

INTRODUCTION

“WE WANT THEM TO KNOW NATURE!!”



Our guide’s impassioned explanation of his primary objective was lost on most of the sunburned ecotour group I had joined for an afternoon of mangrove kayaking in Higashi, one of Okinawa Island’s northernmost villages. We sat in a circle on straw *tatami* mats, sheltered at last from a blazing July sun by the red-tiled roof of a traditional Okinawan house built on sturdy stilts to welcome rare cool breezes blowing through. An exhausted, hungry group of ecotourists dug eagerly into a bowl full of *saataa andaagii*, black sugar and pineapple-flavored “Okinawa donuts,” and chugged hibiscus tea. Our guide, “Cha-chan,”¹ a twenty-something Okinawan outdoor enthusiast nicknamed after brown tea leaves for his year-round tan, told us about his desire to “teach” nature, along with a bit of Okinawan history and culture, on every tour he conducted.

His boss, Mr. Miyagi, a generation or two older and noticeably less tan, sat on the opposite side of the floor table we were gathered around. Miyagi interjected that the Higashi Nature School’s goals were also practical: “Of course, our first objective is to improve the economic health of the area. Agriculture does not appeal to the younger generations, so we bring in third sector business and industry to retain and attract young people.”

Cha-chan was one of many self-declared “nature lovers” I met during fifteen months of fieldwork in the Japanese prefecture of Okinawa. He spoke of the need to retain the rich biodiversity of northern ecosystems, symbolically including himself when he told me: “I never want to be separated from this place!” His boss, director of the Higashi Tourism Promotion Association, was also a nature enthusiast but focused more on how to sustain the livelihood of young guides like Cha-chan by continuing to attract the twenty thousand mainland Japanese tourists who annually visit his hometown of Higashi, a village with only two thousand permanent residents. Since the late 1990s, the Higashi Nature School has grown to become northern Okinawa’s model of success in promoting the “ecotourism” concept to visiting

tourists, and to a predominantly pineapple-farming community not yet accustomed to having large tour buses full of Japanese homestay students flood their rivers, forests, and living rooms.

Miyagi's description of the dramatic shift in local labor away from the sun, sweat, and dirt afforded by the primary experience of farming, toward the more tertiary sun, sweat, and dirt supplied by guiding ecotours, indicates that tourists are not the only population to experience something profoundly new and different when they don a wetsuit to dive deeper into the ocean, or enter a subtropical forest to listen for the call of rare birds. When I asked him whether the growth of ecotourism in Higashi had changed local attitudes toward nature, Miyagi replied without hesitating: "Not much. It hasn't yet. The locals only see the money. It's easy to see business. Then again, people have begun to really want to show a nice clean town to visitors for profit purposes, and this has had a good effect on the environment. The attitudes will change from now on."

This book is an attempt to see, notice, and know how "Nature" is constructed and reconstituted as a cultural, economic, and touristic resource in Okinawa. Looking through the lens of Japanese and international ecotourists while tracing the footprints of their Okinawan nature interpreters, I present a case study of how knowledge about the environment is localized, packaged, and reproduced for tourist consumption in northern Okinawa as part of a much larger Japanese state project promoting village revitalization. The economic and social transformation of the northern Yambaru Area of Okinawa Island—from an "inconvenient countryside" and a "harsh place with only mountains" (Ministry of Environment 2008: 2) into a biodiversity hotspot that hosts nearly 25 percent of Japan's plant species and four of Japan's twelve endemic animals—redefines the environmental sensibilities of visitors and residents alike.

I consider the touristic, activist, and educational initiatives through which Okinawans express and promote their archipelago's specific environmental concerns to visitors while forging new touristic enterprises to sustain local economies. The binarizing social and analytical categories of visitor/visited, local/expert, insider/outsider, and host/guest frequently deployed in anthropological studies of tourism² are both reproduced and transcended in Okinawa. Multiple forms of naturalized touristic encounters between humans and other humans, and between humans and nonhuman forms of life are made visible through ecotourism and other facilitated experiences of nature. The nature of these experiences calls into question the location and limits of the natural environment that local guides and visiting tourists seek to experience, encouraging new theoretical perspectives on why we are compelled to get closer to "green." In Okinawa, knowing nature—even loving it—is a matter of interpretation.

