王政の正当性と王国の例外性

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A King's Legitimacy and a Kingdom's Exceptionality: Ryūkyū's Bankoku Shinryō no Kane of 1458

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When the first French Catholic missionary, Théodore-Augustin Forcade (1816–1885), arrived in Okinawa in 1844, the Ryūkyūans tried very hard to discourage him from taking up residence on their island. Royal officials who met with the French pleaded that their country was both too small and too poor to be of any concern to a major European power like France (Bollinger, 1991, p. 12). While the French were aware of the Ryūkyū Kingdom's diminutive size and overall lack of wealth, although they suspected that the kingdom was not as poor as these royal officials wanted them to believe, their real prize was access to Japan, which was closed at the time to all European nations except the Dutch. Ryūkyūan claims of poverty and powerlessness, however, were not exaggerations, French skepticism notwithstanding; in fact, Okinawa continues to be one of the poorer prefectures in Japan to this day. When considering its objective political and economic circumstances, the Ryūkyū Kingdom seems like an unlikely candidate for the production of exceptionalist rhetoric, especially when one takes into account its tributary relationship with China. If there ever was a good example of a society that would not develop exceptionalist thinking, one might conclude that Ryūkyū, firmly embedded as it was in a context of ritual acknowledgements of China's political and economic superiority, and its de facto status as a tributary of Satsuma after 1609, would be it.

For more than a century prior to Satsuma's invasion in 1609, Ryūkyū was a thriving and prosperous kingdom with wealth filling its coffers from a vibrant foreign trade. Its tributary relationship with China, in fact, was the cornerstone of its foreign trade, as the kingdom swapped pledges of subservience and loyalty for lucrative economic opportunities. Suggestions of superiority were likely unthinkable for the Ryūkyūans in this context, even during this sustained period of prosperity, as any such claim would be a threat to the very geopolitical relationship that made it possible in the first place. A fundamental "proposition underlying contemporary notions" of exceptionalism, writes the Americanist, Jack Greene, is that ideas of "superiority" are the foundation for exceptionalist claims of nations as "exemplary" (Greene, 1993, p. 201). With this view of exceptionalism, examples of such thinking from Ryūkyūan history would likely be scarce at best, and

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there would be virtually no advancement for global analyses of exceptionalism using case studies from the Ryūkyū Kingdom. However, Greene notes another form that exceptionalist thinking takes, namely, the idea of the "exempt nation" that does not conform to the pattern of historical development that otherwise prevails in the rest of the world. What we see during Ryūkyū's age of prosperity is at least one significant statement of exceptionalism, specifically King Shō Taikyū's 尚泰久 (1415–1460) commissioned inscription on the so-called Bridge of the World Bell (hereafter Bankoku Shinryō no Kane 万国津梁の鐘) in 1458. While the ideas articulated on this inscription follow Greene's definition of exceptional nations as exemplary, rather than as exempt, the basis for making such claims had more to do with geography than it did with anything else in the Ryūkyūan case, such as history or the environment. Rather than argue that Ryūkyūan exceptionalism somehow defies already established patterns in the world, that it is the exceptional case of exceptionalism, the focus on the cosmopolitanism that geography conferred on the kingdom actually makes its linkages to exceptionalism stronger, especially to a significant form of exceptionalism from nineteenth-century American history. While the bell continues to be an important symbol of Okinawa's cultural heritage, the king who ordered its casting has become somewhat of an historical afterthought, as have his motivations for doing so. While connecting his political legitimacy to exceptionalist characterizations of his kingdom was ideologically useful to Shō Taikyū, the imperative to maintain this connection lasted only two more years after the bell's completion, rendering its legitimating function superfluous. The laudatory descriptions of the kingdom became, therefore, both a symbolic remnant of happier times and also a vestige of Ryūkyūan exceptionalism.

The conceptual efficacy of exceptionalism stems from the idea that only one country/nation/society/culture is genuinely unique, and therefore superior, in the world, and this is true when one looks at the histories of both the United States and Japan. Shō Taikyū's bell, however, represents an important challenge to these exceptionalist images. By drawing on the connection between Ryūkyūan cosmopolitanism and exceptionalism, it provides historians with an important Asian example with which to compare Transcendentalism, as the quintessential historical example of cosmopolitan exceptionalism in American history. At the same time, the Chinese tributary system, as the contextual foundation for the bell, represents a historiographical image of exceptionalism at odds with the Japanese exceptionalism of the Edo period, predicated as it was on Japan's exclusion from it. Comparison is the potential bane of exceptionalist beliefs since the very existence of *another* exceptional place in the world threatens to undermine their ideological validity, and this comparative role is one that fifteenth-century Ryūkyū can assume in world history.

1. A King's Legitimacy

Shō Taikyū was the seventh son of the founder of the First Shō Dynasty 第一尚王統, Shō Hashi 尚巴志 (1371–1439). In addition to the Bankoku Shinryō no Kane, he commissioned the casting of at least nine other bells of the bonshō 梵鐘 variety, mostly as dona-

tions to the four Zen temples he built during his brief reign of nearly six years (1454–1460) (Hokama, 2010, p. 62; Nelson, 2006, p. 391). While the iconic status of the bell as a symbol of the now defunct Ryūkyū Kingdom is undeniable today, it was imbued with a special status in the middle of the fifteenth century by Shō Taikyū as well, who ordered that it was to be displayed in front of his newly rebuilt royal palace at Shuri 首里 (Arashiro, 2010, p. 30). When visiting Shuri today, one sees a replica bell displayed prominently in a small wooden building near the main enclosure housing the royal palace, a position very close to the one it occupied more than five hundred years ago.

