“Colonial Ethnography and the Writing of the Exotic: Nishikawa Mitsuru in Taiwan”

Faye Yuan Kleeman

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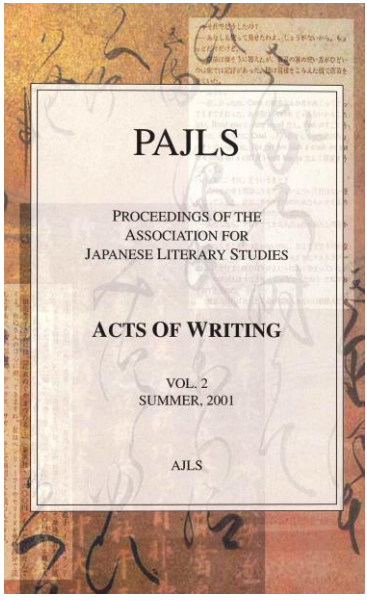

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COLONIAL ETHNOGRAPHY AND THE WRITING OF THE EXOTIC: NISHIKAWA MITSURU IN TAIWAN

FAYE YUAN KLEEMAN

Nishikawa Mitsuru (西川満, 1908-1999) was born to an upper-class, titled family in Wakamatsu City, in the Aizu region, in 1908. His family moved to Taiwan when he was two, where his father joined the family business in running the Shôwa Mine Company. Except for six years (1927-1933) when he studied French literature at Waseda University, Nishikawa lived in Taiwan until the end of the World War II. From 1933 to 1941, Nishikawa served as the editor-in-chief of the literary/cultural section (*bungei-ran* [文芸欄]) of the *Taiwan Daily News* (*Taiwan nichinichi shinbun* [台湾日日新聞]), the government-sanctioned, semi-official daily newspaper on the island. Throughout his pre-war career, the ever prolific Nishikawa published 10 poetry collections, funded and edited 18 different poetry and literary magazines,[1] penned numerous critical essays, and published several novels and many short stories.[2] In his autobiography, Nishikawa revealed that his father had named him "Mitsuru" (or "Man" in *on'yomi*) to commemorate Manchuria, where the father spent his youth. Having just died in 1999, Nishikawa's eventful life parallels modern, 20th century Japanese history, full of glories and travesties. When the war ended, Nishikawa, together with Hamada Hayao, a colleague from *Bungei Taiwan*, was listed as a major cultural war criminal and was put under house arrest to await trial.

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[1] See Appendix 1, "List of magazines edited by Nishikawa Mitsuru" (*Nishikawa Mitsuru henshû zasshirui ichiran*) in Nakajima and Kawahara, vol. 2, 485-490.

[2] See note 4. Eight novels, including *Madame Rika* (*Rika fujin*), *The Chronicle of the Orange Fort* (*Sekikan ki*) and *Taiwan Cross-Island Railway* (*Taiwan sôkan tetsudô*), were published when Nishikawa was in Taiwan. Most short stories appeared in *Bungei Taiwan*. Some of the works have been reissued after the war by the publisher Nigen no hoshi sha.

From 1933 to the end of the war, Nishikawa was the most influential civilian figure in the colonial cultural circle. His cultural section of the newspaper provided a forum for Nishikawa and many other writers, both native and Japanese, to publish their writings, express their opinions, and shape public taste. With the backing of his family's fortune, Nishikawa also founded several magazines and published numerous artistically produced poetry collections, novels and short stories through two of his own publishing houses, Maso shobô and Nikô sanbô. One of these literary journals, *Bungei Taiwan* (文芸台湾, inaugurated in 1940, the year corresponding to the two thousand and six hundredth year of the imperial reign) became the most important literary journal of colonial Taiwan. It competed fiercely for readership with *Taiwan Bungaku* (台湾文学), founded by Zhang Wenhuan (張文環, 1909-1978). The general consensus is that Nishikawa's *Bungei Taiwan* was a place for upper-middle-class Japanese dilettante writers to indulge themselves in crafting exotic and romantic poems and tales while Zhang Wenhuan's *Taiwan bungaku* represented a nativist literary movement with a social mission, and depicted the working class with realism.[3]

