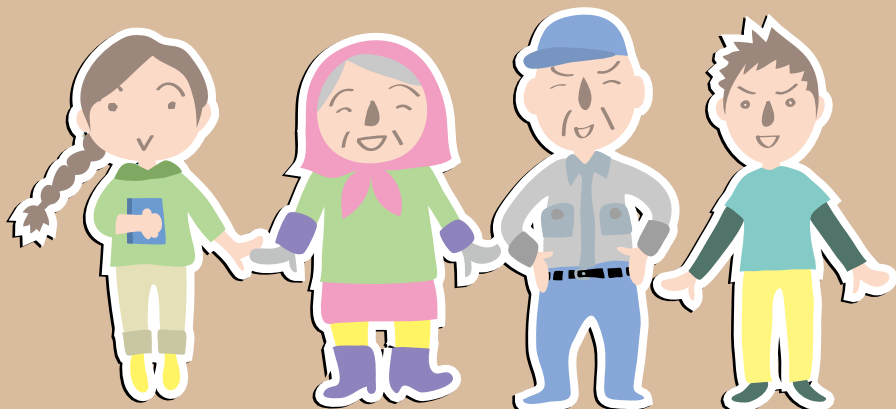


Listening and Documenting

“Kikigaki”:
A Tool for Sharing Wisdom for
Sustainable Societies



First Edition, May 2012
Secretariat of the International Partnership for the *Satoyama* Initiative (IPSI)

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Afterword

Start by Listening

Realising a society in harmony with
nature through Kikigaki

The earth hosts a diversity of life, each kind adapted to and living in different environments. Human beings as well have cultivated lifestyles appropriate for their different natural environments, seeking to live in harmony with nature.

The traditional Japanese house for example was made from wood and clay. Almost all its furnishings as well as tools of daily life were made from wood. Clothing was made from the fibre of plants or harvested from silkworm cocoons. Firewood and charcoal were indispensable sources of fuel for cooking and keeping warm. Grasses and fallen leaves formed mulch and fertiliser that enriched the cultivated fields.

Human-influenced natural environments, such as farmland and secondary forests that people have developed and maintained, function as the habitat and nurturing environment of distinctive species of wildlife. These environments also supply natural resources such as food and timber. Even today, these natural environments are important for their beautiful landscapes and in the passing on of local culture.

Such natural environments—and the sustainable practices, knowledge, and biodiversity they nurtured—are increasingly threatened in many parts of the world due to urbanisation, industrialisation, rapid rural population increases and decreases, aging, and other factors.

Collecting, analysing, and widely disseminating records of actions taken to conserve and sustain human-influenced natural environments is needed. Local and traditional techniques that have been used to manage the utilisation of resources deserve renewed study and appreciation.

Kikigaki (It literally means:listening and recording) can help us attain a better understanding of the values of these important traditions and environments.

Connecting People

Kikigaki is a project that inquires into and records through one-on-one dialogue the stories of interviewees' lives and values. The interviewees' words are faithfully recorded and transcribed. These narratives are then transcribed and summarised in reports that preserve the flavour of the interviewees' way of speaking.

The completed projects use the first-person style of oral narrative. The person's character is conveyed along with the stories of his/her experience, wisdom, way of thinking, and the values s/he has cultivated.

Listening is fundamental to communication. In the process of asking the interviewee questions, the interviewer deepens his or her understanding of the interviewee. The interviewer should not assert personal ideas or beliefs, but instead listen respectfully. Through the back-and-forth process of questioning, listening, and further questioning, the interviewer can skilfully draw out the thoughts of the interviewee. Empathy with the feelings of the interviewer is important, so be sure to demonstrate your grasp and appreciation of what is being said.

By listening to the stories of people who live in local areas and engaging in the collaborative work of hearing their thoughts and recording the conversations, one can secure the trust and respect of the interviewee. This work, moreover,

can lead to a re-appreciation of the value of the natural environment, history and culture of the locale in question.

Connecting Generations

The culture of our daily lives is formed from close interaction with the local landscape and its natural features. In the course of transmitting culture from person to person and generation to generation, the wisdom, innovations and values of each person and era are added and perpetuated.

Even within the forestry industry itself, experts plant different trees and practice different methods based on the natural conditions and history of each region, as well as deriving from their own skills and ideas about how things should be done.

By grasping each individual story and idea that has been passed down, we can understand the characteristics, natural features, history, and culture of daily life of that region. The Kikigaki Project records both the tangible and intangible cultural heritage that arises in connection with nature, history, the wisdom of daily life, and ways of living.

It is important to listen carefully to what those of the older generations have to say. Their experiences, gained over the long years of their lives, provide many lessons that we can apply to our own future.

We believe that interviews by young people with members of the older generations about the accumulated wisdom and the arts of daily life they have passed down will lead to reappraisal of how we use and manage traditional and secondary forests and to discovery of new ways to preserve and utilise them.

Connecting Humans and Nature

The *Satoyama* Initiative is a comprehensive effort at

thoughtful action towards the conservation and use of human-influenced natural environments, such as farmland and secondary forests that have been maintained over a long time. The Initiative's three-fold approach is intended to maintain and rebuild landscapes in which land and natural resources are used and managed in a more sustainable manner.

- Consolidating wisdom on securing diverse ecosystem services and values
- Integrating traditional ecological knowledge and modern science to promote innovations
- Exploring new forms of co-management systems evoking the framework of "commons" while respecting traditional communal land tenure

Understanding the diverse ecosystem services and values that give rise to human well-being is an indispensable aspect of this approach, as is consolidation of the wisdom for securing these services. Compilation of a wide range of traditional knowledge, techniques, and details of daily life through the Kikigaki method is also vital to the process.

How did our ancestors sustainably manage and use these land-and-sea scapes? How did people combine their energies as a community in creating rules regarding the uses of nature? How did human interventions work to protect and nurture biodiversity? The only way to answer such questions is to ask those who have actually engaged in those activities.

We recommend use of the Kikigaki method to learn about the connections between people, between generations, and between humans and nature.

C o l u m n

Quotes from young people who have participated in Kikigaki

— From Japan's "Kikigaki Koshien" programme

While listening to his story, I felt the forest's cry rippling across my skin.
(2nd year high school student, male)

The old man's face was very gentle as he said, "You know, we suffered many hardships".
(1st year high school student, male)

When we were told, "Don't try to simplify life into just one phrase," that made me realise the importance of conscientious Kikigaki.
(3rd year high school student, female)

I realised how special it is to see things with your own eyes, hear things with your own ears, and touch things with your own hands.
(1st year high school student, female)

I had never seen a 74-year-old man so full of energy and enthusiasm, and with an expression so full of life. I was enchanted to see someone so dedicated and absorbed in a single pursuit.
(2nd year high school student, female)

I never thought one person would have so many stories to tell. Perhaps it is perfectly natural, but to me it was something special.
(1st year high school student, female)

I realised that forests are like the foundations of our lives. They are not separate from us, but naturally tied to our daily lives. I became much more aware of forests.
(2nd year high school student, female)

I realised that technology is not just the skills that are handed down; it is the accumulation of the devotion and wisdom of our ancestors.
(2nd year high school student, male)

12 Principles of Kikigaki ①

Get to know the neighbourhood where the interviewee lives and observe things first-hand. Do your best to listen to the voice of the interviewee's experience and memory.

