

DISTANT PAGAN



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This document was translated from the original Japanese text by Ms Jessica Jordan, University of California, Davis, working under a contract with The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Historic Preservation Office, and with the permission of the author/publisher of the original document, Ms Okamoto Mariko.

The contents include memoirs of former residents of Pagan from the years prior to and during World War II. Contributors include men and women, soldiers and civilians. They describe the Japanese settlement on Pagan, the daily activities of adults and children, subsistence, hardships faced during air raids, and the repatriation of soldiers and civilians following the war.

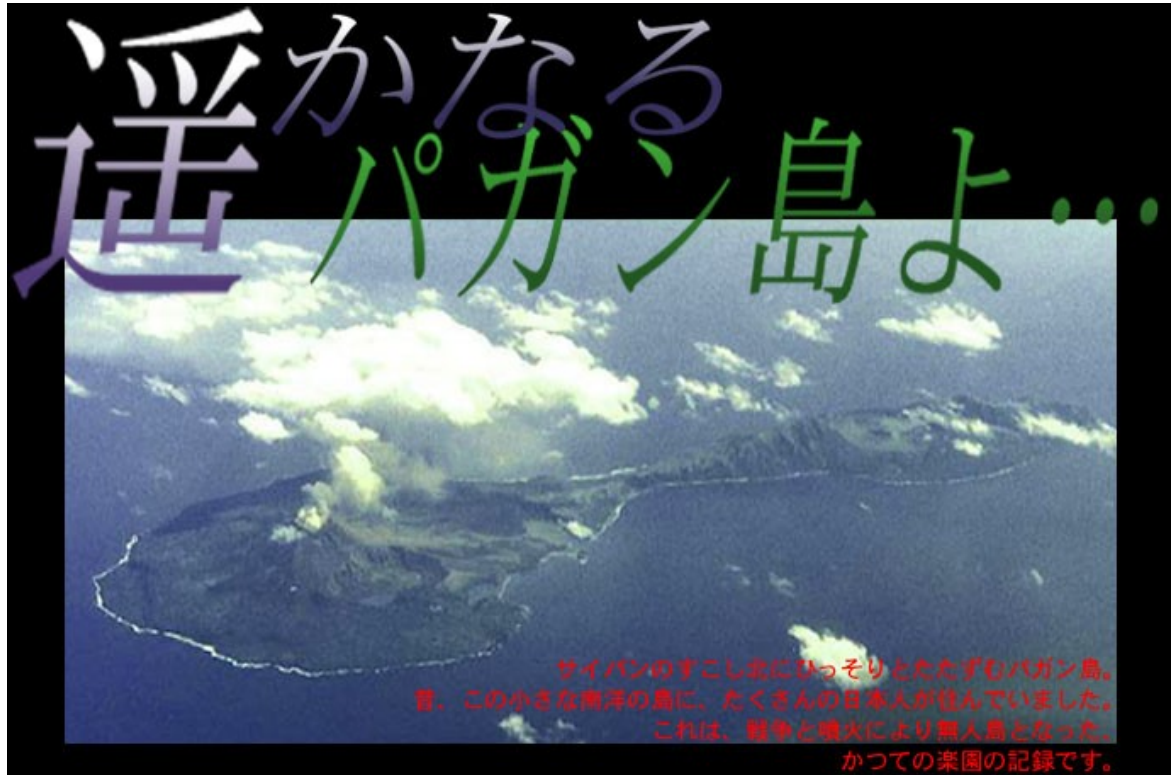
This project was undertaken to assist the Historic Preservation Office in its management of the Cultural Resources of the CNMI and to provide information about Pagan to researchers and interested public, many of whom maintain an emotional connection to Pagan Island.

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Distant Pagan Island



Just a little bit north of Saipan, Pagan Island stands quiet and still. Long ago, many Japanese people lived on this island in the South Seas. These are the records of an island that was once a paradise but has since been deserted due to war and volcanic eruptions.

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1. To Begin



In front of banana trees



At the Saipan Shrine

I came to know about Pagan Island through stories that my mother-in-law told from long ago.

When mom was a child, along with her parents and some teachers from the public elementary school, she crossed over from Saipan to Pagan Island where she spent her life until the end of the war. Before the war, Pagan was shrouded in beautiful nature and the island was a paradise. Mangos and papayas ripened at the island's interior. By the sea, fish of various colors clustered together, and countless white herons¹ danced around the mountain lake. Children would heap lots of bananas into boats floating on the ocean, and would swim and play all day long. Then the war started and people were torn apart by the air raids as they hid under the ground. The food supply bottomed out, and the population was sent into harsh and bitter days.

At mom's request, I collected data from here and there about things I was hearing about for the first time through her stories. Little by little the distant silhouette of Pagan Island came into view. Now I would like you all to know Pagan through these stories, and this is why I took on this project. As for the generation of people who do not know war and may have not even heard that there was a war, it is my hope that you will keep a little bit of the stories from Pagan Island in your hearts.

I would like to point out the tremendous cooperation I received during the creation of this publication from various people from the Pagan Island-Wide War Comrades Association, and the Meeting of Pagan Repatriates, and to offer my sincere appreciation for their cooperation. I would also like to express thanks to Mr. Osakabe's friends, who scanned their photos of the island and sent them to me. I received them in really beautiful condition, but there was a lack of space on my computer and I apologize if their quality has deteriorated.

Finally, I would like to recognize two people who were key contributors to this project. First, my mother-in-law Okamoto Eiko shared countless stories with me and helped me to make contact with others. Second, before Mr. Hattori Hideo passed away, he made important contributions to preparations of the website. While Mr. Hattori had the perspective of a military veteran and my mother the perspective of a child, they both spent many days on Pagan Island and they were both very important in the success of this project. I am eternally grateful to them.

1 Most likely the Intermediate Egret (*Egretta intermedia*)

2. An Outline of the Island

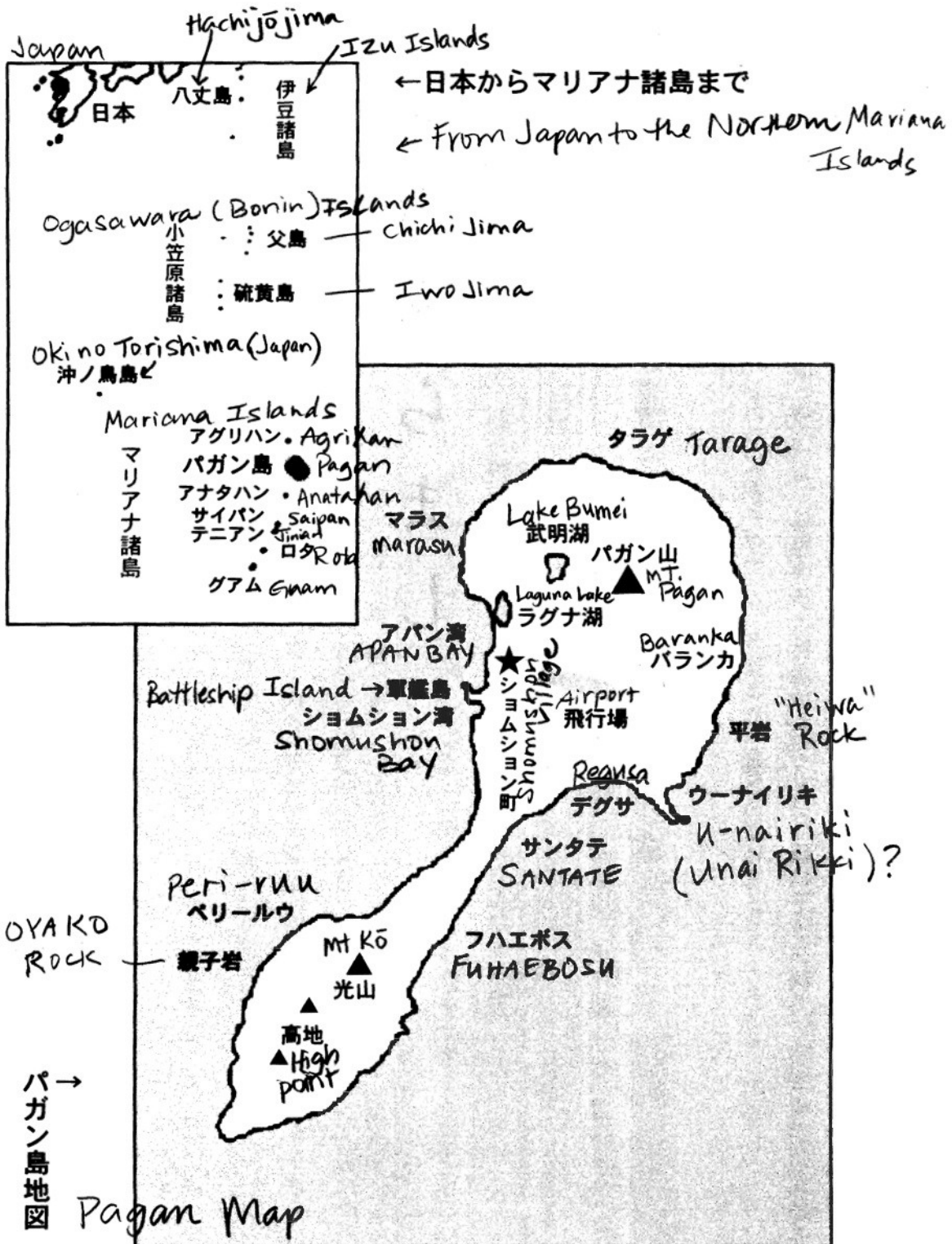


From Japan to the Northern Mariana Islands



Pagan Island Map

[English translations of the location names in the two maps above are on the next page].



Where is this place called Pagan?

Pagan is about 290 kilometers north of Saipan, at the northernmost end of the Mariana Islands. It is a volcanic mountainous island 12 kilometers long by 4 kilometers wide. The island is shaped like a tadpole, with Mt. Pagan rising 570 meters above sea level over the northern portion of the island. According to remaining records, the volcano erupted in March 1922 and May 1981. During these eruptions, thick smoke also rose from the high spot in the southern part of the island. One effect of the volcano is the existence of black sand beaches, and I have heard that this is unique within the Mariana Islands. In the flat areas, lush coconuts, bananas, breadfruit trees, and mangos grow and wild goats and cows live in abundance.

What does “Pagan” mean?

After Magellan discovered Guam in 1521, the Mariana Islands were colonized by Spain until 1899. After that, the Mariana Islands were sold to Germany along with the nearby Caroline Islands and were colonized by the Germans until the First World War. From 1914 onward they became Japanese Mandated Territories. After the Second World War, they became American territories under the United Nations Trusteeship. In a 1978 vote by local residents, the islands at last became the self-governing Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

I have heard that “Pagan” means “foreign land” in Spanish. It must have been a strange island far away from the other Mariana Islands, which until then were known as the “Islands of Thieves.”

The Lives of the People

In April 1917, there was a volcanic eruption on nearby Agrihan Island and those islanders escaped to Pagan. Records say that there were six Japanese included among the refugees. After that, a business called the South Seas Trading Company emigrated Carolinian islanders from Saipan to Pagan in order to cultivate coconuts. Construction of the airport began around the year 1935. Approximately 200 Japanese people and 4 to 500 islanders were assembled from surrounding islands and assigned to this labor. However, this work was extremely difficult owing to the hard bedrock that is characteristic of volcanic regions and that makes up the foundation of Pagan Island. It is said that many laborers died every day during the construction.

From around 1937, construction began for a Japanese Navy base. From around 1942, people involved in the fishing industry migrated to the island and kept businesses involving primarily *bonito* and *maguro* tuna fisheries. In addition, there was produce such as copra (coconut oil), Chinese yams, small sized lemons, bananas, oranges, and sweet potatoes. There was no water, and drinkable liquids consisted for the most part of rainwater collected from daily squalls.

Japanese people lived in a dispersed area from the dried *bonito* tuna factory in Shomushon village down through the southern part of the island. Children went to school at the village's public elementary school. In the village there were 20 to 30 civilian homes, a wharf, a Shinto shrine, a small general store with daily household goods for sale, a police substation, a general practitioner, and a café. The woman who became famous as a central character in the story about the "Anatahan Incident" [The Lost Men of Anatahan] used to work in that café before she went to Anatahan Island.

Carolinian people primarily gathered around the circumference of the Regusa coastline and Laguna Lake. They lived in residences made out of coconut trees that were constructed in such a way that floors were spread on top of frames made from tall pillars. They also had many wells. They would take coconut crabs and fish and exchange them with the Japanese for things like sweet potatoes and vegetables, and in this way the people lived together peaceably. In 1942, the population consisted of 413 Japanese and 229 Carolinians. It is said that there were many immigrants in particular from Okinawa and the Ogasawara Islands.

