

Membership Meeting Notice
Saturday, November 16, 2019, 10 am—2 pm
Legacy Ballroom

Haitai!

After eight months of brainstorming, planning, and following through, Bonenkai 2019, *Kashiragawai*, is here!

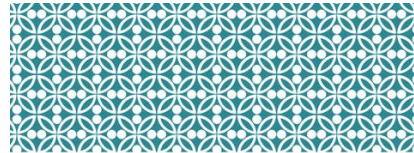
I applaud the entire Hokuzan (alpha Ar-Kob) committee for its creativity, dedication, and energy. Of course, we could not have done it if it weren't for the help from Chuzan, Nanzan, and BOD members.

Thank you for the many learning opportunities! They will be cherished. You are all an inspiration!

Ippee nifee deebiru!
Sandie K
Bonenkai 2019 Chair



Byrnes and Bryan



Itokazu Family
Genealogy

Byrnes
Yamashita

10/19/2019



2019 Upcoming activities:

-November 16, 2019

Saturday, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

OGSH Bonenkai - Okinawan Center
"Kashiragawai"-Transition

-December 2019 – No meeting

08-Sunday-Senior Luncheon

Happy Holidays

-January 2020 – OGS Meeting – 4TH Saturday, Jan 25

18-Unchinanchu of the Year Award Luncheon

25-OGSH Meeting (4th Saturday)

Meeting Report

Saturday, October 19, 2019

Attendance: 62

Visitors: 3

August Treasurer's Report:

Income-Membership dues, donation, sale of Guide Books,
Short Stories, and T-shirts

Expense – Short Story Books and newsletter printing;
bentos

Speaker: Byrnes Yamashita

Secretary's Report: Newsletter

Speaker write-up: Submitted by Brynes Y.

Photos by: Members

Donna's Word of the Month

"umuin"

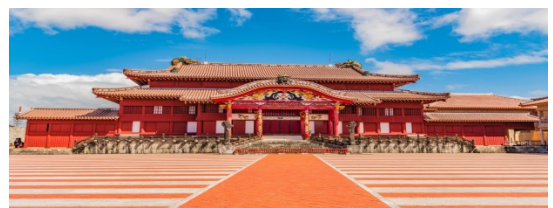
To hope; expect; anticipate.

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Today, Shuri is the name of a district of Okinawa, but it was the former capital of the Ryukyu Kingdom. Shuri Castle, or Shurijo, was the residence of the Ryukyu Kings until Okinawa became a Japanese prefecture in the 19th century. The Castles of the Ryukyu Kingdom, including Shuri Castle, are a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Originally built in the 14th century, the castle was the cultural and political center of the Ryukyu Kingdom.

https://www.hisgo.com/us/destination-japan/okinawa/shuri_castle.html

Itokazu Family Genealogy

By Byrnes Yamashita
PowerPoint presentation by Brynes
October 19, 2019

Good Morning. My name is Byrnes Yamashita and I'm a new member of the OGS. Having gone over my background during my introduction back in June, I won't go into it other than to say that my father's family came from Kumamoto Prefecture and my mother's family came from Okinawan and I will be talking about my mother's family the Itokazus, today.

My quest for my mother's family roots began in 2015 when I attended the funeral of my Uncle Harold Itokazu, our last Nisei in my mother's family, in California. At the funeral reception, we started talking about another family reunion since the last one was in 2007.

After some fits and starts, we are planning our Itokazu reunion for June 2020. 2020 will be the 120th anniversary of initial Okinawan immigration to Hawai'i and June will mark the 30th anniversary of the Hawai'i Okinawa Center. I wish I could say that we planned it that way, but it just turned out like that.

My search for my Okinawan family was not so much to find out about our genealogy, but rather to find our living relatives so we could connect with them and invite them to the reunion.

However, through our research for the reunion we learned that an uncle on Okinawa, Mr. Shinji Itokazu, who was a retired principal of Haneji Elementary School had written a genealogy in 1977 that goes back about 470 years to one of the early kings of Okinawa. It was translated into English in 1984 for the benefit of the people in Hawai'i and we discovered a copy of it.

It turns out that we are descendants of a Prince Tsuruchiyogame who was born to a concubine, so we are the illegitimate descendants of an Okinawan king.

Some of you are aware that I am active with the Nisei Veterans Legacy. The NVL is a non-profit educational organization that is trying to keep alive the story and legacy of the Nisei soldiers of World War II. My father was a member of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team and the 100th Infantry Battalion. I met Shinye Gima through this association.

In 2017 and 2018, I took an exhibit on the history of Japanese Americans in Hawai'i around Japan. We focused on those prefectures that sent the most Japanese immigrants, known as Kanyaku Imin, or Contract Immigrants to Hawai'i.

In October 2018, we were going to Naha, Okinawa and I saw an opportunity to find my Okinawan family. Our last known contact was a visit to Okinawa by my Uncle Harold and Auntie Chieko in 2007. My Uncle's daughter provided this photo from the visit but she had no names or addresses of the people in the photo.