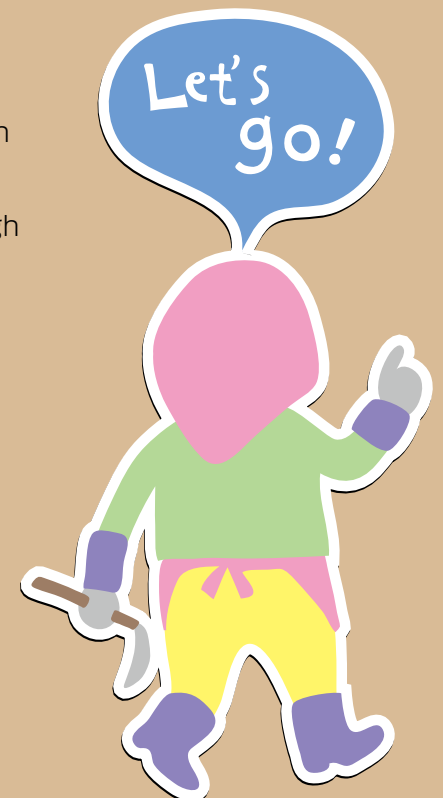


Visit the place where the interviewee works; get a feel for the land and the natural features of the area. As you learn about the wisdom and skills involved in his/her craft, you will begin to understand his/her life and values. Your interviewee will begin to speak more freely upon learning that there is someone who sincerely wants to understand and learn about his/her story.

12 Principles of Kikigaki ②

Observe how a person's work reveals the story of his/her life.

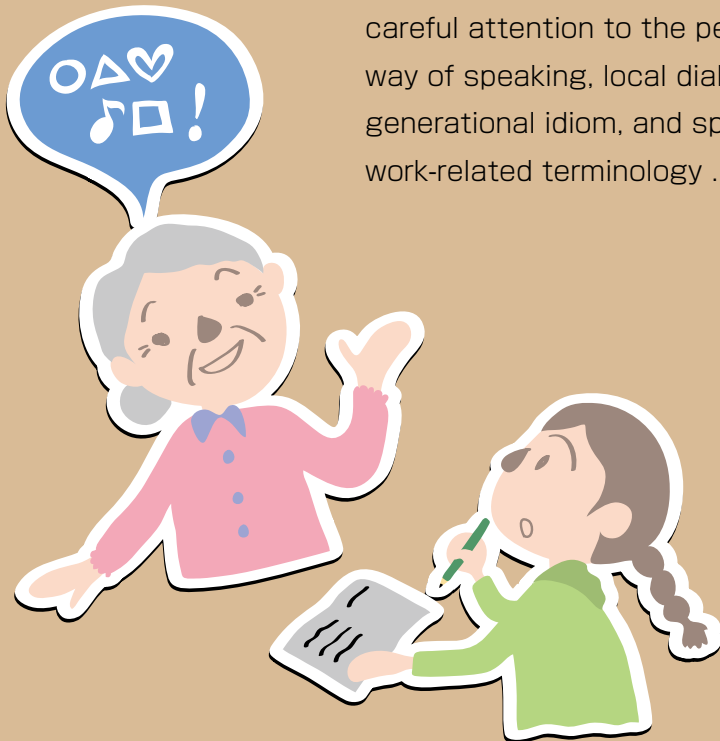
A person obtains the necessities of life, fulfils a role in society, cultivates values, and devotes most of his/her waking hours to the work, craft, or profession s/he follows. Observe your interviewee's life mainly through his/her work.



12 Principles of Kikigaki ③

Note the way the era
the person has lived through is
reflected in his/her way
of speaking.

A person's way of speaking reveals much about the background of his/her life and personality. Pay careful attention to the person's way of speaking, local dialect, generational idiom, and specialised work-related terminology .



12 Principles of Kikigaki ④

More important than literary
talent in Kikigaki is the open-
minded and respectful attitude
you show to the interviewee.

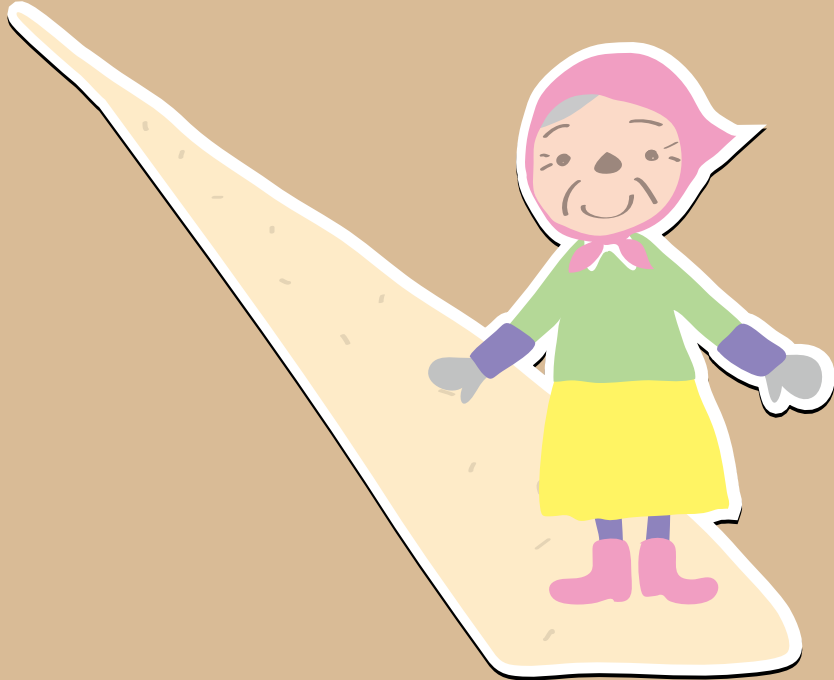
"Kikigaki" writing doesn't require literary talent. It is much better to be curious about your interviewee, to have the courage to ask about the things you don't know about, to have an attitude that communicates wonder and excitement about what you hear, and to convey that you respect and care about the feelings of the interviewee.



12 Principles of Kikigaki 5

Respect dignity of your interviewee.

