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The Formation of Micronesian Japanese: Teaching Japanese at Public Schools in Nan'yōguntō

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1. Introduction

Micronesia, the former Nan'yogunto, had been influenced by Japanese language and culture since the arrival of Japanese Navy in 1914, and especially since the establishment of Nan'yocho (South Seas Government) in 1922, which continued until the end of the War in 1945.

Many native and non-native Japanese speakers migrated from the various areas of Japanese Islands and occupied regions such as Korea and Taiwan. A lot of migrants lived in the central towns of Saipan and Palau where the number of Japanese exceeded that of Micronesian, for example 20,649 Japanese with 4,297 Micronesian lived in Saipan Island, and 5,108 Japanese with 1,184 Micronesian in Koror Island of Palau in 1935. The older Micronesian people have maintained Japanese language ability till now though fifty years have passed since the Japanese retreat from Micronesia by defeat in the War.

This paper describes the overview of Nan'yōguntō Kōgakkō (Micronesian Public Schools) which effected the formation of Micronesian Japanese, that is Japanese language used by the older Micronesian with some interviews from the field studies conducted from 1994 till 1997. Japanese language is also learned by younger generation in high schools and colleges at present, but their Japanese are different from Micronesian Japanese from the point of view of fossilization: Micronesian Japanese is stable, but younger generation's Japanese are still improving. Therefore, we call only older generation's Japanese "Micronesian Japanese" in this paper.

2. The Establishment of Public Schools

Japan set out to establish elementary schools right after the arrival of the Navy. The purpose was to make children, not only from the upper ranges of society but also from the commonalty, go to school to be educated. It was supposed to be what was delegated by the League of Nations because a sentence as "Japanese education for Islanders is aimed at promoting their welfare" was found in Nan'yogunto Kyoikukai (1936: 113).

(1)

Branches	Islands	Public Schools (Number of Pupils in Regular and Supplementary courses in 1935)
Saipan	Saipan Is.	Saipan Koogakkoo (R 216, S 89)
	Rota Is.	Rota Koogakkoo (R 51)
Palau	Koror Is. area Babeldaob Is.	Koror Koogakkoo (R 112, S 120)
		Melekeok Koogakkoo (R 92)
		Ngaraard Koogakkoo (R 110)
	Peleliu Is. Angaur Is.	Peleliu Koogakkoo (R 70) Angaur Koogakkoo (R 28)
Yap	Yap Is.	Yap Koogakkoo (R 76, S 102)
		Nifu Koogakkoo (R 34)
		Maki Koogakkoo (R 123)
Truk	Natsu Is.	Natsu-shima Koogakkoo (R 122, S 137)
	Suiyoo Is. area	Suiyootoo Koogakkoo (R 173)
	Haru Is.	Haru-shima Koogakkoo (R 168)
	Fuyu Is.	Fuyu-shima Koogakkoo (R 80)
	Getsuyoo Is.	Getsuyootoo Koogakkoo (R 54)
	Aki Is. The Mortlocks (Oneop)	Aki-shima Koogakkoo (R 50 *in 1937) Mortlock Koogakkoo (R 77)
Pohnpei	Ponape Is.	Kolonia Koogakkoo (R 145, S 108)
		Madolenihmw Koogakkoo (R 65)
		Uh Koogakkoo (R 75)
	Kitti Is. Kosrae Is.	Kitti Koogakkoo (R 102) Kosrae Koogakkoo (R 83)
Jaluit	Jaluit Is.	Jabwor Koogakkoo (R 136, S 64)
		Wotje Koogakkoo (R 94)
		Kwajalein Koogakkoo (R 48)
		Ebon Koogakkoo (R 42)

Public Schools and the Number of pupils during the South Seas Government period
(Source : Nan'yogunto Kyoikukai, 1936)

At the beginning of Naval Administration period, Gunsei-ki, (December, 1915 - August, 1918) navy officers and soldiers themselves engaged in schools as pilot education. Subjects were Japanese (Nippongo), Ethic (Shuushin), Arithmetic (Sanjutsu), Song (Shooka), and Gymnastics (Taisoo). It was stressed upon that children learned Japanese and obeyed rules so as to keep order and to work hard.

The authorities insisted on an independent principle for schools for Micronesian pupils during Civil Affairs period, Minsei-ki, (September, 1918 - March, 1922): education for them had been based on the same principle of domestic elementary schools. They claimed that pupils concentrate upon learning Japanese (Kokugo) so as to be sensitive to the Imperial Obligation (Koo'on).

The number of schools for Micronesian children had been increasing by the time when the South Seas Government (Nan'yoochoo) established in 1922. It changed the name from Islanders School (Nan'yooguntoo Toomin Gakkoo) to Public School (Nan'yoochoo Koogakkoo). Public Schools were for those pupils who did not always use Japanese (Kokugo) and distinguished from Elementary School (Shoogakkoo) where pupils of Japanese user were educated. It was stressed upon that the purpose of education was the improvement of Micronesian's daily life.

