

# The Ryukyuanist

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## Summit afterthoughts

In July, the Summit came to Okinawa and put it on the world map as the place where the leaders of eight major industrialized democracies and the president of the European Commission met and proclaimed their commitment to bring about a "global information society." On July 22, 2000, the Summit adopted a historic **Okinawa Charter on Global Information Society**. Information and Communications Technology (IT) was viewed as "one of the most potent forces in shaping the twenty-first century."

At noon, July 23, 2000, the Summit wrapped up its work by announcing **G8 Communiqué Okinawa 2000**. Its preamble declares: "A new era dawns. Let us move forward together, with hope, toward a 21st century of greater **prosperity**, deeper **peace of mind** and greater **stability**."

The irony that the world leaders may not have sensed was that for the host society, **Okinawa**, hopes for prosperity, peace and stability would likely be dashed by the over-presence of the U.S. military in Okinawa. The U.S.-Japanese alliance has reduced Japan to the status of a U.S. protectorate and taken away 20% of Okinawa Island for U.S. military bases from which to protect Japan (in addition to using them for the U.S. military strategy in East Asia). Large proportions of Okinawa's skies and waters are also controlled by the U.S. military.

## The president's speech

President Clinton, who was earlier reluctant to approve of Okinawa as a summit venue, eventually accepted the late Prime Minister Obuchi's decision. Before participating in the summit, the president visited the "Cornerstone of Peace," a monument consisting of waves of granite walls inscribed with the names of those who died in, or as consequences of, the 1945 Battle of Okinawa.

The president addressed a select audience invited to the occasion. Shorn of the frills designed to comfort troubled hearts or to confuse critics, the president's offer to right the wrongs suffered by Okinawans was modest.

He correctly described the wrongs. After emphasizing that the U.S.-Japanese alliance "must endure," the president said: "Of course, Okinawa has played a **vital role** in allowing it to endure. **I know that the people of Okinawa did not ask to play this role, and that it sometimes seems like you have borne a heavy burden for peace in Asia.** Though this island has less than one percent of the landmass of Japan, it provides 75 percent of the land on which American bases sit." (Emphasis added.)

For the president's information, the prefecture of Tokyo is also less than one percent of Japan in area, but unlike Okinawa provides similarly less than one percent of its land for the American bases. That is an example of a "fair share" of base burden the Okinawans are

seeking. In order to attain this level of fairness, 99.5 percent of the land occupied by the American bases on Okinawa must be returned to the people of Okinawa.

**"To continue to reduce our footprint..."**

Five years ago, a Special Action Committee on Okinawa (SACO) began addressing this issue. In its final report, SACO promised a number of micro-adjustments which in total would reduce the area of land occupied by the American bases by 20 percent. Some of the adjustments have been carried out. A 20-percent reduction is of course a small fraction of the desired 99.5-percent reduction.

Apparently referring to the work of SACO, the president said: "We made 27 specific commitments to you back then. So far we have met over half of them. Today, I want to reaffirm: we will meet every single one in the time we have pledged to meet them. **We are going to continue to do what we can to reduce our footprint on this island.**" (Emphasis added.)

Okinawans immediately began wondering what that last sentence meant. Cynics among them dismissed its importance saying that it was only a rhetorical embellishment without any special meaning. **The Ryukyuanist** is more trusting. It interprets the last sentence to mean that after having met all the SACO pledges and having reduced the land occupied by the bases by 20 percent, the United States will "continue to do what [it] can to reduce" its military presence in Okinawa. That is, after the initial 20-percent reduction, the reduction of the bases will continue, toward a 95.5-percent reduction.

**Time to go?**

Why is the reduction of the bases so hard and so slow? The stock answer repeated *ad infinitum* is that the U.S. bases in Okinawa as well as in Japan and Korea are needed for "maintaining and guaranteeing peace, security, and stability in Northeast Asia." Another way of saying the same thing is that the bases are here to stay as long as there are conditions of threat and tension that disrupt peace, security and stability in the region.

There are two perceived trouble spots in the region: the Taiwan Strait and Korean Peninsula. The Taiwan question is now universally considered an internal affair of One China. Its settlement is up to the Chinese on both sides of the strait. Threats to peace in Korea have lately almost evaporated. The United States itself has ceased to call North Korea a "rogue state." The two Koreas have been talking with each other with increasing intensity and frequency.

