



Okinawan Genealogical Society of Hawaii  
 c/o HUOA  
 94-587 Ukee Street  
 Waipahu, Hawaii 96797

[OGSHnews@gmail.com](mailto:OGSHnews@gmail.com)

Zoom Meeting  
 Saturday, August 21, 2021  
 9AM



Festival pin with bento purchase.

e-Newsletter  
 2021  
 August

**Agenda:**

Speaker:

Gwen Fujie “Finding My Uchinanchu Identity”

Treasurer’s Report:

Income – Donations; Expense – HUOA Dues

Serikaku/Yonamine Projects

Updates:

- OGSH Taikai JTB Tour
- HUOA 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Poster Board Project
- CANCELED In-Person Bonnenkal
- CANCELED OkiFest In-Person Mini Festival
- Elections
- Yuntaku Live
- Committee Reports

**2021 Upcoming Events:**

- 21 August OGSB Zoom Meeting, 9AM  
Speaker-Gwen Fujie
- 24 7pm Yuntaku Live – Jeffrey Higa
- 4&5 September Virtual Okinawan Festival  
“Sharing Uchinanchu Aloha”  
CANCELED Andagi and Andadog Sale
- 14 Yuntaku Live – OGSB
- 18 OGSB Zoom Meeting, 9AM  
Speaker-Jeffrey Higa

**Gwen Fujie “Finding My Uchinanchu Identity”**

Gwen will share her story from growing up in a non-Okinawan environment, no music or dance, to embracing herself with the Okinawan culture. She read anything and everything on Okinawa to becoming active with the Okinawan community. Gwen will share why she is dedicated to help commemorate “Irei no Hi.”



Joy’s Word of the Month  
*“Ijiri”*  
 (n) Courage; valor; prowess; bravery; boldness

**President’s Message:**

Haitai OGSB Members!

Unfortunately, due to the resurgence of Covid cases we have had to cancel all in-person events for the foreseeable future. This includes the Bonnenkai in November and the OGSB Exhibit at the Okinawan Festival Mini-Fest. But let’s all do our best to stay in touch with each other. Make a phone call, send an email or send a text message to someone you haven’t seen in a while.

Take care and stay healthy.

Ippee Niffee Deebiru,  
 Joy Schoonover



Okinawan Festival T-Shirt Design Winner  
 Morris Umeno’s winning t-shirt design will be printed and available for purchase through the HUOA Online Marketplace  
 From 8AM, HST



Meeting July 17, 2021  
 Speaker: Brandon Ufugusuku Ing speaking on Okinawan Folk Songs

For those who may not know me, I am Brandon Ing. I am half Chinese and half Okinawan, fourth generation on my mom's side from the village of Kitanakagusuku. Locally, we are part of that club, also Young Okinawans of Hawaii and Ukwanshin Kabudan.

I am going to talk about “*Identity and Folksongs.*” Actually, just one folksong in particular. I am going to play a few verses of a song for you. I am assuming most of you know it already. I will take it apart and some of it will be new information for you. I don't claim to be an expert, but I will share what I do know about it.

“*Kunu utaa wakaimiseemi?*” translates to “Do you know this song?” *Brandon plays a little of the song on his sanshin and sings a few verses.* He asks the Zoom audience if they know or have heard it or sang along to some parts. Some of you know this song as “*Asadoya yunta*”. This is the song I want to talk about in regards to ‘identity’. Its background, where it comes from, and how it can tie into someone's identity. He asks for hands from the Zoom audience if they knew that the words were in the Japanese language. This song is probably one of the most recognizable Okinawan folksong melodies. You will understand later on why I am doing this. If you search on Youtube, you will find so many different variations of it from different people from different parts of the world. We know this as an Okinawan folksong, but the words that most people are familiar with is Japanese. I am going to talk about when that happened and why that happened.



The version that I just played, a lot of people will refer it as “*(Shin) Asadoya yunta*” The ‘Shin’ refers to it a ‘New’, so it is “*“New” Asadoya Yunta*’. In Japanese, ‘shin’ means ‘new’, a Japanese prefix. So, to put it in front of a word is to make it ‘new’. So, where is the ‘old Asadoya Yunta?’ The original song was adapted in 1934 by Nippon Columbia Records and they decided to take some songs from Okinawa and to make them popular by spreading them around Japan. But, to do that, they had to adapt it. The melody was “modernized”. The lyrics were changed to Japanese. This happened in the 1930s. It then became a cute, happy “love song”. It kind of lost its original meaning when it was adapted. This is the version most people are familiar with today, the version with Japanese lyrics. I found a Youtube recording from 1954 that sounded like this. *Brandon proceeds to play that video.* If you notice, there is no sanshin in the music, just a piano, violin, and singing. Nippon Columbia decided, for lack of a better word, to ‘*Japanize*’ it. It didn't have any Okinawan instruments in it. When I look at the names on this recording, seems like there were Okinawan names. There were Okinawan musicians on this recording. So now, if that is the adapted modernize version, let's talk about the original version.



