Haruo Furukawa

Beginning in 1893, with his first short-story "Typhoon off the Coast of Japan" (Nov. 12, 1893), Jack London wrote at least six short stories ["Typhoon off the Coast of Japan" (1893), "A Night's Swim in Yeddo Bay" (1895), "Bonin Island" (1897), "O Haru" (1897), "In Yeddo Bay" (1902)] based on his experiences aboard the Sophia Sutherland from January 20 to August 26, 1893. This seal-hunting voyage took London from San Francisco to the Bonin Islands and north to the waters off northern Japan and the Bering Sea. However, this first encounter with Japan, left Jack London with detailed facts and impressions that often appeared in his writings throughout his career.

Visiting Japanese Family First Time

In 1895, Jack London wrote a short story, "Sakaicho, Hona Asi and Hakadaki". Ever since I read this story, the title has bothered me. Each word of the title sounds like a Japanese word; however, except for the word "Sakaicho" the other words are evidently misspelled and meaningless.

"JOCK, you likee come see my house?--not far--you come see my wifee-come 'chopee-chopee'--allesamee good 'chow.' "... "And

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this unexpected invitation of my jin-riki-sha man was most opportune. And, of course, I accepted,"

Sakaicho drove the jin-riki-sha, with London in it, to his house in a narrow alley. He described the interiors of an insignificant little house which a foreign visitor had rare opportunity to visit in 1893.

The whole side of the main, or sitting-room, facing the alley, was open, to admit the cooler air from without. To my Occidental eye it seemed a very bare little room. The floor was covered with thin, un-padded mats of rice straw, on which, beside a little table eight inches high, with a half-hemstitched silk handkerchief stretched across it, lay a woman in sound slumber. It was his wife.

<u>Sakaicho</u>'s wife, <u>Hona Asi</u>, prepared a Japanese dinner while Sakaicho entertained his guest with Japanese tobacco which London described curiously.

"...with deft fingers I rolled the little pellets of fine-cut native tobacco, inserted them in the rectangularly-bent head of the slender pipe, and then ignited them, with a quick puff at the little coal of fire in the hilbachi (hibachi). A couple of inhalations of the mild, sweetflavored herb, emitted through the nostrils in true Japanese style, and the thimble-like bowl is emptied. Then, with a quick, sharp tap on the hilbachi, the ashes are expelled and the operation of filling and

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lighting repeated."

According to Jack London, Hona Asi was a typical Japanese wife who served them and did not eat with them. London describes how Hona Asi "removed the covering from a round wooden box, and with a wooden paddle ladled out two bowls of steaming rice, while Sakaicho uncovered the various bowls on the table and revealed a repast fit for the most fastidious epicure." After the meal, Hona Asi served a glass of ice cream, bought from the little shop around the corner, to entertain London.

... There was bean soup, boiled fish, stewed leeks, pickles and soy, raw fish, thin sliced and eaten with radishes, <u>kurage</u>, a kind of jelly-fish, and tea. The soup we drank like water; the rice we shoveled into our mouths like coals into a Newcastle collier; and the other dishes we both helped ourselves out of with the chopsticks, which by this time I could use quite dexterously. Several times during the meal we laid them aside long enough to sip warm saki (rice wine) from tiny lacquered cups."

London expressed his joy at finding the goodness of human love, from this experience, and wrote, "As a rule, I had found the Japanese a shrewd, money seeking race; but when, as a matter-of-course, I took out my purse to pay the reckoning, Sakaicho was insulted, while, in the background, Hona Asi threw up her hands deprecatingly, blushed, and nearly fainted with shame." This was their "treat" which they wanted me to accept, "though I knew they could ill afford such extravagance." London was pleased to accept their generosity. In the Bonin Islands, London had observed the Japanese shrewdly raised prices to gain as much wealth, as they could, from the foreign sailors.

Sakaicho told London of his youth; his struggles, and his hopes and ambition, with which London was familiar. Sakaicho and his wife were sacrificing themselves to send their son, <u>Hakadaki</u>, to school in America.

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London spent one week visiting Tokio and Fujihama (Tokyo and Fujiyama). On the last day ashore, London could not find Sakaicho, and he hired a jin-riki-sha into the country for a passing glimpse of the native graveyard. He recognized Sakaicho at the graveyard. The hired jin-riki-sha man told London, "a destructive fire had swept through Sakaicho's neighborhood, burning his house and suffocating his wife and child." The fire had started from 5th Street of Motomachi on June 17th and destroyed more than 1600 homes in Yokohama, according to Nakata (p. 6). It seems that London returned to Yokohama from his one week trip, after the fire and wrote the graveyard scene. London completed the story with his eulogy saying, "And, though five thousand miles of heaving ocean now separate us, never will I forget Sakaicho and Hona Asi, nor the love they bore their son Hakadaki."

