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介入する沖縄研究

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Okinawan Studies and Its Interventions

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本論考は、流動するフィールドとして沖縄研究を記述することにより、島々を主題とする沖縄研究が大陸という神話に抗して叙述を行うことを争点化する。地域的隔たりをまたぐ場所としてのこの領域は地域と地域研究の双方を歴史化する。さらには日本とアメリカ合衆国の周縁である沖縄は国民/民族および均質性についての語りを再想像する場である。まとめて言うならば、沖縄研究とはこれら根本的 (foundational) とされてきた空間的・社会的カテゴリーおよび人間の生活条件に関する複数のとらえ方を疑問に付すものである。

Islands, like debris deposited along the curving bank of a vast river in the sea, the Kūrōshio current, trace the peaks called the Ryūkyūs. The summits rise along the eastern fringes of the Eurasian tectonic plate in a gentle bending arc, and press southward and eastward with the earth's mantle against the northward thrust of the Indian-Australian plate and the westward probing of the Pacific plate. Marine life—corals, seaweeds, mollusks, and fishes—percolating from the fecund Indo-West Pacific, navigate Oceania's currents to settle and make homes in Ryūkyūan waters. Those spatial formations of land and water and their movements, including their biotic communities, distinguish the discursive and material contours of what I propose constitutes Okinawan studies.

Situated at the tip of that triangle of oceanic life, the Ryūkyūs are connected with Indonesia at one corner and the Philippines at the other and all of the lands and waters hemmed therein. The islands' spread is more capacious, though, through mobilizations, which extend their reach beyond the Indo-West Pacific to the rest of Oceania and to the Eurasian continent and plate of which the islands form outposts along its easternmost frontier. Moreover, mirroring its liminal location bordering two of earth's edges, the Eurasian and Pacific plates, Okinawa and its study proceed in multiple directions and intervene in reductivist notions of landmasses, regions, and nations. In this essay, I cite some

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of those provocations posed by Okinawan studies to spatial and social formations and thereby reference some of the intellectual gifts of this field to scholarship broadly conceived.

1. Nations¹⁾

The modern nation-state, a European configuration of relatively recent vintage, was conceived of as coterminous with a people. That is, originally, conjured kinship or “blood” tracings delimited the members of a nation-community, and insofar as people constituted a nation, the nation defined the people who were commonly referred to as “races.” In that way, we came to know the British race, the German race, and so forth; the very term “nation” derives from the Latin for “birth,” indicating a common ancestry or descent and hence blood and thus race. That mutual identity and identification is central to the idea of a nation/people. And as a creation of self (nation/people), it set and found itself against those the self was not, its other (other nations/peoples). Nation/people then, like the idea of race, assumed the natural order—timeless, universal, and absolute distinctions, which emerge from equally constant, certain, and peculiar others.

In reality, those inventions of nation/people are historical, arising in place and time through human agency, and their borders are fluid and under constant challenge and violation. Conquest and expansion altered those margins, incorporating novel lands and diverse peoples not originally designated as community members. Migration likewise produced new subjects albeit not always equal or welcome. Indeed, those transgressions of place, together with the imperial expansion of the idea of the “nation,” exposes the simple mindedness of the original notion of an undivided, homogeneous nation and people.²⁾ Consider “Japan” and the “Japanese” as a nation/people.

A founding history recounts that “Japan” was the homeland created for a people, the “Japanese,” who were descendants of Amaterasu, the sun goddess. As the fourteenth-century text, *Jinnō Shōtōki* or *Records of the Legitimate Succession of the Divine Sovereigns* declared: “Japan is the divine country. The heavenly ancestor it was who first laid its foundations, and the Sun Goddess left her descendants to reign over it forever and ever.” And “Japan” was unique because it differed from “foreign” lands and peoples, its others. “Japanese,” another document explained, were originally “of one blood and one mind,” forming the “Yamato race,” and later, absorbed and subordinated others of alien “blood” became “Japanese” as subjects of the emperor.³⁾

That version of its origin gained traction with the transformation of Japan into a modern, European nation-state—the kokutai (national polity). As we know, following the Chinese worldview, kuni (country) once referred to a local domain or region that was familiar and orderly in contrast with the foreign and disorderly outside that domestic sphere. But under Western influences and maps, Japan came to see a larger world, an array of competing nation-states arising mainly from continents and their races arranged in a hierarchy of beauty, merit, and worth—white Europeans, yellow Asians, black Africans,

red Americans, and brown Pacific Islanders. Those Enlightenment ideas were introduced to Japan by Westernizers such as Fukuzawa Yukichi in his *Sekai kunizukushi* (1869) or *Account of the Countries of the World*.⁴

Troubled by Russian expansion to its north in Kamchatka and the Kurile islands and to its south by Europeans in China and Southeast Asia, Japan sought to delimit and consolidate its borders. Ezo or Ainu lands and the Ryūkyū islands, formerly considered *ikoku* or “foreign countries” as listed in the *Wakan sansai zue* (1712) or *Japanese-Chinese Illustrated Encyclopaedia*, became parts of Japan as Hokkaido in 1869 and Okinawa prefecture ten years later. Further, assimilation or Japanization along with the suppression of Ainu and Uchinanchu language and culture were official policies of the Japanese state.⁵

