

# WAVE OF PACIFIKA

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-Focus of Attention in the 21st Century*

interview with Mr. Setsuya Tabuchi

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SPINF Report FY99

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# *The Island Nations of the Pacific - Focus of Attention in the 21st Century*

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With the new fund guidelines set up in 1998, the decision has been made to continue to provide support with a special emphasis on Micronesia over the next decade. Along with that, the SPF delegation headed by SPF Chairman Setsuya Tabuchi made the rounds of Guam, Palau, and Saipan for a period of eight days from October 3 through October 8, 1999 in order to observe local conditions and exchange views with local leaders.

Hiroshi Mitsuzuka, member of the Lower House, former Minister of Foreign Affairs and chairman of the Japan-Palau Friendship Assemblymen Federation, Reizo Utagawa, member of the SPINF Steering Committee and Managing Director of the Nippon Foundation, and Takashi Shirasu, Director of the SPINF Secretariat and SPF chief program officer, participated as members of the delegation.

The group was warmly greeted by the local governments, Japanese embassies and consulates and by many other respective parties. Since Ambassador Masao Salvador of the Palauan Embassy in Tokyo accompanied the group, we were pleased that he would make the trip back home again with us. We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their cooperation.

We asked Mr. Tabuchi, the leader of the group, about the impressions of the delegation members after their journey.

(SPINF Secretariate)

## *The Island Nations of the Pacific Conceal the Potential for Development and Growth in the 21st Century*

- What was your impression after visiting Micronesia for the first time?

**Tabuchi:** The Sasakawa Pacific Island Nation Fund covers more than twenty political entities centered in



Chairman Tabuchi

the independent island nations that dot the Pacific Ocean but also including self-governing islands that are the territory of the U.S., France or other countries. We had the chance this time to visit Palau and Saipan. Still, on the way, we made a stopover in Guam for about four hours, where we were invited to visit the Japanese Consul. The President of University of Guam and his wife as well as trustees, deans and others from that school came to the consul to present us a letter of appreciation for our ten years of endeavor.

A glance at the map shows you that the area of Micronesia alone in the western Pacific is about as large as the U.S. and the island nations of the Pacific occupy an area equivalent to about one-third of the surface area of the entire earth.

The Republic of Palau, where we spent most of our time during the trip, has a population of only about 17,000 but it is extremely vigorous and active. We were able to catch a glimpse of their commitment to work together with other island nations to somehow or other raise themselves up above other developing nations.

Just by coincidence, the 30th South Pacific Forum happened to be held in Palau while we were there and we were able to meet the heads of state of the island nations. We learnt that all the heads of the states took advantage of the opportunity and approved the change of the name of the organization from South Pacific Forum to Pacific Islands Forum. They removed the word "south" from the name because they wanted to express their intention for all of the Pacific island nations to work together to achieve development.

I was given the premonition that the development and growth of the Pacific island nations would become a center of worldwide attention in the 21st century.

## *Preserving the Old Peliliou Island Battlefield as a Lesson*

- Can you tell me more about Palau?

**Tabuchi:** I was strongly moved in Palau by the WWII battlefield on Peliliou Island which still remains intact. To my knowledge, there are few places on earth other than Peliliou where Japanese tanks, U.S. Marshall tanks and other weaponry still remain more than fifty years after the war.

Peliliou Island probably had value as a military base and it was more than likely left that way because no other use has been found for it since then. To be left like that for more than fifty years in a sense may indicate that it has a value as a historic site.

I had the feeling that it would probably be important to keep this legacy of war as a lesson to teach us about

the ruthless cruelty of war and show us that it has not other meaning than just people killing one another, much like the Hiroshima Peace Memorial. I'm sure that it would not be very costly to maintain and manage it. The governments of Japan and the U.S. would probably be able to provide monetary support.

In contrast to Peliliou Island, Saipan Island, the last battlefield in the war between Japan and the U.S., has developed as a tourist resort area. There are many golf courses, scuba diving areas, hotels and amusement facilities and, of course, all signs of the war have all been removed. After visiting Saipan, I felt that the true value of Peliliou Island was as the site of the wartime battle that still remains there.

### *Harmony of Tradition and the Democratic System - an Issue for the Future*

On Palau, we also received an invitation from Governor Sakuma of the state of Ngrard on the main island of Babelthuap. We were warmly welcomed by the entire people including governor, the high chief and even the children.

Prince Takamatsu visited Palau, where a head office of the South Seas Agency was located at the time, in 1927 while on an observation tour on a Japanese warship and stopped in at the state of Ngaraard. The stone monument that was set up at that time by representatives of the state is still there. We received this invitation because they wanted us to participate in the ribbon cutting ceremony on the completion of the repair of the monument.

The monument was in bad condition after more than seventy years and since President Nakamura and Governor Sakuma consider it as a symbol of the friendly relationship between Japan and Palau, they had the intention of repairing it. In sympathy with that wish, Assemblyman Mitsuzuka, chairman of the Japan-Palau friendship, took the initiative that paved the way for the repair of the memorial.

There was something at the ribbon cutting ceremony that left an impression. I had thought that the governor would probably have the highest status among those gathered there; actually, though, it was high chiefs, the traditional authority, who had the highest status and the governor had to show proper obeisance toward them. There is the high chief on the one hand and then there is the government administration on the other. It can be said that this system exists throughout Palau and President Nakamura must show respect for the orders of the chief of Koror and the chiefs of the other Palauan states. This is also clearly spelled out in the country's constitution.

In other words, the traditions that have become established throughout Palau's long history coexist with the new republican or democratic system. The issue for the future will probably be how to go about appropriately reconciling the various vested interests such as the chief's authority with regard to the ownership of lands and the government's goal of building the nation. This is an issue that is beyond the perceptions of the Japanese people.



(From left to right)  
Mrs.Nededog, Mr.Utagawa (SPINF Steering Committee member), Dr.Nededog (President of UOG), Mr.Mitsuzuka (Lower House member), Mr.Shimizu (Regent of UOG), Mr.Tabuchi (SPF Chairman), Mr.Hirokawa (Consul General in Hagatna)

### *The Influence of Japanese Rule - Still There in Various Forms*

- The influence of Japanese administration still seems to remain not only in Palau but throughout Micronesia in a variety of forms, don't you think?

**Tabuchi:** Japanese administration in Micronesia began in about 1920 at the end of WWI and ended at the conclusion of WWII. The authority of the Japanese government was in place for about twenty years.

As I just mentioned, the South Seas Agency had a head office in Palau. Maps and photos of the time show that there were many schools built by Japanese as well as Japanese shops and so forth. There was also a Nanyo Shinto shrine in Palau, much like the large ones that were built in the Japanese colonies of Korea, Taiwan and Sakhalin Island at the time.

More than anything, though, the Japanese gave special priority to education. The memory still persists among the people of Palau that the Japanese people are eager to learn and diligent in their work and we heard people say that they wanted to make friends with us and had respect for us. President Nakamura, Nisei, a second generation of Japanese-Palau, was elected and then reelected to the position of President, which perhaps reflects this feeling toward Japanese.

- President Fujimori of Peru is well known in Japan; it seems, however, that the dedicated efforts of President Nakamura of Palau, President Nakayama of the Federated States of Micronesia and other leaders of Japanese descent are not very widely known.

**Tabuchi:** As I mentioned earlier, I feel that the island nations of the Pacific will draw attention from the rest of the world during the 21st century. In particular, an awareness of the importance of Micronesia, a neighbor of Japan in the western Pacific, is sure to intensify.

Representatives of the U.S. as well as China and the countries of Europe participated eagerly in the debate during the conference. The Pacific Ocean covers a vast area and it is also important from the standpoint

of maritime territorial rights, dominion and so forth.

Tonga, Nauru and Kiribati were newcomers that earned voting rights in the U.N. this year. The votes held by the region will also undoubtedly increase in importance hereafter in international organizations.

