

# World Peace and Okinawa's Potential

By Kojima Akira

Okinawa is a place of both "tragedy" and "hope." Its "tragedy" lies in its past, when during World War II it was the stage of the only ground war fought on Japanese soil, and when it spent 50 years after the war, first as an occupied territory, and then, even after being returned to Japan, as a site for military bases. Its "hope" lies in the principle of "coexistence" with nature and other cultures in the passing down of the legacy of a dynastic culture that thrived for 400 years, a principle whose meaning has been revived now that the Cold War has ended.

The Okinawa Summit scheduled for July 2000 not only marks a quarter century since the Summit was first held, but will also be a historic event that addresses the outlook for the world in the 21st century - the opening act for the new millennium. It is highly significant that the Summit is being held in Okinawa because, as journalist and personal friend Shima Nobuhiko accurately pointed out in his recent article "*Ministerial Diplomacy - The Hidden History behind the G-8 Summit Ministers' Meeting*" (Bungei Shunju), if you look closely at the issues being addressed by the Summit, Okinawa has the "power of place", that is, the "power of the place's message" toward the 21st century.

From that message, we need to confirm the issues that beg to be addressed in this era. What Shima means by the "power of the place's message" is the power of the message that emerges naturally out of the fact that "Okinawa was once a peaceful island that had never seen combat," and that while maintaining a peaceful coexistence with nature, it was an important actor on the Asian-Pacific stage that engaged in active international exchange and trade, welcomed different cultures, and served as a "crossroads of civilization."

When the curtain opened on the 20th century, expectations were high that it would be a century of peace and prosperity set against a backdrop of scientific progress. The reality, however, is that it became a century of heated wars and cold war, of bloody revolution and mass genocide. Though the economy was greatly developed, the environment was simultaneously destroyed and economic gaps widened, thereby creating an undercurrent that threatened world stability. The situation is reminiscent of the world that Charles Dickens wrote about in the opening of his 19th century novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*.

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us."

In order that the 21st century not replicate the world of Dickens, we must learn the lessons of our history.

## The Tragedy of Okinawa

Okinawa originally thrived as the independent Ryukyu Kingdom and focused its energies on maintaining peace and international exchange and trade. Even the Ming Dynasty, which had adopted isolationist policies and was prudent about foreign intervention, maintained a special protective stance toward the Ryukyu and Malacca kingdoms. For this reason, Hokama Shuzen, a literary figure from Okinawa, pointed out the need "to adopt a new viewpoint of Okinawan culture that sees it not just as a regional culture of Japan, but more broadly within the sphere of Pacific cultures." In his book, *Okinawa-no-Rekishi to Bunka*

(The History and Culture of Okinawa) (Chuko Shinsho, 1986), he had this to say:

"If we try to look at Ryukyus history and culture from the broad perspective of the sphere of Pacific cultures, we find that the Ryukyu Kingdom, which like the Java or Thai kingdoms had a long history and had developed its own culture that included trade, economics, politics and diplomacy, was quite unique."

However, when the shogunate and domain (*bakuhau*) system was established in Japan during the Edo Period and the nation's power extended into the local regions, its influence reached all the way to the Ryukyu Kingdom. In 1609, Kyushu's Satsuma clan used military force to gain total control of that dynasty, and Ryukyu was incorporated into the shogunate and domain framework.

Okinawa's decisive tragedy began with World War II. At the end of the war, Okinawa was the site of the only land battle that took place on Japanese soil. The Battle of Okinawa was one of the fiercest campaigns waged in the history of human warfare. Beginning in April 1945, it lasted about three months and resulted in more than 200,000 casualties. Many Okinawan civilians were also lost in the conflict.

After Japan signed the Potsdam Declaration, Okinawa was separated from the newly disarmed Japanese mainland and placed under the military control of the US armed forces. On May 15, 1972, Okinawa was returned to Japanese control as a result of negotiations between the Japanese and US governments.

