





Chapter 1

Past, Present and Future

Satsunan Islands

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This book is aimed at introducing the reader to the Satsunan Islands, a group of about thirty islands located in southern Japan. We begin by clarifying the geographic scope of the islands. The string of islands extending in a southwesterly direction from the southernmost tip of Kyushu to Taiwan is the Nansei Islands. These Nansei Islands also form the borderline between the East China Sea and the Pacific Ocean. The islands in the southern half of the Nansei Islands, which belong to Okinawa Prefecture, are called the Ryukyu Islands. Those in the northern half, which belong to Kagoshima Prefecture, are the Satsunan Islands of this book. "Satsunan Islands" literally means "the islands south of Satsuma," thus the title of this book "Beyond Satsuma."

"Satsuma" was first recorded as a geographical name around the 8th century. It was the name of the southern half of Kagoshima, which is on the western side of Kyushu's southernmost tip. Near the end of the 12th century, the Shimazu Clan gained control over Osumi, Hyuga and Satsuma and formed the Satsuma Domain, which later became approximately the Kagoshima Prefecture of today.

Due to its geographic position, Satsuma has been Kyushu's gateway to and from abroad, and cultural products of every description have been coming in and going out for centuries. For example, sweet potatoes originally from Central

America first entered Japan through Satsuma and are called "Satsuma potatoes" in Japan today. And artisans brought to Satsuma from the Korean Peninsula created original porcelain, which became world renown as "Satsuma ware."

There is also a type of mandarin orange known as *unshu-mikan* in Japanese but as "satsumas" in English. *Unshu-mikans* have excellent qualities not found in other citrus fruit. For example, they have very few seeds and are very sweet, and they can be easily peeled with the fingers. The oranges are originally from an area in Satsuma called Nagashima. Seedlings were exported to the USA in the latter half of the 19th century, and the fruit they bore came to be called "satsumas" after their place of origin.

In addition to the mainland islands known as Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu, the Japanese Archipelago also contains almost five thousand smaller islands. Two hundred and forty of them are part of Kagoshima Prefecture. Having the fifth highest number of islands of all prefectures in Japan, Kagoshima Prefecture is one of Japan's foremost prefectures that are made up of many islands. Here it must be explained that a prefecture, the English translation of the Japanese term *ken* or its equivalents, is the largest administrative division in the local governments of Japan. There are currently forty-seven prefectures in Japan.

Within a prefecture, there are municipalities including cities (*shi* in Japanese), towns (*machi* or *cho*) and villages (*mura* or *son*).

Kagoshima Prefecture contains the Koshiki Islands, the Satsunan Islands and some of the Amakusa Islands. The Satsunan Islands and Okinawa's Ryukyu Islands together form a string of islands that leads to Taiwan. Since ancient times, the islands have played an important role as a "road over the ocean" linking Japan to the Asian Continent and to other places in the Pacific.

The ocean separates the Satsunan Islands from their neighboring islands and from mainland Kyushu. Moreover, from the point of view of the Kanto and Kansai districts, which are Japan's political and economical centers, the Satsunan Islands are situated far away in the distant periphery. But equally the islands are directly linked by ocean to the outside world.

The Satsunan Islands mainly consist of three island groups, which are the Osumi Islands, the Tokara Islands and the Amami Islands. Of all the islands in those island groups, twenty-one islands are inhabited. In this book, as examples, we have selected seven of those islands and two villages that are made of tiny islands.

Specifically, from the Osumi Islands,

we selected Tanegashima Island, Yaku Island, and a village called Mishima, which consists of Kuro Island and other tiny islands. We selected the Tokara Islands, with their seven inhabited islands, as a whole, because the islands constitute a village called Toshima. And from the Amami Islands, we selected Amami Oshima Island, Kikai Island, Tokunoshima Island, Okinoerabu Island and Yoron Island.

Here a quick note on the naming of islands in Japanese may be in order. The Japanese word for island is *shima*. As a part of the name of an island, however, *shima* often becomes its phonetic variant *jima*. It must be also noted that the proper name and the word *shima* or *jima* sometimes become so intermingled that we cannot separate them any more. In this case, we use the whole name as in Tanegashima Island (strictly speaking "Island" is redundant). Otherwise we separate them and translate *shima* or *jima* by "island" as in Yaku Island. Amami Oshima Island is the only exception in that we use the whole name but the name consists of two words, where *oshima* means a "big island". All of this was done to reflect the actual use of island names in Japanese.

Characteristics

The Satsunan Islands are situated between 27 and 30 degrees north latitude. They often receive damage from typhoons

that rampage up from the south between July and September. But for the most part, being southerly situated, this region is blessed with temperate subtropical climate. The Japan Current (Kuroshio), which flows north from Taiwan through the East China Sea between the Amami Islands and the Osumi Islands and then out into the Pacific Ocean, is a warm current contributing to the fine climate.

The Satsunan Islands have numerous subtropical plants, especially in the southernmost islands. As often promoted in tourist information, coral reefs encircle the islands and mangroves grow thickly along the coastlines. Sugarcane is a typical crop cultivated on the islands. There is a zoological borderline called Watase's Line between Yaku Island and Amami Oshima Island. The borderline was named after Shozaburo Watase who noticed that the species of aboriginal animals on one side were much different from those on

the other.

The indigenous society in the Satsunan Islands has fostered a unique culture. From the existence of peculiar raised-floor structures called *takakura*, we can see that the culture of the Satsunan Islands has been closely tied to that of the islands farther south. For example, the culture of the Amami Islands has been especially closely tied to that of the Ryukyu Islands.

In fact, as in Okinawa, the inhabitants of the Amami Islands speak the Ryukyuan language even though the dialects of the islands from the Tokara Islands and upward are close to the dialects of mainland Kyushu. The reason they got separated from the Ryukyu Islands and became part of the Satsunan Islands is the result of a historical transition that these islands went through.

History

Although the ocean separates the islands from each other, it is also a medium that links them to the rest of the world. As a result of their geographic position, since prehistory, the Satsunan Islands have been closely tied to their adjoining Ryukyu Islands and to other places farther abroad. Let us now look back at the Satsunan Islands starting from the early days of

recorded history.

The Satsunan Islands were used as stepping stones to travel to China, which had developed an advanced civilization to the west of Japan. Japan sent official envoys to the Tang Imperial Court in China over ten times between the 7th and 9th centuries to study the advanced culture of the Tang Dynasty. The envoys used different sea routes to China in the different eras, but one of their routes was called the South Islands Route.

Using this route, the envoys voyaged

south along several of the Satsunan Islands and then headed for the estuary of the Yangtze River. A Chinese priest called Ganjin, who contributed enormously to the establishment of Buddhism in Japan, also used the South Islands Route. His voyage to Japan proved to be a tribulation, but he managed to arrive at the south coast of Kyushu in 753.

The Satsunan Islands have also played an important role in relations between Japan and Europe. Two Portuguese men aboard a Chinese ship arrived at Tanegashima Island in the mid-16th century. According to historical data in Japan, this took place in 1543. This was the first time the Japanese had ever seen a European. It was also the first time the Japanese had ever seen a matchlock gun, which the Japanese blacksmiths got busy duplicating. Such matchlock guns radically changed the battle tactics used in those days and became known throughout Japan as *tanegashimas*. Jesuit missionary Saint Francis Xavier later came to Japan to propagate Christianity. On his way out from Japan, heading for China, he also dropped in on Tanegashima Island.

Incidentally, a major change occurred in the region south of the Satsunan Islands in the beginning of the 15th century. The three kingdoms in the Ryukyu Islands united. The kingdoms had been at war with each other but the Sho Clan of the Chuzan Kingdom merged their kingdom with the other two to establish the Ryukyu Kingdom. Looking north to expand its

territory, the Ryukyu Kingdom took in the Amami Islands. This is why the Amami Islands have been so heavily influenced by the culture of the Ryukyu Kingdom.

The Ryukyu Kingdom flourished in trading products gathered from Japan and Southeast Asia with the Ming Dynasty of China. The Satsuma Domain also conducted trade on an equal footing with the Ryukyu Kingdom. But their friendly relationship was short-lived. In 1609, aiming to gain more profits from trade with the Ming Dynasty, the Satsuma Domain acquired consent from the Tokugawa Shogunate in Edo and sent soldiers to invade the Ryukyu Kingdom. As part of their invasion campaign, the Satsuma Domain also subjugated the Amami Islands and placed them under direct Satsuma control. The Satsunan Islands, which are all the islands from Yoron Island northward, became politically separated from the Ryukyu Islands after that incident.

A new element that dramatically changed the daily lifestyles of the island inhabitants emerged in the 17th century. The new element was sugarcane, and it played a vital role in placing the Satsunan Islands within the territory of the Shimazu Clan. In 1610, an islander from Amami Oshima Island who was washed ashore in China's Fujian Province smuggled some sugarcane saplings out from the province back to his island. The saplings were the beginning of Amami Oshima's sugarcane plantations.

In the beginning of the 19th century, aiming to acquire new profits, the Shimazu

Clan made it mandatory for the inhabitants of Amami Oshima Island, Kikai Island and Tokunoshima Island to grow sugarcane. This was a merciless demand on the islanders, but it was a primary source of revenue for the Satsuma Domain, and it was one of the main factors that empowered the Satsuma Domain to lead the movement to overthrow the Edo Shogunate.

After the Meiji Restoration, the Satsunan Islands came to belong to Kagoshima Prefecture while the Ryukyu Islands came to belong to Okinawa Prefecture. But before long, history again dealt the islands an excruciating blow. The U.S. armed forces arrived on the shores of Okinawa and other islands of the archipelago near the end of World War II. The islands then became battlefields of violent combat between the U.S. and Japanese forces.

When the war ended, all of the islands south of 30 degrees north latitude became subject to U.S. military control. The Tokara Islands and the other islands south of them were taken over by the Americans. U.S. military control of the Satsunan Islands

continued until the Tokara Islands were returned to Japan in 1952, and the Amami Islands in 1953. U.S. military control of the Ryukyu Islands continued until they were all returned to Japan in 1972.

In the beginning of the 1960s, Japan entered a new era of high economic growth, which was centered in the Tokyo and Osaka metropolitan areas. The Satsunan Islands were then faced with a population drain as large numbers of their youth were emigrating to the metropolitan areas in search of better-paying job opportunities. Since the end of the war, the inhabitants of the Satsunan Islands have been groping for a means to revitalize their islands.

(Toru Aoyama)

Tasks

The most important postwar task for the inhabitants of the Satsunan Islands and for the remote island municipalities have been how to overcome their severe natural and social problems. Natural problems include the typhoons that

rampage through the islands, while the social problems include the population drain and the aging of the folk who remain on the islands. A great deal of efforts has been made so far.

Two underpinnings for such efforts are the Remote Islands Development Law established in 1953 and the New Special Measures Law for Amami Islands Development established in 1954.

These legal systems were established to raise the state of Kagoshima's remote islands, which include the Satsunan Islands, to the level of the mainland islands. They substantially ensure that the living environment is improved and that education and welfare are improved where necessary. The systems involve transportation aspects such as roads, harbors and aviation grounds and industrial aspects such as farmland and fishing harbors. They have been playing a crucial role for the islands so far in the last half-century.

Furthermore, as a prefecture that encompasses numerous remote islands, Kagoshima Prefecture is financially assisting "the remotest of the remote islands" that are in very severe natural and social situations. The prefecture is helping them with their small-scale public undertakings and the wide range of intricate plans that are not eligible for national funding. Very many improvements are still necessary, but the daily life of the inhabitants of the Satsunan Islands has improved considerably as a result of those laws and prefectural aid.

Some islands now have harbors that can accommodate large-scale passenger ships and aviation grounds that can accommodate high-speed aircraft. Some have highway systems that considerably shorten travel time to the heart of the island. Some have farmland that produces crops that maximally thrive in the temperate climate. And some have clinics and welfare

facilities that alleviate the anxiety felt by the inhabitants about their health and daily lives.

Remote islands are no longer on the far side of ocean but the suffering on them still continues. In a milieu of treacherous weather conditions, their transportation systems are far from complete. With their populations draining at ever increasing speeds and with the aging of the remaining inhabitants, the islanders worry that their regions will fall into oblivion. And being isolated by the ocean, industrial development is difficult in an environment of the flow of free flowing competition and deregulation. Being isolated and closed systems, remote islands need a more subtle balance between development and the natural environment. In a context of rapid social changes, the tasks facing the Satsunan Islands remain unaccomplished.

Urbanites have been arguing recently that all the work being done in developing the rapidly depopulating remote islands is in vain. But now that it has become imperative for mankind to reconsider its coexistence with nature, many urbanites are increasingly attracted to the profundity offered by the remote islands where natural landscape abounds and unique culture is preserved.

Roles of the Islands

Nearly half a century has transpired since the enactment of Japan's laws for the development of remote islands. The inhabitants of the Satsunan Islands are still facing innumerable arduous problems. Is there any hope for the islanders?

Many of the Satsunan Islands and other remote islands of Kagoshima Prefecture are situated in the open sea far away from mainland Kyushu. So all of the many islands could never be linked to mainland Kyushu by bridges or tunnels, no matter how far technology progresses. With that in mind, some urbanites argue that the national government may as well free itself from having to bother with the remote islands by abolishing its program for developing them.

But are the islands of Kagoshima really so insignificant? The mere existence of the islands, which abound in natural resources, is an enormous asset to Kagoshima Prefecture, to Japan, and to the world.

One role of the remote islands for the country is to protect and maintain the national land and its territorial waters. This includes the maintenance of peace and order, the surveillance of fishing zones and the preservation of the environment. This role cannot be carried out unless people remain on the islands, so it is important to maintain the minimum requirements for the daily lives of the island inhabitants.

Another role, which is becoming increasingly important, is to preserve the diversified forms of nature and culture. Anxiety-ridden Japanese people in their routine societies especially find great solace and inspiration on the remote islands. The Satsunan Islands and other remote islands of Kagoshima perfectly satisfy the conditions to bear such roles.

Discovering the value of the islands makes one reconsider the importance of "the level of the mainland islands." It is not necessary for everything to be at the level of the mainland islands to maintain the infrastructure of an island society. Many aspects of island life are far from adequate by the standards of the mainland islands, but they do serve their purposes. And rewarding lifestyles are possible in many cases even without income as high as that on the mainland islands.

On the other hand, actions taken by the Japanese government for the particular tasks of the remote islands are still inadequate. The government must improve its measures involving permanent residence on the islands and transportation costs. And they must work more on the problem of how to cope with the standards for waste disposal and treatment on the islands. It is areas such as these that "the level of the mainland islands" or an even higher level is actually required.

Strategy for Here on

Although the population is dwindling, the islands of Kagoshima still have about 200,000 people. The islanders must have a positive strategy to revitalize the islands using their physical strength. The way they present the individual characteristics of their islands within their islands and to the outside world will be important. It also goes without saying that the Japanese government as a whole must reevaluate the remote islands and aim to correct what they had not duly evaluated.

What must be observed here is the cooperation between the islanders and the outside world, in other words, the close exchange between the islanders and the urbanites. On the mainland islands, immigrants from the Satsunan Islands and the other remote islands of Kagoshima, especially from the Amami Islands, have set up friendship societies made up of their fellows from the islands of Kagoshima. Based mainly in major metropolitan areas, the societies serve to preserve the strong affinity the former islanders still have for each other. Not many other regions in Japan can boast of having such a powerful network

From here on, it will be necessary to utilize the islander friendship society network to help vitalize the islands. In addition to kinfolk and fellow islanders, it will also be necessary to utilize a "semi-islander" network of repeat visitors and new settlers

on the islands, who will be something like a reserve army. The key to activating the islands in this new concept will be for the islanders to exercise flexibility to a degree in conducting exchange with such outside connections.

