

*Cover Page*

**The View of Tokyo from the Blue Japanesia Island  
Tokyo, Soup, Blanket and Travelogue**



Interview: Satoshi Arai and Shirotama Hitsujiya

Illustrations and Calligraphy: Erika Kobayashi

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The view of the outer rim of the volcanic crater of the caldera from the Todaisho Shrine  
(September 9, 2014)

## Wrapped in a Aogashima Blanket

Aogashima is not an easy place to visit; it is situated in the southernmost and remote island of Izu archipelago. Both by sea route or air, the weather pivots the safe arrival to the island and communication with the islanders many days in advance on the weather condition was necessary. Even on the day of departure early in the morning at Haneda Airport it was necessary to call Mr. Satoshi Arai, who participated in the interview, concerning the present weather condition who so kindly gave us advice.

For example last year on September 7th, I flew from Haneda to Hachijo Island and took an eight seater helicopter to the Aogashima heliport arriving safely, however, immediately after a typhoon hit which kept us indoors at the inn until noon the following day. After the typhoon, the windows of the elementary school were broken; the islanders were busy restoring their homes and clearing the roads.

I could not help out with anything, but the experience was unforgettable, as how the village mayor busy cleaning the town office took the time out to speak with me, the Aogashima shochu brewery letting me taste their 12 different shochu brands and afterwards walking back to the inn a bit tipsy looking up and seeing the beautiful moon or the island cats lazily relaxing around the only store on the island. And of course one cannot forget the mother of Aogashima-Ya Inn preparing delicious meals everyday with the local products.

Mr. Tsuneichi Miyamoto, a folklorist, whom I respect, suggests that as a part of a field study to try all different kinds of food that Aogashima offers, which I believe I've accomplished. Another aim was giving something back to the islander. Well, though small, I would like to give this booklet to the 170 some islanders.

Shirotama Hitsujiya

Director

Tokyo, Soup, Blanket and Travelogue

## 2015 New Year Interview: Satoshi Arai and Shirotama Hitsujiya

The written interview in this booklet is a phone conversation between Arai from Aogashima and Hitsujiya from Ekoda.

The illustrations were drawn by Erika Kobayashi in September last year, when she went to Aogashima with Hitsujiya.

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### **Satoshi Arai**

Satoshi was born and raised in Aogashima, one of the smallest villages in Japan also known as the 'solitary island in mid-ocean' is located in the southernmost island of Izu Islands which is one of the nine islands with residents. His father was the central figure in establishing the preservation society for the two of the island's traditional arts "Kanju-Daiko Drum" and "Folk Dance". Influenced by his father, Satoshi enjoyed playing the taiko drum and singing the old folk songs from his childhood. At the age of 15 he went to Tokyo to enter high school with some 2,000 students, where the junior high from the island only had 5 classmates. He wanted to become No. 1 at something, and decided to join the Japanese drum club with zero members and spent a fruitful student life. From the age of 20, he became an independent taiko drum player, in the improvisation style and he performed with a variety of jazz artists. Upon marriage in 2011, he returned to Aogashima. He currently works at his family business, Aogashima auto repair shop; doing maintenance on cars, machinery and operates and maintains septic tanks a part of the environment maintenance business, as well as other businesses including running the Aogashima rent a car, is a tour guide of the island and produces local specialty products. While he has been working hard to fulfill and improve the life style of the island, he actively participates in and performs the taiko drum at various events and ceremonies within and outside of the island and is also the leader of the Kanju-Daiko drums to pass down the history and the spirits of their traditional arts.

### **Shirotama Hitsujiya**

Shirotama was born in 1967 in Hokkaido and dropped out from Meiji University. She is the Artistic Director for Yubiwa Hotel, Director of Tokyo, Soup, Blanket and Travelogue, Playwright, Director and Actress. Her representative works include: "Long Distance Love"

a simultaneous performances project between New York and Tokyo via Internet during the terrorist attack 911 in 2001, the play "Candies" toured in North America and Europe in 2006, and "Kozui" toured four cities in Brazil in 2012. "Annani Aishiattanoni" was performed on the beach at the Setouchi International Art Festival (The Setouchi Triennale) in 2013, and on the railroad at the Nakaboso International Art Festival (Ichihara Art x Mix) in 2014. In 2006, she was selected one of "The 100 Most influential Japanese Women in the World" by Newsweek Japan and made the cover of the magazine.

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### **Illustration and Calligraphy by**

### **Erika Kobayashi**

Writer & Cartoonist.

Her work "Madame Curie to Choshokuwo - Breakfast with Madame Curie" (Published by Shueisha Inc.) was nominated for the "27th Yukio Mishima Award" and the "151st Ryunosuke Akutagawa Award" in 2014. Her works also includes: Shinai Naru Kitty Tachie - Your Dear Kitty," (Published by Little More), "Wasurerarenaino - I can't forget" (Published by Seidosha) and the manga/graphic novel "Hikari No Kodomo 1 Children of Light, LUMINOUS" (Published by Little More) which traces the history of the atomic bomb and radiation victims. She also works as a member of Kvina.

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## Creation of the Universe: New Year in Aogashima

H= Hitsujiya, A= Arai

H: It's been awhile, Happy New Year~

A: Yes. Happy New Year~

H: There was the typhoon when we visited last September. How's the Aogashima Sea now?

A: Very rough, roaring. It was nice until New Year's Eve, but got rough since then as if it is a creation of the universe.

H: That sounds godlike.

A: Suddenly, there was thunder, then it started hailing, and then the sun appeared as if it was a bright halo, it hailed again and the sun appeared over and over. Hailing was so strong I went out to check the car to make sure if it didn't get dented.

H: Was it okay?

