

[Book Review]

A Review of *Tôsho-chi'iki-kagaku toiu Chôsen*

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Daisuke Ikegami, Yasuhiko Sugimura, Yoko Fujita & Makoto Motomura (eds.) (2019). *Tôsho-chi'iki-kagaku toiu Chôsen* [*The Challenges of Island Regional Science*]. Naha, Okinawa: Border-ink. 301 pp. ISBN: 9784899823575. Hardback, JP¥2800.

This book comprises fourteen chapters contributed by researchers at the University of the Ryukyus who have engaged in multiyear interdisciplinary projects on the systematic study of islands, especially small islands, since 2011. Given the general title of the book, readers may find the volume slightly puzzling at first for its heavy focus on “Okinawa,” a particular island territory located on the southwest end of Japan. This is not, however, anything like an oversight of other island communities around the world. For one thing, a single volume cannot cover diverse expanses of island regions worldwide, but more importantly, the contributors, who teach at the University of the Ryukyus, identify themselves as members of an island community directly impacted by the very insularity they study. In other words, they have deliberately chosen to start where they stand—Okinawa.

Two of the editors, Daisuke Ikegami and Yoko Fujita, state in the introduction that the important point of the strategy is to “relativize the perspectives of the large continents and world powers,” whereby they can “pursue the potentials and modes of being of the autonomous regional societies of islands, where islands, or small islands, are considered as agential entities” (p. 17). In each of the three parts of the book, therefore, chapters centered on Okinawa appear first, which are followed by chapters with broader geographical and historical scope. In what follows, I will discuss each chapter to give the reader an idea of the broad range of topics with which island regional science is concerned. The volume is divided into three parts. Part I, chapters 1–5, explores how the unique experiences of island communities serve as the foundation for an autonomous, self-directive society. Part II, chapters 6–10, deals with a wide range of cultural representations that island regional science studies. Part III, chapters 11–14, illuminate transborder and transnational networks of island communities that contribute to redefining regional and international relationships. Readers will see how each chapter considers a unique topic or theme through the lens of island regional science.

Chapter 1 by Makoto Motomura and Junzo Kato reports on multiple educational leadership programs they administered from 2013 through 2017. Developing needs-sensitive programs for

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residents of small island communities should be a priority for local universities, they write, because professional knowledge and skills are harder to access from small islands. Besides, desirable leadership qualities often vary from one community to another. While island communities are expected to grow on their own terms rather than increasing dependence on the central government, the authors observe that there is a “strong tendency to turn more to the ‘mainland’ where the prefectural or central government is located than to island networks that include their neighboring islands” (p. 38). Reliance on government resources is understandable, of course, but Motomura and Kato describe how participants in their program were able to develop leadership skills to better partner with members from neighboring islands, hence leading to a growth more conducive to an autonomous and self-sustaining island community in the region. The authors also note that professional role models for women are often difficult to find in remote island communities, which in their view signals another area where a local university can make a difference.

Chapter 2, contributed by Bixia Chen and Ikuo Ota, invites the reader to reflect upon village landscapes with fukugi trees (*Garcinia subelliptica*) in Okinawa. They analyze how small communities must strike a subtle balance between preserving traditional landscapes and their maintenance cost. Fukugi trees were commonly grown around houses in pre-war Okinawa as windbreaks, but after WWII, woodlands with them grew rarer, which is leading to the disappearance of local cultures once associated with them. Testimonials are cited from residents of Motobu and remote islands to record and understand the traditional relationships between people’s lifestyles and the fukugi trees. Besides serving as windbreaks, the tree trunks were used for construction, bark was used as a dye, and leaves and flowers were used in religious rituals for protection against misfortune. In recent years, the authors note, communities are inclined to think that the maintenance cost outweighs such traditional merits. “Unless we devise new ways to utilize the fukugi homestead woodlands,” Chen and Ota observe, “it would become difficult to preserve them” (p. 63). Readers can easily come up with similar situations—preserving traditional landscapes has simply become expensive in light of the more straightforward economic benefits of urbanization.

Chapter 3, co-authored by Yasuhiko Sugimura and Shigeyuki Naito, squarely addresses the disadvantages of small island economies. For example, importing fertilizer and exporting produce results in higher costs for island agriculture (p. 67). As a model for a self-sustaining economy that does not depend on government spending, the authors turn to agritourism, which has been relatively successful in Okinawa since the 1990s. School trips from mainland Japan have generated notable spikes in agritourism, which has reached as many as 2,615 schools in 2016 sending 430,878 students to Okinawa (p. 71). It serves as a cultural, educational exchange between host families and mainland students. A model case from Miyako Island is discussed in detail. Local families in Miyako took the initiative in 2006, which has now grown into a program that accepts 6,000 students annually (p. 73). The authors argue that the program has been mutually beneficial, bringing extra income to hosting families, on the one hand, while not being perceived by the visitors merely as an economic activity, on the other. It carries greater meaning beyond business, Sugimura and Naito note, with many students developing a lasting relationship with the host family after the school trip (p. 80). The chapter helps readers see what the current state of agritourism is in Okinawa and the importance of constructing alternative models for small island economies.

