PERFORMING OKINAWAN:
BRIDGING CULTURES THROUGH MUSIC IN A DIASPORIC SETTING

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI‘I AT MĀNOA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

IN

ASIAN STUDIES

MAY 2014

By

Lynette K. Teruya

Thesis Committee:

Christine R. Yano, Chairperson
Gay M. Satsuma
Joyce N. Chinen

Keywords: Okinawans in Hawai‘i, diasporic studies, identity, music, performance
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Okage sama de, ukaji deebiru, it is thanks to you...

It has taken many long years to reach this point of completion. I could not have done this project alone and my heart is filled with much gratitude as I acknowledge those who have helped me through this process.

I would like to thank my thesis committee -- Drs. Christine Yano, Gay Satsuma, and Joyce Chinen -- for their time, patience, support and encouragement to help me through this project. Finishing this thesis while holding down my full-time job was a major challenge for me and I sincerely appreciate their understanding and flexibility. My thesis chair, Dr. Yano, spent numerous hours reviewing my drafts and often gave me helpful feedback to effectively do my revisions.

I would also like to thank my sensei, Katsumi Shinsato, his family, and fellow members of the Shinsato Shosei Kai; without their cooperation and support, this particular thesis could not have been done. I would also like to thank Mr. Ronald Miyashiro, who produces the Hawaii Okinawa Today videos, for generously providing me with a copy of the Hawaii United Okinawa Association’s Legacy Award segment on Katsumi Shinsato; it was a valuable resource for my thesis.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends who have always been my pillars of support as they encouraged me through all of my endeavors. I would especially like to thank my family, for their love and for always believing in me.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments ............................................................................................................. ii

List of Figures .................................................................................................................... v

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION ....................................................................................1

  Theoretical Framework
    Identity
    Identities in Hawai‘i
    Culture
    Diaspora
    Performance

  Historical Background of Okinawans in Hawai‘i
    History of Okinawan music in Hawai‘i

  Methodology

  Significance of This Work

  Organization

CHAPTER 2. A LIFE HISTORY –
KIBEI NISEI SANSHIN GRAND MASTER KATSUMI SHINSATO .........................29

  In Okinawa

  Return to Hawai‘i

    Sanshin nu Michi  三線ぬ道 (The Path of the Sanshin) = The Life of Katsumi
    Shinsato

  Establishment of the Shinsato Shosei Kai

CHAPTER 3. LESSONS IN BEING “OKINAWAN” ..............................................44

  Physical space and arrangement

  Classes

  Payment / Tuition

    The Instruments and the First Lesson

    Music Books

    Learning Culture
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Genealogical Chart of *Uta-sanshin* in Hawai‘i by Takenobu Higa ..........22
Figure 2. Nomura-ryū *Kunkunshi* ..............................................................57
Figure 3. *Kunkunshi* with Lyrics Transcribed in *Rōmaji* ..........................58
Figure 4. Recital Booklets ..............................................................................72
Figure 5. Shinsato Shosei Kai Formal Dress 2011 Shinnenkai Group Photo ..........74
Figure 6. Shinsato Shosei Kai Aloha Uniform at 2009 HUOA Okinawan Festival...75
Figure 7. Katsumi Shinsato and Grandchildren at 2007 Legacy Award Banquet ....95
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Okinawan music and dance have become part of Hawai‘i’s multicultural soundscape that continues to evolve. Through performing arts, Okinawans in Hawai‘i have created a vibrant ethnic community that is a unique piece in the multicultural patchwork known as “local” that is Hawai‘i’s society. Okinawan music, particularly as a transnational product, is a vessel into which fluid, intangible, and transforming elements of Okinawan culture can be infused. It flows through a diasporic community, as it flexibly reaches out to all who choose to listen. It evokes emotions or sentiments that are interpreted as feeling connected with Okinawa or things “Okinawan” in some people, despite the fact that they might not even understand the Okinawan language in which the songs are sung. Some describe feeling melancholy when listening to certain songs, while others describe an exuberant feeling of wanting to dance when listening to other songs. Still others say that it brings back fond memories of Jiji or Baban1 (grandparents), memories of the now-departed issei.2 It is a kind of memory device or tool as well as a vehicle through which the younger generations explore their cultural heritage and identities. Thus, music, as a form of expressive culture creates diasporic citizenry of people of Okinawan ancestry in Hawai‘i by infusing sounds, practices, and aesthetics defined as “being Okinawan” (that is, creating a tangible link to Okinawa as homeland) as a means of inventing and circumscribing community.

Okinawan music has become a symbolic marker of Okinawan culture and studying uta-sanshin 歌三線3 teaches that it is not only about learning how to play an instrument or sing a song. It is also about learning the meanings, symbolisms, and cultural elements tied to or embedded in the music. In order to create the aforementioned diasporic citizenry, it takes people who have a body of knowledge, skill sets, and experiences to teach especially the younger people. It is through the knowledge, skills,

---

1 In Hawai‘i, issei grandparents, particularly those from Okinawa, were often called “Jiji [Grandpa]” or “Baban [Grandma].” While these were seen as terms of endearment to many Okinawans in Hawai‘i, today, they are seldomly used for the nisei or sansei grandparents, because these terms connote “old” and conjure up certain images of what a jiji or baban was, how they did certain things (including the way they dressed).

2 Japanese- or Okinawan-Americans distinguish between the different generations with terms like issei, nisei, sansei, yonsei, and gosei, which are the first-, second-, third-, fourth-, and fifth-generation Japanese (or Okinawan)-Americans, respectively.

3 Uta-sanshin is the performing art that involves singing to the accompaniment of the sanshin, an Okinawan musical instrument that is a core instrument in most Okinawan musical performances. Uta-sanshin = song (singing) 歌 + sanshin 三線.
and understanding of the importance of creating these connections that these teachers are able to develop in their students a cultural awareness and a sense of a collective identity, a sense of belonging, in the diasporic community.

But how was it possible for the “traditional” performing arts of Ryukyu⁴ to be “re-planted” and “re-generated” in a location thousands of miles away? How is it possible for it to continue to have an influence on the sansei, yonsei, and younger generations many years later, even shaping their thoughts or imaginings on the maintenance of an “Okinawan” identity and whatever that means? In other words: What are the transmission processes by which something labeled “Okinawan identity” develops in a musical diasporic setting of 21st century Hawai’i, and what follows from these transmission processes? More specifically, how do the particularistic life experiences of one teacher of Okinawan music in Hawai’i become a generalized reference to an “Okinawan identity”?

This project uses a case study approach that focuses on a 91-year-old kibei nisei 帰米二世⁵ uta-sanshin master, Katsumi Shinsato 新里勝美 (b. 1922 in Waipahu, Hawai’i), who has taught over a hundred students over the past 38 years. In this study, I explore how the kibei nisei life experiences of Shinsato contribute to his views of Okinawan identity and his musical activities through which he teaches Okinawan culture and values to the younger generations. By studying the uta-sanshin master’s teaching and performances, my aim is to understand: 1) the significant role that people like Shinsato play in guiding the process of creating this diasporic citizenry; and 2) how the practice of uta-sanshin has been an important and useful “tool” of influence through which “Okinawan traditions” and values have been inculcated into the younger generations. Consequently, an ethnic identity is shaped, perpetuated, and reinforced in a multicultural location far from the ancestral homeland. I explore the process by which he infuses Okinawan values into his activities to invigorate the culture in a diasporic community and how this might contribute to the construct of an ethnic (Okinawan) identity that may have an impact on future generations. Through this case study, I will explore how he

---

⁴ Okinawa was once a kingdom called “Ryukyu 琉球” and has been called that in different periods of its history. Ryukyu is still used in naming Okinawa-related entities today.
⁵ Kibei nisei is a term used to refer to people who were born in the United States but sent to Japan/Okinawa to be raised and subsequently returned to the U.S. This will continue to be defined and discussed throughout the thesis.
negotiates, navigates, and fills the cultural spaces or gaps by teaching students who have varying life experiences, both generational and geographical (i.e., where they grew up). This thesis also presents both an opportunity for me to document the life and life’s work of Katsumi Shinsato, while researching expressive culture and the role it has in the process of fortification of a diasporic identity.

I place emphasis on kibei because the kibei experience is quite unique from that of other nisei who were raised in Hawai‘i or the continental U.S. I contend that Shinsato’s life experiences, including growing up in Okinawa and studying with the issei uta-sanshin masters upon his return to Hawai‘i, make it possible for him to be the bridge between his students and people from Okinawa as well as with the long-gone issei. He is able to explain to his students how things were in pre-World War II Okinawa through examples of his own historical experiences and is also able to tell the stories in ways that make things relevant to his students today. The cultural references he provides through uta-sanshin lessons expand the cultural foundations of his students and make him a valuable Okinawan cultural resource to his students.

With culture being something fluid, flexible, and interactive, an identity influenced by such a culture is neither static nor one-dimensional. Yet, it is interesting to observe how, in a diasporic community, a symbolic, expressive cultural form like Okinawan music can be infused with “Okinawan traditions” and values so as to create a strong affinity with the ancestral homeland and give people a sense of what it means to “be Okinawan” by their participation in doing uta-sanshin. However, I have observed many changes in the Shinsato Shosei Kai 新里勝声会, the group made up of Katsumi Shinsato’s students, over these past seventeen years among the different generations. Some of the members have come and gone, while others continue to participate, but not without the changes that come with time, as they go through different stages of their lives with different priorities and needs. Of course, Shinsato also has adapted in the ways that he teaches and conducts classes over the years, as well as how he interacts with his students of varying ages and generations. But in all of this, the one constant over the years is that Shinsato serves as a cultural guidepost for his students, a position in which he is placed (ascribed) by them, as he teaches them various cultural aspects of Okinawa, all through his musical activities.
Since much of Okinawan culture (religion, rituals and observances, etc.) are not practiced widely by Okinawans in Hawai‘i today, expressive culture plays an important role in creating the means and spaces for them to still do something “Okinawan” and maintain a connection with the ancestral homeland. As Wesley Ueunten pointed out in his doctoral dissertation:

“[…] while any kind of ‘pure’ Okinawan culture no longer exists, Okinawan music and dance in various hybrid forms […] have survived Okinawan experiences of occupation, immigration, assimilation, oppression and discrimination both in the homeland of Okinawa and/or [in] diasporic Okinawan communities.” (Ueunten 2007, 7)

Furthermore, it is not only in Hawai‘i that “Okinawan culture” is under threat; it applies in the homeland of Okinawa, as well. Thus, the movement to “preserve Okinawan culture” from the outside spurs and influences the movement on the inside. In order to explore these issues, I begin by laying down a foundation with a theoretical framework upon which I draw for my analyses.

**Theoretical Framework**

There are a few key concepts that form the foundation of my theoretical framework on diasporic identity, many of them intrinsically intertwined with each other. Since I maintain that music (expressive culture) creates diasporic citizenry, identity, is central to the other key concepts of culture, diaspora, and performance. Thus, that is where I will start.

*Identity*

Identities describe who we are individually, as well as whom we are collectively in our socially oriented, constructed groups (communities). Judy Rohrer provides a good description of identity’s characteristics: “Identity is relational, contested, contingent, negotiated, produced, manipulated, multiple, socially and historically constructed” (Rohrer 1997, 141).

What this tells us is that identities never exist and are never created in a vacuum and necessitate that there be other agents to provide juxtapositions against which comparisons and contrasts can be made to determine similarities and differences which, in turn, help to determine the layout of our boundaries. Identities are complex constructs of the social world in which we live and are formed by the definitions held by individuals...
or groups about themselves, as well as by those definitions ascribed to them by others outside the group. They are developed by tensions exerted internally as well as externally through our interactions and experiences.

That being said, the theories put forth by Stuart Hall and Dorinne Kondo are similar in that they both look at identity as an ongoing, negotiable process of being. As Hall points out, “identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think.” He suggests that “instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, […] we should think, instead, of identity as a ‘production,’ which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside representation” (Hall 1990, 222). Likewise, in her book *Crafting Selves*, Dorinne Kondo maintains that identity is continuously in process of being created and negotiated:

“[…] the product of a complex negotiation, taking place within specific, but shifting, contexts where power and meaning, ‘personal’ and ‘political,’ are inseparable. Identity is not a fixed ‘thing,’ it is negotiated, open, shifting, ambiguous, the result of culturally available meanings and the open-ended, power-laden enactments of those meanings of everyday situations.” (Kondo 1989, 24)

She emphasizes that identity is not static and reminds us that it is important to remember that identities may change as transformations takes place. According to Kondo, identity is not seamless and can be fragmentary and conflicting. It is a sutured product with many pieces, each steeped with meaning that we acquire through our interactions and experiences in our daily lives, that are stitched together (Kondo 1989, 25).

It is also important to keep in mind that not all identities may be “equal” and, in cases where power is not balanced, “the external definitions play a large role in shaping internal definitions” (Yano, 2012). Thus, identity is an arena for power play in its negotiations and much of the power often lies with the majority or the dominant group. Therefore, when discussing identity, it is important to understand what majorities/minorities constitute and how they are formed. Dru Gladney, in his introduction to *Making Majorities*, mentions that majorities and minorities are constructed and marked by societies “under specific historical, political, and social circumstances” (Gladney 1998, 1). He claims that each constructs its majority for “specific and divergent reasons” that are historically and politically placed. He also states
that many times, while it is the accepted majority that defines the minority, those who study ethnicity or cultural identities do not start by asking how the center got to where it is, but instead often look to the periphery (Gladney 1998, 2). One of the ways that majorities and minorities are made is through alterity, a relationship of contrast between self and other, bringing out center-periphery relations, also sometimes employing methods of essentialization or marginalization. Another way for these groups to be formed is through the employment and internalization of stigma, which is the arbitrary “social disapproval of personal characteristics or beliefs that are perceived to be against cultural norms” (Yano, 2012). Stigmas may be inflicted through the use of stereotypes. These types of power plays determine whose voices get heard, whose voices are muted, and which kinds of representations are put forth. Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney offers a “model” for the study of cross-cultural discourse of majorities/minorities as follows:

“First, our endeavor must be historicized, because any minority/majority discourse at present is a product of historical development. Second, the model proposed here is general enough to serve to understand cultural construction of alterity, which is always characterized by a dialectic process of self and other, including external and internal others. Third, majority/minority relationship is by definition hierarchically ordered, with power inequality according differential access to the process of marking and unmarking a social group.” (Ohnuki-Tierney 1998, 51)

Although a majority may have the numbers, it does not necessarily always mean that it has more power politically. Gladney says that “numerical majorities do not always hold political power, and […] peoples do not always seek to join majorities. Yet numbers always do matter in the construction of majorities, even if the politically powerful are not always numerous” (Gladney 1998, 7).