Locating the Ecotourist: Theoretical Questions

As a typical Japanese tourist in Okinawa, you would probably arrive in January, March, or August with your spouse and 1.25 children, drop your luggage at one of Japan Airlines' luxurious, all-inclusive beachfront hotels, and instruct your pre-programmed GPS-equipped rental car to take you straight to three of the most popular tourist sites: Okinawa Peace Memorial Park; an enclosed cultural theme park such as Okinawa World; and Churaumi, the world's second-largest aquarium. You might collect a few *kariyushi* "happiness" Hawaiian shirts for your co-workers and some pit viper-infused *awamori* liquor before finally hitting the beach, where you could partake in marine leisure sports such as snorkeling or a one-time fun dive. You would allot approximately 2.5 days to see, do, and buy it all before flying back to Tokyo to return to work, and your fond memories might not include any Okinawans.

For a middle-class family embarking on its first big trip, the practical appeal of taking a "quasi-overseas trip to quasi-foreign, quasi-tropical" (Figal 2012: 122) Okinawa would likely include the ease of speaking Japanese and spending yen, minimal travel time (about four hours by plane from Tokyo to Naha), and affordable amenities.

These stereotypes of Japanese patterns of domestic tourism³ are well-worn territory, among both tourists (5.7 million visited Okinawa in 2009), and anthropologists of Japan (e.g., Graburn 1989; Hendry 1995; Ivy 1995). Anthropologists have tended to frame their studies of tourism in terms of the ritual and religious origins of tourism (Graburn 1983), the marketing of village tourism to urban Japanese (Ivy 1995; Robertson 1991), or the negative social, cultural, and environmental effects of village tourism (Moon 1997, 1998).

Whether explaining the historical roots of contemporary Japanese modes of travel (Graburn 1983) or analyzing the relationship between nostalgia and national identity at play in domestic village travel (Robertson 1988), anthropologists of Japan have tended to study domestic tourism from the perspective of the tourist guest. Common scholarly assumptions that tourism has been "imposed on locals, not sought, and not invited" (Stronza 2001: 262) have impeded a full understanding of why host communities engage in tourism in particular ways. Studies of recipient communities have criticized the deleterious social and environmental effects of tourism caused by the commodification of nature (Moon 1997: 222) without fully considering the financial, cultural, and community benefits that locals may also derive from actively studying their surroundings and sharing certain aspects of their lives with outsiders.

Marilyn Ivy points out that "those who are living continuously in the place where they were born do not call that place *furusato* [old village or native place]" (Ivy 1995: 103). I contribute to the anthropology of Okinawa by asking how nostalgia operates for Okinawan hosts engaged in ecotourism

in northern towns such as Ōgimi, where a giant carved banner greets visitors: “Welcome to the long-living *furusato!*” Chris Nelson’s (2008: 24) ethnography of Okinawan popular performers provides insight into how the trope of the idyllic Okinawan past both attracts visitors “in search of an authentic experience of a lost Japan” and incites the postwar “will to memory” among the performers. Okinawan nature interpreters (including young novices and experienced retirees) also reify these discourses of loss through storytelling and performance when leading tours.

The existing literature on Japan provides useful theoretical frameworks for understanding how domestic tourism supports rural areas struggling with depopulation and stagnant economies (Ivy 1988, 1995; Moon 1997; Siegenthaler 1999) and creates educational opportunities for tourist “pilgrims” (Graburn 1983). Yugo Ono’s (2005) study of Ainu ecotourism and cultural heritage advocacy in Hokkaido demonstrates how one of Japan’s ethnic minority groups can mobilize the natural resources of the countryside to supplement previously established rural industries such as rice cultivation, fishing, and logging. While recent scholarship dedicated to the political ecology of global tourism begins to cover more territory (cf. Mostafanezhad et. al 2016), ecotourism in East Asia has been largely overlooked by social scientists. Previously one had to journey to a Tanzanian island marine park (Walley 2004), a Costa Rican rainforest (Vivanco 2006), or an Indonesian island (Lowe 2006) to find a critical ethnographic examination of the commodification of the environment (Walsh 2012) through ecotourism.

