

The Path towards the Restoration of Shuri Castle

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Abstract

The Seiden main hall and the Kankai, Zuisen, Hakugin and Shurei gates were classified as national treasures in 1925 and 1933 respectively. They were reduced to ashes during the Battle of Okinawa in 1945. However, with help from the Government of the Ryukyu Islands and private donations, the Shurei gate was reconstructed in 1958. This was the first step in the rebuilding of Shuri Castle. After receiving petitions for the restoration of Shuri Castle, a plan was approved by the National and Prefectural government after Okinawa reverted back to Japan. Overcoming the many difficulties in restoring, designing and constructing, Shuri Castle Park became a reality in 1992 when sections of the castle, along with the Seiden main hall, were opened to the public. Even after it was opened, the Prefectural and National Governments continued their restoration efforts, and the Ocean Exposition Commemorative Park Management Foundation, which is in charge of the management of Shuri Castle Park, seeking to complete the collection within the castle, is continuing to assemble scattered Ryukyuan cultural treasures and arts and crafts from the Ryukyu Kingdom era. This paper will introduce the history of the efforts in restoring Shuri Castle Park, as well as our foundation's efforts to restore traditional arts and crafts

1 The Path Toward the Opening of Shuri Castle Park

Before the Pacific War, the Shuri Castle Seiden, the Shureimon, Kankaimon, Zuisenmon, Hakuginmon gates, and the Stone Gate of Sonohyan-utaki were all designated as National Treasures. Okinawa Prefecture ranked behind only Kyoto and Nara in the number of such designations. These structures with their distinctive architectural styles rooted in Ryukyu's unique culture and history stood as precious evidences and reminders of the Kingdom's great age of trade throughout the Pacific basin with China, Korea, Japan, Southeast Asian and beyond. Sadly, as is well known, the castle and its associated structures were almost entirely destroyed in the bombardments of the Battle for Okinawa in 1945.



Figure 1 The Shuri Castle Seiden as it appeared before the War (Photo: Kikuzo Yanagida)

After the War, the Government of the Ryukyus built the first campus of the University of the Ryukyus on the site of the ruined castle. The remnants of the castle's original structures were razed and carted away, to be replaced by the concrete buildings of the new campus.

The castle was gone, but not forgotten. In 1958, the Government of the Ryukyus and private donors joined together to provide funds for the reconstruction of the Shureimon gate. This was a first step, but only the first, on what would be a long road to the total reconstruction of Shuri Castle,

Okinawa reverted to Japanese sovereignty in 1972. The very next year, the Shuri Castle Restoration Working Group was formed to campaign for the castle's full restoration. Its efforts resulted in a plan to restore the castle's outer walls as a project marking the tenth anniversary of Okinawa's reversion. This work included rebuilding the Kankaimon and Kyukeimon gates. Rebuilding the Seiden and other inner structures had to await finalization of the plan to relocate the University of the Ryukyus. In 1982, the prefectural government put forth its plan to create a park on the site of the now-relocated university. The park was of course to include the castle site and surrounding areas of historical importance, all designated as a historic district of war-destroyed cultural significance. The same year, the national government's Second Okinawa Promotion and Development Plan anticipated creation of a park based on the assumption of Shuri Castle's restoration, and then in 1984, the Okinawa Prefectural Government announced its Shurijo Park Basic Plan. Two years later, the Cabinet in Tokyo announced creation of a 4-hectare national park area around the castle site as an Okinawa reversion commemorative project.

The Seiden would be the most important part of the new park. In preparation for its restoration, documentary research into its architecture and functions began in 1984. Based on this historical research, a restoration design was finalized in 1989. Work began the same year and in November 1992, the Seiden and key associated structures were opened to the public.



Figure 2 The Shuri Castle Seiden at the time of its opening

2 Restoration Work Following the Opening of Shurijo Castle Park

Still, the 1992 park opening was only a "partial opening." The reconstruction and restoration of many original structures remained to be accomplished. As can be readily seen from Figure 3, a great deal of restoration was done from 1992 onward. Since the national and prefectural governments both managed portions of the park, both entities were involved in the restoration of buildings and outer works.

