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Behind the gallantry of Eisa in Okinawa: Discourses upon a contemporary urban fakelore

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Apology, a.k.a. disclaimer

In this presentation, proper names of Japanese institutions, etc. are given in English as explanatory translation. Some of them may have official English names, but many do not have one. Please take into account that those names in English are \textit{NOT} fully official ones.
Related papers in Japanese

山田晴通 (2016): （編集中）
都市的フェイクロアとしてのエイサーの意義.
神谷浩夫・山本健太・和田 崇 共編
『ライブパフォーマンスと地域（仮）』
ナカニシヤ出版（京都）.

in KAMIYA, H., YAMAMOTO, K. and WADA, T. (eds.)

*Live Performances and Areas*

Nakanishiya Press (Kyoto)
Fakelore?

• Behind the gallantry of *Eisa* in Okinawa: Discourses upon a contemporary urban fakelore

• Fake + folklore

• Richard Mercer Dorson (1916-1981) coined the term in 1950
From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

**Fakelore or pseudo-folklore** is inauthentic, manufactured folklore presented as if it were genuinely *traditional*. Over the last several decades the term has generally fallen out of favor in the academic study of folklore because it places an unnecessary emphasis on origin (instead of ongoing practice) to determine authenticity. The term can refer to new stories or songs made up, or to folklore that is reworked and modified for modern tastes. The element of misrepresentation is central; artists who draw on traditional stories in their work are not producing fakelore unless they claim that their creations are real folklore.[1]

The term *fakelore* was coined in 1950 by American folklorist *Richard M. Dorson*. Dorson's examples included the fictional *cowboy* Pecos Bill, who was presented as a folk hero of the *American West* but was actually invented by the writer *Edward S. O'Reilly* in 1928. Dorson also
Eisa (dance)

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Eisa (Okinawan: エイサー Eisaa) is a form of folk dance originating from the Okinawa Islands, Japan. In origin, it is a Bon dance that is performed by young people of each community during the Bon festival to honor the spirits of their ancestors. It underwent drastic changes in the 20th century and is today seen as a vital part of Okinawan culture.

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What is *Eisa*?

- From the All Island *Eisa* Festival organizing committee web site:

* (my translation) One of traditional performances in Okinawa, equivalent to bon dance in other part of Japan. Each local community, or youth group has its own unique style of Eisa, and perform it in the bon nights, dancing and marching.
Some patterns may be found among varied styles, and almost all youth groups performs in the style of “taiko (drum) Eisa” using O-daiko, and Shime-daiko drums, which is said to be most prevailing in Chubu (central) area of Okinawa island. Eisa performed in former municipalities of Yonashiro and Katsuren is quite unique in the use of Paranku, small one-sided tumbalin like instrument, and atmosphere of the performance if quite different from other performances using Shime-daiko.
In some other styles of Eisa, no drum is used in performance, that is, “hand-dance only Eisa”, which are found in Hokubu (northern) part of Okinawa island, and it is said to be the oldest form of Eisa possibly.

In recent years, many “Sosaku-daiko” (creative drum performance) groups using essence of Eisa styles, and combine them to popular music, performing in unique outfits.
Traditional aspects of *Eisa*

- Performance during *bon* period, based on Buddhism and ancestry worship
- Hand dancing (without drums)
- Clown roles originally have their roots in travelling bonze/preacher
Drums in *Eisa*

- Witnesses, or discourses upon pre-war day *Eisa* have quite limited degree of references to drums.

- Drums are traditionally included in *Eisa* performances, but their volume or relative importance was not as much as today’s.
Okinawa city

- Population: 133,000+ (estimation May 2015)
- Although the local economy is relatively slow, the population is slowly increasing in recent years.

- Historically, local economy had been largely dependent upon US military personnels’ private spending until 1970s.
Okinawa city

- The area has been named Koza under US occupation after 1945.
- 1956: Koza city
- All Island Eisa Competition started under the initiative of then Koza city, this year
- 1972: The end of US occupation
- 1974: City renamed as Okinawa city
- 1977: The Competition was renamed to All Island Eisa Festival
Declaration of *Eisa* town

- Okinawa City authority has published “the declaration of Eisa town” (エイサーのまち宣言) in 2007.