Ecotourism is most commonly associated with the hyper-naturalized imaginary of the “Global South” (this term refers to countries such as Costa Rica, Kenya, and Brazil), but over the last twenty years national parks and nature preserves throughout the United States, Europe, Australia, and Japan have also begun to adopt the concept. Through a politics of nature Laura Ogden (2011: 96) regards as “ecological fame-making,” northern Okinawa’s Yambaru forests, for example, are now comparable to Costa Rica’s Monte Verde, a veteran “biodiversity hot spot” (Vivanco 2006: 10) that contains 5 percent of the world’s floral and faunal species. Every ten square kilometers of Okinawa is more than “twenty times richer” (McCormack 1999: 262) than equivalent areas elsewhere in Japan.

Anthropologists have studied tourism as a transnational vector for the commodification of culture (Greenwood 1989); as route for and producer of globalization (Enloe 2014; Stronza 2005); as a mediator of insiders’ and outsiders’ sense of community and belonging (Smith 1989: 5; Waldren 1996); as a colonialist holdover (Urry 1990); as a source of environmental degradation and exploitation (Bundy 1996; Vivanco 2006); even as a form of governance (West and Carrier 2004). As a result, Amanda Stronza (2005: 263) suggests, we know “‘practically nothing’ about the impacts of tourism

on tourists themselves. How are they affected by what they see, do, and experience during their travels?" Paige West and James Carrier (2004), in their case studies of ecotourism in Jamaica and Papua New Guinea, find that the dominant hopes and desires of Western tourists can be gleaned from the behaviors of host countries. They argue that ecotourism "encourages a particular way of knowing people and things in pertinent parts of the world" (2004: 485) and further develop Carrier's term "virtualism" (Carrier and Miller 1998) to explain how ecotourism, a quintessentially neoliberal business concept, moves and grows in similar ways despite being implemented in diverse cultural contexts.

Virtualism explains some of the contradictions inherent in ecotourism: that it tends not to preserve valued ecosystems, but rather creates landscapes that conform to Western fantasies about Nature⁴ through a rationalized "market-oriented nature politics" (West and Carrier 2004: 485; cf. Sivaramakrishnan 1998); or that the local ("traditional") values that ecotourism host communities intend to preserve tend to be replaced by capitalist commercial values (West and Carrier 2004: 486). One of the most common fantasies disseminating from the so-called Global North is the "rescue of Nature from anthropogenic destruction" (Keller 2015: 8), a discourse driven by the rise of industrial capitalism and an underlying belief that Nature is (or at least should be) kept separate from humanity (West and Carrier 2004: 485). My key questions include: How are these discourses mobilized in a non-Western, non-Judeo-Christian context? Is there a Japanese equivalent to the Nature rescue fantasy? If so, how does it manifest in "'Tropical Paradise Okinawa'" (Figal 2012: 8)?

Clifford Geertz (1997: 20) writes that the study and management of tourism requires that it be conceptualized as an "extended field of relationships, not readily disentangled from one another, not easily sorted . . . into clear-cut and exclusive, opposing categories." Such oppositional categories include host/guest, inside/outside, local/global, we/they, and here/there. Studies of ecotourism in the early twenty-first century must also address binaries such as human/non-human, North/South, Western/non-Western, and rich/poor. Accordingly, this study of the political ecology of ecotourism in Okinawa demonstrates that "green development" (Adams 1990) is not limited to developing equatorial nations, and challenges the binarizing discourses of the Global North and Global South. Ecological appreciation of one form or another is becoming a "positive national characteristic" (Vivanco 2006: 10) in many countries, but cultural expressions of this cosmopolitan sentiment are both historically and geographically contingent. This ethnography contributes to sustainable development literature by providing a case study of ecotourism in Okinawa—among the poorest prefectures of one of the world's wealthiest nations.

