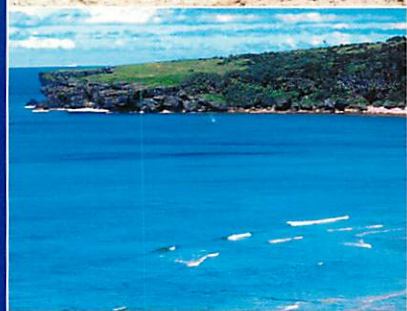
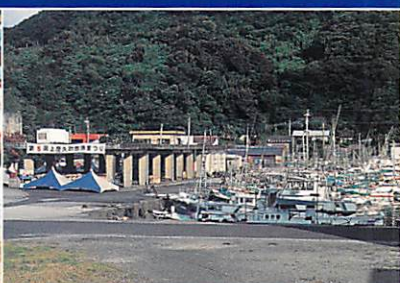




# BEYOND SATSUMA

atsunan Islands Accepting the 21st Century Challenge



Edited by  
**Toru Aoyama**

Kagoshima University  
Research Center for  
the Pacific Islands



# BEYOND SATSUMA

**Satsunan Islands Accepting  
the 21st Century Challenge**

Edited by

**Toru Aoyama**

Kagoshima University Research Center  
for the Pacific Islands  
2001

#### Front cover photos

Right side from top to bottom: High-speed ship *Toppy*, Fishing port on Yaku Island, Masked god called *Boze* in Toshima, Husband and wife in a taro field on Amami Oshima Island.

Left side from top to bottom: Party in the evening in Kikai, Bullfight ring on Tokunoshima Island, Shore of Okinoerabu Island.(Sources of the photos are indicated in the main text.)

#### Back cover photo

Hibiscus flower on Amami Oshima Island © Naze City Office

---

#### Beyond Satsuma:

#### Satsunan Islands Accepting the 21st Century Challenge

---

Originally published in Japanese as "*Satsunan Shoto: 21 Seiki heno Chosen*"

First English edition published on March 2001

Editor: Toru Aoyama

Translator: Ken Yamada

Publisher: Shinichi Noda

Publishing office:

Kagoshima University Research Center for the Pacific Islands

1-21-24 Korimoto, Kagoshima, 890-8580, Japan

Tel (099)285-7394 Fax (099)285-6197

E-mail [tatoken@kuasmail.kuas.kagoshima-u.ac.jp](mailto:tatoken@kuasmail.kuas.kagoshima-u.ac.jp)

Website <http://cpi.sci.kagoshima-u.ac.jp/>

Printing and bookbinding:

Ono Print Corporation

2-1-6 Matsubara, Oita, 870-0913, Japan

---

© Kagoshima University Research Center for the Pacific Islands 2001

Printed in Japan

## CONTENTS

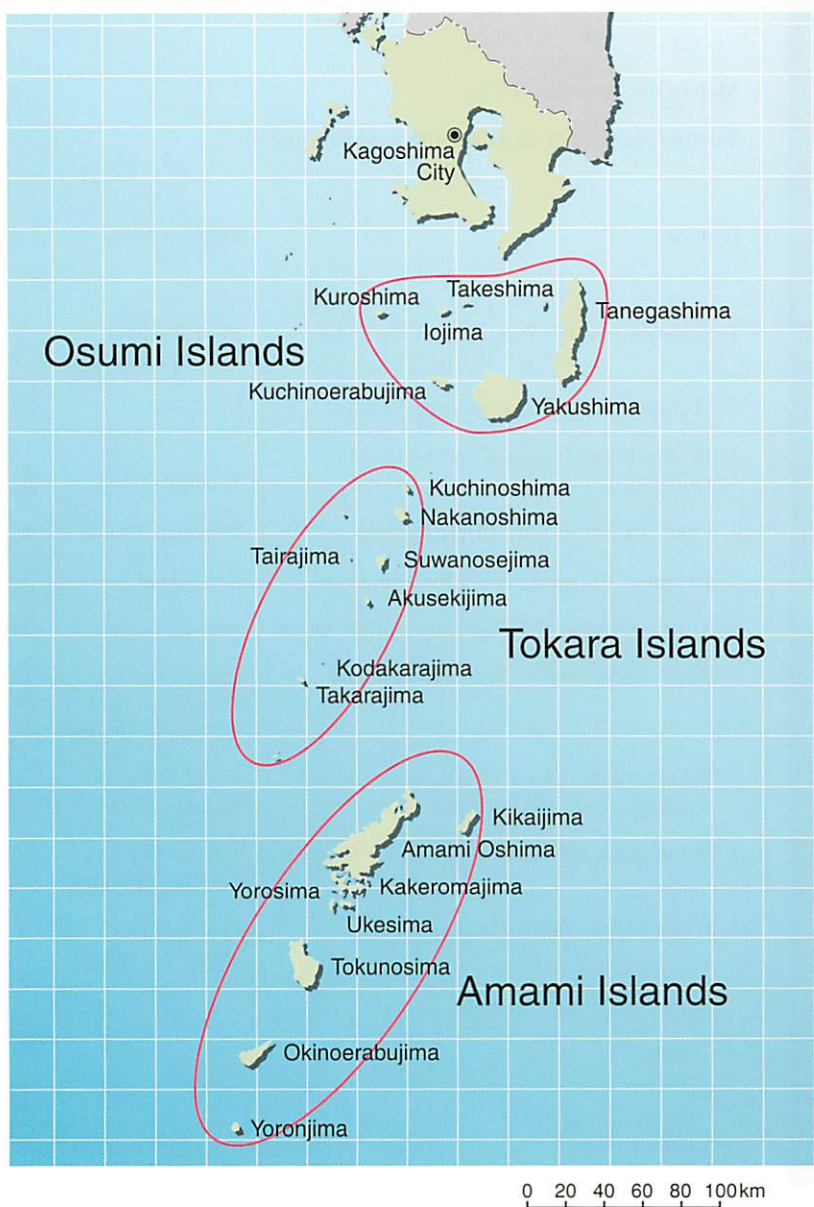
---

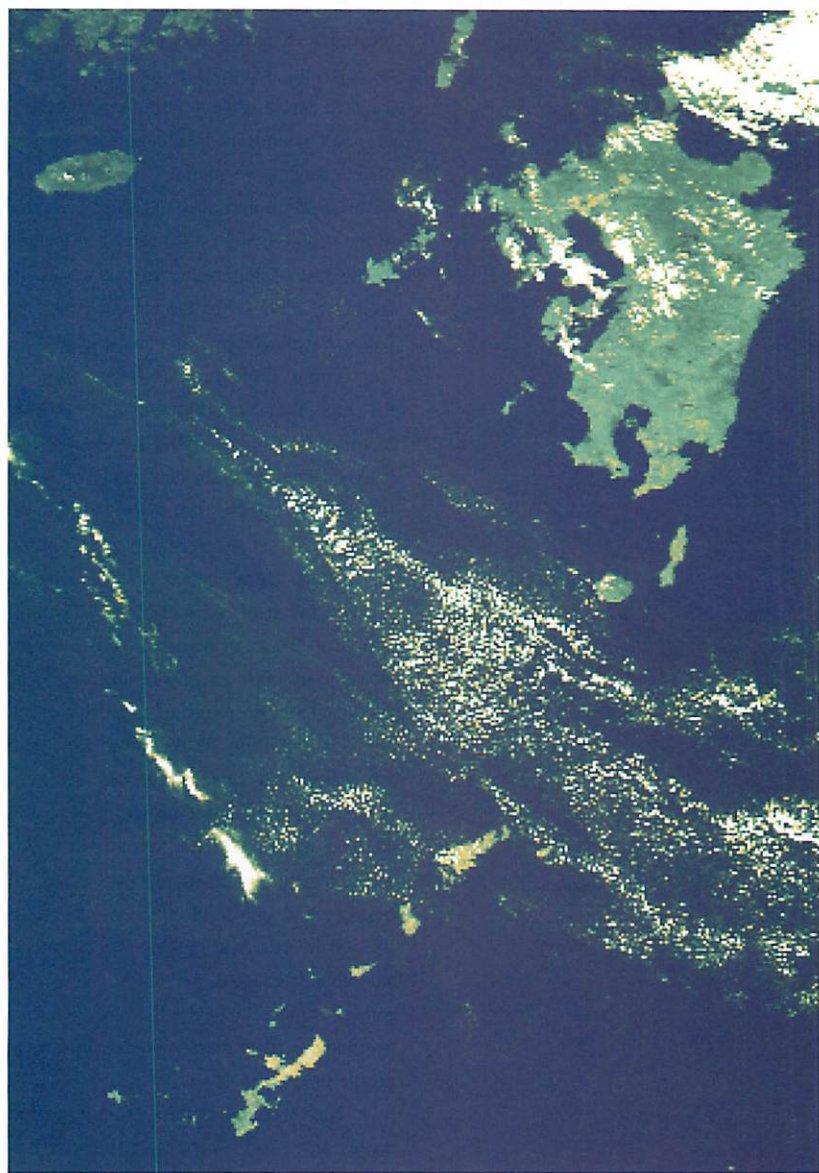
Map of the Satsunan Islands		4
Satellite photo of Kyushu and the Satsunan Islands		5
Preface	Shinichi Noda	6
1. Satsunan Islands: Past, Present and Future	Toru Aoyama Satoshi Uemura	8
2. Mishima: Village Transmitting Vitality	Eiji Nitta	20
3. Tanegashima: Japan's Closest Island to Outer Space	Tadahide Noro	30
4. Yaku: Island on World Heritage List	Yasuhiro Tajima	40
5. Toshima: Village Groping for Tomorrow	Kei Kawai	52
6. Amami Oshima: The Galapagos of the Orient	Sueo Kuwahara	64
7. Kikai: Becoming an Agricultural Island	Etsuji Ishiguro Sueo Kuwahara Yoshihiko Uemura	78
8. Tokunoshima: Island of Longevity and An Enthusiasm for Bullfights	Kazutaka Nakano	92
9. Okinoerabu: People who Bet on the Erabu Lily	Yusuke Sakata Keiichiro Tashiro	106
10. Yoron Island: Yoron Health Villa	Seiji Kokawa Shinichi Noda	118
Fact Sheet		130
Index		132
Contributors		136



# Satsunan Islands

21 Inhabited Islands





Satellite photo of Kyushu and the Satsunan Islands. Created from a NOAA/AVHRR image.  
© Sumitaka Kashiwagi, Faculty of Agriculture, Kagoshima University

---

## *Preface*

At Kagoshima University Research Center for the Pacific Islands (KURCPI), located in Kagoshima City on the island of Kyushu, Japan, we are executing a joint research project into the autonomy of small islands in island zones. As part of the project, we planned the publication of this book to introduce the daily lifestyles of the people living on the Satsunan Islands to the rest of Japan and to the world. In the book, we describe the various problems facing the inhabitants of remote islands of Kagoshima Prefecture and examples of the ways they are vitalizing their islands in order to overcome the problems. The book is intended to provide some groundwork for considering the future of the remote islands.

During Japan's period of high economic growth, much of the workforce of young people in the rural areas moved to major industrial districts. As a result, the rural areas faced the task of overcoming underdevelopment and depopulation. At the same time, the urban areas, which were supposed to benefit most from the high economic growth, also showed insurmountable weaknesses. For example, the unfavorable situation of housing and commuting has made urban life too hectic. And reckless development, automobile exhaust pollution, increasing garbage volume, and industrial waste pollution have brought about drastic urban environmental problems.

The high economic growth period gave rise to rampant urbanization throughout all of Japan. And now, the

traditional communities throughout all of Japan are rapidly metamorphosing into modern but unbearably uniform communities. However, the problems that successively arise in the modern communities have made the inhabitants aware of the importance of the disappearing natural environments and traditional communities. This heightened awareness is prompting the inhabitants to retain tradition and form their own communities in their own way.

One feature of Kagoshima Prefecture is the difference in scope of Kagoshima City compared with its other municipalities. Another feature is the existence of remote islands. In the prefecture, an enormous imbalance has been generated by depopulation and aging in the rural areas together with a tendency for the population to concentrate in Kagoshima City. The imbalance is especially noticeable on the remote islands.

Improved efficiency probably cannot be expected for many of Kagoshima Prefecture's remote islands, even through amalgamation of their municipalities. But because the remote islands are surrounded by ocean, relatively isolated, and small, precious historical culture has been retained in excellent natural environments and the diversified aspects of the region have been preserved. And to avoid the traps of many modern communities, the traditional communities on the remote islands have taken the initiative to vitalize their own respective regions. They are utilizing their own wisdom and independent efforts for multi-

farious regional vitalization.

The enthusiasm of people endeavoring to vitalize their respective regions is presented in this book. I hope that their enthusiasm will be an incentive to reconsider the value of native historical culture and nature. I also hope that it will provide us to consider the way all regions in Japan should move forward into the 21st Century.

Lastly, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the people concerned with the prefecture and its cities, towns and villages and to the local inhabitants for their multifaceted cooperation in making this book possible. I also thank for the Center's visiting professor Don Rubinstein for reading the text in the final stage. And I sincerely thank Kagoshima University President Hiromitsu Tanaka for supporting this project with funds for the promotion of educational improvement.

Shinichi Noda

Director of Kagoshima University  
Research Center for the Pacific Islands









# Chapter 1

---

## Past, Present and Future

# Satsunan Islands

---

Toru Aoyama

Kagoshima University Research Center for  
the Pacific Islands

Satoshi Uemura

Kagoshima Prefecture Remote Islands  
Development Division

---

This book is aimed at introducing the reader to the Satsunan Islands, a group of about thirty islands located in southern Japan. We begin by clarifying the geographic scope of the islands. The string of islands extending in a southwesterly direction from the southernmost tip of Kyushu to Taiwan is the Nansei Islands. These Nansei Islands also form the borderline between the East China Sea and the Pacific Ocean. The islands in the southern half of the Nansei Islands, which belong to Okinawa Prefecture, are called the Ryukyu Islands. Those in the northern half, which belong to Kagoshima Prefecture, are the Satsunan Islands of this book. "Satsunan Islands" literally means "the islands south of Satsuma," thus the title of this book "Beyond Satsuma."

"Satsuma" was first recorded as a geographical name around the 8th century. It was the name of the southern half of Kagoshima, which is on the western side of Kyushu's southernmost tip. Near the end of the 12th century, the Shimazu Clan gained control over Osumi, Hyuga and Satsuma and formed the Satsuma Domain, which later became approximately the Kagoshima Prefecture of today.

Due to its geographic position, Satsuma has been Kyushu's gateway to and from abroad, and cultural products of every description have been coming in and going out for centuries. For example, sweet potatoes originally from Central

America first entered Japan through Satsuma and are called "Satsuma potatoes" in Japan today. And artisans brought to Satsuma from the Korean Peninsula created original porcelain, which became world renown as "Satsuma ware."

There is also a type of mandarin orange known as *unshu-mikan* in Japanese but as "*satumas*" in English. *Unshu-mikans* have excellent qualities not found in other citrus fruit. For example, they have very few seeds and are very sweet, and they can be easily peeled with the fingers. The oranges are originally from an area in Satsuma called Nagashima. Seedlings were exported to the USA in the latter half of the 19th century, and the fruit they bore came to be called "*satumas*" after their place of origin.

In addition to the mainland islands known as Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu, the Japanese Archipelago also contains almost five thousand smaller islands. Two hundred and forty of them are part of Kagoshima Prefecture. Having the fifth highest number of islands of all prefectures in Japan, Kagoshima Prefecture is one of Japan's foremost prefectures that are made up of many islands. Here it must be explained that a prefecture, the English translation of the Japanese term *ken* or its equivalents, is the largest administrative division in the local governments of Japan. There are currently forty-seven prefectures in Japan.

