

Island of Peace, Island of Bases: American Bases amid  
Okinawan Population

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**\*This is a draft, do not quote\***

## **Introduction**

The Okinawa prefecture is unique among the prefectures of Japan. Once an independent kingdom, it became a Japanese prefecture as late as 1879. A common perception of Okinawan people is one of peaceful people. This perception is well promoted by local politicians and activists, and is connected by them to the historical peaceful characteristics of the ancient Ryukyu kingdom.

In modern era, Okinawa has suffered great tragedy during World War II and its aftermath. The battle of Okinawa has left the prefecture devastated and about third of its population dead. The American military has controlled the prefecture for the next 27 years. The American presence has helped its recovery at first, feeding and giving shelter to the many people who lost their homes and all earthly possessions. At the same time, though, the Americans have constructed a vast array of military bases, covering roughly 20% of the main islands land mass. The rapid growth of mainland Japan during the 60's and 70's was not felt in Okinawa, which was under American military control, adding yet another reason for the desire for reversion.

This wish was granted in 1972, when U.S. president Nixon and Japanese Prime Minister Sato formulated an agreement that would return Okinawa to Japan. A great anticipation inside Okinawa that the reversion would decrease the amount of bases in Okinawa was felt. However, even after the reversion not much has changed in this regard. Roughly 70% of American bases stationed in Japan are in Okinawa, a prefecture with less than one percent of Japan's total landmass. Since the reversion to Japan, a continuing popular protest calling for the reduction of the bases burden on Okinawa exists, culminating in a mass popular protest in 1995, leading to a U.S.-Japan agreement to reduce the burden upon Okinawan shoulders. Most of the agreement's decisions have not been met.

The Okinawan collective memory of the Battle of Okinawa has greatly influenced the perception of Okinawan people towards pacific tendencies. U.S. usage of bases stationed in Okinawa during the Korean and Vietnam wars has intensified these feelings, based on fears to be dragged into a U.S. led war.

This paper will explore the Okinawan peace identity. It will identify the origins of the perception of the Okinawan peace identity. It will point to the actors who promote it. It will also attempt to discover whether this perception is based on historic facts or rather is it a modern narrative, focused especially on the dichotomy of before and after the battle of Okinawa. Finally, this paper will examine in what ways the peaceful Okinawan population deals with the constant presence of military bases and personnel all around the island.

In this regard, the paper will seek to identify in what ways the presence of the military bases conflicts with the Okinawan peace perception and how these conflicts are manifested in daily life. In addition, this paper will demonstrate the means by which the Okinawan people protest and object to these conflict.

## **Historical Background**

I believe that historical context is relevant to many issues in modern times. When discussing identity, familiarity with history is essential.

The formation of the Okinawan identity can be traced to early 15<sup>th</sup> century with the creation of the unified Ryukyu kingdom. This is where (and when) the Okinawan story begins.

### **Creation of the Ryukyu Kingdom and Relations with China**

In the 14<sup>th</sup> century three small rival principalities came to be on the main island of the Ryukyu archipelago - Hokuzan in the northern part of the island, Chuzan in the center and Nanzan in the south. In 1372 the Chuzan leader was called to acknowledge Chinese supremacy. He seized the opportunity, knowing the benefits of formal relations with the largest empire of the region. This marked the beginning of the formal relations between China and the Ryukyu Islands. This relationship was based on tribute envoys sent by the Ryukyu kingdom to the Chinese empire. In return, the Chinese Emperor recognized and acknowledged the Ryukyu kingdom and its king. With the tribute envoys scholars were sent from the Ryukyu kingdom in order to study the Chinese classics, ethics, culture and so on (Kerr 2000, 60-66, 79).

Change of leadership and succession disputes in all three principalities during the 15<sup>th</sup> century lead to the eventual unification of Okinawa by the Chuzan principality. Chuzan leader, Shō Hashi, placed his main castle in Shuri, making it the center of his kingdom (Kerr 2000, 84-86).

The tributary system with the Chinese, although evolving, remained basically the same for a few centuries. The Ryukyu Kingdom kept the ties strong, strengthening the cultural and commercial ties between the two countries.

### **Ryukyu and Japan**

Okinawan ties with Japan started at early 15<sup>th</sup> century, when Okinawan representatives traveled through the southern part of Japan – the Satsuma clan territory, to Kyoto – the capital of Japan at the time. As time passed, the Satsuma clan, who was deeply involved in the trade with the Okinawan Island, became more and more dependent on Okinawa as a source of wares for trade (Kerr 2000, 136, 139).

