The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus
In-depth critical analysis of the forces shaping the Asia-Pacific...and the world.

Being Okinawan in Japan: The Diaspora Experience

Steve Rabson

While much has been written recently on Okinawan emigration abroad,[1] *The Okinawan Diaspora in Japan: Crossing the Borders Within* is the first book in English on the Okinawan diaspora in Japan. It draws on a two-year study in residence, 1999–2001, with follow-up research in 2002, 2004, 2006, and 2008. For the purpose of this study, I defined Okinawans living on the mainland as anyone with at least one grandparent or two great-grandparents from Okinawa. The majority of respondents were either first-generation migrants or the children of two migrant parents. I conducted interviews, administered a survey questionnaire, and collected writings by and about Okinawans on the mainland.

For the first two years, I lived in Taishō Ward of Osaka City, where approximately 20,000 of the 75,043 residents—including my neighbors at the time—are Okinawan migrants or their descendants. I attended the functions of local social and cultural organizations, performances of Okinawan music and dance, political action meetings, and informal gatherings in homes and Okinawan restaurants. Migrants told why they had come to the mainland and how they'd adjusted to life there. I asked both migrants and descendants about their connections with Okinawa—if they traveled there, ate Okinawan food at home, spoke with family members in an Okinawan dialect, practiced Okinawan religious observances, joined local Okinawan prefectural associations or friendship societies, took an interest in Okinawa's performing or design arts, or participated in political activism. Interviewees spoke of discrimination and prejudice they had encountered. Many said they felt both pressure to conform and "be like mainlanders" and a desire to maintain their culture.

The book begins with the experiences of women who worked in Osaka's spinning factories in the early 20th century, covers the years of the Pacific War and the prolonged U.S. military occupation of Okinawa, and discusses the period following Okinawa's reversion to Japan in 1972. The last chapter compares the history of Okinawans and other minorities in Japan.

People encounter internal borders across the years and around the world. A company advertises job openings, but an applicant looking for work is greeted by a sign announcing that those from his birthplace need not apply. A family from the same birthplace looking for a home encounters a similar sign on an apartment building with vacancies. A factory pays a woman from there lower wages than it pays other employees, puts her in a more crowded dormitory room, and serves her leftover food in the company cafeteria. Parents of a young woman making wedding arrangements suddenly tell the couple they are now irrevocably opposed to the marriage, having discovered the birthplace of the groom-to-be. A successful businessman changes his name and his permanent residence to conceal that same birthplace from his employees and customers. While first-generation Irish, Italian, and Jewish immigrants have contended with such discrimination in the United States,[2] it has also been experienced by Japanese citizens from Okinawa Prefecture living on Japan's mainland. (Hereafter, I follow the Okinawan convention of referring to the main islands of Japan as "mainland" [hondo]).

When the Japanese government abolished the Ryukyu Kingdom, absorbing it into Japan as Okinawa Prefecture in 1879, most Okinawans on the mainland were merchants of locally grown and handcrafted goods. Large-scale migration began around 1900 with the development of Japan's modern textile industry, centered in Greater Osaka.

Thousands came from the nation's most impoverished prefecture, mostly young women and teenage girls from farming villages, to work under contract in factories. Most stayed temporarily, typically for three years, often working and living in oppressive conditions, and sending a portion of their wages back to help support their families. Leaving Okinawa in 1910 at age fourteen, Kikunaga Atsu went to work at Tōyō Textile Mill in Wakayama Prefecture.

> Girls there came down with beri-beri one after another. Steam was pumped into the factory that had to be kept constantly warm and humid, making the air so bad it was a miracle if you didn't get sick. And standing at the machines working all day made the pain in our leg joints worse. But even when our legs swelled up, they told us it wasn't serious enough to be treated. I ended up in the hospital. . . . After that I wanted to go home, but they wouldn't let us leave until our contracts were up. I had to work at Tōyō for five years, longer than most of the other girls. One of them caught a lung disease and died while I was there.[3]

