

## 7 Science, State, and Piracy in the Making of an Imperial Frontier

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The whalers in olden times visit this beautiful spot no more, and but twice a year the monotony is broken by the arrival of the government steamer ... The 50 or so savage natives did not take kindly to the encroachments of the foreigners, but, like the Red Indians of America, they were pushed ahead of the advancing tide, till now they are as strangers in their own land. Here and there, on some isolated coral beach or in the dark depths of the mighty volcanic gorges, one occasionally stumbles upon a miserable, grass thatched hut, from which the savage owner peers threateningly with sullen visage at the venturous traveler who has invaded his domain – his last retreat before the progressive Japanese.

Jack London on his visit to the Bonin Islands in 1893

Over the decade after the Japanese retreat in 1863, the Bonin Islands fell into a state of rogue rule. Rumor had it that the disappearance of Benjamin Pease, a disreputable businessman who had operated out of the Bonins, was the work of Spenser, a black man brought over from Pohnpei to serve in Pease's dubious enterprise.<sup>1</sup> Known for his crude ways on the island, Pease had threatened Spenser at gunpoint, it goes, shortly before he went missing in September 1874. Pease had a documented history in slave trade and other unspeakable atrocities against Pacific Islanders, chiefly in collaboration with the infamous pirate Bully Hayes. Previously, when Pease commanded the brig *Waterlily*, newspapers warned of the armed buccaneer that camouflaged his malfeasance by flying British and American colors interchangeably.<sup>2</sup> Sued for piracy in New Caledonia over attempted murder and ship theft from a French citizen, the pirate refuged to the Bonin Islands in 1869. In the power

<sup>1</sup> *Dispatch from Mr. Robertson to Sir Marry S. Parkes concerning the Bonin Islands*, December 23, 1875, in: STAT.

<sup>2</sup> *Manaro Mercury, and Cooma and Bombala Advertiser*, Friday May 7, 1869, p. 6, in: TROV; *Sydney Punch*, Saturday April 17, 1869, page 8, in: TROV. Pease's biography is also featured in Dunbabin, *Slavers of the South Seas*, 1935, 223–37.

vacuum left by the retreat of the Japanese several years prior, Pease moved swiftly to make the village of Port Lloyd the base of his trading business. With the two schooners *Lotty* and *Tori* of his *Bonin Company*, he began trading in foodstuff, goat hides, and human labor between China, Japan, and the western Pacific. It is reported that Pease abused the “kanaka” servants and coolies whom he brought to the islands, and sold them off to visiting vessels. The women he recruited at Yokohama he offered to seafarers and islanders as wives and prostitutes, thereby fostering his control over the island community.<sup>3</sup>

Having established himself at the apex of the local law, the black-birder reached out to US consul Charles E. De Long in Yokohama to request governmental protection and to offer his service as a consular agent to the United States. The island’s community of seventy-two, he lamented, was “governed wholly by lynch law,” a fact that was ironically affirmed the following year by Pease’s own violent end.<sup>4</sup> The case remained unsolved, for also Spenser, the suspected murderer, was found assassinated before an investigator reached the island in 1875. Russell Robertson, who reported to the British consulate “questioned Pease’s widow in respect to his disappearance,” as he reported, “but all my questions were answered by monosyllables, accompanied by a silly laugh ... No one seems to regret [Pease’s] loss, nor does one hear a single compassionate remark about him.”<sup>5</sup> In the absence of state power, the implosion of the pirate’s regime raised fundamental questions about the community of renegades’ legal status and escalated concerns about the very nature of rule over the islands to an international level.

Pease’s claims to American protection reverberated as they brought a shelved debate back to the table over the lawful belonging of an archipelago that had, since the decline of the whaling industry, escaped the attention of distant empires. The opening of treaty ports in China and Japan had diverted regional traffic north, leaving the once-bustling whaling entrepôt in the “Japan Ground” as a remote hideaway for offshore business. With the reemergence of Japan under a new form of government, claims and responsibilities for the unruly frontier islands were to be renegotiated among the parties invested in this part of the western Pacific. Given the conflicting claims over the islands that had been made over previous decades – British, American, and Japanese navies all once

<sup>3</sup> Ishihara, *Kindai Nihon to Ogasawara*, 2007a, 217–13. On Pease’s treatment of the Pacific Islanders he abducted and sold, see Dunbabin, *Slavers of the South Seas*, 1935 and Lubbock, *Bully Hayes*, 1931.

<sup>4</sup> *Mr. De Long to Mr. Fish.*, April 21, 1873, in: STAT.

<sup>5</sup> *Dispatch from Mr. Robertson to Sir Marry S. Parkes concerning the Bonin Islands*, December 23, 1875, in: STAT.

planted their flags on the Bonins – meticulous consideration had to be paid to the risks and potentials of claiming this refuge of outlaws.

This chapter discusses the emergence of competing agents in the frontier that blur the boundary between state and commercial agency. Some of the individuals I follow, like Obana Sakunosuke and Tanaka Yoshio, or the Bonin settler Thomas Webb, emerged from scientific and political developments under the shogunate, but as state and private actors in the frontier, they helped showcase a flagship project of the young Meiji empire. The new roles and relationships I describe between pirates, state officials, and scientists were as malleable and reconfigurable as the institutional landscape of the young Japanese Empire. The fluidity of roles, as much as the swift reconfiguration of settler identities on the ground, resonates with the political instability and the physical quality of the contested ocean frontier. At this point, taming the frontier was an ideologically significant project for Japan. Clarifying the state's relationship with its subjects — those who came with the annexed islands and those who were drawn to these spaces of fading state power — was central to this process. The flagship colony in the Bonin Islands became the site of state-funded agrarian experiments centered on exotic fruits and medical plants such as cinchona bark. Underpinning the modern and scientific character of Japanese colonialism, and the Meiji government's emphasis on national prestige, these experiments were showcased at international agrarian conferences.

With shogun Tokugawa Yoshinobu's reversion of political power to the emperor in the fall of 1867, a power struggle broke out that ended in a complete overhaul of political structures and social norms, the Meiji Reform. The year 1873 saw the most pervasive set of reforms, the introduction of new income and land taxes, general conscription, and the abolition of samurai status.<sup>6</sup> A people's rights movement jolted the political landscape demanding representative assemblies, aggressive foreign policy, and the revision of unequal treaties. The movement was thoroughly patriotic and expansionist from the onset, but its rallies stood in the sign of newly coined concepts such as “freedom (*jiyū*),” paired with the demand for benevolent government according to a Neo-Confucian ethic. Social roles and institutional boundaries were set adrift as commoners began drafting constitutions and debating technologies for agrarian improvement, and twenty-one-year-old feminist Kishida Toshiko toured political rallies calling male chauvinism an “evil practice of the Asian Orient.”<sup>7</sup> In the 1870s, everything seemed up for reform.

<sup>6</sup> Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan*, 2003, 65–66, 70.

<sup>7</sup> Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan*, 2003, 80–83; Ghadimi, “Civilization and Enlightenment in Early Meiji Japan,” 722.

The paradox that Japan added remote islands to its territorial holdings while its sovereignty was being compromised by unequal or “semi-colonial” treaties with Western powers is best explained by Takahiro Yamamoto’s “Balance of Favor” between Japan’s treaty partners who jealously kept each other from carving out exclusive colonial territories from Japan.<sup>8</sup> This is perhaps best illustrated by an episode from the early 1860s. In the hope of gaining backup against British interference, Foreign Affairs Magistrate Mizuno Tadanori had invited a Russian officer to join the shogunate’s expedition to the Bonins in early 1862, just months after Russia’s attempt to invade Tsushima (which had ended with a British intervention).<sup>9</sup> Beyond international diplomacy, however, the thrust to incorporate frontier islands emerged from a fragmented network of interests between business, state, and quasi-state agents. The petty tycoons who emerged from this moment of possibility redefined the relationship between the state and private companies by emitting expansionist impulses. Chapter 8 will show how some of these self-made island tycoons eventually negotiated their interests into the colonial policies of Japan’s sprawling archipelagic empire.