Hona Asi from "Donan-shi"

What is the significance of the title of "Sakaicho, Hona Asi and Hakadaki"? Sachiko Nakata, in her <u>Jack London and the Japanese</u>, (Yamanashi ken: The Central Institute Orinji Zen Monastry, 1986. p. 2) explains the significance of the first word of the title. Nakata says, "the name, <u>Sakaicho</u> seems to be derived from the name of the town, a block near the wharf of Yokohama" (p. 5). The name of his son, <u>Hakadaki</u> can easily be identified as "Hakodate," which is the name of the harbor in Hokkaido where the <u>Sophia Sutherland</u> might have called at, after three months of seal-hunting somewhere in the waters off northern Japan and the Bering Sea, before sailing for Yokohama.

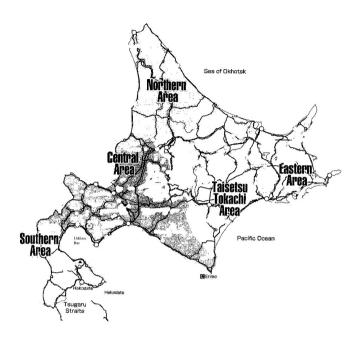
John Perry, in his <u>Jack London: An American Myth</u> said, "London often used the names of real people, places, and things in stories . . . giving his fictions more creditability" (p.33). The name "Hona Asi," therefore,

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must also have a source to consider. As it was shown before, London's spellings in regard to Japanese words tended to be misspelled, such as hilbachi (hibachi), Fujihama (Fujiyama or Fujisan), Tokio (Tokyo).

What is the significance of the name "Hona Asi"? It is interesting to note that London recorded the date and location of the Sophia Sutherland in his essay Typhoon off the Coast of Japan? It says, "... so was our schooner Sophia Sutherland (see Note 1) hove to off the Japan coast, near Cape Jerimo, on April 10, 1893." "Cape Jerimo (Erimo-misaki in Japanese)" is about 205 kilometers northeast of Hakodate. In 1893, Hakodate was one of only three harbors in Japan open to foreigners; Yokohama and Nagasaki were the other two.

Since the names of Sakaicho in Yokohama and Hakodate in Hokkaido were simply or intentionally misspelled, "Hona Asi could be a name of a place either close to Sakaicho or Hakodate. A brochure published by the Hokkaido Visiting Information Bureau at the archives of the old Hokkaido Capitol in Sapporo solved the problem. The map of Hokkaido was divided into 5 areas: "Do-hoku 道北" Area (Northern Hokkaido), "Do-to 道東" Area (Eastern Hokkaido), "Do-o 道央" Area (Central Hokkaido), "Taisetsu • Tokachi 大雪 • 十勝" Area, "Do-nan 道南" Area (Southern Hokkaido). "Donan-shi" and "Honashi" have a similar ring to them. This is the sound of the name London might have remembered. "Donan-(shi)", where Hakodate is located, might have been spelled or pronounced "Hona Asi." (See Appendix A).



The Sophia Sutherland might have encountered two typhoons

The <u>Sophia Sutherland</u> left Japan on June 18 or 19, 1893, if London's record in the story of "Sakaicho, Hona Asi and Hakadaki" was accurate, and the schooner dropped anchor in San Francisco on August 26, 1893 (Kingman, p. 46). On November 12th, forty-seven days after he returned to Oakland, London completed his essay "Story of a Typhoon off the Coast of Japan." He entered a short story contest sponsored by the <u>San Francisco Call</u> and won the first prize. This was London's first writing in the <u>San Francisco Examiner</u> (Kingman, 1992, p. 6).

Seventeen year old Jack London signed up as an able-bodied seaman (see <u>Note</u> 2) of the <u>Sophia Sutherland</u>. "An eighty-ton (see <u>Note</u> 3) three masted sealing schooner, built for speed. She carried an enormous spread of canvas, over a hundred feet from the deck to the truck of the maintopmast," according to Irving Stone's Sailor on Horseback (p. 44). Along

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the San Francisco docks there were many ships, freighters, schooners, passenger ships. London chose "the most romantic of the lot, one of the last sealing vessels to sail out of San Francisco Bay." (p. 44).

