

Young Researcher Overseas Visit Program for Vitalizing Brain Circulation  
Trip Report, Republic of Palau, April30 to May7, 2012

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Trip dates: April30 to May7, 2012

Destination: Republic of Palau, Belau national museum

Trip report:

I visited the Belau National Museum, where I met and spoke with the museum director, Olympia Morei, regarding the intake by the museum of Ms. Konya, who was dispatched as part of the present project. In addition, we spoke of future plans for her research. May 4<sup>th</sup> is Senior Citizen's Day and a national holiday in Palau. Ms. Konya and I visited the Senior Citizens Center in Koror and participated in a ceremony featuring traditional dancing and singing hosted by a seniors group of which Ms. Konya's informant, Antonina Antonio, is a member. Approximately 10 seniors received public acknowledgement. I was surprised because many of the names of the Palauan seniors called up to receive honors were Japanese names such as Haruko, Akemi, Hisae, Kikue, and so on.

It is traditional in Palau for parents to invite relatives and neighbors to a "baby shower" (*Ngasech* in Palauan) to celebrate the birth of their first child. We had the fortune of participating in and observing this ritual.

I also visited Aimeliik State, where I was taken to see Bai (Abai) and Kez by the Aimeliik State government's tourism coordinator, Lelly E. Obakerbau. In Palau society, which was formerly a matrilineal society, Bai (Abai) were places of social gathering for Palauan men and also places where the various clans would meet and talk and the elderly would pass down traditions to younger generations. The Kez were terraced land features created by carving a mountain where taro roots were traditionally offered to the gods.

I was given a tour of historic ruins from the period when Palau was a Japanese trust territory by Mr. Yuriaki Sato, who is a member of the Japan-Palau Friendship Organization. The telegraph tower as well as the power plant and electric generator used to power the telegraph still existed in an untouched state. Mr. Sato created a map depicting Koror City in the period between Taisho 10 (1921) to Showa 20 (1945). It was clear from the map, which included the names of each and every store, that Koror at the time consisted almost exclusively of Japanese businesses. I visited the Palau Komatsu farm (tropical fruit orchard) with Mr. Sato, and received an explanation of the ecology of tropical fruits such as banana, papaya, soursop, and starfruit from Mrs. Komatsu. In addition, I visited an aquaculture facility and learned about the state of

aquaculture in Palau.

I went around the island with Ms. Konya, during which time I explained, among others, the difference between volcanic islands and coral reef islands, the varying forms, topographies, soil development of coral reefs including fringing reefs, barrier reefs, and atolls. In addition, I suggested the possibility that a certain ruin was in fact an ancient animistic ritual site.



Photo 1. A traditional Palauan dance performed at a ceremony celebrating Senior Citizens Day.



Photo 2. An example of a Bai (Abai) in Aimeliik State. The structure is built on a stone foundation without the use of nails or screws. The outer walls and interior beams are decorated with numerous images.



Photo 3. An example of a Kezu in Aimeliik State. There is a 4 to 5-meter tall bulge, called a *bookle*, on top of the table.



Photo 4. Baby shower (Ngasech) celebrating the birth of a first child (in Koror)



Photo 5. An electric generator used by the Japanese army to power the telegraph during the Second World War.



Photo 6. Pineapple plants being cultivated on the Palau Komatsu Farm (tropical fruit orchard)



Photo 7. An aquaculture facility in Palau.