

## Seminar Report Åland – Okinawa (1-2 September 2009)

### Introduction



Åland has achieved peace through a strong autonomy as well as a regime of neutralisation & demilitarisation. In Japan, Okinawa is a much bigger region and very much in the front line of potential conflicts in East Asia. This was one point made by Professor Masako Ikegami, Department of Political Sciences Center for Pacific Asia Studies (CPAS) Stockholm University at the Åland-Okinawa Seminar which was held in Mariehamn on 1-2 September, 2009.

The aims and objectives of the seminar were in brief to compare the regions, with equal input from Okinawa and Åland, and a balance in participants of decision-makers (i.e. officials in the Okinawa prefecture and in the Åland Government administration/parliament) and academic representatives. In addition, it was hoped that the participants would be able to see if the differences between the two island societies were too great to be able to learn from each other or if there is room for future collaboration. It is also hoped that such a seminar would enhance greater understanding between the two regions and their cultures and show both similarities and differences.

## Seminar settings

### Ålands fredsinstitut



The Åland Islands Peace Institute in co-operation with its partners, the Japan Local Government Centre in London and Nihon University in Japan, organised the seminar in Åland. The seminar was on the theme of “Transforming the relationship with Central Government –focusing on Åland and Okinawa”. This overarching theme covered three sub-themes: issues of economics, peace and then political/legal matters. The concept of ‘culture’ and the preservation of cultural identity was the thread running through all the themes. The Åland Island Peace Institute and its partners found that culture is a core aspect that supports and influences the other themes. The seminar did not take on a strict definition of culture for this purpose, but it may be defined as “the ideas, thoughts and attitudes that survive over generations”.

The Åland Islands archipelago is an autonomous region in Finland. Åland has had its self-government since 1921 and is considered to be a successful example of solutions for regional autonomy. Co-operation between various Japanese organisations and the Åland Islands is not new, Japanese representatives have paid numerous visits to study the Åland example and projects have previously been undertaken, for instance in 2004 and the “Self Governance of Islands in the Era of Regions: a Comparative Study of the Åland Islands in the Baltic and the Ryukyu islands in the East China Sea”. Whereas the focus then was on a sociological and geological perspective, the current seminar took an economic, legal and political approach.



The Åland Islands Peace Institute and its partners invited a total of seven speakers. The idea was one of comparison and knowledge exchange between the regions, for example looking at the economic field, where the Åland Islands have relied on shipping for a long time, whereas Okinawa is dependent on tourism and the American military base. The recognition of Okinawa as a special economic zone, as well as the tax exemption for Åland in the EU, were also topics that were discussed during the seminar. Speakers elaborated on how to strengthen regional economic management and inter-regional cooperation in the context of having to rely on the state in economic hardship. This discussion included points on local competitiveness, raising the level of local government autonomy and the best ways to develop regionally.

The situation regarding peace issues also differs, as Åland's demilitarisation was gained in 1856 and strengthened through the instrument of neutralisation in 1921. This status is based on multilateral commitments by countries around the Baltic Sea and beyond. The American military presence on Okinawa since the end of World War II has had a major influence on the developments of the islands and at the time being there are varying perceptions and discussions in Japan and globally concerning the necessity of and the alternatives to the military presence in Okinawa. Therefore, the starting points for discussion were the role of local government in achieving and monitoring peace and the status and maintenance of the Åland demilitarisation within the Northern Europe security context. The common island status and the differing positions regarding peace issues in the two archipelagos was an interesting starting

point for a seminar to which prominent academics and decision-makers participated with great interest.

Regarding social and legal issues the representatives from the Åland Islands presented the right to domicile, which is a prerequisite for the right of land acquisition, running a business and to vote and stand for national elections on the islands. Åland is part of the EU and, slightly simplified, it can be said that the citizenship for the Ålanders exists on three levels: the EU, the Finnish and the Ålandic. On the social system side, points of discussion were what social system is beneficial for the peculiarities of an island and suggestions for the future including what kind of self-governing body and financial system is needed for the smooth running of local authority activities. A common concern for both regions is attracting the return of young educated and qualified persons and ensuring the avoidance of a brain drain to other regions, thus hopefully contributing also to the diversification of the economies in the islands.

### **Some practical outcomes.**

The prospects after the seminars include future cooperation in the fields of research and education. Among other things, the suggestion that a regular Åland – Okinawa youth exchange should be initiated has been put forward so as to promote long-term understanding and knowledge between future generations of Okinawa and Åland. A joint annual newsletter Åland-Okinawa would be a forum for further collaboration and contact. The Åland Islands Peace Institute hopes to be able to publish the rich contributions of the speakers in a publication of the institute.

## **1. Seminar**

### **Opening speech**

The seminar was opened by Elizabeth Nauc ler, member of parliament for the Åland constituency in the Finnish parliament, who spoke about differences and similarities between Okinawa and the Åland islands. Elizabeth Nauc ler noted that Ålanders defined their language through years of struggle and important elements of protection, regarding autonomy as a tool for minority protection. Kunihiko Yasuda, first Secretary (Cultural & Press Attach ) of the Embassy of Japan to Finland, was the other key note speaker who made opening remarks, putting several questions to participants and hoping to find out answers for them through this seminar. He was eager to understand the interest Åland has in Okinawa and what Ålanders think about Okinawa.