Within a prefecture, there are municipalities including cities (*shi* in Japanese), towns (*machi* or *cho*) and villages (*mura* or *son*).

Kagoshima Prefecture contains the Koshiki Islands, the Satsunan Islands and some of the Amakusa Islands. The Satsunan Islands and Okinawa's Ryukyu Islands together form a string of islands that leads to Taiwan. Since ancient times, the islands have played an important role as a "road over the ocean" linking Japan to the Asian Continent and to other places in the Pacific.

The ocean separates the Satsunan Islands from their neighboring islands and from mainland Kyushu. Moreover, from the point of view of the Kanto and Kansai districts, which are Japan's political and economical centers, the Satsunan Islands are situated far away in the distant periphery. But equally the islands are directly linked by ocean to the outside world.

The Satsunan Islands mainly consist of three island groups, which are the Osumi Islands, the Tokara Islands and the Amami Islands. Of all the islands in those island groups, twenty-one islands are inhabited. In this book, as examples, we have selected seven of those islands and two villages that are made of tiny islands.

Specifically, from the Osumi Islands,

we selected Tanegashima Island, Yaku Island, and a village called Mishima, which consists of Kuro Island and other tiny islands. We selected the Tokara Islands, with their seven inhabited islands, as a whole, because the islands constitute a village called Toshima. And from the Amami Islands, we selected Amami Oshima Island, Kikai Island, Tokunoshima Island, Okinoerabu Island and Yoron Island.

Here a quick note on the naming of islands in Japanese may be in order. The Japanese word for island is *shima*. As a part of the name of an island, however, *shima* often becomes its phonetic variant *jima*. It must be also noted that the proper name and the word *shima* or *jima* sometimes become so intermingled that we cannot separate them any more. In this case, we use the whole name as in Tanegashima Island (strictly speaking "Island" is redundant). Otherwise we separate them and translate *shima* or *jima* by "island" as in Yaku Island. Amami Oshima Island is the only exception in that we use the whole name but the name consists of two words, where *oshima* means a "big island". All of this was done to reflect the actual use of island names in Japanese.

## Characteristics

The Satsunan Islands are situated between 27 and 30 degrees north latitude. They often receive damage from typhoons



---

that rampage up from the south between July and September. But for the most part, being southerly situated, this region is blessed with temperate subtropical climate. The Japan Current (Kuroshio), which flows north from Taiwan through the East China Sea between the Amami Islands and the Osumi Islands and then out into the Pacific Ocean, is a warm current contributing to the fine climate.

The Satsunan Islands have numerous subtropical plants, especially in the southernmost islands. As often promoted in tourist information, coral reefs encircle the islands and mangroves grow thickly along the coastlines. Sugarcane is a typical crop cultivated on the islands. There is a zoological borderline called Watase's Line between Yaku Island and Amami Oshima Island. The borderline was named after Shozaburo Watase who noticed that the species of aboriginal animals on one side were much different from those on

the other.

The indigenous society in the Satsunan Islands has fostered a unique culture. From the existence of peculiar raised-floor structures called *takakura*, we can see that the culture of the Satsunan Islands has been closely tied to that of the islands farther south. For example, the culture of the Amami Islands has been especially closely tied to that of the Ryukyu Islands.

In fact, as in Okinawa, the inhabitants of the Amami Islands speak the Ryukyuan language even though the dialects of the islands from the Tokara Islands and upward are close to the dialects of mainland Kyushu. The reason they got separated from the Ryukyu Islands and became part of the Satsunan Islands is the result of a historical transition that these islands went through.

## *History*

---

Although the ocean separates the islands from each other, it is also a medium that links them to the rest of the world. As a result of their geographic position, since prehistory, the Satsunan Islands have been closely tied to their adjoining Ryukyu Islands and to other places farther abroad. Let us now look back at the Satsunan Islands starting from the early days of

recorded history.

The Satsunan Islands were used as stepping stones to travel to China, which had developed an advanced civilization to the west of Japan. Japan sent official envoys to the Tang Imperial Court in China over ten times between the 7th and 9th centuries to study the advanced culture of the Tang Dynasty. The envoys used different sea routes to China in the different eras, but one of their routes was called the South Islands Route.

Using this route, the envoys voyaged

south along several of the Satsunan Islands and then headed for the estuary of the Yangtze River. A Chinese priest called Ganjin, who contributed enormously to the establishment of Buddhism in Japan, also used the South Islands Route. His voyage to Japan proved to be a tribulation, but he managed to arrive at the south coast of Kyushu in 753.

The Satsunan Islands have also played an important role in relations between Japan and Europe. Two Portuguese men aboard a Chinese ship arrived at Tanegashima Island in the mid-16th century. According to historical data in Japan, this took place in 1543. This was the first time the Japanese had ever seen a European. It was also the first time the Japanese had ever seen a matchlock gun, which the Japanese blacksmiths got busy duplicating. Such matchlock guns radically changed the battle tactics used in those days and became known throughout Japan as *tanegashimas*. Jesuit missionary Saint Francis Xavier later came to Japan to propagate Christianity. On his way out from Japan, heading for China, he also dropped in on Tanegashima Island.

Incidentally, a major change occurred in the region south of the Satsunan Islands in the beginning of the 15th century. The three kingdoms in the Ryukyu Islands united. The kingdoms had been at war with each other but the Sho Clan of the Chuzan Kingdom merged their kingdom with the other two to establish the Ryukyu Kingdom. Looking north to expand its

territory, the Ryukyu Kingdom took in the Amami Islands. This is why the Amami Islands have been so heavily influenced by the culture of the Ryukyu Kingdom.

The Ryukyu Kingdom flourished in trading products gathered from Japan and Southeast Asia with the Ming Dynasty of China. The Satsuma Domain also conducted trade on an equal footing with the Ryukyu Kingdom. But their friendly relationship was short-lived. In 1609, aiming to gain more profits from trade with the Ming Dynasty, the Satsuma Domain acquired consent from the Tokugawa Shogunate in Edo and sent soldiers to invade the Ryukyu Kingdom. As part of their invasion campaign, the Satsuma Domain also subjugated the Amami Islands and placed them under direct Satsuma control. The Satsunan Islands, which are all the islands from Yoron Island northward, became politically separated from the Ryukyu Islands after that incident.

A new element that dramatically changed the daily lifestyles of the island inhabitants emerged in the 17th century. The new element was sugarcane, and it played a vital role in placing the Satsunan Islands within the territory of the Shimazu Clan. In 1610, an islander from Amami Oshima Island who was washed ashore in China's Fujian Province smuggled some sugarcane saplings out from the province back to his island. The saplings were the beginning of Amami Oshima's sugarcane plantations.

In the beginning of the 19th century, aiming to acquire new profits, the Shimazu

---

Clan made it mandatory for the inhabitants of Amami Oshima Island, Kikai Island and Tokunoshima Island to grow sugarcane. This was a merciless demand on the islanders, but it was a primary source of revenue for the Satsuma Domain, and it was one of the main factors that empowered the Satsuma Domain to lead the movement to overthrow the Edo Shogunate.

After the Meiji Restoration, the Satsunan Islands came to belong to Kagoshima Prefecture while the Ryukyu Islands came to belong to Okinawa Prefecture. But before long, history again dealt the islands an excruciating blow. The U.S. armed forces arrived on the shores of Okinawa and other islands of the archipelago near the end of World War II. The islands then became battlefields of violent combat between the U.S. and Japanese forces.

When the war ended, all of the islands south of 30 degrees north latitude became subject to U.S. military control. The Tokara Islands and the other islands south of them were taken over by the Americans. U.S. military control of the Satsunan Islands

continued until the Tokara Islands were returned to Japan in 1952, and the Amami Islands in 1953. U.S. military control of the Ryukyu Islands continued until they were all returned to Japan in 1972.

In the beginning of the 1960s, Japan entered a new era of high economic growth, which was centered in the Tokyo and Osaka metropolitan areas. The Satsunan Islands were then faced with a population drain as large numbers of their youth were emigrating to the metropolitan areas in search of better-paying job opportunities. Since the end of the war, the inhabitants of the Satsunan Islands have been groping for a means to revitalize their islands.

(Toru Aoyama)

---

## Tasks

The most important postwar task for the inhabitants of the Satsunan Islands and for the remote island municipalities have been how to overcome their severe natural and social problems. Natural problems include the typhoons that

rampage through the islands, while the social problems include the population drain and the aging of the folk who remain on the islands. A great deal of efforts has been made so far.

Two underpinnings for such efforts are the Remote Islands Development Law established in 1953 and the New Special Measures Law for Amami Islands Development established in 1954.

These legal systems were established to raise the state of Kagoshima's remote islands, which include the Satsunan Islands, to the level of the mainland islands. They substantially ensure that the living environment is improved and that education and welfare are improved where necessary. The systems involve transportation aspects such as roads, harbors and aviation grounds and industrial aspects such as farmland and fishing harbors. They have been playing a crucial role for the islands so far in the last half-century.

Furthermore, as a prefecture that encompasses numerous remote islands, Kagoshima Prefecture is financially assisting "the remotest of the remote islands" that are in very severe natural and social situations. The prefecture is helping them with their small-scale public undertakings and the wide range of intricate plans that are not eligible for national funding. Very many improvements are still necessary, but the daily life of the inhabitants of the Satsunan Islands has improved considerably as a result of those laws and prefectural aid.

Some islands now have harbors that can accommodate large-scale passenger ships and aviation grounds that can accommodate high-speed aircraft. Some have highway systems that considerably shorten travel time to the heart of the island. Some have farmland that produces crops that maximally thrive in the temperate climate. And some have clinics and welfare

facilities that alleviate the anxiety felt by the inhabitants about their health and daily lives.

Remote islands are no longer on the far side of ocean but the suffering on them still continues. In a milieu of treacherous weather conditions, their transportation systems are far from complete. With their populations draining at ever increasing speeds and with the aging of the remaining inhabitants, the islanders worry that their regions will fall into oblivion. And being isolated by the ocean, industrial development is difficult in an environment of the flow of free flowing competition and deregulation. Being isolated and closed systems, remote islands need a more subtle balance between development and the natural environment. In a context of rapid social changes, the tasks facing the Satsunan Islands remain unaccomplished.

Urbanites have been arguing recently that all the work being done in developing the rapidly depopulating remote islands is in vain. But now that it has become imperative for mankind to reconsider its coexistence with nature, many urbanites are increasingly attracted to the profundity offered by the remote islands where natural landscape abounds and unique culture is preserved.



---

## *Roles of the Islands*

Nearly half a century has transpired since the enactment of Japan's laws for the development of remote islands. The inhabitants of the Satsunan Islands are still facing innumerable arduous problems. Is there any hope for the islanders?

Many of the Satsunan Islands and other remote islands of Kagoshima Prefecture are situated in the open sea far away from mainland Kyushu. So all of the many islands could never be linked to mainland Kyushu by bridges or tunnels, no matter how far technology progresses. With that in mind, some urbanites argue that the national government may as well free itself from having to bother with the remote islands by abolishing its program for developing them.

But are the islands of Kagoshima really so insignificant? The mere existence of the islands, which abound in natural resources, is an enormous asset to Kagoshima Prefecture, to Japan, and to the world.

One role of the remote islands for the country is to protect and maintain the national land and its territorial waters. This includes the maintenance of peace and order, the surveillance of fishing zones and the preservation of the environment. This role cannot be carried out unless people remain on the islands, so it is important to maintain the minimum requirements for the daily lives of the island inhabitants.

Another role, which is becoming increasingly important, is to preserve the diversified forms of nature and culture. Anxiety-ridden Japanese people in their routine societies especially find great solace and inspiration on the remote islands. The Satsunan Islands and other remote islands of Kagoshima perfectly satisfy the conditions to bear such roles.

Discovering the value of the islands makes one reconsider the importance of "the level of the mainland islands." It is not necessary for everything to be at the level of the mainland islands to maintain the infrastructure of an island society. Many aspects of island life are far from adequate by the standards of the mainland islands, but they do serve their purposes. And rewarding lifestyles are possible in many cases even without income as high as that on the mainland islands.

On the other hand, actions taken by the Japanese government for the particular tasks of the remote islands are still inadequate. The government must improve its measures involving permanent residence on the islands and transportation costs. And they must work more on the problem of how to cope with the standards for waste disposal and treatment on the islands. It is areas such as these that "the level of the mainland islands" or an even higher level is actually required.

## *Strategy for Here on*

---

Although the population is dwindling, the islands of Kagoshima still have about 200,000 people. The islanders must have a positive strategy to revitalize the islands using their physical strength. The way they present the individual characteristics of their islands within their islands and to the outside world will be important. It also goes without saying that the Japanese government as a whole must reevaluate the remote islands and aim to correct what they had not duly evaluated.

What must be observed here is the cooperation between the islanders and the outside world, in other words, the close exchange between the islanders and the urbanites. On the mainland islands, immigrants from the Satsunan Islands and the other remote islands of Kagoshima, especially from the Amami Islands, have set up friendship societies made up of their fellows from the islands of Kagoshima. Based mainly in major metropolitan areas, the societies serve to preserve the strong affinity the former islanders still have for each other. Not many other regions in Japan can boast of having such a powerful network

From here on, it will be necessary to utilize the islander friendship society network to help vitalize the islands. In addition to kinfolk and fellow islanders, it will also be necessary to utilize a "semi-islander" network of repeat visitors and new settlers

on the islands, who will be something like a reserve army. The key to activating the islands in this new concept will be for the islanders to exercise flexibility to a degree in conducting exchange with such outside connections.

This new strategy to link the remote islands with the mainland islands has actually already begun. Kagoshima Prefecture has also been promoting the Yaku Island Environmental and Cultural Village Concept. And in 2000, the prefecture also held the Kagoshima International Conference on World Natural Heritage (KICWNH) as the first attempt from local governments' perspectives.

Furthermore, based on the tide of the new era, new concepts have been submitted in the prefecture's comprehensive plan for 2001 and on. One concept is the "Plan for Coexistence of Man and Nature on Amami Islands," which will support endeavors aiming to get the Amami Islands designated on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Another concept is the "Plan to Create Island and City Interminglement," which aims to reassess the islands as they deepen closer exchange and cooperation with metropolitan areas.

Now that a half-century has passed since the establishment of the legal system for remote island development, the present state of the new policies that support these tasks to accomplish must also be studied by the national government.

---

# *Pride of the Islanders*

---

Islands are limited areas surrounded by sea. The areas are actually models of the most typical society that can continually develop. Love of the island and pride as islanders are essential elements in fostering such a society. The islanders' love for their islands and unyielding grit in developing them is what will produce islands that are a benefit for Japan, islands that are not inferior to the mainland islands, and islands that gain wide support from the outside.

Development of the remote islands in the 21st century is not something provided by the administrations. It is something that the islanders must proudly propel by themselves with their own creativity and solidarity through repeated trial and error.

The islands are blessed with a temperate climate but are also menaced by rampant typhoons. They each abound with a their own particular natural resources, but are also surrounded by vast isolating ocean. Their people are rich in culture that brilliantly expresses their uniqueness, but also have a pining for the big city. Their history is woven of encounters with the people traveling through, but also contains hate mixed in with the love.

Islanders who make their living on the Satsunan Islands and on the other remote islands of Kagoshima, which are not covered in this book, feel joy at times and anguish at other times, but always shine with enthusiasm for the future.

Will pride as islanders of the new century be fostered in their hearts? Let us examine each of the Satsunan Islands separately and unveil their respective treasures in the following chapters.

