Nationalism, Regionalism, and the Place of the 'Folklore'[1]*

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Introduction

This research is concerned with the experiences of people in Okinawa (or 'Ryukyu')[2] in the modern era in the light of the concept of 'folklore' ('minzoku' in Japanese). Okinawa is a peripheral district of 'Japan', the nation state(Fig.1). Due to the geographical location of their islands, like the Ainu (the aborigines in Hokkaido), Okinawans have had different experiences from those of the 'majority' of people in Japan. This research is particularly focused on folklore because it is a socio-cultural construction which is closely related to Hobsbawm's concept of 'invention of tradition' (Hobsbawm, 1983) rather than the natural product of a modern nation-state.

The process of the substantiation of folklore as a socio-cultural construction can be understood as the process of the contingent articulation of various discourses. For example, the concept of folklore/ minzoku has a positive connotation to the 'genre de vie' of the people. However, when it is given a negative implication, minzoku is called 'dozoku'. Although both minzoku and dozoku refer to the same thing, genre de vie, these characteristics have been interpreted positively or negatively depending on the particular political and social context at any given time. It is important to note that the

concept of minzoku/ folklore is inseparable from the representation of the domain of a nation-state. Without this geographical representation we cannot discuss the diffusion or distribution of folklore.

As Benedict Anderson (1983) says, the boundaries of a nation-state must draw a closed curve within which difference and multiplicity or diversity would be absorbed into homogeneity and oneness or uniformity. The form of the articulation of geographical representation with folklore is found in a map of the distribution of folk traditions. In a map, the difference and multiplicity of folk tradition is presented as concentric circles tracing a gradual movement of folklore from the center to the margins over time.

In Okinawa it was in the Taisho era that minzoku/ folklore came to be seen positively. However, at the same time, Kunio Yanagita established Nihon Minzoku-gaku (Japanese Folklore Studies) which marginalised the folklore of Okinawa in a same way that Okinawa is positioned on the map of Japan[3].

I will outline the representation of the folklore of Okinawa and how it has changed over time.

Historical background

First, I would like to touch on the historical details which need to be understood. Since the 17th century the kingdom of Ryukyu (Okinawa) had been politically influenced by Satsuma-Han ('han' meaning a feudal domain), and therefore had been included in the shogunate feudal domain system[4]. However, Ryukyu was already part of the Chinese 'Sakuhou' system, and, therefore, it was influenced by two systems at the same time. When the Meiji government was

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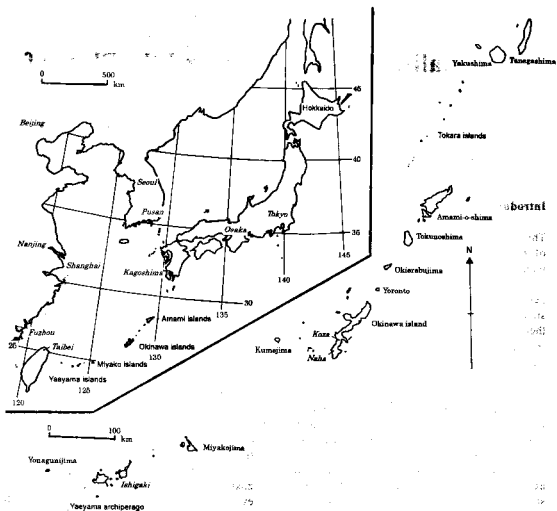oshiro@lit.kobe-u.ac.jp

Photo 1 Angama ritual in Ishigaki

Nmi (left) and Ushumai (right) with their dancing band (back)

Source: Okinawa Taimusu Sha ed. 1991. *Okinawa no Matsuri* (Rituals in Okinawa), Okinawa Taimusu Sha, p.182

established in Japan, the kingdom of Ryukyu was forced to cut off its relationship with China and in 1879 it was compelled to become a full part of Japan and to lose its individual identity (Ryukyu-syobun). Consequently, Ryukyu became part of the unified jurisdiction of the nation. After that, the kingdom of Ryukyu became Okinawa Ken ('ken' meaning a prefecture) as a component part of the nation-state of Japan. The systems or forms of administration, legislation or land administration were very different from those of other prefectures. The government set up a transitional period of changing the old customs to the new until the land management system or land ownership system project was finished in 1903. During the transitional period, the system of education and conscription were operated in the same way as the rest of the prefectures.

