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# Pacific Islands Studies in Japan\*

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This paper aims to give an overview of Pacific Islands Studies in Japan. First of all, I will describe their historical development. Then I will introduce the present Pacific Islands Studies in Japan, research groups, and their characteristics.

## Pacific Islands Studies before World War II

As soon as Japan participated in World War I in 1914, the Japanese Navy occupied German Micronesia. After several years, the area was put under the Japanese Mandate by the League of Nations. The Japanese Government set up the Administration Headquarters (Nan'yo-cho) in Palau and six other district headquarters at Jaluit, Ponape (present Pohnpei), Truk (present Chuuk), Yap, Saipan, and Palau. The rest of the Micronesia Islands, i.e. Guam, Nauru and the Gilbert Islands, were under the United States and the British respectively. Japanese Micronesia had been under Spain and Germany before it came under the Japanese Mandate. The Japanese brought many migrants from Japan into the area. Such a large immigration had never taken place under previous metropolitan powers. It happened because population increase was one of the serious problems in prewar Japan, in which the primary sector industries (e.g., agriculture, fisheries etc) were the main occupation for most of the people in those days.

While the region was under military occupation, the Japanese Royal Navy was the administrative power. MATSUOKA Shizuo, who was one of

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the brothers of YANAGITA Kunio, a famous folklorist, was an officer of the Japanese Navy, and he made some of the earliest works in Micronesia by Japanese scholars, mainly on languages. He wrote a general ethnological explanation on Micronesia, i.e. *Ethnography of Micronesia* (1927) in collaboration with Nan'yocho.

Many Japanese scholars, especially natural scientists, went to Micronesia for field research. There was the Palau Tropical Biological Station (Palao Nettai Seibutsu Kenkyusho) established by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science. There was also the Tropical Industry Institute (Nettai Sangyo Kenkyusho) established in Palau Headquarters (Nan'yocho). Some resident scholars were stationed at these institutes and many visiting scholars came in. The Research Institute for South Sea Economy (Nan'yo Keizai Kenkyusho) and the Association for South Sea Fisheries (Nan'yo Suisan Kyokai) were also established in Tokyo. The Research Institute for South Sea Economy covered not only Micronesia but also Polynesia and Melanesia, and Southeast Asia as well. The coverage was not only in the area where the Japanese colonial power held sway but also the further areas to which it was extending its influence. The Association for South Sea Fisheries covered a large area, too.

There are several scholars who should be mentioned here. YANAIHARA Tadao was an economist who specialized in colonial economy. He made extensive work on Japanese Micronesia and published *Pacific Islands under the Japanese Mandate* (Nan'yo Gunto no kenkyu, 1935). An English translation of the book was published by Oxford University Press in 1940. He was a Christian and rather liberal in his mind in those days. He was forced to resign from the professorship at the Tokyo Imperial University in 1937 because of his paper which criticized the Government and the imperial power for the Japanese colonial administration. After the war, he returned to his former post. He finally became the president of the University of Tokyo.

HIJIKATA Hisakatsu was an art teacher when he came to Micronesia. He became interested in customs and culture in the Pacific. He spent many years in Micronesia teaching art in primary schools. He wrote several ethnographic papers and monographs on Palau and Satewal. His name is still remembered in Palau, as he taught the people wood-carving and encouraged them to create their own art style assimilating paintings of their own traditional style. The project was quite successful in the area of creative art as well as in establishing a souvenir industry in Palau. He concentrated on creative art after the war in Japan and became known as an artist of Nan'yo style. His ethnographies were translated and published recently by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation (1993, 1995, 1996, 1997).

IMANISHI Kinji was a biologist and later became a famous theorist of biological evolution after the war. When he was a young scholar, he was also a leader of the alpinists and an adviser to the adventure club at the Kyoto Imperial University. IMANISHI organized an expedition with some students, such as UMESAO Tadao, KIRA Tatsuo, and KAWAKITA Jiro going to Pohnpei in 1941. Their reports were published in a combined form in 1944. UMESAO and KAWAKITA later became anthropologists. Although their fields were not in Oceania, it is for sure that they had a wonderful experience in making researches in Pohnpei. Actually, UMESAO later encouraged his students to undertake field researches there.