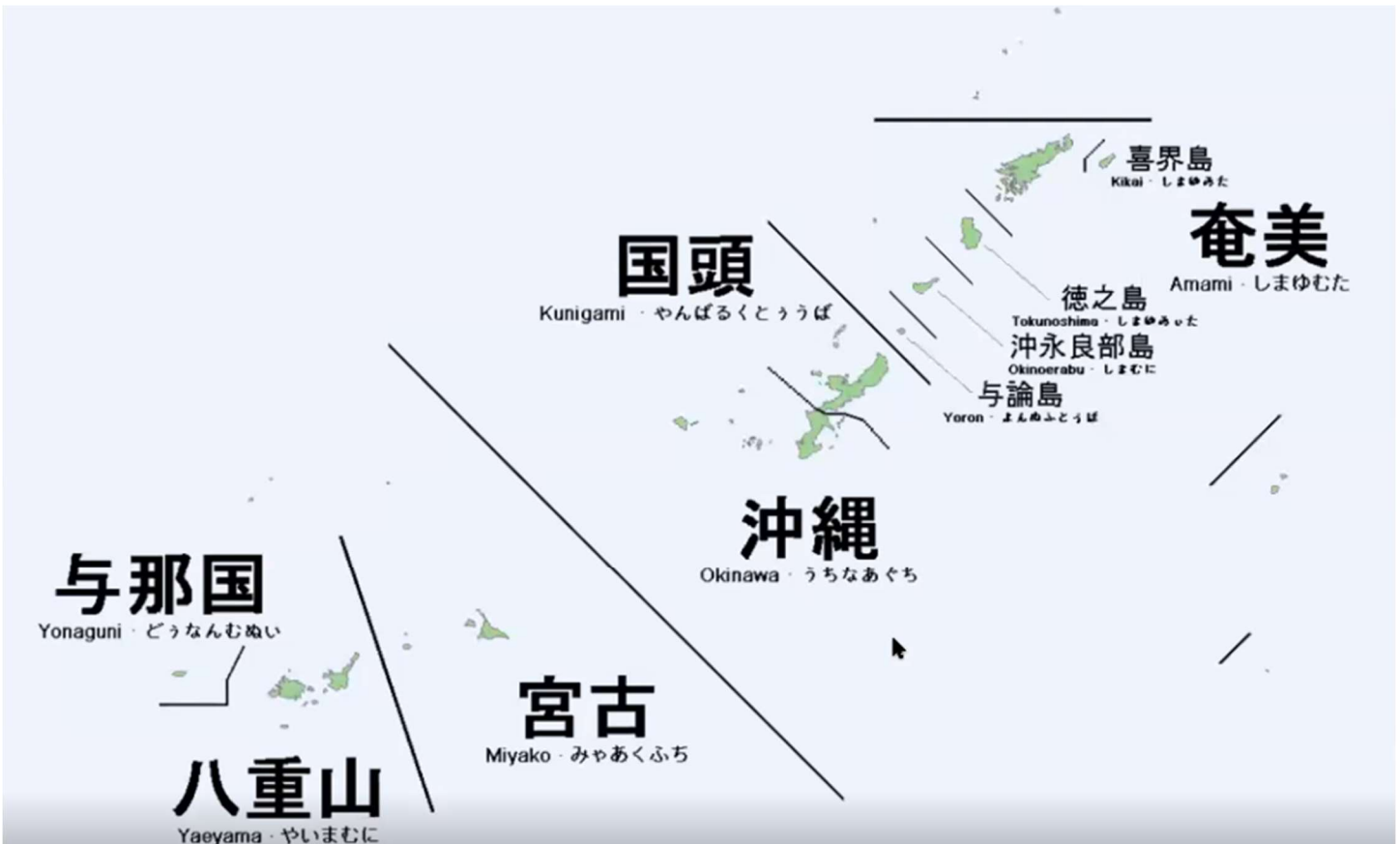
Some of you may be familiar with this information on “Asadoya yunta”. The song come from Taketomi island, part of Yaeyama island group. A classic image of this island is the image of a water buffalo pulling a carriage with tourist on it. It really is a small island that is flat with no mountains and is a popular tourist destination. If you get to go on the water buffalo tour, it will pass the house of the person that this song was written for. Who was it written for? That person is Asato Kuyama. The version we sing now has 4 or 5 verses. But the original version, supposedly had 23 verses. It was not sung in Japanese but in ‘Teedun Muni’, the native language of Taketomi island, a variant of Yaeyama language, which is different from Okinawan language. If you were to listen to the 2 languages side-by-side, ‘Okinawan’ and ‘Yaeyama’ language you will hear some similarity, but as someone who has studied Okinawan language for a long time, you will hear a different language. I don't know what they are saying, but you can pick up a few vocabularies here and there. The original song is about a