Still, those of unrelated “blood” from the Ainu of Japan’s northern frontier to the Uchinanchu of Japan’s southern extremity stretched the physical area known as “Japan” and confounded the idea of its people, the “Japanese.” The former regime of discrimination based upon *jinshu* or physical type fell to the new order of Yamato *minzoku* or folk by the late Meiji period. Although different (and inferior) *minzoku* discourse held, Ainu and Okinawans were Japanese insofar as they shared a national (Yamato) history and culture. In our time, the myth of “Japonesia,” as proposed by novelist Shimao Toshio in his *Japonesia no neko* (1961), helps to suture those fractures at both ends of the reconstituted nation/people. “Japan,” Shimao claimed, formed a unitary racial, linguistic, and cultural sphere from Hokkaido to Okinawa, giving rise to the “Japanese” who are distinctive from their kindred others in Indonesia, Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia of the same, as some believe, Austronesian language family.⁶

Like the Meiji contexts of imperialism and national constitution, Shimao’s Japonesia emerges from a contemporary condition of *kokusaika* or internationalization. Amidst an increasing traffic of labor, capital, and culture, including migration and language shifts, anxieties over losses of identity and distinctiveness can easily translate into political capital. Thus in a July 1985 speech, then prime minister Nakasone Yasuhiro claimed that Japan’s eternal racial purity advanced an “intelligent society” whereas the mixed and colored populations of the U.S. could only produce a dull, superficial nation.⁷ And the International Research Center for Japanese Culture or Nichibunken, established in 1987, bankrolls research projects devoted to the promotion and preservation of a singular Japanese culture. Accordingly, like the Kokugakusha or National Learning scholars of the eighteenth century who insisted upon Japan’s pure essence undiluted by Chinese contaminants, intellectuals continue to promote state ideology to reach a popular consensus and commonsense.

Vexing, nonetheless, are the contradictions posed by those at the nation’s margins like the Ainu and their sustained movement for identity, culture, and indigenous rights and the Okinawans and their resilient drive for self-determination, anti-militarism, and peace.⁸ At the same time (and I’d like to address briefly the twists and turns of Okinawan historiography), those resistances posed by subject peoples to their condition are often complicated and are at times oppositional while in other moments, complicitous. And yet, their

interventions help to historicize invented traditions and trouble the placid waters of the national narrative.

Assimilation might have begun with Ryūkyūan Queen Shō Nei's poem, the last entry in the *Omoro-sōshi* (1610) and a year after the Satsuma invasion, which refers to "when the northerly wind blows." The myth of Amamikyū, possibly of Japanese derivation, traces the Okinawan peoples to divine origins and legitimizes the Shō rulers (1422–39, 1470–1879) who turned the kingdom from a southerly orientation toward Japan especially during the Tokugawa, which annexed the kingdom and transformed it into a prefecture in 1879.⁹ Ifa Fuyū (1876–1947), the "father of Okinawan studies," believed that Okinawans came from Kyushu, following the tradition of Ryūkyūan historian, Haneji Chōshū (1617–75), who cited language and race as indicative of a Japanese descent and a migration southward.¹⁰

The Amamikyū creation story, according to Ifa, comes from the Amabe clan of Japan's Inland Sea who, in the third century, were in service to the Yamato. The Amabe, with their migration to Okinawa, became associated with the creator deity, "Amami person," who visited Okinawa from over the eastern sea. That eastern homeland, the nirai-kanai, was a great island of abundance and happiness and the source of all knowledge, including agricultural arts.¹¹ In those ways, Japanese culture seeped into the Ryūkyūan fountainhead, the *Omoro-sōshi*, with the complicity of some Okinawan intellectuals and rulers, thereby legitimizing Yamato political and cultural hegemony.

By contrast, on islands off Okinawa island, including Kouri, Miyako, and Ishigaki, the origin story is less grand. Their founders, a brother and sister, as in other Oceanic creation stories, are human, not divine. In addition, the sister-brother ancestors escape a flood to become the progenitors of a people, a narrative common to Southeast Asia and Oceania. "A long time ago, a long, long time ago," a Miyako island deluge account begins, "there were the Bunazee siblings. One fine day, the brother and sister went out to the fields to work. Suddenly from far off in the ocean, they saw a mountain-like wave The brother, concerned for his sister, [carried her] with great difficulty up a high hill The tsunami swept away all life from the land. Resigned, brother and sister built a grass hut and pledged to be husband and wife." The sister gave birth to the ajikai mollusk at first, and then to a human child. Gradually the island became filled with people who descended from the sister and brother and honored them as the kami who regenerated the island.¹²

