



# Okinawa Field Trip

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I found many similarities between Okinawa and Vietnam: the weather, the food, the culture (is affected so much by Chinese culture), the anti-war spirit, the hope for a peaceful life... This trip gives me a more comprehensive view about Japan. Previously, I just knew of Japan's cherry blossoms, sushi, and miraculous economy, but now I know that Japan and Japanese people had many losses and painful experiences in war. I found sympathy and it makes me love Japan and Japanese people more.

Lectures on socio-cultural, political and economic aspects of Okinawa. Observations of US bases. Visits to museums and monuments, Orion beer company, Nansei Sekiyu oil refinery. Visits to attractive beaches of Okinawa. Watching Eisa dance. Got firm idea on history, potential and challenges in Okinawa. Understand effects of US bases on day-to-day life of Okinawan people and future of Okinawa. Understand how the technology plays a big role in economic development. Understand the importance of cultural and natural resources for tourism and mind relaxation.

Before coming to Okinawa, I had read some documents supplied by Ohno-san. However, when I came to Okinawa, not only the nature but also the spirit of Okinawan people was so impressive. They make the history of Okinawa. They created, built and protected the traditional Okinawan values.

First, the evidence of the bullet trace on the bunker of Kakazu Takadai Park: without this evidence, I wouldn't have believed a real crude battle actually took place 67 years ago. Second, Okinawans' confusion about their own identity: being part of a majority, I never have this problem, but everyone can be a minority in certain circumstances. Third, the natural beauty and delicious food.

I think this was a very interesting trip. There are many things that I understood and learned from this trip, such as the beautiful nature in Okinawa, Okinawan

people's thinking, and problems in Okinawa. The final reflection session also helped me to have a better view of Okinawa. I think lessons drawn from Okinawa are helpful for me and my own country.

So far, my Okinawa trip was, I should say, a great trip ever since I arrived here in Japan. Aside from the familiarity of feeling like I'm back in my home country because of the sunny and warm weather, the realization that there's a unique Okinawan existence and it's the people in mainland Japan's identity "crisis" so to speak. But that doesn't distract me a bit because I believed in due time that can be resolved and everybody will just be contented and go on with their individual lives.

I could interrelate with my community battle within the country too. Basically I could get a clear vision of the military base, society's protest, how much they fight for freedom, and the monument for the war victims in the peace memorial park saying 1000 words for global peace. I feel completely that the field trip had a strong correlation to me and gave me a lot of knowledge.

Okinawa has its own unique culture and beautiful natural scenery. One hand, Okinawa has some characteristics similar to Japan, other hand it also has some different characteristics. These are advantages of Okinawa, which many other cities in mainland do not have.

I am very impressive when I met Okinawan people. Their characteristics such as hospitality, kindness, pleasantness ... make a good impression to me.

The most impressive thing in Okinawa I found through this trip is Okinawa's history and identity. Both of them are very complicated. Okinawa has complex history with the domination of many countries like the history of Vietnam. The reason is its location. Okinawa has a good geography location so that many countries want to have it to conquer with other countries. Because of this complicated history, Okinawan people up to now do not know where they belong and what they want. It hardly happens anywhere else in the world.

The whole trip was very interesting and informative. What really fascinated me was the problem on identity of the Okinawans. The question of who the real

Okinawans are puzzled me. It even made me ask myself who I really am as a person, as a tribe and as a Filipino. The long history of being independent as a separate kingdom and now being reverted to Japan takes a long time to be restored and healed as a people, land and culture. Seeing them as a minority, they thrive to push their level to be at par with the majority and to be recognized as a land different from the mainland but still the same in every way. The program gave us also a taste of local Okinawan delicacies and produce that they are proud of. It balances everything, from hard-hitting issues to satisfying sites and food. The program set by ICU was really impressive. It summed up the different interests of the students (peace issues, local government issues, environment issues, economic issues and societal issues). I truly appreciate the diversity of issues being shown to us during the entire trip.

As a whole this Okinawa field trip was very impressive and interesting. Professor Makoto Arakaki's lecture was very good. From his lecture I learned lot of things about Okinawa, and Okinawan people as well as Okinawa identity.

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