beautiful woman who refused the proposal of a Ryukyuan government official. He was probably someone who came from

Shuri on the island of Okinawa. He wanted to take her back with him and get married. But she refused because she wanted to stay loyal to her home island, down to her home village.

Referring to a graphic of the Ryukyuan archipelago, he shows the location of Okinawa in relationship to the other islands and the division of the different language groups. Even though the islands are small and relatively close to each other, they have completely different languages.



Going back to the song, thinking about the fact that this woman, Asato Kuyama, was not interested in going with this Ryukyuan official, it kind of gives insight that not everyone was happy to be “united” under the Ryukyu Kingdom. They felt they were forced into it. The Yaeyama islands were incorporated into the Ryukyu Kingdom in the early 1500s.

Referring back to his visual presentation, he plays 3 verses of the original version of what ‘Asaduya yunta’ sounded like. On one side he has the ‘Teedun Muni’ lyrics, the “Taketomi” lyrics and on the other, the English translation. He has never heard a recording of all 23 lyrics. Again, in the video, there is no sanshin. In a lot of the Yaeyama videos of songs, it is sung acapella or just with drums. The addition of sanshin came later. Possibly influenced from Okinawa after becoming part of the Ryukyu Kingdom. So very different from the recording I

played earlier. This was probably as close to the original song. These video recording can be found on Youtube. Type 'asadoya yunta' in the search box. You can also search for 'okinawan folk songs'.

So, with everything being said so far, we can think of Asadoya yunta as a song of resistance to oppression, as Asato Kuyama said to her suitor you may be a big Ryukyuan official, but I do not want to be a part of this. You could also think of this as female strength. She resisted. She wanted to do what she wanted to do. She wanted to stay. She did not want to go off with him. It also a song of identity. This is where I am going to tie into. I've been told by someone from Taketomi island that it should be "Asaduya yunta". That one syllable, one vowel, you can see the difference between Asato a Japanized reading of the name verses Asaduya which is from the native language.

## Asaduya yunta

*Hiya, Asaduya nu Kuyama ni yoo  
Mizashishu nu Kuyu tara yoo  
[Hari nu tsindara kanushama yoo]*

An official from Ryukyu proposed to Kuyama of the Asato family.

*Hiya, Mizashi shu ya bana Nnpayo  
Ataru shu ya Ku-rya Oisu-yo  
[Hari nu tsindara kanushama yoo]*

Not wanting to, Kuyama declined Mizashishu's proposal.

Village chief, please take care of the situation.

*Hiya, Nnpati kara Misasami yoo  
Beeruti kara Yukusami yoo  
[Hari nu tsindara kanushama yoo]  
[Mata hari nu tsindara kanushama yoo]*

Having been refused, Mizashishu got and said, "You refuse?? Fine!"



What do we mean when we say "Uchinanchu"? This is a word from the Okinawan language and that word translates to "person of Okinawa". Yaeyama is now part of Okinawa "prefecture", but are they Okinawan? Is it fair to call them "Okinawan" or even "uchinaanchu"? Uchinaanchu means a person from Okinawa Island. A person from Yaeyama is not part of the Okinawa Island group. They have their own language, their songs are different, a separate culture. I have talked to some people about it. Some don't mind being called uchinaanchu but others do. They say "no". Look at the history and we are not part of Okinawa, so how can we be called uchinaanchu? A person from Yaeyama would refer to themselves a "Yeema pitu" in Yaeyama language but in Okinawan language a Yaeyama person would be referred as "Yeemanchu".

"Asadoya yunta" as I've learned it, but it should be "Asaduya yunta". But I am not going to change it because it is ingrained into me. By calling it an "Okinawan folk song", we are taking away from the place and people who created the song and the true story behind it. The version we sing now is a nice love song in the Japanese language, not even in the Okinawan language. I am not saying to not call it an Okinawan song, but as something to think about.