An unusual peace-maker emerged at the Okinawa Summit in the person of the Russian president, Vladimir Putin. On his way to the Summit, he stopped over in North Korea and secured its willingness to drop its missile development project and to scrap its weapons-grade nuclear facilities.

The Summit adopted a **G8 Statement on Korean Peninsula**, "warmly" welcoming and "strongly" supporting "all efforts by the ROK and the DPRK to reduce **tension** and establish **lasting peace** on the Korean Peninsula that contribute to **stability** in Northeast Asia."

There, then, one sees trouble disappearing from the trouble spots of Northeast Asia. The American bases and American troops in

Northeast Asia have become superfluous. In the fine tradition of American political rhetoric, "it is time for them to go!" Why not "seize the moment!"?

#### **Okinawa's peace message**

Yet, if one turns to Okinawa, the situation is "business as usual" with the burden of the U.S. military presence weighing down on the hearts and shoulders of Okinawans with no relief in sight.

President Clinton's visit was preceded by a 6-month surge in the crime wave of the American servicemen against Okinawans. In July, the Summit month, two incidents arose on the hot heels of each other: a break-in and sexual assault on a sleeping girl, and a hit-and-run accident. The perpetrators were Americans, and the victims Okinawans. How long should this ugly relationship last as a price of the "enduring" U.S.-Japanese alliance?

Two massive demonstrations of protest sprang up in July. One was in response to the recent crimes. This one, though almost spontaneous, attracted more than 7,000 outraged Okinawans. The other, under planning for some time, mobilized more than 27,000 for encircling one of the world's largest air force bases, the Kadena Air Base, by an unbroken human chain.

What is the symbolism of a human chain? One answer that has caught **The Ryukyuanist's** attention is: by joining hands and standing up for peace, we shall one day be able to squeeze all agents and instruments of war out of this world.

#### **Japan's psychological war on Okinawan identity**

Why did the Tokyo-based Japanese government decide to hold this year's summit in Okinawa? It was perceived as a special favor to an unfortunate plaything of history and politics that is Okinawa. When Okinawa Prefecture applied for the hosting of the summit, it argued that Okinawa, so different from the rest of Japan, would impress the foreign visitors with the "diversity" of Japan and enrich the image of Japan in their minds. The Japanese government, for **tatemae**, bought into Okinawa's argument.

However, behind the scenes at the **honne** level, the government's strategists hoped for a different **quid pro quo**, an opportunity to subdue and transform the often recalcitrant Okinawans into loyal Japanese nationals. One strategist claimed that the Okinawa summit should make Okinawans "proud of being Japanese" and "more trusting of the Japanese government." Another hoped for "bringing about a change in the Okinawan mindset mired in Okinawa's special history and to help Okinawans march in step with mainland Japanese."

The summit in Okinawa, then, was not Japan's message of diversity, but the demonstration of its resolve for a more perfect assimilation of Okinawa into Japan (a greater homogenization of Japan). Obviously, homogeneity is still the societal ideal in Japan --- even in the year 2000 AD.

The question to which we should return in a few years is: will the Okinawans have become more Japanese as a consequence of the summit?

(Koji Taira is responsible for this report, analysis, and speculation.)

## Okinawa, Hawai'i and Modernity

Milton Takei

Okinawa and Hawai'i (my homeland) have certain similarities. Both were independent kingdoms that were absorbed into a larger polity. A political analysis featuring a collective memory of lost sovereignty can go a long way toward explaining political conditions in both territories.

Independence movements throughout the world (including the Pacific Islands) can also serve as a model for people in Okinawa and Hawai'i. Yet without people retaining an attachment to Okinawa or Hawai'i there would be no possibility of a movement for sovereignty or independence.

Nonetheless, I would like to ask a question that some people might find absurd: why do people identify with Okinawa or Hawai'i? Identities are not immutable--they change through time. For one thing, Hawai'i as a country did not exist until Kamehameha the Great unified the islands in 1810.

People can identify with both Okinawa and Japan, or with both Hawai'i and the United States. Why would one identity be stronger in some people? My answer is that modern life, despite its benefits, produces a sense of alienation that leads many people to more strongly identify with a smaller territory.

A recent article describes a failed paradigm that would predict that in the modern world, people would identify more with Japan or the United States rather than Okinawa or Hawai'i.

