

# The Ryukyuanist

A Newsletter on Ryukyuan/Okinawan Studies

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New perspectives on the place and role of Ryukyuan/Okinawan studies inspired two international symposia; one at the University of Chiba and another at the University of Bonn. The Chiba symposium paid attention to the distinctive culture and history of Ryukyu/Okinawa from the standpoint of Japan's newly discovered "diversity." The Bonn symposium explored the impact of worldwide geopolitical developments on Ryukyu/Okinawa in the last 800 years, by maximally stretching the outer rim of Ryukyuan/Okinawan history.

## **The Chiba Symposium: In Search of a Paradigm of Diversity (I); Toward a New Life for Okinawa**

The Department of Social and Cultural Sciences of the Graduate School of Chiba University began a series of international symposia under the general theme: "In Search of a Paradigm of Diversity." The first symposium, on July 10-11, 1998, was devoted to Okinawa in the hope to find a "new life" for it.

Japan's social and cultural diversity has long been denied as a subject of serious discussion in the Japanese academe dominated by the all-powerful normative view of Japan as a culturally and racially homogeneous society. In recent years, discrepancies have increased between norms and realities of Japan reducing effectiveness of public policy and private action based on long-held beliefs in homogeneity. Gradually, the Japanese in all walks of life have come to realize that they are not as homogeneous as they once thought they were. Diversity appears to be gaining as a useful way of looking at Japan.

Diversity appears in many shades and shapes. For an illustration of how diverse Japan is, Okinawa as part of Japan is a good choice. For every keyword of difference (geographic, climatic, ethnic, cultural, historical,

linguistic, artistic, and so on), Okinawa is indeed very different from the rest of Japan. The aggregate of these differences sets Okinawa apart from "Japan" as a distinctive society. Okinawa's being part of Japan clearly reduces the accuracy and utility of many well-defined generalities on "homogeneous Japan." To be accurate, what can be claimed to be "general" of Japan must now include the Okinawan exception. How does one obtain generalities that also encompass exceptions? The answer is, by accepting diversity as a principle to guide generalizing efforts.

In November 1998, the organizers of the Chiba symposium finalized and published a report on the symposium. In the report, a majority of paper givers are Okinawan scholars. They present "insider" views of various aspects of Okinawa. A few Chiba faculty members offer "outsider" views. A unique participant from New Zealand makes the symposium "international."

Professor SENAHA Eiki, vice-president of Meio University, gives a commemorative lecture, positioning Okinawa in the Pacific rim and emphasizing the international aspects of Okinawa's recent history. Professor KAJIKU Shin'ichi of the Okinawa Prefectural University of Arts, presented a specialist's paper on

Okinawan language. Professor HOKAMA Shuzen, foremost authority in Ryukyuan studies, examines the last work, published in 1947, of the great pioneer of the field, IFA Fuyu. Mr. DANA Masayuki, head of the Naha City Historical Archive, offers a historical analysis of Okinawans' changing sense of identity. Professor HATERUMA Eikichi of the Okinawa Prefectural University of Arts looks into the Omorososhi, collections of ancient Ryukyuan songs, and explores their meaning to contemporary Okinawans.

Professor Wayne Lawrence of the University of Auckland laments the imminent death of Okinawan language and suggests ways to rescue it by drawing upon the success of the Maori language policy in New Zealand. Professor MIYAZAKI Ryuji of Chiba University, as a non-Okinawan, offers an outsider perspective on Okinawa-in-Japan. Professor MINAMIZUKA Shingo, vice-president of Chiba, talks about legends of Untama Giruu, Okinawa's Robin Hood, though of the 18th Century, who robbed the rich and gave to the poor.

All the presentations explicitly or implicitly ask "whither Okinawa?" as, presumably, requested by the symposium organizers, who adopted its title to be "Toward a New Life for Okinawa." In the postscript, Professor MIZUNOE Yuichi of Chiba says that "New Life" was taken from Dante's Vita Nuova. Dante's love for Beatrice has apparently inspired the Chiba scholars' kind thoughts and sentiments toward Okinawa.

[Okinawa as an important source of Japan's diversity has lately stimulated extensive research efforts throughout Japan, as may be

seen in a recent issue of Tokyo University's Social Science Journal, mentioned in the "Publications" section below. American Ryukyuanists who are also Japanologists would feel lucky winds blowing their way.]

#### **The Bonn Symposium: Ryukyu in the History of East-Asia, Asia and the World**

In conjunction with his report on the Sydney Conference, Professor Josef Kreiner announced his plans to convene a symposium on Ryukyuan/Okinawan studies at the University of Bonn in the autumn of 1998 (The Ryukyuanist, No. 39). The plans were duly carried out, and some sixty or so Ryukyuanists/Okinawanists participated in the Symposium on "Ryukyu in the History of East-Asia, Asia and the World" at the University of Bonn, on September 30 - October 3, 1998, partly overlapping with the 27th Conference of German-Speaking Orientalists.

The objectives and accomplishments of the symposium demonstrate that "history," far from being buried in the dead past, is alive and well as a source of powerful constraints on today's Ryukyu/Okinawa. Take one aspect of present-day Okinawa, for example: the occupation of a considerable portion of Okinawa Island by the United States military forces. The phenomenon generates a "local" conflict between Okinawans who want their land back and the U.S. military who won't "go home." But the conflict is not local. It is rooted in world history that has for ages assigned a special geo-political role to Okinawa and the Ryukyu Islands.

Why is the U.S. military still entrenched in Okinawa? Practically all high-sounding reasons for it are

disingenuous and self-serving. One unstated, but true reason is that the American military fought bloody battles and gained control of Okinawa. Okinawa's strategic value was apparently worth thousands of precious American lives who died fighting the Japanese forces. It is not an empty metaphor that Okinawa is the "key-stone of the Pacific." To let go of it would cause the whole edifice of America's Asian/Pacific strategy to crumble.

That enormous geo-political value of Okinawa and the Ryukyu Islands has always been the primary reason for the interest of Western powers in these islands throughout history. One might almost generalize from it, giving it a little Huntingtonian touch, that Ryukyu/Okinawa can be, and actually is, a valuable Asian outpost of the West in the conflict of civilizations, Eastern and Western.

On the more benign human side of history, Ryukyuan/Okinawans have also made themselves an object of world curiosity through their extensive international activities. Until the late 19th century, they maintained their own kingdom and through their commercial and diplomatic activities were in contact with other countries and peoples. When the Westerners conquered distance and reached Asia in the 15th and 16th centuries, they saw Ryukyuan at several ports of call and wondered where they came from and what kind of people they were. That was the beginning of Western curiosity about Ryukyu/Okinawa.

Thus, the following statement of the Bonn Symposium's objectives effectively summarizes the expectations and accomplishments of the gathering. "Through a

discussion of these three important periods (15th/16th century, 19th century, and the present), of Okinawa's political considerations and reactions regarding these, and the available sources, this symposium aims at a better understanding of Okinawa's present situation." Indeed, the present as history is no myth.

At the opening session, Professor Josef Kreiner presented a historical introduction on "Ryukyu and the World," with emphasis on how the internal dynamics of early modern Europe generated expansive forces that drove Europeans to all corners of the world, Ryukyu not excepted. Then Professor HOKAMA Shuzen introduced "the history and culture of Okinawa" with a domestic emphasis.

The order in which papers were presented was rigorously historical, moving from earlier periods to the present and future. International aspects of what Ryukyuanists call "ancient Ryukyu" were explored in several papers, especially in "The Kingdom of Ryukyu and the East-Asian World Order During the 16th and 17th Centuries" by ARANO Yasunori; "The Portuguese in the South China Sea: The Voyagers and Their Chroniclers" by Engelbert Jorissen; and "Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean and Beyond" by Wolfgang Marschall.

Ryukyu's Chinese connection is indispensable in any discussion of Ryukyu's external relations. Two papers were presented on the topic: "The Kingdom of Ryukyu and China: The System of Tributary States" by Gerhard Mueller, and "Ryukyuan Uses of Chinese Confucianism" by Gregory Smits. [An aspect of China's relationship with a tributary state is narrated below.]

In the 19th Century, there arose a mixture of romantic "Orientalism" and hard-nosed imperialist "realpolitik." On the former, two papers were presented at the Bonn symposium: "Heinrich Klaproth and Okinawa: A European Orientalist's View" by Thomas Leims and "Ryukyu and Its Role in Western Thought: The Peace Movement During the First Half of the 19th Century" by TERUYA Yoshihiko.

On imperialist contest over Ryukyu, two papers: "A Waivering Attention: French Policy Towards the Ryukyu Kingdom" by Patrick Beillevaire, and "The National/Colonial Lessons of the Ryukyu Shobun" by Alan S. Christy. Japanese imperialism was the victor.

But the 20th Century gave new twists to Ryukyuan/Okinawan history. America conquered and held Okinawa for 27 years. It still occupies a part of Okinawa, giving rise to two papers: "Okinawa and Its Role in Japanese-American Security Relations" by TANAKA Akihiko, and "The Base Issue in Okinawa -- Future Prospects" by GABE Masaaki.

Obviously, history has not been too kind to Okinawans. What, then, do they want to do about it? Can they free themselves from the curse of history? Koji Taira offers his thoughts on this and other questions in conclusion: "Okinawa in the 21st Century: A Third Golden Age or Continued Oblivion?" Written before the fateful November 15, 1998 gubernatorial election, this paper tends to pick the golden age against oblivion. In January 1999, the author has second thoughts on all that.

#### **Royal regalia found**

A set of royal regalia, granted to Toyotomi Hideyoshi by the emperor of Ming China, was discovered in the

warehouse of a Kyoto temple, Myoho-in. Kawakami Shigeki of the Kyoto National Museum played a major role in this discovery. In olden days, when the emperor of China conferred a royal title on the ruler of a tributary state, it was customary that imperial gifts including a crown and wardrobe were sent down to the newly appointed king. Hideyoshi was appointed "king of Japan" as part of the terms of peace to end the war provoked by Hideyoshi's invasion of Korea in the 1590's.

The kings of Ryukyu were also regularly appointed by the emperors of China during the Ming and Qing periods. Although Ryukyu's royal regalia of the Ming period have long since been lost, their catalogues remain in historical documents. Even before the real objects were found in Kyoto in August 1998, documentary comparisons of the Ryukyu king's and Hideyoshi's regalia by historians had already established that the two sets were identical. The objects attributed to Hideyoshi must therefore be the same as those received by the Ryukyu kings. One can hardly wait for a public exhibition of the Myoho-in holdings.

How Hideyoshi was made "king of Japan" also makes an interesting story. A fascinating version of it appeared in a Chinese newspaper several years ago, as reported in The Ryukyuanist No. 9 (Summer 1990). According to Zhu Yuxiang's article in the Shijie Ribao (World Daily Report), March 8 and 9, 1990, "Japan begged [China] to invest Toyotomi Taira no Hideyoshi as king [of Japan]." The reasons for such a request from Japan as narrated by Zhu sound unbelievable, however (See No. 9). The desk has written to specialists in

Okinawa to evaluate the historical veracity of this part of the Zhu article.

**Publications (XXVIII)**

We gratefully acknowledge the gifts of the following publications, documents or papers:  
Askins, Arthur L.F., and George W. MacLellan. 1997. Specialized Catalogue of the Postal Issues of the Ryukyu (Liu Ch'iu) Islands (Issues Under United States Administration), Part III: The Nansei Shoto Provisional Postage Stamps (1945-1948) and Provisional Revenue Issues (1946-1950). 3rd edition, revised, updated, and expanded. Berkeley, CA: The Ryukyu Philatelic Specialist Society, LTD. Available from John B. Head, P.O. Box 71, West Bethel, Maine 04286, at \$38.00, postage included. A remarkable publication. In addition to esoteric philatelic information, one learns a great deal about the administrative make-shifts and experiments by the U.S. military occupying the islands during the unsettled post-Battle period of Okinawa.  
Cato Institute. 1998. Policy Analysis, No. 314 (September 1): "Okinawa: Liberating Washington's East Asian Military Colony," by Doug Bandow. Washington D.C. 27 pp. A sophisticated analysis of the strategic environment of post-Cold War East Asia offering a powerful argument for phased troop withdrawals from Okinawa. Conventional justifications for the US force level and structure in East Asia are examined one by one and found utterly unconvincing.  
Cato Institute. 1998. Policy Analysis, No. 317. "The Quadrennial Defense Review Reiterating the Tired Status

Quo," by David Isenberg. Washington D.C. 34 pp. A critique of the Department of Defense's outmoded perception of the global strategic environment which only results in the present oversized military budget. "Spending at Cold War levels in a benign international environment is a waste of taxpayer dollars."  
Hokama, Shuzen. 1997. Okinawa no rekishi to bunka (The history and culture of Okinawa), 19th edition. Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Sha. 248pp. Y 700 + tax. First published in 1986. Three large chapters. The first is a general history of Okinawa, the second a commentary on Okinawan languages and cultures, and the third a "prehistory" of Miyako and Yaeyama before these areas came under the sway of the Chuzan kingdom of Okinawa. A "must" for anyone interested in Okinawa's uniqueness in a global setting.  
<sup>4</sup> Japan Echo. 1998. Vol. 25, No. 4 (August). A section on the Nanjing Massacre intended for "setting the record straight" carries a major article by Hata Ikuhiko, pp. 47-57. Hata concentrates on "Nanking atrocities," defining it as done by the prosecutors at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (Tokyo Trial): "...for about six weeks after Nanking fell on December 13, 1937, Japanese soldiers committed illegal killings of Chinese soldiers and civilians in the city of Nanking and adjacent suburban areas in violation of the Hague Convention of 1907." Hata adds: "This definition includes soldiers who were executed after being captured but does not cover those killed in action." (p.

48). "Using the existing reports and adding in various estimations, I have come up with a figure of 40,000 for the total of soldiers and civilians killed..." (p. 50). The journal follows up with "a recent bibliography" and a sampling from "Japanese textbook treatment of the Nanking Massacre." The Nanjing Massacre is important to Ryukyuan studies because it offers important lessons for civilian killings by the Japanese soldiers in the Battle of Okinawa.

Japan Policy Research Institute. 1998. JPRI Critique, Vol. V, No. 10 (November). Murray Sale, "Comfort Island: Notes on Okinawa." Review of Beat, a film directed by Amon Miyamoto.

Naya, Seiji. 1997. "Perspectives on Okinawa's Future," paper presented at the Hawaii-Okinawa Conference: Building Collaborative Partnerships Toward the 21st Century, November 3-5, 1997 at Yomitan-son, Okinawa. 12 pp.

Notre Dame Seishin University. 1997. Annual Report of the research Institute for Culture and Cultural History, vol. 11. 189 pp. Okayama. Japanese text.

Three articles relate to Okinawa. "A Comparative Study on the Folklore of East Asia --- Korea, China, Okinawa, and Japan" by Kil-sung CHOI; "On Some Manuscripts of Oshima Hikki, a Record of the Drifting Ship of the Ryukyu Dynasty in 1762" by Manabu YOKOYAMA; "Kenji YOHENA, 'Gusoo Niibichi' Rite and Yuta, the Spirit Medium" translated by Masaharu KATO. "Gusoo Niibichi" is often rendered "ghost marriage," though not too helpful. The original English-language article was

published in The Bulletin of the College of Law and Literature, University of the Ryukyus: Sociology, 21 (1979).

Okinawaken Kyōiku Inkai (Okinawa Prefectural Education Commission). 1998. Rekidai hōan kenkyū (Studies in the Ryukyu Kingdom's Diplomatic Papers), Vol. 9. 146 pp.

Three substantial articles and a short travelogue. "The [Administrative] Structure of Ryukyuan Embassies in Fuzhou" by Akito Fukazawa; "Relationships of Calligraphers of Ryukyu and Satsuma in Late Tokugawa Period" by Takashi Takatsu; "A Chronicle of Castaways from Korea to Ryukyu and from Ryukyu to Korea" by Shigeru Kobayashi, Takatoshi Matsubara and Yutaka Rokutanda. The travelogue is about a trip to Beijing by Fusaaki Maehira to attend the Fourth Conference on Ryukyuan-Chinese Relations." The Fukazawa article centers on the resident Ryukyuan chargé d'affaires in Fuzhou (called "Zonryū tsūji") and demonstrates how this position was integrated in the administrative structure of the Ryukyu Kingdom akin to today's foreign service bureaucracy. There is considerable poignancy in the description of how this well maintained foreign service structure of the Ryukyu Kingdom was destroyed by Japan's annexation of Ryukyu. The Takatsu article excavates a historical document attributed to Samejima Masafumi (1773-1859), or pseudonymously "Hakugaku" (White Crane), noted for excellence in calligraphy. Samejima had a brief tour of duty in Ryukyu and befriended many Ryukyuan scholars. The document discussed contains Chinese poems by Ryukyuan scholars

and calligraphers on the occasion of Samejima's 80th anniversary. The chronicle of castaways between Korea and Ryukyu is the most comprehensive one ever compiled and takes up one half of the journal's space. Philadelphia Inquirer. November 8, 1998. The Travel section contains a contribution of Arthur Miller, "Back to Okinawa." A returning veteran reports and muses on changes that time has wrought on Okinawa: "...from its prewar status as a Japanese stronghold to a postwar US bastion and now to a peaceful tourist destination for thousands, most of them from the Japanese home islands." Social Science Journal. 1998. No. 14, a special issue on Okinawa. The cover features a procession of a Ryukyuan embassy to Edo. Chalmers Johnson leads off with his powerful essay: "Okinawa, the Shame of American Imperialism." Six essays then follow on various Okinawan themes. Why, however, so much attention on a subject like Okinawa mainstream scholars have happily neglected? Apparently there has lately arisen a new trend in research. The editorial says: "Postwar Japanologists have tended to base their research on the center... In recent years, more have begun to examine Japan from regional angles, providing us with vastly different perspectives on many aspects of Japan. This special issue is an outgrowth of this trend..."

