



琉球大学学術リポジトリ

University of the Ryukyus Repository

Title	【《国際ワークショップ》報告】 Summary
Author(s)	Okihiro, Gary Y
Citation	国際琉球沖縄論集 = International Review of Ryukyuan and Okinawan Studies(1): 49-50
Issue Date	2012-03-30
URL	http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12000/29996
Rights	

《国際ワークショップ》報告

Summary

Gary Y. Okihiro*

Featured at the University of the Ryukyus conference, “Toward New Island Studies,” were visitors from Columbia University in the City of New York, James A. Danoff-Burg, Denyse S. Dookie, Michael B. Gerrard, and Gary Y. Okihiro. Each presented papers relevant toward a conceptualization of “new island studies.”

James A. Danoff-Burg proposed that islands are ideal scientific laboratories for ecology, evolution, and conservation mainly because complex variables are reduced or limited in island environments. Accordingly, for example, the requirements for the conservation of species are clearer and more easily achieved. He spoke specifically about his research in New York City and the Dominican Republic on the impacts of urbanization on carrion and dung beetles, which yield seemingly contradictory results. On the one hand, increasing fragmentation (urban islands created by human interventions as in roads that divide habitats) leads to a shift toward non-native, invasive species, but those fragments also have vital conservation value. Danoff-Burg concluded by urging a new definition of the “natural” in urban settings to distinguish between “urbanized nature” from “natural nature” because they produce divergent effects.

Michael B. Gerrard examined some of the legal issues involved in rising sea levels that threaten the existence of low-lying island states. Some of those questions concern the very nature of the state and notions of sovereignty, such as, if an island nation disappears beneath rising waters, is it still a nation-state? Does it exercise sovereignty over its land resources, now under water, and fishing rights? What will be the status of the island-nation’s displaced peoples, and who will take them in? Will they retain citizenship rights, and/or gain citizenship in the adopted homes? And there are many non-legal issues such as those island cultures and the question of their maintenance or assimilation. Gerrard then went on to discuss some of the strategies deployed by peoples affected by rising sea levels that flood and thereby render less productive agricultural fields, contaminate their underground water supplies, and require emergency shelters and new house-building techniques such as raising homes on stilts above the rising tide. The underlying question, Gerrard concluded, is the need for a new international agreement to address those concerns for “climate displaced peoples.”

* Professor of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University コロンビア大学教授

Denyse S. Dookie proposed connecting the Caribbean with the Pacific islands around small states and their responses to climate change such as already being undertaken by the United Nations project, “South-South Cooperation between Pacific and Caribbean Small Islands Developing States on Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management.” The project, she observed, revealed the resilience and ingenuity of affected peoples in their responses to the challenges they faced by climate change, and how transferable technologies might be applied globally. Dookie affirmed those connections as of vital importance, the formation of partnerships and cooperation across oceanic and regional spaces, for more comprehensive, synergistic solutions that will benefit all.

Gary Y. Okihiro proposed the importance of the concept of “social formation” in the discourses surrounding islands. Social formation, he said, apprehends power, its locations and articulations, around the axes of race, gender, sexuality, class, and nation. All of those social categories comprise discourses that segregate in binary oppositions, like white-nonwhite, man-woman, heterosexual-homosexual, capitalist-worker, and citizen-alien. Those binaries are hierarchical and thus locate privilege on the one hand, and poverty on the other. In reality, of course, those polarities are not distinctive but are related both in terms of subject positions (the self is defined by its other) and material condition (patriarchy benefits men at the expense of women). Those discourses, Okihiro advances, find expression in a commonsense of islands such that islands are racialized, gendered, and sexualized, and that islands constitute plantation, military, and tourism economies and small island states that possess diminished standing and rights.

In sum, the Columbia participants proposed that a “new island studies” could contribute toward a redefinition of the “natural,” cooperation across oceanic and regional divides, legal and non-legal concerns involving “climate displaced peoples,” and the discourses of island social formations.