At that time Japanese and Chinese relations were not very close, and the trade between them was limited. As Japanese-Chinese relations worsened, and direct trade between them came to a halt, Ryukyu's role as a mediator got bigger. The events caused the connections between Ryukyu and Japan to get stronger, and Ryukyu started sending scholars to Japan as well, as the importance of understanding their language and culture grew. Ryukyu found itself in the middle of two much bigger powers, trying to keep the balance by using careful and polite diplomacy (Kerr 2000, 140-143). All this took place until 16<sup>th</sup> century, a time with instability and wars inside Japan.

### **Ryukyu's Golden Age of Trade**

Between the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries the Ryukyu kingdom has experienced a golden age of maritime trade, delivering wares between countries all over East and South East Asia. A clear symbol for this period of time is the "Bridge across Nations Bell".<sup>1</sup> This bell was placed in the Shuri castle, the center of Ryukyuan government, and commemorates the Ryukyuan role as a connecting link between countries of the region (Wikipedia 2013).

### **Loss of independence**

After two centuries of chaos in Japan, 1573 brought a change. A daimyo named Oda Nobunaga has started the process of uniting the war torn Japanese country. In 1577 his principle lieutenant, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, after Oda's assassination, asserted his supremacy.

Hideyoshi had plans for Japan to become an empire. He planned to invade China through the Korean peninsula. As part of the preparations for the invasion he sent an envoy to the Ryukyu Kingdom demanding supplies and help. Sho Nei, the Ryukyuan king, answered to Hideyoshi that his country is too poor to send supplies. Hideyoshi, who was involved in the Korean campaign, could not give his real attention to the matter. His death in 1598 ended the Korean campaign, and caused yet another war in Japan for the succession of the leadership. In 1606 Tokugawa Ieyasu, the new shogun, gave permission to the Satsuma daimyo to chastise the Okinawans for their rudeness during the campaign in Korea, and their lack of respect for the new shogun. On 1609

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<sup>1</sup> 万国津梁の鐘 (*Bankoku shinryō no kane*)

Satsuma warriors landed on the Island and conquered Shuri castle, the center of the Ryukyu kingdom. Soon after the occupation, a group of officials from Satsuma arrived, and after a survey of the Okinawan economy decided that the Shuri government will be required to pay about an eighth of its revenues to Satsuma. In addition, Okinawan foreign trade will be monopolized by Satsuma, and directed to its interests (Kerr 2000, 152-159).

Okinawa's new position was a difficult one. Satsuma has used Okinawa to circumvent Tokugawa's policy of seclusion by indulging in foreign trade in spite of the prohibitions. The Okinawans were afraid of reprisals from Edo in case this was discovered or by a change in policy from Satsuma. On the other hand, the Chinese wanted to regulate all trade with Japan and if they would discover the trading with Okinawa was *de facto* trading with Japan, they might stop it. Satsuma has ordered Okinawa to conceal their real relations with Japan from the Chinese, so there will be no excuse for an embargo on trade (Kerr 2000, 166-167).

### **Annexation of Okinawa**

Mid-19<sup>th</sup> century brought a change to the long lasted seclusion of Japan. Gradually increasing pressure from western forces to open Japan's borders finally had a result, and the Tokugawa shogunate had to sign a treaty with the Americans in 1854, soon followed by treaties with other western powers. The end of the seclusion aroused a political dispute in Japan between the shogunate and its opposing sections in the country. These disputes eventually ended in 1868 when the Meiji restoration took place and signaled the end of the Tokugawa shogunate and the formation of a new Japanese government. This new government, realizing how far Japan is behind the western countries regarding science and military power, decided it is top priority to modernize Japan, and close the gap that was formed during the two and a half centuries of seclusion (Shillony 2002).

In December 1871 an Okinawan tribute ship heading to China was wrecked on the coast of Formosa. The local population raided the wreckage and murdered fifty four of the survivors. The leaders of the new government saw this as an opportunity to make Okinawa an official part of Japan. In 1872, the Japanese minister at Peking requested the Chinese to punish the inhabitants of Formosa for the murder of the "subjects of Japan"- the Okinawans. The Chinese, by claiming they have no

responsibility over this area, legitimized a Japanese attack on Formosa to punish the culprits who murdered these "Japanese subjects". Japan gained formal Chinese recognition in Japan's paramount interest in the Ryukyus and a British signature on this concession. Not long after the incident, the Japanese government informed the Ryukyu kingdom that it will be under the control of the Japanese empire, and will transform its status from a kingdom to a *han*. All agreements that the Shuri administration did with foreign powers will be handed over to, and managed by the Foreign Office in Tokyo (Kerr 2000, 356-364).

In 1879, the Japanese decided to make Okinawa an integral part of Japan by abdicating the king and abolishing the once Ryukyu kingdom, now Ryukyu han, and create Okinawa-ken, officially closing the page on independent Okinawa.

### **Okinawa Becomes a Prefecture**

After the change of status, Okinawa became an integral part of the Japanese empire and entered the Japanese "nation-family". However, the different customs and speech set the Okinawans apart from the general Japanese public (Kerr 2000, 399). The Japanese government started to change Okinawa's bureaucratic agencies to fit the Japanese standards. Moreover, the Japanese wanted to implement their education system, so Okinawans will study as Japanese and shift their old loyalties from Shuri and China to Tokyo and the Emperor (Kerr 2000, 412).

In the years preceding World War II, Japan kept its expansionist policy and the militaristic sentiments became stronger and stronger. In Okinawa the transition to become a full-fledged Japanese prefecture was still continuing. Gradually, the Japanese education succeeded in making the younger generations of Okinawans lose interest in their heritage and strengthen their sense of loyalty towards the Japanese emperor.

### **War upon Okinawa**

Japanese nationalism, among other factors, led Japan to join forces with Germany and Italy in World War II, opposing the allied forces. The final campaign of the allied forces in the war was against Japan. An important part of this campaign was the battle of Okinawa. This battle was the only battle that took place on Japanese soil. The Japanese forces that were stationed on the island had a mission to fight a battle of

attrition against the allied (mostly American) forces. While the Okinawan citizens expected the Imperial Army to protect them, the army saw the civilians as partners in their military destiny, thus having no intention to protect them, and expected them to behave as fighters, fighting to the death (Ōta 2000, 33,56-57).

Many other Okinawans were conscripts of the Imperial army, and were seeped with the Japanese nationalism. Wishing to show their loyalty to the emperor, they fought with as much as ferocity as the mainland Japanese soldiers (Kerr 2000, 459).

The battle took the lives of more than 200,000 people, about 90,000 of them non-combatant Okinawan civilians. More than 10,000 of them were children under fourteen, the majority got killed after they were driven out from hide-outs by Japanese forces, while others died while performing chores for the Imperial Army (Yoshida 2001, 3-4). The battle ended in an inevitable victory of the United States forces, and the Okinawans found themselves once again under foreign rule.

### **Okinawa under American Occupation**

As the dust of war settled down, the Americans found themselves in charge of a torn island, with a large local population without shelter or food. For the first few years the forces on the island did not do much more than necessary to keep alive the hundreds of thousands of people who survived the war, and now had no place to sleep or food to eat (Sarantakes 2000, 24-29,36).

In early 1950 the United States government finally took a stance regarding the island (and all the other islands in the Ryukyu archipelago), and decided to keep them under its military rule, as the strategic location of Okinawa is ideal for stationing American military forces. In addition, the fact that they were the sole rulers of the island (as opposed to Japan itself, for example, which was placed under the Allied Powers rule) enabled them to use the bases on the island as they saw fit, without external intervention (Sarantakes 2000, 40-41).

When Japan regained its independence in 1952, Okinawa was not included in the agreement, and stayed under American control. Gradually, Okinawa practically became an American colony. Some form of democracy was introduced to the island, but one that will not harm American military rule. Even though the Okinawans had ambivalent feelings towards the Japanese - whether for signing a peace treaty that left

Okinawa under occupation, or for being generally discriminated by Japanese, the majority of the public called for reversion to Japan, and the Okinawan reversion movement gained more and more popularity among the Okinawan public (Yoshida 2001, 151, 172).

In the late 1960's the pressure started to bear fruit. The ever growing influence for the voices within Okinawa calling for reversion, along with the new Japanese Prime Minister – Sato Eisaku, who emphasized the issue of Okinawa, eventually succeeded in convincing the U.S. government to return Okinawa back to Japan, under the umbrella of the U.S.-Japan security treaty, which meant that most bases stayed in Okinawa. 1972 was set as the goal for the end of technical negotiations and the actual transfer of administrative authority (Sarantakes 2000, 130, 134, 173).

