

# Elementary Analysis of Oshiro Tatsuhiro as a Representative Writer in Okinawa after World War II

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## Abstract

In recent years, with the territorial dispute between China and Japan, the research on Okinawa's national subjectivity and cultural themes and its achievements have been increasing in China. However, research on post- World War II Okinawa literature is still not mature. The theses, which analyze Okinawa's history, religion, folklore, culture, and even the potential consciousness of Okinawa, people since ancient times from the perspective of post- World War II Okinawa literature is especially rare. When we study the post- World War II Okinawa literature, it is important for us to ignore Oshiro Tatsuhiro (1925-2020), the first Okinawa writer, who won The Akutagawa Prize, the highest honor in Japanese pure literature. Oshiro Tatsuhiro's literature not only records the relationship between China and Ryukyu with a strong sense of history and humanistic sentiment, but also is praised because of his distinctive Okinawa character, and it also has its own place in the field of "Japanese literature." In a sense, we can also refer to the literature of Oshiro Tatsuhiro as a cross-nation and mixed literature.

**Keywords:** Oshiro Tatsuhiro, Okinawa, Japanese Literature, Chinese elements.

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## INTRODUCTION

Oshiro Tatsuhiro was born in a hereditary goddess's house in Nakagusuku, Okinawa. In 1943, he was admitted to the Tung Wen College (Toa Dobunshoin University) [1]. After Japan's defeat, he dropped out in 1946. In September of the same year, he returned to Okinawa, and the following year, he took up the position at the department of Food Production and Land Development in Ryukyu Islands and engaged in land-related data collection. During the three years from 1943 to 1946, he became a citizen of the defeated nation from the hot-blooded youth who had lived in the so-called "Redemption of China and Asia" and who had been determined to display their ambitions on the mainland of China. After returning to Okinawa, he descended to the stateless youth hosted by the United States from the defeated nation.

The trauma of "frustration of youth" and "looseness of the motherland" brought about by the disappearance of The Tung Wen College (Toa Dobunshoin University) not only prompted Oshiro Tatsuhiro to embark on the road of literary creation, but also had a significant impact on the choice of his early literary genre and even on his life's creative

characteristics -- dramatic elements. In 1967, Okinawa had not yet "returned" to Japan, and was still in the late period of the United States Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Islands. He won the Akutagawa Prize [2] with the novel *The Cocktail Party* at that time, which made him the first person, who described "Okinawa", to achieve "symbolic capital" style success in the Japanese literary circle. After winning the award, he still worked hard and continued to use Okinawa and the Japanese local audiences as his writing objects. He has diligently composed many different works of different styles. In 2015, at the age of 89, he won another prestigious literary award in Japan, the Kawabata Yasunari Literary Prize [3], for his first I novel *Beyonds the Rails* in his personal creation career. At the same time, Oshiro Tatsuhiro shouldered the responsibility of discovering, cultivating, and rewarding the new forces of Okinawa literature. Whether the "Ryukyu News Short Story Award" initiated by the Ryukyu News (Ryukyu Shimpo) in 1973 or the "New Okinawa Literature Prize" created by the Okinawa Times in 1975, Oshiro Tatsuhiro has been a jury member since the establishment of these two awards until today, which serves to show that Oshiro Tatsuhiro's opinions have a continuous and decisive influence upon selecting and

affirming newcomers. It can be said that Oshiro Tatsuhiro is not only the bridgehead of the Okinawa literature creation camp after the Second World War, but also almost becomes the central figure in the Okinawa Literature Forum.

As a leading figure in post-World War II Okinawa literature, his works are in various forms, including novels, essays, scripts, historical commentaries, and even lyrics. The media of his published works include newspapers, literary magazines, general magazines, weekly magazines, movie and drama brochures, and advertising magazines. In addition, he was a staff member of the Okinawa Prefectural Office before he retired at the age of 60 (1986), and administrative documents were also one of the mediums for his publications. Obviously, he is an all-around performer. The diversity of performance means the breadth and depth of the topics involved. Oshiro Tatsuhiro has always placed Okinawa at the center of his creative activities, but Okinawa has a wide range of connotations, including history, culture, customs, folklore, and people's patterns. Oshiro Tatsuhiro's work involves almost all of the above aspects.

