

SONG MONUMENTS IN OKINAWA

Intersections of Sound, Place and Memory

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ABSTRACT: Okinawa has one of Japan’s most thriving traditional music cultures, and songs are an important way that Okinawans understand and construct their island community. Most Okinawan songs have strong regional connections within Okinawa, either through lyrics that sing of local topography, events, or people, or because the melody is believed to have originated in a particular village. From the mid-20th Century on, many villages began constructing ‘song monuments’ (Japanese *kahi*) commemorating songs, composers, or lyrics, in order to create a tangible focus for what was essentially an intangible cultural entity. These monuments usually involve a substantial financial investment, either from local government or private donations, and are often placed in prominent spatial positions within the village. These song monuments are extremely popular among Okinawan music aficionados, and several guidebooks have been published to guide people to these sites. In recent years, bus tours have been organised to transport groups of aficionados *en masse* to these sites, and since 2015, a Facebook page has enabled the sharing of photographs and information relating to song monuments. The song monument phenomenon is particularly interesting for the way that it acts as a site for the simultaneous construction of connections between sound (the songs that performers sing), geographical space (the locations to which songs are connected) and community (the interpersonal links that are formed as people engage with song monuments). In this article I draw on my own experience visiting song monuments as part of the Okinawan music community, in order to analyse their social importance in modern Okinawa. I consider the song monument phenomenon in the context of domestic tourism, as well as a widespread culture of pilgrimage in Japan.

[Note all translations of Japanese phrases in this article are the author’s.]

KEYWORDS: Okinawa; Place; Folksong; Musical topography; Ryukyu; Musical pilgrimage

One of the most important ways that we understand the geographical world around us is through sound. This manifests itself both by the way we have an aural image of ‘soundscapes’ that we associate with particular places - the way they actually sound - but also through the way we make mental maps of songs and places we associate with them. We often relate particular songs with the place we were when we first heard them, or make connections between place names in lyrics, or the place a composer was born or lived. This might be true whether or not we have actually visited the place being sung about. At the same time, we often reinforce or enhance our understanding of songs and music by visiting places, as a way of embodying our spatial understanding of sound. In outlining his concept of what he calls acoustemology - a way of understanding our place in the world through sound - Steven Feld has described what he calls a “doubly reciprocal

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motion”, where, “as place is sensed, senses are placed: as places make sense, senses make place” (1996:91). In other words, our understandings of sound and place reinforce each other, and we are constantly redefining and reaffirming the way we understand places through our senses, and resituating our senses through positioning them in space.

In this article I examine the history and meaning of song monuments in Okinawa, and consider some of the ways they function as intersections between place, sound and collective memory. These monuments (usually known as *kahi*), date from the early 20th Century in Okinawa, and are still being constructed in large numbers today. They are made of stone, concrete or other materials, and generally commemorate a song whose lyrics are engraved on the monument itself. Many of these songs are traditional, in which case a composer or lyricist is often unknown, but whose lyrics often mention a particular village. There are also many monuments to modern songs in traditional and non-traditional styles, as well as a number commemorating specific performers or historical figures who have a connection with music and song. The huge number of these monuments means that it would be impossible to list them all here, but they are found in practically every village in Okinawa, often in prominent positions that promote their position as symbols of local pride.¹

As Suwa described in the inaugural issue of this journal, small island communities such as Okinawa provide a unique context for the study of cultural understandings of place and geography because their relatively clearly-defined boundaries create a heightened sense of “social space and territorial imagination” (Suwa, 2007: 9). As Suwa has related in detail, the Ryukyuan and Japanese term *shima* (island) refers to both the geographical “island”, as well as smaller social communities within islands, that operate as “semi-autonomous cultural zones” (2007, particularly: 7-8). In everyday Okinawan parlance, the term *shima* is also used as a preposition to refer to anything seen as uniquely Okinawan (ie not commonly found in the Japanese mainland) - *shimazake* (‘island liquor’ or *awamori*), *shimamāsu* (‘island’ salt, produced using a traditional Okinawan method of evaporating sea water), or *shimazōri* (‘island sandals’, or flip-flops) are common terms in everyday speech. Suwa notes how the imagining of *shima* is “a cultural practice [that] is always performative” (ibid: 7), and is notable that music has been one of the most important methods of performing Okinawan cultural identities in recent years (Gillan, 2012). The *shima* prefix can be found in many recent musical terms, from *shimauta* (‘island songs’) to *shimadaiko* (‘island drum’), or the 2002 hit song *Shimanchu nu takara* (Treasures of the island people’) by the band BEGIN.

