

# **Conflicting Discourses on Colonial Assimilation: A Palauan Cultural Tour to Japan, 1915**

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## **Abstract**

This paper examines a colonial discourse on assimilation of Micronesians to Japan during the era of Japanese administration of Micronesia, 1914-45. Official, scholarly, and native oral narratives about Micronesians' participation in the tours to the main islands of Japan (cultural tour: *naichi-kankō*), are discussed, with the focus on a Palauan chief, who relocated his village along a straight road called *Ginzadōri* after participating in the tour conducted in 1915. While the agency of Palauans was devalued in the representations by the administrators and some scholars, it is recovered in the Palauans' oral histories, which express great admiration for the accomplishment of the chief who constructed the Ginza Road. Ultimately, how to represent the Ginza Road story depends on how one evaluates the relationship between colonialism, modernization, and modernity. *Keywords*: Japanese administration, Palau, cultural tour, agency, modernity

## **Introduction**

From the end of the nineteenth century, Micronesia north of the equator, apart from Guam, experienced successive colonial regimes under Germany, Japan and United States. Germany exercised sovereignty over the islands after the Spanish-American War in 1898. The Japanese Navy took the area in 1914, and the South Seas Government (*Nan'yō-chō*: 南洋庁) was established in Koror, Palau in 1922. Micronesia under the Japanese administration, called *Nan'yō Guntō* (南洋群島), consisted of six districts: Saipan, Yap, Palau, Truk (former name of Chuuk), Ponape (former name of Pohnpei), and Jaluit. Japanese rule endured until the Pacific War, when US Forces occupied the islands. In contrast with the Germans or Americans, the Japanese made strenuous efforts to develop the economy of Micronesia and encouraged immigration from the home islands. In the middle of the 1930s, Japanese immigrants outnumbered the local population.

Although more than 65 years have passed since the end of Japanese rule in Micronesia, researchers working in the region still encounter the legacies of Japanese administration. There are a number of older people who were educated in Japanese and continue to speak it fluently today. In the nation-building era, half Japanese and half Micronesian with Japanese family names were prominent in the political scene. War remains are still left in battle fields. War memorials have been built by Japanese veterans and ex-immigrants, who have revisited the islands regularly for memorial services. Japanese visitors are often shocked to encounter the deep imprint of colonialism by their own country, if they expect to find "otherness" in the paradise.

It is true that Micronesians had been subjugated by successive colonial rulers since the end of the 19th century. It is also true that the Japanese administration made an extensive and durable impact on the social life in Micronesia. However, this does not mean that Micronesians had unquestionably followed whatever an administrator introduced or had been passive actors in

modern history. Even if they were incorporated into the administrative system, they appropriated the colonizers' culture within their own cultural contexts and constructed a new culture continuously, as Wagner pointed out (Wagner 1981: 4).

As I show in detail in this paper, the image of Micronesians blindly imitating civilization is often presented in colonial documents and previous studies. In these representations, Micronesians are destined to be passively assimilated to the colonizers' ways. This paper will challenge this view through a discussion of the narratives about Micronesians' participation in the tours to the main islands of Japan (*naichi-kankō*: 内地観光), organized by the Japanese administration to make Micronesians pro-Japanese. Specifically, I will investigate the narratives on a Palauan chief who constructed a straight road called *Ginzadōri* (銀座通り: Ginza Road) in Ngiwal village after participating in the tour conducted in 1915. Here, I will call the tours to the main island of Japan "cultural tours," not only because participants visited various cultural facilities during their stay in Japan, but because they were organized as an important cultural policy toward Micronesians. Their intent was to impress the islanders with Japanese civilization, and to teach them Japanese ways. The term "Ginza" does not necessarily refer to the famous commercial district at the center of Tokyo. It is the general term which means "busy street" in Japanese.

This paper also examines the oral histories about the Ginza Road, which are told by Palauans themselves. The agency of Palauans was devalued in the representations by the administrators and some scholars from sovereign states, who considered the construction of the Ginza Road as permeation of administration and civilization. But it is recovered in their oral histories, which highly prize the accomplishment of the chief who constructed the Ginza Road. For Palauans, the chief is a cultural hero and the Ginza Road is a symbol of glory for his village. In this point, the Ginza Road story for Palauans is a counter discourse to the old colonial discourse, which regards the Ginza Road as mere imitation.

Anthropological field research for this paper was conducted from 2002 to 2004 in Ngiwal village, Palau. During the period, I collected stories on the Ginza Road from older villagers who had been educated under the Japanese administration. At the beginning of the research, the life history approach was adopted, though their life histories are not shown in this paper. Specific questions about the Ginza Road were intensively asked of two villagers in Ngiwal in May 2003. Within Japan, the colonial documents relating to the cultural tour and the Ginza Road were investigated.

