

Okinawa

Overview:

Okinawa Prefecture is Japan's southernmost prefecture, and consists of hundreds of islands. Okinawa is best known as having a large concentration of U.S. military bases.

Territory:

The Okinawa prefecture consists of 161 islands (49 are inhabited and 112 are uninhabited islands), and those islands span 1,000 kilometers from east to west and 400 kilometers from north to south. The largest island is Okinawa with 53% of the total land area. Okinawa Prefecture's inhabited islands are typically divided into three geographical archipelagos: Okinawa Islands: Ie-jima, Kume, and Okinawa Hoto Miyako Islands: Miyako-jima Yaeyama Islands: Iriomote, Ishigaki, and Yonaguni

Location:

Located southwest of mainland Japan, between mainland Japan and Taiwan in the Pacific Ocean. Okinawa is found in the same latitude zone as the other famous beach resort destinations such as Hawaii, Florida, and the Bahamas

Latitude and Longitude:

24 degrees to 27 degrees north latitude and 122 degrees to 128 degrees 30' east longitude

Time Zone:

GMT +9

Total Land Area:

2

EEZ:

200

Climate:

The relatively constant warm temperatures and frequent rainfall of the subtropical zone keep the islands green throughout the year. It is not unusual for rainfall to be recorded for over half of the days of the year. Typhoons with monsoon rains strike regularly in late summer and early fall, leaving destruction in their wake. Annual temperature of Okinawa is 22.4 C (72.3 F). Even during the winter, the temperature averages 16 C (60.8 F) and never dips below 10 C (50 F).

Natural Resources:

Negligible mineral resources, fish,

ECONOMY:

Total GDP:	
2001	3,612,000,000,000.00 USD
2002	3,632,200,000,000.00 USD
2003	3,689,700,000,000.00 USD

Per Capita GDP:	
2001	2,078,000.00 USD
2002	2,055,000.00 USD
2003	2,045,000.00 USD

% of GDP per Sector:			
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
2003	1.8%	14.4%	88.1%

% of Population Employed by Sector			
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
2004	6.4%	17.6%	76%

External Aid/Remittances:

Okinawa was in desperate of receiving aid from mainland Japan after the reversion. Because of the unemployment problem, the Nippon Bank from the mainland had to provide massive of aid to Okinawa, to put in figure, it was like this: 1972 154,300,000,000yen 1973 230,100,000,000yen 1974 331,200,000,000yen 1975 349,500,000,000yen 1976 362,300,000,000yen

Growth:

Five years after the reversion, the biggest problem in Okinawa was unemployment. In 1977, unemployed people had gone up to 29,000 and the unemployment rate was 6.8 percent. (Unemployed people in 1971 was 4,000; and unemployed rate was 1.0 percent). On the other hand, the returned base land had provided opportunities to expand Okinawa's economic development. After the reversion, although Okinawa experienced a very critical time financially, with the financial funds support from mainland Japan and the revitalization of tourism, Okinawa has gradually experiencing a economic

growth. 1998 statistic has revealed that Okinawa ranked number two in terms of Nominal Economic Growth Rate, at 1.6%, followed by Tokyo. Where Okinawa had a 0.7% Real Economic Growth Rate, where Tokyo had no increase, and the whole nation had a -1.9%. Since 1998, under the Okinawa Multimedia Island concept, 77 companies have been attracted to Okinawa to operate call centers, provide information services, and develop content and software. As of September 2003, their activities had created some 6,000 jobs. Furthermore, the returned base land provides for residential areas, industrial expansion and the balanced and healthy urban development of Okinawa's economy. Accordingly, the Okinawa Development Special Measure Law of April 2002 offers special measures for the smooth and rapid transition of vacated base land to productive civilian uses. The Okinawa Development Plan, adopted in July of the same year incorporates plans for base land transition and sets up a framework for establishment of a base land council and a local municipality consultative and coordinating body.

