Home away from Home: Okinawan Genealogical Research Practices in Hawai‘i

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November 17, 2018
Questions:

1. Why so many genealogy related queries?
2. Why Okinawa? What is different/special about Okinawan genealogical research?
3. Are the lessons learned in the Okinawan genealogical research relevant to other ethnic groups in Hawaiʻi?
Okinawa Studies Librarianship & Hawaiʻi

• Okinawa Prefecture is one of the 47 prefectures in Japan
• UH has a Japan Studies Librarian & an Okinawa Studies Librarian
• In North America, there are 2 Okinawa Studies Librarians: one at UH Mānoa Library (full-time), and the other at the George Washington University Library (half-time)

• After the Japanese immigrants to Hawaiʻi, Okinawans came to Hawaiʻi in 1900 (distinctions between the Japanese and Okinawan immigrants)
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Genealogy queries in statistics
Genealogy is

“the second most popular hobby in the U.S. after gardening, according to ABC News, and the second most visited category of websites, after pornography.”

How can I, as Okinawa Studies Librarian, assist local, national, and international users who need genealogical research assistance?
Types of genealogical research available in the United States:

1. DNA tests
   AncestryDNA, 23andMe, National Geographic DNA, etc.

2. Census records, Military records, Immigration records, etc.
National Archives & Records Administration

Start Your Genealogy Research

We have arranged the Genealogy section of the website by research topics, or types of records available to search.

The records in our holdings that are most commonly used by genealogists include:

• Census Records
• Military Records
• Immigration Records (Ship Passenger Lists)
• Naturalization Records
• Land Records
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What is special about Okinawan genealogical research?

1. Okinawa as Ryukyu Kingdom (15th-19th Century)
2. Okinawa became part of Japan (1872)
3. The Battle of Okinawa (April – June 1945)
4. USCAR (United States Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Islands; 1950-1972)
5. Reversion to Japan (1972)
Obstacles in finding genealogical information in Okinawa

• Family registry (*koseki*) – available only in Japan

• Language – family registry in Japan is written in Japanese (Japanese vs. Okinawan languages)
Local ‘Oahu Okinawan Genealogical Society

Okinawan Genealogical Society of Hawaii (OGSH)

1992 OGSH established
(The genealogy component in Hawaii United Okinawa Association was launched)

2012 OGSH publishes the first *Beginner’s guide to genealogy research Okinawa*. 
Title:
Beginner's guide to genealogy research Okinawa.

Publisher:

Description:
88 pages : illustrations, maps (some color), forms ; 28 cm

Subjects:
Ryukyuans--Genealogy--Study and teaching.
Ryukyuans--Hawaii--Genealogy--Study and teaching.
Hawaii.

Genre/Form:
Instructional and educational works.

Notes:
Includes bibliographical references (page 86).

Holdings Information

Current Location:
UH Manoa: Hamilton Hawaiian - Library Use Only

Call Number:
CS1308.O54 B44 2012
Local histories & information in Okinawa

Okinawa Prefectural Library (OPL)

It holds city/town/village records

OPL does not manage family registries (family registries are managed by local government offices)

OPL has knowledge and experiences
Collaborations among 3 agencies

June 20, 2017

Teleconference among the 3 agents: OGSH (5 people), OPL (8 people), and Okinawa Studies Librarian

Feedback form: clarify each agency’s needs and strength
Outcome 1: OPL side

1st Generation Immigration Genealogical Reference Service
Outcome 2: OGSH (Hawai‘i side)

“Click here to get form that you can fill-in electronically, and print, to request genealogy service from OGSH.”
Outcome 3: UH Mānoa Library

Provide patrons with systematic assistance
  Individual genealogical research – refer such queries to OPL and OGSH

Roles of Information professionals
  Guide patrons, but not to do their job for them
Outcome 4: Okinawans search for relatives in Hawai‘i and other States and countries

Okinawans who went back to Okinawa and their offspring’s search for their relatives in Hawai‘i and beyond

*Kilokilo Ka Maka - Understanding Our Place(s)*

For those who were born in Hawai‘i with Okinawan ancestry but moved back to Okinawa, Hawai‘i becomes a home away from home.
“From Okinawa to Hawaii and Back Again: A Painter Follows the Currents of Her Family History.”