The Japanese people have a geographical intuition about the region. Materials prepared by Japanese in the past are preserved in the Diet Library. Probably the only countries that have a geopolitical sense of this region are the U.S., Japan and Australia. Japan must take the initiative in making efforts in the region and be the first to direct attention there. Japanese politics, though, often tend to be second best.

The reason why we invited Mr. Mitsuzuka this time is because the Fund would like to work together with him as we proceed.

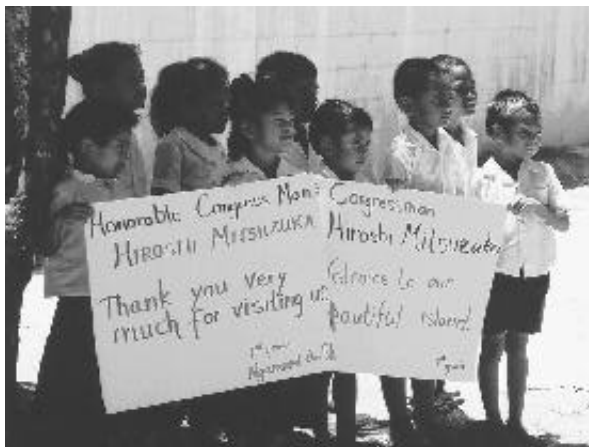
Shozo Azuma, Senior State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, arrived in Palau just as we were leaving and announced on behalf of the Japanese government that the government was inviting the leaders of the Pacific island nations to come to Japan in around April of year 2000. I feel that this will be seen as very commendable and I look forward to concrete results.

There were many people of Japanese extraction with names like Shimizu and Sakuma among the leaders and intellectuals that we met during our trip. The history of the relationship between the region and Japan extends back a long way to prewar times.

### *The Island Nations, a Center of Attention in the 21st Century - the Century of the Pacific*

- When considering the development of Micronesia in the western Pacific, what sort of relationship do you think should be fostered with the U.S., which has administered trust territories for many years, NGOs and other organizations?

**Tabuchi:** There are various issues between the U.S. and Japan. However, since the U.S. has terminated nuclear bomb tests in the western Pacific, there is no problem with regard to this area. No conflicts of interest exist between the U.S. and Japan in the region and conditions are ready for both nations to join forces to



Children of the state of Ngaraard welcomed the delegation at the port

promote projects.

Both Saipan and Guam are U.S. territory but the source of as much of 80% of their foreign currency income is the Japanese tourist trade. A drop in Japanese tourists would increase the burden on the U.S. In that sense, we have a complementary relationship.

I think that the expression "the century of the Pacific" is very broad in meaning. For example, APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Conference) was originally launched by Japan and Australia with the idea of setting up an international forum, which was known as the Asia-Pacific Forum. Korea then became a member and the APEC organization was born. At that stage, it was truly Asia-Pacific in nature.

The U.S. then joined in, claiming that half of the American coastline was on the Pacific Ocean. And then, when Canada joined, it became the Pacific Rim.

The "A" of APEC stands for Asia and that grew to encompass the "Pacific." The expansion of the "Asia" and "Pacific" that Australia and Japan originally had in mind means that there is a general expectation that future development will be in the Pacific Rim area.

Development in the Mediterranean region is at the saturation point and development around the Indian Ocean is probably still several centuries in the future. That is the reason why it is the Pacific now. I think therefore that the "century of the Pacific" will continue on for the time being. As the "century of the Pacific" continues to develop, I think that the spotlight will be on the island nations of the Pacific, which have been virtually ignored heretofore.

### *Aiming for Unique Role for Assistance*

- Finally, I would like to ask you to say a few words about the role of the SPINF within the SPF.

**Tabuchi:** I have great respect for the farsightedness of the late Mr. Ryoichi Sasakawa in proposing and establishing the Island Nation Fund. While the fund, which amounts to ¥3.0 billion, is small compared to other special funds in SPF, it is large when taking the population of the region into account. We must use this fund as effectively as possible.

In Japan, it is probably the residents of the Ryukyu Islands (Okinawa) who understand the feelings of the people of the Pacific island nations more than anyone. As mentioned in the New guidelines, since the Ryukyu Islands are also Pacific islands, it is necessary to always keep in mind the relationship between these Pacific island nations and Okinawa.

Being an era of low interest rates, there are limits to the funds that can be used but the people of the island nations are most delighted by projects that take the future of their children into consideration. It is probably necessary for the fund to put efforts into human resource development.

Even if you wanted to provide overall assistance, due to the limitation of the budgets available, it is necessary to provide unique assistance. If an experiment is conducted successfully in one location, it is possible to turn that project over to the JICA or other larger-scale assistance organization. There is no need for the Fund to do everything all on its own.

In any case, the 21st century is destined to be the "century of the Pacific" and the island nations of the Pacific will undoubtedly attract the attention of the world.

- I would like to thank you for sparing time for this interview today.

## Republic of Palau Travelogue

### Reizo Utagawa

Managing Director  
Nippon Foundation

### My Way in "Wonder Islands"

#### *No Longer the South Sea Islands*

"Do you want to come with me to Palau?" It was Mr. Setsuya Tabuchi, a former Lieutenant Junior Grade of the Japanese navy who was recruited as a student of Kyoto Imperial University, who invited me to accompany him to Palau. The Nippon Foundation had donated 2 ferry boats to link the islands of Palau and a close relationship had since existed with the people of Palau so that I decided to accept his invitation.

Mr. Tabuchi is well known as the don of the largest Japanese financier, Nomura securities and currently the chair of the Sasakawa Peace Foundation. He had served as instructor in the "Kamimaze Fighters School" and many of his students had fought and died in the South Seas. Later, he was appointed commander of a torpedo speedboat and himself went to the South Seas resigned to being face to face with death when Japan surrendered and the war ended. "The spirits of those who died in the war still brings an ache to my heart." For Mr. Tabuchi, seeing the South Sea Islands where the young lives were lost at first hand had remained unfinished business for many years.

Mr. Hiroshi Mitsuzuka, a friend of Mr. Tabuchi and Chairman of the Japan Palau Friendship Diet Representatives' Association immediately agreed to participate in this tour. In October 1999, our group traveled to the Republic of Palau, a newly developing nation in Micronesia.

Formerly a territory of Germany, Palau became a key to Japan's colonial policy in the South Seas after the First World War in which Japan was a "victor country". The Micronesian islands including Palau north of the equator that had been German territory were placed under Japanese rule by the League of Nations and was renamed the "South Sea Islands" with a South Seas Administration Authority located on Koror island in the Palau Islands. The islands administered by the authority were also include the Marshall Islands and the Northern Marianas (Saipan and Tinian) excluding the US territory Guam.

This area experienced intense fighting between Japan and the United States during the Second World War. With the surrender of Japan, the islands became a US protectorate and the name South Sea Islands was abol-

ished and the islands renamed South Pacific Islands. After extended negotiations with the United States and 8 plebiscites, Palau gained independence in 1994 and became the 185th member of the United Nations as the Republic of Palau. This is the recent history of Palau seen at a glance.

In my young days, a cartoon I read was titled "The Adventures of Dankichi" and a song played on the radio was "My Lover is the Chieftain's Daughter". The ambience of the South Seas engendered by the mass culture of Japan in the prewar and years of wartime continues to overlap in my mind with the newly developing republic of today. To catch up with the flow of 50 years from the days of the "South Seas Administrative Authority" to the "government of the Republic of Palau" required some mental adjustment for one born in 1930s.

The population of the country is about 18,000 and by Japanese standards of a scale that is little more than a "village". The President of this republic made up of 300 isolated islands is a man by the name of Kuniwo Nakamura. On the night of our arrival we dined at the terrace of the hotel with President Nakamura.

