

China Capital to Yap Island

Purpose of the large-scale development



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The name of Yap Island reminds me of those islands where the Japanese army deployed during the WWII. Now I heard the island has become a diver paradise. To go there from Japan, it takes only 1.5 hour by plane after transiting in Guam.

The peaceful island of about 100 sq Km has long been known for the use of stone money, too. However, since Chinese companies are planning to develop the island into a big resort, it is going to experience a massive change soon.

Development of the Chinese, by the Chinese, for the Chinese

The development's China side subject is Exhibition & Travel Group (ETG), which head office is in Chengdu, Sichuan. Mr. Deng Hong, the chairman of ETG, went to Yap and exchanged a MOU with the local representatives on January 12 of this year.

According to the report, the plan intends to build 10 hotels with total of 4000 rooms, 15 golf courses and several casinos to begin with. There is also an intention to increase the number of the hotel rooms up to 20,000 in the future.

Although the MOU includes the item which determines to keep the tradition and nature of the island, it also states that ETG can carry out "full-scale" development and the local representatives support it to the largest extent.

By 2015, or by the end of the first term of the plan, Yap Island, smaller than Shodo-shima, will transfigure the form completely, if everything goes smoothly.

Although Mr. Deng Hong may seem to extend the airfield to accept direct flights from Japan and South Korea, when the profit of such a mega enterprise equal to hiring a complete island is considered, it is clear that Chinese people to come in a mass is surely being counted on. Unlike Guam, if it happens in Yap, Chinese visitors will easily get the number one position from the start. It will become the development of the Chinese, by the Chinese, for the Chinese.

Mr. Deng Hong is a famous millionaire in a collection of luxury cars, such as Lamborghini, and a frequenter of a ranking list of millionaires of the world. "Which would you choose between a friend and politics?" When he was asked by a U.S. reporter, he answered "politics (= party)" with no hesitation. The close relations with the party would have helped him in various scenes, including building his individual assets presumed to be hundreds of billions of Japanese yen (*translator's note: several billions of US\$*).

In 2003, Mr. Deng Hong cleared the woods in Aba (Ngawa) Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture of Sichuan, and invited the InterContinental Hotel. Presently, he is building a large-scale hotel in Lhasa, a holy place of Lamaism, also with the InterContinental Hotel group. Because the former development is close to the area designated as one of the UNESCO World Natural Heritages Sites, the impact to the environment and degradation of the site is feared. The latter can be considered as a typical project of the secularization and Han race-ization of Tibet. Therefore, it is natural to figure that both moves would have been carried out backed by the invisible intention of Beijing.

Plans of Mr. Deng Hong is not only in Yap, he is also about to start hotel construction in Samoa, where a MOU was already signed and exchanged. Fiji where Chinese influence is remarkable is suitable for a navy port of call in the halfway point of the route which connects South America to China (see my article in November 2010 issue). Samoa is located a little east-northeast of Fiji, but it can be considered within the same range.



Yap Island locates on the 2nd Island Chain

US Navy 2nd Island Chain Map (Translator's addition)

On the other hand Yap is located on the "2nd Island Chain" which China says, in the position which can check the US Navy going to the Philippines from Pearl Harbor. This is why during WWII, the Japanese Imperial Navy made the anchorage in Chuuk Lagoon.

The methodology of dividing the Western Pacific Region which China desires has now become vaguely visible. It would drop a large amount of capital in the form of a private sector on to the small untouched island, and then would let the Chinese population grow intensively. This could be the strategy of politics and military osmosis. With great concerns it focuses on Micronesia that is now under protection of the U.S. This area was called "Nanyo-Gunto" during the Japanese occupation.

Yap Island is in Federated States of Micronesia, an independent nation. The President, Mr. Emmanuel MORI, is a Japanese origin and a great-grandchild of Mr. Koben MORI from Kochi who became the model of the story of "Boken Dankichi". However, Japan has been assisting only with very limited aids and from time to time invites a few leaders of the nation for meetings ("Island Summit" to be held this year). The U.S. in spite of its role as the protectorate, has long left jurisdiction over this area to the Department of the Interior instead of the Department of State, as same as the National Park Services, etc.

Well, China has really poked the weak point. There is a motion which aims at independence in Yap. If it comes to the reality, Beijing will recognize it first of all.



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Translator's Note:

1) This article appeared on a Japanese monthly magazine "WEDGE" May 2012 issue and was translated in Yap by Mitsue Yasui (Su). The original is listed at <http://wedge.ismedia.jp/articles/-/1859>

2) Mr. Tomohiko TANIGUCHI's profile found on the Internet is as follows;

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(Past) Deputy Press Secretary, Deputy Director General for Public Diplomacy, Speech Writer at Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan / Ex-Officio member at The Fulbright Commission / Senior Writer at Nikkei Business Publications / CNAPS Visiting Fellow at The Brookings Institution / Visiting Fellow at Shanghai Institute for International Studies