

Column: Kijimun's Monologue No.1

Ryukyu Mystery, a monster of Tokashiki Island

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Haisai! I am Kijimun, I live in University of the Ryukyus Library. I will introduce interesting stories of Ryukyu/Okinawa in this fiscal year too! Let me introduce some mysterious stories of Ryukyu/Okinawa, like *Yōkai* or ghost story from *Komonjo*.

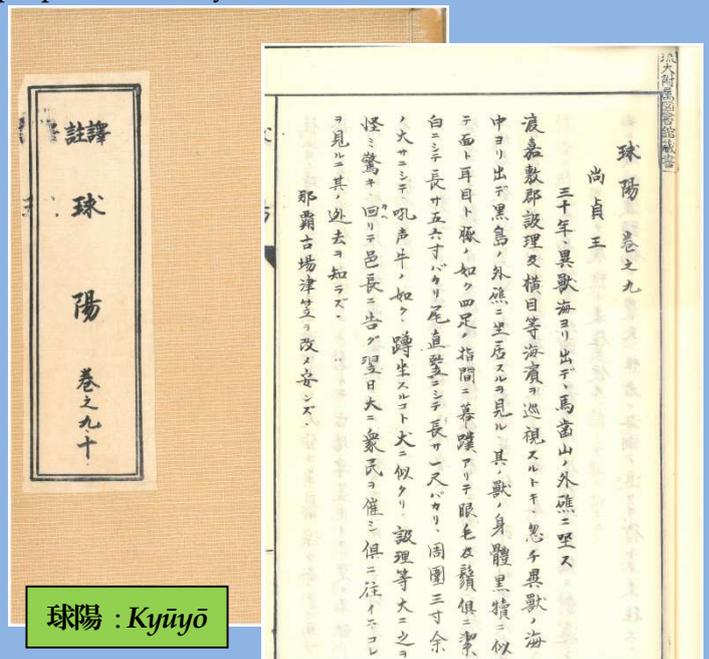
Do you remember that in June 24th 2014, a seadog was found on the Shore of Tokashiki Island in Okinawa?

The seadog was about 1 meter long and it had a mottled pattern of black markings on its gray back. When people gave it a Samma (Pacific saury) and krills, it snapped them up and everybody became a fan of the seadog. From the perspective of ecosystem, this would never happen. It hit the headlines of newspapers as it was the first time in Okinawa.

But, when you read a *Komonjo* of the era of Ryukyu *Ōfu*, you will find a description considered about a lost seadog. Moreover, it looked like a monster for Ryukyuan people of those days.

According to *Kyūyō* which is a history book edited by Ryukyu *Ōfu*, there were a lost seadog looked like a monster to Ryukyuan people.

In 1698, there was a strange creature came out of sea and sat down on a rock reef in Tokashiki island. Its body was like a black cattle, its face was like a pig, it has 4 feet webbed, its eyelashes and its hairs are all white, its tail is straight and hard, the length of 33cm, the circumference of 9cm. It lows like a cow and it sits like a dog. Officials of the island were both surprised at and suspicious of that, then they reported that to a village mayor. On the following day, a lot of people went to see it but it has already disappeared.



We, people nowadays can imagine it may be a seadog according to its appearance, but, from the description above, we can see that people of that time did not know what a seadog was, they were frightened at that and they desperately tried to describe it. There are another descriptions about a seadog in different time at different places too.

How can we know about *Komonjo* of Ryukyu? The Digital Archive of Okinawa Collection in University of the Ryukyus Library will give you an answer. We have pictures, a modern Japanese print transcriptions and a translation in English of many of the ancient documents of Ryukyu, let's try to use the Digital Archive of Okinawa Collection, BIDOM and iXio to check the information in what you are interested and what you need.

The mysterious or scary story of Ryukyuan *Yōkai* will come back in next month too, keep your hopes up!