Other suggestions of Okinawa's southern exposure is the ryūka or five-tone, musical scale, which resembles the widely influential Indonesian gamelan scale, the Okinawan liquor, awamori, which some link with the Thai drink lao-lon, and the South Asian use of banana fibers (bāsho) to weave textiles, bashōfu.¹³ And Okinawan traders, at least since the mid-fourteenth century, frequented ports in Korea, Japan, and China, but also Java, Thailand, Viet Nam, and other places in Southeast Asia. That "South Seas" traffic was enabled by Ming China, which secured Okinawa (Chūzan) as a tributary state in 1372.¹⁴ Chinese diplomats and merchants settled in Kumemura near Naha, and Ryūkyūan stu-

dents went to China beginning in 1392.¹⁵⁾

In fact, the Ryūkyū kingdom's central role in brokering exchanges among east Asian states and between east and southeast Asia for nearly three hundred years suggest to some a reversal of prominence between Okinawa and Japan.¹⁶⁾ Yanagita Kunio (1875–1962), a contemporary of Ifa Fuyū and the “father of Japanese folklore studies,” posited the idea that the Japanese were migrants from the south through Okinawa from China as indicated by language, rice cultivation, and the cowrie shell monetary system. Like Murayama Shichirō and the archaeologist Kanaseki Takeo, Yanagita believed that the early Ryūkyūan language belonged to the Austronesian family of Taiwan and Oceania, and Kanaseki hypothesized two waves of Melanesian migrations to Okinawa and Japan. Both note the close cultural ties until the seventh century between Okinawa and Taiwan, from whence spread Austronesian languages, and Yanagita, in his *Kaijo no michi* (1961), traces Japanese people and language back to Okinawa and from there to Micronesia. His intention might have been to decouple Japan from a post-colonial Korea and continental Asia, and Yanagita, like others involved in a version of the “noble savage” discourse of the first half of the twentieth century called *minzokugaku*, might have seen Okinawans as native peoples unpolluted by the contaminants of modernization and linguistic changes that were sweeping Japan.¹⁷⁾ Still, his ideas provided an opening for Okinawa's escape from Japanese domination.

The power of Japan's colonization, nonetheless, rests in the privileges it confers. Thus, for instance, when the Fifth Industrial Exhibition in Osaka opened in 1903 with a display called “The House of Peoples” showing Koreans, Ainu, Taiwanese, and two Okinawan women being supervised by a Japanese man with a whip, some Okinawans expressed outrage because Okinawans, they insisted, were “Japanese.”¹⁸⁾ And the “father of Okinawan studies,” Ifa, a custodian of the Okinawan Prefectural Library, sought to redress the exclusion of Okinawan history and culture from Japanese discourses by grafting Ryūkyū's islands and peoples onto those of the Yamato trunk. That assimilation, that brand of “Okinawan studies” held, bestowed legitimacy and prestige to a conquered and subject kingdom and people.

In the aftermath of World War I when it acquired some of Germany's holdings in the Marianas, including Palau and the Caroline and Marshall islands, Japan held them as strategic bases for its imperial ambitions. Those “South Sea Islands” gave rise in Japan to sciences of the tropics similar to European and U.S. schools of tropical studies when their empires annexed the tropical band to their temperate homelands.¹⁹⁾ Anthropologists, biologists, medical researchers, and agricultural scientists visited the “South Seas” to study its lands and peoples and to see if Japanese bodies could adapt to the tropical sun, humidity, and heat. From 1914 to World War II, they studied societies and cultures, sexuality and pathology, and saw in their native, islander “other” measurable distinctions. Unlike the Japanese, they concluded, following the trail cut by European discourses and sciences of the tropics, those *kanakas* were of inferior intelligence, sexually promiscuous, and lazy. Still, even as those South Sea islanders, as its “other,” helped to constitute the

“Japanese” identity, Okinawans, as so-called “Japan kanaka,” formed a link with those natives of the “South Seas,” revealing an unbroken line, a continuum along the spectrum of alleged difference between the contrived polarities of “Japanese” and “kanaka.”²⁰⁾

That problem posed by Okinawans to the simpleminded idea of nation/people is a result of Okinawa’s provisional membership in the “Japanese” race predicated upon ethnic assimilation and subjection to the nation-state. And historically and culturally, Okinawans confound the myth of Japonesia because of their southward as well as northward bearings from possible migrations and linguistic and cultural affiliations to commercial and political relations. They reveal the messiness and complexity of nation/people, not as singular in derivation and composition but as multiply layered comprised of human passages from the south and north and of linguistic, religious, economic, and political interactions, exchanges, and impositions. That is the beauty of the Ryūkyūan past.

Moreover, Okinawa’s Oceanic compass points to an alternative origin story for the Japanese (Yamato) people. The Jōmon, central figures in the Yamato tradition, suggest descent not from northeast Asian migrants as is supposed by state ideology but from southern China or even southeast Asia. The hunter/gatherer Jōmon, physical anthropology shows, bear Micronesian and Polynesian characteristics, and they all ultimately derive from Malaysian stock. Okinawans, Japanese, and Ainu were a Jōmon people who inhabited those islands for about 10,000 years to 2300 B.C. Beginning around 400 B.C., they were absorbed by the Yayoi, agriculturalists from northeast China who spread into Kyūshū and moved south and north except Hokkaido where the Ainu predominated.²¹⁾

That Jōmon foundation, an archaeologist speculates, was common not only to Hokkaido, Japan, and Okinawa but also Taiwan, east Asia, and the Philippines, and they spread into the Pacific with the migrations of Oceania’s peoples, the Micronesians, Melanesians, and Polynesians from their southeast Asian homeland. “Therefore,” he concludes, “in both the geographical and biological senses, Japan is an outpost of the Asian continent and, at the same time, an island group in the Oceanic world.”²²⁾ That view of Japan’s multiple origins reconstituted by successive migrations from diverse sources and peoples is affirmed by linguistic evidence, which shows how shifts in the Japanese language mirror those population changes.²³⁾

