

《Session 2》

## Support by the Local Government for Handing Down of Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage to Future Generations

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I would like to present a report on current conditions surrounding cultural properties in Okinawa Prefecture and support measures from the standpoint of cultural property preservation policy.

The systems that support Okinawa Prefecture's cultural property preservation policy are the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties (1950); Okinawa Prefectural Ordinance for the Protection of Cultural Properties (1972), which was based on Ryukyu Government Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties (enacted in 1954); and Ordinances for the Protection of Cultural Properties in each municipality. The objectives of this policy are to designate cultural properties and to safeguard, preserve, hand down, and utilize designated cultural properties.

I wish to begin by examining current conditions surrounding designated cultural properties and the measures that support those properties. I would like you to understand that cultural properties in Okinawa Prefecture are designated on three levels: cultural property that is designated by the national government, cultural property that is designated by the prefectural government, and cultural property that is designated by municipal governments.

Currently (as of July 31, 2003), 145 items in Okinawa Prefecture have been designated as cultural properties by the national government, 263 items by the prefectural governments, and 831 items by municipal governments. This makes a total of 1,239 items. Looking at these items by type, 296 items-including buildings, sculptures, and paintings-have been designated as tangible cultural properties. Twenty-five items - including performing arts (*kumiodori*, traditional Okinawan dance, etc.) and handicrafts (*basho-fu*, *bingata*, etc.) - have been designated as intangible cultural properties. In addition, 191 items - such as folk performing arts - have been designated as intangible folk cultural property and 118 items - such as *Utaki* and *kami-ashagi* (ritual place) - have been designated as tangible folk cultur-

al property. Furthermore, in addition to 346 historical sites (*Gusuku*, etc.), 31 areas of scenic beauty, and 204 natural treasures, 28 items have been designated as adopted, selected, or registered cultural properties. However, despite the fact that the number of items designated as cultural property is increasing every year, the number of such items in Okinawa is still quite low compared to the national average.

Although many *Utaki* have not been selected as cultural properties, when they are selected, they are designated as either “tangible folk cultural properties” or “historical sites”, depending on the thinking behind their designation and regional realities. Many of Okinawa’s *Gusuku* contain *Utaki*, and because *Gusuku* are generally designated as historical sites, *Utaki* are inevitably included in this designation. Also, *Utaki* are rich with vegetation, as they are located in forests, on small hills, or in forest-covered areas, and because of this, there are instances where they are designated and preserved from the national treasures standpoint.

If we estimate that the number of *Utaki* in Okinawa Prefecture is, say, around 1,000, the total number of *Utaki* designated as cultural properties by the national government, prefectural government, and municipal governments is 75. This makes a total percentage of just 7.5%. It should be noted, however, that in many cases *Utaki* are included in *Gusuku*. There are 29 such cases, and if we figure in *Utaki* that are seen as ceremonial sites, etc., and sacred spaces, we get a figure of 212 items.

Next, looking at support measures toward designation of cultural properties, the national government, prefectural government, and municipal governments implement all forms of activities to preserve and hand down nationally designated cultural properties through the cultural properties subsidy system. The prefectural government and municipal governments do the same for prefecturally designated cultural properties and municipal governments do the same for municipally designated cultural properties. Furthermore, in cases where surveys or activities related to cultural properties are to be implemented on a prefecture-wide basis, the prefecture takes on these activities as the project owner. I should mention that, when a cultural property has an owner, the prefecture conducts preservation and repair activities with the owner bearing a portion of the cost required.

The amount of support (subsidies) as funds related to cultural properties in FY2002 totaled 623,815,000 yen. This figure includes government subsidies and subsidy expenses to municipalities and organizations. A breakdown of support (subsidies) shows that the main items included preservation and repair of tangible cultural properties (buildings), improvement of historical sites, excavation of

buried cultural properties, training of persons to pass on intangible cultural properties (performing arts, handicraft skills, etc.), projects to present folk performing arts, and surveys of cultural properties.

The size of these budgets is extremely small compared to budgets for public works projects, etc. However, I do



“Kumishi Daki” (*Utaki* with a park in front)  
Atta settlement in North Nakagusuku village (middle of Okinawa’s  
main island)

not wish to imply that simply pouring in a great deal of money into these endeavors is sufficient. The maintenance of cultural properties also takes time. Among the activities performed here are (depending on the situation) excavations to determine how an item originally appeared, establishment of maintenance committees, collection of past materials, and studies on restoration methods. In the case of buildings, the conduct of analyses during dismantling and repair work and collection of materials require time and labor, and thus these activities cannot be completed in a single year by allocating a large budget for that fiscal year. There are many cases where work can extend over several years, or up to 10 or 20 years for major maintenance projects.

On the other hand, in the case of intangible cultural properties (performing arts, handicrafts, etc.), a major point is the passing on of skills to future generations. Thus, people and groups that preserve these skills train people who can pass on them on to future generations.

Given the outline I have just presented, I believe there has been a change in general attitudes toward cultural properties since the 1990s. In the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, cultural properties often came into conflict with various types of development and construction. We have often heard from our predecessors that cultural properties and construction are opposing concepts, as cultural properties obstruct construction. Amid this situation, cultural properties were destroyed on the one hand, while on the other a variety of preservation activities emerged as people concerned attempted to protect them.

However, as has been presented today, in recent years we have seen move-

ments toward greater placement of value on cultural properties and toward their utilization. This is evidenced in projects related to the preservation of historical town landscapes. It is also seen in consideration for small animals that are natural treasures by building tunnels under roads for them. And it is seen in efforts to return rivers that have been covered with concrete to their natural states and to remove tetrapods that separate people from the sea so as to bring coastlines closer to their natural conditions. I am extremely pleased to see that not only cultural property-related efforts but also public works projects are being structured so that proper care is taken to ensure that cultural and natural properties are left to future generations.

As is stated in the report on the current status of *Utaki*, awareness on the part of local residents is key in addressing one of today's themes - the preservation of *Utaki* and their surroundings. We cannot preserve *Utaki* through simple government designation as cultural properties if local residents are uninterested in them and do not have a mind to protect them. Diffusion and enlightenment on the need for local people to become interested in the protection of tangible and intangible cultural properties (including *Utaki*) in their daily lives, and on efforts in this area by those in charge of administering cultural property, are essential. At the same time, it is vital that local residents work hand and hand with the government. For the intangible heritage that environ *Utaki*, as well, I believe that we have entered an age in which unified approaches are of particular importance.