selfless love of an island shamaness of ancient times and a representative of the emperor from Yamato (*marebito* マレビト [divine visitor]) going on a journey to death." And so on. These images were also joined with the narratives of romanticists that projected an image of ancient Japan onto the "base

6. Yanagihara Toshiaki's points about this are invaluable as he comes from the field of medieval Japanese history. He engages in a detailed discussion on the topic and expresses his concern as follows: "Considering how much people have been talking about the 'multiple Japans' view of history, one does not really detect any signs of people trying to properly place the Japonesia writings of Shimao, which are a precursor to this [view of history]. In particular, Tohoku 東北 history scholars, who have engaged in their research based on the same kind of awareness and focus as Shimao, do not look to him. Is this really okay?" See Yanagihara, "'Tōhoku to Ryūkyū-ko,'" p. 68.

> layer" of the "southern islands": Yanagita Kunio, Orikuchi Shinobu, and Yoshimoto Takaaki.[7]

Ogura also severely criticizes the optimistic outlook of the approach that tries to relativize the modern Japanese state by using the term "Japonesia" to refer to the culture found on the Amami Islands/southern islands/Ryūkyū Arc and sees it as the remains of Japan's base culture. He states that this outlook continues to be immersed in a romance of adoration towards ancient times and "completely forgets" without "bringing to mind" the "things the modern period has saddled and suppressed" that lie in the background to the likes of the Ryūkyū *shobun* 琉球処分 (Japan's annexation of the Ryūkyū Kingdom) and views for and against these islands' return to Japan.

Furthermore, Morimoto Shin'ichirō 森本眞一郎, who added his perspective as a resident of the Amami Islands, expresses as follows his sense of discomfort regarding the lumping together of islands under "Japonesia":

> In order to reabsorb "America's Ryūkyū" as "Japan's Okinawa Prefecture," Shimao continued to broadcast from the neighboring Amami the ethnic sameness of Ryūkyū and Japan (the theory that Japan and Ryūkyū/Japan and Amami have the same ancestors), something that had been repeated ever since the Ryūkyū *shobun* in 1879. The core of this was the [concept of] "the Japan that existed in the distant past" or the "southern islands" that Yanagita Kunio and academic researchers had repeatedly developed after World War II. This was Shimao's "Japan within Japan that was nothing other than Japan," / Ryūkyū Arc / the Ryūkyū Cultural Sphere / "Amami/Okinawa." Shimao's "Ryūkyū-ko no shiten kara" 琉球弧の視点から [From the Perspective of the Ryūkyū Arc] was an intellectual (political) supporting pillar for hauling and reabsorbing the territory of Okinawa into a new postwar Japan. To repeat myself: the domestic political circumstances that were Okinawa's return to Japan (*Okinawa henkan* 沖縄返還) in 1972 was the reabsorption of the Ryūkyū Kingdom colony that Satsuma invaded in early modern times and that the Empire of Japan invaded in modern times.[8]

In other words, the "community fantasized about by Shimao did not go beyond the domain of the state." Furthermore, while collecting the likes of Amami folktales and engaging in research on folklore culture, "Shimao, who settled in Amami for twenty years and wrote novels and the like one after another was, despite his determination, unable to write one book in his entire life that used Amami history and folklore as material."[9]

7. Ogura, "Meta, 'Nantō' bungakuron," p. 170.
8. Morimoto, "Shimao Toshio no teikoku to shūen," p. 65.
9. Morimoto, "Shimao Toshio no teikoku to shūen," p. 58.

Morimoto sees the frustration of Shimao's ideas regarding Japonesia as lying in the arbitrariness of his understanding of Amami and, in the end, despite promoting the idea of Japonesia, being unable to bring together its content in his expressive work as a novelist.