Although Okinawa having always been the object of description, Oshiro Tatsuhiro firmly believes that Okinawa literature is not merely the literature for Okinawa people, only after understanding by Japan, Okinawa literature can be established. This is his consistent philosophy. Therefore, he has consciously described the background, history, and culture of Okinawa in a meticulous manner in order to gain the understanding of Japanese readers of main land and to urge them to think deeply about the delicate relations between Japan and Okinawa. He has always believed that either the legal system or the administrative system is temporary. In the long run, people must think about cultural issues. If this concept is not deeply rooted, Okinawa cannot be saved. Although some problems can be solved by some time-sensitive political means, people's lives rely on politics are difficult to sustain. The one who study carefully its significance of tradition that continues today but not basing himself on the tradition, he will not be able to become a true expressionist person. Therefore, in the concept of Oshiro Tatsuhiro, the Okinawa issue is not a political but a cultural issue.

The structure of Oshiro Tatsuhiro's novels is extremely detailed and gives people a sense of everything. This is closely related to the complexity of Okinawa literature. Oshiro Tatsuhiro devoted a lot of time to his creation. If not, he would not be able to paint a picture of Okinawa. In contrast, his short stories depict people's daily lives in a small, brushy style. However, it is worth noting that since the 1980s, he has rarely created short stories. Even occasionally involved, his short stories have begun to embed new creative

ideas, such as the eternal and universal truth that has been immortalized in daily life. What is most worth mentioning is that, in 2015, he was awarded the 41st Kawabata Yasunari Literary Prize when he was 89 years old with his first I novel *Beyonds the Rails*, which is also a short story. The idea of getting rid of the control and domination of the concept, returning to the person's individual, emotional and accidental, purifying the emotion in the experience and the idea that life itself evolved into a comprehension of aesthetic meaning and achieved the sublimation of the noumenon of emotion have been thoroughly demonstrated in the works.

Furthermore, in Oshiro Tatsuhiro's many works, we can see a combination of social environment and individual trivial matters, as well as a combination of Okinawa perspective and Japanese perspective. Perhaps, because of Oshiro Tatsuhiro's "Japanese perspective", he was able to become a representative writer in Okinawa. If "Japanese literature" is defined from a relatively narrow viewpoint, "Japanese literature" generally refers to the works whose keynote are the Japanese aesthetic sense and value position, and whose target audiences who are proficient in Japanese and Japanese culture (the subject is Japanese). Although both *Nihon-shoki* [4] and *Rai Noboru's Nihon Gaishi* [5] are written in the Chinese language as the "Chinese" standard, however, according to the above definition, these works can be unambiguously attributed to the category of "Japanese literature." Oshiro Tatsuhiro not only writes in Japanese, but also writes for the public readers including Okinawans, within Japan's administrative jurisdiction (not within the territorial sovereignty). From these two aspects, Oshiro Tatsuhiro's literature is real Japanese literature.

Having a "Japanese perspective" means that Oshiro Tatsuhiro fully understands how ordinary Japanese readers view Okinawa. However, it is impossible to be a decent novel by recording the local dialect as it is. Oshiro Tatsuhiro can only presuppose readers who use the standard language in their minds, and then incorporate the "feeling of dialects" into the standard language to write. Supported by such an architecture, the Okinawa landscape depicted by Oshiro Tatsuhiro's work is presented to readers who read "Japanese literature".

In other words, Oshiro Tatsuhiro is a writer who writes the history and customs of Okinawa with the strokes of "Japanese literature". It was due to the fate of Okinawa after the Second World War, Oshiro Tatsuhiro was able to have a place in the field of "Japanese literature."

