The Other Islands of Aloha

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A STORM-BEATEN VESSEL arrived at the bustling seaport town of Chōshi in April of 1840, almost four months after having disappeared off the Japanese coast. The crew claimed that winter winds carried them to a lush island named Aina (Hawaiian *'āina*: land). Located somewhere to the south of Japan, this place was said to be inhabited by strange but amicable foreigners who wore grass hats and greeted one another by raising an arm into the air and saying arōha (H. *aloha*: hello).[1] The castaways' colorful tale naturally attracted interest. As was dictated by Japanese law, a series of interviews had to be conducted before the merchant sailors were allowed to return to their villages.[2] Government interviewers encouraged all six crewmen to recount their adventure, which they did with impressive detail. These interviews reveal that these Japanese castaways had drifted to the remote Bonin Archipelago, where a group of Hawaiians and a few Caucasians had established a colony ten years earlier.

Back in 1829, Richard Charlton, the first British consul to the Sandwich Islands (Hawai'i), organized people to colonize an uninhabited archipelago recently "discovered" in the northwestern Pacific by the Englishman Frederick William Beechey. News of the archi-

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pelago untouched by civilization and free of native princes inspired Charlton to do his part to further British interests.[3] He never received official permission or support from his government for the venture, but he hoped that someday his fellow countrymen would come to recognize the strategic importance of the Bonin Archipelago and properly incorporate them into the empire. Charlton's fledgling colony sailed aboard the *Washington* from Honolulu for the Bonins, where it arrived early in the summer of 1830. The following year Charlton sent another six females.[4] The total population of Hawaiians on the Bonins at this time numbered between two and three dozen. Women may have outnumbered men, and the Caucasian minority consisted of only five males from four different countries.[5] The archipelago's principal anchorage, Port Lloyd, became well-known to Western whalers who traded with the Hawaiian transplants to fill depleted food stores. For reasons that are not altogether clear, British interest in the Bonins quickly waned, leaving the colony to function as an independent settlement where Hawaiian customs and language held sway.

Although many Westerners visited the Bonin Archipelago in the 1830s and 40s, not one of them wrote a detailed description of its people and their daily routines. The colonists themselves largely remained silent as well, leaving scholars with little information on how the Bonin settlement functioned. For these reasons, the accounts left to us by the Japanese castaways are the best sources we have to understand the early years of the colony. This article seeks to expose an English-speaking audience to these primary-source documents, which tell the story of a cross-cultural encounter in 1840 between Japanese castaways and Hawaiian pioneers that sheds light on a long-forgotten episode in the history of the Hawaiian diaspora. Before proceeding further, some additional background information on the archipelago needs to be introduced.

The Bonin Archipelago, a collection of small islands and islets situated about 620 miles south of present-day Tokyo, was possibly sighted as early as 1543 by a Spanish explorer but was not landed on until 1670, when a Japanese boat laden with oranges was forced there by a storm.[6] Between these two noteworthy dates, in the late 1630s, a Dutch expedition happened upon the archipelago while searching for the fabled islands Rica de Oro (rich in gold) and Rica de Plata (rich in silver).[7] Japan's ruling Tokugawa Shogunate sent an

expedition to confirm the details of the orange merchant's story in 1675.[8] Despite this initial interest, the government's long standing ban on overseas travel (*kaikin,* a period that extended from the 1630s to 1850s) ensured that few Japanese would set foot on the Bonin Archipelago before the late nineteenth century. Genuine knowledge gained during the 1675 investigation was largely supplanted by fanciful stories in the years that followed, one of which is responsible for the archipelago's official appellation in Japan. Ogasawara Guntō, or the Ogasawara Islands, are named in honor of a samurai-explorer who never existed but is nonetheless credited with overseeing possession in 1593.[9] In 1876, Japan claimed sovereignty over the Bonins on the grounds of Ogasawara's alleged discovery and prior occupation. In reality, though, Japan had little to do with the archipelago before its annexation; the 1840 castaway accounts confirm this point, and, more importantly for this article, demonstrate the Bonin Archipelago's Hawaiian orientation, a fact downplayed or unintentionally minimized in later Japanese sources.

In December of 1839, six Japanese sailors (Captain Sannojō age 55, Helmsman Yūji 45, Wakichi 35, Sanzō 35, Tokumatsu 35, and Seikichi 25) entered the water looking to trade.[10] The *Nakayoshi Maru* twisted its way down the indented coastline of Japan towards a port in the eastern part of the country. Strong winds swept the ship away from the coast. The crew tossed cargo overboard to prevent their ship from capsizing. Wedged between the winds and waves the *Nakayoshi Maru* buckled under the strain, forcing the sailors to cut down the ship's only mast. Because of extensive damage, the *Nakayoshi Maru* drifted more than sailed, even after the seas had calmed. The men floated more than a month without seeing land. On 1 February 1840, Disappointment Island came into view. Never had a place been so aptly named. The small, bone-dry islet offered the sailors neither rescue nor nourishment. Some of the men consulted a divination device that instructed them to sail east.

The castaways believed that the gods had rewarded their faith, for a green archipelago appeared from over the horizon, after sailing east for a short period of time. Five days later, the *Nakayoshi Maru* dropped anchor in Port Lloyd, where the ship was protected from all winds and waves. The shape of the mountains and the color of the trees made it clear to the castaways that this place was beyond the confines of

FIGURE 1. The crew of the *Nakayoshi Maru* left Otomo for a port near the Naka river, where they intended to bring goods to market. Somewhere between these two points a storm separated the ship from the Japanese coast. After months spent on the Bonins, the crewmen returned to Japan, arriving at a well-known commercial city in the eastern part of the country called Chōshi. The principal anchorage of the Bonin (Ogasawara) Archipelago, Port Lloyd, is roughly 620 miles south of Tokyo (formerly called Edo) and 3,760 miles west of Honolulu.

Japan. Exotic flora and fauna were everywhere to behold: this is why today the Bonins are sometimes referred to as the "Galapagos of the Orient." Dusk approached, so it was decided to remain aboard until morning. Later that night they heard voices through the darkness. The castaways now knew this place was inhabited but they knew not by whom. It was not long before the answer arrived in two small boats. Four or five men approached the ship to greet the castaways. After an awkward exchange, the castaways realized that these people were not Japanese nor could they speak in an intelligible tongue.

The castaways resorted to gestures with some success after they failed at spoken communication. Captain Sannojō took the lead when he struck his stomach then collapsed to his side. While still lying down upon the deck he pointed to his mouth. This was the captain's way of communicating that he wanted food for himself and his men. In response, the islanders pointed to land and then cradled their bellies, an indication that the captain's plea had been understood. The islanders went ashore, returning sometime later with a pig and a duck that the castaways politely refused to accept due to their adherence to the Buddhists prohibition (as they understood it) on meat-eating. They later learned to decline generosity by saying naonao (English no, no) but here, during this first exchange, they did it with gestures. Again the islanders went ashore, returning this time with sweet potatoes that the Japanese found unusually large. Preparations began by boiling water.