The night on the beach of the "South Seas" was a perfect expression of the martial song that begins with the words "The Southern Cross twixt Leaves of Palm". "South Seas is an anachronism." President Nakamura broke the silence with these words. "Neither is it appropriate to call our country the South Pacific. We ought to be referred to as part of the 'Pacific islands countries'. The word 'south' is not required." These words startled us. "But from the point of view of Japan, the United States or Europe, this area is to the south...." This is certainly true but according to the President, this perspective is the root of the problem. Indeed, Palau and the Marshall Islands are Pacific nations situated to the north of the equator.

Reportedly, this was an issue that was debated in the South Pacific Forum (a summit meeting of the Presidents and Prime Ministers of 16 countries) held in the Palau Pacific Resort Hotel where we were staying on that very day.

#### *President Kuniwo Nakamura*

"For this reason, it was unanimously decided that the 'South' would be deleted from the name of the forum and that from now on, it would be known as the Pacific Islands Forum" explained President Nakamura. A third of the area of the earth is taken up by the



President Nakamura

Pacific Ocean and 26 countries, autonomous dominions and territories are located in the tropical Pacific Ocean between the tropic of Capricorn and Cancer. In addition to the south-north naming, these countries do not relish being called west or east by Western nations or Japan.

This was something of a discovery for me. It was in the year 1521 that Europeans discovered the existence of tropical Pacific Ocean with the arrival of Magellan in Guam. However, this was merely discovery by the Europeans and the argument over north or south, east or west is similar to the argument that "our ancestors discovered the tropical islands many thousands of years ago and have been living here since."

President Nakamura is a Nisei and though a Japanophile he is also a nationalist with strong beliefs. His father was born in Matsuzaka in Ise and married the daughter of a chieftain in the islands. President Nakamura was in the second year of primary school in the old Japanese educational system when Japan lost the war. He graduated from a high school in the island under US occupation and studied at the University of Hawaii. Returning to the island, he became a high school teacher. For this reason, his Japanese is limited and our communication with him was conducted in English.

President Nakamura made fun of us saying, "You can't see the Southern Cross from Palau in this season." The orchestra is playing "My Way". President Nakamura's lips are moving slightly as he quietly sings along with the band. His Excellency Masao Salvador, Ambassador of Palau to Japan, who accompanied us from Tokyo whispers to us that President Nakamura's strongest number in Karaoke is My Way. "And now, the end is near, and so I face the final curtain. My friend, I'll say it clear, I'll state my case of which I'm certain. I've lived a life that's full. I've traveled each and ev'ry highway. But more, much more than this, I did it my way." "My Way" as sung by Frank Sinatra.

President Nakamura is probably thinking of Palau as he sings of the "each and ev'ry highway" traveled. "And did it my way".

Not only President Nakamura but also other political leaders of Palau are at once nationalist and highly disciplined. Though this may not concern the tourists sunning themselves on the beaches, the more one

learns of the "national structure" of this republic, the more puzzling it seems.

While an independent country, Palau has executed a 50-year "Compact of Free Association" with the United States and relies on the US for security and national defense. This means that the defense budget of Palau is nil and that it enjoys a free ride. Not only that, the country has executed a contract with the United States under which the latter will provide a total of 450 million dollars over 15 years as fiscal support.

#### *Article 9 of the Constitution Belongs to Palau*

Doesn't Palau face any military threats? Asked this, Ambassador Masao Salvador explains, "Threats are limited to infringement of territorial waters by foreign fishing boats. If the country were to face a crisis, we will call on the conscience of international society. The people of Palau are peace loving..." These words, reminiscent of discussions on the constitution of Japan, elicited a strange feeling. Article 9 of the Japanese constitution has been the source of various inconveniences for Japan, an international power, but for Palau with a population of what would elsewhere be a village, the situation is highly convenient. Moreover, US support accounts for 60% of the fiscal revenue of the country and the "My Way" of the Republic of Palau is certainly shrewd from a financial perspective as well.

The national flag of Palau depicts a golden globe on a background of sky blue. When I commented that the flag "reminded me of the Japanese flag", President Nakamura smiled wryly saying, "That would be one way of looking at it." The sky blue and gold represent the sea and the full moon, peace and tranquility and the bounty of the sea and of the land.

To get to Palau from Japan, one must of necessity travel via Guam. Travel time from Narita to Guam is three and a half hours and from there to Palau and other southern islands, one changes planes to Continental Micronesia Airlines nicknamed Air Mike by the islanders. Flying time from Guam to Palau is two and a half hours but when the connection with the flight from Japan is taken into consideration, the trip takes a whole day including the waiting time.

There is a 200 meter bridge from the Big Island to Koror Island, the capital and seat of the former South Seas Administration Authority. It is a floating bridge that seemingly would sink into the ocean each time an automobile passes. In fact, in the early morning of September 26, 1996, the bridge collapsed at the center and the current bridge is temporary. According to Ambassador Salvador, the incident was a local disaster of some proportions variously called the "KB Tragedy" or the "September Disaster of Darkness".

Since the bridge supported the electricity and water pipes from the Big Island to Koror, the capital ceased to function and a "State of National Emergency" was declared. With assistance from the US government, the bridge was designed by a Hawaiian company and constructed by a Korean construction firm. "The 3 billion yen in ODA funds provided by Japan will be

utilized and a construction of a completely new bridge will begin soon. This time it's the work of the Japanese so there ought not to be any problem." Ambassador Salvador is diligent in praising the Japanese.

Many years have passed since the term "South Seas" used in the age of Japanese rule became an anachronism. However, the national bondage between Palau and Japan continues to be strong to this day.

## Pursuing the Rainbow of the South Seas

### *The "Vegetarian" Fierce Fish*

The morning after our arrival in Palau, I turned on the TV set awakened by the morning call service of the Palau Pacific Resort Hotel. While Palau is in the tropical Pacific 4,000 kilometers via Guam from Tokyo, there is no time difference. Reception of NHK's 6 o'clock morning program is clear. Though already October, the program displayed a morning scene from Jingu Gaien and commented, "Summer is over in Tokyo. A high-pressure system is approaching from the continent and autumn has at last arrived in Tokyo. The temperature this morning is 18 degrees, slightly cold even wearing long sleeves. The daytime temperature is expected to be about 24 degrees and the day should prove refreshing." I switch to a Palau TV station. "The weather today is clear and the temperature will range from 27 to 29 degrees." The broadcast is in English and exceedingly businesslike. The heat is about what it was in Tokyo until yesterday. I wrote in my travel memo, "No problem if I regard this as another week of summer continuing."

Needless to say, summer reigns throughout the year on this island. The temperature is between 27 and 29 degrees the year round. That's why the subject is not a topic of conversation as it would be in Japan. "The people of Palau don't feel any day to be either hot or cold." This was the response given by Ambassador Masao Salvador who accompanied us from Tokyo when I commented, "Tokyo has cooled down from this week." This type of comment is somewhat inappropriate as conversation material during breakfast on an island with a single season.

For the people of Palau who work the sea, the focus of weather interest is the wind and storm. Showers fall almost every afternoon. So people do not talk much about rain. This morning was almost entirely windless. The sea fronting the beach of the resort hotel was still and smooth as glass. Ambassador Salvador says, "For a change there's been no wind even in the daytime the last two days. Not the weather for yachting but let's go on a cruiser."

Our group decided to go to the Big Island (Babelthuap Island). The Big Island and Koror island that is the capital are connected by a bridge but a 20 minute ride in a car takes one to the International Airport and this is where the road ends. For this reason, boats are the



Mr. Utagawa and Ambassador Salvador having a pleasant chat on a boat off the coast of Peleliu

only means of transportation for traveling to the villages of Babelthuap.

We gather at the hotel dock. Ambassador Salvador explains, "This is the remains of base for seaplanes constructed by the Japanese military. It's strongly made and is being used as a harbor for ferries linking the islands and tourist boat carrying divers." There is a "boathouse" operating boats run by Mr. Mizogami formerly Paris branch manager for JAL. From the dock the cobalt colored seabed can clearly be seen. This is how clear the water is.