A sudden demand for labor throughout Japan during World War I brought more Okinawans to the mainland. While many worked in factories or on construction sites, others came to study, then stayed to launch careers as teachers, physicians, attorneys, government employees, or entrepreneurs. By 1925, approximately 20,000 lived there, about half in Greater Osaka. Responding to discrimination and a need for networks of mutual support, they had begun forming residential communities in the industrial sections of Osaka and other manufacturing cities. A former resident recalled,

> Okinawans filled the tenements in Manzaibashi [in present-day Taishō Ward]. Letters could reach them with just their names and "Manzaibashi" written on the envelope, and you could find an Okinawan's home, even if you didn't know the address, just by asking around. . . . Businesses run by Okinawans included three barbershops, two hardware stores, two stores that sold liquor and soy sauce, and two butcher shops. People didn't need to ride the train to do their shopping, and they could go to one of the four public baths in the neighborhood which were easily affordable.[4]

The largest migration occurred during another labor shortage after Japan's military incursions in China escalated to full-scale war in 1937. By 1940, a recorded 88,319 Okinawans—about 15 percent of the total population of Okinawa Prefecture itself—lived on the mainland.[5] "There were fewer exclusions of Okinawans and Koreans during the war when the factories needed our labor," recalled Shimabukuro Takehiko who worked at Osaka Machinery. "It was a time when they would have hired a cat and put its paws to work."[6] Although hiring bans abated during the war, discrimination didn't end. Kinjō Tomiko left Okinawa for work on the mainland in 1943 at age nineteen.

> I took a job at a munitions factory in Shiga Prefecture that made coil connectors for airplanes. . . . One of my coworkers was being harassed by someone in the accounting department who kept making disparaging remarks about Okinawans. When another woman came to us in tears, the house mother in our dormitory, who was also from Okinawa, and I organized all the Okinawan workers for a strike. The next morning we refused to go to work, causing a big uproar among the company managers. . . . After two hours, they agreed to meet with us, and when we told them about the person in accounting, the harassment stopped immediately.[7]

After Japan's defeat in 1945, restrictions imposed during the U.S. military occupation of Okinawa from 1945 to 1972 made travel to and from the mainland difficult, especially in the early postwar years. American military rule in Okinawa, which dragged on twenty years longer than the Allied occupation of the mainland (1945–1952), required residents to obtain travel permits that were issued or denied after sometimes lengthy investigations. Okinawans living on the mainland retained their Japanese citizenship, but residents of Okinawa lost their rights as citizens and were subjected to the dictatorial policies and daily indignities imposed by direct U.S. military rule. Many left for the mainland to work, and smaller numbers to attend colleges, some on scholarships from the U.S. or Japanese government.

When the mainland's "miracle" economy took off in the late 1950s, employment agents recruited Okinawans, mostly recent high school graduates, in "group hirings" to fill a growing labor shortage in factories and small businesses. It was a time when Okinawa's underdeveloped economy, still heavily dependent on U.S. military bases and American purchases of local services, offered few good jobs. However, those who traveled to the mainland for work were often exploited by unscrupulous agents and employers who lied about wages and working conditions in recruiting campaigns, and many encountered prejudice.

After travel restrictions ended with Okinawa's reversion to Japan in 1972, more people went to the mainland for work and study. Some settled there, but most returned to Okinawa even though it offered fewer employment opportunities. A survey conducted in 2000 estimated that 70,000 migrants and their descendants resided in Osaka Prefecture, mostly in Osaka City; 12,000 in Hyōgo Prefecture, mostly in Kobe and Amagasaki Cities; and 45,000 in Kanagawa Prefecture, mostly in Yokokama and Kawasaki Cities, for a combined figure of 127,000 in those three prefectures. While there is considerable movement back and forth, the total number of Okinawans currently residing on the mainland has been estimated at 300,000, between 20 and 25 percent of Okinawa Prefecture's 1.3 million population.[8] Although fewer now live in what have been called "ethnic communities," many maintain close connections with other Okinawans on the mainland.[9]

Young Okinawan workers arrive at Harumi Pier, Tokyo, March 1974

Okinawans as a minority

It is important to note that Okinawans are the "majority" in Okinawa Prefecture, so, strictly speaking, they become a minority only when they reside or travel on the mainland. Even living in Okinawa, however, they fit Wagley and Harris's definition as "subordinate segments of a complex state society."[10] Governments in Japan implemented discriminatory policies starting in the 1870s, even before absorption of the Ryukyu Kingdom as Okinawa Prefecture, and continue them to this day with disproportionate imposition of the U.S. military presence. In fact, it was these policies, especially chronic neglect of the prefecture's deeply troubled economy, that led to the large exodus of Okinawans abroad and to the Japanese mainland.

