

CROSS-CURRENTS



EAST ASIAN HISTORY AND CULTURE REVIEW

The Question of Self-Governance

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Toriyama Atsushi 鳥山淳. *Okinawa: Kichishakai no kigen to sōkoku* 沖縄：基地社会の起源と相克 [Okinawa: Origin and conflict in a military base society]. Tokyo: Keisō Shobō 勁草書房, 2013. ISBN: 978-4326200528.

The attraction of this book is not so much that it deepens evidentiary proof by being a solid piece of research by a historian who offers a careful narrative based on a large volume of material (mainly newspaper articles), as other reviewers have claimed. Rather, while exploring a field that has yet to be defined, Toriyama has left the traces of a powerless, solitary person who floats in a sea of words. What draws me to Toriyama's works, including this one, are these traces. And it is in these traces that we find the key questions underlying his work—namely, what is Okinawa's modern and current history, what are the politics related to this history, and what material relates to the assumptions of historical research based on evidentiary proof?

Therefore, instead of offering the two options of reading this book as the sound result of research or as the exploratory traces of a solitary person, I contend that the latter approach works as a fundamental critique of the former. The question of how to read this volume depends on whether the latter can cast doubt on the historical account itself. I would like to comment on this and other questions raised by this volume, rather than merely confirming the historical facts presented. This is also the question I wish to put to Toriyama himself. By supplementing points raised in his book with my own comments, I will bring out what he intended to be the traces of a solitary person, and structure this review as a query to him.

The period taken up in this book, from 1945 to 1956, represents the start of Okinawa's postwar history, when the island-wide struggle against the Price Recommendation of 1956 and

the violent expropriation of land led to a major step toward the movement for the return of Okinawa that followed. Stated roughly, this period became the focus of researchers searching for the origins of the later Okinawa reversion movement. But Toriyama does not retrace the history of the reversion movement or the history of the Okinawa struggle; rather, he views this period as contemporaneous history that rejects historicity. That is to say, a different beginning is embedded in this period.

Toriyama first observes the people who became refugees in their homeland-turned-battlefield, the efforts they made to survive in that war zone, and how Okinawa became an “island of military bases.” The reality of the postwar period was evident in “the people who were forced to eke out a way to survive in the shadow of the establishment of permanent U.S. military bases” (41). During this time, Okinawans were obliged to accept that “the bases prevented them from returning to their homeland” (28), requiring them to live as refugees wandering the battlefield amid continued military violence. This is where Toriyama’s notion that “‘reality’ is discussed alongside the bases” (155) is formulated.

The “reality” in quotes does not refer to a reality that is factually based or founded on incontrovertible history; rather, it is a “reality” formed by the behavior necessary for survival during the postwar period. It is easy to imagine this “reality” as an unstable, dynamic system that harbors within it the potential to collapse at any time. In effect, Okinawa’s postwar period created an intense desire for survival. The effort to survive reached a climax with the violent land expropriation related to the building of military bases mentioned above. This process involved the complete collapse of the politics aimed at breaking out of the cooperative relationship with the United States that was constructed within the “reality” of living “alongside the bases.” With this collapse as the catalyst, the political forces shifted their attention to the reversion movement seeking Okinawa’s return to Japan. That is why, in many cases, discussion about this period asserts that it was the end of cooperation with occupation and the beginning of resistance.

However, Toriyama’s effort to scrutinize the “reality” of living “alongside the bases” is not intended to depict the course of the reversion movement from cooperation to resistance. Toriyama states that, “while keeping a distance from the way of thinking that attempts to divide people into the two poles of cooperation and resistance, I will clarify what was questioned and what was gambled in the desire for self-governance and recovery” (9). This perspective on the issues presented at the start of *Okinawa* is not merely an analytical viewpoint but also a powerful

declaration of Toriyama's project of scrutinizing people searching for a way to survive while living "alongside the bases." Toriyama's cautious, indirect statement that he was "keeping a distance" can be more simply restated: he is not presenting a history of the reversion movement or of the struggle in Okinawa.

Whether or not one can accept Toriyama's quiet determination is a vital point that deeply affects one's reading of this volume. This is because the shift in perspective from "cooperation and resistance" to "self-governance and recovery" is not a shift from A to B; instead, B is a fundamental critique of A. Toriyama's concern is to address what is considered cooperation and what is considered resistance within the "reality" of living alongside the bases. In other words, what kind of system and scholarship engages in the division of cooperation and resistance by uniformly coloring everything with the misery of occupation, without scrutinizing "reality"? Furthermore, Toriyama's position statement implies that historical research itself perpetrates this division. For this reason, his work should not be read as a solid piece of historical writing.

For example, when Toriyama speaks of "the frustration attached to 'U.S.-Ryūkyū goodwill'" (158) or "the frustration contained within forced cooperation" (245), we must first understand what he aims to convey by using the term "frustration," which is inappropriate for historical analysis. In other words, the "frustration" that sprouted in the bodies of those who responded to cooperation as "forced cooperation" was, at the same time, unmistakably a stance to revoke cooperation. In this manner, all that does not fit within the realm of cooperation is persistently embraced as "frustration," with cooperation being at the same time a stance of resistance. This stance disappears the instant that cooperation and resistance are separated from each other. For this reason, what is important is not the separation of these two concepts, but their connection; this is what is sought through the self-governance that takes charge of recovery. Toriyama also uses the phrase "the identity of the occupation resisters" in a later section. This is not the identity of resisting as separate from cooperation. It is the identity borne out of refugees living alongside the bases. This identity is not something that is categorized by separation or by nominalization, but that is secured by the process of time.

Out of this rises the question of self-governance. Toriyama has discovered that self-governance and recovery are juxtaposed to each other. The question is not how to categorize and define self-governance; the essential issue is how to understand it as a process related to identity. Certainly, scholarship has depicted postwar Okinawa history along the axis of resistance,

whether it be the reversion movement or the struggle for Okinawa. No doubt this is evidence of the arbitrary desire of historians, who seek to pursue by any means necessary the discovery of resistance movements. The lives of those who seek to survive alongside the bases have become categorized by this desire, and by this categorization the process engaged in by those who seek to survive is eliminated. Toriyama's scrutiny raises the point that the lives of the refugees reject the very mechanism of this desire to define their resistance. He contends that, without considering this issue, meaningful discussions on resistance cannot occur.

He does not raise this as a general proposition, but rather as one deeply related to the issue of modern Okinawa history itself. Throughout modern history, Okinawa has been considered an exception in the legal system regarding sovereignty. Or at least Okinawa has continued to receive threats that it will be treated as an exception. This has turned Okinawa into a place where the law is at a standstill, and martial law conditions to preserve order through violence that brooks no dissent are always either ready or present. This is bluntly indicated by the "residual sovereignty" that defines postwar Okinawa. Even after 1972, Okinawa continues to be made an exception by secret pacts and special measures laws. These unjustifiable martial law conditions are enforced by occupation or colonialism.

What is at stake now is not what to call this exceptional condition. What is most important is that we cannot discuss the politics of Okinawa without answering the question of how to deal with the voices under the martial law conditions that have systematically deprived Okinawa of a political arena presupposing sovereignty. In a state where words have come to a standstill and violence dominates, what can be called "politics," and what words can be accepted as being related to politics? In many cases, politics have been discussed and considered under presuppositions that do not delve into these questions. However, politics that arise without addressing these questions lead, by their very nature, to the elimination of the sphere embraced by Okinawa—that is, to the condition of living alongside the bases. We can venture to say that politics are not structured by the dynamics of left or right, conservative or liberal.

With such issues in mind, let us reconsider what Toriyama calls "forced cooperation." This cooperation presupposes that there is no systematic guarantee of a cooperative relationship. There is no stage on which to engage in mutual cooperation. For this reason, cooperation involves staging a performance of cooperation, despite the lack of a political sphere of actual cooperation. Thus, it becomes a way of confirming that cooperation is not feasible. Cooperation

is a term that combines future systemization to make cooperation feasible and declares anticipation of this system. Put another way, words that presuppose a system, to use Walter Benjamin's terms, exist in conjunction with the legitimation of violence to create the state ([1921] 1986). The meaning of implementation of this type of simultaneous superimposition of systematic and non-systematic power is critically significant when considering statements made under martial law conditions in which the law is at a standstill. This means that this overlap appears under martial law conditions and is not defined by the intention or attributes of identity in conventions of historical study. This is a fundamental criticism of historical studies that categorize and define words into existing individuals and groups to arrive at interpretations. The discussion of these issues presented in Toriyama's volume—especially relating to the terms “ethnic group” and “independence,” as noted below—will likely come back as criticism of his historical accounts. To state my conclusion at the outset, these terms contain what Toriyama emphasizes to be a process of self-governance that cannot be categorized, yet it appears that Toriyama is attempting to carefully separate out self-governance from ethnic grouping and independence.