One other important element tied to identity is representation. Hall says that “identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past” (Hall 1990, 225). This positionality, or enunciation as he calls it, is important because it informs the representation put forth. It also adds historicity and specificity when, as he mentioned, “[w]e all write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture which is specific. What we say is always ‘in context’, positioned” (Hall 1990, 222). However, as Gladney points out, since the end of the Cold War, “social and political manipulations of culture and its
representations” are critically viewed because it is often the majorities and institutions that manage most of the “cultural production and consumption.” He also says there is a second concern about how the minority “other” is handled and represented. This refers to the “ethical and political problems inherent in cross-cultural accounts of one culture that are produced by another, observing culture or by a hegemonic state” because the minorities are often exoticized or eroticized for political and economic reasons (Gladney 1998, 3-4). How they are represented makes a difference and Gladney says that “[r]epresentation is crucial to the making of majorities.” The way in which they are depicted marks differences in social and cultural status. Also, whether a macro- or micro-view is applied, definitions can be expanded or collapsed “depending on political posturing” (Gladney 1998, 7). It determines how something is portrayed or what kind of voice something is given.

These various factors affect the processes by which identities are negotiated. Gay Garland Reed provides a clever metaphor6 as she refers to the process of negotiating identities as the “fastening,” “unfastening,” and “refastening” of identities. She defines “fastening” specifically as “[…] the work that individuals do to claim insider status for themselves and for others. […] They are fastened by the categories we have available and by the ways that we submit to those categories and subject others to them.” She says that sometimes “fastening” is intentional with the purposes of creating group solidarity or “belonging.” With regard to “unfastening,” she says that it may either be “constructive or deconstructive” and occurs when one moves between different cultural contexts which have different “norms and rules for membership.” She emphasizes that “the process is never unidirectional,” meaning that as you unfasten one, another is being fastened in its place “simultaneously and in multidimensional ways” (Reed 2001, 329). One important point she makes about identity negotiation is that “cultivation of sensibilities and attitudes” are as important as are “ethnic heritage and history” because “their salience is derived from meanings that insiders and outsiders infuse them with and from the work that insiders and outsiders do to fasten, unfasten and refasten identity.” It is also

---

6 Likewise, another metaphoric imagery that comes to mind is from Frantz Fanon’s title of his book, *Black Skin, White Mask;* the concept of masking and unmasking one through identity negotiations.
important to remember that it is something that is done by us, as well as to us (Reed 2001, 337), voluntarily or involuntarily.

*Identities in Hawai‘i*

Hawai‘i is often considered a cultural anomaly of the United States. Reed states, “Cultural differences in Hawai‘i seem to align Asian and Pacific Island groups in collective contrast to US mainland values and interactive styles” (Reed 2001, 328). Because Hawai‘i underwent historical and social processes that were significantly different from the continental U.S., its cultural and social perspectives, which have been influenced and shaped by these processes, allow for a different kind of identity formation in Hawai‘i. Hawai‘i, unlike the continental United States, does not have a dominant single ethnic group and is a community made up of minorities. However, it does have what is called “local identity,” a pan-ethnic identity which, as Jonathan Okamura claims, has “come to represent the common identity of people of Hawai‘i and their shared appreciation of the land, peoples and cultures of the islands” (Okamura 1994, 162).

“Local” identity embeds meaning and marks the “insiders” from the “outsiders.” Okamura offers that this is a result of:

“[…] increasing marginalization of Hawai‘i’s people to external sources of power and control. Continued affirmation of local identity over the past decade represents an expression of opposition to outside control and change of Hawai‘i and its land, peoples, and cultures.” (Okamura 1994, 162)

This identity has evolved over time and has been debated over the different types of social issues that are embedded in it, including the impact it has had on the status of Native Hawaiian people, or the *kanaka maoli*, as they call themselves. In a way, the term “local” flattens and homogenizes the people of Hawai‘i.

However, identity in Hawai‘i is not so simple as to just distinguish between “local” and “non-local.” Often it involves understanding what social and cultural codes are in operation when deciding which identity to fasten. Many in Hawai‘i also identify with different specific ethnic identities as well, and how they choose to identify themselves in the moment depends on the situation. Thus, identity is situationally placed.

---

7 In his article “Why There are No Asian Americans in Hawai‘i,” Okamura says that its prominence might be one reason why people in Hawai‘i do not necessarily readily identify with the term or identity “Asian American” as they do in other parts of the US (Okamura 1994, 161).
As Reed reports, Hawai‘i presents “a geographic context where mainland US categories are not normalized and […] social and cultural arrangements elicit different patterns of identity construction and negotiation” (Reed 2001, 327).

Identity in Hawai‘i is complex because of all of the aforementioned reasons. However, there is one more compelling reason why Hawai‘i’s identity politics is so different. Some of it goes back to what some believe to be the contested illegal overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawai‘i by the US, but it also stems from the days of plantations. During the plantation era, many laborers were brought in from Asia and Europe to work in the sugarcane fields, forcing the different groups of people to work and live together on the plantations. The plantations were run by white bosses who often mistreated the laborers. Over time, the other different ethnic groups formed a tacit alliance/coalition as a result of the abuse they received. Thus, as Rohrer explains, “Hawaii’s ethnically mixed population and history as an independent kingdom colonized by the United States makes being a white person here a completely different experience than anywhere else in the country. In Hawai‘i, white does not blend in; it stands out” (Rohrer 1997, 140). The effects that Rohrer is describing here is a result of what Reed calls “repositioning of whiteness and Eurocentric culture away from the centre,” making white people “less invisible” than they ordinarily would be in any other part of the US through the process of normalization (where ordinarily “white (American)” culture would be the norm) (Reed 2001, 328). Hall states, “The boundaries of difference are continually repositioned in relation to different points of reference” (Hall 1990, 227).

**Culture**

The types of identities of which I speak are deeply embedded with culture. There are many different definitions of “culture” offered by different social scientists, but the one that best suits my purposes in this thesis is Clifford Geertz’s definition. Geertz defines culture as:

“Culture is a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life” (Geertz 1973, 89).

In his essay “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” Hall says that there are at least two ways in which cultural identities might be pondered, from considerations of both
similarities and differences. One way is via a shared culture, in which people collectively share the same cultural codes and historical experiences, from which they form “stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of [their] actual history.” This creates what Hall calls an “oneness” among the certain groups of people, that he says is the “truth, the essence” and of which they must excavate to “rediscover” this “( __ )–ness” in their cultural identity. This is what, he says, “profoundly reshaped our world” in the post-colonial discourse (Hall 1990, 223-224). However, as he goes on to explain, it is not only from shared culture that identities are shaped.

The other way, he says, comes from looking at “critical points of deep and significant difference which constitute ‘what we really are’ […] ‘what we have become’” as a result of the changes through our histories. He emphasizes that one cannot speak of “one experience, one identity” without addressing the “ruptures and discontinuities” which make up a particular culture’s “uniqueness” (Hall 1990, 225).

Hall points out that it is just as important to look at what we have become (and the processes involved in the transformation) in addition to what we are. In addition to calling identity a “production” as mentioned earlier, he also goes on to state that identities are “subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture, and power” (Hall 1990, 225) and its representations are always positioned. But these positionings are arbitrary and “meanings continue to unfold” (Hall 1990, 230).

Hall came up with a paradigm to explain the formation of a cultural identity that neither proceeds in a straight nor unbroken line. He uses a vector diagram with two axes: one axis represents “difference and rupture,” while the other represents “similarity and continuity.” He asserts that the identity is framed by these axes and in one there is “grounding in and continuity with the past” while there is a “discontinuity with the past” in the other. What this vector diagram demonstrates is the concept that “difference […] persists – in and alongside continuity” (Hall 1990, 227).

*Diaspora*

Another critical component in my theoretical framework is the discussion of “diaspora.” “Diaspora” is etymologically derived from the Greek language, “dia-” (meaning “across”) and “sperien” (meaning “to scatter”). It has a historical and religious
significance, as it originally referred to the Jews who were exiled and living outside their homeland of Palestine, suggesting “a dislocation from the nation-state or geographical location of origin and a relocation in one or more nation-states, territories, or countries” (Braziel and Mannur 2003, 1).

In his article “Diasporas,” James Clifford adapts William Safran’s definition of “diaspora” as a working definition. He cites and summarizes the main features of Safran’s definition as:

“‘Expatriate minority communities’ […having] history of dispersal [from an original ‘center’], myths/memories of the homeland, alienation in the host (bad host?) country, desire for eventual return, ongoing support of the homeland, and a collective identity importantly defined by this relationship.” (Clifford 1994, 304-305)

Based on this definition as a checklist, many groups do not qualify as diaspora. They, instead, fall into a “quasi” diaspora category, as many of them might meet some of the criteria but not all as outlined by Safran. Yet, Clifford goes on to say:

“Safran is right to focus attention on defining diaspora […] and his comparative approach is certainly the best way to specify a complex discursive and historical field.” (Clifford 1994, 305)

However, understandably, he expresses his own uneasiness as he says that Safran idealizes the Jewish diaspora as a “definitive model” to which other “diasporic” groups are held up and judged on conformity as formulated by his definition (Clifford 1994, 305-306). Clifford argues that a more polythetic definition would allow for more flexibility and take into consideration the ambivalent features of a diaspora. He cites other research and points out that, even for the Jewish diaspora, there were points in its history where even it did not meet all of Safran’s criteria.

Thus, Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur explain, “new currencies in globalist discourses confound the one (presumed to be) clearly demarcated parameters of geography, national identity, and belonging.” Braziel and Mannur mention that diaspora can also be a term of “other” in which it historically refers to “displaced communities of people who have been dislocated from their native homeland through the movements of migration, immigration, or exile” (Braziel and Mannur 2003, 1). Going beyond that, Vijay Agnew writes that the definitions for “diaspora” have “expanded to incorporate
situations that are not associated with forced dispersals or a desire to return.” In fact, it may now also refer to an “ability to recreate a culture in diverse locations” (Agnew 2005, 4).

Clifford says that “the term diaspora is a signifier, not simply of transnationality and movement, but also of political struggles to define the local, as distinctive community, in historical contexts of displacement” (Clifford 1994, 308). Along the same line, Hall adapted a metaphor-based schema, the three “presences” in the Afro-Caribbean diaspora, from Aimee Cesaire and Leopold Senghor and used it in his essay. I have taken these examples and tried to generalize and make it applicable to any diaspora.

The first “presence” is what Hall calls “the site of the repressed [suppressed as well?),” which may also be thought of as the original “homeland” that is now symbolic. This is the “unspoken and unspeakable ‘presence’ in [… the] culture” (Hall 1990, 230). However, as Hall reminds us, it took other world events like the ethnic revitalization movements in the 1960s and 1970s to mobilize people and bring out “hidden” identities (i.e. minority identities), as they turned associated stigmas into badges of pride (Hall 1990, 231; Yano, 2012). Hall writes:

“The original ‘Africa’ is no longer there. It too has been transformed. History is, in that sense, irreversible. We must not collude with the West which, precisely, normalizes and appropriates Africa by freezing it into some timeless zone of the primitive unchanging past. Africa must at last be reckoned with by Caribbean people, but it cannot in any simple sense by [sic] merely recovered.” (Hall 1990, 231)

He differentiates between the “old” original Africa that was and the “new” Africa that it has become in the New World and says that, they cannot “literally go home” to the “old” Africa, even though it is “a necessary part of the Caribbean imaginary” because their “belongingness to it constitutes what Benedict Anderson calls an ‘imaginary community’” (Hall 1990, 232). (This “new” Africa is transformed and now becomes part of the third “presence” that is discussed in a later paragraph.) He also points out that when one makes the necessary symbolic journeys, they are “necessarily circular” (Hall 1990, 232) and it is to the transformed “new” Africa to which return is made.

The second “presence” is the one of who holds the power. Hall says that it is “that which is endlessly speaking – and endlessly speaking us. […] It interrupts the innocence
of the whole discourse of ‘difference’ […] by introducing the question of power” (Hall 1990, 232). It is the dominant power that sometimes puts out a portrayal (representation) of a non-dominant group that positions the non-dominant group “within its dominant regimes of representation” (Hall 1990, 233). Because this dominant power is seen as an external agent by the non-dominant group, the non-dominant group often does not realize how this power has also become a part of its own identity’s make-up, imposing on and forcing it to acknowledge itself in its own status of “otherness” (Hall 1990, 233).

The third “presence” is a place that is not as much about power as it is a common space in which there is convergence. Hall calls it “the juncture-point where the many cultural tributaries meet, […] where strangers from every other part of the globe collided. […] It is the space where the creolisations and assimilations and syncretisms were negotiated” (Hall 1990, 234). Hall refers to diasporic identities as having energy that continues to transform as they “constant[ly] produc[e] and reproduces[e] themselves anew,” working with and through the differences that arise. The hybridity that comes from such transformations make heterogeneity and diversity necessary and valuable. At the same time, Hall states that, in diaspora, because a place becomes the narrative of displacement and return to the “origin” is not possible, that place itself as narrative becomes representative, symbolic, and transformed (Hall 1990, 235-236). In other words, the diasporic identity is one of rejuvenation and renewal – something old in its imagination becomes something new again.

Performance

As such, an identity is, in a way, a cultural performance that manifests itself in different forms. For example, music is a performative form of expressive culture “[…] and it ‘speaks’ with considerable power and subtlety as a discourse of difference” (Wong 2004, 3). It is this “difference” or contrast that creates the boundaries that shape identities or cultures, and those boundaries can be shifted, repositioned, and/or relocated. Music is a form of representation by which the story of a community can be imagined and told, its voices heard, its emotions conveyed, transcending time and space. To illustrate this, take Why Suyá Sing: A Musical Anthropology of an Amazonian People in which Anthony Seeger writes about the Suyá Indians of Mato Grosso, Brazil:
“The Suyá lend themselves to a musical anthropology because central parts of their social life are constituted through ceremonies and musical performances, […] they often define themselves as a group by certain song genres and by body ornaments they associate with the production of and attention to sounds. The sonic transparency of their community makes their village a concert hall, the seasonal organization of songs makes their year a concert series (or a simple piece of music), and the rites of passage make of their lives a process punctuated with transformations achieved through long periods of song.” (Seeger 2004, xiv)

It can be argued that this representation of the Suyá’s culture could be considered an outsider’s translation of what transpires in performance that is subject to the outsider’s interpretation. Nonetheless, it is a representation of the culture that informs about the specific place, people, and culture (or at the very least what the anthropologist had observed). As Deborah Wong explains:

“You don’t and can’t have access to someone else’s experience, only to a representation of it, and the process that brings it to you is deeply translative. This is inevitable. […] The artifact that the ethnographer creates may be a text, but it emerges from relationships with real people and an accountability that is potentially life changing.” (Wong 2004, 22)

**Historical Background of Okinawans in Hawai‘i**

In the previous section, we looked at various concepts and theories that are applied to this thesis in order to lay the foundation. Also vital to this foundation is the understanding, in particular, of Okinawan identities in Hawai‘i. It is first important to provide historical background of Okinawans in Hawai‘i, from the first arrival until now, including explanations of the social, political, and cultural elements that have shaped these identities. These explanations should provide the necessary insight into what the crucial circumstances/situations are/were that have greatly influenced the diasporic identities that the Hawai‘i Okinawans carry with them today.

The first group of Okinawan immigrants, a group of 26 men, arrived on Hawai‘i’s shores on January 8, 1900. It was an arduous journey that took them from Naha to Osaka, Osaka to Yokohama, and then from Yokohama to their final destination of Honolulu. There were initially 30 men in the group who were recruited by Tōyama Kyūzō 当山久三 (1868-1910) to go to work on Hawai‘i’s plantations.
Toyama Kyūzō was a school teacher who came to be known as the “Father of Okinawan Overseas Emigration.” According to the article by Matsumoto, Toyama heard about the emigration program in Tokyo where he went to study and recruited the first group of men in Okinawa to go to Hawai‘i. Toyama saw the potential of this as one possible solution to deal with the balance between the increasing population and economic depression with limited resources in Okinawa (Matsumoto 1982, 126-127).

The group of 30 men left Okinawa on December 5, 1899 for Osaka, from where they caught a train to Yokohama. Once there, three men were turned back because they did not pass the health examination. From there, the remaining 27 departed for Honolulu on December 30, 1899 aboard the SS China8 (Matsumoto 1982, 125-126; Kimura 1981, 53-54; Nakasone 2001, xi). Upon their arrival in Honolulu, one man was detained at the quarantine station and was later sent back to Okinawa. Thus, officially, there were 26 Okinawan immigrants with whom the history of Okinawans in Hawai‘i began. According to the figures given by Y. Scott Matsumoto in his article: from 1900 to 1907, there were 8,472 immigrants from Okinawa; from 1908 to 1924, there was an annual average of about 400 to 600 immigrants from Okinawa in Hawai‘i (Matsumoto 1982, 126).

Once in Hawai‘i, life on the plantation was far from being the paradise that most had envisioned when they left Okinawa. They endured long hours as their day began very early at 4am, with many of those hours working under the scorching sun, and under harsh working conditions with unforgiving luna, the supervisors who often whipped the laborers when they did not work fast enough. All of this was for a paltry wage. Yet, they persevered with dreams of someday going home with their hard-earned money (Kimura 1981 (1962), 54-55). A song by Eikichi Miyagi 宮城栄吉 (1904-????), Akogare no Hawai9, poignantly relates the story of the immigrants’ experiences, reminiscing about the time they left Naha Harbor, then years later as they hold fast to their dreams of someday going home in all their splendor, with their savings earned with sweat and tears (and blood):

Natsikashi nu Nafa-ko Nostalgic Naha Harbor,
Sudi nurachi wakari Our sleeves wet [with tears] as we parted,
Akugari nu Hawai As we crossed the ocean

8 Matsumoto and Kimura misidentify the ship as SS City of China.
9 Translated into English here by the author.
Watari miriba

Kuyishisa ya masati
Nniuchi nu umi ya
Yaya ni kayuwasuru
Yumiji tayuti

Asayu hatarachai
Hitu masai mōkiti
Ichī ga furusatu ni
Muduti ichura

Sakurabana sachuru
Hachiharu nu kuru ni
Nishichi kasaniyai
Muduti ichusa

Toward the Hawai‘i of our dreams.

The longing [for home] overwhelms us;
We cross the oceans in our hearts
Night after night,
All in our dreams.

We work day and night,
Striving to earn more than others.
When will we be able to go back
To our beloved homeland?

With the cherry blossoms a-bloom
Around one New Year’s,
Bedecked in my finest,
I shall [someday] return [home].

Of course, many resigned themselves to putting down roots in Hawai‘i after it became apparent to them that that was not going to happen.

Besides having to adjust to the hard work and unfamiliar life on the plantation, the Okinawans, or Uchinanchu as they referred to themselves, also had to deal with the discrimination they faced when coming into contact with the Naichi, or Japanese from the other prefectures. By the time the first Okinawans arrived in 1900, Japanese had been in Hawai‘i for over 30 years and its community was firmly established. Therefore, now the Okinawans were the “newcomers” and were seen as being different from the other Japanese. They were the minority (Okinawan) within a minority (Japanese) (Shimada 2012, 118-119).

It must be explained that historically, Okinawa or Ryukyu as it was called, was once an independent kingdom that flourished during the 14th - 16th century under trade with many other countries. It was also once a tributary of China, whereby envoys were sent to China bearing gifts for the emperor and in exchange, Ryukyu was recognized by the emperor, legitimizing Ryukyu as an independent kingdom. Also, Ryukyuan scholars were sent to China to study and learn about its culture and civilization while Chinese

---

10 Uchinaa is “Okinawa” and –nchu refers to “person” in the Okinawan language; hence, Okinawans refer to themselves as Uchinanchu (also spelled Uchinaanchu). They may refer to the Japanese from other prefectures as Yamatunchu. (Yamato, Yamatu in the Okinawan language, is a reference to the Japanese nation.) However, in Hawai‘i, the Japanese are more commonly referred to as Naichi. More accurately, Naichi is a historical reference to the main islands of Japan during Japan’s colonizing period. In Hawai‘i, however, the label “Naichi” came to be used in reference to the Japanese people rather than the place.
scholars were sent to Ryukyu to teach Chinese studies. Then, in 1609, after it was invaded by the Satsuma Clan of what is now modern-day Kagoshima Prefecture, Ryukyu also became a tributary of Japan. During this period, it actually became a quasi-kingdom that was under the control of Satsuma. Interestingly, the Ryukyuans were kept from dressing like Japanese and having names that sounded Japanese, even though the Satsuma (Japanese) controlled it. Satsuma forced Ryukyu to maintain a pretense of being an independent kingdom in order to continue relations with China and other countries.

Then, with the Meiji Restoration in 1868, Japan underwent a major transformation of modernization as it began its nation-state building process and the feudal system was abolished. With that there were many reforms and in 1872 the Ryukyuan Kingdom was abolished; in 1879 it was officially renamed Okinawa Prefecture.

Thus, at the point in history when the Okinawans came to Hawai‘i, Okinawa had been made a prefecture of Japan only 21 years earlier and reforms that were rapidly taking place in other parts of Japan were lagging in Okinawa. Part of the Meiji Government’s policies involved “standardizing” Japanese citizenry and for the Okinawans it was made doubly difficult because the language and cultural practices of Okinawa were significantly different from other parts of Japan. The difference in its culture was due in part to influences from China and Southeast Asia, which it picked up during its long history of trade with these areas and incorporated them into Ryukyuan/Okinawan culture that made “traditional” Okinawan culture different from the Japanese mainland culture. It also had its own language that was unintelligible to the mainland Japanese. This was the reason why the other Japanese who were already in Hawai‘i thought the Okinawans to be “backward” and “strange.”

Another factor contributing to the discrimination was their food culture and the fact that pork was a major part of the Okinawans’ diet and, therefore, many of them raised pigs. To the Japanese, raising pigs was considered “dirty” work and consuming pork that came from the pigs that ate “slop” was also considered “dirty” and, therefore, the Okinawans who consumed them were also “dirty.” Thus, in those early days, the

---

11 With the Meiji Restoration in 1868, the Meiji Government drastically reformed Japan, which in effect “Westernized” it as part of the process of building its nation-state.

12 When the Okinawans were forced to “learn” Japanese as part of standardization, it was as though they had to learn a foreign language.
Okinawan schoolchildren were taunted by their Japanese classmates at schools in Hawai‘i with the phrase “Okinawa ken-ken, buta kau-kau [Okinawa Prefecture, they eat pigs].” A stigma had been attached to being Okinawan and many wanted to erase it so that they could fit in with the other Japanese.

This carried over into a display of language politics whereby many of the issei sent their nisei children to Japanese language schools and in some households the parents did not speak the Okinawan language to their children at all (Shimada 2012, 119). Instead, they spoke Japanese or “pidgin” English (officially, Hawaii Creole English) to their children and only spoke Okinawan to one another or to their friends who also came from Okinawa. Some nisei said that their parents only spoke Okinawan in the home when they did not want their children to understand what they were saying to each other.

Still other parents sent their nisei children to Okinawa to be raised by grandparents or other relatives because the parents could not watch the children while they worked. Thus, unlike the other Japanese who sent their children to Japan specifically for the purpose of education, for many of the Okinawans the purpose was purely for economic reasons rather than to gain an education (Maehara Yamazato 2007, 84-85). Nonetheless, the children were schooled in Okinawa while they were there. Most would eventually return to Hawai‘i and because of that they were called kibei nisei (kibei literally means “return to America”). Therefore, they are second generation Okinawan/Japanese Americans by birthright who were sent to Okinawa/Japan as children and returned to Hawai‘i (America) after spending extended periods of time in Okinawa or Japan. Kinuko Maehara Yamazato defines kibei nisei as a “subset of ‘[n]isei’ […] born in the United States but educated […] in either Okinawa or mainland Japan, and returned to Hawai‘i as adults either before or after the war” (Maehara Yamazato 2007, 83). However, that definition appears to be quite restrictive in that she claims that they were adults when they returned to Hawai‘i. There are those who may have returned to Hawai‘i during their teenage years or maybe even slightly younger who identify themselves as “kibei,” being

13 While the Japanese language in Hawai‘i included mixtures of different dialects (Hiroshima, Yamaguchi, Fukushima, etc.) of the areas from where many of the issei emigrated, the largest group was from Hiroshima and, therefore, the Japanese language most often heard/spoken in Hawai‘i among the pre-war issei immigrants included many words and phrases from the Hiroshima dialect. Even the Okinawans used words and phrases from the Hiroshima dialect when speaking Japanese.
that they spent their formative years in Okinawa. The kibei experience will be discussed further in later chapters.

Shimada claims that “World War II brought positive changes for Hawai‘i’s Okinawans: economic advancement, improved social and political status, and freedom from discrimination by other Japanese” (Shimada 2012, 118). She said that the Okinawans felt the field had been leveled and Okinawans were in a better position because they offered things that were in demand. For example, when there was an increase in military personnel stationed or passing through Hawai‘i, there was more demand for pork, driving prices higher, and “required the cooperation of the Islands’ Okinawan pig farmers to secure a supply” and the military was even agreeable to giving pig farmers its food waste to feed the pigs. This allowed the farmers to feed the pigs practically for free and earn profit on pork sales as well. Also, restaurants that served American food were frequented by the military, earning the Okinawans a sound reputation in the restaurant business as well. This allowed the Okinawans to gain more in terms of political, economic, educational, and cultural grounds with more capital. They were now attending college and becoming professionals with upward mobility (Shimada 2012, 125-126). Many were now successful business owners. This lessened the discrimination they had faced in earlier years from the Japanese.

But other factors contributed to this lessening of discrimination as well. During World War II, many Okinawans joined the others in the military service to prove their loyalty to America. During this time, they focused on their loyalty to America and being American, as they fought side by side as brothers with the other Americans of Japanese ancestry. Not to mention, their service also allowed some of them to pursue college degrees once they returned home.

After the end of World War II, the Hawai‘i Okinawans, like other Okinawan diaspora in other locations, pulled together their resources to carry out relief efforts to help their relatives in Okinawa. This helped unify the Okinawan community in Hawai‘i for a common cause when otherwise they were often divided into factions. Shimada states:

“Postwar relief efforts truly strengthened Okinawans’ bond with their homeland, their identity as Okinawans, and unity within their communities. Faced with the task of rebuilding a war-torn Okinawa, they came together
with a common purpose, overcoming longstanding internal divisions among themselves” (Shimada 2012, 131).