The earlier version of my work focuses on the discourses upon Micronesians' imitation of civilization after coming back from cultural tours and, by referring to post-colonial studies, discussed the mimesis as a resistance to colonialism (Iitaka 2009: 28-30). It also depicted the ethnographic details of social structure reorganized during the Japanese era (Iitaka 2009: 20-24). This paper looks at the discourses on cultural tours more inclusively, referring to the colonial documents, past studies, and contemporary studies. The theoretical framework of this paper is based on the discussion in colonial studies concerning colonialism, modernization and modernity. I will return to this point in the conclusion.

## **Cultural Tours to the Main Islands of Japan as a Colonial Policy**

A prominent goal of Japanese administration was the cultural assimilation of Micronesians into the Empire of Japan through education at public schools (*kōgakkō*: 公学校) and organization of young people's associations (*seinen-dang*: 青年団). Although Micronesians were not entitled to hold Japanese nationality, their children were taught to speak Japanese and to revere the sacred person of the Emperor. These policies were tightened in the 1930s, when Japan devoted itself to militarism (Imaizumi 1996: 606). This is why the older people in Micronesia, particularly those in Palau, the former administrative center, can still speak fluent Japanese. Young people's associations were obligated to take part in volunteer labor (*kinrō-hōshi*: 勤勞奉仕), such as the construction of roads, without payment. They were also required to attend sport meetings, and to compete in track and field events and swimming and war canoe races (Iitaka 2008: 10-12).

The arrangement of cultural tours, *naichi-kankō*, to the main islands of Japan was one of the assimilation policies aimed at Micronesians, who had been called *tōmin* (島民: "islanders") and recognized as "primitive peoples" (*mikai-shuzoku*: 未開種族) waiting to be civilized (SSSG 1932: 464-467). Tour participants stayed in Japan for one to three weeks and visited major military and cultural facilities around Tokyo. They also visited shrines and temples, viewed the Imperial Palace, and toured the busy streets at the center of Tokyo. Pictures at that time show that all the participants were dressed in the same style, whether attired in *kimono* or suits (SSN 1980: 212; CASSI 1938: 59). The administrators were sure that the tours were effective in overwhelming the Micronesian participants with the glories of advanced Japanese civilization, so that they would become willing and obedient members of the empire.

The first tour was arranged in 1915, a year after the Japanese Navy occupied Micronesia (EASSI 1938: 346). After that the tours were conducted every year, except 1920, until 1941. From 1915 to 1919, participants recruited from all over Micronesia took part in the tours. After 1921, all of the six districts of *Nan'yō Guntō* did not tour together. They were separated into two groups. It is estimated that 600 to 700 Micronesians participated in the tours and visited the main islands of Japan. In Taiwan, similar tours had been arranged for indigenous people since 1897 (Cheng 2005: 55-56, 98-99). Tours for Micronesians followed the precedent of Taiwan, which is why the first Micronesian tour occurred only a year after the occupation.

The tours were organized by the naval administration from 1915 to 1921. During this era, most of the participants were local leaders, such as traditional chiefs and their children, and all the traveling costs were provided by the navy. From 1922 to 1936, the South Seas Government sponsored the tour. Participants from various social strata joined the tour, some under grants from the South Seas Government, some at their own expense. From 1937 to 1941, the Cultural Society for the South Sea Islands (*Nan'yō Guntō Bunka Kyōkai*: 南洋群島文化協会) organized the tours. Some students who graduated from the public schools or the vocational training schools, such as the Training School for Carpenters (*Mokkō Totei Yōseijyo*: 木工徒弟養成所) in Koror, Palau, joined the tours (EASSI 1938: 352). The South Seas Government paid their costs. The tours were abolished at the beginning of the 1940s under the tense international situation preceding the

Pacific War.

### **Colonial Documents on Cultural Tours**

A Naval document (JN 1915) and the report compiled later (EASSI 1938: 347) wrote about the intentions of tour sponsor and the schedules of tour in the early days. "The Guideline for Selecting the Participants of Cultural Tours to the Main Islands of Japan," promulgated by the navy on May 2nd, 1915, said that potential participants of the tours should be those who were "talented and sincere," such as traditional chiefs and men of high repute (EASSI 1938: 347-348). The guideline also said that each district should have three participants. The first cultural tour had 22 participants. In addition, six Japanese who engaged in trades in Micronesia joined the tour as interpreters. They arrived in Yokosuka on July 28th, 1915. They stayed there for a few days, visiting the naval arsenals, war vessels and the radio telegraph station.