Labour Force:	
2004	644,000

Unemployment	
Year:	Unemployment Rate (% of pop.)
2004	7.6%

Industry:
Tourism, agriculture, stock raising and forestry, fishery, IT industry, environmentally-friendly clean energy, and manufacturing industry

Niche Industry:
U.S. military bases, IT industry and convention

Tourism:
The tourism income had also increased after the reversion. The number of tourists in 1971 was only about 200,000 but in the next year it went up to 440,000; and 1,558,000 in 1975. (This was because of the Ocean Exposition). In 1991, this number flows to 3,000,000. And by the end of 2003, there are total 5,084,700 tourist visited Okinawa. The income by the tourism was a very important support for the Okinawa economy. Gyokusendo, an extensive limestone cave in the southern part of Okinawa Honto, is a popular tourist attraction. Also, Okinawa is said to have the most beautiful beaches in all of Japan and normally enjoys above 20 degree Celsius weather for most of the year. Many coral reefs are found in this region of Japan and wildlife is abundant. Sea turtles return yearly to the southern islands of Okinawa to lay their eggs. The summer months carry warnings to swimmers regarding poisonous jellyfish and other dangerous sea creatures. But there is a big problem to this as well. Island's golden beaches are being spoiled by mud and sewage from the development, and the great coral reefs are dying visibly from the pollution. These environment problems should be thought about as well when we think about Okinawa and the Okinawa economy.

Imports and Exports:	
Total Value of Imports: JPY 90,240,631,000 (Jan-June, 2005) From EU: JPY 5,675,587,000 Import Partners (EU): Denmark, the U.K, the Netherlands, France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy From outside EU: JPY 84,565,044,000 Import Partners outside EU: Iceland, Australia, China, Taiwan, Korea, the U.S. Nigeria, Malaysia, Guam, New Zealand Total Value of Exports: JPY 38,757,035,000 (Jan-June, 2005) To EU: JPY 190,507,000 Export Partners (EU): the U.K, the Netherlands, France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy From outside EU: JPY 38,566,528,000 Export Partners outside EU: Taiwan, Guam, China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Korea, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia, Main Imports: Fish, fruits, vegetable, meat products, beverage, coal, oil, chemical product, (make up), wood products, machinery, furniture Main Exports: Chemical products, steel, beverage and tabacoo, pulp, precision machinery, machinery, fish products, re-exports,	
Tot. Value of Imports	0.00 ()
From Eu:	
Import Partners (EU:)	
Partners Outside EU:	
Import Partners:	
Tot. Value of Exports	()
To Eu:	
Export Partners:	
Partners Outside EU::	
Export Partners:	
Main Imports:	
Main Exports:	

TRANSPORTATION/ACCESS

External:

Number of Airports: 14

1 international airport, Naha Airport, and 13 class 3 airports. By class 3 airports, which means to be installed and governed by the prefecture. Naha Airport is also known as Okinawa Airport, located just outside of Naha, it serves as the southern gateway to Japan with a 3,000-meter runway, 25 apron berths, and four regular international routes, namely Shanghai, Seoul, Taipei and Manila, as well as flights to mainland Japan and other parts of Okinawa prefecture. It is the prefecture's major airport.



Number of Main Ports: 3

3, Naha port, Tomari port, and Aja Port (Naha Shinko): Naha Port is the gateway to Okinawa prefecture, supporting the economic activities of more than 40 surrounding island. It handles in excess of 50 liner routes, including international container shipping routes for North America and Asia. At present, Okinawa prefecture has begun promotion to invite an experienced international private terminal operator and is starting a 24-hour, year-round customs service for efficient management of the container terminal in order to turn the Naha Port into a transshipment port for the eastern Asian area.

Internal:**Air**

There are direct flights from Naha into most parts of Japan, to various other islands within the prefecture and a few international destinations. Direct flights now run: Miyako-Tokyo, Miyako-Kansai, Ishigaki-Tokyo, Ishigaki-Nagoya, Ishigaki-Kansai. Flights are operated by Japan Airlines (JAL), All Nippon Airways (ANA) and their subsidiary airlines.