I began my fieldwork planning to focus on the experiences of mainland Japanese tourists. However, the first few ecotours I joined helped me realize that the local (“host”) experience of ecotourism, while it does not involve travel per se, affects Okinawan perceptions of the environment that move well beyond the socioeconomic motivations identified by Mr. Miyagi in the opening ethnographic anecdote. Engagement in tourism-related activities that encourage Okinawans to view their proximate natural environments as unique and even healing shapes local participants’ sense of place and sense of self. In the process of embracing, reappropriating, and responding to the early twenty-first-century set of political and economic constraints, which I label collectively as the “tourism imperative,” Okinawans also come to view their biophysical surroundings like a tourist.

Authenticity and Power

I hate travelling and explorers. Yet here I am proposing to tell the story of [their] expeditions.

—Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*

The tourist can be defined as “a temporarily leisured person who voluntarily visits a place away from home for the purpose of experiencing a change” (Smith 1989: 1). Valene Smith’s classic definition is broad enough to include virtually all kinds of tourists seeking multiple forms of change (geographic, climatic, psychological, or spiritual). Amanda Stronza argues that these leisured people are actually “key protagonists in processes of globalization” (2005: 171). Are all tourists today mere pawns in a multibillion-dollar global industry, or do participants in small-scale forms of alternative tourism develop a sense of ethical responsibility to the places they visit? In 2012, 2 percent of all human carbon emissions came from airplane travel (McGrath 2016). If ecotourists are concerned with the protection of the natural environment, then why not curb the carbon footprint and “staycation” at home?

While “sun, sex, sea, and sand”⁵ (Crick 1989: 307) form highly visible components of most island tourism, leisure travel in Japan is often characterized as including an explicitly educational element as well (Kato 1994). Gotoh et al. (2008) find that changes in Japanese demand for marine tourism can also be linked to larger nationwide sociological trends: growing demands for leisure time, greater quality of life, and extended leisure activities— as opposed to short periods of socializing around work—are all changing the nature of domestic tourism in Okinawa. The authors suggest that ecotour-

ism (sometimes referred to as “green tourism”) favors “the environment and environmental consciousness over sightseeing” through its promise of a “richer holiday experience through deeper interaction with a community” (2008: 31).

Until 2015, The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) offered a simple definition of ecotourism: “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people.” The updated definition reveals the importance now given to the role of the local interpreter: “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people and involves interpretation and education [of staff and guests]” (TIES 2015). Center for Responsible Tourism Director Martha Honey’s vision of ecotourism is even more ambitious: beyond promoting low-impact, small-scale travel to fragile, pristine, and usually protected areas, ecotourism also “helps educate the traveler; provides funds for conservation; directly benefits the economic development and political empowerment of local communities and fosters respect for different cultures and for human rights” (Honey 2000: 33). These idealized definitions warrant unpacking; ecotourism is the fastest growing segment of the tourism industry, with global expenditure estimates ranging from US\$30 billion (Honey 1999: 9) to US\$1.2 trillion (West and Carrier 2004: 483; cf. Butcher 2007; Gössling 2003; Gössling and Hall 2006; Hill and Gale 2009; Holden 2000). This ethnography builds on Noel B. Salazar’s (2010) study of power in tourism by moving away from one-sided studies of the impacts of the global tourism imperative on hosts *or* guests and instead analyzes the stories and experiences of local guides, interpreters, and other primary mediators of “Tourist Okinawa” (Figal 2012: 15), a carefully curated and mutually constitutive tropicalized space.

Ecotourism is an idealized travel concept that often emerges in discourses of sustainable tourism development, but perhaps due to its inherently localized scope, the movement lacks internationally agreed upon standards of implementation and offers few comparative or comprehensive metrics that can be used to determine its effectiveness. Likewise, the genuine ecotourist can hardly be identified by his or her rucksack and reusable canteen. Rather, ecotourism researcher Robert Fletcher suggests, the ecotourist might be more easily identified by the strenuousness of leisure activities pursued. According to Fletcher (2009: 276), unlike “conventional mass tourism where the object is typically to relax and pamper oneself, the aim of ecotourism is to engage in strenuous physical exertion and experience uncomfortable—if not expressly unpleasant—conditions.”