One of my first introductions to song monuments was when I was living in Ishigaki island in the south of Okinawa in 2001, carrying out doctoral research on music-making in Yaeyama, and taking regular lessons in Yaeyaman *fushiuta* (songs accompanied by the *sanshin*, a three-stringed banjo). I had been learning the Yaeyaman song *Tubarāma*, a song that contains the verse:

Nakadō mitsi kara nanakēra kayōkē
Nakasizi kanashāma sōdan nu naran

(I have walked up and down the Nakadō path
but my sweetheart Nakasizi will not speak to me)

¹ A very basic list can be found in Kakinohana et al (1986).

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While driving around Ishigaki with an informant one day, I happened to mention my interest in the song to him, and he suggested we visit the Nakadō path mentioned in the lyrics. We soon arrived at a nondescript junction a short distance from the city center, notable only for a small grassy area on which stood an imposing stone monument (Figure 1). Although there was nothing particularly outstanding about the place itself, the experience of standing on the site that the song was talking about, and then walking along the road itself, somehow changed the way I understood the lyrics and performed the song. This experience must have been had by many musicians and music-lovers, whether it be visiting the house where a famous musician lived, or the grave of a composer or a site mentioned in the lyrics of a song. The act of placing oneself physically inside the geography of the song, so-to-speak, is a way of forming a more personal relationship to it.



Figure 1 - *Tubarāma* monument (to right of tree), Ishigaki city (author's photo).

My continued involvement with Okinawan music since 2001 has brought me into frequent contact with song monuments. As a student of the *utasanshin* (song and sanshin) repertory, I have on several occasions taken part in bus tours to the monuments of songs I and my fellow students were learning. This kind of group trip to visit song monuments is widespread among folk and classical teaching studios in Okinawa. The Nomura-ryū hozonkai, one of the main organisations for the Okinawan classical tradition, to which I belong, organises regular trips for its members to visit song monuments around Okinawa. A web search also brought up many hits from the blogs of individual teachers and students recording song monument trips.² In this way, I realised that song monuments are also ways that people share their understandings of place and sound, becoming the focus for a musical community.

² For examples, see: Hajime Nakasone: <http://hajime34utaifukui.ti-da.net/c219218.html>
<http://www.dee-okinawa.com/topics/2013/03/kahimeguri.html> and <http://hanamizuki.ti-da.net/e7096697.html> - accessed 4 December 2016

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A further aspect of more recent song monuments in Okinawa is that many of them are deeply embedded within discourses of collective memory that operate at a number of contextual levels, just as the concept of *shima* itself reflects the various levels of cultural belonging in any society. At a village level, this may be as simple as remembrance of a historical event or person. More recently, there are an increasing number of examples of songs, and song monuments, connected with the events of WWII, that serve to facilitate cultural memory at an Okinawan prefectural level and, to some extent, a national Japanese level. As with the previous examples, most of these are actively used by many Okinawans as places of performance and community building, allowing song monuments to function as places where collective memory may be actively performed and reinforced and, I argue, becoming what Pierre Nora has described as *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory). Nora notes, in particular, that “memory attaches itself to sites, whereas history attaches itself to events” (1989: 22), and I examine here how recent Okinawan song monuments related to WWII, in tandem with the songs that they ostensibly commemorate, also give place to the shared cultural memory of the events of the Allied invasion in 1945.

Song monuments in Okinawa and Japan

Okinawan song monuments are part of a national Japanese practice of installing commemorative stones to literary and musical achievements. These monuments are collectively known as *bungakuhi* (‘literature stones’), while there are also sub-categories commemorating particular genres of literature - *kuhi* for haiku, and *kahi* for *waka* or, in Okinawa, for Okinawan songs from the classical and folk repertory. Monuments in mainland Japan are also dedicated to individual poets, and these are often known as *okinatsuka*, particularly those connected with Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694). Hironaka’s (2004) monumental study lists 3239 Bashō-related stones around the country (the only prefecture with no Bashō monuments was Okinawa). The oldest of these dates to 1687, when Bashō was still living (ibid: 341), and large numbers of monuments have been erected in the poet’s memorial years (85 new monuments in 1793, Bashō’s 100th year, 65 in 1843, 66 in 1893).

Japanese song monuments are often constructed in a geographical area that has some relation either to the content of the text, or to its author (see Ōhira, 2011: 54). For example, the well-known 20th Century children’s song *Akatombo* has three song monuments around Mitaka city in Tokyo, where the song’s lyricist Rofū Miki lived. In cases where there is no direct geographical connection, as with many of the monuments dedicated to Bashō that are scattered around the country, most of these have been placed by local writers who were particularly inspired by Bashō’s poetry. The large number of monuments devoted to Bashō seems to be directly linked to the representation of this poet with themes of geography and travel. Bashō’s *Oku no Hosomichi* (‘Narrow Road to the Deep North’) is one of the classics of Japanese Haiku and travel literature, and has inspired many later readers to set out on the same route that the poet took. Poetry monuments have often provided the geographical landmarks on which these travels are framed, as described by Hironaka (2004), who visited (and photographed) 3239 monuments to Bashō from Hokkaido to Kagoshima. (See also Motoyama, 1964; and the 20th Century poet Yamaguchi Seishi (1965) also describes his travels around the haiku monuments of Japan. Song monuments continue to be created all over Japan for poetry and song lyrics old and new. Gakusui Kashima, who wrote an account of his travels around the monuments for Japanese children’s songs, describes 18 such stones for the single song *Yūyake koyake* (2005: 8).

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The practice of constructing song monuments seems to be quite widespread in Okinawa in recent years, particularly those connected with folk songs and traditional music. The public interest in Okinawan monuments is also noteworthy: of the first 50 hits from a Google search (in Japanese) for *min'yō kahi* (folk song monuments) in May 2016, 32 were pages of blogs describing Okinawan monuments. Of the remainder, 17 were in mainland Japan, and one in Ireland). This is partly due to the relatively high level of interest in traditional music in Okinawa compared to the rest of Japan (see Gillan, 2012). I also suggest it is due to the strong cultural identity that Okinawa maintains in relation, and often in opposition to, mainland Japan. In the following sections I examine some of the ways that space and place is constructed in Okinawan songs and literature, and consider how song monuments have been used in providing a physical locus on which these spatial understandings are played out.

Geography in Okinawan poetry

Ryukyuan song and poetry have long been used as ways of constructing understandings of space and geography. The Ryukyuan court tradition – normally known today as Ryukyuan classical music (*Ryūkyū koten ongaku*) – that developed among the Ryukyuan ruling elite, takes a large part of its repertory from regional folk songs from all over the Ryukyu islands. Individual island or village names are often preserved in song titles, such as the songs *Binuchi bushi*, *Unna bushi*, *Katsirin bushi*, etc - all place names in the Okinawan mainland - and *Kumōma bushi* (in Yaeyama), *Shudun bushi* (Amami). The collection of song lyrics and melodies by the central Ryukyuan court in Shuri, apart from merely being a way of obtaining musical material, was almost certainly also a way of cementing the political power of the Ryukyu court over its provinces and creating a unified Ryukyuan cultural zone. The *Ryūka hyakkō* collection of song lyrics, created in three volumes between 1795 and 1802, includes songs from Yaeyama in the South to the Amami islands in the north, and lists the geographical provenience of most regional lyrics (the collection is included in Takefumi et al 1997). In this way, members of the Shuri elite, who would not have travelled to most parts of the Ryukyu kingdom themselves, would be aware of these places through their representative songs. To this extent, the use of place names in these song lyrics share some similarities with the *utamakura* of Japanese poetry, in which place came to have fixed associations or representations of certain moods (see Plutschow, 2006: 4-9).