Road:

Local road networks connect all parts of Okinawa Island with three main routes: national route 329 on the east coast, national route 58 on the west coast, and the Okinawa Expressway. The Okinawa Expressway links Naha city to Nago city in 45 minutes, it costs 1,000 Yen per passenger car. All other roads on Okinawa are toll free. Okinawans drive on the left side of the road. Okinawa roads are packed with mini-cars, economy cars, vans, trucks, buses and construction vehicles. Combine them with several thousand taxis of all sizes and you have one of the highest vehicle/road densities in the world.

Sea:

Ferries connect Naha with various ports on Kyushu and Honshu, including Tokyo, Nagoya, Fukuoka, Kobe, Osaka and Kagoshima. The one way trip from Tokyo to Naha takes about 44 hours and costs 22,000 Yen in the cheapest class. There is only one ferry per week. From Kagoshima on the southern tip of Kyushu, ferries depart for Naha every day, taking about 25 hours and costing around 13,000 Yen for the one way journey in the cheapest class.

Other Forms of Transportation:

Monorail, buses, rental cars, taxi, Besides the Okinawa Monorail (Yui Rail), which connects central Naha with Naha Airport, public transportation on Okinawa Island is limited to buses. Okinawa's bus network is quite dense, but finding the right connections can be complicated. Furthermore, service can be rather infrequent on some lines.

Economic Zones:

Okinawa is actively promoting industry by placing the processing, tourism and resort, and information and communications industries that use the Special Free Trade Zone in a priority position, thereby helping to stimulate the prefecture's economy. Okinawa is placing special emphasis on attracting processing industries, which will be based in the industrial zone within the Nakagusuju Bay Port Development Industrial Complex, the only Special Free Trade Zone within Japan. Enterprises setting up operations in this district are supported through generous incentives such as the 35 percent corporate income tax exemption and youth employment development subsidies. Initial investment subsidies for factory lease consolidation are also planned for the future.

Energy Policy:

Total Energy Production: 2002 2003 2004 Type: Most of the energy production is from Thermal Power Thermic information not available Geothermic: Other: _____ Total Energy Consumption: 6,883,256 7,155,770 7,193,218
Sectors: Domestic: 3,435,342.7 3,569,670.2 3,586,218.3 Commercial: 734,906.3 778,283.8 797,911.7 (includes both commercial and industry use)
Industry: Public Lighting: 2,704,007 2,807,816 2,809,088 Public Service: (includes both public lighting and public service)

Year	Total Energy Production (Mwh)	Type			Total Energy Consumption (Mwh)	Sector				
		Thermic (Mwh)	Geothermic (Mwh)	Other (Mwh)		Domestic (Mwh)	Commercial (Mwh)	Public Service (Mwh)	Industry (Mwh)	Public Lighting (Mwh)
2002	0	0	0	0	6,883,256	3,435,342	734,906	2,704,007	0	2,704,007

Official Currency:

Japanese Yen

Banking and Insurance:

Number of Banks and Credit Unions: 10
Number of Agricultural Credit Unions: 1
Number of Insurance Companies: 4

Japanese Yen, Exchange Rate 2002 2003 2004 Per US dollar 125.39 115.93 108.19

Financial Services:

Borrowing, mortgage, mutual funds, portfolio management, personal saving advisor services are provided at most branches of various banks throughout the prefecture.

Communications/E-Commerce:

% of population who have access to cell phone/internet Cell phone Internet Internet with cell phone 2005 61.9% 31.3% 22.9%

Public Ownership:

Over the past several years in Japan, attempts have been made to strengthen the framework for privatization. The Koizumi government, which has adopted deregulation and major reform as its slogan, has laid a foothold for privatization through a spate of actions including proposals made through advisory councils for the deregulation and liberalization of government-developed markets to private businesses, as well as the easing of the legislation that forms the outer frame for deregulation and market liberalization. In 1988 there were ninety-seven public corporations, reduced from 111 in the early 1980s as a result of administrative reforms. Japanese government divided the national-level corporations into several categories. The first included the main public service and monopoly corporations: Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corporation, Japanese National Railways, and Japan Tobacco and Salt Corporation. However, Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corporation was privatized in 1985, and the Japanese National Railways in 1987, and Japan Tobacco and Salt Corporation in 1988. The second category included the major development corporations devoted to housing, agriculture, highways, water resources, ports, energy resources, and urban development projects. The Japanese Highway operators were changed into public-owned private corporations in 2005. In 2003, Japan Post was formed out of the former government-run postal services, but privatization is still pending and a major issue in Japanese politics. Under the proposed bill, the incumbent postal public corporation, Japan Post, will be split into four units-the over-



