

Editors' Note:  
*OJIS* Special Issue in Collaboration with SICRI

Island Cultures and Heritage: Open and Continuous Reflections

Ayano Ginoza,\* Meng Qu,\*\* Evangelia Papoutsaki\*\*\*

It is our pleasure to announce the publication of this co-edited volume between the *Okinawan Journal of Island Studies* and the Small Island Cultures Research Initiative (SICRI). SICRI's two conveners, Dr. Evangelia Papoutsaki and Dr. Meng Qu, have come on board to create a call for papers on the theme of "Interdisciplinary Approaches to Small Island Cultures and Heritage" along with Dr. Ayano Ginoza, the editor of the *Okinawan Journal of Island Studies (OJIS)* to produce this volume.

In this co-edited volume, we invited submissions for peer-review articles, book reviews, and forum essays that cover topics related to the broad area of small island cultures and heritage, including, but not limited to, tangible, intangible, digital, and/or Indigenous cultural heritage as well as the impact of the Anthropocene, militarism, and colonialism on small island cultures and their cultural heritage. We were particularly interested in submissions that bring in multi- or inter-disciplinary approaches to engage in island cultures and heritage. Small island cultural heritage is perceived here as an open and continuous reflection of a living culture. We were also open to receive submissions that analyze and reflect on how the COVID-19 Pandemic has affected cultural activities on islands.

The following definition by UNESCO on cultural heritage was offered as a starting point:

Having at one time referred exclusively to the monumental remains of cultures, heritage as a concept has gradually come to include new categories such as the intangible, ethnographic or industrial heritage. . . . Closer attention is now being paid to humankind, the dramatic arts, languages, and traditional music, as well as to the informational, spiritual and philosophical systems upon which creations are based. The concept of heritage in our time accordingly is an open one, reflecting living culture every bit as much as that of the past. (UNESCO 2003, "What is Cultural Heritage and Types of Cultural Heritage")

While tangible heritage is easier understood and thus protected, "intangible cultural heritage" (ICH) has become just as important in safeguarding cultural diversity in the age

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\* Associate Professor, University of the Ryukyus

\*\* Assistant Professor, Hiroshima University

\*\*\* Executive Editor ePress, Unitec Institute of Technology New Zealand

of globalization. Transmitted from generation to generation, intangible heritage “is constantly recreated by communities and groups and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity” (ich.unesco.org, 2021). We were thus keen to see how the contributed articles engaged with this aspect of island heritage.

For the Research Institute for Islands and Sustainability, which houses *OJIS*, this collaboration serves two objectives. First, while as the name *Okinawan Journal of Island Studies* indicates it anchors the journal in the geographic area that encompass Okinawa, it strives to create an opportunity to explore different elements outside the scope of a traditional journal of area studies. Second, as a journal that engages in research on islands and their communities, *OJIS* hosts island scholarship that contributes to critical discussions on island studies in collaboration with innovative and vigorous initiatives that contribute to the missions of RIIS. In this vein, *OJIS* creates a relational space to connect other island stories together in constructive conversations. SICRI joins this relational space as a network to co-create intersectional space for scholarly discussions on islands.

Established in 2004, SICRI aims to support small island communities by researching their language, literature, music, dance, and folkloric and media cultures and to identify potential research partners and appropriate strategies to benefit small island cultures and those researching them. SICRI operates with reference to broader UNESCO concepts of cultural heritage (as stated above), consideration of island communities as (simultaneously) isolated and connected, and is concerned with addressing the impacts and potentials offered by varied activities, internal and external, on islands. It was thus with this spirit of collaboration that SICRI proposed to *OJIS* a jointly edited volume that would increase mutual exposure to existing and new networks of island scholars, globally and regionally.

While the submitted articles addressed various aspects of island heritage and cultures, three sub-themes emerged from the selection process, including leveraging socially engaged art-based tourism for island revitalization, island cultural and heritage tourism dynamics, and island heritage and socio-cultural engagement.

### **Island Heritage and Socio-cultural Engagement**

The understanding of island heritage draws from a diversified focus that connects islands, cultural heritage, and academic and creative re-presentation as well as island rhetoric with mobile technologies. Henry Johnson makes an important link at the crossroads between island studies and heritage studies. His case about Japan's Enoshima expands our knowledge by encompassing environment, ritual, and creative arts. He concludes that in the process of modernization, there is an ongoing negotiation between island cultural heritage and emerging heritage that interlinks the present and past as well as what is inside and outside of the island. In a Samoan island's coastal village, Muliaumaseali'i (2022) discovers how the mobile phone becomes part of the ancient sacred

space of *va tapuia* and how it connects with the present and the afterworld. After evaluating the urban legend of “text messages from the grave,” the conclusion shows that the sacred space did not change due to mobile phone use. On the contrary, mobile phones have become a new communication vehicle of rhetoric to help return to the Samoan way of life. The COVID-19 global pandemic has had serious impacts on island scholars and their research. The pandemic created “isolated islands” between countries, casting each society away like many new physical islets. Through a hermeneutical approach, Spratt, Nash, and Sweeney describe the dialogue between photographing the landscape, linguistics and the unspoken language, musical composition, and the technologies of the Australian island. These three papers demonstrate how island heritage grows to accompany the gradual change of island culture. Therefore, island cultural heritage is a subject that needs to be continuously studied and examined from multiple angles.