[3] The standard discourse in Taiwan has tended to juxtapose the two as nationalist vs. colonialist, that is, positioning Zhang Wenhuan's *Taiwan Bungaku* as the one that represented native identity and resistance while identifying Nishikawa's *Bungei Taiwan* as a mouthpiece for the colonial government and a bastion of the aristocratic, well-financed Japanese colonialists, where they could amuse their literary pretensions. Fujii Shôzô argues that in fact both journals were racially well integrated, with both Japanese and native writers. In fact, Nishikawa put considerable effort into recruiting new young native writers and at one point chastised Zhang Wenhuan for not doing enough in this respect. Fujii attributes the rivalry to a personal antipathy between Zhang and Nishikawa and, more importantly, to competition for readership and market share. I would add that stylistic differences also contributed to the friction, with Nishikawa's unrelenting insistence on a romantic, nostalgic, and aesthetic representation of Taiwan at loggerheads with Zhang's insistence that a social realism representing the working class of peasants, factory workers, and small businessmen and the hardships they suffered under the colonial rule was the only way to create true literature. See Fujii Shôzô, 25-75. Also see various debates on realism vs. romanticism in *Bungei Taiwan* and *Taiwan Bungaku*.

DOMESTICATING EXOTICISM: THE CRITICAL DISCOURSE ON NISHIKAWA MITSURU REVISITED

In both Taiwan and Japan, Nishikawa remains a controversial figure. Like many other writers of the colonial period, Nishikawa Mitsuru's literary legacy came under scrutiny several times during the pre-war and postwar period. The pre-war critical discourse is summarized in Nakajima Toshio's "Nishikawa Mitsuru to Nihon tôjiki no Taiwan bungaku—Nishikawa Mitsuru no bungakukan" (Nishikawa Mitsuru and Taiwanese Literature under Japanese Rule—Nishikawa Mitsuru's Concept of Literature).[4] Nakajima traces the pre-war discourse on Taiwanese literature by Nishikawa Mitsuru's colleagues and rivals. This critical discourse, constituted primarily by authors who published in *Bungei Taiwan* and *Taiwan Bungaku*, reveals that Nishikawa's authority as an arbiter of literary taste, enhanced by his privileged financial standing and cultural elite status, was often on shaky ground. His colleagues at *Bungei Taiwan* praised him for his poetic flair and his romantic bent. For example, Long Yingzong (竜瑛宗, b. 1911), who was often categorized as a romantic novelist himself, commented on Nishikawa's romantic leanings:

> On the whole, yearning for the past and fantasy are the two main characteristics of Romanticism. In this sense, Nishikawa Mitsuru's literature belongs to this category. What exactly is it that he wants to make out of his literature? It is neither life nor humanism. Only beauty. Among contemporary writers, there are not many that match his insatiable appetite for beauty.[5]

But his rivals faulted his writings as mere exoticism that did not reflect the reality of Taiwanese society. They accused him of being authoritarian and aristocratic in his dealings with his contemporaries and denigrated his works as no more than exotic word games of the leisure class. This discourse, identifying Nishikawa as a decadent Romanticist,

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[4] Shimomura *et al.*, 407-432.

[5] *Ibid.*, 419.

was inaugurated by his contemporaries and reinforced many times throughout the pre-war period. This criticism was so well established that even his own colleagues regurgitated it.[6] Postwar studies of Nishikawa's literature, done mostly by Japanese scholars, often affirmed this thesis.[7] On the other hand, there are almost no postwar studies of Nishikawa by Taiwanese researchers.[8] For about three decades it was considered taboo to either talk about the occupation period or discuss literature written in the Japanese language. Someone like Nishikawa, who had a significant impact on pre-war Taiwanese literature, was ignored in the postwar canonization of Chinese/Taiwanese literary history.

Of eight major postwar literary histories published both in Taiwan and mainland China, only Ye Shitao (葉石涛) and Liang Mingxiong (梁明雄) briefly mentioned Nishikawa Mitsuru and *Bungei Taiwan*.[9] Though *Bungei Taiwan* was the longest-running literary journal (38 issues altogether) published in pre-war Taiwan, Ye and Liang play down its influence in their accounts and insist that it only reached a small group of Taiwanese intellectuals who knew Japanese, with very little impact on the mass audience. They both repeat the romantic/exotic idioms favored by their predecessors.[10] It seems that when discussing

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[6] See Yang Yunping (楊雲萍) and Huang Deshi (黃得時).

[7] Major studies by Kondô Masami and Matsunaga Masayoshi are both negative in their assessments.