Like minorities elsewhere, they experienced prejudice and discrimination in mainland Japan because differences—real and imagined—have caused them to be viewed as outsiders of inferior status. With a history and culture distinct in many ways from the rest of the country, they have been forced to cope with a society in which differences are often considered "strange" or "wrong," and with a central government that has long imposed a monocultural standard in education, publicly priding itself on the nation's mythical "homogeneity."

Throughout most of the twentieth century, Okinawans living on the mainland felt pressures from popular attitudes, government policies, and many of their own community leaders to avoid prejudice and discrimination by adopting mainland Japanese culture, and discarding or concealing their own. While many resisted those pressures, others sought to conform in varying degrees, minimizing their Okinawan identity in public. People changed their distinctive Okinawan names, or used mainland variants when circumstances required it. Urasaki Kenshō recalls the experience of his younger brother, Kenkei, who moved to Osaka in the early 1920s.

> At that time signs excluding Korean and Okinawan workers were everywhere in Osaka. So he used a fake name and home address, "Taguchi Shinjirō from Miyazaki Prefecture," and got a good job right away at a large printing plant in Higashi Ward. He learned to operate high-speed presses for newspaper publishing, and worked there for more than twenty years until bombs destroyed the factory during the Pacific War.[11]

Although incidents of blatant discrimination in employment and housing diminished after World War II, cases have been reported even after Okinawa's reversion to Japanese administration in 1972. Many Okinawans coming to the mainland on "group hirings" continued to work for less and in worse conditions than their mainland coworkers. A nurse was fired in 1977 from a hospital in Osaka for alleged "inefficiency" because she spoke with an "Okinawa accent." She regained her job with compensation after a local support group in Taishō Ward filed suit. As late as the 1980s, signs on restaurants and apartment buildings in some sections of Tokyo and Osaka excluded Okinawans. They continue to encounter insults and stereotyping on the mainland in the 21st century.

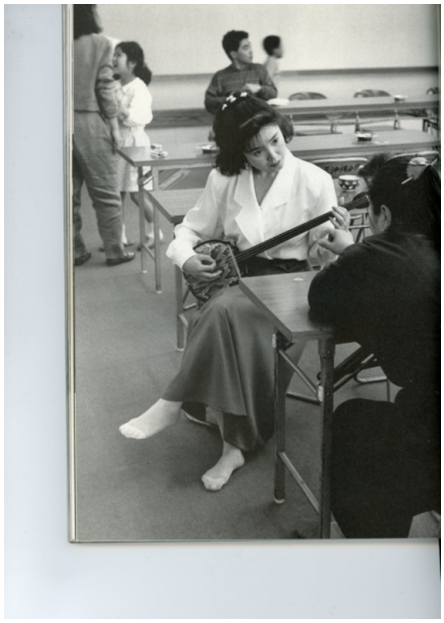
Differences ridiculed and celebrated

A recently emerging pride in "roots" among minorities in Japan and elsewhere has inspired a growing number of Okinawan migrants and their descendants on the mainland to embrace their culture and to speak out against inequities. Their experiences, like those of minorities in other countries, have given rise to an acute and illuminating perspective. They are now giving it voice with powerful resonance in oral and written testimony, essays, and literature, as well as music. Translations are presented in the chapters that follow.