Debates about the problem of authenticity pervade social science literature on tourism. Erve Chambers (2000) emphasizes the source of agency as

the key measure of authenticity in host communities. Gerald Figal's (2012: 89) work on heritage tourism in Okinawa builds on Chambers's theory of authenticity by not equating the real/traditional/authentic with "always and only things of the past one strives to reproduce faithfully under conditions of modernity" (cf. MacCannell 1999). My objective in studying ecotourism development in Okinawa is neither to "condemn hoaxes nor to award diplomas of genuineness, but rather to understand a moral and social phenomenon which is especially peculiar" (Lévi-Strauss 1955: 18).

West and Carrier (2004: 485) demystify another contradiction inherent in ecotourism—the apparent ethical contradiction between conservation and travel—by demonstrating that the authenticity of a traveler's experience is judged through the framework of "Nature and the frontier" rather than the messages of conservation biologists or anthropologists. Primordial Nature, with its host of exoticized plants, animals, and (in some cases) people, can only be reached by "being here" (Geertz 1988: 130). We can begin to understand ecotourism's peculiar mix of leisure, fantasy, and activism by first studying its proponents and practitioners—those who are already "here," navigating with great passion the future of tourism development on Okinawa.

Ecotourism is meant to change the nature of encounters between hosts and guests in destination communities and ecosystems around the world (Stronza 2005: 171). This ethnography focuses on the experiences of "educationally oriented" Okinawan and mainland Japanese travelers (Smith 1989: 5). The consumer profile of the ecotourist is different from that of the middle-class Japanese tourist who, since the 1960s, has desired Tropical Paradise Okinawa. However, Akinori Kato finds that the difference is more likely a matter of degree than kind. The educational component of ecotourism is important not only to Japanese vacationers who seek to camouflage or at least justify the purely recreational element of their trips with an educational (or religious) component (Kato 1994: 57–59); improving environmental education about Okinawa is also a top priority for many of the nature guides I met during fieldwork. By examining the touristic reciprocity that shapes host-guest encounters at Okinawa's natural sites, I hope to complicate our understanding of the motives and desires of those who preserve, maintain, package, and present these places for outsiders—and for themselves.

By studying ecotourism in Okinawa, I complicate the narrow view that most educationally oriented travelers who participate in ecotourism, whether as paying customers, guides, or planners, are also members of a very narrow demographic: "namely, white, professional-middle-class members of post-industrial Western societies" (Fletcher 2009: 271). According to Robert Fletcher, these professionals tend to be people who practice (or were raised by practitioners of) "relatively well-paid white-collar professions" (271)

such as teaching, journalism, business, and law. While Japanese people have been problematically characterized as “Honorary Whites” or even “Honorary Europeans” (Adachi 2010; cf. Beasley 1987; Kawasaki 2001), Fletcher’s generalizations about the ethnic, cultural, and geographic backgrounds of most ecotourists lose traction when considered in the Okinawan context. In Okinawa, racialized discourses of difference constructed vis-à-vis the idea of the dominant mainland Japanese ethnic group unsettle hemispheric divides (cf. Keller 2015; Lowe 2006; Tsing 2005) that inform much of the existing scholarship on ecotourism.

Nature has always been a resource in Okinawa, but Yambaru’s recent economic transformation from supplier of lumber for postwar reconstruction in the south to recipient of vacationers (from southern Okinawa Island, mainland Japan, the United States, and beyond) has dramatically altered the region’s economic makeup. This transformation has also spurred new discourses of ecological uniqueness that influence local residents’ regard for the everyday rivers, forests, and oceans that constitute the northern landscape. By bringing this landscape to life in a dynamic new way, ecotour guides reconceptualize their own and their customers’ practical, physical, emotional, and spiritual relationships with biophysical nature.

This book is a parallel endeavor. Rather than presenting the biophysical world in snippets of colorful ethnographic details to evoke the scene of primary human-human interactions and events, I place forests, oceans, rivers, and their array of nonhuman inhabitants centrally in my narrative. I employ “landscape ethnography,” which Laura Ogden defines as “an approach to writing culture that is attentive to the ways in which *our relations with non-humans produce what it means to be human*” (2011: 28). My objective is to provide new interpretations of a few key interspecies relationships cultivated through Okinawan ecotourism today. These relationships are clearly influenced by, but not reducible to, the profound social, political, and environmental consequences of colonization and war, and the attendant discourses of death, loss, violence, and invasion so superbly articulated by other anthropologists of Okinawa (e.g., Angst 2003, 2008; Nelson 2008).