the-counter service unit, the mail delivery unit, the savings unit, and the insurance unit in April 2007, which will be owned by a holding company 100% owned by the government. By 10 years later, April 2017, the savings company and insurance company will be released from government control through sale of their entire shares on the stock market to become private corporations, while the over-the-counter service company and the mail delivery company will remain 100% owned by the holding company, which by that time will be one-third controlled by the government. But in the future, the holding company will be allowed to buy back shares of the two financial service units from the market, if it deems it appropriate. The two units under the holding company will also be able to buy shares of the two financial units to form a group through crossholding.

Land Use:

There are 38 U.S. military bases in Okinawa; they occupy 18 percent of land of Okinawa Island. Commercial, residential and agriculture and forestry comprise the rest of the land in Okinawa.

Agriculture/Forestry:

Okinawa is a major producer of sugar cane, pineapples, papayas and other tropical fruits. Animal husbandry in Okinawa has vigorously grown since reversion. Animal products now account for about 40 percent of total farm output, clearly making them a key part of the farm economy. Forests yield a variety of wood products. Abundant forests also help ensure the supply of water needed for daily life, protect against disasters such as floods and landslides and contribute to a pleasant living environment.

Marine Activity:

Fishing:

Okinawa produces some 8,000 tons of mozuku seaweeds every year, 95 percent of the total production in Japan. Prawn cultivation yields 750 tons of products, making Okinawa Japan's leader in this industry. In addition to traditional mainstay products, malabar grouper, cobia, and giant clam varieties have been designated as strategic products and the prefecture is aggressively promoting their cultivation. In view of the growing importance of aquaculture and fish farming, the functions of the Fish Farming Center are to be strengthened. A deep-water research system has also established to develop production technology.

Marine Life:

Coral reefs, sea turtles, jelly fish, and other variety of sea creatures.

Critical Issues:

United States Military Installations on Okinawa. These bases affect the lives of the Okinawan people, and also they have an adverse impact on economic and industrial development. Accordingly, many Okinawans support consolidation and reduction of the base presence. A rape incident in September 1995 involving a young Okinawan girl sparked a worldwide outcry. In response, the governments of the United States of America and Japan established the Special Action Committee on Okinawa (SACO) in November 1995 and began negotiations on reducing the excessive burden of the bases on Okinawa. The two governments issued a joint final SACO report in December 1996. The report provided for the return of Okinawa of eleven military facilities, including the total return of the Futenma Marine Corps Air Station, which many Okinawans had long sought. The total area to be returned is projected to be 5,002 hectares. If all provisions of the SACO Agreement are carried out, the amount of land returned will exceed all returns to date since Okinawa was reverted to Japan. Besides land return, the SACO report also calls for steps to reduce excessive noise stemming from base activities and for various improvements in the operation of the Status of Forces Agreement, which governs relations between base personnel and the local community.

JURISDICTIONAL RESOURCES

Capital:

Naha

Political System:

Japan is academically considered a constitutional monarchy with a bicameral parliament, the Kokkai or Diet but most Japanese feel strange about the term monarchy and quite a few scholars argue Japan is a republic. Japan has a royal family led by an Emperor, but under the current constitution he holds no power at all, not even emergency reserve powers. The executive branch is responsible to the Diet, consisting of a cabinet composed of a prime minister and ministers of state, all of whom must be civilians. The prime minister must be a member of the Diet and is designated by his colleagues. The prime minister has the power to appoint and remove ministers, a majority of whom must be Diet members. Sovereignty, previously embodied in the emperor, is vested by the constitution in the Japanese people, and the Emperor is defined as the symbol of the state. The legislative branch consists of a House of Representatives (Shugi-in) of 480 seats, elected by popular vote every four years, and a House of Councillors (Sangi-in) of 247 seats, whose popularly elected members serve six-year terms. Each house contains officials elected either directly or proportionally by party. There is universal adult suffrage with a secret ballot for all elective offices.