As a reminder, the Yaeyama islands are part of Okinawa "prefecture," but that's because Japan overthrew and annexed the Ryukyu Kingdom, which Yaeyama was forced to become a part of. So, you either erase or honor the identity. Keep in mind, when we say uchinnanchu, or 'Okinawan', although we may feel like we are being inclusive of other island groups, i.e. Miyako, Yaeyama, but people of those places may not feel the same. They

may feel like they are being forgotten. If you know someone from there, it might be good to check with them how they would like to be identified as.

This brings us to Uchinaanchu Taikai which comes next year. When talking about this, does this include all the islands? From our own personal view, it does. We want to include everyone from the island groups. Just by using that word, does it make anyone feel left out? I don't know. Every year in October, we have Uchinaanchu no hi (Uchinaanchu Day). But, are we celebrating only people with roots from Okinawan Island? A possible solution some of us have talked about is Shimanchu meaning a "person of the land". It would be inclusive of all these lands. At issue is the word Shimanchu, which is an Okinawan word. If we call somebody from Yaeyama, Miyako, or Amami Islands, *Shimanchu*, but for us, we are including them but we are still using our language, which to some people may be viewed as an oppressive tactic. So many things to think about with identity in the small space of all these different islands. We're not saying this is the solution, but it is something we have thought about.

The point is: I want to tie this into my own identity. I identify as Okinawan, Uchinaanchu. Depending on the context, sometimes I use Shimanchu, sometimes Ryukuan, indigenous Ryukyuan. What I want to get at with this presentation is, as an *Uchinaanchu*, I myself do not want to be called "nikkei" or "Japanese" or "part of the Japanese community" because it erases my *uchinaanchu* identity, the very thing that Japan has tried to do throughout history. They tried to erase our culture, our language. Referring to a picture of a school age boy wearing a "hogen fura", a sign worn around the neck that states that he is being punish for speaking his native language instead of Japanese. If you've ever seen a "hogen fura", it is like a dunce cap. It is humiliating to wear. The sign states in Japanese: "I used the dialect. I used Hogen". They're belittling our language into just a dialect, beneath the umbrella of Japanese, which is something I disagree with strongly. They are punishing kids for it, just a couple of generations ago. Talking about erasure, a lot of young people in Okinawa don't even know this relatively recent history. You say "hogen fura" and they ask what is that? They don't realize that their own grandparents were punished or beaten for speaking their own language in school because they were only supposed to speak Japanese. It kind of creates this mindset that the older generation didn't pass it down because they were brainwashed. Their language was dirty. It was not something their kids would not benefit from, so let's stop it. So, it is hard to find someone who can teach native languages because it is ingrained in their brain that it is something not to do.



It is important to hold on to our identity to honor our ancestors, our elders. My grandparents are my strong reason to being uchinaanchu because they taught us that we were. By saying this, I am saying, "Grandma, I am not going to forget what you taught me." This is who we are...who I am...and I am going to be proud of it. In that sense, I want people to respect my identity. I myself, want to be sensitive to those from other islands in the Ryukyus or wherever they may be from, who might not want to be identified as "Okinawan" or uchinaanchu.

This is what I want to share for the serious part of my talk. I want to share a few more things about Asadoya Yunta. There is a side connection to southeast Asia. In-between each verse you hear this heeshi, "[mata] hari nu tsindara kanu shama yo". If you ask most Okinawan musicians what it means, they'll say they don't know. It was kind of a filler with nonsense words to fill in the space between verses to keep the rhythm. According to the documentary I showed earlier, in the Yaeyama language, the heeshi translates to "Lovely, lovely maiden".



The interesting thing about the heeshi, according to a friend, Garrett Kam, an expert in Indonesian performing arts, he told us that if you take that phrase and play with the syllables, you can actually make it mean something in Malay. So, you would have, "*Matahari terjun dara ke nusa mayo*". It could have a meaning in Malay being,

“The sun sets, the dove goes to the island.” Poetically speaking: “As she ages, the maiden chooses to stay alone.” If you think about the original meaning of the song, it really fits into the original song was about. She decided to stay, refuse the proposal of the Ryukyu official, and stay on her own island. I’m just sharing what I’ve heard. I don’t have much more detail of the Malay language and how this might connect.

One more connection I want to share is when we listen to Okinawan music and when we compare it to southeast Asian, especially Indonesian Javanese music, the tones that they use fit nicely together. There is the Okinawa Prefectural Art University Gamelan Club (Gamelan – traditional instrument ensemble of Indonesia). When I was there, I heard many collaborations. You’d hear them play “Asaduya yunta” and some of them playing the sanshin also. I want to share because for me this kind of collaboration highlights the connection between Ryukyu and southeast Asia. Just the way of the tone of their instruments are spaced out, it sounds like an Okinawan music skill. I am not trying to say our identity is southeast Asian. I just wanted to show this as an example because of the connections, either through trade or some genetics.

