

Theorizing the Okinawan Diaspora in Hawaii: Applications of diaspora studies to a unique multicultural setting

ハワイにおけるオキナワン・ディアスポラの理論化：多文化という特有な環境に対するディアスポラ研究の応用

Howard Higa

ハワード・ヒガ

Key words : Okinawans, Hawaii, diaspora, multicultural

キーワード：オキナワン（沖縄系人）、ハワイ、ディアスポラ、多文化

Abstract

This paper outlines the steps involved in defining and qualifying the Okinawan experience in Hawaii as a legitimate “diaspora” within the conventions of contemporary diaspora studies. The strength of this study centers on three contextual conditions that distinguish the Okinawan diaspora experience in the multicultural setting of Hawaii. These contextual conditions serve as directives to accommodate the ethnographic data and to carry the research. This sets the stage for developing a theoretical framework to align the investigation with diasporic postulates which accentuate and converge on culture and ethnicity in the deliberations. The ongoing research holds the potential to offer insight into diaspora studies at large and represents a final opportunity to capture and record the historical and lived experiences of a passing generation. As Okinawans are one of the longest lived people in the world, the encounters of this investigation with near-centenarians who have “credible” first-hand connections to the birth of the diaspora from 1900 is momentous.

要約

本稿は、ハワイにおける沖縄系人の経験を、現代のディアスポラ研究の慣例においての正当な「ディアスポラ」として明示していく過程を略述するものである。本研究は、ハワイの多文化という環境における沖縄系人のディアスポラ経験を特色づける3つの背景状況を中心に据えた点に意義がある。これらの背景状況は、民族学的調査データを整理し、調査研究を行う際の指標としての役割と、ハワイの歴史的な状況と現代の状況の重要な結びつきを示す役目を担っている。さらに、これらの背景状況を提示することにより、本研究調査データとディアスポラの必要条件としての文化とエスニシティの重

要さを組み合わせる際の理論上のフレームワークを構築することができる。現行の研究調査は過ぎゆく世代の歴史的で生きた経験を捉えそれらを記録に残す最後の機会であり、またディアスポラ研究に新たな明察を提示する可能性がある。沖縄人は世界でも長寿の人々と言われており、1900年から始まったディアスポラと“確実に”かかわりを持つ100歳近い人々に会う本調査は重要な意味を持つものである。

I. Introduction.

On January 8, 1900, the SS China sailed into Honolulu Harbor carrying twenty-six Okinawans on an epoch journey from the Ryukyu Islands to Hawaii. They would represent the first of waves of “Uchinanchus” to Hawaii, arriving with intentions of securing substantial savings and someday returning to their homeland. With dreams unfulfilled, coupled with the political circumstances of the time, a great majority would remain in Hawaii. A hundred years later, in January of 2000, 40,000 of their descendants would celebrate in a centennial commemoration, embracing the ideals and fulfillment of the “American dream”.

It is the quixotic chronicle that is often proffered for the various immigrant groups to America. However, belying the surface of the Okinawan experience in Hawaii is an extraordinary opportunity for ethnographic and diasporic forays which will present unique and significant insights among the diasporas of America. The purpose of this paper is to highlight the process of legitimizing and defining the Okinawan experience in Hawaii within the conventions of contemporary diaspora theory. This will set the stage for deliberations of the afore-mentioned forays into diasporic-related principles such as cosmopolitanism, recognition and difference, rootedness and rootlessness, etc. (Higa, 2008B). This paper aims to lay the theoretical base for such endeavors.

II. Unique conditions inherent to the Hawaii setting.

In order to establish the groundwork for the unique deliberations of diaspora which are afforded through a focus on the Okinawan experience in Hawaii, the following three contextual conditions are asserted as distinguishing premises of the Okinawan diaspora in Hawaii: 1) the multicultural composition of Hawaii whereby Okinawans strived

amongst and against other minority groups; 2) the relative isolation of the Hawaiian islands among the states of the American union; and 3) the rise to power and the effects imparted by the Okinawans and Japanese as a diasporic group in Hawaii. These three contextual conditions mark the value and intrigue of the undertaking. They serve as the skeletal structure for the overarching focus of this research, providing the underlying premises for the linkages of the past (the arrival of the first Okinawans in 1900) to the present. The ethnic identity of the Okinawans in Hawaii is a fundamental chord which runs throughout the investigation. The three contextual conditions will be elaborated on here, in brief, before moving on to the theoretical applications to the focus.