The attention their work as authors and performers has drawn on the mainland is partly the result of a recent fascination there with Okinawa. An "Okinawa boom" was sparked initially by nationwide media coverage of Okinawa's reversion to Japan in 1972, which made travel between Japan and the mainland much easier, and by the International Ocean Exposition held in Okinawa three years later. Since then, it has been fueled by the wide popularity of Okinawan music, the international success of local athletes, and nationwide broadcasts of television dramas and documentaries set in Okinawa. Furthermore, the mainland media focuses periodically on the American bases in Okinawa, especially when U.S. forces there cause fatal accidents or commit major crimes. The

rape of a twelve-year-old elementary school girl by two U.S. Marines and a sailor in 1995 ignited nationwide protests. Since reversion, thousands from the mainland have joined demonstrations in Okinawa against the disproportionate U.S. military presence.

That combination of curiosity and sympathy has boosted travel to Okinawa, already a popular leisure destination for Japanese tourists who are a major source of the prefecture's income. It has also drawn mainland visitors to Okinawan neighborhoods on the mainland, still home to many migrants and their mainland-born descendants. Wanting to taste a "different" culture, visitors eat Okinawan food and listen to Okinawan music. But the Okinawa boom also has its downside, reinforcing old stereotypes and creating new ones. Many young mainlanders think being Okinawan is "cool," but their assumptions and expectations are often misguided and unwelcome.



Practising sanshin

Historical migration to the Ryukyu Islands from the Pacific and Southeast Asia resulted in a population today with on the average shorter stature, somewhat darker skin, fuller chests, more body hair, and rounder eyes than in mainland Japan. Yet no strict duality exists between mainlanders and Okinawans. There is such wide individual variation in both groups that many Okinawans have none of the features listed above, while some mainlanders are said to "look Okinawan." Thus, Okinawans can rarely be identified from their physical appearance alone. Still, they are associated with features said to make them look "foreign."

Okinawans on the mainland have a shared sense of history as a people descended from subjects of the independent Ryukyu Kingdom that was invaded by Japan's southernmost province of Satsuma in 1609, then abolished in 1879 by Japan's Meiji government; and, a subsequent history of oppression and exploitation as residents of Okinawa Prefecture. That their ancestors hailed from the once-independent and culturally distinct Ryukyu Kingdom has been a source both of pride among Okinawans and of prejudice against them on the mainland as not quite fully Japanese and thus inferior to people in other prefectures.

Many Okinawans on the mainland observe the holidays and ceremonies of their religion, based on ancestor worship, which is not practiced by mainlanders. However, religious practice is not mutually exclusive. Okinawans and mainlanders hold funeral and death anniversary ceremonies at the same Buddhist temples and maintain membership in the same Buddhist sects. In addition to religious practice, shared "sociocultural" activities among Okinawans include a diet that differs in many respects from mainland Japanese cuisine, as well as distinct traditions in the performing and design arts. As for the linguistic component of Okinawan ethnicity, older migrants speak mainland Japanese in public, often with an "Okinawa accent." Among themselves, however, they might speak an Okinawa dialect or a mixture of an Okinawa dialect and mainland Japanese. Their descendants use fluent mainland Japanese, while some are able to understand and/or speak at least some Okinawa dialect learned from their relatives.

"Assimilation" and the myth of homogeneity

Beginning in the Meiji Period (1868-1912), Japan's government sought to assimilate Okinawa Prefecture politically, ideologically, and culturally under the Japanese state. Assimilation policy (*dōka seisaku*), banned certain indigenous customs, such as the tattooing of women's hands and the consulting of *yuta* shamans, and mandated the practice of rituals in Japan's state religion, Shinto. The official rationale was that Okinawans needed to abandon aspects of their culture that kept them in a "backward" (i.e., inferior) status and to embrace the "modern" (i.e., superior) culture of mainland Japan.

Though they resisted this policy at first, many in Okinawa came to advocate and practice assimilation in varying forms and degrees. Name-changing, which became widespread among Okinawans on the mainland, actually started in Okinawa when Japan's victory in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 inspired many to associate themselves with a nation rising in wealth and power. Another motivation was to avoid prejudice and discrimination based on "being seen as different," especially because some Okinawan customs have been viewed by mainlanders as "foreign" or "barbarian" (*yaban*)[12]. An Okinawan newspaper editorial insisted in 1903 that "our prefecture is making rapid progress [in] conforming with other prefectures in all matters."[12] Besides changing their names to mainland alternatives, many were adopting mainland dress and hairstyles.