It was taken at the Itokazu family tomb in Haneji. The man in the maroon shirt is my Uncle Harold and the lady in the black top is my Auntie Chieko. We believe the man in the blue shirt was my Uncle's cousin, Shigeji Itokazu and the other people are members of his family.

I went through the OGS process to find my relatives on Okinawa. I filled out the paperwork with the information I had about my grandparents. My Okinawan grandparents, Shinpei and Uta Itokazu immigrated to Hawai'i in 1907 and settled on Kaua'i.



The OPL came back right away and said that they had info on my possible relatives but to get the info, I had to go to Nago City (Haneji Village was absorbed by Nago City many years ago), and prove my lineage before I could get the info.

I had to show my mother's birth certificate and my birth certificate to prove my relation to my grandparents before they would give me the information.

I thought, "Wow, what a pain in the okole!" But I went ahead and gathered up the paperwork and got an International Drivers Permit. I figured I had to rent a car, drive up to Nago and take someone to interpret for me.

I mention all of this because this is the bureaucratic process you have to go through if you deal with the Okinawan government.

In the meantime, I contacted Colin Sewake on Okinawa to let him know I was coming with the exhibit to Okinawa. Many of you know that Colin is our "Main Man" on Okinawa and acts like a coordinator for many contacts with Hawai'i.

At the Okinawa Festival in September 2018, he introduced me to Mr. Choko Takayama who is the former President of the Okinawa Hawai'i Kyokai and told him that I was looking for my relatives on Okinawa. Takayama-san asked me, "What village are they from?"



When I answered, "Haneji", his face lit up." He said, "I am from Haneji." I couldn't believe my good luck.

When I got to Okinawa in October, he called me up and said, "If you are still trying to find your relatives, I have called a meeting of several men from Haneji that may know about your family. Can you make a lunch?" I said, "Of course."

This is a photo of our meeting at a restaurant in Naha. There were 5 or 6 senior men from Haneji. I am showing them the reunion book from our 2007 reunion.

It has many old historic photos and they were fascinated with them.

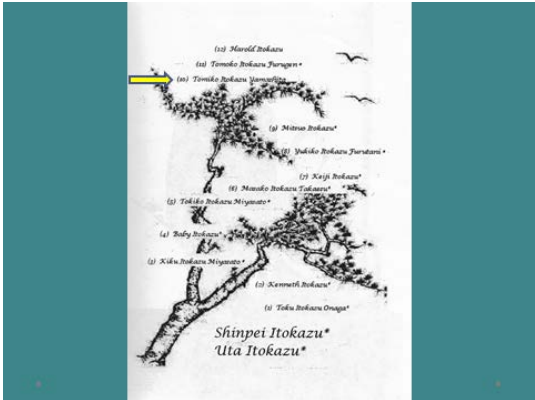
This photo includes my great grandfather, Shinei Itokazu, but we don't know which person he is. They were very interested in this photo because it was taken on Okinawa around 1900. Very few photographs from that period survived the Battle of Okinawa so it is very rare to have such a photo.



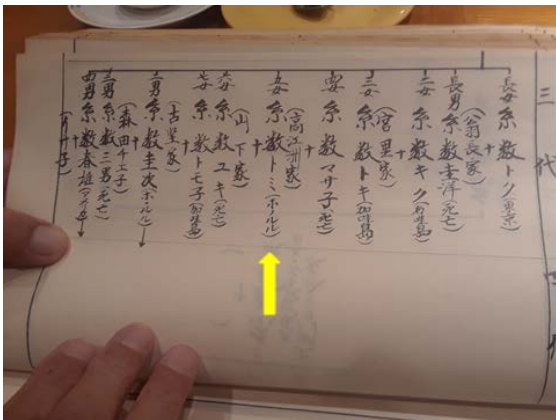
They were also very interested in the old photos from Hawai'i such as this early reunion photo taken in 1954 in Kapa'a, Kaua'i. They had not seen much information on the early lives of the Okinawan families in Hawaii. I was two-years old in this picture.



Well, it turned out that one of the gentlemen in the meeting was Tomonori Itokazu and he had brought the Itokazu Family kouseki to the meeting. I think it is called a keizu in Okinawa. Our kouseki survived because northern Okinawa was not destroyed as much as the southern side of the island during the war. He is the man sitting next to me in this photo. We are comparing my reunion book with his kouseki.



This next picture is of the Shinpei and Uta Itokazu family tree as it appears in the book. My mother Tomiko was born the 10th of 12 children and her name is highlighted on the tree.

