

Hiroshi Kakazu (2008) *Island Sustainability: Challenges and Opportunities for Okinawa and other Pacific Islands in a Globalized World*, Victoria BC, Canada, Trafford Publishing (print on demand), 281 pp, paperback, ISBN: 1-4251-7658-5, US\$23.98.

Given the expanding literature dealing with the study of islands, one cannot be blamed for yearning for a publication that somehow brings all this rich, island-inspired scholarship to bear on one particular island territory. The approach would need to be truly holistic: appreciating the legacies of history, geography and culture; considering the economic opportunities of trade, tourism, knowledge industries, agriculture and geostrategic rents; and charting a way towards a future that considers novel political arrangements with metropolitan power. Hiroshi Kakazu performs these tasks, and more, quite admirably in this his latest publication: *Island Sustainability*.

The focus of Kakazu's research is – obviously to those who know him – his beloved Okinawa. The sprawling archipelago, with just over a million population, is now the southernmost prefecture of Japan, but has had a history quite distinct from that of its current motherland. It was an independent kingdom until 1878. The islands were also occupied by the US military from the end of the Second World War until 1972, and still support a massive US military infrastructure, the largest by far in the whole of Japan. The opportunity is there to present a politico-economic strategy that argues for an international “growth triangle” approach with neighbouring Taiwan and perhaps Kyushu and Shanghai (all three much closer to Okinawa than Tokyo). This approach is then strengthened by a distinct Okinawan *champuru* culture that cherishes its own identity, its impressive life expectancy: at 86 years for women, “one of the highest in the world” (p. 78), also expressed in a long, sustained opposition to the US military presence. Kakazu wryly also reminds us that Okinawa is the only Japanese prefecture which is currently not suffering population decline. Its prospects for thriving in the information age are encouraging.

The book is a collection of nine key chapters, which the author has developed and presented in a variety of island studies and regional studies fora in recent years. They represent Kakazu's accumulated scholarship of late and his third major book since his pioneering *Sustainable Development of Small Island Economies* (1994), which presented a rigorous economic case for geostrategic rents. The author is quick to acknowledge his collaborative endeavours with “ISISA, UNESCO-INSULA, JSIS and JSIE” (p. 13): for the uninitiated, these would be the International Small Islands Studies Association, UNESCO's International Scientific Council for Island Development, the Japan Society for Island Studies, and the Japan Society of International Economics respectively.

Of course, such a book is as much about its author as its subject matter. Dr Kakazu was born in Okinawa, studied in the UK and USA, and has had a distinguished career with various positions in Japan, including Vice-President of Okinawa's own University of the Ryukyus. He is a co-founder of ISISA, Vice-President of UNESCO-INSULA and President of JSIS. The text represents the author's own sincere but critical and grounded

ruminations about how best can and should Okinawa develop, and what are the major challenges and bottlenecks in this regard.

Insightfully, Kakazu adopts a ‘neutral’ stance with respect to the geographic givens of his focus. Okinawa may be seen as a remote, island archipelago, divested of the powers of jurisdiction that he enviously observes in similar, but much more autonomous, island territories as Åland, Azores, Hawaii and the Isle of Man (p. 290) as well as the Cook Islands and Tokelau, in the Pacific. The Japanese government is loath to promote a ‘one country, two systems’ approach (e.g. p. 66) that has so far worked fairly well for Hong Kong in its dealings with China. But Okinawa is also blessed with the flora and fauna to make it ‘the Galápagos of the Orient’, and is excellently placed in the centre of a bustling and promising economic region: the map on the book’s cover expounds this. Moreover, Okinawa is different enough, and remote enough from ‘mainland Japan’, to have its own special legislation to support specific incentive programs for development.

Kakazu is aware that, for *his* development plan for Okinawa to succeed – moving from large scale dependency on transfers from Tokyo to self-reliance – there are a number of “thorny” policy hurdles to overcome. These include: “US military bases, regional security, territorial disputes, various regulations, the liberalization of Okinawa’s economy and ... the decentralization and autonomy of local government” (p. 178). Interestingly, Kakazu is a firm believer in the devolution of some policy capacity to the level of the Okinawan prefecture; he also opines that various regulations at the national level (such as those relating to cabotage) are too protectionist and reduce overall price competitiveness. His thrust is to exploit Okinawa’s strengths – location, natural and cultural heritage, knowledge capital, networks, infrastructure – in a more liberalized global economy, while cognizant that excessive income inequality must be addressed, and carrying capacity respected.

Since he is a professional economist, we cannot fault the author for scattering an innumerable number of graphs, charts, equations and figures in his text. Sadly, these are not fully self-explanatory and most require some background knowledge. The text is also riddled with those spelling and grammatical mistakes that follow from less than perfect proof reading. The volume also lacks an author and subject index. Perhaps such deficiencies are a function of this being a ‘print on demand’ publication. The book is very affordable to the buyer; but this comes with some loss to the overall quality of presentation. (I am now told by the author that he is working on both the corrections and the index: on demand publication permits these changes.)

Such failings do not detract from the book’s main success. *Island Sustainability* is a well thought-out compilation that critically reviews the prospects for sustainable small island development from multiple and interdisciplinary perspectives, all with a sharp island focus.

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