2. Regions

World regions offer discrete units of study for fields within academies in the West. They are justified as coherent geographies of “shared ideas, related lifeways, and long-standing cultural ties,”²⁴⁾ and, although delineated in disregard of national borders, they are invariably comprised of adjacent countries. The assumption underwriting that spatial design is that landed proximity maps social affinities and groupings of peoples. Hence, we have Okinawa and Japan belonging to the region called East Asia together with China and Korea, and we have other regions such as Southeast Asia, South Asia, and so forth. Those regions justify fields of study called area studies arising in the U.S. especially after

World War II and the onset of the Cold War, despite their resemblance to the ancient and now moribund idea of geographical determinism, which assigned to continents distinctive flora and fauna, including races, and to climates, racial and cultural constitutions.²⁵⁾ Taxonomy produces coherence, enabling disciplines and explanations. That power to name and classify, of course, produced imperial discourses, which justified expansion, colonies, and the expropriation of land, labor, and culture.

The political nature of world regions and area studies as organized and practiced in the U.S. is shown in the idea of Southeast Asia. The so-called mainland or peninsula encompassing Burma, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia, along its archipelagic or insular extension involving Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Brunei, was only grouped and named Southeast Asia during World War II. Previously they were divided into colonies of the British, Dutch, French, and U.S. empires, but in 1942 Japan's military rendered those distinctions irrelevant, especially in light of its ostensible mission of "Asia for Asians" and the dismantling of white supremacy. As a theatre of war along the color line in the midst of the twentieth century, Southeast Asia came into existence.²⁶⁾ Even as nations, both imagined and real, are human designations of space, regions are "imaginings of what people have wanted the world to be,"²⁷⁾ and they are conjured in actual struggles and contestations over space and thus possess material and political attributes.

Regions, as bounded spaces, naturalize a social project and construction.²⁸⁾ The modern nation of Japan, as noted in the previous section of this article, arises from those discursive and material interests to discipline space, and in that, Okinawa is drawn into the rubrics of Japanese and East Asian studies. However, Okinawan studies could just as easily attach itself to Southeast Asian and Oceanic studies as argued by history, physical and cultural anthropology, longstanding economic ties, and contemporary political choices such as coalitions with the Ainu and other Pacific Islanders as indigenous peoples allied against the forces of colonization and assimilation. The field's multiple plantings astride spatial fabrications underscore regionalism's historical and material qualities and interests, and they suggest alternative ways to conceive of our world and its study.

Okinawan studies, it seems to me, is more than a national or regional project; the field, instead, thrives in violations of spatial orders. A good vehicle for transgressing and yet respecting bordered spaces is "local knowledge," as espoused by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz, involving a tack among "incommensurable perspectives on things, dissimilar ways of registering experiences and phrasing lives" and a placement of them "into conceptual proximity such that, though our sense of their distinctiveness is not reduced (normally, it is deepened), they seem somehow less enigmatical than they do when they are looked at apart."²⁹⁾

Geertz's proposition, assuredly a longstanding tenet of the comparative method, intrigues nonetheless in the light of imperial area studies or global spaces delineated and named, given coherence, contrasted with their others, and assigned significance by those with the authority. As pointed out by historian and cultural critic Arif Dirlik, there is no

Pacific region, only “a competing set of ideational constructs that project upon a certain location on the globe the imperatives of interest, power, or vision of these historically produced relationships.”³⁰⁾ But the Geertzian search for meaning rather than mechanics or structure and function to make sense of “particular things in particular places” such that they “take particular form and have particular impact” offers a compelling interest for Okinawan studies, which emerges from many local sites to engage the worlds around them.

I am thinking of the numerous islands, along with their distinctive dialects and orientations, all embraced within the compass of Okinawan studies. Consider, for instance, the elasticity of the Ryūkyūs chain and the pulls exerted on its northern islands such as Tokara and Amami by Kyushu and the Yamato and the gravitational forces of Taiwan and the Philippines upon the southern islands of Hateruma and Yonaguni. The middle ground is Okinawa island, which some maintain was peopled by its smaller, nearby neighbor, Kudaka island, where worshippers sit on Ishikibama beach facing southeastward from whence came the first humans, a brother and sister.³¹⁾ Farther south on Taketomi island, a brother and sister arrive after a drift voyage, and on Hateruma, plants, foods, and people from Luzon island in the Philippines make landfall.³²⁾ Influences tug from the north and south, and they manifest themselves in local, original knowledges shaped through a process of endemism.