However, Okinawa could not return to being a "peaceful country without a military." Around 1952 when the San Francisco Treaty and the Japan-U.S.



Photo : Ryukyu Shimpo

Bankoku Shinryokan Hall, where the G-8 leaders will convene for their summit

Security Treaty were signed, 130,000 hectares of the Japanese mainland were comprised of US military bases. Their area was reduced to about one-quarter of that figure under the revised Japan-U.S. Security Treaty of 1960, and today they cover about 10,000 hectares. However, the area accounted for by the US bases (special facilities) in Okinawa has hardly been reduced at all from the 27,850 hectares they covered when Okinawa was returned to Japan. The bases account for 12% of the total area of Okinawa Prefecture, and more than 20% of Okinawa Island. About 75% of the American military base land in Japan is concentrated in Okinawa, an area that accounts for only 0.6% of Japan's total land area.

Since Japan was one of the losers of the war, its postwar diplomacy was primarily American. The summit held

a quarter of a century ago was the first international body in which Japan was an original member, and since then the nation has been in an ongoing search of its own foreign policy. However, as Zbigniew Brzezinski says in *The Grand Chessboard* (BasicBooks, 1997), "Japan has become the basis for America's political - military presence in the Asia-Pacific region, yet it is also a security protectorate."

Today the types of issues that come under the purview of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty and the Japan-U.S. alliance have changed to include not only the security of Japan itself, but also of the greater Asia-Pacific region, and not just military security, but such global security issues as the environment, refugees, and drug trafficking. This reflects the recent trend toward globalization and

increasing mutual interdependence, and indicates that as we move toward international cooperation between all countries in the 21st century, we are also moving into a world that is not limited to problems only between Japan and the US. Even if that were the case, the current burden carried by Okinawa in terms of military security would be excessive. Herein lies Okinawa's tragedy.

### The Cornerstone of Peace

A monument called the "Cornerstone of Peace" has been erected in Mabuni, the site of the final campaign in the Battle of Okinawa. Built out of the desire to convey to the world the "heart of peace" that has been cultivated by the history and spiritual climate of Okinawa, this park was constructed in

1995 in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the end of the Battle of Okinawa and World War II to memorialize those killed in combat. Ota Masahide, former governor of Okinawa prefecture published *Okinawa: Heiwa-no-Ishiji* (Okinawa: The Cornerstone of Peace) (Iwanami Shinsho) the following year in 1996. In his book, he says the construction of this "Cornerstone of Peace... was the greatest event commemorating the 50th anniversary" because, as he emphasizes, "the Cornerstone of Peace itself was the basis for the prefectural slogan that would be used for the 21st century, 'Creating a peaceful Okinawa, fully of vitality and charm.'"

In the same book Ota says, "Feelings of hatred for war and grief for those lost in battle, regardless of whether those lost were allies or enemies, is common to all war survivors. It is with that in mind that the Cornerstone of Peace has been engraved with the name of every single person who lost their lives in the Battle of Okinawa without any distinction of nationality, civilian or soldier, young or old, male or female. Inscribing the names of both allies and enemies was intended to remind us of the misery of war and the foolishness of human beings who went to the limit of useless killing, and to serve as evidence of our vow to never repeat those errors. The names of more than 230,000 people have already engraved, and the engraving work will proceed in the future."

While the engraving work proceeded smoothly, the task of confirming the names of those who died in battle had to be carried out thoroughly. We contacted governments overseas, including the US, the UK, South Korea, and Taiwan. Getting permission to engrave the names involved a whole range of problems.

The "Cornerstone of Peace" covers an expansive 47 hectares. As of June 1998, 106 foundations with 1,204 stone monuments inscribed with the names of 237,316 people had been erected. The names of 14,005 Americans as well as those from the British and other Allied Forces who perished, as well as the

names of the Koreans and Taiwanese who are believed to have been forcibly taken to Japan are all being inscribed in their native language.