Many of these Ryukyuan songs are categorised as *Tochibome-uta* (land praise songs) - songs where the lyrics make specific reference to a positive aspect of a place, as in *Kumōma bushi*:

Kumōma tiru sīma yugafu sīma yariba Ufudaki ba kusadi shirupama mainashi
(The island of Kohama is truly a blessed island. Ufudaki mountain is behind, and White Beach at front.) (Arashiro, 2001: 63)

Other songs, such as *Unna bushi*, refer to a historical event that took place in the village:

Unna matsi shita ni chiji nu fē nu tachusi, kui shinubu madi nu chiji ya nēsami

(Beneath the pine tree at Onna village is a sign banning ritual festivities, but they can never ban us meeting in secret.) (Katsuren, 1999: 36.)

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In some cases, Okinawan folk songs contain lyrics describing particular journeys between different places. The song *Mutubu Nākuni* describes the walking distance from Motobu to nearby villages:

Mutubu kara Haniji Ijashicha ya ichiri, Majaganiku madi ya niri nu chimui
(From Motobu to Isagawa in Haneji is one *ri*³, to Maja and Ganeku must be two *ri*)
(*Okinawa Min'yō Meisenshū* liner notes)

One verse often sung by the singer Rinshō Kadekaru in the song *Yanbaru Timatu* simply lists villages between Ishikawa and Chatan on the Okinawan main island⁴:

Ishicha, Fijaunna, Ifa tu, Kadikaru tu, Sunan, Yamagushiku, Chibana, Machimutu,
Gwiiku, Nzatu, Yara, Kadina, Nugun, Nuzatu (*Okinawa Min'yō Meisenshū* liner notes)

The preceding verse in Kadekaru's version of this song tells of a group of young men who had travelled from Chatan village for a *mōashibi* music and dance gathering, but had been turned away by the locals, and Kadekaru is presumably describing the long walk home. This kind of playfulness with words and spatial concepts would have been immediately understandable to Okinawans from the local area, while almost completely meaningless for those with no local geographical knowledge.

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While there are no in-depth historical studies of the practice of building song monuments in Okinawa, the oldest traditional song monument that I have seen is that to the 18th Century female poet Unna Nabī, constructed in Onna village in 1928. In the post-WWII period, renewed interest in traditional music led to a number of song monuments being constructed. Like the Unna Nabii monument, most of these were constructed with the intent of providing landmarks for songs mentioning the local landscape or with a connection to local history. In some cases, song monuments became the source for contentious debate about ownership of songs. Following a drawn-out debate carried out in a local newspaper, a monument to the Yaeyaman song *Basī yunta* (Figure 2, left) was constructed in Kabira in the early 1960s, contradicting a separate theory that the song originated in Ishigaki. The Yaeyaman writer Takeshi Miki wrote a subsequent article in the *Yaeyama Mainichi* newspaper (Miki, 1963) lamenting what he described as the “violence of cement” (*semento no bōryoku*). A later monument was also constructed in downtown Ishigaki, reasserting the alternative theory (Figure 2, right).

In this way, one purpose of song monuments is to construct images of local cultural village identity through song. A monument for the song *Nagakumu bushi* in Amami, in addition to containing the lyrics, also includes a paragraph describing the song's importance:

Min'yō wa kokoro no furusato. Watashitachi no tōi sosen ga soboku na seikatsu no
naka kara umidashita yutaka na kokoro no araware desu.

(*Min'yō* is the heart's hometown.⁴ It is the expression of the rich hearts of our ancient ancestors, produced from their simple lives.)

³ One *ri* in Okinawa, as in Japan, was approximately 3.9 kilometres.



Figure 2 - Two monuments to *Basī yunta/basī nu turī bushi*. Kabira (left), Ishigaki (right) (author's photos).

Song monuments are constructed at a number of levels, including local governments and companies, as well as by private initiative. Often, there is overlap between these three. The monument for the Yaeyama song *Basī nu turī* (Figure 2, right) was constructed by the Ishigaki city council, with funds donated by the Japan Lottery Association (Nihon Takarakuji Kyōkai). Many monuments are constructed with money raised through fundraising events and private donations. The *Tubarāma* monument mentioned at the beginning was completed in 1983 with a total budget of nearly 3 million yen (around US\$30,000 in 2016), raised mostly through private donations (Iriomote and Ōta, 1983: 5).

