

Introduction

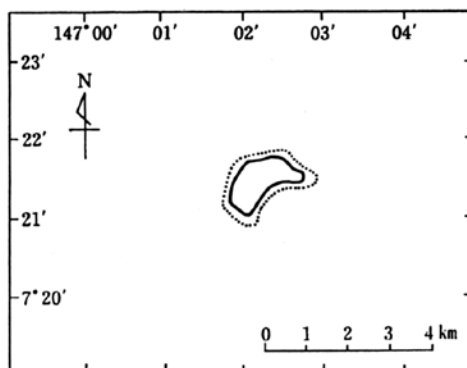
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Introduction

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Satawalese is the language spoken on Satawal Island (N 7°21', E 147°02'), which forms a part of the Central Caroline Islands, and is located about 1,000 km east of Yap and 500 km west of Chuuk (formerly Truk) [Map 1]. It is part of the State of Yap, which is one of the Federated States of Micronesia. It is a raised coral island surrounded by a fringing reef that averages 50 m in width, with a circumference of about 6 km and a surface area slightly smaller than 1.2 square km [Map 2]. The average height of the island is 4 m. The population of the island was recorded in August 1978 as 492, with 86 households. In addition to those who live in Satawal, there is a Satawalese community in Yap, and also in Saipan forming part of the Saipan-Carolinian community¹⁾.

The main data of this dictionary are based on cultural terms recorded by a team of three Japanese cultural anthropologists (AKIMICHI Tomoya, ISHIMORI Shuzo, and SUDO Ken'ichi) who stayed on Satawal in two separate periods, June–September 1978 and June 1979–January 1980. It would have been difficult for non-Satawalese to elicit traditional knowledge that had been considered to form a part of the property of each clan and had been handed down only to selected individuals to be kept secret by them. However, the late 70's was a time when, as a result of the introduction of Christianity (1952) and also of westernization, young people on the island were no longer interested in learning such esoteric, “non-practical” knowledge. It was obvious to everyone that much of their inherited knowledge was fast disappearing as older members of the clans passed away. Many words had



Map 2 Satawal Island (Sudo 1979a: 253)

already fallen out of use and were not understood by most of the people. For this reason, the anthropologists report, senior member(s) of the community were happy to teach them previously secretly-kept knowledge that they considered precious so that it might be documented and not lost forever.

After the researchers returned to Japan, they initiated a dictionary project in the hope that the results of their research would be documented in a form that would be accessible to the people in Satawal, and by this means people in the community would have access in the future to the traditional technical terms that form part of their cultural heritage.

Background

The first part of the compilation of the dictionary was conducted as a part of an inter-university joint research project at the National Museum of Ethnology (Japan) with ISHIMORI as the principal investigator. IT specialists at the Museum provided technical support. Culturally significant terms collected by AKIMICHI, ISHIMORI and SUDO during their fieldwork on the Island formed the base for the dictionary. These included the names of fish and plants, words expressing concepts related to supernatural-beings, navigational terms, archaic forms occurring in *roong* (spells), and the names of the parts of a canoe and of a house. The number of words in the original collection is reported to have been about 10,000 (Ishimori 1980). SUGITA Hiroshi, one of the authors of the Trukese-English Dictionary (Goodenough and Sugita 1980, 1990), was invited to cooperate, and conducted a preliminary grammatical and phonological analysis of the language, the details of which appear in Sudo and Sauchomal (1981). The orthography proposed by SUGITA at that time was used for spelling words for entry into the dictionary and was also used by the anthropologists in later publications describing various aspects of Satawalese culture and society. Sabino SAUCHOMAL, a native speaker of the language, was invited to stay in Japan for one year (1981–1982) to participate in the compilation of the dictionary, and working with SUGITA, added additional entries and information. Unfortunately, however, various factors hindered the progress of the work in the subsequent two decades, and the original materials were never published.

The data were “re-discovered” in 2005 by KIKUSAWA, when she joined the Museum. Having her as an in-house Oceanic language specialist and the collaboration of REID as an English native-speaker lexicography specialist enabled the restart of the dictionary project. Examination of the earlier work revealed that work on the dictionary had stopped at the stage where the different sets of information collected by the five original researchers had been combined into a single file. As a result, it was often found that a word was not only duplicated, but

sometimes appeared with three, four, or even five separate entries, each presenting slightly different definitions and information from the others. Thus, the first task for the new compilers was to combine each group of overlapping entries but without losing essential information. Much of this task was taken care of by SUGITA. Meanwhile, two major decisions needed to be made; one regarding the orthography, and the other regarding the presentation of the definitions of cultural-specific terms, the details of which appear below.

Once the basic direction of the compilation of the data was agreed upon, the definitions of most of the entry words were revised and a finderlist was compiled. Culture-related entries were cross-referenced to the Cultural Notes where the relevant indices are found. Some of the grammatical information that appeared in the original data but explanations for which were not available unfortunately had to be excluded from the dictionary. Other grammatical information, such as an indication of word class was kept in a simplified form. A bibliography of publications (both in English and Japanese) on Satawalese culture and language was compiled to be included. The final manuscript was then checked by the three original compilers for accuracy. Aspects of these processes are reported in some detail in Kikusawa 2010.