The artistic and aesthetic qualities of the bell were rather unremarkable for the time; rather, the distinctive feature of this bell was its inscription, one that Shō Taikyū commissioned the Japanese Zen monk, Keiin 渓隠 (?–?), with composing.[1] Because of the king's generous patronage of Buddhism, it is not surprising that this inscription refers to his pious reign:

> [O]ur king, Shusei 主世, Shō Taikyū, blessedly lives in the year of the tiger [1458]. He received the throne from the high heavens (*kōten* 高天), seeking to nourish the people with the [fertile] earth, to activate the Three Jewels (*sanbō* 三宝) and to repay the Four Debts (*shi'on* 四恩). For these reasons, he recently cast this bell, and placed it in front of the royal palace of Chūzan 中山. He established the laws of the Three Dynasties and gathered together, before the kings of antiquity, *wen* and *wu*. For those below, he saves the masses of the Three Worlds (*sangai* 三界); for those above, he pays his respects to the royal thrones of bygone eras.[2]

The Buddhist concepts of the Three Jewels, the Four Debts, and the Three Worlds dominate this brief passage, and Shō Taikyū is represented as aligning both himself and his rule with them. In fact, the passage clearly links the casting of the bell to his efforts at reigning in accordance with Buddhism, an effort that was geared primarily toward saving "the masses of the Three Worlds," a reference to the cycle of death and rebirth, rather than the king's personal salvation. Shō Taikyū, therefore, wanted to project an image of benevolence and compassion for the Ryūkyūan people, perhaps in emulation of the celestial rulers known as the *chakravartin* in Buddhism, despite the fact that non-elite Ryūkyūans were skeptical of Buddhism as a foreign creed.

While the Buddhist images in this passage are certainly prominent, there are, intermingled with them, references to Japan and China as well. The passage proclaims that Shō Taikyū had received the royal throne of Ryūkyū from the "high heavens" (*kōten*), a phrase that is reminiscent of Takamagahara 高天原, the abode of Amaterasu 天照大神, the progenitor of the Japanese imperial line, as well as the other major *kami* of the Shinto pantheon. Although Amaterasu was the heavenly ancestor of all earthly emperors, she herself did not descend from Takamagahara to the earth since it was her grandson, Ninigi-no-mikoto 邇邇芸命, who traversed the Heavenly Bridge (Ama-no-ukihashi 天の浮橋) in order to take up residence on the earth. He bore with him the three imperial regalia as symbols of the divine ancestry of Japan's emperors and the possession of which signified their political legitimacy via the concept of rule by divine right. Thus, the claim of receiv-

ing the throne from the "high heavens" was consistent with Japanese mythology, and its appearance on the bell's inscription invoked the powerful ideology of the Japanese imperial institution.

The reference to the "high heavens" on the bell's inscription, while subtly borrowing from the political imagery of the Japanese imperial institution, also diverts the reader's attention away from the actual circumstances of Shō Taikyū's accession. While Shō Taikyū was the son of Shō Hashi, who succeeded in uniting Okinawa under the banner of the kingdom of Chūzan, he was not in line to succeed his father. Shō Chū 尚忠 (1391–1444), Hashi's second son, came to the throne in 1439, but his reign lasted only five years, and so he was succeeded by his son, and Hashi's grandson, Shō Shitatsu 尚思達 (1408–1449), whose reign was as brief as his father's. Shō Shitatsu had no heir, and so royal succession reverted to his uncle and Hashi's fifth son, Shō Kinpuku 尚金福 (1398–1453) in 1449. Kinpuku's reign was of an even shorter duration than those of his nephew and brother, and so royal succession became an issue once again upon his death in 1453. Although Kinpuku had a son, Shiro 志魯, his younger brother, Furi 布里, Hashi's sixth son, insisted that he was the rightful heir to the throne. This succession controversy erupted into bloodshed, and a brief period of chaos ensued in which the royal palace at Shuri was destroyed by fire, a conflict during which both Shiro and Furi were killed (Kerr, 2000, p. 97). As Shiro was Kinpuku's only son, royal succession reverted to Hashi's seventh son, Taikyū, later in 1454. Consequently, Taikyū's characterization of his royal accession as somehow divinely ordained was accurate only tautologically, and was perhaps more of a statement of fate or karmic destiny.[3)]

Taikyū's inscription also refers to the "Three Dynasties" and "*wen* and *wu*," both of which were invocations of ancient Chinese history. The locus classicus for the concepts of *wen* and *wu* is the *Records of the Grand Historian* (*Shiji* 史記) compiled by Sima Qian 司馬遷 (135 or 145 BCE-86 BCE) during the late second century BCE. By mentioning *wen* and *wu*, a classical reference, in the same sentence as the Three Dynasties, the latter likely signified the three dynasties of China's high antiquity, namely, the Xia 夏朝, the Shang 商朝, and the Zhou 周朝. Thus, the ideological message that was conveyed in this passage was that Shō Taikyū ruled over Ryūkyū not only in accordance with Buddhist principles but also in emulation of China's classical exemplars. Shō Taikyū knew all too well that portraying his reign as exclusively aligned with Buddhism would have alienated Chinese visitors to his court, especially those special envoys who were involved in the investiture ceremonies (*sappō* 冊封) associated with Ryūkyū's tributary relationship with the Ming dynasty 明朝. Unlike the Japanese,[4)] the Ryūkyūans were active participants in China's tribute system, a relationship that began in 1372 during the reign of Chūzan's King Satto 察度 (1321–1396), while the first king to receive formal investiture from the Chinese was Satto's son, Bunei 武寧 (1356–1406?) in 1406 (Kerr, 2000, p. 83). Both of these customs, namely, tribute to China and investiture from it, began even before Okinawa was unified by Shō Hashi in 1429, and both were critical to the political and economic identities of the Ryūkyū Kingdom by the time of Taikyū's reign.