But others were involved too. Private groups, the Shuri Castle Restoration Working Group that first pushed for restoration, and the park's first manager, the Ocean Expo Commemorative Park Management Foundation, produced replicas and

restorations of original craft works such as stone monuments, framed pictures, instruments, utensils and the like, aiming to restore an authentically original atmosphere to the castle buildings and grounds.

As for national and prefectural work, in the national park portion inside the castle walls, restoration of the Suimui-utaki where kings stopped to pray before going out of the castle was completed in 1997. The Hakiginmon, in front of Goshinbyoden where the body of a deceased king was kept for a time, was finished in 1999. The year 2000 saw restoration work completed on the Keizusa and Yomotsuza where castle officials kept and managed the records of noble lineages and goods, and also the Hikagedai sundial, the second floor king's private quarters, the Zuisenmon gate stone shishi (lion-dogs) and the Uekimon gate.

Let us note in passing the role of Shuri Castle in the year 2000 G8 Summit meetings. Japan was the host country that year and gatherings were held in Kyushu and Okinawa. The castle was selected as the venue for a convivial dinner party attended by the assembled heads of state and government. In the same year, Shuri Castle was included among the properties added to the list of World Heritage Sites as Gusuki Sites and Related Properties of the Kingdom of Ryukyu.

In 2003, restoration of the Kyo-no-uchi, where the castle's most important festivals were held, was completed and opened to the public. The king's study, where he received visitors on official business, and the princes' sitting room, the Sasunoma, were finished. There is a very special garden adjacent to these buildings. Work on this garden area was finished in 2008 and it was incorporated into the castle tour route.

Okinawa Prefecture continued its restoration work apace on the castle's outer walls. The Keiseimon, a gate in the southeast wall of the castle, was restored in 1998 and by 2002, all work on the outer precincts was finished.

Along with the work of the national and prefectural governments went the restoration efforts of the Shuri Castle Restoration Working Group (below, the Working Group). The Working group solicited funds from businesses and individuals and used the money to research and recreate the stone statues and other pieces that originally dotted the castle grounds and surrounding areas. In 1996, the Working Group completed restoration of the Ryuhi Shosan Hi (monument of praise) that originally stood in front of the Zuisenmon. Since this would be inside the castle in the national park portion of the park, the Working Group presented it to that portion's managing entity, the Ocean Expo Commemorative Park Management Foundation, for installation in its original location. Restoration of the northern Soetsugi Ujo stone inscription and its twin, the southern Soetsugi Ujo stone inscription that originally flanked the Keiseimon was finished in 2004. Because their location is outside the castle walls in the prefecturally managed park area, these restored stone figures were presented to the prefecture to be placed in their original setting. In 2006, a monument to King Sho Toku and the Matama Minato stone inscription were restored. These stone pieces were originally behind the Shureimon, which is now in the prefecture's area of the park. So the Working Group presented them to the prefecture. But the location is slated to be part of a new park road, so although Okinawa Prefecture accepted them, they now stand temporarily in front of the rest house.

As we have seen, management and administration of Shuri Castle Park was originally divided between the Ocean Expo Commemorative Park Management Foundation, for the national portion, and the prefecture's Outer Wall Group. It is as clear as day that unified management would be more efficient. The efforts of various people resulted in the Commemorative Park Management Foundation taking over consolidated management of both the national and prefectural portions of the park in 1992.

As the agent of the nation and prefecture, the Foundation performed the usual urban park management tasks – publicity and promotion, security, buildings and grounds maintenance and so forth. But beyond these activities, it undertook research on issues related to Shuri Castle and it drew on the Shuri Castle Fund, set up when the park was established, to collect and assemble many widely scattered Ryukyu Kingdom-related cultural treasures. In the next section of this article, we will introduce some of the results of this Foundation's research.

3 Restoration Work of the Ocean Expo Commemorative Park Management Foundation.

After being charged with responsibility for park management in 1992, the Foundation, besides performing regular administrative functions, also began to do research on various Shuri Castle-related topics and issues. Some of the main results of this research are introduced below.

