

Period I Documents showing that the Ryukyu people had geographical awareness of the Senkaku Islands

A book on a family tree that suggests a relationship between the Ryukyu people and the Senkaku Islands

Keizu and Kafu in Ryukyu

Keizu-Kafu is a book on the genealogy and records of a Ryukyu notable family.

In 1689, the Ryukyu Kingdom established the “Keizu-za,” an administrative body to collect and compile “Keizu,” a record of the genealogy of a noble family. Keizu formed the basis of the class system in the Kingdom; those with Keizu were called “Kei-mochi (a Keizu holder)” (= “Shizoku [nobility]”) and those without were called “Mu-kei (a non-Keizu holder)” (= “Heimin [commoner]”). Keizu documents submitted by families to the Keizu-za were thoroughly inspected by its officers. Passing documents were approved with an official seal of the Kingdom, with one copy kept in the Keizu-za and another copy kept in each household. With each generational change in the household, a new draft was submitted to amend the existing chart, and this procedure was repeated. Keizu were not treated as private documents, but as valuable official records in the Ryukyu Kingdom. It is assumed that during the Kingdom Era there were approximately 3,000 Keizu existing in the Shuri and Naha areas of the Okinawan mainland.

The front cover of each Keizu displays the surname of the family and indicates whether it is a head family or a branch family. The contents were divided broadly into two parts: the Keizu with the family’s historical lineage (also called “Seikeizu”), and the Kafu with the history and work history of the successive heads and their family members. Therefore, the official name of these documents was the “Keizu-Kafu.” The words, “Keizu” and “Kafu,” are abbreviations of “Keizu-Kafu.”

The “Keizu-Kafu” are documents critical to the research of the history of Okinawa and the Ryukyu Kingdom, with many published research papers referencing these records.

No.3 Sho-sei Gushikawa-ke Kafu (Record of the Gushikawa Family, a branch of the Sho Family) Juni-sei Kōki (12th Family Head: Kōki SHO) 1819 (Estimated)

FY2016/P9

Overview

This is a record of the genealogy of Koki SHO (Choei NAKIJIN) (*1), an influential member of a noble family during the time of the Ryukyu Dynasty. It was reprinted in *Naha-shi Shi Shiryohen (The History of Naha – References)* Vol. 1, No. 7. It mentions “Yokon-koba Island” (Yokon-kobajima), which is considered to be a part of the present-day Senkaku Islands.

According to the records, when Koki SHO travelled to Satsuma (Kagoshima) on business in 1819 (estimated), the (Satsuma) ship of the party fell into distress at sea. After the storm had subsided, the ship was stranded on the coast of an island. A separate note (an explanatory note written in smaller letters across two lines below the main text) has been added to the records with regard to this island, stating that upon inquiring later, he found out that this island was commonly known as “Yokon-kobajima.”

The description of this incident in the document included an account of how the party had stayed the night on the island after the storm, and when they went to find some fresh water, there was no spring water anywhere. This account shows that the party landed on the island.

The record also states that, after they became stranded, the group waited three days for a favorable wind. However, a storm started up suddenly and they drifted once again and were cast away on Yonaguni Island, which is one of the Yaeyama Islands, this time. As the document describes how a local official on Yonaguni Island signaled to the party from the island, we can see that this official was accustomed to rescuing ships in distress.

Furthermore, it was the official who would presumably have informed the party that the island they were driven to was “Yokon-kobajima.” This suggests that, at the beginning of the 19th century, the people of Yaeyama had clear geographical awareness (*) of the Senkaku Islands through incidents such as shipwrecks.

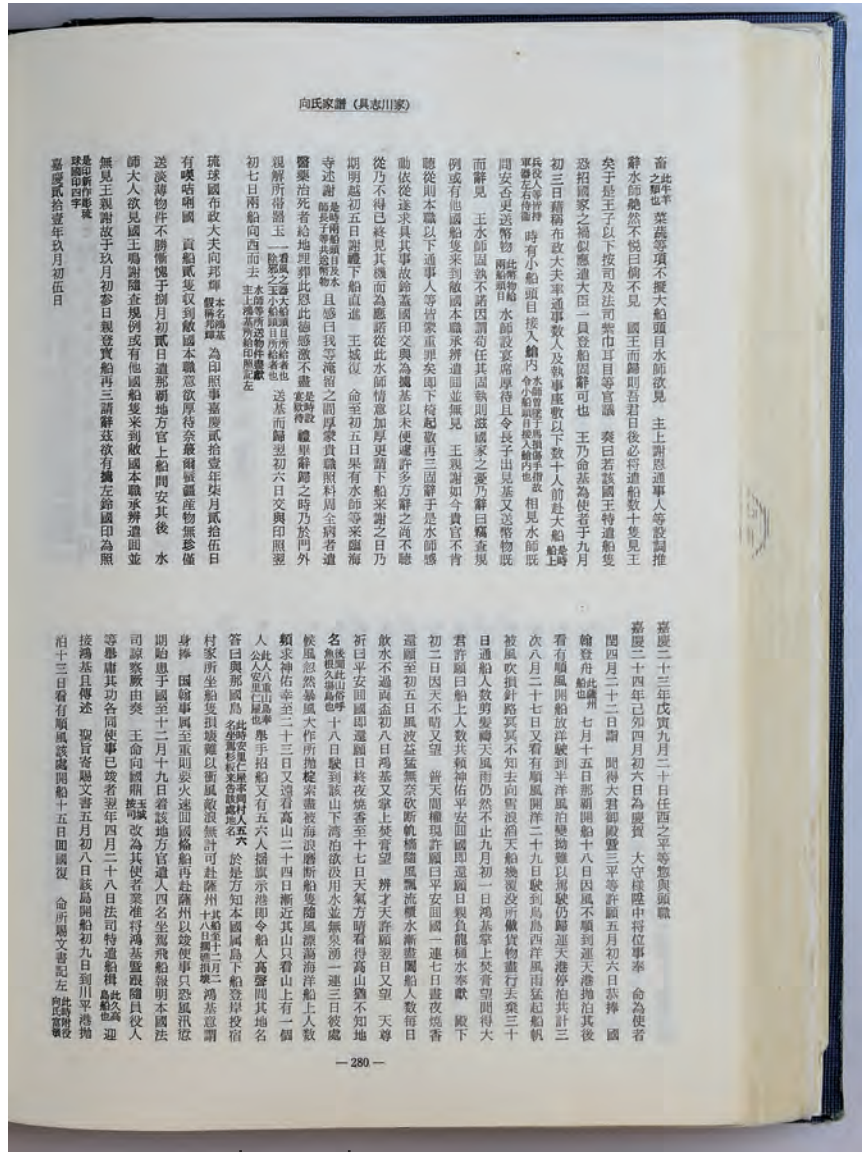
*1 The pronunciation of the surname “SHO (向)” is the same as that of the surname “SHO (尚)” (written with a different kanji character), a clan of the royal family. However, only limited members of the royal family who were close to the king could use the latter surname. The former surname “SHO (向)” indicates the holder would be a distant relative of the royal family, but it is appropriate to interpret this surname as that of an influential member of the nobility, not that of the royal family.

*2 This is one of only a few documents that contain descriptions of landings on the Senkaku Islands in the premodern era such as the early 19th century. This is also considered to be an important document in the sense that it suggests that the people of Yaeyama had clear geographical awareness of the Senkaku Islands.

Date Created	1819 (Estimated) 1982 (date of production of the full published)
Author(s) & Editor(s)	-
Publisher	-
Name of Publication	Naha Shishi (The History of Naha) References Vol.1 No.7 (Sho-sei Kafu Taiso Imina Shoi)
Language	Classical Chinese
Medium	Paper
Public Access	Available to the public
Repository	Okinawa Prefectural Library
Reference& Information	Available at the Okinawa Prefectural Library

Excerpt [English translation]

On the 17th of September 1819 in the lunar calendar, as the weather finally cleared up, we saw a mountainous island but weren't sure what it was called. (We later learned that it was locally called "Yokon-kobajima Island [魚根久場島]"). On the 18th, we sailed to this island and anchored at an inlet to get some fresh water, but unfortunately could not find any springs. There we waited for a sailing wind for three days. Suddenly, a storm came on and everything, including the anchor and ropes, was lost to the waves. The ship was left to drift in the wind. People on board were praying for divine assistance. Fortunately, we saw another mountainous island on the 23rd. On the 24th, we gradually got closer to the island. There was a person up on a peak of the island waving to our ship. (He was Jinya ASATO, an officer of Ishigaki Island.) Five or six other people were waving flags, indicating the location of an inlet. When a ship officer yelled to ask the name of the place, they replied "Yonaguni Island."



Repository: Okinawa Prefectural Library

[Reference] Research into the genealogy in the Naha City historiography project

This document is contained in the "Sho-sei Kafu Taiso Imina Shoi" section of *Naha-shi Shi Shiryohen (The History of Naha - References)* Vol. 1, No. 7. According to the commentary on the history of Naha City in the book (p. 1), the existing records of the genealogy in Okinawa include those of the Main Island family branch (Shuri/Naha/Tomari, Kume) and the Sakishima Islands family branch (Miyako/Yaeyama (Kume)). According to *Shishu - Shuri Naha (A Collection of Family Names - Shuri, Naha)*, which is a full catalogue of the genealogy of the Main Island family branch, there are approximately 3,000 volumes for the Main Island family branch, with approximately 400 family names. (The collection of family names does not exist for the Sakishima Islands family branch, and the number of its volumes is unknown.)

Books on family trees, as shown in the boxed commentary (p. 17), were kept in the genealogy office

and by the respective families. However, those preserved in the genealogy office were destroyed by fire during WWII. In Naha City, research and collection (duplication) were carried out for the family trees kept by each family since around 1965. As of December 1981, 550 volumes had been collected, and the family tree of the GUSHIKAWA family was also included among those which were selectively reprinted and recorded.

Currently, the Naha City Museum of History holds approximately 950 genealogical documents (including Miyako and Yaeyama). Of these, approximately 600 volumes of genealogical records had been collected by September 2008 and duplicated in the fifth edition (enlarged and revised) of *Shishu - Shuri Naha*.

The top photograph shows the covers of books on genealogy, and the bottom one shows their inside pages. These photographs are from *Naha-shi Shi Shiryohen (The History of Naha - References)* Vol. 1, No. 7



Repository: Okinawa Prefectural Library

The top photograph shows the covers of books on genealogy, and the bottom one shows their inside pages. These photographs are from *Naha-shi Shi Shiryohen (The History of Naha - References)* Vol. 1, No. 7