

*Techniques & Culture International Meetings*  
*Marseille, MucemLab, Fort Saint-Jean*



京都精華大学  
KYOTO SEIKA UNIVERSITY

L'ECOLE  
DES HAUTES  
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Mucem

Center for Innovation in Traditional Industries, Kyoto Seika University

## *Waza on the Move*

### Ineffable arts of learning

Scientific direction: *Akira Takada (Kyoto Univ.)*, *Xiaojie Tian (Univ. of Tsukuba)*, *Masaki Shimada (Teikyo Univ. of Science)*, *Frédéric Jouliau (Advanced School for Social Sciences)*

**(23 october 2020)**

**9 AM to 2:30 PM // 4 PM to 8:30 PM**

**On line inscription on: [mucemlab@mucem.org](mailto:mucemlab@mucem.org)**

9 AM/ 4PM

Welcome and introduction by **Aude Fanlo** (Head of Research & Teaching Dept. Mucem, and **Annabel Vallard** (Head of *Techniques&culture*)

9:10 AM/4:10 PM

General introduction on the scientific issues of "Waza" by **Akira Takada** (Kyoto University), **Xiaojie Tian** (University of Tsukuba), **Masaki Shimada** (Teikyo University of Science) and **Frédéric Jouliau** (Advanced School for Social Sciences)

9:20 -9:30

• **Oussouby Sacko** (President of Seika University)

*Presentation of the policy of the University of Seika and of the "Center for Innovation in Traditional Industries" with a special address to the WAZA question.*

### **Session 1 (9:30 AM-4:30 PM): Waza, play & apprenticeship**

• **Masaki Shimada** (Teikyo University of Science)

*Acquisition of skills to make and use tools through play and playfulness among wild chimpanzees*

• **Akira Takada** (Kyoto University)

*Anthropological imagination through drawing: Depicting playful childhood among the San of Southern Africa.*

• **Koji Sonoda** (Japan Society for the Promotion of Science)

*Playing House as an Ecosystem of Learning Environment Among Baka Children*

• **Ines Pasqueron** (Post Doc, Imaf AMU)

*Learning to laugh: a Tanzanian case.*

• **I. Lien, Ho** (Dept of Theatre Arts, National Sun Yat Sen Univ. Kaohsiung, Taiwan)

*Discover New Affordances of Disability, Embodiment and Theatre making Through the Socially engaged Performance Theatre "I am a Normal Person".*

- **Inès Moreno** (ENSAD, Paris)  
*Manufactured Series - Choreographing a technical learning process.*
- **Haruka Okui** (Dept of Social Studies, Doshisha University)  
*Gestural Interactions on the Intensive Training of Waza at a Puppet Theater.*

### **Session 2 (10:45AM-5:45PM): The Waza and the socialization of know-how**

- **Xiaojie Tian** (University of Tsukuba)  
*"Knowing by Feet" during the Growing-up of Pastoralist Maasai Children in Savanna.*
- **Yoann Moreau** (Research Institute for Humanity and Nature, Kyoto)  
*Waza in the Era of mechanized production.*
- **Junko Ohishi** (Faculty of Health and Sport Sciences, Univ. of Tsukuba)  
*Waza and Women in Early Modern period of Japan.*
- + • **Alice Doublier** (CNRS Paris)  
*A technique without culture? The art of the container or the new lives of soy sauce maceration tanks (Shôdoshima, Japan).*

### **Session 3 (11:30 AM-6:30 PM): The Waza, between tradition and innovation?**

- **Flavia Carraro** (CNE Marseille)  
*Textile routes and weaving communities (or praise of the loom).*
- **Francesca Cozzolino** (ENSAD, Paris)  
*From milpa culture to object design. A tradition of craftsmanship invented in the village of Tonahuixtla (Puebla-Mexico).*
- **Fanny Pellerin** (ECAL, Lausanne)  
*Correlation. Bamboo as an heuristic tool, the learning process of a technical gesture by a confrontation of two opposite materials.*
- **Chia-Huei Tseng & al.** (Tohoku University)  
*Perceived "togetherness" and "MA" between two dancers in joint improvisation.*
- + • **Gwendoline Torterat** (Univ. Nanterre)  
*Knapping flint today.*

### **Lunch Break : 12h - 12:30**

### **Session 4 (12:30AM- 7:30PM): Between "body techniques" and objects, the role of skills**

- **Frédéric Joulian** (EHESS)  
*The Gàubi of Dali. Analysis of a complex technical action among Chimpanzee from Côte d'Ivoire.*
  - **Itsu Horigushi, F. Joulian, Kione Akao Kochi, Yuji Yonehara** (Seika Univ., EHESS)  
*On Waza's Washi, the art of making Washi in Kurotani, Kyoto Mountains.*
  - **Emilie Letouzey** (Univ. Toulouse)  
*"Bringing the techniques to life" ... or not. Practices on the yarn of Japanese horticulturists in a small district of the North of the conurbation of Ōsaka.*
  - **Yujie Peng** (National Museum of Ethnology, Japan)  
*Changing shapes, Shaping forms.*
  - **Daniel Niles** (Research Institute for Humanity and Nature, Kyoto)  
*World in a basket.*
  - + • **Isabelle Borsus** (Univ. Libre de Liège)  
*Skin games. The incorporation of taxidermy know-how.*
- General comments by: Gen Yamakoshi** (Kyoto University) and **Damien Kunik** (Musée d'ethnographie de Genève, Switzerland) and conclusions by editors.