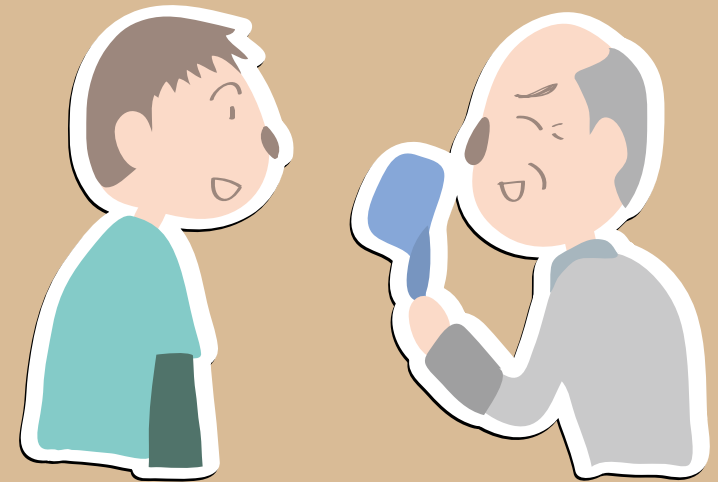
The life of each individual is different, and each person has a story to tell precisely because of the long journey through life s/he has travelled. Individuals may be hard to see against the backdrop of a whole society or era, but the life of the person you are interviewing will not disappear.



12 Principles of Kikigaki 6

Kikigaki starts with the encounter of two people.

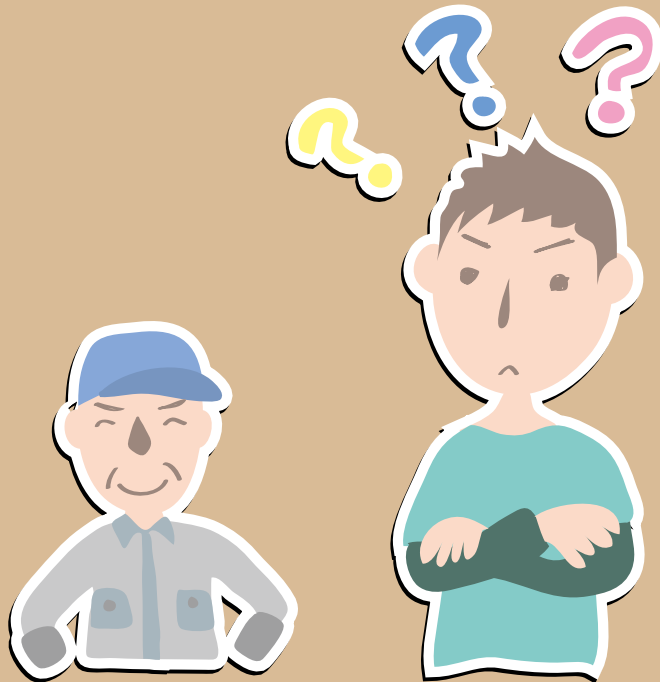
Start by introducing yourselves to each other. Make eye contact, connect through conversation, and explain why you are coming to meet him/her. If you speak with an honest and sincere attitude, your interviewee will certainly open up to you.



12 Principles of Kikigaki ⑦

The experiences of a lifetime cannot be expressed in just a few words.

Asking “why?” and “how did that happen?” are an important part of Kikigaki. As you listen to the interviewee’s story, if you pursue each thread of your inquiry carefully, you will discover previously unrealised details of the person’s work or life, and you will be able to get closer to understanding the essence of his/her work and way of life.



12 Principles of Kikigaki ⑧

Cultivate a good rapport with your interviewee.

Make an audio recording of all your conversations with the interviewee; transcribe it word-for-word because that process will help you to fully and deeply understand your interviewee. Your empathy with your interviewer will be the driving force in completing your Kikigaki work.



12 Principles of Kikigaki 9

**Don't add
your own words;
only edit out unneeded parts.**

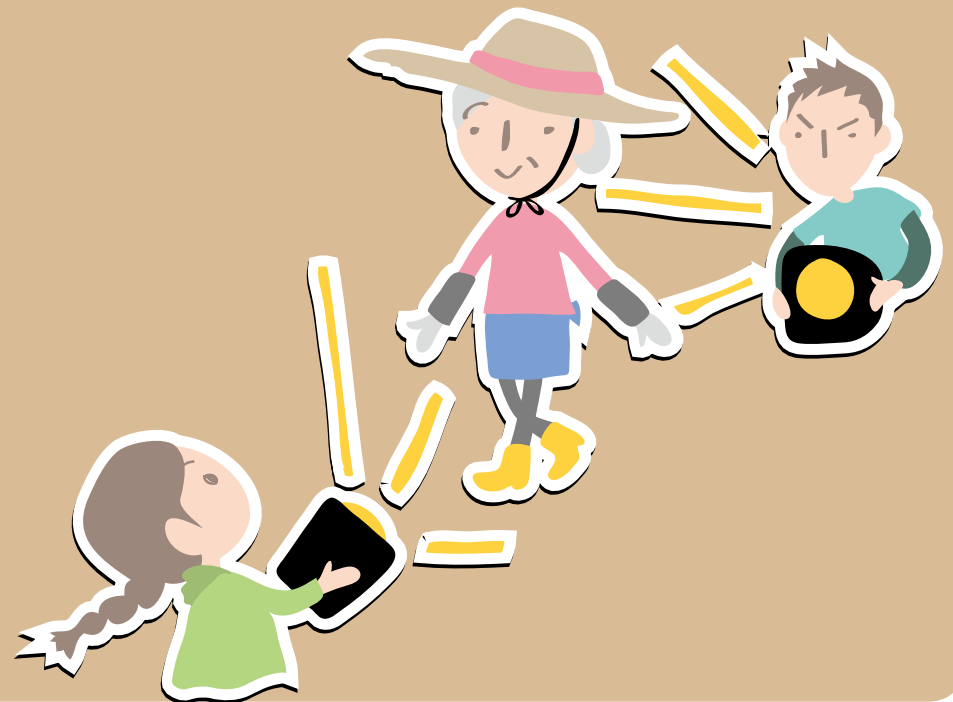
"Kikigaki" is the process of faithfully compiling only the interviewee's own words. Be careful not to add on your own ideas or opinions to the story. Furthermore, make sure you understand and convey the central ideas of your interviews, and cut out only the unnecessary portions of the dialogue.