In the aforementioned *Ministerial Diplomacy*, Shima Nobuhiko recounts an episode involving former Chancellor Helmut Schmidt of West Germany, who visited this area. Upon finding the name of a German-American with the same last name as his own at the "Cornerstone of Peace," Chancellor Schmidt was moved to tears in front of his Japanese guide, and remarked, "I've been all around the world, but never before have I seen a monument engraved even with the names of the enemy's casualties."

Miyasato Akinari, Ryukyu Shinpo President, who attended the sherpa meeting on the Okinawa Summit held in October 1999 said this: "Like the Olympic Games, the culture of Okinawa is an integration of five rings, Okinawa, Japan, the US, China, and the Asia-Pacific region, and is characterized by its deep-rooted spirit of openness, flexible thinking, and mutual aid."

### Building Bridges around the World

Bankoku Shinryokan is located on the coast of Nago City in Okinawa where the nine Heads of State will convene for the Summit. "*Bankoku Shinryo*" means "building bridges around the world," and expresses the strong spirit and prosperity of the ancestors of the Okinawans who built up the thriving Ryukyu Kingdom in the 14th to 16th centuries, the "Era of Great Trade." The Okinawa-born historian Higashionna Kanjun wrote a book entitled *Okinawa Shogaishi* (History of Okinawa's Public Relations) (cited in Ota, Okinawa: The Cornerstone of Peace, p. 21) in which he said:

"Okinawa's diplomatic relations can be divided into two main periods separated by the arrival of the Satsuma clan in the early 17th century. The prior period emphasized trade, while the latter period focused on politics. In the former, to maintain their independence

and become more prosperous, the Ryukyu people engaged in commerce and trade with partners spanning a wide area that included the Japanese mainland, China, Korea, and various places in the South Seas, and the foreigners in those places also congregated at Naha Port to engage in commerce.

"The enormous profits from trade became the envy of the lords of western Japan, and eventually Ryukyus was captured by Shimazu, only to become a puppet of the Satsuma. Not only was the island deprived of its trade profit, it could not even maintain its independent existence under the watchful eye of the Satsuma. With this event, the Ryukyu Kingdom's history of living became a history of being allowed to live, and in compensation for this privilege, it had to give up everything it had. Human history finds the hardships of living with this kind of weakness in the history of Okinawa's foreign affairs, and civilization itself begs our serious reflection."

Historical documents from Okinawa impart to the reader a traditional peace-loving way of life. While strengthening its control over Okinawa in the Meiji Era (1868-1912), the central government in Tokyo tried to unilaterally coerce the Okinawans to station the Kumamoto 6th army division regiment there. The Okinawans, however, stubbornly refused the government's strong appeal.

Their refusal was premised on the following facts: (1) no matter how strong a military presence were to be established in Okinawa, as mere solitary islands in the South Seas, it could not effectively deal with enemies through military force, (2) the concern that other countries might perceive the deployment of an army on this small island as a threat, thereby inviting aggression, and (3) maintaining polite and friendly relationships with neighboring peoples, rather than a military presence, would make it possible to preserve peace, and Okinawa's long history of successfully maintaining peace had been a result of

## POWER PROJECTION ( FLIGHT TIME FROM KADENA )

this approach (Ota). To put it in baser terms, Okinawa may have had no other choice, given its original geographical and historical environment, than to be “peace-loving.”

Even if this were the case, however, the historical fact that the Ryukyu Kingdom was able to use this diplomatic approach to maintain national tranquility, engage in active exchange and trade with other countries, and achieve economic prosperity for 400 years is quite compelling. Such peaceful intent may have been a matter of national policy during the Ryukyu reign, but the popularity of the ideal itself is hardly limited to Okinawa. It has a universality that extends beyond Okinawa. This ideal is growing increasingly important in the 21st century world, and, as mentioned earlier, may be even closer to being realized than in the past.

Okinawa is closer to Taiwan and the Chinese mainland than to Tokyo. The attached map is made up of concentric circles drawn with Okinawa at the center. This map makes it easy to understand how Okinawa survived on trade and exchange with neighboring countries even during the reign of the Ryukyu Kingdom. This is its “power of place.” Asia is not a single entity. It is a conglomeration of diverse histories, cultures, and races.

Ever since the Meiji / Taisho Period (1868-1926) when the artistic activist and author of *Cha-no-Hon* (The Book of Tea) Okakura Tenshin (1862-1913) said “Asia is one,” there have been periods in Japan where people absolutely believed that this was the case. This may have especially been the case from the Euro-centric viewpoint embodied in the phrase “the West and the rest.” However, Asia is actually many more than one, and is in fact full of diversity. It is within this context that Okinawa has used its “power of place” to participate in active exchange with neighboring peoples and to actively accept diverse cultures without exception.

It was able to do this because it was a “crossroads” of different civilizations.



This is also why Hokama Shuzen, mentioned earlier, wanted to look at Okinawa more broadly within the sphere of Pacific cultures. At this crossroads lay not the “clash of civilizations” envisioned by Samuel Huntington, but a world of exchange and fusion.

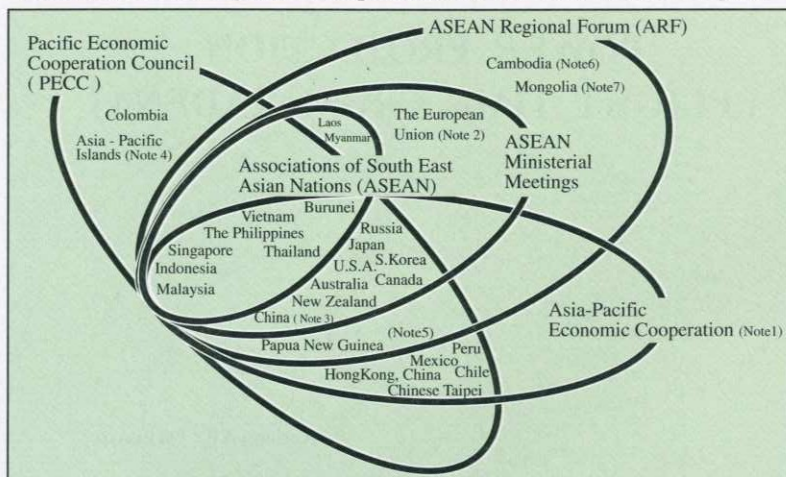
Incidentally, in *The Clash of Civilizations*, Huntington discussed “the isolated Japan” and characterized Japan as follows: (1) Japan is an isolated nation from the perspective of culture and civilization, (2) while Japan was the first major non-Western state to successfully modernize, it is notable that it did not Westernize, (3) the United Kingdom, the United States, France, Russia, and China have all had revolutions, and even Germany experienced a kind of revolution in the form of Nazism, but Japan has never had a revolution, and for this reason has been able to build a sophisticated modern society while maintaining consistency with its traditional culture, and (4) Japan’s lack of cultural ties

with other nations creates difficulties (during a crisis, Japan cannot expect other countries to come to its aid because they can identify with its culture) and opportunities (Japan bears no responsibility to come to the aid of another country based on a common culture, and consequently can pursue its own national interests) (*Bunmei-no-Shototsu to 21-Seiki-no-Nihon* [Japan’s Choice in the 21st Century], Shueisha Shinsho, 2000).

I personally disagree with the Huntington theory. However, even if I were to accept it just for the sake of argument, I would argue that different suggestions or conclusions can be derived from it about Okinawa.

The attached map mentioned above is a military map. Okinawa’s Kadena Air Base is placed in the center, and it is drawn based on flying times from that location. What this means is that within three hours of that air base, one could reach the entire Korean peninsula, Hokkaido, central China, the Russian Far East, the Philippines, parts

## Framework for Regional Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region



Note 1 : The ASEAN Secretariat, PECC, and the South Pacific Forum (SPF) participate in APEC as observers.

Note 2 : EU involvement consists of participation by the EU Troika (consisting of the current, former and next states to hold the Presidency of the EU) in the ASEAN Ministerial Meetings.

The EU was represented by the Presidency, assisted by EU committee members, at the First ASEAN Regional Forum.

Note 3 : China and Russia have been members of the ASEAN Regional Forum since its first meeting in 1994, but they also began participating in the ASEAN Ministerial Meetings in 1996.

Note 4 : Asia-Pacific Islands : Vanuatu, Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Tonga, Nauru, West Samoa, Fiji, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Papua New Guinea, Palau (12 nations), Cook Islands, Niue, Guam, American Samoa, Northern Mariana Islands (5 regions).

Note 5 : Papua New Guinea participates in the PECC as a constituent member of the Asia-Pacific Island Nations.

Note 6 : It was decided at the Sixth ASEAN Summit in December 1998 that Cambodia would be admitted as a member, but details regarding when it would be admitted were left unsettled.

Note 7 : Mongolia was admitted as a member of the ARF at the Fifth ASEAN Regional Forum Meetings in July 1998.

of Indonesia, and within five hours, one could go as far as the greater part of India, central Russia, all of China, and Indonesia to the south.

The "power of place" in cultural exchange and trade also affords the "power of place" in military strategic affairs, and this has given rise to the present situation in which the US manages its bases in Okinawa because of the need for maintaining security in the Asia-Pacific region. The irony is that it is this "power of place" that has made Okinawa a place of both tragedy and hope.

### New Possibilities for Okinawa in the Post-Cold War Period

The Cold War was the kind of war that

caused endless escalation of armaments in both Western and Eastern camps. As Professor Paul M. Kennedy discusses in *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, both the US and the USSR overextended themselves. Thus, the USSR, which had a weak economic base from the beginning, finally collapsed at the end of its process of self-destruction. In 1991, the USSR was dissolved, and the 20th century Cold War became a thing of the past. The US also exhausted its own economic power by participating in the civil war in Vietnam, a symbolic battle of the Cold War. Still, with the end of the Cold War brought about by the collapse of the USSR, the US was released from the demands of the arms race and was able to reap the "dividends of peace."

It is perhaps an irony of history that in the same year that the USSR fell, 1991, the US economy began to recover and started the longest running economic expansion in its history.

The nature of the Summit has been changed by these historical changes. The Summit was originally started in 1975 to reunify the West at a time when the Western economies found themselves facing a serious crisis due to the oil shocks, and recognized their numerical inferiority to the former Eastern bloc led by the Soviet Union. Consequently, it was originally an economic summit. With the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan, however, and especially with the Reagan administration's characterization of the USSR as "the evil empire" and accelerating arms escalation, the Summit temporarily became more political in nature. When Russia later emerged after the Cold War as the successor of the USSR and began to promote economic liberalization and political democratization, it turned, in the eyes of the Summit participants, from a foe, to a friend deserving assistance. Russia became an official participant at the 23rd Summit held in Denver, Colorado in 1997 when the Summit officially became an organization of eight member countries, the G-8.

In any case, the Cold War that had shaped the world for the latter part of the 20th century had become a thing of the past, and along with it were discarded principles of world politics based on the equilibrium of power and sometimes the "equilibrium of fear."

The era of arms escalation gave way to the era of arms reductions. A major step was taken away from the potential for a global war involving the world's superpowers. This is not to say, however, that international disputes were eliminated. On the contrary, the number of incidents has increased in the post-Cold War period. While the nature and types of conflicts have changed, their numbers are still rising.

Unlike the conflicts of the Cold War period, which were premised on

political ideologies such as the free-market economy vs. the controlled economy, and democracy vs. socialism, these new conflicts tend to stem from religious and ethnic differences. Disputes initiated for economic reasons, such as Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, also differ from the ideological conflicts of the Cold War period.

Many of the post-Cold War conflicts have occurred between different ethnic groups within one country rather than between countries. While there is still the potential danger for a conflict between the major powers to erupt into an "all out war," the many disputes that have erupted in the post-Cold War period can be characterized as "low-intensity conflicts" (Kato Akira, *Gendai Sensoron-Postmodan-no-Funsou LIC* (Contemporary War Theory: Post-Modern LIC) (Chuo Koronsha, 1993).