The invocation of *wen* and *wu* likely also resonated with Japanese visitors to Shuri as well as with those from China. Although these terms invoked the great historical work of Sima Qian, they were also of paramount importance to the political and cultural identity of the Muromachi Bakufu 室町幕府. In fact, the reign of the shogun who attempted to project an image of the ideal union of *wen* and *wu*, Ashikaga Yoshimitsu 足利義満 (1358–1408), ended only forty-six years earlier. The union of *wen* and *wu* was especially appealing to warrior elites in Japan, as it functioned as a classical archetype for the bifurcated political system in Japan. While the shoguns and shogunal regents of the Kamakura period 鎌倉時代 (1192–1333) maintained their autonomy away from the intrigues of their civilian counterparts in Kyoto,[5] the Ashikaga shoguns ran the institutions of their warrior regime within Kyoto itself, creating a political system that was a literal blending of warrior and civilian elites. While the Ryūkyūans did not have parallel governments in the way that their Japanese counterparts did, the members of its elite class, the *aji* 按司, had both civil and military responsibilities. Thus, Taikyū's legitimacy was not only derived from Buddhism and from Chinese historical models, but was also linked to the prevailing political and cultural ideal in Japan.

2. A Kingdom's Exceptionality

While the inscription on the Bankoku Shinryō no Kane served a critical legitimating function for Shō Taikyū, who needed the ideological support since he had ascended to the royal throne under controversial circumstances, it also praised the Ryūkyū Kingdom as an especially unique place in the world. While such praise had only limited utility in terms of its legitimating potential, it still served to enhance Taikyū's authority as the ruler of a kingdom that was not insignificant even when viewed alongside its much larger and more powerful neighbors, China and Japan. While the legitimating function of the bell was important in its own day, it was its articulation of Ryūkyūan exceptionality that endured in the centuries that followed:

> Ryūkyū lies in a felicitous place (*shōchi* 勝地) in the south seas. It gathers together the sublimity of the Three Han (*sankan* 三韓), acts as the attendant (*ho* 輔) to the chariot (*sha* 車) of the Great Ming, and is the lips to the teeth of the Realm of the Sun (*nichi'iki* 日域); it is the island of Penglai 蓬莱 that sprang up in the interval between these two [realms]. With its ships, it has become the bridge (*shinryō* 津梁) of the ten-thousand realms [of the earth], eagerly amassing the foreign treasures of the ten directions. Its spirit, people, and [myriad] things fan the benevolent winds of the peaceful summer.[6]

Korea

By the time the Bankoku Shinryō no Kane was cast, the trade relationship between Goryeo 高麗 and Ryūkyū was already in decline, but the reference to it in the inscription signified that it was still important enough to Shō Taikyū to warrant inclusion. Formal relations between the two kingdoms began in 1389, when Satto repatriated Korean cap-

tives of the Wakō 倭寇, sending along with them gifts of pepper and sappanwood for the Korean king (Arashiro, 2010, p. 28). During the reign of the last of Goryeo's kings, Gongyang 恭讓 (1345–1394), the Ryūkyūans traded with the Koreans, chiefly by sending their tribute missions to China via Korea, where they acquired gifts from Gongyang of silk and ginseng;[7] although trade between the two kingdoms, both of which were tribute states of China, was important to the Koreans, they were generally reluctant to send trade missions to Ryūkyū for fear of encountering the Wakō while at sea. Even after the fall of Goryeo and the rise of Joseon 朝鮮 in 1392, trade between the two kingdoms continued until the 1430s, when the Ryūkyūans began chartering Japanese ships to Korea instead of sending their own, and trade all but ended by 1480 due to Japanese efforts to take over Korea's trade with Ryūkyū by masquerading as envoys from the latter kingdom (Arashiro, 2010, p. 28). By the time the Bankoku Shinryō no Kane was placed outside of the palace at Shuri, the trade relationship with Korea subsequently endured for only about twenty years more.

It is interesting to note that the inscription refers to Korea as the "Three Han" or *sankan* (K. *samhan*), rather than as Joseon, the reigning dynasty in 1458. The name *sankan* can refer to either of two sets of three states, the pre-Three Kingdoms states of Mahan 馬韓, Jinhan 辰韓, and Byeonhan 弁韓, states that occupied territory comprising most of South Korea today, or the Three Kingdoms themselves, namely, Goguryeo 高句麗, Silla 新羅, and Baekje 百済. Assuming that the inscription refers to all of Korea, rather than just the southern half, the Three Kingdoms makes more sense as the signified for *sankan* in this context, even though the era of the Three Kingdoms had ended almost eight centuries earlier. The inscription characterizes Ryūkyū's relationship with Korea as one in which the former "gathers together the sublimity" of the latter (sankan no shū wo atsume 鍾三韓之秀). One way to interpret this passage is to think of it as a reference to the trade relationship between the two kingdoms, with an emphasis on its meaning for and impact on Ryūkyū.

China

In contrast to the way in which the inscription portrays Ryūkyū's relationship with Korea, it characterizes its relationships with China and Japan rather differently, namely, by portraying Ryūkyū as assisting both China and Japan. In another interesting difference by comparison with Korea, it refers to China by the name of the dynasty then in power. Ryūkyū's formal relationship with China predated the unification of Okinawa, when the first Ming emperor, Hongwu 洪武 (1328–1398), sent a request for tribute to Satto in 1372.[8] Satto responded to the request by sending a tribute mission to China;[9] when his son, Bunei, became the king of Chūzan in 1396, the Hongwu Emperor recognized his ascent to the throne by sending investiture officials (*sappōshi* 冊封使) to Chūzan. After Shō Hashi overthrew Bunei and assumed control over Chūzan, more than twenty years passed before he was able to subdue and absorb the rival kingdoms of Hokuzan 北山 and Nanzan 南山, and thereby unify the island of Okinawa, but throughout the turmoil of the

times, the tributary relationship endured until the kingdom was abolished in 1879. Thus, not only did the formal relationship between Ryūkyū and China continue for more than four hundred years after the casting of the Bankoku Shinryō no Kane, it was a relationship that was of much more vital economic importance to the kingdom than was the case with Korea.