A: Yes. Because we are right under the weather front when the cold air hits the warm above Aogashima there is a thunder cloud and weather becomes very rough. So, thunder and hail, though there's no snow.

H: Is it cold?

A: It depends on the wind. If the south wind is strong the cold relaxes a bit.

H: What's Arai's New Year Like?

A: We usually hold a grand Mochi-Tsuki, pounding rice to make rice cakes on December 30th. We invite our close neighbors and people who returned for the New Year. However, this year we decided not to hold it since there was a misfortune at the end of the last year.

H: Oh no.

A: The person who passed away had a wonderful personality and was loved by everybody. He was also a good shochu brewer. He always invited new comers to the island to make sweet potatoes together, the ingredients for the shochu. When he caught any fish he would give away all the fish. He was old-fashioned and one of the last traditional islanders. He was like a big brother for the people of my father's generation.

H: He was like the eldest son of Aogashima.

A: Yes. Not only for me but it's a huge shock for everyone.

H: I'm sorry to have said Happy New Year.....

A: No, you couldn't have known. We are okay and trying to go forward.

H: I'm sorry for your loss.

A: Thanks, well so at the end of the year we had our loss and we customarily hold a Buddhist prayers every 7th days after one's death. I felt better after having the prayers with everyone.

H: It was a funeral with all the islanders?

A: That's true.

H: The pray, is it unique to Aogashima?

A: Yes. We haven't had a priest in the temple for hundreds of years even before the great volcanic eruption of Tenmei during the Edo period. It is said that our prayers used to be the same as Hachijo-Kojima, Hachijojima and Miyakejima. We gather together and pray from the book called Wasan [2]. The elderly play a key role, and everybody participates and recites the prayer together.

H: In unison?

A: Right. This style only remains in Aogashima. Prayer is conducted every day by family members and every 7 days by volunteers at the house of the one who have passed. There are several kinds of prayers, and they vary depending on how one passes away.

H: Do you continue after 49 days of one's death?

A: Yes. If an islander dies, we get together every 7 days. Old customs still exist on the island.

H: In Aogashima was it interment burial in the old days?

A: Yes. But many people die in the hospitals outside of the island, so nowadays cremation is more common.

H: I heard that in the old day, they would have the dead body hold a bottle of shochu in his or her arm.

A: As you know there are four people at each corner to hold the coffin during the funeral right? In the old days these four people would announce the memorial service, assist in the burial and play an important after the funeral too. So only a close person to the one who passed would be able to do this and have a commitment to accept such a role since it's for a long period of time. So if they find a bottle of shochu from a grave they can drink it as part of their service. LOL

H: I heard that the best shochu is from a grave?

A: I often heard that too. Indeed, if a bottle has been under the eaves it's easy to take it out, but we can't easily take it out from a grave, so I guess the shochu is well aged. LOL So, sometimes I hear the conversation during a memorial service like; "Your father's shochu was the best".

H: It must make you feel happy if you were the child.

A: It's true. We still keep some of the old customs even today, like the way we place a mortuary tablet, we usually cover it with a hood, and pull it up little by little until the 49th day. It shouldn't be shown at once. We believe that it takes time for a dead person to be ready to pass over to the other side, so we pull it up little by little.

H: What is the denomination of the island?

A: The temple in Aogashima is Jodo Shinshu. I've heard it was a branch temple of Zojo-Ji Temple in Shiba, Tokyo. Many priests were exiled to Hachijo-Jima as an ideological political offender, so the Wasan style emerged in Hachijo-Jima. Then, it might have been handed down to Aogashima as it only exists here now.

H: It's like the Galapagos Islands.

A: It is. I've heard that the priests from Hachijo-Jima have told us to value the custom.

H: But, you don't want to pray so frequently.

A: That's true. Many people passed away last year. I started memorizing the prayers when my grandfather died as the last gift to him. I prayed many times last year, and thought I wouldn't do this for a while...

I was going to ask many things to the person who died recently such as the name of the places on the island and the old customs. He had both experience and memories of the old days. He was like the last "big spirits of Aogashima".

H: I see.

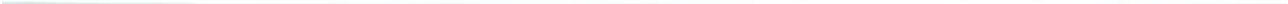
A: It's too late.

H: You're currently revising the old books with new translations aren't you? You are gathering the history of island to archive them and plan to pass this down, right?

A: That's right. He knew many things such as the customs of Aogashima in the early Showa, how we used to catch fish and the stories that he heard from his grandfather and grandmother. So, when I asked him a question, I learned the history from the mid Meiji period till the present. I listened to his experiences which could only be available in the books. The stories I heard from him were very valuable, but I didn't take notes. I was planning to ask him again. It made me realize that when something needs to be done, we should do it immediately, otherwise it's too late.

H: I see. I look forward to your Aogashima history research.

A: Thank you so much.



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## **Aogashima in the Middle of the Volcanic Eruption Period**

H: It might not be a good time to ask, but I have something that I really wanted to ask you. I'm not sure...

A: What is it? Please go ahead.

H: Well, It has been 230 years since the last volcanic eruption hasn't it? It's said that the eruption period of Aogashima is about every 200 years. If so, isn't it the eruption period now? I was scared when I talked with you before as you told me the latest evacuation manual was 20 years old. When did the 200 year interval start?

A : Before the great Tenmei eruption during the Edo period, there was a terrible eruption about 100 some years ago, however, there is no record before then. Many volcanology researches have been conducted and it said the eruption period is about 200 years.

H : I see. It means you are in the very middle of the period, but will continue to live in Aogashima right?

A: Well. Right.....I will....LOL.

H: LOL.

A: It is my hometown. It's sort of my fate to live here including the volcano. It might be the reason why I don't take it so seriously. It's the same for the others living in Aogashima.

