



Column Kijimun's Monologue

No. 6 Traces of the Battle of Okinawa Found on Campus

Haisai! Kijimun here. In this final issue of "Some mysterious secrets hidden in the University of the Ryukyus," let me tell you about some remnants and traces of the Battle of Okinawa which can be found on campus.

75 Years Ago, This Land Was a Fierce Battle Ground

During the Battle of Okinawa in 1945, the current location of the University of the Ryukyus was the front line of defense of the Japanese Imperial Army, and the 12th and 14th independent infantry battalions (each battalion had roughly 300 to 1,000 troops), heavy artillery units, as well as tank units were stationed in the area. According to Daisaku Kina of the Nakagusuku Village Board of Education and Haruna Nakamura of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of the Ryukyus, who possess expert knowledge on the Battle of Okinawa in Nakagusuku, the headquarters of the Maintenance Squadron, 27th Tank Regiment was located in the area behind what is now the tennis courts, and many local residents were forced to work on the construction of food storage trenches and bunkers near *Shijimata* (near Sembaru pond). Once combat began, many of the area's residents are said to have evacuated southward to the Shimajiri region. Of the battle sites located on what is now Ryudai campus, the most intense combat took place on *Ishigusuku* (142 highland trench / Rocky Crags), where the U.S. 7th Army and the Japanese Imperial Army engaged in fierce combat from April 9th to 22nd, resulting in enormous casualties on both sides. On the tombs of *Gorenbaka*, a row of five tombs located near the agricultural fields on the Faculty of Agriculture campus are several bullet holes still remaining from the battle, which is quite telling of the intensity of the combat that took place there. In addition, the remains of a *senshagō* (tank trench) was found in the pasture next to the 50th Anniversary Memorial Hall (see November 2015 issue). Other ruins of the Battle of Okinawa include *Gachimata* trench and Uebaru artillery observation trench, which is located near the University of the Ryukyus hospital. As you can see, numerous battle sites still remain on campus.



Gorenbaka



Senshagō



On February 1st, 1977, 45 bones were found in the area



Shuri Castle Monument



Top: Top section of *Dai-Ryu Chu*
Bottom: Sun dial

Post-War Efforts for the Collection of War Dead

After the Battle of Okinawa, *Ishigusuku* was apparently a completely treeless, white hill with completely bare limestones and numerous bones of the war dead remained on the ground, after which residents of the area collected the bones and buried them at Nishihara's war memorial as well as Itokama Tower in Nakagusuku. On February 1st, 1977, during Ryudai's construction at its current location, 45 bones of the war dead were found in vicinity of what is now Welcome Plaza, which is located near Ryudai's south entrance. In addition, on November 27th, 1987, a bone and combat boots were found on the Faculty of Agriculture campus. Efforts for the collection of war dead remains are still being carried out at Ryudai as well.

Cultural Assets Affected by the Battle of Okinawa

Finally, let me tell you about some traces of the Battle of Okinawa connected with the years when Ryudai was located in Shuri. Included among the Ryukyu University Museum (*Fūjukan*)'s collection are the head section of *Dai-Ryu Chu* (Great Dragon Pillars), which stood at Shuri Castle's seiden (main hall) until their destruction during the Battle of Okinawa, as well as the Rōkokumon Nichieidai Hoiban (sundial). Also housed at *Fūjukan* are relics gathered from Shuri Castle's construction site (among other areas) through surface soil collection. In addition, Shuri Castle Monument, which is located next to the library, commemorates the fact that Ryudai's Shuri campus was constructed on the site of Shuri Castle after it was destroyed in the Battle of Okinawa.

While the landscape at Ryudai has changed significantly since the university's construction, we've been living on what was once an intense battle ground dating back to the years when Ryudai was located in Shuri. Amazing! I encourage you all to ponder what exists on the land beneath your feet! Thanks for reading Kijimun's Monologue for another year. (YM)

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