The inscription likens Ryūkyū to the attendant or attending chariot (*hosha*) of the Ming (daimin wo motte hosha to nashi 大明為輔車以), which is likely a metaphor for its tributary, yet very close, relationship with China. This metaphor evokes an image of Ryūkyū as flanking China, and using its peripheral position to render assistance to it. As a Chinese tributary, not only did Ryūkyū pay homage to the Chinese emperor, in exchange for which the Chinese recognized their king, its envoys were also allowed to trade with authorized merchants in Fujian 福建, where the Ryūkyūans established a permanent settlement in 1439, not even twenty years before the casting of the Bankoku Shinryō no Kane (Kerr, 2000, p. 93). In fact, Satto's motivation for responding to the Hongwu Emperor's request for tribute was perhaps equally economic in nature as it was political, if not more so. Although the Ryūkyūans had traded with the main islands of Japan since Jōmon 縄文 and Yayoi 弥生 times, giving them access to a whole range of goods and commodities, such as metals (which Ryūkyū lacked), trade goods acquired from China did more than simply fill critical needs, since these were goods that the Ryūkyūans could sell abroad at a hefty markup, and their best customers in the fifteenth century were the Japanese. Thus, the inscription, on its surface, portrays China as receiving the benefits of Ryūkyūan assistance, even boldly suggesting a peer-to-peer relationship, despite the fact that the actual situation was the exact opposite, as Ryūkyū disproportionately benefitted from its tributary relationship with China, for which its leaders were very grateful, yet this feeling that the inscription conveys suggests an arrangement of mutual benefit rather than a one-sided dependency.

Japan

The metaphor of assistance is repeated in the characterization of Ryūkyū's relationship with Japan, which the inscription describes as "the lips to the teeth of the Realm of the Sun" (nichi'iki wo motte shinshi to nasu 以日域為唇歯在). While the inscription's characterization of the kingdom's relationship with China both evokes an image of center/periphery and also political parity, this is not entirely the case with its perhaps more colorful description of the kingdom's interactions with Japan. As was true of the kingdom's trade relationship with China, the Ryūkyūans acquired valuable goods and commodities from the Japanese that they could use in their trade activities elsewhere in the region, including China; at the same time, they brought highly sought after Chinese goods with them to Japan, goods for which Japanese elites, especially warrior elites, were willing to pay premium prices. The trade was so critical to the Muromachi Bakufu that it appointed one of its officials, the *Ryūkyū bugyō* 琉球奉行,[10] to supervise its trade with the Ryūkyū Kingdom (Arashiro, 2010, p. 28).

While Ryūkyūan trade goods, including those they acquired from the Japanese, were perhaps in some demand among the Chinese, it is unlikely that the Ryūkyūan impact on Chinese trade was as great as it was on Japanese trade. Like the Ryūkyūans, the Muromachi Bakufu received an invitation to send tribute from the Hongwu Emperor, a letter that arrived during the shogunal reign of Ashikaga Yoshimitsu in 1372. Yoshimitsu, driven by a desire to engage in "a profitable luxury trade" with China, replied to this invitation in 1402, eight years after his retirement, when he dispatched a mission to China (Kerr, 2000, p. 70).[11] Upon its return to Japan, Yoshimitsu was handed a letter in which the Ming emperor recognized him as the king of Japan, despite the fact that his son, Yoshimochi 足利義持 (1386–1428), had already assumed the office of shogun.[12] Skeptical of this arrangement between his father and the Chinese, Yoshimochi temporarily ended the Bakufu's formal relations with the Ming dynasty, a move that made the Bakufu's trade relationship with Ryūkyū even more vital.[13]

The inscription's metaphor of lips and teeth in its characterization of the relationship between Ryūkyū and Japan[14] does not rely on a center/periphery binary for meaning in the way that its metaphorical description of the kingdom's relationship with China did. Instead, it evokes images of mutual dependence and even symbiosis, more strongly suggesting a relationship of parity, which would resonate with the actual trade relationship that existed between Ryūkyū and Japan. At the same time, this relationship of mutual benefit that existed between the Ryūkyūans and the Japanese was not as one-sided as the inscription's characterization of Ryūkyū's relationship with Korea implied. In fact, the order in which the inscription mentions the three main Asian trade partners for Ryūkyū itself is an inverted hierarchy, from least important to most; in other words, rather than listing them in order of importance to the kingdom, they are listed in reverse order of importance. This would mean that Japan was the most critical trading partner for Ryūkyū over either Korea or even China. Any suggestion that Japan was more critical to the Ryūkyū Kingdom than China might strike us as odd today, knowing how dependent the Ryūkyūans were on their kingdom's trade relationship with China. It is important to remember that the author of the inscription was a Japanese Zen monk named Kei'in from Kyoto's Shōkokuji 相国寺. In addition to their roles as religious teachers and as general educators, Japanese Zen monks[15] were also key players in facilitating the flow of goods to and from Japan, a role whose importance was even more enhanced following the Ōnin War 応仁の乱 (1467–1477), when Ryūkyūan merchants were forced to confine their activities to Kyushu for safety reasons. Thus, from a Japanese perspective, Japan was a more important partner for Ryūkyū than China was, so that the hanging of the Bankoku Shinryō no Kane outside of the Shuri Palace for all visitors to see, especially investiture officials from China, was ideologically significant.