One thing that Shimada did not consider in her article about the strengthening of an Okinawan identity in Hawai‘i, though, was the influences created by the various sociopolitical movements of the 1960s and 70s that had swept across not only the US but across the world. As Ueunten wrote:

“[R]acial dynamics in the U.S. would compel many sansei and yonsei to take an interest in their culture and heritage. As Michael Omi and Howard Winant write: “The upsurge of racially based movements which began in the 1950s was a contest over the *social meaning* of race. It was this process which created what we call ‘the great transformation’ of racial awareness, racial meaning, racial subjectivity” (Ueunten 2007, 94).

This is offered as an explanation for the increase of interest in Okinawan culture in Hawai‘i. These movements forced people to think about who they were and what made them the way they were. In 1980, the United Okinawan Association sponsored a leadership tour for the younger sansei generation to Okinawa. The trip made a tremendous impression on those who participated and compelled them to do more as a community and to take on roles of leadership. One thing that came out of this was the Okinawan Festival that is now being held every Labor Day weekend. It has been held at several different locations over the years but seems to have found a home at Kapiolani Park, and what was once a one-day event is now a full two-day event. This event has provided a venue for the performances of Okinawan culture and has made the culture highly visible to the general public.

Often, it is the aural and visual performances that capture the audience’s attention, namely the songs and dances of Okinawa. Then, sometimes this translates into interest taken in the history and culture which motivates people to learn more about them and even nurture a sense of pride in being part of that ethnic community. This brings us back to the point of my thesis statement that these forms of expressive culture play a major role in influencing the shaping of the diasporic community and identity in Okinawans in Hawai‘i.

The section below gives a historical overview of how a particular style of music, Nomura-ryū, the style studied and taught by the subject of this case study, came to be
established in Hawai‘i and who were some of the key persons responsible for making that happen. This background would provide the reader with the necessary historical settings, describing the development of Okinawan music in Hawai‘i and giving insight into what Shinsato himself does to perpetuate those “traditions” passed from the masters before him.

**History of Okinawan music in Hawai‘i**

The person who was credited for first teaching Okinawan *uta-sanshin* in Hawai‘i was Ryōei Nakama (仲真良永; 1875-1934). According to Takenobu Higa, Nakama arrived in Hawai‘i in 1906. He was originally from Awase-son 泡瀬村 (Awase Village; which is presently part of Okinawa City). He taught Nomura-ryū (Nomura School or Style) *uta-sanshin*, which he began learning at the age of nine from his father. At the age of twelve, he was scouted by Misato Weekata 美里親方 who was one of founder Nomura Anchō 野村安趙’s top students and placed under his tutelage. At age 16, he entered a prestigious *uta-sanshin* competition and won it. According to his son Ryōkin, as told in Higa’s book, Ryōei took and passed the test to serve the royal Shō Family; however, since he was not a music teacher he was hired to work for the royal Shō Family as a babysitter. But at the same time this afforded him access to some of the great court musicians and masters of Nomura-ryū like Kuwae Ryōkō 桑江良行 and Kuwae Ryōshin 桑江良慎 and he studied under them. Eventually, he ended his services with the Shō Family due to circumstances at home and returned to Awase. Shortly thereafter, though, he received word that an Okinawan entertainment troupe had been formed in Shuri and joined them to perform as the *jikata* 地謡 (musical accompaniment for performances) for Okinawan plays. He even went to Osaka and performed at the 1903 Osaka World Expo. In 1906, Nakama decided to go to Hawai‘i. There he began teaching *uta-sanshin* to his fellow Okinawans. Among the notables were two students, his son Ryōkin 良金 (1902-1976; issei; originally named Ryōtarugani 良樽金) and Eikichi Miyagi 宮城栄吉 (1904-??); issei), who both later became masters and taught many students of their own (see Higa’s genealogical chart for *uta-sanshin*, Fig. 1; Higa 1978, 13). When Nakama returned once again, this time permanently, to his native Awase in 1929, some of the Hawai‘i students went to Okinawa to continue their studies of *uta-sanshin* and he

14 “Weekata” is a rank of nobility.
Fig. 1: Genealogical Chart of *Uta-Sanshin* in Hawai‘i by Takenobu Higa
(Higa 1978, 13)
arranged for some of the great masters to go to Hawai‘i to teach the people in Hawai‘i. It was during this time, when his son Ryōkin and fellow master Eikichi Miyagi, who was Shinsato’s teacher, were teaching *uta-sanshin* and people were going between Okinawa and Hawai‘i, that a strong foundation was set for Okinawan music in Hawai‘i (Higa 1978, 14-18).

In his dissertation, Ueunten mentions that when the Okinawans came to Hawai‘i, one of the few things that they brought over with them was their music from their homeland which served to comfort them through their hardships in a strange, unfamiliar new land. Even when faced with discrimination by those from other prefectures, the music was the one element that they were able to share with others at events like bon dances. Although the other people called it “peculiar,” they tolerated that aspect of the Okinawan culture and it was allowed to continue to be openly performed amidst the local Japanese and Hawai‘i general community. Interestingly, Ueunten claims that the performance of Okinawan music and dance in Hawai‘i must be looked at as being “shaped within the context of the Japanese community in Hawai‘i” (Ueunten 2007, 80) because the “Okinawans resisted complete assimilation to Japanese culture by practicing and performing Okinawan music and dance in private” but, on the other hand, it was also because of other factors, such as the Okinawans’ demonstrated solidarity in their participation with the Japanese in the early labor movements, which the Japanese admired, that made it possible for them to perform publicly in the Japanese community (Ueunten 2007, 79-84). He points out that even in the 1930s:

“The public performances of Okinawan culture in the circle of the bon dance temporarily suspended the everyday discrimination that Okinawans experienced and the deep feelings of shame that Okinawans had for being Okinawan. This seeming contradiction between the everyday concealment of Okinawan culture and the acceptance of unabashed performances of Okinawan music and dance in the temporary circular space of the bon dance can be understood if we consider it as a space where Okinawans claimed membership in the Japanese race. Even though Okinawan songs and dances performed the bon dance stood out as ‘peculiar’ to the Naichi Japanese, Okinawans were participating in the bon dance as Japanese. By extension, Okinawan music and dance performed at the bon dance was also made Japanese.” (Ueunten 2007, 83-84)

Music and dance also played an important role in the Hawai‘i Okinawans’ efforts to raise funds to help with Okinawa’s recovery after World War II. Many of the performers put on fundraising performances that went toward helping Okinawa rebuild after the war. The monies raised provided food (livestock), medicine, and other necessities for the Okinawans in the
homeland. This working toward the common goal of raising funds to rebuild Okinawa unified
the otherwise factionalized Okinawan community in Hawai‘i. In some sense, the music and
dance provided the arena in which everyone came together (performers and audience) to be a
participant, whether as performer or observer, for the worthy cause.

The songs and dances also serve as important memory devices through which the
Okinawans in Hawai‘i continue to transmit history (or at least to provide ties to their issei
ancestors) and the concept and feeling of “Okinawa(n-ness)” to their descendents. Whether one
participates in the performance of music-making and/or dancing, or not, the songs and dances are
parts of the symbolic Okinawan culture with which people are familiar and relate.

Today, there are two main styles (schools) of uta-sanshin performed in Hawai‘i:
Nomura-ryū and Afuso-ryū 安富祖流. While Nomura-ryū has been performed longer in Hawai‘i
and was more prominent in the past, in recent years, Afuso-ryū has gained many students and
many go between Okinawa and Hawai‘i often to further their studies in uta-sanshin. With the
increased interest in Okinawan culture, there has also been an increase in the number of people
studying Okinawan music and dance. In addition to private lessons offered by the different
sanshin associations or groups, a music course titled “Okinawan Music Ensembles,” which is
essentially uta-sanshin, is offered at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa through the
ethnomusicology section of its music department. This course has been offered regularly at the
University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa since the 1960s.

Methodology

In order to investigate the transmission processes by which “Okinawan identity”
develops in a musical diasporic setting and the role that one Okinawan music teacher
plays in those processes, I took a qualitative research approach, choosing to do
participant observation, interviewing, and archival materials review as my main methods
of gathering data. Because I have been studying with Shinsato over the past 17 years,
participant observation seemed like the natural thing to do, as my participation in the
process has been ongoing, with the only difference now was that I needed to be more
conscious, critical, and analytical about what it was that I was learning and how I was
learning it. Being part of the Shinsato Shosei Kai also allowed me access to the other
students and to gain their insight into their own learning of Okinawan culture and how
they viewed Shinsato’s role in this process.
I also selected Shinsato to be my case-study subject because he is the last of the kibei nisei sensei teaching Nomura-ryū uta-sanshin in Hawai‘i. His being a kibei presents a different set of experiences, circumstances, milieu, from the other teachers who are currently actively teaching uta-sanshin. His life experiences of growing up in pre-WWII Okinawa adds a dimension that the other sensei now would not have and presents something unique that potentially affects the way that he views Okinawan identities and how he teaches his students.

I began the formal research back in 2012, first by drafting two sets of questions for my interviews. I planned to interview Shinsato as well as a few of his students. First, my intent was to investigate how Shinsato’s life experiences might have shaped his perspective on Okinawan identity and what influence that had on how he teaches his students about Okinawan culture, with particular attention paid to his musical career. Thus, I drafted one set of questions specifically for Shinsato, asking him about: his life (growing up in Okinawa and returning to Hawai‘i), his family, how he began his studies in uta-sanshin, the impact it has made on his life, and about teaching his students about Okinawan culture through music.

Second, I wanted to find out about the ways in which students are influenced or affected by what Shinsato teaches them. Thus, I developed a second set of questions to ask his students, including one of his grandchildren. I asked them questions about what they knew about Okinawan culture prior to taking uta-sanshin lessons, their thoughts on how Shinsato teaches them, what they get out of the lessons and the application of those lessons, as well as their perspective on the topic of Okinawan identity and what influences them.

I first began the interviews by conducting an interview with Katsumi Shinsato. He called in his wife Yoshiko to help him recall certain things, and together, they did the interview in their home after one of my lessons. That interview lasted approximately 90 minutes. After their interview, I interviewed four of Katsumi Shinsato’s students of different ages and generations, including one of his grandchildren, on four separate days. Then, using the same set of questions with a few minor adjustments, I also interviewed one of his daughters who was heavily involved in Okinawan dance all throughout her childhood until her early adult years and worked very closely with her father on many
performances. The interview provided deeper insight, told from his daughter’s perspective, as to how she viewed her father, as a family man, performer, and teacher.

All of the interviews I conducted were audio-recorded and varied in length, ranging from an hour to two-and-a-half hours a session, depending on how much interviewees wanted to talk and share and whether there were things that needed clarification or follow-up during the conversations. While they included prepared questions, the interviews were very informal and conversational so as to put the interviewees at ease. They were conducted in the English, Hawaii Creole English, or Japanese languages, or a mixture therein.

I have tried to get accurate assessments of the interviewees’ thoughts or ideas on Okinawan culture and identities by posing neutral, objective and open-ended questions, However, I am not certain that interviewees formed their answers a certain way based on what they thought I might want to hear because they felt placed in a particular environment or situation by the interviews. In other words, their answers may be situationally placed.

Although the interviews provide a good amount of data, my data also comes from much of my own personal participant observation as a sansei studying uta-sanshin since 1996. As with the nature of case studies such as this one about people and culture, my data is more qualitative than quantitative data. It includes a conscious and reflexive examination of what I personally have gained from studying uta-sanshin with Shinsato Sensei, what and how I learned about Okinawan culture through the lessons and performances, how it has shaped and re-shaped my perceptions about an Okinawan identity both for myself and what I have observed of others. Some of the information included in this thesis has also come from my recollection of stories shared with me by Shinsato Sensei during my lessons over the years.

**Significance of This Work**

There are many historical works about Okinawans in Hawai‘i. However, there are few that focus on the significance of expressive culture in the inventing, circumscribing, performing or transmitting diasporic identities. This particular case study looks at how one Hawai‘i Okinawan cultural performer inculcates Okinawan “traditions” and values through his musical activities, teaching and performing. It also takes into
account his unique life experiences as a kibei nisei who spent his formative years in pre-war Okinawa and returning to Hawai‘i, giving him a different perspective of what it is to “be Okinawan.”

This thesis contributes to the discussion of the politics of identity, especially as it applies to diasporic studies. It examines the transmission processes in which identity and culture are not seen as static, unchanging objects or concepts, but rather as living, transforming, and evolving elements amidst the environment in which they are situated. It looks at the roles of expressive culture and performance as part of that transmission process in the diasporic setting in which one transforms and performs “Okinawa,” taking an approach similar to Stuart Hall’s, that we must reflect on not only who we were, but who we are today and have become through these processes.

While I realize that a case study like this one is only looking at the way one person inculcates Okinawan culture into a specific group of people, an examination of this one individual’s life history also historicizes certain significant events and provides insight as to how, what, and why he teaches his students a certain way. Through the lessons they learn from this one teacher, students learn about “being Okinawan” by the cultural lessons he gives them as part of their training in the art of uta-sanshin. Also, by studying the concept of identity as it applies to a particular group (the Okinawans in Hawai‘i) through a particular aspect of culture (music), I hope that people will get a sense of the events and processes that brought about the consciousness of Okinawan identity in Hawai‘i to where it is today.

Organization

In the chapters that follow, I examine the different ways in which Katsumi Shinsato disseminates lessons on Okinawan culture and values to his students through uta-sanshin. Chapter 2 provides some historical background on Shinsato’s life and the Shinsato Shosei Kai. It covers his life experiences of growing up in Okinawa during the pre-war years, his return to Hawai‘i, his family life, and his life as a uta-sanshin artist and teacher. I include these because all of these factor into how he teaches his students and, in turn, influences what and how his students learn about Okinawan culture.

In chapter 3, I focus on the uta-sanshin lessons: how the lessons are structured and the methods he employs to get the students to learn about the Okinawan culture.
Socialization plays a big part in the learning of culture; I will discuss how the members socialize during the lessons and what the outcomes of such interactions yield. His explanations of cultural points in the songs, in the form of “talk story,” provide students with a foundation on which to build cultural understanding.