[8] Taiwanese studies of Nishikawa Mitsuru did not appear until 1980, with Zhang Liangze blazing the trail. See "Nishikawa Mitsuru kenkyû bunken mokuroku," in Nakajima and Kawahara, vol. 2.

[9] Four from Taiwan: Ye (1987), Xu Junya (許俊雅)'s *Taiwan wenxue sanlun* (台湾文学散論, 1994), Liang Mingxiong's *Rijushiqi Taiwan xiaoshuo yanjiu* (日據時期台灣新文學運動的研究, 1996), and Peng Ruijin (彭瑞金)'s *Taiwan xinwenxue yundong sishinian* (台湾新文學運動四十年); and four from China: Bao Hengxing (包恒新)'s *Taiwan xiandai wenxue jianshu* (台湾現代文学簡述, 1988), Gong Zhong (公仲) and Wang Yisheng (汪義生)'s *Taiwan xinwenxueshi chubian* (台湾新文学史初編, 1989), Gu Jitang (古継堂)'s *Taiwan xiaoshuo fazhanshi* (台湾小説発展史, 1988) and Huang Chongtian (黃重添)'s *Taiwan xinwenxue gaiguan* (台湾新文学概観, 1986, 1990).

[10] Ye, 60-61; Liang, 263-68.

Nishikawa Mitsuru, there is no escape from conceptual terms associated with the foreign and exotic, such as *ikoku jôsho* (異国情緒) and *ikoku shumi* (異国趣味), and categories of analysis such as *ikoku bungaku* (異国文学).[11]

My concern in this study, however, is not the issue of canonicity *per se*. Rather, I would like to examine the "romanticism" and "exoticism" that are constantly associated with Nishikawa Mitsuru and situate them in a larger context of romantic colonialism that formed part of the Japanese colonial discourse in the thirties and the forties. In particular, I will consider how the idea of the South (expressed as *nanpô* [南方], *nantô* [南島], *uchi/soto nan'yô* [南洋], and, in a more literary vein, *nankai* [南海] or *nankoku* [南国]) that arose with imperial expansion was normalized through literary and artistic representations.

After graduating from the French Literature Department of Waseda University, Nishikawa was unsure about whether to go back to the colony or stay in Japan. However, at the urging of his mentor, Yoshie Takamatsu (吉江高松), he returned to Taiwan in 1933. Later, Nishikawa recalled that Yoshie had encouraged him to "devote my whole life to [creating] a regional literature that rivals French provincial literature;" the advice "convinced me to return to Taiwan."[12] Yoshie composed a poem for Nishikawa upon his return to the island: [13]

The South,	*Nanpô wa hikari no*
Source of the light.	*minamoto*
Gives us order, joy, and	*wareware ni chitsujo to*
splendor.	*kanki to karei to wo ataeru*

[11] In fact, in literary studies, the term "*ikoku*" was applied most often to the West (*seiyô* [西洋]) and the South (*nan'yô*) but rarely to literature written about or on the continent or the Korean Peninsula. A certain psychological distancing is at work here to determine what is and is not exotic enough warrant the use of the term.

[12] See "The Abridged Biography of Nishikawa Mitsuru " (*Nishikawa Mitsuru ryakureki*) in Appendix 3 of Nakajima and Kawahara 1998, vol. 2, 509-512.

[13] Fujii Shôzô, 105.

Nishikawa took his teacher's words to heart and the poem gave him a sense of mission, a mission to cultivate the barren cultural scene on the island and to establish a distinct brand of Southern literature (*nanpô bungaku* [南方文学]) as a subgenre of colonial literature (*gaichi bungaku* [外地文学]), intended to counter the metropolitan literature (*naichi bungaku* [内地文学]).[14]

One characteristic that distinguishes Nishikawa's writings from those of many other Japanese expatriate writers is the absence of colonial nostalgia. Nishikawa writes about Taiwan, and nothing but Taiwan. Despite spending seven years in Tokyo studying, the stage of his fictional works is always set on the island and only rarely are the stories limited to Japanese characters alone. Unlike many Japanese writers in the colonies, who wrote of their yearning for and nostalgia toward *naichi*, Nishikawa is relatively devoid of this sentiment. In addition to his numerous works of poetry, short stories, and novels, Nishikawa was particularly involved in a body of work, which I call "ethno-literature." For example, he collected and rewrote Taiwanese folktales in *Kareitô minwashû* (華麗島民話集), and produced collections of verse and prose on folk religion and customs such as *Maso* (媽祖), *Taiwan fûdoki* (台湾風土記), and *Taiwan kenpûroku* (台湾顕風録)(see fig. 1). These were not realistic, matter-of-fact documentations of local custom; rather they were written in a style that combined objective observations with highly imaginative, colorful and ornate poetic language. Again, it is easy to dismiss these works, as Kawamura Minato has done, as Orientalist