### **Incorporating a Pirate Island**

The word that Benjamin Pease had established himself as the new hegemon in the Bonin Islands reached finance minister Ōkuma Shigenobu in the form of a British newspaper article. The article was translated and re-published in late 1873 by the *Tōkyō Nichinichi Shimbun*, a widely read illustrated paper that communicated to the Japanese public that Pease was flying the American flag on the islands which “Japan had colonized marginally but then abandoned them.”<sup>10</sup> The public attention to the apparent loss of territory embarrassed the government. Just two days after the publication, Minister of the Right Iwakura Tomomi called to reclaim the forgotten colony. At a moment of legal fluidity and institutional reinvention, the reclamation of an island inhabited by citizens of foreign governments – holders of unequal treaty privileges in fact – raised fundamental legal questions.

As Ōkuma pointed out, the reclamation would have necessitated expropriating Pease, an act that, though found legal according to a specific reading of the French civil law, could have met resistance on the ground.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Phipps, “Sovereignty at Water’s Edge,” 149; Yamamoto, “Balance of Favour,” 2015, 23.

<sup>9</sup> Yamamoto, *Demarcating Japan*, 2023, p. 198.

<sup>10</sup> Cited in Ishihara, *Kindai Nihon to Ogasawara Shotō*, 2007a, 231.

<sup>11</sup> *Ogasawara-tō yōroku*, vol. 1, entry 2, pp. 8–9, January 20, 1874, in: OVBE, Acc. No. Great Safe 2-3-1.

Documents were collected and letters exchanged between the ministries to discuss strategies that included budgeting 10,000 yen to purchase the islands from Pease, or to allocate 100 dollars monthly to hire the apparent owner of the islands as a Japanese official.<sup>12</sup> It was found “hard to estimate what sort of a person this famed Mr. Pease is. Since it is reported in the newspapers that he seems to wield such unchallenged power, it is furthermore difficult to estimate whether the islanders would support his objections to our intervention.”<sup>13</sup> The plan was put forward that Pease should be made chief magistrate if he proved apt for the mission, for “if it turned out that the foreigners on the island are a mob of villains, it would be unthinkable that a normal person can govern the island by administration.”<sup>14</sup> Japan’s attitude towards this new type of colonial population was yet to be defined.

For Britain and the United States, who had both formerly stated claims to the Bonin Islands, appeasing a nest of renegades and offering protection to a horde “of whom but four are classed as white persons,”<sup>15</sup> as one American diplomat reported, would have caused major costs at the prospect of minimal commercial or strategic benefits. After the decline of the whaling industry, and with the opening of treaty ports in Japan, the Bonin Islands had lost their appeal in the eyes of Western empires. Accordingly, the British signaled their reluctance by forwarding information about the islands and their American inhabitants readily to the US Legation in Yokohama.<sup>16</sup> From Washington, the local circumstances that surfaced in the aftermath of Pease’s disappearance elicited the explicit statement that the claims Commodore Perry had staked to the islands “has never been expressly sanctioned by Congress, and we are not aware that any other act (*sic*) of the Government has since taken place which would show a disposition to support the claim of the naval officer adverted to.”<sup>17</sup> Japan’s intent to enforce its law on the islands, and by extension, the interests of the treaty powers, thus came as a convenient solution for both governments, so that the British consul Harry Smith Parkes indicated that he would acknowledge Japan’s reclamation of the abandoned colony.<sup>18</sup> Even Ōkuma, the planning mind behind Japan’s designs on the islands, acknowledged dryly that “owning (*yū suru*) this island won’t yield any profit for our country, but it also won’t cause

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, entry 4, pp. 72–73, 1874, in: OVBE.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, entry 5, pp. 80–81, June 13, 1874, in: OVBE.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84, May 30, 1874, in: OVBE.

<sup>15</sup> *Mr. Bingham to Mr. Fish*, December 29, 1875, in: STAT.

<sup>16</sup> *Sir Harry S. Parkes to Mr. Bingham*, December 27, 1875, in: STAT.

<sup>17</sup> *Mr. Fish to Mr. De Long*, May 31, 1873, in: STAT.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*; also cited in Chapman, *The Bonin Islanders*, 1830 to the Present, 2016b, 79–81. Also see Yamamoto, “Balance of Favour,” 2015, 206.

much loss.”<sup>19</sup> The ideological meaning of controlling an archipelago in the “South Sea,” on the other hand, could hardly be overestimated.

Clarifying the belonging of the islands was also part of the government’s efforts to define clear boundaries for the empire. Negotiations over the northern borders in Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands were in full swing in 1874 with chief negotiator Enomoto Takeaki in St. Petersburg and ended on May 7, 1875, with Japan’s cession of Sakhalin in exchange for the entire Kuril Islands chain.<sup>20</sup> With a breakneck expedition to Taiwan in 1874 in retaliation for the murder of a Ryukyuan ship crew, Japan had moreover asserted its claims to the Ryukyus and tested out the reactions of the neighboring Qing empire. As Danny Orbach has pointed out, the campaign to Taiwan was an act of military disobedience – Lieutenant General Saigō Tsugumichi had willfully ignored the order to withhold – and yet plans to establish a permanent presence on the island were forged in the background.<sup>21</sup> Each of these frontiers was subject to a different geopolitical situation, but as Yamamoto Takahiro recognizes, “the Japanese government’s boldness was to a great extent driven not by the existence of competing claims, but by the fear of losing the balance in other edges of the archipelago as a result of losing out in the south.”<sup>22</sup>

Attempts to establish an exclusive border in the frontier zone at this point did not mean to exclude international business from the Bonin Islands. Rather, installing a customs authority to suppress tax evasion was seen both as a source of revenue, and as an ultimate assertion of sovereign power. As Ōkuma had stated: “Since the Ogasawara Islands’ belonging to our country is unquestioned ... it shall be considered to establish an open port with a [harbor] authority (*chōkan* 長官) that enforces general administration and taxation over the entire islands.”<sup>23</sup> Just like the Tokugawa shogunate had attempted a decade prior, the Bonin Islands could be made the model for a sovereign port for international trade, beyond the framework of unequal treaties.

### Pinning Down Biographies of Labor and Migration

In late 1875, more than a decade after the Japanese settlers had abandoned their colony in the Bonin Islands, the Emperor’s steamboat

<sup>19</sup> *Ogasawara-tō yōroku*, vol. 1, entry 2, p. 7, January 22, 1874, in: OVBE.

<sup>20</sup> Yamamoto, “Balance of Favour,” 2015, 134–35.

<sup>21</sup> Orbach, “By Not Stopping,” 2016, 51. Tsugumichi was, incidentally, the younger brother of the leader of the Satsuma rebellion, Saigō Takamori.

<sup>22</sup> Yamamoto, “Balance of Favour,” 2015, 168–69.

<sup>23</sup> *Ogasawara-tō yōroku*, vol. 1, entry 2, p. 7, January 22, 1874, in: OVBE.