3. Photographs

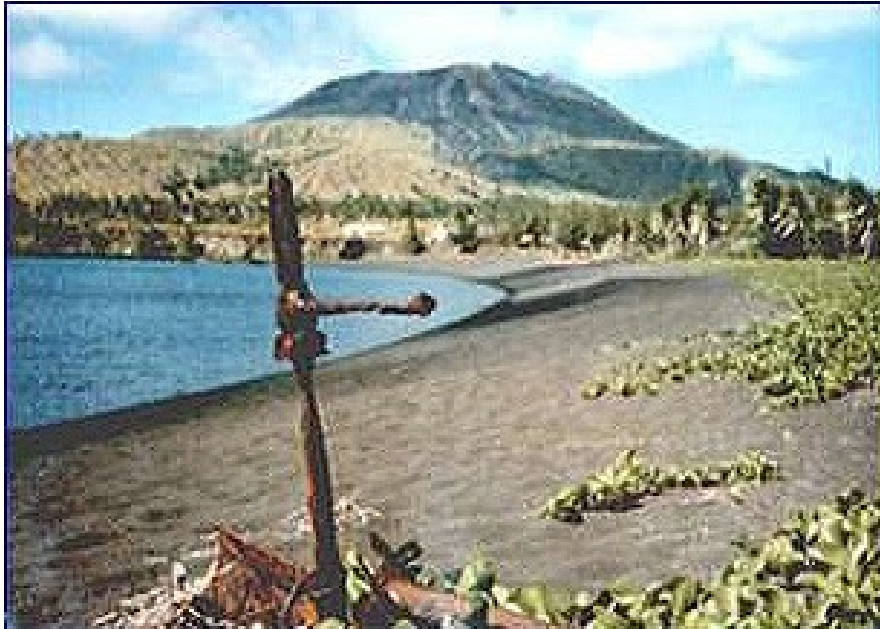
These photographs were taken in 1979. These have been reproduced from the Pagan Island-wide War Comrades Association publication “Records of the Defense of Pagan Island.”



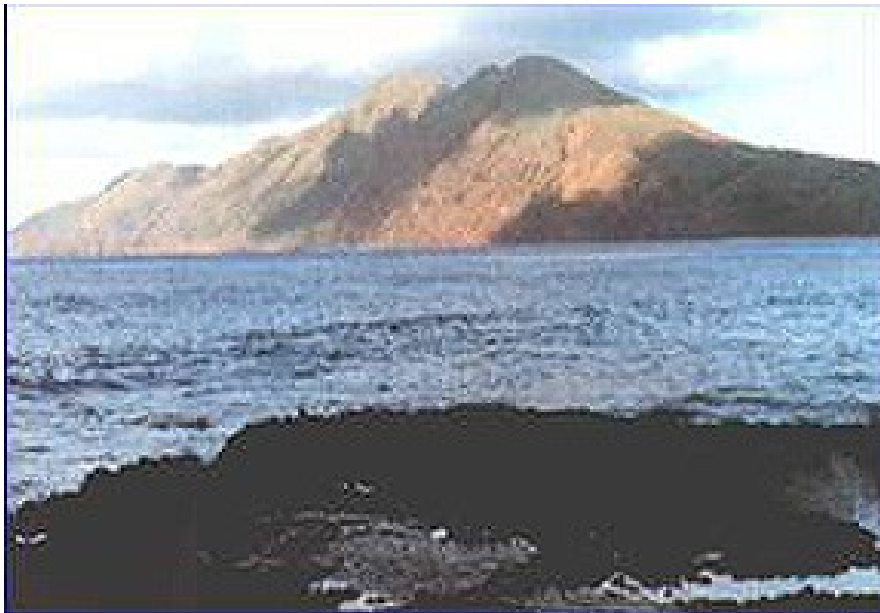
A view of Gake from Apan Bay.



Apan Bay



A view of Mt. Pagan from Apan Bay



Regusa Bay



View of *Myōto* Husband and Wife Rock from Regusa Bay



Laguna Lake



Laguna Lake



View of the southern region from the vicinity of Battleship Island



View of the southern region from the vicinity of Battleship Island



Scenery seen from a battlement (pillbox)



Air Raid Shelter



Wreckage of Japanese Military Airplanes



Rusted wreckage of anti-aircraft guns



View of Shomushon Bay from Battleship Island

4. War and the Island

Life Before the War

There were two classes in the island's public school that extended through advanced courses, and a husband and wife had been assigned to teach the 40 pupils. At the school, games like dodge ball were popular. When school let out, every day the children who commuted from far away would make lots of fun stops along the way home. They did things like picking and eating mangos and papayas that were always growing, drinking sweet coconut juice picked by Carolinian people they knew, and playing beside the ocean.

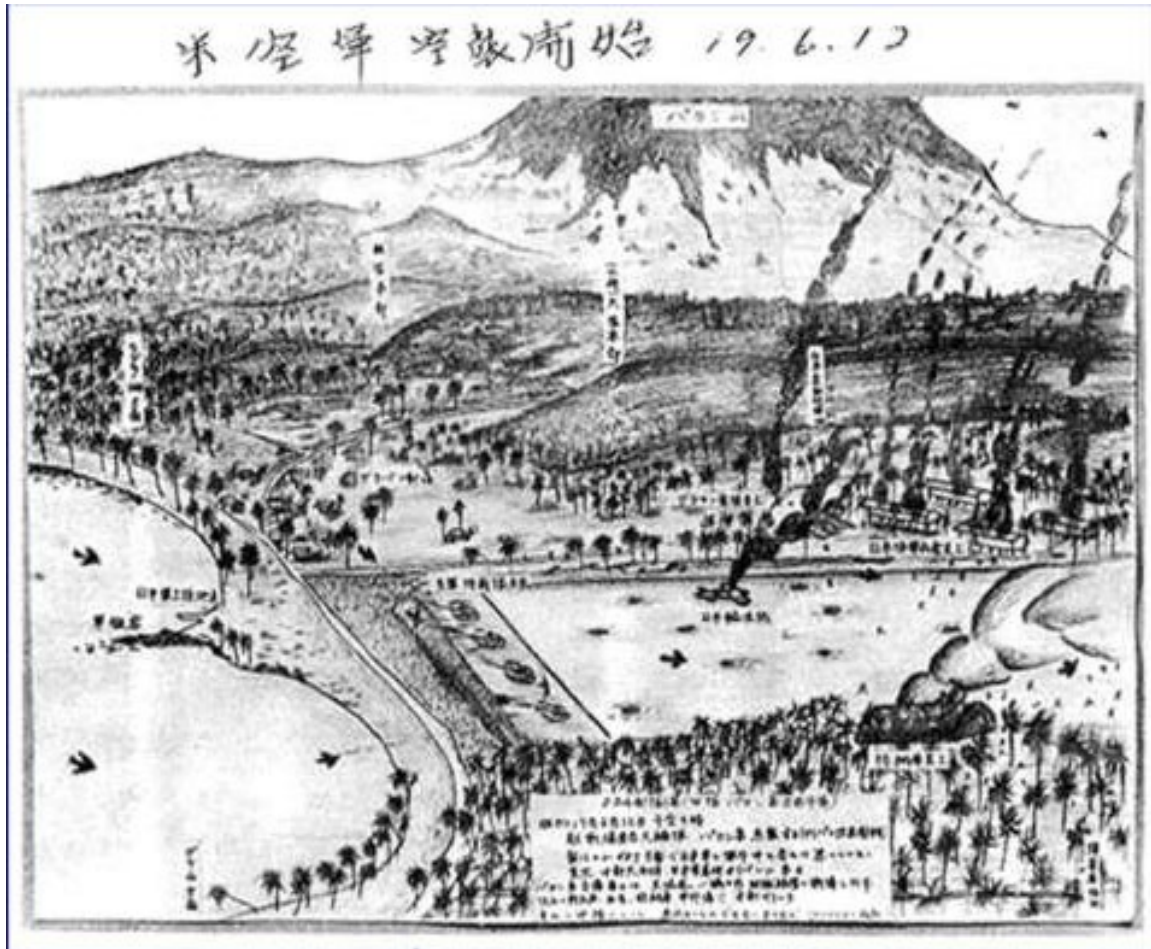
An ox-drawn cart called a *kareta* could hold lots of bananas piled as high as a mountain. When the children would bathe in the sea they would transform the cart into a resting place by floating the cart in the ocean and piling themselves on top. Using wood, glass, and wax, the children would make underwater glasses to dive down and catch things like fish and octopus with a harpoon. In the rocky areas there lived many creatures like spiny lobsters, turban shells, abalone, and hermit crabs, all of which became good toys for the children.

Most of the adults on the island were engaged in fishing for *bonito* tuna fish. Sometimes, these adults used to gather at the dock to snack on fish or shellfish while drinking homemade coconut wine and singing traditional *nagauta* songs to the accompaniment of a samisen or a *sanshin* (an Okinawan samisen made of snake-skin).

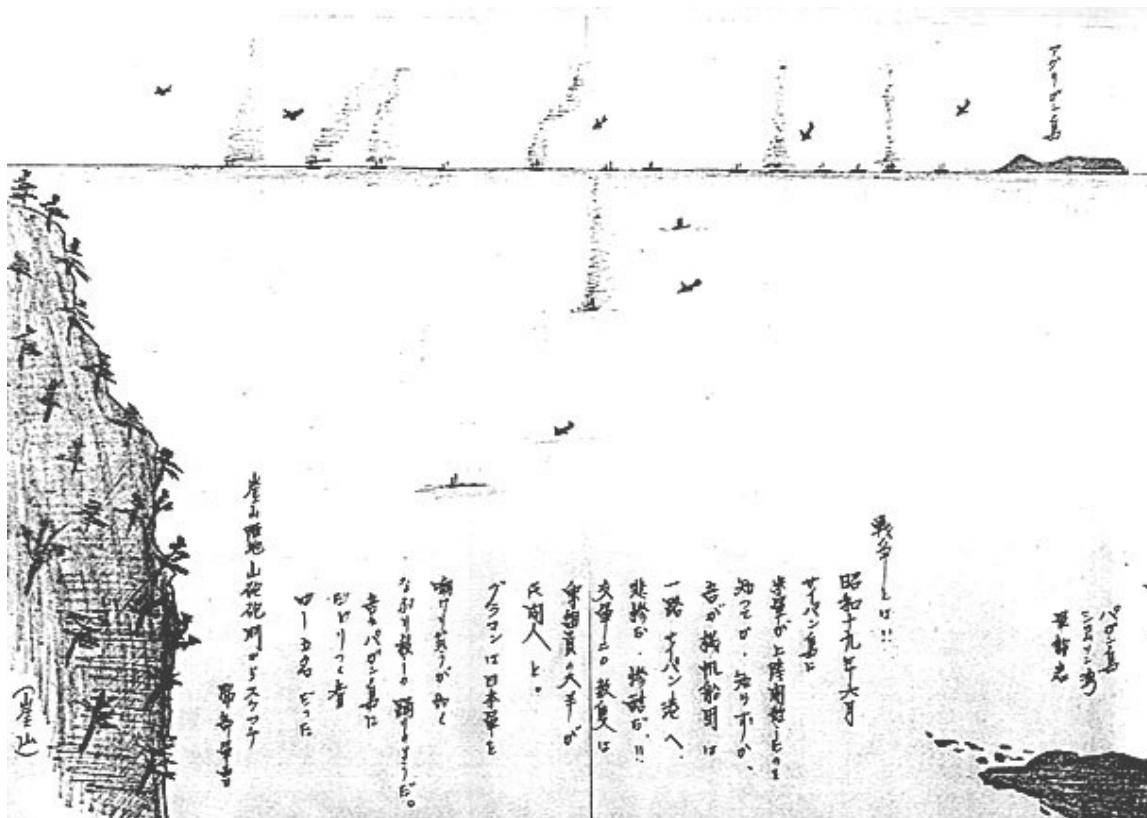
The First Air Raid

On December 8, 1941, the Pacific War began when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Day by day fierce American fighting was unfolding in islands to the south. Beginning in early 1944, Japanese military units were continually introduced to Pagan island: Army and Navy garrisons consisting of 2,500 troops were stationed there. Then on the morning of June 12, an air raid began amid the sounds of deafening explosions and machine gun fire. American Grumman fighter planes proceeded in formation to deliver fatal blows to Shomushon village and the harbor. In the daytime people would hide in underground shelters, and by night they would hurriedly work to repair the demolished airstrip and procure food provisions.

Mr. Hattori Hideo of the Pagan War Comrades Association sent me drawings of the air-raid scenes that he saved as sketches in his pocket diary from those days.



June 6, 1944 - View of the first air raid from the embrasure at the encampment on Mt. Gake.



The Struggle for Food Provisions

Less than two months after the big air raid, the island's food supply had noticeably dwindled. This was not merely a wound of battle -- a great number of people began to die of illness and malnutrition. I have attempted to make a list of the items that were used as food during the war.

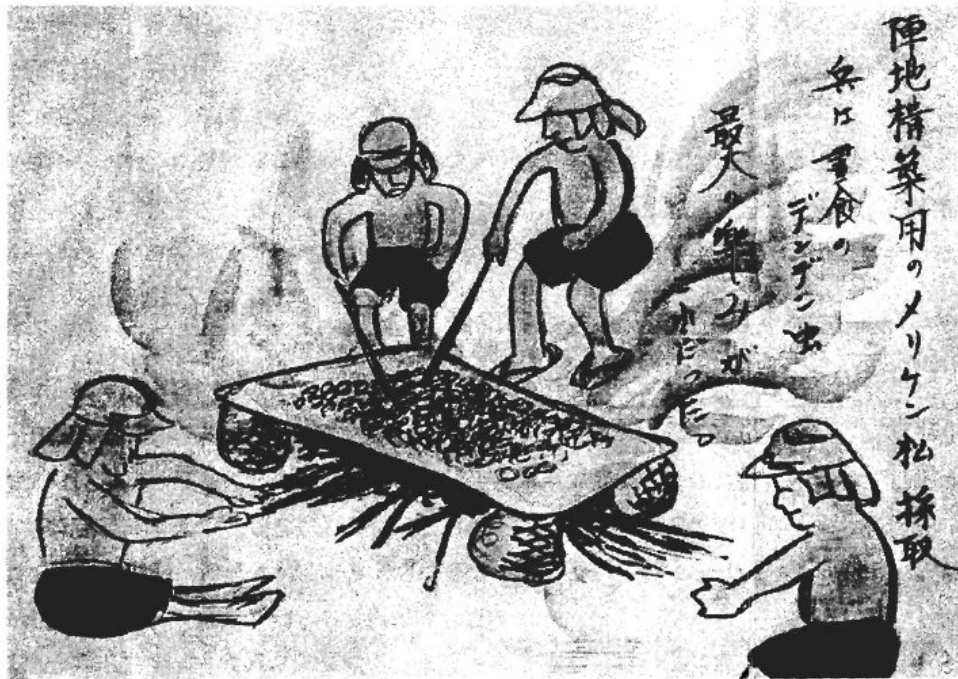
Coconut Crabs

These large creatures were known to measure almost 1 meter-wide claw to claw. They are a part of the hermit crab family, and they eat coconut meat. With a flavor similar to that of a hairy crab, they were a favorite among the islanders. When opened up there were lots of brains piled inside. The brains tasted like a mix of crab and cheese upon which coconut oil was drizzled, and they are said to have been quite a delicacy. However, Coconut Crabs had to be seized quickly and they have strong claws, so it was hard to capture them even if you did find their burrows. Getting a taste of these crabs was rare.