3. Images of Exceptionality

The inscription on the Bankoku Shinryō no Kane was significant in its own time

chiefly for its political legitimation potential, something that Shō Taikyū needed in the years following the tumult and intrigue that culminated in his ascent to the throne. However, the inscription did more than glorify Shō Taikyū's rule as it also glorified the kingdom over which he ruled. Not only was Shō Taikyū a just sovereign, he was also a ruler over a prosperous, if not wealthy, kingdom. The inscription's praise for the Ryūkyū Kingdom, as revealed upon a closer examination, moves from the merely laudatory to the assertion of the kingdom's singular uniqueness, what Americanists call exceptionalism, perhaps as a rhetorical strategy geared toward enhancing the king's legitimate authority even more. While the issue of Shō Taikyū's legitimacy faded following his death in 1460, the appeal of the inscription's high praise for the kingdom endured, and subsequent kings allowed it to remain on display.

The inscription's exceptionalist message emanates from three distinct images, all of them related to the kingdom's geography, namely, *shōchi* 勝地, *shinryō* 津梁, and *hōraijima* 蓬莱嶋. The description of Ryūkyū as a *shōchi* is found at the very beginning of the inscription; in fact, it is in the inscription's very first sentence, establishing the parameters of the exceptionalist characterization of the kingdom that follows thereafter. The word *shō* 勝 can also be read as *sugureru* or *masaru*, meaning "to excel" or "to be excellent." Thus, *shōchi* signifies an "excellent locale," a "sublime place," or even an "ideal location," and each of these translations captures the overall exceptionalist tone of the passage. However, I choose to translate it as "felicitous place," since *shōchi* by itself does not necessarily imply that a particular location is exclusively and uniquely excellent, since other places could potentially qualify as *shōchi*, not just Ryūkyū. The inscription further clarifies this claim by describing Ryūkyū as "in the interval between these two [realms]" (kono futatsu chūkan ni arite 在此二中間), a reference to Ryūkyū's location between China and Japan. The inscription's reference to Korea in this context is significant, since it is similarly located between both China and Japan, so the fact that Ryūkyū was situated between the two could not by itself justify an exceptionalist interpretation of *shōchi*. The description of Ryūkyū as a *shōchi*, however, certainly invited readers into drawing such a conclusion.

The inscription's exceptionalist tone becomes more apparent when it likens Ryūkyū to a *shinryō* 津梁, or "bridge." In addition to "bridge," *shinryō* also indicates that something serves as a "conduit," and this image is certainly a critical aspect of the inscription's imagery. The concept of the conduit is more useful in interpreting *shinryō* than is the case with the image of a bridge, as it accounts for both the role of Ryūkyū in connecting different areas to it and to one another, and for the movement of goods to and from the various areas that were connected in this way. Despite the fact that the inscription established at its outset that Ryūkyū was located between China and Japan, and that it had at least benefited to some degree from its relationship with Korea, Ryūkyū, according to the inscription, was a *shinryō* for the whole world, such that trade goods flowed into it from all directions of the compass, not just from Korea, China, and Japan. The terms *bankoku* 万国, or "the ten thousand realms," and *jippō* 十方, or "the ten directions," convey the

all-encompassing nature of Ryūkyū's connections with the outside world. In a sense, Ryūkyū's connections with the outside world made the kingdom the very antithesis of an isolated realm; consequently, we can interpret the inscription as proclaiming a cosmopolitan identity for the kingdom.

In the absence of any specific realms in this context, other than Korea, China, and Japan, this part of the inscription might strike a reader as overly blustery and even fabricated. This, however, was actually not the case since the Ryūkyūans had already begun cultivating lucrative trade ties with many parts of Southeast Asia in the decades immediately prior to the casting of the Bankoku Shinryō no Kane (Arashiro, 2010, p. 30). Between 1419 and 1458, Ryūkyūan envoys traveled all throughout the region they called Manaban 真南蛮, including the Ayutthaya Kingdom (Thailand), Palembang (Indonesia), and the Sunda Kingdom (Java); the Ryūkyūans expanded on these trade networks throughout the rest of the fifteenth and into the sixteenth centuries to include the Malacca Sultanate and Patani (Malaysia), the island of Sumatra, the Philippines, and Annam (Vietnam) (Kerr, 2000, p. 91; Arashiro, 2010, p. 29–30). At the height of Ryūkyū's trade with Southeast Asia during the sixteenth century, Annam was second only to China as a destination for Ryūkyūan trade missions, with Japan ranking a distant thirteenth place (Arashiro, 2010, p. 30). In addition to transporting Japanese goods, including swords and screens, Korean goods, chiefly cotton, and Chinese goods, like silk and porcelain, to points in Southeast Asia, the Ryūkyūans also acquired rare commodities on their trade missions there, including sappanwood and ivory, to sell to their customers in Japan, Korea, and China (Arashiro, 2010, p. 30). When viewed within the context of this lively trade, the inscription's characterization of Ryūkyū as a conduit for foreign goods from around the world seems less like an exaggeration and more like an accurate description.

With the concepts of *shōchi* and *shinryō*, an image of Ryūkyū as exemplary has arguably emerged already, so that a characterization of the bell's inscription as exceptionalism seems appropriate. However, exemplary, as it is understood within the context of exceptionalism, implies singularity and uniqueness, concepts that do not necessarily emanate from what people think of as exemplary in other contexts; in other words, the qualities associated with an exemplar or model create the conditions for exceptionalism to emerge so long as that model is the only one. Neither *shōchi* nor *shinryō* foreclose the possibility that other realms might also be described as one, the other, or even as both. For this reason, the invocation of the last exceptionalist image, *hōraijima*, is especially critical. With *hōraijima*, there is little doubt as to the exceptionalist message of the bell's inscription.

The imagery associated with *hōraijima* originated in Japanese antiquity, when the myth of Penglai arrived in Japan from China. Penglai was thought to be a sublime realm of immortals, one of three such islands whose denizens blissfully lived their lives without any material cares or suffering of any kind (Jang, 1992, p. 83). Penglai had a strong association with Daoism, especially its alchemical tradition; in fact, Penglai was thought to grow magical herbs that conferred immortality on its inhabitants (Campany, 2006, p. 321). The famous Chinese emperors Qin Shihuangdi 泰始皇帝 (259–210 BCE) and

Han Wudi 漢武帝 (156–87 BCE) were thought to have dispatched expeditions to find Penglai and bring these herbs back to China. The inscription articulates two distinct reasons that justify Ryūkyū's claim, and that of Okinawa Island especially, to be the fabled Penglai. The first is serendipitous geography, namely, that Penglai was thought to be an island to the east of China, and Okinawa Island was one such major island, along with any of the main islands of Japan, each an alternative candidate for Penglai. The other reason is a direct consequence of Ryūkyū's role as the world's *shinryō*; specifically, its role as a bridge to the world and as a conduit of its goods brought sumptuous luxuries from all over the region to Okinawa Island. Although hardship in the lives of the Ryūkyūan people was not unknown, they were certainly more prosperous than their descendants were going to be, especially after Satsuma's invasion. One of the essential functions for the continued displaying of the Bankoku Shinryō no Kane in subsequent eras, other than its exceptionalist one, was the commemoration and preservation of these memories of happier times. Not only did the image of *hōraijima* or Penglai serve as the symbol for that era's wealth and happiness, it also gave Ryūkyū, and especially the island of Okinawa, a mythological, supernatural, and divinely-ordained quality about it. Above all, the invocation of *hōraijima* imbued Ryūkyū with a singular and unique quality that is perhaps the most distinguishing feature of exceptionalism.

The Chinese Tributary System and East Asian Exceptionalism

While *shōchi* and *shinryō* do not, by themselves, constitute the basis for Ryūkyūan exceptionalism, the synergy they create when viewed together, especially when both are viewed alongside *hōraijima*, does indicate that such a basis has emerged. Specifically, these terms portray Ryūkyū in a way that scholars of American exceptionalism would describe as exemplary. The qualities associated with the exemplary comprise one form of exceptionalism, while those associated with the exempt comprise the other. It would be a difficult task to try and justify Ryūkyūan exceptionalism as founded on any concept of an exemption, especially through the use of terms like *shōchi*, *shinryō*, and *hōraijima*. In fact, the Ryūkyūans went to great lengths to demonstrate how their kingdom was an active participant in a cultural sphere dominated by China; rather than show how their society developed in ways that were distinct by comparison with China, they wanted to prove how thoroughly embedded it was in a world dominated by the Chinese.

A case for a kind of Ryūkyūan exceptionalism based on the idea of the exempt is made especially difficult when one considers the significance of the Chinese tributary system to Ryūkyū.[16] The Ryūkyūans upheld Sinocentrism[17] at their ideological heart and maintained their own symbolically subservient position[18] with regard to China for more than four hundred years. Following their subjugation by Satsuma, there were several opportunities to end this relationship during the seventeenth century since the cost of sending tribute missions was simply more than the now impoverished kingdom could bear. Ironically, it was Satsuma's leadership that kept Ryūkyū's tribute status going even though they were forced to borrow money to do so. Not only was the Chinese tributary system

critical to Ryūkyū's cultural identity and economic viability, it was also critical to the ways in which the concept of exceptionalism applied to the pre-modern East Asian context. In the American context, claims of superiority usually follow assertions or demonstrations of the exemplary and the exempt, a fact that Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–1859), perhaps the "founding father" of American exceptionalism, observed during his American sojourn in the 1830s (Lipset, 1996, p. 13; see also Tocqueville, 2006). For societies which were part of the tributary system, like Ryūkyū, claims of superiority over China[19] were perhaps so unthinkable as to merit no serious mention; at the same time, China, as the recipient of these tribute missions, was perhaps so obviously superior in the minds of its own people so as also to merit no serious mention.[20] Japan, which was at best a half-hearted tributary state, gave its intellectuals the necessary foundation upon which to make such superiority claims, and they indulged themselves accordingly, especially after closing the door on the tributary system in 1624 and following the decline of the Ming dynasty in 1644. This fact, however, need not lead us to conclude that exceptionalism can only apply to China and Japan in the pre-modern context. Tokugawa exceptionalism (see McNally, 2016) shares with its American counterpart such assertions of superiority because Tokugawa intellectuals were able to formulate their views of Japan using images of both its exemplary and exempt qualities. In the case of Ryūkyū before 1609, descriptions like those on the Bankoku Shinryō no Kane were more relevant to the exemplary than they were to the exempt, but its participation in the tributary system eliminated any basis for a claim of superiority over China.