In addition, Oshiro Tatsuhiro, in his dedication to literary creation, also examined the blending and embarrassment of the values of traditional Chinese culture and the spirit of the Ryukyu Kingdom with a broad and calm perspective. He positively affirmed the

overseas Chinese's contribution to Ryukyu, but it was difficult to identify with the old-fashioned thinking of the village of Kuninda [6] represented by Lin Shigong(林世功,1842-1880) [7] in the wave of modernization; As the emperor education and occupation of the Chinese Empire's ideology are in full swing, Oshiro Tatsuihiro objectively and slightly reluctantly tells that even the overseas Chinese, the civics of the village of Kuninda, were forced to join the army of aggression against China. During the Great East Asian War, as an overseas student dispatched by Okinawa government, Oshiro Tatsuihiro studied at the Tung Wen College in Shanghai. With this experience as the theme, Oshiro Tatsuihiro wrote a youthful image of intertwined with pride, bitterness, and remorse - Mornings in Shanghai: Works From the Tung Wen College. In Okinawa's first Akatagawa award-winning novel, *The Cocktail Party*, Oshiro Tatsuihiro pointedly pointed out that during the Japan's aggressive invasion towards China, as the perpetrators of war, Okinawa people have caused a train of harm to China. It can be said that Oshiro Tatsuihiro's literary works, especially essays and historical novels that describe the origin, integration, dislocation, and conflict with China, break the common thread that everyone often falls into when they think about the history of Okinawa -- That is to say that Okinawa history is only a history of suffering and will not make other interpretations.

## CONCLUSION

In short, we can use a mythical phrase to describe Okinawa—an island is rich of water but waterless, and an island is rich of habitants but deserted [8]. The so-called "somewhere is rich of water but waterless" refers to the unexpected scarcity of fresh water that can really be used for drinking and living on this green island surrounded by sea and on many rainfall areas. "an island is rich of habitants but deserted" refers to the fact that there are quite a lot of people on this island who have outstanding talents, education background, and insights, but few of them are active as politicians or bureaucrats in the center (that is the main land of Japan called the Yamato). Moreover, there are not many people; as a literary person or a scholar, who stand firm in the corresponding field.

It is precisely because of this that Oshiro Tatsuihiro's literary roots are accompanied by dizzying dual structures: somewhere is rich of water but waterless, somewhere is rich of inhabitants but deserted, someone who is theism is atheistic, and there is a soul but no soul. It is Japanese literature but not

Japanese literature at the same time. It is Okinawa literature but not Okinawa literature. The island where this paradox was established is Oshiro Tatsuihiro' Ryukyu (Okinawa).

## REFERENCES

1. The Tung Wen College is one of Japan's private university which was located in Shanghai City, China. It was established in 1939 and abolished in 1945.
2. The Akutagawa Prize (芥川龍之介賞, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke Shō) is a Japanese literary award presented biannually (twice a year). Because of its prestige and the considerable attention the winner receives from the media, it is, along with the Naoki Prize, one of Japan's most sought after literary prizes.
3. The Kawabata Yasunari Literary Prize was set up by Kawabata Yasunari Foundation in 1973. It is used to reward outstanding short stories published in the year.
4. The *Nihon Shoki* (日本書紀), sometimes translated as *The Chronicles of Japan*, is the second-oldest book of classical Japanese history. The book is also called the *Nihongi* (日本紀, "Japanese Chronicles").
5. The *Nihon Gaishi* (日本外史) is a 19th-century book on the history of Japan by Rai San'yo. The whole work comprises 22 scrolls.
6. Kuninda was an Okinawan community of scholars, bureaucrats, and diplomats in the port city of Naha near the royal capital of Shuri, which was a center of culture and learning during the time of the Ryukyu Kingdom. The people of Kuninda, traditionally believed to all be descendants of the Chinese immigrants who first settled there in 1392, came to form an important and aristocratic class of scholar-bureaucrats, the *yukatchu*, who dominated the royal bureaucracy, and served as government officials at home, and as diplomats in relations with China, Japan, and others.
7. Rin Seikō (林世功, 1842–1880) in Japanese, was a scholar-bureaucrat and diplomat of the Ryukyu Kingdom. He was known for leading a movement to petition the government of Qing Dynasty China to rescue the Ryukyu Kingdom from annexation by Imperial Japan.
8. Minato Kawamura. *The lost Ryukyuan* [M].Tokyo: Complete works of Oshiro Tatsuihiro (Volume 6),2002:419.