H: I know a bit about the eruption period, then I got to know you, I would like to know your thoughts about it, a person living on a volcanic island that might erupt soon.

A: How can I put it? It's difficult to explain but it's similar as, we were born in Japan not because we wanted to be born in Japan, were we? I didn't plan to be born in Aogashima, but I was raised here and learned about the volcano after.

H: Oh, I see.

A: The people who were born in the beginning of Meiji were able to hear the real experience and history from their grandfathers and grandmothers who returned to the island. The real issue is that the generations after has no opportunity to listen to the story from a person who has experienced the eruption, but only an indirect story of the history. The people in the Meiji period must have taken volcanic eruption seriously as they have heard the actual history. In my generation; "oh there's smoke", I live in a volcano. The awareness that you gradually live in Aogashima later comes to you.

H: It must be the same for any country, island and city?

A: Yes, but, the next eruption it's said that it would be a phreatomagmatic explosion. During the aftershocks, the island will crack at this stage, and when the magma touches the

seawater it will be a magma phreatic explosion. It's like putting water onto a heated frying pan and smoke comes out with a hissing noise.

H: So, the frying pan is Aogashima?

A: Yep. It's said that the scale of the eruption will be so intense that it will leave no trace of the island in its original form.

H: Really? What's written on the latest evacuation manual?

A: If the seismometer of the island observes the slightest vibration, ESCAPE! That seems to be the scenario for now.

H: Will the tremor be informed on the island's TV network?

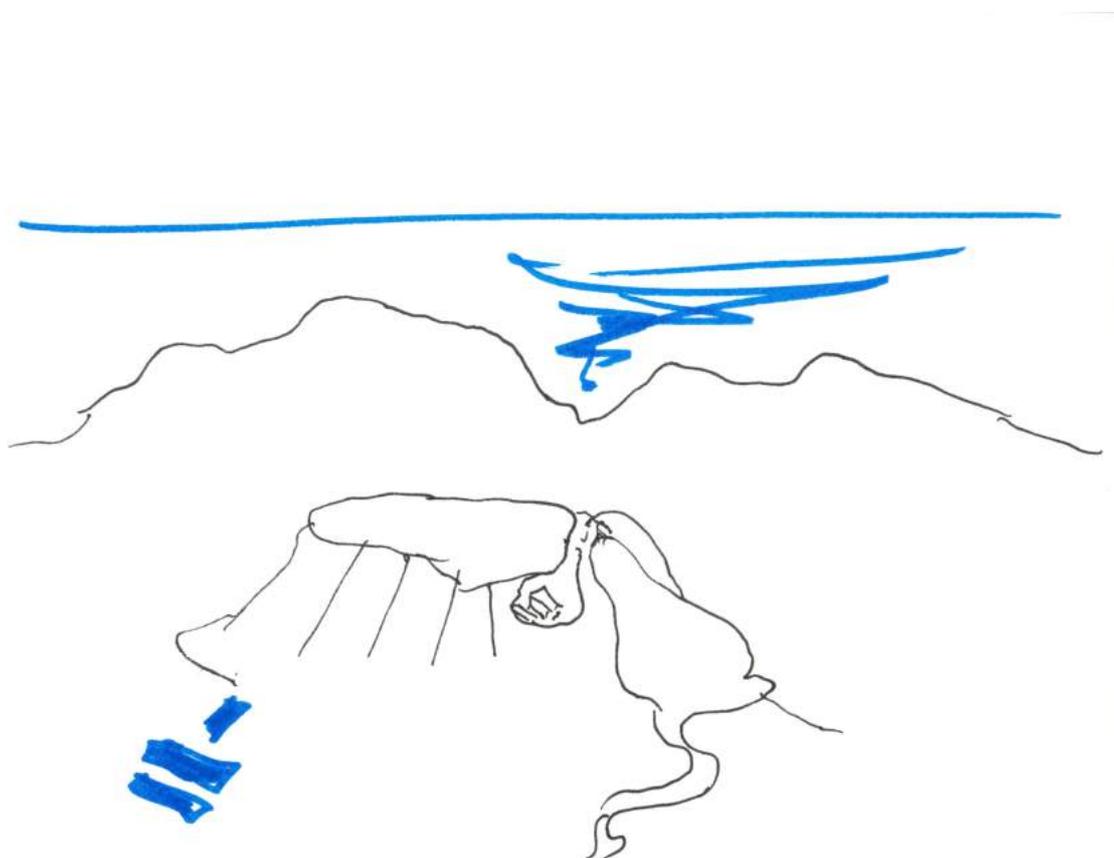
A: No, I don't know about the information systems. A task force will surely be established. I believe it is the same for any municipal government in an emergency situation; it's an unexperienced one-shot deal, isn't it? I doubt that if any municipal government will seriously prepare for the one-shot deal.

H: It's critical.

A: Yes it is. So the one shot deal means it will not happen twice. I believe it's not only Aogashima, but in any situation it will not happen twice, so readiness is important.

H: I would to visit Aogashima again though.

A: Yes.



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## Important Role for the Aogashima Kanju Daiko Drum

H: By the way, I've heard that you are coming to Ekoda next month.

A: A live house in Ekoda, the Flying Teapot. There's a drum event. A Korean specialist in their famer's folk dance music will be coming. I will play the Kanju Daiko drum. Many interesting percussionists that my younger brother knows will be there too.

H: I will be there. It's a part of my walking area.

A: That's true. It's within walking distance. I'll be waiting for you.

H: Ekoda is one of my project themes, so I stroll and patrol the area. You frequently go back and forth between Ekoda and Aogashima?

A: I do without awareness. I go to Ekoda for my music.

H: So I want to know more about your drums.