12 Principles of Kikigaki 10

**Remember it is you
as interviewer who will
help to make the interviewee's
story shine.**

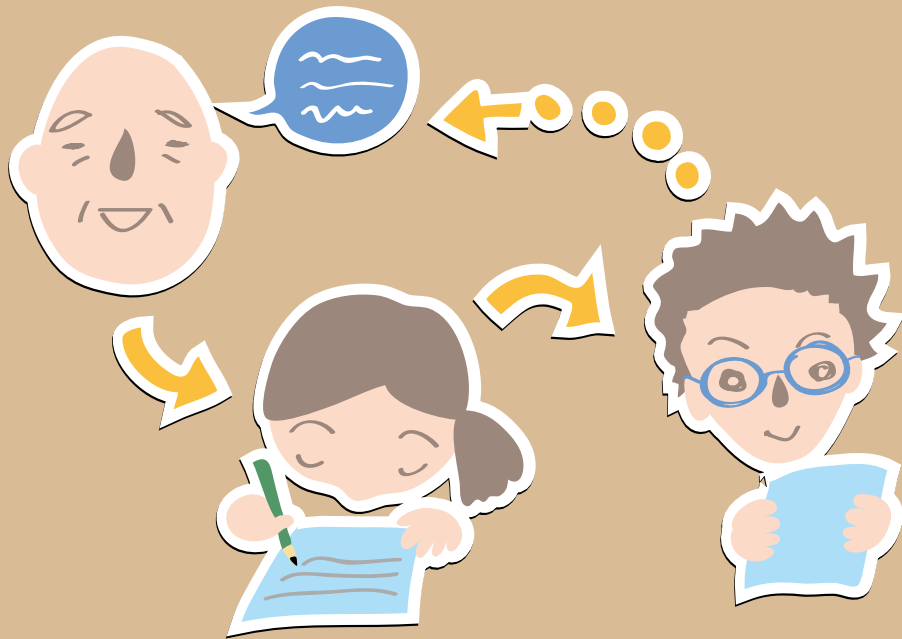
The interviewee shows different dimensions of him/herself, depending on the angle from which questions are asked. The interesting thing about Kikigaki is that interviews of the same person by different interviewers produce quite a different record.



12 Principles of Kikigaki 11

You are the bridge between the interviewee and the reader.

The fundamental point in editing your report is making it readily accessible to readers. It is through your writing that the reader has his/her first encounter with your interviewee. It is up to you to convey this story effectively and with thoughtfulness and consideration.



12 Principles of Kikigaki 12

Kikigaki is a joint product of the interviewer and the interviewee.

Kikigaki requires the cooperation and collaboration of the interviewer and interviewee. It is very important to develop a relationship of mutual trust between you and your interviewee. And if in the end you develop a feeling of mutual gratitude—if you can exchange heartfelt “thank yous” at the end of the project—you will have realised one of the important goals of Kikigaki.



- Kikigaki:
Take Up the Challenge!

step-1 Preparations

Your first step in Kikigaki!

1 Finding the right person to interview

Give some thought to the theme you have chosen for your Kikigaki project and look for a region or occupation that matches that theme. Start your search for persons that you could interview with those criteria in mind. One good method is to ask your teachers, family members or friends to help introduce you to suitable persons to interview.

2 Contacting your interviewee

Contact the person you want to interview with a telephone call or by writing a letter. Explain clearly the purpose and goals of the Kikigaki project. If s/he agrees to a Kikigaki interview, then set a date, time, and place.

3 Doing preparatory research and creating a questionnaire

Research your interviewee's occupation and the area where s/he lives by reading books or studying reliable sites on the Internet. Think about questions you would like to ask based on what you have learned, and start by writing down a list of your questions. Then, using this list, you can work on the important step of organising in advance the flow of your interview and the way you will ask your questions.

Take note

The Kikigaki interview is not a simple question-and-answer session. Try to hold a natural conversation, and rather than posing questions one after the other, carefully pursue each thread of your inquiry with further questions. As much as possible, try not to look at your notes during the interview; use them mainly as a reminder.

4 Check your equipment

It is important to prepare thoroughly in advance to ensure that there are no problems with your audio recording. Make sure in advance that you fully know how to use the recording equipment, and practice ahead of time so you are familiar with it and can operate it smoothly. Don't forget to check that you have new or charged batteries.

Here's your challenge !

Drawing up your questionnaire

Think about what kind of questions you would like to ask. Try looking at the example below for reference.

Topics	Sample Question Ideas
Basic information	Age, date and place of birth, family members
Childhood	Memories of upbringing, childhood dreams
Work description	Materials, tools used, when and where he/she works, details of procedures or techniques, things requiring caution in that job
Feelings about job	Reasons the work is worthwhile, necessary skills, past challenges or common hardships
Future	Objectives or visions for the future, future of successors in the craft, profession, or industry

Checklist What you will need

☐ Audio recorder

Prepare your tape recorder or voice recorder and know how to use it.



☐ Batteries

Bring enough new or fully charged batteries for the full interview.



☐ Camera

Take a portrait photo of your interviewee; photographs of his/her place or area of work, equipment used, etc. will be a good addition to your report.



☐ Notebook and pens or pencils

Taking down notes about words you didn't understand or things that you wanted to hear more about will be useful.



step-1 Key Point

We rarely sit down to a one-on-one interview with someone we are meeting for the first time. The better prepared you are and the more conscientiously you approach the interview, the more successful it will be.

step-2 Interview Day

It's finally time to meet.
Enjoy listening and learning!

1 Starting your interview

First introduce yourself courteously and tell your interviewee about yourself. Explain the aim of the Kikigaki project and obtain his/her permission to record the conversation and to take photographs.

2 Place and Time

Choose as quiet or secluded a place as possible for the conversation. If you can have your interviewer show you pictures, drawings, or other materials, actual tools or the workplace, seeing these can quickly enhance your understanding of what you will be hearing about.

Take note

Position your audio recorder as close to the interviewee as possible, and pay attention to interference from noise around you. Don't rely only on the audio recording; take good notes of important information when appropriate.

3 Questions

Start by recording the interviewee's basic information—name, birthdate, family members, vocation and so on, and then move on to the main part of the interview.

When someone is telling a story, there is a tendency to omit details or leave out parts of the story that might not be clear to a listener who is hearing about the subject for the first time. Pursue your questions thoroughly, in asking about details of what has been said to make sure that your understanding is correct. Keep in mind that your attitude, facial expression, and expression of interest will

affect what the interviewee tells you. The more interest you have in the story, the more your interviewee will be happy to tell you.

Take note

In order to effectively convey an in-depth picture of the interviewee's life and work, it is important to collect a range of specific stories or episodes. Therefore, try to avoid overly general or abstract questions such as, "How would you sum up the difficulties of your work?" or "What is your purpose in life?"

Here's your challenge !

Asking questions

Ask standard questions	Things that may be commonplace to the interviewee may be centrally important to the work or the craft or skill s/he practices. Don't assume that you know anything about the interviewee or his/her work; do your best to ask questions that will give you a complete picture.
Get the full story Obtain specifics	Who, what, where, when, why, and how: pursue your questioning carefully but clearly in order to get a full understanding of all the main features of the story.
Find out how his/her work and life go together	Ask your interviewee to tell you about a typical day or year of his/her work and daily life. That kind of account will give you a fairly accurate picture of the person's work as a whole.