A. On the conditions of multiculturalism in Hawaii.

Historically, the early immigrants from Okinawa faced a host culture based on a community in flux and in transition. By the time the Okinawans arrived in 1900, over a century had passed since the arrival of the Europeans, who were already entrenched in the islands as leaders in business, trade, politics, education, and religion. In fact, the very fields that the Okinawans were brought in to toil were owned and managed largely by a cohort of wealthy European families. Additionally, the Okinawans were preceded by other Asian laborers such as the Chinese and the mainland Japanese. By 1900, the Native Hawaiian Monarchy had been overthrown through a combination of American military might and the aspirations of foreign business leaders (Barker, 2005; Conklin, 2007; Dougherty, 1992). The Native Hawaiians were reeling from losses on many fronts – political, economic, spiritual, and social. Not to mention, the catastrophic decline of the Native population due mainly to the spread of foreign diseases and the introduction of guns for warfare in the islands. Around the time Captain Cook arrived in the Hawaiian islands in 1778 the Native Hawaiian population was estimated to be as high as 300,000. By the year 1900 that number had dwindled to a mere 28,718 (Dougherty, 1992).

Modern day Hawaii evokes images of a “paradise” and is often referred to as the “melting pot of the Pacific.” However, certain societal ills which are unbeknownst to the outside world are reaching a critical point in Hawaii today. The meshing of

cultural, ethnic, political, social, and religious elements in Hawaii's modern history may have resulted in a combination of "paradise" and "tragedy", depending on who is telling the story. Diapora studies offers an approach and methodology to clarify the story. The Okinawan diapora in Hawaii, though just one chapter in the story, is significant due to the Okinawan propensity toward cultural solidarity (which served as a model for other ethnic groups in the islands to emulate) and the rise to power of the Okinawans in Hawaii (which has ramifications for the plight of the Native Hawaiians). (Discussed in Higa, 2008, B).

For the discussion at hand, the significance of the multicultural setting of Hawaii is that assimilation and acculturation with the host culture—which are the hallmarks of diaspora experiences—have not been critical conditions in the Hawaii setting.

Aiwa Ong's "Buddha is Hiding" (2003) explores the everyday processes of "being-made" and "making" in the context of citizenship viewed as a set of self-constituting practices set against institutions and conditions of power. Diasporic subjects, according to Ong, face the onslaught of norms, rules, and systems but are able to "modify practices and agendas while nimbly deflecting control and interjecting critique." Ong posits this struggle as the biopoliticization of American life, wherein "the individual is the bearer of sovereignty."

Ong's postulates are based on the imperious effects that American values and institutions cast on immigrant groups. Ong argues that "biopolarism" leads to a type of "ethnic cleansing" through the systematic process of removing cultural features which are deemed to be unacceptable.

The Hawaii setting, albeit America, offers a different range of diasporic experiences. The strains of assimilation and acculturation with the host culture have not been, for the most part, as critical and severe. Minorities striving amongst minorities has always been the status quo or the accepted norm. Even the dialect of English unique to Hawaii, referred to as Hawaiian Creole English (or HCE) by linguists is celebrated and valued for its rich heritage of immigrant groups contributing to the melting pot of a common language code.

B. On the factors of isolation and distance.

Conditions inherent to the Hawaii setting have served to “standardize” certain factors for the observation of diasporic forays—for example, due to the boundaries of travel and living space; the limited range of social contacts and constructs; and the unique political climate and conditions. Conversely, the experiences of the immigrants on the mainland of the US—individually, as a community, and generationally—would be widespread, diverse, and yielding, making it more difficult to draw correlations and summations among the experiences.

The minority among minority factor mentioned above coupled with the island setting in Hawaii have developed as significant factors in the diasporic deliberations of Okinawans in Hawaii. Certain features which can be attributed to the land-locked setting of Hawaii have been realized in carrying out the ethnographic fieldwork of this study, from the access to multi-generation subjects living in the same household to opportunities for the observation of the residual effects and preservation of culture (Higa, 2008B). Most significantly, the island setting has indeed afforded distinct delineations for the discussion of diasporic configurations—often laying bare clean slates of ethnographic and empirical data which have not been confounded by interracial marriage over generations, the acute pressure to assimilate with the host nation, distance and separation among family members, etc. (Higa, 2008B).