Of course, there were practical or "survival" assimilation strategies for Okinawans residing on the mainland, such as becoming proficient in "standard" Japanese and acclimating to foods available there. Many chose the selective approach described by Terrence Cook as "aiming at the best of two cultural worlds, that is, assimilating to the stronger culture in part for its riches and in part for chances of career progress, and yet preserving much of their own cultural tradition."[14] However, the notion that Okinawans are (or should be) "conforming [in] all matters with people in other prefectures" presupposes that homogeneity exists among Japanese, ignoring individual and regional differences on the mainland. Japan is hardly the only country where "homogeneity," or at least cultural conformity with the majority, has been idealized. With increased immigration to Britain from South Asia starting in the 1960s and 1970s, a notorious claim was "We are fish and chips, not curry and rice." Recent anti-immigrant sentiment in the United States has focused on the issue of language. Some politicians advocate legislation to make English the official "national language," which implicitly targets the Spanish-speaking Latino community and explicitly seeks elimination of bi-lingual education in the schools. Controversy has erupted in France over a law banning face-covering veils of the kind worn by Muslim women.

By the 1970s, government officials in Japan were actively promoting the myth of the country's "unique homogeneity," widely disseminated in the popular press by countless books and magazine articles "on the Japanese" (*Nihonjin-ron*). In 1979, the United Nations ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 27 of which addresses the rights of minorities. The Japanese delegation initially reported to the UN Human Rights Committee that "minorities of the kind mentioned in the Covenant do not exist in Japan." In 1986, Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro declared that there are no minority groups in Japan.[15] The myth was never more clearly articulated than in a speech by Foreign Minister Asō Tarō on October 15, 2005, to commemorate the opening of a national museum in Kyushu. "Japan is one nation, one civilization, one language, one culture, and one race, the like of which there is no other."

Andrew Gordon has written that "the concept of Japan as a homogeneous and cohesive middle class society was a powerful ideological force in postwar history."[16] Millie Creighton points out that "this powerful ideological force has been capable of denying realities of those on the margins, Japan's minorities, including Burakumin, Okinawans, resident Koreans, [and] indigenous Ainu. . . .

Japan's assertion of an imagined homogeneous self, maintains its minorities in a living contradiction. While denying these people exist as minorities, since they have supposedly been incorporated into Japan's harmonious and all-encompassing 'middle class,' they are not granted social equality."[17] Even some Okinawans have sought to perpetuate the myth. Miyagi Kiyoshi, past president of the Osaka League of Okinawa Prefectural Associations and a strong advocate of assimilation, proclaimed in 1987, "It is high time for us to stop viewing Okinawa as being special and distinct in Japan."[18]

"Becoming a Japanese:"A pernicious fallacy

Tomiyama Ichirō goes beyond questioning the notion of a homogenous nation to challenge the concept of nation itself, citing Benedict Anderson's characterization of a nation as an "imagined community" and of "nation-ness" as a "cultural artifact."[19] In his landmark study of Okinawans in Osaka, *Kindai Nihon shakai to "Okinawa-jin": Nihonjin ni naru to iu koto* (Modern Japanese society and "Okinawans": On becoming Japanese), Tomiyama explains how the "imagined community" of a Japanese nation has had the effect of excluding Okinawans. He argues that the context described by Jean-Paul Sartre for the construction of "Jews" in France and by Frantz Fanon for the construction of "Malagasy" in South Africa also obtains in modern Japanese society. "Okinawans are not represented according to their individual characteristics. Instead, they are placed in a category called 'Okinawans,' which is not based on any objective criteria and always connotes a separate group."[20]

Tomiyama explains that this separate categorization has been manifested not only in popular attitudes that stereotype and exoticize (or "otherize") Okinawans, but also in oppressive government policies and exploitative business practices. His book analyzes the economic effects of discrimination, focusing particularly on factory conditions and job assignments for Okinawans and mainlanders in various industries. Citing company documents, he shows that discrimination was a conscious business strategy to maximize profits. Beginning in the early 1920s, Okinawans organized to fight these inequities. As founders of the Kansai Okinawa Prefectural Association and leaders in the Osaka Union of Textile Workers, they planned strikes and protests that led to negotiated improvements in wages and working conditions at some factories.

Tomiyama also describes how, for Okinawans on the mainland, efforts to "become Japanese" required abandoning much of their culture in a process called "life-style reform," advocated by Okinawan community leaders.

> Just what did lifestyle reform target for "improvement?" . . . The categories for reform of Okinawans who had come to live [on the mainland] . . . touched on all parts of their lives, including the Okinawan language, Ryukyuan clothing, Ryukyuan dance, songs accompanied by the *sanshin*, living in enclaves of Okinawans, festivals, child-rearing methods, diet, the drinking of *awamori* liquor, and so on.[21]

Okinawan community leaders insisted that "life-style reform" was essential to avoid prejudice and to live successfully on the mainland. Oyakawa Takayoshi, whose family moved to Osaka in 1925 when he was nine, recalled the acute effects on children of prejudice and pressures to "become Japanese."

> I hated Okinawan *sanshin* music, dance, and the songs with meaningless rhythmic syllables that people sang until all hours of the night. And I despised that word "Ryukyu." In one of the ward's open fields, Okinawan theater troupes set up a lean-to stage and a booth for collecting admission. Mainlanders would gather to watch the plays, fascinated. But they made fun of Okinawans in loud voices, and I felt ashamed. Another thing I hated was when people riding trains or walking down the street spoke to each other in Okinawa dialect. I thought they should be like people from other prefectures and always use standard Japanese or Osaka dialect in public.[22]

As Oyakawa's experience indicates, Okinawans often ignored their community leaders' exhortations to abandon their culture and their neighborhoods in order to "become Japanese." Mainland residential enclaves, the largest of which is in Osaka's Taishō Ward, remain to this day in several cities. Moving to Taishō Ward as a child from Okinawa with his family in 1954, Kinjō Isamu remembers,

> My parents maintained our Okinawan life-style so completely that sometimes we forgot we were in Osaka. We always spoke in Ryukyuan. Since we were among mostly other Okinawans, it was easy to live this way. My father grew *goya* (bitter melon) in a vacant lot . . . and made brown sugar. My mother had her weaving implements sent from Okinawa, and wove *kasuri* (splashed-pattern cloth). We conducted all the annual observances strictly by the old lunar calendar, including the spring *shiimii* festival of feast and prayer honoring departed relatives, and the [*eisa*] festival in [late] summer when the spirits of the ancestors are said to return to this world for a brief visit.[23]

Varied constructions of identity

Pressures to "become Japanese" by rejecting what was Okinawan confirm Benedict Anderson's characterization of "nation" as an "imagined community" and "nation-ness" as a "cultural artifact." Yet, if the Japanese nation is an "imagined community," there are also those who "imagine" Okinawa, its culture and history, to be included. John Lie explains that, for them, "manifest differences [are] regarded as merely regional differences."

> Even Iha Fuyū (Ifa Fuiu), the father of Okinawan studies who traced his ancestry to China, believed in the common origin of rice culture (1942). The folklorist Yanagita Kunio famously regarded Okinawa as the source of Japanese culture, especially the origin of rice culture (1978). In this vein, Okamoto Tarō called for the Japanese to return to Okinawa as a repository of an authentic Japanese culture (1972).[24]

For Okinawans living on the mainland, who have suffered discrimination for being culturally "different" and felt pressures to assimilate by concealing their origins, such theories probably seem academic. Today, however, a growing number of younger mainland residents are actively rejecting a Japanese identity in favor of being Okinawan. After graduating from high school in Okinawa, Tamaki Natsuko went to college on the mainland, and became a reporter in Tokyo for the *Yomiuri shimbun* newspaper in 1992. "Until about five years ago, I considered myself Japanese," she wrote in 2000.

