

## Preface

“There is nothing on the Amami Islands.” The people of Amami often sigh and say these words. Is it true that “Amami are islands with nothing?” No, Amami has a wonderful history, culture, and even nature. One of the reasons why the people of the Amami Islands do not know such information is because of the researchers. This is also something that the locals often lament. “Even if we work with the researchers from the mainland, those people just take the data back home with them and never tell us about it.” As a solution, in April 2015, the Kagoshima University International Center for Island Studies (*Toshoken*) set up an Amami branch office in Amami city, where faculty and staff are stationed, provide education and conduct research more closely tied to the Amami Islands.

For example, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology’s special expense project “Development of Education and Research Infrastructure for Biodiversity and Its Conservation in the Satsunan Islands” (Kagoshima University, FY2016–2019) involved comprehensive research (joint research by science and humanities researchers). The research was conducted in the Amami Islands to investigate the detailed distribution of terrestrial and marine organisms, elucidate the mechanism for maintaining the diversity of ecosystems, and clarify the relationship between humans and nature.

In addition, study sessions have been held to return research results to the local people as much as possible. These sessions have included “Let’s talk in the Amami branch office”; symposia on the archaeological sites, island songs, industry, and biodiversity of the Amami Islands; observation sessions on land and marine life; and lectures on visiting the Amami Islands. However, while the return to the local community has increased since the opening of the Amami branch office, compared to that in the past, this was only a part of our research. Furthermore, the local people who participated have been limited to only a select number of people. Therefore, we carried series, “The Enchanting Amami Islands: Bringing Research Results to the Locals,” in the local newspaper “*Nankai Nichinichi Shinbun*” from January 2020 to March 2021 to present our discoveries and the latest studies to the people of the Amami Islands.

This series was written by full-time faculty members, adjunct faculty members, and visiting researchers at *Toshoken* (49 scholars and 66 publications), and comprised of

eight fields: (1) Island Civilization, (2) History and Culture, (3) Society and Economy, (4) Nature on Land, (5) Nature in the Sea and Rivers, (6) Utilization of Animals and Plants, (7) Various Problems over Nature, and (8) Island as a Place of Education.

Then, we picked up and recomposed publications related to History, Culture, Society, Economy, and Education and we translated them into English for this book. The book was partly supported by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology's special expense project "Formation of a Global and Local Education and Research Base in the Amami Islands, a Candidate Site for World Natural Heritage" (Kagoshima University, FY2020–2021).

"Is there *nothing* in the Amami Islands?" We hope that readers who feel that there is "nothing" would be able to answer "no" to this question after reading this book, and readers who think that there is "something" would be further charmed by the Amami Islands.

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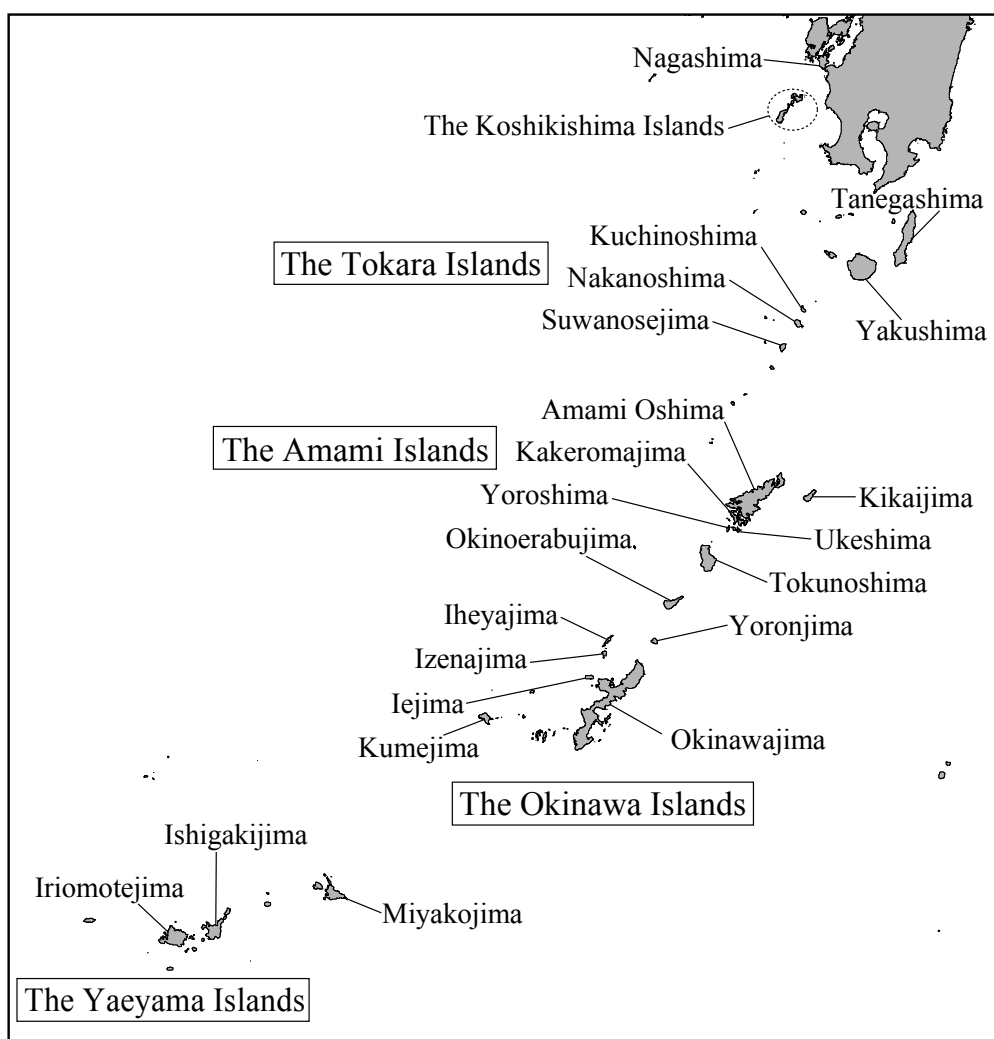
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Map of eight inhabited islands of the Amami Islands and islands mentioned in this book (Map source: National Land Numerical Information [Administrative Division] by Japanese Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism).