Salon D’Uchinaa : Constructing Cultural Public Sphere in Present-Day Okinawa *1

サロンとしてのウチナー ——現代沖縄における文化的公共圏の構築

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Abstract:
近年のいわゆる「沖縄ブーム（沖流）」に伴う内地からの観光客や移住者の著しい増加に呼応する勢いで沖縄本島の各所で観光住宅地の開発が進み、うちなんちゅ（沖縄人）とないちゃー（内地人）が様々な形で交錯する公共空間＝「郊外接触地（NSC）」が形成されつつある。本稿では本島那覇市の中心街に隣接する新都心地区で著者が近年行ってきたフィールドワークを手掛かりに、中間層の非政治的な公共圏として構築されるNSCの内情とそこに反映される環境的・人倫的な諸問題を明らかにする。そして沖縄の公共の空間の開拓が、沖縄文化の全国的なアピールと沖縄の経済活性化に貢献するという名目で地域に根を張りつつも、その実沖縄の伝統的なライフスタイルを腐食する新たな脅威として作用しつつある様子を洗い出してみたい。うちなんちゅとないちゃーの連帯を目指した自治体の形成はこうした文化的な浸食に少なからず対応する策を打ち出してはいるが、構成員の階級的な意識レベルからして、これが実質的にどこまで地域の文化と経済の持続的発展に貢献しうるかについては更なる検討が要求される。

Keywords: Okinawan tourism, new suburban contact-zones (NSCs), cultural public sphere, Okinawaness, Ameku Shintoshin

キーワード：沖縄ツアリズム、新郊外接触地（NSC）、文化的公共圏、沖縄性、天久新都心
INTRODUCTION

The current popularity of Okinawa in Japan is expanding democratic social spaces wherein local Okinawans commonly interact with Japanese mainlanders who come as tourists and immigrants. New suburban contact-zones (hereafter NSCs) such as Ameku Shintoshin (天久新都心) and Chatan (北谷) districts make up social spaces in which people, most typically urban middle-class, engage in commercial activities and enjoy liberty with cultural diversity in mind. These what may be called “apolitical spheres of common difference” are equipped with salon-like plazas such as shopping malls, coffee shops, and amusement quarters in which pursuits of personal happiness with respect to material satisfaction and trend-bedecked lifestyle become the predominant mode of activity for interacting agents.

My goal in this thesis is to map out the mechanism of these emergent NSCs in Okinawa in the light of Jurgen Habermas’ theory of the transformation of public sphere, and evaluate the underside of his projection of democratic social sphere with respect to my ethnographic interviews with Okinawan critics who regard these spheres as attributes of Japanese subalternism. Of specific emphasis will be on the imagery of Okinawa as Japan’s tropical utopia and how this imagery caters to the needs and wants of urbanized Japanese mainlanders and Japanizing Okinawans for the sacrifice of sociocultural and environmental costs, which are attended by more concerned local residents. NSCs in Okinawa disseminate the media-projected, business-industrial view of “fantasized Okinawa,” pressuring residents to subordinate their lifeworld to the language and logic of Japanese capitalism.

My informants consider NSCs in their neighborhood to be a symbol of middle-class fantasy that signifies the potential destruction of local lifeworld –lifeworld that includes various cultural products and environmental features which the people of Okinawa consider to be their properties, otherwise known as the “islanders’ treasure (島人ゆた).” These critics remind us of what emergent cultural public spheres in Okinawa obscure as “transparent” modes of resistance, which are anchored in the sociohistory of a distinct premodern nation that was colonized by the Japanese, and “returned” to Japan from its post-Second World War US occupation.

Okinawa’s NSCs and their surrounding offer indices of mixed feeling that local Okinawans have about their culture’s current well-being and continuous positioning in the matrix of Japanese ethnocentrism. Such a cultural matrix and its form of development can be outlined in reference to Habermas’ theory of the materialization and transformation of bourgeois public sphere as well as its subsequent analytical alterations, especially with respect to the problem of what constitutes the public. Yet, I contend on the basis of my empirical accounts from Okinawa that the sociocultural construction of public sphere depends heavily on the hegemonic imposition of preferable private interests –which in contemporary Okinawan terms represents neoliberal concerns towards the expansion of corporate space.

