ZAIRAICHI

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ZAIRAICHI -MNGD Special issue 04

Making Networks for Glocal Development

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The List of Contributors

ZAIRAICHI

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1. Demonstration of Participatory Road Maintenance at Jinka in November 2022

2. Mr. Wendimu Conducted Unconfined Compression Test at AASTU in September 2022

3. Grinder Is Installed at AASTUAddis Ababa Science and Technology University in November 2022

4. Fourth Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) Was Held Face-to-face in September 2022

5. Mr. Frehaileab, a MNGD International Student in the PhD Program, Described His Research Project at the Research Meeting in Ehime, February 2023

6. Research Meeting Was Held Face-to-face at Ehime University in February 2023

ON LAUNCHING *ZAIRAICHI*

Masayoshi SHIGETA

How has people's knowledge been comprehended thus far in history? In considering traditional knowledge as a fixed referent, modern knowledge placed in opposition to the traditional, and scientific knowledge as representing universal truth, we feel that none of these can capture the knowledge practices of the people who live here and now.

ZAIRAICHI (local knowledge) is a type of knowledge formed through people's practice and experience in their daily interactions with the natural and social environments. This type of knowledge cannot be presented in a concrete form. However, we can focus on the mode of the existence of knowledge that emerges in each phase and deal with the processes of its formation and practice. The main target for analysis is people's everyday action and related aspects.

Here, the word *ZAIRAI* (local) is used to describe a situation in which the inter-relationship among subjects in a particular locale is reconfigured in relation to all research subjects, including all animate and inanimate creatures and human beings, as well as the actions, thoughts, knowledge, occupations, environments, institutions, customs, and communities that they produce. Following this, "localization" refers to the processes through which the reconfiguration takes place. In many cases, every subject and the inter-relationship among subjects change through localization.

The reason we add *ZAIRAI* (local) to *CHI* (knowledge) is not a passive one: that is, we are not merely trying to avoid being easily influenced by the dualism of tradition versus modernity owing to the lack of a unique perspective in capturing the practices of the people

who live here and now. Rather, it is because we believe that by using the adjective *ZAIRAI* as an exceptionally relational term, we can be liberated from conventionally dominant values and dogmas, and we can capture and understand the knowledge that is practiced here and now in a relative, contextual, and proper manner.

ZAIRAICHI research aims to bear witness to the generation of *ZAIRAICHI*, which is constantly created by people who live here and now in every part of the world, including modern Africa, and to examine its dynamics by way of fieldwork, drawing from the perspective of area studies. Furthermore, it aims to focus on people's attempts to use *ZAIRAICHI* for a better life (positive practice) and to understand its meaning in a "glocal" (global + local) context.

Conventionally, two fields have dealt with people's knowledge. The issue in Development Studies and Applied Anthropology revolves around how to make the most of the knowledge of those who are receiving interventions in order to pursue development. On the other hand, in Cognitive Anthropology, it is assumed that folk knowledge reflects the system of culture, and research topics have been limited to knowledge that is re-testable, such as the classification systems for animals, plants, and colors. However, the two approaches — i.e., the one that recognizes meaning in the practical aspect of knowledge and the other that seeks universality in the cognitive aspect — are not contradictory; rather, they have been described as complementary to each other in a variety of academic reflections and in the prospective for each field. There is also commonality in methodology.

Understanding *ZAIRAICHI* begins with synthesizing perspectives that have been presented in opposite ways by Development Studies and Cognitive Anthropology. It encompasses "the relationship between the cognitive system and social interaction," which Cognitive Anthropology has not touched upon, and "the relationship between utility and cognition," which has not been within the scope of Development Studies. In order to achieve this synthesis, it is necessary to carry out fieldwork on the processes of change in various contexts, focusing on the generation and practice of the dynamics of knowledge, an aspect that both disciplines have neglected.

One major feature of *ZAIRAICHI* research is its focus on the generation and practice of knowledge. As its starting point, it recognizes multiplicity in people's thinking by rejecting a homogenized understanding, and it goes beyond the concept of *ZAIRAICHI* as a fixed referent as well as the position in which locality is seen as infinitely good. Thus, it keeps the sites generated by *ZAIRAICHI* in a social context and the historical processes under consideration, while focusing mainly on the political nature of discourse and the power surrounding *ZAIRAICHI* itself. Finally, the research evaluates *ZAIRAICHI* in relation to its interaction with social relationship and its positive practice.

Another feature is collaborative fieldwork, in which cooperation is sought from the people in the area studied, and *ZAIRAICHI* and its practice are kept in focus. By maintaining a reflective perspective, which objectifies the generation of knowledge at fieldwork sites, we can avoid the danger of falling into an uncritical interpretation of people's beliefs and of *ZAIRAICHI* as resistance to the Western knowledge paradigm or resistance to the dominant modern discourse. Without concern for the knowledge of practical thought through collaboration, it would be impossible to go beyond a simple understanding based in the local context and, further, to translate it into a global context.

ZAIRAICHI research can present outcomes unique to Area Studies and different from the methodology-driven Development Studies by accumulating cases of "the formation of *ZAIRAICHI* and its positive practice" in sufficient quantity and good quality. If we can understand the processes by which I can become public knowledge and of how it can become institutionalized through its generation and practice, this understanding would make a positive contribution to drafting policies for development that is appropriate to each area. The possibility of the people's *ZAIRAICHI* knows no limit.

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