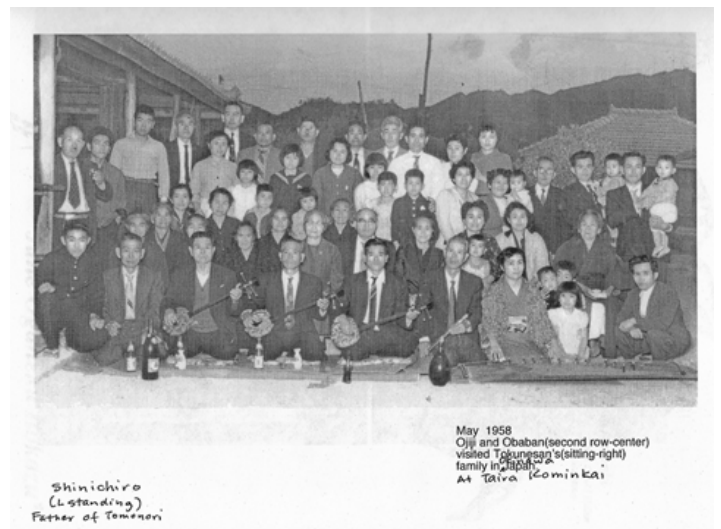


Here is a photo of the page in the kouseki that shows the family of Shinpei and Uta Itokazu. The highlighted person is my mother, listed here as "Tomi". It shows that she married Isao Yamashita.

When I told this story to Shinye Gima, he yelled, "You are Isao Yamashita's son?" It turns out that Shinye was an elementary school classmate of my father in Wailuku, Maui, at Iao School. Small world story.

This next photo was the clincher. In May of 1958, my grandfather and grandmother went to Okinawa with my oldest Auntie Toku, who had married an Okinawan gentleman named Fukuyei Onaga and moved back to the Japan.

In the reunion book, the caption says that they are visiting her in Japan, but I looked closely at the picture and felt that it was taken in Okinawa. The men are holding sanshin, not samisen, and the building roofs look Okinawan.



The men from Haneji looked closely at the photo. They recognized that it was taken at the Taira Kouminkai or Community Center. They had grown up at the facility so recognized it immediately.

Tomonori looked closely at the faces and recognized his father, Shinichiro, standing at the far left. This photo proved to everyone that Tomonori was part of my Itokazu family.

You hear people joking about how all the people from a village are probably related somehow. There is some truth to this. The old villages on Okinawa were formed around something called a munchu, which is a patrilineal family clan.

In the old days, all the men of a munchu had names with the same root. In my family's case, it was "Shin". My grandfather's name was Shinpei, his father's name was Shinei. Tomonori's father's name was Shinichiro, his father's name was Shinrin. Shinei was Shinrin's uncle.

This is all kind of confusing, but it is one of the things that show that you are related.

Choko Takayama is a former Vice Governor of Okinawa. The Vice Governor is not a politically elected position, it is a Civil Service position and it is more like a Managing Director of the prefecture. Anyway, Takayama-san is very well known and influential. He called the Okinawa Times and a reporter came right over to the meeting. She interviewed us and took a picture.



The next morning, an article appeared in the Okinawa Times about me finding my cousin Tomonori. My friend that works at the Okinawa Times mentioned that it is big news there when someone from Hawai'i finds their relatives. Takayama-san is on the left in the photo.

My brother Bryan and I will attend the Legacy Banquet next month to thank him personally for helping us find our relatives on Okinawa.

Some of you may know my second cousin, Patsy Itokazu Takamiya. She is very active with the Haneji Club. I came back from Okinawa, all excited so I called her up and told her, "Patsy, I found our cousin on Okinawa, Tomonori Itokazu!" She says, "I know Tomonori, I met him during the Taikai in 2016."

This photo shows Tomonori on the left with Patsy, her husband George along with her brother David and his wife. Also in the photo is Tomonori's sister Nobuko. Tomonori had driven up to Nago from Naha just to meet them.



We have invited Tomonori to our reunion in June 2020. He is planning to come with one of his nephews. We hope to refresh our relationship and contact information and in 2021, I hope to take a family group to Okinawa for the Taikai to visit our family tomb and expose our younger generation members to Okinawan Culture and our family there.

Now going back to the original photo I showed you. When I showed it to Tomonori, he didn't recognize Shigeji, so this is a mystery and shows that we have more to learn about our family on Okinawa.



The next photo is of our 1995 reunion and the last one is of our 2007 reunion. You can see that we have a large family so we hope that we can improve our relationships and expose our younger members to our large family and their Okinawan culture.



Tomonori has agreed to attend the reunion his health permitting, but he asked if he could speak to people that were involved with sending help to Okinawa after the war. He was a young boy at the time and knows how important the help from Hawai'i was to enable their recovery.

I contacted Jon Itomura whose grandfather Shinye Shimabukuro was one of the eight men that took the 550 pigs to Okinawa in 1948. Jon agreed to meet Tomonori but also invited him to attend the Irei no Hi commemoration ceremony and address the gathering to express this thanks to them. We are waiting to hear if he can make the event on June 22 (June 23 on Okinawa).



Finally, since the OPL process to get information on your relatives is so onerous and bureaucratic, I suggest that you try to find a local contact through your village association that can help you find your relatives. It was so much easier for me, thanks to Takayama-san's help. We are greatly indebted to him.