In chapter 4, I will focus on the performances of the Shinsato Shosei Kai: the different types of performances that the club has done in the past and how “Okinawan-ness” is performed at these events. In this chapter, I also discuss the importance and role performance has in reinforcing identity.

Finally, in chapter 5, I conclude with a summarization of the analyses that I have made to wrap up the thesis. At the end, I also include a transcript of an interview of Shinsato done by the Hawaii United Okinawa Association (HUOA) for its 2007 Legacy Award in the “Appendix.” This interview provides additional cultural clues on Shinsato’s view of *uta-sanshin* and what it means to him.
CHAPTER 2. A LIFE HISTORY – 
*KIBEI NISEI SANSHIN GRAND MASTER KATSUMI SHINSATO*

Our life experiences influence and even shape our identities. Our life experiences can make us who we are and who we become. And, in turn, we could be an influence on others as well, creating a chain effect. Thus, life histories are worth studying to the effect that we might learn something about the ways in which some life experiences could affect the formation of collective identities. As Maehara writes:

“Today, increasing number of social researchers are interested in personal narratives and employed life stories method in order to understand the relationship between individuals and society.” (Maehara 2005, 30)

She goes on to cite:

“Kinoshita (2002:19) states that “telling stories, is therefore, a process of constructing collective identities, revealing both internally-oriented emotional manifestations and externally-based shared understand [sic] of who they are.” (Maehara 2005, 31)

In this particular case study, I focus on the life history and musical activities of a Hawai‘i Okinawan cultural performer to demonstrate how some of his unique life experiences as a *kibei nisei* of growing up in pre-war Okinawa and returning to Hawai‘i prior to World War II make him an ideal candidate as a cultural bridge between various groups of people, including the departed *issei*. I would like to include even just a small “soundbyte” of what some of his memories of events that shape his perspectives. Some of these experiences are unique to the specific environment and times in which those events took place. By including this chapter on his life history, my intention is to provide background information as to some of the circumstances and experiences that make him the ideal bridge and to explain how those experiences can be seen as making him effective as a cultural guide.

By his sharing some of these stories, I want to get some insight into how those experiences possibly influenced his views on Okinawan values and culture and how he views his role as a teacher to his students. I would like to see how these views translate into what he does to teach his students about Okinawan values and “traditions.”

Katsumi Shinsato was born on June 4, 1922 in Waipahu, Hawai‘i, technically making him a *nisei*, but since he went to Okinawa at a very young age and later returned
to Hawaii‘i, this makes him more accurately a *kibei nisei*. Like many others, his father had come from Okinawa to Hawaii‘i to work on the plantation and his mother, like many of the women, arrived as a *yobiyose 呼び寄せ* immigrant. Katsumi is the fourth of seven children, three boys and four girls, born to Katsuichi and Usa Shinsato. Above him were a brother and two sisters while two more sisters and a brother followed him. In 1927, when he was five years old, his mother took him, along with four of his siblings, with her to Okinawa.

As Kinuko Maehara Yamazato wrote in her article “To Okinawa and Back Again: Life Stories of Okinawan Kibei Nisei in Hawaii‘i,” it was common in those years for parents to send their children back to Okinawa for economic reasons, unlike the *Naichi* who were more likely to send their children back to Japan for educational purposes. For these *kibei nisei* Okinawans, education was more of an incidental happenstance of their being in Okinawa, not their sole purpose for going to Okinawa. Maehara Yamazato writes:

> “Okinawan Issei were more likely to send their children to Okinawa for economic reasons. [...] Members of extended families raising their family members’ children was a common practice in Okinawan society. By sending their children to Okinawa, where the children could live with grandparents inexpensively, parents could remain in Hawaii‘i to save up money for their own return to Okinawa. [...] It was not until the early 1930s that many Okinawan Kibei Nisei were sent to Okinawa or mainland Japan for educational purposes.” (Maehara Yamazato 2007, 84-85)

**In Okinawa**

In Hawaii‘i, because everyone was too busy working trying to make a living and the children were too young to go to work or to care for themselves, Katsumi’s parents decided that Usa would take the children to Okinawa where the children could be looked after while Katsuichi stayed in Hawaii‘i to work. During my interview with Shinsato (2012), he said:

---

15 Kinuko Maehara Yamazato refers to the *kibei nisei* as a subset of *nisei* and a ‘sub-group within the Okinawan diasporic community in Hawaii‘i.’ They were born in Hawaii‘i but sent to Okinawa or Japan to be raised or educated and would later return to Hawaii‘i. She argues that the Okinawan *kibei nisei* is different as she distinguishes their experiences from the “Okinawan experiences” and the “Japanese *kibei nisei* experiences” (Maehara Yamazato 2007, 83).

16 *Yobiyose* means “to call over,” hence, they were called over by someone who was already there.

17 The other two were not yet born.
“[I was taken to Okinawa by my mother when I was 5 years old. So most of my childhood memories were of being in Henza with only my grandmother and mother. My other siblings were older so they went back to Hawai‘i much earlier than I did].” (K. Shinsato, 2012)

His wife Yoshiko explained:

“The older ones all came back already. Already he had two older sisters and one older brother [that came back to Hawai‘i] and then he came down. [...] Certain age then, you know, they used to call…they all used to do that, eh. After certain age, then they start calling them back [to Hawai‘i]. They let the grandmother raise and then…[they call them back].” (Y. Shinsato, 2012)

Katsumi grew up in Heianza 平安座, or Henza as it was more often called, which is an island that was part of Yonagusuku-son 与那城村 in central Okinawa, off the Yokatsu Peninsula. There he lived with his grandmother, mother and siblings until the siblings were each gradually called back to Hawai‘i. He recalled:

“[Henza is an island supported by fishing and the men were all fishermen. One neat thing about the island was that when it was low tide, you could walk across the shoals to Yakena 屋慶名 on the Yokatsu 与勝 peninsula [situated between Yonashiro 与那城 and Katsuren 勝連] on the other side. People would walk across during the low tide and all the old ladies knew exactly when low tide was and when high tide would be every day. So they knew when you had to be back on the island because when high tide came, you had to use a boat to go across.

I attended Henza Kōtō Shōgakko 平安座高等小学校 [Henza Upper Elementary School] there. I don’t remember much about other Okinawan cultural things, because Henza didn’t have much because there was only fishing. But all I know is that I was always interested in music from when I was a child. However, I had not held, let alone seen, a real sanshin as a child because we were poor].” (K. Shinsato, 2012)

---

18 He calls it Heianza and Henza interchangeably.
19 At the time Katsumi lived there, it was part of Yonagusuku-son 与那城村. In 1994, Yonagusuku-son was renamed Yonashiro-cho and, subsequently, in 2005, it became Uruma-shi.
20 There was a vast difference between the structure and organization of the educational system in Japan/Okinawa prior to WWII, when Katsumi was attending school, and that of post-WWII. At the time, after completing the 6-year jinjō shōgakko 尋常小学校, what was then called “normal school,” there were a few options to choose from if one wanted to continue his or her education. Among the several options, one was the kōtō shōgakko 高等小学校 (upper elementary schools), which was equivalent to today’s 7th and 8th grade. This school was for those who wanted to continue school but could not or did not want to attend the chūgakkō 中学校 (intermediate schools) or vocational specialty schools.
Ironically, his first exposure to the *sanshin* in Okinawa was through listening to records played on a phonograph sent from Hawai‘i by his father. He listened to the Okinawan music records which his father also sent, playing them on that phonograph and that made him want to play the music, too. However, they could not afford a real *sanshin*. So he did the next best thing.

“[When I was eight,21 I saw a *kankara sanshin* カンカラ三線 (*sanshin* made from an empty tin can) that someone had brought back from Osaka. So I wanted to have one too. I used an empty tin can, cut out the holes in the can, then I asked my mother’s friend who was a carpenter to make the *sao* [wooden neck/core of the *sanshin*] out of old wood for me and I stuck it in the tin can. Then, I used the threads that the sewing ladies brought back from Osaka to string my makeshift *sanshin*. I didn’t care what it looked like, as long as the sound came out (*laughing*).]” (K. Shinsato, 2012)

Katsumi had a special aptitude for music and was soon playing along with the records on his *kankara sanshin*. He did not have any formal training on *sanshin* until much later, several years after he returned to Hawai‘i. Thus, he developed his own freestyle of playing the *sanshin*. He had a remarkably good ear for music and he figured out the different tunings and pitches of the *sanshin*, all by ear. (His gift of music was well-developed and he later learned to play the violin, banjo, taiko, and guitar, among other instruments, on his own.)

“[I’m not sure how I knew what pitch it was supposed to be, I never learned from anyone…but for some reason, I was just fast at catching on. I tried to play along with the record on my *kankara sanshin* and I used the song *Nubui Kuduchi* 上い口説 to do the *chindami* [tuning]. But at the time I didn’t know what each string was called; I just knew how high or low they should be tuned and what the music was supposed to sound like. I didn’t know what the notes were called or what the different symbols were for either. I only knew them by sound. But the one thing that I always thought about was how much I wanted to someday be able to play on a real *sanshin*; that was what really motivated me] (Shinsato, 2012). [When I was 13 or 14, I would play my *sanshin* and I would make the teachers at school dance. Now when I think about it, I really did something embarrassing then]” (Shinsato, 2007).

---

21 At the Legacy Award banquet in 2007, the MC mentioned that he was “introduced to the sanshin at five years old. At the time, he couldn’t afford to buy a traditional sanshin, so he made one which consisted of a tin can […].” However, during my interview with him in 2012, he said that he made a sanshin for himself when he was eight years old.
He enjoyed his time on Henza so much that he did not want to go back to Hawai‘i when his father came for him:

“[My father came to Henza first to try to get me to come back to Hawai‘i, but I was still *kodomo* [a child] so… I told him that I didn’t want to go back to Hawai‘i because I wanted to go to school and I wanted to stay with my mother. So he took my older brother back first instead].”

However, his father later sent one of his friends to try again to get Katsumi to come back to Hawai‘i.

“A little later, my father’s friend, who was also from Henza, came to bring me back to Hawai‘i. So, *shikata ga nai* [had no choice], I had to go back.” (K. Shinsato, 2012)

Thus, in 1938, when he was sixteen years old, he reluctantly returned to Hawai‘i with his father’s friend. As it turned out, it saved him from being drafted by the Japanese military as so many Okinawan students had been.

**Return to Hawai‘i**

Upon his return to Hawai‘i, for a short while he lived in a district called Waialae in East ‘Oahu where many Okinawans had pig farms there. Then, he later moved to downtown Honolulu where he attended Hawaii Chūō Gakuin 布哇中央学院 on Nu‘uanu Avenue during the day and worked at Bailey’s Bakery as a baker at night.

“I started working at a bakery when I moved to Honolulu. I was going to school at Nuuanu Chūō Gakuin during the daytime and I worked as a baker at night. I worked a few years at Bailey’s Bakery and then Bailey’s closed down. So then I worked at another bakery in Waikiki at night. What bakery was that? I forgot what the bakery was called]. (K. Shinsato, 2012)

During one of our lessons, I recall Sensei telling us about how hard it was to have returned from Okinawa and not being able to speak English, particularly after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and the U.S. was in the middle of a war with Japan. He said that one day, when he was walking alone down a street in Downtown, there were a couple of military personnel walking in the opposite direction. One of the men just looked at him and said, “Damn Jap!” and punched him in the stomach. He said that completely knocked the wind out of him.

22 During the interview, he called it “Nuuanu Chūō Gakuin,” but after further research I found that it was actually “Hawaii Chūō Gakuin.”
In 1944, he and the former Yoshiko Shimabukuro were married. In the years that followed, he worked at many different jobs within his family’s businesses. He worked at his family’s restaurant and then later worked at the family’s fish market in the A‘ala district of downtown Honolulu. Also, being that his father Katsuichi was from the fishing island Henza, the family eventually bought several fishing boats. When the fishermen brought in fish, it was Katumi’s job to go to the boat to get the fish to take to the market and sell them.

Over the years, their family grew and Katumi and Yoshiko raised a son and three daughters. In the early years they lived in the Downtown/A‘ala area, for a time living with a large extended three-generation Shinsato Family. Katumi credits his wife for having taken good care of the family, including the extended family, all the while taking on work as a seamstress to help the family. She also did much of the cooking and cleaning, no small task with a very large extended family, all the while looking after their own children.

After a while, Katumi and Yoshiko owned and ran their own liquor store for two or three years. There they provided goods to the nearby mortuaries and while the liquor store did well, there were frequent break-ins, prompting them to sell the store. Later, someone offered to sell them a small mom-and-pop grocery store. Despite Yoshiko’s objections, Katumi wanted to have the store, so they took over the grocery store. They would wash vegetables, cut/grind meat to order for customers, and even pack fresh tofu for customers. They often worked very long hours and their children also pitched in during their free times. The Shinsatos operated the store for seventeen years. When they eventually sold the store, Katumi went to work at a local elementary school as a janitor. While there, he graced the school with his handiwork, sometimes even designing elaborate decorations. According to his biography in the 2013 Magukuru recital program booklet, he retired at the age of 69.

Sanshin nu Michi 三線ぬ道 (The Path of the Sanshin) = The Life of Katumi Shinsato

With the end of World War II in 1945, people were able to once again participate in cultural activities and travel more freely between Okinawa and Hawai‘i. It was in

---

23 Yoshiko (1923-2013) was a nisei born and raised in Hawai‘i.
1945, when he was 23, that Katsumi finally realized his dream of being able to play a real sanshin. As previously mentioned, while in Okinawa he did not have any formal sanshin training, but he had taught himself to play the music on a kankara sanshin. Interestingly, his father Katsuichi had also played sanshin and over the years had collected many sanshin in Hawai‘i, even some valuable rare ones. (It is interesting to note that despite that, Katsumi never played or held a real sanshin until 1945.) Katsuichi had been playing sanshin with his hometown friend Eikichi Miyagi’s group.

