

# On the margin: personal archives of an outcast - a case study

Izumi Hirano

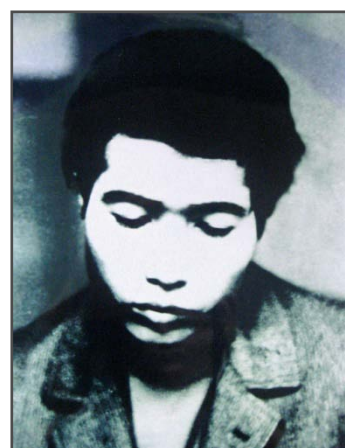
Master's student, Graduate Course in Archival Science, Gakushuin University, Tokyo, Japan. E-mail: nonalaviolence@gmail.com

## 1. Introduction

Given the general public's repugnance toward criminals, we rarely see their personal archives housed in repositories in Japan. Through an analysis of the personal papers of a Japanese death-row inmate, focusing on the traces left on the margin of his papers as sources of rich contextual information, the poster aims to discuss the nature and significance of such archives.

## 2. The Case

### 2-1. Creator: Norio Nagayama (1949-1997)



Born in poverty, brought up with minimal education, he shot four people in 1968 at the age of 19. After his arrest in 1969, he started writing and reading extensively in detention. In 1983, he received the "New Japan Literary Award" for his short story "A Wooden Bridge." His death sentence was finalized in 1990. When he was executed in 1997, he left manuscripts for an unfinished novel, "Flowers," which was published posthumously.

### 2-2. History of the fonds

1969-1997: Created and mailed piecemeal by himself to supporters, lawyers and publishers  
1997 : 14 boxes of personal belongings, including his papers, left to his lawyers  
1997- : Total of 72 boxes re-collected and kept by a supporter  
2008- : Arrangement & description in progress by the author

### 2-3. Content

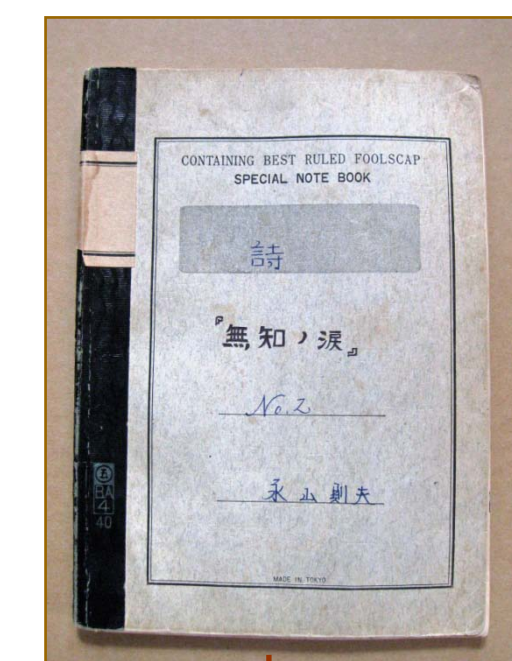
The fonds consists of the following :



- Journals (1969-1990)
- Notes for study (1969-1990)
- Manuscripts (1969-1997)
- Correspondence (1969-1997)
- Other papers and books