Snails

A valuable source of protein, all soldiers would gather snails. They inhabited the inner regions of the island, emerging after squalls. To eat them, the soldiers had to first pull the meat out of the shells and place it in a container, and then stir it with a stick until it became a slimy scum. Then they would sprinkle on a bit of salt and fry it with oil. It was then boiled in salt water and the scum scraped off the top, followed by a dusting with tapioca (a type of potato) starch. Then the meat was once again fried in oil. In this way the soldiers also made tempura.

What's more, there were people who would eat the boiled yellow scum, calling it "curry." But there were several people who, due to starvation, would not wait for the cooking and would eat the snails raw. These people would start to act crazy and would die within a few days. It is said that the snails' ovaries contain a deadly poison, and that there were also things like parasites in them.



Troops cooking snails (sketch by Hattori Hideo).

Geckos

Geckos could be caught sometimes when they would walk across the ceiling, or when they scuttled out from behind the layers of a banana tree trunk that was being pulled apart. The big ones measured about 5 centimeters, but these were rarely caught. They could be fried or deep-fried in oil and eaten, and the soldiers used to say that geckos invigorated the body. There were some people who slung special pouches on their hips that they used just for geckos, so that any time they caught one it would go into the pouch. However, it wasn't long before people had caught almost all of them and their numbers dwindled.

Monitor Lizards

There were large lizards with bodies as long as 50 centimeters. Their bodies were green with white spots. They were beautiful lizards. If one of these was found, first 10 or so people would encircle it and lead it toward a coconut tree. If the lizard ascended the tree, one person would take a long stick and chase it higher and higher up the tree. Eventually the lizard would reach the top of the tree and could run no more, and it would fall down and the crowd would catch it. It is said to have been very delicious, with a simple taste much like chicken. Lizards were very rarely caught and they were a delicacy on the island.

Pigs

Wild pigs were captured. However, there were many civilians and Carolinians who kept pigs as pets, and if these people found out about a pig being caught they would accuse the hunter of being a thief. It is for that reason that pigs were caught secretly, under the dark of night.

When a large pig was caught, it would let out a terrible squeal. Because of this, they caught meek, baby piglets. When you showed a piglet some food, it would pitter-patter over to you. While the piglet was eating the food they would use one hand to hold the pig's behind in check, and with the other hand they'd make a V-shape or a peace sign with two fingers and quickly shove them into the piglet's nose. The surprised pig would try to back up, but because its behind was being held it couldn't move anywhere. After two to three minutes, it was said to lose consciousness. This may seem cruel, but catching a pig this way meant that many people could eat.

Mice

Traps were made out of large empty cans. They would grill a mouse and then take the guts out of its abdomen from which the legs, ears, and tail had already been removed. Then they would sprinkle salt over it and grill it once more, and the fatty meat is said to have been delicious. There were people who said that if you just didn't look at the shape of the animal, it tasted just like a sparrow.

Grasshoppers

These grasshoppers are many times larger than grasshoppers in Japan. When they would grill the ones that were caught flying in fields of Japanese pampas grass, the bodies would instantly grow longer. They would cook them to a light brown and then eat them crunchy.

Flying Fish

The following incident happened only once during the war. A group of flying fish so large they turned the surface of the ocean jet black was pushed by a group of dolphins in a surge toward the beach. Soon the beach was covered in flying fish. It is said that everyone gathered them up and ate until they were full. In addition, I heard that these flying fish were dried and preserved and became an important food source at the time.

Coconuts

When you split a coconut in two, the white core was called "copra." When this copra was cut into small pieces the shape of hailstones and then boiled, it tasted like peanuts. If you smashed the copra into small pieces, kneaded it thoroughly with water, and then boiled it down, the oil would float to the top. This oil could be used in cooking, as kerosene, or made into soap. In addition, the coconut flower is similar to corn-type of flower. If you cut the tip of the flower with a knife then attached a container to it overnight, a white flower sap would accumulate. This was coconut wine, and if left in place it would turn into vinegar. If the collected vinegar were boiled down, it would become white wine. If boiled down further still it would turn into a starch syrup-like substance. Juice of the coconut is sweet and was consumed as a beverage, while the

leaves and stems were used as construction materials. Coconuts were a valuable plant with many uses.

Papayas

Different from trees that have been selectively bred, wild papaya trees were more like wild grasses that grew very large. At 4 to 5 meters tall, the trunk lengthened smoothly up to the top where large leaves extended out in the shape of squares. In between the leaves, fruits hung directly off the trunk. On the wild trees the fruits were small, about 4 centimeters in diameter. One tree held 20 to 30 fruits. Because of the tropical climate, the tree produced fruits all year long. However, the diameter of these trees was a mere 5 to 10 centimeters so they were weak and fragile. Tree climbing was impossible and one could only wait until the ripened fruit fell out of the tree on its own.

When one had taken all the fruits, the tree's root could then be used as food. In papaya roots there is one part that is shaped like a *daikon* Japanese radish, and this root could be minced and mixed with everyday foods to extend the food supply.

Breadfruits

These fruits shaped similar to loquats grew on breadfruit trees. Some breadfruits were bigger than a child's head, and when roasted whole they had starchy sweet taste like the combination of chestnuts and pumpkins.

Sweet Potatoes

These could be harvested after just 3 months, so all military units would cultivate sweet potatoes together. Other than steaming or boiling them, if one ground them to a pulp, placed them on top of a banana leaf and steamed them, it would come out like a sponge-cake like dish. Boiling the stalks would produce liquid that was mixed with food to extend the food supply.

Pagan Royal Ferns (Rock fern)

This plant belonging to the fern family is fatter than the Japanese rock fern and has a tip that rolls up in a curl. They would boil the shoots in salt water and eat them. After taking shoots

from a fern it could be left alone for two or three days and the leaves would harden, then new shoots would again appear.

Pig Pumpkins

These were enormous pumpkins, and each one would feed 30 people. They disappeared quickly.

Peppers

Aside from being used to add flavor to a dish, wild peppers could be added to snails when it was time to remove the scum. The peppers would make it easier to get rid of the sliminess.

Rainwater and Salt

A coconut tree could be made into something like a trough that would collect rainwater by cutting it diagonally and boring a trench. Also, if you ladled the seawater into a drum can and simmered it down, salt could be removed to create potable water. Any smoke that was visible would become the target of enemy airplanes, so coconut husks that produced relatively little smoke were used as fuel for fires.

Tobacco

Although Homare brand Japanese cigarettes had been distributed, they soon disappeared entirely. When they did not have any tobacco, they would dry, roll in paper and smoke eggplant leaves or the hairy substance that covers breadfruit trees. In any case it seemed to be enough just to watch smoke come from one's lips.

The End of the War

On August 15 1945, the war ended when Japan surrendered unconditionally to the US. For the first time in 1 year and 2 months since the air raid, Pagan Island looked forward to quiet days. According to American records, From February 1944 to April of '45, over 400 tons of bombs were dropped, including several tens of incendiary bombs. Within the map of the Mariana Islands, Pagan was the next island after Tinian to be massively bombed. American

officers who moved to the island after the war are said to have remarked, “If our military had come ashore here at Pagan, the body count would probably have been higher than at Iwo Jima.”

On October 20th of that same year, initially 2,164 troops were repatriated on board a transport ship called “Chô-Un-maru.” On the 26th they arrived in Uraga, Kanagawa Prefecture. The Chô-Un-maru was a 3,500-ton ship, and it was only loaded with food and water for 500 people. People who died while on the ship were buried at sea. By the time the passengers finally saw the shadow of the island of Japan emerge, they are said to have screamed “Mt. Fuji! Mt. Fuji!”

Bringing happy, cheerful feelings as they returned their homeland, the soldiers were bombarded with insults and jeers from compatriots: “American soldiers appear crisp, but Japanese soldiers are somehow dirty,” or, “We suffer so because of military losses.” Carrying home the wrapped ash remains of people once close to them, the soldiers said it was a dark homecoming.

On January 27 of the next year (1946), the group of 338 resident Okinawans who had departed from Pagan Island arrived in Okinawa after one week and took lodging at a place called Inumiyadoi. Then on March 6th, 140 civilians and 65 remaining military personnel traveled on a destroyer named “Hatsu’ume,” to arrive in Sasebo, Nagasaki Prefecture. Although Pagan Island had been summer all year round, there was unseasonable snow falling in Sasebo and everyone was said to have been shaking from the cold. This is how all of the Japanese people disappeared from Pagan Island.

5. The Island Thereafter

Plans for a Pagan Island Resort

Around 1970, there was a large financier putting energy into plans to develop each of the Pacific Islands. They surveyed Rota, Yap, the Palau Islands, and Pagan Island. Japanese financiers were developing tourism in places like Guam and Saipan, and they noticed that volcanic Pagan Island had abundant resources for hot springs. However, these plans were broken and never came to be.

A Volcanic Eruption

After the end of the war, repatriates pondered their own memories of Pagan, but that green island they remember from long ago does not exist anymore. On May 15, 1981, Mt. Pagan erupted, rolling volcanic smoke thousands of kilometers up into the air.

The mayor of the Carolinian village, Mr. Santiab Tas Castro, was living on the island at the time. According to Mr. Castro, several days beforehand the earth rumbled and smoke rose out of the volcano. At the moment when the villagers began to feel uneasy, several large explosions occurred. Mt. Pagan split open on a north-south axis and lava flowed out, burning down groves of trees. Just then, Mr. Castro says that a Japanese steamship “Ôyô-maru” that was passing by caught an SOS from a Coast Guard vessel, and the Japanese ship rescued all 53 civilians. After that the island became completely devoid of people.

Island of Cows and Goats

Now wild cows, goats, and pigs breed on the island, and it is said that plants other than coconuts and other tall trees have all been eaten up by the wild animals. The snails have also completely disappeared. Once a week, local people come to take goats and pigs to sell to Saipan and Guam. Coconut crabs often appear in restaurants in tourist areas, and their numbers have greatly declined in the wild. It is for this reason that in fact many such crabs come from Pagan Island. In Europe, coconut crabs from Pagan are said to be prized as the “the real thing.”

6. Other Stories

African Snails

The snails that became an important food source were not originally found on Pagan Island. There was a person who was raising the African snails on the island. Every year the island was slammed with tropical typhoons, and one year when a particularly big typhoon passed by the African Snails flew through the air and were scattered across the grassy fields. Two years later, the African snails could be seen in all parts of the island.

Right after the war started, the children of the island gathered lots of snails into a truck and presented them to a military unit. However, the troops had never eaten things like snails, so they secretly threw them out. When fighting grew fierce and snails were the only things that could be found, the troops are said to have regretted their actions, saying, “what we did to those snails was unfortunate.” And when the war ended and everyone faced repatriation to Japan, it is said that they built a memorial pillar for the snails and said prayers of thanks to the creatures that had kept them alive.

Carolinian Youths

Most troops were assigned to Pagan Island from cold China, so many people struggled with the physical change of environment. Mr. Hattori Hideo caught malaria after landing there, and he was admitted to a field hospital. One day when he was almost completely better, by chance he looked up to see an adorable Carolinian boy standing there. He must have been 5 or 6 years old. The boy was holding a small package wrapped in a coconut leaf.

“Mr. Soldier, eat this,” said the boy in skilled Japanese as he handed him the package. Inside was a snail cooked in oil. Somehow, it seems as though the boy’s mother had made him take the package to the sick soldier. Mr. Hattori had never tried eating snail up until that moment, but the boy had gone out of his way to show him kindness so he put the whole thing into his mouth. In an instant a fishy taste came over him. He said that even though he drank something right away, a sliminess remained in his mouth for around 3 days after that. Mr. Hattori became good friends with this boy who helped him from time to time.

One time, the boy carried an octopus on his shoulders that looked like it was bigger than him. With all his might, he dragged it over. “My father told me to give this to you.” Because of this generosity, everyone was able to enjoy eating octopus for the first time in ages.

This kind Carolinian family all fell victim to the war. While the boy and his mother were out of the house, an air raid struck. The boy’s father and the house were lost. Even now as Mr. Hattori is over 80 years old, he remembers this boy, and he says that sometimes the boy appears in his dreams. He only encountered the boy for a short time, but for some reason he feels as though they shared the same blood. Mr. Hattori says this thought seems strange to him.

A Place for Practicing the A-Bomb Dropping

The skies over Pagan became part of the course flown by American bombers heading to the Japanese mainland to conduct air raids. On their return trips, they would drop leftover bombs on the silhouette of the island that became a kind of practice area. Pagan Island was used a place for practice runs of the A-bomb dropping.

Atomic bombs are different from normal bombs in that they are dropped using a parachute, so training must have been required. Strange bombs attached to parachutes were dropped on the island one after the next. And by means of this training, in 1945 the “Enola Gay” bomber took off from Tinian Island and headed for Hiroshima on August 6th, followed by the “Bock’s Car” bomber that headed for Nagasaki on August 9th. Both airplanes dropped Atomic bombs. Further still, and I dare say this is not the truth, but it has been said that at the end of the war one American officer at the seat of negotiations was rumored to have remarked: “we dropped a real Atomic bomb on Pagan Island, but owing to bad weather it failed to detonate.”