One night in 1945, Katsumi’s mother asked him to accompany her on an errand, so he went with her.

“[When she was finished with her errand, my mother told me, “Your father is at Miyagi Sensei’s house today, so let’s go there.” So we went there. Miyagi Sensei’s house was filled with lots of people, all the erai daisensei (great masters), like Ikehara [Seikō] Sensei and Izumigawa [Kanyei] Sensei. When we got there, Miyagi Sensei stood up and handed me the sanshin he was playing and told me “Here, play along.” That was the first time I had ever held a real sanshin. I knew how to play Kagiyadefu somewhat, so I just played along. Miyagi Sensei was amused because it was the first time I was playing a real sanshin. And I was made to sit next to him and there were all these erai daisensei there. Of course I didn’t know who these people were until later. I was just a kid compared to them and I didn’t know if I was playing the right notes or not.

Then, Miyagi Sensei told me, “You should come learn sanshin too.” After that, he would call me up on the phone and tell me to come over to play. However, we were poor and had no money, so I didn’t go. But Miyagi Sensei would call and tell me “Kinasai, kinasai [Come, come].” Then, I went because I wanted to. But the others all paid tuition. When I didn’t go he would call and ask why I didn’t come. But I couldn’t tell him that I didn’t have money and couldn’t afford it. So he told me, “If you’re worried about the tuition, don’t worry, you don’t have to pay tuition. Just come.” So because I loved playing, I started going to practice again.]

(K. Shinsato, 2012)

That is how Shinsato began formally studying uta-sanshin under Eikichi Miyagi and became a member of Miyagi Sensei’s group. Since many of the students were issei or kibei nisei, it was a comfortable group for him to be in because they all understood the Okinawan language. He would go to Miyagi Sensei’s house once a week to practice with

---

24 In the interview, he said he received formal training for the first time when he was twenty, which would have been in 1942. However, Yoshiko said that it was in 1945, after the war, because they could not play sanshin during the war. “They wouldn’t allow it.”
the other members. He said the part that he enjoyed the most was listening to all of their stories, for he said that that was when he learned the most (Shinsato, 2007, 2012). Miyagi Sensei’s house was the gathering place and everyone would go there during their spare time to play sanshin and even share meals together:

“[Whenever they were free, everyone was at Miyagi Sensei’s house…daytime, nighttime…anytime of the day…many of them were farmers so they had their own time…]” (K. Shinsato, 2012)

Yoshiko Shinsato recalled:

“People used to bring food and, then they go cook together and eat, just like…and they had only small two bedroom apartment, you know. …they used to use the parlor and they open up only one bedroom…with one small kitchen…just one stove and refrigerator fit kind. People used to bring vegetables, they hardly have to buy and if the refrigerator broke, they get together and buy one for them…. The members paint the house for them. Just like family…” (Y. Shinsato, 2012)

Through Miyagi Sensei, he met many of the great masters of the arts (uta-sanshin, dance, taiko, etc.) who came from Okinawa to visit. Some went on to become designated Japan’s Human National Treasures whereby the government gave them special recognition for their high level of skill in their arts. These studies led him to work towards a kyōshi menjō 教師免状 (instructor’s certificate #212) in 1964 and a shihan menjō 師範免状 (master’s certificate # 176) in 1971 from the Nomura-ryū Ongaku Kyōkai in Okinawa.

**Establishment of the Shinsato Shosei Kai**

Katsumi Shinsato formally studied uta-sanshin under two masters. His first sensei, Eikichi Miyagi (宮城栄吉), who was an issei, was the head of a music club called the Miyagi Gensei Kai (宮城弦声会). Miyagi was his father’s friend. Shinsato studied uta-sanshin with him from 1945 until the Miyagi Family moved to Los Angeles in 1956. After Miyagi left Hawaii, one of his students, Shinsuke Yamashiro (山城真助),

---

25 Miyagi Sensei studied under Ryōei Nakama (仲真良永) who was credited as being the first person to teach sanshin and organize Okinawan performing arts in Hawaii in 1906 (Higa 1978, 13-17). Miyagi continued the Gensei Kai in Los Angeles and later also became the head of Nomura-ryu Ongaku Kyokai - North America Branch.
also an issei, took over teaching duties and established the Yamashiro Shinsei Kai (山城真声会). Shinsato continued his uta-sanshin studies under the tutelage of Yamashiro.

In early 1975, when Yamashiro fell ill and was ordered by his doctor to strictly limit/curb his sanshin activities (lessons and performances), Yamashiro approached and asked Katsumi Shinsato several times to take over his music club. In essence, this would mean that Shinsato would teach Yamashiro’s students. However, he did not feel comfortable and confident because he was also one of Yamashiro Sensei’s students and the other students were his nakama [peers]. Although he possessed a shihan menjō master’s certificate, he did not feel as though he could teach others who he considered his peers or seniors. Therefore, he turned Yamashiro down several times. However, late one night, a group of Yamashiro’s students came pounding on the door of the Shinsato residence. These men normally did not drink any form of liquor, but on that night, they had come from a bar where they had gone to build up their courage. They had come to see Shinsato in desperation, to beg him to take over the club. Otherwise, they faced losing the club and a place for them to gather and play sanshin. Thus, Shinsato reluctantly agreed to take over and continue the club. However, he did so with the condition that he was not going to be “teaching” them, but rather, that they could all practice and continue to learn together. The members of the Yamashiro Shinsei Kai happily agreed.

The members of the former Yamashiro Shinsei Kai discussed among themselves what to name the new club and after discussions and consultations, it was decided that the new club would be called “Shinsato Shosei Kai 新里勝声会.” Thus, Shinsato Shosei Kai was formally established in April 1975. Its charter members were all men and mostly issei or kibei nisei. (Yamashiro was also one of the members and served in an advisory capacity.) The naming of the club was significant because it included part of Shinsato’s name, as well as part of the club names of his two teachers. The first three characters (新里勝) were from Shinsato’s name. The fourth character (声 [voice]) was part of the club names of his two teachers, passed down from the Miyagi Gensei Kai on to the Yamashiro Shinsei Kai; it symbolized a passing down of teachings, tradition, and culture that also
reflected/stressed the importance of voice. This also reflects the relationship between teacher and student and the tight bond between them.

In order to teach Nomura-ryu koten, one must have the proper certification from the official organization, Nomura-ryū Ongaku Kyōkai, in Okinawa. This provides a kind of “authentication” from the authoritative body, again linking the diasporic groups with the homeland. For many years, following in the footsteps of his two sensei, Shinsato also belonged to the Nomura-ryu Ongaku Kyōkai Hawaii Shibu 野村流音楽協会ハワイ支部. This organization consists of the individual music clubs of those who teach, learn, and perform the Nomura style of koten music in Hawai‘i. During its membership with this organization, the Shinsato Shosei Kai participated in all of the organization’s activities. Twice a year, in the “Haru no Taikai 春の大会” and “Aki no Taikai 秋の大会,” spring and fall meetings respectively, they performed together with other Nomura-ryu koten groups.26 Also during this time, Shinsato and some members of the Shosei Kai actively performed with other members of the Nomura-ryu as the jikata for various performances. They were kept quite busy throughout the year performing for birthdays, weddings, and New Year’s parties. The younger performers were able to observe different Okinawan cultural practices at some of these festivities at which they performed.

However, in the early 2000s, Shinsato Shosei Kai decided to withdraw itself from the Nomura-ryu Ongaku Kyokai. The Shosei Kai was getting considerably smaller in number and many of the members were getting older and felt that they could no longer contribute 100 percent to the activities of the organization. In an organization like the Nomura-ryu Ongaku Kyokai, while everyone who belongs to the organization all play the same style of koten, it is still potentially a place of rivalry, albeit friendly, between the different groups. The membership of the other clubs includes some relatively young members who aspire to become performers and obtain their teaching certificates. Sutton mentioned in his article:

“Perhaps bearing more directly on the vitality of the musical tradition than sheer numbers is the presence of rivalry and competition between music groups. [...] The sense of rivalry is healthy for several reasons. Members of music study groups feel a sense of duty to continue their study and to

26 Nomura-ryu Ongaku Kyōkai is an association of those who study and perform Nomura-ryu koten. While the main headquarter is in Okinawa, there are many branches outside of Okinawa, including many overseas branches like the Hawaii Branch. At the taikai, a full ensemble of sanshin and koto perform together.
gain proficiency not so much for personal glory as for the good name of the group […] Among the advanced students and teachers, the rivalry between subschools demands continuous musical activity lest one’s own lose visibility.” (Sutton 1983, 60-61)

Thus, while many members felt badly about the withdrawal from the organization, the senior members felt that it would reflect badly upon the Shosei Kai if members did not fulfill their obligations and fully participate in all of the activities. For many of the members, they simply want to enjoy playing the sanshin “for fun” and socializing with club members; it is more of a hobby than something competitive. It is through socializing that members get the most satisfaction and Sutton mentions that while competition might be a motivating factor, the “factor which contributes to both the quality and quantity of Okinawan music in Hawaii is the camraderie [sic] which Okinawan musicians feel, particularly those who share the same teacher” (Sutton 1983, 63). It is this camaraderie that encourages the club members to come to lessons more than the opportunity to have performances. Therefore, the club’s performances were mostly limited to the Okinawa Festival, the club’s New Year party, or the Nomura-ryū Ongaku Kyōkai’s taikai at that time. Now the Shosei Kai usually performs twice a year. It is still playing Nomura-ryu koten, but the only difference is that the group is now an independent club. Because of that, the Shosei Kai is probably less visible than other groups, but it does perform publicly occasionally.

Today, in contrast to the membership of the Shinsato Shosei Kai in 1975, there are more women in the club than men and there are a few shin issei, a few kibei nisei/nisei, but more sansei and yonsei, and one gosei (Sensei’s great-grandchild). Although fewer understand the Okinawan language, let alone Japanese, through the social processes of interacting with others during lessons or the activities, members are learning and doing things “Okinawan” that are otherwise absent from their daily lives. Later in this chapter, we will see how the New Year party affords members a certain opportunity to connect with Okinawan culture and be in tune with so-called “Okinawan-ness.”

27 Shinsato is different from some of the other sensei in that he asked his students what they wanted to do, to stay in the Nomura-ryū organization or withdraw, and left it up to their decision. His reason was that it would be the students who would have to commit to doing things within the organization and he did not want to force people to participate.
His love for the Okinawan performing arts also influenced his family life. Of his four children, two of his daughters began studying Okinawan performing arts, mainly dance, from a very young age. They even learned koto and taiko. At the young age of eight years old, one of his daughters was featured at a performance at the Honolulu Academy of Arts (now known as Honolulu Museum of Art) with a photo appearing in the local newspaper. From the time they were in elementary school until they were in college, two daughters performed at parties, sometimes every weekend, and even went on trips to the continental US and to the neighboring Hawaiian islands to do performances. His daughter, Andrea Oshiro, said that they had no choice or say in the matter…they just did it and did not know any differently.

“No, [it was] not so much strict. We just…it was already in our life, I guess. We started so young, we don’t know any different. […] It was so embedded that we don’t know that there was another lifestyle. […] It’s just you grow up with that. So you don’t know that you were forced. You know, all I know was, okay, you gotta go, you going practice, you going learn…” (Oshiro, 2013).

He was constantly asked to perform as jikata (accompanying ensemble) over the years. Although he was usually part of the jikata that performed when his daughters danced, interestingly, his daughter said that he never used to play the sanshin; instead, he always played the taiko. She said it was not until much later, after he received his teaching certificate, that he would play the sanshin for the jikata. However, when his daughters practiced at home, he would play the sanshin for them so that they could get used to the rhythm and become familiar with the songs. His daughter said that he would provide comments about their dancing, their timing and critiquing (she called it ‘noting’) their practices and performances. Because they did not understand the Okinawan language, he would explain to them about the songs so that they could appropriately interpret the dances.

“In growing up, stage performance, everything, he used to do the drumming for us. And then, in not knowing the language, we [didn’t] know anything…the Okinawan language. In learning the dances, then he would, besides our senseis, […] he would explain why, what kind of dance and what you’re doing to the dance because we [didn’t] understand. All we know by tune or by a certain word, turn! or stomp! or something like that (laughing). […] The sensei] didn’t speak English so we had to
kind of figure out or he would sometimes tell us, you know, what to say, what to do or whatever.” (Oshiro, 2013)

Just as Maehara Yamazato stated in her article (Maehara Yamazato 2007, 91), like other kibei nisei, with his unique life experiences as a kibei and his ability to communicate with his own children, he became a bridge and a source of Okinawan culture to his own children as he explained the meanings and significance to them as they learned their dances.

Also, because he was around these performers, his children were also able to interact with a variety of performers and were exposed to the different cultural aspects that these people taught or brought with them from Okinawa, even if they did not speak the same language. Katsumi would be the bridge between them. His daughter said that their main exposure to Okinawan culture was mostly through music and dance. His daughter recalled:

“The performers would come and stay with us. [There was] that kind of influence, when the others came in too, they taught us. […] He also did [Okinawa] shibai [drama] so the actors used to come too. Growing up in the Okinawan culture, because of him, my sister and I were always having fun with the senseis, you know, the sanshin senseis, the koto senseis and stuff. Um, there was no rivalry, there was just…work together…and stuff like that. It was fine.” (Oshiro, 2013)

Today, his family has grown to include ten grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren. His musical influence has reached his grandchildren and, now, even his great-grandchildren. Four of his grandchildren, a granddaugther-in-law, and a great-grandchild take sanshin lessons and are members of the Shōsei Kai. When asked what else he gets out of playing sanshin with his grandfather, beyond playing the sanshin or singing, grandson Grayson Nose says:

“For me…it’s…I guess it’s more of a way…it’s a way to keep the relationship with my grandpa, and the family, definitely…in general. I mean, he doesn’t speak too much English and it’s hard to just have a….for me it’s difficult, not speaking a lot of Japanese, to have a long conversation with him. But it’s a good way to do something WITH him. And then it’s a good reason for the family to come together. ‘Cause if we didn’t, then, I don’t know how often I would see everybody. So it gives me that kind of connection to them.” (Nose, 2013)
In one of the Legacy Award interview segments with his granddaughters (see Appendix), one of his granddaughters said that they would not know anything if it were not for their grandfather. She said that by being “exposed to many different things,” [...] they “at least have a better understanding of the arts and appreciation for it.”

In 1998, the Shinsato Shōsei Kai received the 15th Annual Hakubi Kimono Schools Foundation Culture Award for its outstanding contributions to promoting cultural exchange between Japan and the US. In 2006, during the 4th Worldwide Uchinanchu Taikai in Okinawa, the Okinawa Prefectural Government presented him with a “Distinguished Contributor from Overseas” recognition ‘for his dedication to promoting the Okinawan culture as a sanshin teacher’ (Hawaii United Okinawa Association, 2007). Then, in 2007, Katsumi received the Hawaii United Okinawa Association’s Legacy Award for his contributions to the Okinawan community in Hawai‘i.

Katsumi Shinsato has always emphatically said that neither would he have been able to do what he has done with the club or with his life until now, nor would he have been as successful, had it not been for the unwavering support of his family and, particularly, that of his wife. In his interview, he said:

“In my heart, there is one thing that I cannot say enough. That is that I always say and feel ‘arigato, arigato’ in my heart with so much gratitude to my wife. She has always done motenashi (hospitality) like make and serve tea and coffee, or cook and serve food for the club. I don’t like to talk, so she would entertain the guests on my behalf. I would not have been able to continue the club all these years if it hadn’t been for her support. That’s why, although I don’t say ‘thank you’ out loud, but I always feel and say ‘thank you’ in my heart and that is my true feeling. I know that I am able to do my music as I want because of her and I have never forgotten that. That’s why, too, since we’ve been married, I have never once called her ‘Yoshiko’ when calling out to her. I always call her ‘Mommy, Mommy’ and, with that, my heart is always filled with gratitude. I was able to reach the age of 90, all thanks to her. That’s the truth.”
(Shinsato, 2012)

Unfortunately, Yoshiko Shinsato passed away suddenly and unexpectedly on April 4, 2013, at the age of 89 before the Shinsato Shōsei Kai’s Magukuru recital. But the recital went on, honoring Katsumi Shinsato Sensei while also being dedicated to her memory as well.
His daughter, Andrea Oshiro, came up with the best description of what music is for her father’s life. She said that his life is all about the music:

“His life translates always into music, to me. Um, because even if you’re talking to him, he may be looking at you, but you know he’s not listening. He’s got a song in his head. ‘Cause he’s singing as he’s walking around or something. There’s nothing…that he worries about or…how can I say…daily routine, he just follows the routine but he’s always got the song in his head. To me, that’s his life. Period. […] So like I said, he translates everything into his music background, whatever it is.

He wants his students to be happy to learn *koten*. You know, *minyō*…everybody’s into *minyō*. It’s faster, livelier. But *koten* is a hard thing to teach. He wants to appreciate *koten*, because that’s his life. Yeah, that’s his life. So, to get whoever interested…that’s fine. I mean, he may not scold…but [he just wants them] to know *koten.*” (Oshiro, 2013)
CHAPTER 3. LESSONS IN BEING “OKINAWAN”

For those who study Okinawan music or dance, lessons are an important part of their training in these traditional arts. Lessons create the spaces for people to formally train and learn, not just music or dance, but also the cultural aspects (e.g., cultural behavior) that are part of these arts. This is an important component in the inculcation of culture because one learns from a teacher and there is a transferral of knowledge, skills, and information from teacher to student during the lessons. Those who teach the Okinawan music and dance are more likely to have a teaching certificate from an official organization in Okinawa, like the Nomura-ryū Ongaku Kyōkai, and have a musical or dance lineage that includes a connection to some reputable master in the past. In fact, Ueunten wrote in his master’s thesis:

“A samisen instructor under Nomura-ryu must receive the proper accreditation before he can officially teach. […] Membership […] requires that the koten samisen musicians in Hawaii conform to the standardized system […] Therefore, the koten samisen schools in Hawaii maintain strong cultural links to Okinawa which serve to enhance their position in Hawaii as bearers of “genuine Okinawan culture”” (Ueunten 1989, 59).

In this chapter, I focus on the lessons taught by Katsumi Shinsato and discuss the significance of lessons in terms of the teaching and studying of Okinawan culture through the medium of *uta-sanshin*. By describing the lessons, methods used to teach/learn, and the socialization process, I would like to demonstrate how one *uta-sanshin* teacher in Hawai‘i in the 2000s consciously inculcates and adopts his role in this process of perpetuating the Okinawan culture in a diasporic community through his teaching activities.

Katsumi Shinsato teaches Nomura-ryū, or the Nomura style, of *koten* 古典 (classical) *uta-sanshin*. While he self-taught himself to play on a “*kankara*” *sanshin* that he had made himself while growing up in Okinawa, his formal training or lessons in Nomura-ryū *uta-sanshin* did not begin until after he returned to Hawai‘i and after World War II had ended. In 1945, when cultural activities could again resume, he began

28 “Traditional” Okinawan music is often divided into two types: *koten* (classical, or court music) and *min'yō* (folk music). There are three styles of Okinawan classical music that exist today: Nomura-ryū, Afuso-ryū 安富祖流, and Tansui-ryū 湧水流 (Kurazumi 1998, 15; Garfias 1993/94, 120-121).
29 A *sanshin* made out of a tin can and strings
studying *uta-sanshin* under the tutelage of one of his father’s friends, Eikichi Miyagi.\(^{30}\) Shinsato began teaching in 1975 after being asked by his other sensei, Shinsuke Yamashiro, to take over teaching duties. In the beginning, he could only teach during his free time as he held full-time jobs to support his family. It was only when he retired in 1991 that he was able to teach more hours.

Over the years, Shinsato has taught over a hundred students; although some quit to pursue other interests or did not have as much time for lessons, and some have passed on, there are those who have continued to attend lessons. He does not advertise to recruit students. It is mostly by word of mouth that new members come to him. Although the Hawaii United Okinawa Association has a cultural directory in which he is listed, often it is through the introduction of someone already associated with the club that new members join. He was also listed in the Nomura-*ryū* directory put out by the main office in Okinawa, but it is highly unlikely that someone not already affiliated with Nomura-*ryū* would have used that directory to contact him.

His music club, Shinsato Shōsei Kai (established 1975), currently has 23 students and they range in age from 11 to 89. There are 5 male students and 18 female students. There are 5 *shin-issei* 新一世,\(^{31}\) 3 *kibei nisei*, 2 *nisei*, and more *sansei*, *yonsei*, and now a *gosei* student. (His students include members of his own family: some grandchildren and, now, a great-grandchild.) Depending on the students, Shinsato Sensei conducts the lessons in English (or Hawai‘i Creole English (HCE), otherwise known as “pidgin English”), Japanese, or a mixture of both. The students’ skill levels range from beginning to advanced levels. Among the students he has taught over the years, there are a few who hold teaching certificates for *uta-sanshin*.

**Physical space and arrangement**

He teaches classes almost every day of the week at his home in Kalihi and lessons usually run anywhere from an hour to, occasionally, two hours.\(^{32}\) Lessons are held in a

---

\(^{30}\) As mentioned previously, Eikichi Miyagi was a student of the first Nomura-*ryū* teacher in Hawai‘i, Nakama Ryōei. Miyagi was also credited, along with Nakama’s son, of laying a strong foundation for *uta-sanshin* in Hawai‘i.

\(^{31}\) *Shin-issei* are “new” post-World War II first generation arrivals

\(^{32}\) While in the process of writing this thesis, circumstances changed when Shinsato’s wife, Yoshiko, passed away and Shinsato moved out of his home to go live with one of his daughters and her family. After a little while, lessons resumed at Jikoen Temple once a week on Sundays with all students in one class.
room lined with numerous framed certificates, awards, and pictures related to Shinsato’s sanshin activities. Students freely gather around two rectangular folding tables put side-by-side in the middle of the room with Shinsato Sensei sitting at one end. Everyone generally sits wherever he or she wants and where there is space, but after awhile people generally sit in the same space at the table all the time. Noticeably, though, unlike in Okinawa, there is no real arranged seating with a clear hierarchy. In one corner of the room, there are two wooden boxes filled with little stools that he and one of his students made that allow people to sit seiza (proper Japanese-style with their legs folded under them) more comfortably, by having a seat on which they could sit and inconspicuously tuck their legs around the dowel under the seat. It gives the appearance of sitting seiza, but it also takes the pressure off of the legs that often leave people in discomfort, if not in pain. There are also floor-level music stands neatly lined against a wall for students to take and use during lessons.

**Classes**

When first beginning uta-sanshin lessons, unless there are other beginners to form a class, one has private individual lessons until one is able to read and play some of the notes (usually one song, *Kajadifu Bushi* かぎやで風節)\(^\text{33}\). The private individualized lessons are necessary because the student will learn how to read the different markings on the music, not just the notes, and will need specific instructions on what the markings mean. It might take about 4-6 weeks for the student to learn this one song and to become even somewhat comfortable with the music. At that point, the student would usually join one of the classes, numbering anywhere from 2 to 7 or as much as 10 people in a class, with varying levels of skill. The classes are not divided by skill but rather when people are able to make the classes.

**Payment / Tuition**

At the beginning of the year, club members pay an annual due of $20 and monthly payments are made for tuition at the first lesson of the month. The tuition is a nominal fee of only $25 a month. He has not raised the tuition for many years because, like most of the Okinawan dance and music teachers, he believes in promoting the culture for the sake

---

\(^\text{33}\) Although written in hiragana-kanji syllabically/phonetically as *ka-gi-ya-de-fū* (or *ka-gya-de-fū*), the Okinawan pronunciation of this is *ka-ja-di-fū*. However, it has been called both *Kagiyadefū* and *Kajadifu*. 

46
of the future generations. They make it affordable for people to learn and they teach and share the culture with people who are interested and who will appreciate it.

**The Instruments and the First Lesson**

To learn to play the *sanshin*, one would obviously need access to a *sanshin*. Some students are lucky and already own their *sanshin* (some are family heirlooms) when they begin lessons. However, for students who do not have a *sanshin*, Shinsato has loaned some of his own *sanshin* from his personal collection to students until they purchase their own. He has helped students obtain their own *sanshin* by using his connections in Okinawa and, on occasion, has brought back *sanshin* with him when taking trips to Okinawa. In a few cases, some students did not buy one, but instead, continued to use one of Shinsato’s *sanshin*.

Shinsato begins by teaching the students about the instrument, including how to properly receive and hand over a *sanshin* to someone. In this way, students are taught to respect the instrument because, according to Shinsato, it represents the person who owns it, plays it, and even the craftsman who painstakingly made it. Students are taught that it is not very polite to hold the *sanshin* with one hand by the neck, holding it upright, and handing it over to someone. One should hold the *sanshin* horizontally with the left hand supporting the neck and the right hand supporting the backside of the *sanshin* body and extending arms out to hand over the *sanshin*. Likewise, it is important to receive the *sanshin* with both hands if it is given in this manner.

After teaching the new student this etiquette, Shinsato Sensei teaches the student how to properly assemble the *sanshin*. He teaches the student about the parts of the *sanshin* as he explains and has the student actually practice assembling a *sanshin*, while he demonstrates the proper way to set up on his own *sanshin*. He instructs the student to lay the *sanshin* flat on its back, then pinch and lift the three strings high enough to insert and stand the *uma* (駒), a wooden piece with three shallow grooves in which the strings will rest. The student learns how and where the *uma* should be positioned on the *sanshin* so that it will lift the strings away from the body of the *sanshin*, allowing the strings to vibrate and resound. If the student does not properly assemble the instrument, it affects the sound of the *sanshin* or it could cause the string to cut or the *uma* to snap.
He then instructs the student to pick up the *sanshin* and hold it as if playing. He corrects the student’s hand positions and teaches the student the proper way to hold the *sanshin*. He also adjusts the *sanshin*’s resting position on the student’s lap. He proceeds to instruct on the proper way to hold the *bachi/tsume* (plectrum) used to pluck the strings. Then, he demonstrates how to correctly pluck the strings and has the student practice plucking the strings a few times. He tells the student what each string is called and takes out a big chart, which he made himself, to begin teaching the names and symbols of the notes. He also provides the student with a finger chart to look at and practice at home.

**Music Books**

The students all purchase a set of five books called *kunkunshi* 工工四, called that for the characters that represent the notes, which contain all of the classical songs in the Nomura style (Figure 1). Each style (i.e., Nomura-ryū, Afuso-ryū) has its own *kunkunshi*. While they all have most of the same songs in their repertoires, there are subtle differences in the ways they perform the songs that make it difficult for them to perform together. There are 201 songs in the Nomura-ryū *kunkunshi* (Garfias, 1993/1994: 120). The five volumes are: *Jōkan* 上巻, *Chūkan* 中巻, *Gekan* 下巻, *Zokkan* 続巻, and *Tokushū* 特集.

The *sanshin* music notation, called *kunkunshi*, is unlike western music notation and consists of Chinese characters or *kanji*. The sheet music has *kanji* in boxes, or in some cases, in between two boxes as well. The placement of these characters, either in a box or on the line between boxes, is very important because it also instructs to the rhythm of the music. There are two sets of music notations that one must pay attention to in the *kunkunshi*; one set is for the *sanshin* and the other is for the voice (singing), hence the term *uta-sanshin*.