### **Sub-theme 1A: General outline of Okinawa prefecture**

Katsunori Uehara , Deputy Director General in charge of Industry and Employment, Department of Tourism, Commerce & Industry at the Okinawa Prefectural

Government gave a general overview of Okinawa prefecture. According to Mr. Uehara, Okinawa Prefecture and Åland are about 8,500 kilometers apart. Okinawa's location is a vital point that connects mainland Japan, mainland China, and the Southeast Asia region. Okinawa is the westernmost prefecture of Japan. Within the span of 1,000 kilometers east to west and 400 kilometers north to south, more than 160 islands can be found inside Okinawa Prefecture. The land surface area for Okinawa is approximately 2,275 kilometers squared, making it one third the size of Åland. (Land surface area for Åland is 6,784 kilometers squared.) Okinawa normally enjoys a warm climate with an annual average temperature at 22.4 degrees Celsius with about 1,370,000 people residing in Okinawa. (The population of Åland is only about 27,000.) Mr. Uehara also noted that, with a distinct history and unique culture Okinawa is blessed with an abundance of natural resources and a tropical climate. Okinawa is most famous for its blue sea and blue sky and is often referred to as the "Paradise of Healing" in Japan. The modern-day Okinawa was once called the Ryukyu Kingdom. The Ryukyu Kingdom prospered through trade with Japan, China, and countries in Southeast Asia. An ancient document described the Ryukyu Kingdom as "A state in the south sea with a strategic geographic location. Incredible treasures from Korea can be found in the Ryukyu Kingdom. The country is a strong support for Ming China and its relations to Japan can be compared to that of brothers. Flourishing with riches and resources from foreign lands, it is a gateway of trade that bridges ten thousand nations." We now understand that the Ryukyu Kingdom was a key player in trade with Korea, China, and Japan and had prospered through trade. This was known as the "Age of the Chinese".

However, according to Mr. Uehara, after Japan ended its isolationistic foreign policy in order to transform the feudal state of samurais into a modern nation, the Japanese government officially annexed the Ryukyu Kingdom as one of its prefectures and changed its name to Okinawa. This was known as the "Age of the Japanese" and it lasted from 1879 until 1945. In 2000, UNESCO accepted *Gusuku sites* and related properties of the Kingdom of the Ryukyus as a World Heritage Site. The nine heritage sites include the imperial castle of Shuri, the mausoleum Tamaudun, and other Gusuku castles sites.



As the westernmost prefecture of Japan, Okinawa is strategically located between Japan and the rest of Asia. Because of this, Okinawa became a battleground in World War II and more than 200 thousand lives were lost. The Cornerstone of Peace was established to honour all those that suffered from the Battle of Okinawa. With the names of all the victims carved in stone, it is dedicated to both civilians and military personnel regardless of their nationality.

He also gave brief information about the establishment of the US military bases. After the war ended in 1945, the islands were occupied by the United States for 27 years. Okinawa was under the command of the US military until 1972. According to Mr. Uehara, this 27 year period had a great impact on Okinawa's future in social, economic and cultural terms and is referred to by some commentators as the "Age of the Americans". The US has built large bases on Okinawa. The Americans occupy great parts of valuable land in Okinawa, leaving local citizens with limited land space around these bases for their residence. Military bases soon became the central focus, and the basis of the socio-economical structure of Okinawa was distorted.

Mr. Uehara stated that, even today, approximately 70 percent of all the US military facilities in Japan are located on the island of Okinawa and accidents and crimes committed by US military personnel continue to happen. However, some of the base operations are in the process of a possible relocation to Guam. It is a widely held view in Okinawa that the people of Okinawa pray that the burden of the accidents and crimes committed by US military personnel can be reduced without delay.

Mr. Uehara returned to the year 1972, when measures and laws were enacted to support the development and promotion of Okinawa. In assisting Okinawa Prefecture's transition back to mainland Japan, Okinawa Promotion and Development Plans were conducted three times within the span of 30 years. Seven trillion yen worth of government funds were invested in Okinawa Prefecture within the

30- year span. Measures, such as the reduction of liquor tax and other national taxes, were implemented to gain progress in providing solid social capital and improvements in industrial infrastructure. 2003 marked the commencement of the 4<sup>th</sup> Okinawa Promotion and Development Plan. From the “Age of the Chinese” to the “Age of the Japanese”, and from “Age of the Americans” back to the “Age of the Japanese”, the history of Okinawa is one of the endless changes.

According to Mr. Uehara, currently, there are ongoing debates on the issue of administrative reform in Okinawa for greater autonomy. There may even be the chance to witness Okinawa become a special autonomous region in the near future.

Mr. Uehara mentioned in his presentation that, the Okinawa Prefectural Government has been putting much effort in the tourism and IT industries. Okinawa attracts about six million incoming travelers per year. According to the 2006 Okinawa Prefecture Tourism Division Report, within the Pacific region, Hawaii and Okinawa are the only two islands that are able to attract more than 5 million tourists annually. About 70 percent of the incoming travelers are repeat customers and 31 percent have visited Okinawa at least five times. Another thing that was underlined by Mr. Uehara is that, recently, wedding ceremonies in Okinawa are becoming more and more popular. It is possible to even reserve the venue of the 26<sup>th</sup> G8 Summit, which was held in Okinawa, for wedding ceremonies. In 2006, 6050 new couples took their vows in front of the grandeur of Okinawa’s ocean view as they celebrated the new chapter of their life at various resort hotel chapels within the prefecture.