In Japan, the modern school system or the military were the places where the pre-modern 'bodily manner' or 'way of life' was institutionalised (Fujitani, 1994), but in Okinawa, the pre-modern norm had been allowed to continue officially during the transitional period. Therefore, the conscious creation of membership of the nation was in a different context from that of other prefectures. For example, when the Sino-Japanese War occurred during 1894-95, there were many ex-samurai of the former Kingdom of Ryukyu who deeply believed and stated that 'the yellow warship will come from China to save the Ryukyu'. In 1905, after the Russo-Japanese War, Shigetaka Shiga, a geographer with a nationalist mind, visited Okinawa, and the next year in Tokyo he stated 'still, the people of Ryukyu have something different deep in their heart' (Shiga:1906, Takara:1980) .

In this context, especially in primary school, the Okinawan aspects of vernacular way of life was suppressed, for example dialect, mo-asobi (young people's after school singing and musical games), male topknots, female tattoos, Ryukyu style clothing and bare feet, in order to create an idealised or imagined 'real Japanese people'. 'Huzoku Kairyo Undo' (a reform movement aimed at changing Okinawa to Japan) developed in the late 1880s to the early 1900s when the land project had finished and teachers, born in Okinawa, had been brought up as Japanese (see Gima1985; Oguma, 1998). Inheritance of the Okinawan way of life was seen as negative and

its characteristics were codified like a table of wrongs or sins. In particular the way of life or demeanour which had been adopted by Okinawans, but was characterised by the Japanese as dozoku (uncivilized local customs), became the object of correction to assist the full Japanese assimilation process. Of course Okinawan people did not change to Japanese people immediately although their peculiarities had been identified and also the education system organised to correct this. Chofu Ota, a typical intellectual at the time in Okinawa, said 'the pressing need for Okinawans is to assimilate thoroughly with people in other prefectures, they should even sneeze like people in other prefectures'. There must be a voluntary conversion of consciousness. That is to say it must be people themselves who aspire to be 'Japanese' (Tomiyama:1994,1997).

Nationalism and the 'folklore' of Okinawa

The time had come for negativity about the peculiarities of the Okinawans to change to a more positive view point. In 1921, the inclusion of Okinawa in Japanese folklore studies was stimulated by Kunio Yanagita's trip to Okinawa. According to Murai (1992), Yanagita had changed his interest to the southern islands (of Japan) to heal his broken heart. Yanagita had proposed the 'middle farmer promotion' policy as a policy for colonial Korea which had been rejected. Consequently, Yanagita confronted his senior official at the time and resigned his career as a senior public official in 1919. Yanagita was devastated by the colonial policy for Korea which resulted in the 'San-ichi' movement (a protest movement against imperial Japan). From 1920, he travelled through Japan from north to south as a staff member of Asahi Shinbun-sya (a newspaper publishing company), and compiled his travel writing from that trip experience in a book entitled Kainan Shoki (travel essays of the southern sea region). After this time Okinawa, the southern islands, would come to occupy an important position in his research.

There were several studies on Okinawan folklore before Yanagita began his research. In 1906, Fuyu Iha, who is seen as a father of Okinawan Studies, graduated from the Imperial University of Tokyo and, back in his home, Okinawa. He continued his studies while he

worked at the prefectural library[2]. Yanagita came to Okinawa ten years after Iha's first book Ko Ryukyu ("Old Loochoo") was published. However these two people did not adopt the same stance on Okinawa as an object of study. Yanagita projected the temporal distance over the spatial distance and described the situation in Okinawa as a mirror for modelling the relationships of diffusion between the cultural center and its periphery in the nation-state of Japan, while Iha was still experiencing the political-academic fact that he himself as an Okinawan native was on the periphery, and explored the peculiarities and differences of Okinawa for articulating the 'Japanese-Okinawan same ancestor theory' (see Tomiyama, 1997).

Father of Yaeyama studies

After the studies by Iha and Yanagita, people who recorded and commented on folklore were mainly school teachers. In the Okinawan case, they also wrote county history and geography under the 'Chiho Kairyo Undo' (reformation movement of rural districts), and contributed some articles to Kyodo Kenkyu (1913-17) which was edited by Yanagita and Toshio Takagi. Some teachers then sent manuscripts to Robata Sosho which was a series compiled by Yanagita after the cessation of Kyodo Kenkyu. On the one hand, they oppressed dozoku (uncivilized local custom) by playing a role in educating Okinawans to be 'good Japanese', on the other, they collected and reported the local folklore. From this fact, we can see some contradictions within their position. As Gregory wrote elsewhere (Gregory, 1995a,b), inspired by Said (1978, 1993), this is exactly the complex and multiple appearance of a situation in which space, power and knowledge are related to one another. Therefore we see that plural subjects, which appear depending on a situation, are kept in one body. This is illustrated in the next case.

Eijun Kishaba, who guided Iha and Yanagita respectively in Ishigaki Island, the southern part of Okinawa, was inspired by them and started his career as a folklore study scholar beginning with folksongs. Later, because of his considerable excellent contributions, he came to be called 'father of studies on Yaeyama'. In 1924 he wrote Yaeyama Min'yo Shi (folksongs of Yaeyama), one of the series of Robata Sosho. Be-

fore retirement age he resigned his post as a school master to make way for his junior. As one of the intellectuals in Yaeyama, he took on managerial positions for Yaeyama county and managed administrative or cultural works. He negotiated with authorities on folk affairs. An incident occurred in 1931 in which Kishaba was active. 'Angama' is a kind of ancestral ritual with two people putting on masks like an old man and woman and simulating their ancestors performing with music and dancing while another group wearing flowers and covering their faces with towels tour houses in a village. This event was claimed to need control by police to prevent an affray by youth as had happened in the previous year. Against this, Kishaba supported Angama in newspapers and at a meeting with the police(Photo.1)[5].

In 1938, astonishingly, Kishaba appealed for the abolition of the Angama ritual and he was positively involved in 'Yaeyama Jinja' construction movement for promoting Yaeyama county. 'Jinja' is a shrine which represents the national system of Shinto. There were only a few shrines in Okinawa district. In the original plan of construction of Yaeyama Jinja, 'Sansho Gongen', a facility of Shinto-Buddhist synthesis, was selected for the construction site. However, Kishaba and the others who involved in the Yaeyama Jinja construction movement proposed Utaki, a place in which people pray to their 'kami' (ancestors or spirits), for an alternative site for the construction of Yaeyama Jinja. There were Utaki in the Yaeyama islands similar to others in the Okinawan region. What is important here is this conjuncture that occurred as he knew the folklore well and supported it. Utaki is fundamentally a local sacred space enshrined by the priestess and people and could not represent a national symbol within a village. Therefore, by its very nature in its original institution it could not be a facility at the county level. Though the movement of overriding Utaki with Jinja had happened several times since Ryukyu-shobun, Utaki could not be a focus of prayer for an area greater than a village. But Kishaba himself was the person who plotted to change ritual forms from Utaki to Shinto style. Eventually, 'Oishigaki Utaki' became a site for Yaeyama Jinja.

A Shadow of Man in the Utaki

In Utaki in Ishigaki island the most sacred place is called 'Ibi'.In 1945, just after the second World War, there was a man who at this place burnt 'Goshin-ei' (a picture of the Emperor). This is an extreme example of the alteration of sacredness of sacred space[7]. It is taboo that men enter Ibi, and the fact that he burnt the Goshin-ei in this very sacred place could not have occurred without the condition of that place being specifically changed and fitted into the narrative prepared by the nation-state. Utaki, which is itself a singular sacred place, had also been caught up in the web of the national Shinto system restructured under the regime of the Emperor over the whole Japanese geographical scale, and into the system of national territory, where Okinawans could not experience a real religious hierarchy. Although Utaki is not Jinja, it had come to be represented as Jinja rhetorically. Because of its 'planeness' which represents holiness, while most people continued to pray to their ancestors or spirits, it had also become a place of burning Goshin-ei. While Utaki Integration Movements under the initiative of administrators were failing all along the line, ironically, some people positively altered their gaze to Utaki as Shinto space. This fact indicates just one aspect of the permeation of 'Japanization' or 'nationalization'.

Regionalism in Okinawa and the role of "folk affairs" in this recent development

Since the late 1990s, there have been increasing movements towards regionalism in Okinawa. These movements were sparked off by a rape incident by U.S.soldiers, and developed into the revision of the "the Japan-U.S.Status of Forces Agreement". Okinawans advocated removing the US bases in Okinawa. A prefecture referendum supported the removal which brought the prefecture into disagreement with the varying opinions of the Japanese.