An example of a recent company-sponsored monument was constructed in 2011, commemorating the well-known 20th Century composition *Hiyamikachi bushi*, and located in the grounds of the Ryokujuen old people's home in Okinawa city. Kinjō Kazurō, a manager in the Ryokujukai company of which Ryokujuen is a part, told me how the stone was initially conceived as a way of commemorating the 30th anniversary of the company in 2009, as well as remembering the song's composer Seihin Yamauchi⁵ (1890-1986) who, along with his wife, were among the first batch of residents to enter the facility in 1979. The monument was funded mainly through a charity concert in March 2011 (days after a large earthquake and tsunami hit northern Japan), at which many of the top names of Okinawan traditional music performed. The monument was ordered and constructed in China, at a cost of 900,000 yen (about US\$8,500 in 2016).

⁴ *“Min'yō wa kokoro no furusato”* (*‘Min'yō is the heart's hometown’*) was one of the catchphrases of the mainland Japanese folk song boom of the post-WWII years - see Hughes (2008).

⁵ The original lyric is attributed to Shinsuke Taira, who is also credited on the monument.



Figure 3 – Detail from *Nagakumu bushi* monument (author's photo).

An interesting aspect of this monument is that it seems to have been the impetus for a large range of associated social activities connected with the Ryokujukai company. Kinjō told me that groups often come to perform the song in front of the monument (see Figure 4), but he has also been instrumental in organising a yearly singing competition devoted to *Hiyamikachi bushi*. Kinjō is active himself as a performer of the *uzagaku* tradition that Yamauchi Seihin transmitted. He has also actively sent members of his staff to learn other musical traditions connected with Yamauchi and this has resulted in the creation of an organisation, the Preservation Society for the Music Transmitted by Seihin Yamauchi (*Yamauchi Seihin Denshō Gakkyoku Hozonkai*). All of these activities were originally inspired by the construction of the song monument, showing how these kind of projects can become the seed for a range of community activities.

Song monuments and community building

In this way, song monuments can be seen to be embedded in Okinawan society, and to act as a focus for the creation of social networks. This can also be seen by their position in Okinawan tourism. Several guide books have been published in recent years giving details of the positions of various monuments. Takenobu Kakinohana, author of the first of these guide books (Kakinohana and Agarie, 1986), told me that he also leads regular bus tours around monuments, organised by local town halls, education boards and the National Theatre Okinawa. One performer who is active leading bus tours is Kanako Horiuchi, who also often leads singing events in front of monuments (see Figure 5). Horiuchi is active as a performer and teacher of Okinawan folk songs, and she told me that the majority of the people who join her tours are active learners of the tradition who are interested in learning about the background of the songs. The poster in Figure 7 is for a tour in 2016 sponsored by the culture department of the Nishihara town Life-long Learning division, a branch of

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the local town government that organises educational activities for mature citizens. Kakinohana told me that these events are very popular, and are often booked up well in advance (interview, June 2016).



Figure 4 - Visitors performing facing the *Hiyamikachi bushi* monument, 2016. (Photo courtesy of Kazurō Kinjō.)



Figure 5 - Kanako Horiuchi leading a bus tour of song monuments. (Photo courtesy of Kanako Horiuchi - used with permission.)

Song monuments have also recently begun to be promoted as sites for local tourism, both through organised tours and through their inclusion in tourist literature produced by local governments. A tourist brochure produced by the Kumejima local government office, for example, provides a mapped one-day sightseeing course around the island's song monuments.⁶ As Roberts and Cohen have outlined in the case of memorial plaques and other heritage sites related to British popular music, sites of memory “provid[e] a *performative space* in which experiential memories can be rehearsed acknowledged and re-embodied [and] furnish a means by which to give substance to the ritual and performative dimensions of cultural memory” (2014: 252). Many Okinawan song monument sites likewise show evidence of ritual activity, such as the burning of incense or the offering of flowers, in the commemoration of historical events or figures. This is particularly common when the monument has an existing connection with a ritual shrine. The *Kajadifuu* monument in Kunigami was constructed near a shrine to the introduction of a metal working foundry to this village, which one theory believes to be the origin of the song (Figure 6). Another example is the shrine dedicated to the legendary historical musician Akainku, who is commonly credited with being the founder of the Okinawan *utasanshin* (sanshin-accompanied song) tradition. Yomitan village, on the west coast of the Okinawan mainland, had long contained a shrine known as Aka nu kū (Aka shrine), but the post-WWII increased pride in traditional Okinawan music led to this being rebuilt in 1956. The site quickly became a focus of pilgrimage for Okinawan musicians, and recent years have seen the construction of several song monuments and other commemorative objects. Figure 8 shows two of these song monuments: the left-hand stone contains the famous verse depicting Akainku as the progenitor of *utasanshin*. The newer stone on the right contains a modern *ryūka* lyric by an unknown author: *Uta tu sanshin nu nkashi hajimari ya, Inku niagari nu kami nu misaku* (“The ancient origins of *utasanshin* are the work of the god(s) Inku Niagari”).