### **Constructing Okinawan Peacefulness**

The Ryukyu kingdom, a small kingdom surrounded by much larger powers, had to use a careful diplomacy in order to remain independent. The Ryukyuan have managed to form an image of peaceful people, thus were welcomed by all, promoting their ability to trade. One can argue that this is where the Okinawan peace identity began.

In modern times as well, the idea of Okinawan people as peaceful people can be easily argued to be true. Large anti-war and anti-base movements, in accordance with an easy going way of life and acceptance of the other are clear characteristics of this society.

#### **Historic Depiction of Peaceful Ryukyu**

Depiction of Okinawa and its inhabitants as peaceful people is not new. Foreign visitors to the Ryukyu kingdom have produced a documents of their perception of olden Ryukyu. In many of these documents, Okinawan society is perceived as almost utopian – mutual respect, no crime, harmony and so on. An interesting anecdote concerns Captain Basil Hall's depiction of Okinawa to Napoleon Bonaparte. Captain Hall visited Napoleon during his exile in St. Helena, and described to him his voyages to East Asia. When discussing Ryukyu (Loo-Choo), he described to Napoleon that the people of Ryukyu have no weapons at all. Napoleon could believe this and pressed Captain Hall about this point, to which he answers that as far as he can tell, they have



never had any wars. Napoleon remains astonished, and to as Hall described, his expression made evident his feelings that a country with no weapons and war is a monstrous anomaly (Hall 1826, 315-316).

Captain Hall's understanding of Okinawa is, of course, skewed at best. The royal guards of the Ryukyuan Kingdom did indeed have weapons, and the kingdom itself was formed by a warlord through a series of battles that conquered other warlords by force. As a testament to Ryukyuan diplomatic abilities, they were able to show Captain Hall what they desired for him to see, hiding the less idyllic aspects of the kingdom, promoting the perception of their own peacefulness.

### **Peace Identity in Modern Okinawa**

There are many definitions for the idea of identity. For this paper I deal with identity thorough two perspectives – first is identity as perceived by oneself – for this case study – how do the Okinawans identify themselves? The second is identity as perceived by others – how do non-Okinawans identify Okinawans? On top of that, I deal with the ways in which both of these perceptions affect each other.

Construction of peace identity in modern Okinawa is mostly connected to the experience of the island in World War II.

For example, Keiichi Inamine, governor of Okinawa prefecture between the years 1998-2006, mentions Okinawan strong anti-war sentiments, connecting them to the battle of Okinawa (Keiichi 2000, 12). He represents a dominant sentiment in Okinawa, one that remembers the horrors of the war and vows to never experience them again.

Another symbol of peace is the "Cornerstone of Peace" monument in southern Okinawa. This monument commemorates the names of all of the victims of the battle, regardless of their nationality. This is unique among war memorials, which usually commemorate only the victims of their nation. This uniqueness is considered a true testament for Okinawan people's true desire for peace (Nobuyoshi 2000, 24-25).

The Cornerstone of Peace is not the only memorial in Okinawa. Many memorials are scattered around the island, where ruins of battle sites reside. These ruins/memorials are considered in Japan and specifically in Okinawa as "symbols of peace". In the Second National Symposium for War Ruins Preservation (held in Haeburu town in

southern Okinawa in 1998), preserving these sites and memorials was referred to as construction of "fortress of peace" in Okinawa (Figal 2001, 38).

Another interesting phenomenon is that of the peace guides. These younger peace guides (*heiwa gaido*) are replacing war experience storytellers (*senso taiken kataribe*) (Figal 2001, 38). As the generation that experienced the war slowly disappears, the younger generation took on itself to preserve their memories of the battle. Their goal is to promote peace by remembering the horrors of war.

Ishihara Masaie, a scholar of Okinawan identity, promotes the notion of Okinawa's distinctive "philosophy of peace". Masaie argues that the memories of the war, added by the prolonged American occupation and the continued heavy concentration of bases in Okinawa, "have led to high public awareness of the war and to widespread public participation in recording its history for purposes of peace promotion". He, however, connects this peace philosophy to the Ryukyu kingdom as well "men from the tiny kingdom of Ryukyu traveled without weapons, armed only with words, consideration, and good nature, and maintained peaceful relations with peoples throughout East and Southeast Asia" (Ishihara 1995, 16). Figal addresses this notion and also quotes the pamphlet of the original Prefectural Peace Memorial Museum, regarding the Okinawan spirit: "a deep regard for human life, a categorical rejection of war related acts, the pursuit of peace...". As he rightly suggests, this is a highly romanticized depiction of the modern and ancient Okinawan moral standards (Figal 2001, 41-42). This emphasis on pacifism, however, does have a meaningful symbolism regarding how Okinawans perceive themselves. This self-perceived historical pacifism is manifested to the daily conduct of Okinawan society in the ways it promotes its causes, handles conflicts and reacts to often not so peaceful realities. It is important to note that even if the historical peaceful depiction is not accurate, connecting modern pacifistic philosophy to an imagined past deepens its meaning and effect in the eyes of Okinawans and foreigners alike.