Hereafter, I'd like to touch on aspects of socio-cultural characteristics which interact with political characteristics, and to see how the "folklore", or specific characteristics of "Okinawan" vernacular, as outlined above, are now represented.

The oppression which worked specifically on Okinawans such as "Fuzoku Kairyou Undo (Custom Reformation Movement)" in the Meiji 30s (late 1890s to around 1907) or "Seikatsu Kaizen Undo (Lifestyle Improvement Movement)" in the Showa 10s (the mid 1930s to the mid 1940s), as previously discussed, was relaxed after the Second World War under U.S.military governance[8].The U.S.stressed individuality of Okinawa/Ryukyu on purpose, because it hoped to cut off the strong affinity between Okinawa and Japan. This is the reason why the U.S.used the term "Ryukyu" instead of "Okinawa" which indicates its inclusion in Japan. However, when the restoration movement towards Japan was rising and articulating its agenda, as a reaction to U.S.governance, the pressure by the Japanese government to become "Japanese" began to reoccur in the same way as it had before 1945 in Okinawa. "Hogen-Fuda" is a good example of the suppression by the Japanese government on Okinawan culture at this time. It was a punishment plaque which was hung around the neck of a student who was pointed out for speaking dialect as a warning to others.

Vernacularized Rock 'n' roll

Eiichi Miyanaga is a person who became a legend to many people. He was educated during the restoration period and experienced the oppressing restrictions on the Okinawan dialect in school. Later he became a famous drummer of the legendary rock 'n' roll band "Murasaki(purple)" who used to play at Koza city. He now explores styles of rock 'n' roll music adopting the musical scale and dialect of Ryukyu in his songs. Murasaki frequently played for U.S.soldiers at music clubs in Koza during the Vietnam war. Murasaki sang in English and their style of music performance was hard rock. At that time in the Japanese popular music scene where there were still many popular pop music groups, Murasaki were unique and pioneers in introducing a hard rock style into Japan[9]. Although Murasaki disbanded in 1978, Miyanaga continues to play his music with other bands. It is interesting that Miyagawa, who did not sing in Japanese, now combines with "Ryukyu Kobudo Taiko"(Ryukyu style drum band but it is a version of invented tradition or fake-lore cf: Yagi,1994) using Okinawan dialect and music scale (NHK-ETV on air, 1992).

The context of change in which such a case

occurred is, I think, the rising state of cultural activism in Koza city. (It changed its name to Okinawa city after an administrative merger.) Okinawa city is located in the middle part of Okinawa island at a distance from Naha, the capital city and administrative and business center of Okinawa prefecture. Formerly, before 1945, Koza was a rural region and urbanized in the post war era as a local town for near the U.S.Kadena air-base whereas Naha was a neighboring town of Shuri, the former capital of Ryukyu Kingdom[10]. It can be said that Koza is the nearest thing to America in Okinawa. So, it is not surprising that a rock 'n' roll band such as Murasaki was born and was active in Koza rather than any other place in Okinawa. But Koza has also been the Mecca of Okinawan folk music since the end of the World War II. Many musicians who are active and still leading figures are living and playing in Koza. The agents of the recent boom in Okinawan popular music, such as Shokichi Kina who was known by his song: "Hana (flower)" or "Hai-sai Ojisan", Rinken Teruya who is the leader of the famous "Rinken Band", and Sadao China who produced 'Ne-nes' are all their sons. The character of their music is mixture of Okinawan folk music and western popular music. Only ten years ago, this trend would not have possibly happened in Okinawa. It seems to me that such music is produced in the very culturally mixed city of Koza rather than in a place which adheres to "tradition" or "authenticity" like Shuri or Naha. Here we can see the context of the background in which Miyanaga changed his attitude and adopted Okinawan dialect and musical scale[11].

Additionally, in the middle district of Okinawa island around Koza, performing "Eisah", which is a version of the Bon (ancestral ritual) dance with collective singing and drumming, is very popular. Eisah was originally simple. Although it was formally a folk performance, it has developed an expressive style and become more lively and stirring. Eisah has come a long way from the so-called authentic style. It can be said that these developments are characteristic of "folk" activities in Koza in which the traditional is not preserved in an old form but arranged creatively[12].