In addition, Mr. Uehara stated that Okinawa is not only known as the land of resorts, many international conferences are held within the prefecture as well. Okinawa promotes and attracts sports camps and exchanges of different genres of music and performing arts. “Our goal is to sell Okinawa as a “Convention Island””, stated Mr. Uehara.

Mr. Uehara continued and spoke about the promotion of the IT industry in Okinawa. Okinawans are working on the expansion of the information and communication technology industry and expect it to develop into a leading industry for Okinawa Prefecture.

The first competitive edge of the business environment in Okinawa is its capacity of skilled workers and exceptional human resource. In the past, most skilled workers in Japan found employment in large cities, such as Tokyo and Osaka. However, in response to the competitive labour market, many firms today are starting to relocate to regions with a large pool of skilled workers and exceptional human resource.

The second competitive edge of the business environment in Okinawa is its geographic location. Because Okinawa is not prone to earthquakes or other natural disasters, many large IT companies and financial corporations as well as the Japanese government have marked Okinawa as the site to back up their data in case of an emergency.

“As well, we look forward to seeing Okinawa become the entry point for Asian countries and fulfill its role in the Asia Gateway Initiative launched by the Japanese government”, noted Mr. Uehara.

Furthermore, being blessed with a warm climate and an amazing natural environment, Okinawa not only appeals to firms with its welfare program, it is also attractive because it is the birthplace to many creative ideas.

The third competitive edge of the business environment in Okinawa is the assistance provided to alleviate firms’ financial burdens. For example, to reduce communication costs, the prefecture subsidizes part of the telecommunications fee for the line between Okinawa and Tokyo. With the subsidy, the telecommunications cost between Okinawa and Tokyo is as low as the cost within Tokyo.

Within the last ten years, IT companies and financial corporations have rapidly moved into Okinawa, creating more than 15,000 new jobs.

As a bridge in the IT industry connecting Japan with the rest of Asia, IT Shinryo Park was established in Okinawa as the base for the development and expansion of leading IT services, including off shoring operations and business process outsourcing centres.

Beginning in 2008, projects on the establishment of Intelligent Buildings were initiated to make Japan, one of the global pioneers in the field of information and communication technologies, more competitive in the international market.

In addition, as one of the players in the Asia Gateway Initiative that was launched by the Japanese government, Okinawa is working on the international exchange and logistics base project.

“This October, we expect to unveil Naha International Airport as the 24-hour base for All Nippon Airways, connecting Okinawa with neighboring Asian countries”, said Mr. Uehara.

Okinawa is also putting energy into the promotion of science and technology. Construction is currently moving forward on the Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology, which aims to have the highest world standards.

The Institute of Science and Technology’s goal, under its five key concepts, is to be able to contribute to the independent development of Okinawa and also to global science and technology.

In preparation for the founding of the Institute, Dr. Sydney Brenner, Nobel Laureate in Physiology and Medicine was welcomed in as president. Furthermore, the Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology Promotion Corporation were established in 2005.



The administration of the Institute is driven by a board of governors comprised of distinguished scientists; 5 of whom are Nobel laureates.

In preparation for its founding in the year 2011, the Institute has already begun carrying out research. There are already close to 200 people at the Institute, including researchers, post-doctoral researchers, and graduate students from around the world, as well as office staff.

There are also individuals from Finland, Sweden, and other parts of Northern Europe at the Institute.

Talking about international events in the islands Mr. Uehara mentioned that international workshops are held at the Institute in order to strengthen cooperation with research institutions and universities both within Japan and abroad, and also to spread the concept of the Institute to researchers nationally and internationally. Individuals from both Finland and Sweden have participated in these workshops.

Finally, Mr. Uehara gave a brief account of international exchange with foreign countries. The first 26 people to emigrate from Okinawa arrived in Hawaii in the year 1900. One century has passed since then, and now the number of Okinawans and individuals of Okinawan descent living abroad has reached 360,000. Emigrants from Okinawa overcame many obstacles with their inherent cheerfulness. Dedicating themselves to the development of their respective countries, they contribute greatly to further exchange with Okinawa.

Up until the present, 496 people have been appointed as “New Uchina Goodwill Ambassadors”. New Uchina Goodwill Ambassadors serve as leaders in building a network of Okinawans active all over the world. There is one “New Uchina Goodwill Ambassador” in Finland, and this individual is making great efforts as a cultural bridge between Finland and Okinawa.

Furthermore, the number of *kenjinkai*, or Okinawa associations abroad, has reached 71, and we are promoting friendly relations even with the *kenjinkai* in the neighbouring country of Sweden.

Finally, Mr. Uehara said in his presentation that the Okinawa Prefectural Government is planning to host the “Worldwide Uchinanchu Festival”, with the goal of continuing, as well as further deepening and expanding the global network of Okinawans.