Those peculiar expressions serve to order and bestow meaning upon discrete daily activity, which can implicate simultaneously the local and the global. The kuba palm exemplifies both spatial dimensions. As local knowledge, the kuba is associated with sacred groves, utaki, and on Hateruma, the island’s principal deity alights on the kuba leaves, which rustle, and descends to earth along the palm’s curved trunk. Those sacred groves of kuba, in the words of a researcher, convey “an impressive sense of peace and quiet [and] communion with Nature.”³³⁾ At the same time, the kuba imparts an apprehension of activity and intercourse across local spaces and peoples. Heroic figures, both men and women, paddle their canoes on overnight voyages to the Philippines, and return with the kuba palm in their holds.³⁴⁾ Whether a gift or a theft from abroad, the kuba palm was transplanted in Ryūkyūan soil and made local, central, and unique to Okinawan subjectivities. Further, the Ryūkyūan home is both the mountain tops along the eastern fringes of the Eurasian plate and the lands of the kuba palm to the south called Pae-Patera or Hae-Hateru(ma).³⁵⁾ They are not distant oppositions, Okinawa and the Philippines; as sites of origin, they are both local.

3. Landmasses

The world historian Felipe Fernández-Armesto observed that civilizations are commonly considered land based formations, ignoring the fact that they “are grouped around waterways,” from the China Sea to the Indian Ocean, the Mediterranean, and the Atlantic and Pacific.³⁶⁾ This is a reality extended by Barbara Watson Andaya in her 2006 presiden-

tial address at the annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies in San Francisco. In that exhortation to untie Asia from its area studies anchorage, Watson Andaya urges a focus on human interactions between land and sea because by stressing only landed initiatives we miss the interconnections and exchanges taking place upon the ocean's fluid, seemingly borderless space.³⁷⁾

What Fernández-Armesto failed to consider and Watson Andaya only gestured at is that continents and islands, the visible land formations upon which they center their contention, bed upon tectonic plates that exceed land's end, extending into ocean depths rarely penetrated by human comprehension. And along the plates' margins, where mass bumps up against mass, molten rock can ooze through the cracks and, given time, solidify and create seamounts, islands, and majestic mountain ranges packed with life's diversity. The totality of those biotic communities and their agencies, including but not limited to humans, should constitute the multiple, if not fluid subject matters of our concern.

In addition, as Watson Andaya noted, oceans are not mere appendages to lands nor are they unadorned waterways around which civilizations are established. As Pacific Islanders long held, the seas were a destination as well as a crossing, watery spaces were marked and named as readily as mountains and valleys, and humans formed relationships, including kinships, with those oceanic places and their resources and populations. Islanders, thus, occupied the water's spaces and thereby rendered them into places of social constitution and production. "Nearly every aspect of life in Micronesia is significantly influenced or controlled by the sea," a study noted. "As compared to the power and moods of the sea, the land is insignificant, humble, dull. The rhythm of life is dictated by the sea."³⁸⁾

Moreover, the Western penchant for land over water translates into an assumption that continents are the only landmass that matter. "Oceanic islands," a geologist began, "are small, young, isolated, simple, and subjected to a limited range of environmental factors." Accordingly scientists, famously Charles Darwin on the Galápagos islands and Margaret Mead on Samoa, found them to be ideal research laboratories because of their finite variables and controlled conditions. By contrast, he continued, "consider the continents. They are aggregates of every type of rock produced for billions of years, and most of their history is obscure The whole is obscured by every type of soil and by plants. Across the continents migrate animals and plants in constant flux. One can have little reason to hope that nature has conducted many controlled experiments on the continents."³⁹⁾ Those scientific sentiments, those attributions of islands and continents, about simplicity and complexity, stasis and movement, are neither unique nor confined to that branch of human knowledge.

Myths abound in those metageographies or "spatial structures through which people order their knowledge of the world."⁴⁰⁾ Widely held to be "tiny spaces" absent significance or moment, islands are commonly represented as feminine—vacant, passive, acted upon, stirred only by outside, manly manipulations.⁴¹⁾ That gendered definition of self or continents, as large, unbroken landmasses has its other, islands, as distant, small bodies of

land surrounded by water. Boundedness appears to be an island's natural state, while boundlessness, a continent's. Yet in reality, there are no divides between islands and continents anchored as they both are onto tectonic plates, which form the earth's mantle, albeit of different densities beneath and above the oceans.

Carl Ritter, the most influential human geographer of the nineteenth century, saw continents as the major organizing principle of metageography. "Each continent," he was positive, "is like itself alone . . . each one was so planned and formed as to have its own special function in the progress of human culture." Inevitably, bound to that notion of social evolution and design was Ritter's view that at the apex was Europe, the homeland of white people, followed by Asia, the homeland of yellow people, Africa, of black people, and America, of red.⁴²⁾ Continents, accordingly, suggested a metageography and hierarchy of civilizations and races.

By the twentieth century, continents were not only assumed to demarcate earth's surface but also to be a "natural" and sometimes divinely ordained state. In the U.S. about mid-century, America was divided into North and South and Antarctica and Australia acquired continental status. The resulting seven continents scheme gained rapid and widespread recognition, despite its glaring defects in the light of zoogeography's demonstration that life forms move relatively freely across continental boundaries, and the geology of tectonic plates that reveal India to be a part of Australia and not Eurasia, and North America's seamless connection to Eurasia under the Bering Sea. Continents not only prove inadequate as a schema of physical geography but of human geography as well insofar as they purport to map cultural and racial differences and their ranks. Still, because they conform to "the basic patterns of land and sea that spring to the eye from a world map," the continental system appears sensible and true.⁴³⁾