Revisiting Cultural Public Sphere

In formulating the idea of “public sphere (Öffenlichkeit),” Jürgen Habermas envisaged the primordial model of public space in places such as British coffeehouses and French salons, where members of the bourgeoisie engaged in open discussions and exchanged ideas while standing aloof from regulations and constrictions of the aristocratic state (Habermas 1989). Habermas himself altered the way democratic public sphere could be interpreted over time, arguing that the liberal atmosphere predominating public sphere was subsequently lost to the governmental need to
control public information—thus the collective consciousness of the middle class—and corresponding transformation of the public from critical, liberal masses that actively participate in political and cultural debates to what can be regarded as “institutional dupes” that regulate themselves socially and politically, and providing subsequent researchers of public culture with directions toward examining how platforms for articulating self-regulatory agendas are established and renovated.

While Hartley (1992), working on the extension of Habermas, effectively demonstrates the role mass media played in conforming public views to the principles and interests of market economy, such a monolithic projection of public transformation is criticized by more recent theorists including Calhoun (1992), Frazer (1992) and Robbins (1993) who call our attention to a perspective incorporating multiple, mutually-interactive publics within a society. These theorists focus on counter-public forces that can arise in reaction to the exclusionary politics of dominant public spheres and/or the governing bodies of the bourgeois nation-state (Squires 2002: 446).

In her critical review of such a scholarship, Catherine Squires points out that most of the recent debates on counter-public space presume shared identity, indistinguishable counter-ideologies, or the collective production of counter-discourses, among a variety of marginalized social groups, leaving behind the question of what constitutes a public “counter” in frustrating vagueness (see also Dawson 1995, Asen 2000, Asen and Brouwer 2001). As Squires elaborates:

Differentiating the “dominant” public sphere solely on the basis of group identity tends to obscure other important issues, such as how constituents of these publics are in relation to others. Additionally, focusing on traditional political protest actions, such as boycotts or marches, may cause us to overlook important developments in inter- or intrapublic discourse as well as publicity (Squires 2002: 447).

Thus, Squires proposes a different set of terms that can describe multiple publics in a multicultural social setting without reifying the boundaries between them or entirely dismissing group identity as a reasonable criterion for defining a public sphere. She postulates three types of response to a subaltern public sphere which may configure and reconfigure with respect to existing politicoeconomic and sociocultural conditions: “enclave sphere” that hides counter-hegemonic ideas and strategies in order to avoid sanctions at the same time as producing lively debates internally; “counter-public sphere” that can confront wider publics in order to examine ideas and mobilize social movements; and “satellite sphere” that seeks separation from other public spheres for reasons other than oppressive relations but is involved in wider public discourses from time to time. These subspheres develop in reaction to both oppressive sociopolitical forces and the internal politics of that particular sphere (2002: 448).

While my goal in this case study of an NSC in Okinawa will not be the mere identification of any of these three analytical subtypes of cultural public sphere in examined contexts, I will utilize these typologies as guidelines to describe competing position-taking activities, and outcomes that characterize a public sphere in contemporary Okinawa. The data I will be presenting here are gathered as a part of my ethnographic fieldwork that started in the spring of 2002. This fieldwork consists of a series of sporadic observations in Ameeku Shintoshin, as well as a series of conversations involving nearly two dozen local residents and a dozen tourists from mainland Japan, all of whom are familiar with the district.
Positioning Okinawa in Japan’s Cultural Matrix

Okinawa, better known as the Ryūkyū archipelago, is situated southwest of mainland Japan. Islands that spans 400 kilometers north-south and 1,000 kilometers east-west collectivize 160 large and small islands, inhabited by approximately 1,350,000 people, as Japan’s 47th prefecture since 1972. Bedecked with a subtropical ecosystem, Okinawa attracts thousands of tourists each year. Having an ethnicity of its own, which includes language that is mostly unintelligible to the rest of Japanese and customs that appear distinct from those found in the mainland Japan, Okinawa tends to be regarded as an exotic cultural sphere by Japanese mainlanders.