People don’t know about the fact that cloth gathered from parachutes was being made into things like shirts. When it was decided that all Japanese people would be repatriated to Japan, some women who had picked up parachutes came over to the Japanese military units. After having been caught up in bitter fighting, everyone had a tattered appearance and the women of the island cared about what the troops looked like. The women helped them by wanting to make clothes from the parachutes for the men to wear as they were repatriated. I heard that the troops were so moved that they were pained by the generous gestures of these women.

The Star-Spangled Banner and White Flags

Air raids came to a dead stop after the end of the war on August 15, 1945. On the 24th, the island was overwhelmed with leaflets dropped from the sky by American airplanes. They might have made a mistake, because what was written on the leaflets said: “Announcement to the Japanese Military, Marcus Island.” The content of the leaflets conveyed Japan’s unconditional surrender. After that on the 28th and 29th, the leaflets that whirled down from the sky were revised to say Pagan Island, and contained an order for a military envoy be sent out on the 31st. Well, even if the exchanges with the US military were called ‘negotiations,’ there just wasn’t anybody who could speak English. In the end, it was a man named Okamoto Keinosuke, called the “10,000 year apprentice officer” behind his back, who was singled out for this duty. His commanding officer said to him, “Since you graduated college, you should be able to speak English. ‘Apprentice’ is awkward, so you will now be called First Lieutenant.” With those words, Mr. Okamoto suddenly became First Lieutenant. Along with another officer, the three men hoisted a white flag and together headed toward the wharf.

The American destroyer approached, and countless American troops got into a boat and came closer. An American officer spoke quickly and rattled on and on. With a desperate expression, Mr. Okamoto kept repeating, “Once more please.” For a while the exchange continued in this way, when it occurred suddenly to the American officer to say in extremely accented Japanese, “are you carrying weapons?” He repeated the phrase several times.

When they expressed that they did not have anything on them, the three were taken to the destroyer. On the deck and in the cabins, American sailors had automatic rifles aimed right at them. Amidst this tension, two American Nisei interpreters read the 37 clauses of the surrender terms to them, and the negotiations ended after two hours. And on September 2nd, after the official signing ceremony, the American military expressed a desire to hoist the Star-Spangled Banner on the island. Mr. Okamoto recorded a conversation from this time in his memos:

American: “When did you know about Japan’s surrender?”

Japanese: “We knew on the 24th from the leaflets that came from the repatriation vessel.”

American: “You haven’t heard the Emperor’s broadcast?” (Called the Imperial Broadcast, on

August 15th the Emperor declared over the radio that Japan had been defeated).

Japanese: “No. Our radio does not work well.”

American: “When you saw the leaflets, did you think they were real?”

Japanese: “Since they were something that came from Americans who are loyal, we did not think they were a lie.”

American: “We want to put up a flag here. Do you have any tools with which to dig into the earth?”

Japanese: “Even our hoes have already been taken to the weapons cache.”

American: “Hoes are farming tools, so it is all right for you to possess them. So, where is your hometown?”

Japanese: “Near Osaka.”

American: “Is that right? I was in Kôbe for some time.”

The interpreter went on to say, “you all have good luck. There were plans to storm the beaches of Pagan Island on September 5th, and 50,000 Navy sailors from the US mainland were in training. You were saved by the end of the war on August 15th.”

A pole was erected, and just as the national flag hoisting ceremony was about to begin, the American officer said the following: “It is all right if you Japanese officers go over there, and it will not matter if you turn your backs to the national flag.” The American military seemed to understand Samurai spirit, and it is said that everyone was grateful for this.

Incidentally, when it came time to make the white flag that the military envoy took to the American destroyer, the only white cloth on hand were loincloth-like strips of cloth. But each and every loincloth was stained. The troops resorted to thinking, “that’s right, the commanding officer would probably have a new one...” However, that commanding officer has since passed away and now there is no way of knowing whether or not this story is true.

The piece above cites one section of a story called “War’s End at an Orphaned Island” within a series called “War” published by the Yomiuri Newspaper in September 1976.

Delicious Water

After losing the war, the troops did not know what to do and many anxious days passed. Americans had put a stop to all radio communications, and with a lack of information various rumors were flying around. One rumor said that if you took too much in the way of canned food supplies provided by the Americans, they could be confiscated upon inspection in Japan. That was why everyone threw away the canned foods one after the next into Lake Bumei. One senior officer pointed out that with regard to diaries with daily entries, “it would be unfortunate if these were found by the American military.” The diaries were burned up. Lance Corporal Sakamoto Masao obeyed this directive – he filled in detailed war conditions, names and addresses of war dead, and then tearfully disposed of important diaries and waited for the day of return.

Then on October 20th, the troops were delighted to finally be able to board a boat sent by the American military to pick them up. While not knowing what awaited them in a Japan that had lost the war and had been reduced to ashes, at any rate the troops were consumed with a single-minded desire to set foot on the soil of their homeland. But how did it feel when the terrible news landed upon the ears of all who went down to the dock? Because a Japanese regimental commander Major General Tenhane had broken the prohibition on radio communications and took over communications at the command division on Chuuk Island, the people on surrounding islands would have to remain on their respective islands. Lance Corporal Sakamoto’s name was also read aloud as part of the list of people who were to remain.

The troops who had been chosen to remain got into a truck that returned to the powerless military unit. Lance Corporal Sakamoto also rode in the truck, looking up at the sky with a blank expression when he heard the voice of Warrant Officer Yoshida Chônosuke: “Lance Corporal Sakamoto, Lance Corporal Sakamoto, you are to return. If you don't return, they won't know the records of the deceased. Hurry up and come to the wharf! If you are not riding on this ship, we won't be able to return to Japan for a while.” Thinking deeply about bitter memories and apologizing to his good friends, Lance Corporal Sakamoto jumped down from the truck.

The landing boat headed out to the transport ship on the open ocean. Looking back from the deck of the boat, he saw two trucks returning to the mountain carrying those who remained. Everyone was waving their hands vigorously from the roof racks. But then he thought that the fate of these two trucks might be a double-suicide, and Lance Corporal Sakamoto's chest felt like it was being compressed. He prayed for their return to happen one day sooner. Just then the boat's American sailor pointed his finger at Lance Corporal Sakamoto's canteen and gestured, "give me that" with his hands. The Lance Corporal was standing under the blazing hot sun so the canteen had become hot to the touch. "Anyway your water is not drinkable, so if I want your canteen as a memento you should give it to me," the American seemed to be saying. When Lance Corporal Sakamoto passed him the canteen he disappeared into the boat's interior, and momentarily came back out to return the canteen to the Lance Corporal. It was cold to the touch because it was filled with freezing water. The surprised Lance Corporal Sakamoto looked up with thankful eyes and silently bowed his head. The American sailor laughed cheerfully and went back into the cabin.

The casual goodwill of the American sailor, who until yesterday had been an enemy, made a strong impression on Lance Corporal Sakamoto who presently gulped down the water. It was delicious water. It was not rainwater; it was real water. For Lance Corporal Sakamoto, this moment became a snapshot that he was never able to forget his whole life. The island gradually faded into the distance until it disappeared from view.

Well, after another half-year the troops who remained on the island along with civilians were returned to Japan. Within that half-year, it is said that they were seized with feelings of homesickness. They would climb to the top of Battleship Island just about every day, gaze in the direction of the distant homeland, and cry as they waved a flag. One day, the American ship saw them as they came closer, asking, "who are you guys?"

"We are Japanese troops who remained."

"All Japanese military should have been repatriated."

Just then, the stranded people are said to have felt a sadness that is impossible to express with words. What's more, it is said that the remaining troops salvaged and ate the canned foods that were thrown away into the lake.

This story is from “Pagan Island Garrison Records” published by the Pagan Island-Wide War Comrades Association. Mr. Sakamoto Masao’s record was cited.

Cigarettes

The American military conducted a physical inspection as well as an inspection of personal belongings. One particular soldier used to unbutton Japanese soldiers’ shirts himself if they ignored his order to undo their own buttons, and when the inspection was over he would button them back up for them. When they would take out empty cigarette cases from their trunks, American troops would take 2 or 3 cigarettes (Camels) from their pockets and put them into the empty cases, then close the cases and give them back with a wink. When they found children, they would give them chocolate or gum. They would also clip fingernails that had grown long.

It is said that people who witnessed this kind of scene came to speak with one voice, and would consult with people who took the opposite stance saying that they should not have such attitudes. After the signing of the surrender documents and according to these documents, just by becoming prisoners of war the Japanese troops were supplied with things like California rice, corned beef, and sardines in oil. This was exceptionally mild treatment.

Miss Pagan

On the island there was beauty known widely as Tama-chan. She was a fair-skinned and plump 16 or 17 year-old cute girl. Tama-chan was the object of the affections of the troops on the island, and everyone ended up naming their pet goats, pigs, and chickens after Tama-chan. Even now, one particular soldier becomes enraptured when he tells stories about Tama-chan. In his memory, she wears a one-piece dress and rides a *kareta* bull-cart hitched to a white ox. She appears slowly as she comes out from under the shadow of a coconut tree. He says he looked forward to seeing the figure of Tama-chan every morning as she went to draw water. After the war Tama-chan returned to her hometown, and to this day she is said to be living happily.

The Fallen Zero Fighter

In 1993, a discussion was raised about transporting one Zero Fighter airplane to Saipan.

This plane made a forced landing and remains to this day at Pagan Island. More than 10 years ago, the Japanese owner of the Marine Sports Hotel in Saipan saw the airplane when he stopped by Pagan. He thought he might want to put the airplane on exhibit in his hotel's garden. This idea was immediately brought before the Northern Mariana Islands Legislature, and for the time being the matter was to be investigated.

As the owner's proxy, Kamisawa Shôsukey chartered an airplane and left for Pagan Island. They descended onto the landing strip that had been half-buried under lava from previous volcanic eruptions. The problematic Zero Fighter had jumped over the landing strip and was broken on its side in a pitched forward position. Its legs were broken, and the tip of the propeller was bent. Also, within the span of 10 years someone had made off with the wings, and 1/3rd of the fuselage had been cut off. Owing to these conditions restoration would have been extreme, and in the end just the cost of transporting it to Saipan was enough to cause this conversation to fade away.

There remains one eyewitness account from the Pagan Island Garrison Signal Unit attesting to the conditions of this Zero Fighter's forced landing.

A communications cylinder dropped from a friendly plane. It said, "Tomorrow (estimated to have been June 13) at 3pm, the forced landing of friendly airplanes is expected. It is requested that you consider preparations of the airport." Without hesitation, throughout the night potholes were repaired on the auxiliary roads running through the landing strip and the lawn, and somehow or other it was made usable again. Just as the prior announcement stated, 2 or 3 damaged friendly airplanes landed but were chased by enemy airplanes that proceeded to drop bombs mercilessly. The damaged friendly airplanes up in the sky were shot down, and there was nothing to be done but gaze up and watch the enemy planes go by. They flew away in a leisurely manner, as though they were invincible.

Immediately after the forced landing, one Army Type 97 Bomber along with 10 engines was destroyed by fire caused by shooting from an American military airplane. Aside from this Zero Fighter, it is said that other remnants such as these still sleep quietly at Pagan Island even today.

This story references a record written by Kamisawa Shôsuke that was printed in The Pacific Society Bulletin number 59/60 in October 1993.

7. Touring Pagan Island

Nowadays Pagan is a deserted island. After the war, there are records of Japanese visiting the island countless times. Also, there are local people who use the island as hunting grounds for coconut crabs, goats, and pigs. I have heard that a small-scale cruise tour goes up there on an irregular basis. I have made an attempt to consolidate the records of Japanese people who returned to the island to get an idea of what it is like nowadays.

◆ People who visited Pagan Island ◆

◆ Kanetaka Kaoru (Author)

While the era is unknown, the author Kanetaka Kaoru says that he has visited Pagan Island.

◆ First Infantry Battalion (War Comrades Association). June 1979

Six members of the War Comrades Association went to Pagan Island. This was before the volcanic eruption, and they are said to have entered the hot springs.

◆ Field Hospital (War Comrades Association). November 1979

Seven members of the Field Hospital went to Pagan Island.

◆ Kayama Yuzo (Actor). Immediately after the volcanic eruption.

While collecting footage for a TV show onboard a yacht cruise, this group by chance passed close to Pagan Island and decided to change plans and go ashore. Wreckage such as anti-aircraft guns, Zero airplanes, and the former public elementary school building were recorded on camera.

◆ Nippon Television Network Corporation (NTV) Camera Crew. May~June 1989.

Hattori Hideo and 18 other members of the Pagan War Comrades Association conducted a survey for half a month in search of remaining Japanese soldiers. Mr. Hattori's detailed report appears on the "Pagan-tô No Bunshû" [Pagan Island Anthology] portion of the website.

- ◆ Chiba Prefecture Survey Group. April 21, 1991.

The Chiba Prefecture Survey Group made the voyage to Pagan for the purpose of a Mariana Archipelago Survey of plants and animals. This document, called “Records of an Expedition to the Northern Mariana Islands” [Kita Mariana Shôtô Tanken-ki]. (*Asakura Akira*/Shû A5 format, 368 pages. Fixed price: book 3,398 Yen + tax),” is sold by Bun-ichi Co., Ltd. [website: http://www.bun-ichi.co.jp/hotnews_frame.html].

- ◆ Monden Osamu (Journalist) visited the island for a special photogravure edition of a weekly morning newspaper.