*Meiji-maru* entered Port Lloyd. The newly appointed island magistrate Obana Sakunosuke, who had already served as the local magistrate during the first colonization in 1861–1863, declared the harbor regulations enforced. The colonization began with a plan strikingly similar to that attempted under the shogunate. The inhabitants were granted the right to remain on the island under the condition that they sign the new law, read to them in English during a short ceremony.<sup>24</sup> Since the population had more than doubled in the meantime and counted seventy-one “foreign” individuals by 1875, the government encouraged Japanese individuals to settle in the Bonin Islands by granting the construction of houses and land improvement, even as trade with foreigners remained mostly in the hands of English-speaking islanders.<sup>25</sup>

The whaling vessels that had been cruising all around Japan in the mid nineteenth century carried sailors of the most diverse backgrounds – Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders, Europeans, as well as Africans – across an increasingly connected Pacific world. For a few, Pacific integration opened business opportunities, but for many more, it meant displacement, coercion, or even enslavement. Over the 1860s and 1870s, Pacific islands experienced a different and even more violent form of maritime displacement than those coolie workers who had been ferried along the Kuroshio over previous decades. Initially, it was the demand for workers aboard whaling vessels, and later, a more systematic trade in indentured laborers and slaves to plantations and mines in Australia and South America that displaced thousands. One hundred thousand indentured laborers were brought from Melanesia to Queensland, Australia, between 1860 and 1900, an experience that cost one-third of the migrants their lives. More deadly even was the slave trade to Peru that, among other places, nearly depopulated Rapa Nui (Easter Island). Of 3,500 slaves brought to Peru in 1862–1863, almost all were dead by 1866.<sup>26</sup> Though tribal societies sometimes took part in the slave trade, the systematic kidnapping at the hands of “blackbirders” like Bully Hayes and Benjamin Pease exposed island communities to rampant violence at large.<sup>27</sup> It must be assumed that even before the pirates’ arrival, many of the settlers in the Bonin Islands did not migrate out of free will.

After Japan’s incorporation of the Bonin Islands, the inhabitants of non-Japanese descent have been commonly referred to as Euro-Americans (*Ōbei-kei* 欧米系) in scholarship and administration, and

<sup>24</sup> Cholmondeley, *History of the Bonin Islands*, 1915, 164–70.

<sup>25</sup> Ishihara, “Wasurerareta shokuminchi,” 2007b, 62.

<sup>26</sup> McNeill, “Of Rats and Men,” 1994, 315–16.

<sup>27</sup> Matsuda, *Pacific Worlds*, 2012, 220.



within the community itself. British and American government representatives since 1830 corresponded exclusively with a small group of white men whom they had installed as a quasi-authority in the islands. The thirteen “articles of government” Commodore Perry had drafted for the “Colony of Peel Island” in 1853 codified their rule at the order of the US government. The Japanese who subsequently built on the authority of “councilmen” Nathaniel Savory and Thomas Webb in key positions, administratively cemented racial and gendered hierarchies by recording each individual as a member of a patriarchal household, even in absence of kinship by blood.<sup>28</sup> Their plans to name Benjamin Pease the Japanese officer (*Nihon shikan*), as well, followed the strategy of building on, rather than replacing, local power structures.<sup>29</sup>

Given the racial bias reflected in the records of both Western and Japanese governments, only fragments are known about the circumstances under which Pacific Islanders were recruited for the colony in the Bonin Islands. The party of thirty settlers who reached the islands in 1830 had been financed by its white founders and authorized by British consul Richard Charlton in Honolulu.<sup>30</sup> The group was led by the Italian Matthew Mazarro, joined by the Briton Richard Millichamp, the New Englanders Nathaniel Savory and Alden B. Chapin, as well as Charles Johnson from Denmark. Besides these white men, only the names of Harry Otaheite from Hawai‘i and John Marqueses from the Marquesas are recorded.<sup>31</sup> One historian later cited Mazarro referring to the twenty-five Hawai‘ian members of the expedition as “slaves.” His ways with these people were rough in any case, as various accounts suggest. In particular, the recruitment of women – six were brought upon request from Hawai‘i in 1831 – indicates that the colony was firmly embedded in Pacific networks of human trafficking.<sup>32</sup>

As David Chapman has found, one visitor in the late 1830s reported that Mazarro tried to bribe the Cape Verdean whaler John Bravo into

<sup>28</sup> The initial colonization had been authorized by British consul Richard Charlton, but was apparently financed by the settlers. Cholmondeley, *History of the Bonin Islands*, 1915: 14–22. When Commodore Perry’s fleet stopped by Port Lloyd, he named Nathaniel Savory, James Mottley, and Thomas H. Webb councilmen of the Colony of Peel Island. “Constitution for the Colony of Peel Island,” in: *Untitled Collection of Documents Created During Commodore Perry’s Visit to the Bonin Islands, 1853*, in: OVBE.

<sup>29</sup> On the political organization of the islands, see: “Constitution for the Colony of Peel Island,” in: *Untitled collection of Documents created during Commodore Perry’s visit to the Bonin Islands, 1853*. In: OVBE; *Ogasawara-tō yōroku*, vol. 1, entry 4, pp. 71–72, 1874, in: OVBE.

<sup>30</sup> Cholmondeley, *History of the Bonin Islands*, 1915, 17.

<sup>31</sup> Chapman, *The Bonin Islanders*, 2016b, 27.

<sup>32</sup> Dunbabin, *Slavers of the South Seas*, 1935, 120–23.



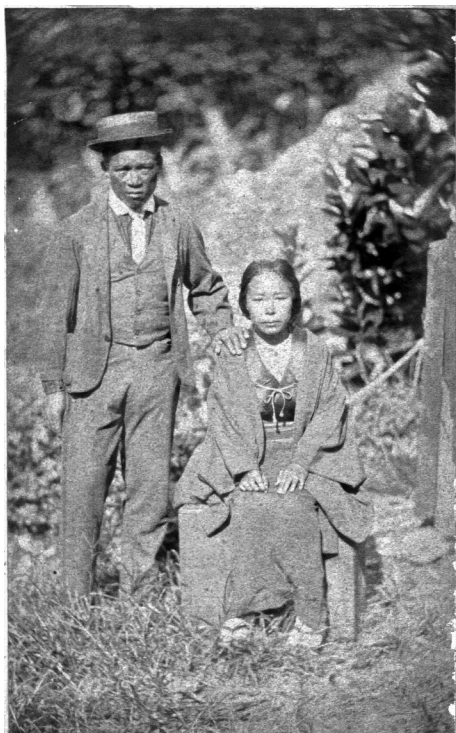


Figure 7.1 Portrait of Bonin residents by Matsuzaki Shinji (1875). Probably twenty-four-year-old Robert Morris, born in the Bermudas, and his wife O-Yoshi, 19, born in Ōnuma near Yokohama. O-Yoshi was one of two Japanese women residing permanently among the Islanders in 1875, apparently brought there by Benjamin Pease. *Photographs of Bonin Islanders*, no. 157, image 3, in: OVBE.

murdering a girl, a crime the latter refused to commit.<sup>33</sup> In 1843, Millichamp sailed to Guam where he “enticed” a married woman to join him in the Bonin Islands, and by way of it, also abducted her fifteen-year-old niece, Maria, who soon found herself married to Mazarro, an old man at that time. When Mazarro passed away in 1848, Maria became the wife of Nathaniel Savory.<sup>34</sup> Though few of these women’s destinies are documented in detail, their biographies indicate that the gendered and racialized violence that displaced individuals across the Pacific did not halt in the Bonin Islands (Figure 7.1).

<sup>33</sup> Chapman, *The Bonin Islanders*, 2016b, 33–34.

<sup>34</sup> Dunbabin, *Slavers of the South Seas*, 1935, 120–23.