C. On the political power accrued by the Okinawans in Hawaii.

A focus on the politics of power within the Okinawan diaspora connects the chronicle to the present day. The rise to power within, as well as distinct from, the Japanese-American wave of achievement in Hawaii has allowed the Okinawans a perch on the upper middle-class economic ladder in Hawaii. This newfound voice in local politics and affairs commands considerable power and attention. It is a voice that the Native Hawaiians may summon in advancing their claims for national sovereignty and political and historical redress. The Okinawans in Hawaii have begun to sympathize with the Native Hawaiians, recognizing the similarities of the plights of the Native Hawaiians under the dominion of the United States government and the homeland Okinawans

under the dominion of the Japanese government. (Although, homeland Okinawans may not share the same sentiments (Higa, 2008B)). Furthermore, the solidarity of the Okinawans in Hawaii within the “local” affiliation has gained strength in the last decade as burgeoning forces from the outside have accelerated a cultural upheaval in the islands which threatens to undermine the perceived “local” way of life, most notably programs and affairs connected to the Native Hawaiian existence. This “local” versus “other” dichotomy has been shaped through decades of minorities striving amongst minorities in Hawaii. The “other” factor in the differentiation of “native” and “other” has provided the catalyst for the solidification of the “local” affinity through the antagonization of the island way of life. Native Hawaiians face critical threats on many fronts. It will be incumbent upon the local membership to support the Native Hawaiian cause, most notably, starting with the Okinawans.

The connection between the Okinawans and Native Hawaiians has already shown a groundswell of movement, including academic forums in the community and at the University of Hawaii; grassroots organizations and internet sites; and print and television media coverage.

This current state of affairs highlights just one of the distinguishing diasporic flows which has emerged through the Okinawan diaspora in Hawaii, nurtured by the unique cultural and political elements innate to the Hawaii setting. The display and recognition of the interplay of diasporic elements and constituents have been uniquely discernable, with clean delineations along cultural lines in the island setting. This has afforded important connections and applications in theorizing diasporic and ethnic identity generally.

These three premises provide the backdrop for the following directives for theorizing the Okinawan diaspora in Hawaii.

III. Legitimizing the standing in the field.

A. “Margins of Diaspora.”

In the terminology of the field, the Okinawan experience in Hawaii can be fundamentally approached as a “margin of diaspora.” It is a term coined by Brown (1998) which refers to the diasporic groups on the fringes—those that exist outside of the realm of the well-storied and -studied experiences. Like Campt (2002:95), remarking on the status of the German-Black diaspora, attention is directed “toward the less celebratory, less comfortable, and more problematic elements of this discourse (on diaspora), as well as their implications for our attempts to make sense of the histories, cultural formations, and expressions of black (Okinawan, etc.) communities elsewhere.”

The term “margin of diaspora” is asserted here to legitimize the area of focus—the investigation of Okinawans in Hawaii—as a bona fide and valid “diaspora” within the realm and conventions of the discipline. It is imperative to note that the label does not “marginalize” or detract from the standing in the field.

It is necessary, however, to make clear distinctions between “margins of diaspora” and terms such as “borderline cultures” and “stranded minorities” since the semantic nuances may appear similar on the surface but the intended denotations are quite dissimilar. As terminology in this evolving discipline sometimes carry indistinct denotations, this issue needs to be addressed in order to enter the focus area of this study in the proper category and avoid being construed as “cognate phenomena” (Cohen 1997, pp. 187-92; Safran 1999; Schnapper 1999). (Discussed in Higa 2008B)

B. Cohen’s conventional standard.

The task of sorting through theoretical works on the profile of a diaspora, including the field-forging definitions proposed by Armstrong (1976) based on diasporas in multiethnic historical settings to more recent attempts to summarize the current state of the field (Marienstras 1989; Safran 1991, 1999; Tololyan 1991, 1996; Anderson 1994; Clifford 1994; Chaliland and Rageau 1995; Vertovec 1997; Sheffer 2003), did not arrive

at a sufficiently clear set of conventions and directives to implement for the current undertaking.