A: Yes.

H: Drums are used widely such as to make music or drama, but I believe they were originally used to offer the sounds to nature or the gods for rituals. On the other hand, they are played at live houses. You're doing both. When I visited Aogashima last September, you were playing the drum in the moonlight of the super moon. It was a special night as if you and the moon were one. Is there a difference to you between playing at a live house and others?

A: Well. When I was a musician in Tokyo, I was a little self-conscious or didn't know myself. LOL So, I had a kind of delusion like I wanted to attain a special sound like nature. Then I returned to Aogashima, playing the drums here became natural in my original life setting as it used to be when I was on the island before high school. I play the drum because I really enjoy it.

H: I see.

A: On the day of the super moon, I was exhausted from removing mud after the typhoon, but to the end the day without some joy would be regrettable. Also, my friend who visited the island shared the same feeling. I play the drum not as a ceremony like Kagura, but to enjoy when people get together. It's like folk art, island songs and dance are all the same. Sometimes you accidentally are unified with nature.

H: Though it may be different than Kagura, but I still feel that your drum is close to it.

A: It's true that the taiko drum reflects ones way of life. My drum must have been based on my life on the island. I don't realize it myself, but when some people see me playing, it's

different from playing on the stage, it may be the fact that I am living here may affect this.

H: You are also teaching Kanju Taiko, and there are children and adult classes, right? I would like to ask another question. Playing Kanju-Taiko as improvised performance and the technique you must learn. Do you balance the both?

A: Yes I do. To mention a little history of the Kanju-Taiko, it was named in 1979. It started with Tsunemichi Yamada, the former village mayor at the time and my father, a project which also involved young people in the taiko drum. What I heard was that the taiko drums were mainly used for rituals, but during breaks to eat, drink and talk, the people played the drums for fun. On the other hand in Hachijo-Jima, people mainly played the taiko drums just for fun like Africa. Aogashima and Hachijo-Jima are neighbors, and have influenced each other; they sometimes gather and why not enjoy beating the drum together? Tsunemichi is from Hachijo, my father was a drummer and my grandmother was the MIKO, a shrine priestess and loves the taiko drums. So they had a special connection for the taiko drums. They thought that it would be nice to have time to play the taiko drums just for fun at some gathering for Aogashima people like our neighbor Hachijo. That was the start of Kanju-Taiko.

H: I see.

A: When I was a performer in Tokyo, I thought too much about Sokkyo or improvisations, but now I think of the Japanese word Sokkyo (Soku + Kyo) meaning a moment and excitement, if we can get excited instantaneously and enjoy. I believe that Sokkyo is the world of the folk art.

H: You are right as the word Soku and Kyo. Is that what you want to communicate?

A: That's right. It's the most important aspect for both the taiko of Hachijo and Kanju Taiko. When people hear the drumbeat, there is excitement, people gather and a song starts, a dance and the taiko passed around for everyone to play. The biggest attraction of the taiko is to share the good times with people around you.

H: Does your daughter like taiko as well?

A: She can't hold drumsticks yet, but she already knows what she likes. She likes my brother's taiko, and has no interest in other players. She reacts more to my brother's than mine.

H: Is it a sensation of smell or hearing?

A: She is honest because she still has that animal instinct.

H: How old is she?

A: Two and a half years old.

H: It might be fun if she can play taiko with her classmates.

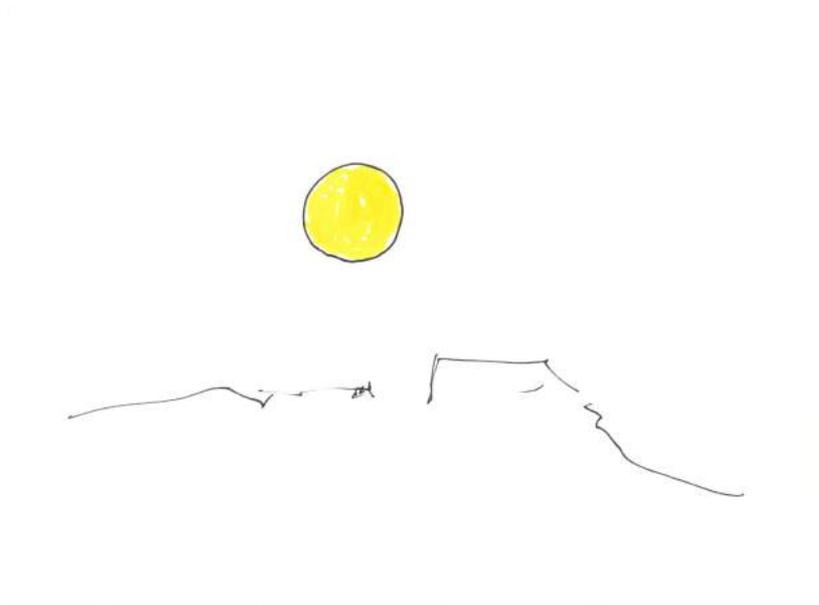
A: But she doesn't have any classmates. She might enter the elementary school alone.

H: It means that she's the only student in her grade?

A: It happened before, but it wasn't like that there are any students at the school, and totally alone. Indeed, there's very little chance to have another student in her grade.

H: There's no chance to play with other children?

A: That's true. There are few female students here and they're older than my daughter, so I plan to put her into a nursery school from the spring.



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## **To Convey the Allure of Aogashima**

H: It makes me contemplate little about your daughter's generation, what you said before was that; "In my father's generation, the island was impoverished and they committed themselves to improve the standard of living economically. They accomplished this within 50 years where it would take 100 years for Tokyo. Because of this the islanders including myself live comfortably now and that we shouldn't think of the island's life as they did before but to consider what is necessary from now on", really left an impression on me. So, are you considering something right now?

