

**The Copra Dealer of the South Sea Islands:  
A Korean Named HWANG YEONGSAM and HIJIKATA HISAKATSU**

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**Abstract**

This paper is part of investigation about a Korean who worked and lived in the South Sea Islands during the 1920s and 1930s. HIJIKATA HISAKATSU who is well known as both a folklorist and an artist, has left a large amount of records about the South Sea Islands, and his book contains a story regarding HWANG YEONGSAM. HWANG YEONGSAM had moved to Satawal Island, which was notorious for its inconvenient transportation, and worked as a copra dealer in the area until he got murdered by the islanders. Half a year later, HIJIKATA and SUGIURA SASUKE moved to the island to take over the copra business, living in his house.

I reconstructed the image of HWANG YEONGSAM based on the information presented in the book of HIJIKATA, and further dealt with some cases of Koreans who emigrated to the South Sea Islands and lived there as copra dealers. Also, based upon the activities of HWANG YEONGSAM as well as HIJIKATA, the brokerage of copra on the islands mobilizing the local inhabitants and part of the copra industry were recomposed as well.

**Key words:** Copra dealer, HIJIKATA HISAKATSU, Modekngei, Palau, Satawal Island,  
SUGIURA SASUKE

## Introduction

After Meiji Restoration, Japan had strengthened its military force and accepted Occidental civilization under the objective of attaining wealth of the country as well as military power. With its military force at the head, Japan invaded neighboring countries and colonized them. That is to say, the leaders of modern Japan had followed the path of imperialism, modelling themselves upon Europe. The Sino-Japanese War as well as Russo-Japanese War are the symbols that highlight Japanese invasion, colonizing Taiwan in 1894 and Korea in 1910 as the results of their victory.

Japan later occupied islands in Micronesia as well, which had been previously German colonies, with the occurrence of the World War I in 1914. Although the entire population of Micronesia consisting of Mariana, Palau, Caroline and Marshall (excluding Guam and Gilbert) was only about 50,000 and the area was quite small, it gave significance to the fact that Japan branched out into the South. The Japanese then called the area the South Sea Islands. Japan could then finally become an empire, being in possession of Taiwan, Korea as well as the South Sea Islands.

One of the characteristics of the Japanese colonial administration was about literal settlement. When developing the resources of their colonies, they did not solely rely on mobilizing the original inhabitants but rather made some Japanese people emigrate to the colonies and then take charge of the development. The reason why Japanese empire applied such a method was not only because they attempted to resolve the overpopulation problem they were facing back then, but also because they wanted to make sure that they could eternally rule the colonies of which they were in control, with Japanese people settling down.

Japanese government had propagandized via media what rosy future the South Sea Islands held and printed primary school textbooks containing the story of the South Sea Islands in order to encourage people to emigrate. Not many of the Japanese, however, wanted to move to the South Sea Islands. Those who wanted to move there were generally people in agricultural villages with low social and financial status, or islanders of Okinawa, Hachijojima, Ogasawara, and so on. Most emigrants moved after being recruited by some of the Japanese companies based in Saipan or Koror (Palau) Island, but others had to move alone or with their family and then find a way to earn their living as merchants.

Once Japanese empire started developing the South Sea Islands, even some Korean people moved there. Since Korea was already part of the empire, there was no restriction on Korean people emigrating to the islands. A few Japanese enterprises even recruited Koreans as labor force needed for the development of the islands. Some Koreans applied for the recruitment of Japanese companies hoping that they could make some money, and others voluntarily started their own business. The emigration of Koreans increased considerably in 1937, in which there was postwar shortage of manpower. From the late 1930s, a number of Koreans passed away while working as laborers, soldiers, or comfort women, being dragged into the battle zone of the Sino-Japanese War as well as the Pacific War. Of course, some managed to survive and come back alive. Micronesia at that time, was the land of

opportunity to some Koreans, as much as it was the land of pain with the history of forced labor to others (CHO 2015).

Those Korean people who had moved to, lived in and died in the South Sea Islands and their existence is now almost forgotten. For the last five years have I been searching for the Koreans' trace in Saipan, Tinian and other islands in Micronesia that once belonged to the South Sea Islands. Now that it has been 70 years since the war was over, it was very difficult to find any testifiers who are still alive. The first generation of Koreans who had lived there already passed away, and the second-generation ones were not easy to find either. Some testifiers were found in Korea; however, this is only an exception. Meanwhile, there are a few records such as journals, reminiscences, diaries, and so on in which Koreans wrote about what they had experienced. I discovered some of them and presented them, of which the representative example is JEON KYEONGWOON's record. The record of JEON KYEONGWOON, who lived on Tinian Island for a long time, is an example (CHO 2017). Also, the reminiscence of LEE KONGSEOK (2001) and LEE INSHIN (1995), who participated in building airdromes on Watje and Mili atolls during the Pacific War under the name of civilians attached to the military and then were isolated by the US Army but managed to come back, is also crucial.