I attempt to expand scholarship on Okinawa by including nonhuman animal histories, without which critical Okinawan perspectives on the environment cannot be usefully incorporated into the literature on tourism-dependent islands, sustainability, and ecotourism. In addition to rendering legible the lasting ecological consequences of nineteenth-century Japanese colonialism, of the devastating 1945 Battle of Okinawa, and of the postwar U.S. occupation of Okinawa (1945–72), I conduct a hopeful analysis of Okinawan responses to the tourism imperative through new forms of engagement with nature.

Fieldsites and Methods

I conducted the first half of my fieldwork (August 2009–April 2010) from Ginowan, a central Okinawan city about a twenty-minute drive north of the capital city of Naha where close to 90 percent of Okinawa’s population resides (see Figure 0.1). I chose to move to Ginowan because it put me just a short drive away from the University of the Ryukyus, where I was affiliated and audited a variety of courses on ecotourism, sustainable tourism development, and environmental education over the course of my fieldwork. Ginowan, located next to the town of Chatan (where I completed my open-water scuba diving certification in 2009), is one of the primary sites for coastal coral transplanting activities described in Chapter 4. The bulk of my training dives were conducted with members of Reef Check Okinawa, a nonprofit organization (NPO) in the southern city of Itoman.

For the second half of my fieldwork (December 2010–May 2011), I moved north to Nago, the largest city in the Yambaru Area. The name “Yambaru” (山原) combines the Chinese characters for “mountain” and “field,” refers to the area’s geographic characteristics. The Yambaru Area includes Nago City and the three villages of Kunigami, Higashi, and Ōgimi (see Figure 0.1). From Nago, I was able to frequently visit the Wellness Center in the town of Motobu and the Churaumi Aquarium, as well as the Kunigami Forest Therapy Centers, all of which became central sites for my research. Yambaru’s forests are comprised of low hills covered by evergreen oak (*Itajii*) and subtropical plants, including wild orchids, azaleas, ferns, and mistletoe (McCormack 1999: 267). Protected species include the Ryukyu robin, Scops owl, Pryor’s woodpecker, Okinawa rail, and rare amphibians, reptiles, and insects.

Throughout my fieldwork I was a visiting scholar in the University of the Ryukyus’ Department of Tourism Sciences (DTS) and at the International Institute for Okinawan Studies (IIOS). I worked primarily with sustainable tourism planning and environmental education specialist Professor Junko Ōshima (DTS) and Katsunori Yamazato, Professor of American literature and Director of IIOS. By guest lecturing in Professor Ōshima’s Ecotourism courses, I gained a sense of the kinds of questions and problems being addressed by tourism researchers. During the second half of my fieldwork, I was also a visiting scholar in Tourism Sciences at Meio University in Nago. Under the auspices of Professors Yūji Arakaki and Sumiko Ōgawa, I had the privilege of presenting my findings at the Okinawa Ecotourism Promotional Association’s annual conference in 2011. These kinds of intellectual exchange opportunities provided invaluable networking opportunities and helped me to refocus my scope of inquiry over the course of my fieldwork.

With the help of my advisers, I gained introduction to a variety of government agencies and NPOs that generously facilitated my participation in the majority of activities described in this book. At the Okinawa International Center in Urasoe, I attended weekly lectures and training sessions on ecotourism and sustainable tourism development sponsored by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), a Japanese government organization frequently compared to USAID. JICA sponsors tourism industry professionals from the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) countries and Oceania to engage in sustainable tourism training workshops and site visits ranging from six weeks to six months in length. By following these groups, actively participating in their brainstorming sessions, and serving as a discussant during presentations of their project summaries, I became familiar with the discourses of sustainability and development that pervade the tourism sector of islands currently receiving Overseas Development Aid (ODA) from Japan.