3. Public School and Japanese Language Education

3.1 Education System of Public School

Public School consisted of Regular Course (Honka) and Supplementary Course (Hoshuuka). Regular Course was obligatory three-years education, and only selected excellent pupils went up to Supplementary Course where they studied two more years.

The age of entering school was about nine basically. However, ages of children were sometimes not sure.

(2)

J1 : Mukashi no gakkoo, dookyuusei, minna onaji toshi deshita?

(In former school days, were classmates of the same age?)

M1 : E?

(What?)

J1 : Nan sai ni nattara gakkoo e ikinasai tte.

(On what age did you go to school?)

M2 : A, aa. Soosoo. (Talking with M1 in Yapese.)

(Oh, yes.)

M1 : Aa, soo itte iru kedo, anmari, aa, chiisai toki no are ga, aa, umareta toki ga, aa, omottara chigatteru. Aa, aru hito wa toshi ga sukunai de, sugu gakkoo ni haitte iru.

(Um, they say like that, but when child, the year of birth is different all things considered. Um, some younger children go to school.)

M2 : An toki mo, kono, byooin ga, umarenakatta kara ne, soshite takusan no umareta kodomo mo, byooin de kaite nai. Soshite bokura yappu no hito mo soo, kaite nai kara ne, toshi wa iranai kara, de, maa, byooin ga kitara unda kodomo, byooin motte ittara, soshite sore, tsukeru n dakara ne, aa, nan gatsu nan nichii, unda, kono hito. Saisho wa nakatta. De, Nihonjin ga kono kodomo o mitara, aa, kodomo wa nan sai daroo, de, sono...

(At that time, at the hospital, they did not give birth, and many children were not recorded at the hospital. So, we, Yapese, also were not recorded because we did not need ages. And, um, the hospital came and recorded new babies, if you brought them there, um, like this person gave birth on what day of what month. At the beginning we did not have ages. Then, when Japanese looked at certain child, he guessed his age. And, um, ...)

M1 : Taigai ni suru.

(He gave him an approximate age.)

M2 : Un, taigai. Boku no toshi mo soo datta.

(Yes, approximate. My age was also decided like that.)

J1 : Aa soo desu ka.

(Oh, is that so.)

M2 : Aa, Nihonjin no hito ga kono kodomo ga taigai ikura daroo, de, toshi kimeta.

(Yea, Japanese decided the approximate ages of children.)

J2 : Ima wa kodomo.

(Now, children ...)

M1 : Ima wa dekiru.

(Now, we can.)

M2 : Aa, min na byooin ni itte, unde, soshite tsukeru.

(Um, everybody goes to hospital and gives birth, and then gets recorded.)

J1 : Aa, byooin ni

(Yea, to hospital)

M2 : Mukashi wa byooin ga amari nai kara ne.

(There were not many hospitals in these days.)

J1 : Ie de undeta.

(They gave birth at home.)

M2 : Un.

(Yea.)

(Males, Yap, August, 1994)

After graduation of Public Schools there was a sole school of techniques, Mokkoo Yooseisho, in Palau where only excellent boys could go. They studied skills of architecture and mechanics. They could speak Japanese fluently at this level.

3.2 Education at Public School

Education at Public Schools were done based on the special textbooks for Micronesian, Koogakkoo Kokugo Tokuhon. The main principle of compiling the textbook was to enable Micronesian to assimilate to the Nation. Therefore, its content included the military, the nation, and the Imperial House.

As for writing style only colloquial style was selected to teach how to write, though colloquial and literary styles of writing were used at that time. Transcription way in public schools was more close to pronunciation, though Historical Transcription (Rekishiteki Kanazukai) was educated in domestic schools.

At the beginning teachers taught subjects with Micronesian assistant teachers. After Japanese teachers explained in Japanese assistant teachers translated that into Micronesian languages. This teaching style was adopted in the Regular Course (Honka). It depends on the islands but schools in town where a lot of Japanese migrants lived adopted this only in the first year. The second or third year pupils understood Japanese without assistant teachers in those areas.

In some main islands pupils work at Japanese houses after school by Training Pupil System (Renshuusei Seido). What they did depended on the family: they cleaned houses, helped cooking, nursed, fed chickens and so on. The purpose of this program was to use Japanese practically and to experience Japanese life style. Children were directed to save money which they received from the Japanese wives at Post Office. However, during the War their savings disappeared and were never returned.

Pupils from villages which were far from the school lived in the dormitories. They had to use Japanese there. One of our informants still remember most of the dos and don'ts of the dormitory.

(3) Kishukusha Kokoroe

(Dos and Don'ts of the Dormitory)

1. Aizu ga attara subayaku shimashoo.

(When signed, behave quickly.)

2. Kishoo, shokuji, gaishutsu shootoo no jikoku o tadashiku mamorimasho.

(Be punctual for rising, eating, going out lighting out.)

3. Sagyoo no toki no hoka wa hadaka ni nattewa ikemasen.

(You must not strip off except working time.)

4. Ie ni kaeru toki, hoka no mura ni ikitai toki wa kanarazu shakan no sensei ni wake o hanashite yurushi o ete, shuuban ni tsugenasai. Kisha shitara sugu shuuban ni tsugenasai.

(When you go back to your home or go to other village, tell the reason to House Master teacher to get permission and then tell that to Weekly Duty.

When you come back to the dormitory, tell it to Weekly Duty immediately.)

5. Kishukusha dewa Nihon no kotoba o tsukaimashoo.

(Let's use Japanese language in the dormitory.)

6. Kishukusha no seito dooshi wa kyoodai, shakan no sensei wa oya no yoo na mono desu. Otagai ni tasukeai, nagusameai, tomoni tanoshimi, tomoni benkyoosuru kokorogake ga taisetsu desu. Jibun no koto shika kangaenai no wa kokoro no iyashii hito desu.

(Pupils of the dormitory are brothers and sisters and House Master teacher is like a parent. It is important to have good intensions so as to help and solace each other, enjoy and study together. Those who think only about themselves are vulgar.)

7. Tabemono o soto de taberu no wa warui shuukan desu. Jishuushitu no tsukue no ue de ogyoogi yoku tabemashoo.

(Eating outside is a bad habit. Let's eat at a table in the self-study room.)

8. Karada ya kimono o kirei ni shimashoo.

(Let's keep your body clean.)

9. (forgotten)
10. Mochimono o tadashiku okimashoo.
(Let's put things rightly.)
11. Gaishutsu shita toki wa gakkoo no seito toshite hazuru yoona okonai no nai yoo yoku ki o tsukemashoo.
(When you go out, avoid a shameful behavior as a school pupil.)
12. Nete kara hanashi o shite wa ikemasen.
(You must not speak after going to bed.)
(Female, 77, Colonia, Yap, 1994 and 1996)

3.3 Acquisition of Japanese

The number of Japanese exceeded that of Micronesian in some area, which effected their acquisition of Japanese. Population of Micronesian and Japanese in 1935 were as below:

(4)

Branch		Micronesian	Japanese
Saipan	Saipan Is.	4,297	20,649
	Tenian Is.	—	13,951
	Rota Is.	788	5,016
Palau	Koror Is. area	1,184	5,108
	Babeldaob Is.	3,067	716
	Peleliu Is.	716	221
	Angaur Is.	751	456
	Yap Is.	3,694	627
Truk	Haru Is.	2,115	79
	Natsu Is.	1,584	788
	Aki Is.	1,191	145
	Fuyu Is.	974	88
	Getsuyoo Is.	617	16
	Kayoo Is.	173	109
	Mokuyoo Is. area	2,367	1,570
Pohnpei	Ponape Is.	2,394	5,754
	Kosrae Is.	1,184	34
Jaluit	Jaluit Is.	1,989	428

Population of Micronesian and Japanese in 1935

(Source : Nan'yogunto Kyoikukai 1936)

Generally speaking the degrees of contacts with Japanese children or their parents before entering school were higher in the islands where a lot of Japanese lived than in other places. Children living in these areas learned Japanese naturally through playing with Japanese. They were able to speak in Japanese fluently from the second grade of the Regular Course. On the other hand children of islands as Yap could not play with Japanese because their parents prohibited it. Most of our Yapese informants recall that they could not speak Japanese after graduation of the Regular Course, or even after the Supplementary Course. Although they were trained to read the textbooks, it was hard for them to speak out in Japanese.

In Yapese case they learned conversation style of Japanese through working with Japanese and other Micronesians after graduation from schools. They worked at the sites of construction of the Nan'yo Shrine and the Airport, the face of phosphate rock, the Agricultural Experiment Station, and so on. Female Micronesian worked as assistant sanitation engineers, telephone operators, maids, and so forth.

Roughly speaking, there were two types of the formation of networks for Japanese language usage: one was the network formed in children's world and the other was formed in workers' world. The former was applicable to Palauan and Saipan whose Japanese ability was supposed to be high enough to have a wide range of vocabulary and pragmatic competence. It was an exceptional instance, but there were few Palauan people who engaged in the Army. The latter was applicable to such people like Yapese.

Their Japanese language ability were full of variation, but they recognized differences of dialectal Japanese and standard Japanese. There were a lot of residents who speak dialectal Japanese in those days.

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