

***Nuchidutakara* (life is a treasure): The Spirit of Okinawa in Resistance to the Fascism of Democracy**

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1. *Nuchidutakara* — The thought of as an oath to inherit the memory of war

Nuchidutakara has become a widely-known word that expresses the spiritual and ideological character of Okinawa. It is a popular idea that thoroughly embodies peace and rejects any spirit of sacrifice. The term holds a very important position considering the future state of Japanese society and world peace.

However, Okinawans have not always recognized and circulated this term as a symbol of the heart of Okinawa. According to Osamu Yakabi, an Okinawan modern and contemporary history researcher who carefully explored the coining of the term *Nuchidutakara*, “The word *Nuchidutakara* is hardly confirmed in texts written during and in early postwar times.” (Yakabi 2009:199). After the introduction of the term *Nuchi* in the late 1960s, “In June 1987, a local newspaper reported that the description of the Japanese genocide in the Battle of Okinawa was completely removed from high school textbooks by the Ministry of Education” (ibid.:199). Two newspaper companies, the Okinawa Times and the Ryukyu Shinpo, immediately began a three-month long series. Related organizations also responded quickly to the “fight against the power that comes to crush” (Kinjo et al. 2019:129). They “broke the silence of 37 years and started talking about the deletion of massacres by the Japanese military in the textbook examination because they felt bitter that ‘if we don’t talk now, it will be miserable again.’” One of the most notable aspects of this struggle was that not only organizations and researchers but also readers who had subscribed to newspapers received the daily testimonies (Yakabi 2009:203). Furthermore, in the process of collecting testimonies from people and questioning about the experience of the Battle of Okinawa, researchers extracted the word *Nuchidutakara* and it was published in the Okinawa Times. This was the moment when

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the word first appeared in a newspaper (Yakabi 2009:204). Thus, *Nuchidutakara* is a new popular idea with less than 40 years of history that represents the Okinawans' earnest desire for peace and their oath of determination to inherit war memories in collaboration with researchers.

However, the word had already been used in the speech of the Crown Prince during his visit to the prefecture in 1983 to promote blood donation and in the speech of U.S. President Bill Clinton at the Okinawa Summit in 2000. The intended ideological nature has also been used in the language of the opposition (Kinjo 1987:20-22; Kano 2011:230). The Okinawa People's Thought Movement, which continues to this day, is in the midst of a battle to refine its ideological character, in which the words *Nuchidutakara* are not easily taken away by the authorities.

This report focuses on this point. Specifically, the author focuses on two thinkers from the Yomitan village who have led the Okinawans' ideas to this day, the sculptor Minol Kinjo and the Shinshu Otani monk Shoichi Chibana. Through an overview of how the ideological character of *Nuchidutakara* has been refined by these two thinkers, I examined the ideological conditions and significance of *Nuchidutakara* which protects people from war and enables them to live truly democratically.

2. Who coined the term *Nuchidutakara*?

The sculptor Kinjo adopted the term as his own way of life, but *Nuchidutakara* is not originally invented by him. Kinjo testified that he had first heard the words in the postwar streets as the voice of the people who had sacrificed a lot in the war (Kinjo 1987:21-22). However, he said that he learned the spirit of the term in his childhood just after World War II. Kinjo was raised by his maternal grandfather Makari Miyagask (Kinjo 2001). His father had gone to war and died in battle on Bougainville Island when Kinjo was less than a year old. Kinjo said that his grandfather, who was a fisherman's boss, never exploited his fellow fishermen. He recalled, "If there are ten fishermen, some of them have been fishing for four or fifty years, and some of them have gone out to sea for the first time yesterday or today, but they have the same share. In fact, what I've experienced is that the deaf, who had just started fishing, worked in the sea together, but we divided all the fish and shellfish in the harvest into equal parts. I think it was the *Nuchidutakara* that supported this behavior, which is that life is a treasure." (ibid.:1-2) Thus, the term *Nuchidutakara* supposedly existed long before it was ideologized as the language and spirit of the people, but it was reconceived out of the language of the people

who lived during the war. According to what Kinjo has learned from his predecessors, *Nuchidutakara* can be understood as a spirit of equal distribution on the premise that there is no superiority or inferiority in life.

3. Word of Okinawa in resistance to the fascism of democracy

Yomitan village, the birthplace of Shoichi Chibana, contains the remains of the war, Shimukgama and Chibichirigama, known as the most important bases for Okinawa peace learning (Yakabi 2009:65-75). Two people who had immigrated to Hawaii were evacuated to Shimukugama. They realized that the U.S. military was not as cruel as the villagers had been taught by schools and Japanese soldiers (as being “the demons, the U.S. and the British”) but that “they wouldn’t kill them if they didn’t even fight back.” Therefore, the two of them left Gama and negotiated with the U.S. military, and as a result, the lives of 1,000 residents were saved (ibid.:71-72). On the contrary, a veteran soldier and two nurses accompanying him on the Chinese front were evacuated to Chibitirigama. They had only seen the atrocities committed by the Japanese army in China and they told the residents that they were the demons of the U.S. military. According to the testimony of the survivors, this account triggered a group suicide by yelling “*Tenno Heika Banzai*” (Shimonoshima 1984). Parents killed children and adults set fire to futons, thinking that it was better than being humiliated and brutally killed by U.S. soldiers. In fact, 85 out of 135 people were killed. Simukgama and Chibichirigama are considered indispensable for peace learning because they demonstrated that “imperialization education” was the cause of life and death, depending on where the residents of the same district evacuated to.