International disputes are as old as the history of humankind. Though the causes of these disputes are myriad, two of the causes behind post-Cold War conflicts are economic poverty and despair. Poverty and despair may be the most basic causes of low-intensity conflicts.

Though Asia still bears the scars of the Cold War in a tangible form on the Korean peninsula, the Asian region as a whole is currently enjoying the most stable and peaceful conditions it has ever had in the 50 years since World War II. The long-standing conflict on the Indo-China peninsula has ended, and the gunshots there have been silenced. The Thai government's long-discussed goal of moving "from battlefield to marketplace" has been achieved.

There are no established regional security organizations in Asia as there are in Europe. Movement toward regional security cooperation has finally gotten underway via the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), an organization for fostering constructive dialogue. The nature of the threats that endanger the safety of Asia differ from those in Europe. In Asia, the USSR did not pose a common threat to Asia even during the Cold War period. At least, it

was not the largest threat. To the various countries of Asia, the threats that endanger safety were not limited to threats from the outside. Internal transitions have also been a source of instability, and fragile political power also has often posed a threat to these societies. External threats tend not to be of the Cold War type that are based on ideological differences, but tend instead to come in the form of hegemonic aspirations of neighboring countries.

The nature of these Asian threats are linked to the fact that many Asian nations that were once colonies gained their independence after World War II, and suddenly had to walk on their own for the first time.

The gunshots in Asia have been silenced not because of the functioning of a strong regional security system, but because of confidence building between nations. The secret behind this confidence building is overcoming the despair caused by poverty and making it possible for people to experience real economic development without regard for past antagonisms and to dream of even further development in the future.

So how has economic development in Asia been possible? The answer here, too, is different than in Europe. That is, Asian economic development has not come about through the coordination of governments, as has been the case in the EU formation process. Instead it has evolved naturally out of the interdependence that has been promoted at the level of the private sector through the market. This is economic development through the formation of the "natural economic territories (NET)" mentioned early on by Robert Scalapino (Chuo Koron, Feb. 1992).

Natural interdependence cannot be achieved without open trade policies in each country and region involved. Free trade has been practiced widely in Asia throughout history. The Ryukyu Kingdom clearly had a long prosperous history made possible by its commitment to ideas common in the Asian world, of openness, free trade, and as discussed earlier, non-military,

peace-loving intentions. Okinawa's potential in the 21st century as well as its potential for contributing to world peace and prosperity come from a historical tradition dating back to the reign of the Ryukyu Kingdom.

The "mental climate" of respecting coexistence with nature, which has been firmly rooted in Okinawa from the past to the present, will also be an indispensable value in the world of the 21st century.

### Significance of Shuri Castle

The G-8 Summit official dinner is scheduled to be held at Shuri Castle in Naha. Built in the early 15th century, this castle was the royal palace of the Ryukyu Kingdom formed independent of the nation of Japan. During World War II, Japanese troops used the basement of the castle as a stronghold and command center. The castle was destroyed in the Battle of Okinawa and University of the Ryukyus was opened at the same site under the orders of the US Army. According to University of Okinawa Professor Arasaki Moriteru, there are strong indications that Okinawan castles (*gusuku*) were sacred places. Even the ruins of Shuri Castle contain several places for prayer, and long ago people could have regularly been seen going there to pray (*Okinawa Gendaishi* (Modern History of Okinawa) (Iwanami Shinsho, 1996).

Destroyed by the ravages of war, Shuri Castle was restored for the 20th anniversary of Okinawa's return to Japan in 1992, and "it stirs a sense of timeless romance that reminds us of the vitality of the Ryukyu people, who had woven ties with people throughout Asia," but it also reminds us of the ideals of a peace-loving state. This, indeed, is a manifestation of what Shima calls the "power of the place's message." JTI

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