Here's your challenge !

Words to be on the alert for

Adjectives	When you hear generalised adjectives like "big," "pretty," etc. in your interviewee's remarks, it may be wise to follow up by asking "how big?" or "pretty in what way?" so you can really understand the ideas.
Proper nouns	Confirm how to spell or write the names of persons or places accurately when they come up. When it is difficult to imagine a tool, or place, etc., just from the name when your interviewer mentions it, you can ask him/her to draw a picture for you along with giving an explanation.
Technical terms	When you hear technical terms or other words you don't understand, be sure to ask about their meanings, and how to spell or write them.

step-2 Key Point

Show respect for your interviewee and be modest, approaching the interview as a person learning about an entirely new topic. There is no need to be embarrassed about what you do not know.

step-3 Transcription and Editing

What is it that you think the speaker wants to convey?

1 Transcribing your recording

Transcribe the conversation you recorded word-for-word to maintain the interviewee's tone. Although it will take time and effort, this task is important to deepening your understanding of your interviewee, and is an important opportunity to consider how you will present your report of the interview.

Take note

When you are transcribing the recording, there may be places where you are not able to hear the recording. You may also find that there are parts of the conversation that you didn't completely understand. If possible, meet with the interviewee more than once and continue your interview, checking your understanding of these parts.

2 Compiling your report

Remove your questions, leaving only the speaker's words, and edit your record of the interview. If, after removing your questions, the text is difficult to understand, then fill in the essential parts, such as the subjects of sentences that were implicit in the conversation, etc.

Because people tend to jump between topics and repeat themselves when speaking, you can pull together related points. Edit out interjections ("um," "er," etc.), extraneous words or peculiar or colloquial expressions in order to make your report easier to read.

3 Shortening your report

To create a clear and vivid image of your interviewee's personality and work, you may find it desirable to cut out unnecessary material.

Take note

Leave out any idle complaints, uniquely personal expressions, or abstract views on the world. Clearly determine what is important to that person in their consideration of how to live their life, and what message they want to impart.

Here's your challenge !

Editing your Report

To make your report easier to read, fill in the implicit subjects of sentences or any important missing information. You may want to reorganise the order of parts of the conversations. How you organise the report is up to you, but be careful not to distort the main points made by the interviewee or the passages that reveal his/her character.

● Transcript:

Q: How old were you when you began working in the forestry cooperative?

A: Um, I was 22 years old. My mother was delighted with my decision.

Q: That's great.

A: Well, my mother was my father's ... My father was a lumberjack so my mother was probably identifying me with my father.

● Example of an organised passage:

When I was 22 years old, I began working in a forestry cooperative. My mother was delighted with my decision. She was probably identifying me with my father, who was a lumberjack.

Be sure to check your work:

The opening pages of our Kikigaki report are the most important.

The beginning of your report should give the basic information about the interviewee (name, age, family members, vocation, etc.), described in his/her own words. If it is clear what type of person the interviewee is from the outset, the reader will find it easier to read through the report to the end.

step-3 Key Point

Remember that the reader knows nothing about the interviewee. Write in a way that allows the reader to completely understand the interviewee's story. Effectively organise the main points and utilise the interviewee's distinctive voice to enliven the narrative.

step-4 Completion of your Kikigaki Report

One more step left! Create an interesting, easy-to-read report.

1 Consider the entire structure of the report

Think carefully about the overall structure of your report. For example, you may want to organise the interviewee's story in chronological order, starting from childhood. Alternatively, you may decide to introduce recent events or stories that made a strong impression on you. How you structure the report is up to you.

Above all, create an easy to understand, interesting piece of writing that will hold the reader's interest.

2 Adding a title and subtitles

Once you have organised the content of the report and established its narrative, create a title for each subsection, and think about the main title for the report. Be sure to include the names of the interviewer and the interviewee as well as the date(s) of the interview.

3 Ask the interviewee to check the content of your report

After compiling and editing the report, be sure to ask the interviewee to read over your draft and confirm the contents of your report are accurate. Discuss any mistakes, supplementary information that should be included, and text that should be deleted. Include the necessary revisions in the final version of your report. Print and bind the completed report. Send a copy of the

completed report and present it to the interviewee as an expression of your appreciation for his/her cooperation.

step-4

Key Point

Kikigaki is the project of documenting someone's life.

As you write your report, be aware of the consideration and trust the interviewee has placed in you.

Here's your challenge ! Final Check

- ☐ Did you include the name, gender, age, occupation/ profession, location, family structure, and other basic information about the interviewee at the beginning of the report?
- ☐ Have you consistently followed your chosen theme? Were you able to vividly depict the interviewee's life, character, and work?
- ☐ Did you trim out redundant text and compile a well-organised report?
- ☐ Are there any sections that could be confusing to the reader? (For example, mixing stories from long ago with recent stories or major digressions from the subject.)
- ☐ Have you removed the unnecessary interjections and other speech oddities to make the report easier to read?
- ☐ Have you replaced "this," "that," and other demonstrative pronouns with specific words to clarify ambiguous references?
- ☐ Have you replaced abstract or ambiguous phrases such as "kind of like that" or "these kinds of places" with concrete images that convey the message more clearly?
- ☐ Did you check your facts (names of people and places, names of tools, etc) carefully?
- ☐ Have you followed a consistent register in writing? Subject-usage? Calendar systems (local calendar or Gregorian calendar)? Units (inches or centimetres)? Other notation?
- ☐ Are your sentences too long? Have you made good use of paragraph breaks and subsections?
- ☐ Did you add simple supplementary definitions for technical terms?
- ☐ Are there any typos or misspellings? Proofread carefully.
- ☐ Did you create clear titles and subtitles that are appealing or interesting to the reader? Did you include the names of the interviewer and interviewee, and the date(s) of the interview?
- ☐ Did you confirm the contents of your report with the interviewee and include the necessary changes? If you are going to print copies of your report in booklet form, did you get permission from your interviewee?

- Examples of the Kikigaki
- Educational Method
- — Focusing on Japan's "Kikigaki Koshien" Programme —



The Kikigaki technique is already being utilised in the schools in Japan. The Kikigaki Koshien programme, which began in 2002, is a leading example. Every year 100 high school students interview veteran experts in occupations connected with the natural environment of forests, the ocean, and rivers. Through these one-on-one interview activities, students record the knowledge, skills, philosophies, and lifestyles of these individuals.

The veteran experts who are interviewed are selected by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries in collaboration with private organisations. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology invites high school students throughout the country to participate in the Kikigaki programme. The programme is primarily administered by the NPO Kyozon-no-mori Network and is made possible through the support and cooperation of many private businesses and other organisations.

Veterans in such occupations as reforestation, charcoal making, boatbuilding, woodworking, and fishing are people whose work benefits from their long experience of working with nature. In contrast, most of the students who participate in the Kikigaki programme are from urban areas. While these students may have an interest in nature, they are not familiar with the knowledge and skills that are needed to live in the countryside. Nevertheless, these young people undertake the challenge of Kikigaki interviews.

● The First Interview

The fundamental activity of Kikigaki is listening, which is rooted in the two-way interaction, or dialogue, between two people. As the interviewer's interests and concerns change,



so the topics of conversation will shift. The greater the empathy between interviewer and interviewee and the more they open themselves to each other, the more likely it will be that they will achieve a meaningful conversation. In the Kikigaki Koshien programme, high school students are the interviewers of men and women who are generally in their sixties, seventies, or eighties—that is, approximately the age of their grandparents.

In recent years, young people are increasingly absorbed in video games, mobile phones, and the Internet, and many have become inept at communicating with other people. Moreover, they learn about the problems and issues in society primarily through textbooks, TV, and the Internet, rather than through first-hand experience.

For young people, then, visiting these veteran experts, coming into contact with the landscape and ethos of the local area where they live, and seeing firsthand their interviewee's place of work, are invaluable experiences.

For example, an expert in forestry who has been working to maintain local forests over many years will tell an interviewer about the changes that occur in the forests as the seasons turn, or about how to appreciate the mountains. Besides expressing the pride, joy and difficulty they find in their work, forestry experts may also be frank in voicing sadness that the sons they hoped would succeed them in their work have moved to the cities to pursue other careers. Listening to the stories of these experts, students begin to think more deeply about the meaning of work, living, and the meaning of their own lives.

● The Benefits of Kikigaki

“Kikigaki” involves recording and then transcribing the dialogue with the interviewee; the interviewer plays the recording, stops it, and transcribes the words. The students listen over and over to the voices of these people who have lived for a long time, and the words make them think. In the process, the students often grasp important words or passages that they may have missed during the interview itself. They may come to a better understanding of what they have heard, realising, “Oh, so that is what he was trying to say!” Although transcription is a labour-intensive process, it is a necessary process for gaining a deep understanding of the interviewee.

One high school student said, “As I was editing my transcript for the report, I suddenly realised that I was unconsciously using the expert's words as if they were my own. This mysterious sensation is something I could only have experienced through Kikigaki.”

For their part, many of the veteran experts who are

interviewed later say, “it was the first time I ever thought back about my life and told my story to anyone.” There are also those who remarked, “I didn’t think my life was very important or worth talking about, but when I read the report you compiled, I felt as though my life may not have been a waste. Thank you for your hard work.”

In this way, through the encounter of two people, Kikigaki makes it possible for veteran experts who are often buried in their local environments to reconfirm their self-respect and personal dignity.

● The Young People Who have Benefited from Kikigaki

The Kikigaki Koshien programme began ten years ago. The number of students who have participated in the programme will soon rise to over 1,000. The voluminous results of their efforts, moreover, serve as an archive of the knowledge and skills of Japanese who live and work close to nature. Along with publishing the Kikigaki reports, the Kyozon-no-mori Network makes them available through an electronic library on the Internet.

The Kikigaki Koshien programme has not ended just with documentation. The experts who spoke of “the tears of the forests” and “the loneliness of the villages” have touched the hearts of their student interviewers. The students have formed groups that go into farming, mountain, and fishing villages all over Japan, and engage in such activities as maintaining Satoyama areas, protecting terraced rice fields, and restoring seaweed beds. Through these activities, they seek to share the sentiments of the people of those communities and participate in their dreams for the future through Kikigaki. Although depopulation and aging in Japan’s



farming, mountain and fishing villages continues to advance, Kikigaki activities enable us to connect to the future hopes and dreams of the people of these regions.

The Kikigaki Koshien programme is garnering attention as an initiative in line with one of the United Nations themes of “Education for Sustainable Development.”

● Kikigaki in the Schools

The success of the Kikigaki Koshien programme led to the adoption of the Kikigaki method in regular school curriculums. One example is a class called, “Creations from the Environment” taught at the University of Tsukuba Senior High School at Sakado in Saitama prefecture. One year in this class, when the theme was “Uses of Bamboo,” students used the Kikigaki method to interview craftsmen who made rope, farming tools, and charcoal out of bamboo. The students learned how the types of bamboo used and the season when

it is harvested differ depending on the products to be made and what they are to be used for. They realised how just bamboo alone is reborn into many different kinds of products depending on the types of bamboo and the technology used. The class proved a good opportunity for students to raise their awareness about the diversity of human ingenuity and the wisdom of traditional crafts. The teacher in charge of this class believes that Kikigaki is of great value as an integral part of career education.

High school students in their mid- to late-teens are at a time in their lives when they are trying to decide what career path to choose. What are their dreams and goals for the future? Should they attend university or enter the workforce immediately after graduating from high school? For young people who are about to take their first steps toward adulthood, learning from the life and career outlook of their elders is one of the most important things they can do. It is through encounters with others that young people develop the values that will guide them through their lives.

● Connecting Regions through Kikigaki

At a public junior high school in Kakunodate (part of the present-day city of Semboku) in Akita prefecture, students form groups and use the Kikigaki approach to interview local residents in their area as part of their Japanese language class. One year, in the shopping mall near their school, Kakunodate students applied the Kikigaki method to interview the tofu maker, the fish vendor, the proprietor of the general-goods store (*zakkaya*), and other owners of the small shops that make up the old-style *shotengai* shopping mall there.

The junior high school students got to know the interviewee

shopkeepers well, like the elderly lady who runs the tofu shop. She wakes up far earlier than the students to work in the shop, carefully boiling the soybeans and making the tofu. They found out that the soybeans she uses are supplied directly by local farmers. The fresh, warm tofu gives off a warm, sweet smell. The students told their mothers about the local tofu maker. One told his mother, “So I would rather you bought tofu from the tofu store than at the supermarket. Starting tomorrow, please buy our tofu at the tofu shop.”

After finishing their Kikigaki projects, the students have begun to truly *see* the people who work in the shopping district and understand what they are thinking about as they work. Now, as the students pass by the shops in the morning, they hail the shopkeepers with ringing “Good Morning” greetings.

Japan has always had strong local community ties. People help and support each other in order to enhance their lives in their local areas and sustain their livelihoods. Particularly in cities, however, the bonds between people who live and work in the same place are much weaker. In this way, it has been found that the Kikigaki approach is also useful for strengthening the bonds among people, and re-examining and rebuilding the foundations of local communities.

● Kikigaki beyond Japan

In recent years the Kikigaki approach has been recognised for its usefulness both for preserving traditional knowledge and as an approach to capacity building in education. In Indonesia, for example, the Kikigaki approach will be used in education to raise awareness of the value and importance of local traditions and culture.

Not only preserving primeval forests, but also human-influenced natural environments, such as the farmland and secondary forests that people have developed and maintained over a long time, is equally important in protecting biodiversity and human well-being. Such landscapes as villages, farmlands, and adjacent woods and grasslands that have been shaped and maintained through long-term human influence vary widely due to their unique adaptations to local climatic, geographic, cultural and socio-economic conditions. The conservation and utilisation of these natural landscapes, however, face difficulties in many parts of the world due to urbanisation, industrialisation, and drastic increases or decreases in population.

Approaches like Japan's Kikigaki Koshien have the potential for widespread application in areas that are confronting these types of problems. In many regions all over the world, the use of the Kikigaki method can contribute to renewed appreciation of the sustainable use and management of natural resources and the preservation and recreation of a positive relationship between humans and nature.



Kikigaki Works ①

Seeing the Interconnections in Nature through Whitebait Fishing

Interviewee **Mr. Koji Iwasaki** (64)

Interviewer **Moe Yoshii** (16)

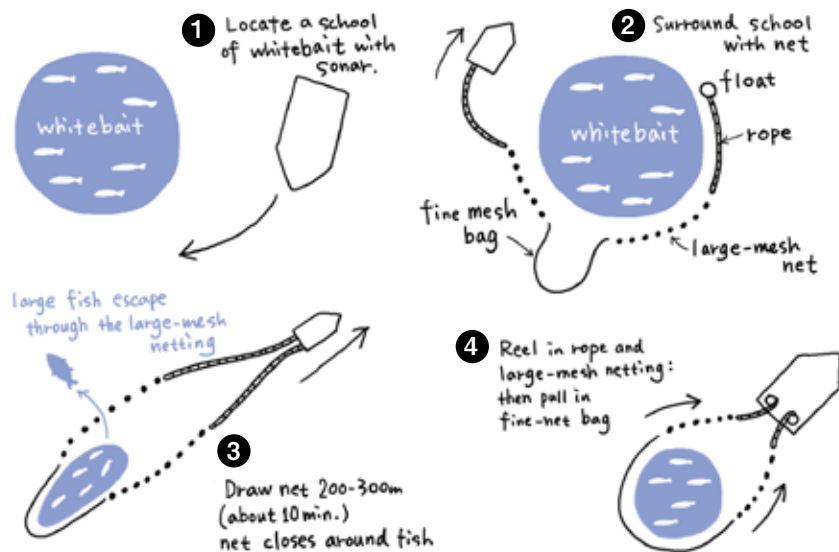
● The “Staple” of the Sea

I started fishing for whitebait with my father when I was about 16. Three generations of my family, my grandfather, father, and I, have been fishermen. Whitebait are sardine, anchovy, and herring fry of about three centimetres—they're semi-transparent and do not have scales. In Japan, we call whitebait “the white rice” of the sea because they are the staple of the diet of so many other kinds of fish. If this staple food of the oceans were to disappear, those fish would not survive.

● Whitebait Net Design and Fishing Method

The plankton on which whitebait feed propagate in river delta areas where freshwater and saltwater mingle, and the whitebait come from farther offshore to feed on these plankton. The freshwater that flows down the streams and rivers from the mountains to the sea, therefore, is very important.

The whitebait fishing season comes around three times during the year. In the spring, from April to mid-May, is the



best time for harvesting whitebait; the other times are in summer and fall. In the spring, we fish in the shallow waters of the bays; later in the year, we trawl about two kilometres offshore.

These days we locate schools of whitebait by using sonic fish finders, but in the past we used our fisherman's instincts. In the spring, we know the smell of the air that means "the whitebait are coming." We can tell from the smell of the air coming from offshore when it is time to head out to fish. We can also distinguish the different types of whitebait. I always felt an indescribably wonderful feeling whenever I found my intuition had guided me correctly.

A whitebait net is made up of a 30-metre bag net trailing at the end of a 100-metre surrounding net, which is affixed to the ends of 100-metre of rope. The mesh size of the surrounding net is about 1 metre. The mesh size of the bag net starts at 3 centimetres for the first 5-metres and

becomes progressively smaller down to 0.5 millimetres. We encircle the whitebait school and draw them in using this net. It is designed so that large fish can escape, while just the schools of whitebait are caught.

All the whitebait that we catch, we process and sell ourselves. It is our family business. The fish are rinsed and boiled in a 3 percent salt solution. The brine is made with sweet sun-dried salt ^(*). After boiling, the fish are quickly cooled and refrigerated, a process that brings out the flavour. We also sell dried as well as fresh whitebait.

● Vital Links

As residential areas expand, forests are disappearing, and what happens then is that water quality suffers. Today we do have modern sewage processing systems, but detergents and other household chemicals drain into and contaminate local rivers.

Along the seashore as well, landfills have degraded the seas, destroying the relationship between the land and the ocean, and taking away our means of livelihood. We need to better preserve our natural environments. The mountains and rivers feed the ocean; this relationship is of the greatest importance.

(*) This crystallised salt is made from seawater, which is dried in sunshine and wind, and is rich in minerals.

Koji Iwasaki was born in 1945 in the city of Yokosuka, Kanagawa prefecture. After graduating from junior high school, he followed in his father's footsteps as a whitebait fisherman. Today he continues fishing with his son, a fourth-generation fisherman.

Harvesting Seeds for Forests 100 Years From Now

Interviewee Mr. Mitsuru Sugimoto (70)

Interviewer Nanase Shiota (15)

● Following in My Father's Footsteps

I was born and raised in the village of Kawakami in Nara prefecture. The house I was born in was on the middle slopes of the mountain, so the woods were my playground most of the time. I was adventurous and probably a bit mischievous. When I was 22 I started helping my father harvesting the seeds of cedar trees, but when I tried climbing trees, I could only make it up about two metres. My father ribbed me, "What! That's as far as you can go!? You're hopeless!" Well, I knew I couldn't disappoint my father, so I learned how to go higher, and eventually I took over the work.

● The Process of Seed Harvesting

The area around Kawakami is fertile ground for the growth of cedar forests and receives plenty of rain, so 70 percent of the land within the village boundaries is planted forest. ^(*) These forests are filled with fine cedars thanks to the wise management of our predecessors. In order to produce strong trees for harvesting as timber, good saplings are needed. And in order to grow good saplings, we need seeds

with good-quality genetic makeup. Harvesting of quality seeds, therefore, is the most basic of the very root of good forest management.

The right time for harvesting seeds is the three-week period from October 20th to November 10th. First we select seed trees by assessing their shape and the texture of their bark. It has taken us 30 years to perfect this method of seed harvesting.

If we consider that the trees mature over a period of 100 years, we cannot help feeling a strong sense of responsibility for getting these practices right.