A: Well, that's difficult. A friend of mine who's a consultant for the local areas talked about marginal settlements and noted that Aogashima had the most attention. The village population is 160, right? The aged people rate is quite high and with the decline of the population rate at this level within several decades the population will disappear. It was just based on the data. Then, I was asked what I thought about it as a resident.

H: So, what did you answer?

A: Well, nobody lives one's life expecting to die tomorrow.

H: No, we don't.

A: As a fact I know that the population is decreasing, but we live our daily lives, we're not in the situation where we're striving to find food for tomorrow. At this moment I can't imagine that the island would disappear. It's the same as one can't image about dying. Well maybe, we're getting older and shrinking, both the island and us.

H: From the outside, people might think Aogashima should do something.

A: Yes, A lot of attention is on us, like what are these people going to do!

H: Do you think the attention is none of their business?

A: Not at all. It's a matter that we need to think about as long as we live. But for me, perhaps because I play music, if it doesn't hit me in the face I really can't have a solid sense. People really do nothing until everyone thinks; "oh no how awful", at that point we might find a way to work things out. Yeah, that's why I live in Aogashima the taiko drum, island dances, island folk songs, the nature and the life, all of it gives me the time to share with others, and is the part that makes me feel good. In my case, it's the taiko drum, if and when I realize that it might disappear, and then at that time I would think the necessity to pass on the tradition.

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## **Observing "The End and the Beginning" Through Aogashima**

H: I see. It makes me want to cry.

A: Sorry, my way of thinking is so easygoing.

H: Oh, no. For my projects; I visited Aogashima last September, and for some years I aimlessly walked the streets of Ekoda. Last year on the last day, the Ekoda market, which can be considered the kitchen of Ekoda, with a history of 70 years closed. It has been around since the days of the black-market, with crowded narrow alleyways. When I heard the market would disappear, I frequently visited, took a lot of photos and talked with the people there. Then came the last day, but I heard not all shops would be demolished at once, so I visited there today as well. The storekeeper of the bean shop had begun to clear things out and said to me; "I didn't expect it to be closed like this", all I

could say is; "Yes, I think so." At the end of the last year, there was an increase in customers and many of the stores sold out their products. Many customers put in advance orders, and so there was nothing to sell to other shoppers who came in. The bean shop storekeeper told me with smile; "I thought the end was going to be like the flame of a candle just fizzle away, but, I had business with a lot of people till the very end". The smile on his face, made me believe that, he's considering his second life positively. Of course, I am going to follow-up on this.



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The only liquor store in Aogashima

"Juichiya Sake Shop"

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This is a project to observe "the end and the beginning" of towns, villages and markets in Tokyo. This is just my logic but as I live in Tokyo, things like fashion tend to start with a boom and end so fast, when I started this project the first was to see the end of the Ekoda market. I'm the one who started the project, but thought that I didn't want to actually see it end. It's over. The end was spectacular. Gosh, I gone on forever

A: I see. In places there's a life too. I guess a place like a temple has a life for hundreds of

years. A reinforced concrete building has about 40 years lifespan doesn't it? But people's life continues don't they? And the places where people gather are to be like undulation itself, I think

H: So when "people" come to a "land" it becomes the "place" ?

A: That's right. There was a place that used to be an Inn town in the old days but disappeared without a trace, how places function depends on who gathers there. The reason that it disappeared may have been influenced by the change of lifestyle. When lifestyles and common objectives change, I believe that the place itself changes.

H: I don't know what will happen to the site where the market was, but rumor has it, after they make a vacant lot, a reinforced concrete building will be built then new tenants. The main reason why the market was closed was that it could have been a fire hazard, and of course those shops weren't built to cope with a major fire. Some of the storeowner, like the grocer, opened a store nearby and started business again, a second life, so I would like to follow how the people will precede with their lives. But now, I would like to reminisce a little about the end as if it were the first seven days of some one's death.

A: I see. About the first seven days, returning to the story about the person who passed away the other day. I realized that no one would be able to substitute him. All the experiences and memories are gone with him. So I learned when he died everything along with it died.

H: Hope we will be able to continue to pass this down.

A: Yes. I think how we pass something down like memories to the future is the key. For example, the island dances have been performed in the same way since 200 years ago as it's performed by the people who live here now. In that sense, the dance is memorized as like a "feeling". There is no written record, but a record of "feelings" passed on from one person to another, isn't it? As it is important to observe memories to continue to play the Kanju Taiko, for example, the flying fishes comes when it is spring and the fishing starts, it's a scene that has been around.

H: You mean the fishing of flying fish is memory too?

A: Flying fish fishing is special, since it has been a part of the island since long ago. We get pretty hyped about it more than other fishing. It tells us that spring is coming. It is totally a different excitement.

H: I kind of understand that special feeling about the flying fish. I wonder if a flying fish suddenly thought of jumping. Fishes swim, but I wonder when flying fishes started jumping.

A: That's a curious thought.

H: They may have tried to jump a bit or they were chased by a big fish and tried to escape.

A: Maybe. Nobody will ever know.

H: In short, flying fish are mutations?

A: It may be the case.

H: And I think that mutation is important.

A: Interesting.

H: This is still a hypothesis, but have you heard the so called Mitochondrial Eve. That one woman in Africa is the ancestor of all mankind, and is the mother of all people. But a mother should have a mother, so who is the mother of the DNA Eve?

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That's nonsense since it's a mutation of DNA. And because the children of Eve could adapt to earth by chance, we live on the earth as her descendent including me. People whether they're American or Muslims are all descendants, in the same way as a flying fish; A descendant of the mutation. That's my story.