Stories regarding Koreans who went to the South Sea Islands can also be found in some records that Japanese people left. Many autobiographies as well as interviews in which Japanese people discuss their experiences have been published so far. Nonetheless, those records are not that helpful, because it is merely about Japanese individuals and their families and what they had to go through, while briefly mentioning their Korean neighbors and their fragmentary impressions of them. The story of one Korean that is found in the record of HIJIKATA HISAKATSU (土方久功), however is worthy of note. He left numerous writings and works including '*Driftwood* (流木 HIJIKATA 1974, 1992, SUDO and SHIMIZU 2010ab, 2011, 2012)', where appears a Korean personage named HWANG YEONGSAM (黄永三), who was as a copra broker. In other paper have I reported a case of a Korean who was also a copra middleman himself, living in Yap colony (CHO 2018a). His family in the case was different from others who had to undergo hardships of forced labor during the Pacific War, for they moved to the South Sea Islands all by themselves looking for business opportunities and actually succeeded. Compared to this family, HWANG YEONGSAM was different in that he was all alone on Satawal Island, however, he also voluntarily moved to the South Sea Islands to find a job and worked as a copra broker, which are the commonalities between the two.

Based on the record about HWANG YEONGSAM in the book of HIJIKATA (1974, 1992), I would like to classify the cases of Korean people who were active on the South Sea Islands in the 1920s and 1930s. Then I would also try to depict the existential patterns of copra middlemen on the islands at that time, though it may be brief.

### **HIJIKATA HISAKATSU's life on the South Sea Islands and its Record**

HIJIKATA HISAKATSU was a folklorist and an artist at the same time, who studied the

local culture while living on the South Sea Islands for more than ten years and left some paintings and sculptures there. When it comes to scholars who did researches in Micronesian inhabitants' history and culture, there are some prominent ones such as AUGUSTIN KRÄMER (MÖNTER 2010) from Germany, MATSUOKA SIZUO (MATSUOKA 1927) and YANAIHARA TADAO (YANAIHARA 1935) from Japan, however, HIJIKATA was the only one to have lived in the field for such a long time to both study the folk customs and create artworks. For this reason, he is indeed considered as a representative researcher and artist in Japan who studied the South Sea Islands.<sup>1</sup>

HIJIKATA HISAKATSU had lived on the South Sea Islands for more than ten years, from 1929 to 1940. The works of art that he had produced during that time were later donated to Setagaya Art Museum in Tokyo after his death, and his writings were published between 1991 and 1992 as a collective of eight books. In his complete works of writing were included his books published in the 1940s right after he returned to Japan, as well as other various articles and lectures for which he had been asked. Among the whole series, the book seven is the most well-known to the public, which is '*Driftwood*'. It was written in a form of journals and talks about some of his experiences after moving to Satawal in Sept., 1931, until he left the island in Dec., 1938.

HIJIKATA HISAKATSU was born in 1900 and graduated Tokyo University of the Arts with a sculpture major. He moved to Koror (Palau) Island, which belonged to the South Sea Islands back then, in 1929. The French artist Gauguin, who had also moved to Tahiti to continue painting, greatly influenced his decision to move there (OKAYA 2007: 27). At that time, the urban district of Koror (Palau) Island had more than 10,000 of population and all the offices, schools, banks, companies, and stores were concentrated in the area.<sup>2</sup> It was right there where HIJIKATA first started living when he arrived in Palau. His center of interest since the very beginning of his stay was ethnographic research. He was eager to investigate and study the ruins and the remains of the islanders and their lifestyle, traditional religions, and tribes as well. But he did not speak the Palauan language. The person who helped him with his investigation and learned sculpture from him was SUGIURA SASUKE.<sup>3</sup> About a month after HIJIKATA's arrival in Palau, SUGIURA came to see him. He was three years older than HIJIKATA, born in 1897, learned carpentry from the age of 13, and then moved to the South Sea Islands when he turned 20, in 1917. He then got employed as a carpenter by the South Sea Industry Company and built houses. Later, he started a pearl culture business but failed, so made a guild and opened a store where he sold groceries, timber, and so on. SUGIURA had thus various experiences on the South Sea Islands and made quite some money, however, he had always dreamed of becoming a sculptor ever since he was young. As soon as he heard

1 Refer to the following books to know more about the life of HIJIKATA HISAKATSU as a folklorist and an artist. OKAYA, KOJI, 2007, *South Sea Ridge*, Fuzanbo International Publishers, Tokyo, Japan; SHIMIZU, HISAO, 2016, *Biography of the HIJIKATA HISAKATSU-a man called a Japanese Paul Gauguin*, Tojo Publishing, Tokyo, Japan.