Shimao's ideas regarding "Japonesia" were certainly not theoretically structured, and, when he expanded the purview of his Japonesia ideas with his personal experience on Amami playing a central role, he could not deny that historical and folklore evidence from Okinawa and the Ryūkyū Arc was lacking. Furthermore, there were more than a few times when Shimao himself was unable to avoid falling into self-questioning regarding Amami, where he lived for over twenty years. For example, Wakamatsu Jōtarō 若松丈太郎, a poet who engages in research on Shimao in Minamisoma, Fukushima (Shimao's ancestral land), writes the following:

> In 1970, Shimao Toshio gave a lecture in Okinawa's Naha entitled "Yaponeshia to Ryūkyū-ko" ヤポネシアと琉球弧 [Japonesia and the Ryūkyū Arc]. Yet, in the "Naha ni kanzu" 那覇に感ず [Thoughts on Naha] that he wrote immediately afterwards, he said that he wondered while giving his talk why his own words "were spinning in place so much without any feeling of substance." In other words, while talking about his ideas regarding Japonesia he felt despair regarding their hollowness: my words are spinning in place, they do not have any feeling of substance, my words are empty.[10]

In his above-quoted article, Morimoto makes a similar point about Shimao's wavering as follows:

> "I no longer understand the island"; "It's to the extent that I want to say that I can't see anything";[11] "It's like I'm going to get screwy, thinking that there're bigger things than the island."[12]
>
> "I've said too much that the Ryūkyū Arc is Japan";[13] "In other words, I think that the characteristics of the southern islands temporally and spatially have a *something* longer and broader than the Japanese state that has unfolded on Yamato (the mainland)."[14]
>
> "In truth right now I feel like I don't want to write anything about the southern islands."[15]

10. Wakamatsu, "Shimao Toshio ni okeru 'inaka': Sono ishiki no hen'yō."
11. "Amami no shima kara" 奄美の島から, 1971, STZS vol. 17, p. 256.
12. "Amami no shima kara," 1971, STZS vol. 17, p. 257.
13. "Ryūkyū-ko ni sunde jūroku nen" 琉球弧に住んで十六年, 1971, STZS vol. 17, p. 266.
14. "Ryūkyū-ko ni sunde jūroku nen," 1971, STZS vol. 17, pp. 266–67.
15. "Shimao Toshio hi shōsetsu shūsei dai ikkan atogaki"島尾敏雄非小説集成第一巻あとがき, 1973, STZS vol. 17, p. 287.

Here, Shimao is clearly coming undone at the seams with regard to the relationship between the southern islands and Japan. However, perhaps having been healed when taking a U-turn from Amami to Japan's Kagoshima, he would again resurrect himself as the creator of the concepts of the Ryūkyū Arc and Japonesia. Even so, this was only in essays and dialogues, and he did not produce a novel that took islands, the Ryūkyū Arc, or the southern islands as its topic.[16]

In this way, Shimao was puzzled and even sometimes felt hopeless regarding the difficulty of theoretical development, which emerged as a problem in the process of expanding his own concept of Japonesia to the southern islands, the Ryūkyū Arc, and the Japanese archipelago as a whole, as well as regarding the demand that simultaneously presented itself of reconfirming the content of his own experience. Put conversely, Shimao's statements regarding Japonesia could not withstand questioning regarding their consistency as historical and cultural theory, as well as their effectiveness as a theory of a state. Reexamining his ideas regarding Japonesia from this perspective would surely entail recalling that these are words that came from the hands of a novelist, as well as gauging the power of the word "Japonesia" in terms of its functioning within the statements of an author. To rephrase simply, instead of examining this word in terms of its validity as a theoretical concept, we would examine in his written expressions its functioning within the process that spanned from his initial motivation to write on "Japonesia" to his development of this idea. Many scholars have, of course, suggested this direction, and I will next examine the path of their discussions.