Following the presentation, there was discussion including on the employment situation and strategies in Okinawa. According to Mr Uehara, the unemployment rate is higher than in other regions in Japan and stated specifically there is no place for young people to work in Okinawa. He also explained the connection between central government and island. There is a long standing practice of the central government preparing decisions by conferences but in most cases final decisions come from the office of the Prime Minister.

## Sub-theme 1B: Economic situation Åland

After the presentation by Mr. Uehara, researcher at Statistics and Research Åland Richard Palmer, PhD in economic history, gave a presentation about the Åland economy, historical developments and current challenges. He spoke about historical development of Åland Island, starting with growth of the population of Åland and Finland in the years 1750 to 2008. According to Dr Palmer, demography and economy are connected to each other. It's very important nowadays to get the right competence in order to develop and not to lose the competitive edge, not only investing in the material but also investing in knowledge as well, and it seems as if Okinawa is on its way to succeed in that respect.



Speaking about the history Dr Palmer noted that Åland belonged to Sweden until 1809. Finland was ceded to the Russian Empire, with Åland as well. Early during the Finnish and Russian era the Ålandic population growth was about the same rate as the Finnish population growth. And then gradually they diverged in this manner and then actually the Finnish population growth has been much stronger than the Åland one. The period of up until 1920-21 when Åland became an autonomous part of Finland was a period of very slow population and this was partly due to emigration to America, first to Sweden and then to America. Dr Palmer stated it is interesting because sometimes historians have presented this period as a sort of successful period in Åland history when Åland managed to build sailing ships and managed quite successfully economically, but it is to judge from its demographic development it was not actually that successful. The period of autonomy as a part of Finland was up until 1970 wasn't very successful in terms of population growth at all. The growth rate of the population of Åland was about half that of Finland until just about a few decades ago. From 1970 onwards Åland's population growth has actually exceeded that of Finland's. Another interesting feature of the land population and also of the economy is that the composition of the Åland population –the interesting thing here is

that the number of native Åland born Alanders is about the same as today. That means that population growth on Åland depends entirely on immigration. Also other aspects to this most young Ålanders study abroad – they study in Sweden while Åland is unable to provide work for them after they finish the studies. The share of people born in Finland increased particularly since the 1970s, it has been fairly constant, but the interesting point is that foreign people, born outside the Nordic countries are an increasing part of the Åland population, which means that Åland is gradually becoming more and more multicultural. According to Dr Palmer nowadays there are around 70 nationalities living in Åland. This is something that has been an issue in the political debate in percentage terms that Ålanders, or native born Ålanders are a declining part of the Åland population.



Dr Plamer also explained economical developments in Åland. Åland depends on and the main base of the Åland economy is transportation, sea transportation especially, and when talking of a tourism based economy, what is actually meant is that it is transportation around Åland that is important, the ferry connections to and from Stockholm, going to Helsinki to Tallinn and so – that is the important part of the economy. The tourism on land isn't that important. Often people make the mistake that of not differing between the land based tourism and the sea based tourism. From the end of the 1950s onwards, Åland had a gradually increasing number of people arriving. It is thanks to the development of ferry traffic, in particular the passenger traffic. This number continues to increase but still the important thing is the transportation outside Åland and the consumption in the ferries. The reason for Åland becoming and having the opportunity to develop this transportation system is through the geographical position – Åland is favourably placed in the Baltic Sea in between Stockholm, in between Helsinki and Estonia. Historically the possibilities to transport goods, cars, people and so forth were very limited and at the end of the

1950s, a company called Viking Line, was founded and actually Viking Line is still by far the largest company on Åland and in many ways it is the basis of the Åland economy still. Åland belongs to the European Union but it is not part of its tax area, so that means that ships calling at Åland ports are able to sell alcohol at a reduced price. Ferries going between Stockholm and Tallinn call here at 1 o'clock every night, as well as the ferries going between Stockholm and Helsinki, so Åland has an excellent transportation system. It also means that the ferry business is profitable, and ship owners are able to employ a large number of Ålanders and foreigners too. And as it is a profitable business it is able to give large tax revenues indirectly.

Okinawa is a services based economy with 90% of the GDP referred to services. Something similar has happened on Åland, agriculture has declined which is of course a common development in developed societies. But agriculture and industry is actually quite a small part of the Åland industry, it is the transportation industry that is important in terms of employment. But most important is the services sector which is gradually and continuously increasing, and that includes some very different kind of services, personal services, corporate services, information technology, finance insurance, wholesale finance and insurance on Åland is intimately connected to shipping so there is a comparative advantage there. "If we take a closer look at the current situation we see that agriculture and fishing is a small part of the economy", noted Dr Palmer. According to him the Åland economy is not that dependent on land based tourism; a number of people employed in the hotels and restaurants is even smaller than people employed in any other industry. But the large important base of the economy is in transportation including shipping, and the shipping industry is also important for local regional policy because it provides work for people living out in the archipelago, they work one or two weeks on board a ferry and then they can live out in the archipelago, and then they are free in two weeks, it's important for a local economy. Finally, on the issue of how the large public sector in Åland is financed – the Åland economy functions in an economy as of itself, but all taxes are sent to the government of Finland, to the tax authorities of Finland, and they redistribute these taxes to Åland, via the state budget. So Åland actually has no economic authority, the economy is entirely political. There is also a political discussion going on about Åland having a greater responsibility in that respect.