"As communication in political, economic and cultural matters increased, the peoples of different regions would develop a new common identity, which would transcend their differences. Society would become 'modernized' by means of elite-instituted policies aimed at achieving social standardization (e.g., a common language and

citizenship). As a consequence, the cultural identities of ethnic groups and minorities would be replaced by a set of class-oriented conflicts, or conflicts among interest groups" (Luis Moreno, "Local and Global: Mesogovernments and Territorial Identities," **Nationalism & Ethnic Politics**, Vol 5, Nos. 3 & 4, Autumn/Winter 1999, p. 64).

In the beginning, there was the local community -- among agriculturalists, it was the village. In the isolated, pre-modern community, almost everyone outside the village boundaries were strangers, although people who had moved into the village would have relatives elsewhere. The process of modernization has expanded people's horizons so that they are now part of larger "imagined communities" (Benedict Anderson, **Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism**, New York: Verso, 1991).

The world is divided into countries. The question is where the borders are to be drawn. Some people wonder if globalization is making these boundaries less significant.

The article by Moreno I cite above says that the kind of analysis described in the quote has been falsified. I think that more accurately, one could say that in many countries, the process of assimilation into a national identity has been imperfectly successful.

People may see themselves as British, Spanish, or French while others in the same territory insist that to the contrary, they are Scottish, Catalan, or Breton. There can be various sub-group identities that people can hold while at the same time feeling comfortable with their citizenship as currently legally mandated.

Modernity brings many material advantages that people who have them

would be loathe to give up. The modern world also causes people a certain unease, a sense of rootlessness and powerlessness, a feeling that they don't know who they are. The loss of pre-modern ties causes alienation. Japan, Europe and the United States possess great wealth, but people sense there is something wrong.

Some people probably feel perfectly comfortable as a citizen of the world, detached from any particular place; such people are similar to the Confucian scholar-officials who had to be able to serve anywhere in the empire. However, I suspect that individuals who feel deprived relative to the dominant groups in their society would tend to feel more alienated than those who are in a position of power, as were the scholar-officials.

Pre-modern peasants were forced to bear the burden of taxation and rent. They also suffered other indignities. However, if they had enough land they did not need to work for other people, and thus retained a certain autonomy. Peasant agriculture involved many choices, and even experienced cultivators might disagree on what would be the best decision; thus independence from daily supervision had a value for peasants. The state was normally far away.

In the process of modernization, people in effect traded their personal autonomy for material advantages. The glow of progress made up for the impositions of governments, employers, or customers. Today, modernity is increasingly suspect, and people see that prospects for the future are not so bright.

Modern urban dwellers have lost their connection to non-human nature. Unlike pre-modern peasants, they do not have the relationship of reciprocity with the non-human world which involves humans giving to nature and getting benefits in

return. Production is no longer for the family's own use; that is, it is no longer for subsistence.

Nature is no longer personified as spiritual beings that can help or harm people, much in the same way as their human neighbors. The resulting alienation from Nature can cause city-dwellers to enjoy home gardens, or trips to the mountains, forest, or desert. The alienation of modernity can also cause people to have a renewed interest in the particular place where they were born, with its own climate and geographical features. They can become like the character in the song, "Carry Me Back to Old Virginia/Virginny," the state song of Virginia, USA.

The song was the center of some controversy, because some people argued that the lyrics implied that the character in the song liked life under slavery. I have a different interpretation: despite being a slave, he still loved the land of his birth so much that he wished to be buried there.

In a smaller country the size of Okinawa or Hawai'i, people can hope to regain some of their lost autonomy. If there can be less demands from Tokyo or Washington, people can hopefully gain more control over their lives. Many people wish to resist globalization, as personified in the World Trade Organization, for example. They can hopefully feel more rooted in a place.

Rather than being absorbed into a universal human category, or assimilated into a larger polity like Japan or the United States, people might feel happier if tied to a smaller political community, with its own particular characteristics. While not the same as life in a pre-modern village, with its ties to nature, perhaps people can at least return part of the way to the world they have lost. A smaller country is better than a bigger country.

#### Publications (XXXIV)

We gratefully acknowledge the receipt of the following publications, papers or materials.