**Okinawa Prefectural  
Art University  
Gamelan club**  
(Gamelan - traditional  
instrument ensemble  
of Indonesia)



Comment by John referring to a protest video he viewed of police hauling away protesters and they were singing “Asaduya yunta”. He said now that he understands the meaning of the song, he now knows why they were singing it. Brandon added, “Hey, I am staying here, this our place.”

A question was asked on which Okinawan language to revive, since in Hawaii the Hawaiian language is now thriving because an effort was made to revive it. A major reason why there is no specific Okinawan language education is that the Japanese government controls all aspects of education. There is just no time for an Okinawan language curriculum.

*Ippee niffee deebiru - Okinawan*  
*Shikai tu niifai yuu - Yaeyaman*

Thank you very much



## Transforming force into *flow*

**GWEN FUJIE MOTIVATES PEOPLE TO DO, BE AND GIVE THEIR BEST.** Her mission is to spread the power of peaceful communications while helping individuals and organizations increase their personal and professional effectiveness. With her expertise and work experiences in various industries such as healthcare, education, hotel and government, she teaches the practical skills of how to communicate cooperatively and peacefully in all relationships. Sharing real-life suggestions and techniques, Gwen makes the learning experience unforgettable with her non-threatening and approachable teaching style and lively and interactive sessions. Born and raised in Hawai'i, she has presented programs to hundreds of organizations and thousands of individuals nationwide. Her impressive client list includes The American Hospital Association, Starwood Hotels & Resorts, Bank of Hawai'i, Kamehameha Schools, Hawai'i State Judiciary, Hawai'i Pacific Health, and the National Weather Service.

### What People Say:

*"YOU were the biggest hit of the day! This group really connected with you—so many wonderful comments about how you touched them and that you are what you teach and you speak from the heart."*

—Maryann Sacharski, Time Warner Oceanic Cable

*"Gwen's passionate enthusiasm for her subject and her ability to energize people have been instrumental in helping our staff to make a serious commitment to work together as a unified team."*

—Charles P. Harris, Aloha Nursing & Rehab Centre

*"Your seminar provided that extra push and helped all of our managers stop and think just how important the words that we choose to use are in dealing both with our customers and with our fellow employees. You have truly made a difference!"*

—Raymond S. Sanborn, Kama'aina Kids



### Presenting A Few of Gwen's Dynamic Seminar Courses...

#### Tongue Fu!®: How To Deflect, Disarm and Defuse Verbal Conflict

Based on author Sam Horn's popular book, Tongue Fu!® presents martial arts ideas for the mind and mouth. It's the constructive alternative to giving a tongue-lashing or to being tongue-tied, a step-by-step process for turning hostility into harmony and aggravation into aloha.

#### Mission Possible—Strategies for Meeting Your Goals and Living Your Best Life

Turn your beliefs and actions from impossible to possible! Learn how to overcome obstacles and challenges, build confidence and courage and maintain momentum.

#### The Motivated Manager's Toolbox®: A Blueprint for Building Motivation, Appreciation and Validation at Work

Discover what it takes to become a master at motivation. Learn the skills, attitude and behaviors to reenergize, rejuvenate and reignite your team. You'll receive a "toolbox" of ideas and techniques to motivate employees and volunteers.

#### Professionalism and Etiquette in the 21st Century Workplace

Improve your professional image and business relationships. Learn basic business etiquette, the unspoken "rules" at work, how to develop and maintain quality working relationships and how to communicate with care.

#### Life Management 24/7

Plan, prioritize and be prepared! This fun and motivating session offers time and life management lessons and practical, easy and cost-free stress control techniques.

*Gwen can tailor a class specifically for your needs. Please contact her for details.*

Go to: <https://www.jtbusa.com/Branch.aspx?city=Honolulu>

## 7th Worldwide Uchinanchu Festival in Okinawa!

**Taikai is coming!**



**7th Worldwide Uchinanchu Festival**  
**Oct/Nov 2022 Pre-register now!**

Once every 5 years Okinawans and friends of Okinawans return to Okinawa for a grand celebration. For this special event we will be working with Sumie Consillio (Oshiro), formerly of Naka's Travel Service, to create and escort tour packages to the Taikai, and we hope that you will consider joining us for this once in five years event!

In past years tours to the Taikai have filled up quite quickly, so reserve your space now to guarantee you place in our tours. [Download the PDF format application form here.](#)