### **Island Cultural and Heritage Tourism Dynamics**

Vietnam, Taiwan, and Japan share similar concerns in relation to the balance between the preservation of cultural heritage versus the development of island tourism. Nguyen, Vo, and Quang discuss the current situation and future challenges of marine cultural heritage under the pressure of socio-economic evolution on Lý Sơn Island in Vietnam. Their findings reveal that although both tangible and intangible marine cultural heritage on this island are preserved quite well, future challenges related to the impacts of economic restructuring and tourism development will put island heritage conservation at risk. Beuningen focuses on how two world heritage shrines and their islands are being represented in Japanese and Western travel information sources. He finds that the representations differ between Japanese and Western sources in how sacredness and religious character are emphasized. While Western sources highlight more typical island features, Japanese sources focus more on the sacredness of the sites, which can result in implications for the day-to-day activities at the shrines and for their management, since different expectations among tourists might be created. In the context of the southeastern coast of Taiwan, Orchid (Lanyu) Island, Chang and Chung propose the term “Tao-style” equality, explaining that it is either adjustable or contradictory to the all-in-one equality in our capitalist consumer society. In the Tao mind, equality is integrated with layers of socio-psychological and material needs. For example, for Tao fishing communities, preserving *mangarao* (sharing) and spontaneous *meyayo* (donating) is essential whenever fishing groups distribute their harvests. Unfortunately, our capitalistic worldview does not give us the vocabulary to describe the Tao understanding of equality. All three papers in this grouping call for further attention by local governments to the making of policies regarding island tourism development and the conservation of marine cultural heritage.

## **Leveraging Socially Engaged Art-Based Tourism for Island Revitalization**

The wide academic foci of island heritage, socially engaged art, and community-based tourism are integrating in the indivisible mission of island revitalization. In marginal island villages (Tu), or so-called peripheral communities (McCormick; Hamadeh), socially engaged art place-making, events, and festival tourism are becoming an antidote to the issues caused by serious aging and depopulation in Japan. Due to the focus on island-engaged art activities, the Seto Inland Sea region has been receiving considerable critical attention. Three research papers highlight the significance of the Setouchi Triennale as a case study to discuss how art and tourism play a role in regional revitalization. McCormick evaluates the effects of Triennale participation on islands. Particularly on the Setouchi Triennale's central "art island," Naoshima, contemporary art shows its power to transform local heritage into new cultural capital through reactive socio-cultural elements to reinterpretation and "creative augmentation." The relationship between art and island heritage has attracted diverse interpretations from the perspective of community-based creative enterprises, civil participation, and artworks that are rooted in community landscapes as well as in heritage forms. Under a framework not mainly based on art but rather on an environmental framing and eco-tourism perspective, Hamadeh traces the development of the architectural history of art museums on Naoshima. She adapts the concept of the "planetary" to critically evaluate how island heritage, environmental histories, and local landscapes are considered key drivers for tourism purposes. Tu emphasizes how the Setouchi Triennale brings transformation of social dynamics for three art islands. He concludes that evaluating the effects and outcomes of art revitalization requires consideration of diverse factors, especially in terms of population retention, to obtain the transformation of social dynamics of an island community. These three articles share the same research area but under three different research frameworks, demonstrating the importance of considering diverse factors and interdisciplinary perspectives in island research.

## **Forum Contributors**

The Forum section of this volume contains three distinctive contributions. Philip Hayward's initial book review of Jonathan Pugh and David Chandler's *Anthropocene Islands* resulted in a substantial engagement with one of the authors, which we felt merited a place in the Forum. The subsequent conversation between Hayward and Pugh was captured on an Islands Conversation podcast published by SICRI (<https://www.sicri.net/island-conversations-4>), which we consider a complementary element to this Forum piece. The link to the podcast is also offering us an opportunity to bring new elements for engaging with scholarly work using multimedia tools. Equally important is Glenda Tibe Bonifacio's piece "Gender, Migration, and Post-Disaster Communities: Call for Intersections and Dynamics of Local and Global Connections in Asia-Pacific Island Countries."

It is an important “positioning paper” for gender and migration in post-disaster island countries that serves as a way of “announcing” and inviting participation in a new initiative led by Prof. Bonifacio. Finally, Maggie Whitten Henry’s Forum photo essay “*Windrows*” brings a creative element to this section, with its focus on a series of visual artworks in conversation with the winds of coastal Newfoundland/Ktaqmkuk.

This volume also hosts a substantial book review section that covers a wide range of publications, including: Sarah MacKinnon’s review of *Scotland and Islandness*, which explores the themes of community, economy, and culture; a review by Meng Qu of *The Challenges of Island Studies*, which consisted of the proceedings of an international symposium on “Prospects and Challenges for Envisioning Regional Science for Small Islands”; Junko Konishi’s engagement with Henry Johnson’s book on *Nene’s Koza Dabasa*; Evangelia Papoutsaki’s review of the richly illustrated volume *Pacific: An Ocean of Wonders*; and a review by Henry Johnson on *Identity, Language and Belonging on Jersey: Migration and the Channel Islands*.

As the contributors to this collaborative issue suggest, the ways through which we may discuss islands and islander inquiries do not need to be precluded by limited epistemology or region. The theme for this volume, “Interdisciplinary Approaches to Small Island Cultures and Heritage,” created a space for a rigorous discussion of multi- and inter-disciplinary approaches that reflect a growing network of island communities and suggest the potential for increasing studies of islands on their own terms. We are thankful for all the submissions to this volume and the enormous support we received from the SICRI network to convene such an exciting platform for collaboration of island scholarship and community engagement.