During the period treated in this volume, the terms “Okinawa peoples” and “Ryūkyū peoples” appear quite often. “Independence” is also frequently discussed. Ethnicity and independence are presented not only in relation to the independence sought by the Okinawa Democratic Alliance, led by Nakasone Genwa and others, and the Okinawa people's liberation demanded by the Okinawa People's Party, but also in the context of the recollection of the slaughter of residents during the Battle of Okinawa. Let us first consider the people. In this context, ethnicity is not the homogeneous category designated by anthropologists. Essentially, an ethnic group is created by means of a strong, self-directed aim to construct a collective body from multiple historical experiences. To use Frantz Fanon's phrase, a national culture is the force that results from many varieties of power of a “whole body of efforts” made by a people ([1952] 1967). This is also a force that overrides systems.

What sort of “whole body of efforts” could be made by residents who had become refugees and by the many people from the Amami Islands who came to Okinawa to build the bases during the time period covered in this volume? The Okinawan people were the product of such efforts at collectivity made by these displaced persons. This effort must, I believe, be deeply involved in the issue of self-governance. However, it seems that Toriyama carefully avoids

discussing the possibility that people can collectively override party politics. Yet self-governance under occupation is essentially a coerced autonomy in which the autonomous structure is overlaid by legitimized violence. Self-governance is discussed not only as autonomy, as it is deeply involved with the issues of ethnicity and independence.

Nakasone Genwa stated, “We want to go with the intense spirit of demanding independence,” and “Okinawa belongs only to the Okinawans.” To this, Toriyama adds, “We must be careful to avoid seeing the ‘we’ that is raised along with the topic of recovery as an immediate intention for ‘independence.’ This is not tied to some form of reversion, but rather should be understood as an identity that carries with it a more fundamental desire” (81). In this instance, it seems that Toriyama himself is ascribing words related to independence to the reversion issue. What is important is not the analysts’ categorization regarding independence or identity. Nor is “independence” merely the independence of Nakasone Genwa’s political intentions or the Okinawa Democratic Alliance’s policy. What is important is the existence of self-governance and independence as inseparable processes under occupation conditions. As Toriyama himself states, “the movement for reversion to Japan began from the point of taking a gamble on the realization of self-governance by reverting to Japan”; self-governance was a gamble for independence so that autonomy could be discussed within the independence movement. Stating it a different way, doesn’t linking independence to the reversion issue result in losing sight of the many possibilities that exist?

This may be what historian and philosopher Tsurumi Shunsuke meant by stating that, when considering democracy as a system, we must think of the revolution over and beyond the system itself ([1963] 1991). In other words, democracy cannot exist where there is no aspiration to incite a revolution. Democracy does not follow or protect a system; it exists with revolution, which is a power that overrides systems. For Tsurumi, democracy, like Okinawa’s self-governance, is not guaranteed as a system. A discussion of democracy involves discussing the system while at the same time discussing the revolution that goes beyond the system. A system of self-governance that is discussed in the context of a lack of systemic guarantees is the very thing that can be discussed together with the legitimized violence that falls outside the system. What is within the system and what is outside the system cannot be sorted into categories. The vital issue is not the pros and cons of sovereignty in general, nor is it the issue of reversion to the

state. It is the overlapping of these two processes, in which self-governance can be discussed within the word “independence,” and in which identity can be questioned.

Faced with the construction of new U.S. military bases, a process that tolerates no discussion, the frustration that has taken hold among those who talk of forced self-governance seems to be pushing them into a position to speak of self-governance as independence under martial law conditions in present-day Okinawa. At the same time, the withdrawal from martial law conditions by staking Okinawans’ aspirations on independence could present an opportunity to secure the continuation of fundamental criticism of the current state. Just as Tsurumi attempts to secure an aspiration toward revolution in daily life by continually superimposing revolution onto democracy, continually overlapping self-governance onto independence is a way to survive an ever-changing reality. And this is by no means simply the reversion issue requiring reassessment by the existing state.

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