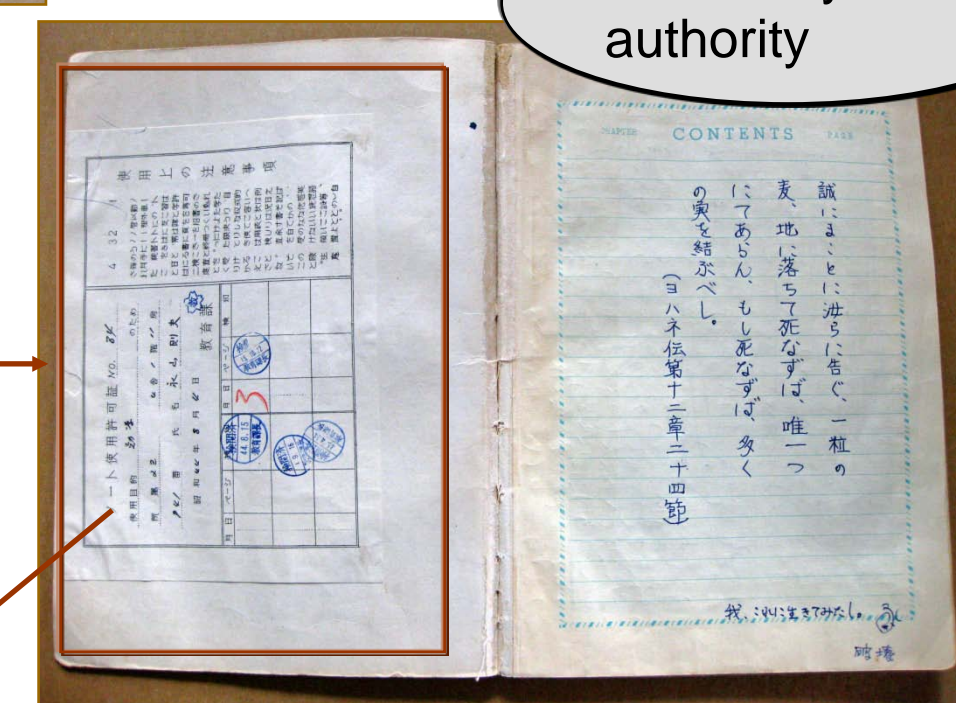
## 3. Findings

### 3-1. Control & Strategies : Example of Journals



Ex.1 Journal in notebook  
"Poems / Tears of Innocence No.2" (1969-08/1969-09)  
(ID 19-002)

Open!



Control by the authority

Translation:  
Authorization form for the use of the notebook  
Rules for use (main points):  
1. Do not use for purposes other than stated.  
2. Number all pages and do not rip off.  
3. Use only one notebook at a time.  
4. Render the notebook for regular inspection.

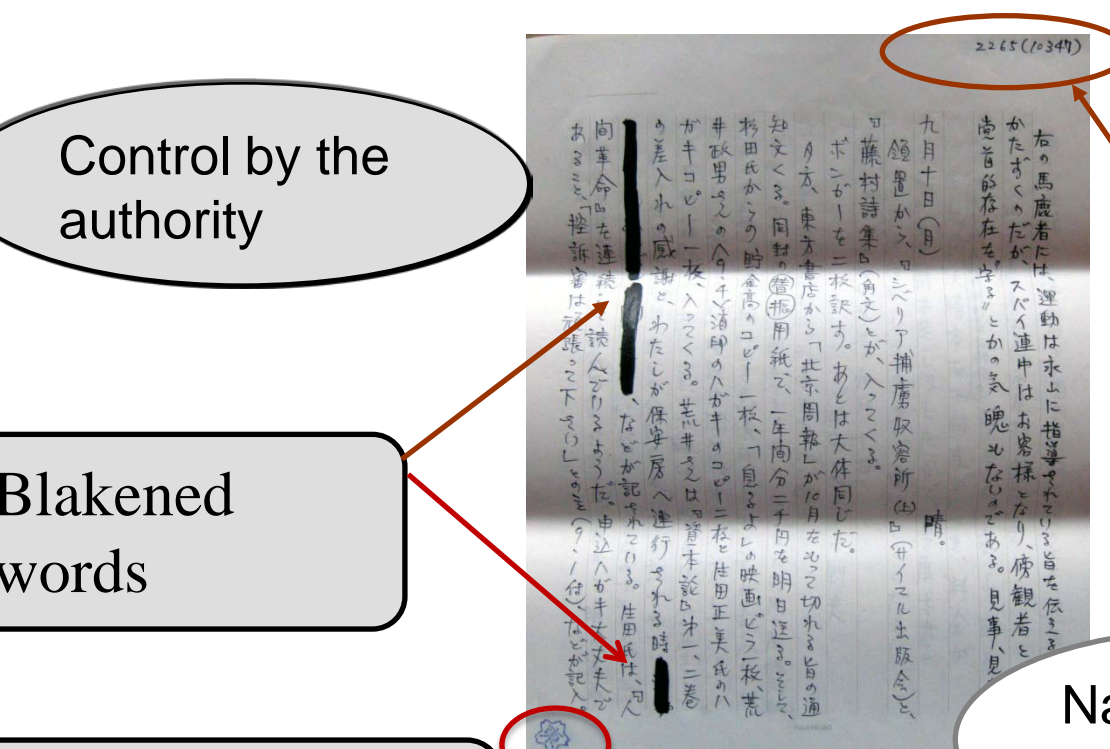
Flip!



Nagayama's strategy

The same notebook with a whole page blackened by Nagayama.  
His signature is on the low-right corner of the black square, showing it was his doing.