Figure 3 Chronology of Restoration Projects in the Years Following Opening of Shurijo Castle Park

Years	Restoration Projects
1995	Restoration of framed Emperor's inscription Chuzan Seido in the Shuri Castle Seiden Ufugui (2d floor) (Mgmt Foundation) .
1996	
1997	Ryuh Shosan monument restoration. Located in front of Zuisenmon. (Shuri Castle Restoration Working Group. Donated to Ocean Expo Commemorative Park Management Foundation).
1998	Completion of Shuri MoriUtaki(Nation).
1999	Keiseimon gate finished (Prefecture) .
2000	Restoration of the Ryukyu kings' seal(Mgmt Foundation) . Hakuginmon Gate completed (Nation) .
2002	Completion of Keizuza, Yomotsuza, Nichieidai, Nikai Udun, Tomoya, Zuisenmon Ishijishi, Uekimon (Nation) (Festive dinner for leaders held in Hokuden during G8 Kyushu-Okinawa Summit) (Shuri Castle included among Gusuku and Related Properties of the Kingdom of Ryukyu enrolled on World Heritage list)
2003	Completion of Shuri Castle outer works(Prefecture) .
2004	Restoration of framed works, Shuzuikyoyo and Eisoeizen in the Seiden Ufugui (2dfloor) (Mgmt Foundation) .
2006	Kyo-no-Uchi area opened (Nation).
2007	Restoration of the Soetsugi Ujo north and south stone inscriptions. Located in front of Keiseimon (Shuri Castle Restoration Working Group. Donated to Okinawa Prefecture) .
2008	King Sho Shin monument and Matama Minato monuments restored. Temporarily in prefecturally administered Shurijo Castle Park.(Shuri Castle Working Group. Donated to Okinawa Prefecture) . Shoin and Sasunoma structures finished (Nation). Restoration of Tokugawa Museum's Ryukyu musical instruments (Mgmt Foundation) . Shoin and Sasunoma gardens finished (Nation) .

i Items in blue were Okinawa Prefecture projects

ii Items in red were projects done by the Ocean Expo Commemorative Park Mgmt Foundation

iii The restorations in green were done by the Shuri Castle Restoration Working Group

① Restoration of the Chinese Emperor's framed inscription, "Chuzan Seido"

Three years after the opening of the park, the Foundation produced a replica of the so-called "Chuzan Seido " a framed picture or inscription by the Chinese Emperor that originally was displayed in the great room on the Seiden's second floor. The second floor of the Seiden was called Ufugui, and also Gyoshoro. This is because this gift or grant from the Chinese Emperor to the King of Ryukyu was framed for display in Ryukyu in a lacquered wooden frame. The framed inscription was in eight panels. There seems to have been a large lacquered framed inscription on the second floor of the Seiden toward the end of the Ryukyu Kingdom era in the second half of the 19th century. However, the Shuri Castle Seiden restoration was modeled on the Seiden as it was in the 18th century. At that time, framed pictures from Emperors had three panels. Among them, this Chuzan Seido from Emperor Kangxi of the Qing Dynasty era (1644 – 1912) is the oldest. So restoration research was done first on this picture.



Figure 4 Restored Chinese Emperor's framed calligraphy "Chuzan Seido"

Although the records make it clear that there was indeed a Chuzan Seido inscription on the Seiden's second floor, no photograph or other rendering of it exists. The lack of any image made restoration immensely difficult. Information was sought in China's leading historical repository, the Municipal Archives in Beijing, which is comparable to Japan's National Archives. There the Municipal Archives were consulted for its holdings of writings in his own hand by Emperor Kangxi. A four-character "Chuzan Seido" was analyzed in Emperor Kangxi's own hand and the restoration was based on that.

② Reproduction of Chinese Emperors' Shuzuikyuyo and Eisoeizen framed writings

With this done, restoration was undertaken of two other framed inscriptions by Chinese emperors, the Shuzuikyuyo and Eisoeizen. These were framed as two-panel diptychs.

The first of these was written by Emperor Yongzheng. He was the son of Emperor Kangxi, author of the Chuzan Seido. The second was done by Emperor Kangxi's grandson, Emperor Qianlong. Qing Dynasty China was at its most prosperous during the reigns of these three emperors. Not only were the three superb political leaders, they were also men of exceptional literary talent.



Figure 5 Restored Chinese Emperor's inscription "Shuzuikyuyo"



Figure 6 Restored Chinese Emperor's inscription "Eisoeizen"



Figure 7 The framed inscription plaques on the Seiden's second floor.

Of course, no photographs or other renderings survive for the two emperors' inscriptions. As was done with the Chuzan Seido, samples were obtained of their handwriting through the research cooperation of China's Municipal Archives. Detailed research was also conducted on the state of lacquering techniques at the time of the two inscriptions.