Likewise visually, islands, with few exceptions, emerge as tiny specks of land especially when seen from the perspective of the Pacific's immensity.⁴⁴⁾ "Views of the Pacific from the level of macroeconomics and macropolitics often differ markedly from those from the level of ordinary people," explained Epeli Hau'ofa of his "sea of islands."⁴⁵⁾ Accordingly, most versions of world history envision "the Pacific" as its Rim circled by economic and political giants, continental Asia and America. And while seas might serve as fertile breeding grounds for exchanges of goods, peoples, and ideas, they are not ordinarily conceived of as places of generation and production, but as mere watery routes, unlike landed roots, or even barren deserts, a land metaphor, to traverse and endure.⁴⁶⁾

Oceania's smallness is a state of mind, "mental reservations," imposed upon its peoples by European colonizers, Hau'ofa came to understand while driving from Kona to Hilo on the island of Hawai'i. "I saw such scenes of grandeur as I had not seen before: the eerie blackness of regions covered by recent volcanic eruptions; the remote majesty of Maunaloa, long and smooth, the world's largest volcano; the awesome craters of Kīlauea threatening to erupt at any moment; and the lava flow on the coast not far away," he described. "Under the aegis of Pele, and before my very eyes, the Big Island was growing, rising from the depths of a mighty sea. The world of Oceania is not small; it is huge and

growing bigger every day.”⁴⁷⁾

“Continental men,” Hau`ofa continued, in their imperial enactments “drew imaginary lines across the sea, making the colonial boundaries that confined ocean peoples to tiny spaces for the first time.” On the contrary, to Oceania’s peoples, “their universe comprised not only of land surfaces, but the surrounding ocean as far as they could traverse and exploit it, the underworld with its fire-controlling and earth-shaking denizens, and the heavens above with their hierarchies of powerful gods and named stars and constellations that people could count on to guide their ways across the seas. Their world was anything but tiny.”⁴⁸⁾

4. Okinawan Studies

Okinawan studies, accurately conceived, insists upon border crossings of lands and waters, continents and islands, world regions, and nation-states; those enclosures, the field reveals, are paltry human inscriptions and affectations. At the same time, those dominions have real effects on peoples’ subjectivities and daily lives and on the mobile social order; they possess discursive and material properties, thereby exemplifying power and its contestation. Implicated within that struggle both as discourse and practice is Okinawan studies in its disruptive and creative senses.

As a subject of islands, Okinawan studies writes against the myth of continents; as an area astride regional divides, the field offers continuities as well as distinctions; and as a periphery of Japan and the U.S., Okinawa renders problematic the national archive and narratives of nation/people and homogeneity. The immensity of those endowments of Okinawan studies to scholarship broadly conceived must not be undervalued or dismissed by thank-you notes for contributions made to the general fund of human knowledge. Okinawan studies, rather, renders dubious those foundational spatial and social categories and ways of apprehending the human condition.

Moreover, knowledge organized around nations, regions, and landmasses constitute discourses involving ideology and language. Their power rests in their ability, conveyed through social apparatuses such schools, churches, policing and prisons, the military and media, and the like, to interpellate subjects as distinguished from their objects and to locate them within those regulatory regimes.⁴⁹⁾ Japan and the Japanese, East Asia and East Asians, and continents and their races are examples of those metageographies, discourses, and subjectivities. Multiply and liminally positioned, Okinawa and its peoples expose and contest those imperial estates.

At the same time, Okinawan studies as a discourse can engender the same hegemonic capacities as its opposition. It can essentialize spaces and subjectivities, produce and police ideologies and languages, and interdict agency and travel. Okinawan studies, as we know from its beginnings, has validated governing notions of landmasses, regions, and nations. The problem for Okinawan studies is to free itself from confining ideologies using their language and, at the same time, to visualize imaginative, alternative spaces,

understandings, and articulations of self and society.

Such registers arise from the local, the familiar, and their ascent is not burdened by the parceling of lands, regions, civilizations, nations, or peoples, despite their gravities of mass and proximity, kinship and tradition, literatures and archives. Instead, they can confuse certainties, disturb discipline, and energize enigmas while, in Clifford Geertz's words, they "attempt to come to terms with the diversity of the ways human beings construct their lives in the act of leading them."⁵⁰ Those interventions ascend from the particular, the local, while retracing their roots and ramifications can launch remarkable voyages across and through lands and seas, radiating and branching in sundry directions.

A case in point is the Shiraho, Ishigaki island creation account of humans who emerge from the amankani (hermit crab) hole. The story appears to validate the land claims of Shiraho's people, but tracing its derivations can complicate and extend considerably its spatial dimensions. Shiraho's origin story might in fact be an import from Hateruma island whose migrants repopulated the town following the devastating 1771 tsunami, which killed about a third of Ishigaki island's population and nearly all of Shiraho's people.⁵¹ Hateruma islanders, as stated earlier, maintain close connections with the Philippines, suggesting a more distant site of origin. Additionally, Ishigaki's people might have come from Taketomi island, which some Ishigaki islanders regard as their ancestral home, whereas Taketomi islanders tell a brother-sister, drift voyage origin story,⁵² a creation chronicle of vast Oceania. In just that sense, Shiraho, as a people and place, connects humans with other life forms, islanders with other islanders, and land with sea.