An increasing number of tour and real-estate campaigns recently advertise Okinawa as a place of escape for stressed-out businessmen and their families, raising the number of visitors to more than 5 million per year from approximately 500,000 per year over the last three decades (figure 1). An unprecedented number of Okinawan restaurants, bars and gift shops are prospering throughout Japan today as Okinawan foods and goods meet popular demands (figure 2). Local Okinawan singers and bands including BEGIN, Rimi Natsukawa, Misako Koja, MONGOL800, and Orange Range make major debuts as more and more Japanese mainlanders develop tastes for laid-back, heartwarming melodies and lyrics that tend to signify social ties, collective happiness, and the importance of life. The so-called Ryūkyū style, including kariyushi wears (Aloha-like shirts) and bingata designs from the Okinawan equivalent of kimonos, is preferably adopted by the mainlanders. Television programs and commercials generate Okinawan tastes by partly incorporating Okinawan language, music, and dance.

Figure 1.
Covers of magazines demonstrating Okinawa as a tropical utopia – the place to which tourists and retirees from urbanized Japan can escape and regain their senses of humanity: from the April 2004 issue of Okinawa Style (left), the May 2005 issue of Rakuen Okinawa (right).
The admiration of Okinawa as a “pure land” is demonstrated in a popular series of morning dramas called Chura-San (Ms. Beautiful) that was aired on national broadcasting corporation, NHK, between April and September of 2001 (figure 3). The story of a young girl from a local island of Okinawa who goes to Tokyo in search for job opportunities, faces challenges including cultural conflicts with mainlanders, makes new friends, cooperates with fellow Okinawans, earns a position in a hospital, engages in a romantic affair, marries, returns to her home to give birth under the support of her families and friends, and eventually attains happiness in life provoked empathy of so many viewers that the second, third, and fourth series were subsequently produced. What attracted the hearts of viewers was the honesty of the main character, Erie, which stood against rather crafty mind-sets represented by Japanese mainlanders (most notably those from Tokyo). Erie’s purity is believed to be the precious product of Okinawa’s community life. Such a drama signifies a form of social organization that the Japanese mainlanders have supposedly forgotten amidst socioeconomic progress, but could reincorporate if willing to do so.

Much of these examples illustrate how new ventures take advantage of the image of Okinawa as “beautiful and peaceful,” at the same time as contributing to the public reinforcement of this romanticized image. Cases including these contribute to the social construction of Okinawa as an antithesis to the busy life of contemporary urban Japan. At the same time, the emergent discourse
on fantasized Okinawa re-appropriated Okinawa as a legitimate part of the Japanese mainstream—a mainstream national culture that has become evermore receptive to internal cultural diversity over time.

Few published studies on the recent celebration of Okinawan pop culture in Japan and other parts of Asia focus on dismantling the fantasized Okinawa. These provocative studies try to expose Okinawa’s internal diversities, which tend to be overridden by the image of Okinawans as generally kind, open-hearted, and eco-friendly (e.g., Tada 2002, Tanaka 2004). From an ethnographic point of view, these studies remain somewhat underdeveloped because their analyses do not extend beyond the authors’ own interpretations of selective texts, but my own observations reconfirm that there are some undersides to the media-projected fantasy: i.e., the lifeworld of local residents in Okinawa is being substantially altered into commercial spheres that can serve the interest of visitors coming from mainland Japan. In many parts of Okinawa, beaches where fishermen used to work are being filled with marine-sporting attractions (figure 4), farmlands are being altered into pensions and tourist resorts (figure 5). More and more forests are cut away as pavements are expanded. Rough roadside constructions expose soils that contain high percentage of acid, drain them into the sea on rainy days, intoxicating the seawater, killing ocean creatures, and thereby substantially destructing the regional ecosystem (figure 6).