On August 1st, they arrived at the newly-built Tokyo train station and were welcomed by a naval officer and members of the company mining phosphate in Angaur, Palau (Nakamura 1998: 3). On the next day, they viewed the Imperial Palace. Afterward, they visited some parks and temples, the Crown Prince's Palace, the Mitsukoshi department store, military facilities, the Yasukuni Shrine, and so on. On August 7th, they took an excursion to Nikko, where the founder of the Tokugawa shogunate was enshrined. After coming back to Tokyo, they visited the museums and the zoo in Ueno, the Mitsukoshi department store, a beer factory in Ebisu, the Imperial Theater, Tokyo Imperial University, and various facilities of the navy. After going sightseeing in Kamakura, the participants returned to their islands from Yokosuka on August 14th (Senjyu 2004: 136).

According to administrators, the participants from Micronesia were strongly impressed by what they saw in Japan and even changed their lifestyle after coming back from the tours. A report written by the navy administration in 1918 said that the tours were effective enough to make them obey the Japanese. The report also said that it was rather funny that some Micronesians tried to imitate the Japanese ways of life they had seen during the tours. The following is extracted from the document compiled later:

The cultural tours are effective enough to make Micronesians be surprised at civilization. Participants made their experience public after coming back to their villages. In some cases, they try to imitate what they saw in Japan. Even though such cases are rather funny, it is also true that Micronesians started to take part in the tours by their own expense, which is accumulated through producing copra, collecting top shells and engaging in wage earning. This is partly because of the geographical closeness between Micronesia and Japan and partly because of their growing interests in Japan. Most importantly, it proves that they started to trust the Japanese Empire and celebrate the administration (EASSI 1938: 351).

Here, attention should be paid to the fact that the naval administrator considered cultural tours an effective cultural policy to assimilate Micronesians as early as in 1918, at a time when the Japanese Empire did not promote cultural assimilation policies generally. Furthermore, the

report insisted that cultural tours greatly contributed to the “reform” or the “improvement” of Micronesians’ social life. Describing cultural tours as an effective policy for assimilating Micronesians and as the nodal point of social reform in Micronesia was echoed in later publications by subsequent administrators and the Japanese government.

For example, in the annual reports submitted to the Permanent Mandate Commission at the League of Nations, the Japanese government said that arranging cultural tours was intended to accomplish the “moral and material well-being of natives,” together with organizing young people’s associations, providing amusements such as gramophones and moving pictures, building public meeting houses, making public baths, arranging agricultural fairs, and so on (MOF 1927: 132-133). Even though the Permanent Mandate Commission often suspected that the assimilation policies by Japan would violate Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, which required the mandating country to “promote to the utmost the material and moral well-being and the social progress of the inhabitants of the territory, who are subject to the present mandate,” the Japanese government kept insisting that the policies towards Micronesians helped the development of “primitive people” who lacked their own history and culture and believed in superstitions (Imaizumi 1994: 34). It is certain that Japan regarded cultural tours as a typical example of successful administrative policies.

### **An Essay Written by Micronesians in 1940**

While there are several records on cultural tours written by Japanese administrators, there are few records written by Micronesians themselves under the Japanese administration. An exception is an essay which was contributed to a journal titled “*Nan’yō Guntō*” (南洋群島: South Sea Islands) by a Ponapean man named Anton in 1940. However, he lauds Japanese policy so strongly that one suspects that the essay was not written by himself only, and was dramatized by Japanese editors. Published in the tense atmosphere right before the Pacific War, the work reflects the imperialistic and militaristic view which the Japanese government fiercely asserted at that time.

In the essay, titled “Miscellaneous Thoughts after Coming Back from the Cultural Tour: An Appeal to My Villagers,” the Ponapean admires the civilization he saw in Japan and says that he was strongly impressed by an agricultural school and a farming village in Okazaki city, where rice was grown. He recommends that his villagers recognize the sacredness of the Japanese Imperial Family and admire His Imperial Majesty, and urges the villagers to engage in volunteer works much harder, as Japanese citizens did under the National Mobilizing Law. He also insists that the villagers appointed as headmen should reform their lazy habits and be willing to perform their administrative duties. He urges villagers to build up their savings by economizing (Anton 1940: 40-45).

What the Ponapean wrote in this essay exactly reproduces the propaganda made by the Japanese Empire. The unfortunate Ponapean was displayed as an ideal Micronesian, one who was awakened through participation in the tour, initiated social reform after coming back to the village, devoted himself to the works ordered by the administrator, and finally, admired the Emperor. It is true that young Micronesians were educated at public schools to speak in Japanese and believe in the Emperor, and that participation in cultural tours influenced their attitude.

However, it does not necessarily mean that they automatically became loyal to Empire, as was propagated in this essay. Censorship of the press was in effect at this time, and an essay critical of cultural tours would never have seen publication.