The community of migrants grew busy catering water and foodstuffs to visiting vessels at the height of the whaling boom, and was therefore never static. A settlement of merely thirty to forty inhabitants for decades, the community fluctuated greatly, as crew were dropped off by their ships when they had fallen ill, while others moved away to pursue their opportunities elsewhere. Many jumped ship to evade the harsh conditions of life aboard a whaler, or left signing on to another vessel.<sup>35</sup> The possibility for crew to abandon their ship and hide in the forest was a major nuisance for ship captains, as Commodore Perry's eagerness to police the islands illustrates (see Chapters 5 and 6). Like the family of Tewcrab, a Pacific Islander who immigrated – who knows under what promises – after a woman from his community had married a German settler in the Bonins, or Nathaniel Savory from New England, who shipped goat skins to merchants based in Shanghai, Honolulu, and Boston, the islanders were internationally connected and traded over vast distances.<sup>36</sup>

The social organization was rudimentary, and the community dominated by a few white men was quickly turning into a pan-Pacific melting pot. The patrilinear gaze of Japanese sources suggests that unlike elsewhere in the Pacific, patriarchal family structures had become dominant in multiethnic marriages and large eclectic households, regardless of the matrilinear heritage many migrants must have brought from Oceania. Japanese biographical records of 1862 suggest that at least 23 percent of the population at the time were born on the islands and were ethnically mixed, whereas only eight out of forty-eight can unambiguously be identified as “Euro-Americans.”<sup>37</sup> (Figure 7.2). Later surveys show that by 1876, when the population had almost doubled, the share of immigrants from Pacific islands had increased to some 45 percent, with an additional 34 percent being multiracial islanders of the second generation. At that point, only four individuals on the island were born in a Western country.<sup>38</sup>

It can be assumed that, by the time of the Japanese takeover, the island community had developed an original local identity as the first generation of colonists passed away. After Mazarro's death in 1848, Savory appeared to represent leadership in the islands until the

<sup>35</sup> An overview of seventy immigrants arriving on eighteen voyages between 1830 and 1837 can be found in Long, *English on the Bonin (Ogasawara) Islands*, 2007, 43.

<sup>36</sup> *Sadame*: 15–17, in: OVBE. On language, trade, and culture in the Bonin islands at that time, ref. to Cholmondeley, *History of the Bonin Islands*, 1915, and to Long, *English on the Bonin (Ogasawara) Islands*, 2007, as well as to Chapman, *The Bonin Islanders*, 2016 and Chapman, *Britain and the Bonins*, 2016a.

<sup>37</sup> Individual biographical outlines of each head of household were written down in *Sadame*, in: OVBE.

<sup>38</sup> *Ogasawara-tō yōroku*, vol. 2, entries 18–19, pp. 34–41, in: OVBE.

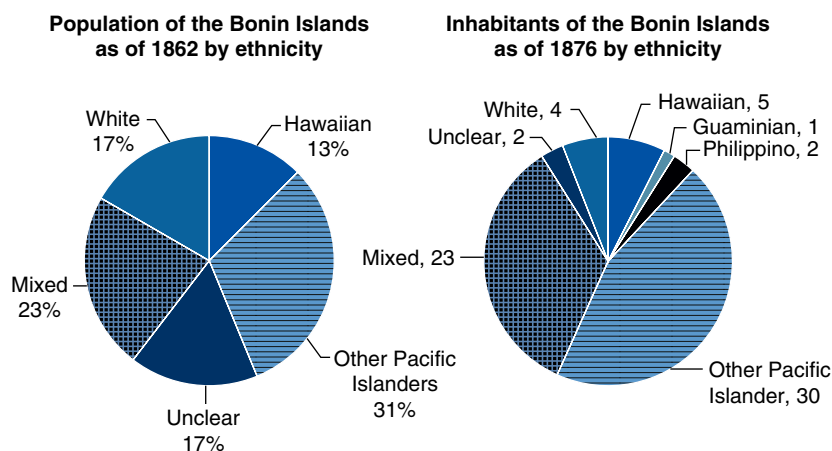


Figure 7.2 Ethnic composition of the Bonin Islands as of 1862 and 1876, based on Japanese demographic records. *Sadame*, vol. 2 entry 18, in: OVBE.

emergence of Pease, but after the two died in 1875 and 1874, respectively, Thomas Webb, who had been in the Bonin Islands since 1847, was the last member of the council installed by Perry. Even though political power long remained concentrated in the hands of a few men of European descent, the settlement was quickly merging into a pan-Pacific melting pot.<sup>39</sup>

Language and material culture was fluid and eclectic, as a Japanese castaway record indicated as early as 1840. As linguist Daniel Long has found, of fifty-three local expressions the Japanese visitors had picked up, thirty-six can be related to Hawai'ian or Tahitian, eleven to English or Portuguese, and six remain of unknown origin. Features apparent in the *katakana* renderings of Bonin speech, such as reduplication of English lexemes – *koukou* for “to cook,” *batsubatsu* for “boat,” and *hayahaya* for “fire” – and the interchange of *t* and *k*, as it occurs between Hawai'ian and Tahitian – turning “water” into *wowaka*, for example – indicates pervasive pidginization.<sup>40</sup> Hawai'ian, which at least in the settlement's first decade seemed to prevail as the quotidian language, was slowly giving way to new creole versions of English that absorbed

<sup>39</sup> Long shows that, around 1840, languages spoken in the islands were strongly influenced by Hawai'ian. Long, *English on the Bonin (Ogasawara) Islands*, 2007, 53–54. *Ogasawara-tō yōroku*, vol. 2, vol. 2, entries 18–19, pp. 34–41, in: OVBE.

<sup>40</sup> Long, *English on the Bonin (Ogasawara) Islands*, 2007, 53–55.

influences of Portuguese and other languages spoken in the ethnically mixed households, as Long concludes.<sup>41</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 6, this sort of creolization also encompassed material culture and everyday practices of all islanders. Abe Rekisai in 1863 observed Thomas Webb, councilman at Perry's order and harbor pilot under the Tokugawa government, navigating around the islands in an outrigger canoe, catching fish with a spear.<sup>42</sup> The islanders' grass-thatched homes were inspired at traditional Hawai'ian dwellings, built with local materials and suited for the islands' climate. Clearly, creolization was a multidirectional process that encompassed all aspects of everyday life.

When the British investigator Russell Robertson asked Maria, the widow of Nathaniel Savory who had been abducted from Guam by Millichamp in 1843, whether her hoisting the American flag conveyed that her family considered themselves under American protection,

she answered in the negative, merely saying that it had been the dying wish of the late Mr. Savory that the flag should be shown on the arrival of a vessel or on any gala day. I invited her confidence and that of her family as to any wishes she might have on the subject of nationality or protection by reason of her alliance with Savory, but she said that, in common with her children and the settlers generally, they had no other wish than to be regarded as Bonin Islanders, and to be protected in their rights of property on the island.<sup>43</sup>

A growing number of islanders had come to see themselves as members of their immediate local community rather than as protégés of an abstract, distant government to which they had never had any personal or ethnic ties whatsoever.

### Citizenship and the Making of Imperial Subjects

The question of citizenship is a politically fraught question in a community with this degree of ethnic mixing. Benjamin Pease claimed in 1873 that among the then sixty-eight islanders, there were twenty-five Americans, seventeen British, four French, and "a number of

<sup>41</sup> Long, "Evidence of an English Contact Language in the 19th Century Bonin (Ogasawara) Islands," 1999, 255–57. In the early phase of the settlement, Hawai'ian may have had a higher currency than English since it is partially intelligible with other Polynesian languages. Daniel Long has pointed out that the islanders abandoned literacy, with as little as three men able to read and write in 1876. This fact may have accelerated creolization out of an initially simple pidgin.