A: So, mutation occurs because our lives continue. If our lives ceases, there would be no change.

H: That's very true.

A: A Korean drum master told me that he is only a part of a long history of performers. Within those parts, a special talented person will show every hundred years that help develop the field, but he or she is still within the part. Though I am not a special successor, I believe that it is important to be in that part.

H: I believe that an extra ordinary person suddenly appears. There is prehistory and there is history, there are great musicians who leave a name in history, and there is the history before the history first. The pre-history continues, and history leaving impacts on that historical.

A: I agree. There's a great drummer, Yoshio Okuyama who is one of the great Hachijo Daiko drummers. In a beat he can easily express several hundred years of the Hachijo-Daiko. Whether one choose or you are chosen, there're countable great men who suddenly pop up.

H: I'd like to listen to that beat ~

A: I'm not that type of person....

H: Yes you are. Your Kanju-Taiko under the moonlight of the super moon was amazing. I thought it was sexy.

A: Oh that, I do my best when there's a beautiful lady.

H: Well. As I recall she's Miss Hachijo.

A: Yes she is.

H: I see. LOL

H: Has there been any media interviews or coverage on Aogashima recently?

A: It's been quiet and little clam. It doesn't mean fewer tourists.

H: I feel that if something extreme suddenly happens, various things are broken.

A: Yes. In a sense the island is protected by the gods from a far. The sense of distance protects it in various ways. The state of being far away can't be changed suddenly. In that way it is protected.

H: I see.

A: Even when the busy TV crews noisily come over, the weather interrupts and things don't go smoothly as scheduled. Then finally for the first time they understand that Aogashima is such a place. It's this isolation this sense of distance deepens the understanding of various things.

H: The long distance from other areas makes the heart grow fonder. When we talk about our travelogue of Aogashima to some people who have never been there, they give their thoughts of the island. But, we get really excited and talk too much. I think we shouldn't talk too much about it.

A: Really? That's interesting.

H: You're like Latin. You're Mr. Aogashima.

A: Do you think so?



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Osato Shirine; 300 steep steps made of 1,300 cobblestones.

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### **No Matter Where One Is, Thinking of Returning to Aogashima**

H: Yes, Is it alright to finally talk about KANJU? We have talked about it briefly, but this time more seriously.

A: Please.

H: It's a bit vague but it has been less than a year since I learned "Kanju", but I believe that it's important for present Japan. The word "KAN" is return and the word "JU" is live. It's not come back to more return to, returning to one's hometown especially when we live in a city.

A: What I'm researching now is "Izu Kaito Fudoki (topographical record of the islands of Izu)". It is the only book written about the situation of Izu before the volcanic eruption. The reason why I'm researching this is because I wanted to know why people decided to return.

To fully understand this I should study the situation before and after the eruption. Then, I thought “what returned”? I thought about this more often especially when someone on the island has died. When the man I mentioned died the end of last year, I believe he became a part of Aogashima. I can’t explain it properly, but I thought “KANJU” is one’s soul returning to a place where one should live, not just returning to live.

H: I see. You can dimly see Aogashima from Hachijo, so I was wondering how the people felt who evacuated to Hachijo when they could see Aogashima.

A: It took 50 years to “Kanju” return home and the first thing they did was the maintenance of the Konpira Shrine. Reconstructing the shrines and holding Shinto rituals was the first thing done so that there was a place where ones soul could return.

H: I visited Osato Shrine built with stones that was brought from Mikono-ura through precipitous cliffs. I thought it was a great job.

A: That’s true. Those people who could return to the island first thought that they should reconstruct the shrine to enshrine the spirit of those people who couldn’t return. Just returning is not “Kanju”. There were many people who couldn’t return so they returned with their souls.

H: So you’re also the present “Kanju” (return home).

A: Oh. Do you think so?

H: When I was a child, Tokyo was called “Tokyo desert” and I think it’s a black hole nowadays. The image of being swallowed is somehow the same as the desert. It’s not a natural disaster like a volcanic eruption, but returning from there and thinking where to go when you return. In a sense, it’s just like a modern version of “Kanju”.

A: I see.

H: I think your classmate Eishun Kikuchi is doing “Kanju” while living in Tokyo with Aogashima food.

A: Yes, Eishun is. I’ll give away a secret of when he was a kid; he really wanted to go to Tokyo and pretended that the school corridor was Shibuya Center-gai. LOL

H: Shibuya Center-gai in the corridor? That’s funny.

A: But, when he was past 30, he started facing back to his hometown. I was glad that he adopted Aogashima into his life again. After he had accomplished everything as a sommelier he spontaneously reached out to Aogashima and opened up a restaurant Aogashima-Ya [4] in Shinjuku. I believe it is difficult for one to be honest about their identity without doing everything one can in one’s field.

H: So you came to Tokyo with Aogashima taiko drum, did your best and returned to Aogashima with it.

A: I wish.

H: I want to “kanju” (return home) too. How can I “kanju”? I’ve been swallowed up by the black hole called Tokyo and still moving around this way and that.

A: I sort of understand what you’re saying. It is interesting. There might be many people who want to “kanju”. I wouldn’t understand if someone told me the word identity, but “kanju” might sound right.

H: When I collaborated with an American on a work [5] she said that America is a land of immigrants, so nobody is American in the beginning. People become Americans.

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As we were developing our work, the keyword “home” came up. Not limited to the “home” that is built. It’s a certain moment like when I saw a leaf from a window. We believe that if we called it home it had to be there. When I think about it now, it might have been the work of American “Kanju”.

A: Interesting.