### **Narratives by Scholars**

During the Japanese era, some scholars reported interesting episodes of Micronesians who participated in cultural tours and introduced changes in village life. Tadao Yanaihara, a colonial scholar who visited Palau and other islands in the 1930s, wrote that a chief from Peleliu Island, Palau, who had participated in a cultural tour, constructed a rest house that looked like the Hibiya Concert Hall in Tokyo (Yanaihara 1935: 513-514).

Hisakatsu Hijikata, an artist and ethnographer who had been in Palau as a temporary employee under the South Sea Government, describes a straight road called “Ginzadōri” (Ginza Road), which was constructed by a traditional chief from Ngiwal village, Palau, who participated in the first cultural tour and was impressed by well-organized roads in Tokyo. Hijikata wrote as follows in his diary in January, 1942, when he traveled around Babeldaob Island and stayed at the chief’s house with Atsushi Nakajima, a famous Japanese novelist.

This old man (the traditional chief) took part in the first cultural tour. He must have been a great young chief at that time. He was impressed with what he had seen in the main islands of Japan and tried to make his village look like a busy street called *ginza*. He relocated the houses originally scattered on hilly country and rearranged them in line in an orderly way along the straight road constructed along the seashore with coconut trees. He was not satisfied with the relocation at that time, and arranged for box lamps along both sides of the street to light up, even though he stopped using them since enough oil was not provided. He is such a person with an amusing anecdote (Hijikata 1979: 85).

As previously mentioned, the Ginza Road in Ngiwal might refer to the well-known Ginza district at the center of the Tokyo, but it is a general term for a busy road. There are innumerable Ginza Roads all over Japan. When Japanese immigrants built their towns overseas, they sometimes named the main street Ginza Road. Most likely, the Palauan chief borrowed the Japanese term alluding to the busy and prosperous district of town.

This episode of the Ginza Road, mentioning the chief’s participation in the cultural tour and the villagers’ relocation following it, is often taken as a key example of the heavy impact of cultural tours on Micronesians. In the post-Pacific War period, American anthropologists reproduced similar kinds of narratives on cultural tours and the Ginza Road. In 1960, Roland Force described the effectiveness of cultural tours and explained the process of the construction of the Ginza Road.

.....These individuals (those who participated in cultural tours) returned to their homeland thoroughly impressed with the technological accomplishments of their dominators and every effort was made to emulate them: for example, after one

such tour by one of the senior chiefs in Palau, he decreed that henceforth all men must wear their hair short, in keeping with the Japanese custom.

Styles of dress, cooking techniques, architectural design, and even village organization felt the impact of Japanese culture. A village chief from Babeldaob Island returned from his visit to Japan and set forth a plan for rearranging all of the dwellings in the village in orderly rows along a main roadway. This roadway is still referred to as the Ginza (Force 1960: 73).

Mark Peattie, a historian, who comprehensively investigated the Japanese administration in Micronesia, pointed out that cultural tours were “the most effective programs to win over the hearts and mind of Micronesians” (Peattie 1988: 109). He also said that the tours contributed to the acceptance of new life styles in Micronesia, as Force said in 1960:

If this group (the group of the first cultural tour) accomplished nothing else upon its return, it contributed to the increasing acceptance of Japanese (Western) attire in Micronesia. Departing the islands in loincloths, without shoes, and with their hair bundled up with combs, Micronesian chiefs returned in suits and shoes, and with close-cropped hair (Peattie 1988: 109).

The episode of the Ginza Road became a well-known story for Micronesians too. A history textbook for Palauan students, compiled by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Palau, mentions the cultural tour and the relocation in Ngiwal. The Palauan book gives the chief a name, at last. Uong, the highest-ranked chief from Ngiwal, is listed as one of the Palauan participants who took part in the first cultural tour. The change he underwent and the change he introduced in his village is described as follows:

Upon his return from Japan, Uong’s hair was cut Japanese style and he wore a suit bought in Nagasaki. He immediately ordered his people to relocate their houses down from the traditional village site. They were then rebuilt along coconut-lined streets imitating the streets lined with trees in Japan. He also built street lamps on both sides of the street. These were never used, however, since there was no oil for the lamps. He even built himself a Japanese-style house and furnished it with goods he bought in Japan (Rechebei and McPhetres 1997: 169).

Though these written records are useful to reconstruct the cultural tour as a colonial policy, it is difficult to reach the Micronesians’ points of view on cultural tours only by reading the written records. Micronesian societies were originally non-literate and local history was preserved in oral histories and in the performative heritage, such as chants, songs, folktales, paintings, sculptures, and so on. Here, we should refer to Micronesians’ oral histories to investigate their understanding about the cultural tours.