<sup>42</sup> *Nansho kōki*, pp. 96–111, ed. in: Suzuki, "Ogasawara shotō no kaishū jigyo ni okeru Abe Rekisai (2)," 2012.

<sup>43</sup> *Dispatch from Mr. Robertson to Sir Marry S. Parkes concerning the Bonin Islands*, December 23, 1875, In: STAT.

Hawaiians,”<sup>44</sup> though given his quest to be acknowledged as governor at the service of the United States, Pease had all reasons to inflate the number of American subjects in particular. The British consul Harry S. Parkes confirmed three years later that fifteen or sixteen individuals retained claims to British citizenship, though there seemed to be some uncertainty still regarding their national affiliations.<sup>45</sup> The largest group of settlers, the Hawaiians, also stood under the extraterritorial protection of a Treaty of Amity and Commerce since 1871, at least in theory.<sup>46</sup> The presence of foreign citizens with claims to extraterritorial privileges as stipulated in the unequal treaties was a source of concern for both the Japanese and the respective foreign governments.

There had been an embarrassing precedent to this scenario. In 1863, when Nakahama Manjirō hired whalers in the Bonin Islands to train a Japanese crew in the handling of the explosive “bomb lance” harpoon, an English and an American whaler were caught with stolen property and a handgun aboard the schooner *Kimizawa Number One*. They were transferred to Yokohama to be tried for piracy at their respective consular courts, as the treaties commanded. The American George Horton, aged 84 at the time, was found innocent by the consul, having been cajoled by his British companion.<sup>47</sup> US Minister Robert H. Pruyn instead ruled that the Japanese government was to pay 1,000 Mexican silver dollars as a redemption for the wrongful accusation. The money was received and subsequently administered by Pruyn, illustrating how treaty powers could use their judicative power for their own gains.<sup>48</sup>

Nevertheless, asserting the extraterritoriality of their citizens in the Bonin Islands also came as an inconvenience to foreign governments, as they feared that the Bonins’ sheer remoteness would make the assertion of extraterritorial privileges so troublesome that the principle would risk being undermined. As one observer in the US Department of State recognized, the Japanese harbor regulations for the Bonin Islands were “to be regarded with favor; but we should jealously guard the right of trial and of punishment of our own citizens secured to them by the treaty.”<sup>49</sup> Internally, it had already been decided in reaction to Pease’s request for US protection that “if citizens of the United States have repaired to those islands for the purpose of taking up their abode, ... they may fairly be

<sup>44</sup> *Mr. De Long to Mr. Fish*, April 21, 1873, in: STAT.

<sup>45</sup> *Ogasawara-tō yōroku*, vol. 1, entry 97, p. 246, December 20, 1876, in: OVBE.

<sup>46</sup> Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism*, 2004, 211.

<sup>47</sup> Eldridge, *Iwo Jima and the Bonin Islands*, 2014b, 27.

<sup>48</sup> *Mr. Pruyn to the Gorogio*, December 21, 1863, in: STAT; *Mr. Pruyn to Mr. Seaward*, July 2, 1864, in: STAT.

<sup>49</sup> *Mr. Fish to Mr. Bingham*, December 20, 1876, in: STAT.

held to have deliberately abandoned the United States without purpose of returning, and therefore to have relinquished the rights as well as duties of citizens.”<sup>50</sup> Nullifying the extraterritorial rights of citizens, however, was a balancing act. British Consul Parkes stated openly in conversation with the Japanese foreign minister Terashima Munenori that “regardless of the scale of crime, British citizens are subject to British government. This is unalienable; even for petty crime they cannot be processed by your government ... yet, it is unconceivable that we dispatch a vice-consul to the said island.”<sup>51</sup> When Terashima informed Parkes of his intent to naturalize the inhabitants of the Bonin Islands, Parks agreed that “should the presence of British citizens become a source of concern, it will be necessary to evacuate them, or to grant them the citizenship (*kokuseki* 国籍) of your country.”<sup>52</sup> In the interest of the principles stated in the unequal treaties, British and American governments found it opportune to encourage the naturalization of their subjects in the Bonin Islands.

Within the first year from the Japanese takeover in 1875, it was decided to naturalize the Bonin Islanders as a precaution to avoid conflicts with the extraterritoriality clause stipulated in the unequal treaties.<sup>53</sup> The *Essential Records of the Island Ogasawara* document how the naturalization of sixty-four individuals in the Bonin Islands, the first of its kind in Japanese history, figured as a diplomatically supported step toward a new understanding of sovereignty based on population control. On February 24, 1877, the Briton Robert Myers of Chichijima informed his consul in Yokohama that he had become a Japanese subject and renounced British protection. Together with four others, Myers was to be “naturalized (*kika* 帰化),” at a time before territorial sovereignty (*ryōyū* 領有) and citizenship (*kokuseki*) were legally formalized. Though foreigners could enter the *koseki* (戸籍) family registry by marriage or adoption according to a law of 1871, the naturalization of foreign families or individuals based on their abode in Japan was unprecedented, as David Chapman has pointed out.<sup>54</sup>

Under the shogunate, grouping the Bonin Islanders into households pinned down the population in a bureaucratic system, rendering individuals “legible” for the state. As James Scott wrote, “modern statecraft is largely a project of internal colonization, often glossed, as it is in

<sup>50</sup> *Mr. Fish to Mr. De Long*, May 31, 1873, in: STAT, also cited in: Chapman, *The Bonin Islanders*, 2016b, 79.

<sup>51</sup> *Ogasawara-tō yōroku*, vol. 1, entry 97, pp. 248–49, December 20, 1876, in: OVBE.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, entry 97, pp. 248–49, December 20, 1876, in: OVBE.

<sup>53</sup> Ishihara, “Wasurerareta shokuminchi,” 2007b, 61–64. On the process of naturalization, see Chapman, *The Bonin Islanders*, 2016b, 73–6; and Chapman, “Inventing Subjects and Sovereignty,” 2009.

<sup>54</sup> Chapman, “Inventing Subjects and Sovereignty,” 2009, 2, 6.

imperial rhetoric, as a ‘civilizing mission.’ The builders of the modern nation-state do not merely describe, observe, and map; they strive to shape a people and landscape that will fit their techniques of observation.”<sup>55</sup> With the Bonin Islanders’ integration into the *koseki* family registry, which had been harmonized nationwide in 1871, the state not only asserted sovereign rule over the frontier islands, but it created a new category of “naturalized foreigners,” or *kika gaikokujin*, that set the inhabitants of the southern colony apart from the “former Natives” (*kyūdojin* 旧土人) of Ezo (Hokkaido).<sup>56</sup>

The naturalization drew exclusive borders around an ethnically distinct colony, as also the islanders noticed. As the *Essential Records of the Island Ogasawara* document, most inhabitants remained highly skeptical of the new government’s offer of naturalization:

Except for five persons, no one stated an interest. Let alone the holders of British, American, French, Portuguese or Spanish citizenship, even the stateless *Kanakas*, whom we tried to convince in various ways, for lack of common language indicated merely that they are disinterested. It is impossible to force the conversation.... Having pursued their business here in freedom without restrictions for decades, they are concerned what sort of constraints will be imposed on them if they accept Japanese citizenship at this point.<sup>57</sup>

Given the skepticism on the part of the islanders, it took five years until the government had succeeded in naturalizing the last of them with treats and threats by 1882, turning the community into imperial subjects and obliterating their extraterritorial rights.<sup>58</sup>

### Showcasing Imperial Cosmopolitanism

Despite their acceptance of Japanese citizenship, the Bonin Islanders became the constructed other of Japanese colonial superiority. The double standard of this naturalization becomes evident in the islanders’ conflicting representation as “Western” in appearance and “primitive” in material culture. As David Odo has pointed out, this representation of “exotic” islanders began in 1875 with the photographic documentation of the colonial enterprise and the distribution of *carte-de-visite* images of the colonial population.<sup>59</sup> The dual topoi of “South Sea” exoticism and the alleged Western-ness of “naturalized foreigners” carried through to

<sup>55</sup> Scott, *Seeing like a State*, 1998, 82.