4. Conclusion

While the general lack of superiority claims among the Ryūkyūans marks their exceptionalism as distinct by comparison with that of the Japanese[21] and the Americans, theirs also had some important commonalities with both, especially with the latter. Specifically, the Bankoku Shinryō no Kane represents a blending of exceptionalism and cosmopolitanism that resonates with the ways in which Americans conceptualize exceptionalism today, which itself is a legacy of the first half of the nineteenth century, chiefly as it was embodied by intellectuals associated with the Transcendentalist movement, whose members avidly embraced ideas from the world's great religions, including Buddhism and Confucianism (Gura, 2007, p. xv). The Ryūkyū Kingdom was founded on maritime trade, and contacts and interactions with cultures and societies outside of Ryūkyū were an accepted part of life among Ryūkyūans in general. By the end of the fourteenth century, a Chinese settlement had been established in Okinawa by immigrants from Fujian, which developed into the village of Kumemura 久米村 by the early seventeenth century and the arrival of Satsuma (Kerr, 2000, p. 75). By the early eighteenth century, it was not uncommon for Ryūkyūan elites either to send their sons to Kumemura for their education or even to relocate to Kumemura and assume a Chinese identity. Kumemura came to signify, in the words of George Kerr, both "alien blood" and "social prestige," and the presence of for-

eigners in Okinawa, or those with foreign ancestry, was an integral part of Ryūkyūan society and cultural identity. Ryūkyūan cosmopolitanism was not limited merely to the presence of Chinese families in Kumemura; there is some evidence to indicate that there were settlements of Koreans in Okinawa as well, at Tumai 泊 and in Naafaa (Naha) 那覇 (Kerr, 2000, p. 91). The reluctance of Korean kings to send their ships directly to Ryūkyū may have necessitated such a merchant community, and of course, there were Japanese families that resided in Ryūkyū during the same era (Nelson, 2006, p. 389); in fact, following the Satsuma invasion, Satsuma's leaders ordered these families to return to Japan. Not only was the presence of foreigners in Ryūkyū an everyday aspect of life for Ryūkyūans during the heyday of the kingdom's maritime trade, a large proportion of the Ryūkyūans themselves had experience either traveling or living abroad. An estimated 32,000 Ryūkyūans journeyed to Southeast Asia from the middle of the fifteenth century to the middle of the sixteenth century, and nearly 100,000 made the trip to China during the same era, which are remarkable numbers given the fact that the population of Ryūkyū by the end of the sixteenth century stood only at about 100,000 people (Arashiro, 2010, p. 30). Consequently, it is not an exaggeration to say that the cosmopolitan nature of their society was something that the Ryūkyūans not only acknowledged but also actively embraced.

While Transcendentalist intellectuals in the United States both believed in their nation's exceptionality and supported immigration, their contemporaries, the Know-Nothings, shared their belief in the former but vehemently opposed the latter. The activities of the Know-Nothings were the culmination of a broader set of anti-immigrant agitations that a newspaper editor dubbed as "nativism" in 1844 (see Billington, 1937 and Higham, 1988). Thus, Transcendentalism and Know-Nothingism were both forms of nineteenth-century American exceptionalism, yet their followers were pitted against one another politically since the former supported at least the idea of cosmopolitanism while the latter gave rise to nativism. The inscription on the Bankoku Shinryō no Kane asserts a form of Ryūkyūan (or even Okinawan) exceptionalism from a cosmopolitan perspective, adhering to a pattern of exceptionalism familiar to Americanists, yet predating Transcendentalism by nearly four hundred years. At the same time, the Ryūkyūans were perhaps more truly cosmopolitan than were the Transcendentalists, as Ralph Waldo Emerson's (1803–1882) assertions about the English basis of the American national character demonstrated (see Emerson, 1866). The pattern of nativism-exceptionalism is one that also likely emerged in Ryūkyū, chiefly in the response of the *noro* priestesses to the spread of Shinto. It is this form that was so dominant in early modern Japan and one that Americanists associate with Japanese exceptionalism today. One would likely find it difficult to think of an example of cosmopolitan exceptionalism in Japanese history. To the extent that Ryūkyūan history is part of Japanese history, the Bankoku Shinryō no Kane might be one of the few such instances of cosmopolitan exceptionalism to be found.

Shō Taikyū's bell, both as a statement and as a symbol of Ryūkyūan exceptionalism, represents a critical counterexample to the histories of exceptionalism of both the United

States and Japan. It is proof that nineteenth-century Americans were not the only ones in world history who found their nation's uniqueness in its tolerance and diversity, and it demonstrates that exclusion from the Chinese tributary system did not have to foreclose any attempt to claim a distinctive place within an Asian world dominated by China. For scholars of exceptionalism, the Bankoku Shinryō no Kane is important because it draws their attention to a small and now defunct kingdom whose leaders never envisioned war or conquest, the goals of much larger states, as the basis for greatness, a lesson the Japanese have since learned but one that perhaps continues to elude Americans to this day.