Ex.2 . Journal on letter pads : Entry on 1979-09-10  
(ID 21-B-023)



Control by the authority

Blakened words

Censorship stamp

Pages numbered, carbon copies kept

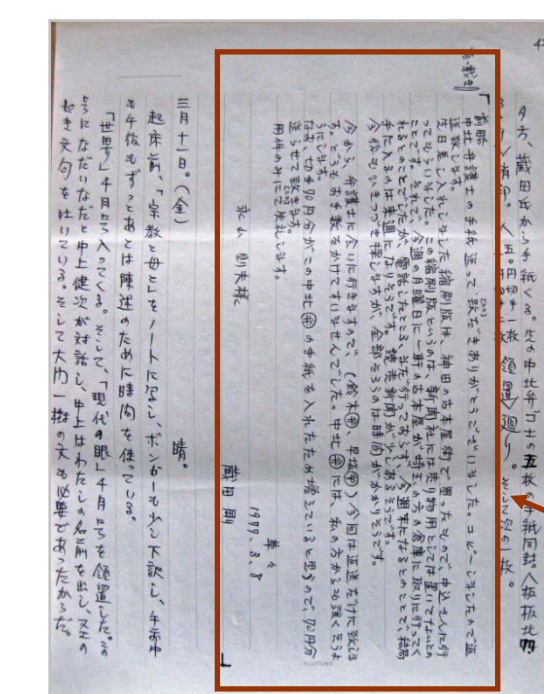
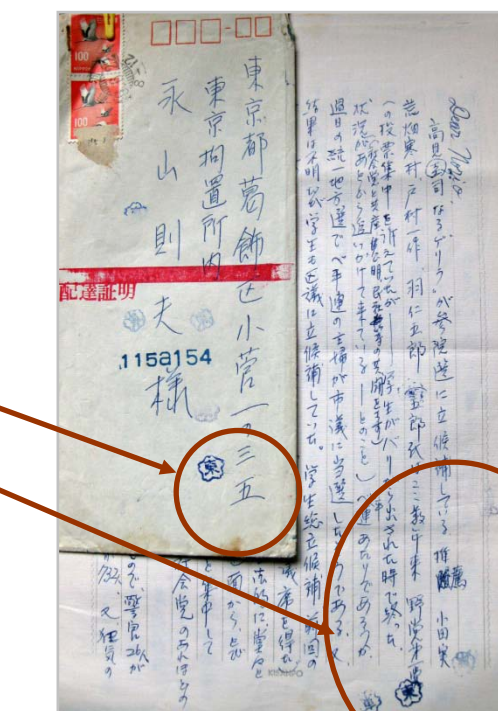
Nagayama's strategy

### 3-2. Control & Strategies: Example of Correspondence

Ex.3. Letter from a supporter dated 1971-06-21 (no ID)

Control by the authority

Check the sender and the content (stamp), black out phrases or remove the page, when necessary.



Ex.4. Journal entry dated 1977-03-10 (ID 40-B-036)

Copy the content of a received letter, make and keep carbon copies.

Nagayama's strategy

### 3-3. Summary of Findings

## 4. Discussions & Conclusions

conclusions are shown in

### 1) The nature of prisoners' archives:

The prisoners' archives can be seen as testimonies of :  
- the prison authority's efforts to maintain their coercive system  
- prisoners' challenge to such efforts  
(Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005)

⇒Traces left in the margins of Nagayama's papers can also be construed as such testimonies.

### 2) Significance of prisoners' archives as private archives without privacy

Created under constant surveillance and censorship, the private/public borderline is particularly blurred in the case of prisoners' archives.

⇒Prisoners' archives might help us understand the nature of "private" archives better.

### 3) Significance of Nagayama's archives for Japanese citizens

- Japanese prison authority's tendency for secrecy (The Japan Federation of Bar Associations, 2007)
- Introduction of the so-called "lay judge system" (similar to the jury system in the U.S.) in Japan in May 2009

⇒Nagayama's archives can inform Japanese citizens of the realities of the death penalty, enabling them to make informed judgments on capital cases.

### Questions for debate :

Nagayama papers are in private custody, kept accessible owing to the efforts of a private citizen. Supposing the above conclusions hold true.....  
• Can (should) such papers be inside the scope of public repositories' collection policies ?  
• Can they be part of our efforts to "represent the underrepresented" in archives?

## Literature cited

Japan Federation of Bar Associations, ed., *Consideration of Japan's First Report on the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment: The Record and Follow-Up*. Tokyo: Gendai Jimbunsha, 2007.

Nelson Mandela Foundation, *A Prisoner in the Garden: Opening Nelson Mandela's Prison Archive*. Johannesburg: Penguin Books, 2005.