(Satoshi Uemura)

### Guide to Japanese Pronunciation for English Speakers

In this book Japanese words, place names and personal names are transcribed into Roman characters according to the standard transcription system. Here is a very brief guide to Japanese pronunciation.

1. There are five vowels in Japanese.
  - *a* is pronounced like the 'o' in 'hot'.
  - *e* is pronounced like the 'e' in 'bet'.
  - *i* is pronounced like the 'ee' in 'bee'.
  - *o* is pronounced like the 'o' in 'bone'.
  - *u* is pronounced like the 'oo' in 'cool', but without rounding your lips.
  
2. Each vowel can be either short or long. To pronounce a long vowel, simply lengthen the duration of the short vowel. For instance, long *a* is pronounced like the 'a' in 'spa'. Long vowels are usually indicated by a '-' mark over the letters, but for the sake of simplicity, the mark is not used in this book.
  
3. Most of the consonants are pronounced like those in English. However, there are some points to be mentioned.
  - *g* is always pronounced hard like 'g' in 'gun'.
  - *r* is pronounced like Spanish 'r' without the trill, by touching the tip of the tongue to the roof of the mouth behind the teeth.
  - When *y* follows a consonant and is followed by a vowel, they make one syllable. Pronounce it as one sound. For instance, *kyu* is pronounced as English word 'cue'.
  - Double consonants indicate a pause in breath. For instance, *toppi* is pronounced like "top-pea".
  
4. Finally, when pronouncing a word, clearly separate each syllable and give equal emphasis to each. For instance, *Okinoerabujima* is pronounced like 'o-ki-no-e-ra-bu-ji-ma'.







# Chapter 2

---

Village Transmitting  
Vitality

# Mishima

---

Eiji Nitta

Faculty of Law, Economics & Humanities,  
Kagoshima University

---

A village with a population of 446 is transmitting its vitality to the world. The name of the village is Mishima, which is made up of Io Island, Take Island, Kuro Island and peripheral uninhabited islands such as Shin-Io along with the coral reef, all interspersed in the East China Sea. Io and Take are 40 kilometers south-southwest of Nagasaki while Kuro is 50 kilometers from Makurazaki. Mishima is situated at the northernmost tip of the Nansei Islands. The climate is temperate with an annual mean temperature of 19.4 degrees Celsius, but precipitation is quite heavy, with Kuro receiving the most.

Take has a circumference of 9.7 kilometers, an area of 4.18 square kilometers and a population of 94. Io has a circumference of 14.5 kilometers, an area of 11.79 square kilometers and a population of 140. Kuro, which is the largest of the three main islands, has a circumference of 15.2 kilometers, an area of 15.65 square kilometers and a population of 212. (Populations as of March 31, 1999.)

The village of Mishima has undergone drastic depopulation. Its islands are blessed with bountiful nature in its sea and mountains, but violent typhoons rampage through every year. Io is an active volcano island. Virtually the only transportation to Mishima is a village-operated 800-ton ship called the *Mishima*, which makes eleven round trips a month. Aside from that, there is only one small aircraft used irregularly.

The village of Mishima faces a severe problem, which is common in all rural areas in Japan. The youth tend to emigrate to urban areas and the folk who remain behind are aging. In fact, the largest segment of the population is oldsters between 60 and 70 years old, while the segment between 15 and 25 is extremely small.

Mishima has no senior high school so their youth have no choice but to move to a mainland island of Japan to complete their studies after graduating from junior high school. This is the result of a scarcity of jobs in the village for the young generation. Once they leave the islands, they never return. The largest segment of the employed workforce is in the construction industry because ordinary public works projects in depopulated areas are socially very significant.

But overcoming its handicaps of inconvenient transportation, depopulation and aging, Mishima is getting ready to take a bold leap into the 21st century under the slogan "Liven Up Mishima!" The leap will be through the livestock industry, tourism, education, and also by transmitting Mishima's vitality to the outside world.



# Industry

---

Industries in Mishima include livestock, agriculture and forestry, fisheries and mining. Mishima's produce includes bamboo shoots and camellia fruit from the agriculture and forestry industry, spiny lobsters from the fishing industry, and buhlstone from the mining industry. But the agriculture and forestry industry and the mining industry yield less than 8 million yen and 15 million yen respectively (as of fiscal 1999).

Livestock, specifically Mishima cattle, is Mishima's most hopeful industry. Mishima cattle are in the Satsuma black-hair cattle family, which is a Kagoshima brand. The breeding and raising of these black-hair cattle is conducted on the expansive pastures of Mishima's islands, and the calves are dispatched to the outside market. About 550 head of the cattle are raised in the village. All of Mishima's islands have cattle ranches, but Kuro has the most. In fact, 32 of the 112 households on the island are Mishima beef cattle raisers, raising 320 head altogether.

Although sales income reached 80.73 million yen in 2000 from 287 head dispatched to the market, annual sales surpassing 100 million yen have been recorded in recent years. Mishima places special importance on making livestock its key industry. They have adopted special measures to improve their pastures, improve

the environment, and subsidize the cattle-raising households. The measures have proved successful and the brand name of "Mishima Beef" is now firmly established on the market throughout Japan.

As a measure against farther depopulation, the village has adopted a system to encourage newcomers to settle in the village. Under this system, which emphasizes the livestock industry for employment, a calf is given to new residents as a present. New residents can also use on loan prefecture-owned or village-owned cattle, ranches, pastureland and barns. Taking advantage of this system, one family from Okayama Prefecture has already moved into the village and is now enjoying a bountiful daily life with cattle in the natural landscape of Mishima.

Throughout Japan, Kagoshima Prefecture advertises the beef of Satsuma black-hair cattle and the pork of Satsuma black pigs as specialty products of the prefecture. Both have won high acclaim from consumers. The islanders take great care in raising the Satsuma black-hair cattle in order to successfully market the beef. Mishima Beef will become much more important, not only for the village of Mishima, but also for the whole livestock industry of Kagoshima Prefecture.

A new type of ferry, scheduled to go into service in autumn of 2001, will add great convenience to the shipping of the beef. Mishima cattle are not raised in overly crowded barns or pumped up with drugs. They graze in abundant green pastures

---

and grow into healthy calves of outstanding quality. This special feature is expected to win even higher acclaim for Mishima Beef from now on.

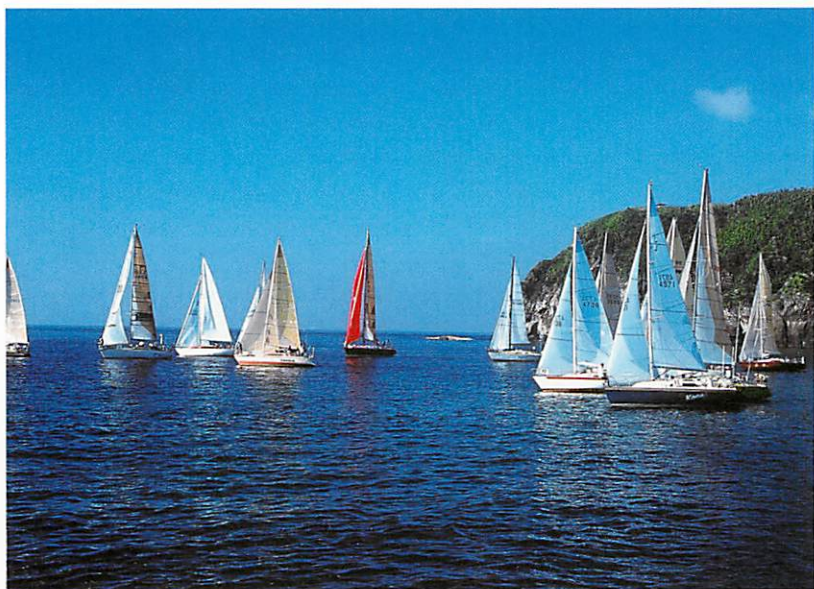
## *Mishima Cup Yacht Race*

---

It goes without saying that Mishima is surrounded by ocean. And the ocean that encloses Mishima does not separate Mishima from the outside world. Instead, it is a 360-degree all-directional medium

that connects Mishima to the outside world. It is also a medium on which yachts are sailed.

The Mishima Cup Yacht Race, which began in August of 1990, takes place every year on the first Saturday of August. The starting point of the race is the port of Yamagawa at the southernmost tip of the Satsuma Peninsula. And the ending point is the port of Take Island, which is 600 miles south. Over 40 yachts



Mishima Cup Yacht Race ©Mishima Village Office

also enter the race every year including many from outside the prefecture.

The Mishima Cup Yacht Race initially began as an event to vitalize the village. But for the sake of those who love the sea and its islands, and for the sake of those who love their native village, the idea of making the race an annual event took root in the minds of the people who experienced it. It has now taken place for 11 straight years as an established event and has surpassed the level of a mere event to vitalize the village. It has evolved into a full-fledged international yacht race in its own right.

The reason the Mishima villagers first implemented the race was because they wanted throngs of people from the outside world to visit their village. But for the tiny island village to hold such an event, many problems were encountered in lodging and feeding the over 500 participants. To solve the difficult problems, the village office administration did not adopt a top-down approach. Instead, the administration and the villagers of the three islands worked together and solved the problems one by one over a series of discussions. This approach, incidentally, brought the villagers into a warmer relationship with each other.

Competition is not the only exciting aspect of the Mishima Cup Yacht Race. The get-together after the race is also a great enjoyment for the participants. And it is gaining popularity every year. The participants receive a hearty welcome

from the villagers at the get-together. A Mishima calf is given away as the prize at a lottery drawing, which, incidentally, also serves as great advertising for Mishima Beef. Being globetrotting sailors, Mishima Cup Yacht Race participants are making the name "Mishima" world famous.

Although the Mishima Cup originated in a tiny remote island village, it receives acclaim on a national scale. For example in 1994, it won the Minister of Home Affairs Award for the category of "excellent local public entity with community planning that creates vitality and mental composure". And in the same year, it also won the National Land Agency Director General's Award at the Regional Planning National Exchange Conference. Mishima Cup Yacht Race enthusiasts aim to raise the Mishima Cup to the same level as the America's Cup.

---

## Linked to the World

---

In addition to yacht races, another excitement has arrived at Mishima. Mamadi Keita and his group came to Io Island from Kenya in August of 1994. Mamadi plays the djembe and other traditional Kenyan drums. The djembe became the new craze on the islands, and through the djembe, cultural exchange between Mamadi and the children of Mishima began.

The children were completely enthralled with the rhythm of the djembe as Mamadi

was teaching them how to play it. They gained great self-confidence in playing the djembe when they accompanied Mamadi on a two-week trip for performances in Naze City on Amami Oshima Island, in Bisei and Osa Towns in Okayama Prefecture, and in Hiroshima City in Hiroshima Prefecture.

With West Africa's djembe added to Mishima's traditional performing arts, a new blend is in the making. In 1998, four junior high school students from the village were sent to Kenya on a mission to learn more about the djembe. As a result, Mamadi came straight back to Mishima. Together with the children, Mamadi developed a djembe and African dance circle at the village's cultural exchange club called Mishima Djembe Ensemble. This mingling of the remote island children with a culture as different from their own as Kenya's is a rare happening in Japan.

Io's djembe band called Wassada performed at the International Volcanic Gas Outdoor Study Meeting held on Io Island in October 2000 and enlivened their fellow islanders and the participants from around the world.

The wide exposure of the djembe-performing children extends into outer space. Now that worldwide communication through the Internet has become possible, remote islands are no longer at such a disadvantage for sending and receiving information. Mishima Elementary & Junior High School on Io Island and Katadomari Elementary & Junior High School on



Djembe performance ©Mishima Village Office



Kuro Island have become designated schools of the Remote Area School Multimedia Utilization Research Project implemented by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology.

As an experiment, the two schools are conducting lessons received through the Internet together with distant schools in other remote areas. A television conference system linking the remote island schools to Kagoshima City opens many new possibilities. For example, without actually going to Kagoshima City, the pupils at Mishima

Elementary & Junior High School can perform the *djembe* in Kagoshima City auditoriums. And pupils at Osato Elementary & Junior High School can communicate with space shuttle astronauts like Mamoru Mori.

The rapid progress of communications systems will no doubt be a great advantage on Mishima. Tiny remote islands are now linked to the world.

## Sightseeing

Tourism will also broaden Mishima's link with the outside world. The inhabitants of Mishima remember a bitter experience when their resort development project failed after calling in a major corporation that specializes in developing tourism. Society will not be demanding resorts in the coming era. Instead, many people will be searching for a place of repose to heal their hearts and minds.

Mishima has virgin nature, and a great number of traditional performing arts and historic cultural heritages. They are irreplaceable assets as resources for sightseeing. It would be wrong to destroy such assets in the name of development.

The open-air hot springs on the coasts of Ito Island are certainly attractive.

And the vast meadows, the mountain terrain, and the panoramic seascapes are enough to heal the hearts and minds of the exhausted visitors. Ito's active volcano contrasts with the flat grassland to produce a sensational impact. There aren't many places like that on the earth.

Nature lovers will relish all of Mishima. Fishing enthusiasts will find paradise everywhere on the islands. History buffs will be fascinated with relics and legends about the Buddhist priest called Shunkan and the deserters of the Heike Clan. Gourmets will experience epicurean delight in prepared fresh fish, bamboo shoot cuisine and *shochu* liquor. Traditional performing arts fans will be overwhelmed with the dance and song of the *hassaku-odori* on Ito, the *umakata-odori* on Take, and the *men-odori* on Kuro. And birdwatchers will be enchanted with the peafowl hovering over Ito and the myriad of other wildfowl

---

warbling and twittering in the woods of the islands.

A few small inns are the main lodging facilities in Mishima. Large-scale lodging facilities are unnecessary, and from past experience, are known to be more of a burden than an advantage. Between 2,500 and 3,000 tourists visit the island village yearly, but a considerable increase is not expected until the present transportation situation changes.

Tourism will also play a substantial role in the village's economy if the average number of tourists can be increased to twenty per day from the fewer than ten per day at present. Keeping in mind the limitations in the number of tourists they can accommodate, the village must determine how much of an increase in tourists to plan for.

A new type of ferry is scheduled to go into service in autumn of 2001 and the present 11 roundtrips per month will be increased to 19. This new ship might increase the number of tourists. However, measures will also have to be made to

prevent the tourists from bringing in their automobiles and causing noise pollution, accidents and environmental destruction.

Judging from the daily lifestyles on Mishima today, I think it is feasible to plan for an increase in tourism and still protect the environment. Mishima need not aim to have large-scale tourism or group tours. The small inns and the friendly ladies who run them are enough for the village. And that is what the people who come to the village want.

Recognizing the value of Mishima, tourism from here on at Mishima should be protective of the natural environment so that tourists come to enjoy the island and make repeat visits. With the aircraft at Io's aviation grounds and the new ferry, Mishima will become an extremely appealing place to visit.

## Tasks

---

Merely being linked to the outside world is not enough. The villagers cannot survive on international exchange and tourism alone. Mishima must have a foundation that allows its inhabitants to live securely, abundantly and happily. All

sorts of measures have been adopted in Mishima to cope with its situation of being a village of islands with an overwhelming ratio of elderly people.

For example, homes of all oldsters are equipped with an emergency button for summoning the village office or a nurse. Like other areas in Japan with an aging population, each sector of Mishima

also has a welfare center for the elderly, a daily life center, and a welfare farm. For Mishima, with its overwhelming ratio of aged, such facilities are indispensable and are well maintained.

The welfare centers and daily life centers have been modified into small-scale nursing facilities as a result of a policy that went into effect in April 2000 that enables nursing care on health insurance. Modification of their structures is also promoted to make the facilities more suitable for elderly people using wheelchairs. Much is being done to provide the island-born elderly with security in their later years.

The children in Mishima described the way they think the village should be. They wrote that the village should retain its beautiful islands abounding in nature and that it should be a safe place, even if you get sick. They also wrote that the village should have convenient transportation and that it should conduct exchange with the outside world. Entering the 21st century, Mishima continues to "liven up" and become the islands of their children's vision.



Tanegashima Space Center





# Chapter 3

Japan's Closest Island to  
Outer Space

## Tanegashima

Tadahide Noro

Education and Research Center for Marine  
Resources and Environment, Faculty of  
Fisheries, Kagoshima University



Launching a rocket at the Tanegashima Space Center

© NASDA



Tanegashima Space Center is a launch base constructed by NASDA (National Space Development Agency of Japan) to launch application satellites. It is located on the southern tip of Tanegashima Island in a town called Minamitan. With a total area of 860 square kilometers, it is the Japanese version of the NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida. The center went into operation in 1967. So far, 39 satellites have been launched from Tanegashima Space Center with H-I and H-II launch vehicles. All of them remain stationary in the upper skies over the equator and are used for satellite broadcasting and weather forecasting.

Mamoru Sato, professor of analytical chemistry in fisheries at Kagoshima University, spent three years here in Minamitan in the 1950s as a high school teacher. He remembers his surprise upon arriving at the island to see that some of the other passengers of the bus were barefooted. He also remembers that the record player he brought all the way from Kagoshima City on a 6-hour ship ride was useless on Tanegashima because of unstable voltage. Incidentally, the ride to Tanegashima was shortened to one hour when a high-speed ship called *Toppy* went into service in 1989. The ship was named after flying fish called *toppi*, which are caught around the islands.

Tanegashima, one of Japan's southern islands, was selected as the launch base site for two reasons. One reason was that it is close to the equator, which is the

geostationary orbit for satellites, and the other was that it had retained a wide expanse of nation-owned land necessary to accommodate the base. Today, Japan's southernmost islands are those of Okinawa Prefecture, but they had been under U.S. occupation at the time so they could not be considered for selection.

Tanegashima is an island of farms. One third of the island's population is still engaged in sugarcane farming. The whole town of Minamitan, with its modest population of a few thousand, takes advantage of the island's temperate climate to produce early harvested rice and red rice, both for which the area is famous. But the construction of the Tanegashima Space Center, which is the aggregate of Japan's multifarious cutting edge technologies, metamorphosed Minamitan into a supporting town.

Sixty NASDA personnel presently



High-speed ship *Toppy*

© Nankai Yusen Co. Ltd.

---

staff the Tanegashima Space Center. But about four hundred people surge into the town every time a rocket is about to be launched. The visitors include scientists, engineers and reporters, some of whom are from foreign countries. Some of the inhabitants who were booted out of the area to make room for the launch site now work for NASDA in the launch base. Others work at nearby hotels and inns.

In Minamitane, Takao Asao and his wife run a four-storied hotel called Sun Pearl. Engineers from Osaka, Nagoya and other distant places who temporarily leave their families to work at the space

center find solace in the family-like atmosphere of this 30-room hotel.

About seventy thousand tourists a year, which is virtually every tourist to the island, visit the Space Museum next door to the Tanegashima Space Center. The launch base surrounded by meticulously maintained lawn is seen in the background of the Space Museum. Farther in the background is emerald green sea very unlike anything seen from the mainland islands. When you enter the Space Museum, you feel in your bones that you are at Japan's closest point to outer space.

## *Portuguese Matchlock*

---

In 1543, a trading vessel from Ming (China in those days) drifted ashore on Cape Kadokura, which is the southern tip of Tanegashima. The village head who conducted the investigation with the crew happened to be good at reading and writing Chinese, which was fortunate for the trading vessel and also fortunate for Japan from then on.

Although Japanese and Chinese cannot communicate with each other through their spoken languages, they can communicate in writing. In much the same way the European intelligentsia was cultivated to read and write Latin, the Japanese intelligentsia of those days had to acquire the ability to read Chinese

literature in its original script.

Written characters originating in ancient China were conveyed to Korea and Japan, and are still used in writing Korean and Japanese today. Unlike the English alphabetical characters or other phonograms, Chinese characters are ideograms, each with a meaning. Japanese today cannot pronounce written Chinese with Chinese pronunciations, but they can grasp twenty to thirty percent of the meaning of simple sentences.

The Tanegashima village head and the Chinese crew communicated by writing in the sandy shore with sticks. And through this, it became clear that the ship was a Ming trading vessel that had drifted ashore. The islanders were dumbfounded to see very conspicuous Caucasians among the Orientals aboard the





Demonstrating Tanegashima guns in the Tanegashima Teppō Festival, Nishinoomote

© Nishino-omote City Office

vessel and were curious about the long tubular matchlocks they were carrying. They were flabbergasted to see that they were new weapons that could pulverize a target placed dozens of meters away instantaneously at the sound of a blast.

Tokiaki, feudal lord of the Tanegashima Domain, was awe-stricken with the matchlock guns and purchased two of them for two thousand flat gold coins, which was an astronomical amount in those days. After Tokiaki became proficient at using them, he made up his mind to order his swordsmith vassals reproduce them. He then made Kinbei Yaita responsible for producing the guns and Kojiro Shinokawa responsible for producing the gunpowder.

Iron manufacturing and forging had already been conducted on Tanegashima in those days. Black iron sand still speckles the sandy shores around the island today. Examination of the iron sand indicates that iron manufacturing had

begun in the 10th century and that it was fueled by high-quality charcoal made from enormous amounts of wood. In the 15th century, iron mine experts were invited from the mainland islands and the iron manufacturing industry began.

The inhabitants of Tanegashima had already been producing swords and farming equipment when the matchlocks arrived. For the steel-making technology and swordsmith skills on Tanegashima in those days, reproducing the matchlocks brought over by the westerners was not such a difficult task.

At first the swordsmiths couldn't figure out how to make the screw used in the root of the gun barrel but they learned how to make it from a blacksmith on a Portuguese ship that visited the island the following year. One year later, the Tanegashima Domain had succeeded in producing several dozen matchlocks, which brought the islanders successful military victories in battle against the

---

powerful Satsuma Domain (Shimazu Clan).

Throughout Japan, these matchlocks later became called "Tanegashimas." Feudal domains in Osaka, Sakai, and other cities near the capital of Kyoto also started reproducing them in large quantities thirty years after the matchlocks first arrived to Tanegashima Island. Eventually, in the Warring States period, feudal lords were vying with each other to purchase these Tanegashima guns.

Feudal lords of every domain in Japan engaged in many kinds of large and small-scale battle in attempts to expand their domains. The feudal lords used to base their battle tactics on man-to-man combat using swords, bows, arrows and other such weapons. But with the advent of the state-of-the-art Tanegashima gun of Portuguese origin, battle tactics suddenly changed from man-to-man to group-to-group. And the gods of victory

always favored the side with the most Tanegashima guns.

The Tanegashima guns dramatically changed the balance of power among the feudal lords, and drove Japan into a new era of political unification conducted under commanders called *shoguns*. It is a fascinating historical fact that it was the new weapon from a miniscule island about a thousand kilometers away from Kyoto that spurred on this unification.

The arrival of the matchlock at Tanegashima Island was the first of European civilization to be conveyed to Japan. In 1549, Jesuit missionary Saint Francis Xavier, who was the first person to propagate Christianity in Japan, traveled to Satsuma via Malacca, Macao and Tanegashima. At this time in Britain, Queen Elizabeth I was about to begin her reign. And Spain and Portugal were busy establishing Manila and Macao.

## Tanegashima- Scissors

---

With a population of 20 thousand, Nishino-omote is the largest city on Tanegashima. Up a small alley in this Nishino-omote stands a factory called Makise Cutlery Shop where Yoshifumi Makise and his younger brother Hirofumi produce scissors, knives and other cutlery,

which are specialty products of Tanegashima. The brothers, who are the descendants of 37 generations of Tanegashima swordsmiths, strictly adhere to the traditional methods in making each piece.

Law prohibited the manufacture of Tanegashima guns after the Meiji Restoration so gunsmiths on Tanegashima changed their product line to scissors, knives and other cutlery. In 1900, there were eighty scissors makers on Tane-

gashima who produced scissors on a small scale in their own homes. But today, aside from the Makise brothers, there are only three workshops producing scissors. Using the traditional techniques inherited from their parents, the Makise brothers produce ten pairs of completely handmade scissors every day.

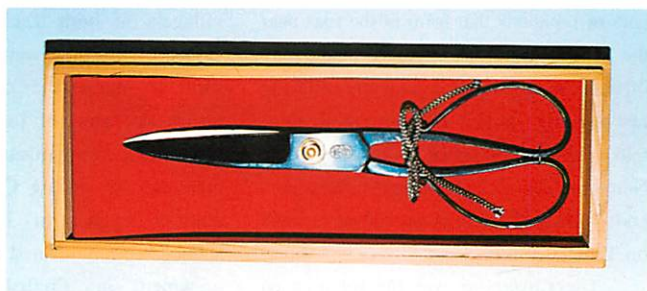
Tanegashima scissors (called *tanebasami*) have a unique design in the style of the scissors of ancient China's Han Dynasty. It is believed that a Ming trading vessel introduced them to Tanegashima at the time of the matchlocks. The scissors can be handled by the right or left hand with equal ease. And the more they are used, the better the blades fit together for unequaled cutting quality, so many people demand to have a pair. They are also designated as traditional craft of Tanegashima and are popular with the tourists as souvenirs.

As with the Tanegashima guns, Tanegashima blacksmiths also used to utilize high-quality iron sand as the raw material to make Tanegashima scissors.

Unique design and ease of use make the scissors very useful in everyday applications. But some cutlery dealers point out that the quality of the steel used as raw material in Tanegashima scissors is inferior to that of modern scissors.



Forging Tanegashima scissors, Makise Cutlery Shop  
© Nishino-omote City Office



Tanegashima  
scissors  
© Nishino-omote City  
Office

---

In addition to the scissors, the Makise brothers also make Tanegashima knives (called *tanebocho*), which are perfect for slitting and slicing the flying fish and other fish caught around Tanegashima. The housewives and fishmongers

on the island insist on them. The knives made by the brothers are rarity goods with professional specifications. To get one, you must first place an order and then wait almost one year to receive it.

## Cashmere: USA Wrecked Vessel

---

Loaded with 30 thousand barrels of oil, the *Cashmere*, an American 936-ton wooden sailing vessel, departed Philadelphia for Kobe in April 1885. It passed the Cape of Good Hope at the southern tip of Africa and continued its journey. When it finally reached the open sea 300 kilometers southeast of Tanegashima on September 11, it encountered a menacing typhoon.

Since ancient times, seamen have been apprehensive about the sea around Tanegashima, which is in the northbound path of typhoons that form in the seas near the Philippines. The complex topography of the remote islands interacting with the fast-flowing Japan Current (Kuroshio) makes the waters even more dangerous. Numerous sea accidents occur in the waters and shipwreck victims are often rescued on Tanegashima.

The *Cashmere* was big for a cargo

liner of those days but it lost all of its masts from the overwhelming force of the typhoon. In the early dawn of September 13th, ship captain Alexander Nicol and two navigators got washed away by a giant wave and were never seen again. By the time the storm had subsided, the ship was no longer in sailing condition. It was badly flooded, its hull was severely damaged, and the crew had no more food or drinking water.

Seven of the twelve remaining crewmen, who had barely managed to remain aboard, took a lifeboat and drifted ashore at Tachiyama in Nishino-omote City. The other five crewmen drifted farther north on a makeshift raft to Iseki. Farmers and fishermen working nearby at the respective shores happened to find all of them.

Chronicles reveal that all of the villagers at both Tachiyama and Iseki stopped what they were doing and came forth to nurse the crewmen back to health. A teacher of Tachiyama's elementary school communicated with a Chinese crewman by writing Chinese characters. And a teacher of Iseki's elementary school communicated with the other crewmen in English. Through the

exchange, the villagers learned that the crew were survivors of a shipwreck.

The rescued crew later took a ship to Kagoshima City and, through the good offices of Kagoshima Prefecture, returned safely to the USA on ships leaving Japan from Kobe and Yokohama. The son of Alexander Nicol, captain of the *Cashmere*, was one of the crewmen. One century later in 1980, Junya Arizono, Minaminihon newspaper reporter (now president), located the whereabouts of his descendants.

In those days of primitive weather forecasting and navigation skills, wrecked ships were often attacked by pirates or plundered by nearby inhabitants. So the goodwill shown to the *Cashmere* crew by the Tanegashima villagers deeply touched the hearts of not only the Americans, but of people around the world.

The American government sent fifty yen in Japanese currency and a gold medal as a token of praise for the goodwill for the villagers who rescued the *Cashmere* crew. Three years later in 1889, U.S. President Grover Cleveland presented five thousand American dollars to the village. That amount is equivalent to six thousand yen at that time and 200 million yen today (2001).

With that gift money, the two communities that rescued the *Cashmere* crew established an education fund from which the interest was utilized for school operating expenses and scholarships for



Medal presented to the villagers of Tanegashima by the U.S. government as a token of gratitude for rescuing the *Cashmere* crew, Tanegashima Gun Museum (Teppokan)

© Tanegashima Gun Museum

a long time. Monuments that display a detailed account of the shipwreck have been erected in the schoolyards of Anjo Elementary School and Iseki Elementary School and still stand today. In Iseki, a festival is still conducted annually on September 22 to celebrate the rescue of the *Cashmere* crew.





Mountainous forest on Yaku Island ha





# Chapter 4

---

## Island on World Heritage List

# Yaku

---

Yasuhiro Tajima

Faculty of Education, Kagoshima University

To begin with, let's look at Yaku Island's early encounters with the outside world. In 1708, when Japan was a closed country, missionary Giovanni Battista Sidotti from the Vatican arrived at the south shore of Yaku to propagate Christianity. Complete with a topknot hairstyle, he had disguised himself as a samurai, but even so, he was captured and taken to Edo. Hakuseki Arai, who interrogated Sidotti, was impressed with Sidotti's wide range of knowledge and experiences. The details of that interrogation can be found in its interrogation record called *Seiyokibun*.

In 1914, American botanist Ernest Henry Wilson visited the island. At academic societies, he reported that Yaku had numerous plant species and peculiar and invaluable ecology. This was the first time Yaku had been made known to the outside world. The forests on Yaku contain many Japanese cedars over a thousand years old called *Yakusugi* cedars. Young Japanese cedars under a thousand years old are not regarded as *Yakusugi* cedars. Wilson introduced various stumps of those *Yakusugi* cedars to the world. Incidentally, in Japan, the biggest of the stumps he introduced is called the "Wilson Stump."

But Yaku was not famous until it became a World Heritage Natural Property. In December 1993, meeting the terms of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, Yaku became the first site in Japan to be designated on the UNESCO World Heritage List as Natural Property. Yaku has won world acclaim for the ecumenical



Mountainous forest on Yaku Island has been nicknamed

value of its natural environment. The peculiarities of Yaku's natural environment and its unique value are summarized in the reasons for Yaku's registration on the World Heritage List. Here is a translated quotation from the summary.

Yaku is an island of towering mountains. In the middle of the island is Kyushu's highest peak, Mt. Miya-noura, which is 1,935 meters high. As a result of factors such as annual rainfall of four thousand to ten thousand millimeters, it has extremely peculiar forest plants including *Yakusugi* cedars several thousands of years old.