Figure 4.
Scenes of a local beach being transformed from a living space of local residents into an attraction for leisure-loving Japanese tourists.
Figure 5.
Scenes of a local farmland altered into pension real-estates.
Figure 6.
Rough roadside constructions expose red soils containing high percentage of acid (top). In effect, reefs full of living creatures are turned into a dead sea (bottom).
Okinawa’s sociohistory testifies to a series of hardships experienced by the Okinawan people under approximately four centuries of annexation in which the Japanese state tried to assimilate what was once an independent kingdom into its sociopolitical order. For many Okinawans today, the ongoing absorption of the Okinawan way of life into Japan’s national edict can be a devastating, albeit subtle, process of cultural erosion. Okinawa’s so-called “return to Japan (本土復帰)” in 1972 is a controversial issue since it could be regarded as the incorporation of Okinawa into Japan’s postcolonial order after attaining independence from nearly three decades of U.S. military occupation since the end of the Second World War. This return is considered to have pushed Okinawa toward industrialization in accordance with the interest of Japanese nation-state, transforming the relaxed, community-based, eco-oriented lifestyle of the Okinawan people into lives that rely heavily on market economy, which is essentially fast-paced, competitive, and stressful."

For critics such as Nakandakari (1998), Okinawa’s return to Japan in 1972 is a point on the index of Okinawa’s colonial history that signifies the fact that the Japanese have been playing a dominating role. "The ongoing absorption of Okinawa’s lifeworld to the Japanese national order is implied by the tendency to determine Okinawa’s socioeconomic position in accordance with the standard of mainland economy. The secretariat of Japanese cabinet (2000), for example, treats Okinawa as one of Japan’s most backward economies, and states that although the prefecture has been “doing pretty good in terms of raising its standard of income from less than 50% of the national average before its return to Japan in 1972 to more than 70% as of the year 2000,” and that “the prefecture’s infrastructure, especially the transportation system, is vastly developing,” contemporary Okinawa “demonstrates a serious overall rate of unemployment –especially concerning youngsters– in this era of the so-called mega-competition.” 

Due in part to such an official characterization, a popular notion of Okinawa as Japan’s most underdeveloped region is ascribed to the quality of young Okinawans as generally “easy-going,” “undetermined,” and even “lazy.” Okinawan youngsters themselves are aware of this characterization, and they use terms such as teegee, meaning “wishy-washy,” and yonnaa-yonnaa, meaning “slow-going,” as a way of stereotyping their collective self. My young Okinawan informants happily incorporated these terms in order to demonstrate their intention of not being absorbed by the capitalist logic of mainland Japan. In the words of one of my informants (a 26 year-old female employee of a small local IT company), the Japanese corporate logic “is no good because it transforms human beings into egocentric profit-seekers.” In the end, she said, this kind of logic “enhances distrust in the name of doing one’s job right.” This informant’s inclination toward configuring and sustaining what she regarded as relaxed Okinawan lifestyle is intricately tied to her sense of resistance against the work-stressing ideology of Japanese corporation.

In a series of interviews conducted between 2003 and 2005 involving 22 Okinawan adults (female and male aged between 24 and 60), I found that all of my informants had mixed feelings about their relationship with Japanese mainlanders, or what they called Yamatonchu or naichaa. On the one hand, my informants looked up to naichi (mainland Japan) –especially its urban centers such as Tokyo and Osaka– as the source of inspiration in their ongoing construction of trendy lifestyles. This sense of adoration tended to be stronger for younger adults, but for elders too, naichi was a place they wished to go at least once in their lifetime, albeit for a relatively short period of time, in their pursuits of urbanity. On the other hand, all of my informants felt that the customs of industrialized Yamatonchu differed very much from those of Okinawa. Older
informants tended to consider the mainlanders as typically “formal,” “self-centered,” and “cold-hearted.” These stereotypes summed up to the perception that the mainlanders could not be trusted. Younger informants did not appear to care all that much, and they were angered by their older counterparts who occasionally displayed their senses of distrust (if not hatred) against other, different-but-equal human beings. Even so, there were moments in which these young informants used the term naicha to refer to visitors from mainland Japan—as outsiders who could never truly comprehend the Okinawan way of life, and whom the Okinawan people found it difficult to understand objectively.