The Ryukyu Kingdom produced a great variety of lacquered goods for presentation to the Chinese emperors, the Tokugawa shoguns, the lords of the Satsuma Domain and other daimyo. Lacquering techniques were very highly developed. Examples of Ryukyu lacquer ware given as gifts to Chinese emperors can be found today in the Palace Museum in Beijing and at other repositories. However, with the abolition of the Ryukyu Kingdom in 1879 by Japan's Meiji government, lacquer ware was no longer produced as official presents and tribute goods. Instead, lacquer craftsmen were exposed to a wave of competitive pressure in a new capitalistic economy, and so turned their skills toward producing cheap goods for everyday use. Technical sophistication dropped off and the special skills required to produce highly decorative tribute goods almost entirely fell out of use and died out.

This meant a serious effort had to be made to recapture the lacquering skills of the Ryukyu Kingdom era, for a restoration of the Shuzuikyuyo and Eisoeizen diptychs was required that went beyond merely duplicating their form and elements. The records of the royal office that established and regulated the quality of lacquer ware were consulted. Deciphering these records, research and trials were conducted on lacquering base layer methods and so revived framed picture making.

The know-how gained through repeated trial and error experiments and test productions has actually created a core of skilled lacquer crafts people. These people are taking charge of research for the restoration of the "three ornamental utensils" used in New Year's celebrations in rooms on the Seiden's first floor (discussed below), and also of various other restoration projects.

③ Restoration of Ryukyu Musical Instruments

The national and prefectural governments handle the "hard side" of restoration.- structures and walls. The Working Group and this Foundation work on restoration of stone statuary, framed calligraphy inscriptions and pictures, musical instruments and the like - castle furnishings from days long past. To exhibit items of this nature, an exhibit space for Ryukyu era arts and crafts was created in the Nanden, a building that stands near the Seiden. This space had to be strictly temperature and humidity controlled. To prepare an exhibit that would adequately showcase the elegance and importance of the arts and crafts items on display, this Foundation began work in 2000 restoring the Ryukyu-era musical instruments held at the Tokugawa Art Museum in Nagoya. This museum is operated by the Tokugawa Reimeikai, an entity established by descendants of the Owari Tokugawa family that originated with Yoshinao, the ninth son of Tokugawa Ieyasu, founder of the Tokugawa shogunate. In Tokugawa times, when there was a new shogun or a new Ryukyu king, ambassadors from Ryukyu would journey to Edo to greet the shogun in a political ceremony. When the eleventh shogun, Tokugawa Ienari, assumed his office in 1790, envoys from the Ryukyu Kingdom went to Nagoya to offer congratulations. For the house of Owari Tokugawa, they gave a performance of Ryukyu court music. After the performance, they presented the instruments they had used to their hosts. The Ryukyu musical instruments now in the museum are those the ambassadors gave away.

In working to restore these Ryukyuan musical instruments, the researchers were privileged to have the Tokugawa Museum's unstinting cooperation. The museum made its collection available for careful examination countless times and detailed photographs of the design patterns could be taken. Of course the desire was to go beyond merely restoring the instruments' shapes. The aim was to fully elucidate and assimilate the techniques used in their making into the restorations. To help do this, an analysis of the chemistry and physics of the instruments' materials was conducted. They were x-rayed to determine their internal structure and fluorescent x-ray analysis was used to better understand the materials used in their construction. The kind of materials used in the lacquer surface was particularly sought after (If heavy metals were used, that would show up under fluorescent x-rays), as well as the types of metal or metals that were used for the metal gongs and so forth, so as that the original production methods could be uncovered. Present-day chemical analysis cannot differentiate among wood materials so the works of numerous writers on woodworking were culled and thus the woods used in these instruments could be determined.





Figure 8 Restored Ryukyu musical instruments

All this research yielded some very interesting results. It was found that the instruments were lacquered with vermilion lacquer and the main ingredient in that vermilion was mercury – mercury vermilion. Documents of the time when the instruments were made regarding trade with China record large imports of mercury vermilion from that country. There are many examples of vermilion or cinnabar lacquer in other Ryukyu lacquer ware as well. The decorative gold inlay applied to these instruments looks very similar to the technique used in Ryukyu in the 18th and 19th centuries. Large quantities of a hardwood called "tagayasan" (or axe-blade wood) from Southeast Asia and southern China went into the instruments' wooden decorations.

Trade between Ryukyu and Southeast Asia was stopped by the second half of the 16th century. In the latter 18th-century Ryukyu, obtaining this tagayasan or other hardwoods directly was difficult. Instead, it is thought that these woods could only be gotten via Fujian Province in southern China.

In this circumstance, the bodies of Ryukyu musical instruments that used the Asian hardwoods were often made in China and imported to be lacquered with the vermilion lacquer and decorated with gold inlay in Ryukyu. Presumably, the instruments that the Ryukyu envoys took with them to Edo and presented as gifts to the Owari Tokugawa house came out of such a process. Thus in the course of restoring musical instruments of a certain period, a serendipitous glimpse can be seen of some of the particulars of the history of foreign trade in that era.

Of course, the techniques used at the time when these Ryukyuan musical instruments were made have almost totally died out. This made restoration work immensely difficult. With no information at hand, the only recourse was to go to the Tokugawa Museum time and time again to make detailed inspections of the actual instruments in the museum's keeping. This was possible only through the great kindness of the museum's late director, Mr. Yoshinori Tokugawa, who allowed unlimited access to his collection and assisted us in every way right up to the final restoration. And for our part, we have kept detailed records of what our research has learned about the craft techniques of that era. Hopefully these will be useful in future restoration projects requiring data on the craft of Ryukyu lacquering.

Having taken eight years of work, the restoration of these musical instruments was finished in 2007 and they were put on exhibit in the Nanden.

4 Future Restoration Research ~ Further Along the Road ~

This Foundation's research and production work has all been independent and freely chosen; it has not been done under contract or delegation from the national or prefectural government. And in contrast to buildings, the authentic restoration of instruments and tools as they were is complicated by the fact that with the dissolution of the Ryukyu Kingdom, the craft techniques used became modernized. The old ways stopped for all time. Recovering and restoring the old methods becomes a matter of great difficulty, making the considerable time and expense required along the way from the start of a project to its completion a real issue. Moreover, the required research methods are far from established. Trying to do research on the old crafts is something like walking down a dark street under a new moon without a lantern. Inevitably, any research program encounters many twists and turns along the way.

However, by insisting on doing restoration work that fully incorporates the authentic materials and techniques used, many craft techniques have been rediscovered that were used by our ancestors so many centuries ago, only to be subsequently lost. Educating people in the use of and delight in these techniques will contribute, we hope and believe, to a revival of Okinawa's declining traditional craft industries.

Besides the work of restoring Ryukyu musical instruments, our Foundation has been working since 2000 to restore the "three decorative utensils," sake serving bowls used when the king gave his vassals a drinking banquet each New Year's in his living quarters on the Seiden's first floor. This project was begun contemporaneously with the restoration of the Ryukyu musical instruments, and as with those, none of the actual articles survive as a basis for restoration, only a single illustration, so again, restoration research is proving exceedingly difficult.

For example, Figure 9 shows four tables. On the tables in vermilion lacquer in the foreground are round vermilion lacquered stepped offering dishes. These sit on raised round "kashibun" confectionary trays. Ryukyu lacquer ware utensils like these that were passed down through generations of royal families are found today in collections and museums.

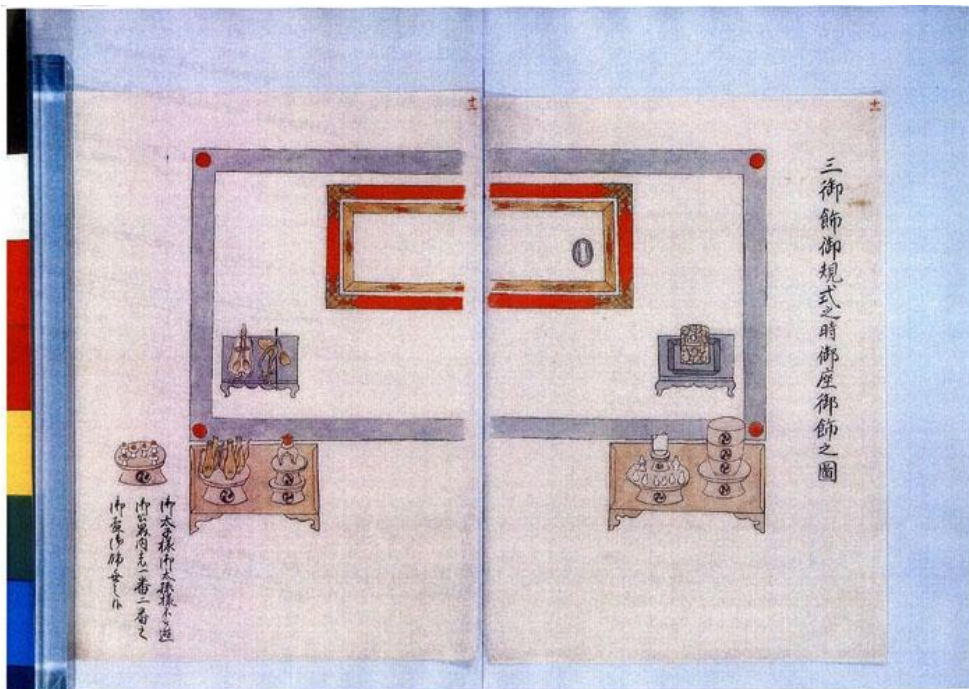


Figure 9 Illustration of utensils used for drinking banquets in the king's first floor quarters in the Shurijo Castle Seiden

Atlas (Ataiho) Okinawa Prefectural University of Arts Yoshitaro Kamakura items



Figure 10 The restored Seiden lower hall (first floor) No display items at present

It is thought that the Ryukyu lacquer ware in Figure 11 is a utensil very similar to the kashibun trays in Figure 9. As with the musical instruments, this piece was x-rayed. The x-rays reveal a concentric circle shape in the legs or raised base portion. The body of such lacquer ware utensils was made with wrappings of long narrow wooden tape, a most unusual method. The piece in Figure 11 was badly damaged. When our foundation repaired it in 2003, it was discovered that well after the period when the base part was made, someone applied a rough coating by way of repairing it, ruining its appearance. Removing the coating brought the original lacquer ware body clearly into view. Inspecting it carefully now, it was apparent that it was a utensil whose body was shaped with wrapped wooden tape.

The first issue in restoring this type of utensil was whether or not using the wrapped wooden tape method of fashioning the body would be a prerequisite condition. The problem was that production techniques using this very complex method no longer exist. They have completely disappeared. However, with the coating gone so the underlying wrapped tape could be seen, and with x-ray images of the shape, attempts could be made to determine the methods used. To learn how to make such an item with this technique, innumerable practical trials were conducted, and finally got it right. There is still work to be done, beginning with experiments on lacquering methods and on the gold inlay techniques used to embellish this drinking banquet lacquer ware. As this work progresses, completion of the restoration of such utensils will be possible.



Figure 11 A probable actual example of the lacquer ware serving trays shown in the "three decorative utensils" illustration Ocean Expo Commemorative Park Management Foundation



Figure 12 An x-ray picture of the piece in Figure 11. The concentric circle shape in the vermilion lines shows up.



Figure 13 Enlarged photograph of the damaged portion of the painted Ryukyu lacquer ware piece shown in Figure 11. Traces of the wrapped wood tape can be seen.

Conclusion

While reporting on the progress of restoring Shuri Castle following its destruction in the Second World War, we have introduced some of the results of what might be called the "soft side," restoration work done so far by this Foundation. When talking about Shurijo Castle Park, the terms "road to," or "path to" should not be taken to mean that we have reached the goal, that we are on the peak gazing down. No, rather we are still climbing the mountain, step by step, and we are only halfway up the path. While building on the know-how built up so far, we are still only at the midpoint, with many challenges to surmount ahead. One national government project coming up is the restoration of the buildings of the Ouchibara, the area behind the Seiden where the king and his family and their female attendants lived, and where men were strictly prohibited from entering. This Foundation also will be steadily at work conducting restoration research and work on items for display in the Seiden and in other structures to be restored. The know-how gained in the process of rediscovering the traditional arts and craft techniques used in the Ryukyu Kingdom era will of course enliven the displays at Shurijo Castle Park. But beyond this, it will contribute to a renaissance in the traditional craft industries of the Okinawa region.

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