Hawaii United Okinawa Association. 2000. *Uchinanchu*, nos. 74 & 75 (January & February), 4 pp. & 12 pp. The year 2000 marks the hundredth anniversary of the arrival of the first 26 immigrants from Okinawa. Commemorative events are scheduled over the year under the banner: "Okagesama de 2000, Bridging a Century of Uchinanchu Aloha." *Ukazi debiru, Aloha*. A new president takes office: Albert H. Miyasato. Merger of the Hawaii Okinawa Center and the Hawaii United Okinawa Association.

Hirarashi Shi Hensan Iinkai (Committee for the Compilation of Hirara City History), ed. 1981. *Hirarashi shi* (Hirara City History), vol. 1. Hirarashi Kyōiku Iiinkai (Hirarashi Education Committee). A general history of Miyako and Hirara, prehistory to 1945: preface and table of contents, 21 pp.; text, 517 pp.; appendices, 113 pp.

*Ibid.* 1981. Vol. 2. General history, postwar. 571, 171 pp.

*Ibid.* 1981. Vol. 3. Data Base I: documents, premodern. 20, 684 pp.

*Ibid.* 1978. Vol. 4. Data Base II: 1879-1945 (end of the Ryukyu Kingdom to the end of World War II). 620 pp.

*Ibid.* 1976. Vol. 5. Data Base III: newspapers, 1945-1952 (end of World War II to the inauguration of the Government of the Ryukyu Islands). 799 pp.

*Ibid.* 1985. Vol. 6. Data Base IV: 1945-1972, public documents, periodicals, economic statistics, public health materials, etc. 28, 915 pp.

*Ibid.* 1987. Vol. 7. Data Base V: ethnographies. 754 pp.

*Ibid.* 1988. Vol. 8. Data Base VI: archeology, biographies. 24, 853 pp.

*Ibid.* 1994. Vol. 8. Data Base VII: utaki (sacred groves). 13, 670.

Hirarashi Sōgō Hakubutsukan (Hirara City General Museum). 1999. *Kiyō*, No. 6. 92 pp. 6 articles on diverse topics: e.g., pre-modern poll tax, funeral language, sand dunes, etc. Alao a useful overview, by Nakasone Masaji, on changes in the socio-cultural patterns of Miyako society since 1945.

Hokama, Kanwa. 2000. *Caraway senpū* (Caraway storms). Naha: Hirugisha. 307 pp. 2800 yen + tax. As the legends tell it, High Commissioner Caraway was an Aeolus incarnate who blew down merciless storms on Okinawa's financial sector to cleanse it of corrupt practices. Not so, according to this memoir of a former Banking Administrator who served from January 1963 to July 1965. Caraway saw the need for a war on corruption, but lacked know-how and personnel to carry it out. Although the author was formally subordinate to Caraway, his office enjoyed a high degree of autonomy. He therefore autonomously (with no guidance or directive from Caraway) and vigorously executed the war on corruption. He sent numerous corrupt bankers to justice and reorganized several banks and insurance companies. The memoir deploys the original, English texts of the author's memos and reports to Caraway and other political superiors along with analyses and commentaries in Japanese. The author rightly touts Okinawans' will and ability to eliminate corruption, a feat that many other countries, especially Japan, find it hard to pull off.

**Japan Echo**. 2000. Vol. 27, No. 3 (June). Contains a special section, "Spotlight on Okinawa" consisting of an introduction and three articles. Introduction by Kawachi Takashi. "Asia's Regional Order: A Two-Century Perspective" by Shiraishi Takashi. "Environment and Development in Asia" by Matsushita Kazuo. "Futenma Air Station: The Okinawa Problem in Japan-U.S. Relations" by Gabe Masaaki.

Japan Policy Research Institute. 2000. **JPRI Critique**, vol. 7, no. 2 (February). "Further Nago Notes," by Chalmers Johnson; "The Marine Corps Air Station: Is This Base Really Necessary?" by Shunji Taoka.

Japan Policy Research Institute. 2000. **JPRI Working Paper No. 65**: "Peace Wars: The Politics of Presenting the Past in Contemporary Okinawa," by Julia Yonetani. 5 pp. The "peace wars" broke out when the new governor, elected in November 1998, and his administration attempted to secretly alter some of the exhibits and scripts at two Peace Memorial Museums, especially those that had to do with the Battle of Okinawa. The article is an orderly and searching analysis of dark (non-transparent) political maneuvers and the complex controversy that they generated. The hostilities ceased when the administration capitulated and reinstated its predecessor's cultural policy.