By following and riding on the official JICA bus, I learned which nature-based tourism sites are considered most important by the Okinawans who organized our visits. Sites included the Churaumi Aquarium, the Zamami Whale-Watching Association, the Ufugi Nature Museum, and Kunigami's Forest School, all of which are discussed in the chapters that follow. JICA and the Okinawa International Center worked in conjunction with NPOs such as the Okinawa Environment Club (OEC) and the Kunigami and Higashi Tourism Associations to organize experiential training fieldtrips that fostered discussion and debate between international participants on the relative merits and disadvantages of how ecotourism is conducted in Okinawa. With permission from key administrators of these training tours, I participated in ecotourism activities and observed how sustainable tourism in Okinawa is produced for tourist consumers, local residents, and tour staff. The interviews included in this book were conducted as formal and informal semi-structured conversations with the government officials, academics, nonprofit directors and affiliates, guides, tourists, and museum employees who were kind enough to answer my questions before, during, and after tours.

I also attended Okinawa Prefecture-sponsored conferences on topics ranging from biodiversity, conservation, and slow living to long-stay tourism and community building. Much of the data I include was gleaned from comprehensive presentations and handouts provided by lecturers at these talks. A presenter at one of these conferences outlined some of the common socioeconomic characteristics of ecotourists: "They are mostly women in their twenties, of the highest educational background." He went on to list a few sub-categories profiling the typical ecotourist:

- Socially Aware (politically active)
- Visible Achiever (interested in material success)
- Young Optimist (age 18–24)

I quickly determined that I was the Young Optimist (or at least, that I had been when I began graduate school). Having my demographic mirrored back to me so succinctly made me squirm, and reminded me to avoid broad generalizations about my informants wherever possible. Castaneda and Wallace (NAPA Tourism Workshop, 19 November 2008) acknowledge some common challenges associated with studying tourists, a category most anthropologists have probably occupied at some point during their time in the field: “One runs the risk of studying her/himself being a tourist participant. . . . Studying tourism, especially tourists, can lead to uncomfortable introspection without a path through the maze of self-interpretation.” The theme of “uncomfortable introspection” that runs throughout this book is an unintended consequence of my methodological approach, which can be summarized as participating in ecotours and other nature-based tourist activities; observing the ways that guides and tourists interacted with each other and with the nonhuman life forms they sought; and conducting informal, semi-structured interviews with the ecotourism advocates and local participants whose lives and livelihoods are affected most directly by the expansion of alternative tourism activities in the north.

This book represents my attempt to create a path through the “maze of self-interpretation” that concerned me as an ethnographer, but also held clear significance for Nago Museum and Ufugi Nature Museum affiliates, Forest and Dolphin Therapy participants, and perhaps most of all for the Japanese and Okinawan nature interpreters who, like me, linked their identities directly to their interpretive work. My research contributes to anthropological perspectives on tourism, inter- and intra-subjectivity, and the environment by probing the ways in which discourses of vulnerability, loss, and disaster shape the politics of island tourism development and produce new forms of environmental affect in guides and participants. I bridge the existing anthropological literature on the small island “vulnerability paradigm” (Moore 2010), “hosts and guests” (Smith 1989), and interspecies (or “post-human”) relationships by focusing on the organized natural and touristic encounters that bring these discourses into the same frame.

I begin my inquiry by asking: How do people become ecological stakeholders through participation in forms of travel idealized as sustainable? What kinds of performative acts serve to destabilize and reconstitute the economic, political, and social categories oversimplified by the labels Tourist, Expert, and Local? I consider broadly what is at stake in our ability to

cultivate and support affective relationships with nonhuman forms of life—a need that increasingly manifests in the form of nature-based tourism.

The pages that follow will take you on a series of ethnographically rendered ecotours and other touristic animal encounters that re-create the complexity of experience I saw, touched, and felt when following guides and their tourists into the woods, under the sea, and into the town halls, conference rooms, and museums where they discussed what these forays into nature mean to them.