- Being a poetical expression of homage to Eisa, the declaration praised gallantry of energetic youth.
大地をゆるがす太鼓の音　天まで響く歌三線の声

太鼓は人々の魂をゆるがし　歌三線は悠久の歴史と平和を謳う

夏の夜の勇壮華麗な演技に　青年たちは珠玉の汗をとばす
ドンドンドン魂の太鼓 トゥントゥンテン癒しの三線

ピューイピューイと指笛がなり スリサーサーと声が弾む

エイサーのリズムは宇宙の波長と調和して 人々の心をときはなす

青年たちの愛郷心は エイサーによって育まれたエイサーを踊る喜びが 島を愛する心を育てた
沖縄全島エイサーまつりは 戦後の混乱した沖縄でウマンチュに勇気と活力を与えた

郷土の芸能文化をこよなく愛する沖縄の中でも沖縄全島エイサーまつりは

島人の魂を駆り立て 人々を興奮の渦に巻き込み 人々を魅了し続けた

そしてエイサー文化は 強固なものへと継承発展される
私たち沖縄市民は エイサーを通して育んできた 心優しい精神と
先人たちが築きあげた偉大なる文化遺産エイサーを
迎恩の心に満ちたわがまちの誇りとするとともに

たくましい生命力と文化の薫り高い住みよいまちづくりに努めることを決意し
ここにエイサーのまち沖縄市を宣言する
大地をゆるがす**太鼓**の音 天まで響く歌三線の声

**太鼓**は人々の魂をゆるがし 歌三線は悠久の歴史と平和を謳う

(gallant and gorgeous)

夏の夜の勇壮華麗な演技に 青年たちは珠玉の汗をとばす
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郷土の芸能文化をこよなく愛する沖縄の中でも沖縄全島エイサーまつりは (All Island Eisa Festival)
島人の魂を駆り立て 人々を興奮の渦に巻き込み 人々を魅了し続けた (excitement)

そしてエイサー文化は 強固なものへと継承発展される
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All Island Eisa Festival gave the Uchinanchu (Okinawan) people bravery and vitality, when Okinawa was in post-war confusion
私たち沖縄市民は エイサーを通して育んできた心優しい精神と先人たちが築きあげた偉大なる文化遺産エイサーを（Eisa as cultural heritage）迎恩の心に満ちたわがまちの誇りとするとともに（strong vitality and rich culture）たくましい生命力と文化の薫り高い住みよいまちづくりに努めることを決意しここにエイサーのまち沖縄市を宣言する
After the declaration

- After the declaration, the city authority more often encourages local efforts to make Eisa related elements visible in its urban landscape, through setting landmarks, street furniture, and other constructions decorated with Eisa related symbols.
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• Original Eisa characters become in use after 2011.
20 December, 1970

Koza riot

The Koza riot (コザ暴動 Koza bōdō) was a violent and spontaneous protest against the US military presence in Okinawa, which occurred on the night of December 20, 1970, into the morning of the following day. Roughly 5,000 Okinawans clashed with roughly 700 American MPs in an event which has been regarded as symbolic of Okinawan anger against 25 years of US military occupation. In the riot, approximately 60 Americans were injured, 80 cars were burned, and several buildings on Kadena Air Base were destroyed or heavily damaged.

Background

Following Japan's defeat in World War II, Japan came to be formally occupied by Allied forces and governed under martial law for roughly seven years. While the Occupation of Japan came to an end and most of Japan regained its independence in April 1952, Okinawa Prefecture was to remain under US military occupation for another twenty years.

By 1970, it had already been decided and was widely known that the US military occupation of Okinawa was going to be ended in 1972, and that Okinawa would return to being a part of independent Japan, but also that a considerable US military presence was to remain. This came in the wake of a number of incidents between servicemen and Okinawan civilians over the years, including a hit-and-run accident in September 1970, only a few months prior to the riot, which resulted in the death of an Okinawan housewife from Itoman. The servicemen involved in that incident were acquitted at their court-martial. This incident fueled the growing discontent of Okinawans with the standard status of forces that exempted US servicemen from Okinawan justice, as are all military personnel stationed on foreign soil long term.
In conclusion

- Historical Eisa should have been something afar from gallantry, but a ritual of worship to ancestors based on Buddhist belief. It should have been less sophisticated, less organized, and less noisy, when compared with its modern counterpart.
In conclusion

• Orientation towards gallantry of contemporary Eisa might have its roots in post-WWII situations in Okinawa, where the occupational US military controlled the Ryukyus, and prevailed over Okinawan people to obey.
In conclusion

• Festival frenzy around contemporary Eisa might have been a substation for resistance action of the local people against the mighty dominating power, thus the result of the occupational past, and on-going presence of US military bases.
Thank you for your attention!

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Please join Sapporo conference next year!
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