My attempt to synthesize elements from among the works seemed to confound the process and deviate from a core set of directives and principles. Therefore, in order to realize the objectives of this section of the study, two “models” for the profile of a diaspora were chosen among the previously mentioned body of knowledge. In combination, they were chosen for the clarity, comprehensiveness, ease of application, and potential to extract and connect to the fieldwork and research on ethnic identity which is the core of this investigation.

The first model, Cohen’s (1997) conventional standard, has been characterized as “short, pithy definitions of social and political phenomena (which) are elegant and easy to digest and remember (Sheffer 2003)”. Certainly, Sheffer was alluding to the practical applicability of the theorems. Sheffer, however is critical of Cohen’s running list of “common features of diaspora”, calling it a focus on “*undifferentiated* reasons for migration, social features, main patterns of occupation, and desiderata of such groups.”

Nonetheless, Cohen’s model will serve to set the stage for this investigation, chosen for its functional and comprehensive features. Furthermore, it is necessary to initially proceed through the arduous, conventional route in order to give the focus on Okinawans in Hawaii the full treatment. In other words, it is necessary to commence with thoroughly elaborating on the distinguishing features which would qualify the Okinawan experience in Hawaii as a valid diaspora to set it apart from borderline cultures and other cognate phenomena. Finally, a thorough investigation is an urgent need for the focus on the experience of Okinawans in Hawaii, as it represents the final opportunity to gather, analyze and preserve ethnographic data from the passing first and second generation subjects of the Okinawan diaspora in Hawaii.

C. Cohen’s list of common features of a diaspora.

Cohen’s list of “common features of a diaspora” provides a broad but thorough checklist of descriptors to define and qualify diasporas. Cohen’s list is as follows (Cohen, 1997,

p. 26):

1. Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions;
2. alternatively, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions;
3. a collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history and achievements;
4. an idealization of the putative ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity, even to its creation;
5. the development of a return movement that gains collective approbation;
6. a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history and the belief in a common fate;
7. a troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance at the least or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group;
8. a sense of empathy and solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries of a settlement; and
9. the possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism.

D. Utilizing Cohen's list to define the Okinawan diaspora.

As previously mentioned, a comprehensive application of theoretical conception to the Okinawan diaspora is imperative in order to legitimize the standing in the field and to capture the data from a passing generation. Cohen's list of features will be utilized here as a guide and conduit to cull the collective data and build a theoretical base. For lack of space, however, only two of Cohen's features will be presented here to illustrate the defining qualities of Cohen's features and to highlight the steps in this process which will carry on beyond the scope of this paper.

1. Cohen: "Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions."

The dispersal of Okinawans to Hawaii, which was marked by the arrival of 26 Okinawans aboard the SS. *China* in Honolulu Harbor in 1900, did not bear the features of “trauma” which depict the dispersal of Jews to Babylon, the African slave trade, or the Armenian diaspora. The Okinawan diaspora to Hawaii seems to manifest itself in Cohen’s second proposition of “trade diaspora.” Still, there is much to investigate under this theme of “trauma.” As Cohen (1997, p. 28) points out, referring to the system of indentured labor abroad of the Indians, Chinese and Japanese in the nineteenth-century, “It does not minimize the oppressive aspects involved in this system of labour control to say that in some crucial respects they differed from those of the victim diasporas.”

Additionally, the political, social and economic climate in Okinawa leading up to the epic voyage to Honolulu in 1900 can be characterized as “traumatic,” stemming from such tragic affairs as the full annexation of Okinawa by Japan in 1897 which marked the demise of the Okinawan monarchy, the ban on the use of Okinawan language in school and in public, the land reforms of 1899-1903 which ended the communal system of land tenure, and the tariffs placed on Okinawan commodities by the Japanese government which severed the flourishing trading routes. The angst in society, as a “victim” of the Japanese government, eventually compelled Okinawans to seek alternative means of survival and support for their families. These features leading to the displacement of peoples to other territories and constituting diasporas are to be found in other colonial experiences at the time, for example, in India, parts of China, and internally within Africa. It can be argued that these experiences were traumatic for those caught up in the disruptions for they involved separation and exile, pauperization and their consequences.