SUGIURA Ken'ichi was a graduate student from the Imperial University of Tokyo. He was one of the few who made anthropological field research with the latest methods in those days before World War II. He published many papers on Palau (e.g., 1942a, 1942b, 1944, 1945, 1949).

IZUI Hisanosuke was a linguist and made a study of Micronesian languages before World War II. His work was published after the war, and is one of the important works on the Micronesian Language Family (1950).

*A Bibliography of Micronesia Compiled from Japanese Publications 1915-1945* was compiled by HATANAKA Sachiko (1979). This work helps us to look into the Japanese publications on Micronesia in those days. Titles of papers

and books are translated into English and information on the location of the title is also given.

## Development of Pacific Islands Studies in 1945-1970

After the war, the Japanese were prohibited from visiting Micronesia. The family members of mixed marriages were forced to come to Japan if they were registered as Japanese, while those who were not remained in Micronesia.

Not only for Micronesia, but everywhere outside of Japan, research was impossible for Japanese scholars for many years. It was not until the late 1950s that several scholars were able to come to the Pacific for field research. In those days, the Japanese yen was so cheap, as one U.S. dollar was worth 360 yen, and travel costs were very expensive for ordinary Japanese struggling for everyday living.

Those who were able to make overseas field research in the Pacific in the 60s were not so many. HATANAKA Sachiko was one of such pioneers. She came with the expedition of the City University of Osaka medical research team in Western Samoa in 1961, spent some time in Tahiti, and later went to Pukarua in the Tuamotu Islands by herself for her own field research before she left Polynesia in 1964. She wrote a book, *From a Remote Island in the South Pacific* (Minami Taiheiyo no Koto Nite, 1967) besides her English paper (1971). The book was very popular in those days. On the way back, she stopped at Papua New Guinea and she gained a strong impression of the cultural situation there. Later, she became a fellow of the Research School of Pacific Studies at ANU (the Australian National University) and she went to Highlands New Guinea. She spent several years in New Guinea and wrote many reports and papers (e.g., 1973a, 1973b). She also spent some time with a Japanese female novelist during the time when she was in Chimbu. The novelist, ARIYOSHI Sawako, wrote a documentary essay, *Two Women in New Guinea* (Onna Futari no New Guinea, 1969). This book again made HATANAKA famous in Japan. Later, after she had spent some time at

the East-West Center in Hawai'i, she came back to Japan and took a teaching position at Kanazawa University, and later at Chubu University. She was quite active even after coming back to Japan, and she compiled a Japanese Bibliography (1979) already mentioned; and she formed an expedition to Reao in the Tuamotus with archaeologists and linguists. But after that, she switched her interest from the Pacific, starting field research in Northern China and then studying refugees from the Three Baltic Countries (Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania).

Another female Oceanist is AOYAGI Machiko. She left Japan almost at the same time as HATANAKA and she went to Tonga. Her essay, *Best Kept Kingdom of Tonga* (Hikyo Tonga Okoku, 1964), also became very popular. Her paper on Tongan kinship published in the *Journal of the Polynesian Society* has been cited many times. She later made a study on the Modekngai, a new religion in Palau, and wrote a huge volume on this topic (1985). She recently published an English translation of the book (2002). This experience of research on religion led her to the study of the new religion of the Maori (e.g., 1989, 1999). She is retired from her professorship at St. Paul's University and now teaches at Ibaraki Christian University.

The most important figure who started Pacific studies in these early years in Japan was ISHIKAWA Eikichi. He was about ten years older than these two scholars and his background was mainly in ethnology. His interest was broad and extensive. His publications (e.g., 1977, 1979, 1985, 1987a, 1987b, 1990, 1992) are mainly books, and he edited many volumes encouraging his students to write chapters for these books. Although he seldom wrote in English, his Japanese publications influenced his students and young colleagues. He taught at St. Paul's University first, and then at Tokyo Metropolitan University. He recently passed away in March 2005.

## Development of Pacific Studies Associations

Sometime in the late 1970s, ISHIKAWA started the Japanese Society for Oceanic Studies (Nihon Oseania Gakkai), which was a group of young

scholars and students led by ISHIKAWA in the beginning. It was soon after ISHIKAWA started teaching at the Department of Social Anthropology, Tokyo Metropolitan University. MABUCHI Toichi had taught in the department long before, and since he was very much interested in the ethnological study of Oceania in the area of brother-sister relationships (e.g., 1960), he had also recommended Oceanic studies to his students. Because of ISHIKAWA's influence (and MABUCHI's former influence), many of the students of the Department were studying the Anthropology of Oceania. The society had its annual meeting and a few occasional seminars each year. The society covers the region of greater Oceania, a combined large area of Madagascar, Indonesia, island Southeast Asia, Australia, Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia. Other leaders of the society were OSHIMA Joji (geographer), KOISHI Hideo (nutritional scientist), and AOYAGI Machiko. Other important members were TAKAYAMA Jun (archaeologist), CHIKAMORI Tadashi (archaeologist), USHIJIMA Iwao (social anthropologist), SAKIYAMA Osamu (linguist), and OHTSUKA Ryutarō (ecological anthropologist). Younger anthropologists joined and later they became the leading members of the society. The Society started to publish *Man and Culture in Oceania*, the annual official journal, in 1985. The first editor was OHTSUKA Ryutarō. It was an English language publication from the beginning because we would like to have our papers read not only by Japanese but also by various people: scholars and local people in Oceania as well. Since vol.16 (2000) we changed the title of the journal from *Man and Culture in Oceania* to *People and Culture in Oceania*. The Society has about three hundred members.

Almost at the same time when the Japanese Society for Oceanic Studies was started, the Pacific Society (Taiheiyo Gakkai) was also established. The members of this society had various backgrounds. They were scholars, of course, such as economists, political scientists, scholars of international relations, and journalists, writers, bureaucrats, businessmen, etc. The Society appears to have had some sponsors who helped the society financially. The

society's publication is the *Journal of the Pacific Society* (Taiheiyo Gakkaishi) which is a combined English and Japanese language Journal and counted no.93 as the latest one, published in October 2004. The most active members are NAKAJIMA Hiroshi and OSHIMA Joji. The society is active in projects designed to enlighten the general public and young people.

There used to be the Micronesia Association (Mikronesia Kyokai) which was composed of a sort of "alumni" of Japanese in Micronesia, such as former officials of Nan'yo-cho, teachers, businessmen and so on who worked in Japanese Micronesia. HATANAKA and I visited it once sometime around 1974 when most of the leading members were over seventy years old. After that, a research unit was established within the Association by younger members who were interested in the Pacific, and this later became an incorporated body: the Japan Institute for Pacific Studies (Taiheiyo Shoto Chiiki Kenkyusho, JAIPAS). As a private non-profit organization, it has sponsors among those companies which do business in the area, and it works closely with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It has various projects sponsored by companies and offices making their own research in the Pacific.

## **National Museum of Ethnology**

The National Museum of Ethnology (Kokuritsu Minzokugaku Hakubutsukan) was established in 1974 and opened in Osaka in 1977. The Museum has exhibitions and also extensive research sections. It has professors, associate professors, research associates, and fellows, and even graduate students recently. The exhibition space is huge, but at the same time the research functions are also very much appreciated. In the beginning, the researches were done by the area studies divisions. The Oceanic Division had several young scholars who were very active in those days. ISHIMORI Shuzo, SUDO Ken'ichi, and AKIMICHI Tomoya made a team for an expedition to Satewal Island, Micronesia. SUDO made a study on the Satewal matrilineal kinship system (1989). ISHIMORI carried out research



into the spiritual life of the people (1985). AKIMICHI first made a study on fishing and then on the control of maritime resources. He wrote many papers (e.g., 1981) and books (e.g., AKIMICHI 1996; AKIMICHI and TAWA 1998).

After the Satewal project, ISHIMORI committed himself to the study area of tourism. His interest shifted from Oceania in general to tourism in general. He is still very active at the Museum.

SUDO has extensive field research experience in many places in the Pacific. He has made field research in Palau, Yap, Tonga (e.g., 2000b), and the Solomons (2004) as well. He has organized several research teams and made applications for research projects. Later he resigned from the Museum and took a new position at Kobe University. Recently he left his position as a dean of the Faculty of International Studies there after finishing his term and returned to his research routine.

AKIMICHI also left the Museum to go to the Research Institute for Humanity and Nature (Sogo Chikyu Kankyogaku Kenkyusho), in Kyoto University. His main interest is still in resource management in Southeast Asia and the Pacific. His theoretical work is backed up by his ample field experience.

