

ACTIVITY: Diving for beche-de-mer

CASE: GSAF 1921.10.04

DATE: Tuesday October 4, 1921

LOCATION: The accident took place in the Coral Sea on the Barrier Reef off Cairns, Queensland, Australia.

NAME: Yoichi Sakamoto (or Schamok)

DESCRIPTION: He was a 22-year-old male from Awano, Japan. He was a member of crew of divers from the ketch *H. 1*.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: New Moon, October 1, 1921

DEPTH OF WATER: 60 feet

TIME: Afternoon

NARRATIVE: Witnesses heard him call out when he was close to the dinghy. They saw the tail of the shark and pulled the injured diver into the dinghy.

INJURY: Fatal. The diver died 10 minutes after he was bitten by the shark.

SPECIES: Not identified. The shark was 12 or 13 feet in length.

SOURCE: Cairns Post, Tuesday October 11, 1921, page 4 & Monday October 17, 1921, page 2

THE BARRIER FATALITY.

MAGISTERIAL INQUIRY.

An inquiry into the cause of the death of the Japanese, Yoichi Schamok, who was bitten on the left thigh by a shark, on the 4th instant, off the Barrier Reef, and subsequently brought to Cairns, dead, was held in the Cairns Inquiry Court on Friday, before the P.M. (Mr. W. Simpson).

Sakartara Shinozaka stated he was a member of the ketch *H. 1*, which left Cairns to proceed to the Barrier Reef on the 4th instant, arriving there the same afternoon. Other members of the crew were six Japanese, four aboriginals, and two Malays. They were searching for beche-de-mer, deceased being a member of the crew.

Witness was in a dinghy with deceased, about a mile from the ketch, which was about a mile distant from the Reef. Each took his turn at diving, witness going down first in about 60 feet of water. Deceased, taking his turn, went down about four times that afternoon, staying below about half a minute each time. Witness heard deceased call out when in the water, close to the dinghy, at the same time noticing the tail of a shark about 12 or 13 feet long near him. The water was colored with blood and witness pulled deceased into the dinghy. He saw the mark on his left knee of a shark bite, the flesh being torn off the leg. All deceased was heard to say was: "Sore, sore." Bandaging the wound with a towel, witness called on the men in another dinghy nearby. Deceased succumbed before the ketch was reached, living only ten minutes after being bitten.

Deceased, who was a life-long friend of witness, was born in Awano, near Kobe, Japan. He was three years in this country, and had attained his twenty-second year. He was not married.

Evidence of a like nature was given by the captain of the ketch, Iwakichi Minami, three members of the crew, and Constable Murtagh James, to whom the body was handed over to on arrival at Cairns.

Dr. J. Jamieson's certificate of death stated that the cause was accidental.