Political Parties:

Democratic Party of Japan or DPJ [Seiji MAEHARA, leader]; Japan Communist Party or JCP [Kazuo SHII, chairman]; Komeito [Takenori KANZAKI, president.]; Liberal Democratic Party or LDP [Junichiro KOIZUMI, president]; Social Democratic Party or SDP [Mizuho FUKUSHIMA, chairperson.];

Important Legislation:

The Okinawa prefecture exercises the legislation shared with the rest of Japan. The legislation are categorized into many groups: Administrative Law, include Agriculture Law, Arbitration law, Banking law, Civil Law, Commercial Law, Communications and Media Law, Company law, Constitutional law, Criminal Law, Environmental Law, Health law, Intellectual Property Law, Labor Law, Law Sources, Tax law, Transport and Maritime Law. Administrative Law: Administrative Procedure Law No. 88 of 1993 Alien Registration Law Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act Law Concerning Access to Information Held by Administrative Organs Law Relating to the Reciprocal Judicial Aid to be Given at the Request of Foreign Courts Law of Extradition The Alien Registration Law The Foreign Lawyers Law The Nationality law Commercial Law : Commercial Code of Japan Foreign Exchange and Foreign Trade Control Law The Consumer Contract Act The Consumer Protection Fundamental Act The Product Liability Act Health Law: Food Safety Basic Law (Law no 48 of 2003) Industrial Safety and Health law Law No. 57 of June 8, 1972 Law concerning Regulation relating to Human Cloning Techniques and Other Similar Techniques Law on Organ Transplantation (Law No. 104, 1997) Pneumoconiosis Law The Basic Law for Persons with Disabilities Environmental Law: Agricultural Land Soil Pollution Prevention Law Air Pollution Control Law Environmental Impact Assessment law Fisheries Law No 267 of 1949 Law Concerning Special Measures against Dioxins Law Concerning the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity through Regulations on the Use of Living Modified Organisms (Law No. 97 of 2003) Law Concerning the Promotion of Procurement of Eco-Friendly Goods and Services by the State and Other Entities Law Concerning the Promotion of the Measures to Cope with Global Warming Law No.117 of 1998 Law concerning the Rational Use of Energy Law for Enhancing Motivation on Environmental Conservation and Promoting of Environmental Education Noise Regulation Law Offensive Odor Control Law The Basic Environment Law The Law Concerning Special Measures for Total Emission Reduction of Nitrogen Oxides from Automobiles in Specified Areas Vibration Regulation Law Water Pollution Control Law Wildlife Protection And Hunting Law

Principal Taxes:

Taxation in Okinawa is generally divided into two categories; one is the so called direct taxes, which include income tax, corporation tax, and inheritance tax. And the other one is the indirect tax; it is comprised of sales tax (5%), liquor tax and cigarette tax.

Associated Power:

Mainland Japan

Citizenship:

Japanese

Paradiplomacy:

Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), International Venture Club, NGO Asia Child Support (ACS),

HUMAN RESOURCES

Population: 2004 2005 Total 1,350,236 1,368,902 Male 671,978 Female 696,924 Age of Population: 2000 0-14 264,279 15-24 181,979 25-49 469,495 50-64 210,352 65 and over 182,577

Island	Area (km sq.)	Population	% of Total Population
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Population:	
Year	Resident Population

Age of Population:	0-14	15-24	25-49	50-64	65 and up
2000	264279	181,979	469,495	210,352	182,577

Migration:

In 2005, there were 4,951 newcomers to Okinawa, and there were 4,779 people moved out.

Crude Birth Rate:	
1999	12.8%
2000	12.8%
2001	13%

Life Expedctancy:

Japan has the highest life expectancy in the world, and Okinawa has the highest life expectancy in Japan. Life Expectancy at birth Total Population Male Female 2005 83.15 80.02 86.89

Crude Death Rate:	
1999	6%
2000	6.1%
2001	6.2%

Ethnicity:

Due to Okinawa's location and history, it is more ethnically diverse than other parts of Japan. Okinawans are a unique blend of Malay from Formosa and Philippines, Chinese from China, and Japanese from Japan, also native Okinawans.