Åland is very dependent on what happens in the Finnish economy, and the state budget has been weakened by the recession, as Finland is very dependent on its exports, which is contracting so the amount paid to the Åland public sector will be smaller as well. And also if the large Åland companies pay less tax, this extra compensation will be smaller. This means there is a risk of a very uneven sum being paid to Åland. Up until now there has not been a problem because the Finnish economy has been able to expand and the Åland economy has been able to expand as well.

### **Sub-theme 2A: Issues of culture and peace on Okinawa**

In this section Professor Masako Ikegami, Department of Political Sciences Center for Pacific Asia Studies (CPAS) of Stockholm University, spoke about Okinawa's quest for peace and compared Åland and Okinawa. According to Professor Ikegami, Åland and Okinawa are quite similar in their geopolitical backgrounds. In the sense that both of the islands are located in strategically a very important location, and that in the past Åland suffered so much from many wars because of this importance of its location between the Russians, British and even the French. In her opinion, Åland has achieved peace through neutralisation and demilitarisation, while Okinawa is still in the front line of potential conflicts in East Asia. Åland's status of demilitarisation and neutralisation was a lucky outcome of the balance of major powers, not a rare outcome of wars in Europe 17-19c. However what is unique with Åland is that it is the only case where demilitarisation and neutralisation was combined with autonomy for the local population and this makes Åland's status is very unique through the arrangements of the 1921 agreements and the constitutional arrangements in Finland.

Because of the importance of the strategic location during the Pacific War of WW2, Okinawa became "a kind of sacrificed fortress" for Japan and that caused terrible tragedy in the battle of Okinawa which was actually the most brutal ground battle during the Pacific War. Over 200,000 Japanese people including many Okinawan local civilians, perished in this battle and with the Americans about 14,000 American soldiers also being killed. A very terrible tragedy. The situation now in East Asia is very challenging for regional security compared to Europe, with North Korea having now gained nuclear weapons as well as lots of missiles. "The Taiwan Straights right now, because of the Komintan Regime is pacified but it is not permanent, we never know what it will be in the future" added Professor Ikegami. People still think that the situation is not very sure. Also, East Asia has lots of territorial issues such as the East China sea, Senkaku/Diaoyutai Islands, between China and Japan, and Takeshima/Dokutou Islands between Korea and Japan, the Northern Territories, the South Kurile Islands and the East China Sea over the gas and oil fields.

Prof. Ikegami also pointed out that there are lots of territorial disputes which are actually getting worse in terms of military tension. With China's challenge against the US hegemony as well as in East Asia with China's rapid military build against America, although still the dominant military power, we observe very worrisome offensive/defensive posturing, namely that many Asian countries are modernising their weapons systems under the name of defence, and this kind of situation makes the security milieu pretty bad in East Asia. North Korea has at least hundreds of short range and middle range missiles which in the future could be nuclear capable. China is also deploying nearly 1000 short range/middle range missiles which are also basically nuclear capable. So therefore many military experts say that if any armed conflicts were to break out in East Asia then Okinawa is top of the list of targets

because of the heavy presence of the US military base, as well as the strategic importance of its location. Because of the importance of the strategic location Okinawa has been heavily burdened by the presence of the US military, although nowadays it is a bit less, it did use to be that 70-75% of land area of Okinawa was exclusively used by US forces and their facilities and lots of military personnel. According to Professor Ikegami, US bases occupy about 11 percent of the Okinawa territory and 19 percent of the main island territory. Airspace and sea areas around Okinawa are used by U.S. forces for military exercises. Professor Ikegami also noted that Okinawa's economy is not as dependent on US base revenues as one may have expected. However, Okinawa's economy mostly depends on the heavy American military presence. Okinawa's sea and air space is also heavily restricted, causing another inconvenience, and despite Futenma Air Base supposedly being relocated to the northern part of the island, it is an air base that is located in a extremely heavily densely populated area, and alternative facilities are not ready yet. There have been many discussions in the past decade since the end of the 1990s between the Japanese and US government to mitigate this heavy burden, with nowadays some quite significant plans for the relocation of the US military bases, the largest plan of which is the relocation of marine forces of about 8,000 American marine soldiers to Guam. Because of this relocation the Japanese government has to pay huge amounts of money to help mitigate the situation. Actually with the relocation many lands and facilities of the US military in the southern part of the Okinawa mainland are supposed to be returned or relocated, so some plans are actual still pending because of the lack of alternative facilities, although this relocation of US military bases is the hottest issue between Tokyo and Washington.

During the speech, Professor Ikegami put out some open questions on the feasibility of increased self-government, on the mandate that Okinawa government needed for unique development: e.g. a special free trade zone (FTZ) to reach the level of "one country, two system" to synergise regionalism and to develop a "unique regional space". She also posed the question of what the security situation of Okinawa will be if the US base shut down. According to her estimates, the US bases may be maintained in Japan for along time. She also pointed out that there are different opinions about the US base in Okinawa and in the rest of Japan. The Japanese government and Japanese defense authorities do not agree completely on this issue. Some believe that Japan should develop its own defense. Professor Ikegami also noted that Okinawa's future and peace depends on the totality of the regional security.

In concluding Professor Ikegami said that Okinawa does actually have lots of potential, not only in terms of the economy, but also if Okinawa could act with Tokyo and together with the United States, as well as with other neighboring regional countries Okinawa has very rich potential to contribute to actual regional peace.

## **Sub-theme 2B: Issues of peace on Åland**

The Director of the Åland Islands Peace Institute, Associate Professor Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark, spoke about the peace issues in Åland, how the Åland Islands ensured peace and autonomy, and gave brief information of the history of the Åland autonomy, about the Convention of 30th March 1856 between Russian, Great Britain and France on the non-fortification of the Åland Islands, and about the 1921 multilateral Convention on the Non-Fortification and Neutralisation of the Åland Islands. Professor Åkermark briefly talked about geographical position of the Åland Island and today's perception of 'connectedness'.

She mainly concentrated on the determination of the conception of the demilitarisation and neutralisation and differences between neutralization and neutrality. According to Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark, demilitarisation is the reduction of a nation's army, weapons, or military vehicles to an agreed minimum and/or the agreement of non-fortification of a territory during peace time. Demilitarisation is usually the result of a peace treaty ending a war or a major conflict. Neutralisation means that the islands should not be used for military purposes at war time and should be kept outside the theatre of war. Professor Spiliopoulou Åkermark also explained that the neutralization of the territory does not depend upon neutrality of a country. She argued that the Ålanders have in practice developed a strong say in issues of the demilitarisation even though they do not have any formal competence in matters of defense.

In Europe there are in fact several other examples of demilitarisation and a few neutralised regions. After speech by Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark the participants discussed the security situation in Åland today, and about the development of defense cooperation in the EU and NATO from a Finnish and Åland perspective.

## **Sub-theme 3A: Political/ legal system Okinawa**

Jun Shimabukuro, professor from University of the Ryukyus briefly spoke about the Japanese regional and local system. According to him, the Japanese governmental system was influenced strongly by European States, especially by the French and German system prior to World war II, and by Britain (and the US) after the war. Professor Shimabukuro then explained the different regionalisation patterns in the Western European countries and in Japan. As he explained, in Western Europe reorganisation at the regional level first means devolution of central power. Secondly, the political involvement of ethnic minorities was an important factor of regional reorganisation. And thirdly, that all this happened within the context of European integration. That means that the EU institutions' cooperation has recognised regional governments as partners of the EU regional policy, and encouraged regions to get involved formally in the regional policy making process in Brussels. According to Professor Shimabukuro, this shows that the goal of democratisation is most important in Western Europe. In comparison with Western European countries, Japan appears to take more of an efficiency-oriented reform approach rather than promoting issues

of democracy. In Japan, most of the approaches relating to regional government focused firstly, not on the devolution of political power and administrative functions and organizations of the central government, but rather on the process of the merger of prefectural governments and the absorption of the functions and organisation of prefectural governments into new larger prefectures. Secondly, even though Japan in reality is a multi-ethnic society, there is strong belief that “Japan is made of a single nation-state.” With the exception of Okinawa, there are no regions that have a strong regional and self-government oriented demand. Professor Shimabukuro said that Okinawa is the only area where an ethnic minority group forms the majority of the residents of the region. And thirdly, Professor Shimabukuro emphasised that there is no Asian equivalent to the European Union.



In the Meiji Era, the Japanese government introduced a system of local authority based on the French (and German) system. The system has three important characteristics.

1. The central government appoints the prefectural governments.
2. The prefectural assemblies were established by public election of the members, but kept strictly under control of the prefects.
3. If central government ministries needed to provide services at a local or regional level, they had to delegate the functions to the prefect governors. Central government ministries did not have any local or regional branches of their own.

However, according to Professor Shimabukuro , the characteristics of the prefectural system have changed, particularly since World War II:



1. The prefect/governor is directly elected by the public
2. The prefectural assemblies have acquired more power vis à vis the prefects/governors and influence central politics through a variety of routes.
3. Each central government ministry has established their own single-purpose regional branch in accordance with their own needs.

Hokkaido and Okinawa are exceptions to the above. Both regions are new territories of modern Japan. Professor Shimabukuro explained that the Japanese government never introduced to Hokkaido the same type of prefectural system as the other mainland's prefectures. A special governor under the prime minister directly controlled the governmental organisation in Hokkaido. According to Professor Shimabukuro, the fate of the Ryukyu Islands (the largest island is called Okinawa) has always determined by the will of external rulers and political situation surrounding the islands in the Asia- pacific region. He said that, the Okinawa prefectural government is completely the same type of local government as on the Japanese mainland. The secretary of State for Okinawa development supervises the agency and its offices as well. Professor Shimabukuro also gave brief information about the history of the Ryukyu Islands. Speaking about Okinawa's identity he stated that, according to the recent survey people mostly think themselves as Okinawan and they favor increased autonomy of the region. The survey conclusion showed that there is a strong existence of Okinawan identity among the people living in Okinawa and a desire for greater autonomy for Okinawa.

