Cultural understanding and misunderstanding between ruler and ruled: US government and Okinawa, from 1945 to 1972

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Abstract

The Okinawa Islands are located at the southernmost tip of the Japanese Island chain nearby China. United States forces landed on the small islands of Okinawa in 1945 during the Pacific War. The US government introduced a military government and implemented occupation policies over Okinawa from 1945 to 1972. She realized that the Okinawa Islands were a suitable location for US military bases to maintain peace in Asia. Okinawa reverted to mainland Japan in 1972, but even today about 50,000 US military men and women and their families live in Okinawa in terms of the Japan-US Mutual Defense Treaty. Yet Okinawa was not only an islands of US military government era, the rulers and the ruled made efforts to understand each other. However, sometimes both parties failed to understand each other. Even today there is some cultural misunderstanding between Americans and Okinawa's. The presentation explains process of cultural exchanges between the US and analyzed cases of culture-based mutual misunderstanding.
1 Chronology

• ① Ryukyu Kingdom 1429-1879
• ② Dual Relations with China and Japan
• ② Annexation by the Meiji Japanese government, 1879.
• ③ The Okinawa Battle In the Pacific War March to June 1945.
• ④ The US military government in 1945-72
• ⑤ Under the Japanese Administration from 1972
2 Map of Okinawa
3 Southern gateway to Japan

① 1,000 miles from Tokyo, Seoul, Manila.
② 500 miles from Shanghai and Taipei
③ Population 1,400,000
④ Size of Okinawa Islands 2,265 sq. km
⑤ Smallest prefecture
⑥ International exchanges with Asian nations
4 Battle Field of the Pacific War

• ① The Battle of Okinawa from March 26 to June 23, 1945
• ② 94,136 Japanese soldiers died
• ③ 12,281 American soldiers
• ④ Over 125,000 Okinawan civilians
• ⑤ 1,685 Okinawan male and female students
• ⑥ One third of Okinawan population
5 Military Bases Islands

• ① Okinawa under the US military government from 1945 to 1972
• ② Okinawa returned to Japan in 1972
• ③ Okinawa under Japan – U S Mutual Defense Treaty
• ④ 75% of total area of US Military facilities in all Japan.
• ⑤ 20% of total area of Okinawa main Island
6 Different approaches between Okinawa and USA

- Okinawa ① War experience and peace movement  ② MILITARY bases for local economy  ③ CULTURAL Pride  ④ Dream for Independent Nation

- USA ① US military bases for Asian security (Korean war, Vietnam war, Gulf War and Iraqi War)  ② Protect Okinawa from communist expansion  ③ TEACH Education, Christianity, Democracy.  ④ Economic aid
7 Korean war

- ① US troops moved to Korea from Okinawa
- ② USA decided to keep Okinawa for US bases
- ③ The US military government started in 1951.
- ④ Bases construction and economy boom
- ④ Requisition of Land for bases
8 Vietnam War

1. November 19, 1968, a B-52 exploded while taking off Kadena Air base.
2. December 14, 1968 about 40,000 Okinawans participated in the rally to withdraw B-52s.
3. Economy, Land lease, workers, gift shops, restaurant and Special aids.
4. Total income from the military bases was 15%.
Kadena air bases
Military exercises
9 The Okinawa Reversion Agreement, but still the large areas of the US Bases

• ① The Okinawa Reversion Agreement on June 17, 1971
• ② Main reasons for the Reversion
  • The end of the Vietnam War
  • Nixon’s Guam Doctrine
  • Formal US–China relations
  • Less value of Okinawa bases
• ③ US military government lay off 1629 employees in 1972
• ④ The first 400 marines returned to Okinawa from Vietnam after the end of the war.
• ⑤ The US forces withdrew completely and officially from Vietnam on March 39, 1973
10 Effort to solve issues: Soft—power approaches

- 1 Education Institutes: Schools and Universities
- 2 English Language Education
- 3 Scholarship
- 4 Public Information
- 5 Friendship Associations
- 6 Okinawa Studies
- 8 Entertainments Activities
- 9 Karate
- 10 International Marriages
- 11 Volunteer Activities
- 12 Religious Activities
Conclusions: Peace cornerstone
All nationalities, without excluding enemies and friends

- 72,900 Japanese
- 14,000 Americans
- More than 200,000 Okinawa civilians
The Cornerstone of Peace was unveiled on June 23, 1995

Peace Cornerstone
Anti-base movement
On holidays, people visit the monument to look for names of their family members and relatives.
Shuri Castle