Objectification of cultures

As previously discussed, attitudes towards Okinawan folklore have been changed from negative to positive, and the other way around. Yanagita and his "folk studies" positively interpreted the folk affairs in Okinawa, but came to be represented negatively in the pre-war era, and as Muneyoshi Yanagi and his "Mingei Undo" (folk craft movement) valued the Okinawan "traditional" style of life but were oppressed in war time, then the reverse view of both situations re-emerged. Therefore the Koza case illustrates the concrete version of a paradigm shift. If you are self absorbed in your own culture, your view of life will not change. If you take a step back, and look at your culture from a distance, you take a very different view. As Ota stated, "Objectification of culture" will become possible. According to Ota, this means building up cultures as new operational objects based on selected and interpreted elements [of the old] (Ota:1993, p.391).

Hence we see that singers, whose fathers are singers of Okinawan folk music, adapt folk music to include elements of western popular music. Conversely, Miyanaga absorbs his Okinawan music heritage into western music. These two show reverse directions. In the past, the audiences for each were never the same, but now people listen to both musical developments. The vernacular connects both streams into one hybrid style. The audience for the music is not isolated to Okinawan people only on the islands of Okinawa. The musicians now play across the world due to the "World music boom" which occurred in Japan from the late 1980s.

Today, we can see a sort of transition in the commitments to, and representation of, the particular vernacular style around Okinawa prefecture. I think that some parts of this, for example regionalism, reflect these attitudes either consciously or unconsciously. In the past, the "folk" (affairs) or "folklore" were confined by the extremes of a negative or a positive understanding, but in the present, this has been separated from these opposing axes and displaced. After all, in Okinawa, we now find a place where the differences, changing tradition or authenticity, negotiate with each other and create an alternative place for "folklore" and view this positively[13].

Notes

1) The first part of this text is based on Oshiro (1998a).

2) The term "Okinawa" used here refers simply to the prefecture of Okinawa. However this term is embedded in an extensive historical and political background, which will be addressed later in much detail. At this point, however, it is important to take into account that the term "Okinawa" also connotes the island Okinawa where the former capital Shuri is located. Used in this sense the term "Okinawa" includes those surrounding island groups, Amami, Miyako and Yaeyama, all of which were under the hegemony of Okinawa. In other words the imaginative political relationship that existed between Okinawa and these other island groups is now a political actuality that has Okinawa placed in a central and controlling position.

3) For more information on the process of establishment of Japanese folklore studies, founded by Yanagita, see Yanagita Kunio Kenkyukai (1988).

4) Araki(1980) and Kinjo(1978) examined the problem of so-called "Ryukyu Shobun" (annexation by Imperial Japan).

5) I drew the biographical account of Huyu Iha (or Ifa) mainly from Hokama (1979) and Kano (1993).

6) Information on Kishaba's work on folklore comes form pre-1945 newspapers such as "Sakishima Asahi Shinbun" "Yaeyama Shinpo" "Kainan Jiho". These newspapers have been re-published in "Ishigaki-shi shi" (The history of Ishigaki City series).

7) This case can be found in Makino(1972).

8) Nishihara (1976) provides a deeper understanding in his detailed account on "Seikatsu kaizen undo" (life reform movement) of the Showa 10 era.

9) For information on the relationship between Koza city and rock'n'roll music, see Okinawashi Kikakubu Heiwa Bunka Shinkoka (1994). This book is a collection of interviews with representative musicians of rock'n'roll in Koza city after 1970s, providing some insight into the similarities and many differences they have.

10) For more information on the formation of the city of Koza, see Tasato (1971); and on the whole of the urban geography of Okinawa prefecture, see Domae (1997).

11) Okinawa Kokusai Daigaku Bungakubu Shakaigakka Ishihara Zeminaru (1994) presents a detailed analysis of contemporary musical conditions in Koza city. Kumada (1998) analyses so-called "Okinawan pop", that is music of second or third generation post-war Okinawan "Min-yo" singers and suggests that it is possible to denote the following characteristics: a) "heterogeneity of styles", forming a pastiche of various musical elements taken out of context, b) "Okinawan new romanticism" expressing in song an unrealistic idealised utopian "Okinawan" image, and c) "fluidly interwoven ethnicity" in which ethnic values are made up of an interwoven matrix of various unrelated elements in constant flux, unlimited by restraints of temporal or spatial relationships.

12) In post-war years "Eisah" developed into a more ostentatious form, which has since been used for physical education in schools. See Okinawashi Kikakubu Heiwa Bunka Shinkoka (1998).

13) I have discussed the subtle differences between various discourses on the "Okinawa-Japan" politico-cultural axis. See Oshiro (1998b).

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