Professor Shimabukuro concluded his speech with the idea that the regional system in Japan has basic characteristics that are common to the British system, within which each central government ministry defined its administrative regions based on their own criteria, with the expectations of the two peripheral regions. He also pointed out that Okinawan regionalism is the same type of regionalism that has been exhibited recently in Western European countries.

### **Sub-theme 3B: Political/ legal issues Åland**

Lars Ingmar Johansson, former director of the Parliament of Åland and member of the Board of Directors of the Åland Islands Peace Institute, presented some of the political and legal issues in Åland and gave a brief history of the formation of the autonomy. The Åland governor, the representative of the State of Finland on Åland, has to be accepted by the Ålanders and he is appointed by the President of Finland upon the acceptance by the speaker of Åland parliament. He has the right to speak but not to vote in the legislative assembly and he declares the assembly opened if the President of the Republic is not present.

The right to own land, the right to vote in national elections and to establish bigger businesses is reserved for persons with the right to domicile. He said that, foreign affairs are a matter for the State, but the Government of Åland can propose

negotiations and shall be informed of negotiations if the matter is subject to the competence of Åland. If a treaty that Finland has concluded contains provisions within the authority of Åland, the consent of the Parliament of Åland is needed in order to have the provision to enter into force in Åland. If the provisions is contrary to the Autonomy Act, a 2/3 majority is required in both the Finnish parliament and the Legislative Assembly. Åland has to implement EU directives but does not take direct part in the negotiations and preparations at an international level.

Åland develops its contacts with Brussels mainly via Helsinki. Mr Johansson also gave information about Åland's parliament and government. The parliament has 30 members which are appointed through elections and their working term is four years. The working methods regulated in detail, all matters prepared in one of the five committees. Parliament has legislative and budgetary power, which appoints and controls the Government. Government prepares the bills and the budget, responsible for the administration of the sectors within the competence of the Autonomy.

He further explained about The Åland Delegation which is headed by the governor. According to Mr. Johansson, the Åland Delegation gives its opinions on acts passed by the Legislative Assembly, decides on matters concerning economic equalisation and tax distribution and gives opinions to State authorities. It consists of 4 members, 2 appointed by the Legislative Assembly and 2 by the Finnish Government and it is chaired by the governor.

Speaking about language provisions, Mr Johansson said that Finland is bi-lingual (Finnish and Swedish) with Åland as an exception based on the decisions in Geneva in 1921. The official language on Åland is Swedish and shall be used by the Åland administration, the state administration in Åland and in the municipal administration. The language of correspondence between Åland and the State officials in Finland is also Swedish. A Finnish citizen has the right to use Finnish before a court and with State officials in Åland. The language of education in schools maintained by the public is Swedish, unless provided in an act of Parliament of Åland. Rules and regulations to be followed in Åland shall be available in Swedish. Satisfactory proficiency in Swedish is necessary when the right of domicile is granted on application.

Mr Johansson discussed further the right of domicile. Following the Act on Autonomy, the right to domicile is granted automatically to a child under 18 years who is a citizen of Finland if the father or mother has the right of domicile and he/she are residents on Åland, or upon application if the person has lived for at least five years in Åland and has satisfactory proficiency in Swedish. The right of domicile gives the right to vote and stand as a candidate in elections to the Legislative Assembly, to acquire real property, to establish a business (bigger than a one man family business), as well as freedom from military service conscription in Finland. As Mr Johansson explained, that right of domicile is lost after having lived for more than five years outside Åland, something which is currently under debate.

In his conclusion he stated that the reforms of the autonomy are today prepared with Finnish and Ålandic representatives as equal parties in a process of negotiation and compromise aimed at achieving agreement. This is a consensus mode that has developed over time.

## **Conclusion**



The seminar concluded with a panel debate among all speakers. Among the themes that were highlighted were the importance of culture preservation as a common agenda in both regions, the potential lying in regional and interregional cooperation and the importance of creating an environment which is challenging and inspiring for the younger generation. The seminar was formally closed by the Director of the Japan Local Government Mr Noboru Fujishima who thanked all speakers and participants for rich presentations and constructive and engaged debates.

## **Joint Okinawa Prefecture - Åland Islands Seminar: “Transforming the Relationship with Central Government”**

**Programme 1-2 September 2009**

**September 1st**

**1st session: 9.00-12.00**

9.00-9.30 **Opening of the seminar:** The current Åland representative to the Finnish parliament, Ms

Elisabeth Nauc ler, and First Secretary (Cultural & Press Attache) of Embassy of Japan to Finland, Mr Kunihiko Yasuda, will open the seminar

9.30-10.15 **Sub-theme 1A: General outline of Okinawa prefecture**

Mr Uehara Uehara (Deputy Director General in charge of Industry and Employment Department of

Tourism, Commerce & Industry Okinawa Prefectural Government)

10.15-10.30 Discussion

10.30-11.00 Coffee Break

11.00- 11.45 **Sub-theme 1B: Economic situation Åland**

Dr Richard Palmer, Åland Statistics and Research (ÅSUB)

11.45-12.00 Discussion

12.00 -13.30 Lunch Break. Lunch for speakers and staff at Arkipelag with compliments from the Åland Islands Peace Institute