This new strategy to link the remote islands with the mainland islands has actually already begun. Kagoshima Prefecture has also been promoting the Yaku Island Environmental and Cultural Village Concept. And in 2000, the prefecture also held the Kagoshima International Conference on World Natural Heritage (KICWNH) as the first attempt from local governments' perspectives.

Furthermore, based on the tide of the new era, new concepts have been submitted in the prefecture's comprehensive plan for 2001 and on. One concept is the "Plan for Coexistence of Man and Nature on Amami Islands," which will support endeavors aiming to get the Amami Islands designated on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Another concept is the "Plan to Create Island and City Interminglement," which aims to reassess the islands as they deepen closer exchange and cooperation with metropolitan areas.

Now that a half-century has passed since the establishment of the legal system for remote island development, the present state of the new policies that support these tasks to accomplish must also be studied by the national government.

Pride of the Islanders

Islands are limited areas surrounded by sea. The areas are actually models of the most typical society that can continually develop. Love of the island and pride as islanders are essential elements in fostering such a society. The islanders' love for their islands and unyielding grit in developing them is what will produce islands that are a benefit for Japan, islands that are not inferior to the mainland islands, and islands that gain wide support from the outside.

Development of the remote islands in the 21st century is not something provided by the administrations. It is something that the islanders must proudly propel by themselves with their own creativity and solidarity through repeated trial and error.

The islands are blessed with a temperate climate but are also menaced by rampant typhoons. They each abound with a their own particular natural resources, but are also surrounded by vast isolating ocean. Their people are rich in culture that brilliantly expresses their uniqueness, but also have a pining for the big city. Their history is woven of encounters with the people traveling through, but also contains hate mixed in with the love.

Islanders who make their living on the Satsunan Islands and on the other remote islands of Kagoshima, which are not covered in this book, feel joy at times and anguish at other times, but always shine with enthusiasm for the future.

Will pride as islanders of the new century be fostered in their hearts? Let us examine each of the Satsunan Islands separately and unveil their respective treasures in the following chapters.

(Satoshi Uemura)

Guide to Japanese Pronunciation for English Speakers

In this book Japanese words, place names and personal names are transcribed into Roman characters according to the standard transcription system. Here is a very brief guide to Japanese pronunciation.

1. There are five vowels in Japanese.
 - *a* is pronounced like the 'o' in 'hot'.
 - *e* is pronounced like the 'e' in 'bet'.
 - *i* is pronounced like the 'ee' in 'bee'.
 - *o* is pronounced like the 'o' in 'bone'.
 - *u* is pronounced like the 'oo' in 'cool', but without rounding your lips.

2. Each vowel can be either short or long. To pronounce a long vowel, simply lengthen the duration of the short vowel. For instance, long *a* is pronounced like the 'a' in 'spa'. Long vowels are usually indicated by a '-' mark over the letters, but for the sake of simplicity, the mark is not used in this book.

3. Most of the consonants are pronounced like those in English. However, there are some points to be mentioned.
 - *g* is always pronounced hard like 'g' in 'gun'.
 - *r* is pronounced like Spanish 'r' without the trill, by touching the tip of the tongue to the roof of the mouth behind the teeth.
 - When *y* follows a consonant and is followed by a vowel, they make one syllable. Pronounce it as one sound. For instance, *kyu* is pronounced as English word 'cue'.
 - Double consonants indicate a pause in breath. For instance, *toppi* is pronounced like "top-pea".

4. Finally, when pronouncing a word, clearly separate each syllable and give equal emphasis to each. For instance, *Okinoerabujima* is pronounced like 'o-ki-no-e-ra-bu-ji-ma'.