◆ The Most Updated Information on Pagan Island ◆

On January 29 2001 I received an e-mail from a Cessna airplane pilot named Ogata-san.

(excerpted) I have read your website on Pagan Island. I had been undergoing pilot training for private use at a flying club in Guam, and the president of the club said that he had been to Pagan island two or three years before with two other pilots. He said that unfortunately the airstrip there had become shorter due to a lava flow, so the Cessna had been unable to land. Should they become necessary, I am trying to confirm whether or not any photographs, ect. might exist...?

With this email as a starting point and beginning with Shimomura Hiroshi who visited Pagan Island by Cessna airplane in September 1996, I was fortunate to have many opportunities to hear various stories from people who have been companions on such airplane journeys. Another person whom I met at this time, Osakabe Tomoyuki, visited Pagan Island in March of 2001 and Yanabe Mineyasu visited Pagan Island on April 7th. Both men kindly shared their experiences in the “Min'na No Koe” [Stories from Readers] portion of the website.

After that, permission to enter the island became difficult so visits slowed, but in August of 2007 Mr. Koyanagi Atsushi of Micronesian Aviation Systems' Tokyo Office visited the island. Herein I introduce records of some of the aforementioned visits to the island.

- ◆ Shimomura Hiroshi, September 22, 1996. Traveled from Guam to Pagan Island on a Cessna airplane. Mr. Shimomura's full records appear at the end of this section in sub-section 7.a.

♦ Mr. Osakabe Tomoyuki, March 20 2001. Traveled from Guam to Pagan Island on a Cessna airplane. Mr. Osakabe's full records appear at the end of this section in sub-section 7.b.

♦ Mr. Koyanagi Atsushi. August 17, 2007. Traveled from Guam to Pagan Island on a Cessna airplane. Mr. Koyanagi's full records appear at the end of this section in sub-section 7.c.

One after the next, I received communications from Mr. Motoyoshi of Micronesian Aviation Systems, a company that exists in both Guam and Saipan. For those who may desire it, this company offers consultations about travel to Pagan Island. I strongly encourage interested parties to contact this company via the information below.

♦ MAS Tokyo Office (Representative: Koyanagi Atsushi). From within Japan: Phone: 03-5548-1811. IP Phone: 050-1201-8811. Cellular Phone: 090-9390-8565. E-mail: no.1@skyclear.us

♦ MAS Saipan Business Location: As of September 2006, this location was preparing for reopening

♦ MAS Guam Business Location. Phone: 671-649-9595. E-mail: mm@ifcguam.com. Website: <http://www.ifcguam.com>

7.a. Mr. Shimomura Hiroshi's Records

On September 22, 1996, Mr. Shimomura Hiroshi visited Pagan Island. It was an adventurous flight because he had little information about the island, and he did not really know much about the condition of the landing strip. Mr. Shimomura really loves airplanes, and he rides various kinds of airplanes around the world. This flight was one that could have been made only by someone with his kind of knowledge and experience.

Mr. Shimomura's comments:

I went to Pagan Island in September 1996. The body of the airplane was 1209V, and traveling companions included the PIA captain Satô, and ANKA captain and my friend Mr. Hamazaki. After spending one night on Saipan, it took us two days to reach Pagan.



◆ This is the Cessna airplane that Mr. Shimomura's group rode in. This area looks like a simple field, but this is the landing strip at Pagan Island. Currently about half of the landing strip is buried under lava rocks, but starting in 2002 the Northern Marianas government has been planning to extend it.



◆ Left photo: Immediately following a forced landing, this Army Type 97 Bomber went up in flames after being gunned by American airplanes.

◆ Right photo: An abandoned Zero Fighter that made an emergency landing at the side of the landing strip. Now it rests on Pagan Island, exposed to wind and rain.



- ◆ Left photo: As a result of the influence of the volcano, black sand beaches such as these are particular to Pagan Island.
- ◆ Right photo: A Japanese Navy air-raid shelter.



- ◆ Many Japanese and employed local people fell victim to the demands of the construction of the airport around 1935. This Martyrs of Duty Monument expresses sympathy for those people. Even after the war began, people died defending the landing strip that was demolished in the daily bombings.

7.b. Mr. Osakabe Tomoyuki's Records

On March 20, 2001, Osakabe Tomoyuki visited Pagan on a Cessna airplane while he was receiving training on Guam to be pilot for private use. This flight was made along with Micronesian Aviation Systems staff members as a part of his training.

Mr. Osakabe's comments:

At Pagan, we approached the island from the south and circled past the east side to make the landing from the north. After we landed, I placed a new 500-yen coin on top of the "Martyrs of Duty Monument foundation stone," in such a way that the wind would not blow it off. We were there for just under 2 hours, so we did not go to the north side of the airport. According to Mr. Shimomura, near the north and northwest side of the airport there are wrecks of old Japanese military equipment that have been left there. As for remnants of the lives of the old islanders, near the beach that lies to the west of the Martyrs of Duty Monument I saw what I think are concrete buildings all around the wells. There were also things like air-raid shelters and pillboxes on the east side of the landing strip. There was probably something else to be found if one walked atop the lava rocks, but it would have been hard to get a foothold on the lava and it really did not feel like a good place to take a walk. I thought there was a lake at the base of the mountain so I searched for it, but I did not find it (but Laguna Lake was there). Lava rock dust was easily stirred up so we did not fly too far over the lava rocks. We were not able to confirm the remnants of buildings buried under the lava rocks.

*Records of Mr. Osakabe's experiences are also reported in the "Min'na no Koe" [Stories from Readers] section of the website.



◆ Left photo: Visible straight ahead is Pagan Island lying on the surface of the sea. Standing

alone and tranquil on the right side of the island is the Mt. Pagan of recent eruptions. The rugged topography on the left side is the southern highlands.

◆ Right photo: A close-up of the southern highlands. During the eruption, volcanic smoke also rose from these highlands.



◆ Left photo: Battleship Island is the narrow protrusion in the middle, while Apan Bay is on the right and Shomushon Bay on the left. In the interior is Mt. Pagan.

◆ Right photo: A view from the north part of the island.



◆ Left photo: A view from Shomushon Bay while we prepared for landing.

◆ Right photo: A rare sight in the Mariana Archipelago, the black sand beach of Shomushon Bay.



- ◆ Left photo: This is probably something from the Mountain Artillery Company.
- ◆ Right photo: Wreckage of a Zero Fighter on the side of the landing strip. Many times people have tried to take this wreckage with them, but to this day it rests in this position.



- ◆ Left photo: Remnants of dropped bombs that remain around the landing strip. They attest to the terror of the air raids of those days.
- ◆ Right photo: The Cessna airplane of Mr. Osakabe's group. Looking from this angle, it appears as though we landed on a surface that was more of a field and less of a landing strip. I was happy that we returned safely.

7.c. Mr. Koyanagi Atsushi's Records

On August 17, 2008, Koyanagi Atsushi visited Pagan Island.

Koyanagi Atsushi's Comments:

In the Guam area there was unseasonable weather much like Japan's rainy season. Yesterday from around before noon the weather improved so we departed Guam on a journey that would serve as a training flight. We stopped at Tinian in order to refuel. We continued on, reaching an altitude of just over 6,500 feet. While looking sideways at the small islands below, four hours passed before we arrived at Pagan Island. There were lots of clouds surrounding just the island. Was that volcanic smoke from Mt. Pagan rising up? We thought that the mountain might easily be the center of steam in the area. We were short on time, so we settled on scoping out the condition of the airport, the island, and its surroundings. However, a landing would have been sufficiently possible. We had decided that if the weather turned bad along the way we would give up and turn back, but luckily there were no sudden weather changes and we were able to make the trip there and back without incident.



◆ View of Mt. Pagan from Apan Bay



◆ A rock in the shape of a tunnel.



◆ In the foreground are black sand beaches particular to Pagan Island.



♦ Mt. Pagan wrapped in greenery.



♦ The cliffs at the island's southernmost point.

♦ The webpage below has many more pictures.
<http://www.skyclear.us/pagan.htm>

8. Songs of Pagan Island

A military doctor at the time, Mr. Oda Minoru wrote down songs that Carolinian people sung on Pagan Island. The songs are really monotonous, and are said to have been like Buddhist prayers. While these are the product of memory, which is a little unreliable, Mr. Oda's translation of the words are also introduced here. (Original poems are only numbers 1 and 3).

Carolinian Song

1. Andeshide- umana-na (Before the dawn) haguha- fudaidaifui (I dreamed of you) ankauru- zugi maigohô (When I try to get up) mannbusuzu- manjia- fua- (I am so very tired)
3. Purohago- na taigeni- (Because of you) iii- ta taotao ho- (my body) manpu-su mina shoku shoku (has lost this much weight) tifu tsu-gu kaufu matai (I think I will die).
2. So cruel, your requests/ day and night, I cannot sleep.
4. If I could, I would become a little bird / and sometimes fly to where you are

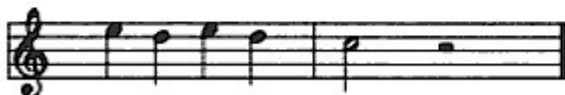
Follow link to listen to this song, visit this page and click on the play button next to the sheet music on the top of the page: <http://www.dd.iij4u.or.jp/~pagan/song.html>



2. と ても ひ ど い です あ な た ー の ご よ
4. も し も で き る な ら こ と り ー に な っ



う ひ る ば ー ん わ た し ね る こ ー
て あ な た の と こ ろ に と き ど ー



と で き ま せん
き と ん で ゆ く ー

◆ Regarding this “Carolinian Song,” I received this e-mail from a Mr. Watanabe Yô in Chichijima, Ogasawara (Bonin) Islands.

I arrived at your webpage when I searched for Anatahan. The website is a solid piece of work and I am moved. The Carolinian song on the “Songs of Pagan Island” page is still sung to this day here in the Ogasawara islands by the name “Before the Dawn.” The original poem does not remain, but the translated poem is pretty much the same as this one. However, the song appears to be slightly different. Other than this song, there are also songs like “Dugout Canoe” and “Lemon Forest” that came from the south. There are probably other songs that people who lived in Pagan Island would remember. A CD recently came out entitled, “Bonin Islands Old Song Book.” If you give me your address I will send one to you. It has been arranged with quite a contemporary sound, but I think you will be able to grasp the original feeling of the songs.

Bonin Islands Old Song Book - I received this CD after taking up Mr. Oda’s kind offer. Along with other songs, this CD includes refined traditional folk songs and ballads that seem to be sung in the Ogasawara Islands. This CD is arranged in a modern style and is an easy listening experience. You can buy it at places like Amazon.com. Search for it by typing in “Ogasawara Kôyôshû” (January 30, 2002).

◆ **CD Recorded Tracks** 1. Dugout Canoe 2. *Urame* ~ Before the Dawn ~ *Urame* 3. Lemon Forest 4. 5th Street, Palau 5. For *Oyado* ~ Recessional Hymn 6. NINBO 7. Humpback Whale’s Song 8. *Urame* ~ *Uwadoro* ~ Mimicry 9. KAKA 10. Song of the Fastening Dance (Apu’tairan)

◆ Mr. Yoshii Shige’ichi who used to be in the Pagan Defense Corps gave me Carolinian songs he heard on the Island.

Love Song

Beneath the blue moon, nostalgia for whispers of love, the scent of bananas.

Parting Song

...On the island, you and I have separated far away from each other and will live I in secret. Ahhh, Spirit of Ramune (said to be some kind of a god).

Mr. Yoshii says that a youth named Juan Taitano from a Carolinian family of Spanish descent used to sing these songs. He says that Juan Taitano had a wife and children, and that every day he would come to Mr. Yoshii's unit to give them coconut wine.

◆ From the anthology "Pagan Island Repatriates Collection," a song was made from Jahana Yoshiharu's poem.

"The Pagan of My Memories"

Those stars that night of the hazy moon, their faint light flickered on and off. I longingly recall a distant memory of the childish and simple figure I used to be.

Many years have passed and that light died out. Where is that small southern island now, to hide my body in the shade of coconuts? Cape Pagan, I yearn for you.

That island wrapped in coral, now a beloved memory. In vain, Santate village and the peak of the volcanic eruption faded away, but sadness remains.

◆ This is an original song called “The Pagan Island of My Memories.” By all means, try listening: <http://www.dd.ij4u.or.jp/~pagan/song.html> [scroll down to the bottom of this page]

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is accompanied by chords indicated by letters above the staff. The lyrics are in Japanese, with some words in parentheses indicating alternative readings or phrasing.

Chords: C, F, C, Am, Em, F, C, Dm, C, Am, Em, F, C, F, G, C.

Lyrics:

おぼろ づきよの あほし はー
 イクトセ すーぎて たえは て たー
 サンゴで つーつむ あおしま はー

きえて またつく うすあ か りー
 みなみ こじまよ いまい ず こー
 いまは こいしい おもいで よー

はなれて とーおく しのばる るー
 ヤシの こかげに みをか く すー
 ふんかの みーねも サンタ テ もー

おさな なじみの おもかげー よー
 パガン みさきよ なつかしー やー
 はかなく きーえて なおかなー しー

1. Those stars that night of the hazy moon/ their faint light flickered on and off/ I longingly recall a distant memory/ of the childish and simple figure I used to be.
2. Many years have passed and that light died out./ Where is that small southern island now/ to hide my body in the shade of coconuts?/ Cape Pagan I yearn for you.
3. That island wrapped in coral/ now a beloved memory./ In vain, Santate village and the peak of the volcanic eruption/ faded away, but sadness remains.

9. Pagan Island Anthology

This is the section where I introduce contributions from people with a relationship to Pagan Island. I rely on soldiers and civilians who used to live on the island to spell out their experiences for us. Contributions are not reported chronologically, and the dates that appear at the end of each story indicate when it was posted on the “Distant Pagan Island” webpage.