Historical accounts, data, and studies will fill in the discussion here. I have accessed archival resources and examined documents toward this end. Most intriguingly, my ethnographic interviews of first and second generation Okinawans in Hawaii have been able to elicit accounts of the hardships and trauma that their parents and grandparents faced.

2. Cohen: “A strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history and the belief in a

common fate.”

“Group consciousness” among the Okinawans in Hawaii has been, for the duration of their 100+ year experience in Hawaii, a product of two main factors: a) ingrained self-perception as a consequence of political and social positioning in society; and b) an innate, natural inclination attributed to traditional Okinawan culture and values.

a. Group consciousness as social/political positioning.

The Okinawans were inaugurated into newfound lands with derogatory labels which aimed to distinguish them from their Japanese counterparts from the mainland of Japan. For example, in Hawaii they were referred to as “Japan-pake” (“pake” meaning “Chinese”) and in other lands as the “other Japanese” (as “otro Japones” in Peru, “Japanese-kanaka” in Micronesia, and “other Japanese” in Mindanao).

The early Okinawan settlers in Hawaii were quickly differentiated from their Japanese counterparts due to their “peculiar” cultural mannerisms and their inability to speak and comprehend the standard Japanese dialect. Though they often toiled the fields side by side on the plantations, the Okinawans and Japanese were commonly housed in separate quarters.

In Waipahu, Oahu, “Higashi” camp would come to be known as the Okinawan quarters and “Nishi” camp as the Japanese quarters; in Ewa, Oahu, Banana Camp (for Okinawans) and Mill Camp (for Japanese); and so on across the islands. These were rather discrete distinctions for relatively small communities and areas of land. Yet, the subjects of my interviews could readily recall these distinctions, taking pride in the clarity of their nostalgic recollections. For example, Joe Oshiro commented that the hongwanji or Buddhist temple at Higashi camp maintained Okinawan traditions, whereas the hongwanji at Nishi camp observed Japanese traditions.

Rather than recoil in society as the disparate ethnicity, the Okinawans embraced their heritage and recognized the social, political and cultural delineations as a basis for solidarity among their membership. For example, money lending schemes set up in

accordance with homeland traditions flourished. Also, arrangements for contacting and procuring prospective brides from Okinawa, later referred to as the “picture bride” phenomenon, were organized.

Most significantly, the Okinawans celebrated their culture without inhibition and with cultural flair and fashion. Professor Emeritus Kiyoshi Ikeda of the University of Hawaii, a second generation Japanese American, relayed to me in an interview: “You could always tell when the party was being put on by the Okinawans. Oh, the song and dance...was so lively.”

The stigma of being the “other Japanese” along with the perpetual Okinawan-Japanese relational factor forced the Okinawans to acknowledge their differences and solidified a sense of “who we are” in relation to the “other.” Such delineations of culture became discrete and enduring in the island setting of Hawaii.

Fast-forwarding to the present, the cultural affiliation among Okinawans in Hawaii remains steadfast. Amazingly, many 3rd and 4th generation Okinawans are of pure ethnic stock despite the highly interracial composition of the islands. The “Young Okinawans” is an organization made up largely of 4th generation Okinawans who exude the cultural pride in displays of the traditional arts, especially through the resurgence in the art of taiko drumming.

An Okinawan cultural “renaissance” emerged in the 1980s and has had widespread effect. A multi-million dollar Okinawan cultural center was built in the 1980s and serves as the hub for a myriad of cultural activities today—including, the organization of the annual Okinawan Festival in Honolulu, an exchange program for high school students from Okinawa and Hawaii, an Okinawan genealogy club, etc. The 2007 Okinawan Festival attracted over 500 participants from Okinawa. Other ethnic groups in Hawaii—the Koreans, Portuguese, and Greeks—have organized their own festivals, following from the success of the Okinawan Festival. It also inspired the Okinawan government to launch the Worldwide Unchinanchu Festival in 1990, an ambitious campaign to welcome home Okinawans from across the globe. Two chartered flights carried over 600 Okinawans from Hawaii to the festival in 2006.

My interviews of 3rd and 4th generation Okinawans in Hawaii have offered insights into the “group consciousness” of younger Okinawans today. Some of my interview questions centered on “signifiers” of culture (Higa, 2008B).

b. Group consciousness as an innate feature within the cultural mindset.