August 31, 2015

“Grandma Kina was born in 1921, the third of four girls. Her two older sisters were Kibei—born in Hawaii, but raised in Okinawa. This was a common practice amongst the Japanese—wealthier families sent their children back for a ‘proper’ education and cultural immersion; ...
...poorer families like mine were motivated by having one less mouth to feed. At 17, Grandma Kina joined her sisters as she was said to have been a particularly unproductive cane field worker with quite a big and loud mouth to feed.”

Jean L. Cooper, Metadata, Creation & Organization at the University of Virginia Library

“Sometimes there are misunderstandings about what sort of help I am able to provide. Sometimes people expect me to do the research for them, and I have to make it clear that my job is to help them do the research.” (Emphasis in her original answer to my questionnaire).
Jean L. Cooper works as a Cataloger and Reference Librarian, and Genealogical Resources Specialist at the University of Virginia Library, where she has worked for the past thirty years.

**Author**

She is the author of

*A Guide to Historic Charlottesville and Albemarle County, Virginia* (History Press, 2007)


*Index of Students of the University of Virginia, 1825-1874* (Shortwood Press, 2011)

*Cohabitation Register of Louisa County, Virginia* (Shortwood Press, 2016)

*A Challenge Was Given* (Shortwood Press, 2017)
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Consulate General of Japan in Honolulu

Service started: February 22, 2018
Searching Your Japanese Roots

If you know the name of your ancestor...

STEP 1: Get a copy of Immigration cards at the Consulate-General of Japan!

The Consulate-General of Japan in Honolulu keeps registration cards of Japanese citizens who immigrated to Hawaii and their family members spanning from the 1880s to 1975. (*)

Get the application form from our website or through email. Fill out the form and submit it to the Consulate-General office. You need a proof of relationship between the applicant and the person on the registration card (e.g., birth certificate) at the time of application.

Applications:
http://www.honolulu.us.emb-japan.go.jp/jponlineservices/ext.html
American citizens: Visitor visa requirements:

STEP 2: Get a copy of the Koseki Tohan (Japanese official family registry)!

Once you obtain a copy of the immigration card, you can also obtain a copy of your family's official registry in Japan. If interested, the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii (JCC) offers assistance for obtaining and translating your copy of the Koseki Tohan. Refer to following link for details.

http://www.jcc.hawaii.org/koseki-hiroko-resource-center/

STEP 3: Get additional resources

Refer to the Consulate-General of Japan in Honolulu website for a detailed list of places and resources available to you in searching your roots.

http://www.honolulu.us.emb-japan.go.jp/jponlineservices/ext.html

STEP 4: Visiting Japan

After obtaining your ancestor's information from Step 1-3, you may want to find out more about your Japanese relatives or your family graves in Japan. Before planning a trip to Japan, there are a few things you should be aware of:

1. Try to verify existence of family members and/or gravesites BEFORE making the trip to Japan. If you cannot find your Japanese relatives, your temple in Hawaii may be able to assist you in locating your family graves in Japan.
2. Find out about available English assistance in Japan. Contact the local municipal office and check availability of English assistance where you plan to visit. Many municipal offices have English websites and they may have English speaking staff that will be able to help you.
3. Check with the Consulate visa section about visa requirements. U.S. citizens are exempt from visas for up to 90 days if their visas are for tourism, commerce, conference, visiting relatives/acquaintances, etc.

Consulate-General of Japan
1732 Nuuanu Ave, Honolulu, HI 96817
Tel: 808-521-8111
http://www.honolulu.us.emb-japan.go.jp
Consulate General of Japan in Honolulu also provides,

A service that genealogy information seekers can easily obtain (information seekers can visit the consulate and seek information in person, or by mail or by email)

A list of useful resources to discover ancestors and local history around the time immigrants arrived in Hawai‘i by collaborating with the Japanese Cultural Center for Hawai‘i (JCCH)
Conclusion

• Collaboratively work with an academic library, a public library, and a local genealogical society (and maybe State archives as well?)

• Educate patrons with what librarians can do and cannot do

• Share ideas and information with others

• Share experiences—what worked and what did not work
Questions?

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