On Shimao's Motivation to Write About "Japonesia"

As is well known, when the word "Japonesia" appeared in Shimao's writing, the folklorist Tanigawa Ken'ichi quickly incorporated it into his theoretical apparatus in his "'Yaponesia' to wa nani ka'" 〈ヤポネシア〉とは何か (What Is Japonesia?, 1970). It is also well known that this apparatus changed in nature in the process of Tanigawa's own academic development.[17] However, Tanigawa, while holding that Shimao's ideas regarding Japonesia came into existence due to his "second southern islands experience" after World War II "giving him the job of engaging in a kind of abstraction," and also while stating that his own feelings regarding this concept have changed, makes the following suggestive statement:

16. Morimoto, "Shimao Toshio no teikoku to shūen," p. 58.

17. In Hanada's "Yaponeshia no hajimari," and particularly in his subsequent "Yaponeshia no owari," he critically examines in detail the concept of Japonesia and Tanigawa Ken'ichi's folklore research, and then proposes that the term itself should be rendered dead.

> When talking about southern island life filled with the sunny blessings of Apollo, I cannot help but recognize difficult-to-grasp shades, like the shadows of fishes, in the depths of Shimao's writings. If so, it is natural that my interest goes towards what he did not say rather than what he did say. I think that at the very least his ideas regarding the southern islands should be read with this as a premise.[18]

Here Tanigawa describes his feelings regarding the backdrop of Shimao's words on Japonesia. This perspective is an attempt to reflect on the qualities of Shimao as an author and the texts he wrote. In other words, it is a suggestion that we try taking in Shimao's "Japonesia" writings as his "southern islands literature." This perspective was later clearly spelled out in an article by Suzuki Naoko 鈴木直子. Suzuki points out that Shimao's "writings on 'southern island' culture" have had a strong influence on diverse fields, and, furthermore, deeming these writings (including what she calls "southern island novels," or novels that apparently take his relationship with Amami culture as a theme) "southern island literature," states the following:

> Shimao's southern island literature consists of texts written not about the nature of the southern islands or how to articulate the southern islands but about whether it is possible in the first place to do so. Rather than the act of narrating an Other being, something that constructs an adequate relationship with the Other, is it not rather directly connected to the act of "naming" and ruling over the Other? This kind of question, which is the basis of Shimao's writings in general, certainly exists here as well. Shimao's hesitation regarding the issue of how it is possible to narrate the Other without excluding or subsuming it permeated his southern island literature. Furthermore, this approach of pursuing the (im)possibility of the act of narrating the Other appears to be an essential element of not only [his] texts regarding the southern islands but actually his writing in general.[19]

The analytical objects of Suzuki's article are the novels *Kawa nite* 川にて (At the River, 1959) and *Shima e* 島へ (To the Island, 1962). Suzuki argues out that, aside from their criticism of Japanese culture, they are "self-critique literature that adopts a first-person single viewpoint," and that this critique has the two focal points of war experience and marital relations. She also proposes that we examine "the southern islands in [Shimao's] novels."[20] Also, in the same year Hanada Toshinori 花田俊典 reexamined Shimao's confession that the motivation for his statements regarding "Japonesia" was

18. Tanigawa, "Shimao Toshio ni okeru Nantō," pp. 153–54.
19. Suzuki, "Shimao Toshio no Yaponeshia kōsō," pp. 42–43.
20. Suzuki, "Shimao Toshio no Yaponeshia kōsō," p. 48.

feeling "a stifling something" in the current situation in Japan and that he "could not repress" his "feeling of wanting to no matter what free" himself "from it."[21]

> At the core of the development of his ideas regarding Japonesia must have always been his personal emotion—or, rather, his emotion as one individual—of wanting to get out of a stiff and barren uniformity.… For him, that [discovery of the southern islands] was above all discovery of a "foreign land." … He was moved by the declaration "here is unknown territory" as a literary (in other words, personal) revelation, and in the end broadcast this as Japonesia.[22]

We could overlay the statements pregnant with meaning found in Tanigawa's article onto Hanada's points, as well as understand Suzuki's article as a concrete proposal from this perspective.