The Sophia Sutherland took "the Southern passage to Japan to take advantage of northeast trade winds" (Kingman, 1979, p. 42). (See Appendix B. the Kuroshio Current or the Japan Current.) The Sophia Sutherland left San Francisco on January 20, 1893, several days after his birthday (Kingman, p. 42; Perry, p. 29; Dyer dated on January 12th, p. 28). Sinclair and Stone mentioned that three days after the Sophia Sutherland sailed out of the bay, the schooner met the first typhoon around January 23rd (Stone, p. 43). Andrew Sinclair also recorded the typhoon, "He was given the wheel on the voyage to the Bonin Islands (小笠原諸島). A storm was blowing, and he learned to battle against nature." (p. 16). (See Appendix B.) In "The 'Sophie Sutherland". London mentions the death and burial in the sea of the Bricklayer, "on a day of wind," on the way from San Francisco to Japan. This same incident was mentioned at the end of "Story of a Typhoon off the Coast of Japan." Then, London had pleasant sailing for 51 days, and London describes his observations of the skies and seas during this phase of the voyage in "The Run Across," (Aegis, 1895). On these pleasant nights, London enjoyed reading books such as Ivan Turgenev's A Nest of Gentlefolk (Hamilton, p. 6), Leo Tolstoy's Anna Karenina, Herman Melville's Typee: A Real Romance of the South Seas (Boston: Dana Estes & Company, 1892), Gustave Flaubert's Madame Bovary, Jacob's sea stories, etc. (Stone, p. 54) until the schooner reached the harbor of Futami, Chichijima (the Bonin Islands) around March 15th. The schooner anchored in "the harbor of Futami, Chichijim" (Nakada, p. 2). the Bonin Islands for 10 days according to London in "The Sophie Sutherland" (Shepard, 1956). (See Appendix C). In 1897 he wrote the memory of his boyhood adventure in "Bonin Islands: An Incident of the Sealing Fleet of '93" (Aegis, December 1897). Then, the schooner sailed north along the eastern coast of Japan to Hokkaido Island and the Bering Sea.

As London wrote in his "Typhoon off the Coast of Japan," his schooner Sophia Sutherland encountered a typhoon near Cape Jerimo, on April 10, 1893. At the end of "The 'Sophie Sutherland'", after mentioning the 100 days of seal hunting around the waters of northern Japan and the Bering Sea, London describes how he single-handedly sailed the Sophie Sutherland through a typhoon. This corresponds with the typhoon near Cape Jerimo. In contrast, the incident of the burial in the sea of the Bricklayer, which was mentioned earlier, corresponds to an earlier typhoon, as noted by Stone (1938, p. 43), which occurred between San Francisco and the Bonin Islands.

Second Typhoon?

In "Chris Farrington: Able Seaman" (<u>The Youth's Companion</u>, May 1901), Jack London described how seventeen year old Chris Farrington single-handedly sailed the <u>Sophie Sutherland</u> in the middle of a typhoon in the latter part of May. After three days of the typhoon, Farrington and the two others on the ship, the old captain, 80 years old, and a Chinese cook, had to return to the sealing grounds in the north to rescue the crew of 19 who were not able to get back to the <u>Sophie Sutherland</u> before the typhoon. The descriptions of the events in this short story also correspond to a typhoon off the coast of Hokkaido near Cape Jerimo or Erimo-misaki (襟裳岬)."

The <u>Sophia Sutherland</u> is said to have made only 2 sealing voyages. Jack London sailed on its first voyage in 1893. On June 26, 1895, 2 years later, the <u>Fort Wayne Gazette</u>, Indiana, (page 1, col. 6) reported that the Sophia Sutherland had brought back three American survivors of the sealer

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Alta from Hakodate to San Francisco. The three survivors reported to the press that they were refused a landing and food by the natives, who spoke English, after their vessel was "lost in a dense fog off the coast of Japan in April." The three survivors had eaten raw birds to survive. Later, the American consul in Hakodate protected them and sent them back to San Francisco on the Sophia Sutherland. (http://www.newspaperearchive.com) In 1900, the Sophia Sutherland is reported to have been destroyed by a storm on September 26 after being delivered to the Eskimos of Bailey Island, Alaska for whom the schooner had been bought by Capt. H.H. Bodfish of the whaler Beluga (Lyman, 1941, p.2), "before she could be refloated." The following excerpts from "Chris Farrington…" and "The Sea Wolf", bear slight resemblances to these incidents.

On the afternoon of the third day he picked up a schooner, dismasted and battered. As he approached close-hauled on the wind, he saw her decks crowded by an unusually large crew, and on sailing in closer, made out among others the faces of his missing comrades. And he was just in the nick of time, for they were fighting a losing fight at the pumps. An hour later they, with the crew of the sinking craft were aboard the Sophie Sutherland.

Having wandered so far from their own vessel, they had taken refuge on the strange schooner just before the storm broke. She was a Canadian sealer on her first voyage, and as was now apparent, her last ("Chris Farrington...", 1901).

While crossing San Francisco Bay in a dense fog

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the ferry-steamer "Martinez" collides with another ship and begins to sink. Humphrey Van Weyden, one of the passengers, jumps overboard to save himself and is caught in the swift tide and swept out to sea. Miles from shore he is rescued by the sealing vessel, "Ghost." Van Weyden's relief and happiness at being saved from a watery grave is short-lived, for instead of being taken back to San Francisco he is forced to perform the menial duties of cabin boy on a ship bound for the North Pacific ("The Sea Wolf", 1904).

In another recorded incident in the <u>Mainichi Shimbun</u> on July 8, 1893 (Nakata, p. 4), after three months of seal-hunting in the waters of northern Japan and the Bering Sea, the fast 80 ton (see <u>Note</u> 3) three masted <u>Sophia Sutherland</u> sealing schooner of the United States, ran ashore on the jetty of the harbour by accident at midnight of yesterday, the 7th, on her arrival at Yokohama after a voyage from Hokkaido, but she was safely refloated due to a good tide," Nakata recorded that the schooner was carrying 3850 sheets of seal-skin on board.

None of London's stories recorded the <u>Sophia Sutherland</u> stopping in Hakodate harbor (see Note 4), but it seems natural to think that the <u>Sophia Sutherland</u> dropped anchor in Hakodate harbor for repairs and to replenish supplies during the 100 days of sealing around northern Japan and the Bering Sea and before sailing to Yokohama. Hakodate harbor is about 205 kilometers south-west of Cape Jerimo, and the distance from Hakodate harbor to Yokohama harbor is 526 kilometers while it is 4,420 kilometers from Hakodate to San Francisco.

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References of This Experience in Later Writings

Facts and details from Jack London's observations and experiences from his first visit to a foreign country. Japan, on the sealing schooner Sophia Sutherland are subtly placed in his writings. In "An Odyssey of the North", one of London's Yukon stories. Yeddo and the Yoshiwara sisters are mentioned. Gunderson, a Scandinavian giant, is similar to a person who sailed with Jack on the Sophia Sutherland in 1893. The crew of the Sophia Sutherland was predominantly Scandinavian, as was the crew in London's "Goliath" of the yacht Energon. Beginning with "A Typhoon of the Coast of Japan". Jack London left an unfinished novel "Cherry" when he died in 1916. "Cherry" begins with the discovery of a Japanese baby in the wreckage of a sampan, off the coast of Hawaii, from a typhoon. One of the characters has a Hawaiian name for "green turtle." Jack London mentions great green turtles and sampans in the waters of the Bonin Islands. Influences from Lafcadio Hearn's writings and other Japanese are used in "Cherry". Jack London's voyage in 1893 appears to have been a major event in his life.

Note:

- 1. The Sophie Sutherland, a 156-ton gross and 148-ton net sealing schooner built in 1889 at Tacoma, Washington (Perry, p.29).
- 2. The rank of able-bodied seaman required proof by affidavit and examination that sailors were nineteen, with a minimum of three years on deck, the captain signed London, accepting Holt's word. (Johnny Heinold, barkeeper of the Last Chance Saloon, who knew London, later said he influenced the skipper's decision, John C. Higgins, "Jack London on the Waterfront," Westways, 26 (January, 1934), p. 34). (Quoted by Perry, p. 29).

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3. "This three masted schooner of 156 tons was built at Tacoma in 1889 for the Ocean Shipping Co. of Portland, Ore. This schooner is famous as the vessel in which Jack London registered as an able bodied seaman and sailed to the commander Islands in 1893. He used the material later to write The Sea Wolf. John Lyman, Pacific Coast Built Sailers, 1850-1905, The Marine

Digest (August 23, 1941, p. 2).

