THE LEGEND OF MINAMOTO NO TAMETOMO: CONTROVERSY AND CONNECTIONS BETWEEN RYŪKYŪAN/OKINAWAN AND JAPANESE HISTORIES

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In 1879, Japan established Okinawa prefecture and abolished the Ryūkyū kingdom, which was once an independent country. Since then, Okinawa has been largely displaced and neglected in Japanese history. In 2007, the Japanese government instructed publishers of history textbooks to delete passages stating that the Japanese Imperial Army ‘ordered’ civilians to commit mass suicide at the end of the Battle of Okinawa in 1945. It is reported that more than 110,000 people in Okinawa demonstrated against this central government order to modify textbooks.¹ This protest raised the issue of the accuracy of the description of the battle in the textbooks, but more generally the lack of information on Okinawa covered in Japanese history has long been an issue of concern. Higa, Shimota and Shinzato’s book Okinawa, published in 1963, argued that, even after the Second World War, a proper description of Okinawa was not included in Japanese school textbooks.² Okinawa’s inadequate inclusion in Japanese history textbooks to this day has resulted in harsh criticism from Isa Shin’ichi, who asserts that some Japanese people are intolerant of different cultures within the Japanese islands.³ It is not the case, however, that historians in Okinawa and mainland Japan have not attempted to integrate Ryūkyūan/Okinawan and Japanese histories. During the Meiji and Taishō eras, the credibility of the legend of Minamoto no Tametomo was one of the major issues regarding relations between Okinawa and mainland Japan. This chapter discusses the controversy over the legend of Tametomo that made some historians aware that there was common ground between Ryūkyūan/Okinawan and Japanese histories.

It seems likely that Okinawa and mainland Japan were included within the same cultural sphere in the Jōmon period, but were later separated from each other and developed their unique cultures. Different historical processes may have caused the separation of the study of Okinawan history and that of Japanese history. In history books published in the Meiji and Taishō eras, Okinawan history and Japanese history were treated separately. The Meiji government wanted to assert the legitimacy of the Meiji Restoration and compiled an official history emphasizing the distinctions between Japan and other countries, as well as the importance of loyalty to the Emperor and patriotism. In the 1890 history book *Kokushi gan* (*National History*), Shigeno, Kume and Hoshino, history professors at the Imperial University, described Japanese history on the basis of a genealogical table of the Emperors and largely excluded Okinawa from Japanese history. According to Araki Moriaki, local history was included in school textbooks published during the 1890s for the purpose of instilling loyalty to the Emperor and patriotism into society, and local people who displayed loyalty and patriotism were praised in textbooks. It was difficult in Okinawa at that time to find those who displayed loyalty to the Emperor and patriotism. Moreover, according to Kinjō Seitoku and Nishizato Kikō, the Okinawan historians Majikina Ankō and Shimakura Ryūji’s *Okinawa issennen shi* (*The One-Thousand-Year History of Okinawa*) adopted the concept of period division based on *ōchō shikan* (*the dynastic view of history*) and regarded Okinawan history as the history of an ‘independent’ country. This may also have prevented historians from including Okinawa in Japanese history in the pre-war period.

Okinawa was under US administration after the Second World War, but was returned to Japan in 1972. In a paper published in 1970, Kinjō Seitoku and Nishizato Kikō asserted that a new approach to integrating

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