> Then, in 1995, I was one among many reporters sent from the mainland to cover Okinawa after the child rape case that year. . . . I'd had no special interest in the military base issue before, but now, as I reported on conditions there, I began to feel estranged from Japan. After finishing my report, I returned to the mainland, where the base problem didn't seem to exist, and where what was a front-page issue in Okinawa wasn't even covered. . . . Reporting on the

problems of military bases in Okinawa made it seem only natural for me to say, "I am Okinawan, not Japanese." Perhaps Okinawans will become Japanese when those bases are removed to the mainland.[25]

Other Okinawans reject the notion that they should have to decide whether to be (or not to be) Japanese or Okinawan. Perhaps the most important message interviewees conveyed on this topic was that people are much less apt to take sides in a discourse about identity than to exercise individual preferences in their daily lives. An eighteen-year-old musician explained that, although her parents were from Okinawa, she was better able to express her feelings in folk music from northeastern Japan (Tōhoku) and decided to make her career performing it. At the same time, she preferred Okinawan food that her mother cooked at home.

A schoolteacher living in Osaka, who is an activist in the local Okinawan community, proposed legally changing his family surname back from the mainlandized version adopted by his father to the Okinawan original. However, his oldest daughter vehemently objected. She was fully aware that the name had been changed as an expedient to avoid prejudice and discrimination, and was proud of her Okinawan heritage, having danced with her schoolmates in the annual *eisa* religious festival. She was simply used to the name she was born with by which she identified herself and was identified by others. In the end, her view prevailed and the family's name stayed in its mainlandized version.

This article is adapted from the introduction to Steve Rabson, *The Okinawan Diaspora in Japan: Crossing the Borders Within*. University of Hawaii Press, 2012. He has also published *Okinawa: Two Postwar Novellas* (Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1989, reprinted 1996) and *Southern Exposure: Japanese Literature from Okinawa*, co-edited with Michael Molasky (University of Hawaii Press, 2000). He is professor emeritus of East Asian studies, Brown University and an Asia-Pacific Journal Associate.

Recommended citation: Steve Rabson, 'Being Okinawan in Japan: The Diaspora Experience,' The Asia-Pacific Journal, Vol 10, Issue 12, No 2, March 19, 2012.

Notes

[1] See, for example, Okinawa Club of America, ed., *History of the Okinawans in North America*, trans. Ben Kobashigawa (Los Angeles: Asian American Studies Center, University of California, Los Angeles, 1988); Ethnic Studies Oral History Project, *Uchinanchu: A History of Okinawans in Hawai`i* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984); and *Imin-shi hankō iinkai, Burajiru Okinawa kenjin imin-shi* (History of Okinawan Immigrants in Brazil) (São Paulo: Burajiru Okinawa Kenjin-kai, 2000). In 1940, the numbers and distribution of Okinawans overseas were estimated as follows: South Pacific, 56,400; Hawai`i, 27,000; Brazil, 23,000; Peru, 14,000; Argentina, 13,000; United States, 9,000; China, 9,000; Canada, 3,000. Figures in Arasaki Moriteru, ed., *Okinawa no sugao: Profile of Okinawa* (bilingual) (Tokyo: Techno Marketing Center, 2000), 68–69.

[2] A 2008 PBS documentary, "The Jewish Americans," showed signs that read "Gentiles Only," "Christian Only," and "No Jews, Dogs, or Consumptives." In a lecture on October 22, 2010, at Brown University, Professor Alexandra Filindra showed Help Wanted advertisements in newspapers from the early twentieth century specifying "No Irish" and "No Italians."

[3] Fukuchi Hiroaki, ed., *Okinawa jokō aishi* (The tragic history of Okinawa's women factory workers), (Naha: Naha Shuppan-sha, 1985), 76.

[4] From an interview quoted in Mizuuchi Toshio, Ōsaka, Okinawa, Ajia (*Osaka Okinawa, Asia*), Osaka: Ōsaka Shiritsu Daigaku, 1999), 38-42.

[5] Prefectural police departments compiled figures from family registers (*koseki*). According to official records, another 55,706 emigrated abroad between 1899 and 1932, mostly to Hawaii and South America.