<sup>56</sup> Chapman, “Inventing Subjects and Sovereignty,” 2009, 7.

<sup>57</sup> *Ogasawara-tō yōroku*, vol. 2, entry 17, pp. 29–31, April 1, 1877, in: OVBE.

<sup>58</sup> Chapman, *The Bonin Islanders*, 2016b, 91–94; Chapman, *Britain and the Bonins*, 2016a, 172–76.

<sup>59</sup> Odo, “Expeditionary Photographs of the Ogasawara Islands, 1875–76,” 2009, 205.



touristic photography of the prewar period, as a collection of postcards at the Ogasawara village archive illustrates.<sup>60</sup> To label this penchant for the exotic a showcasing of “cosmopolitanism” should not affirm the euphemistic nature of the term, which has all too often been used in colonial settings to embellish histories of Native expropriation and marginalization. Rather, it underlines how popular ethnography from the newly incorporated frontiers was central to affirming the nation’s ambitions as a multi-ethnic, colonial empire: Japan now ruled over a climatically distinct colony that enabled the nation to wield power by researching and exhibiting a colonial other, thereby elevating itself into the ranks of maritime empires.

The photographer Matsuzaki Shinji, who accompanied the expedition to the Bonin Islands in 1875–1876, was a commercially successful and politically well-connected young artist. The year before, Matsuzaki had followed the expedition to Taiwan, of which, however, only one photograph has survived. In the Bonin Islands, Matsuzaki portrayed the “Natives” (*dojin* 土人) with their straw huts, outrigger canoes, and Western-style clothing (Figures 7.3 and 7.4).<sup>61</sup> Later photographs, such as a collection of thirty-six images by an unknown author presented to the Meiji Emperor several years into the colonization, are focused on the progress of colonization, including a school, sugarcane farming, and a substantial town harboring a steamboat.<sup>62</sup> In a manner reminiscent of the exhibition of Ainu people in the celebration of colonial achievements in Hokkaido, even if less condescending in nature, the Japanese distributed handy photographs of the islanders among the paying public (Figure 7.1).<sup>63</sup>

When the American novelist Jack London visited the Bonin Islands in 1893 on a seal hunting voyage, he was told about the history of the “Natives” that struck the visitor in stark contrast to the Japanese colonizers:

Two hundred and fifty years ago ... the Japanese government took possession and colonized [the islands]; but fifty years later they were deserted. During the next two centuries their few inhabitants, abandoned by their mother country and cut off from all intercourse with the outside world, relapsed into semi-barbarism. This beautiful but remote group of islets was forgotten, actually forgotten.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>60</sup> *Senzen no Ogasawara no ehagaki*, in: OVBE.

<sup>61</sup> On Matsuzaki’s work, see Odo, “Expeditionary Photographs of the Ogasawara Islands, 1875–76,” 2009. The original photographs are held at the Ogasawara Village Board of Education Archive: *Photographs of Bonin Islanders*, no. 157 in: OVBE.

<sup>62</sup> *Ogasawara-tō tsuki Hachijōjima shashinchō*, in: KUN, Shoryō-bu.

<sup>63</sup> David Odo remarks that some of these photographs may have been paid for by the islanders themselves as *cartes de visite*, a bourgeois custom in the late nineteenth century. Odo, “Expeditionary Photographs of the Ogasawara Islands, 1875–76,” 2009, 205–08.

<sup>64</sup> London, *The Asian Writings of Jack London*, 2009 [1896], 98.

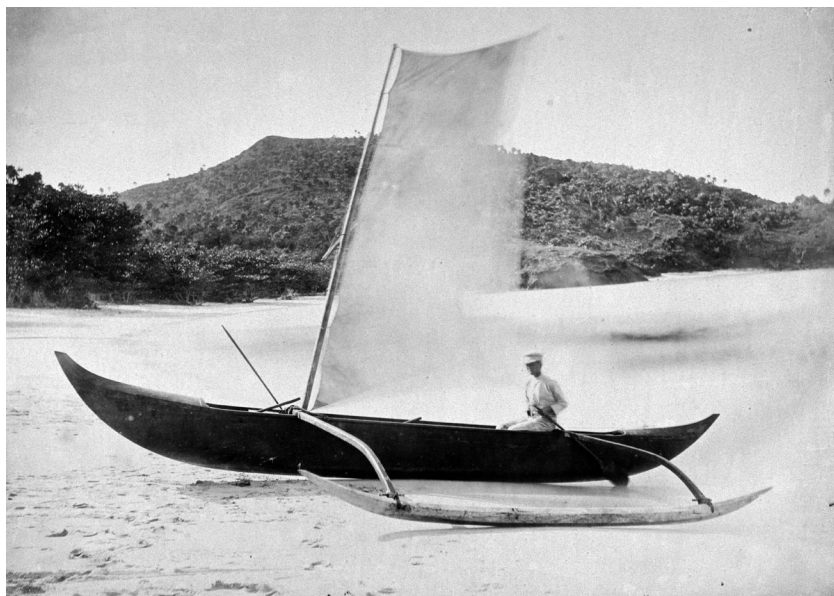


Figure 7.3 A Japanese sailor sitting in an outrigger canoe (1875). The photo was taken during the Meiji-maru's expedition to the Bonin Islands by Matsuzaki Shinji. *Ogasawara shashin*, in: NAJ, Acc. No.: 附A00084100.

Ethnically different subjects were used to convey a patronizing narrative of ahistorical Japanese presence vis à vis foreign visitors. At the same time, an evolutionary rationale constructed racial hierarchies that legitimized Japanese hegemony in both cultural and institutional terms.

The Bonin Islands were colonized with a proactive immigration policy that boosted the population within just a few years. In order to farm the islands more intensively, the government first sent convicts to the islands for corvée labor, and financially incentivized the construction of dwellings for poor emigrants. The government initially granted fifty yen to each individual or couple for the construction of homes and lent household and work tools for free. This immediately attracted a large number of immigrants, chiefly from Hachijō, but also former samurai displaced by the abolition of their status group in 1873 were among the immigrants. In 1879 already, this policy was reverted and it was temporarily prohibited to move to the colony. With the introduction of special permits in 1883, the population continued to grow fast, reaching



Figure 7.4 Bonin Islanders in front of a church (mid-Meiji period). Note the mingling of Western and Japanese clothing styles. (*Ogasawara-tō tsuki Hachijōjima shashinchō*, in: KUN, Shoryō-bu, Acc. No. B9-32.)



Figure 7.5 A Japanese family in a Bonin outrigger canoe (Taishō/early Shōwa periods, i.e. 1920s or 1930s). (*Senzen no Ogasawara no ehagaki*, no. 148, in: OVBE, Dehumidified Closet, Compartment B-76.)

2,000 in 1890 and 5,550 in 1900.<sup>65</sup> Even though Japanese immigrants outnumbered the small community of earlier Pacific immigrants, the Bonin Islands continued to figure as a piece of the “South Sea” within Japan (Figure 7.5).