Since the annexation of Okinawa, Okinawans have suffered from discrimination from Japanese and were not completely assimilated to the Japanese state (Hein 2001, 32-33). These facts have enabled the Okinawans to construct a unique identity.

Matsushima Kiyomi, an Okinawan activist, claims that “Uchinānchu <sup>2</sup> are characterized, like other indigenous peoples, as a people with a strong ‘value of non-violence’ and a ‘peace-oriented philosophy’” (Siddle 2003, 144). He, among others, views that a strong characteristic of the Okinawan identity, not just today, but since olden times, is peacefulness. Reading literature on Okinawan identity, quotes such as this are common: "Okinawan tradition is being evoked as the practices of an emotionally satisfying human community, valuing peaceful and moral human relationship [sic.]... This is, of course, a utopian notion of Okinawa life, but it still offers a coherent vision of an alternate future for the rest of us as much as it does for Okinawans" (Hein 2001, 35-36). McCormack and Norimitsu connect the legend about the words of Shō Tai, the last Ryūyuan king when facing the abduction of the Ryūkyū kingdom – “Nuchi du dakara” – life is a treasure, as a core statement for Okinawan moral. In these words, they claim, he stresses that preserving life is more important than fighting for the kingdom. Moreover, they argue that deviation from this moral value during World War II is one of the reasons that led to its tragedy in Okinawa (McCormack and Norimatsu 2012).

Scholars and laymen alike recognize that the depiction of Okinawan peacefulness is many times utopian and exaggerated. However, they also agree that such characteristics exist.

### **Military Bases on a Peaceful Island**

The presence of military bases amid civilian population can be a source of many problems, especially in densely populated areas. Crimes, accidents, pollution and noise are but part of possible problems that arise from such a situation.

Another issue concerning the bases is one of economy – do the bases and works they provide assist the local economy, or do their presence and use of land prevents options for development.

These issues are very important for understanding the complex issue of American bases in Okinawa, but are not the focus of this paper. This paper focuses on is the conflict between the warring nature of the bases and the peaceful nature of the Okinawan citizens. Such conflict is based on two main causes:

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<sup>2</sup> Okinawans in the local Okinawan language.

1. Fear of War. The horrid battle left many scars, physical and mental, on the island and its inhabitants. Realizing the devastation left by war, the Okinawan people developed an "allergy" for war. Since the emergence of the Cold War and the breakout of its proxy-wars in East Asia – especially the Korean War and Vietnam War, Okinawans have feared they would be the target of retaliation, as bases stationed in the island were used in these wars. Remembering the horrors of World War II, they were weary that a battle they were not part of would consume the island again. Interestingly enough, this echoes similar sentiments of the older generation living after the annexation of Okinawa by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They have opposed the conscription of Okinawans to the Imperial army for fear that an armed force stationed in Okinawa will attract attacks (Kerr 2000, 461-462).

2. Daily Contradiction. After the end of the Cold War, the fear of being dragged into war has waned (but not vanished), and a new perception in opposition of the bases emerged. Living in Okinawa, one cannot miss the presence of the American military bases. Observing the bases when driving along major high-ways, watching low flights of airplanes and helicopters taking off and landing or the occasional sounds of gunshots from a nearby shooting range are all constant reminders of their presence. The Okinawan peaceful way of living and state of mind stands in stark contrast to these strong militaristic routines.

### **Protest, Objection and Acceptance**

Okinawan way of dealing with the bases is twofold. On the one hand, a constant and meaningful popular protest exists – in the form of sit-ins, demonstration and so on. This also usually reflects in politics through elections, especially in recent years, where candidates promoting anti-base stances triumph. In addition, widespread, usually rather anti-base, is very significant in local mass-media.

On the other hand, the peaceful nature of Okinawa diffuses into Okinawans' relationship with the American military. Generally, this coexistence runs smoothly, with many interactions of civilian nature – such as joint festivals and shows. In addition, many Okinawans work in or around the bases, so interaction is unavoidable and is usually friendly.