Class Division:

In Okinawa, there is no very big gap between the rich and the poor. However, the ones who are white collar and government employees tend to better off financially.

Languages:

Japanese and Okinawan

Religion:

Observe both Shinto and Buddhist 84%, other 16% (including Christian 0.7%)

Literacy:

99% of total population

Education System:

People of Okinawa follow the same education system as the rest of Japan, which consists of six years of elementary school, each three years of junior and senior high school and four years of university or two years of junior college. Compulsory education includes elementary school and junior high school. Over 90% of all students graduate from high school and over 40% from university or junior college. At universities, the percentage of male students is higher than that of female students while the opposite is the case at junior colleges. The number of graduate university students is relatively low. The Japanese school year starts in April and consists of three terms, separated by short holidays in spring and winter, and a one month long summer break. A characteristic of the Japanese school system are entrance exams, and with them a high competitiveness among students. Most high schools, universities, as well as a few private junior high schools and elementary schools require applicants to write entrance exams. In order to pass entrance exams to the best institutions, many students attend special preparation schools (juku) besides regular classes, or for one to two years between high school and university (yobiko).

Total Pre-schools:(2005)	283
Total Primary Schools	
First Level:	284
Second Level:	



Third Level:	
Total Secondary Schools:	163
Total Professional Schools	4
Universities:	9

Number of Schools per Island:											
		Pre-school		Elementary			High-school		Prof.	University	
		Pub	Priv	1	2	3	Pub	Priv		Pub	Priv

Students Enrolled:					
Year:	Pre-School	Elementary	High-school	Prof.	University

Teachers							
Year	Pre-School	Elementary			High-School	Prof.	University
		1	2	3			

Total Pre-Schools: 283 (2005) Total Primary Schools: 284 First Level: n/a Second Level: n/a Third Level: n/a Total Secondary Schools: 163 junior high, Total Professional Schools: 4, Okinawa Polytechnic College; Gushikawa Vocational Ability Development School; Urasoe Vocational Ability Development School; Okinawa Vocational Ability Development Promotion Center. Universities and Colleges: 9, University of the Ryukyus, (national); Okinawa Prefectural University of Arts, (prefectural); Okinawa International University, (private); Okinawa University, (private); Meio University, (private); Okinawa Prefectural College of Nursing, (prefectural); Okinawa National College of Technology, (national); Okinawa Christian Junior College, (private); Okinawa Women's College, (private); Student Enrollment 2003 2004 2005 Pre-School 17,171 17,511 17,337 Elementary 104,862 103,587 102,933 High-school 110,611 108,055 106,471 Professional Information not available University and Colleges Teacher 2003 2004 2005 Pre-School 999 1,005 1,009 Elementary 5,552 5,565 5,667 High-school 3,722s 4,077s 3,695j 4,066s 3,708j 4,051s Professional Information not available University and Colleges

Medical Services:

Medical Services: Number of Medical Personnel 1996 1998 2000 Doctors 2,189 2,298 2,336 Dentists 629 637 696 Care takers 11 10 8 Public health nurses 353 419 455 Midwives 255 268 360 Nurses 5,863 6,524 7,237 Practical nurses 4,382 4,457 4,724 Dental Hygienists 499 586 601 Dental Technicians 303 269 269 Per 100,000 population, Number of Medical Personnel 1996 1998 2000 Doctors 170.6 176.6 177.2 Dentists 49 51.7 52.8 Care takers 0 0 0 Public health nurses 27.5 32.2 34.5 Midwives 19.9 20.6 27.3 Nurses 457 501.5 549 Practical nurses 341.5 342.6 358.3 Dental Hygienists 38.9 45 45.7 Dental Technicians 23.6 20.7 20.5 Medical Facilities, Number of Beds 1999 2000 2001 Medical facilities 1,289 1,323 1,356 Hospitals-national/prefectural 14 15 15 Other 79 79 80 Total 93 94 95 Clinics-national/prefectural 36 36 36 Other 614 632 665 Total 650 668 701 Dental clinics 546 561 560 Nursing homes 10 8 n/a (Number of beds)19751 19791 19870 Hospital totals General illness 13919 13959 14035 Mental disorder 5630 5630 5630 Contagious diseases 24 21 24 Tuberculosis 178 181 181 Number of beds at clinics (general illness) 2,225 3,229 2,240 All health services are subject to co-payments of between 20 and 30 percent, up to reasonable limits. (Jeong and Hurst, 2001).