Miki, Takeshi. 2000. **Dokumento: Okinawa henkan kōshō** (Document: Restoration of Okinawa at the Negotiating). Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Hyōronsha. xiii, 352 pp. 2600 yen+tax. In 1968-69, the first year of the Nixon-Kissinger collaboration on foreign policy, the author, then a reporter for the **Ryukyu Shinpo**, covered developments in the Japanese-American negotiation over

Okinawa's reversion to Japan. He joined the press club of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs when Miki Takeo (no relation of the author's) was the Foreign Minister. This book complements the memoirs of the principal players in Japanese-American relations such as Henry Kissinger, U. Alexis Johnson, Wakaizumi Kei, and others. Its unique strength is information on Okinawa's wishes, proposals and disappointments that American or Japanese sources rarely touch.

Miyagi, Etsujiro. 1982. **Senryōsha no me** (The eyes of the occupiers). Haeburu: Naha Shuppansha. 382 pp. 2400 yen. Contains many unbelievable, though true, stories of how Okinawa and Okinawans were seen by their "occupiers" during the 27 years of occupation. American views of Okinawans are gathered from governmental, academic, and media sources. They are methodically classified, organized and analyzed at several politico-societal levels ranging from the high office of the U.S. presidency to life ways of GIs and dependents in Okinawa. On the whole, it appears that Americans liked Okinawa, but disliked Okinawans.

Miyako Kyōdoshi Kenkyūkai (Miyako Local History Research Association). 1992. **Miyako no shiseki wo tazunete** (Visiting historical ruins of Miyako). Hirarashi. 88 pp. A helpful guide to places of historical interest.

Mulgan, Aurelia George. 2000. "Managing the US Base Issue in Okinawa: A Test for Japanese Democracy," **Working Paper No. 2000/1** (National Library of Australia, Canberra). 47 pp. A comprehensive evaluation of Japanese politics' inability to democratically respond to Okinawans' protests against the U.S. military presence. The diagnosis of the Japanese

government's problem in relation to Okinawa is astute. "An overriding priority for the Japanese government has been to avoid endangering the US-Japan Security Treaty and the US commitment to the defence of Japan. This helps to explain why it has consistently viewed the base issue as a foreign policy issue rather than as a domestic issue and thus why it has been so unresponsive to local anti-base protests in the past....

[Ultimately] removal of the US bases from Okinawa is primarily contingent on American strategic withdrawal from East Asia, not on localized political opposition in Okinawa." (pp. 43-44).

Ota, Masahide. 2000. **Okinawa no ketsudan** (Okinawa's resolve). Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha. 142, iv pp. 2200 yen + tax. A memoir of the author's gubernatorial years (1990-1998) that has grown out of interviews with a correspondent from the Asahi Shinbun. Governor Ota exposed the injustices Okinawans suffered under the war-centered Big-Power geopolitics. Under the U.S.-Japan security pact, the U.S. armed forces occupy 20% of Okinawa Island and enormous expanses of sea and air spaces. Ota said NO to the status quo and worked hard to have Okinawa's grievances recognized. He clashed with the Japanese and U.S.

governments and in 1998 lost his bid for the third term. He then opened the Ota Peace Research Institute and began a new round of public life.

University of the Ryukyus, Faculty of Law and Letters. 2000. **Ryukyu University Economic Review** No. 59 (March). 388 pp. A volume in honor of Professor Yoshitaka Matsuda (1934- ), well-known Marx scholar, who retired in March. Four among numerous articles specifically relate to Ryukyu/Okinawa. "The Ryukyuan 'Gusukus' or Their Economic Images Reflected in Ancient Icon (2)" by Masaru Komatsu. "Production Function of Okinawan Economy" by Hitoshi Tominaga. "The Economic Police and Okinawan People Under the Controlled Wartime Economy" by Nario Kabira. "Industrial Structure and Wastes in Okinawan Islands" by Hajime Oshiro.

University of Tokyo, Institute of Social Science. 1999. **Social Science Japan Journal**, Vol. 2, No. 1 (April). Oxford University Press. 153 pp. Annual sub.: \$95. Includes a review by Matt Allen of Michael Weiner, ed., **Japan's Minorities: The Illusion of Homogeneity** (1997), which contains a chapter on Okinawans.

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