Chapter 4, authored by Kazuyuki Tomiyama, travels back in history and considers the political and economic autonomy of the Ryukyu Kingdom after Satsuma's invasion in 1609. Tomiyama re-examines the accomplishments made by Sai On (1682–1761), a top bureaucrat, politician, and royal advisor of his time, who was well aware of the kingdom's scarce resources due to insularity. "We are thus scarce in products," the author quotes from Sai On; "We lack help from neighboring states," and "We barely manage to acquire daily necessities" (p. 85). For this reason, agriculture became a great priority for the Ryukyu Kingdom, Tomiyama argues, which effectuated its relatively autonomous agricultural policies (pp. 87–89). Through a series of analyses, the author shows how the kingdom heavily taxed rice harvests, following Satsuma's land tax policy, which made its own people survive on sweet potatoes and fern palms. The chapter also presents quantitative data extracted from 19th century documents (pp. 91–95), which inform us about the agricultural situation of the Ryukyus moving out of pre-modern times and transitioning toward the Meiji era.

Chapter 5, contributed by So Hatano, examines the complexity of industrial development in the Japanese colonial period in Taiwan by turning to the history of the Jinguashi and Ruifang gold mines in northeastern Taiwan. Jinguashi and Ruifang had been developed by the Qing Dynasty before Japanese colonists arrived in the 1890s, but the latter rapidly transformed them into major mining towns. These two mines are considered today as candidates for Taiwan World Heritage sites, but if so, Hatano points out, "there is a need to narrate a history that does not eliminate the world as it is lived" (p. 100). Citing many historical sources, the author delves into the intricate development of the two towns achieved by both the Japanese settlers and the local Taiwanese. It suggests a history of the people woven out of strategic, practical, and ambiguous interactions, an interplay between the *space* politics of modern Japan and the *place* of humanity for the local Taiwanese. Hatano's argument is not meant to suggest that cooperation from both sides made Japanese colonialism successful in the region. What is important is to avoid misinterpretation of the landscapes. "The future of the region," he emphasizes, "is not made brighter by eliminating its inherent ambiguity" (p. 114). It is a rightful resistance to memory erasure when tourism and commercialism come to the fore.

Chapter 6 is a delightful treat for readers interested in language. Shigehisa Karimata, the author, reminds us that the Ryukyuan and Japanese languages stemmed from a common ancestral language, often referred to as the *proto-Ryukyuan-Japanese language*, and that they are therefore "sister languages whose historical and genealogical relationship has been proven" (p. 120). He then discusses many examples that illustrate the astounding linguistic diversity observed across the Ryukyuan archipelago. The language of Ogami Island, for example, has only 10 consonants, while the dialect of Ie Island uses 38 consonants (p. 121). Yonaguni Island, on the southwest end of the Ryukyuan arc, uses a dialect with only three vowels, whereas the Sani community, at the northern end of Amami, inherits a dialect with as many as 18 vowels (p. 122). A community may have a dialect quite different from those spoken in adjacent communities, making it a *language island* despite its geographical continuity with the surrounding area, such as is the case with Onna Village on the main island (pp. 128–129). What are the invisible barriers that separate people and their languages, Karimata asks, if not geographical borders or boundaries (pp. 129–130)? This

chapter, well informed and synthetic, invites readers to reflect on intriguing questions concerning language and social history.

Chapter 7, contributed by Moriaki Miyahira, surveys the religious communities of the Sakishima Islands, i.e., Miyako and Yaeyama, where local priestesses have traditionally conducted religious services. The author's detailed fieldwork uncovers an interesting, uneven spread of official priestesses on Miyako Island, which suggests that the female theocracy of the Ryukyu Kingdom did not span the island uniformly (p. 136). Physical distance from the kingdom's administration in Shuri does not explain it well since other islands further away from the Shuri government often exhibited stronger parallels with the kingdom's religious system. Miyahira surmises that it is the large number of micro-communities on the island that made a difference since it could have been difficult for the kingdom to appoint an official priestess for every single micro-community (p. 137). The issue carries contemporary relevance in that it relates to how depopulation may impact religious practices in local communities. If a community can no longer afford a priestess due to population change, it will have to choose between discontinuing certain religious practices or appointing someone else from the community to fulfil her function. The chapter presents a helpful table that illustrates how these changes have happened in Sakishima (p. 141), which could be of interest to social scientists.