Group consciousness has always been at the center of Okinawan society. A sample of remarks by anthropologist William Lebra, a pioneer in Okinawan cultural studies, is as follows (Lebra, 1980; 115-116):

“Okinawan society was characterized by a collectivity focus—the basic unit of reference was the family, not the individual; individualism was de-emphasized and aggressive pursuit of self-interest deplored. Children were socialized for mutual interdependence, and ideally people were expected to live up to their responsibilities and to honor obligations...”

“...the collectivity provides an identity for the ego and the security of its support...”

“...The observance of propriety, cooperation, compromise, de-emphasis of the individual in preference for group togetherness, and self-sacrifice for the collectivity were some of the principal features constituting the Okinawan ethos at the beginning of the century.”

My interview transcripts reveal recurring accounts of family pride among the elderly Okinawans in Hawaii today, stemming from the strength of family ties. For example, Kiku Nishihara, age 86, commented on how she raised her 8 children: “You gotta keep telling them we family. From small kid time I always tell them to take care each other, you gotta take care each other. That’s why all the kids stay real close. They take care.”

Masa Miyahira, age 95, commented on the closeness of his family: “My kids, they no forget. My boy, he come over with his family every weekend. My daughters too. We close. Real close. We always do things together. From long time ago. You gotta.”

The hallmark of the Okinawan family in Hawaii has been the potluck dinner at “baban’s” (grandma’s) house every weekend, nearly without fail. Though the potluck spread is multi-ethnic, the gathering is a time-honored Okinawan tradition.

Addressing contemporary issues regarding the factors which make up the “psychocultural profile” of Okinawans in Hawaii today, Lebra (1980, 132) wrote:

“Foremost among these is the strong allegiance to the family system, nuclear and extended. Within the Hawaii Japanese community, the Okinawans have been noted for large families and for observing a greater range of kin ties. Another factor would be the organized groups, not only those like senior citizen organizations and the various *son-jin-kai*, but also some businesses and cultural associations (music, dance, poetry) which have tended to preserve a strong inner core identity of Okinawanness.”

It is notable that “turn of the century” and contemporary Okinawanness are quite parallel in these descriptions by Lebra. Interestingly, the Japanese-Okinawan relational factor is employed to sharpen the focus here as well.

E. Sheffer’s “differentiated” features of diaspora.

As the strengths of this study are the cultural and ethnic delineations which afford clear observations for diasporic explorations, it is appropriate to align the investigation with diasporic postulates which accentuate and converge on culture and ethnicity in the deliberations.

Sheffer’s (2003) introduction of “ethno-national diasporas” aims to differentiate between “cognate phenomena” (which have qualified as “diaspora” in a wide spectrum of conditions) and a specific category of social and political formation based on cultural and ethnic correlations.

For example, Sheffer raises issue with the application of the term “diaspora” to transnational formations which can be construed as “deterritorialized identities”, i.e.

groups that consist of hybrid identities, orientations, and affinities which are not connected to a specific land of origin (Glick Schiller et al. 1992; Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc 1994; Kearney 1995, pp. 526-7; Guarnizo and Smith 1998). Sheffer argues that this indistinct application of the term “diaspora” opens the flood gates to the following “cognate phenomena” which have muddled the directives of the field: groups sharing ideological frameworks, such as communism; “clashing civilizations” (Huntington 1993); Latinos worldwide, Asian-Americans, and Arab-Americans as single entities; members of various religious denominations, such as Catholics and Anglicans; people who speak the same native tongue, such as the Francophone (Miles and Sheffer 1998); and even members of the “global youth culture” (Scholte 1996, pp. 53-61).

The working definition of an “ethno-national diaspora” which will serve to underscore the connection to the Okinawan experience in Hawaii is as follows (Sheffer 2003, pp. 9-10):

...an ethno-national diaspora is a social-political formation, created as a result of either voluntary or forced migration, whose members regard themselves as of the same ethno-national origin and who permanently reside as minorities in one or several host countries. Members of such entities maintain regular or occasional contacts with what they regard as their homelands and with individuals and groups of the same background residing in other host countries. Based on aggregate decisions to settle permanently in host countries, but to maintain a common identity, diasporans identify as such, showing solidarity with their group and their entire nation, and they organize and are active in the cultural, social, economic, and political spheres. Among their various activities, members of such diasporas establish trans-state networks that reflect complex relationships among the diasporas, their host countries, their homelands, and international actors.