Okinawan studies in motion, like the liquid currents, which define the field's contours and subject matters, reveals how local knowledge or apprehensions of particular things in particular places engages and grapples with ideas and practices in disparate places and times. It can thereby extricate and liberate. And its reach, the influences of this variety of Okinawan studies is only circumscribed by our abilities, energies, and imaginations.

Notes

- 1) This section, "nations," is a revised, enlarged version originally published as "Preliminary Thoughts on Migration and the Nation/People," in *Proceedings for the International Symposium: Human Migration and the 21st Century Global Society—Immigration, Language, and Literature*, edited by Nakahodo Masanori, Yamazato Katsunori, and Ishihara Masahide (University of the Ryūkyūs, March 2009), 79–84.
- 2) This problem is of course the reason for the "imagined community" of the nation as described by Benedict Anderson in his *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).
- 3) As quoted in John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 222.
- 4) Tessa Morris-Suzuki, "A Descent into the Past: The Frontier in the Construction of Japanese Identity," in *Multicultural Japan: Paleolithic to Postmodern*, eds. Donald Denoon et al. (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 82–88.
- 5) Morris-Suzuki, "Descent," 83, 85–86.
- 6) Hokama Shūzen, "Okinawa in the Matrix of Pacific Ocean Culture," in *Okinawan Diaspora*, ed. Ronald Y. Nakasone (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 49.
- 7) See Yōichi Higuchi, "When Society Itself Is the Tyrant," *Japan Quarterly* 35:4 (October-December

- 1988): 350–56.
- 8) See, e.g., Hanazaki Kohei, “Ainu Moshir and Yaponesia: Ainu and Okinawan Identities in Contemporary Japan,” in Denoon, *Multicultural Japan*, 117–31; and Katarina Sjöberg, “Positioning Oneself in the Japanese Nation State: The Hokkaido Ainu Case,” in *Transcultural Japan: At the Borderlands of Race, Gender, and Identity*, eds. David Blake Willis and Stephen Murphy-Shigematsu (London: Routledge, 2008), 197–216.
 - 9) Ronald Y. Nakasone, “An Impossible Possibility,” in Nakasone, *Okinawan Diaspora*, 20–21.
 - 10) Hokama, “Okinawa,” 49.
 - 11) Toichi Mabuchi, “Tales Concerning the Origin of Grains in the Insular Areas of Eastern and Southeastern Asia,” *Asian Folklore Studies* 23:1 (1964): 6–18; Ronald Y. Nakasone, “Agari-umaai: An Okinawan Pilgrimage,” in Nakasone, *Okinawan Diaspora*, 144, 147–48; and Mitsugu Sakihara, “History of Okinawa,” in *Uchinanchu: A History of Okinawans in Hawaii* (Honolulu: Ethnic Studies Oral History Project, University of Hawaii at Manoa, 1981), 7–8.
 - 12) As cited in Hokama, “Okinawa,” 46. For other origin stories of the Oceania type, see G. H. Kerr, “The Eastern Islands,” T1-2, Y1-2, unpubl. manuscript, GHK1J04003, G. H. Kerr Papers, Okinawa Prefectural Archives. And on the sister-kami figure as an Oceania type, see Toichi Mabuchi, “Spiritual Predominance of the Sister,” in *Ryukyuan Culture and Society: A Survey*, ed. Allan H. Smith (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1964), 79–91.
 - 13) Hokama, “Okinawa,” 46, 50–52.
 - 14) On the Southeast Asian trade, see Shunzo Sakamaki, “Ryukyu and Southeast Asia,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 23:3 (May 1964): 383–89; and Sakihara, “History,” 7. See Robert K. Sakai, “The Satsuma-Ryukyu Trade and the Tokugawa Seclusion Policy,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 23:3 (May 1964): 391–403, for the trade with Japan.
 - 15) Mitsugu Matsuda, “The Ryukyuan Government Scholarship Students to China, 1392–1868,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 21:3/4 (1966): 273–304.
 - 16) See, e.g., Josef Kreiner, “Notes on the History of European-Ryūkyūan Contacts,” in *Sources of Ryūkyūan History and Culture in European Collections*, Monograph No. 13, ed. Josef Kreiner (Tokyo: German Institute of Japanese Studies, 1996), 15–41; and Josef Kreiner, “Ryūkyūan History in Comparative Perspective,” in *Ryūkyū in World History*, ed. Josef Kreiner (Bonn, Germany: Bier’sche Verlagsgesellschaft, 2001), 1–39.
 - 17) Hokama, “Okinawa,” 48–49; Sakihara, “History,” 4; and Alan S. Christy, “The Making of Imperial Subjects in Okinawa,” *positions* 1:3 (Winter 1993): 623, 625–27, fn. 49, p. 637.
 - 18) Christy, “Making,” 607–08.
 - 19) See e.g., my *Pineapple Culture: A History of the Tropical and Temperate Zones* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).
 - 20) Tomiyama Ichirō, “Colonialism and the Sciences of the Tropical Zone: The Academic Analysis of Difference in ‘the Island Peoples,’” *positions* 3:2 (Fall 1995): 367–91.
 - 21) On the commonalities but also divergences of Jōmon culture in Japan and Okinawa, see Richard Pearson, “The Place of Okinawa in Japanese Historical Identity,” in Denoon, *Multicultural Japan*, 95–116.
 - 22) Katayama Kazumichi, “The Japanese as an Asia-Pacific Population,” in Denoon, *Multicultural Japan*, 24–27, 28.
 - 23) John C. Maher, “North Kyushu Creole: A Language-Contact Model for the Origins of Japanese,” in Denoon, *Multicultural Japan*, 31–45.
 - 24) Martin W. Lewis and Kären E. Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 158.
 - 25) See, e.g., my *Pineapple Culture*, 5–25.
 - 26) Lewis and Wigen, *Myth of Continents*, 170–73; and Matthew H. Edney, “Mapping Parts of the World,” in *Maps: Finding Our Place in the World*, eds. James R. Akerman and Robert W. Karnow, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 139.
 - 27) Edney, “Mapping,” 139.
 - 28) See, e.g., the process by which scholars assigned coherence to the region, Southeast Asia, in Lewis and