Steele, Bill. 1968. "Where Do We Go from Here?" 18 pp. Explores the international legal environment surrounding the status of the Ryukyu Islands and comes up with a surprising proposal: (in the context of the late 1960's when the reversion of Okinawa to Japan was taking shape, but still in flux) the United States should annex the Ryukyus and then quickly grant it independence so it is re-constituted as a successor to the sovereign Kingdom of Ryukyu. This road, not taken, was nevertheless within the legal possibilities in light of history, laws, treaties, wartime agreements among the Allied Powers, etc.

Tokyo Okinawa Bunka Tsūshin. 1998. Nos. 70 (May) & 71 (July). Tokyo: Tokyo Okinawa Keizai Kenkyū Kai. 4pp each. "Bunka tsūshin" (literally, "culture communication") is a hard-to-define concept. Could it be "inter-cultural communication" between Tokyo and Okinawa? The mission of the paper is: (1) supply of information on Okinawan culture [to non-Okinawan Japanese audience] and (2) commendations of people, businesses, and information contributing to the development of the Okinawan economy. The publisher/editor is an Okinawan, TAMAKI Masayasu (or TAMAGUSUKU Seiho by traditional Okinawan reading). Every issue carries a corner column nominating a non-Okinawan for honorary Okinawan citizenship. No. 70's nomination goes to ENDO Yasuhiko, former Local Government Ministry official, born in Shizuoka. No. 71's goes to TSUKUSHI Tetsuya, journalist, born in Oita.

Uchinanchu. 1998. Volumes 65 (June/July), 66 (August/September), 67 (October/November). Newsletter of the Hawaii United Okinawa Association. From the standpoint of Ryukyuan studies, this is an

important source of information on the extent to which Okinawan culture and language survive in the Okinawan diaspora community of Hawaii. Vol. 65 announces the forthcoming Okinawan Festival. A major attraction is Eisā, noted as "Bon dance on the main island of Okinawa." Vol. 67 carries a 2-page essay by the departing president, Pamela E. Tamashiro, on her term's accomplishments under the banner of "Yuimaaruu." A page is devoted to the introduction of new officers for 1999. The president-elect is Lillian Takata, who announces her leadership keyword: "Yaaninjyu" (Family members).

University of Okinawa. 1998. The Institute of Regional Study Annual Report, No. 11. 147 pp.

Two articles are of special interest to Ryukyuanists. "The importance of Co-ops Networking in Okinawa" by Seizen Asato (Japanese text); "Okinawa Within Foreign Coverage of International Affairs (1995-1996)" by Kiyomi Maedomari (English text). The latter article analyzes foreign press and media reports on Okinawan topics during September 1995 to September 1996. Three major events attracted foreign attention most: the gang rape of an Okinawan school girl by three US servicemen, lease renewals for land used by US military bases, and the referendum for realignment and reduction of the bases. The article extensively comments on the first topic and its ramifications.

University of the Ryukyus. 1998. Keizai Kenkyū (Economic Review), No. 56 (September), 316 pp.

Commemorates the retirement of Professor Isamu Nakasone (b. 1932). Of numerous

contributions, two are specifically related to Okinawa: "The Ryukyuan 'usukus' or their Economic Images Reflected in an Ancient Icon (I)" by Masaru Komatsu; "Okinawan Cane-sugar production under the Controlled Wartime Economy" by Nario Kabira.

#### Apologies

Professor Karen Lupardus, who took over the reins of editorship last summer, recently returned them to the old desk. **The Ryukyuanist** No. 41, edited by her, was a remarkable product filled with refreshing new information and analysis. We are grateful for her superb job and shall sorely miss her involvement in future issues.

We regret that the production of No. 42 has been delayed. We will endeavor to make up for the lost time as expeditiously as possible.

Realizing how different minds and hands can generate superior output, we welcome volunteer editors who might wish to take over editorship for one, two, three or all future issues of **The Ryukyuanist**. Please contact the desk for further details.

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