**2nd Session: 13.30-16.30**

13.30-14.15 **Sub-theme 2A: Issues of culture and peace on Okinawa**

Dr Masako Ikegami (Director of the Center for Pacific Asia Studies, Stockholm University)

14.15- 14.30 Discussion

14.30-15.15 **Sub-theme 2B: Issues of peace on Åland**

Dr Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark, director of the Åland Islands Peace Institute

15.15-15.30 Discussion

15.30-17.30 Meeting for future collaborations, such as youth exchange and newsletter

17.30 Reception at the Mariehamn City Hall- open to all

19.30 Dinner at the ÅSS pavilion for speakers and staff with compliments from the Åland Islands Peace Institute

## **September 2nd**

### **3rd Session: 8.30-12.00**

8.30-9.15 **Sub-theme 3A: Political/ legal system Okinawa**

Dr. Jun Shimabukuro (University of the Ryukyus)

9.15-9.30 Discussion

9.30-10.15 **Sub-theme 3B: Political/ legal issues Åland**

Mr Lars Ingmar Johansson, former director of the Åland parliament

10.15-10.30 Discussion

10.30-11.00 Coffee break

11.00-12.00 Panel debate and discussion including representative of Shizuoka University, Dr Fujio Ohnishi. Moderator Ms Barbro Sundback, member of the Åland parliament

12.00-12.10 Closing. Mr Noboru Fujishima, Director of JLGC, will make a closing remark.

12.00-13.30 Lunch break. Lunch for speakers and staff at Arkipelag with compliments from the Åland Islands Peace Institute

14.00 Excursion (Pommern )

## **List of Participants**

### **Mr Uehara Uehara**

Deputy Director General for Industry and Employment Department of tourism, commerce, industry

Okinawa prefectural government

### **Dr Richard Palmer**

is currently working as a researcher at *Statistics- and Research Åland*.

Before moving to Mariehamn and Åland in 2005 he taught in the international relations program at Stockholm University in the areas of international economic

history, economic development, political economy and globalization. His research focused on economic globalization and multinational corporations.

Palmer received his PhD in 2001 at the *Department of Economic History, Stockholm University*.

### **Dr Masako Ikegami**

Is currently working as Professor & Director of the Center for Pacific Asia Studies (CPAS), Stockholm University.

Her special fields of interest are inter-disciplinary and comparative studies combining sociology (modern nation-state theory), political sciences (policy analysis), world politics/international relations, political- and social economy (industrial- and technology policy), and sociology of science & technology, on issues of security policy- & decision-making process (national and regional security of Japan and the Asia- Pacific), and research and development (R&D) policy.

Dr Ikegami is a doctor of Sociology from Tokyo University and holds a PhD in Peace and Conflict Research, from the Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University (1998).

### **Dr Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark**

Is the Director of the Åland Islands Peace Institute since 2007, and responsible for the research activities. She is associate professor in international law from the University of Uppsala (Sweden)

Spiliopoulou Åkermark has published two books, six edited volumes, and more than 60 articles and reports in the fields of international law, demilitarization, indigenous peoples and minority rights, multiculturalism and autonomy arrangements.

### **Dr. Jun Shimabukuro**

Is currently working as Professor of Politics at the University of the Ryukyus.

His fields of interest are mainly sub -national and comparative politics. In 1998 he undertook a study visit to Scotland to research autonomy. He has published extensively on issues of decentralization, regionalization and constitutional processes in Japan and in other countries and regions.

### **Mr Lars Ingmar Johansson**

Retired in 2008 from his position as Director of the administration of the Åland Parliament, a post which he held since 1983.

Mr Lars Ingmar Johansson has had several contacts with Japanese representatives, such as diplomats, journalists, the Nitobe Foundation, Japan Local Government Centre and the Governor of the Iwate province, Mr Hirayo Masuda. He is the Deputy Chairman of Ålands kulturstiftelse (The Åland Cultural Foundation), Member of the

board of the Åland Peace Institute and has published articles and lectures especially in the field of the autonomy of the Åland Islands.

Mr Lars Ingmar Johansson holds an MA in political science and law from Åbo Akademi University (1969).

### **Ms Barbro Sundback**

Is currently member of the Åland parliament. Ms Sundback has been a member of the Åland parliament since 1979 and was its speaker between the years of 2005 and 2007. As a Member of Parliament, she has taken up the issue of awareness building and prevention of trafficking in women within Europe. She has also been deeply involved in peace education and peace building activities.

She is the chairperson of the Board of the Åland Islands Peace Institute and one of its key founders.

### **Dr Fujio Ohnishi**

Is currently a visiting fellow at the Wider Europe Research Centre (WERC) at Shizuoka University.

He has recently been visiting fellow at the Barents Institute in Kirkenes, Norway, where he has undertaken research on the structure and functions of Barents cooperation. Dr Ohnishi is actively implementing regional work in Japan through his membership in the Shizuoka City Council of Public Promotion of Local Self-government.

Ohnishi holds a PhD in International Relation from Nihon University, Japan where he also is Adjunct Lecturer in International Relations and Interdisciplinary Regional Studies, specializing on the Nordic countries. Based on his knowledge of Scandinavian languages he analyzed in his thesis the peaceful steps in the settlement of the status and democratic structure of the islands of Åland.