Schools of yellow striped fish, a blue angel fish like variety and fish that resemble sea bass. Since there are no waves on the sea surface, this is like looking down into a tank at an aquarium. Barracudas that look like a large sea eel with only the head made ferocious can also be seen. The sharp teeth are capable of biting off a finger or two.

"I thought we could swim here later but with the barracudas around, that doesn't sound like a good idea." Counters Ambassador Salvador in his somewhat stilted Japanese, "Daijobu (No problem)" then he switched into English, saying "The barracudas of Palau are vegetarians." "You mean they're peace loving and won't attack people? So your country's peace constitution applies even to barracudas!" "Yes. it applies to all living things...."

### *On Ambassador Salvador*

Ambassador Salvador is quite an accomplished conversationalist. In Palau, as with President Kuniwo Nakamura, there are numerous people with Japanese names. During the years of Japanese rule, the population of the country was 24,000 or 6,000 more than it is today. Japanese colonial settlers numbered 20,000 and the native Chamorro and Kanaka only 4,000. Japanese men were encouraged to marry native women from prominent families and as a result, it is said that even today, about 10% of the population have a Japanese father and native mother. Although Ambassador Salvador has no Japanese blood, an uncle is of Japanese ancestry. His family name "Salvador" was a Christian name used during Spanish rule and combined with his first name, the ambassador's full name is symbolic of the history of colonial rule. Ambassador Salvador graduated from a local high

school and after studying at the University of Hawaii, lived in Hawaii for 18 years. During this time, he was involved in information negotiations with the US government towards the independence of Palau. When asked, "Were you an emissary?" he responds, "Something like that." When Palau became a republic having gained independence, Palau established embassies in the United States and Japan and Ambassador Salvador became the first ambassador to Japan.

The security system of this country is extremely well designed. Since the country is small with a population of only about 18,000, the country has hardly any capability of attacking other countries. For such a country to execute a 50-year security contract with the United States is wise. It is an initiative possible precisely because the country is small. The "Japanese Constitution" is really effective only in Palau. Ambassador Salvador used the example of the vegetarian barracuda to illustrate this point.

Our destination was the state of Ngaraard. We had heard that a primary school built in the days of Japanese rule and reconstructed using ODA funds from Japan and an adjoining "Monument Commemorating the Visit of Prince Takamatsu" also reconstructed through labor donated by the islanders were to be unveiled. The cruiser sails among numerous limestone islands also known by the Japanese name "Iwayama (rock Islands)".

These islands came into existence due to the projection of corals that are marine invertebrates over many hundreds of million years to form limestone. Soil then covered the limestone and the plant seed found in bird excrement caused foliage to grow thus creating many small islands covered with green plants. Larger islands measure about the size of a tennis court while smaller islands are no more than mounds found in a garden with two or three palm trees. The scenery is a veritable miniature garden. This may be termed a large scale version of "Matsushima, oh Matsushima" which in Japanese famous Haiku.

### *The Village Called Ngaraard State*

We arrive at the dock in Ngaraard State. It is indeed a state but really a village with a population of 500. With the exception of Koror island with a population of 8,000, this republic is made up of small states with population of several hundred each. Small as these states may be each has a State Governor, a chief and representative to the congress in capital Koror. This is a combination of the legacy chief structure of Palau and the state structure imported from the United States.

Similar to the rest of Micronesia, Palau is a matrilineal society and the chief is selected by a woman of the preeminent village family. The status of Chief is not handed down to his heirs and while the chief has authority over money and land, when he dies, the authority is returned to the prominent woman. Even after modern administrative structure was introduced into Palau by the United States, this traditional system of Chiefs remains entrenched. The position and role of a Chief is guaranteed under the constitution of the

republic.

The Chief of this state is a man in his 60s named Girarois Idepu. Ambassador Salvador explains, "His function is merely as advisor to the administration and legislature but in matters of traditional customs and everyday life, he has more authority than the administration." On the occasion of the visit by Mr. Hiroshi Mitsuzuka, Chairman of the Japan Palau Friendship Diet Representatives' Association, a ceremony to commemorate the reconstruction of the Prince Takamatsu Monument (erected in 1941) was held. The state Governor, in his 40s, was the host at this ceremony and greeted the attendants in both Palauan and English. Palauans in this age group are generally fluent in English.

In his speech, the Governor referred to the Chief saying, "I owe my present position to the Chief" and "Were it not for the Chief, the Governor could not exist". This is not mere flattery. In Palau, it is traditional for the administrative sector to pay respect to the Chief.

Chief Idepu speaks a little Japanese. His remarks may be summarized as, "Tourists from Japan, please visit our island in larger numbers. We have 7 times the ultra-violet rays of Okinawa and any atopy will easily be cured while playing with sea turtles and dolphins at the beach..." The nature of this nation is bountiful. And within this bountiful nature, time moves slowly on.

The Republic of Palau is comprised of 314 islands (of which 9 islands are inhabited), its territorial waters measure 21 kilometers in radius with the Big Island at the center and the waters in which Palau has fishing rights measure 2,600 kilometers in radius. Fish, shellfish, coral, all of these are found in Palau. Phosphorus mines and copper mountains are also found here. Admittedly with US financial aid, the per capita national production is 8,000 dollars. This is certainly not a low level considering that the economy of this country is based on a combination of the traditional system of autarky and monetary economy. From one perspective, this small republic may be the richest "village nation" in the world.

Ngraad soup that is a hot pot dish containing squilla, mangrove crab and taro is served. It taste superb. People tell us that the catch of mangrove crab is particularly good this year. The Governor attributes this to "the temperature of the sea". When asked if this has to do with "El Nino (son of god)", Ambassador Salvador responds that "it is the female noun that ought to be used". The excellent haul of mangrove crab has to do with La Nina (daughter of god).

Apparently the educated people in this country have some knowledge of Spanish, the language of the former colonial rulers. The trip back to Koror seemed to pursue numerous rainbow bridges. A shower had come to the South Seas.



# Rethinking the Bloody Battle for Peleliu

## *Among the 7 Colored Corals*

Peleliu Island is located at the southernmost perimeter of the coral reef that surrounds the approximately 300 large and small islands that make up the Republic of Palau. Measuring 9 kilometers north to south and 3 kilometers east to west, on a map the island looks like the a large spiny lobster, a variety of sea life found in these seas. The island was formed through the projection of dead corals that formed limestone over many hundreds of million years and a hill 98 meters in height found in the center of the island is the point of highest elevation on the island. Merely because the elevation is less than 100 meters does not mean the hill is easy to scale. The going is steep with precipitous cliffs.

At the point where the leg connects to the body in this lobster shaped island is a wharf. The island is about 2 hours sailing time from Koror, the capital. The trip involves transferring onto a small motorboat on the high seas. The seas around the island are the habitat of corals and a deep drafted boat can enter only during high tide. The motorboat moves through the shoal over the coral reef. Deep blue, emerald, cobalt, flaming yellow, green. All around us are corals extending to the horizon that sometimes turn purple shining in the sunlight. This is an enormous "natural bath of the South Seas". The boat scuttles along in the sea of 7 colored "bath oils".

The wharf of Peleliu is being dredged using ODA funds provided by Japan. The sea water in the inlet surrounded by the coral reef does not move. The dredging is necessary to remove accumulated sand in order to secure a route for the 2 ferry boats (Yamato Maru and Nihon Maru donated by the Japan Foundation) that link the island to Angaur, the island of phosphorus mines.

Mr. Azuma Nakagawa, born in 1932 and a member of the 14th graduating class of the airforce pilot training center, greeted us at the wharf. He explains, "I began living on this island 7 years ago in order to pay my respects to the memory of the Japanese soldiers who fought to the last and perished on Peleliu." He sports a white battle cap of graduates of the Naval Academy. The cap has a "cherry blossom and anchor" and two black stripes. Mr. Setsuya Tabuchi, who invited me to accompany him on this trip to Palau, introduces himself, "I was an instructor in the center at Omura air base in Kyushu."

Peleliu Island is the setting for one of the fiercest battles between Japan and the United States during World War II. In September 1944, the US First Marine Division appeared off the north western Philippine Seas in a squadron consisting of 50 battleships. The objective was to secure a forward base for MacArthur's operations to retake the Philippines. The air division of the Japanese Navy had a base on this island with two run-

ways. Forty Zero Fighters were stationed on this island and MacArthur's strategy was to eliminate this threat prior to the Philippine operations and to acquire an airfield for the US air force.

The bloodbath on Peleliu Island has been documented in several published works in Japan after the war. The US made tourist map obtained in Palau also included an interesting passage on the Battle of Peleliu. The passage reads, "The occupation of Peleliu was scheduled to be completed in 4 days. In fact it took 75 days. The reason for this is that the island was defended by Japanese soldiers who believed it their destiny to fight onto death. The United States experienced its most difficult battle in the Pacific here and the losses incurred by the armies on both sides were of the highest magnitude in the Second World War." According to records kept by the United States, 1,319 US soldiers died, 5,142 were wounded and 73 were missing in action. On the other hand, 9,837 Japanese soldiers died. This amounts to almost all the soldiers of the defending forces having been killed in action.

## *Orange Beach Painted in Blood*

With Mr. Nakagawa as our guide, we visited the battle scars on the island. The south western beach at which the US First Marine Division landed is a sand beach. Five hundred meters offshore, the beautiful coral reef surrounds the island. D Day for the US forces was May 15, 1944. With the support of naval artillery, the marines boarded landing vessels and proceeded to the coastline. The marines under the command of General Rupertus numbered 17,490. The defenders consisting of the Second Infantry Regiment and other units numbered 10,500 under the command of Colonel Kunio Nakagawa.

Mr. Nakagawa, our guide, says, "The main defending force was a Mito regiment that had been brought from Manchuria. The regiment was renowned for its courage." Indeed, there are numerous spots named after places in the Kanto plains in Japan such as Mitozan, Suifu-zan, Oyama, Takasaki-wan, Mukojima and Tokaido. For the defending Japanese, easily comprehensible names were required to prepare for the battle. Unnamed hills and placed with names in the native language were probably changed to names familiar to the Japanese soldiers.

The place where the US forces landed was Orange



Mr.Tabuchi (left) and Mr.Nakagawa (right)

Beach located only 300 meters from the Naval Air Division base. Mr. Nakagawa explains, "The Japanese had called the beach Nishi-hama but this name was later changed to Orange. This is because the color of the sand had changed to orange drenched in the blood of the US soldiers." According to US military annals, the majority of the dead and wounded among US soldiers were casualties during the landing operations on the beach that continued for the first 9 days. The record also states, "Although 18 tanks also landed on D Day, all but one were destroyed by Japanese artillery fire. One soldier was killed in action for every inch of ground gained."

The US produced map of Palau states that "Orange beach is the most popular tourist spot on Peleliu Island". Not only do groups from both Japan and the United States visit the beach to honor the memory of the fallen soldiers, it is also called Honeymoon Beach and is frequented by young couples and divers.

The full moon seen from the beach is large and popular. Reportedly, the moonlight is sufficient for reading a newspaper. I ate my box lunch with Mr. Sestuya Tabuchi under the shade of a palm tree and the breeze was pleasant indeed.

According to US historical accounts, after losing the airfield, the Japanese military retreated into the approximately 500 caves on the island to continue the fighting. Japanese Model 95 tanks and US Sherman tanks that are 5 times as large are still left in the places where they were destroyed in the battle that took place half a century ago. The fighting from the caves turned into a ghastly siege in the face of white phosphorous shells from Sherman tanks and infantry fire throwers. Numerous skeleton remains of Japanese soldiers are enclosed in the caves to this day.

Before this, the US First Marine Division that had encountered unforeseen losses in the landing operation had all been replaced by the 81st Infantry Division (10,944 soldiers) by October and had returned home. There is an anecdote concerning the valiant resistance of the Japanese soldiers at Peleliu that the Emperor expressed deep emotion saying "Are the troops at Peleliu still putting up a fight?"

### *Sakura, Sakura*

Colonel Nakagawa, commander of the Japanese regiment, continued the fight to the last against the newly introduced 81st Infantry Division from his headquarters atop Oyama, the highest hill on the island (98 meters above sea level). However, the soldiers in the Oyama headquarters had dwindled to only 120 and the final moments had arrived. On November 24, 1994 at 4 p.m. the headquarters sent a radio signal "Sakura, Sakura" and went off the air. Colonel Nakagawa killed himself after this. This is the final moments of the fight to the last by the Japanese military as told by our guide Mr. Higashi Nakagawa.

At the foot of Oyama hill is Peleliu Shrine constructed by the Japanese after the war to enshrine heroes. There is a monument to Admiral Nimitz, commander of the US Pacific Fleet, next to the shrine. The words

"Travelers, return to Japan and tell the story of how valiantly the Japanese soldier fought with love for his country" are inscribed on the monument. The monument expresses a "tribute to the enemy" by Nimitz, a true military personage.

What did the Battle for Peleliu that became a battle of unprecedented proportions mean for the United States? Two articles of interest can be found in the guide to Peleliu published by the United States. One article concerns the fact that the manual for boot training was produced based on the experiences of soldiers who returned from this battle. The manual states "Those who do not feel fear in battle are fools merely exhibiting bravado" and "Soldiers who feel fear must not be called cowards".

Appended is a survey on the fear felt by US soldiers who actually experienced the fight to the last against Japanese soldiers. "Those who felt as if their heart would burst", 84%, "Those who experienced cramps in the stomach", 69%, "Those who could not stop shaking", 61%, "Those who broke out in cold sweat", 56%, "Those who experienced nausea", 27%, "Those who experienced stomach disorder", 21%, "Those who experienced incontinence", 10% and so forth. The other article expresses doubt concerning the strategic effectiveness of the Battle for Peleliu for the United States. "Though reference is made to MacArthur's operation to retake the Philippines, the military assets of Japan on Peleliu Island were hardly worth the casualties incurred." This is admittedly wisdom based on hindsight but it is also a fact that while the Japanese defenders for Peleliu were still fighting, the operation to land on Leyte Island had begun.

These two articles may be said to be straightforwardly expressive of the US perspective on war that is based on a philosophy of pragmatism. The Japanese perspective on the history of the fighting at Peleliu is reportedly that through concerted defense, the US landing in the Philippines was delayed. This fierce battle between Japan and the United States was a clash of cultures with "The Samurai spirit is the spirit of willingness to die" on the Japanese side and "Soldiers who feel no fear are fools" on the US side. Which is correct? Nothing will be gained from pursuing the answer to this query after the passage of so many years. That, indeed, is this thing called war.

## The Fertile Sea-The Islands of Tradition

### *"The Spherical Moon on a Backdrop of Blue"*

The flag of the Republic of Palau depicts the full moon on a background that is the sea. During Japanese rule in the South Seas, the song "The Rising Sun on a Backdrop of White" endorsed by the Japanese Ministry of Education was taught in public schools in Palau. Is it because of impressions of daily experiences in those days that the national flag was designed resembling the Japanese flag? This question cannot be answered with any certainty. In any event,

the people of Palau are proud of their flag calling it the "flag of peace and tranquility".

This flag depicting the "sea and the full moon" can be seen everywhere on the islands that comprise Palau. This is certainly differently from a certain country where people oppose the raising of the "rising sun". The people of Palau love their national flag. The flag certainly has a simple beauty to it that is on par with the Japanese flag. Why did the people of Palau incorporate the sea and the full moon into their national flag? The answer to this question was provided to us through our trip.

First the "moon". Although I had heard that the "moon seen in the South Seas is astounding", the moon seen from Palau was larger and brighter than anything I had expected. The sky is no lower here than in Japan but the moon in the night sky somehow seems much closer to the surface of the earth. In Japan, the harvest moon is a feature of the autumn season but here in Palau, there is neither the autumn season nor autumn insects. The bright moon is always the moon of summer. But the moonlight is clear throughout the year as in autumn in Japan. We stayed 3 nights at the Palau Pacific Resort located on the west coast of the scenic Arakabesang Island that is connected to Koror, the seat of the government, by bridge. The palm leaves on the beach of the resort glittered green in the moonlight. Although for me, the light was not quite sufficient for reading a newspaper, there was certainly enough light to read at least the headlines. In a thicket by the pool, a ray of light streaks by. Fireflies. Here in this land of never ending summer, fireflies can be seen throughout the year.

Then there is the "sea". The main attraction of Palau, a tourist destination, is scuba diving. For this reason, the shallow coral sea that takes on seven colors and the deep emerald sea are famous throughout the world and constitute a promotional line in attracting tourists. There is no denying that this is "beauty born of the natural".

However, a minute change in the perspective shows us that there is a deeper aspect to the seas of Palau. The sea after evening shower, or I should say squall, is stupendous. Every evening a squall arrives so that almost every day, numerous rainbows can be seen in the sky over the ocean to the west. The rain clouds that remain above repaint the sea a deep green and at times, green raindrops seem to fall.

Palau, a nation with a veritable sea of fertility, is populated by only 18,000 people and is thus of a scale of a village or town. The archipelago nation appears as only several sesame seeds or poppy seeds even in a large world map that would take up much of the wall of a room but enjoys the luxurious blessing of "beauty born of the natural". Ambassador Masao Salvador who acted as our guide commented on this sitting at the beach lit by moonlight.

"Palau is blessed not only by the natural environment. The history and traditional culture of Palau are also attractions that bring tourists here. How about a Palau Eco Culture Tour? But alas there are so few flights



a Bai, a traditional meeting house, established within the Palau Community College

from Japan."

I have a thick tourist guide written in English that I purchased in Palau. After returning to Japan I opened the book and on the first page found the following introduction signed by the former President Etpison that reads, "I hope this book will give the reader an understanding of our small nation in the most beautiful sea found on earth today and help form unending friendship with the rare organisms that make this area their habitat."

However, what I gained from my travels in Palau was not only the "beautiful sea" and "rare organisms". True to Ambassador Salvador's recommendation, the extraordinary traditions and customs of this small nation were astounding. Realization that I had come to an extraordinary country indeed came through contact with 2 cultural legacies.

#### *What is "Bai Girl"?*

One such artifact is a traditional building called "Bai". "Bai" is the Palauan word for gathering place. These houses with gabled triangular thatched roofs are built on stilts. The larger houses may reach 12 meters in height with the front entrance wall measuring 6 meters and the side walls measuring as much as 20 meters. Patterns that look like hieroglyphic characters are carved into the gable wall on the entrance side. These represent the sun, turtles, stars, fish, octopus, clam shells, waves, men, women and so forth. They express some stories. It is said that in the past, 2 to 3 thatched Bai could be found in each village. Since these houses are made from grass and wood, they lasted only 50 years. Our group saw a restoration of a ruined Bai in Koror. According to the explanation offered by the female art researcher of the museum, "there were two types of Bai, the housing for the chief and a gathering place and women were not allowed in the former." In all Bai used as gathering places, there was a carving of a naked woman with legs open in an acrobatic posture. What is the meaning of this carving? The art researcher's explanation is pregnant with meaning: "It is called Bai Girl and was a custom for hundreds of years that has now disappeared in this modern day."

What then is Bai Girl? Reading the section on "The Vice of Palau" in a book purchased at the museum

provided the answer to this riddle. "The Bai used as a gathering place was much like a school where young boys would learn to fish, hunt and work wood. Moreover, it was in the Bai that young boys would lose their virginity. A young girl brought from an outside village would sexually service the boys in exchange for Palauan money (Udo-udo)."

"So a Bai Girl is a prostitute." This satisfied my curiosity. The fact that the Palauan word "Bai" is pronounced exactly like the English word "Buy" is merely a prank of coincidence. Girls in Palau mature early and lose their virginity at an early age. There are reportedly numerous unmarried mothers among the young and in this matrilineal society, the children of these girls are taken into the maternal home and raised lovingly. While the "modern age" was brought to this archipelago through rule by three generations of overlords, Spain, Germany and Japan, the extended family with a matrilineal system as core is apparently still entrenched to this day.

### *From Where did the "Stone Coins" of the Yaps Come?*

Another astonishing cultural heritage is "stone coins", the largest currency in the world. Having said this, the ancient currency of Palau, Udo-udo, was comprised of rare stones, glass or small pieces of pottery. The Palauans did not use stone coins but from many hundreds of years ago Palau had been supplying Yap, a neighboring island (situated a distance about equivalent to the distance between Tokyo and Osaka), with huge stones as raw material for stone coins. Most probably, the chieftains of Yap traveling by canoe to neighboring islands many years ago, thought the limestone in Palau that is really the remains of coral to be jewels. They then would have taken this stone back home as treasure and this eventually became currency. According to explanation given us on Peleliu Island, the origin of the stone, enormous rocks would be tied with a rope and suspended in the sea and then rowed to Yap by canoe utilizing the buoyancy of the water. The trip reportedly took many months and it can be conjectured that it is for this reason that the stones were considered valuable.

However, from the mid-19th century, the value of the stone coins fell dramatically. A trader from the United States found and obtained rights to collect the stones from a Palauan Great Chieftain, produced the stone coins locally and transported large quantities to Yap on sailboats. Even so, the stone coin was valid currency in Yap as recently as the late 1920s. The following interesting narrative can be found in the essay "Yap Island Travelogue" written by Tadao Yanaihara in 1934.

I: "Who has had experience using the Yap currency (stone coins)?"  
Almost all raise their hands.

I: "What did you buy using the currency?"

Young man: "Fish, canoe, payment when obtaining help. Also I buy what I need such as potatoes or banana. To buy one bunch of bananas, I pay using a

stone coin with a diameter of about 1 foot."

I: "Who has had experience selling personal belongings and accepting Yap currency in payment"  
Several people raise their hands.

I: "What did you sell?"

Young man: "Pig, banana, potatoes."

This is a conversation between Yanaihara and a group of 40 young men in a village. What is interesting about this excerpt is the fact that those who have had experience selling something and accepting payment in stone coins are far fewer than those who have used the currency to make purchases. The episode signifies that the stone coin was not considered desirable currency and that the currency was on its way to extinction.

On our way back from Palau, Air Micronesia made a stopover in the airport in Yap Island. A large group of Chinese women who had traveled via Palau and Guam left the aircraft at this point. These women were on their way to work as emigrant workers in a sewing factory on Yap Island of the Federated States of Micronesia. While there are still half-naked women in Yap wearing only grass skirts, stone coins are no longer in distribution. The currency used is US dollars and the sewing factories are the largest earners of dollar revenue.

I got comment from Ms. Elizabeth Rechebei, author of "History of Palau - Heritage of an Emerging Nation", about "Bai Girl"

Hi Reizo,

How interesting! Yes, it sure sounds like "buy" girl. Bai girls may refer to the customary activities of ladies to go to a bai (Palauan men's house) and consort with the residents of the bai. There are many different but subtle meanings and words in reference to bai activities of these women. In a way, it is a prestigious activity especially if Palauan money is involved. It is rather complicated and I don't want to give the wrong connotation. Foreigners consider it a form of prostitution and it has a negative meaning for them but to Palauans, it is one of the customary activities in their culture long time ago and women do it for prestige in more ways than one. It is no longer done; the church discouraged it along with many other cultural stuff.

### **Reizo Utagawa**

Managing Director (Responsible for International Affairs), Nippon Foundation. Born 1934. Formerly reporter for Mainichi Shimbun. Served as Washington correspondent, Manager of the Economics Department, Director and Editorial Manager and resigned in 1988. Participated in the foundation of the Institute for International Policy Studies by former Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone and served as director and senior researcher of the institute. Has been in the current position since 1995.

**FY2000 SPINF Projects**  
**SPINF Projects for FY2000 Get Approval!**

**1. Exchange projects that respect the values and cultural identity of each island society**

***Exchange Media Personnel among the Pacific Island Region and Japan***

First of a five-year project  
The Sasakawa Peace Foundation  
10,000,000 yen

With the aim of promoting mutual understanding and exchange between Japan and Pacific island countries, information exchange and transmission is strengthened by providing opportunities for media personnel in the Pacific island region and Okinawa to increase their understanding of the problems confronting the respective island communities. A further purpose is promoting networking among media personnel in the islands.

***Coconut College***

First of a five-year project  
The Sasakawa Peace Foundation  
5,000,000 yen

The "Islands Forum" was held for three consecutive years starting in 1994 with the purpose of creating a network among academicians and activists involved with various Pacific island countries. Coconut College has started in 1997 with the purpose of using the personal network formed through that conference to promote understanding in Japan of the Pacific islands. Three days opening seminar will be held in Yaeyama Islands in Okinawa. Occasional Seminar will be held in Toko=yo and virtual class is offered using WWW.

***Regional History Project of the Council of Presidents of Pacific History and Social Studies Teachers Association***

First of a three-year project  
National University of Samoa (Samoa)  
3,600,000 yen

The aim is to strengthen the network of the Pacific Union of Teachers of History and Social Sciences in order to raise awareness of the importance of history in school education as a whole. At the same time, it intends to help teachers become better historians by improving their skills in developing teaching materials, writing theses, presenting papers, and studying documents.

**2. Micronesia-focused projects aimed at promoting regional harmony**

***Educational Support for Better Understanding on Japan in the Micronesian Region***

Second of a three-year project  
Association for Japanese Language Teaching (Japan)  
5,000,000 yen

Collaborate primarily with educational institutions in North Mariana to research and develop a system to support appropriate Japanese language education and introduction of Japanese culture. This project intends to create a model for use by other Pacific islands.

***Archaeological Training Programs in Emerging Micronesian Island Nations***

First of a three-year project  
University of Guam (U.S.A.)  
3,600,000 yen

The aim is to recover a sense of cultural identity by excavating and restoring historic sites destroyed over the long period of colonialism. This effort is intended to contribute to sound economic development and

independence. Research has until now been conducted by U.S., European, or Japanese archeologists. The project will collaborate with local museums and government organs to cultivate people among the local population who can conduct research and manage the sites.

***PATS Staff Trainee Program***

First of a three-year project  
Ponape Agriculture & Trade School (Federated States of Micronesia)  
1,800,000 yen

To enable graduates of the 35-year-old Ponape Agriculture and Trade School, the only occupational training school in Micronesia, to become leaders in the school, special training is provided graduates for two years following graduation to raise the skill-level of instructors and increase the number of locally born instructors.

**3. Projects that support education and training through the medium of distance education**

***Transcending Borders with Education Online***

Second of a three-year project  
Micronesia Seminar (Federated States of Micronesia)  
3,200,000 yen

To tackle the various problems confronting Micronesian society today, this project study information sharing, and problem analysis and resolution as individuals and groups. Participants will participate in debates and discussions and master methods of research technology and document creation. Project use the Internet for project development to broaden participation in the seminars.

***Training Program for Distance Education and Learning Technologies and Applications in the Pacific Islands***

Third of a three-year project  
University of Hawaii (U.S.A.)  
5,400,000 yen

The purpose of this training is to contribute to the development of efficient, effective distance-learning materials and a distance-learning system. Educators, communications business managers, and government-related persons are taught skills for gathering the newest information related to long distance learning.

***Charting the Future Course of Distance Education in the Western Pacific***

One-year project  
University of Guam (U.S.A.)  
6,000,000 yen

To cultivate human resources through distance learning, while promoting regional cooperation in the Western Pacific region, the project strengthens the network among distance-learning-related policy makers and concerned local persons in order to create concrete policy proposals and activity plans. It will also implement a training program for raising the skill levels of distance-learning development technicians.

**4. Projects to promote networking among NGOs and NPOs operating in the region and to form linkages among Pacific island nations and Asian countries**

***The 2nd General Assembly of the Pacific Youth Council***

One-year project  
Secretariat of the Pacific Community (New Caledonia)  
5,400,000 yen

At the second General Meeting, the Pacific Youth Council (PYC) established in 1996 will undergo structural reform to energize the organization. PYC will invite related organizations to the General Meeting to strengthen its network with youth groups in and outside the region, supporting organizations, and international bodies.

# *Universal Service and the IT Revolution in the Age of Free Competition*

## *A Digital Divide in the Pacific Island Nations*

**By Rieko Hayakawa**

Program Officer,  
The Sasakawa Pacific Island Nations Fund

### *Assistance to PEACESAT boosts dramatically cost efficiency*

The Sasakawa Pacific Island Nations Fund (SPINF) has been conducting surveys and research into, and providing assistance for, distance education programs across the islands nations of the Pacific for the past 10 years. The success of these efforts has borne a number of fruits, including the upgrading of the University of the South Pacific's USNet<sup>\*1</sup>, an aid project undertaken in conjunction with the governments of Japan, Australia, and New Zealand, and the distance education project for nursing and medicine being implemented on an experimental basis by the University of Guam throughout Micronesia.

In a three-year plan that began in 1998, SPINF has contributed to the Training Program for Distance Education and Learning Technologies and Applications (DELTA) in the Pacific Islands of PEACESAT headquarters, located within the University of Hawaii<sup>\*2</sup>. A conference held in Honolulu in January this year as part of that program brought together many of the people involved in policy making for distance education, mainly in Micronesia, to draw up a policy for making real improvements to distance education in the region.

During the conference Dr. Norman H. Okamura, a telecommunications specialist at PEACESAT headquarters, illustrated the program's success by describing the Universal Service Fund<sup>\*3</sup>, a U.S. fund for telecommunications that has already contributed up to about US\$4.5 billion for telecommunications infrastructure and network building in schools and other institutions throughout the U.S. and will probably

result in about US\$10 million for the three U.S. territories in the Pacific that includes Guam, the Northern Marian Islands and American Samoa. American Samoa received US\$3.5 million in the first year and US\$2.7 million in the second year.

This fund also helps defray communications costs and other operational expenses, and it is estimated that close to US\$5-7 million will be provided annually in future. This means that for at least the next 10 years some US\$50 million is expected to be provided for distance education in Guam, the Northern Marianas, and American Samoa. Meanwhile, the SPINF is contributing US\$150,000 to PEACESAT headquarters over the three-year period, boosting cost efficiency almost 300-fold.

### *Correcting the imbalance between information haves and have-nots*

The United States' Telecommunications Act of 1996 greatly opened up the telecommunications sector. Telecommunications liberalization does not necessarily yield good results alone, however. Deregulation leads to a more competitive market and thus improved services and lower costs for many customers. But the private sector cannot be expected to take much interest in developing services in poorer communities, on small islands, and in other areas where there is little prospect of making a profit. Yet telecommunications, like water and electricity, are basic human needs in the modern age, and governments have a responsibility to prevent the emergence of too wide a gulf between the information haves and have-nots.

That is why the Universal Service Fund was established in 1983. Contributions collected from telecommunications businesses and subscribers are redistributed to the disadvantaged to rectify information imbalances. American Samoa has already benefited from this fund and has all public and private schools connected to a high-speed fiber network, and has off-island T-1 Internet access and video teleconferencing capabilities. Guam and the Northern Marianas are about to qualify for discounts under the Schools and Libraries Program, generally known as the E-rate (educational rate), which has a total annual budget of approximately US\$2.25 billion.

### *The widening information gap*

Those Western countries that have most actively pursued telecommunications deregulation already have domestic telecommunications networks in place; they are assured of a market in which free competition is possible. Accordingly, they can simultaneously promote the idea of universal service, with its goal of making telecommunications "broadly and equally"



(From left to right)  
Mr.Suzuki, Prof.Tanaka, Prof.Kosuge, Mr.Miyajima, Minister Ueda,  
Mr.James, Mr.Andrew, Dr.Okamura, and Ms.Higa

accessible.

A portion of the world's population now lives in an environment where people can use the Internet on a daily basis to access information from around the world and to express their own views. The way the speed and volume of information transmissions constantly improves and the cost of using the Internet falls is truly impressive. And hardly a day goes by without the newspapers or television reporting something new in the field of Internet business.

In contrast, the 1998 report of the International Telecommunications Union\*<sup>4</sup> (ITU) pointed out that there were still 40 developing countries in the world in which the distribution of telephones was less than one per 100 people. The island nations of the Pacific, which have total populations of only a few tens or hundreds of thousands, and some of whose islands with only a few dozen residents are located hundreds or even thousands of kilometers from the national capital, have very little telecommunications infrastructure and lack the kind of market that would enable them to correct the information imbalance within their own borders.

For many of these developing countries, liberalization of the telecommunications sector means only a further widening of the gap between those who have access to information and those who do not. Guam, the Northern Marianas, and American Samoa are U.S. territories and thus have benefited from U.S. funding. Yet neighboring independent countries like the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Palau, and Samoa do not receive the same help. Such nations' telecommunications policies are sometimes strongly influenced by the desires of telecommunications companies. And, of course, most of the telecommunications in these countries are in the hands of global enterprises financed from North America and Western Europe.

#### *An experiment to rectify the information imbalance*

The question is, whose job is it to correct the imbalance between developing and developed countries arising from deregulation of international telecommunications?

At the Honolulu conference Palau's Minister of Health Masao Ueda, Vice-President for Instructional Affairs Spensin James of the College of Micronesia, and Dean of Continuing Research and Extension Services Andrew Kuniyuki of the College of the Marshall Islands, Prof. Toshio Kosuge and Prof. Masatomo Tanaka of the University of Electro-Communications,



Staff of the Education Ministry of Saipan and Guam responsible to promote E-Rate activities



Mr. Masao Ueda,  
Palau's Minister of  
Health



Mr. Andrew Kuniyuki,  
Chairman of the Board  
of Trustees of the CMI



Ms. Andra Samoa,  
American Samoa  
Power Authority

along with Deputy Director Shinya Suzuki of the International Cooperation Division of the Japanese Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications (MPT), honored us with their participation. And after the conference, informal meetings were arranged with Akio Miyajima, director of the Oceania Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Kobo Inamura, Deputy Director General of the Communications Policy Bureau at MPT, to discuss the possibilities for Japanese aid to help the three independent island countries of Micronesia with telecommunications related to health education.

Suzuki expressed his personal opinion that "in order to realize universal service on an international level, the ideal would be to establish a World Universal Service Fund to be directed by an international organization like the ITU and to cover the entire globe. As things stand, however, perhaps Japan, the United States, and other developed countries should deal with the problem and take active steps to eliminate the information gap suffered by developing countries."

Inamura warned of the perils of policies that could lead to a kind of high-tech colonialism, in which the more that developing countries adopt advanced technologies, the more dependent they become on developed countries. He also stressed that job creation through the appropriate introduction of information technology and the promotion of industry were also important. (Inamura created many jobs in Okinawa Prefecture during his term as director of the Okinawa Office of Posts and Telecommunications with the establishment of the telephone number service center there.)

Meanwhile, Miyajima said that, in preparation for the Second Japan-South Pacific Forum Summit Meeting, PALM 2000, scheduled for April, Japan wanted to investigate the potential for providing active assistance so that globalization and the technological revolution could be brought to all the island nations of the Pacific in an appropriate manner.

All three men appeared to be thinking along largely similar lines.

Japan and other developed countries have an important role to play in telecommunications in the small island nations scattered across the vast Pacific Ocean, which covers about one-third of the planet's surface. Actually, the "digital divide" is on the agenda of the Group of Eight Kyushu-Okinawa Summit in July. Japan itself includes many small islands, some of them

very isolated. An extensive telecommunications network was built up by the Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Public Corporation<sup>\*5</sup>, when telephone lines were taken to any part of the country where a need was identified. In a sense, the concept of providing universal service "broadly and equally" can be said to suit the Japanese temperament.

International cooperation in telecommunications is an area in which much is expected of Japan. The scale of the budget is small, but the SPINF intends to continue supporting endeavors to improve distance education and otherwise expand the use of information technology in the island nations of the Pacific.

The fund also administers an independent program, Yashinomi Daigaku (Coconuts College), aimed at giving the Japanese a better understanding of Pacific island nations. The College's website at [www.yashinomi.to/](http://www.yashinomi.to/) provides detailed information (in Japanese) on the telecommunications situation in these nations.

**Note:**

1. The University of the South Pacific has its main campus in Fiji and an extension center in each of the other 11 Pacific island nations that are members of the university. Since its establishment in 1968, the university's mission has been to provide distance education to all its members, and has set up USPNet to enable satellite communications (the website is at

[www.usp.ac.fj/](http://www.usp.ac.fj/)). SPINF has conducted a feasibility study for the upgrading of USPNet and provided support leading to official development assistance projects.

2. In 1971 the late Professor John Bystrom of the University of Hawaii was instrumental in securing the use, free of charge, of a used satellite from the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration for service as Pan-Pacific Education and Cultural Experiments by Satellite (PEACESAT). In addition to management of a satellite network, PEACESAT headquarters has now become a think tank acting as a survey and research consultant on public telecommunications policy in the region and organizing workshops for the advancement of distance education, telehealth, telemedicine and other humanitarian purposes (<http://obake.peacesat.hawaii.edu/>). SPINF support for the headquarters has included a grant for the PEACESAT Policy Conference in Sendai in 1992. That conference was a crucial step on the way to the formation of PARTNERS, another international cooperative satellite project that is currently being promoted by Japan's MPT.

3. See the website ([www.universalservice.org/](http://www.universalservice.org/)).

4. The ITU is the major international organization in the telecommunications sector ([www.itu.int/](http://www.itu.int/)).

5. The corporation was privatized in 1985.

**Editor's Note:**

It was a great opportunity for me to be able to accompany our chairman, Mr. Tabuchi, and Congressman, Mr. Mitsuzuka, to the countries of Micronesia. As coordinator of the trip, my only concern was their health because of their age, since they are almost 80. However, after a few days on the trip, I had to change my preconception. The two fellows were very energetic and curious about all of the events that we attended, although I realized that they had a delicate and sharp sensitivity on some occasions such as meetings with Presidents and Prime Ministers. That is perhaps natural, though, given the fact that Mr. Tabuchi is the man who transformed The Nomura Securities Co., known as "Gulliver Nomura," into the largest securities company in the world, while Mr. Mitsuzuka, a very experienced politician, served as minister of four ministries (Ministry of Finance, Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Industry and Transportation). The aging of the society is a serious problem

in Japan. However, as far as I can tell from observing these two senior citizens, aging means richness, an attraction to knowledge, humanity, sense and humor. I can see now that I will have to give thought myself to how I go through the aging process.

Coups occurred in Fiji and the Solomon Islands as this newsletter entered the final proofreading stage. The news from PINA (Pacific Islands News Association) in Suva updated developments on the two coups everyday. As Mr. Tabuchi mentioned in an interview, the traditions of the Pacific Islands are beyond our perception. However, I would like to remind our friends that internal conflict can wield a fatal blow, especially for small nations. If you recall how you were colonized by European countries, they took advantage of your internal struggle to gain control.

Rieko Hayakawa, June 2000



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