Next let us return to the *Yuriika* special issue on Shimao and consider its articles a little more. Higashi Takuma's 東琢磨 "Kikkake toshite no 'Yaponesia'" きっかけとしての「ヤポネシア」 (Japonesia as an Initial Impetus) focuses on "'Okinawa' no imi suru mono" 「沖縄」の意味するもの (The Meaning of Okinawa), one of Shimao's "southern island essays" from 1954, and considers the "things included [therein] besides the archaeological-folklore studies vector."[23] In his article, Higashi refers to Okamoto Keitoku's 岡本恵徳 research into and analysis of Shimao's conception and development of the idea of "Japonesia." Okamoto, focusing on a discussion between three literary figures residing in Okinawa and Shimao, points out Shimao's hesitation that appears therein. Drawing from this article, Higashi deciphers the complexity of Shimao's nature as a human and brings into relief his optimistic attitude towards his own country and other countries' cultures. However, he also says that what prompted Shimao's ideas on Japonesia deserve more attention than their danger.

> I feel that there is something more important than their dangerous nature. Namely, the "initial impetus" that was the self-awareness of Shimao Toshio before he spoke of Japonesia. Where was the space of his daily life? Kobe, Amami, Tokyo. In the case of Shimao, "here" and "there" must have replaced each other. Considering this, perhaps Japonesia was like a gaping hole in the space of his daily life that connected here and there.[24]

21. Hanada, "Yaponeshia no hajimari," p. 38.
22. Hanada, "Yaponeshia no hajimari," pp. 38–42.
23. Higashi, "Kikkake toshite no 'Yaponeshia,'" p. 195.
24. Higashi, "Kikkake toshite no 'Yaponeshia,'" pp. 200–201.

Then, while describing how Shimao's ideas regarding "Japonesia" exerted a great influence on the Okinawan movement against the island's return to Japan, he asks, however, what was "decisively different about Shimao's Japonesia and opposition to Okinawa's return":

> Where did this difference lie? I think that we need to reread multiple times the "sensation" [*kankaku* 感覚] and "sensing" [*kanju*] aspects of Shimao Toshio. Tenaciously going back to the place before "Japonesia" ([an idea] that Shimao was able to present precisely because he was the writer of war novels, fantasy novels, and I-novels) became a fully formed theory, in other words, back to its point of departure—this is perhaps to not forget the confusion that was present in the moment that prompted these ideas.[25]

So where was the "moment" of this "point of departure"? Drawing from Okamoto Keitoku's view that Japonesia arose out of the relationship between Shimao and Ōhira Miho, he concludes, "the tale of never-ending negotiations between the 'Other' that was Miho gave birth to Japonesia."[26]

Other scholarship also touches upon the origins of and initial impetus that lead to "Japonesia." In the same *Yuriika* special issue, Tanaka Yasuhiro 田中康博 assesses Shimao's Japonesia ideas in the article "Tasha no manazashi" 他者の眼差し (The Other's Gaze), stating that they "do not adopt the position of an *anti*-state discourse … but rather could be called a *non*-state discourse, softly unraveling the concept of the nation-state,"[27] and also discusses the initial developmental stage that produced them:

> The initial development stage that led to [Shimao's] ideas regarding Japonesia was—to borrow his phrase—him being a "person who has lost his hometown 故郷." Shimao, who had roots in Tohoku, settled in Amami after living in multiple other places. By encountering the southern air he realized Japan's diverse nature. At first, Amami appeared before him as a "foreign land" or "the ancient past."[28]

The viewpoint that focuses on Shimao's consciousness as someone who had lost his hometown is also in the above-quoted passage by Higashi. Takasaka Kaoru 高阪薫 also takes this as a premise. Indicating her agreement with Okamoto's view that the "existence of Miho" is the contact point between literature and Japonesia for Shimao, she writes the following:

25. Higashi, "Kikkake toshite no 'Yaponeshia,'" p. 204.
26. Higashi, "Kikkake toshite no 'Yaponeshia,'" p. 205.
27. Tanaka, "Tasha no manazashi," p. 214.
28. Tanaka, "Tasha no manazashi," p. 215.