The Special Attack Corps that Fell into the Open Ocean Around Pagan Island – Yumita Chôko (Age 68), Tokyo

My lover	daughter of the chief
She was black in color but	a beauty in the South Seas
In the shadow of coconuts	a stomping dance
Dance, dance	the one who does not dance
Who does not want	to get married

The soldiers used to sing this a lot, so I have remembered this since I was a kid. Every year when the anniversary of the end of the war draws near, stories about the war are broadcast on television. During the summer of last year, without thinking I turned on the television. What was playing was a program about an elderly person named Ms. Torihama Tome. During the war, Ms. Tome was operating a cafeteria in Kagoshima, Kyûshû. Just about every day she would send off young boys in the Special Attack Corps who were headed for battlegrounds in the south, only after feeding them lots of delicious food. She would see them off with the kind of spirit one might extend to one's own child.

One day shortly after that, I turned on the television again and this time Ms. Tome's daughter Akabane Reiko was singing an *ariran* Korean folk song on a program about young Korean men who went to the battlegrounds. And then once more on a different day, without thinking about it I was flipping through the channels when Akabane Reiko's program was on once again. The story featured was about a young man in the Special Attack Corps, I think he

was called Major Mitsuyama Fumihiro.*² The Major announced his departure in the direction of southern skies by saying: if I die I will turn into a firefly, and without fail I will come back home. As expected, he was killed in the war.

Especially since no one would have expected me to know the programs that were on television, all three times I felt that by chance I turned the dial and the program appeared. This gave me a weird feeling. Then gradually I began to feel like the people of the Special Attack Corps were calling out to me. In spite of myself, this is how I began to want to pick up a pen to write down my stories. During the wartime on Pagan Island, my older brother Sukesaburô and my older sister Tamako³ went out to dig sweet potatoes when an enemy airplane spotted them. They were bombed by a B-29. This is when I thought I might be separated from my parents. Then just as I became aware of what sounded like a small airplane in the distance, I said ‘air raid’ and yanked on my younger sister’s and brother’s hands as if to pull them off and together we dashed toward the air raid shelter.

However, I was tomboyish so my older brother Kôsuke and I ran off to a place with a nice view near the air raid shelter. From there we could see fields of melons and watermelons and the air was filled with the sweet smell of melons. Japanese pampas grass grew thickly over our heads, and it was the best hiding place for my older brother and me. My older brother and I saw many things at this hiding place, like airplanes taking off from the airport. When I think of the things that appeared on the wide expanse of ocean in the direction of Battleship Island, there were American battleships, enemy airplanes, hits from guns and machine guns. Despite these heavy attacks, in response there were what appeared to be attempts to hurl full force in the direction of the enemy military. Airplane after airplane puffed out black smoke, and circling around as they lost their balance the small Japanese fighters would plunge into the ocean. Those airplanes must have been the Special Attack Corps.

There were many people in the Special Attack Corps who perished with the fighter planes that my brother and I watched from our hiding place as they plunged into the ocean around Pagan Island. Could it be that Major Mitsuyama of Akabane Reiko’s story that I kept hearing about was in one of those planes? There was never a corpse, and could it be that members of the

2 All names that appear with an asterisk* represent common readings an individual’s name, but the precise pronunciations of these names have not been confirmed by the author.

3 Tamako is “Miss Pagan” referred to in section 6. Other Stories.

air force seen off by Ms. Torihama Tome sunk into the ocean inside their airplanes around Pagan Island, and still do not rest in peace? It was not those three chance incidents that caused me to think like this. There were also one or two American airplanes that fell into the ocean during that battle, but the Americans went out to search using boats and airplanes from morning until dark until they found the corpses. This difference is regrettable, and this feeling of regret from those days still lingers in my heart. Sadly, the older brother with whom I saw all these things went to heaven at the age of 71 in April of 2002. It's a shame; if he had lived just a little longer, he would have told you about so many things. (10/17/2002)

Daifuku Mochi: Soft Rice Cakes Stuffed with Sweetened Bean Jam from a Comrade from an Unknown Island – Okamoto Eiko (Age 68), Shinagawa Prefecture

I was 6 years old. We moved from Saipan Island to Pagan Island. I was in the first grade at Garapan Public Elementary School. My memories of Saipan Island are white -- the dress with lots of white lace and the white hat. The white uniforms of the Navy men. The white veils of the Catholic nuns. White roads. White houses. The white colors that glittered on hot days. There was a large breadfruit tree in the garden at my house that grew breadfruit bigger than a child's head. A lizard more than 1 meter long with green skin and white spots would lumber when it occasionally walked by.

One day, my father and mother who were both teachers were assigned to the isolated Pagan Island. My mother was opposed to it. We rode in a small wooden boat, and when the sail was hoisted up it would travel quickly. It was a 3-day journey by boat. We could see the small, deep green colored Pagan Island across the blue, blue ocean. A black volcanic peak rose up, and coconut trees lined the coast, bending under the weight of their own thick growth. The waves that broke over the coral reef were white, but the sand on the beaches everywhere was gray. We jumped onto a small concrete pier. In the small ponds of ocean water in the spaces between the rocks, I could see countless cobalt colored fish smaller than my pinky finger swimming in schools. On the black sand beach, the Cherry Shell seashells were red, and the seawater was bathed in a sparkling mixture of orange and peach colors. I forgot about my small anxieties, and Pagan Island became my lifelong hometown.

There were two classrooms at the school. From elementary school to the second year of advanced courses, there were around 40 pupils. Made of wood, the floor was elevated and the

corridors wide. My father's rallying cry would echo during physical exercises, accompanied by the sound of the organ played by my mother. I don't have memories of our studies, but I did secretly copy characters that had been skillfully written by Tomoko, who was later killed by a bomb during an air raid. Many classes consisted of riding on the school's bull cart and helping to pick cotton, or doing lots of other things outdoors like tending to the cows and goats kept by everyone. There was frequent laughter from faces darkened by the sun as we jostled together in the daytime under the hot, hot sunshine.

Night. If you extinguished the lamp on nights when there was no moon, there was pitch-black darkness. But there was no fear in the hearts of us children. The ocean was always making soft noises. The rustling of coconut leaves was a lullaby. The beauty of moonlight nights was striking. Brilliantly and without a sound, the moonlight would pass through the center of my body. I thought it was the light of the gods. In the forest below the cliff, there were wild bananas, oranges, mangoes, lemons, and pineapples. I would figure out the time when they would ripen and then go to pick them. Tropical Almond⁴ trees gave off a sweet odor and bore lots of small-sized green fruits, and beautiful jewel beetles with a glittering prismatic rainbow color would gather around these trees. Later on at the Hôryûji Temple I saw the same beetle inside a *zuji*.⁵ I was surprised to see a jeweled beetle enshrined here, and at the sight of the beetle I fixated on memories of Pagan Island far, far away.

For an excursion, we went to the other side of Mt. Pagan to a nameless lake at the foot of the mountain. There was no map nor was there a path through the thicket of Japanese pampas grass, so a large boy made a path for us by using a hatchet to cut the grass. Filled with a spirit of adventure, I strained hard to follow along behind him. We arrived at the nameless lake. That mysteriousness of that place was in the scenery that made you swallow your breath. A cobalt blue lake sunk secretly beneath the sheer cliffs. Wild goats walked across the steep cliffs. Birds large and small whirled about without making a sound. There was also a strawberry finch.⁶ There were hot springs, and steam was coming out of a small pool of standing water.

I also cannot forget the excursion with all the students. We loaded up a boat with *bentô* lunch boxes of bananas and steamed potatoes. The small pupils either rode in the boat or swam

4 *Terminalia catappa*

5 A cupboard-like case with double doors used for holding revered objects.

6 Most likely a Micronesian Honeyeater (*Myzomela rubratra*)

in the water around the boat. The larger boys were entrusted to keep watch over everyone. Everyone strained hard to swim.

Before long, the Navy and Army began to be stationed on this peaceful island and immediately thereafter construction on the airport and the encampment began. The pupils were not aware of the impending disquiet and everyone spent their time on ruckus play. As part of military plans, school was transferred three times. The tide of war approached, and I saw armadas pass by on the distant open ocean, along with shadows of submarines. At that time, we still did not know the terror of air raids. This was probably around the time that fierce fighting was going on at Saipan, just before the *gyokusai* honorable defeat.

In the early morning of June 12, 1944, the first air raid started days of hellish destruction on the island. That day was a boundary in time -- the school disappeared, friends became separated, and those amused, laughing voices were extinguished from the island. For fear of daily air raids, we did not look up at the sun but drew our every breath in secrecy below the ground. Our food was potatoes, wild bananas, papaya stalks, and snails. Somehow we extended our lives eating these things. Then one day, an American airplane distributed leaflets with an amateurish sentence written on it saying that Japan had lost. Peaceful daylight hours returned to Pagan Island, and the laughing voices of children echoed once again.

We were repatriated in March of the year following the end of the war. I wrapped Pagan Island tightly, deep inside my heart, and said *sayonara* to the island.

March. The wind blowing down from Akagi in Gunma Prefecture was cold. My limbs were chapped, and it was the first time I had known frostbite. When I had time I went out on a footpath between rice fields to pick eatable wild grasses. If you boiled them and put them into steamed buns, you could increase the quantity of food by just a little. One day after I had picked grass next to a big farm house, a girl approached me and handed me five *daifuku mochi* soft rice cakes stuffed with sweetened bean jam wrapped in a piece of newspaper. It was real food, the likes of which I had seen once long ago. She said that she had been talking with her father who was repatriated from Pagan Island about stories from the island. When I heard "Pagan Island," I shed big tears that fell onto the package of rice cakes. On the island, there were times when food became so scarce that we had to contend with each other in order to eat. I do not know her face or her name, but she was a companion from the island.

I think of Pagan Island as a remote and faraway place and those times have disappeared, but when I remember the *daifuku mochi* rice cakes from that day the happy thoughts of Pagan Island come vividly back to life. (4/5/2002)

Memories from Immigration to Repatriation – Yumita Chôko, Tokyo

“Memories”

In 1936, my family moved to Tinian Island to live. My dad (Ban'nai Torao) had gone to the island ahead of everyone else, so seven of us including mom (Rinoi), my grandfather (Yagorô), four children including me, and our assistant left on the long boat journey for Tinian. The eldest boy (Shin'ichirô) who was 14 years old at the time was left behind in order to pursue his studies and to live in Tokyo at the home of our maternal grandfather. The siblings who went to Tinian included Tamako (age 10), Kôsuke (age 7), Sukesaburô (age 5), Chôko (me, age 3). The following year, in 1937 came the fourth boy Rokurô, then after moving to Pagan Island the third girl Tadzuko came along in 1940, and the fifth boy Toshio was born in 1943. Also the sixth boy Ki'ichi was born in Tokyo in the middle of the repatriation process in 1946.

I was three years old at the time and still very small, and I have absolutely no memories from the boat. The only thing I remember was when we descended onto the pier upon arriving at Tinian, an auntie I did not recognize gave me a perfectly red apple and a round candy on a stick with a crystal sugar coating. Even now after more that 60 years have passed, I still cannot forget that first time I ever sniffed the scent of an apple. Two years later, my family moved from Tinian to Pagan. I don't have any memories from this time, but after moving to Pagan when I was five years old a very large typhoon hit the island. Our house blew away, coconuts were scattered all over the place, and the leaves on trees had all been blown away. I remember shaking with fear. This is my first memory of Pagan Island.

My family lost our house in this typhoon, and this time we moved to the location that was the farthest from the school and where we were able to relax. The place, called either Santate or Hafebo, was located at an elevated spot, so if you looked east or west you could see the ocean. The 20-meter walkway from the gate to the house was lined in pine trees, and when you went under the shade of the trees you could hear the pine leaves rustling as they swayed in the cool,

piercing wind. It was like heaven. When one took cover under the shade in this southern island, a crisp wind blew and there was no need for air conditioning.

It was a long, long commute along the road from this house to school. I tried to keep up and not lose to my older sisters and brothers, but I always ended up trotting along behind them. Then on the way back from school, my friends and I climbed mango trees and picked mangoes. We searched for the oranges and pineapples that were ripe by smelling them. If we were thirsty we would climb coconut trees and pick coconuts. If there were islanders nearby, they peeled off the skin for us and we drank the coconut milk. By the time we arrived at home we were full. Some of my most important memories were formed along that distant, long road that I used to travel like this with my friends.

The following also happened at the row of pine trees in front of my house. In order to protect Pagan Island during the time when the war drew near, soldiers were stationed in every location. They put up a tent in the row of trees. While some soldiers were cutting down the pine trees, my dad told them he had been taking good care of the pine trees as protection against typhoons. When dad said this, a person with the rank of sergeant sat him down and beat him. Seeing this, my older brother Kôsukey must have thought the beating of our dad among the trees of our house was unacceptable. He lowered his saber, put on his leather boots, called over the commanding officer who passed by while blaring a *kyûkyû* noise. He explained dad's situation to the officer. Even though he was indebted to civilians, that commanding officer got angry with us for what was going on. Before long the troops moved on to another location.

“Compulsory Labor”

Sometime before my third year in school, most farming families cultivated cotton and every day the students went out to help with this. Today was the day my family picked cotton. The perfectly white soft cotton bloomed so completely that even now as I remember them, they seem like they might spill over. Before we knew it, an entire day passed as we stuffed cotton into the baskets that hung from my older brothers' and sisters' hips. Tomorrow was the day we helped the Nihei* family. My younger brother was still in the first grade, and he had to go to the distant school all by himself. I heard that just on that day my younger brother said he absolutely did not want to go to school, and cried saying he would not leave, but my mother scolded him and made him go.