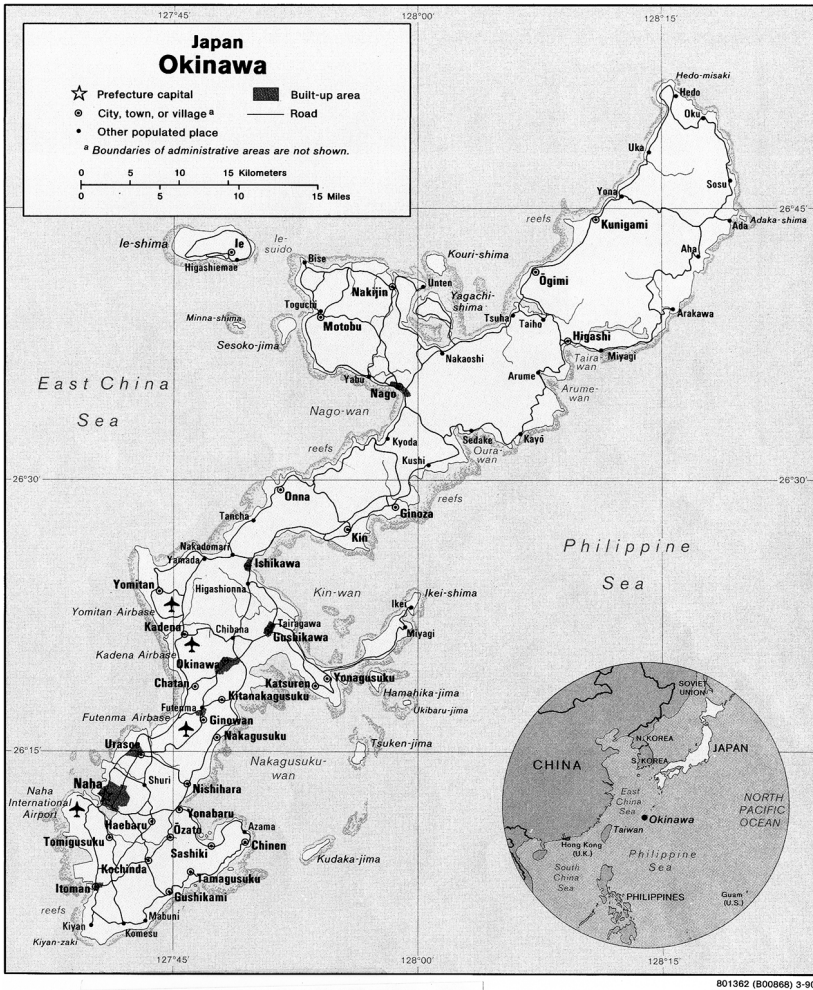


FIGURE 0.1 • Map of Okinawa Island, Okinawa Prefecture, Japan⁶

Notes

1. All informants' given names and nicknames have been changed. All Japanese and Okinawan names are presented throughout the text as follows: [First Name] [Family Name] in accordance with standard English language practice.
2. Noel Salazar (2010: 139) grapples with the politics of naming social actors in host communities, considering "passive" terms favored by other scholars: "visitee," "travelee," and "touree." Salazar favors the more agentive "tourate" for his multi-sited study of foreign tourist guides in developing countries. Because this ethnography explores the fluidity of identities within domestic tourism and across multiple social frames (cultural, occupational, political), I do not favor any one descriptor for Okinawans involved in the tourism industry. Rather, I adopt the language used by my informants to describe their work.
3. While the focus of this ethnography is Japanese domestic tourism, it is worth noting that, according to the World Tourism Organization, in 2005 roughly a quarter of international "tropical island tourists" came from Australia, Japan, and Indonesia (Picard 2013: 17). For a discussion of translation, knowledge, and nature-based Japanese tourism in Canada, see Satsuka (2015).
4. Raymond Williams (1983) observes that the word "Nature" is "perhaps the most complex word in the [English] language" (219). Following Anna Tsing (2005) and Eva Keller (2015), I capitalize "Nature" when emphasizing a particular related discourse or definition such as "singular global system uniting all life" (Tsing 2005: 91). I do not capitalize "nature" when using the term to convey its many other meanings. For a groundbreaking history of a similarly problematic term, "Wilderness," see Cronon (1995).
5. These are Crick's often cited "4-S's of tourism" (1989).
6. Courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin.