

The Ryukyuanist

A Newsletter on Ryukyuan/Okinawan Studies

No. 44

Summer 1999

Okinawa Prefecture actively sought and obtained the Japanese government's designation of Okinawa as the venue of the Y2K G8 Summit. Okinawa was pleased with the government's action, but at the same time feared that a quid pro quo for the Summit-hosting privilege might sooner or later be demanded. The feared price was, and continues to be, an alternative site in Okinawa for the Futenma Marine Corps Air Station, which will be closed and returned to Japan.

Initially, the Japanese Government repeatedly assured Okinawa of "no link" between the Okinawa Summit and the Futenma replacement issue. Tokyo has apparently changed its mind in the wake of President Clinton's remarks about the desirability of a pre-Summit resolution of the Futenma issue. Tokyo is now pressuring Okinawa to make up its mind quickly and deliver the desired site.

Okinawa wants to have the U.S. military-occupied areas drastically reduced. But the U.S. and Japan insist that if they have to vacate the areas presently occupied, Okinawa must provide alternative sites to which to move the bases. Tokyo and Washington firmly believe that Okinawa owes them parts of its land, sea and sky for permanent use by the U.S. military.

For its part, Okinawa has real human weaknesses: i.e., a minority of Okinawa's population depends for a living on economic benefits derived from the U.S. military bases (rents, jobs, spending of military personnel on local goods and services, government expenditure for the improvement of amenities around the bases, etc.). These economic dependents of the military bases form a powerful special interest group in Okinawan politics. On the other hand, the exclusion of extensive areas of land, sea and sky from civilian use has wildly distorted and stymied the Okinawan economy. This social cost of an extensive military presence on the small islands has been acknowledged, but not sufficiently heeded.

Although the pervasive anti-base sentiment occasionally erupts into mass protests, these are like storms that rage briefly and dissipate shortly. As a consequence, Okinawan politics fails to generate a firm decision on whether to tolerate, reduce or eliminate the U.S. bases. In the meantime, the status quo of military presence continues undisturbed.

Okinawa's political paralysis is described and analyzed in the feature article of this issue contributed by Dr. Masamichi Inoue of the University of Kentucky. In addition, this issue offers the usual publications section and an in-memoriam vignette on a U.S. High Commissioner who served at a distinctive juncture of the history of occupied Okinawa.

**U.S. Military Bases in Okinawa:
Problems of Local-National-Global Articulation**

Masamichi S. Inoue

In 1996, the U.S. and Japanese governments announced that the U.S. would return some of its major military facilities to Okinawa, including the Futenma Marine Corps Air Station located in densely populated central Okinawa. However, the return of Futenma was made conditional on the construction of a state-of-the-art sea-based facility east of relatively thinly populated northern Okinawa, that is, offshore of Henoko, a community of 1,400 residents, in Nago City (population: 55,000).

This essay focuses on the processes in which social movements first arose in Henoko "for" as well as "against" the proposed base relocation and then unfolded beyond the initial communal context in a convoluted way. My approach is anthropological. It relies on the fieldwork that I conducted in Henoko and Nago in 1997-98, and at the same time critically relates to previous anthropological studies of Okinawa.

In the 1920s, Japanese native ethnology led by Yanagita Kunio discovered Okinawa as its disciplinary foundation. Yanagita believed that Okinawa had preserved the basic structure of the constantly changing Japanese national culture. This belief also penetrated ethnological studies on Okinawan language and religion in the 1960s and 1970s.

For their part, American anthropologists initiated their studies of Okinawa during World War II. Resonating with the strategic and administrative objective of separating Okinawa from Japan, their approach emphasized ethnic and cultural differences between Japanese and Okinawans, by touting, for instance, the independent status of the Ryukyu Kingdom.

Finally, producing massive

scholarship on Okinawan kinship, Japanese social anthropology (established after the war under the influence of Euro-American scholarship) contains orientations of both Japanese native ethnology and American anthropology.

In sum, despite different intellectual concerns, Okinawan studies in the past broadly share a commonality in that Okinawa is treated as a living museum of old customs and manners, not as a living society and culture of the present in active interaction with the outside world.

My approach emphasizes the present, without abandoning the achievements of the previous studies. I propose to expand their scope by additionally exploring the issues of history and politics that they have neglected, in order to underscore the specificity of a place, Okinawa, as situated within world-wide relations of power and history.

Culture, History and Power in Henoko

In the mid-1950s, the so-called island-wide protest was waged against the United States Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Islands (USCAR). The issue centered on the expropriation of Okinawan land for creating military bases. In its midst, the USCAR notified Henoko of the construction of Camp Schwab within its territory.

On the Christmas eve of 1956, Henoko eventually concluded a contract with the U.S. authorities to accept the base. The general sentiment of the 600 residents of this poor northern Okinawan community relying on forestry, farming, and fishery at that time was that it would be better to economically transform itself in exchange for the base construction than to lose everything by

protesting against the plan as in the case of other Okinawan communities. Henoko had to make do within the constraining order of power to render social conditions manageable. But, this inevitably introduced fissures into Okinawa's unified front against the USCAR. After Henoko's compromise, the island-wide protest soon died down.

The Christmas eve of 1956 thus became a historic date when the Okinawan dilemma between peace and economy was acutely expressed and transformed through Henoko. This history was repeated on the Christmas eve forty-odd years later in a different form (see below).

Once the construction of Camp Schwab started in 1957, men and women from outside districts flooded into Henoko, looking for jobs in and around the newly created entertainment district serving the U.S. military personnel. The population soon reached 3,000. After the Vietnam War, however, Henoko became a depressed economy mainly dependent on rents on land occupied by Camp Schwab. Many new residents left the community, although some stayed on.

Despite this profound structural transformation, I found that Henoko retained a sense of continuity and wholeness thanks to its social-cultural formations, including the kin structure called *munchū*.

Munchū refers to a highly institutionalized patrilineal descent group. It is one of the most important, if somewhat weakening, social organizations in today's Okinawa. It originates in the practices of the ruling class of the Ryukyu Kingdom and is structured around the principle of primogeniture, with religious functions of ancestor worship at its core.

Munchū's resiliency is illustrated in the following example. When a Henoko woman marries an outsider (e.g., a man migrating to Henoko) she formally exits her *munchū*. Yet, by staying in the community, she mediates her

husband and children into her original *munchū* through various social functions (e.g., weddings, funerals, and festive/ritual occasions). Her marriage with an outsider thus makes it possible for her *munchū* to interdigitate with her new household and to expand its social network. The *munchū* system, along with other social practices, has helped Henoko absorb outsiders without being hijacked by them.

On the political-institutional level, the resiliency of social formations in Henoko has materialized in a relatively fragile composition of the administration by native and non-native male residents, overseen by older native leaders. In one sense, the Okinawan kinship of primogeniture has found expression in the communal structure of male rule and seniority control.

What emerges from such resilient social-political formations is the construction of a peculiar form of Henoko identity that involves a two-fold mechanism. On the one hand, the community has constituted its position, its Okinawanness, its self-image distinct from *Yamato* (mainland Japan), by asserting its social-political formations in everyday interactions with the adjacent American base. In doing so, however, residents have also differentiated themselves from the rest of Okinawa by proclaiming mutually beneficial interdependence between the base and the community. The sense that "we are *Uchinānchu* (Okinawans), but a different kind of *Uchinānchu*" has thus permeated Henoko.

Yet, resiliency went hand in hand with tensions within Henoko, which surfaced in the wake of the offshore base dispute. Those from "genuine" but marginalized Henoko descent groups, women who viewed nature and peace as critical to the welfare of their children, senior residents who experienced the Battle of Okinawa, and others pressed the administration to reject the base construction. From

the administrative point of view, the planned base would become, if carefully handled, a social outlet to release and dissolve internal discontent caused by the deterioration of the communal economy.