The Museum has a seminar project system. A seminar project is led by one/several staff members or visiting scholars of the Museum and is composed of scholars in domestic institutions, and it runs for two to three years. The Museum provides travel costs and the project organizes several seminars in a year. When the project finishes the Museum publishes a collection of papers. Sometimes it also provides occasions of open seminars and symposia. Although the project schemes are recently shifting from area studies to thematic ones, there have been several projects on Oceania. These are: USHIJIMA and NAKAYAMA eds. *Variety and Transformation of Basic Social systems in Oceania: Mainly on Micronesia* (Oseania Kiso Shakai no Tayosei to Hen'yo: Mikuroneshia to sono shuhen, 1989); OHBAYASHI, SUGITA, and AKIMICHI eds. *The Compilation and Analyses of the Database of*

*the Peoples and Cultures in Southeast Asia and Oceania* (Tonan Ajia and Oseania ni okeru sho minzoku bunka no detabesu no sakusei to bunseki, 1990); KOYAMA ed. *Australian Aborigine: Hunters and Gathers Today* (Osutoraria Aborijini: Saishu shuryomin no genzai, 1991); YOSHIOKA and HAYASHI eds. *Anthropological Study of Oceanic Modern History: Contact and Change, Peoples and Nations* (Oseania kindai shi no Jinruigaku teki kenkyu: Sesshoku to Henbo, Jumin to Kokka, 2000); RUDDLE and AKIMICHI eds. *Maritime Institutions in the Western Pacific* (1984); USHIJIMA and SUDO eds. *Cultural Uniformity and Diversity in Micronesia* (1987); SHIMIZU and BREMEN eds. *Wartime Japanese Anthropology in Asia and the Pacific* (2003); SUDO and YOSHIDA eds. *Contemporary Migration in Oceania: Diaspora and Network* (1997); SUDO ed. *National Integration and National Culture in Oceania* (Oseania no kokka togo to kokumin bunka, 2000); YAMAMOTO, SUDO, and YOSHIDA eds. *National Integration and Localism in Oceania* (Oseania no kokka togo to chiikishugi, 2003).

Including the two new scholars who joined recently, there were six Oceanists in the Museum in 2005: INTOH Michiko (archaeologist), HAYASHI Isao (anthropologist), ISHIMORI Shuzo (anthropologist), KOBAYASHI Shigeki (material culture researcher), KIKUSAWA Ritsuko (linguist) and SHIRAKAWA Chihiro (anthropologist).

## **Research Center for Pacific Islands, Kagoshima University**

The previous research institute was founded in 1980 and the latest name of the institute, Research Center for Pacific Islands (Tatoken Kenkyu Senta), started in 1998. This center has always concentrated on Pacific Area Studies. Most staff members hold teaching positions at the Kagoshima University, but some are full-time at the center. Right now, NAGASHIMA Shunsuke, a socio-economist, is there, managing research projects. Having a background in economics, he is interested in small island politico-economic and ecological study. He is trying to visit as many small islands as possible all over the world. Recently, the Center hosted the first Small Island Cultures

Conference in February 2005 in Kagoshima. This institute always has one visiting scholar position, which is on open competition.

## Socio-Cultural Anthropology

Since the department has two Oceanist staff members in Kobe University, there is a kind of centripetal move to the Oceanic studies in the department. They are SUDO Ken-ichi and YOSHIOKA Masanori. YOSHIOKA first made field research in North Raga, Vanuatu (e.g., 2003). He has recently started field research in the urban area of Santo (2002). He also has experience of some field work in Kiribati and in Tuvalu. He has just published a new book titled *Anti-Postcolonial Anthropology* (Han-posutokoronial Jinruigaku, 2005).

SUDO has organized several research projects, including field research funded by the Ministry of Education Scientific Research Fund. His latest one is: Anthropological Study on Globalization and National Culture in the Oceanic Nations. His present project has about ten members and they are expected to make researches in their respective fields.

