



Collective Works
of
HIJIKATA HISAKATSU

Society and Life in Palau

Edited by Endo Hisashi

THE SASAKAWA PEACE FOUNDATION

Published by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation
3-12-12 Mita, Minato-ku, Tokyo, Japan 108

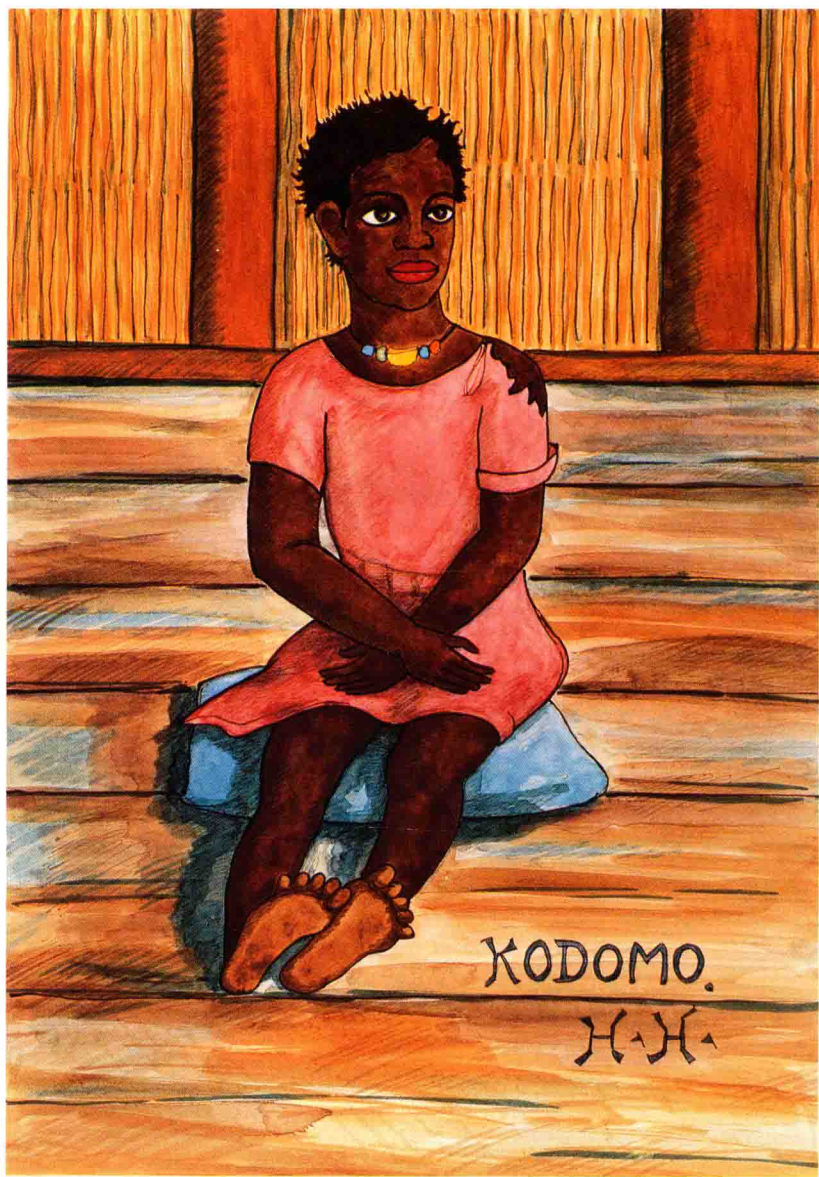
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Printed in Japan
First Edition, 1993
ISBN4-88326-001



Cloud 1969



Child 1970



Beautiful Day 1970

Ut—Boat House 1970





Woman with Necklace 1970



Profile 1959



Knitting and Taking (Palau Series) 1968

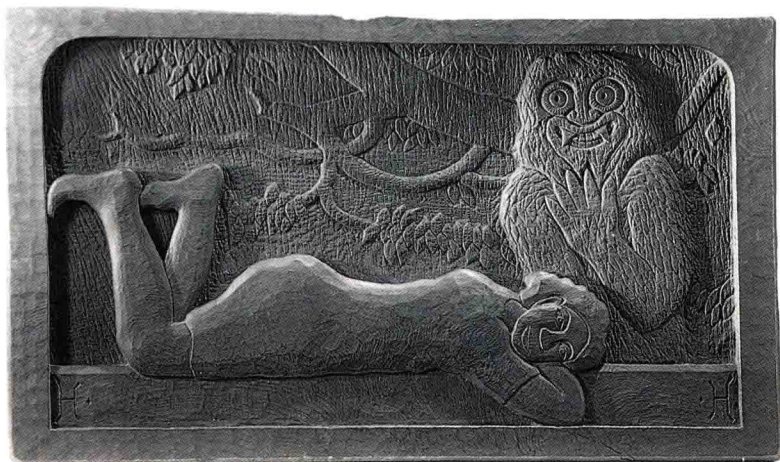


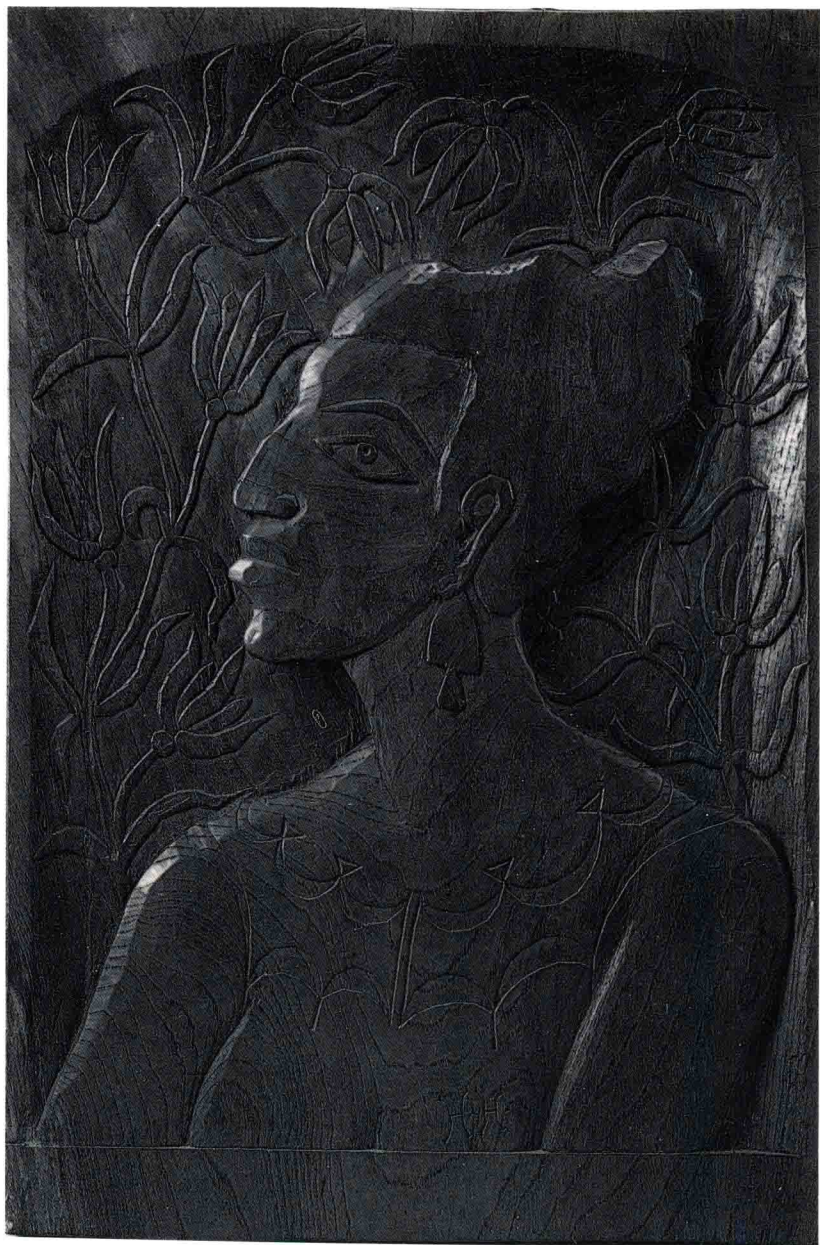
Bathing Pool 1966



Quiet Talk on a South Sea Island 1968

A Delep (Spector) 1955





Woman with Tattoo 1949

Preface

The Sasakawa Pacific Island Nations Fund was established in 1988 within the Sasakawa Peace Foundation. Japan and the island nations of the Pacific have enjoyed a long history of interchange and ever-deepening relations. Nevertheless, due in part to past events and recent transitions, mutual understanding must still be nurtured and reinforced. Therefore, the dual purpose behind the establishment of the Sasakawa Pacific Island Nations Fund is to promote friendship and understanding between the peoples of the Pacific Islands and Japan, and to lend what support we can to the island nations in their development efforts.

Hijikata Hisakatsu lived among the people in the islands of Micronesia during the Japanese occupation before and during World War II. The islanders accepted him warmly into their midst, allowing him to experience firsthand their life and culture. He, in turn, recorded and left for succeeding generations his experiences and observations in the form of several Japanese publications, which have been compiled into the *Collective Works of Hijikata Hisakatsu*.

Judging his works to be of high value to the Micronesian people and to scholars the world over, we decided to support the English translation and publication of this volume, *Society and Life in Palau*. It is our sincere hope that this publication will contribute to a deeper and fuller understanding of the Pacific Islands, and that its historical content will be of some benefit in preserving the cultural heritage of the island peoples.

The first draft of this volume of the *Collective Works of Hijikata Hisakatsu*, *Society and Life in Palau*, was translated by Paul B. N. Naamon and Tamami Kumasaki Naamon and edited by Endo Hisashi of Tottori University. The Palauan expressions in it were identified and reviewed by Kempis Mad of the Belau National Museum and the editor. The English text was copy-edited by Coralyn K. McGregor. We extend a special word of appreciation to these people for their painstaking and dedicated efforts, and to Sudo Kenichi of the National Museum of Ethnology, without whose technical guidance this publication would not have been possible. We are most thankful to Hijikata Keiko, who generously gave us

permission to publish her husband's works in English. We are also grateful to the Micronesian Area Research Center in Guam, the San-ichi Shobo Publisher, and the Setagaya Art Museum for their warm support.

Tabuchi Setsuya

Chairman

The Sasakawa Peace Foundation

Foreword

The islands of Micronesia are located in the Western Pacific, a vast expanse of sea stretching 5000 kilometers from east to west. Hijikata Hisakatsu, a sculptor, poet, and ethnographer, spent 13 years in these islands beginning in 1929. The islands of Palau and Satawal provided the setting for his research and artistic pursuits. Palau is now the Republic of Palau (Belau), while Satawal is part of the Federated States of Micronesia, which joined the United Nations in 1991. Both states have taken their place as modern nations in the international society.

Micronesia entered the pages of world history in 1521, when Magellan stopped in the Mariana Islands. Since the 17th century, the Marianas, the Caroline Islands, and the Marshall Islands have been governed in succession by Spain, Germany, Japan, and the United States. After World War I, Japan named them the "South Sea Islands." The headquarters of Japan's South Sea government was located on the island of Koror in the Palau archipelago, the first islands to be visited by Hijikata. In 1947, following World War II, the South Sea Islands were renamed the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands and were placed under the administration of the United States by the United Nations.

Hijikata graduated from the Tokyo School of Fine Arts in 1924. While making sculpture in plaster and wood and writing poetry, he dreamt of traveling to the South Seas. His image of the South Seas came largely from Paul Gauguin's *Noa Noa*, which described life in Tahiti. Hijikata's interest in the South Seas, however, had little to do with the picture Gauguin had painted of Polynesian life. His main interest was rather in the ancient roots of Japanese culture. In his diary, he wrote of his motive for going to the South Pacific: "While studying prehistory and cultural history, I came across writings on the natives of the South Pacific." It was in 1927 that he became interested in the South Pacific, especially the islands of Micronesia. He began reading extensively about the societies and cultures of the island peoples occupying the Pacific with Japan. In addition to books written by Japanese scholars, he also read J. G. Frazer's *Golden Bough* and W. J. Perry's *The Children of the Sun*. Of all this literature, he was most influenced by Matsuoka Shizuo's *Ethnography of Micronesia*.

Matsuoka's book was based on information he had collected on the various islands that he visited during his navy career, as well as on the official documents of Japan's South Sea government and on studies by European ethnographers. Matsuoka wrote, "The Japanese have been the Japanese since ancient times as have the South Sea people been the South Sea people since ancient time." His point was that it is a mistake to make superficial connections between the ancient customs of Japan and those of the South Sea islanders based on mere resemblances between them. Hijikata was inspired by Matsuoka's assertion that it is essential to gain an accurate, in-depth understanding of both cultures when making anthropological comparisons. Though he empathized with Matsuoka as an amateur ethnologist and archaeologist, Hijikata believed that there was a need to record the actual conditions of the life and culture of the South Sea islanders through more intensive field work than Matsuoka had been able to perform.

Through his research in the South Seas, Hijikata demonstrated that his interest in prehistoric culture was genuine and not just academic. In February 1929, under the heading "Why I want to go to the South Seas," he wrote in his diary: "The native customs and legends of the South Seas will undoubtedly be a source of endless interest to me." This passage reflects the image that Hijikata had formed in his mind of the South Seas through his reading, and it tells of the expectation mixed with a sense of uncertainty felt by the first Japanese to do a serious anthropological study of Micronesia.

One reason Hijikata chose Micronesia as the area for his research was his aversion to cold weather. In February 1928, he wrote a poem entitled "Island Floating in the Blue Sea." After a verse bidding farewell to Tokyo, he said:

My spirit longs for the perpetual summer of the South. A small island floating in the middle of the vast southern sea will give me a good life for while and then provide a quiet repose for my soul.

The latter wish was not to come true. Hijikata died in Tokyo in January 1977.

About to embark on his quest, Hijikata thus declared his intent to live happily with the people of the South Sea Islands in the shade of palm trees and tropical foliage. Hijikata embraced a dream of a primitive and nonliterate society, and in March 1929 he set out in search of it in the Micronesian islands of Palau.

Four days after arriving in Palau, Hijikata was able to make his own sketches

of the a bai pictures that had so impressed him in Matsuoka's book. The people of Palau had no written language, and these colorful pictures carved into the gables, beams, and rafters of the great meeting houses told the story of their history. These pictures had a tremendous appeal to Hijikata, who was intensely interested in pre-historic culture and primitive art. Thenceforth, he went out almost everyday to observe wooden images, traditional money, stone pillars, ruins and artifacts, and funeral sites in caves. He recorded the legends and myths narrated to him by Palauan elders. Hijikata learned about the quickly disappearing "old" Palau from a report by Augustin Krämer, a German ethnographer who had been in Palau in 1908, and something about archaeological methodology from Yawata Ichiro, a Japanese archaeologist who came to Palau to do research while he was residing there.

During the course of his investigations, Hijikata was dismayed to find that the people of Palau showed little if any interest in their history or traditional culture. He expressed a sense of crisis in his dairy, noting "A piece of the old Palau dies every time a Palauan elder passes away; within 10 years it will be almost impossible to know the old Palau." He began teaching the art of woodworking to boys in public schools at the request of the South Sea government. He instructed them in the use of *kaibakl*, or hand axes, in carving a bai pictures on thick wooden boards. These "story boards" made by his former students are now sold to tourists for hundreds of dollars each. He made the rounds of all the schools in Palau, spending a few months teaching at each one. During these sojourns, he lived with the villagers, experiencing firsthand their lifestyles and customs. These stays provided him with a perfect opportunity to ask the elders questions about the oral traditions surrounding their villages' stone images and other ancient remains and to learn from them the local myths, folk tales, and religious beliefs. He took careful notes, and in 1931 published his studies in an article entitled "The Palauan Viewed from Legends and Artifacts."

After living in Palau for two years and learning all he could about Palau's historic culture, Hijikata became interested in investigating another South Sea island where there remained a more primitive way of life than could be found in Palau. With the spreading influence of the Japanese colonial administration, some 5,000 Japanese had now settled in Palau. The Palauan people, forced to live under

colonial rule, had become what Hijikata viewed as "semi-civilized." This environment was quite different from the South Sea culture that he had envisioned.

In September 1931, Hijikata left Palau aboard a small schooner to search the outer islands of Yap for a "place unaltered by civilization where the islanders still live in the old way." On all the islands he visited, Hijikata was disappointed to find that Japanese merchants had made barter arrangements with the islanders to produce and supply copra. After sailing for 18 days, he arrived at Satawal, the final port on the supply route. After two months of living on the island, Hijikata wrote a letter to Japan, saying, "I and a student (a carpenter apprentice) who came with me are the only Japanese on the island. Not knowing the language yet, I cannot say that things are truly interesting. I am, however, enjoying being the most respected person on the island. I am satisfied with life here; eating food the womenfolk spend all day in making, plain though it is, under the blue sky with a breeze blowing through the palms, laughing at trivial things."

In another three months, Hijikata had gained sufficient proficiency in Satawalese to converse rather freely. He developed a phonetic alphabet for transcribing the nine vowels and 15 consonants of the Satawalese language, and used it to record folk tales in the people's native language. He spent seven years on this island of only six kilometers in circumference and 280 in population. He observed and took notes on the daily life of the islanders, their economic activities, important events, and religious ceremonies. He also acquired knowledge about diverse aspects of their culture, including the oral tradition of their matrilineal clan migrations, sibling relationships, extended family structure, kin organizations, social and political systems, land tenure and inheritance customs, food resource management, marriage, extramarital relations, divorce, taboos, and magico-religious practices and beliefs. Having completed most of his ethnographic studies, he spent much of his time during his last three years on the island in painting, making sculpture, and writing poetry.

Hijikata's research methods were essentially different from those of the many ethnographers who at the time collected and recorded information using only preconceived guidelines to fit certain conceptual schemes. He sought to understand other cultures by learning about their general frameworks through participant observation of the inhabitants' ordinary life and of frequently repeated events. He