Aware of the growing influence of this group in Henoko and beyond, the administration kept the facade of neutrality, which in fact gave it a convenient excuse for not explicitly opposing the new base. In addition, seeing the base construction as a once-in-a-lifetime economic chance, another group appeared on the scene from the fringes of the administration, actively welcoming the base. This group tended to be composed of new residents who moved into Henoko in the 60s, desperately in need of jobs.

As it is evident from the rough sketch above, the question of the offshore base threw up several axes of conflict into relief against the background of Henoko's peculiar social history - conflict between new and old residents, between men and women, between different generations, or between different economic classes.

The Offshore Base Dispute, 1997-98

Complex local politics in Henoko then entered into the making and unmaking of social movements outside the communal context. In the much publicized campaign for the Nago City Referendum, concerns for ecology, peace, and democracy among residents on the east coast in general and in Henoko in particular prevailed across Nago City. The anti-base movement won the referendum in defiance of massive Japanese governmental intervention.

Yet, ironically, precisely because of the success of the anti-base mobilization, tensions also emerged within it. On the one hand, there was an urgent need to translate Okinawa's pervasive anti-military sentiment into a universal language of human rights, environment, peace, etc. to appeal

to the public in Okinawa, mainland Japan, and beyond. On the other hand, such a universalistic posture would often offend the lived experiences and cultural sensibilities of local Henoko residents which I briefly described above. By striking at the heart of these tensions, Higa Tetsuya, Mayor of Nago, retrieved the concrete language of the local interest and subverted the universal principle.

On the Christmas eve of 1997, Higa hurried to Tokyo. After a meeting with Prime Minister Hashimoto, the mayor announced his intention to accept the planned base as "a step toward the reduction of the U.S. military presence in Okinawa." Yet simultaneously, he offered to step down as mayor of Nago, "taking the responsibility for the disorders in city politics."

The social meaning of Higa's behavior is rather complex. Without support of the Ota administration throughout the offshore base dispute, the mayor finally gave in to the national/global logic of strategy in military affairs by accepting the base. In doing so, however, he also affirmed the regional identity on the cultural and economic levels.

Culturally, the mayor dramatically acted out his resignation in Tokyo, capital of the nation, quoting Tei Junsoku, a legendary magistrate of Nago in the age of the Ryukyu Kingdom and calling for the restoration of harmony in Nago. Economically, in return for the sacrifice of his political life for the national cause, he secured the Prime Minister's "solemn promise" to develop the economically ill-fated northern Okinawa.

Mayor Higa's double-barreled action changed the political tide in Nago, probably beyond what he intended for. In the ensuing mayoral election, the anti-base group was already exhausted after a year of strenuous efforts. The knot that had bound political parties,

labor unions, and women's/citizens' groups in the referendum came loose. For their part, the pro-base group, led by business leaders and conservative politicians, and supported by an extensive conservative electoral base, seized upon the second chance by modifying its strategy.

By putting the Japanese government's voice on the back burner because of the constituents' antipathy to it as indicated by the referendum, they rallied behind politics of the local, by the local, and for the local, Nago City. The pro-base candidate highlighted the local economic problems - for example, the unemployment rate of the Nago youth at 20% - and bypassed the offshore base issue by declaring that it was a matter left to the prefectural governor's decision. In the process, the pro-base group successfully reconstituted Nago's identity as the north and challenged the hegemony of southern-central Okinawa that had imposed, if indirectly, the offshore base upon Nago in the first instance.

Facing the return of the local in importance, the anti-base candidate said in retrospect: "The more I talked about the offshore base, the more distance from Nago I felt." In the end, the anti-base candidate was defeated, though narrowly, in the mayoral election in February, 1998. The changed political tide in Nago further washed over the gubernatorial election of November, 1998, in which Governor Ota, the peace idealist, was dismissed by voters of Okinawa.

In sum, in the referendum, a totality of Okinawa was created in opposition to the Japanese and U.S. governments, in which the Okinawa residents transcended their local concerns and joined the universal discourse of peace, ecology, and democracy. This totality was then transfigured into the age-old internal conflict within Okinawa through the logic of the economy in

the mayoral election.

Tormented by the dilemma of choice between peace and economy, the residents of Nago City in general, and those of Henoko in particular, have revealed the agonizing processes in which micro concerns of social life challenge as much as reinforce macro political processes of the Japanese nation, with the global U.S. military operations as an overarching structure.

Conclusion

The eventual fate of Okinawa's military base question is open to conjecture. For this reason, I consider the anthropological commitment to the present to be of continuing critical importance, both politically and intellectually.

The task of looking at the present compels the anthropologist to return from what Stuart Hall calls "the clean air of meaning and textuality" to "something nasty down below" in the field. Indeed, at the beginning of my fieldwork, I met suspicions of both those for and those against the planned base, that I was a special agent of the CIA or a spy for the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Such a cultural perception, I argue, should be taken seriously, for it invites the anthropologist to live, grasp, and hopefully transform Okinawa's historical relations with Japan and the U.S. at the level of concrete human interactions.

A comparison of psychoanalysis and anthropology, both of which are ultimately sustained by human interactions, may be appropriate at this juncture. In the age of modernization, Freud intervened for his clients in what he called the "battlefield" at the border between the conscious and the unconscious. In the age of globalization, I as an anthropologist wish to explore the possibility of anthropology to engage in the battlefield at the border between the local, the national, and the global.

Publications (XXX)

We gratefully acknowledge the following gifts of publications, papers, and materials.

Egami, Takayoshi (ed.) 1997. *Gendai Okinawa no seiji to shakai - 1996 nen shūgin senkyo zengo no seiji ishiki bunseki wo chūsin ni -* (Politics and society of modern Okinawa --- centering on the analysis of political consciousness during the period around the House of Representatives elections of 1996). Nishihara: University of the Ryukyus Faculty of Law and Letters. 242 pp. Useful for a review of the problems and accomplishments of the prefectural administration under Governor Masahide Ota, who was elected in 1990 supported by reformist forces. Egami's article, pp. 87-106, offers a good perspective on the first Ota administration, 1990-94. The September 1995 rape of a school girl by U.S. servicemen thrust Okinawa's politics in an unexpected, perilous direction. The UR scholars undertook the reported public opinion research at a point where the new political momentum reached its climax.

Hawaii United Okinawa Association. 1999. *Uchinanchu Newsletter*, #68 (December/ January), 8 pp., and #69 (February/March), 12 pp. President Lilian M. Takata expounds on her motto "Yaninju." #69 reviews the history of Okinawan immigration to Hawaii, in anticipation of a centennial in Y2K.

Leavenworth, Charles S. 1905. *The Loochoo Islands*. Shanghai: "North-China Herald" Office. 186 pp. Reproduced and bound by Paul A. Myers, a Chicago-based private collector/publisher of classic works and rare documents on Ryukyu/ Okinawa. An accomplished artist in *shodō* and *sumi-e* (calligraphy and ink painting), Dr. Myers held an exhibition of his masterpieces at Lubeznik Gallery, Michigan City, IN, in April and May 1999.

Nakachi, Kiyoshi. 1997. "Characteristics of Exchange Activities Between Okinawans and Americans Under the U.S. Military Government," *Meio Daigaku Kiyō* (Meio University Journal), No. 3 (October): 9-18.

Okinawaken Bunka Shinkōkai (Okinawa Prefecture Cultural Development Society) and Kōbunshokan Kanribu Shiryō Henshūshitsu (Public Documents Archives Headquarters, Historical Materials Compilation Office), eds. 1999. *Dai-4-kai Ryukyu/ Chūgoku kōshōshi ni kansuru sinpojiumu ronbunshū* (Collection of papers presented at the fourth symposium concerning the history of Ryukyu/China relations). Okinawa Prefecture Education Commission. 329 pp. Most of the articles have to do with the official principal-tributary relations between China and Ryukyu Kingdom. Two articles of different orientations are "Ryukyu and the East Asian international relations around the Opium Wars" by Fusaaki Maehira and "Comments on Ryukyuan ships drifting in pursuit of (non-approved) trade" by Yu Yuchu. Yu refutes the hypothesis, held by some Ryukyuan scholars, that some of the Ryukyuan ships which drifted to the Chinese coast claiming to have been blown off by the storm probably did so intentionally for trading purposes.

Okinawa Kokusai Daigaku Kōkai Kōza Iinkai (Okinawa International University Public Lectures Committee) (ed.) 1998. *Okinawa keizai no kadai to tenbō* (Okinawa economy's problems and prospects). Ginowan. 412 pp. ¥1500+tax. A collection of articles that have grown out of public lectures given Saturdays by various authors in September - December 1997 under the auspices of the Okinawa International University Public Lectures Committee. The topics range widely over urban policy, fiscal policy, monetary policy, agri-business, multi-media, American military bases, de-regulation, free trade zones,

international comparison, and youth employment.

Okinawa Prefecture. 1998. *Heisei 10-nen chiji hōbei jigyo no gaiyō* (Summaries of activities during the 1998 U.S. visit of the governor). 76 pp. Governor Ota saw much value in maintaining direct contacts with officials in Washington DC for problem-solving regarding the U.S. military bases in Okinawa. He made it a rule to pay a visit to the U.S. capital every spring.

Okinawa Prefecture. 1998. *Okinawa no beigun kichi* (The U.S. military bases in Okinawa). 1998. 531 pp. A basic source on the subject.

Okinawa Prefecture. 1998. *Zai-Okī beigun kichi no sakugen tō ni kansuru giron tō* (Arguments concerning reduction of U.S. military bases in Okinawa and related matters). 18 chapters, no consecutive pagination.

Ota, Masahide, and Natsuki Ikezawa. 1998. *Okinawa kara hajimaru* (It Starts from Okinawa). Tokyo: Shūeisha. 319 pp. ¥1700 + tax. A detailed exposition of Okinawa's many problems in the form of conversation between the governor and a novelist.

Ota Masahide Seikei Bunka Kenkyūkai (Ota Masahide Political, Economic, and Cultural Studies Society). 1998. *Ota Okinawaken Chiji 8-nenme no ayumi* (The 8th-year foot steps of Okinawa Governor Ota). 210 pp. An annual review, which has become the last for the Ota administration.

Smith, Patrick. 1998. "Masahide Ota and the End of an Ideal," *JPRI Critique*, vol. 5, no. 11 (December). Comments on the result of the last gubernatorial election of Okinawa. "First elected in 1990 on an anti-bases platform, he (Ota) has stood firmly against the U.S. presence---and given Okinawans a voice in the matter for the first time." "His leading opponent was Keiichi Inamine, a former oil executive...he

effectively managed to cast the election as a stark, unappealing choice between idealistic principles and economic growth."

Zhou Huang. 1757. *Liuqiuguo zhilue* (A Short History of Ryukyu), 208 pp. A custom printed and hand bound edition in a case covered with jade green silk cloth and equipped with hand carved bone closures, by Paul A. Myers. Zhou Huang was the deputy emissary of the Emperor of Qing who in 1756 participated in the formal investiture of Sho Boku as King of Ryukyu. This report on his Liuqiu mission is lauded as one of the best of its genre. Katsushika Hokusai, 1760-1849, ukiyoe artist of Edo, developed colorful woodblock prints of "Eight Landscapes of Ryukyu" from Zhou's sketches that adorned early pages of this book.

Forthcoming

Chalmers Johnson, president of the Japan Policy Research Institute (JPRI), editor. **OKINAWA: COLD WAR ISLAND**, a collection of essays on various facets of the Okinawa problem. In press. 296 pp. + index. US\$20 + shipping & handling. Available for sale via a secure Internet server from the JPRI distributor, the New Mexico US-Japan Center at:
<http://www.nmjrc.org/okinawa_cold_war_island.html>.