2 Palauan Islands refer to the islands located in the east of the Philippines and the south of Guam. It consists of about 200 islands with various sizes, of which only eight are inhabited. The biggest one is Babeldaob, which is also called Palau Island, comprising 75% of the entire Palauan area. The small island called Koror, located in the south of Babeldaob Island, has been the hub until today ever since the Japanese ruling period (CHO,2015).

3 Refer to the following book to know more about the life of SUGIURA SASUKE. KURABASHI, YAICHI, 1943, *Japan Carpenter of the Lonely Island*, SUGIURA SASUKE, Bunmatsudo Bookstore, Tokyo, Japan.

of the news that HIJIKATA arrived in Palau, therefore, he decided to become his apprentice. HIJIKATA accepted him as his pupil and also asked him for help in researching the folk customs. This is how their combination began. SUGIURA lived with HIJIKATA during his entire stay on the South Sea Islands and did many things together.

Since HIJIKATA HISAKATSU had to earn his living, he accepted without a moment's hesitation when asked to work as a part-time school teacher by the Administration Headquarters (Nan'yo-cho). Having graduated Tokyo University of the Arts, he was a man of ability from the Administration Headquarters' perspective. So, it was natural that he was offered a job as a woodwork teacher. He oversaw carpentry. Schools belonging to the Administration Headquarters could be put into two categories: primary schools for Japanese children and public schools for the residents. While the primary school was run based on the educational system of the Japanese mainland, public school was there to educate local inhabitants. Each region had a public school of which the curriculum was three years long. He began teaching third grade students and carpentry apprentices.

While he was working as a teacher, he also took some time to meet the local people and investigate the folk customs. As HIJIKATA HISAKATSU moved from region to region in Palau studying Palauan legends, myths, and customs, he was in everybody's mouth. He was the first to research on Palauan myths and legends and old folk songs ever since Japan had occupied and ruled the South Sea Islands. Despite SUGIURA who assisted him with translation, he needed some more help. Some help from the residents who know a lot about the local history, myths, legends, and so on. One of his assistants who helped him investigate was KODEP, the leader of Modekngai. Modekngai was a new religion that people in the South Sea Islands had come up with (AOYAGI 1985).

Modekngai was based upon the mixed doctrines and rituals of Western Protestant Church and their traditional religion, and the number of the believers had been increasing considerably among the inhabitants. The Japanese government kept strict watch on the leaders of the religion as well as their behavior and assemblies. KODEP wanted to help HIJIKATA with his research, however, he was suspicious that he might be related to the Administration Headquarters and spying on him. Only after he had observed HIJIKATA HISAKATSU for a month, he realized that he truly came for ethnographic research purposes, not to investigate Modekngai, and then began to help him out (SHIMIZU 2016:132). KODEP was first and foremost a spiritual leader respected by Palauan residents, and then a religious leader. He was the most knowledgeable person when it came to Palauan legends, myths, and customs as well. KODEP was very much willing to cooperate with him and that was how HIJIKATA HISAKATSU could study ethnography on the South Sea Islands as he had wished. Most of the investigation done between 1929 and 1939 in Palau was thanks to KODEP's great guidance and help.

As the cooperation advanced, the Modekngai started to invite him to their assemblies. It was also an expression that they wanted him to show interest in their religion as well. HIJIKATA, however, was not interested in the religious activities of Modekngai. So, he either responded to their invitations in a passive way or did not take part in it. HIJIKATA HISAKATSU and Modekngai thus had this subtle relationship in that regard.

After it was discovered that HIJIKATA had participated in the Modekngai assemblies for several times, the Administration Headquarters sounded a warning to him and he was in danger of quitting his teaching job. On the other side, the leaders of the Modekngai including KODEP were discontent about HIJIKATA HISAKATSU for not showing enough interest in their religion. He then was in a difficult situation that he could no longer continue his study in Palau. So he sought some other ways then decided to leave Palau and head to a different region where it is not influenced by civilization a lot and people keep their traditional customs (OKAYA 2007, SHIMIZU 2016: 142).