Yaku's climate ranges from subtropical to subalpine with changing





"Alps on the sea"

© Yasuhiro Tajima

altitude from the coastline to the mountaintops. Accordingly, the vertical distribution of the island's vegetation is very noticeable. Plants such as banyan trees grow thickly in the island's subtropical zones in the coastal areas. Plants such as *tabunokis* (*Machilus thunbergii*), chinquapins and oaks thrive in the island's warmtemperate zones. Plants such as firs and Yaku-wheel trees are found throughout the island's temperate zones. And plants such as Yaku bamboo grass and alpine roses adorn the island's sub-alpine zones.

With a myriad of peculiar plants growing wild throughout all of the zones, the structure of Yaku's ecosystem is very peculiar. The island is the

northern limit for many species and the southern limit for many other species.

An especially outstanding natural feature of this region is the forests of aged and colossal Yakusugi cedars. These cedars are several thousand years old and have diameters of three to five meters. Ecologically and morphologically, from a global point of view, the forests are precious natural forests.

Moreover, Yaku is the habitat of Ryukyu robins, Izu Island thrushes and other nearly extinct animals and plants.

The islanders are happy that their island's natural environment wins high acclaim as one of the invaluable outstanding sites on the planet. Understanding that this natural environment is an important resource, they hope to raise their standard of living by utilizing it wisely as they increase its value.

Since the dawn of history, the islanders have been living in harmony with the natural environment and utilizing it wisely. Their daily lives are part of the workings of nature and cannot be separated from it. Let us now take a look at the daily lives of the Yaku inhabitants.

---

## Lifestyle Transitions

---

Yaku is an island of towering mountain peaks and not much flat ground, which is why it is called "the Alps on the Ocean." Traditionally, the inhabitants of Yaku regarded the Yakusugi cedars as sacred and did not fell them. But in 1640, the islanders started felling them to produce small thick boards called *hiragi*, which became the island's main product. The boards were also used as tax offerings to the feudal lord.

The islanders lived daily lives in peaceful harmony with the mountains and ocean. Here is a quotation from *Sangoku Meisho Zue* (meaning "Pictures of Famous Sights in Satsuma, Osumi and Hyuga"), which is a record from the Edo Period:

"Yaku is completely mountainous with almost no fields. The islanders live abundant daily lives felling cedar trees on the mountains and catching fish at the sea. Being simple and honest, they don't close their doors at night or even pick up things on the roadside that belong to someone else."

But with land tax reforms in 1875, most of the land on Yaku became state-owned and off-limits to the islanders, except for residential areas and the outlying fields. A prohibition had also been placed on felling forest trees without governmental permission. The islanders managed to scrape together a living by fishing for bonito, which were numerous here in those days. But around 1900, new motor-

powered fishing vessels from mainland Kyushu began charging by and hauling away practically all the bonito. To eke out a bare existence, the islanders then started reclaiming fields and growing sugarcane and other crops.

The islanders began producing charcoal in the late 1920s when the off-limits prohibition was lifted on some mountains. They were also able to catch flying fish at sea. So their subsistence came to be supported by charcoal, flying fish, sugarcane and sweet potatoes. In fact, the lifestyle of the islanders was said to be "ten days on the mountains, ten days at sea and ten days on the fields." It continued that way until the 1960s.

But in the 1970s, the foundation of the island's industry was about to enter a great transition. The flying fish were disappearing. And the island's large-scale sugar factory and many starch factories were forced to close down as a result of low market prices.

Their farming industry started focussing on market crops such as garden peas and potatoes and on fruit such as Chinese honey oranges, *tankan* oranges and loquats. Moreover, a new industry to service the increasing number of tourists began. The islanders built new lodging facilities and focussed more energy into making craftwork with the precious wood remaining in the stumps of felled Yakusugi cedars.

In 1964, Yaku received designation as a national park. In 1971, Yakusugi Land opened and improvements were made in

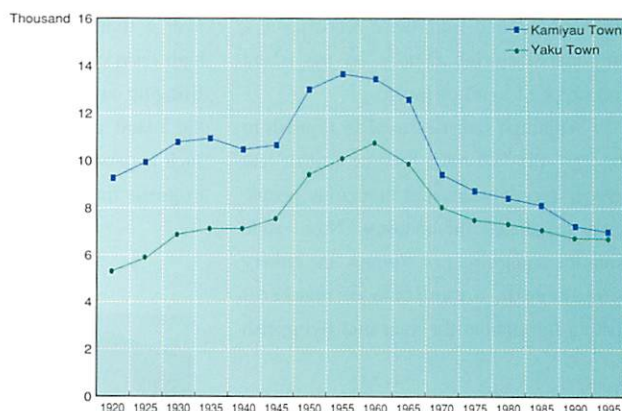


transportation to the island. An air route for a small YS-11 airplane was established and a high-speed jetfoil called *Toppy* went into service. Furthermore, registration on the UNESCO World Heritage List raised Yaku's appeal as a sightseeing attraction.

But with this transition, numerous sugarcane farmers abandoned farming and abandoned the island, which aggravated the depopulation that had begun in the 1960s when the young generation started emigrating to the major metropolitan areas. Yaku's population had reached its peak in

1960 with 24,000 people but thereafter diminished steadily. The aging of the remaining population has also become a grave problem.

In this milieu, the two towns on Yaku decided that their basic policy would be to promote tourism and primary industries, which are farming, forestry and fishery. The islanders have been busy keeping the sightseeing spots and transportation systems in order and have also been putting energy into producing fruit and market crops such as zedoaries and tea.



Population change on Yaku Island from 1920 to 1995 (compiled from censuses by the author)

## Farming, Forestry and Fishery

Cultivation of Chinese honey oranges on Yaku began in 1924 when Kanenari Tsuzurabaru, who was a village assembly

member at that time, brought a Chinese honey orange tree back with him from Taiwan. The oranges did not win favor from the farmers at first but the number of farmers who cultivated the oranges increased gradually. Today the oranges are very famous throughout Japan as *Yaku ponkan*.

Around 1970, the islanders adopted

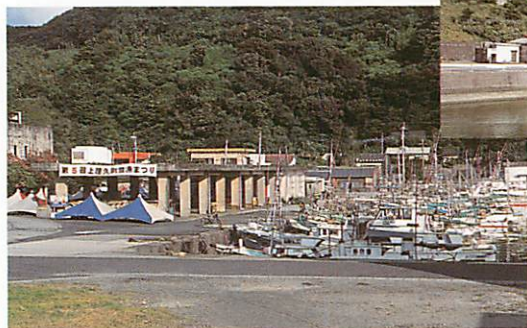
the *tankan* orange, which is marketed in a different season than the Chinese honey oranges. They now produce as many *tankan* oranges as they do Chinese honey oranges. However, Yaku macaques have been sneaking into the orchards and causing increasing damage in recent years. Farmers set up nets and electrified fences around their orchards, but that did not solve the problem. The Yaku macaques now get in through the gutters.

Zedoaries, which are used as raw material in manufacturing gastrointestinal drugs, are grown on all Yaku farms. Drugs are manufactured from these zedoaries at a drug-manufacturing factory on the island and supplied to all of Japan.

Although fisheries used to flourish in the past, the fish have become scarcer and scarcer recent years and numerous people have abandoned the industry. Now, aside from the aquaculture of shrimps, the fishery is reduced to a modicum of mackerel fishing throughout the year and flying fish

fishing in May and June. Consequently, the island's mackerel processing plant at Isso doesn't have enough raw mackerel to process its quota of dried mackerel. It now has to purchase raw mackerel from places around Makurazaki on mainland Kyushu.

Besides that, there are about twenty workshops on the island that process Yakusugi wood to produce exquisite craftwork. Law prohibits the felling of Yakusugi cedars so the only available Yakusugi wood is that which remains in the stumps of trees already felled. The wood in the stumps is finely lined with over a thousand annual growth rings. Its high resin content prevents it from rotting. Bringing out the best of such characteristics, the island craftspeople produce craftwork such as jars and house furnishings with an exquisite finish.



Fishing port, Kamiyaku



Mackerel processing plant, Isso

© Yasuhiro Tajima

© Yasuhiro Tajima

# New Direction of Tourism and Service Industry

The number of visitors to Yaku for sightseeing has increased from 54,590 in 1975 to 153,503 in 1999, almost a three-fold increase. The increase was most dramatic in 1989 when the high-speed jetfoil *Toppy* came into service. Statistically, two-thirds of the visitors during that period came by jetfoil while the remaining one-third came by airplane. But with the advent of the jetfoil, the increase in visitors using jetfoil was very noticeable.

July and August have the highest monthly number of visitors. May has the next highest. The monthly number of visitors during the winter period from December to the end of February is less than half as that of August, which is the peak month. There is no big difference in the ratio between male and female. In the age breakdown, the largest segment of visitors is from twenty to twenty-nine and the next largest segment is from ten to nineteen. In the breakdown for number of lodged nights, the largest segment is for two nights, followed by the segment for one night, and further followed by the segment for three nights.

Over ten thousand tourists are estimated to go mountain climbing to see an impressive Yakusugi cedar named *Jomon-*

*sugi*, which is a sightseeing highlight on Yaku. But it takes a whole day to complete this mountain climbing course so many general tourists prefer to visit Yakusugi Land, Shiratani Unsui Valley, and other sites accessible by bus.

Yaku lodging facilities have a total capacity to accommodate 2,124 people (as of November 1997). The main facilities include 43 Japanese-style small inns called *minshukus*, 9 Japanese-style inns called *ryokans*, and 6 western-style hotels. Other lodging facilities include one communal lodge run by the local administration, one privately run youth hostel, four pensions, and two no-frills hotels for traveling businessmen. The rapid increase of *minshukus* during the 1990s indicates the rising importance of the tourism and service industry to the regional economy.

Other tourism-related industries include the Yakusugi wood workshops mentioned earlier and souvenir shops. There are also several dozens of guides who take tourists to see places such as Mt. Miyanoura, which is the highest mountain. They also take tourists up a mountain to see the famous tree named *Jomonsugi*.

Bringing out the best of Yaku's outstanding natural environment, the islanders place prime importance on environment-protective tourism called "eco-tourism." This ecotourism is a new form of tourism based on the wisdom of people who have merged with their natural environments in their daily lives.

---

## *Administrative Action*

---

The national government, Kagoshima Prefecture and the two local administrations (of the town of Kamiyaku and the town of Yaku) on the island have worked enterprisingly in the movement to have Yaku designated as a World Heritagesite. Kagoshima Prefecture was especially enterprising as it promoted the "Yaku Island Environmental and Cultural Village Concept."

This concept is not the development or environmental conservation of conventional ideology. It is a concept that aims to actualize a new relationship between man and nature, which is the ideal state of coexistence. The concept concerns Yaku, where support and enrichment of each other's livelihoods is demanded while preserving the lush natural environment. The basic idea behind the Yaku Island Environmental and Cultural Village Concept is to re-create the region under the concept of "coexistence and recycling."

Kagoshima Prefecture, taking the role as the base of operations, constructed two centers on Yaku and is promoting the concept. One of the centers is the Yaku Island Environmental and Cultural Village Center, which is in the town of Kamiyaku. The other is the Yaku Island Environmental and Cultural Learning Center, which is in the town of Yaku. The former is a museum-like place that presents a

total view of Yaku's exceptional natural environment and the daily lives of its inhabitants. The latter is a facility with lodging accommodation where visitors can learn about and experience the environment in light of the concept.

In addition, the national government has constructed the Yaku Island World Heritage Conservation Center in the town of Yaku. And the town also has constructed the Yakusugi Museum, which mainly exhibits the history of Yakusugi cedars. Let us now take a look at a new movement that has begun a few years ago in the towns of Yaku and Kamiyaku. The movement aims towards becoming a society that practices recycling.

Yaku Island, which is designated on the UNESCO World Heritage List as Natural Property, promotes the harmonious coexistence between man and nature and is trying to accomplish zero emission. So in March 1999, the administrations of the towns of Kamiyaku and Yaku drew up a zero-emission plan, aiming to become a society that practices recycling of resources. In 1998, the islanders were able to recycle only 15.3% of their garbage, but with the new plan, they are aiming to recycle 99.2% by 2003.

One example of the efforts is the equipment brought into the town of Yaku to regenerate disposed cooking oil into diesel engine fuel for automobiles. Another example in the town is the recycling of Styrofoam. Styrofoam is collected separately from other garbage, dissolved

in chemicals, and then shipped to a private company in Kagoshima City.

Composting for kitchen refuse has been conducted in the town of Kamiyaku since 1998. Until then, kitchen refuse had been incinerated as burnable garbage. But that forced a temperature drop in the incinerators and raised the possibility of dioxin generation. So they started separating kitchen refuse from other garbage and composting it. The compost obtained is sold at 200 yen per 15 kilograms.

Aside from that, the use of electric vehicles is promoted in the town of Kamiyaku in order to reduce the use of gasoline, which emits carbon dioxide. Three service stations have been established in the town to recharge the batteries for the vehicles.

An officer in the village office's



Yaku Island Environmental and Cultural Village Center

© Yasuhiro Tajima

environmental planning division says, "Yaku may be a tiny island that is no more than a dot on a map. But we will approach this task with persistence that impresses the world as we become a sustainable society that practices recycling."

## Returnees and Newcomers

Around 1970, many people who had emigrated from Yaku Island returned to the island and played a vital role in saving the island's eligibility for the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Since the 1960s, which marked the high growth period of the Japanese economy, numerous young people emigrated from the island to the major metropolitan areas. During the same period,

however, many remaining islanders went on felling sprees, cutting down the Yakusugi cedars one after the other. This was unfortunate because the Yakusugi cedars, which are over a thousand years old, are the islanders' heritage of unparalleled importance.

Yakusugi cedar logging did temporarily support the livelihood of numerous islanders, but at that pace, the Yakusugi cedars would soon be exhausted and Yaku would lose its invaluable natural resource. So, unable to remain indifferent to the bleak future, some of the emigrants returned to the island around 1970. The





Newcomers settling down on Yaku Island

© Yasuhiro Tajima

returnees established a group called "Save Yaku" and incited a movement to oppose the felling of Yakusugi cedars.

Meeting resistance from the intent Yakusugi lumberjacks, the movement did not progress as smoothly as they had planned. But as a result of the movement, the west forest road area and some other natural forest areas were protected from the lumberjacks and a prohibition was later placed on the felling of Yakusugi cedars. It was this movement that

initiated the movement to have Yaku designated on the World Heritage List.

Another example of outside influence is the remarkable increase of newcomers who have been settling down on the island these recent years, especially since 1990. The population on Yaku had been steadily draining until that time, but during the nineties, immigration exceeded emigration in some years. In fact, the total population is now steadily increasing, especially in the town of Yaku.

Most of the newcomers are married couples at the retirement age who had been living in major metropolitan areas. Dreaming of life in Yaku Island's lush natural environment, they purchased land on the island and moved in and settled down. Some of the newcomers work at a hotel or run a *minshuku*-type inn, but most of them are retired. However, some of the retirees do light work such as harvesting Chinese honey oranges or

Reasons for newcomers to settle down in Yaku Town (compiled from the author's inquiry conducted in July 2000)

Reason	No. of households
attracted to the place when visited for sightseeing	5
attracted to its natural environment, such as sea, mountains, rivers, fishing sites	4
looking for a place to live in a warm climate	4
possible to pursue a self-supporting life-style	2
the island is famous as a world natural heritage	1
bought land when visited the place	1
relatives live here	2
looking for a second job after retirement	1
local people are friendly	1
Total	21

*tankan* oranges.