The book is composed of 5 parts, which are entitled, together with the contributors' names, as follows: I. Japan's Legacy: The Typhoon of Steel (Masahide Ota, Koji Taira). II. Okinawa: The Political and Military Setting (Kozy Amemiya, Steve Rabson, Mike Millard, Chalmers Johnson). III. Okinawan Identity: Assimilation Policy in Okinawa: Promotion, Resistance, and Reconstruction (Steve Rabson, Kozy Amemiya, Koji Taira). IV. Okinawa: The Protest Movement: Women and Military Violence (Carolyn Bowen Francis, Masahide Ota, Chalmers Johnson). V. Okinawa: A Future Without American Bases? (Shuji Taoka, Masayuki Sasaki, Gavan McCormack, Patrick Smith). More information in **The Ryukyuanist's** autumn issue (forthcoming).

In memoriam: Ferdinand T. Unger (1913-1999)

Army Lieutenant General Ferdinand T. Unger died at the age of 85 on January 31, 1999. He was a resident of Arlington, Virginia.

From November 1966 to January 1969, General Unger served simultaneously as High Commissioner of the Ryukyu Islands, Commanding General of the U.S. Army in the Ryukyus, and Representative in the Ryukyus of the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific.

In meeting these multiple roles, the High Commissioner position was found to be the most unique as he actively sought to make Okinawa a better place for the inhabitants and to achieve their welfare and well-being as directed by the Executive Order of the President of the United States.

Toward this end, in his first appearance before the Ryukyuan legislature three months after his arrival in Okinawa, General Unger stated that he was prepared to rescind twenty-nine ordinances and other laws issued by his predecessors on the condition that the legislature pass the necessary laws and provide related machinery to handle the problems which ordinances covered.

General Unger demonstrated a willingness to listen and respect Okinawan proposals and complaints and, where possible, made accommodations to meet the problems presented to him. He recognized the need for an increase in direct U.S. monetary aid for Okinawa above the authorized annual ceiling of \$12 million and aggressively urged responsible Congressional committees for an increase to \$25 million. The lawmakers eventually granted an annual authorization level of 17.5 million dollars.

In military base related problems, General Unger instituted a program for better acquainting American personnel with matters of importance to the Okinawan people. He thereby sought to reduce unfavorable adverse incidents and improve understanding between American and Ryukyuan cultures, the overall goal being to reduce anxieties and unrest of the inhabitants.

He recognized that the way the military would want to do things would not always be compatible with the civic responsibilities. He demonstrated patience in dealing with unique and diverse problems and sensitivity to the aspirations of the Okinawans.

Following months of consultations with Okinawans at all levels of responsibility, General Unger recognized that what they desired most was a public election of the Chief Executive of the Government of the Ryukyu Islands (GRI), a position then filled by appointment.

During 1967 he recommended to Washington that a change be made in the Executive Order governing Okinawa so that the GRI Chief Executive could be popularly elected. The idea was approved and an election was held in November 1968. Ironically, the winner in this election was Mr. Yara Chobyō, a candidate supported by reformist forces opposed to the U.S. rule of Okinawa.

Another popular action by General Unger was the move of the United States Civil Administration offices from the building jointly occupied with the GRI in Naha to Machinato.

Throughout his years in Okinawa, General Unger successfully carried out his role as soldier, diplomat and politician while seeking to meet the hopes and aspirations of the people of Okinawa without compromising the basic principles regarding the United States' mission in the Ryukyus.

The Ryukyuanist, a quarterly newsletter on Ryukyuan/Okinawan Studies, is edited by Koji Taira. For contact: ILIR-UIUC, 504 E. Armory, Champaign, IL 61820, USA: E-mail, <k-taira@uiuc.edu>; Tel., 217-333-1483; Fax., 217-244-4091. Sub.: individuals, \$10; institutions, \$20.