While we were taking a short rest after arriving at Nihei Yôko's house, in the eastern sky from the direction of Saipan we saw a formation of airplanes rapidly approaching. With wide-eyed wonder, Sasaki Kazuko, the Tôyamas and I were bewildered at the sight of so many airplanes, one, two, three.... we had just began to count them when bam bam bam the air raid came pelting down. I did not know where the air raid shelter was in this area, so I ducked near the roots of a banana tree. Everyone ran here and there, hiding in all different directions.

First of all, the airport was bombed, and black smoke billowed up in that direction. That day the attack was over in about an hour, and I wasted no time rushing through my goodbyes and returning to my house. At home, my mom who had scolded my younger brother Rokurô this morning was feeling pain in her heart. She thought that exactly around the time of the air raid, he was probably passing right by the airport, so he must surely have died. However, just then Rokurô happened to come back. "Mom, I was scared. In the forest above the cliff just before the airport, an islander held me in his arms and we were hiding," he said. His desire to stay home that morning could have been an omen. Mom was crying as she pulled my brother close to her and held him tight. That day dad was at the most dangerous spot of all when he went to participate in making the airport, but he returned home without injury. The happiness of my family at that time was unrivaled.

"Air Raid"

After picking cotton at the Nihei house, I separated from my friends, and day after day there were air raids. Mr. and Mrs. Fukahori who were teachers of the school and their daughter Eiko (presently Okamoto Eiko), Yumiko, and the doctor's daughter Higuchi Masako (presently Nishida Masako) all lived right in the middle of town so I did not find out where they were taking refuge until after the end of the war. At Pagan Island where we were all living, the Americans did not come ashore and the attack was from the air and the sea. This is different from Saipan and Tinian where residents ran this way and that, and then forcibly chose death. Every morning the airplanes came at around 8 or 9 o'clock. Rising smoke would be targeted for bombardment, so cooking for breakfast and lunch had to be finished by around 7am.

One afternoon when the air raid had finished and we were steaming sweet potatoes for the troops, without a sound a reconnaissance airplane returned and saw the smoke. Soon after that, just when we thought that a fighter plane had come back, the attack began to hail down

upon us. At that time I thought I would die and I was so very, very terrified. Even though we were with our parents every day, the thought of parting with my parents and dying was so horrible, yet the troops had come to the island so far away from the country of Japan. However they might of thought about their own parents, the troops must have been sad. Even my childish heart could understand this feeling.

After the daytime air raid ended, all night from dusk until the dawn my older brother Kôsukey went by *kareta* bull cart to the military headquarters in order to make a compulsory delivery of sweet potatoes. On the return path when he came close to the airport, suddenly a timed bomb exploded. My brother said he thought it was naval gun shooting from the ocean. As he desperately rushed the *kareta* away from that place the thought in his head was, “Ah, here I am separated from my parents and I will die.” Ah, war is frightening, truly frightening.

“Shomushon Bay”

After entering the month of August, airplanes came all the time. Nevertheless, they kept dropping bombs only on the tall ocean rocks and this seemed strange even in the mind of a child. Then on August 15, we found out from the troops that Japan had lost to America. Pagan Island also became an American territory, and my parent’s land as far as the eye could see had all become American property. For that reason, we all had to leave the island.

To make it so that repatriation could happen at any time, Japanese and Okinawan people assembled at Shomushon bay where there was a pier. Around 10 Americans and one Japanese interpreter came from Saipan. The oldest boy in our family had been working at the Post Office in Saipan, and having heard that Saipan had been honorably defeated my dad thought that he must have died. Dad went so far as to make a posthumous Buddhist *ihai* mortuary tablet for him. However, just in case he asked the interpreter, “You don’t happen to know a Ban’nai Shin’ichirô?” The interpreter is said to have replied, “Mr. Ban’nai is alive. I’m his friend Sugano Isami from the same Post Office.”

Because of the destruction of the war, cultivated land had disappeared as far as the eye could see. But my dad probably thought to himself that it was a matter of great celebration to return to Japan without having any of his 8 children die. Some of our Okinawan friends and

Navy and Army troops went back on the first boat and we were repatriated after them. After that, I heard that 56 troops from the main unit stayed behind.

While we were waiting for repatriation at Shomushon bay, for the first time in a long time I met with my friends again. We did not study but simply played every day. It was about 50 meters to the ocean, and Pagan's black sand has a rough feel to it, so if you lie down on it you become covered in black specks just like a sesame seed rice cake. Just about every day, we went swimming and caught fish. When the troops and my older brothers threw in a stick of dynamite, with one blast fish came floating up and turned the surface of the bay completely white. At this signal, adults and children could take a vine from the beach bindweed⁷ plant and drag it through the water, snagging floating fish on the vine and taking away lots of fish. I remember eating all kinds of dishes that we made from these fish.

We spent each day not knowing when they would come to get us, so in order to kill time the troops decided to hold a variety show. At night they practiced and built the stage, and at last the day of the show arrived. Pounding on a barrel instead of a *taiko* drum, they performed traditional folk songs called the *hanagasa ondo* and the *yagibushi*. It was a lively night. That night Higuchi Masako and my older sister Tamako danced the "plover song" together. This song had a feeling that was exactly right for Shomushon bay. While they sang the song, we could hear the soft swish, swish, swish sound of the waves nearby.

"At the seashore on blue moon night/ the bird cries as it searches for its parents/ fading away into a country of moonlight nights/ the silver-winged plover."

When I close my eyes I do not think that 56 years have passed, and memories of my youth come flooding back to me.

"Chocolates"

While we waited for repatriation, we had received food rations from the Americans. Indeed, those rations consisted only of things I had never eaten before in my life, and breakfast, lunch, and dinner were all separate. Among the rations were various things, including chocolates, biscuits, chewing gum, bread, canned meat and fish, and canned egg yolks (we made

7 *Calystegia soldanella*

fried eggs from these). There were watermelon, melons, bananas and various other fruits. During and after the war there was no rice on Pagan Island and staple foods were wheat and sweet potatoes, so I was very surprised that the lives of Americans were so advanced.

There were many people in my family, and we received many portions of rations so we thought we would make efforts to bring some of them back as souvenirs to our hometown in Japan. Other households also planned to do this. Additionally, because we would return to a cold place, one blanket per person was distributed. It was a light, good quality blanket. Then at last a ship came to get us, and I parted with the delightful Pagan Island. Our port of arrival in Japan was Sasebo [Kyûshû]. During the baggage inspection at Sasebo, the rationed food provisions and blankets were all confiscated citing lack of documentation. The Japanese-made blanket we were given in return was a shabby thing made totally from cotton scraps.

There were many people in my family, and one person had become sick so we remained in Sasebo for about 1 week. After that we noticed the street stalls along the highway -- were those not the same candies and canned foods for sale that were taken from the rationed goods that were supposed to have been confiscated? We could hardly enter the country without feeling vexation at having souvenirs taken from us after we had so carefully set them aside to take back to our hometown, and anger at the filth of those Japanese who had inspected our belongings. When we arrived in Tokyo, mom gave birth to her 9th child. To this sixth-born boy, in commemoration he was christened with the name “Ki’ichi,”⁸ My older brother who had returned home a little before us had come to meet us in Tokyo. Standing before him for the first time, I was embarrassed and I was unable to say anything (01/30/02)

A Short History of Pagan Island - Kameoka Shin’ichi (Age 82), Fukuoka Prefecture

Through the Landing at Pagan Island

In Kiharu, Kantô Province, Manchuria, the Tôyama Division had been specially organized into 200 troops. We passed through Korea’s Ranan, Motoyama, and Keijô [Seoul] to arrive in Fusan [Pusan]. On March 3rd, 1944, troops filled the 5,000-ton troopship Takaoka-maru with gas and loaded on supplies. We passed through Shimonoseki, the Inland Sea, the port at

⁸ Lit. “record 1,” a name commemorating the first child born in Japan post-repatriation.

Kushimoto, and Tokyo Bay to arrive in the open sea near Kisarazu. This was done in order to organize a large-scale transport convoy.

Around that time, Tokyo Bay was preparing for air raids by enemy airplanes by conducting blackouts after dark. From Kisarazu Bay if you looked at Yokohama or Yokosuka on the opposite shore, lamplights flickered in the dark night, and a poetic sentiment drifted amidst this tension. The deckhand was gathering together all members of 1st Mountain Artillery Company. As they headed to the distant Imperial Palace, they sang a chorus of military songs.

“Praying at Daybreak”

Ah, we bid farewell to the stately transport ship. Exuding hope for the prosperity for our glorious nation, we say prayers to the distant Imperial Palace where we swore to the skies above... this determined military song was a famous tune composed by my revered senior, Mr. Ozeki Yûji. It was a piece of work from when Mr. Ozeki was about 30 years old. Not just a military song, it was a popular song that made you feel moved to tears right away.

On March 12th, the transport ship convoy quietly left the port at Tokyo Bay. In the open ocean near Ôjima, enemy submarines suddenly attacked us. The convoy’s flagship Tatsuta-maru was hit and sunk, and the convoy fell out of formation in disarray and dispersed into the darkness.

On March 13th, people ranking as company commanders and above were given the signal to assemble in the cabin of the Takaoka-maru, where they were ordered to make a landing. “As a part of the group of air and sea bases in Saipan and Tinian, Pagan Island is a main point of national defense so with utmost strength we will defend and secure this island.” This was the gist of the strategy. Along with this order, maps of Pagan Island were passed out. Consequently, the goal of our actions became clear.

“Map of Pagan Island”

The map of Pagan Island (I still possess this map) was the result of a Naval survey of 1917. Immediately after the First Great European War, Japan adopted the island as a Mandated Territory and immediately thereafter it was made into this territory. This map had been made

into a photographic negative and the airport and a summary of other important military bases had been inscribed onto it. Around 1917, it was thought that a number of local people were living there. Also, considering the precision of the map, I think the group of surveyors consisted of more than 10 people and it must have taken more than 1 month to produce it.

On the map, the volcanic eruption of Mt. Pagan in 1923 was specified, along with the elevation of Mt. Pagan at 567m. The mountains on the southern portion of the island were specified to be Mt. Maru 503m, Mt. Tsurugi 541m, and other nameless mountains at 574m, 528m, and 427m. At the island's southern tip called Peri-rû there was the fountainhead for a hot spring. Also, there were 200 countrymen, "*Nanbô* employees" of the *Nankô* Corp. fisheries, 1 policeman, coconut crabs, and big lizards were recorded on the map. It can be thought that aside from these 200 countrymen, the rest of these figures had been specified between around 1937~39 and the people from *Nankyô* fisheries were residents of the South Seas Development Corporation. The airport and other military facilities were completed around 1938, and the residential areas and the public elementary school probably opened around that time or afterward. Civilians probably gradually increased in number around then as well.

On March 18th, the Takaoka-maru arrived at Pagan Island. A 4-ton truck and other cargo were unloaded in an instant by one wave of sailors after another onto the area around the wharf at Battleship Island. The boat appeared to move quickly. The deckhands beneath the captain were in formal attire and were repeating "sayonara" as they engaged in the cap waving (ceremony), while the boat boarded by the remaining troops announced its departure from Pagan Island and left port bound for Saipan.

The People of Pagan Island

Pagan is an island originally born of a volcano. The whole island is covered in volcanic ash, volcanic stones and miscanthus reeds. There may be no roads, but it is not inconvenient to walk around. As far as obstacles, there was the lava that flowed out of the north side of Mt. Pagan during an eruption. There was no space for people to live in that area. For the most part, material from both sides of Mt. Pagan was used during the construction of the Garapan region.

Roads at the center of the island included only the 8~10 meter-wide arterial road that ran from the southern hills of Mt. Gake, via the peak of Mt. Gake, then passing between the airport

and Battleship Island, and leading finally to the *katsuo-bushi* dried Bonito factory (observatory). Directly beneath Mt. Gake, there was a military-use road that ran from Battleship Island, passed by the southern tip of the airport, and ended up at *Unai Riki* on the west side. Along the main road there were workers' residences, the public elementary school, civilian homes, and around thirty shops that were sandwiched along the roadside. Most of those shops had tin roofs, and in order to provide ventilation through the walls they were constructed as shacks.

“The Workers' Residences and the Public Elementary School”

If you passed by the eastern point of the airport, you would dead end at the workers residences. Immediately to the side of this was the ocean. These buildings were about 30 *tsubo*⁹ in area and they were painted white. The manager and his wife and three members of a police patrol lived here. There were no children. The building had an office, a main house that was about 25 *tsubo*, and the 6-tatami-sized storeroom also served as a jail. The chief and his wife were both around 40 years old. They were both refined, small-statured, skinny people. The always hung bunches of bananas under the eaves of the residences. By now, I cannot remember the names of the chief, his wife, or the police patrol.

On the west side of the arterial road was an approximately 50 *tsubo* school, and the school grounds were relatively wide. The neighborhood around the school was originally flat ground, and the surrounding area was like an exercise field. The school principal was called Mr. Fukahori, and he and his wife were both from Gunma Prefecture. The male teacher of about 30 years old was a gentle person, but his wife, also a teacher, was fairly outspoken and would scold troops and civilians for doing bad things. There was a large toilet at the north side of the school that I would sometimes use. First Lieutenant Honda Kiyoshi of the Mountain Artillery Company had been working as a middle school teacher, so he often visited the school and had lively conversations about education. He went on an official trip to Saipan to receive weapons and construction supplies (primarily cement), but because of the American invasion he died in battle and never returned to Pagan.