## Oral Histories about the Ginza Road

Even though Micronesians might have interpreted and reinterpreted the stories about cultural tours in the post-Pacific War contexts, their oral histories are still worth investigating in order to understand their perspective on cultural tours, which was distorted in colonial documents. Some studies by Japanese scholars tend to look down on the value of Micronesians' oral histories. Hajime Senju, who reconstructed the schedules of earlier cultural tours from newspapers and naval documents, insisted that oral histories were not treated in his study, since what Micronesians said sometimes did not correspond with the written records (Senju 2005: 65). Scholars, especially those from Japan who make use of colonial documents to reconstruct history, should carefully avoid such an exclusive position and pay attention to the way in which Micronesians construct their history in oral traditions.

It is widely said in the oral histories I collected in Ngiwal village that chief Uong, who participated in the cultural tour, built a straight road named Ginza Road along the seashore after coming back from the tour, and ordered the villagers who had lived in hilly inland country to live along the road. At first glance, the narrative seems to follow colonial documents or fit with the narratives by scholars who depicted the episode. However, contrary to the colonial documents and some of the scholars' narratives, oral histories place great value in the accomplishment by chief Uong, and situate it in the local context. The episode of the Ginza Road is part of a broader success story of chief Uong, who skillfully survived through the turbulent colonial period.

Chief Uong was born in 1886. He was entitled to inherit the highest chief title in the village. According to the oral histories, he traveled to Yap in his youth as a member of a troop hired by the German administration. Upon his return, he inherited the chief title, despite his young age. He would have been about 29 years old when he joined the first cultural tour to the main islands of Japan and initiated the construction of the Ginza Road and the relocation of the villagers after returning from the tour. During the Japanese era, chief Uong became a village headman (*sonchō*: 村長). At the same time, he supported the activity of the German Evangelical Church, which started their mission in Palau in 1929, and he converted to Christianity on his own initiative. Under the United States' administration in the later years, he did not hold any official status in the political arena, but his leadership was still vigorous and the newly elected leaders consulted him when they tried to organize community work. Chief Uong died in 1969 and was buried beneath a tombstone with the inscription in both Chinese and Japanese characters, saying "*Ngiwal mura sonchō*" (オギワル村村長), the village headman of Ngiwal.

An old man born in 1917 told me in May 2003 that his father had engaged in the labor work for relocating the village during day time, while he fished at night. All the adult men in Ngiwal worked to clear the land along the seashore, level out the uneven surface, and carry rocks from the reef to decorate the road. Women did not join the manual labor but prepared food and sometimes helped to level the uneven ground. This elder himself helped with the leveling when he was not in school. All the work for building the road was voluntary. The old man said that the new Ginza Road was much more beautiful, compared to how it looks today, with flowers planted around the road and with lamps burning at night. He regarded the time as the golden age of his village.

An old woman born in 1925 did not remember the time of relocation but had vivid impressions of the chief. According to her, chief Uong was very strict but the life in the village thrived because of his strictness. He was smart enough to earn income by selling copra to Japanese. She said that Ngiwal at that time was the most beautiful village because of the well arranged Ginza Road. She also admired the powerful leadership of the chief, and complained that the contemporary chiefs were misbehaving, by fighting over their titles with other candidates. From her perspective, chief Uong was recognized as the best leader in the history of Ngiwal. She said in fluent Japanese as follows.

Chief Uong visited Japan as a member of *kankōdang* (観光団: tourist group). After coming back to Ngiwal, he ordered all the villagers, staying on hilly country at that time, to live together along the newly constructed road called “Ginzadōri.” The road was straight and beautiful. Ngiwal was the most beautiful village in Palau. It was much more beautiful at that time (May, 2003).

At first glance, what is told in the oral histories is almost the same as what is described by some scholars. However, stories of the Ginza Road told by Palauans illustrate the strong leadership of chief Uong and the development of Ngiwal under his initiative. People in Ngiwal add a positive meaning to his achievements. He was described as an active leader, even a cultural hero, who led his village to the right place. His participation in the first cultural tour and the construction of the Ginza Road are considered the highlights of his career.

Even the younger generations, who were born after the Pacific War, have full knowledge of chief Uong’s participation in the first cultural tour and call the straight road *Ginzadōri*, as the older generation which directly experienced the Japanese era does. Elementary school teachers explain the story to students as an important part of local history. The story of Ginza Road in Ngiwal has proudly been passed down from generation to generation and shared with other Palauan villagers.