But unable to understand the traditions and customs of the regional society, the newcomers sometimes come into friction with the native islanders. But on the positive side, the newcomers are adding new stimulus to the island

community. They help the native islanders create their websites and help them solve the various problems involved in the e-commerce for their farm products. The newcomers also work at solving the island's bridal shortage problem.

## *Education for the Future*

Yaku uses its globally recognized lush natural environment as its main resource. To protect that environment, Yaku aims to become a recycling society that does not produce garbage. For Yaku, environmental education for the children, who bear the future, plays a vital role in its regional development. It also plays a vital role in creating ecotourism, which is the new kind of desired tourism.

Unusual for Japan, environmental science has been newly added to the curriculum at Yaku Senior High School, which is the only senior high school on Yaku Island. The faculty there has begun to foster the needed specialists in all aspects of environmental problems in the future.

Kagoshima Prefecture's board of education systematically conducts a program at the Yaku Environmental Culture Learning Center in the town of Yaku. In the program, students from

elementary and junior high schools throughout the prefecture visit the center and experience and learn about the environment on Yaku Island. They lodge in facilities that make the best use of the environment. The center has become a main base in the environmental education program that the prefecture conducts. It is especially valuable for the elementary and junior high schools of the prefecture as a familiar environmental education facility that can be used for everyday and special events.

The direction that Yaku is taking is, as the prefectural and local administrations indicate, to protect its valuable natural environment as its main resource, to use it wisely, and to develop its primary industries (farming, forestry and fishery) in harmony with the natural environment. Yaku is not only developing an outstanding environment, but is also actualizing a new tourism industry of ecotourism, for which the daily lives of the islanders play an important role. Yaku is now moving tentatively in that direction and its progress will become the center of public attention.







# Chapter 5

---

## Village Groping for Tomorrow

---

# Toshima

---

Kei Kawai

Kagoshima University Research Center for  
the Pacific Islands





The sea at Kodakara seen from Ferry Toshima

© Kei Kawai

The village of Toshima spreads over the islands called Tokara. The Tokara Islands consist of seven inhabited and five uninhabited islands. All of the Tokara Islands were created by volcanic activities. The names of the inhabited islands are Kuchinoshima, Nakanoshima, Taira, Suwanose, Akuseki, Kodakara and Takara. A distance of 160 kilometers between the northernmost and southernmost tips of the village of Toshima makes it Japan's longest village.

As the region where the cultural spheres of Yamato and Ryukyu overlapped, the Tokara Islands witnessed a flourishing interchange of people and culture since the days of antiquity. In fact, the remains of a dugout called Tachibana from the end of the Jomon Period were discovered on Nakanoshima.



Masked gods called *Boze*s exhibited at Toshima History & Culture Pavilion

© Kei Kawai

A man there told me, "Toshima is Japan in miniature." I thought he was simply implying that the north is different from the south, or that the people on Kuchinoshima and Nakanoshima are serious and diligent while the people on Kodakara and Takara in the south are magnanimous and easy-going. But there was more to it than that. The islands in the north are towering with precipices that jut out towards the ocean while Kodakara and Takara are gently sloped and are covered with uplifted coral reefs. The man said that those topographical characteristics affected the characteristics of the island inhabitants.

The village of Toshima is filled with mystery. On Akuseki, masked gods called *Bozes* appear in the seventh month of the lunar calendar used in old Japan and drive the evil spirits away from the people. Moreover, it is said that many defeated soldiers of the Heike Clan escaped to this region and settled there around 1200. It is also said that, although historically untenable, Captain Kidd buried his treasure on Takara and that the island in Robert Louis Stevenson's book called *Treasure Island* is actually Takara (meaning "treasure" in Japanese).

This region is extremely interesting biologically. A zoological borderline called Watase's Line runs between Akuseki and Kodakara. Temperate Zone life forms dwell on one side of the borderline while Subtropical Zone life forms dwell on the other. For example, in these islands, *habus* (*Trimeresurus*), which are venomous snakes

indigenous to this region, do not dwell to the north of Watase's Line, whereas *Tokara habus* (*T. tokarensis*) dwell only on Kodakara and Takara.

A myriad of other native plant and animal species inhabits this region. Tamoto lilies (*Lilium nobilissimum*), which give blossom to white petals between late June and early July, are endemic to Kuchinoshima. They are called "tamoto lilies," meaning "sleeve lilies," because defeated soldiers of the Heike Clan brought bulbs, hidden in their sleeves to the island. The

tamoto lilies are now on the verge of extinction because they have been excessively picked since the late 1920s.

There are Tokara horses, which are a native species of small horses that have never had contact with horses of the Occident. They have been designated as protected animals of Kagoshima Prefecture. And there are Ryukyu robins (*Erithacus komadori*), which are designated as protected animals of the nation. They inhabit the Tokara Islands and the other islands of the Nansei Island archipelago.

## "Steamship is our roads."

Having no airport facilities, the village of Toshima is completely dependent on sea vessels. The village, which consists of

twelve islands, has almost no roads. So Mr. Fumizono, who made great exertions to put a village steamship into operation, proclaimed "Steamship is our roads." The *Toshima Maru*, which is the village-operated liner that the villagers had wished for, finally went into service in 1933.

Nowadays, a doctor comes to the islands by ship once a month. Food and mail are transported by ship. There are almost no stores in Toshima, so for shopping, the villagers go to the city by ship. All of the villagers unload the cargo from the ship that comes three times a week so the islands become very active during the unloading time.

A new large-size ferry, also called *Toshima*, was put into service in 2000. The old ship could not be used during unfavorable weather conditions, which occurred often. But the large-size ferry can handle almost any weather condition. The



Monument on Nakanoshima commemorating the opening of a new sea route © Kei Kawai

new *Ferry Toshima* sways very little and affords a pleasant ride, even in slight turbulence. I could feel the great reliance and pride in the new ferry when a man there told me, "Now we can still get around, even when the other ship is out of action."

In the past, ships had to moor in the offing because the harbors of the islands weren't equipped to accommodate them. A barge from the harbor had to go out to meet

the ship and come alongside it. The cargo and passengers were then transferred into the barge and hauled to the harbor. It wasn't until ten years ago that the harbor on Kodakara was able to accommodate ships. Gaja Island, which used to be inhabited, was abandoned because it ran out of young people to transfer cargo from the ship to the barge. Equipped harbors and stable service by the ships are necessary to support the villagers' livelihoods.

## Industries

Farming and ranching are the main industries of Toshima but only twenty percent of the villagers are engaged in them. Many villagers work in the marine products industry or at the construction sites of public works projects but most of them have more than one job. For example, a person who runs an inn might also work in the fishing industry, or a farmer might also work at a power company. A fisherman explained, "It's safer to hold different kinds of jobs."

The apparent reasons are that the income from only one job is not enough and that there are few year-round jobs. The villagers used to be self-sufficient. In cattle breeding, beef cows, which are black-hair cattle, are put out to pasture. At auction time, calves are dispatched by ship. The lady who runs the inn where I stayed said, "Buyers mercilessly haggle down the

prices of the calves."

She explained that it is too expensive to return the calves to Toshima so the sellers apparently end up selling the calves at unreasonably low prices. But a long time ago, commission merchants used to come to the islands and purchase the calves at ridiculously low prices to make enormous profits for themselves. In those days, having no understanding of market pricing, the villagers had no choice but to agree to the unfair terms set by the commission merchants. Another villager added, "So the situation now is better than before."

The villagers have been engaged in putting Tokara goats out to pasture recently. As you walk in the village, a Tokara goat often suddenly appears in front of you from behind a bush or something and gives you a start. In farming, the villagers are also putting energy into the cultivation of loquats, *toranoos* and other such crops. However, a lack of space for ranching and an aging population have become problems.



---

## *Living on the Ocean*

---

The islands of the village are situated in line with the flow of the Japan (Kuroshio) Current, where the ocean contains a wealth of natural resources. Single-hook fishing for Japanese snapper, flame snapper, splendid alfonsino, and other fancy fish that live near the seabed occurs all year round in Toshima. People also troll the waters for bonito, Spanish mackerel and dorado. These fish are mainly consumed in the village.

Flying fish migrate to the village from May through June so fishermen fish for them by gill net and preserve most of them by drying. Skin diving for spiny lobsters, cuttlefish and green snails is also conducted in the coastal areas. The end of the year is the time when the village is swamped with orders for spiny lobsters. Even without advertising the spiny lobsters, orders for them come in from all over the place as a result of the high acclaim they receive by word of mouth. But these fishing industries have many problems.

One problem is that less than 10% of the population is engaged in the marine products industry. Still worse, the number of younger participants in the fishing industry is steadily diminishing as the population drains so the fishing industries are conducted on a very small scale. Although scores of flying fish migrate to the village in spring, it is not profitable to fish for them on a small scale, so the flying

fish cannot be fished for when not enough people are available.

Another problem is that the villagers of Toshima have almost nothing to put up for collateral, so they don't qualify for financing from any bank. It is difficult for them to get bigger fishing vessels and increase the scale of their fishing industries. Another problem is that they cannot place really fresh fish on the market of the mainland islands because of the long transportation time. And to market the fish, freight charges must also be paid.

Other major negative factors are the rampant typhoons that blow through the Tokara Islands in summer and the monsoons that disrupt weather conditions in winter. Another problem is, according to some villagers, the alarming decrease in the fish population brought on by deteriorating water quality caused by construction on the coastal areas of the islands. Still worse, it is believed that other environmental problems are also severely affecting the volume of natural resources.

On the other hand, according to some villagers, fish are so bountiful in this region that numerous fishing vessels from other regions continually come here and raise havoc. The village fishing industries are conducted on a very small scale. So even though the area is good for fishing, the village fishing boats are too small to handle unfavorable weather conditions that the large-size vessels from other prefectures can handle.

To further develop the marine products

industry of the village, a fisherman who conducts local single-hook fishing points out that emphasis must be placed in three areas. The first is acquiring large-size fishing vessels through investment. The second is knowledge about the fishing industries. And the third is knowledge about the fish that utilize the features of the area.

With assistance from the village office, the fisherman is now setting up a large-scale refueling facility on the harbor. He also operates a 5-ton fishing vessel, which he acquired through his own investment. This 5-ton vessel is operable even in unfavorable weather so now he can go out on twice the number of days as he could when he used a 1-ton vessel.

Now that the large-size *Ferry Toshima* has been put into service last year, he can dispatch fish to the market on a regular schedule. The ferry has eliminated the problem of many canceled plies (runs). With the new ferry, fish are dispatched immediately after they are caught and are marketed in good fresh condition. He says that he can immediately dispatch even a small catch. This steady supply of fresh fish to the market is a merit that offsets the freightage.

Immediately after a typhoon has passed is the best time for him to hustle. This is because the fishing vessels from other regions evacuate the area when a typhoon is about to strike and it takes them a while to get back after the typhoon passes. But having the new large-size vessel and a geographical advantage, he

can resume operations as soon as the weather starts improving.

This strategy also gives him a head start at dispatching his catch to the market. He can also charge a high price for the catch because the supply of fish is low at times of unfavorable weather. He says that the large-size fishing vessel allows him to market fresh fish even under slightly unfavorable weather conditions and that his catches have been winning higher appraisal than before. Needless to say, the large-size *Ferry Toshima*, which stoutly stands up to foul weather, also contributes to his achievements.

With such things in consideration, the following must be established to further develop the marine products industry:

- 1) Measures for natural resources
- 2) Maintained anchoring sites and refueling facilities
- 3) Increasing the number of younger participants
- 4) Measures for funding
- 5) Stable means of transportation

Numerous fishermen point out that



Green snails caught by skin diving © Kei Kawai

---

the volume of natural resources has considerably decreased. Fishing restrictions on a few species are conducted during closed seasons for fishing. But what is really necessary is for a study to be conducted into the volume of natural resources and for more efforts to be made in reforming the present attitude of "catching fish" to "fostering fish."

It is necessary to teach things such as proper fishing methods to the fishermen. And although most of the islands are equipped with harbors, it is also necessary to add adequate refueling facilities. It is important to consider that if those items are not implemented systematically, the environment will be destroyed and the volume of natural resources in the coastal area will diminish.

In the face of a population drain, finding younger participants is a major problem but I think that the villagers might solve that problem by conveying the image they hold of the future to returnees and newcomers to the islands. Toshima is conducting financing for the development of its fishing industries and the financing is expected to

become much more substantial. Another positive turn is that the large-size *Ferry Toshima*, which is of vital importance, is expected to provide even more stable service.

Many problems are pointed out for the marine products industry on the remote islands but on the other hand, the islanders are wasting no time in becoming modernized. They are taking increasing advantage of information technology. In fact, lately, fishing vessels have also been communicating with each other not only by radio, but also by mobile phones.

Before, messages had been conveyed to fishing vessels entirely by radio. But now, mobile phones are used for verbal dialog and email with vessels within a twenty-mile range from the island. Their informational exchange includes topics such as the location of good and bad fishing areas. And with mobile phones, fishing vessels can also easily and instantly obtain large quantities of information such as the latest weather charts, so fishing plans have become easier to map out. Information technology has indeed permeated every nook and cranny of Japan.

## Salt

---

The natural salt industry is one of Toshima's important industries. Salt from Toshima is marketed under the brand name of *Takara no Shio*. Shipped to Osaka and other places, it is one of Toshima's few

nationally famous products. In Toshima, salt is produced on Takara and Kodakara. On Takara, natural salt production is now a small-scale industry that engages three people.

In the past also, production of natural salt had been conducted on Takara but the industry declined and was temporarily sus-

pended. It went back into operation four years ago after a monopoly on salt had been lifted.

The drying of the salt is now done either by natural sunlight and wind or by heating in pots, but they say that the naturally dried salt has a mellower taste. Toshima's natural salt industry made rapid growth because it went back into operation at a time when a boom for natural foods had occurred and Toshima jumped on that bandwagon.

Natural salt production is perfectly suited to the region because the islands are surrounded with an abundance of saltwater and the raw material is there for the taking. And unlike produce that loses freshness with time, salt does not deteriorate in quality no matter how long it takes to transport to its place of consumption.

But Toshima's salt industry has been hit with a double punch. Competition from other areas has rapidly increased and the natural salt boom in Japan is on the wane. A peculiar phenomenon in Japanese society is that fads occur with enormous momentum but suddenly come to an end when the next fad begins. So now, with the increased supply and decreased demand, it has become difficult to expand business operations.

Two tons were produced on Takara in



*Takara no Shio* salt

© Kei Kawai

the first year after coming back into operation but that was not enough to break even. Toshima's salt industry then expanded to allow a twelve-ton yearly production, but yearly production is now held down to five tons because of the present oversupply. To accomplish further development, the people in this industry must open a new market of consumers.

But being on a remote island far from the place of consumption, and being a small-scale industry, they are not in a position to sell their product by dispatching sales personnel to directly meet with the dealers and consumers. So the people in the industry are now trying to expand their market by advertising on the Internet and sending samples to various places. They are steadily continuing production and anticipating a recurrence of the boom.

## Future Prospects

The Tokara Islands have an exquisite natural environment. And being created by volcanic activity, all of the islands have



---

numerous hot springs. Japanese tend to visit places where there is mystique, lush nature, natural spas and delicious local cuisine. The Toshima administration is thinking of making those attributes into resources for tourism but the villagers don't seem to pay much heed to the idea. A gap in thinking is in the making.

A great change in the thinking of the villagers will probably be necessary for them to appreciate the numerous latent possibilities in tourism as a future industry. But without giving the views of the villagers due respect, a major problem will occur. Generally, plans to develop tourism in the countryside mainly reflect urban attitudes and values. The sense of values held by villagers greatly differs from that of urbanites and "island practice" accordingly greatly differs from "city practice."

There will be no hope of making Toshima a site for tourism unless the villagers clarify the ideal future they want for the islands and discuss it with the administration so that a common understanding can be reached.

The many problems in Toshima include aging, depopulation, declining birthrate, garbage and confusion about what the main industry should be. As a depopulation countermeasure to enliven the islands, the village is inviting city children to sojourn on the islands to study the mountains and seas. The children enjoy the life on the islands, but this also involves many problems.

The decreasing number of villagers



Open-air bath on Akuseki

who can act as substitute parents for the city children is a big problem. The villagers are now examining the possibilities of calling in such substitute parents from the outside. In any case, I think that the key to solving the depopulation, aging and other population problems will be the way the returnees, newcomers and other outsiders are handled. Also, the upkeep of steady service by the ships will play a vital role in raising the standard of living on the islands.



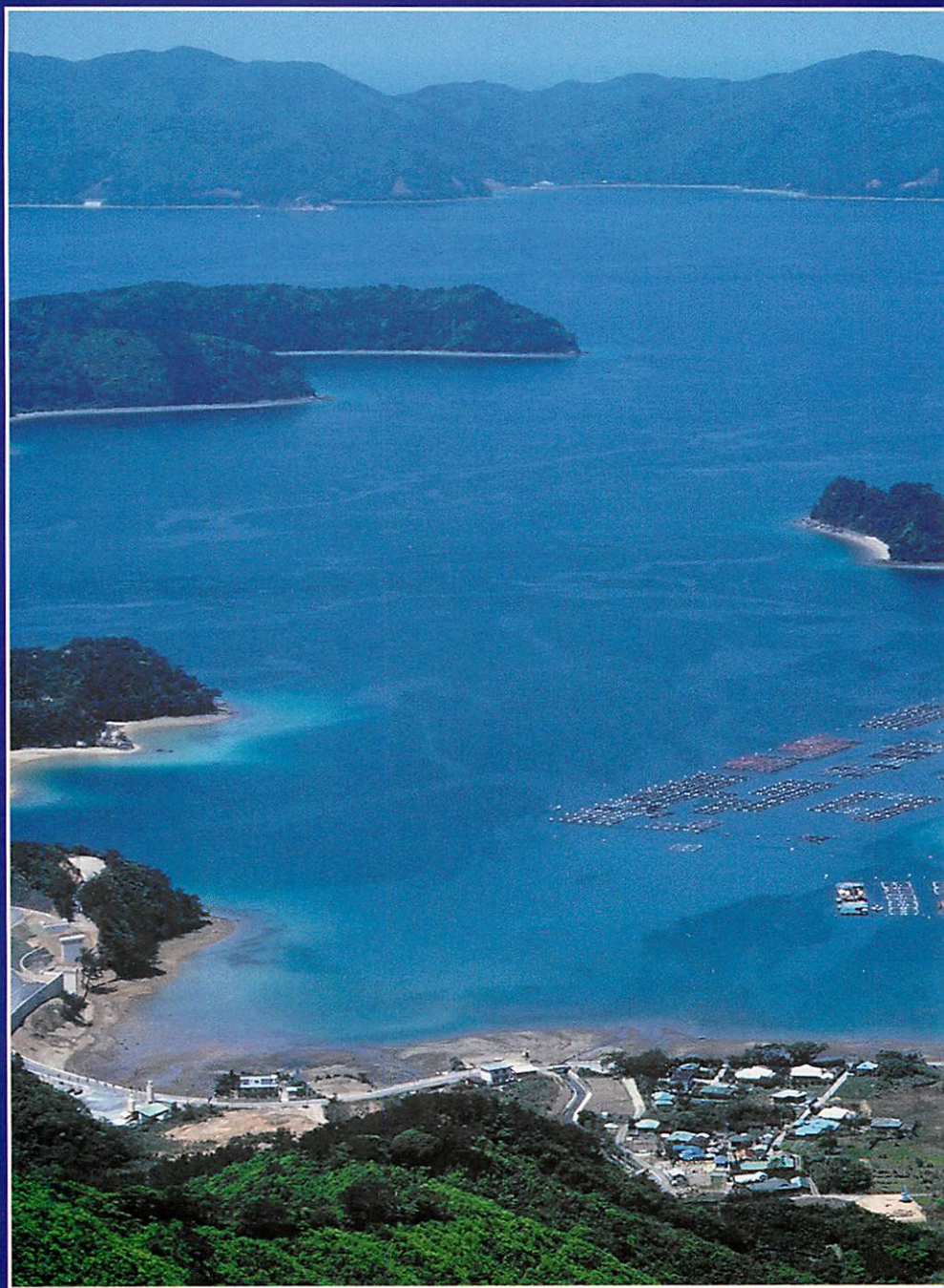
© Kei Kawai

Roads make up an important transportation network in any region of land on the globe. People come and go, up and down an assortment of roads from alleys and avenues to streets and superhighways. Likewise, valuing the "steamship is our roads" concept, Toshima must not depend only on the *Ferry Toshima*, but must have more sea vessels of every description. For successful future development, Toshima must have a sense of solidarity as a community in

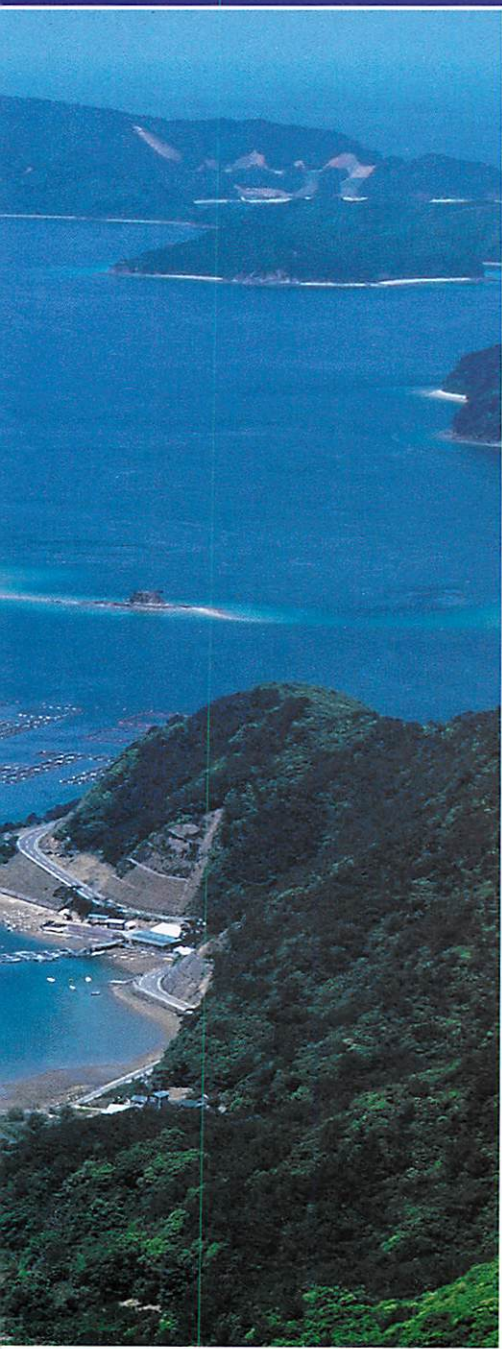
which all members share the same fate.

I think that the future possibilities will increase if exchange between the islands is deepened in many ways such as plies (runs) by small vessels. Daily life on the islands unfolds at a slower pace than in urban areas so a very apt organizer who can skillfully harmonize "island practice" with "city practice" is absolutely necessary. The organizer will need a comprehensive viewpoint that is fixed on the future.









# Chapter 6

---

## The Galapagos of the Orient

# Amami Oshima

---

Sueo Kuwahara

Faculty of Law, Economics & Humanities,  
Kagoshima University





Husband and wife in a taro field

© Ryo Aoyama

The string of islands from the southern tip of Kyushu to Taiwan is called the Ryukyu Arc. Within the Ryukyu Arc, the Amami Islands are the row of eight inhabited islands from 27 degrees to 29 degrees north latitude. The eight Amami Islands are called Amami Oshima, Kakeroma, Uke, Yoro, Kikai, Tokunoshima, Okinoerabu and Yoron. The Amami Islands have a total population of about 130,000 people and consist of one city and ten towns or villages.

Amami Oshima has an area of 719.5 square kilometers and a population of 74,000 people. Combined with Kakeroma, Uke and Yoro, which are its three small neighboring islands, the total area is 818 square kilometers. Next to Okinawa and Sadohashima, Amami Oshima is the third largest of Japan's remote islands.

Mountains over 400 meters in height

run north and south on the island, with Mt. Yuwan at a height of 694 meters as the main peak. Zigzagging shorelines which hug the mountains provide the coasts of Amami Oshima with many good harbors. Interspersed in the many small areas of flatland found in zigzagging bay areas around the island are isolated communities with many differences in language and folk customs.

The Nansei Islands were part of the Asian continent about ten million years ago. Innumerable mainland animals then inhabited this area. But about one and a half million years ago, the Tokara Islands of today broke away from the continent and isolated the animals.

About one million years ago, the Nansei Islands were divided into several large areas and the land kept repeatedly rising and subsiding as a result of active diastrophism,

which is movement in the earth's crust. The low areas then subsided into the ocean and the high areas became islands, which include Amami Oshima, Tokunoshima, Okinawa, Ishigaki and Iriomote. Coral reefs then developed in the low areas that subsided in the ocean but later were uplifted to become the coral reef islands named Kikai, Okinoerabu and Yoron.

Amami Oshima had been part of the Asian continent for a long time, and because it did not sink into the ocean after the separation, it is still the habitat of numerous mainland Asian plants and animals. But it underwent a peculiar evolution as a result of being isolated by the ocean since the separation. The peculiar animals on Amami Oshima are like living fossils.

One example is the Amami rabbit (also called Amami hare), which is on Japan's protected species list. Another example is the Lidth's jay, which is also on

the list. The Lidth's jay is the emblematic bird of Kagoshima Prefecture. Lidth's jays are endemic to Amami Oshima. As with the Amami rabbit and the Anderson's newt, the Lidth's jay is a species that survived from the age when the islands were part of the continent, but it has evolved to adapt to the peculiar ecosystem of Amami Oshima.

Numerous other wild birds such as the Ryukyu robin and the white-backed woodpecker are found almost exclusively on Amami Oshima. So are numerous other Nansei Islands endemic species such as the *kenaga* mouse (*Diplothrix legata*) and the Ryukyu sweetfish (*Plecoglossus altivelis ryukyuensis*). Amami Oshima also has the second largest acreage of primeval mangrove forest in Japan. Amami Oshima is a treasure trove of plants and animals that are uncommon to the rest of Japan and to the world. That is why it is often called the "Galapagos of the Orient."

## *Kinsakubaru: Amami Oshima's Last Sanctuary*

A myriad of wild fowl species inhabits a primeval forest area on Amami Oshima called Kinsakubaru, which is the last sanctuary for the wildlife of the island. It is said that almost three hundred species here have been recorded so far, many of which have already been recorded in reference listings. This means that over half of

the 560 recorded species of wild fowl in Japan are on Amami Oshima. The many birds that visit briefly while migrating and the many that stray in are included in this number. This wide variety of wild fowl species is an indication of the great importance of the natural environment and peculiar ecosystem of Amami Oshima.

Lidth's jays enjoy eating acorns and have a habit of burying them in the ground in October and November to store them for the winter. In doing so, the Lidth's jays are inadvertently planting seeds for *itajii* oaks

(*Castanopsis cuspidata* var. *lutchuensis*) and Amami *arakashi* oaks and contributing to the replanting of the broadleaf forest.

Endemic subspecies such as the White's ground thrush and the white-backed woodpecker are wild fowl that especially depend on a primeval forest. With an estimated population of about one hundred, White's ground thrushes are closer to extinction than any other wild fowl. It is believed that white-backed woodpeckers also cannot easily survive without a primeval forest containing many old trees or other trees with broad trunks.

Amami Oshima used to abound with lush woods that teemed with Lidth's jays and a myriad of other wild birds and other endemic animals. The lush woods provided all the creatures with a safe and secure sanctuary. But since the end of World War II, the lush woods have been rapidly disappearing as a result of commercial developments. The only virgin forest that still remains untouched is Kinsakubaru, which

contains slightly less than half of the natural forest acreage of the past on the island.

*Itajii* oaks and other oaks over a hundred years old are said to grow in this forest. The Duke of Edinburgh reportedly remarked that Kinsakubaru was a marvelous sight when he came to view the island for the World Wide Fund. It is said that the production staff of the movie *Godzilla* were so impressed when they saw a poster of Kinsakubaru that they decided to make Amami Oshima their shooting location.

Since the end of World War II, much of the woods on Amami Oshima have been undergoing massive deforestation as a result of a surging trend commonly known as "Amashin" to develop the Amami Islands. Trees are chopped down, crisscrossing forest roads are paved, tunnels are dug, and mountainsides are shaved. Man's presence is felt even in the depths of the woods.

An incident occurred recently that typified man's clash with the animals in the woods. A dispute over the construction of a

golf course broke out and gave rise to an unprecedented lawsuit known as the "Amami rabbit case." The dispute divided the islanders into two factions supporting either commercial development or nature conservation.



Kinsakubaru, primeval forest area on Amami Oshima

© Naze City Office

## *Amami Rabbit Case*

This lawsuit became the focus of attention throughout the nation because it was the first time in Japan the plaintiffs were the spokespersons for wild animals, which in this case were Amami rabbits. Here is how it started.

An area on Amami Oshima called Ichizaki was known as one of the regions inhabited by numerous Amami rabbits. The area includes a site slated to become the Sumiyo village golf course. In 1992, some people were worried that the golf site development might adversely affect the habitat of the Amami rabbits, so they went to observe the development site and the peripheral area. They found Amami rabbit droppings and other traces that proved that Amami rabbits indeed inhabit the area.

As the spokespersons for the Amami rabbits and the natural environment of Amami Oshima, one nature conservation group and its twenty-two members filed a suit against the golf site developers. However, the main point at issue in this trial was what party could be judged as qualified or not as a plaintiff within the framework of the laws in force. The trial would establish whether a corporation without juridical personality could be a spokesperson for nature itself. (The corporation was established to protect the natural environment.) At the same time, the trial would also establish whether individuals, as natural persons, with serious concern for conservation of the natural

environment could be such spokespersons.

In 1999, the court ruled that such entities were not qualified as plaintiffs. The judgment was based on the legislation and judicial precedents concerning plaintiff qualifications up to then. So the animals lost the suit in the first trial.

Since the end of World War II, harbor, road and embankment constructions and other public works have been progressing rapidly, destroying the natural environment. But on the other hand, nature conservation campaigns, environmental protection campaigns and other movements have arisen to directly oppose the large-scale development projects that destroy the valuable forest and waters of the island.

In the beginning of the 1970s, a large-scale development project planned for an island called Edateku, which is part of the village of Uken on Amami Oshima, divided the villagers and the rest of the islanders into two factions either supporting or opposing the project. The project plan was to reclaim the shore of Edateku and construct a large-scale petroleum reserve base there. However, as the result of several years of intense protest campaigns by local and outside organizations established to conserve nature or to protect the environment, the project was called off.

Since the end of World War II, Amami Oshima has been depending on large appropriations as financial aid for island development from the national administration. And because island devel-



---

opment destroys nature, antagonism has been extremely intense on Amami Oshima

between supporters of development and supporters of nature conservation.