Orthography

The original orthography used in the dictionary was a kind used for ‘scholarly writing,’ in which an attempt was made to provide a phonemically accurate representation for each term, especially in distinguishing between long and short vowels. However, orthographic questions had been the source of on-going discussion and experimentation for many years so that the choice of an orthography for the dictionary needed to be re-examined and one that would be acceptable to Satawalese speakers chosen²). Based on discussion between SUGITA and Richard LIGITEIWEI from Satawal, it was decided that changes to the original orthography needed to be made so that it would be closer to that currently in use by Satawalese speakers. The decision was made to replace all accented vowels (*á, é, í, ó, ú*) with digraphs (see the Orthography section), and to disregard their vowel length distinctions. The glides /y/ and /w/, which are used inconsistently in Satawalese writing, would be maintained in the new orthography³).

In order to retain information as to vowel length, it was decided that earlier spellings which distinguished vowel length, when different from those shown in the headword, should also appear in the dictionary, but should be listed under each entry as alternate spellings (*AltSp*:).

There were other problems related to the spelling and the documentation of the forms of words that needed to be resolved. These were mainly related to the fact

that many words supposedly forming part of the original file were missing from the recovered data, and these had to be re-entered based on materials published by the anthropologists in which the terms had been recorded. The earliest publications, however, used inconsistent spelling systems so that in many cases it was difficult to determine what the correct form should be. It was decided to enter such forms as they appear in the original sources except that accented vowels (and accented *ʻ*) were converted to the new orthographic system. These forms, for which there were no equivalent entries found in the original files, are identified with a subscript 'x'.

Other inconsistencies in the data appear to be due to generational differences. SAUCHOMAL, one of the compilers, was then a young Satawalese man, while the original data were collected from senior members in the community. There is some indication also that there were some regional variants. A note was found in the original data claiming that certain lexical differences are found between the East and West parts of the island. Stylistic variation, particularly in the use of /l/ and /n/ may also account for some of differences in the spelling of words (SUGITA pers. comm.)⁴⁾. In addition, some compound words appear to be represented as citation forms, while others are represented in natural speech forms. This is particularly true with compound words where two words are connected by a genitive marker *-n* (or its variant *-y*). However, these have been kept as they were recorded⁵⁾.

Ideally, in a dictionary, entry forms are represented with a consistent spelling system and have been double-checked for their accuracy with native speakers. However, time, funds and available personnel have made it impractical to achieve such a goal. The options are to leave the data sitting unpublished, or to publish it in an imperfect state. We believe that the latter option is the only appropriate one for this dictionary, so that the extensive research of the original compilers can finally see the light of day, and that Satawalese people can eventually have access to some of the wisdom and knowledge of their forefathers.

Cultural Notes

This dictionary contains a section called "Cultural Notes," which is a summary based on the papers published by the anthropologists reporting the results of their fieldwork (most of which are published in Japanese) and has been compiled by KIKUSAWA with the help of SUDO and Lawrence A. REID, for the following two purposes. First, it provides lists and figures to supplement the Finder list. In this dictionary, reflecting the specialization of each of the compilers, many culture-specific terms and place names are recorded. These terms are more easily accessed when listed according to the categories appearing in this section, rather than being scattered throughout the Finder list with non-specific English glosses. Second, this

supplement is intended to provide access to relevant information that is available in Japanese, but which is not generally available to non-Japanese speakers, and which cannot easily be contained in the definitions provided for many of the cultural terms. The Japanese academic publications from which these notes have been abstracted document a great deal of cultural information that was known on Satawal in the late 70's and early 80's, but much of which has now disappeared.

It is hoped that this supplement will serve as a navigator for those who are interested in exploring the cultural treasures from a small coral island in Micronesia.

Notes

- 1) A dictionary (Jackson and Marck 1991) has been published on the Saipan-Carolinian language, closely related to Satawalese. Saipan-Carolinian is the language spoken by people who now live in Saipan but originate from various areas of the Central Carolines. The community of about 5,000 people (as of the early 80's) is considered to have developed as a result of a massive migration that took place after a typhoon (or a sequence of them) struck the Central Carolines, resulting in the land being contaminated with seawater and subsequent widespread famine. Half the population of Satawal is said to have also migrated there, and people today still maintain clan and lineage relationships with those in Satawal Island and relatives visit each other. The migration is believed to have taken place in 1815 (Ellis pers.comm., Sudo 1985a: 849; cf. Ellis 2007).
- 2) According to Roddy (2007: 35-43), there are at least six different orthographies used for writing the language in published materials, and a variety is found in individual's writings as well.
- 3) Sauchomal points out that it is more appropriate to use *y* in the initial position of proper nouns only (2018, pers.comm.). However, the original spelling system has been kept in this version.
- 4) Note also, however, "Though [l] is not a phoneme in the language, Satawalese use *l* stylistically in writing personal or place names containing phonemic /n/." (Roddy 2007: 43). According to Sauchomal (pers.comm.), it is commonly known that the spelling systems used on nearby islands have had some influence. In islands to the east of Satawal, which are part of Chuuk, only *n* and not *l* is used, and in those to the west of Satawal, which are part of Yap, *l* is used most of the time instead of *n*.
- 5) Data in the earlier file were gone through by SAUCHOMAL and the spelling was changed according to his pronunciation. In addition, many of the names of things that had been originally recorded as a single word were re-written as a sequence of words in this process. However, the spelling of forms taken from published materials, were kept as recorded by the authors, with modifications to match the orthography adopted for the dictionary.