To climb the trees we use a type of sling called a "karuko," consisting of a rope and wood blocks or short rods. The ends of the rope are wrapped around the tree and knotted to wooden blocks on which we place our feet to climb the tree. When you climb a 70 to 80 year-old tree that has reached a height of 40 metres and gaze out over the treetops at the beautiful mountain landscape, you can understand how the birds must feel.

In harvesting seeds, we climb the trees and with a sickle, cut off branches that have cones attached. We have to



concentrate carefully when we're gathering seed cones, but it is so enjoyable that sometimes I find myself humming a song as I work.

We bundle the cut branches and dry them for two weeks. We then beat the bundles inside a large barrel, knocking out the seeds the size of rice kernels into the barrel. We then use a fine mesh sieve to separate the seeds from the chaff. We carefully store selected seeds until spring.

● Managing Forests with Nature's Balance in Mind

The forest is a kind of home—a home not only to humans, but animals and other plants. By protecting not only planted forests, but natural forests^(*) as well, we can protect the balances of nature. Forestry in high mountain areas is not profitable, so if we maintain the old-growth forests there, we can preserve good habitats for animals, and the nutrients of those areas will flow down to the planted forests below. We have to actively cultivate and nurture the planted forests, however—just the same as we would do with our children. We must pass on the knowledge of fostering and preserving the forests to the next generation, because the forests are the most important foundation of human life in this country.

(*) Artificially planted forests make up about 40 percent of Japan's entire forests. The most commonly planted trees are Japanese cedar (*sugi*), cypress (*hinoki*), larch (*karamatsu*), and other such conifers that provide timber suitable for construction.

(*) Naturally growing forests in Japan are made up of largely oak and other broadleaf trees.

Mitsuru Sugimoto was born in 1932 in the village of Kawakami in Nara prefecture. After graduating from junior high school, he entered the forestry profession. A master of the traditional art of tree climbing using *karuko*, he has been harvesting the seeds of cedar trees for more than 50 years.



Kikigaki Works 3

Sustaining Use of Mountain Areas through Slash-and-Burn Farming

Interviewee Ms. Kuniko Shiiba (85)

Interviewer Kikuno Nakayama (15)

● Living in Harmony with Nature

My family was quite poor, so from around the time I was in third grade of elementary school, I helped with the burning of the mountain fields.^(*) Later, at the age of 23, I married, and to this day, I have worked constantly with slash-and-burn type of cyclical farming. In the first year of the cycle we plant soba buckwheat, in the second year, some variety of millet, in the third year, adzuki beans, and in the fourth year, soybeans. After the fourth year has passed, the soil is no longer productive. Then we don't try to grow crops there any more, but just let the land revert to nature for the next several decades. That way, we do no permanent damage to the natural environment^(*). This rule should never be altered. This is the way people ought to live in harmony with nature.

● Setting the Fires and the Mountain Gods

August is the time for burning. So in June, we cut down the trees and shrubs, and clear away undergrowth in the area we want to make the field—which we call the yabo. Around the burn area we clear a firebreak, removing the trees, and all the



brush to ensure that the fire does not spread beyond the burn area.

One person starts the burning at the top of the slope. When we judge the time is right, another person lights the fire going in a straight line down the slope to the mid point all in one go. Lighting the upper part first assures that the fire will not go out of control, and after that we can burn the remainder from the bottom. We keep to this method of burning because if we were to light the fire in many different places at once, it could easily get out of control.

Before we begin the burning, we make prayers to the mountain gods. We announce that we will now set the field alight, and we pray that all the snakes, frogs, insects and other living things will quickly depart from the scene. To the gods of the mountain and of fire we pray that the flames will not burn beyond the bounds of the field and ask the gods to watch over us. We are setting fire to the mountain, so we

appeal to the gods to protect the animals and to watch over the mountain. Even if we cannot see them, the mountain gods are there, all around us.

● Sowing and Harvesting

After the burning is finished, we sow the soba buckwheat seeds. There is no need to water them. We just sweep over the ground with a broom so that the ash covers the seeds and when the morning dew falls, the seeds will sprout. The soba grown in such fields has a pleasant aroma and chewy texture. We want to continue to have products like this, so we keep on with this slash-and-burn method. All that effort is to make sure we'll have seeds to carry over to the next generation. After all, neither plants nor animals can survive without perpetuating their seed.

Japanese varieties of millet (*hie* and *awa*) are planted in May of the following year. The harvested heads of millet are dried and if kept in a storehouse (*kura*) built of wood, it can be stored for 100 years. On my farm we have grain from 60 years ago that is perfectly edible. So if you know how to practice slash-and-burn agriculture, you will never go hungry.

(*1) Agricultural method by which mountain forest and fields are cleared and then burned, and the ash serves as fertiliser, nourishing the crops.

(*2) In Japan's climate, areas not under cultivation the vegetation recover after about 20 years, and when the farmer determines that the trees and other plants have grown back sufficiently, the process can be repeated in the same area.

Shiiba Kuniko was born in 1924 in the village of Shiiba in Miyazaki prefecture. She has practiced traditional slash-and-burn farming for many years, and in the process, has cultivated native species of soba, Japanese varieties of millet, and other grains.

A f t e r w o r d

The *Satoyama* Initiative promotes the maintenance and rebuilding of landscapes in which the sustainable use of land and natural resources is practiced in accordance with local characteristics and the nature of the society and economy of our times. The integration of traditional ecological knowledge and modern science as well as the passing down of various cultural legacies and technical skills are valuable for the sustainable management of these landscapes.

The Kikigaki method can help in the collection and documenting of traditional knowledge. In the process, it is our hope that it will also contribute to the enhancement of the capacities of young people and to raising their awareness about the value and importance of local traditions and culture. We hope that this text can be a useful tool for efforts to record oral history around the world.



Listening and Documenting

—“Kikigaki”: A Tool for Sharing Wisdom for Sustainable Societies—

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Authors: Nanase Shirota, Nahoko Yoshino

Design: Tomoko Iwai

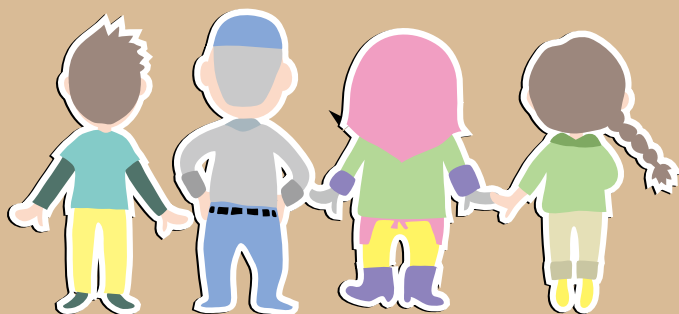
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