

Teaching and Research Interests
by David C. Moreton
July 30, 2008.

1) Shikoku Pilgrimage

Since 1999, I have been involved in studies of the Shikoku pilgrimage examining such areas as: its history, the custom of charitable giving, collecting and examining maps and other old materials on it, and looking into the history of non-Japanese and the pilgrimage. For many years, I have had the opportunity to teach a course to Japanese students as well as give lectures to foreign students on the pilgrimage. In both cases, students have enjoyed learning about this pilgrimage route and many have become eager to embark on the journey and experience it first hand. The Shikoku pilgrimage is unique in many ways and its freedom and custom of charitable giving attracts both people inside and outside Japan. I feel that this wonderful aspect of Japanese culture and history should be shared with and studied more by those outside of Shikoku.

Research interests:

- looking into the history of the earliest non-Japanese pilgrims. For example, Frederick Starr, Alfred Bohner, Oliver Statler.
- Interviewing non-Japanese pilgrims to find out their motives for doing the pilgrimage, thoughts on the pilgrimage etc.
- examining the history of `miracle tales` (reigen) and translating these stories into English.

2) Japan Culture

My undergraduate and graduate school studies in Japan and Canada focused on Japanese culture, religion and society. This academic learning added to the seventeen years that I have lived in Japan between 1988 and 2008 as a Christian missionary, English teacher (English conversation school, elementary school, high school, university), and university student etc have provided a great influence on my understanding of Japan. I have used examples from these experiences in a university class called, "Learning about Japanese Culture in English" during which we used a book called Nihon Marugoto Jiten (Kodansha, 2003)) which explains aspects of Japanese culture in English. This class has provided the students a chance to read and (re)learn about aspects of their own culture and then discuss and present these topics in class. Often students are asked to explain about Japan when they go overseas or when non-Japanese come to visit, so it is important to hold a class like this.

Research interests:

- Learning about Japan through the study of Japanese folktales.
- Japan through the eyes of a foreigner. For example, looking at the writings and life of Lafcadio Hearn, Basil Hall Chamberlain, Frederick Starr, William Adams etc.

3) Comparative culture and intercultural communication

For many years at the university level, I have taught a class entitled, "International Society and Japan" based on a book called This is Culture (Nanundo, 2005) and covered such topics as types of culture, intercultural communication, and mutual understanding. In this class, students learn about the differences between those of different cultures, in this case namely, international society and Japan; however, I also talk about life as a foreigner in Japan, multiculturalism in Japan and the dangers of attaching labels or categorizing people. I teach them my favourite proverb "The frog in the well knows nothing of the great oceans" and emphasize the importance of learning about other people, other cultures both outside and inside Japan.

Research interests:

- Experiencing another cultures through overseas study programs. (troubles, difficulties)
- History and development of multiculturalism in Japan.

4) Foreign Language Learning

For approximately twenty years, I have had the opportunity to teach English as a Second Language at numerous schools in Canada and Japan as well as to teach Japanese to students at the University of British Columbia. During this same period, I started to learn and continue to study Japanese and realize the difficulties of learning a new language; however, this personal learning experience aids me in effectively teaching the students to learn a new language. On many occasions for ESL teaching in Japan, I have used a book called Let's Talk about It (Longman, 1997) which gets the students thinking and talking about various topics related to Japan and the world.

As well, I also have a wide variety of experience from participating in speech and essay contests and thus, I have found role plays, speech giving and presentations have been very effective in language acquisition.

Research Interests:

- Public Speaking (Speeches)
- Essay Writing
- Presentation skills

5) War diaries

At present, this is just a research topic which began after receiving a set of diaries which my grandfather kept and wrote in secret during World War II while he was a Japanese Prisoner of War in Thailand. He, as an Allied soldier, along with tens of thousands of other POWs and coolies were forced to construct the 400-kilometer 'Death Railway' between Burma and Thailand. In 2006, I started meeting with a group of Japanese women in Tokushima who began to translate his diaries into Japanese. This project should be completed late 2008.

Not only my grandfather's diary, but other books written during such terrible times offer a closeup and honest look at the thoughts and feelings of the writers. Reading such materials makes one contemplate the meaning of life, the power of humankind, the importance of peace and the futility of war. Often in class, I show my students a movie called BARAKA (1995) which makes the audience think about such issues.

Research interests:

- The 'Death Railway' between Burma and Thailand.
 - Looking at other wartime journals.
 - Hearing the stories of others about war.
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