> Thinking about this contact point in my own way, Shimao's suicide corps experience in Amami/Kakeromajima, where he met Miho, forms the core of it. With this in mind, I think that one of the motifs of his writings regarding Japonesia is his war experience—or, delving deeper, one that covers war responsibility—and that this is also a motif of having a complex with regard to being both a perpetrator and a victim. In other words, I think that Shimao and Miho met in Amami through the war, this became literature, and its content is inlaid with Japonesian elements.[29]

It is certainly true that for readers of *Shi no toge*, as well as for the readers of Shimao's works that have been labeled and received as "sick wife" stories, the presence of the Other of Miho looms large, and it is easy to understand how her unique image in his novels embodies the "foreign land" of Amami or southern island culture. However, some call for caution regarding the reductive method of such a very simplistic I-novel interpretation. Adachibara Tatsuharu 安達原達晴, expressing agreement and drawing from Okamoto Keitoku's ideas on the subject, analyzes the renderings in *Gyoraitei gakusei* 魚雷艇学生 (Motor Torpedo Boat Student, 1985), and points out the following:

> However, I think that when discussing Shimao and "the southern islands," there is a tendency to neglect a clear fact: Shimao's first encounter with the "southern islands" (here, Kakeromajima) predates that with Miho. For the suicide corps member Shimao, more than a place of a fateful meeting with an island daughter, a living space that heals an injured heart and mind, or a ground from which to weave his thought, the southern islands must have been nothing besides a military base.[30]

Takasaka also holds that Shimao's "experience of being a suicide corps commander, in other words, his experience of the good/evil, right/wrong, and love/hate involved in war gave birth to his Japonesia ideas," and attaches importance to two works that Shimao wrote during the war (in 1945) from which we can detect the beginnings of this motif: "Hamabe no uta" はまべのうた (The Song of the Beach) and "Shima no hate" 島の果て (The End of the Island).[31]

We must keep in mind that even Takasaka's article, based on a traditional view of the I-novel, treats Shimao's novels—a fiction discourse—in the same way as diaries and other writings and works to uncover facts, looking at this dimension of the history of scholarship on Shimao's Japonesia writings. However, it appears that moving away from discussions of the undeveloped nature of these writings as theory, a direction

29. Takasaka, "Toshio bungaku ni miru 'Yaponeshia' no hōga to keisei," p. 230.
30. Adachibara, "'Gyoraitei gakusei' to 'Nantō' no hakken," p. 66.
31. Takasaka, "Yaponeshia-ron no kanōsei: 'Mō hitotsu no Nihon' no yukue," p. 267.

is emerging towards discussing Japonesia while using as a reference framework the words and statements of the novelist Shimao as a whole. This is a direction clearly indicated in the above-examined works of Suzuki Naoko and Hanada Toshinori. Furthermore, an article primarily analyzing Shimao's short story "Shima e" by Yasuhara Yoshihiro 安原義博 also tries to go in this direction:

> The "island" motif that appears in Shimao's literature develops anew along with the contradiction that began to reveal itself in his conception of Japonesia. In fact, in "Watashi no naka no ryūkyū-ko" 私の中の琉球弧 [The Ryūkyū Arc in Me], written five years after "Shima e," he reveals the following: "Right now I can say that I do not have an understanding of Amami, even a little bit. Thinking that I had understood it somewhat was an illusion." Here, what is important is that "another Japan" is, as before, possible to express, but the islands have lost their image as a Shangri-La. Actually, Shimao's conception of Japonesia is moving towards the impossibility of knowing "another Japan." However, could we not say that due to this realization, Shimao's literature acquired "islands" as places of literature? We can detect this in the same essay's following passage: "While a dramatic way of saying things, the Ryūkyū Arc appears to me like the potential of Japan and Japanese people's expression. In other words, I feel like here is an open window to the world in the insular creative expressions of Japanese people."[32]

Thinking about the motivation that led to the emergence of the words "islands" and "Japonesia," we can see that they arose along with words and tales that sprung out of Shimao Toshio's body. The questions thus arise of why Shimao Toshio continued to write, as well as why it was possible for him to continue to write. In turn, we wonder why did this have to be "the southern islands," "the Ryūkyū Arc," and "Japonesia?" Was his encounter with the Amami Islands a privileged and absolute experience? Readers of *Shi no toge* already know the story of moving north hand-in-hand with his wife's illness.