[14] In fact, Nishikawa was ambivalent about whether Taiwanese literature should be considered part of metropolitan literature, an extension of *naichi* into the colonies that is termed *naichi enchôshugi* (内地延長主義), or a separate literary endeavor with unique characteristics deriving from the distinctive physical and cultural environment. He seems to have been uneasy about *naichi* writers intruding upon his position as an authoritative voice of the colony. In "Shintaiseika no gaichi bunka" (新体制下の外地文化, 1940), he compared the level of cultural support from the central government to Manchuria and Taiwan, and called for more understanding and material support from *naichi*, but in "Gaichi bungaku no shôrei" (外地文学の奨励, 1942) he complained bitterly that the *gaichi* (colonial) literary award should not be given to tourists and visiting writers from Japan, but should only be awarded to those who lived and wrote in the colonies.

exotica.[15] My goal here, however, is to broaden the scope of the critical evaluation on Nishikawa from such isolated, evaluative terms and instead, situate his work in the larger context of the Japanese colonial romanticism and ethnographical study before and during the war.

Before addressing directly the nature of these productions, I would like to contextualize them with some information on the development of the discipline of ethnology or folklore studies (*minzokugaku* [民俗学]) in Japan. It is only through a consideration of this intellectual milieu that we can understand Nishikawa's vision of the South.

YANAGITA KUNIO AND ONE NATION ETHNOLOGY (*IKKOKU MINZOKUGAKU* [一国民俗学])

Over the past decade, colonial and postcolonial studies have repeatedly cast new light on issues that were long taken for granted, sometimes leading to a new paradigm. The studies by Koyasu Nobukuni and Lee Yeounsuk (イ・ヨンスク [李妍淑]) on the pre-war Kokugo/Nihongo debate revealed the relationship between colonial language policy and the formation of Japanese linguistic identity. James Fujii's strategic reading of Natsume Sôseki's *Kokoro*, juxtaposing it with Sôseki's records of trips to colonies such as Manchuria and Korea in *Mankan tokorodokoro* (満韓ところどころ), calls into question the canonization of this text as an expression of modernity while ignoring the Asian expansionism that was a central part of this modernity.[16]

Recently, new scrutiny has been directed toward Japanese ethnology, in particular the scholarship of Yanagita Kunio (柳田国男, 1875-1962) and his followers, with critics such as Murai Osamu, Koyasu Nobukuni, and Kawamura Minato examining their writings in the context of colonialism.[17] The implication of these postcolonial readings of

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[15] See "'Minami' e mukau bungaku: Nihon kindaibungaku ni okeru nanpô," in Kawamura 1994, 59-66.

[16] See James Fujii.

[17] Mariko Asano Tamanoi argues from the gender perspective against some contemporary folklorists, such as Miyata Noboru, who categorize Yanagita

Yanagita will be discussed later, but I would like to first consider the role played by Yanagita Kunio, often credited as the founder of *minzokugaku*, in the formation of a Japanese national identity during the late twenties. Yanagita started out as a young romantic poet, associating with authors such as Tayama Katai and Shimazaki Tôson and publishing in the preeminent literary magazine of the day, *Bungakkai*. Yanagita turned to folklore studies after resigning from a prestigious position as Chief Secretary of the House of Peers (*kizokuin shoki kanchô* [貴族書記官長]) in 1919.[18]

Yanagita's career as an ethnologist is identified with several themes, beginning with his discourse during the 1910s on the *yamabito* (山人) or mountain inhabitants, supposedly remnants of the original inhabitants of Japan. His focus shifted in the mid-twenties to the common people or *jômin* (常民), a prototypical agrarian community that he believed constituted the core of the Japanese people and the locus of their Japanese identity. He first became fascinated with the idea of the South during a trip to Okinawa in 1920, but his interest in this topic intensified in the early forties and lasted through the rest of his life, culminating in his last published work, *Kaijô no michi* (海上の道 [The Sea Route], 1961), in which he asserted the Southern origin of the Japanese people and their arrival in Japan via a marine route.

Through tireless fieldwork, collecting folktales and recording local customs; editing journals and founding research groups and associations devoted to local history, Yanagita was able to establish *minzokugaku* as a legitimate academic discipline and even suggested that the discipline might achieve the status of a "new national learning" (*shinkokugaku* [新国学]).[19] Despite his close ties to Korea (he

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Kunio as a progressive early advocate of the liberation of women, but this debate goes beyond the scope of the current paper.

[18] The reason for the resignation was over a disagreement with the Speaker of the House Tokugawa Ietachi.

[19] Koyasu, 51-2. The homonyms (with different *kanji*) *minzokugaku* (民俗学 [the study of folklore and folk customs]) and *minzokugaku* (民族学 [the study of ethnic groups]) are to be distinguished. In the context of Yanagita Kunio and Orikuchi Shinobu's work, *minzokugaku* 民俗学 refers strictly to the study of

participated in the annexation of Korea and served as a colonial bureaucrat involved in agrarian policy) and his involvement with the South in both a personal and an official capacity (as Japanese representative to the League of Nations, he served as a Commissioner to the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands Committee stationed in Geneva, the headquarters of the Leagues of Nations) his research rarely extended to either of these regions.[20] For Yanagita, the southern frontier of Japan stopped at Okinawa. He resolutely resisted a comparative approach, arguing that it was still premature.

This inward-looking tendency has prompted scholars to label Yanagita's brand of *minzokugaku* "one nation ethnology" (*ikkoku minzokuron*)[21] or sometimes "insular nation ethnology" (*shimaguni minzokugaku* [島国民族学]). Despite Yanagita's reluctance to reach beyond the boundaries of the Japanese archipelago in his own research, in reality, ethnological research and fieldwork were flourishing in many parts of the colonies, often carried on by Yanagita's own disciples and followers.[22] In an interview (*zadankai*) in *Minzoku Taiwan* (民俗台湾), entitled "The Establishment of a Great East Asia Ethnology and the mission of *Minzoku Taiwan* ("Daitôa minzokugaku no kensetsu to *Minzoku Taiwan* no shimei" [台東亜民俗学と民俗台湾の使命]) Yanagita pointed out that Taiwan is an ideal laboratory (*keikoba*

Japanese folklore. *Minzokugaku* 民族学, on the other hand, is a later term derived from Western cultural anthropology and is almost interchangeable with *jinruigaku* (人類学); during the pre-war period and immediately after the war, it often referred to studies and fieldwork on peoples and cultures outside of Japan. See Kawamura 1997, 138-140.

[20] Throughout his extensive collected works in 36 volumes, Korea is mentioned only twice.

[21] The term was used to criticize Yanagita's narrowly defined ethnology of Japan; however, Yanagita himself used it in a positive light. Kawamura 1996, 9-10.

[22] In Taiwan, the journal *Minzoku Taiwan* was mainly run by Kanazeki Takeo (金関丈夫, 1897-1983) and Nakamura Tetsu (中村哲, b. 1912), professors at Taipei Imperial University. *Chôsen minzoku* was founded in 1933 as the organization journal for the Chôsen minzoku gakkai.

[稽古場]) for the development of a Greater East Asian Ethnology that would encompass Japan's colonial empire:[23]

> In Korea we have Akiba-kun [Akiba Takashi (秋葉隆)] and I think he will agree with the idea. In Manchuria, Ômachi-kun [Ômachi Tokuzô (大間知篤三)] is there and I am sure he most likely would wish the same thing."

The construction of a Greater East Asian Ethnology, a concept that paralleled the political ideology at that time, thus was conceptualized and carried out with the tacit encouragement, albeit without any direct involvement, of the father of Japanese native ethnology.[24] To be fair to Yanagita, he was certainly not naïve in term of politics, being a politician himself. In the same *taidan* he also exhorted the ethnographers in the field not to be discouraged. "Be patient" he said, "and the politicians will come around and use the results of our research. And because of that, it is better that we go (to the colonies), using methodology that will relate facts accurately."[25]

Taiwan was an inviting object of study for the Japanese ethnographers. Geographically, it is situated at the eastern edge of East Asia and at the northern end (excluding the "Japanese" Ryûkyû Islands) of an archipelago stretching through the Philippines to Southeast Asia; for the Japanese, it was the gateway to Japan's new ambitions in the South Pacific. Culturally, it was a mixture of continental Han culture and the primitive aboriginal inhabitants who were, despite significant internal cultural and linguistic differences, collectively referred to as "Takasago-zoku" (高砂族) by the Japanese ethnographers. The Han culture of Taiwan shared with Korea and traditional Japan a settled, rice-based agriculture and a continental culture defined by the use of Chinese

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[23] Yanagita 1943, 4-6.

