What in Okinawa about Okinawan Environmental Problems: An Outline of the Okinawa Cross-Cultural Environmental Experiences

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(Abstract)

As we all may agree, environmental issues do not stand by themselves; they are not merely about preservation and conservation of the physical environment and animals living somewhere. They are also social and cultural problems. My main goal is to analyze the process thorough which "Okinawan environmental problems" have become recognized as "Okinawan" problems. By explaining the social, cultural, and economic situation in postwar Okinawa, I will attempt to delineate some of the essential elements that constitute people's idea of "environmental problems" and show some of the early environmental problems that occurred during 1970s as an example of the cross-cultural experience of Okinawa. I will conclude that Okinawan environmental problems were created through cross-cultural interaction between Okinawa and the U.S. military.

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Environment and Security Abstract Conflicts: The U.S. Military This paper explores the effects of ongoing in Okinawa environmental issues related to U.S. military bases in Okinawa. Okinawa's history, particularly the damage it suffered during World War II, has led to an active anti-military movement on the island. Key Words: military, environmental history, Japan

Introduction

Since the end of The Second World War, Okinawa has been a major hub of U.S. Armed Forces in the Pacific, and is home to a significant number of U.S. military bases. These bases are controversial in Okinawa, however, and opposition to them has ebbed and flowed over the years. These experiences underlie Okinawa’s strong peace movement to this day. After Emperor Hirohito’s surrender on August 15, Allied forces occupied Japan. Genuine security requires respecting the will of the Okinawan people and stopping construction at Henoko, as well as reducing the militarization of the Asia-Pacific region by—among other things—enacting a moratorium on all new bases. The Okinawan people’s struggle is at a critical juncture. U.S. citizens can help by contacting members of Congress to impress upon them that a new Marine base at Henoko is unacceptable, and that construction must be stopped. People of other nations are urged to contact the nearest Japanese embassy to show solidarity with Okinawans against the construction plan. Okinawa Prefecture (, Okinawa-ken; Okinawan: Uchinā) is one of Japan's southern prefectures, and consists of hundreds of the Ryūkyū Islands in a chain over 1,000 km long, which extends southwest from Kyūshū (the southwesternmost of Japan's main four islands) to Taiwan. Okinawa's capital, Naha, is located in the southern part of the largest and most populous island, Okinawa Island, which is approximately half-way between Kyushū and Taiwan. Okinawa and the many islands that make up the prefecture boast some of the most abundant coral reefs found in the world. Since complete annexation would have created a problem with China, the sovereignty of Ryūkyū was maintained.