Notes

1) Note that Nelson cites the monk Kaiin 芥隠 (?–1495) as the author of the bell's inscription rather than the monk Keiin 渓隠 (see Nelson, 2006, p. 391). This is likely a case of mistaken identity, as Keiin's name is clearly visible on the inscription itself, not Kaiin's.
2) This inscription is reproduced in Hokama, 2010, p. 69. Alternate English translations can be found in Nelson, 2006 and Pearson, 1969.
3) Note that my characterization of Shō Taikyū's reign as controversial and even tumultuous conflicts with Nelson's observation that it was an era in which the kingdom enjoyed the "height of its prestige" (see Nelson, 2006, p. 368).
4) From the seventh century until 869 CE, the Japanese sent imperial delegations to China that facilitated trade between the two countries. Thereafter, the Koreans acted as trade intermediaries until the eleventh century, when Chinese merchants began trading directly with the Japanese (see Akamine, 2004, p. 25). Japan's participation in the tributary system during the Muromachi era ended around 1550. Although there were thoughts among the Japanese that the lucrative China trade should be restored, the Japanese invasion of Korea in 1592 further isolated them from China. The early Tokugawa shoguns sought to renew Japan's tributary relationship with China, but the second and third shoguns, Hidetada 徳川秀忠 (1579–1632) and Iemitsu 徳川家光 (1604–1651), respectively, ultimately decided against it in 1624 because of the subservient image it would have created for the still nascent Edo Bakufu (see Toby, 1991, p. 62).
5) Nelson observes how the Kamakura era was a time in which "the first consolidated political units were emerging on Okinawa" (see Nelson, 2006, p. 375).
6) The colorful language describing Ryūkyū's relationship with China and with Japan comes from the *Zuo zhuan* 左伝 (4th c. BCE?). The gist of these references is that Ryūkyū's relationship with Japan was as close as it was to China and that these relationships were characterized by mutual dependence, which also strongly suggests that there was geopolitical parity between Ryūkyū and its larger neighbors to the north and to the west.
7) Nelson observes how the Ryūkyūans were "intermediaries" in "the exchange of Korean cotton for Southeast Asian spices and medicines" (see Nelson, 2006, p. 379).
8) Actually, the Ming Chinese sought to secure tribute from the Japanese by sending envoys to Japan in 1369. It was during their travels that the Ming envoys considered the idea of seeking tribute from Ryūkyū, which ultimately resulted in the 1372 mission (see Takara, 2011, p. 79).
9) Although the Ming Chinese were amenable to the idea of receiving tribute from the Ryūkyūans, they also sought a commitment from the Ryūkyūans to monitor the activities of the Wakō (see Akamine, 2004, p. 48).
10) Nelson argues that the usage of *wayō kanbun* 和洋漢文 by Ryūkyūan officials suggests that there was a "cultural affinity" between the Ryūkyūans and the Japanese that was not the case with the Chinese, as the usage of classical Chinese would have suggested. For their part, the Muromachi Bakufu responded to the Ryūkyūans using their own *kana* syllabary, which Nelson observes likely signified a "perceived difference in status" between the Ryūkyūan king and the Japanese shogun (see Nelson, 2006, p. 370–371.)

11) These tribute ships were later referred to as *kenminsen* 遣明船 (see Kamiya, 2010, p. 28).
12) Yoshimitsu was later criticized for his acceptance of Chinese investiture, most famously by Zuikei Shūhō 瑞渓周鳳 (1392–1473) (see Verschuer, 2007, p. 270).
13) Despite Yoshimochi's efforts, the Bakufu resumed sending tribute ships to China after his death. By 1551, these missions came to an end, in part because of a raucous episode in 1523 between two bands of warriors representing rival daimyo that took place in China (see Chan, 1968, p. 411–412).
14) According to Nelson, "[R]yukyu did not see itself purely as a tributary of China but accorded equal importance to its relations with Japan" (see Nelson, 2006, p. 368).
15) Nelson includes Shingon priests as well (see Nelson, 2006, p. 381).
16) During the Ming dynasty, the Ryūkyūans sent the most tribute missions of any country (171), while Annam had the second most (89) (see Takara, 2011, p. 82).
17) Scholars have yet to explore the connection between Sinocentrism and exceptionalism. At the same time, descriptions of Sinocentrism by Sinologists sound remarkably similar to those of exceptionalism by Americanists (see Cranmer-Byng, 1973, p. 68–69).
18) As Mark Mancall observes: "Presentation of tribute to the emperor was the ritual appropriate to acknowledging the world order" (Mancall, 1968, p. 64).
19) Not only was any such claim of superiority over China unthinkable in the fifteenth century, but also Chinese superiority over all of the countries on its periphery was considered axiomatic (see Fairbank, 1968, p. 2).
20) It is also unlikely that the Ryūkyūans harbored feelings of superiority over the Japanese. Nelson observes how the Ryūkyūans accepted that the shogun was of a higher status than their own king and otherwise made a "decision to adopt an attitude of humility" toward the Muromachi Bakufu. At the same time, the attitude of royal officials toward Satsuma prior to 1583 "was anything other than deferential," and this is reflected in the fact that the Ryūkyūans composed their correspondence with Satsuma's officials in *kana* rather than in *wayō kanbun* (see Nelson, 2006, p. 383). The fact that the Ryūkyūans of the fifteenth century did not make any overt superiority claims on the inscription of the Bankoku Shinryō no Kane, and the fact that the author of the inscription was a Japanese monk, resonate with contemporaneous Japanese attitudes toward China in which superiority claims were as yet still unthinkable given Japan's own participation in the Chinese tributary system.
21) By refusing the Ming invitation to rejoin the tributary system, the Tokugawa Bakufu gave Japanese intellectuals a basis upon which to make any claim of Japan's superiority over China at least appear intellectually coherent. Interestingly, participation within the tributary system gave the Koreans an intellectual justification for their own claims of superiority over the Japanese of the Muromachi era since (1) the Koreans claimed the Japanese island of Tsushima 対馬 as its own tributary, and (2) the Ming Chinese ranked Joseon higher than the Muromachi (see Swope, 2002, p. 761).

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王政の正当性と王国の例外性

マーク・マクナリー

尚泰久王統治下の琉球王国において、万国津梁の鐘は、王の統治の正当性を主張する重要な機能を持っていた。王は王国の持つ富と権力を誇る内容の碑文を鐘に刻ませたが、その碑文を政治的に有効にし、その有効性をその後も継続させたのは、今日アメリカ研究の分野において例外主義（exceptionalism）と呼ばれている形態にあった。近世の琉球人が、朝貢国である中国を自分の国よりも優れていると認識していたことは、東アジアにおける中国の優位性の上に成立していた朝貢貿易というしくみが、琉球王国にとって特に重要であり、例外主義として機能しているという点で、歴史的重要性をもつ。中国、アメリカ合衆国、そして日本の事例において、歴史家はしば

しば政治的・文化的優位性を表明する言説がいかに例外主義として機能するかを分析しようとするが、琉球王国の事例における例外主義には、そうした優位性の主張が見られない。琉球王国の例外主義は十九世紀のアメリカと同じように、世界主義（cosmopolitanism）を支持する例外主義であり、世界史的な観点からも意義深いと言える。