Unsurprisingly, the reality is complex, and the Okinawan attitude towards American forces is both of protest and rejection towards decision makers and of (friendly?) acceptance towards the men in the field.

The peace guides are a good example for a way to cope with the memory of the war and existence of battle ruins sites. Such sites serve as evidence to the horrors of war, but the Okinawans choose to use these memories not as a mean to enhance nationalism and hatred, but rather promote pacifistic ideas of coexistence. This is similar to mainland Japan peace museums in many ways, but is distinct because of the fact that Okinawa was the only battle ground on Japanese soil.

The notion of peace promotion through symbols of war can be extended to the way Okinawans deal with the bases issue. Since the American occupation of Okinawa, the Okinawans have protested against the presence of American bases and forces and its consequences many times. These protests had peaks and lows, with a few points of massive popular protests consisting of a large percentage of the island's population. These protests, however, rarely took the form of violent actions and were never the ground for an armed resistance, not during the American occupation, and surely not after the reversion. The few exceptions of violent incidents, most notably the "Koza riot" of 1970, were not part of an organized resistance, but rather an eruption of frustration that soon subsided.

This is true for the protests today as well. A good example is the ongoing sit-in at the Henoko shore, where the substitute installation for the Futanma MCAS is planned to be built. This sit-in is a non-violent resistance linked mainly to human rights, environmental and other pacifistic organizations. The leaders of the sit-in are part of an organization called "The Association for Protecting Life" (inochi wo mamoru kai). As its name suggests, they seek to promote peace and not to wage war.

In a complex reality such as this, though, nothing is that simple. Where there is protest, there is conflict. Even the members of this association are willing to obstruct the works and surveys in the area in order to prevent, or at least delay, the construction of the new base. Such obstructions are peaceful in nature, and do not result in a violent conflict, promoting the ideas of the "peaceful Okinawans", but making a point – peaceful is not push-over.

The future holds many uncertainties, and as Laura Hein writes, discussing several options for the future of Okinawa and Japan, Okinawans may “spearhead a national policy that translates the strong pacifist sentiments of the Japanese population into an active principle for international engagement...” (Hein 2001, 35). Such conducts will surely set in stone the Okinawan ideas of peace.

Another question is ought to be asked. Is it possible that constant reminders by public figures, academics and politicians, Okinawan and foreigners alike, of the Okinawans’ peacefulness have actually made the Okinawans peaceful, or at least empowered these characteristics within them? As shown, this kind of public perception of Okinawans is not new. Even during the age of the Ryukyu kingdom, a projection of a peaceful, harmonious Ryukyuan people, not familiar with the concept of war was common. Has the external perception of peaceful Okinawans influenced the internal Okinawan identity, emphasizing its peaceful nature?

It is a known claim among constructivist forums that words create reality. Is it possible that this is the case in the modern Okinawan identity as well?

## **Post Seminar Comments**

During the seminar, a few interesting and useful comments were raised. I will deal with them briefly:

- a. The issue of identity. One commentator rightfully questioned my definition of identity for the paper. For this paper, identity is defined through two lenses – the first is self-perception – how do Okinawans perceive themselves? The second is external image – how do others perceive Okinawans? These two perceptions and the nexus between them create the Okinawan identity discussed in this paper.
- b. Division between “peaceful Okinawa” and “not-so-peaceful Okinawa”. Of course, there are many facets to Okinawan population, and not all are peaceful and pacifistic. The paper focuses on Okinawans as peaceful people for two main reasons: a. Okinawan peacefulness as deduced from anti-war/anti-base surveys is the narrative of the majority of the Okinawan population. b. The Okinawan pacifistic identity, as a link from ancient Ryukyu to the modern trauma of World War II, is an interesting and unique case study that is worth looking into, even if it does not include the entire Okinawan population.
- c. Okinawan victimization narrative. One comment revolved around the issue of Okinawan victimization narrative from the Japanese – starting from the Satsuma invasion in 1609, continued in the “Ryukyu shobun” of 1879, and in modern times – the battle of Okinawa, the American prolonged occupation, and of course, the bases issue. Although this narrative is closely connected to the “peaceful Okinawa” discourse, I chose not to focus on it. One reason is that I think that focusing on the negative aspect of the Okinawan peace narrative obscures its many positive achievements. A second reason is that I don’t think that victimization is what defines the Okinawan peace identity, but rather enforces it. It is not the origin for this narrative, but it is used to empower it, both in the political and the cultural fields.

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