While these feelings erupted as the results of my assertive interviews, most of my informants indicated that they did not have any problem living and interacting with naicha on day-to-day basis with a sense that they were all part of the social reality of the present-day Japanese nation. All of these informants agreed that dialogues were necessary in order to attain greater mutual understanding between Okinawans and mainlanders, and cultural exchanges and interplays could harmonize everyone and profit everyone—as long as each of the two sides were willing to understand and learn more about the other.

The Fantastic World of Ameku Shintoshin

It is against this sort of backdrop that the government of Okinawa, in collaboration with Okinawa Tourist Association, mapped out plans to develop NSCs—as a way of advertising Okinawa and its products to the rest of the world, offering job opportunities for local Okinawans and thereby sustaining Okinawa’s local economy. Ichiro Miyazato, the chair of Okinawa Tourist Association, told me in an interview conducted in the summer of 2006 that places such as Ameku Shintoshin and Chatan provide invaluable opportunities for Okinawans to interact with outsiders and in particular tourists and immigrants from naichi, but a wide cultural gap between Okinawa and Japan is yielding the people of Okinawa to readjust their lifestyle to naichi culture. This, says Miyazato, tends to separate people into groups consisting of those who enjoy economic developments and those who are concerned about problems generated by recent social changes. Such a statement testifies to the fact that mutually distinct and potentially confrontational subspheres are emerging within one and the same NSC in Okinawa.

As for Ameku Shintoshin, an area that spans 1.5 km north-south and 1.5 km east-west was ceased by the U.S. General Head Quarters in 1953, and was transformed into a military base. The 14th U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee Meeting, held in 1973, paved the way to a series of partial returns of the land to landowners, and the area was in fact entirely returned to the City of Naha in 1987. Yet, setting a condition that the estate would not be privatized without an efficient urban planning that can serve “public interests,” the commissioner of Naha City gave a national bureau called Urban Renaissance Agency (URA) a contract to start up a series of construction that raised gigantic shopping malls, amusement parks and skyscraping apartment complexes with fancy rooms and terraces since 1992. My observation in March 2007 revealed that the district was still undergoing construction (figure 7).
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Figure 7.
Scenes from Ameku Shintoshin District in Naha City.
One of these urban structures that I observed recently was a large duty-free shop called DFS Galleria, operating since December 2004 as one of the 22 international outlets of an American-based, globally-franchised duty-free shopping corporation. DFS Galleria in Ameku has been the only outlet in Japan so far. Standing next to Yuirail Omoromachi Station, a station representing one and the only railway system in Okinawa that connects Naha International Airport and downtown districts, the 1300 square-meter plaza was attaining its fame for providing “anyone who departs Okinawa prefecture using domestic airways” with accessible, high-quality marketing services that can save up to 30 percent on branded commodities including chic Chanel accessories, Louis Vuitton and Gucci handbags, as well as Christian Dior cosmetics, not to mention Prada clothing that is attracting more and more middle-class consumers around the world today – thanks to the effect of a 2006 Hollywood movie The Devil Wears Prada starring Meryl Streep and Anne Hathaway.

The crowded galleria was equipped with a large café that provoked the image of Italian courtyard, as well as a large buffet restaurant with a cosmopolitan flavor. In these areas of relaxation, I overheard conversations by groups of families and friends that emphasized what these people (mostly tourists) saw and bought in Okinawa, if not gossips about their acquaintances. None of these conversations emphasized local problems, or themes related to the subaltern conditioning of Okinawans in the matrix of Japanese national culture.

One noteworthy feature of DFS Galleria in Shintoshin was the exhibition of local products alongside international brands. The first of its seven main galleries was dedicated to the marketing of shapely Okinawan glassware, kariyushi wears, traditional liquor called awamori, or packaged local delicacies such as sooki pork stews, chinsukoh sugar candies, and beniimo sweet-potato tarts. Thus, DFS Galleria co-operated as a commercial sphere where local identities were sold to visitors from mainland Japan – albeit in the form of re-/invented tradition.

One other interesting feature was the tendency of DFS Galleria in Ameku Shintoshin to disseminate trends for local Okinawans. One of my informants, a female high-school teacher in her mid-twenties, visited the plaza occasionally in order to obtain information about the latest well-known brands of both domestic-Okinawan, mainland Japanese, and international types. Although she knew that she could not purchase anything there without flying out of Okinawa on a domestic flight, she enjoyed the fanciful and informative atmosphere that this commercial sphere provided. This informant happily pointed out that the Galleria’s unique positioning in Okinawa’s NSC as a “powerhouse of high-quality fashion” contributed to Okinawa’s local economy by creating 800 new jobs for Okinawan workers – a datum she claimed to have obtained from a local gossip.

Located to the northwest of DFS Galleria is Naha Main Place or NMP, a gigantic two-story shopping mall that consists of 67 tenanted shops on the first floor and 56 shops on the second floor. It emphasizes marketing in three major genres, which are fashion, gourmet, and groceries. In my observation, this commercial sphere was bedecked with restaurants, coffee shops including Starbucks, game centers, and a Cineplex alongside shopping outlets of virtually all kinds of daily goods. The mall attracted hundreds of people from all ages who were apparently enjoying the bohemian atmosphere. Here, as in DFS, I confirmed relaxed conversations in cafés and dining areas that focused on family issues, inter-/personal problems, and business affairs, let alone recent trends (figure 8).
Figure 8. Scenes from NMP where locals and visitors enjoy shopping and relaxation.
Local Reactions

One of Ameku Shintoshin’s local self-governing bodies called Ameku Piaza grew from 13 componential households in its established year, 2000, to 202 registered households in 2006. The self-government is a young, hybrid political sphere that aligns natives and newcomers, which include local landowners, Okinawan residents and immigrants from naichi. Preserving public safety, consolidating residents, and sustaining a healthy environment are three declared objectives in the polity’s manifesto. Formal and informal meetings, voluntary activities and public events are held regularly in order to strengthen social ties and enhance communal solidarity.

Although Ameku Piaza is usually hidden behind the district’s apparent commercial sphere, it is the essential supporter of community in this part of Naha City. In September 2002, for example, Ameku Piaza filed a claim against city authorities when its sensitive executives found out that one of the district’s estates that was supposed to become an elementary school was about to be taken by a gas corporation that wanted to use the estate for its offices and warehouses. The governor of Naha City overlooked the promise made before Ameku residents previously to utilize the estate for public education, and there was no follow up. Through a series of subsequent actions, Ameku Piaza effectively prevented the gas corporation from taking over the land in question. In February 2003, Ameku Piaza acted again when a transportation agency mapped out a plan to turn a piece of the district’s lowly populated land into a parking lot for its trucks. Activists from Ameku Piaza insisted on avoiding heavy commercial traffic in any part of the district because it threatened public safety by causing damages to public health as well as local environment. The plan was successfully overturned when city authorities recognized the plan as not serving the interest of Ameku community.

On a more relaxed, informal, or apolitical side, Ameku Piaza organizes events that enhance social exchanges among its members—especially between Okinawans and Japanese mainlanders. These events include get-togethers on memorial days, learning traditional Okinawan crafts and performances, and environmental management workshops including eco-tour and farming. There are also marketing tours in which juvenile members of Ameku community follow appointed instructors to local shops in order to become familiar with the way things are managed in these commercial outlets of their neighborhood. Most of these activities take place unnoticeably from the perspective of visitors. For insiders, however, these activities are crucial components not only of solidarity building, but also of productive cultural integration between traditional Okinawan lifestyles and urban Japanese customs. To borrow from an insight of one of my informants who belonged to Ameku Piaza (a male resident in his mid forties), this sort of integration offers a positive alternative to cultural erosion, which tends to be particularly evident in the commercial sector of Ameku district, as far as sustainable development of the district’s public sphere is concerned.

These cases show how Ameku Piaza plays the role of a watchdog in the district’s NSC that steps out when expositions of social problems which tend to be covered up by commercial matrix become necessary. Ameku Piaza presents itself as a metamorphic sphere that serves the interest of concerned citizens who reside in this district by shifting its functional quality between enclave, counter-public, and satellite spheres.

Conclusions

In this thesis I tried to expose through ethnographic means the internal structure of public
sphere represented by Ameku Shintoshin, and situate this social gestalt in a wider context of Okinawa’s sociohistory as a way of evaluating how NSCs in Okinawa function as contact zones wherein traditional and innovative forces are blended through interactions between natives and newcomers. The overall sphere of Okinawa’s NSCs such as Ameku Shintoshin is characterized in terms of tensions and interplays between two social components: one consisting of residents who are concerned with sustaining their local ways of life, and another which is affected by incoming visitors, the order of Japanese capitalism to which Okinawa’s local economy is subjugated, and homogenizing forces of the global market. This cultural mixture carves out a hybrid public sphere that consists of dominant, enclave, counterpublic and satellite subspheres.

The dynamic configuration of Okinawa’s NSC can be perceived as a sphere of public socialization—a kind of liminal space for transforming oneself through liberal interactions—in which local residents can enlighten themselves about the condition of their existence in an ever-borderless lifeworld through events initiated by their self-governing bodies, while visitors partake of less realistic, nonpolitical, and trendy (albeit superficial) roles of the district that, in effect, provide sources of income for the district to sustain its commercial sphere as a popular entity. Some of my more critical informants consider emergent NSCs in Okinawa to be a cultural matrix that projects middle-class fantasies while eroding Okinawa’s cherished local environment. These informants contend that NSCs contribute to the neo-colonization of Okinawan culture, and their perspective is validated through the present observation of spherical dimensions that are hidden behind the commercial veil and obscured as “transparent” modes of existence from the perspective of Japan’s social mainstream.

The theoretical framework concerning materialization and transformation of the bourgeois public sphere as a democratic social space—a framework developed by Habermas, especially in his later postulation regarding auto-constriction processes which take place through institutional developments of mass media and the bourgeois state—may well inspire our examination of public cultures in Asia under the current influence of globalization—as a combination of deterritorializing and unifying forces of capitalism and associated values of the middle-class. However, the present case study of how a public sphere is articulated in Okinawa through the amalgamation of values and habits which are associated with middle-class mainlanders, subaltern Okinawan subjects undergoing upward mobility, and subaltern subjects who distinguish themselves from these two other types of agency reconfirms post-Habermas propositions toward ever-extensive, class-free, culturally-sensitive, and/or locally-situated conceptualization of the public and its sphere of life.

Above all, the current study of an Okinawan NSC was an attempt to exemplify the applied significance of the theory of public sphere as generated by Habermas and critically extended by Squires in a subaltern context of East Asia. Ideological components of public sphere and its transformation as developed in the contexts of Euro-American civil society, including the ideas of the public, democracy, citizenship, civil rights, liberty, domination, and autonomy, are applicable to the cultural context of Okinawa—due at least in part to the sociohistorical trajectory of the Okinawan people. One may postulate an additional point of view that the development of dominant public sphere, which is characterized by the economic ideal of urbanized Japanese mainlanders, has, over recent decades, provided environmentally-concerned residents in NSCs with a basis on which public consciousness were nurtured and public spheres of enclave, counter and satellite types were dynamically configured.
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Endnotes

*1 Data presented here are subject to the ethical protocol of social scientific research. Privacies and confidentialities of all institutions and individuals mentioned in this paper are protected under the Privacy Protection Act. Please be sure to consult with the author for duplicating this paper, regardless of length and form. All visual materials (figures) are subject to personal and institutional copyrights, and should not be further duplicated.

*2 One may characterize Okinawan pop music, or Okipop, as a fusion between trendy musical styles of rock, funk, hip-hop, or rap, with typically Okinawan tunes including those of sanshin, a three-string, banjo-like instrument that possibly developed out of Indian sitar, and lyrical phrases in Okinawan dialect. This musical genre became an object of national celebration through three major stages of development: a state of genesis in which a group called Rinken Band earned nationwide recognition in the latter half of 1980s by catering to the emergent ethnic boom of the time; the era in which a Japanese pop band, The Boom, released a song arranged in an Okinawan style called Shima-Uta (The Island Melody), making it a major hit in 1993; and a period of development during the latter half of 1990s in which a series of popular bands and artists such as BEGIN, DIAMANTES, Parsha Club, Neenee’s, and Cocco made their way into the Japan pop-music scene, helping to make mainstream society all the more familiar with Okinawan melodies. Such a progression can be situated in a sociocultural context that represents an emergent sentiment for Asia’s open regionalism which blends regional urbanities and local identities.

*3 Corresponding in particular to the proposition made by Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka and his cabinet to develop Japan’s rural areas by building transportation and telecommunication networks throughout Japan, Okinawa’s statesmen under the guidance of Japan’s Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) exercised a series of campaigns toward the latter half of 1970s and into 1980s that praised economic progress and thereby altered local ecosystems into industrial zones.

*4 The subjugation of Ryukyu Kingdom to the Tokugawa shogunate between early 1600s and 1868; abolishment of the Kingdom by the Meiji government in 1872; enforcement of military conscription laws in 1898 that aimed to suppress anti-Japanese campaigns by Okinawan activists; establishment of militaristic systems by the Japanese wartime government and the corresponding Japanese national-spirit propaganda in 1938; prohibition of Okinawan language in 1940; the raid of Okinawa by U.S. military forces in 1945 which devastated Okinawa’s main island; and the issuing of a U.S.-Japan joint declaration in 1969 that promised the revert of Okinawan Islands to Japan on May 15, 1972 – a promise completely denying any sense of Okinawan national sovereignty (see also Sumiya 1998, Teruya 2003).


*6 The term Yamatonchu refers to the “people of Yamato.” Yamato is an old signifier for Japan. The word naichaa refers to the “mainlanders.” In this case, naichi denotes mainland Japan. Both Yamatonchu and naichaa are used, often derogatorily, to signify Japanese mainlanders.

*7 There is a 200 thousand-yen per-person limit on the purchasing of these items. Information regarding DFS Galleria is taken from the company’s homepage (www.dfsgalleria.com).
Other sections are dedicated to cosmetics, men and women’s fragrance, fashion accessories, boutiques, luxury jewels, and fashion.

Information taken from Naha Main Place homepage (www.san-a.co.jp/enpu/sc/mainplace).

Taken from Ameku Piaza homepage (www.geocities.jp/amekupiazza).

For details regarding this and other actions taken by Ameku self-government, one may refer to a letter written by Jōji Murata, a former chair of Ameku Piazza, addressed to the mayor of Naha City (dated September 3, 2002) (www.bekkoame.ne.jp/~drkazu/bunsyo3-4.html). See also Ameku Piazza newsletters (e.g., www.geocities.jp/amekupiazza/news/piazanews5-5.htm) and residents’ accounts (e.g., www.bekkoame.ne.jp/~drkazu/voices.html) for further details.

Taken from the February 20, 2003 issue of Ameku Piaza Newsletter (Volume 3, Number 10).