[24] For a discussion of other aspects of wartime Japanese ethnology and figures such as Takata Yasuma, see Kevin Doak's recent article, which discusses the conceptual foundation and institutionalization of ethnology in and after wartime.

[25] Oguma, 32.

characters and the canonical status of the Chinese classics. The aboriginal culture of Taiwan was predominantly Austronesian, sharing characteristics with the native cultures of the Philippines, the South Pacific and the Malaysian-Indonesian archipelago. This was the closest example to Japan of the Southern culture that Yanagita came to see as the ultimate origin of the Japanese people.

Japan's encounter with and its imagination of the South can be traced back as early as 17th century, when Japanese employed as soldiers and tradesmen by the East India Company formed expatriate communities throughout South and Southeast Asia. One of the earlier records of the South Pacific and the "barbarians" inhabiting that distant region is found in Suzuki Tsunenori (鈴木経勲)'s *An Actual Record of the South Pacific Adventure* (*Nan'yô tanken jikki* [南島探検実記], 1892), in which Suzuki documented his trip to the Marshall Islands to investigate an incident wherein Japanese fishermen were attacked by the islanders. But the aestheticization of the "South" is best captured in the images created by the iconoclastic anthropologist and artist Hijikata Hisakatsu (土方久功, 1900-1977). His beautifully rendered paintings, drawings, sculptures, and masks as well as the tools he collected from the islanders preserve a unique view of the native culture (see fig. 2).[26] Hijikata was an academically trained artist who, after graduating from Tokyo Art School (Tôkyô bijutsu gakkô [東京美術学校]) in the mid-twenties, spent more than a decade living among the locals on the South Pacific Islands.[27] The series of images of the South Pacific produced by Hijikata typify Japanese conceptions of the Tropics and came to be treasured as high art. His highly personal representations share much with the style of Western artists such as Gauguin and Picasso. These exoticized depictions present an escapist paradise, a tranquil refuge from the bustle and noise of modern Japan.

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[26] His collections from the South Pacific islands were donated to and preserved at the Department of Anthropology at the Tokyo Imperial University (now Tokyo University).

[27] Hijikata left for the South Pacific islands in 1929 and stayed there for a decade, until 1939, without returning to Japan. From 1939 to 1942 he shuttled back and forth between Japan and the islands.

Hijikata's vibrant and colorful depictions of a romantic South serve a specific discourse of the newly nascent ethnology (*minzokugaku* [民俗学]), one that attempts to inform the metropolitan masses of the empire's newly and rapidly expanding cultural and racial acquisitions. Nishikawa Mitsuru's exoticized portrayal of the tropical colony of Taiwan, represented by his meticulously documented and categorized images of objects, customs, and everyday life, also served this new discipline. Nishikawa always emphasized that his journal *Bungei Taiwan* was not just a literary magazine but also a general cultural magazine (*sôgô bunkashi* [総合文化誌]) that served as an nexus for productive dialogues between culture, art, and literary and ethnographical writings. Articles on European, Japanese, and local art scenes regularly shared the pages of each issue with reproductions of woodblock prints, etchings, sketches, and paintings that featured local and foreign artists of the past and present.

Almost all of the books Nishikawa published contained (sometimes elaborate) illustrations, mostly woodprints done by his *Bungei Taiwan* colleagues Ikeda Yasaburô and Tatsuishi Tesshin. One of the prime examples is *Taiwan dokuhon* (台湾読本), the Taiwan Primer, which assembled various images culled from the magazine *Bungei Taiwan*'s illustrations and accompanied them with short essays. It served simultaneously as a poetic ethnographical exploration and a tour guide for people who wanted to know more about the island or travelers to the colony. The visual and verbal texts played upon each other to denaturalize the island and a new discourse of the colony is reinscribed and articulated for the metropole. The highly organized taxonomy of images, from native plantations, animals, and insects to famous spots, architecture, religious practices, and the customs of daily life, were not merely an innocent artistic representation of the colony; they also reveal the colonialist Nishikawa's reading and construction of his surrogate homeland.

Conclusion

In contrast with Hijikata Hisakatsu's vibrant, subjective, transcultural mode of representation of the Pacific Islands, the South in *Bungei Taiwan* and *Taiwan dokuhon* clearly is a different kind of

ethnographical portrayal. Their rather detached, object-oriented, and collective representation is closely associated with the ethno-pedagogical function which mediated (or at least attempted to mediate) the knowledge gap between Japan and its colonies. By constructing and propagating portrayals of different cultures, in particular the tropics hitherto unfamiliar to an increasingly imperialist Japan, Nishikawa is actively engaged in organizing and structuring the social and cultural environment that he lived in and experienced. Indeed, no representation (of the other) under an asymmetrical power relation is banal or innocent, and certainly not even Hijikata's works can be free of the power dynamic of representation.

Hijikata Hisakatsu's creations, representing an idyllic, tranquil South, were celebrated as superior works of art, whereas Nishikawa's school of aesthetic-ethnographic portrayal was totally obliterated after the war. The discursive space of the Japanese postwar colonial discourse privileged a personal, apolitical, non-ideological, aesthetic representation (such as that of Hijikata) while relegating the institutionalized, collective, pedagogical, ethnographical representations (i.e. *Bungei Taiwan*) into the "twilight zone in Japan's postwar epistemological map."[28] Postwar Japan has forsaken the collective memory of this period (except in the case of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, where a public, collective memory was forged and reinforced through countless victims' memoirs, fiction, drama and annual commemorative ceremonies) and opted instead for an internalized, private, personal form of grief and remembrance. In other words, all the war experiences, and particularly the colonial memories, were transferred from collective, public, institutional experiences into private, individualized, personal ones.

This is precisely why the cultural historian Kawamura Minato questions Katô Norihiro (加藤典洋, b. 1948)'s contention in his controversial book *Haisengoron* (敗戦後論 [Discourse on the aftermath of the war defeat])[29] that Japan should atone for the death of its own citizens before apologizing to other Asian victims. Kawamura's

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[28] See the similar discussion on Tanabe Hisao and his Greater East Asian Musicology (*Daitôa ongakugaku* [大東亜音楽]) in Hosokawa.

[29] See Katô; also Kawamura's rebuttal in Kawamura 1998, 227-266.

criticism of Yanagita (which itself occasioned heavy criticism) is less about Yanagita's complicity in the creation of a Greater East Asian Ethnology *per se* than the discipline's introversion following the de-colonization process. As Kawamura points out, the Greater East Asian Ethnology was an experiment, just like many pan-Asiatic imperial projects that failed and ended with the end of the empire. Rather, he faults the exclusionist stance of Yanagita and the whole field of *minzokugaku* in reinforcing and valorizing the idea of "*ikkoku minzokuron*," even though it meant implicitly rejecting the ethnographers who returned from research in the colonies (*fukuin* [復員]). In his words: "Together with the water of the illusory Greater East Asian Ethnology, they threw out the baby called 'East Asian Comparative Ethnology [大東亜比較民俗学].'" He concludes that the problem with "the 'colonialism' in the Japanese native ethnology is not that it tried to establish *minzokugaku* in the colonies but that it attempted to purge all shadows of the colonies from the world of *minzokugaku*" so that they would not have to deal with internal criticism of their own complicity in colonialism.[30]

Fifty years ago, the French literary historian Raymond Schwab maintained that colonialism shaped literary (and I would like to add, visual) representation. He defined Romanticism as "Europe's response to the overwhelming experience of finding its civilization not unique but merely one of many."[31] Nishikawa's journey from a poet writing in the genre of French Symbolism to an appropriator of colonial culture to a romantic/ethnographic writer to his fascination with religion and the occult in his final days echoes that of Yanagita's life in many ways. Another, perhaps even more apt comparison, may be made to a contemporary of Nishikawa, the founder of Arts and Crafts Movement (*mingei undô* [民芸運動]) Yanagi Sôetsu (a.k.a. Yanagi Muneyoshi [柳宗悦], 1889-1961). As one of the members of the humanistic art and literary movement Shirakabaha (白樺派), Yanagi Sôetsu first studied Western art and was well-versed in Western art theory. When a trip took him to Korea, he "discovered" the artless beauty of the everyday objects

[30] Kawamura 1997, 138.