He started to look for other subjects of study. After wandering around several islands including Kayangel, he settled down in Satawal Island. He left Palau on 21 Sept., 1931 and arrived in Satawal on 8 Oct., in which he spent the next seven years and two months.

### **The Death of the Dealer HWANG YEONGSAM**

HIJIKATA HISAKATSU's book *'Driftwood'* is where he talks about HWANG YEONGSAM's story. It also contains his life with SUGIURA SASUKE on Satawal as well as the results of his researches on the local religion, myths, family relationship, customs, and so forth. At the beginning of the book, there is a chapter titled 'The Unnatural Death of HWANG YEONGSAM' which is as following (A, B, and C);

#### **A**

Until half a year before our arrival on Satawal Island, there had been a copra dealer. The captain of Joumeimaru (長明丸) found out that the only Japanese, whose name was HWANG YEONGSAM, was gone just before our voyage to the island. When talking about his death, the islanders would say,

"Mr. IWASAKI (岩崎, HWANG YEONGSAM used this Japanese name instead) would get some coconut wine from the coconut tree in his backyard every day. The Japanese are not good at climbing trees, however, this coconut tree was on a slope, lowered, so anyone could climb up the tree with ease. The problem was that, some part of the tree that was three feet away from the ground was worm-eaten, so it was in a very poor condition. Though Mr. IWASAKI seemed to be aware of that and he was a little tall and big for a Japanese, the worm-eaten part got broken and he fell when he climbed it to get some coconuts as always. So, he was crushed to death under the coconut tree. Very scared, we held a funeral and then locked up the door of his house, so no one could enter."

The captain had a look at his belongings left in his house after listening to the story, however there was nothing important but some cash. So, he left the belonging at the village headman's disposition then returned to the Yap office to report the accident. The office took the report as it was and did not try to know any further. Nonetheless, the copra dealers on each island and the branch of the South Sea Trading Company in Yap produced a concrete tombstone to express their condolences, which our boat has brought.

#### **B.**

HWANG YEONGSAM was a violent and confident man. He used to drink too much. He

was stubborn. He was a man of stamina. When it came to the islanders, he was very tough and aggressive. He was not very ethical. In short, he could have done anything silly and it would not have surprised anyone. It was very suspicious.

C.

But in this book, since we are not talking about HWANG YEONGSAM only, I would like to jump to the ending so that the readers do not worry. Seven years later, when I was about to leave the island, I happened to know the truth behind the accident. So, when the police from Palau broke the grave open, they discovered that HWANG YEONGSAM's skull had been smashed with a dull weapon. He had been murdered by the inhabitants. The perpetrator who had killed him was already dead, but all those people who were related to the murder including SAWAHWEA, the village headman, and his relative OJIAITEINU were executed in Palau (HIJIKATA 1992: 19-22).

To sum up the whole story above, a Korean named HWANG YEONGSAM had been living on Satawal using the Japanese name, 'IWASAKI'. He had been a copra dealer and died half a year before HIJIKATA entered the island. The captain of of Joumeimaru discovered his death when he stopped by the island, which the residents explained was because he fell from the coconut tree. The captain took it at face value, reported it to the office, then the officials declared it as an accidental death. People in the village made a grave for him. According to the islanders, HWANG YEONGSAM was a tough and violent heavy drinker. Seven years later, HIJIKATA found out that HWANG YEONGSAM, who had used to bother the villagers, got murdered as a matter of fact, not died from an accident. Then the police started investigating, which led to the execution of the people concerned.

He was in charge of the store on Satawal, which belonged to the Yap branch of the South Sea Trading Company. His work consisted of mobilizing the villagers to collect coconuts on the island, extract copra and then send it to the Yap branch via of Joumeimaru, the liner ship that came four times a year.

Then what kind of person was HWANG YEONGSAM? Where in Korea he had come from, since when he had lived on Satawal, and why he had started working as a copra dealer are still veiled. But as we can see in the case of KO MYEONRYEO from Jeju Island who had also worked as a copra dealer for 20 years since 1921 (CHO 2018a), running TAKAYAMA store (高山商店) in the city of Colonia on Yap Island, there was no strict restriction on Korean people working as copra dealers. One's ability to collect copra was more important than whether he or she is Japanese or Korean.