[6] Okinawa Kenjin-kai Hyōgo-ken Honbu, *Shima o deta tami no sensō taiken-shū* (War experiences of the people who left the islands) (Amagasaki: Okinawa Kenjin-kai Hyōgo-ken Honbu, 1995), 57.

[7] Ibid., 187-188.

[8] Figures for the three prefectures are cited in Okinawa Ken-jin Kai Hyōgo-ken Honbu, comp., "Anketo shōkei ichi-ran hyō" (Chart of aggregate survey totals) (2000). Estimate of total mainland population was given by panelists from the University of the Ryukyus at a symposium on diaspora at the Okinawa Studies Conference held in March 2009 at the University of Hawaii.

[9] Kaneshiro Munekazu, "Esunikku gurupu to shite no 'Okinawa-jin'" ("Okinawans" as an ethnic group), *Ningen kagaku* 37 (1992).

[10] Cited in Milton and Yinger, *Ethnicity: Source of Strength, Source of Conflict* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 21.

[11] Nakama Keiko, "1920, 1930 nendai ni okeru zai-Han Okinawa-jin no seikatsu ishiki (Lifestyles among Okinawan residents of Osaka in the 1920s and 1930s), *Ōsaka Jinken Hakubutsu-kan kiyo* (Bulletin of the Osaka Human Rights Museum) 3 (1999), 61.

[12] Arashiro Toshiaki, *Ryūkyū*, *Okinawa-shi* (Naha: Okinawa Rekishi Kyōiku Kenkyū-kai, 1997), 188.

[13] Ryūkyū shimpō, April 7, 1903.

[14] Terrance E. Cook, Separation, *Assimilation, or Accommodation: Contrasting Ethnic Minority Policies* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 100.

[15] Quoted in Richard Siddle, "Ainu: Japan's Indigenous People," in Michael Weiner, ed., *Japan's Minorities: The Illusion of Homogeneity* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 40, 43.

[16] Andrew Gordon, conclusion to Andrew Gordon, ed., *Postwar Japan as History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 461.

[17] Millie Creighton, "Soto and uchi 'Others': Imaging Diversity," in Weiner, *Japan's Minorities*, 213–214.

[18] Quoted in "Ōsaka no Okinawa," *Mainichi shimbun*, March 19, 1987, 24.

[19] Tomiyama Ichirō, "On Becoming 'a Japanese': The Community of Oblivion and Memories of the Battlefield." This article, originally published in *Yoseba 6* (March 1993), was adapted and expanded in "Senjō no kioku" (Memories of the battlefield) (Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Hyōron-sha, 1995). It was translated by Noah McCormack and posted at *Japan Focus* on October 26, 2005: here. Benedict

Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (New York: Verso, 1991), 1–7.

[20] Tomiyama Ichirō, *Kindai Nihon shakai to "Okinawa-jin": "Nihon-jin" ni naru to iu koto* (Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Hyōron-sha, 1990).

[21] Tomiyama, "On Becoming 'a Japanese.'"

[22] Oyakawa Takayoshi, *Ashiato: Oyakawa Takayoshi no kaisōroku* (Footprints: Recollections of Oyakawa Takayoshi) (Osaka: Matsuei Insatsu, 1995), 22. Adapted from translation in "Memories of Okinawa: Life in the Greater Osaka Diaspora," in Laura Hein and Mark Selden, eds, *Islands of Discontent: Okinawan Responses to Japanese and American Power* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), 117.

[23] Kinjō Isamu, "Okinawa izu namba wan," in Ōta Jun'ichi, *Ōsaka no Uchinaanchu* (The Okinawans of Osaka) (Osaka: Burein Sentaa, 1996), 89. Adapted from translation in Steve Rabson, "Life on the Mainland: As Portrayed in Modern Okinawan Literature," in Chalmers Johnson, ed., *Okinawa: Cold War Island* (Cardiff, CA: Japan Policy Research Institute, 1999), 89.

[24] John Lie, *Multiethnic Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 95.

[25] Tamaki Natsuko, "Nihonjin de aru koto, Okinawa-jin de aru koto," *Ryūkyū shimpō*, May 27, 2000, 11.

Created by Datamomentum