### **Checking Colonial Documents and Colonial Contexts**

I would like to revisit the colonial documents and colonial contexts within which the episode of the Ginza Road is analyzed. The episode corresponds with the colonial documents in many aspects. Chief Uong is listed in the record by the Japanese Navy as one of the 22 participants of the first cultural tour organized in 1915 (JN 1915). There were three other participants from Palau. They were sons or candidates of chiefs in their twenties or early thirties, who stayed overseas as soldiers under the German administration or who could understand either German or English. A group photo was taken at the Mitsukoshi department store at the center of Tokyo (see Figure 1). Participants were wearing men’s formal wear, consisting of *kimono* and *hakama*, some of them holding Japanese flags. The chief from Ngiwal is in the second row from the front, third from the left. Colonial records confirm that he visited Japan in 1915.



Figure 1. Group Photo of the Participants of the First Cultural Tour, Mitsukoshi Department Store (*Source: JN 1915*)

The land register record compiled in the 1930s shows that the relocation of the village did happen in Ngiwal, as remembered by villagers. There were four hamlets in Ngiwal at the beginning of the 20th century. A German ethnography shows that house lots were scattered around old stone paths leading from seashore to inland before the Japanese era (Krämer 2002: 119) (see Figure 2). However, in the 1930s, 39 out of 49 house lots in Ngiwal were arranged along the Ginza Road (see Figure 3) (DLM 1967; 1970a; 1970b). It is certain that the relocation did happen, at some point prior to the 1930s.

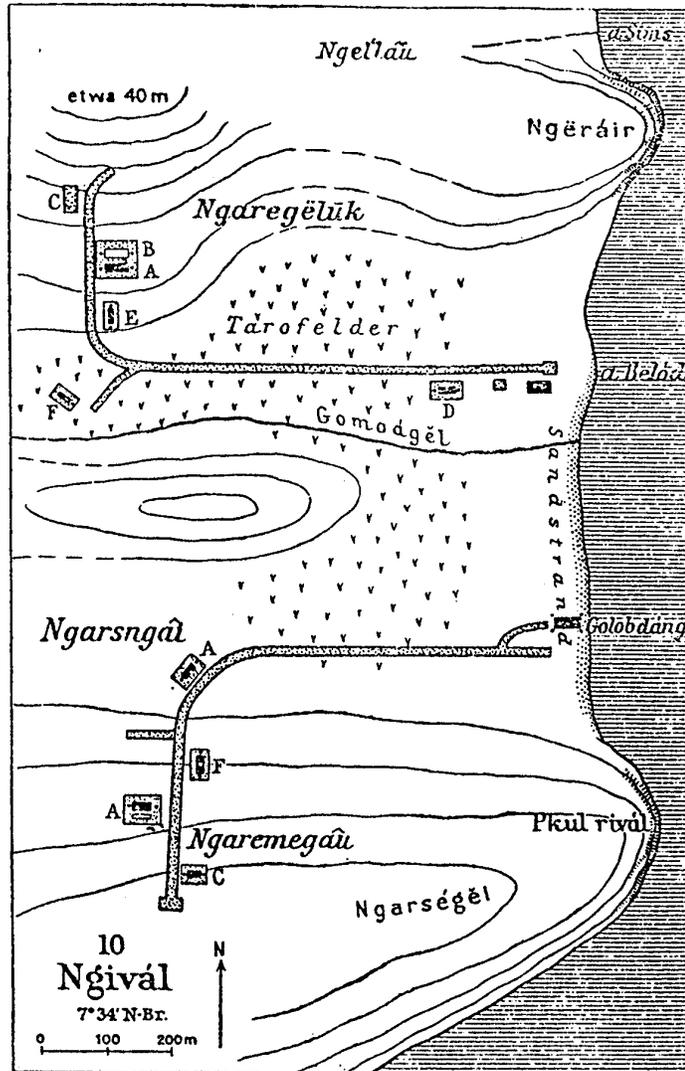


Figure 2. Ngiwal in the 1900s  
(Source: Krämer 2002:119)