Yelping dogs near the water's edge during their first night had led the castaways to imagine themselves on the outskirts of a settlement that had 400 to 500 households, but when they called on their hosts they learned how few dwellings there actually were and how wrong their assumption had been. What they found was not a bustling seaport town but a tiny collection of a dozen or so huts that, to the castaways, looked more like temporary shelters than homes. Other visitors to the settlement also failed to be impressed by the dwellings, one of whom wrote that these "snugly-thatched cabins are valueless."[11] These huts were of Hawaiian design but apparently not particularly good examples. The castaways said that all of the huts looked to be of similar construction. Each had a single door and a shutterless window. Crossbeams attached to wooden pillars firmly posted into the ground constituted a simple frame to which was secured thatched wall panels

and roofing. Doors did not slide sideways upon rails or in a groove as they do in Japan but instead hung on hinges that swung open and shut.

A few dozen men and women lived in these huts with a handful of children. Western sources place the resident population at about forty souls, nineteen of these being women according to William Samuel Waithman Ruschenberger who visited the Bonins in 1836.[12] In 1837, Captain Michael Quin counted only thirteen women, all of Hawaiian stock, and six children.[13] It is not entirely clear how many people lived in the Port Lloyd settlement in the 1830s and 40s. Equally unclear is how many people lived elsewhere on the Bonins. Moreover, sojourners staying in the archipelago at various times reached double digits. The population of long-term residents in 1840 was nevertheless quite small, probably numbering fewer than fifty people. When ships sat at anchor in Port Lloyd, the number of men roaming the settlement ballooned but likewise contracted once captains gave the order to depart. Had the castaways arrived in the Bonins to discover whalers, their repatriation interviews would have read quite differently.

Curious where he was, one of the castaways asked the name of the island. Perhaps he pointed downward while asking the question or touched the soil beneath his feet because an islander responded by saying Aina, the Hawaiian word for land or earth. As a result of this exchange, when the castaways returned to Japan they reported that they had stayed on an island called Aina by its inhabitants after first encountering the barren islet of Hōrokibōhō (word of unknown origin and meaning). The former arose from a misunderstanding and so too may have the latter. While the meaning of Hōrokibōhō remains elusive, it is perhaps safe to say that it was not the islanders' name for Disappointment Island. These were but some of the many such misunderstandings caused by the linguistic and cultural divide.

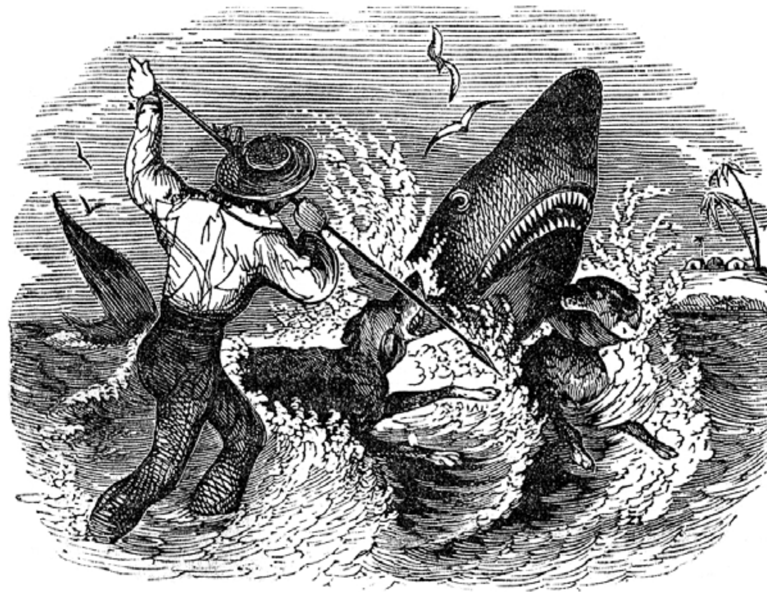
The castaways and their hosts shared company during the next two months, not infrequently over meals called kaukau (Hawaiian-Pidgin *kaukau*: food, to eat), during which they learned a great many things about each other. To begin with, the castaways quickly discovered that the meals themselves never seemed to be served without root vegetables. The island staple came in three varieties: white, red, and black, called respectively by the islanders owara (H. *'uala*: sweet potato), roshiu (E. radish), and iyama (E. yam).[14] Two types did not

disagree with the Japanese palate. According to Captain Sannojō, one of them tasted like the *satsuma imo* (a type of sweet potato). The iyama failed to be enjoyed. In fact, it appears to have been strongly disliked by the Japanese. Stripped of its skin after first being boiled in water, the iyama was then mixed with turtle oil and kneaded. Its preparation may have contributed to the unappreciated taste. This fare was typically scooped up with fingers to be eaten. Clearly, the castaways witnessed the preparation and eating of poi (a staple Hawaiian food made from the taro plant) or an improvised approximation. Taro was in cultivation on the Bonins according to a Western source from the late 1830s.[15] Somewhat similarly, the islanders mashed sweet potatoes that they mixed with saltwater in wooden bowls.

In addition to the above mentioned vegetables, the islanders grew two kinds of garlic, pumpkin, pepper (spicy with a rich taste), melon, onion, sugarcane, sorghum, and maize among other things.[16] The latter two crops had not been sown with human consumption in mind but as animal fodder. Ducks, dogs, pigs, and other domesticated animals roamed the settlement and the nearby bush. Fuha (H. *pua'a*: pig) outnumbered the other domesticated animals. One household alone owned as many as fifty or sixty of them. Not all of the animals had been raised for the dinner plate. Islanders kept pets: a long-tailed, fish-and-sweet potato-eating cat as well as several dogs. These dogs might not have raised an eyebrow if seen sniffing their way through the backstreets of Edo (modern-day Tokyo), for according to the castaways they bore a close resemblance to a Japanese breed. Islanders stirred their dogs to activity by saying jōhaihai (H. *ho'ohaehae*: bark) as they clapped their hands.

The depth of the relationship between the locals and their dogs escaped the castaways. These animals not only provided companionship and protection but assisted in wild goat and boar hunts. According to a visiting British naval officer, these dogs "are so well taught that they will at any time, under the direction of their masters, find, attack, and bring down the largest hog."[17] No small feat given the prey's power and disposition. Scarred bodies stood as evidence that these dogs did not always come out on top. Incredibly, it was reported that the dogs captured aquatic prey as well: an islander "had instructed the dogs to catch fish, and two of them will plunge into the water and seize a shark, one on each side, by the fin, and bring it ashore in

spite of resistance."[18] This line of text inspired a drawing in a popular 1840s adventure book published in Boston (see Figure 2). The size of the shark was not mentioned, giving the artist the freedom to draw it large. At first blush one might be inclined to write the shark hunt off as an absurd statement, but another late 1830s account mirrors it closely and provides qualifications: "[s]harks are numerous, but small: these the dogs frequently chase in shoal water, capture and drag high and dry on the sandy beach."[19] Captain Quin tells us that the dogs were a breed from Hawai'i.[20] How he came by this information he did not say, leaving us to wonder if these dogs had been related to the now extinct Hawaiian poi dog. With all the things that the castaways could have forgotten to mention but did not, how is it possible that all six men would have failed to recall the dogs' peculiar shark hunt if they had witnessed it? The goat and boar hunts failed to be reported, too, which suggests that the castaways never saw the dogs in action. One can only speculate as to the reason why.



Catching a Shark with Dogs.

FIGURE 2. Here we have a liberal use of artistic license. This fanciful rendition of the Bonin shark hunt appeared in an adventure book from 1842. Accuracy, it seems, was less of a priority to the publisher than marketability. Charles Ellms, *Robinson Crusoe's Own Book; or, The Voice of Adventure* (Boston: William C. Perry, 1842) 142.

The islanders fully utilized the seas around them by catching and collecting numerous edibles. Octopus, sea bream, and turtle were boiled in saltwater or broiled after first being sprinkled with salt. The local diet was salt saturated, at least that was the opinion the castaways held. They claimed that "even the well water was a bit salty." The bit about the well water either serves to support their claim of excessive salt consumption or shows that the castaways had a sense of humor. Salt aside, condiments, seasonings, and other necessities for fine cookery were in short supply or absent entirely. Food was plentiful though, allowing for three solid meals a day and snacks in between. The islanders were not without their treats. One of the local delights was hot sugar water, presumably extracted from sugarcane that was introduced to the islands a number of years earlier.[21] The castaways did not comment on its taste.

Islanders ate to excess, the castaways thought, due to the absence of rice in their diet. Exactly what was meant by this is unclear: had the locals fallen under the spell of gluttony or did they simply eat larger portions of meat, fish, fowl, and vegetables since rice was unavailable as a filler? The castaways did not see edible roots as possessing the same dietary status or purpose as rice. Spiritual and cultural associations aside, what rice was to the Japanese the edible root was to the islanders: a prized dietary staple. An important difference between roots and rice was that the rice plant required a communal effort to sow and harvest. This distinction did not go unnoticed by the castaways. When an individual or family wanted food, they would go to their personal plots to dig up sweet potatoes or other edible roots. It was an independent way of life, one that was quite different from Japanese communities of the day. The sort of self-reliance found in the Bonins would not have conjured up romantic images of "rugged individualism" in the castaways' minds, but instead served as an example of the settlement's primitive state. Japanese have a tendency towards collectivism, a cast of mind which might have led the castaways to view Bonin individualism as manifest inability rather than preference. Deep-rooted dietary habits and a morsel of gastronomic chauvinism influenced the castaways' opinions about agricultural matters as well as shaping their palates.

Shapes of other things affected meals as well, such as kitchenware. Cooking was usually done in iron pots, and although the selection

of available cookware was limited the islanders aptly made do. When utensils substituted for fingers and hands, food was eaten with a lone chopstick that had a piece of forked metal on its end. This "chopstick" did not grip food but instead impaled it. The common fork was also described as "a double-pronged brass spatula." The Japanese felt that local spoons did not belong on a supper table, claiming instead that these oddly formed instruments looked as if they were designed for dispensing medicine. Although utensils bordered on the bizarre from a Japanese perspective, other items in Bonin cookeries seemed normal enough to the castaways.

The castaways found the islanders to be a strange and unmannered people, but deeply appreciated their generous and friendly nature. Since Japanese custom and ritual did not hold sway over social interactions in this foreign land, the castaways often could not comprehend the actions of their hosts. Three examples may help convey some sense of this: (1) an islander read aloud from a book (probably the Bible) when taking walks with the castaways. This effort was likely intended for the spiritual benefit of the castaways, who did not know what to make of it; (2) the castaways thought that they may have witnessed some of the islanders singing but were unsure. In rural Japan the link between dancing and singing was a strong one, and since the islanders did not move their bodies while moving their mouths the castaways came away confused about what they had witnessed. Had they been treated to song or merely melodic speech, the castaways remained unsure; (3) an unsettling moment for some of the castaways occurred when a group of islanders looked over the distressed Japanese ship, or mokkō (H. *moku*: ship) as they called it. Instead of doing or saying something appropriate in accordance to Japanese sensibilities, the islanders just smiled queerly. Their strange expressions failed to inspire confidence in recent repairs.

The castaways assisted in the erection of a new hut, seeking to return some of the goodwill. Volunteering for this project also served to pass time, as did many other activities while they waited for the seasonal winds to change direction. Working together presented a perfect opportunity for technological exchange. Did the hut incorporate Japanese knowhow due to the castaways' participation? No one alive can answer that question, for the repatriation interviews neglected to give a detailed reporting of the topic and the hut has long since fallen

to the ground and out of the minds of men. Then there is the other side to the question: did the castaways return to Japan with some new skills? There is no evidence that they did, but one should bear in mind that it is the little things that take root and which often failed to get reported. Working together presented an opportunity for the castaways to size up their hosts. When helmsman Yūji picked up a log and muscled it over to the build site, he inspired some islanders to do the same. Their attempts to mimic his feat of strength met with failure. It was reported that it took two or three islanders to lift a log of equal size. This was all the proof that the castaways needed to brand their hosts as a feeble people. Western sources never directly address the matter of vigor, nor do they hint that the Bonin islanders lacked physical strength. Incidentally, there are other accounts of Japanese strongmen in repatriation interviews and seamen's stories, which invite speculation that Japanese sailors were either a brawny bunch or just liked to see themselves that way.

The huts, whatever the castaways might have thought of them, effectually fulfilled their primary purpose as protection from the elements—evidenced in the following decades by the islanders' slow acceptance of other structures. Clothing—the islanders' other protection against the elements—was simple, functional, and relatively uniform much like the huts one could say. Long cotton dresses with sleeves and frillery around the collar adorned women, while men wore trousers and button shirts that the castaways described as a "two-piece outfit divided at the waist." Shirts were made from the same persimmon and white colored fabrics as the women's dresses. A feature worth mentioning was the "pouch that was stitched" (pocket) into trousers, wherein the islanders kept tobacco and other sundries. Women's clothes appeared to have lacked this convenience, and this was not the only difference in apparel between the sexes. Women slipped into and out of their garments through the bottoms, as their style of dress did not unwrap like the Japanese kimono. Island dresses appeared, at least in part, to be made from layered fabric with hemlines like those on robes worn by Buddhist monks but minus the pleats. Since island women did not wear *obi* (a sash or belt), the castaways explained, their dresses lifted when the wind blew. The Bonins reached temperatures that encouraged clothing to be light and breezy, so modesty sometimes took a back seat to comfort in this archipelago. All the evidence

suggests that Bonin women stitched together and wore a variant of the *holokū*, a Hawaiian dress based on the Mother Hubbard introduced to Hawai'i by Protestant missionaries in the early nineteenth century.[22] The well-known *mu'umu'u* of today owes its origin to the older *holokū*. Clothes in the Bonins would not have seemed out of place in a Hawaiian port town such as Honolulu.

The castaways wrote about style and pondered over manufacture. They wondered, for instance, if local cloth was colored persimmon by using tree bark dye. Islanders had access to white cotton cloth from the Americas and nankeen, a pale yellow or buff durable cloth made from a type of yellowish cotton from the Nanking region of China that was popular at the time. Perhaps the latter was the persimmon-colored cloth that attracted the castaways' attention. Cotton sheets, as well as other fabrics, were purchased or bartered from passing ships. Bonin islanders might well have acquired dyed fabrics or even applied dyes themselves. There is a third possibility. Some clothes might have looked like they were colored with tree bark dye because they were tapa (*kapa* in Hawaiian), a cloth made from tree bark fibers that impressed early visitors to Hawai'i.

Clothing in Edo period Japan did more than protect from the elements, it conveyed social status in a highly stratified society. Someone's station in life was announced in their dress for all to see. Bonin clothing was functional and more or less uniform, which may have encouraged the castaways to view it as a settlement of social equals. Some islanders had more influence than others, but no one man had authority over his neighbors. The Bonins were largely lawless. Although the castaways never talked about this topic directly, they seemed to have some sense of the lack of communal pressures and social controls. Clothing can say much about a person or people, but only if you know the intricacies of local fashion—uniformity in dress conveys its own message.

Women twirled their hair up into a bun that was kept in place by tortoiseshell combs. When their hair was not done up, it was braided and allowed to hang freely. The castaways also noted that island women "kept their teeth white," meaning that they did not purposefully stain them black (*ohaguro*), a fashion most often associated with married townswomen in Edo period Japan. The men wore their hair short, cropped in the front and shaven in the back. A few men kept

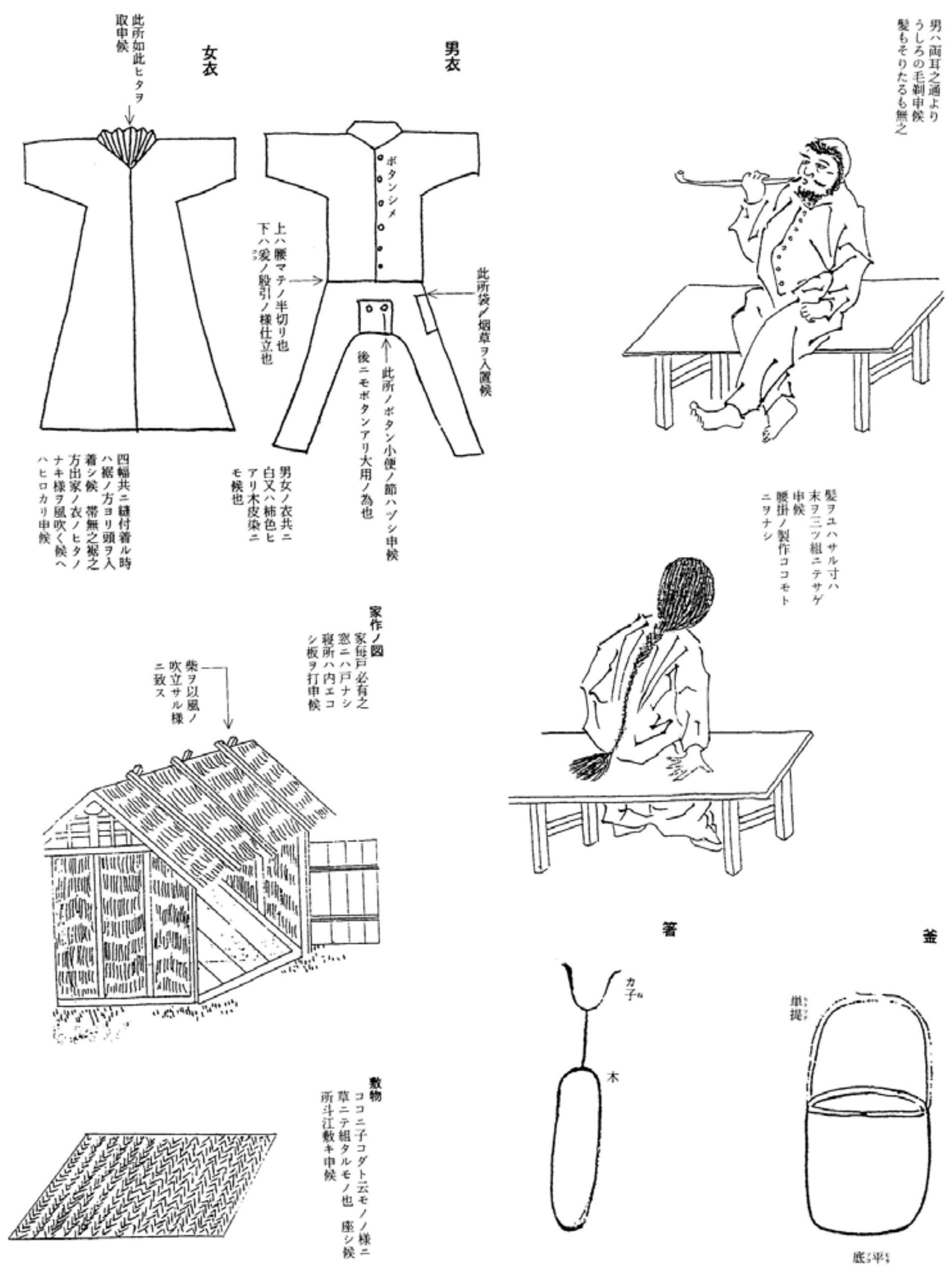


Figure 3. Sketches of the Bonin settlement. Courtesy of Rikuzentakata City.