Chapter 8, authored by Ikue Kina, draws a thread of inspiration from "A Grafted Tongue," a poem by the Irish poet John Montague, who was concerned with language attrition and colonialism. Kina points out that in Okinawa, the widely acclaimed 1967 novel *The Cocktail Party* by Tatsuhiro Oshiro remains a powerful voice to this day. "The postcoloniality of this novel," she writes, "does more than expressing Okinawa's resistance to American extraterritorial rights" (p. 160). The plot is complex. The protagonist returns from a cocktail party at his American friend's home, not knowing that his daughter had been raped by an American acquaintance during the party. He struggles to sue the acquaintance, who is protected by American law, while his Chinese friend reminds him of the wartime violence of Japanese colonialism against the people of China. Kina then moves on to examine Eiki Matayoshi's 1978 novel "The Wild Boar that George Gunned Down," a work that interlaces abundant voices in postcolonial Okinawa, represented by an ill-treated American soldier stationed in Okinawa, a prostitute whom he bought, and other characters. The polyphony of voices, resounding without clear boundaries, speaks with its own darkly internalized imagery (p. 164), leading to the gun killing of an old Okinawan man. The works of Tami Sakiyama, a female writer from Iriomote Island, whose works Kina interprets as creating a nuanced Okinawan vocabulary to narrate the reality of small islands, are also discussed.

Chapter 9, composed by Tsutomu Inamura, can be considered one of the conceptual chapters. The author explores the nature and potential of cultural resources from the standpoint of resource anthropology. As foregoing chapters suggest, managing cultural and historical resources is not a simple task for island communities when economic ends must also be met. The author thus writes: "The task to figure out how to achieve both economic development and protection of culture is a problem shared by islands around the world" (p. 173). Not all cultural assets translate directly into economic resources, and even when they do, they can create a wide range of problems. Where did the *original* culture of the islands come from, how did it spread, and how did it *change* into some-

thing else in the modern age? A question like this is legitimate for the historian but often involves questionable presumptions regarding the pre-modern, the prototypical, the traditional, the ethnological, and so on, whose distance from the present is measured from the unquestioned “modern” perspective. Inamura, therefore, devotes space to discussing the insights of Kunio Yanagita (1875–1962), Japan’s pioneering folklorist, who preferred the word *transition* over *change* and the word *transmission* over *tradition*, which helps us understand *cultural resources* better in the author’s view.

Chapter 10 turns to Hawai‘i, which maintains a strong connection to Okinawa through immigration and tourism. Kinuko Yamazato brings into focus Hawaii’s Plantation Village, an outdoor facility in Waipahu on the island of O‘ahu, and reflects on issues of modern museum representations. The multicultural and multiethnic milieu of early plantation life is displayed well at Hawaii’s Plantation Village, she notes, but it may erase alternative histories and memories unintentionally. For example, the museum’s brochure takes the viewpoint of immigrants when it states: “The story that we share with you is our story, Hawai‘i’s story” (p. 195). The museum highlights the hardships and challenges of plantation life for immigrants, though it conceals, among other things, the native Hawaiian perspective. “Throughout the display,” Yamazato writes, “no description is given as to what kind of place Waipahu was for the native Hawaiian people” (p. 197). Yamazato also analyzes patterns of narrative performances at Hawaii’s Plantation Village. The performances contribute to the passing down of the history and memory of immigrants and may provide effective means to teach young people the importance of multiculturalism, but the histories of land condemnation and colonization by American authorities are easily rendered invisible. The author alerts readers to the “limit of expressing the diversity of culture and identity of the people of Hawai‘i” (p. 205), which can be considered a common problem of modern museum representations.

Chapter 11, by Masaaki Gabe, discusses issues of security of small islands, where two senses of security are discernible: the security of the people living on islands and national or territorial security. The Senkaku Islands, for example, are currently uninhabited; hence, security in the first sense is not an issue, though security in the second sense remains important for the Japanese government. The author goes on to narrate the battle of Okinawa in WWII, depicting how the security of the people of Okinawa was sacrificed for national security. In recent years, Japan’s Self-Defense Forces have been enhancing their defense capabilities in the southwest end of Japan’s territory. The defense policy is flawed, Gabe argues, as it only destroys the environment, economy, democracy, and more (pp. 217–218). The argument helps magnify the disparity between the two senses of security. It is best for a sovereign state to defend both its people and territory, worst if it defends neither. But what if it defends its territory but not its people, or vice versa? “When it comes to what to defend in Okinawa,” Gabe points out, “there is something unclear about Japan’s Self-Defense Forces” (p. 220). The chapter raises an issue worthy of further consideration.