# Techniques & Culture International Meeting

(23 oct. 2020)

Marseille, MucemLab, Fort Saint-Jean

Entrée sur inscription : [techniques-et-culture@ehess.fr](mailto:techniques-et-culture@ehess.fr)



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## *Waza on the Move* Ineffable arts of learning

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*Abstract:*

In Japan, under the term *Waza* (わざ) we mean the embodied know-how, the mastery of a craft act but also the processes and forms of tricks that go with it; it is loaded with profound meaning whose intensity is equivalent only to the pleasure experienced in performing or seeing performed an effective manual action. This word, the conceptions, practices and devices it implies will serve as a basis for questioning at new costs - closely mixing interaction and culture - the question of learning and transmission in both formalized and institutionalized universes and informal or performative ones. By calling on development psychology, primate ethology, hunter-gatherer anthropology, but also design, history, sociology or the sciences of education to contribute, we intend to take up again these central questions of Francophone cultural technology, which is partly inherited from Japan's popular and academic cultures.

*Main issues:*

In recent decades, increased attention has been given to the universality of human education and social learning of children in both human and non-human animal societies. For example, Gergely and his colleagues have argued that humans are universally equipped with the natural inclination to convey cultural knowledge through explicit intentions and that this natural pedagogy enabled humans to prosper (Cisbra & Gergely 2006, 2011; Gergely et al. 2002). Accordingly, for them education is defined as entailing the following traits: 1) Explicit pronouncements of knowledge that can be generalized by an individual who serves as a teacher; and 2) interpretations of pronouncements performed on the content of the knowledge by an individual, who serves as the student (Cisbra & Gergely 2006: 257). However, there remains a limited understanding of the cultural and ecological foundations of education and learning. For instance, why children are enthusiastically involved in activities that are not useful to the subsistence of the targeted group is still (?) largely unknown. The pitfall of natural

pedagogy, as proposed by Gergely and others, is that it premises the modern educational system, such as schools, to discuss education and learning. In contrast, ethnographic studies, which have relativized education and learning under the modern institutions, have the potential to offer a unique contribution by expanding the theoretical coverage and fields of those arguments (Takada 2016).

As a notable example, using a Japanese term *わざ* (pronounced *waza*) as a key heuristic concept, a number of researchers have investigated the socialization process of tacit knowledge of humans, in which culture and technique are inseparably related. These studies have revealed that children or “cultural novices” often implicitly learn tacit knowledge, such as appropriate use of cultural tools and elegant body movements of traditional dances, without the explicit pronouncements of knowledge by a teacher, while being involved in social relationships of the expert group (e.g., Ikuta 2007).

Analogous to these, researchers have investigated social learning among juvenile chimpanzees, focusing on the process of acquisition of recognized skills through a master-apprenticeship (de Waal 2008; Matsuzawa et al. 2008; Shimada 2018), or explored relations between tradition, transmission and *waza* in complex tool-use behaviors (Joulian 2000, 2005). Adopting the term *waza*, this special issue of *Techniques&Culture* attempts to explore the cultural and ecological foundations of education and learning in human and non-human animal societies following five aspects:

#### *Axis 1: Waza, play and apprenticeship*

First, *waza* has usually been evaluated for its functions in local subsistence, or its evolutionary advantage in the historical development of both human and nonhuman animal societies. Following this perspective, the skills that do not have pragmatic uses (e.g., the tool play of children, or object play of juvenile nonhuman animals) are often overlooked with little consideration of their significance, or are perceived as under-developed or even wrong. Nevertheless, this perspective arouses several doubts when considering the *waza* of children, including juvenile animals. First, if pragmatic objectives do not motivate the deployment of *waza*, how can *waza* be developed? Can and should imperfection or maladjustment be part of the investigation? The answer is of course positive and concepts such as detriment, sabotage, or vengeance be associated with *waza*. The second set of doubts questions how children explore and discover the new affordances (Gibson 1979) of materials and tools through trial and error. When children’s body features and needs transform in the course of development, what kind of changes are brought to the practitioners’ perception on a certain *waza*? These questions also raise the anthropocentric dimension of studies on animal and human motor skills and their now century-old history. It is noteworthy that studying the tacit knowledge within non-human animal lives has an extensive history, even without using such a term as *waza*. Taking these studies into account, we may further ask whether the tacit knowledge of other species should be considered as *waza*? If so, how can we compare this with the *waza* of human?

#### *Axis 2 : The Waza and the socialization of know-how*

Secondly, the socialization involved in the acquisition of a *waza* seems to us to be an insufficiently explored entry into study - apart from perhaps historians or ethnologists of professions and techniques (Julien, Rosselin 2003; Sigaut 2012, Bouillon & al. 2017) -, and whose link with a “community of practice” (Lave & Wenger 1991) can be detailed in relation to the different forms of knowledge and performance. Previous studies on education often adopted a dichotomy between novices (non-skilled) and experts (skilled) or between the younger (who are supposed to know less) and older (who are supposed to be more experienced and skillful) generations to explain the cultural transmission of knowledge.

However, such dichotomies are too simplistic to deconstruct the process of knowledge (re)generation in a particular space and time. In the actual practices of social interaction, conventional social roles, such as novice and expert, are often transformed into (or filtered by) positions, such as those who know and who do not know, which are contingent upon the progress of interactions in order to accomplish mutual understanding (Takada 2006). Detailed analysis of changing participation frameworks (Goffman 1981) will clarify the following questions, which are crucial to explore the sequential organization of social interaction: What kind of social relationships enable waza (re)generation? In which context is waza put into practice?

*Axis 3: The Waza, between tradition and innovation?*

The third challenge, legitimation of waza, raises several concerns related to the legitimization of pragmatic skills and the authorizing of tradition. First, the concerns of how and whether the various forms of waza and relevant social interactions be recognized and established as the customs of a certain group. For instance, using a spear to hunt has been recognized as an important custom in hunter-gatherer societies (Lee 1979). On the other hand, using it to dig holes, or as hammers to make other toys, usages that are often found among hunter-gatherer children, have not been regarded as waza, nor been considered to associate with hunter-gatherer identity so far. Nonetheless, serious consideration about the ways that the community of practice encourage or discourage these usages would enlighten the process of legitimation (and non-legitimation) of waza. Similar arguments can be developed with respect to "modern" contexts and social situations. In which circumstances would waza be regarded as innovation and technology or knowledge? How would such waza diffuse within the society? Investigating these questions leads us to reconsider the dichotomy of traditional and modern and clarify the "social life" of waza.

*Axis 4: Between body techniques and objects: the role of skills*

The fourth topic, that of the concretisation of know-how in objects, makes it possible to raise all cultural, economic, political, ecological and symbolic relations of praxis that can be brought out by studying the connections between the waza (and the embodied skills) and the systems of objects, whether they are in common use, produced over time, or specialized and artistic and which are both sometimes recognized as heritage elements. High technical skills acquired over years or decades of learning can sometimes not be seen in the objects produced, are not readable, or only by experts, or conversely, the manufacture of complex objects involves only a simple algorithm and the pressing of a finger on a button.

In this issue, dedicated to hands, gestures and learning, all preliminary situations, such as those involving simulations, devices and toys, will be given priority. The waza of DIY enthusiasts will be able to coexist with that of contemporary design professionals, with situations of hybridization and innovation (Grimaud & al. 2017) often opening up, through a side step, to more acute understanding of learning and manual intelligence.

*Conclusion: Around the know-how, a Franco-Japanese cross history*

The last issue refers to the crossed and still poorly known history of intellectual relations between Japan and France concerning research in material culture as formalized by André Leroi-Gourhan when he went back from Japan before World War II, (Leroi-Gourhan 1941-43, Soulier 2011), and which is based largely on the formal and informal knowledge of Japan in the 1920s (Cobbi 2006; Kunik 2015). A large part of the concepts about material culture, efficiency and aesthetics can only be understood in the light of the Japanese emic and etic context, in which the notion of waza plays a key role. This issue is therefore also a way to

revisit this history and to renew a dialogue on methods, reflexivity, learning and dissemination of waza, that has been interrupted between the two countries for almost 70 years.

Taken together, this special issue aims to explore the cultural and ecological foundations of education and learning, with a special reference to socialization to waza in both human and non-human animal societies. In this attempt, it sets “move” at the core of the analysis to facilitate reconsideration of waza as well as re-capture the process of waza (re)generation in social interaction of children with others. It focuses on the continuous transformation of waza adaptive nature and culturally distinctive meaning of tool uses, sequential organization of social interactions with respect to waza generation.

We welcome researchers and practitioners from very diverse backgrounds and disciplines, who will find an interest in the above-mentioned issues and will endeavour to share their analyses and experiences of learning in time and space, ... in Japanese or French contexts, or of course, in other intellectual traditions. The proposals will be based on methodologies involving the analysis of empirical data (ethnographic, sociological, technological, technological, ethological, etc.) and their presentation and analysis in one of the three possible forms allowed by the journal.

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