Figure 6- Shrine to the founder of a metal foundry in Kunigami, including lyrics to the song *Kajadifuu bushi* (author's photo).

⁶ http://www.town.kumejima.okinawa.jp/sightsee/culturalspot/monument_tanka_circulation.html - accessed 19 July 2016.

平成 27 年度琉歌碑巡り

垣花武信氏と
行く

琉歌碑を訪ねて

～沖縄本島中部東コース編～

平成 28 年

2 / 20 (土)

8 : 00 ~ 17 : 00



定員 40名 (定員に達し次第締め切り)

(西原町内にお住まいの方及び町内に勤務・通学されている方)

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Figure 7 – Poster for a 2016 tour of song monuments sponsored by the culture department of the Nishihara town Life-long Learning division.



Figure 8 - Song monuments to Akainku in Yomitan (author's photo).

The site continues to be actively used for ritual activity, as well as offertory performances. A sign outside the shrine, asking worshippers to clear up after themselves, indicates that the site is used fairly regularly. When I visited in 2011, a bottle of awamori liquor had been left as an offering outside the shrine building. In recent years, the shrine has been used to perform music and dance as part of the *Sanshin no hi* (sanshin day) sponsored by the Ryukyu Broadcasting company, and held in Yomitan's Ōtori hall nearby (again, the choice of location was based on Yomitan's Akainku connection, indicating that their promotion of this historical connection has immediate cultural and financial payoffs).

Connell and Gibson have described a “sense of quasi-religious faith in the power of music icons” that “renders the range of physical spaces that they occupied or passed through sites of crucial importance, imbued with sacred meaning” (2002: 223). Connell and Gibson describe sites of pilgrimage connected with rock and pop music performers such as Elvis Presley, John Lennon etc, but I argue that notions of quasi-religious pilgrimage are equally applicable to song monuments in Okinawa. A common feature of pilgrimages around the world is the practice of leaving behind a memento of oneself at the site - for example by leaving flowers or writing graffiti (eg Connell and Gibson, 2002: 224-5). Although I have never seen this myself, Horiuchi commented to me that she had seen people piling up stones near song monuments, a practice that she interpreted as a wish on the part of visitors to ‘leave behind their memories’ (*memorii o nokoshitai*). In this way, song monuments function as a way for learners of Okinawan music to affirm their relationship with songs in a public and tangible way. Horiuchi explained:

Visiting song monuments is a method of ‘self-gratification’ [jiko manzoku] as a way of bringing yourself closer to a song... I think many people have those kinds of thoughts. Recently, with text messages and social media, it is easy to take a photo and make it public immediately. For those kinds of people... even

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though you can't see songs, by giving them a physical presence [katachi ni suru], you can make them visible/tangible. It's a kind of 'self-fulfillment'.

This kind of need can clearly be seen through the establishment of a Facebook community known as *Ryūkahi no Tansa* (Explorations of Ryukyu Song Monuments), which currently has some 415 members (June 2016), and frequent posts of photographs of monuments. The community is administered by Nobuharu Kinjo (aged 63), a computer expert from Nago, who is also a fluent speaker of the Okinawan language, and is active in promoting this language, partly through his activities as an announcer for the FM Uruma Radio station.