Figure 4. More sketches of the Bonin settlement. Courtesy of Rikuzentakata City.

clean faces, while others did not. The comparatively modest stature of some islanders was offset by others who were outsized. Waistlines varied quite a bit, too. Men ranged from thin to fat. The women, on the other hand, all fit between comfortably stout and corpulent. Apparently, there was not a slim one in the group by Japanese sensibilities. Some island men scarcely ever took off their woven grass hats, called babare (H. *pāpale*: hat), even when indoors. Conversely, women wore nothing on their heads at all. It was thought that this difference in apparel explained why some of the men had fair skin whereas the women were uniformly dark. It did not seem to occur to the castaways that they were dealing with a multiracial male population. Most adults had "potato faces" (facial scarring), a sign that they had been stricken with smallpox, but the children of the settlement, all seven or eight of them, owned unblemished skin. Little else is known about the children except that the adults would scold them by saying aranboanharan (H. *hālana hoʻohālana*: quiet, be quiet).

Agents of the Tokugawa Shogunate often pressed repatriates (returning castaways) for information about the outside world. The government wanted news on the state of international affairs and intelligence on matters of warfare. These questions had added significance in this case because of the Bonin Archipelago's proximity to Japan. The castaways had nothing to offer their interrogators on the former and could only talk on a small aspect of the latter: weaponry. The settlement was without an armory and, to the castaways' surprise, not a single sword or fighting spear was on hand. The islanders did own some impressive firepower, however, which was used to drop a variety of birds. It was reported that the islanders kept pistols on their person at all times, for reasons that appeared to have more to do with hunting than personal protection.

In the way of tools, the islanders used big broad-axes and saws that "functioned backwards." To cut with haheyoro (H. *pahi olo*: saw), as they were called, "one must push it away from oneself and not pull towards" like proper saws. In other words, these saws cut on the push stroke. Carpenters' planes functioned similarly. A broad-bladed knife, or bāhei (H. *pahi*: knife) in the local tongue, was used to gut fish. This knife almost looked as if it could have come from a Japanese kitchen. A durable left-twisted rope made out of grass impressed the castaways who attempted, but failed, to imitate it. Hawaiian cordage was held

in high regard by New England whalers, which is why the durable manufacture found its way onto many ships.[23] Island buckets looked and functioned just like those of Japan, except the handles were made from metal hoops that had been halved. The larger of these was called bakete (H. *pākeke*: bucket) and the smaller keite (H. *pākeke*: bucket). Other implements and items were like their Japanese counterparts, these included borome (E. broom), nails, earthenware bowls, and needles.

Smoking was an island pastime. The castaways' repatriation interviews as well as contemporary Western accounts show that the tobacco leaf was held in high esteem. The residents of the Bonins purchased it off of passing ships and eventually someone planted its roots in the rich, volcanic soil. "Tobacco has been planted with such success that it is likely to give them a great deal of trouble from its spreading so fast," wrote Captain Quin who visited the Bonins just a few short years before the arrival of the *Nakayoshi Maru*.[24] According to Commander Blake who called on Port Lloyd in December of 1838, "I was informed that a small quantity of it [tobacco] was cured in leaf by the master of an American whaler, and that it proved extremely good."[25] Blake was of the opinion that there were markets for Bonin tobacco in New South Wales, Manila, and Russian settlements in and around the Pacific.[26] History would show that Blake's advice was not pursued, leaving tobacconists to ponder what might have been.

After mixing with oil into a green substance that resembled *mochi* (a rice cake made from glutinous rice), tahako (E. tobacco) or ibaka (H. *paka*: tobacco), the islanders used both designations for the leaf, was smoked or chewed. Men always seemed to have some stashed away in a pocket or two. When the urge came calling, they scraped off shavings from the *mochi* looking substance with a knife. These shavings were then rolled between fingers and placed into an earthenware pipe to be lit and enjoyed. Where there is smoke, the old saying goes, there is fire. Islanders struck fire with flint, making what they called paya (E. fire). Sparks ignited swatches of old, tattered fabric (perhaps char cloth) that had been placed into a wooden bowl. This was not a traditional Hawaiian way of starting fires, but was the flint and steel method introduced from the West. An islander repeatedly said paya while holding a smoking pipe called aibobaka (H. *ipu paka*: smoking pipe) in hand. Fire did more than allow the locals to light up, it per-

mitted them to illuminate their nighttime surroundings with candles housed in iron holders.

When an islander said ohaka ohaka (H. *'ohaka*: empty), a castaway showed his cup with some water in it. This prompted nods. The castaways came away believing that this was a local designation for water. In Hawaiian the word *'ohaka* means "empty." It appears that the islander was not referring to the substance inside the cup but to the cup's current state. The castaways also drank tei (E. tea) during their stay, which was brewed in an iron kettle called an aibohao (H. *ipu hao*: kettle).[27] Tei was served in a bora (H. *pola*: bowl), it was reasoned by the castaways, because the islanders' did not possess proper teacups. According to Captain Sannojō, the beverage "smelled like medicine." He was not particularly impressed with its taste either.

The settlement had about ten Hawaiian outrigger canoes. Each hull was a carved out log from which "two boards extended into a wing." Healthy arms behind wide wooden paddles pushed the canoes through both calm and rough waters. The islanders used their canoes for transportation, fishing, and turtling. Fishing by net, a common practice in Japan, was not seen by the castaways. The islanders were anglers who used rock weights and octopus bait. They were also adept turtle hunters who developed unique techniques. While fishing takes advantage of a prey's desire to feed, turtling exploits its desire to mate. Leashed females were used as live bait for males. Placed in an ideal spot, the temptress was left alone to do what comes naturally. An unpleasant surprise waited for males that mounted her. Islanders in their outrigger canoes snuck up behind distracted males. The islanders could celebrate their catch, but for male turtles it was a nasty end to a promising afternoon. A later observer of the Bonin turtle hunt said that unsuspecting males were hooked in a soft spot near the shoulder to render them helpless. He also claimed that shiny-shelled females made for better bait.[28] Islanders therefore may have polished to a shine the female's shell in order to increase her desirability.

Western visitors had not been mute on the topic of Bonin turtles. In fact, they wrote of it often, but few bothered to jot down the animal's habits or even details of procurement. We are left with mainly the most general of descriptions, and more than a few lines written by culinary discontent as sailors grew tired of the turtle's taste after eating it day in and day out. "We need not say that 'turtle soup' soon

became *no luxury* with us," one sailor wrote.[29] Fortunately for history, some writing arms extended beyond the stomach. Ruschenberger accompanied a turtling party in 1836. He described a hunt that did not use the turtle's reproductive drive against itself but was far more conventional. This may suggest that the peculiar but ingenious turtling technique witnessed by the Japanese was not uniformly practiced or was merely seasonal. Another possibility is that the technique detailed above was developed after Ruschenberger's 1836 visit but before the castaways arrived in 1840.