In other words, the identities of ethno-national diaspora groups are established through the interplay of primordial, psychological/mythical and instrumental elements (Connor 1994; Smith 1989). (For lack of space, the broad theoretical discussion on Sheffer’s postulates will not be included here.)

Sheffer’s list of common characteristics “which historical and modern diasporas share”

will be employed to organize the focus in this section of the ongoing research. Sheffer's list (2003, p.83) from the perspective of ethno-national diasporism, is summarized as follows:

- All diasporas have been created as a result of voluntary or imposed migration.
- In most cases, decisions to join or establish diasporic entities have been made only after migrants have settled in their host countries.
- Diasporans generally have been determined to maintain their ethnic identities and have been capable of doing so. Those identities have been important bases for promoting solidarity within diasporic entities.
- Most diasporas have established intricate support organizations in their host countries.
- They have been involved not only in economic activities in their host countries but also in significant cultural and political exchanges within their homelands and other diasporic entities of the same national origin.
- They have maintained contacts with their homelands and other dispersed segments of the same nation.
- In some cases, blatant hostility and discrimination have forced individuals and groups to join or establish ethno-national diaspora organizations.

Additionally, the Okinawan experience in Hawaii will be applied to Sheffer's queries on ethno-national diasporas, to corroborate with the discussion along these lines and to define the Okinawan experience in the process. Here is a partial list of Sheffer's queries (2003, p.6):

- Is the identity of diaspora members of an essentialist, instrumental, or constructed nature?
- What are roles of collectives, individuals, and environmental factors in diasporas' formations, persistence, and behavior?
- Are these stable and homogenous, or unsteady and hybrid formations?
- What are the organizational structures within diasporas, and what are the strategies and tactics they employ?
- What are the functions of these organizations and their contributions to

homelands, host countries, and the emerging global society?

- Are these groups precursors of post-modern, post-national, and trans-state social and political systems?

Furthermore, through the ethnographic explorations of this study, the Okinawan experience in Hawaii holds the potential to offer insights into related queries pertaining to discrete aspects of ethno-national diasporas such as:

- What are the social, political and cultural conditions which cause a diasporic group to fluctuate between strong ethno-national allegiances and assimilation (or dormancy)?
- What are the factors which trigger “cultural enlightenment” among members of the younger generations of mature diasporas?
- To what degree is membership in ethno-national organizations a matter of cultural calling or a survival mechanism (e.g., a reaction to discrimination or alienation in society)?
- How do diaspora members reconcile citizenship in a host nation after experiencing acute political and social injustices at the hands of the host nation (e.g. the internment of Okinawan and Japanese Americans during WWII)?
- What influence do “successful” diasporas (e.g., those which are stable and employ successful strategies and tactics) have on other ethno-national diasporas?

IV. Conclusion.

This paper has attempted to outline the steps involved in legitimizing and defining the Okinawan diasporic experience in Hawaii, while demonstrating that relative and insightful ethnographic data is abundant, accessible, and applicable throughout.

The unique context of the island setting is a key strength of the study, providing all the ethnographic and cultural material necessary for the research in progress, with implications that go beyond the focus on Okinawa, thus establishing the full the potential of this study. Having set the foundation and made the connection from the historical to the contemporary, the stage is set to continue deliberations into diaspora-

related principles such as cosmopolitanism, national sovereignty, recognition and difference, solidarity and criticism, belonging and distance, rootedness and rootlessness, insider space and outsider space, etc.

Finally, this undertaking is quite literally a unique and timely opportunity to capture and record, first-hand, the historical and lived experiences of a diaspora which spans the entire 20th century. It is uniquely possible through the clear delineations of culture in the island setting and the propensity of Okinawans to live long and healthy lives—not a subjective statement, as Okinawans are arguably the longest lived people in the world (The Okinawan Program, 2001).

My interview transcriptions are filled with adjoining notes which almost read like tall tales—from first-generation Okinawans like Mr. Masa Miyahira who, at age 94, recently built a large brick wall, climbed to the rooftop to do repairs, and challenged me to spar in boxing when I arrived for the interview; to Mrs. Kama Higa who climbed her orange tree to pick fruit from the higher branches.