Song monuments and collective memory

The central element in the construction of a modern Okinawan identity and collective memory is undoubtedly the trauma of the Allied invasion at the end of WWII and the subsequent American occupation until 1972. As Nelson (2008) and Roberson (2010) have both shown, music, dance and performing arts have been important ways of maintaining memory in those who were alive in 1945, as well as constructing images in those who were not. Many WWII-related songs have been commemorated in recent song monuments, and I examine some examples here.

New Okinawan songs dealing with WWII began to be composed soon after 1945. An early example is *Yaka bushi*, a song written in one of the post-war Okinawa internment camps in Yaka on the East coast of Okinawa main island (Kin town). A song monument was constructed in 1983 (see Figure 9), one side which contains the lyrics of the song, the other side laying out the history of the internment camp itself, and the subsequent sequestering of the site for military purposes by the American forces between 1946 and 1979. In this way, the song, which deals with the pain of the war and the subsequent separation of families and lovers in the aftermath, is embedded in the remembrance that, for most Okinawans, the war did not end in 1945 but continued to be felt for years afterwards.

Yaka bushi, verse 4

*Awari Yaka mura nu, yami nu yu nu karashi
uya uran wami nu, nakana uchumi*

(Look at the crow in the night-time shadows of desolate Yaka village
How could I, who have lost my parents, keep from crying?)

A second generation of songs dealing with the WWII invasion of Okinawa came in the 1960s, and two of the best-known of these songs have been commemorated through recent song monuments. The first, *Kanpō nu kwēnukusā* ('Leftovers from the naval guns'), written by the Okinawan musician Kōbin Higa (1917-1973), and first recorded in 1975 by the female quartet Deigo Musume (Higa's daughters) after Higa's death in a traffic accident in 1973 caused by a drunk American military driver (Kohama, 2014:32-7). A monument for the song was constructed in 2013, also in Yomitan. The funds for this monument, some 12,800,000 (about US\$120,000) were raised through small-scale fundraising efforts such as a ground-golf tournament, a concert, and a commemorative CD, under the organisation of a committee established by the Yomitan local government.



Figure 9 - Composite of front and back of *Yaka bushi* monument in Kin (author's photos).

At the opening ceremony of the monument on 23 June 2013, Memorial Day in Okinawa in which the war dead are remembered every year, the monument was consecrated in a Buddhist ceremony, again providing a link between song, ritual and remembrance.⁷ Most of the speeches were also concerned not only with remembering the war, but promoting these memories for future generations. The head of the construction committee for the song monument, Gen'ō Ikehara, spoke of the importance of using the monument as a site of memory, and as a way of passing on the experience of WWII to future generations:

We must not repeat the same mistakes of history. War does not only destroy bodies, but also minds and souls. War is a place where humans become non-human, and we must never return to fighting. It is the duty of those who managed to live through the war to transmit this message to the younger generations, who do not know war. (Translated from live stream recording)

The Yomitan village mayor, Denjitsu Ishimine, also made overt connections between the song, the violence of WWII, and the continued political situation in Okinawa:

All Okinawans who experienced the war share the same sentiments regarding the absurdity of war, the criticism of its inhumanity, and the pain and anger at the human sacrifice and material loss. However, in Okinawa today, with the problem of the relocation of the Futenma base to Henoko, with frequent incidents and accidents caused by the American military, with the forced deployment of MV22 Osprey aircraft, with 74% of all American bases in Japan existing on Okinawa, which accounts for only 0.6% of Japanese territory, and as long as the Japan Status of Forces Agreement, that acts as a shackle against solving these problems, exists, then American governance will

⁷ The ceremony was streamed live on the Internet, a recorded version can be accessed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XDA5u2S4wjw> - accessed 8 December 2016

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effectively continue. From this immediate situation, I would like to propose that every one of us spread the strong sentiment contained in the following lyrics of Kanpō nu kwē nukusā, and transmit a message of everlasting peace throughout Okinawa and beyond, for the generation who are in charge of the future of Japan. (Translation from live stream recording)

*Uradin kuyadin akijaran
shisun machidee igunsana*
(There is no end to the bitterness and sorrow
Let us transmit the message to all future generations)