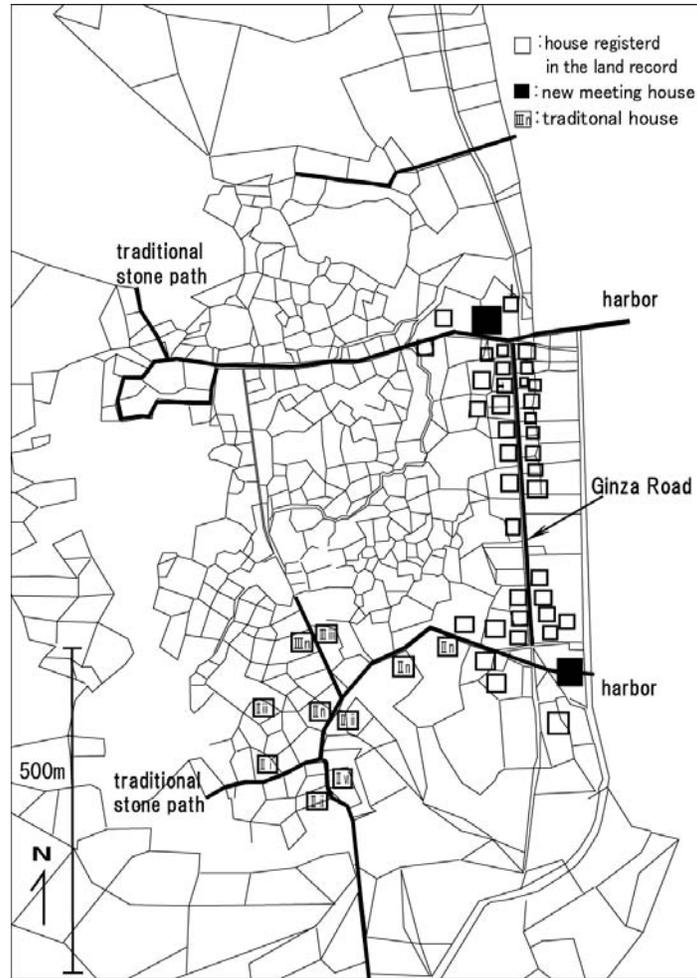


Figure 3. Ngiwal in the 1930s (Source: DLM 1967; 1970a; 1970b)

However, closer examination of other colonial documents reveals factors other than cultural tours led to the relocation of villagers. First, the prohibition of warfare both by German and Japanese administrations was the precondition for the relocation (Smith 1983: 17). Palauans, who had lived on the hilly country for defense prior to the colonial period, did not need to live in such inconvenient places after colonial pacification. In fact, relocation became a general phenomenon gradually proceeding all over Palau until the 1960s or 1970s.

Second, demographic and economic changes contributed to the readiness to relocate. Palauans started to leave traditional house lots, since the extended family (*telngalek*) was dissolving after the population decreased in the 19th century. The monetary economy penetrating the society also affected the process. The nuclear family (*ongalek*) was becoming the unit of daily production and consumption, after the German administration imposed the plantation of coconut trees and the taxation to each nuclear family. Thus, during the Japanese era, some nuclear families moved to the flat land along the seashore and came to live separately (Sugiura 1944: 229).

Third, public hygiene policy might have contributed to the relocation. In the pre-colonial era, the traditional house lots were the place both for living and for burial (Parmentier 1987: 68,

Endo 2002: 129). The dead bodies of a kin group were buried next to the house, where the members of the extended family were living. This burial place is called *odesongel*, which is paved with stones. The Japanese administration prohibited burying the dead bodies in the house lots and ordered that the public cemetery be constructed in each village.

Finally, the relocation might be related to the public work projects organized by the South Sea Government. These projects, in which young people's associations (*seinendan*) engaged without pay (*kinrō-hōshi*), included the construction of roads all over Babeldaob Island. A Palauan song describes the scene of the construction of the road connecting Ngiwal and its next village, Melekeok (Tellei et. al. 1998: 44). It is not clear whether the construction of the Ginza Road was part of the project or not, but at least it is certain that young Palauans were often mobilized to the public work ordered by the Japanese administration.

The relocation then occurred due to various factors, such as the ban of warfare, socio-economic changes, public hygiene policy, and public work projects. Even though the chief's participation in the cultural tour could have initiated the relocation, it was not the determining factor. Rather, it is a rhetoric used by Palauans to recover their agency repressed in a colonial situation. Palauans suppose that chief Uong's participation in the first cultural tour is the direct cause of the construction of the Ginza Road in Ngiwal, as colonial administrators and some scholars did. However, there is a sharp contrast between the colonizers' view and the Palauans' view. While the former devalues Palauans' agency, the latter bestows positive meaning to the accomplishment by chief Uong. Palauans recall his bold decision to change the living patterns of centuries and move the village to the convenient location on the coast; his success in making the village the most orderly and beautiful in Palau; and many decades of strong but just leadership. For Palauans, whether he named the new village street *Ginzadōri* or Broadway is of distinctly secondary importance.

## Conclusion

It is obvious now that administrators, scholars and Palauans employed the episode of the Ginza Road in different ways for their own purpose. From the administrators' perspective, the story of the Ginza Road satisfied the imperial desire to assimilate the local people. The administrators referred to the influence of cultural tours as a symptom of permeating administrative power and as an evidence of Micronesians' obedience to Japan. The image of aping Micronesians was useful to prove the superiority of Japanese. Micronesians were represented as if they suffered from a "dependency complex" (Fanon 2008: 64).