[31] Cited in Fulford and Kitson, 9-10.

of Korean peasant life, which he construed as the beauty that old Japan had lost.

The goal of these cultural arbiters was essentially to recuperate the illusive lost past that had been engulfed by the onslaught of modernity and the colonialism that came with it. Yanagita sought value in a pre-modern agricultural communal entity called *jômin* (common people); Yanagi Sôetsu paid homage to "utilitarian beauty"(*yô no bi* [用の美]); Nishikawa promoted his "beauty of decadence and ruin" (*haikyo no bi* [廃虚の美]) in the tropics. If the desire to capture the lost (or the about to be lost) lies at the root of all Romantic literature, it should be no surprise that Iguchi Tokio proclaims that "Japanese ethnology is literature" (*Nihon minzokugaku wa "bungaku" de aru*)."[32] In a sense, the "lost past" was reinstated to buttress the old imperialist hierarchies between core and periphery. And it is precisely because of these gestures to the "lost" and the "past," signaling something that no longer exists and hence present no threat to imperial power, that these ideas could be promoted and circulated throughout the empire.

In assessing Nishikawa Mitsuru and his works, the critic must go beyond superficial codewords like "exoticism" and "romanticism," to grapple with issues such as representation (and self-representation), authority, authenticity, mimicry and Diaspora, all common topics in the discourse of post-colonial theorists. But this interrogation of Nishikawa must be grounded in the specific conditions of the precise historical moment in which he lived. Like Yanagi Sôetsu's nostalgic Orientalism, his works constitute part of a larger discourse narrating the other. In the course of developing into a full-fledged academic discipline, Japanese ethnology also fulfilled the desire to acquire knowledge about the colonized people. Both Hijikata Hisakatsu's "high art" and the more mundane, even "trivial" forms of visual expression presented by Nishikawa Mitsuru, when put into historical context, reveal that seemingly objective and apolitical arenas such as art and ethnography are by no means neutral. Knowledge is power, art is a form of knowledge, and thus art is power. By situating Nishikawa Mitsuru's literary and aesthetic production within the framework of the romantic colonialism of

[32] Iguchi, 126-29.

Japan's 1930s and 1940s, we can appreciate the significance of historical context in the cultural production of Japanese colonial representations.

Figure 1. Woodblock print illustrations from *Taiwan ehon.*

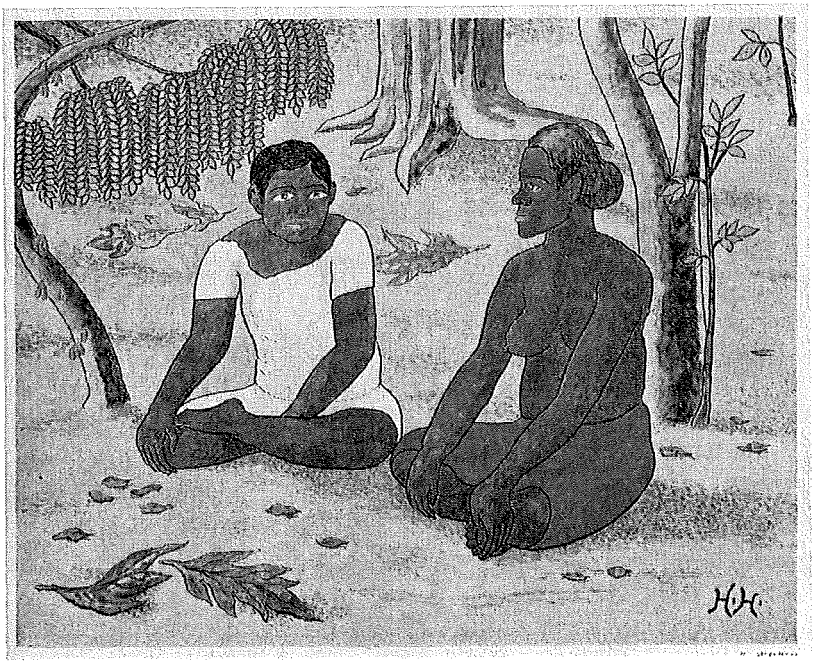

Figure 2. Hijikata Hisakatsu, *An easy day on the Southern Island*, watercolor. From *Hijikata Hisakatsu zen chosakushu* (Tokyo: San'ichi shobô, 1992).

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