The Overlapping and Instability of Japonesia and Emishi

Above, I have tried to consider how the direction towards "another Japan" in Shimao's writings—gradually acquired amid twists and turns—functioned as an initial developmental stage that led to his writing and linguistic rendering. Upon entering the mid-1960s, we again find a tendency in Shimao to understand Amami via internalization. He said that "in a way, Amami and Tohoku have a shared feeling" when pondering "unaffectedness" and "something like loyalty to weakness that is to

32. Yasuhara, "Shimao Toshio 'Shima e' chō genjitsu to Yaponeshia," p. 84.

an excessive extent" based on his sense that "a way of feeling and seeing that has the qualities of Tohoku, where the likes of my father and mother were born," remains in him.[33] Then reconsidering his encounter with Amami, he came to "feel like I had returned to the old era of my hometown," and, delving into this feeling, upon "groping my way around Tohoku via my ancestral land of Fukushima," he is led to imagine that "there is some kind of thing, like that which is at basis of the hearts and minds of old-time Japanese people, flowing as similar emotions between [Tohoku and] the islands of the Ryūkyū Arc."[34] In 1975, Shimao, having left Amami, even declares, "I felt that I had known *a priori* this island, and that by spending time on this island the Tohoku blood in me became weightier."[35] Does this mean that Shimao's internal thoughts created a distant circuit and began to circulate between the southern island of Amami and Fukushima's Minamisōma Odaka?

> For example, a way of feeling and seeing that is like Tohoku, where the likes of my mother and father were born, remains in me. I sometimes consciously lay this bare and look at Amami. When this element functions strongly, I sometimes think that that which is absorbed in Amami is fake. And at the same time, in a way Amami and Tohoku have a shared feeling that jumps over the central regions [of Japan]. This is when I am pondering unaffectedness. A sincere something, something like loyalty to weakness that is to an extent excessive.[36]
>
> I realized that there is some kind of similar feeling flowing between Tohoku and the islands of the Ryūkyū Arc. While this is unrelated to the likes of academic proof, I simply cannot deny sensing this signal. In the background of Tohoku—and this is also an unrestrained way of saying things—the world of the Ainu remains lying in a way that closely resembles a transparency. I had wondered if perhaps this is related to, for example, them being areas that are political backwaters.[37]
>
> When I myself first came to the island, I felt in some way that I had returned to an old era of my hometown. I think that this island is preserving Japan's roots in a more unaffected, or pure, form.
>
> Amami might not be the only place where I feel this. For example, I feel the same kind of thing in Tohoku. My father, mother, and their ancestors are also

33. "Amami o te gakari ni shita ki mama na sōnen" 奄美を手がかりにした気ままな想念, January 1967, STZS vol. 17, pp. 108–9.

34. "Amami, Okinawa no kosei no hakkutsu" 奄美, 沖縄の個性の発掘, April 1970, STZS vol. 17, p. 175.

35. "Kakeroma-jima Nominoura" 加計呂麻島呑之浦, April 1975, STZS vol. 17, p. 319.

36. "Amami o te gakari ni shita ki mama na sōnen," STZS vol. 17, pp. 107–9.

37. "Ryūkyū-ko no shiten kara," January 1967, STZS vol. 17, p. 114.

> from Tohoku. While I myself have not resided there, groping my way around Tohoku via my ancestral land of Fukushima, there is some kind of thing, like that which is at basis of the hearts and minds of old-time Japanese people, flowing as similar emotions between [Tohoku and] the islands of the Ryūkyū Arc, including Amami.[38]

Shimao's discoveries on the Amami Islands in his two periods there—first, the time spent awaiting his death after being transferred to Kakeromajima's Nominoura, and, second, the twenty years spent after moving with his family—as well as his contemplations regarding them appear to have transformed into entirely internal issues on a deep level as time passed and he continued to write about Amami. Wakamatsu Jōtarō supposes that this happened as follows:

> Amid his Amami Islands life from 1955 and later, there was a time when Shimao Toshio tried to see and establish himself on Amami, considering it his hometown. However, on the other hand, he felt that he was a person who could not settle on Amami, perceived himself as having Tohoku Emishi エミシ blood, and felt that he was someone who had lost his hometown. These ended up jostling up against each other in his mind. For example, on the one hand, he would say, "I feel uneasy about limiting my home to only Tohoku" ("Furusato o kataru" ふるさとを語る), call himself "a person who has lost his hometown," and remark, "However, there is nowhere that I can call my hometown." On the other hand, he would also say that in the dark depths of his heart and mind he "hears heavy and low murmurs of Tohoku" ("Futatsu no nekko no aida de" 二つの根っこのあいだで). It seems that he ultimately constructed the concept of Japonesia as a bridge between Amami and [his] "hometown," in other words, between southwestern Japan and Tohoku (northeastern) Japan. As far as I am aware, Shimao first used the word "Japonesia" in his "Miyamoto Tsuneichi cho 'Nihon no ritō'" 宮本常一著『日本の離島』[Miyamoto Tsuneichi's *Japan's Remote Islands*], which he published in October 1960…
>
> Around 1962, when he was forty-five years old, Shimao read *Kitakami sankei ni seizonsu* 北上山系に生存す [Surviving in the Kitakami Mountains], which was edited by Ōmura Ryō 大牟羅良, who was engaging in local activities in remote Iwate villages. This is a collection of reports on the lives of eleven people largely in their early twenties. It appears that therein Shimao saw and sympathized with the sure-footedness of their daily lives and acquired hints for his creative activities. This can be gathered not only from his "Ōmura Ryō hen 'Kitakami sankei ni seizonsu'" 大牟羅良編『北上山系に生存す』[Ōmura

38. "Amami, Okinawa no kosei no hakkutsu," April 1970, STZS vol. 17, p. 175.

> Ryō, ed., Surviving in the Kitakami Mountains] but also from when he touched upon this book in *Bungei jihyō* 文芸時評 [Literary Comment], which he published four years later. Partially due to such reading, he became more strongly aware of the Tohoku Japan *emishi* blood in him.
>
> The year 1967 was the one hundredth anniversary of the Meiji Restoration and in parts of central Japan there were related events. In contrast, Shimao deepened his ideas regarding Japonesia and the Ryūkyū Arc, which very much took into account the objections of the people of Okinawa ("Uchinanchū" ウチナンチユー) and the people of Tohoku ("Emishi"), in other words, of the two "non-Yamato" in the southwest and northeast.[39]

Wakamatsu understands Shimao's return to Odaka (in Minamisōma, Fukushima; his ancestral land) and his discovery of "Tohoku" there as something with a weight that was not less than his experience on Amami Ōshima, and aims to extract Shimao's desire to draw closer to this place and establish his own hometown. We can easily see that Shimao's desire was motivated by his self-identification as a "person who has lost his hometown." Doesn't this moment that led to him realizing his own faults show us the almost entirely intimidatory nature of the experience of having no other method besides calling the southern islands "Japonesia?" Those "southern islands" thrust in front of Shimao must have been an inarticulable and unreachable foreign land from which he was estranged, and this activated, in the form of the novelist Shimao Toshio, a power that actually for this very reason continually pulled him towards linguistic expression.

"Japonesia" must have come together with "Emishi" to form his expressive style. While appearing as the will to search out "another Japan" that is in Japan, it was designed in a way that pushed the centrifugal force that continues to be called an I-novel in an opposite direction from this. In other words, we should measure the entirety of Shimao Toshio's expressions in terms of the drive of words that could not help but continually seek a foreign land that is not located "here."

(Translated by Dylan Luers Toda)

39. Wakamatsu, "Shimao Toshio ni okeru 'inaka': Sono ishiki no hen'yō."

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Abbreviation

STZS *Shimao Toshio zenshū* 島尾敏雄全集. 17 vols. Shōbunsha, 1982–1983.

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