Islanders opened their homes, allowing hospitality to infringe upon privacy and unexpectedly permitting a foreign government (Japan's Tokugawa Shogunate) to peer into their domestic life. The latter potentiality surely never entered anyone's mind when they opened their doors to guests that winter. But what would history be without unsuspecting souls? According to the castaways, husbands and wives did not share the same bed, a raised earthen mound about two feet high with a grass mat placed on top. Hanging cotton sheets curtained off areas to ensure privacy, and perhaps to defend against the sun, insects, and mildly bad weather. Before falling asleep, the islanders wrapped a thin sheet around themselves. People rarely behave the same way with visitors present as they do when they are home alone, a convention no doubt to spare hosts from embarrassment and guests from intimate knowledge about their hosts. Bearing this in mind, couples sleeping apart and sectioning off their huts with hanging sheets may have been practices more common with guests present than without.

The huts had many alien items, the manufacture and purpose of which eluded the grasp of the castaways. Naturally, objects that could be easily understood received the most attention: furniture for instance. Benches like those found in Japan accompanied small tables called baba (H. *papa*: table). Islanders sat cross-legged on mats that resembled *nekoda* (a Japanese rush mat that is slept upon).[30] Used indoors and out, these grass mats resembled the tastefully woven mats produced in Hawai'i in the early nineteenth century. How these differed (or did not differ) from the sleeping mats was an unaddressed topic. In addition to dried leaves and grass, the islanders heavily relied on wood as a material to make articles of daily use. Although woodenware cluttered the tiny huts, lacquer was nowhere to be found. The

castaways probably found this peculiar, if not downright odd. Whatever the case, it was at least worth telling those back home about. In Japan, lacquer was ubiquitous and an important medium of creative expression: as China was to porcelain (china), Japan was to lacquerware (japan). Although the English term "japan" is scarcely printed outside of dictionaries today, it was once a term of common parlance.

Ink and brushes for calligraphy had not been seen either, but the islanders did possess a type of thick paper. Dip pens, inkwells, and other tools of the literate were not common to the Bonins at the time because of pervasive illiteracy. In the late 1830s, a mere three inhabitants could be found that were able to pen their own name.[31] Other Western sources continued to identify illiteracy as an island problem well into the latter half of the nineteenth century.

The ship was repaired prior to 9 April 1840, when castaways readied themselves for the dangerous return trip. They had waited a long time for the seasonal winds to change direction. Islanders came to see them off. Parting gifts for the crew of the *Nakayoshi Maru* included a tortoiseshell comb, a drawing (map), and a leather-bound book. The castaways drew lots from a divination device that instructed them to journey northward. An islander pointed to the direction of Japan and showed how many days it would take with his (or her) fingers, and accordingly the castaways arrived at Chōshi. The islanders appeared to know more about Japan than Japan knew about them. Most of the islanders' parting words made little sense to the castaways, who took the items and sailed away with winds pushing from the south.[32]

An island came into view in late April but the elements conspired against a landing. Nightfall arrived with a downpour and thick weather, concealing everything under a shroud of fog. It took two days for the sun to fight through the clouds, but when it finally did land was within reach. The very next day a fishing boat was hailed. As fortune would have it, the *Nakayoshi Maru* sailed all the way back to Japan where the incident was promptly reported to the proper authorities. Officials inspected the ship and confiscated the gifts that the crew had received. Edoya Bunjirō, a merchant in good standing, received some of the cargo he was owed. The men were detained pending an investigation, which was a financial burden because it dragged on for nine months. The investigators' inquiries dealt with the exceptional as well as the mundane, even tallying lost cargo. Since the ship had

been blown off course by northwesterly winds and returned home with winds from the southeast, it was reasoned by Sannojō that the odd island with its inhabitants lay to the southeast of Japan. The crew of the *Nakayoshi Maru* believed that about 370 to 380 *ri* (Japanese leagues) lay between the Bonins and Chōshi.[33] They also noted that the weather was unusually warm in the archipelago, for even though it was winter snow did not fall upon the ground. The middle of January on the Bonins felt, temperature-wise, like a Japanese May. According to the crew, they subsisted mainly on dried bonito shavings, seaweed, and fish since rice (or any other grain) was unavailable to them. The rest of their diet consisted of gifts from the islanders, who demonstrated themselves to be very charitable.

The castaways learned a number of words that surely made their stay more pleasant, most coming from the Hawaiian language: neho for "*niho* (teeth)," bō for "*poʻo* (head)," and so on. But a few, such as nōshi for "nose" and māfu for "mouth," are derived from common English words. Already by the 1830s, various loanwords had entered the Hawaiian language or became Hawaiian-pidgin. *Kaukau*, meaning both "food" and "to eat," is an example of the latter. It is commonly held that this versatile word is of Chinese origin: *chow-chow*, although competing explanations do exist. In addition to the Hawaiian language, various loanwords, too, sailed aboard the *Washington* in 1830 and found a home in the Bonins. In the nineteenth century, whalers roamed the Pacific in great numbers and Port Lloyd was a well-known port of refuge. The Bonin islanders not only traded goods and services with whalemen but words as well, forming the beginnings of a type of pidgin language unique to the Bonin Archipelago, a local tongue that was largely superseded by English, which itself was eventually superseded by Japanese. The evolution of language on the Bonins is a complex topic that goes beyond the scope of this article but which has been studied by Daniel Long in his book *English on the Bonin (Ogasawara) Islands*.[34] In 1840, however, this process had yet to displace the Hawaiian language. The following (Table 1) is a list of words that the castaways recalled during their interviews.[35]

Returnees to Japan were often fearful of the repatriation process, partly for legitimate reasons but also because of rumors of overly enthusiastic interviewers. In truth, some stressful interviews ended in accidental death or suicide; however, this could hardly be considered

Table 1. Words Reported in Use on the Bonins by the 1840 Castaways

Reported Word	Reported Meaning	Proposed Origin	Proposed Original Form
banebane	love affair	Hawaiian	*panipani* (coitus)
yō	male	English	you
mei	female	English	me
toohe	vagina	Hawaiian	*kohe*
raho	scrotum	Hawaiian	*laho*
ōre	penis	Hawaiian	*ule*
wayō	breast	Hawaiian	*waiū*
okore	buttocks	Hawaiian	*ʻōkole*
māfu	mouth	English	mouth
nōshi	nose	English	nose
neho	teeth	Hawaiian	*niho*
heiheiiyao	ear	Hawaiian	*pepeiao*
bō	head	Hawaiian	*poʻo*
bare	hand	Hawaiian	*pale* (to ward off)
neie	leg (or foot)	Hawaiian/English	*neʻe* (to step)/knee
oboo	stomach	Hawaiian	*ʻōpū*
teuha	one's back	Hawaiian	*kua*
imoyai	sleep	Hawaiian	*hiamoe*
kōkō	cook	English	cook
kaukau	meal	Hawaiian-pidgin	*kaukau* (food, to eat)
owara	white potato	Hawaiian	*ʻuala* (sweet potato)
roshiu	red potato	English	radish
iyama	black potato	English	yam
bakeke	dried bonito	?	?
fuha	pig	Hawaiian	*puaʻa*
tei	tea	English	tea
ohaka	water	Hawaiian	*ʻohaka* (empty)
owaka	"	English/Hawaiian	water/*ʻohaka* (empty)
oaka	"	"	"
ibaka	tobacco	Hawaiian	*paka*
tahako	tobacco	English	tobacco
aibobaka	smoking pipe	Hawaiian	*ipu paka*
hayahaya	fire	English	fire
paya	"	"	"
hoya	"	"	"
bakete	bucket	Hawaiian	*pākeke*

(Continued on next page)

Table 1. Words Reported in Use on the Bonins by the 1840 Castaways *(continued)*

Reported Word	Reported Meaning	Proposed Origin	Proposed Original Form
keite	small bucket	Hawaiian	*pākeke* (bucket)
borome	broom	English	broom
bō	gun	Hawaiian	*pū*
bāhei	knife	Hawaiian	*pahi*
bāhe	small knife	Hawaiian	*pahi* (knife)
haheyoro	saw	Hawaiian	*pahi olo*
bora	cup or bowl	Hawaiian	*pola*
baba	small table	Hawaiian	*papa* (table)
aibohao	tea kettle	Hawaiian	*ipu hao* (kettle)
hao	tripod kettle	Hawaiian	*ipu hao* (kettle)
mokkō	main ship	Hawaiian	*moku* (ship)
batsubatsu	cockboat	English	boat, boat
shubu	board a ship	English	ship
kanbashi	compass	English	compass
kaiton	captain	English	captain
maiten	crew title	English	mate
ikaha	wardrobe	Hawaiian	*kapa*
babare	woven hat	Hawaiian	*pāpale* (hat)
gama	sandal	Hawaiian	*kāmaʻa*
arōha	a greeting	Hawaiian	*aloha* (hello)
naonao	to decline	English	no, no
jōhaihai	excite dogs	Hawaiian	*hoʻohaehae* (bark)
aranboanharan	scolding a child	Hawaiian	*hālana hoʻohālana* (be quiet)
Hōrokibōhō	name of an island	?	?
Aina	name of an island	Hawaiian	*ʻāina* (land)

the norm. Naturally, castaways would lie to conceal wrongdoings and events that they thought might place them under suspicion. For the castaway account detailed here, deception is not merely a possibility or a hypothetical but a point of fact. The crew of the *Nakayoshi Maru* was not truthful with the investigators about all of the items they had brought back with them. In addition to the three items that the shogunate confiscated (a tortoiseshell comb, a drawing, and a leather-bound book) the men successfully smuggled into Japan some

cotton and linen cloth, a shell, two glass cups, a copy of *Conversations on the Bombay Mission*, and an ornamental hairpin, which could be seen at the Rikuzentakata City Museum in Iwate prefecture before it was destroyed by a wall of water on 11 March 2011.[36] The castaways kept tight-lipped about some aspects of their adventure, particularly during the first interview.[37] The relationship that the castaways shared with their hosts was obscured by the interview process and the sensibilities of the age. Racy vocabulary hints at contact more intimate than directly stated.

Japanese chauvinism most certainly colored the castaway's portrayal of the Bonins, but no more so than contemporary Western accounts. Despite all the cultural and linguistic hurdles that confronted the Japanese, the *Nakayoshi Maru* episode is by far the most revealing glimpse into the inner workings of the Bonin settlement. The castaways detailed various aspects of daily life that are found nowhere else: providing us with information on diet, dress, habits, turtling techniques, material culture, and much more. As was shown above, the Japanese are responsible for preserving in text some of the vocabulary of the long-since-forgotten local tongue. Western sources, as the reader has surely noticed, add context to the Japanese account as well as help to clarify points and provide elements of island life that went unnoticed or were misinterpreted by the castaways.

Nathaniel Savory, an American expatriate who lived on the Bonins from 1830 to his death in 1874 at the age of eighty, kept correspondences and occasionally wrote entries in a large dairy. The latter was destroyed by a tsunami that washed through Savory's home in 1872, a fact that historians bemoan.[38] His surviving papers (predominantly letters to family, friends, and sea captains with whom he did business) are a cornerstone of Lionel Berners Cholmondeley's *The History of the Bonin Islands*. Savory's papers are instructive but largely fail to illustrate the day-to-day activities of the archipelago's inhabitants, and when viewed collectively they give the false impression that the archipelago had a stronger affinity with Western culture than it did in reality. This point is made abundantly clear by the castaway narrative. The Hawaiian orientation of the colony in the 1830s and 1840s is lost in Savory's words. The narrow scope of his surviving papers is more responsible for this false impression than is bias or deliberate misrepresentation.

In the years following 1840, the Bonin settlement slowly grew by adding sailors from many nations and various stocks to its ranks. Adventurers, rogues, and kidnapped women also made their way to the Bonins and learned to call it home. As for the children born on the islands, they were the natural consequence of interracial unions. This made change inevitable. Although Hawaiian customs were eventually overshadowed, they remained an important cultural influence upon the Bonins well into the twentieth century. In 1876, Japan annexed the archipelago and the inhabitants became naturalized Japanese citizens not too long thereafter. Today, the descendants of the original settlers still live on these remote islands. Moreover, a few Hawaiian words continue to survive.[39] The repatriation interviews of the 1840 castaways give insight into a forgotten episode of the Hawaiian diaspora, and remind us that the race which first inhabited the Hawaiian chain gave birth to the pioneers who established civilization on the Bonins.

Notes

1 All words attributed to the Bonin islanders are underlined to make them more conspicuous to the reader, a strategy to avoid confusing them with words from other foreign languages that appear in this article. It is to be stressed, what the castaways thought they heard was not necessarily what was said. The relationship between the two groups was one of mutual misunderstanding, a typical first contact. English, Hawaiian, and Hawaiian-Pidgin equivalents given throughout this section are educated guesses.

2 For further information on the repatriation process, see Kobayashi Shigefumi, "Hyōryū to Nihonjin: Hyōryūki ni miru ibunka tono sesshoku," in *Hyōryū to hyōchaku: Sōsakuin*, ed. Tanigawa Ken'ichi (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 1993).

3 Alexander Simpson, *The Sandwich Islands* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1843) unnumbered pages in postscript.

4 Lionel Berners Cholmondeley, *The History of the Bonin Islands* (London: Constable & Co. Ltd., 1915) 16–20, 40–41; T. Horton James, "The Sandwich and Bonin Islands" (London: W. Tew, 1832) 9.

5 Ross H. Gast, *Bonin Islands' Story* (Monrovia: Monrovia News-Post, 1944) 11, 13.

6 Tabata Michio, *Ogasawaratō yukari no hitobito* (Tokyo: Bunken Shuppan, 1993) 14–15, 21.

7 Hyman Kublin, "The Discovery of the Bonin Islands: A Reexamination," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* vol. 43, no. 1 (1953):39.

8 Tanaka Hiroyuki, *Bakumatsu no Ogasawara* (Tokyo: Chūōkōronsha, 1997) 7–8.

9 Yamada Kiichi, *Nanshinsaku to Ogasawara Guntō* (Tokyo: Hōten Gijuku, 1916) 62–64. Despite Ogasawara Sadayori's non-existence, it is surprisingly easy to find his "descendants" throughout Japan today.

[10] This article is the product of blending several primary-source documents into a single narrative. The castaways' repatriation interviews as well as other relevant materials are reprinted in four collections: "Otomo-sen hyōryūki," in *Nanbu sōsho*, ed. Nanbu Sōsho Kankōkai (Tokyo: Rekishi Toshosha, 1971) 10:445–453; "Nakayoshi Maru hyōryūki," in *Rikuzentakatashishi*, ed. Rikuzentakatashishi Henshū Iinkai (Rikuzentakata: Rikuzentakatashi, 2002) 12:161–215; "Mutsu Otomoura-sen Ogasawaratō ni hyōchaku gaijin ijū no gairyaku gujō ikken zen," in *Zoku tsūshin zenran: Ruishū no bu*, ed. Tsūshin Zenran Henshū Iinkai (Tokyo: Yūshōdō Shuppan, 1987) 27:769–789; and "Ikokubu 4: Hyōryū" in *Tsūkō ichiran zokushū*, ed. Yanai Kenji (Osaka: Seibundō, 1972) 4:868–881. Unless otherwise stated, the following narrative comes from these sources.

[11] W.S.W. Ruschenberger, *Narrative of a Voyage Round the World, During the Years 1835, 36, and 37* (London: Richard Bentley, 1838) 300.

[12] Ruschenberger, *Narrative of a Voyage Round the World* 302.

[13] Michael Quin, "Notes on the Bonin Islands," *The Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, vol. 26 (1856):233.

[14] Iyama is the English word "yam," but the forthcoming description of this tuber's preparation suggests it was taro.

[15] Ruschenberger, *Narrative of a Voyage Round the World* 307.

[16] Quin, "Notes on the Bonin Islands" vol. 26, 234; Ruschenberger, *Narrative of a Voyage Round the World* 307, 310.

[17] Quin, "Notes on the Bonin Islands" vol. 26, 234.

[18] Ruschenberger, *Narrative of a Voyage Round the World* 308.

[19] Quin, "Notes on the Bonin Islands" vol. 26, 234.

[20] Quin, "Notes on the Bonin Islands" vol. 26, 234.

[21] Quin, "Notes on the Bonin Islands" vol. 26, 234.

[22] Mary Kawena Pukui and Samuel H. Elbert, *Hawaiian Dictionary* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1986) s.v. "holokū."

[23] The Japanese documents are too vague to be certain that the cordage was of Hawaiian type. The "grass" seen by the castaways might have been just that, or possibly something else which merely looked like grass. The renowned *olonā* shrub, with its strong bark fibers, was not native to the Bonins nor is there evidence to suggest that it was introduced either. Fibers from the Hawaiian *olonā*, or another hearty shrub, grass, or tree, could have been acquired from a passing ship but it is more likely that the islanders would have used a local substitute.

[24] Quin, "Notes on the Bonin Islands" vol. 26, 234.

[25] P.I. Blake, "Report from the Officer Commanding *H.M.S. Larne,* on the Occasion of Her Visit to the Bonin and Caroline Islands" 1838–40, Photographic reproduction housed in the Hawaiian and Pacific Collection, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

[26] Blake, "Report from the Officer Commanding *H.M.S. Larne,* on the Occasion of Her Visit to the Bonin and Caroline Islands."

[27] The islanders acquired tea from passing ships. The young leaves of an endemic tree, the Cinnamomum pseudo-pedunculatum Hayata, have been known to

find their way into teapots, and the taste is said to resemble black tea. Toyoda Takeshi, *Ogasawara shokubutsu zufu* (Kamakura: Abokkusha, 2003) 44.

[28] Yamagata Ishinosuke, *Ogasawaratōshi* (Tokyo: Tōyōdō, 1906) 514.

[29] Jones, *Life and Adventure in the South Pacific* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1861) 240.

[30] *Nekoda* is known today in Japan as *negoza*.

[31] Ruschenberger, *Narrative of a Voyage Round the World* 302.

[32] It might be more accurate to say that the castaways did not understand the actions of their hosts.

[33] The Japanese unit *ri* was not uniformly understood by Edo period (1603–1868) seamen. The 1840 castaways may have held the opinion that one degree of arc was roughly 43 *ri*.

[34] In addition to his recent book written in English, Daniel Long has authored many works in Japanese on related topics.

[35] A list of words reported in use on the Bonins was compiled by Nobushima Fuyuo in his article "Ogasawara shotō senjū imin no kotoba," *Taiheiyō Gakkaishi,* vol. 19 no. 3–4 (1997):77–80. Daniel Long added his own insights to Nobushima's list in *English on the Bonin (Ogasawara) Islands* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007) 53–54. We have borrowed some of their conclusions and part of Dr. Long's layout. Some of the reported words contain an "o" that may have sounded more like "wo." For example, the castaways might have pronounced owaka as "wowaka." One additional point on pronunciation needs to be made, "wiyama" is possibly closer to the original pronunciation than iyama. The following etymologies are conjecture and should be regarded as such. We would like to thank Dr. Long for his assistance, as well as Dr. Puakea Nogelmeier and Dr. Albert J. Schütz who provided help in 2006.

[36] Tabata, *Ogasawaratō yukari no hitobito* 65–68; Ishizu Michiyasu, "Otomo-sen hyōryūki (sono 2)," *Ogasawara*, 25 Mar. 1988. We would like that thank Mr. Tomita Masuo for providing us with pictures of these items.

[37] It was a common practice for Tokugawa officials to conduct repeat interviews. The 1840 castaways were interviewed multiple times.

[38] Cholmondeley, *The History of the Bonin Islands* 125–126.

[39] For details on this point, see Daniel Long and Hashimoto Naoyuki, *Ogasawara kotoba shaberu jiten* (Kagoshima: Nanpō Shinsha, 2005).