However, during Chibana’s youth, there was no such place for peace learning in Yomitan village. Shoichi Chibana revived the memory of Chibichirigama that had been reduced to a garbage dump (Kinjo et al. 2019:129), along with non-fiction writer Tetsuro Simojima in 1983, and opened it up as a place to think deeply about peace. Chibana continues to narrate the memories of the places as a peace guide to this day. Chibana’s reputation as “the person who burned the Japanese flag” (Chibana 1996) was based on his belief in peace and attempts to revive and inherit the memories of Chibichirigama’s war so that there would never be another war. It is important to note that Chibana has kept the *Hinomaru* as a treasure in the Buddhist altar drawer to this day. This *Hinomaru* is the national flag of the country that Chibana had bought before Okinawa’s return to Japan in 1972 (Ogasawara Islands returned to Japan in 1968), and waved many times to return to

Okinawa's homeland. It is therefore kept as a precious memory of Chibana's youth, who lived under the occupation of the *America Yu*. Chibana recounts that under American rule, which was marked by unjust oppression, only Japanese schoolbooks provided democratic things at the time (Asahi Shimbun Digital, 2011). Therefore, the *Hinomaru* became a symbol of Chibana's dream of breaking through the unjustly damaged situation and obtaining equal human rights. However, Okinawans who returned to the Japanese Constitution and the Japanese democratic state for the first time in 27 years viewed the *Hinomaru* as a symbol of fascism that completely betrayed the "nuclear-free mainland" (Chihana 1996:6) demanded in the movement to return to their homeland. Chihana learned from this experience that democracy and fascism were not counter-concepts that presented opposite societies to the people; whether it was prewar militarism or a democratic country, fascism could be realized under the right conditions.

Media control enables populism and creates a majority that cleverly incites popular sentiment and crushes a small number as a result of legitimate consensus (Chibana 2017). The use of the term *Nuchidutakara* by the side that imposed control eliminated the core of the idea and modified it to suit the principle of majority rule. That is why Chibana emphasizes the spirit of not abandoning the minority, that no one should be sacrificed, as a core part of *Nuchidutakara* that should not be exploited.

Then, through what kind of action do the Okinawans embody the idea of *Nuchidutakara*? The code of conduct that Okinawans follow to interact with others is also considered to be the feeling of *Chimugurisa*, which exists as the unique language of Okinawa.

4. Act of finding pride as a human being in the vessel of one's mind that can conceive of the pain of oneself and others

The translation of *Chimugurisa* into Japanese is similar to the meaning of the word *Kawaiso* (I'm sorry) . However, in this translation, the most important aspect of *Chimugurisa* is omitted. The word *Kawaiso* implies that one can break off relationships with others, such as "I'm sorry, but I can't do anything for you" or "I feel sorry for you, so I'll leave you alone." This feeling gives one the choice of how to deal with other people's wounds. On the contrary, *Chimu* means "heart" in Japanese and *Gurisa* means suffering, which together means "my heart aches." However, the word *Chimugurisa* also implies the feeling of empathy for other people's suffering. In other words, *Chimugurisa* does not include the choice of whether or not to suffer the pain of others. Others' suffering

and that of one's own are equally implied in "my heart suffers" without boundaries, and the spirit of "equal life" (Kinjo 2003:3) is embedded in *Chimugurisa*. Therefore, those who have a *Chimugurisa* mind overwhelmingly incorporate the suffering and sadness of other people's lives into their own compared to those who have a *Kawaiso* mind that allows them to freely choose the extent of other people's and their own suffering. It is no exaggeration to say that the process of life from the beginning to the end is the process of forming a vessel of mind filled with the pain of oneself and others. When those with such a vessel of heart shout *Nuchidutakara* for example, in a democratic country, they would not be allowed to say that there is a "life" that can change its value inside and outside the national boundaries.

However, Kinjo posits that it is not enough to have a *Chimugurisa* to truly live in the spirit of *Nuchidutakara* and advocates bringing in the traditional feeling of the Korean people called *Han* (resentment).

The term *Han* strongly incorporates ethnic Korean ideas that are different from those incorporated in the Japanese term *Urami* and refers to "emotional activities" in which feelings of sadness, suffering, and resignation are precipitated and deposited within oneself (*Hanpuri*) and created and sublimated into a new life (Unno & Gombeye 1987; Hanazaki 1981; Kinjo 2001; Kawase 2018). Kinjo sees the possibility of life in *Han*'s work to solve his grudge. The empathy of *Chimugurisa*, which is accompanied by the suffering of others and one's own, enables a solidarity that does not isolate others, but if suffering only builds up like a dam, people will have no choice but to be overwhelmed by life. Also, if these sufferings are caused by discrimination or exploitation, the victim's resentment, despair, and anger will most likely transform into aggression and create a structure that engenders new sacrifices. If so, *Nuchidutakara* loses its original meaning. However, if the dam of pain is the source of a new and desired life, *Nuchidutakara* will mean exactly what it states. Kinjo said that "human pride" (Kinjo 2001, Fukushima 2015, Kawase eds. 2018) can only be revered by people who have been hurt can be seen in *Han Toki* (solving) (Kawase eds. 2018). By adding the idea of *Jodo* to the term, Kinjo then reaches the word "You live *Jodo* by solving *Han*." The term *Jodo* refers to a new world of life that can be seen before the end of resentment. *Jodo* refers to a world that is worthy of being a society where everyone lives together. It refers to a world where the suffering of others and oneself is associated not only with each other but also with the pride and dignity that sublimates pain. As this *Jodo* is a state that can only be seen in the world of life, it can be said that the spirit of *Nuchidutakara* which should not be sacrificed by any person, can be an idea of peace that resists fascism in democracy.

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