Citation: Tacoma Public Library

http://www.cimorelli.com/cgi-

bin/magellanscripts/ship bio1.asp?ShipName=Sophia

SOPHIA SUTHERLAND - 1889-94

Code letters: KGMV

Official Number: 116283

Master: Captain M. White (1889-92); Captain A.C. Sutherland

(1893-94)

Rigging: wood, 3 masts Schooner: 1 deck

Tonnage: 157 tons gross and 149 tons net

Dimensions: 105.3 feet long, 25.7 foot beam and holds 10.3

feet deep

Construction: 1889, J. Macdonald in Tacoma, WA

Owners: Ocean Shipping Co. (1889-92): A.C. Sutherland

(1893-94)

Port of registry: Portland, Ore. (Register of Ships - So-Sy)

4. Hakodate harbor was opened in 1859 (Ansei 6th year of Ansei Period) and in 1867 (3rd year of Keio) a foreign concession was made in Omachi (area, the western part of Hakodate harbor). In 1865, an English accountant of the British Consulate at Hakodate, Mr. Thompson resigned and opened a shipyard at 57 Toyokawa town (豊川町) and almost monopolized

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western style shipbuilding until his death in 1888. Tsuzuku Shipyard (續造船所) was under operation by the Tsuzukus until November 1893. Tadajiro Kuninaga (国永忠二郎) took over the shipyard, but in 1897 Kuninaga opened new Kuninaga Shipyard (国永造船所) at Wakamatsuchou (若松町). Iwagishi Shipyard (岩岸造船所) was opened next to Kuninaga Shipyard. Ootake Shipyard (大竹造船所) and Sasaki Shipyard (佐々木造船所) operated at where Thompson Shipyard was located until 1904. (Hakodate Ward History, p.446).

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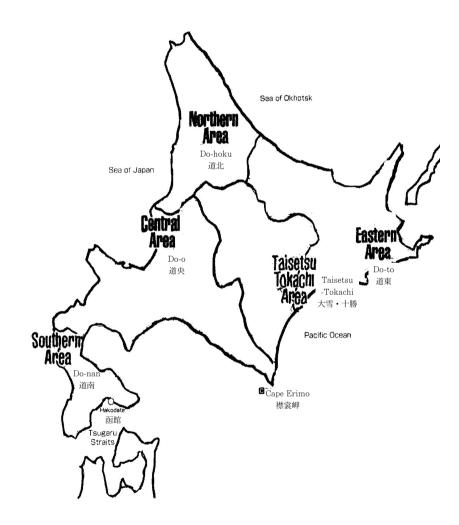
Hakodate shiyakusho (函館市役所), 19489.

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APPENDIX A

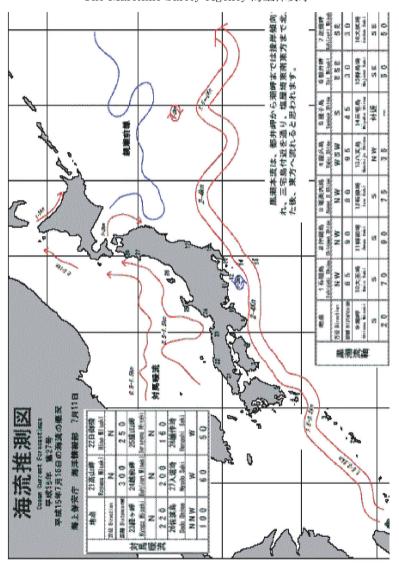
Five Areas of Hokkaido: Do-hoku, Do-to, Taisetu • Tokatsu, Do-o, Do-nan; Cape Erimo, Hakodate



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APPENDIX B

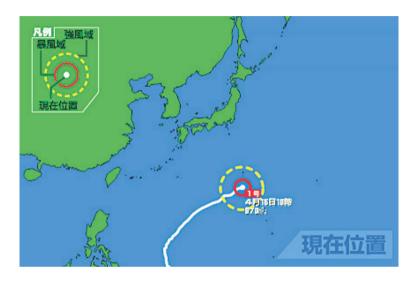
The Japanese Current or the Kuroshio (Black) Current 黒潮 The Maritime Safety Agency 海上保安庁



http://www1.kaiho.mlit.go.jp/KANKYO/KAIYO/qboc/2003/ocf200327.pdf

APPENDIX C

Typhoon around the Bonin Islands (小笠原諸島) April 15, 2004



4月15日	■大きさ	
18 時 現在	■強さ	
	■存在地域	父島の南 約 230km
	■中心位置	東経 142 度 0 分(東経 142.0 度)
	"	北緯 25 度 0 分(25.0 度)
	■進行方向・速さ	東北東 40km(21kt)
	■中心気圧	970hPa
	■中心付近の最大風速	30m/s(60kt)
	■25m/s以上の暴風半径	半径 130km(70NM)
	■15m/s以上の強風半径	南西方向に 370km(200NM) 北東方向に 330km(180NM)
	■1 時間後の推定位置	父島の南 約 210km

http://www.tv-asahi.co.jp/hotweather/typhoon/index.htm