SHIMIZU, who had been at the National Museum for over a decade, most recently took up a position as Professor of Social Anthropology at Hitotsubashi University, although he will be retiring in March 2006. He was one of the editors of *Anthropology and Colonialism in Asia and Oceania* (1999) and has an extensive research career in Micronesia. He has worked in the Marshalls (1993), Pohnpei, Kosrae (1990), Hawaii, and Guam, and recently he made a study on the migrants from Pohnpei in Oklahoma City, U.S.A. (1995). He is a polemicist and well known for his debate on kinship with SCHNEIDER in *Man* (SHIMIZU 1991; SCHNEIDER and SHIMIZU, 1992).

KASUGA Naoki at the Department of Anthropology, Osaka University, is another important Oceanic scholar today. He wrote a huge volume of historical anthropological work on the counter-colonial movement in early 20th century Fiji, titled: *A Rasputin in the Pacific: Historical Anthropology on the Viti Kambani Movement* (Taiheiyo no Rasupuchin: Vichi Kanbani undo no

rekishi jinruigaku, 2001). He is well known and well read for his theoretical work in Japan as an economic anthropologist.

TANAHASHI Satoshi is the direct “descendant” of ISHIKAWA in Tokyo Metropolitan University. He succeeded my editorial work on *People and Culture in Oceania* since 2003. He also has many students who are majoring in the anthropology of Oceania. He has been continuing a series of intensive field researches in the Cook Islands (e.g., 1997). He is also close to the Cook Island Maori in New Zealand.

Tsukuba University has three Oceanists and, in due course, it established an Oceanic Area Studies course in its Graduate School some years ago. The Oceanists there are: MAEGAWA Keiji (the Torres Strait Islanders) (e.g., 1994), SEKINE Hisao (the Solomons) (e.g., 1998), and KAZAMA Kazuhiro (the Kiribati and the Banabans in Fiji) (e.g., 2001). They are in their forties and thirties and very energetic in supervising students.

I myself teach Economic Anthropology in the Faculty of Economics, Hosei University. My major field is Samoa, and I first carried out research on the traditional exchange system and its transformation (e.g., 1990). Later, I undertook several projects on the Samoan overseas migrants and their network with the homelands (e.g., 1994, 1997, 2001). I am also interested in cultural policy and identity issues (e.g., 2000). I also edited a book: *History of Oceania* (2000).

## Linguistics

SAKIYAMA Osamu (e.g., 1999, 1998), who used to work for the National Museum of Ethnology, now teaches at the University of Shiga Prefecture. KIKUSAWA Ritsuko will be one of the few leading linguists in the Oceanic field. Her paper in *People and Culture in Oceania* which discusses the linguistic reconsideration of the Austronesian migration (2003) won the Japanese Society for Oceanic Studies Award this year (2005).

## Archaeology

INTOH Michiko is the most active leading figure in Oceanic archaeology in Japan at the moment. Besides her research reports and papers, she publishes books for general readers (e.g., 2002). She has also compiled old photographic materials at the University of Tokyo (1999).

## Ecological Anthropology

OHTSUKA Ryutaro, the first editor of *Man and Culture in Oceania* and a former president of the Japanese Society for Oceanic Studies, led the Department of Human Ecology, Medical School, the University of Tokyo. He always ran projects with his junior colleagues and graduate students in the Pacific, mostly in Papua New Guinea and later in the Solomons. He educated many students in the field and in the classrooms. He has just retired from his post and moved to the National Institute for Environmental Studies. He has written many papers and a number of books (e.g., 1983, 1993).

## Conclusion

Although smaller in volume, recent Pacific Islands Studies in Japan have not been much different from Euro-American achievements in the same field, since Japanese are very sensitive to the Euro-American academic tendencies. But the group-oriented system of organized seminars and setting projects and collecting papers might be very characteristic of the Japanese.

Although Japanese scholars have advantages in making researches on historical materials on Micronesia under Japanese Mandate, their works have not been made known to the wider circle of scholars in Pacific Islands Studies. It is not only because of the language barrier, but also because of the differences in the historical recognition and evaluation of the Japanese Era, even among the Micronesians themselves. Japanese historians/anthropologists meet those Micronesians who were active during

Japanese Era or who are in some way close to matters Japanese, and they talk of the good things of Japan because they are pro-Japanese. On the other hand, there are many stories against Japanese told by Micronesians to American historians/anthropologists, too. We have to analyze and integrate those two different kinds of stories and experiences in order to grasp how the Micronesian societies really were during the two Wars. There are still many things to be done in this area.

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