### **Imperial Science, “South Sea” Agriculture, and Geologies of National Ambition**

Like in the systematic colonization of Hokkaido around the same time, the scientific promotion of agriculture stood high on the Meiji government’s agenda for the “South Sea.”<sup>66</sup> The Bonin Islands’ southerly climes gave the experimentation with subtropical plants a special, strategic value. Finance Minister Ōkuma Shigenobu had expected that the military campaign to Taiwan in the summer of 1874 in retaliation for the murder of a Ryukyuan ship crew by Taiwanese Natives would translate into a lasting colonial project, and acquired seeds of foreign plants to be grown in the colony. The breakneck expedition, however, ended in a disaster for the Japanese, leaving 70 to 80 percent of their troops sick of tropical disease – lethal for 561 out of 3,600 men.<sup>67</sup> Ōkuma was therefore painfully aware of the importance of tropical medicine for southward ventures.

In preparation for the expedition to the Bonin Islands the following year, the botanist Tanaka Yoshio, head of the Ministry for the Promotion of Agriculture (*kannō kyoku*) and a disciple of Abe Rekisai, the botanist who had explored the islands at the order of the shogunate (see Chapter 6), asked the Dutch consul to send him cinchona seedlings from Java half a year before the colony was reclaimed.<sup>68</sup> The bark of the cinchona tree, originally endemic to the Andes, yields quinine, the most effective treatment for malaria known at the time. The Dutch had sent an agent to Peru in 1855 to obtain seedlings of the valuable plant, and within a few years, their plantations in Java became the world’s leading quinine producers. Exporting cinchona seedlings from the Dutch empire was strictly prohibited, but the consul offered nine types of coffee to grow in the Bonins instead.<sup>69</sup> When the seedlings turned out to have withered on the transfer, Tanaka sent a close collaborator to the British

<sup>65</sup> Ishihara, “Wasurerareta shokuminchi,” 2007b, 63–64.

<sup>66</sup> On scientific agriculture in the colonization of Hokkaido, see Walker, “Meiji Modernization, Scientific Agriculture, and the Destruction of Japan’s Hokkaido Wolf,” 2004, 248–74.

<sup>67</sup> Orbach, “By Not Stopping,” 2016, 51.

<sup>68</sup> Suzuki, *Ogasawara-tō yōroku*, 2005 vol. 1, preface, p. 9.

<sup>69</sup> Nagumo, “Kina no kokunai saibai ni kansuru shi-teki kenkyū,” 2011, 1530.

colonies in India and Ceylon and then to Java to purchase additional seedlings. At this time, the emissary returned with forty-two cinchona seedlings and 50 kg of various seeds. Perhaps the Dutch had come to realize that they were already losing their monopoly on quinine to the British and the French, who were also growing cinchona by the early 1860s, and found it opportune to play the diplomatic token before others did.<sup>70</sup> The Bonin Islands, with their subtropical climate, offered the conditions of an agrarian laboratory for Japan.

The quickly mutating institutions of the Meiji state introduced a centralized regime of systematic planning to the experimental fields of Chichijima island. Tanaka Yoshio, the expert-in-chief, had built up a formidable scholarly network at international conferences and world exhibitions that allowed him to correspond and exchange seedlings with agronomists all around the world.<sup>71</sup> In 1877, for example, he purchased a handful of “sea island cotton” seeds from South Carolina. The seeds were sent to the Bonins with exact instructions on the plant’s treatment and fertilization (Figure 7.6).<sup>72</sup> Along with the cotton seeds, rubber, coffee, and olives were sent as projects of priority, but all of them were later given up. A later project in the early 1880s returned to the species originally grown by the islanders such as banana, sugar cane, citrus fruits, pineapples, and betel.<sup>73</sup> The introduction of new species and the remote planning of local agriculture was embedded in the new international role the empire and its scientists aspired to play.

Almost immediately after the Japanese takeover, preparations began in early 1876 for the first *Exhibition for the Promotion of Domestic Industry and Agriculture* (*naikoku kangyō hakurankai*) at Ueno Park in the center of Tokyo the following year. Governor Obana quickly put together shipments of exotic produce – eleven living plant types, two goats, and a buck, as well as four specimens of local minerals – for the ministry of internal affairs. Later, a miniature canoe and oars were shipped as well, along with samples of cotton and eleven types of wood, recorded with their English or Austronesian names.<sup>74</sup> Photographs of Bonin Islanders and their material culture were also distributed.<sup>75</sup> As a laboratory of scientific and biological globalization, the frontier islands contributed

<sup>70</sup> Suzuki, *Ogasawara-tō yōroku*, 2005, vol. 1, 2;10.; Nagumo, “Kina no kokunai saibai ni kansuru shi-teki kenkyū,” 2011, 1530–32.

<sup>71</sup> *Kokushi daijiten*, keyword “Tanaka Yoshio.”

<sup>72</sup> *Hakubutsu kyoku yori okuraru Beikoku kaitō kusawata tane*, Envelope with seeds and instructions on cultivation, in: OVBE; Suzuki, *Ogasawara-tō yōroku*, 2005, vol. 2, preface, p. 3.

<sup>73</sup> *Ogasawara-tō yōran*, pp. 185–89, in: OVBE.

<sup>74</sup> *Ogasawara-tō yōroku*, vol. 2 entries 27, 40, 75, pp. 65–69, 94–96, 141–44, in: OVBE.

<sup>75</sup> Odo, “Expeditionary Photographs of the Ogasawara Islands, 1875–76,” 2009, 205–08.





Figure 7.6 Envelope containing “sea island cotton” seeds sent to the Bonin Islands by Tanaka Yoshio in 1877. *Hakubutsu kyoku yori okuraru Beikoku kaitō kusawata tane*, in: OVBE.

to the new government’s self-representation as an encompassing, cosmopolitan empire.

Scientific description of the Pacific and its islands disenchanted earlier imaginations and instead confined the ocean into a specific geography. With the founding of internationally connected research institutions, scientific projects could draw on a globalized body of empirical information. Tokyo University was founded in 1877 with a strong inclination toward German academic traditions, but the pathways of scholarly imports were manyfold. The sheer quantity of data that became available enabled new imaginations of the offshore as a specific topography. With the reorganization of scholarship along the disciplinary structures of Western academia, geology had been extracted from the more generalist discipline of “applied studies (*jitsugaku*),” under which punctual pictures of rock structures in the vicinity of mining sites had emerged.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Gardner Nakamura, *Practical Pursuits*, 2005, 3.

The body of oceanographic data grew with the opening of the treaty ports and the subsequent compilation of precise bathymetric maps of harbor zones. With the landing of Japan's first deep sea telegraph cable in 1871, mapping the deep sea had assumed a concrete, geopolitical purpose. When the British *Challenger* deep sea sounding expedition called at Yokohama in 1875, the oceanographers attracted major attention from the new Ministry for Waterways (*suiro kyoku*), and the Meiji Emperor himself invited the scientists to an audience.<sup>77</sup> The subsequent expansion of the geographical imaginary to the deep sea added a third dimension to questions about Japan's position at the center of an archipelagic Pacific.