HISTORY AND CULTURE

History:

On a world map, Okinawa is just a small dot in the Pacific Ocean, but it used to be an independent kingdom -- the Kingdom of the Ryukyus. As a small kingdom, Okinawa prospered in the region, trading with Japan, China, Korea, and Southeast Asia. As the winds of world trade blew through, Okinawan people ventured out and brought back many foreign influences. Subsequently, Okinawa has developed its own unique history and culture. In the 11th century, castles began sprouting all over Okinawa symptomizing a period of struggles among the emerging petty rulers. In the late 12th Century, one of the petty rulers founded Shunten Dynasty (1187-1259). It was followed by the Eiso Dynasty (1260-1349), the Satto Dynasty (1350-1405), the First Sho Dynasty (1406-1469), and the Second Sho Dynasty (1470-1879). The last dynasty was replaced by Okinawa prefecture with governors appointed from Tokyo until 1945. During the 27 year American interlude from 1945 to 1972, Okinawa was under the U.S. military government. The first three dynasties exercised their control probably only in their adjacent areas. But King Satto is known for establishing tributary relationships with China in 1372. This relationship with China greatly accelerated Ryukyu's cultural and political development. The First Sho Dynasty achieved the political unification of Okinawa in 1422.

Referenda:

There was no referendum in Okinawa.

Recent Significant Events:

Okinawa has proposed the offshore zone of Marine Corps Camp Schwab along the Henoko coast of Nago City as a site for relocation of the air station and has stipulated four conditions to the National government including a fifteen-year limitation on the new facility's use, and strict measures to minimize the environment impact of construction and operation. In July 2002, a major step toward starting construction was taken when local organization met with the representatives of the National and Prefectural governments and agreed on a basic plan governing the size of the new facility, its construction method and its precise location, and appropriate environmental measure. The success of the 2000 Kyushu- Okinawa G8 leaders' meetings in Okinawa has been especially important in spotlighting Okinawa as a major convention resort destination.

Music, Dance, Handicraft and Patrimony:

Having historically been a separate nation, Okinawa language and culture differ considerably from that of mainland Japan. The Ryukyu language is a major dialect of Japanese. The separation of the Ryukyuan dialect from the language of the Japanese main islands took place about 1500 years ago. Over the subsequent centuries, Ryukyuan gradually became unintelligible to the Japanese. Despite government efforts after 1879 to establish Japanese as the standard language, the local dialect persisted as the informal language of the home and friends. Recently, however, radio, television and increased travel between Okinawa and the main islands of Japan have accomplished to a large extent what prewar governments failed to attain. Today, the Okinawan language is near extinction. Culturally, Okinawans are closer to Filipinos and Chinese than mainland Japanese. Perhaps Okinawa's most famous cultural export is karate, probably a product of the close ties with, and influence of China on Okinawan culture. Karate is thought to be a

synthesis of Chinese kung fu with traditional Okinawan martial arts. Another traditional Okinawan product that owes its existence to Okinawa's trading history is awamori— an Okinawan distilled spirit made from indica rice imported from Thailand. The people of Okinawa also maintain a strong tradition of pottery. Furthermore, other prominent examples of Okinawan culture include the sanshin, a three-stringed Okinawan instrument, closely related to the Chinese sanxian, and ancestor of the Japanese shamisen, somewhat similar to a banjo. Its body is often bound with snakeskin (from pythons, imported from elsewhere in Asia, rather than from Okinawa's poisonous habu, (which are too small for this purpose, but which are sometimes used to make habu awamori). Okinawan culture also features the eisa dance, a traditional drumming dance. A traditional craft, the fabric named bingata, is made in workshops on the main island and elsewhere.

Sources:

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