## *Father Ferriet and Amami Life Forms*

---

After setting foot on Amami Oshima and seeing the myriad of life forms, a Frenchman wasted no time in introducing them to Europe. The man was a Catholic priest named Father Joseph Bernard Ferriet. He was originally a missionary who was sent to Nagasaki from a Catholic mission in France in 1881. It was Ferriet who began the propagation of Catholicism on Amami Oshima when he arrived on the island at the end of December in 1891.

He first arrived to a city called Naze, which is said to have had a population of between six and seven thousand in those days. With Naze as his base, Ferriet zealously propagated the religion and created a network of converts mainly in the northern part of the island. However, he ruined his health and had no choice but to return to France in 1906 to recuperate. But the seeds of faith that he planted on the island started bearing considerable fruit after 1912 as a result of the efforts of his successors. According to a survey conducted in 1918, there were 3,799 Catholic believers, 9 churches, 2 French missionaries and 3 Japanese missionaries on Amami Oshima.

Ferriet was not only a missionary. He

was also a recognized authority as a researcher of life forms on Amami Oshima. Besides propagating Catholicism, he collected bugs and plants that were peculiar to Amami Oshima and sent them to the academic circles of his home country. It was through Ferriet that Amami Oshima first became known to the world. Ferriet devotedly collected coleopterans and sent them to Rene Oberthur, who was a famous beetle collector in France.

Ferriet's first treatise about the specimens he collected was published in 1894. The beetles that Ferriet sent to Oberthur captured the interest of academics throughout France, so in return, Oberthur sent Ferriet words of encouragement and suitable remuneration. Ferriet used the remuneration for erecting churches and evangelizing. Oberthur distributed the specimens from Ferriet to specialists, who then started mentioning them in numerous essays and treatises. Some of the specimens were passed on to academics in Britain and were recorded as specimens from Ferriet.

Ferriet was also interested in plants, especially mosses and ferns. As he did with the coleopterans, he sent samples to France for specialists to examine. It is said that Ferriet's name is affixed to the scientific names attributed to some of those species.

In 1923, jurisdiction over evangelizing activities on Amami Oshima was trans-



Farming family in a sugarcane field

© Ryo Aoyama

ferred from the mission in France to a Catholic denomination in Canada, so Japanese-Canadian missionary Motoi Yonekawa came to the island. Besides propagat-

ing Catholicism, he also operated the Oshima Girls' High School in Naze and made great endeavors in educational work on the island.

## First Photographer on Amami Oshima

Before World War II, there was a Japanese photographer who wasted no time in photographing the valuable creatures on Amami Oshima and presenting them to the outside world. On April 12th, 1935, Kenji Shimomura, Japan's first natural life cameraman, arrived at the area of a *gusuku* (a ruined castle) in the village of Sumiyo on Amami Oshima.

In the *gusuku*, there was a mountain

that was thickly forested with ferns growing rampantly and tree ferns rising majestically. On the mountain, Ryukyu robins would be chirping away and white-backed woodpeckers would be busy pecking on the trees. The holes and paths used by Amami rabbits could be seen here and there.

The main reason for Shimomura's visit to Amami Oshima was to photograph some Lidth's jays, which are on the protected animal list. Shimomura was the first person to capture Amami rabbits and Lidth's jays on film. In the autumn of 1935, he exhibited a photograph of a Lidth's jay



Farming family and their tractor

© Ryo Aoyama

in an exhibition at the British Museum in London. The theme of the exhibition, which was sponsored by a company called English Country Living, was natural life photography of the world. Next to the Lidth's jay photographs were photographs

titled "Habitat of Lidth's Jays," which depicted forest scenes at the village of Sumiyo. That was the first time photographs Lidth's jays and scenes of Amami Oshima had ever been displayed at an international event.

## Coexistence with Venomous Snakes

---

Another animal that played a role in nature conservation on Amami Oshima is the *habu* (*Trimeresurus flavoviridis*), which is a venomous snake. The islanders went through great pains fighting the *habus* for a long time. In the past, about three hundred people were bitten by a *habu* every year and about half of the victims died from the bite.

When bitten, a victim had to cut off

the bitten part of his or her body at once to prevent the venom from circulating throughout the whole body. So numerous victims ended up dead or crippled from the injury suffered from hacking off a bodily part using a sickle or whatever else they happened to be carrying. But nowadays, thanks to an antidote, victims rarely die from a bite.

The *habu* reportedly is nearsighted but sensitive to aerial vibration and its tongue and entire body are sensory organs that perceive approaching prey. The *habu* avoids direct sunlight, which weakens it, and takes shelter in the shade of things like

stone walls and cycads. When prey approaches, the *habu* readies itself by coiling into an S-shape. It then leaps a distance up to twice its body length and sinks the two fangs of its upper jaw into its victim.

It is said that a *habu* bite is sometimes hardly noticeable, feeling something like "a peck by a chicken." So some people die from a *habu* bite without even knowing they have been bitten. It is also said that victims die in about an hour if the bite is serious. In the Amami Islands, *habu*s are found only on Amami Oshima and Tokunoshima and are not found on Kikai, Okinoerabu or Yoron. *Habus* do not inhabit the latter three because the islands are uplifted coral reefs that had been submerged for a long time.

The venomous snakes may be a formidable menace to the islanders, but they also bring about a wide assortment of benefits to mankind. An example is the designs of Oshima pongees (a special product of Amami Oshima), which have peculiar designs that resemble the patterns on *habu* skins. No two *habus* have the same pattern on their skins even though there are so many of them. The *habus* greatly out-number the humans. Reportedly about 200,000 *habus*

inhabit the island. This great diversity of patterns is, no doubt, what influenced the designs of Oshima pongees.

Another benefit brought about by coexistence with *habus* is the protection of virgin forest and other aspects of the natural environment. The very existence of these venomous snakes kept man away from the mountains and forests for a long time. With the innumerable *habus* crawling around, the mountains and forests were terrifying places. As a result, the valuable species of plants and animals of Amami Oshima managed to survive.

Amami Oshima's peculiar topography was also a key factor in protecting the animals. With the greater part of the island occupied by steep mountains, there is very little flat land. Another factor that contributed to the protection of the natural environment was the ancient unwavering beliefs that the islanders held about nature. They feared ghostly apparitions called *kenmuns* and other phenomena that they believed haunted the forests. It was a combination of such factors that protected Amami Oshima's natural environment over the ages and preserved the island as a treasure trove of plant and animal species.

## *Michinoshima*

Today, a combination of two Chinese characters meaning "cover" plus "beauty" is used to write "Amami." In historical

Japanese literature such as the Ancient Chronicle (*Kojiki*) of 712 and the Chronicles of Japan (*Nihonshoki*) of 720, it was written with a different combination meaning "ocean" plus "look," or with three special Chinese characters used only



---

phonetically.

The history of the Amami Islands can be divided into three main ages. The first age is a period in which the islanders lived in hamlets. It begins in the neolithic era and continues into the 8th and 9th centuries. The second age is the early modern period that begins when the hamlet chiefs struggled to protect and expand their domains. After that, in the same second age, comes a period of rule by the Ryukyu Kingdom, which is followed by a feudal period in which the Amami Islands were subject to the Satsuma Domain. The third age is the modern period that begins with the prewar years, which includes the Meiji Era (1868-1912), Taisho Era (1912-1926) and early Showa Era (1926-1945). The third age continues with a postwar period that includes a brief rule by the Allied Forces' General Headquarters and the present period that begins when the Amami Islands were returned to Japan.

Since the beginning of the Edo Period (1603-1867), while under rule of the

Satsuma Domain, the Amami Islands were officially named "Michinoshima," which means "route islands." From the 7th century through the first half of the 8th century, the Amami Islands had become known as Michinoshima because they were important points of marine traffic for envoy ships heading to China and for ships voyaging to mainland Kyushu from China and Ryukyu. The Amami Islands offered the ships refuge and replenishment of food and fuel.

In the beginning of the Heian Period (794-1192), relations with the Tang Dynasty waned and the Imperial Court lost interest in the south islands. So in 824, the south islands were freed from jurisdiction of the Dazaifu, which was the Kyushu branch of the central government. In name only, the islands belonged to the Osumi Domain, but in reality, they had entered a period in which they didn't belong to any domain.

---

## *Naha Reign and Yamato*

---

Throughout their history, the Amami Islands underwent two long periods of colonization. The first was the Naha Reign, which was 340 years of rule by the Ryukyu Kingdom. And the second was the Yamato Reign, which was 260 years of rule by the

Satsuma Domain. According to folklore, the Amami Islands started paying tribute to the Ryukyu Kingdom in 1266, but in reality, it was during the 15th century.

In the mid-14th century, the main island of Okinawa consisted of three small kingdoms called Hokuzan, Chuzan and Nanzan. But in 1429, Chuzan destroyed Hokuzan and Nanzan, unifying the island. Ryukyuan culture started flowing into the Amami Islands after the unification of

those three kingdoms.

Local powerful clans in the Amami Islands or blood relatives of supreme lords were appointed as lords over the Amami Islands. *Noros* (high priestesses) were sent to each island by Her Majesty Kikoe in Shuri, the capital of the Ryukyu Kingdom. Amamian culture absorbed all facets of Ryukyuan culture including folk music, traditional dance, ceramics and musical instruments like the *jabisen*, which is a snake-skinned samisen.

In 1368, the Ming Dynasty placed an embargo on Chinese merchant vessels, prohibiting them from conducting overseas commerce. So with the Chinese merchant vessels out of action and out of the way, the Ryukyu Kingdom developed into a mighty trading power linking Japan to mainland China.

In 1609, the Satsuma Domain invaded the Ryukyu Kingdom and subjugated the Amami Islands. The Amami Islands were then taken out from the Ryukyu Kingdom and placed under direct control of the Satsuma Domain. Starting from the closest to Satsuma, the names of the islands in the Ryukyu Arc became Kuchinoshima, Michinoshima (which later became the Amami Islands), Ryukyu and Saki.

Local administrators from the Satsuma Domain came to the Amami Islands in 1613 and the new administration began. The Satsuma Domain monopolized sugar, which they sold directly in Osaka, and mercilessly demanded enormous amounts of sugar as tax payments from the islanders.

From 1753 to 1755, the Shimazu Clan received a mandate from the shogunate to undertake the difficult task of repairing the Kiso River. The clan had to borrow a great deal of money for the task and had trouble regaining good financial standing. Still worse, the extravagant lifestyle of Shigehide Shimazu, the feudal lord, drove the clan deeper into debt.

In their efforts to replenish their battered finances, the Shimazu Clan looked to the sugar on the Amami Islands as their source of revenue. The islanders were forced to convert their rice paddies into sugarcane fields and to eat potatoes instead of rice as their staple food. The Amami Islands became a colony of peasants for the Satsuma Domain's production of unrefined brown sugar.

Peasants who could not produce enough unrefined brown sugar, which was demanded as tax, became slaves called *yanchus*. It is said that one-third of the island's population became *yanchus*. An edict to emancipate the *yanchus* was issued in 1871 in the fourth year of the Meiji Era, but it wasn't until the end of the Meiji Era about forty years later that all of the *yanchus* were set free.

By slave-driving the peasants, the Satsuma Domain paid off their astronomical debts and secured a substantial financial base to operate as a powerful clan during the Meiji Restoration. It is said that the Meiji Restoration would have unfolded much differently if the Amamians had not been exploited for the unrefined brown

---

sugar.

Between the Ryukyu Kingdom and the Satsuma Domain, the Amami Islands tasted a bitter history of subjugation, exploitation and discrimination. But on the other hand, through the eras, the Amami Islands have carefully guarded the vestiges of an ancient culture that is no longer existent on the mainland islands of Japan.

Examples are numerous. The peculiar Amamian dialect is loaded with archaic expressions. Amamian priestesses such as *noros* (high priestesses) and *yutas* (shamans) retain the ancient form of traditional *mikos* (shrine maidens). Until a few dozen years ago, the islanders

zealously practiced ancestor worship and continued the practice of washing the bones of the deceased after letting the corpse decompose for a certain length of time.

More examples include their custom of carrying things on their heads or carrying things on their backs in baskets attached to their foreheads by tumplines, their thatched roofs and elevated floors in their architecture, their ceremonial or ritual events held all year round, and their bountiful traditional handicraft. The Amami Islands are truly a treasure house of folklore and cultural anthropology.

## *The Devil called "Amashin"*

---

The third time the Amami Islands were colonized was the American Reign, which was the short eight-year period of occupation by Allied Forces' General Headquarters directly after the end of World War II. On January 29th, 1946, a memorandum from the Allied Forces' Supreme Headquarters placed the Amami Islands and Okinawa under the same division of administration. In 1951, The Amami Oshima Reversion Council was formed and as a result of the campaigning on the entire island, Amami Oshima reverted to Japan on December 25th, 1953.

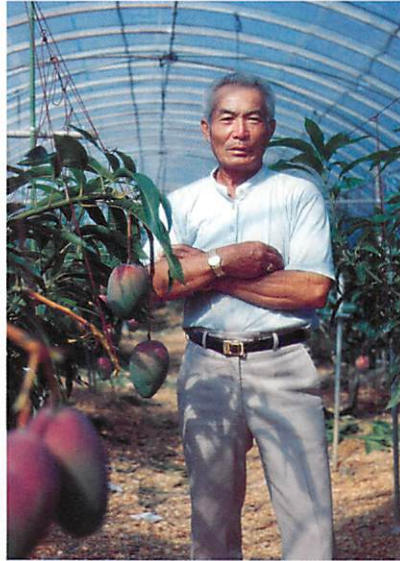
The economy of the Amami Islands was completely devastated at the time of the reversion so the Japanese government established the "Special Measures Law for Amami Islands Reconstruction" in 1954 and implemented the reconstruction. But the average income of the islanders remained less than half of the national average and showed no signs of improvement. So the "Special Measures Law for Amami Islands Development" and the "New Special Measures Law for Amami Islands Development" were established in the second and third terms respectively. The laws have eventually become known by their Japanese abbreviation "Amashin." In 1994, the Revised Amashin Law was established and a ten-year extension to 2003 was enacted.

In that way, the name of the "Special Measures Law for Amami Islands" established June of 1954 was revised from "Reconstruction" to "Development" and then to "New Development." This law has also been revised and has had its term extended every five years. But it retains consistent underlying objectives, which are to raise the average income level on the Amami Islands to the level of Okinawa and the mainland islands of Japan and to make the Amami Islands economically independent.

Almost 1.44 trillion yen for operating expenses have been poured into the islands for the task so far in the 45 years since the Amami Islands reverted to Japan. Projects entailing large-scale modifications of the natural landscape such as roads and harbors occupy almost eighty percent of the entire budget.

One-third of the Amami Islands' population emigrated during the last forty years. Most of the people who left were between fourteen and forty years old, which is the prime age range needed in the industries on the islands. As a result, the aging problem has become increasingly serious. The number of persons 65 years old or higher increased by 97.4%. In fact, persons 65 years old or higher occupied 22.9% of the total population of the Amami Islands in 1995. This is a significantly high percentage compared to the national average of 14.5% or the Okinawa Prefecture average of 19.7%.

An ever-increasing number of people



Mango farmer

© Ryo Aoyama

have started pointing out that Amashin is a devil in disguise. The people say that in this intense pursuit to actualize a higher average income and to reach the level of the mainland islands, the very identity of the Amami Islands will be lost. They say that it will be the end of the islanders' independent consciousness as Amamians.

For the Amamians, the half-century since the reversion to Japan has been a period of naively following the devil called Amashin. But more and more people in the Amami Islands are awakening to the true opulence of their islands. They are opening their eyes to their exuberant natural environment and culture. They are also trying a diversity of means to make this more widely known.