Since 1875, Heinrich Edmund Naumann held the first professorship of geology at what was to become Tokyo University. The young scholar from Germany had the awesome task of drawing up an overarching geological concept for the Japanese islands, a project that occupied him long after the expiration of his ten-year tenure. From the bent shape of the Japanese islands, Naumann inferred an "intensive propulsion originating effectively on the Japan Sea side to thrust the land masses towards the ocean."<sup>78</sup> Though later insight into plate tectonics have debunked this theory, Japan's perceived drift away from Asia toward a geological telos in the Pacific resonated with Japan's ideological reorientation at the time. In 1885, the year Naumann published his trailblazing *Geotectonic Structure of Japan*, Fukuzawa Yukichi, the doyen of classical liberalism in Japan, expressed this idea succinctly in his notorious piece *Leaving Asia*. "Japan," Fukuzawa wrote, "is located in the eastern extremities of Asia, but the spirit of her people have already moved away from the old conventions of Asia ... It is better for us to leave the ranks of Asian nations and cast our lot with civilized nations of the West."<sup>79</sup> The project of situating Japan in a new metageographical context connected observations of geological processes to visions of civilizational progress.

The structures that appeared as writhing veins of rock in Naumann's geological maps were augmented by his successor at Tokyo University, Harada Toyokichi, to form a terraqueous topography of mountains, ridges, and deep sea troughs. By that time, the apparent geological thrust toward the island Pacific had already translated into realpolitik. The fifth anniversary of the Bonin Islands' incorporation was commemorated in

<sup>77</sup> Nishimura, *Challenger-gō tanken*, 1992, 137–49; Ōshima, "Kaitei jigata chōsa no reki-shi to genjō," 2000, 474–82.

<sup>78</sup> Naumann, cited in Küppers, "Heinrich Edmund Naumann und die Entwicklung der Geowissenschaften in Japan," 1994, 98.

<sup>79</sup> Edited in: Lu, *Japan: A Documentary History*, 1997, 351–53.



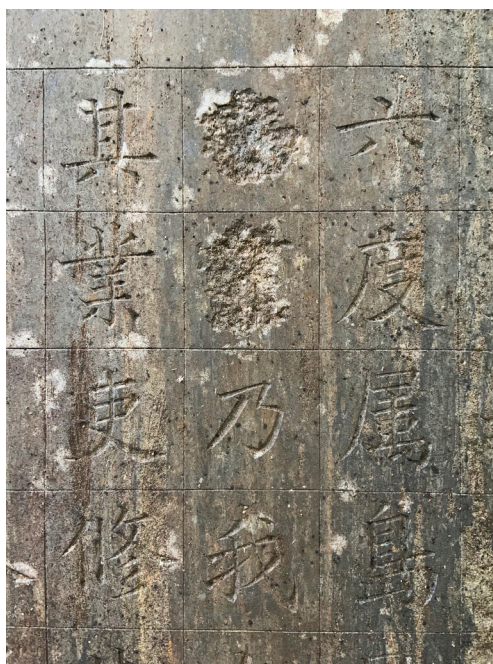


Figure 7.7 The memorial stela in Ōgiura, Chichijima, with the edits ordered by Obana Sakunosuke, 1880. *Kaitaku Ogasawara no hi*, EPIT.

1880 with the inauguration of a stela that celebrated the “the opening of a vast frontier” (see Figure 7.7).<sup>80</sup> Authored by home minister Ōkubo Toshimichi (1830–1898) himself, the epitaph argued that:

To the southeast of Izu ... islands spread out like stars, and also this island is part thereof. The mountain range of Kai and Izu [provinces] winds down in wavelike movements ~~and ends here~~ [*strikethrough in the original*]. This is thus our southern gate.<sup>81</sup>

Giving way to his hunger for further expansionism, island governor Obana Sakunosuke, in whose honor the stela was erected, erased the words limiting Japan’s claims. Obana’s reckless edits were recorded in

<sup>80</sup> *Kaitaku Ogasawara no Hi*, EPIT. I am grateful to Tanaka Hiroyuki for pointing out this reference, and to Ludy and Yoshino Sforza, residents of Ogasawara, for guiding me to the original stela. *Ogasawara-tō yōroku*, vol. 4, entry 201, pp. 203–05, in: OVBE. I have previously cited this stela in Rüegg, “Currents and Oceanic Geographies of Japan’s Unending Frontier,” 2021, 19; Rüegg, “Mapping the Forgotten Colony,” 2017, 143, and Rüegg, “Oceanic Knowledge and National Space-Time in Pacific History,” 2024, 123–25. Also see Chapman, *The Bonin Islanders*, 2016b, 94–95.

<sup>81</sup> *Kaitaku Ogasawara no hi*, EPIT.

the island chronicle *Ogasawara-tō yōroku*: “The characters ‘and ends here’ went against Sakunosuke’s taste. He deleted those parts that greatly distort the geographic reality on the map of the Southern Sea (*Nankai*) and other parts, and set up the stela on a hill some twenty *ken* [36 m] from the office at Ōgiura.”<sup>82</sup> The mountain range of Izu was no longer bounded by the landmass of Honshu, with the sea as its limit, but continued as an underwater ridge 1,000 kilometers to the Bonin Islands and ever farther south. As mountains of the Izu range, running off the slopes of Mount Fuji, the islands in the Pacific became geographically connected to the motherland, and with them, to the surrounding maritime space. No longer a southern boundary, the islands had become the empire’s gateway to the vast Pacific.

### New Actors in the Frontier

The incorporation of the Bonin Islands with their heterogeneous population and their transforming environment of introduced animals, plants, and agrarian practices, became a laboratory of colonial administration and modern statehood. At a time when institutional boundaries were malleable and ideological compasses spinning, on-the-ground realities in the ocean frontier gave rise to new actors that affected the policies of the still-forming Meiji state. With the Bonin Islands, Japan was to incorporate a population that, unlike the people of Ezo and the Ryukyus, had no significant history of interacting with Japan. Instead, some of these islanders may have enjoyed extraterritoriality under the unequal treaties. As a result, incorporating the Bonin Islanders into the new system of rule raised questions of ethnicity and imperial subjecthood.

During the colonization under the shogunate a decade prior, attempts to put territorial claims on a scientific and legal footing had raised questions about the histories engraved in the islands’ social and natural environments. Under the Meiji government, the Bonins became a laboratory for the introduction of tropical species instead. The practical meaning of introducing medical plants like chinchona, then the most effective remedy for malaria, was obvious, yet what kept justifying state-led investments into the mostly unprofitable colony for decades was the ideological value of controlling an archipelago in the “South Sea.” It is important to note that the Bonin Islands were never officially called a “colony (*shokuminchi*),” a word only used with regards to Japanese colonies after the colonization of Taiwan in 1895. Yet the

<sup>82</sup> *Ogasawara-tō yōroku*, vol. 4, entry 202, in: OVBE, Acc. No.: Great Safe 4-3-37.

islands' occupation and incorporation at a formative time for the young empire underlines that the continuation of a shogunal project of frontier incorporation informed the modality of the empire's later expansion.

The emergence of new types of actors which I have outlined here by following the activities of scholars, state officials, and renegades tells of a negotiation of roles and power. In the frontier, this negotiation occurred at a distance from the socio-political turmoil in the aftermath of Ōkubo Toshimichi's fiscal and status reforms of 1873, offering the space for new and experimental definitions of sovereignty and subjecthood, or be it, nationality. This included the possibility to annex the islands in the manner of a *han*, with the rogue businessman Benjamin Pease as an official at the order of the Japanese government. Had he not fallen victim to his own lynch law, the blackbirder could have become an island governor at the order of the Japanese to rule the island community with crude methods. In trying to cement and build on local structures of power, rather than replacing them, the Meiji government continued a practice initiated under the shogunate. Attempts to define the new roles of business and crime, state institutions and science, or the meaning of imperial subjecthood, came at a time when the young empire was at a crossroads. The process opened new spaces for creative exploration in each domain. Yet as Chapter 8 will show, it was the very fluidity of identity and interest that complicated, time and again, the government's attempts to establish effective control over ocean and islands in the frontier.