This opportunity to capture and document stories and data from a passing generation's enduring members—who were there from the beginning and are still able to credibly articulate accounts and events—drives this research project.

V. References.

- Anderson, B. (1994). Exodus. *Critical Enquiry*. 20(2): 314-27.
- Arakaki, R. (2002). 'Theorizing on Okinawan Diaspora.' in R. Nakasone (ed.), *Okinawan Diaspora*. Honolulu, Hawaii. University of Hawaii Press, pp. 26-43.
- Barker, J. (2005). *Sovereignty Matter: Locations of Contestation and Possibility in Indigenous Struggles for Self-Determination*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Basch, L., N. Glick Schiller, and C. Szanton Blanc. (1994). *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments and Deterritorialized Nation-States*. Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach.
- Brown, J. (1998). 'Black Liverpool, Black America, and the Gendering of Diasporic space.' *Cultural Anthropology*, 13(3), 291-325.

- Campt, T. (2002). 'The Crowded Space of Diaspora: Intercultural Address and the Tensions of Diaspora.' *Radical History Review*, 83, 94-113.
- Chaliand, G., and J.P. Rageau. (1995). *The Penguin Atlas of Diasporas*. New York: Viking.
- Clifford, J. (1994) Diasporas. *Cultural Anthropology* 9 (August): 302-338.
- Coffey, A. and Atkinson, P. (1996) *Making Sense of Qualitative Data*. London: Sage.
- Cohen, R. (1997). *Global diasporas: An introduction*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Conklin, K. (2007). *Hawaiian Apartheid: Racial Separatism and Ethnic Nationalism in the Aloha State*. Montgomery, Ala.: E-Book Time.
- Dougherty, M. (1992). *To Steal a Nation: Probing Hawaiian History*. Waimanalo, Hi.: Island Style Press.
- Glick Schiller, N., L. Basch, and C. Blanc-Szanton. (1992). 'Toward a Transnational Perspective on Migration.' *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*. 645: 1-24.
- Guarnizo, L., and M. Smith. (1998). 'The Location of Transnationalism.' In: P. Smith and L. Guarnizo, eds., *Transnationalism from Below*, pp. 3-34. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publications.
- Higa, H. (2008B). 'Okinawan Identity in Hawaii: Delineations of culture and power within a cosmopolitan setting.' To appear in *The Journal of Chubu Gakuin University*.
- Huntington, S. (1993). The Clash of Civilizations. *Foreign Affairs*. 72(3): 22-49.
- Kearney, M. (1995). 'The Local and the Global.' *Annual Review of Anthropology*. 24: 547-65.
- Kingston, Maxine Hong. (1976). *The Woman Warrior*. New York: Knopf.
- Lebra, W. (1980). 'The Okinawans' in f. McDermott, W. Tseng, and T. Marezki (eds.), *People and Cultures of Hawaii: A Psychosocial Profile*. Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press.
- Marienstras, R. (1989). 'On the Notion of Diasporas.' In: G. Chaliand, ed., *Minority People in the Age of Nation States*. London: Pluto Press.
- Miles, W., and G. Sheffer. (1998). Francophonie and Zionism: 'A Comparative Study of Transnationalism and Trans-statism.' *Diaspora*. 7(2): 119-48.
- Nakasone, R. (1996). *Reflections on the Okinawan Experience*. Fremont, Calif.: Dharma Cloud.
- Ong, A. (2003). *Buddha is Hiding*. London, England: University of California Press.

- Safran, W. (1991). 'Diasporas in modern societies: Myths of homeland and return.' *Diaspora* 1:83-99.
- Schnapper, D. (1999). 'From the nation State to Transnational World: On the Meaning and Usefulness of Diaspora as a Concept.' *Diaspora*. 8(3): 225-52.
- Scholte, J. (1996). 'Globalization and Collective Identities.' In: J. Krause and N. Renwickl, eds., *Identities in International Relations*, pp. 38-78. London: Macmillan.
- Sheffer, G. (2003). *Diaspora Politics: At Home Abroad*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Tololyan, K. (1991)
- Tololyan, K. (1996). 'Rethinking Diaspora(s): Stateless Power in the Transnational Moment.' *Diaspora*. 5(2): 3-36.
- Vertovec, S. (1997). 'Three Meanings of Diaspora.' *Diaspora*. 6(3):227-97.