The original performers of the song, Deigo Musume, also sang live, giving a reminder of the inspiration of this act of cultural remembering in sound and song. The *Kanpō nu kwē nukusā* monument also features a playback option, where the original Deigo Musume recording can be heard over a speaker installed to one side. In this way, the song as a sonic entity is re-emphasised in the context of the place in which it has been commemorated, once again showing the symbiotic nature of place, sound and memory.⁸

Another song commemorating the events of WWII is *Satō kibi batake* ('The Sugar Cane Plantation'), written in 1967 by the Japanese composer Naohiko Terashima, describes the sound of the wind (the onomatopoeic phrase *zawawa zawawa* is repeated 64 times during the song) as it blows through the sugar cane that grows to this day on the site where thousands of Okinawans lost their lives in 1945. A monument to this song was constructed, also in Yomitan, in 2012. As with *Kanpō nu kwē nukusā*, the *Satō kibi batake* monument speaks not only from the perspective of remembrance, but of Okinawa's continuing struggle for peace. This attitude is evidenced particularly well by a plaque at the entrance to the song monument, bearing the following 'Zawawa charter':

- 1) This song monument serves to strive for a world without war.
- 2) This song monument serves to instill peaceful hearts in our children.
- 3) This monument serves to preserve the sorrow of the war dead to later generations.
- 4) This song monument serves as one site for learning about peace in Okinawa.
- 5) This song monument serves to preserve the natural landscape of sugar canes.
- 6) This song monument serves to promote singing about peace that the composer depicted in words and music.

The *Zawawa* charter is shown in the foreground of Figure 10, with the song monument itself in the background of the picture. As with many other song monuments, this one includes a grassy area in front with seating on the left-hand side, allowing visitors to commune with each other and contemplate the surroundings slowly. The monument also features a playback option, in this case with a synthesiser version of the melody only.⁹ Note the sugar cane fields that can be seen around the monument. Terashima's song is particularly interesting, given that he himself was not an Okinawan (he was born in Tochigi and first visited Okinawa in 1964 at the age of 34), and that the song is one of the best-known songs in Japan connected with Okinawa (for the background to the song, see

⁸ My video of the song playing at the monument in June 2016 can be viewed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iZXwDJijO9A&feature=youtu.be> - accessed 10 November 2016.

⁹ A video can be accessed at the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3w2qxQVcX_8&feature=youtu.be - accessed 3 December 2016

Terashima, 2007). As the only site in Japan which experienced a direct Allied invasion during WWII, Okinawa is one of the most important locations in modern Japan for the performance and construction of national cultural memories surrounding the war. As the *Zawawa* charter demonstrates, the song, and the cultural memories that it facilitates, and intimately connected with discourses of peace in modern Japan.



Figure 10 - 'Zawawa charter' and *Satōkibi batake* monument in Yomitan (author's photo)

Conclusion

In this article, I have discussed the ways that song monuments serve as an interface between understandings of place, sound and memory. As Straw has written, despite being “long considered one of the most ethereal and abstract of cultural forms, music is arguably the one most embedded in the material infrastructures of our daily lives” (Straw, 2011: 227). Song monuments provide a material presence for songs, a tangible form for the intangible medium of sound and words. The special geographical and cultural position of Okinawa - at the very edge of Japan in both cases - leads to a heightened sense of geographical and cultural awareness that is expressed well for many through songs and song monuments. At the same time, monuments hold meanings far beyond simply commemorating a song's lyrics or melodies. They provide a focus for community activities that also form themselves around songs and places. At a very basic level, they provide tangible markers for Okinawans and others to physically visit the geographical sites that are memorialised in song lyrics, and in some cases literally to perform their geographical awareness through song. As my interviews have revealed, for many performers, visiting and singing at song monuments are ways of fulfilling their relationship with Okinawan songs. My examples and analysis here of the *kahi* for *Hiyamikachi bushi* and, particularly *Kanpō nu Kwēnukusā* and other WWII-related songs, shows that these monuments also become the impetus for more specific cultural events that enable the performance and recreation of cultural memory. In many cases, these communities are also formed around shared memories, in which cases song monuments serve further purposes - as *lieux de mémoire*. And, as songs

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themselves provide a medium for the performance of communal memory, so song monuments provide one that, as I have shown, is often inextricable from the Okinawan present, and its continued search for peace.

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