In the academic writings, scholars from Japan and the United States focused on the impressive episode such as the Ginza Road story and described Micronesians who were willing to adopt new life styles after coming back from the tours. Hijikata's vivid depiction of the Ginza Road story is a typical example. A history text book for Palauan students also refers to the story in almost the same way as Hijikata did. To some degree, these studies shed light on Micronesians' experience under the Japanese administration. At the same time, some writings about cultural tours exaggerate the image of Micronesians imitating civilization without question and reduce them to passive actors in colonial history. In this point, the colonial discourse on assimilation of Micronesians has seeped into the narratives by scholars. Micronesians are

represented as if they were unsophisticated colonial wards, longing for civilization.

Palauans, however, stand this perspective on its head. They converted the Ginza Road story and gave a positive meaning to chief Uong's achievements under the Japanese administration. Their narratives about the Ginza Road recover the agency of chief Uong and reverse the hierarchical relationship between Japanese and Palauans. Even though traditional chiefs were deprived of much of their political power during the colonial era, chief Uong is remembered as a man of vigorous action, who wisely appropriated civilization and minimized the powers of Japanese administration. He is regarded as a prominent leader, rather than as a passive, obedient, amusing, or provincial figure, as portrayed in colonial documents and some academic texts. People in Ngiwal are proud that chief Uong guided villagers with strong leadership and constructed the most beautiful and well organized village in Palau.

The discussion over the relationship between colonialism, modernization, and modernity is relevant here, in order to know the reason why plural histories are produced by various agencies. In colonial studies, especially the study about the Japanese administration in Korea (e.g. Itagaki 2004), there are arguments between those who regard modernization as a step to the development of the colony, and those who critically assess modernity as an important part of colonial rule. The former sees the modernization of the colony as a neutral social process, while the latter views colonial modernity as administrative technology. For example, the former would evaluate the public hygiene policies introduced by the colonial administration as eventually contributing to the well-being of the colonized, while the latter will regard them as a way of colonizing the body of those colonized (Arnold 1993).

Regarding the Ginza Road story, administrators were naïvely confident that the modernization (Japanization) of the Micronesian colony contributed to the civilization of "primitive people." Modernization was considered as the absolute measure of a people's standard of living. In the documents submitted to the League of Nations, the Japanese government insisted that colonial policies such as cultural tours to Japan were arranged for the well-being of Micronesians, though these policies were intended to discipline Micronesians.

There are excellent studies which investigate the colonial policies toward Micronesians and their impacts on Micronesians' life (e.g. Peattie 1988: 81-118). These studies pay close attention to the ideological dimension of the administration. However, when scholars depict Micronesians willingly accepting civilization after coming back from the cultural tours, they inadvertently reproduce the administrators' understanding of the modernization of the colony. In their depictions, local culture is destined to disappear and be replaced through modernization.

A similar colonial discourse has been repeated in the study of cargo cults in Melanesia. In these so-called cults, people in Melanesia built airfields, wharfs and storages to welcome their ancestors who were believed to return to this world with wealth owned by white men. Cargo cults have been regarded as strange, irrational, and blind belief in civilization held by those who were devastated after contact with Europeans. Yet current studies point out that it was not a cult held by a disappearing people, but rather a creative socio-political movement by those who appropriated the administrators' culture and discourse (Kaplan 1995: 16, Lattas 1998: xxiv).

Instead of accepting a simplified perspective of the modernization of a colony which overlooks the dimension of domination, it is reasonable for scholars working in the postcolonial era to consider colonial modernity as administrative technology. At the same time, if colonial

modernity is regarded as something inevitable which people cannot resist, the passive colonial figures will be reproduced again. The important fact is that colonial modernity does not thoroughly permeate into those who are colonized, as the colonizer expects. Field research with indigenous peoples can reveal how imperfectly colonial subjects adopt modernity, or how they change the original meaning through appropriating the colonizer's discourse.

In Palauans' oral histories, colonial modernity is something people can appropriate and modify in local cultural contexts. Even though Palauans were incorporated into the structure of administration, there was still a significant void in which local people tried to secure their cultural continuity. Within this void the Ginza Road story was produced as a counter discourse to that of the colonizer. We see, in the end, that the Ginza Road episode is not only a story of the past, belonging to the Japanese era, but a very contemporary story as well. When the Palauans tell the Ginza Road story from their perspective today, they are not only recalling the strength and agency of an admired chief of long ago, Chief Uong; but they are also recovering agency for themselves.

### **Acknowledgements**

The earlier version of this paper was presented at the workshop titled "CAPAS-MARC 2010 Workshop: Migration, Network and Colonial Legacies in the Pacific Islands," held at the Center for Asia-Pacific Area Studies (CAPAS), Academia Sinica, Taipei, on November 11th and 12th, 2010. I would like to express my gratitude to CAPAS and MARC as the sponsor of the workshop. I also would like to thank Dr. Pei-yi Guo who organized the symposium, and Dr. Stephen Murray who edited my English and gave productive comments.

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