H: Another thing I have been working on is called “Tokyo Hitohako” (Tokyo One Box). It is a documentation of a lady who is trying to buy a home in Tokyo. She lives with her daughter. She’s looking around various real estate agents, going to see the house she thinks are good and collecting various information. Her dream home is getting bigger and bigger; a place where she and her daughter could live together, have friends over and with a garden. I talked with her about the most important element for her. I asked; “What’s the minimum element you need to call the place a home?” She answered; “my daughter.” I’m glad that she realized the most important aspect rather than saying locations, sizes and a garden. The word “kanju” came up seeing the relationship between her and her daughter.

A: That is true. Well, the island is booming now, right?

H: Is it?

A: There’re many students who want to do something for the island.

H: I see.

A: Well, It is not easy. LOL

B: LOL

A: The students say they would like to help, but they first sit and do nothing...

H: I can imagine.

A: I asked them how their grandpas and grandmas are. Some say they have never talked with their grandparents that closely. So, I told them they should go to talk with them as it is the base of their roots. We can’t go farther back than that. It’s only about 200 years. Even Aogashima, it’s difficult to find the real voice, though I do work hard on my research. It’s

hard to reach and it's only 230 years.

H: I see.

A: I told them that before coming to the island, they should listen to their grandpa's and grandma's stories. You can feel more the reality of things.

H: I used to ask inquisitively to my grandparents of both my father's and my mother's sides.

A: I think it's the most suitable way to start from one's birth and go back.

H: Is that both home and roots?

A: Yes, that's right.

H: I think this New Year's interview was very fulfilling.

A: This year is the 180th memorial of attaining "Kanju" (returning home).

H: The whole island should do something.

A: We plan to. The Kanju-Taiko group will hold an event every month

H: What are you going to do this month?

A: First of all, A New Year's party. We were planning to go to the first temple visit of the New Year organized by Kanju Daiko. But when we have a Buddhist memorial service, it will become a week for Buddhism. We even go and recite prayers. We will hold a film of sceneries of Aogashima fifty years ago.

H: I see. How about the next month?

A: I am going to visit Australia for the first overseas workshop of Kanju Daiko.

H: Great.

A: We are thinking of series of history seminars on Kanju Daiko as well.

H: Will you come to Ekoda as well?

A: That is right. Let's meet in Ekoda.

H: I'm looking forward to your stories.

A: Oh let's meet in Aogashima as well.

H: I love to.

**Footnotes**

(1) Aogashima

Aogashima is a volcanic island with 9 kilometers in girth, located 358 kilometers south of Tokyo and 65 kilometers south of Hachijo Island. It is located in the southernmost part of the habited Izu Islands. The whole island belongs to Aogashima-mura, Tokyo. The population is approximately 170. It takes twenty minutes from Hachijo Island to the blueish island by helicopter.

(2) Wasan

It is a sort of Buddhist hymns. It was created during the Heian period and widely spread among the general public.

(3) Kanju

At Aogashima, the level of eruptive activities started in Ansei 9 (1780) became more violent in Tenmei 5 (1785). The islanders had been evacuated to Hachijo Island and Aogashima became an uninhabited island. Fifty years later in Bunsei 7 (1824), the islanders returned to Aogashima and the Aogashima's recovery was accomplished. The word Kanju describes the accomplishment. "Kanju" became known by "Aogashima Kanju-Ki" published by Kunio Yanagida in Syowa 8 (1933).

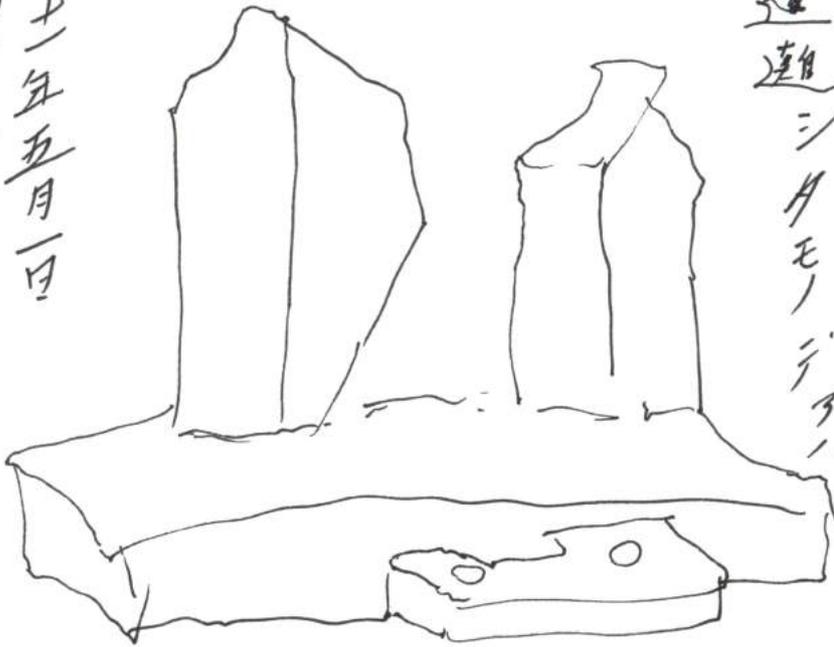
(4) Aogashima-Ya

Seafood Izakaya (Tavern) serving mainly vegetables and fish of the Izu Islands opened in Shinjuku on March 2014. The owner is Mr. Eishun Kikuchi originally from Aogashima. The tavern has the greatest line up of Aogashima Shochu in Japan. It is always crowded with people related to Aogashima.

(5) Work collaboration in America

In 2007, Mesujika Doe directed by Shirtatama Hitsujiya performed by Japanese actors appeared in the Tokyo International Arts Festival based on the story written by the American playwright Trista Baldwin. The international co-creation lasted until 2013, but it has not been completed.

昭和三十一年五月一日  
青ヶ島村民一同



兵隊墓  
此ノ碑ハ徵兵ノ  
余查ハタノ明治二十六年  
五月百八丈島ニ渡ルノ御リ海上風波  
ノ大運難シクモノテ  
シテ

### Soldiers Tomb

A monument built for the soldiers who would have fought for Japan but lost during the passage to Hachijojima due to the strong wind and high waves on May 1, in Meiji 26 (1892).

May 1, Showa 31(1956)

From the Aogashima Villagers.

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## **Viewing Tokyo From the Blue Japanesia Island,**

**「Retrospective: Travelogue autumn 2014」**

October 8, 2014 Community Space 1F Arts Chiyoda 3331

The blue Japanesia Island is the name I used before I actually seen Aogashima. With Erika Kobayashi, we finally arrived for the first time to Aogashima on September 7th to 9th for 3days and the days where tranquil even with the typhoon. A month later on October 8th, Erika and I as double hostess held a talk show to report our findings and occurrences at Aogashima and invited Eishun Kikuchi, Fram Kitagawa, and Takashi Shinkawa as guests. The reception area also became the Aogashima shochu tasting area prepared by Eishun Kikuchi. The talk started while the audiences were enjoying Aochu (Aogashima shochu). We talked about many things. Right after we arrived at Aogashima heliport, I remembered an islander said; "It seems you brought the typhoon with you". When we went down to see the ocean, the waves were so high as if they were about to swallow the seaport. We had to stay in the inn and read many books about the Izu Islands on the bookshelf. We couldn't be of any help with the restoration work after the typhoon, so we went out to explore the island. We lied down on the road and felt the heat of the earth. How delicious those Aogashima's vegetables, eggs and fishes steamed by the geothermal heat were. We went up the stairs made of stones that the islanders carried and placed one by one after "Kanju" (returning home) to visit the shrine. At the crater of a volcano, we looked down at the caldera which was just like a Macha (green tea) Bavarian cream. The beauty of the moon we saw on the last night. We listened to the Kanju Taiko and the folk songs. The shochu tasting tour we went to at the Aogashima Shochu Brewery, where we were a bit drunk, and how the islands cats gazing at us as such. While we made our report with our photographs, we asked the guests to make their comments. Fram Kitagawa said; "I try not to talk about the places I don't know and only visited once." He didn't mean to criticize our fieldwork, but it was his attitude and belief as he has been involved in various places though arts. Actually there were less than 10 people we were able talk to on the island. They were the village major who stopped cleaning in front of the town office to talk to us, the town office workers, the people at the inn, the workers at the seaport and the passengers waiting for the ship. I've heard that it was not only us but many media people and researchers visited the island. We picked Aogashima as a place for our fieldwork, even if we had limited conversations; we were still allured by the island and can't be indifferent to the island and the future of the people living there. After the talk, I kept thinking what travel and doing fieldworks

meant to me. Furthermore, I was thinking of publishing my work there. I'm sure it's a method to know the place, know the people and verify my thoughts, but who was I am doing this for? I was planning to put my brief answer to this question if possible around this page of the booklet giving it out to you, but it could not be realized. But there is still a desire. Meeting someone, somewhere, and the time when my fieldwork is about over, I would like it to be said from the people of the land; "You didn't ask any questions after all, is that alright?"

Shiratama Hitsuji

Director

Tokyo, Soup, Blanket and Travelogue



from right to left,

Erika Kobayashi (Writer & Cartoonist)

Eishun Kikuchi ("Aogashima ya" owner)

Takashi Shinkawa (Arts Journalist)

Fram Kitagawa (Art Director)

Shiratama Hitsuji

## About Tokyo, Soup, Blanket and Travelogue

**statement: comment by Shirotama Hitsujiya, Director**

For quite a long time Tokyo was a futuristic city for me. But now I believe that I walk among its historic remains. I am a habitant, I am a musician, both aspects of the note are exquisite but Tokyo is like a symphonic suite and its musical scores accelerate at a pace hard to keep up. Like a spring I would to write down some of the musical rest.

**project:**

**Tokyo (habitat) + Soup (Meal) + Blanket (Clothes) + Travelogue (Mark)**

These small themes are about lifestyle, each theme progresses simultaneous, each theme influences the other, dividing and unifying eventually they will become one large theme. The first theme titles are the four noted below.

**Tokyo One box**

Rolling a Dream Box in Tokyo

**Ekoda Soup**

Getting Lost in Ekoda

Tokyo labyrinth of crossroads

**Aogashima Blanket**

Viewing Tokyo from the Blue Japonesia Island

**Travelogue**

Examine Tokyo

Roll about, getting lost, view、 and talk to Tokyo.

When these four projects have been rolling about, when accomplished our present world will stop in a moment and the time spent on the process will ask us in a three dimensional way. These are the kind of art projects which we are aiming for.

**people: operation and creative**

Shirotama Hitsujiya - Director, Kei Ito - Assistant Director, Kiyomi Miyahara - Chief Administrator, Yuko Itoyama - Assistant Administrator, Ryo Kusanagi - Designer, Yoshinori Itoyama - Technical Director

Sponsor : Arts Council Tokyo (Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for History and Culture) ,  
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**Yubiwa Hotel**

**Tokyo, Soup, Blanket and Travelogue “Aogashima”**

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### **About [Tokyo Artpoint Project]**

**In cooperation with various arts organizations and NPOs, Tokyo Artpoint Project pursues art projects with local community and citizen involvement as a way to foster an environment where everyone can be actively engaged in culture and to create and disseminate Tokyo's charm. The project is a part of the Arts Council Tokyo, organized by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government and the Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for History and Culture.**

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\*On April 1, 2015 Tokyo Culture Creation Project will be integrated with Arts Council Tokyo