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- Wigen, *Myth of Continents*, 173–76.
- 29) Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 15, 233.
 - 30) Arif Dirlik, “The Asia-Pacific Idea: Reality and Representation in the Invention of a Regional Structure,” *Journal of World History* 3:1 (Spring 1992): 56.
 - 31) From a tour of Kudaka island led by Akamine Masanobu, July 4, 2009.
 - 32) G. H. Kerr, [untitled manuscript], 46–61, 138, 160–61, 171, 178, GHK1J04004, G. H. Kerr Papers, Okinawa Prefectural Archives.
 - 33) G. H. Kerr, “Far Eastern Islands,” 142, GHK1J04002, G. H. Kerr Papers, Okinawa Prefectural Archives.
 - 34) *Ibid.*, 153; and Kerr, “Eastern Sea Islands,” 17.
 - 35) Kerr, “Eastern Sea Islands,” 17.
 - 36) Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *Millennium: A History of the Last Thousand Years* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1995), 20. See also, Sugata Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006).
 - 37) Barbara Watson Andaya, “Oceans Unbounded: Traversing Asia across ‘Area Studies,’” *Journal of Asian Studies* 65:4 (November 2006): 669–90.
 - 38) As quoted in Philip E. Steinberg, *The Social Construction of the Ocean* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 53, 55. See also, Paul D’Arcy, *The People of the Sea: Environment, Identity, and History in Oceania* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2006) on the sea as a home, site of production, and a source of belief systems.
 - 39) H. W. Menard, *Islands* (New York: Scientific American Books, 1986), 1. On islands as scientific laboratories, see Menard, *Islands*; Robert H. MacArthur and Edward O. Wilson, *The Theory of Island Biogeography* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1967); and Edward J. Larson, *Evolution’s Workshop: God and Science in the Galapagos Islands* (New York: Basic Books, 2001).
 - 40) Lewis and Wigen, *Myth of Continents*, ix.
 - 41) See e.g., Judith Williamson, “Woman Is an Island: Femininity and Colonization,” in *Studies in Entertainment: Critical Approaches to Mass Culture*, ed. Tania Modleski (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 99–118.
 - 42) Lewis and Wigen, *Myth of Continents*, ix, 30.
 - 43) Lewis and Wigen, *Myth of Continents*, 31–35.
 - 44) For evolving European views of islands, see especially John Gillis, *Islands of the Mind: How the Human Imagination Created the Atlantic World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Rod Edmond and Vanessa Smith (eds.), *Islands in History and Representation* (London: Routledge, 2003); and John Fowles, *Islands* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1978). On Pacific islands, see Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1960); Greg Denning, *Islands and Beaches: Discourse on a Silent Land, Marquesas 1774–1880* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1980); Rod Edmond, *Representing the South Pacific: Colonial Discourse from Cook to Gauguin* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Nicholas Thomas, *In Oceania: Visions, Artifacts, Histories* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1997); and K. R. Howe, *Nature, Culture, and History: The “Knowing” of Oceania* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2000).
 - 45) Epeli Hau‘ofa, “Our Sea of Islands,” *Contemporary Pacific* 6:1 (Spring 1994): 148–61. For an earlier version of Hau‘ofa’s “Our Sea,” and responses to it, see Eric Waddell, Vijay Naidu, and Epeli Hau‘ofa (eds.), *A New Oceania: Rediscovering Our Sea of Islands* (Suva, Fiji: University of the South Pacific, 1993).
 - 46) For a study of the social construction of oceanic space, its uses, regulations, and representations, see Steinberg, *Social Construction*.
 - 47) Hau‘ofa, “Our Sea,” 151, 152.
 - 48) *Ibid.*, 152, 153. See also, Steinberg, *Social Construction*, 39–67 for a comparative view, including a Micronesian perspective, of the ocean.
 - 49) See, e.g., Louis Althusser, *Essays on Ideology* (London: Verso, 1984).

- 50) Geertz, *Local Knowledge*, 16.
 51) Oral history, Ishigaki Shigeru, Ishigaki City, July 24, 2009, conducted by Wesley Ueunten.
 52) G. H. Kerr, [untitled manuscript], 132, 136,138.

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