In January 1986, the actor Kayama Yûzô went ashore at Pagan Island during a search for uninhabited islands in the central Pacific on board a homemade yacht. This was five years after the great explosion of Pagan Island on May 16, 1981. In the neighborhood of the old elementary

9 1 *tsubo* equals about 3.3 square meters.

school, there were things that looked like a medical office and a school. In houses that were partially destroyed by direct hits from lava rocks, I heard that medical tools and teaching materials were scattered about. Also, Mr. Hattori of the Mountain Artillery Company accompanied Nippon Television Network Corporation, and his testimony reported that the fallen volcanic ash had piled all the way up to the roof of the school remains. Even today, if you were to excavate the school remains, I think a nostalgic relic of that era would emerge.

The place called the armed forces was a place of severe military discipline, and separating from the military encampment was seen as fleeing in the face of the enemy so the troops had almost no contact with civilians. My company (1st Company Kameoka Unit) was in charge of the defensive perimeter of the airport including Mt. Gake, the school and the periphery of the arterial road, and the expansive region of the periphery directly beneath Mt. Pagan. In order to construct the encampment buildings and as a measure against hunger, we would patrol each area daily, both at night and during the daylight hours. Because of this duty, I became acquainted with a number of civilians and I am happy that I can spell these memories out in a manuscript just as I remember them. (8/15/01)

The Island of My Birth – Miyashiro Sei'ichi (Age 57), Okinawa Prefecture

On January 20, 2002, per the established custom, an assembly of Pagan Repatriates opened their meeting. Around 30 people participated, and a fun banquet was held where the topic of discussion was memories from a half-century ago of that paradise in the south. Each person reported on their recent conditions, and there was entertainment and informal chats. The meeting lasted just over three hours, but it felt like no time at all.

Participating seniors included my uncle Miyashiro (age 91), my father Miyashiro (age 88), and young people included 55 year-old Mr. Shiroma and after that myself (born in 1943). Among the elders were memories of the good old days on the island, and meanwhile I turned my thoughts toward the island where I was born but had never seen (meaning an island about which I have absolutely no memories).

Since I was small I had heard “return to the South Seas,” but the first time I became conscious of the word Pagan was during my high school entrance examinations. At that time, I got a hold of an abridged record of my family registry that said, “born at Regusa, Pagan Island,

South Seas Archipelago.” Pagan was a dream island in my imagination that I had heard about through my father’s occasional stories. After I began participating in the “Pagan Island Repatriates Assembly” long ago, this place has assumed a real meaning. In addition, I have seen the booklet *Distant Pagan Island* that Mrs. Okamoto has taken great pains to collect, edit and publish this year. I read the whole thing in one sitting, and I immediately accessed the website.

I would like to offer my sincere thanks to Mrs. Okamoto for preparing and administering the superb website. I was introduced to this beautiful paradise when I saw it for the first time in the color photographs on the website, and I was really moved. I understood why “The Island of my Birth” was a southern paradise. But a war also took place on that paradise. And it was truly miraculous that everybody on the island was able to return to Japan without injury. Nowadays it seems difficult to visit the island, but if given the chance I would definitely visit at least once. It would have been nice to go while my father was still feeling well...

Jahana Yoshiharu’s “The Pagan Island of My Memories” is a wonderful song, and it is a tune that I can sing. I want to sing it in chorus with everyone at next year’s “New Year Assembly.” For the time being, I am writing this letter because I want to express that I was moved by the website. I will write again. I have come to the end, but once again please allow me to express my sincere thanks to Mrs. Okamoto (system operator) for creating and administering the website. Please continue to enrich the website well into the future. (01/24/01)

The Children of Pagan Island – Okamoto Eiko (Age 67), Shinagawa Prefecture

At the Pagan Island elementary school, there were about 40 pupils from 1st grade through the 2nd year of advanced courses. There were 2 classrooms and 2 teachers, my mom and dad.

Our single-family residence was a two-bedroom house next to the classroom. It was made of wood and had spacious hallways, and it was our playground. The garden was big, and was encircled by coconut trees. We had two concrete water tanks for holding rainwater, and we also played on top of those. We would spend the whole day playing ball or beanbags.

When the after-school dodge ball game ended everyone went home, then it was just my younger sister and me. The school suddenly got quiet, and at night the sound of rustling coconut leaves and the rumbling of the ocean would draw near. For my entire life after this period, I

have thought of these as the nostalgic noises of my hometown. And from the school campus, the view of the beautiful sky at dusk during the sunset made the vivid shadows of coconut trees look like *kiri'e* paper cut-outs.

The stars that came out in the evening remain in my eyes like the brightness of a diamond. At night there were only lamps. I slept soundly in the light from the moon that came in through the window. One after the next, while I slept I thought of the friends I would meet and the games we would play the next day. My memories of studies at school include the abacus, dodge ball, swimming, playing on the coastline, sketching, and caring for goats and cows to whom we were indebted because they facilitated the school's mode of transport - a *kareta* ox-cart. Pagan was probably an island that I saw through my sketches. What vividly comes back to life are things like the papaya trees, the perfectly red *canna*, and the indomitable thicket surrounding pineapple fruits. I drew scenes full of dark verdure and various green colors that the sunlight would bring into view. In the middle I drew a very large papaya tree and fruits. Under that were the red *canna*, and on the ground I drew the low thicket of pineapples. "That's very good." My mother's solitary voice was happy. This is the only time I can remember hearing my mother's affectionate voice.

Never content to be second best, I had many esteemed rivals. There was the talented sketch artist Moromi Kôjirô, Tamako-chan who was good at dodge ball, Yumita Chôko the master swimmer, Tomoko who was good at writing characters, fashionable Uchima Shizue, the strong and bright Hikari-chan,* and many more. Everyone's skin turned completely black from the sun. The boys had shaven heads and the girls had bobbed hair, and everyone's eyes sparkled. Even now, these memories remain in my heart.

The other day, I received pictures taken by a Mr. Ôhashi Yoshihito¹⁰ who is a pilot for All Nippon Airways International Lines. The photos were of the Pagan Island volcano that he was able to see from the air. On top of the vast ocean the solitary Pagan Island stood alone, and it was blowing smoke up out of the volcano. I felt lonely and sad, and I couldn't take my eyes off it.

Now Pagan Island is devoid of people because of the devastation of the war and volcanic eruptions. The rich greens of the old days have been cut in half, and the island is covered in

10 Mr. Ohashi's website (Japanese only): <<http://homepage3.nifty.com/yoshihito/>>

yellow earth. I cannot go back there to visit, but... the beauty of the quiet colors at dusk, the greenery, the flowers, the fruits, the small birds, the vivid colors of the fish and shells by the sea, and the friends with whom I played so often... Pagan Island is my treasure. It is a treasure of the 20th century. (12/03/00)

Living With Few Resources– Chino Yoshikado (Age 80), Nagano Prefecture

In a sudden change from the severe cold of Manchuria, I went to the eternal summer of Pagan Island. My body really felt the drastic change in temperature. However, opposed to the heat during the daytime, the nights were comfortable. Being blown by a cool breeze, viewing the Southern Cross twinkling through the shadows of coconut leaves, I thought I had come to a dream island in the romantic South Seas. I had begun to wonder if the war would really start here on this island.

In no time the air raids began and lasted from morning until night, but what was the most painful was the fact that supplies were cut off and there were not enough resources.

1. We cut down a locally grown hard wood tree called ironwood¹¹ and used them as materials the construction of the encampment.

2. Food resources were coconuts. It is said that these trees had been planted some time ago by the South Seas Development Corp. and the forests were growing in well-organized formations. We recovered and made food from the dried coconut meat called *copra*, from the coconut oil, and from the meat of the nuts that ripened, fell to the ground, and had germinated. This last type of meat was called “Coconut bread,” because it looked like bread.

3. We made pumpkin shoots and papaya roots into pickles by preserving them in seawater. We found lots of plants growing in the wild, and sometimes we grew them ourselves.

4. There were things like red peppers, tomatoes, yams, Pigweed¹², Judas-ear mushrooms, mangos, bananas, lemons, and pineapples. Nuts could be gathered from a tree of the nut family that grew in the island’s interior resembling the Broom tree¹³ (we called them windbreak forest nuts). Some troops made *miso* paste from these nuts.

¹¹ *Casuarina equisetifolia*

¹² *Portulaca oleracea*

¹³ *Cytisus scoparius*

Local Salt Manufacturing

In the shadows of the rocks by the shoreline, we would bend sheets of tin to use them as kettles. Salt was made in these kettles by placing them in a large bonfire and evaporating the liquid.

5. Inhabiting creatures - Coconut crab (straight traveling type), geckos, monitor lizards, snails, and mice. Once, I came across a wild honeybee nest on the inside of the hollowed out part of a tree. Each honeycomb was about 15cmX30cm, and there were about 5 honeycombs. We would harvest the honeycombs under the cover of night shadows. This was a very precious item. When we tasted the honey we felt dreamy, like we had gone to heaven. However, I was stung 5 or 6 times each time.

6. Fish - When the *katsuo* tuna boat would come back to the port at night, sometimes we gathered up what we had in our small wallets and bought 1 fish for 2 yen. This was an important item, and if you hung it from the ceiling it would emit a blue phosphorescent glow at night. Sometimes the fish went bad this way. The troops at the encampment by the shoreline were blessed with very large fish killed by the shock from the explosions of bombs dropped into the ocean by enemy airplanes. After the war, we had permission to use dynamite, and organized groups to collect the fish. Sometimes, one explosion of dynamite would float about 120 mullet fish to the surface.

7. Illnesses - An outbreak of amoebic dysentery occurred because of a shortage of strong and effective medicine (emetine hydrochloric acid). Tropical boils. Dengue fever. Outbreaks of famine caused by food shortages.

8. Fuel - As part of air-defense, we were especially careful about bonfires, and we would make good use of charcoal that had been removed from the earth during cultivation of the ground in preparation for construction. These had been destroyed by fire during an eruption by Mt. Pagan that occurred some time ago. Because these were buried under the ground, large trees were unearthed in their original large form. These were used as a smoke-less fuel that was helpful since it could be used during the daytime.

9. Other - During the bodily inspection in front of the repatriation ship, my *omamori*

talisman pouch was discovered and I was cross-examined about it. I did not know how to reply, but then I quickly said it was a ‘mascot’ and I was given the okay. An impression still remains of the local islanders as we left. Some of them saw us to a place near the dock and watched as we boarded the ship and sailed out of sight. (11/16/00)

Military Facilities on Pagan Island -- Kameoka Shin'ichi (Age 81), Fukushima Prefecture

It is unclear when the opening or completion of military facilities took place at Pagan Island because there are no remaining records. The center of these facilities was the airport. On June 16, 1944, due to bombing by American airplanes like the Lockheed Grummans and B-24's, these facilities were blown away in less than 48 hours.

Outline of Military Facilities

1. Airport – total area 80,000 *tsubo*,¹⁴ with 600 meters on its north-south axis and 730 meters on the east-west axis.
2. Hangar –large enough to accommodate 10 Zero fighter airplanes.
3. Navy barracks
4. Fuel and Ammunition magazine – in the middle of the slope at Gake, a cave was dug out under the precipice. Around 200 drum cans of gasoline were stored in there.
5. Foxholes – on the western end of the airport in the middle of coconut trees, there were 2 shelters in the style of pillboxes (each could accommodate around 20 people). They were made of concrete.
6. Construction to flatten the top part of Battleship Island.
7. Wharf – it was built at the cove of Battleship Island with concrete (about 30 meters).

The above facilities were planned and executed by the Navy, and if valued at the going rate (currently) this large construction would cost more than 500 billion yen. It is thought that the number of workers required for this construction totaled 100 to 200 people, and the time

¹⁴ 1 *tsubo* equals about 3.3 square meters

period was around 2 to 3 years. On July 18, 1944, a government office was destroyed during the honorable defeat of Saipan. When Saipan and Guam collapsed, all documents about the administration of Pagan Island disappeared. Is there anywhere one can go today to find remaining records relating to the above? Events of the era we lived through seem to have passed into oblivion.

In those days, the wells of Mt. Gake were also dug out and utilized concrete construction. It is thought that the construction occurred from around 1939 through 1941.

The population of residents of Pagan Island quickly increased because of the aforementioned construction. They must have used a considerably large-sized ship for bringing in the materials. The construction was based on Naval fortification regulations, so plans were concealed. Workers were ordered not to talk about it, and lips were sealed regarding all activities. Mr. K. of the Pagan Island Garrison 1st Company talks about having been engaged in these operations, but he has never come out with details about this construction.

Including local people, the population of residents of Pagan Island at that time was 450 people. If you also include the construction workers they comprised an equivalent number of people, and it is thought that there were quite a few exchange dealings between the residents and the workers. There were also snack stands, a police substation, and a school, all of which must have begun to operate because of the increase in the population from around that time. (9/25/00)

About this Book

The homepage, “Distant Pagan Island,” begins with the history of Pagan and an outline of the island, and then I introduce a collection of stories contributed by people with a relationship to the island. I began this project on April 15th of this year, and during the war commemoration days in August I was fortunate to have had the story picked up as a special feature report by Shizuoka Daiichi Television. I would really like for you all to have a look at the website, which has not been completely distributed yet. On this point, I made up my mind to bring together content from the website to create this booklet.

As for printing arrangements, not all pictures or information could be included but in general the content has been printed here. From here on, I will continue to run the website. I invite people to contribute information about the island or personal stories at any time, and I would be happy to receive communications sent to the contact information found at the end of this booklet.

Lastly, regarding the production of the website, I received lots of information and stories from Mr. Hattori Hideo and everyone from the Pagan Island-Wide War Comrades Association and the Pagan Island Repatriates Assembly. I was allowed to cite many episodes from the “Pagan Island Garrison Records” published by the War Comrades Association.

I am thankful from the bottom of my heart to everyone who helped to shed light on this unknown island called Pagan, and from here on out I am determined to continue to grow the website.

Okamoto Mariko, December 2000

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