Chapter 12 presents a different perspective on military presence in the Pacific. Ayano Ginoza takes a feminist approach to uncovering and analyzing politically manipulated representations that have masked violence against women in the region. The so-called “Asiatic-Pacific Theater,” originally referring to U. S. military operations in Asia and the Pacific during WWII, represents the masculine power of America over the exotic, underdeveloped, receptive, and half-naked feminin-

ity of the Pacific islands. The image of the *masculine* defending the *feminine* is not only a common fantasy but has been repeatedly used to justify the subordination of small islands to military forces. The author proceeds to describe how the Okinawa Women Act Against Military Violence was formed in 1995, following the rape of a 12-year-old girl by three U. S. servicemen stationed in Okinawa. It galvanized transnational movements in the U. S. and elsewhere, including partnerships with the Women for Genuine Security (WGS) and the International Women's Network Against Militarism (IWNAM). "What the international solidarity reveals are," Ginoza writes, "first, the fact that violence to women, which becomes visible when experiences are shared, is a structure identified with a pattern common to the regions where U. S. military units are stationed; and second, a form of peace and security that does not depend on such structural violence" (p. 242).

Chapter 13, contributed by Mamoru Akamine, presents a lively picture of the Ryukyu Kingdom and its people engaging in a vast trade network across East and Southeast Asia in the 14–16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The author begins by explaining the diplomatic system introduced by Emperor Hongwu (1328–1398), the founder of the Ming dynasty. It had two main pillars: the investiture system, which politically legitimized the rulers of the Ryukyu Kingdom, and the tributary system, which established the economic relationship between the Kingdom and Ming China through commercial trade (p. 253). In Akamine's presentation, the most important context to this was the so-called *wako* pirates raiding the coastlines of China around that time, a grave problem for Emperor Hongwu. He wished Japan would clamp down on them, but negotiations with them were unsuccessful (p. 255). This motivated the emperor to treat the Ryukyu Kingdom favorably—Hongwu expected that it would mediate between China and Japan. The Ming court banned its people from sea travel to keep international trade under full control while granting tribute ships to the Ryukyu Kingdom. Readers will see how this historical chapter casts amazing light on the political and economic order China constructed around itself, a major influence on surrounding regions including the Ryukyus, Japan, and Southeast Asia.

Chapter 14, the final chapter, by Daisuke Ikegami, focuses on the greatest postwar threat to the autonomy and self-governance of islands in the Pacific: nuclear tests. When the South Pacific Commission (SPC) was formed in 1947, Ikegami notes, interest in "regionalism" was growing (p. 279). The purpose of the commission included the promotion of people's welfare in the South Pacific and equal partnership between Western powers and the island territories. However, the commission did not handle political matters of defense and security, so it did not handle nuclear test issues in the region either. The French government, which was aspiring to develop nuclear armaments, denied health hazards and continued its nuclear tests in the atolls (pp. 282–283). Stronger anti-nuclear movements arose and called for solidarity across the island territories throughout the 1950–60s. In 1971, the South Pacific Forum (SPF) was formed, which finally brought a halt to nuclear explosions conducted by France (p. 286). Denuclearizing the Pacific, Ikegami points out, was recognized as part of postwar decolonization (pp. 288–289). It is important to note that the anti-nuclear movements are transregional in nature and hence do not receive the best analysis within the usual framework of foreign diplomacy and international relations. For this reason, the author "introduced the perspective of regional island science and attempted to offer

a narrative centering on the self-directed activities of the islands” (p. 291).

As the diverse topics of the volume amply demonstrate, island studies as a regional science includes the study of historical, political, economic, linguistic, religious, cultural, and educational conditions of island communities along with a close examination of their unique resources, constraints, problems, and opportunities. Since it does not yield to easy summary, we have attended to individual chapters in seeing what this massive endeavor involves on its broad fronts. I may note that eight years after the 1986 inaugural of *Islands of the World* conference in Victoria, Canada, it was in Okinawa, Japan, that the conference evolved into the International Small Island Studies Association (ISISA). Many of the topics discussed in *Tôsho-chi'iki-kagaku toiu Chôsen* were addressed at this conference back in 1994, which signifies both the continuous efforts made by researchers and the leading role Okinawa has played in the persistent development of island studies. The question now concerns the next step—where is the project heading, what are the new methodologies it demands, and what defines its success? The current volume marks an impressive cornerstone for researchers at the University of Ryukyus, who have made substantial contributions to island studies, while reaffirming the importance of interdisciplinary connections and trans-regional collaborations for its future growth.