HIJIKATA HISAKATSU described the dead dealer as "the only Japanese HWANG YEONGSAM who disappeared" and specified that he was Korean even though he called him Japanese, as it can be seen in the phrase; "HWANG YEONGSAM used a Japanese name, which is 'IWASAKI'. The Japanese are not good at climbing trees, however...". A Japanese name here refers to a family name. Koreans living in Japan used their Japanese family name in order to avoid any possible discrimination they could face in their lives (CHO 2013: 48-50).<sup>4</sup> Other Koreans in

4 KO MYEONRYEO, who had run the TAKAYAMA Store in Colonia on Yap Island since 1921, had been known as TAKAYAMA to the Japanese (CHO 2018a). JEON KYEONGWOON, the palm manager of the Saipan branch of the South Sea Trading Company, had also used the family name 'MATSUMOTO' (CHO 2017).

the South Sea Islands also used Japanese family name as well.

The reason why HWANG YEONGSAM had used a Japanese name can be presumed as that he had wanted the islanders to perceive him as a Japanese. Islanders on Satawal must have not been able to tell Japanese people from Koreans, and besides, as he was using a Japanese name, they must have thought that HWANG YEONGSAM would be one of the Japanese mainland people, representing the ruling class. His assuming the air of a Japanese in such a small village of less than 300 people shows how powerful he was as a ruler there. Of course, for him to make the inhabitants collect coconuts and dry the kernels of the fruits, he might have needed some external force.

He did not stop there, though. He was 'huge', 'violent', 'confident', 'stubborn', and 'a man of stamina'. He was also a 'heavy drinker', being 'tough' and 'aggressive' toward the villagers. In addition to that, he was 'not very ethical'. In short, he could have done anything silly and it would not have surprised anyone. HIJIKATA did not specify further, but HWANG YEONGSAM had been violent to the villagers, often assaulting women there. Then it is clear that the residents did not appreciate his being around. Since they had no choice, however, they would yield to his power and then grasped the chance to murder him. And because they knew there would be consequences, they buried the body and lied to the captain about his death.

### **HIJIKATA HISAKATSU's Life on Satawal Island and Copra Dealer of South Sea Islands**

Above is everything HIJIKATA HISAKATSU wrote about HWANG YEONGSAM. His '*Driftwood*' is a sort of diary that talks about his life on Satawal, which was later recomposed in Japan. So he deleted what he did not want others to know, and showed only what he wanted others to see as he intended. The former mainly concerned the folk customs and family lifestyle of people on Satawal and his artworks. On the contrary, his life with his wife, especially about getting married and divorced, was all omitted even though it must have been crucial in his entire life. Besides, he wrote about his drawing and sculpting activities, but not at all about his experiences of working as a copra broker for Satawal branch of the South Sea Trading Company. He and SUGIURA SASUKE entered Satawal in their capacity as copra dealer, collecting and managing copra, and they remained so for the following seven years until they leave the island. His investigation on the death of HWANG YEONGSAM and another copra dealer named YAMADA on Lamotrak Island, led him to leave the island. The circumstances under which HIJIKATA first entered the island and then left it therefore were all connected to HWANG YEONGSAM after all.

First, let me begin with the story in which HIJIKATA decided to move to Satawal with SUGIURA. In '*Driftwood*', it is written that it was not their original plan to go to Satawal. HIJIKATA HISAKATSU explained to the chief of Palau branch of the Company about how he will first buy a ticket to Ulithi then board the *Joumeimaru*, and asked for his consent if he could look around Satawal so that he could decide later where to stay.

But in his diary, HIJIKATA HISAKATSU decided to move to Satawal from the very beginning. He and SUGIURA left Palau and arrived in Yap three days later, where they talked

to the chief of the Yap branch and obtained the permission the next day to use the house on Satawal belonging to the Trade Company. This house was where HWANG YEONGSAM had stayed half a year before. And they also submitted a document saying that they were entering Satawal. Two days after they arrived on Satawal, they built a tombstone for HWANG YEONGSAM. In *'Driftwood'* however, what happened on the 25 Sept., 1931 including getting permission from the Yap branch manager to use the house and submitting the document to the office was all deleted. SHIMIZU (2016: 146) pointed this out, insisting the necessity of comparing and contrasting the contents of the book *'Driftwood'* and his journal.

HIJIKATA HISAWATSU had been visiting several different islands for more than a year to find one to settle in, ever since he had quit his teaching job in Jul., 1930 to Sept., 1931. His most important criteria mentioned in *'Driftwood'* were "wherever the least civilized and the islanders keep their traditional lifestyle from a long time ago". These are also the criteria that Western anthropologists would use when looking for an area as the subject of their study. Finding the original of the South Sea Islands and to research on them was a very ideal criterion. He then also added more conditions such as accessibility from the city and convenience of living. The last condition was, more precisely, that they should be able to stay on field and work as copra dealer.

Satawal was such a small island with less than 300 people living on, with only four liner ships a year stopping by for a very limited time, so it seemed good enough. In addition, even after the death of HWANG YEONGSAM who had died half a year before, his post was not replaced yet. Thus, HIJIKATA chose Satawal as the fittest one for his criteria. Satawal was the most suitable area to research in, for he hoped to study the archetype that had not been tainted by Occidental civilization and to work as a copra broker as well.

When they arrived on the island in Sept., 1931, most of the islanders came to see them. The headman guided them to the house where HWANG YEONGSAM had been living. They settled down there, reopening the store of the South Sea Trading Company that had been run by him. Getting married to a local woman, SUGIURA, the carpenter, built another house and moved out. They got along well as the leaders of the villagers. Asked by the headman, they also taught some residents and their children Japanese, and they were even more respected than the headman. Besides, they could also make some money from their work as copra dealer. Copra is dried coconut kernels extracted and its production requires the entire procedure of collecting coconuts, getting rid of the hard shell, and then extracting and drying the kernels. They supervised the process and the local inhabitants did all the labor. Still they were not in need of any money. They did not need any money to buy products. Device to make people move was absolutely necessary to mobilize them. It was a shop. For copra broking, they built a shop and displayed some products people would like, so that they can later get what they eat after working for the copra production.<sup>5</sup>

5 OKAYA (2007: 73-74) explained, "It has nothing to do with sculpture, but SUGIURA SASUKE was not only a copra dealer of the South Sea Trading, but also an owner of the small store 'South Sea Trading Company Store', making the residents happy with general merchandises". This shows HIJIKATA HISAKATSU's artistic self, which would not help any further. In order for him to be seen nicer, it would have been better if he hid his living self, opening a store, selling goods, and gathering copra. OKAYA (2007: 73-74), however, explained the copra broking activities of HIJIKATA HISAKATSU and SUGIURA SASUKE, based on the examination he had conducted on location.

The house he used to live in and the front of his atelier was a small store with a sign that says; 'South Sea Trading Company Store'. This is where HIJIKATA HISAKATSU proved his real worth and vitality. He had been working as both a broker and a collector-seller, gathering copra and selling it whenever of Joumeimaru came. Just before he moved to the island, he talked to the leader of the Yap branch of the company and got the permission to use the house that belonged to them. He then already promised to work as a copra broker.

HWANG YEONGSAM must have also opened a store himself. The name must have been the same, 'South Sea Trading Company Store'. Some people opened a shop on each island in the South Sea Islands area and did copra broking. The South Sea Trading Company gathered copra from these people and sold it to Japanese enterprises. From this perspective, HWANG YEONGSAM was one of the brokers that gathered copra from all over the islands full of Japanese people and sold it. From the islanders' perspective, however, he was a representative of the Japanese empire that ruled them. He was the only foreigner on the island, who set up for a Japanese and was not even afraid of the headman of the village. He certainly had the power and exercised it.

Of course, HWANG YEONGSAM was a tyrannical person who ill-treated the residents. That is why the villagers murdered him. Since the police found out his skull smashed by a dull weapon, several people must have held him and then struck his head to death. This, from a different point of view, is not a murder but rather people's punishment on the offender. It was legal defense, and even if it is a murder according to the current law, it was not about personal grudge against him but about doing what the villagers had wished.

HIJIKATA HISAKATSU spent more than seven years on Satawal. After those seven years, he must have been quite close to all the islanders. Still, he reported to the police as soon as he found out that HWANG YEONGSAM had in fact been beaten to death by the people. Why would have he done so?

SHIMIZU (2016) believed that the reason why HWANG YEONGSAM's case was not thoroughly investigated is because he was a Korean. "Koreans were discriminated and had low social status. Since it was a Korean who had been murdered and the murderer was a local islander, neither the captain nor the officials would not investigate the accident thoroughly. Maybe they thought that it had nothing to do with them, the Japanese.", he explained. He then continued, "HIJIKATA HISAKATSU had a strong sense of justice in a way. He had ruled the island for seven years. Even though he was originally a Korean, he could not keep his eyes closed to a 'Japanese citizen' murdered by the islanders. This shows how HIJIKATA HISAKATSU kept distance with others and did not assimilate himself with the villagers even when he was married to a local woman and interacted with the residents for such a long time." (SHIMIZU 2016: 150-151).

It is true that HIJIKATA HISAKATSU kept distance with other inhabitants. People on Satawal were important research subjects to him. He always wrote the ethnography based on much information he had obtained from the people; however, they were not Japanese but merely some local residents ruled by the Japanese empire. But there was another reason. It had something to do with the murder in Lamotrek Atoll, which was near Satawal.

On Lamotrek was a Japanese copra dealer named YAMADA. He took charge of copra

broking on not only Lamotrek but also Elato atolls. Married to a local woman, he had worked for a long time on field, however, was found dead one day, out of the blue. HIJIKATA HISAKATSU heard this news from SUGIURA, who 'used to take days off to go to Lamotrek Island with other villagers and take a rest for a few days. The cause of his death was the same as HWANG YEONGSAM's, fall from a tree. After listening to an islander explaining it, HIJIKATA said; "A peninsular on Satawal had also fallen from a tree and died. This is about the authority and prestige of Japan, the evil must be got rid of", and told SUGIURA about how to investigate it. Then SUGIURA returned to Lamotrek to see the wife of YAMADA. She showed him the will of YAMADA. It was about how to distribute his inheritance, written on a notebook. SUGIURA came back to Satawal with the note.

Being reported and having checked the will, HIJIKATA examined how YAMADA's property, accumulated for the past 27 years as the results of his hard work, would be distributed to people and concluded that one evil person murdered him for money. So, he made a list of some violent villagers and investigated each of them. Then he thought that HWANG YEONGSAM's case should be completely reexamined as well, for he had died from the same kind of accident, falling from a coconut tree. He also thought that he should talk with the administrators in Palau about the both cases and that was the beginning of the police investigation (KURAHASHI 1943: 172).

## **The Copra Dealer of the South Sea Islands**

One of the critical reasons why HWANG YEONGSAM had started living on Satawal was about coconut gathering. Copra is dried coconut kernels. It can be the ingredient of soap, synthetic rubber, glycerin, and even cosmetics. Westerners first discovered and used copra as raw materials of modern industry. They found out that Pacific Islands had a large amount of coconut trees, so mobilized the local inhabitants to gather coconuts and processed them to bring to Europe. With the increasing number of coconut farms in the Marshall Islands including Ebon, copra production expanded. After Japanese occupation of Micronesia in 1914, however, German copra production was put at Japanese disposition. Later, the people living in most of the South Sea Islands, who collected copra produced from coconuts and sent it to Japan, were called copra dealer. On small islands were only a couple of them, but on big ones were dozens of them opening their own stop and competing. Even on Satawal, the most remote and isolated island, was a copra dealer as we could already see from HWANG YEONGSAM's story.

When HIJIKATA was looking for an island to move to, the range of examination was limited to Yap among the six areas of the South Sea Islands that belonged to the Administration Headquarters (Fig. 1). Although the reason was not mentioned, it might have been because the area had had the most active copra production with relatively many islands surrounding it. The islands he had investigated more or less corresponded with the route of Joumeimaru, the regular ferryboat of the South Sea Trade Company. Joumeimaru moved from island to island to collect copra and supplied the stores of each island with the products they needed at the same time. According to his investigation, Ulithi, Fais, Woleai, and

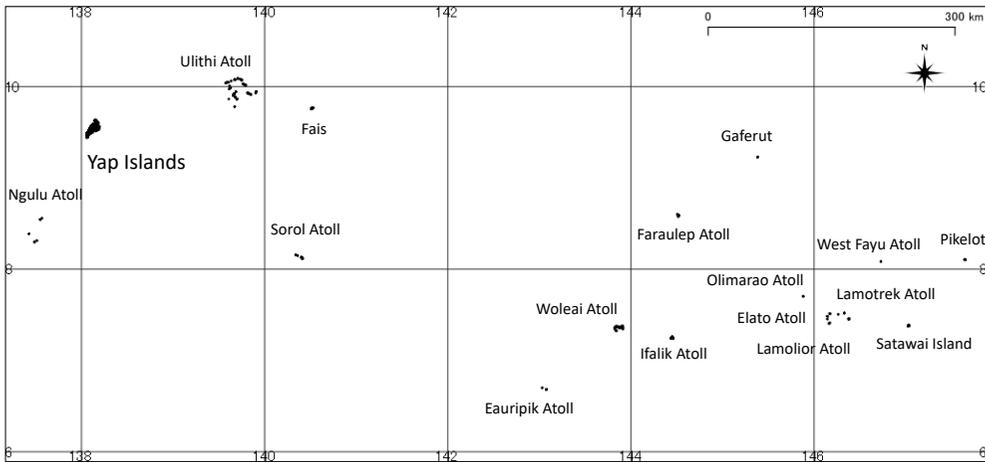


Fig.1 Islands of the Yap Area

Lamotrek atolls were the biggest ones where Japanese started to settle down in earlier times. Nonetheless, “Japanese copra brokers had already been living there, running a grocery store and encouraging the islanders to somewhat forcedly work for copra production” (HIJIKATA 1992: 18). On the other hand, Sorol Island had its population decreasing to 30, with only one Japanese living in. Faraulep atoll was where tobacco was produced, however was suffering from the increasing number of insects. Ifalic and Eauripik atolls are so poor that it is hard to live in and there are no liner ships stop by. Elato also has too small a population, and the Japanese on Lamotrek oversaw its copra broking.

When he decided to move to Satawal, he had two reasons for it. One was “wherever the least influenced by civilization with people keeping their traditional lifestyle” (HIJIKATA 1992 :18) and the other was about not being too harsh to live in and being able to work as a copra broker. What is intriguing is, however, that he actually examined the living condition of copra dealer in the Yap area.

The circular ferry Joumeimaru that HIJIKATA HISAKATSU and SUGIURA boarded in Sept. 1931 had a tombstone to put in front of the grave of HWANG YEONGSAM on it. The tombstone had a note of explanation saying, “This concrete tombstone was made by the copra dealer on each island as well as the Yap branch of the South Sea Trade Company with their condolences and is now brought by our boat.”

Fig. 2 is one of the advertisements published in the booklet titled “A Guide to the South Sea Islands”. (HIJIKATA 1992:18). It seems like an advertisement under sponsorship, which allows us to estimate the network of copra middlemen. In the union of copra trade association belonged six regional associations including Palau, Yap, Mariana, Truk (Chuuk), Ponape (Pohnpei), and Jarut (Jaluit). About dozens of copra brokers must have been

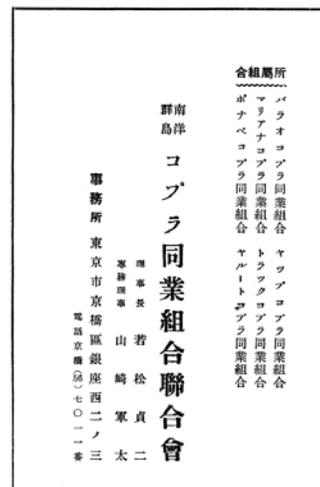


Fig.2 Advertising of the Copra Trade Association (from OUGIMI 1939).

affiliated to each of the regional associations, gathering coconuts and producing copra while mobilizing the local people. HWANG YEONGSAM was a copra dealer and copra merchants knew who lived on which island. So when they heard the news about HWANG YEONGSAM's death, they raised money and put up a tombstone to cherish his memory. With this being said, copra dealer on each island considered each other as partners, forming a network with the Yap branch in the center. And the partnership as well as the network had lasted until 1945, in which Japan lost the Asia-Pacific War and the empire got dissolved.

## Conclusion

This paper discerned the existence of a Korean who had worked in the South Sea Islands in the 1920s and 1930s, based on the record about HWANG YEONGSAM in HIJIKITA's book '*Driftwood*', and depicted what copra dealer were like at that time. What is interesting is that HIJIKATA, who provided the data, was the researcher, the artist and the copra dealer himself in the islands at the same time. In '*Driftwood*' where he recomposed the journal, he wrote during his stay on Satawal, he described his ethnography research and artworks in detail, while reducing shortened his story of collecting and managing copra and loading the ships with it. He thus mentioned the story of HWANG YEONGSAM who had previously been in charge of copra broking on Satawal only briefly. Fortunately, his journal contained some of his working experiences as a copra dealer that could be reconstituted.

Some Koreans moved to the Yap area in the very beginning of Japanese occupation of the South Sea Islands and worked as copra dealer, standing abreast with the Japanese. They were afraid of going to the unknown land, however, were eager to find new opportunities, which motivated them to get used to the new environment. They lived either in family on a big island such as Yap like KO MYEONRYEO did, or alone on a small island like HWANG YEONGSAM. These Korean dealers were themselves from a colonized country, Korea, however they ruled the Japanese and local islanders when in the South Sea Islands, forming a network with other Japanese partners and existing as part of Japanese domination.

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