

Constructing Okinawa as Japan's Hawai'i: From the Honeymoon Boom to the Resort Paradise

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In this article, I investigate how Okinawa has been constructed as 'Japan's Hawai'i,' inheriting the honeymoon boom from Miyazaki.

There was a prehistory in the processes Hawai'i became an overseas paradise for Japanese and Okinawa became a domestic resort paradise as 'Japan's Hawai'i': the process honeymoon mecca went south such as Izu - Nanki - Southern Kyushu, and the age Miyazaki in the peak of the honeymoon boom produced '*nangoku*', tropical image of 'the South' and became the main paradise for newlywed couples.

I trace the history of the Japanese 'honeymoon boom' that developed starting in the 1960s. Taking a honeymoon trip became customary in Japan when postwar baby-boomers reached marriageable age. These young couples generally followed the recommendations of travel agents in planning their honeymoons, so tourist destinations became crowded with newlyweds. The more honeymooners traveled somewhere, the more those places became favored by other Japanese tourists, including retirees, unmarried travelers, and parents with children. The earlier honeymooning paradise in Japan was Miyazaki, a prefecture in southern Kyushu that, like Hawai'i and Okinawa, has a pleasant tropical climate. After the ideal of honeymooning on a tropical paradise was established in Miyazaki, newlyweds began traveling farther south, seeking paradise in Hawai'i, Guam, and Okinawa.

When overseas travel for tourism was liberalized in Japan, Hawai'i and Guam were easily accessible and warmer than Japan, so they were suitable destinations for Japanese to go abroad for the first time. At the age honeymoon couples formed the large population of domestic travel, in overseas travel these islands became honeymoon destinations. They had a sequence from Miyazaki as '*nangoku*' and 'tropical paradise'.

On the other hand, Okinawa became the southernmost part of Japan by its reversion in 1972, and inherited the status of tropical paradise from Miyazaki, through the shift of the honeymoon boom.

When Okinawa developed as 'the Prefecture of tourism' by promoting 'blue sea' and 'tropics', its clear model was Hawai'i, as a precedent. One simple goal that Okinawa should aim to be 'Japan's Hawai'i' has been kept since the reversion. To that extent, Hawai'i, including Waikiki, has been a traditional and qualified ocean resort.

Of course, not only Hawai'i was influential to Okinawa. The concept of 'road-park' established in Miyazaki was introduced on the main road of the west coast in Okinawa, and the road connected the capital city Naha with the northern resort area. This was also an important

moment for Okinawa's resort development. The success of Moon Beach Hotel which stood along with the road-park promoted the transformation of the west coast into 'Okinawa's Waikiki' where resort hotels densely stood, and formed the base for establishing Okinawa as an authentic ocean resort capable of competing with Hawai'i and Guam.