As mentioned earlier, all students begin by learning the song Kajadifū Bushi, which is the very first song in the *Jōkan*. Shinsato has an enlarged chart that he made of *Kajadifū Bushi* as it appears in the *kunkunshi*. It is rather appropriate that they start with this song because, for some reason, whenever there is a celebratory event on the main island of Okinawa, it is usually the first song that is performed in a traditional Okinawan program. Although there is no definite explanation as to why this is so, it was explained to me that every different marking that could be found in a *sanshin* music was found in...
this one song, so if one can master the technique of that song, one should be able to do
the others as well. Thus, Kajadifū has become the one song upon which students of uta-
sanshin start building their foundations.

Whenever teaching a new song, Shinsato will usually play and sing the entire
song, with the student playing along (if he/she is able to play) but not singing the first
time. Sometimes, he might play it twice just to further familiarize the student with the
music. For the beginner student, after he goes through the song once or twice, he goes
over each note, one by one, demonstrating the finger position and playing the note for the
student, then has the student play each note as well. Once the student learns a bunch of
the notes, he will point to each note on the chart, and have the student play the note as he
points to it. This is also an exercise to see if the student recognizes the note and knows
how to play it. He will usually go over the first verse several times to get the student
used to playing the music. It is up to the student to go home and practice and review
what he/she was taught in lessons that day. Gradually, as one becomes familiar with the
song, one sings louder and gains confidence to be able to sing with the others.

Although in the beginning we start by learning the first five songs in the Jōkan in
order,\(^{34}\) we do not stay only in the Jōkan, but rather, we start learning different songs
from the other volumes as well. The Jōkan songs are usually the shorter songs, the
Chūkan songs are much longer and more difficult, while most of the Gekan songs are in a
different tuning called niage 二揚, and the Zokkan, and Tokushū songs are the livelier
songs. What we learn after those first five songs depend on what Sensei selects for us to
learn. There is no order that has to be followed and generally we start learning different
songs for performances.

These books are in Japanese, so while the students can play the music in these
books once they learn (memorize) which character symbolizes what note, many are still
unable to read the lyrics in the book. Therefore, Shinsato spends countless hours creating
music sheets with romanized lyrics (Figure 2) so that the students can sing the songs.
Before he had access to a color copier, he would do each music sheet by hand because

\(^{34}\) The set is called Gujinfū 御前風 and it was performed in the court for the king during important events
or for important guests like Chinese emissaries.
parts of the music were marked in red as well as black and it was necessary to be able to see that coding.

While it is difficult for the student to absorb and read both the sanshin music as well as the voice music in the beginning, he stresses to the student that the singing part is just as, if not more, important than the sanshin music. He emphasizes the uta-sanshin. It may take the student a few months before he/she is comfortable and able to sing and play at the same time. As a student becomes more advanced, Shinsato will teach the student about the subtle differences in the different notations for the vocal music. There is a difference whether there are dots or lines, if they are red or black, or if they are connected. Students begin paying attention to the little changes and the different symbols in the vocal music line.

However, one thing that Shinsato has been trying to get his students to do, but with some difficulty, is to have the students be able to play without looking at the kunkunshi. He tries very hard to get students to not be so reliant on the kunkunshi, but many do not have the confidence to play without it. They often depend on the kunkunshi to know how the songs should be played and sung. Garfias mentions that such reliance on the kunkunshi, even though it is not a Western music notation system, is very much a Western concept of having a written record of music so that it can be played the same way consistently all the time. Garfias writes:

“While this [addition of voice pitch notation] was widely hailed as a great stride forward for the dissemination of Okinawan music, in its tendency to move from the direct oral tradition to increased dependency on a formal and literal notation system, it was also one which showed a distinct Western tendency. This gradual Westernization is something which had crept in as part of the attempt to make the Okinawan tradition more like the prestigious Japanese traditions of music without realizing how Westernized in interpretation those traditions had already become. With the addition of vocal notation many performers and, in particular, teachers began to take the notation system quite literally, this in spite of the fact that the older musicians pointed out mistakes in the Serei Kunio’s transcribed notation of the voice part.35 Gradually, a formal, almost frozen style began to permeate performances in both the Nomura and Afuso traditions.” (Garfias 1993/1994, 121-122).

35 Serei Kunio 世禮國男 (1897-1950), a sanshin master and first president of the Nomura-ryū Ongaku Kyōkai, transcribed the music while listening to another sanshin master, Isagawa Seizui 伊差川世瑞 (1872-1937), sing the songs in 1953.
However, the *uta-sanshin* tradition is one that was originally steeped in oral tradition. Shinsato said that in the earlier days they were taught to play by listening, watching, and imitating one’s sensei to pick up on the nuances and style of playing. One would mimic one’s sensei in order to try to learn expressive tones. One would even watch and imitate a sensei’s hand motion, because the hand motion was also a technique used to keep time and rhythm. He said that the *kunkunshi* should be used only as a guideline for learning but not to be relied upon in a performance. The emotions, or *jō* 情, are what should come out when one plays. But many times one becomes rigid and loses sight of this when one is so fixated on playing and singing strictly according to the *kunkunshi*. While it does take some technique to get the right tone or color of sound to bring out emotional expressions, he often tells his students that they have to experiment with sounds themselves to bring out their own expressions to match what they are feeling as they sing the songs. It is unique to an individual as far as how they will use the sound to convey their own expressions. By relying only on the *kunkunshi* to tell one how to sing makes the performance very “square.” Shinsato Sensei has stressed that one can have a good voice, but if he/she lacked *jō* it would be difficult to captivate the audience. On the other hand, even if someone does not have as good a voice, but he/she can project *jō*, it is possible to capture the audience.

Although his students all have the set of Nomura-ryū *kunkunshi* books, once programs are decided, they practice with the folders put together by Shinsato, which contain the romanized songs that they will play for their two performances of the year. Shinsato Shōsei Kai performs at its annual club *shinnenkai* (New Year’s party), and at the annual Hawaii United Okinawa Association (HUOA)’s Okinawa Festival at Kapiolani Park during the Labor Day weekend. Shinsato puts together music folders for his students and they practice with these folders in preparation for these events a few months in advance.

**Learning Culture**

Learning *uta-sanshin*, however, is not merely about learning the notes and singing the songs. At the very first lesson, Shinsato Sensei tells the new student that it is important to learn the appropriate etiquette (culture). He proceeds to teach the student that before one does anything else, beginning lessons or a performance, it is important to
show mutual respect to others by bowing and saying “yoroshiku onegaishimasu” [Please help (or, look favorably upon) me]. Likewise, it is also important to thank everyone when the lessons or performances are over, by again bowing and this time saying “arigatōgozaimashita” [Thank you]. For the next few weeks, he prompts the student to repeat these greetings and salutations until the student is able to remember to do them on his/her own. Through the repetition of these actions over time, it becomes automatic for the students. However, he explains to them why it is important to not merely memorize the phrases; he tries to instill in them a true sense of humility and gratitude. He does this by trying to explain to them in detail and with repeated verbal instructions about what it means to have humility and what it means to have gratitude. He does this by using stories, narratives, metaphors, or analogies to which they can relate. One such analogy, about the rice plant, is discussed in a later section of this chapter.

Because many are English-speaking only, it is difficult for them to get this right away. It requires translating the stories. It takes repeated instructions, repetition whereby they memorize the story or pattern/routine until it becomes ingrained in them. It is through the reinforcement of these practices, ritualizations, that they learn what it is to be “Okinawan” or to perform “Okinawan” as it applies to being part of learning a “traditional” art. It has to be practiced constantly in order for them to make it part of their “tradition.” Therefore, repetition is one of the important teaching methods that is necessary in order for the learning of culture to take place. Even when learning the songs, it is through constant repetition that students learn the songs. Some even record their lessons so that they can remember what needs to be done or how it needs to be done and practice with the recordings.

Okinawan music lessons are more than just music lessons. They also provide opportunities for students to socialize with others, especially during break time, as another way to learn about Okinawan culture. Students will practice for about an hour then have a break during which they would sit around the table, enjoying refreshments. Often, Yoshiko Shinsato, Shinsato Sensei’s wife, would offer students tasty refreshments during their break that include Okinawan food that she had cooked herself. It gives them a sense of camaraderie as they enjoy each other’s company and “talk story.” According to Kurazumi, it was this kind of camaraderie during the plantation days that encouraged the
“group solidarity and harmony that Okinawans began to develop [that] would help perpetuate Okinawan traditions in Hawaii” (Kurazumi, 1998: 23). Many say learning uta-sanshin gives them a connection to the Okinawan culture and they feel in touch with their “Okinawan-ness.” Especially for those who come from or grew up in Okinawa, when they come to lessons, they are amidst a familiar culture and sounds. As Kurazumi puts it,

“The further one stays away from home, the more one feels nostalgic about the music and dance of their homeland. They say that they value the Okinawan performing arts more highly today than they did when they were still living in Okinawa.” (Kurazumi 1998, 50).

The bigger the class, the more people tend to socialize. During the breaks, conversations cover all kinds of topics. This is the time when especially the younger people can benefit and learn from the elders about Okinawa and Okinawan culture. Sometimes the discussion may be about Okinawan food and how to make something or it could be about what someone remembers about certain customs in certain regions of Okinawa.

Because cultural upbringing plays an important role in the meanings that we sometimes place in things, concepts, and/or symbols, we do not always understand/interpret certain elements in the same way as someone else. Because of his life experiences growing up in Okinawa, he is possibly more attuned to what is being expressed in the songs than someone who has never experienced Okinawa. He understands the language and their forms of expression. For many of us who did not grow up in Okinawa, we might not know certain things nor understand them, especially the abstract. Therefore, he tries to explain it to us in such a way that we are able to grasp and understand the concepts. He teaches us Okinawan language, culture, and values by explaining so that we are able to make the connections between items, concepts, or symbols and their meanings, so that they make sense to us. One of the Shosei Kai members, Student A, says:

“If you understand what you’re singing, the expression can come out. You know, I probably could be singing, um, if they had war songs, okay, in Okinawa, where they talking about war, whatever…and I might be singing it as a LOVE song because I don’t know! You know, I don’t know that. Without the information from Sensei…or Sensei telling us, “Oh, this is a beautiful song about this guy and this girl and the romance and the sun and the moon and whatever… if he doesn’t tell us that we wouldn’t know what
we’re singing or dancing…because, again, I don’t have all of that behind me. I really wish today that I understood some Japanese.” (Shosei Kai members, Student A, 2013)

For those who are interested in the meanings of the songs and are willing to listen, Shinsato Sensei will take the time to explain what the songs mean and about the symbolisms contained within the songs. Songs that teach about values and morals are called *kyōkunka* 教訓歌 and there are many of those songs. However, there was one song in particular that made a lasting impression on me. As Shinsato Sensei explained this to me, the song was about the character of the rice plant. He said that when one is young, one stands up tall because he/she is not weighed down by the responsibilities and heavy lessons of life, and sometimes youth brings with it a sort of brashness. This is very much like the rice plant. A young rice plant stands straight up because it does not have many rice grains growing on it. However, as the plant matures, it grows more rice grains and starts to bend with the weight of those grains. But the older rice plant is much more valuable than the young, tall rice plants because of all of those grains of rice. The lesson here is that, like the rice plant, one must bend/bow and be humble the higher the status one attains in life. Never forget to be humble and remember to treat others with respect because one never knows when he/she may need someone’s help. It is also true that one is better respected if one is successful and can still be humble.

Shinsato has to think of ways to provide verbal instructions that his students are able to understand. He usually has the meanings of the lyrics translated so that all of the members have an understanding of the songs. In this way, his teaching methods are very involved and requires him to translate, reconceptualize presentations of lessons to make them relevant to the students, and to transliterate the lyrics so that they are able to sing. It involves so many more steps than if he were teaching someone who already understood Japanese/Okinawan and have the same cultural understanding, as they would in Okinawa.

He says that it is more complicated now to teach the younger generations these old songs because, besides speaking and thinking in a completely different language from these texts, they have a different view of the world. In the past, when the people studying uta-sanshin had the same understanding it did not take as much to explain to them. However, with the younger generation who are now living in a completely different
world, it takes even more effort to explain things to them in ways that they can relate or understand.

As much as possible, he tries to have the students understand what the songs are about. However, it is not only the students to whom he tries to explain. He also tries to get the audience to understand. Every program that he puts together, whether it is for the shinnenkai or the Okinawan Festival, he writes out the meanings of the songs in Japanese. Then, for the past several years, I have had the privilege of reading what he writes and translating those texts into English for the programs. The narratives are read to the audience by the emcee. Ever the teacher, he wants people to understand and appreciate the beauty of Okinawan songs. In the Okinawan language, there is a term of chimugukuru 肝心, which loosely translates to something like “heart and soul.” By understanding the songs, the students are better able to appreciate them and feel this chimugukuru.

Shinsato has always said that one could be a student of sanshin for life. The more one studies, the more one realizes there is still so much more to be learned. He is a model of diligence and perseverance as he continues to read and study about the stories behind the songs. While some who teach koten frown upon playing or teaching min’yō (Kurazumi 1998, 42). Shinsato has accepted that, nowadays, people are more into min’yō than koten. He said that in the past, if one studied koten, one only played koten. However, his own sensei composed some min’yō and viewed both koten and min’yō as valuable songs of Okinawa. Therefore, he includes some min’yō in the program and teaches them to students. He appreciates the poetry of both koten and min’yō and tries to pass down that appreciation to his students.

Lessons are more than just practice sessions. Lessons create the space for people to learn about what it is to be “Okinawan” through the routines that become part of the rituals of the lessons. It becomes a community in which students learn about the Okinawan culture by socializing with others in the class as they share stories and learn about Okinawan culture through the songs, as the songs are explained to them. It is the space that is transformed to connect them with Okinawa.

While the lessons are important for these reasons, they are also meant to prepare students for performances. Performances are yet another space in which “Okinawan-
ness” is displayed and presented, except that these are in public spaces. In the next chapter, we examine how performances sustain the culture as well as maintain ethnic community.
Figure 2. Nomura-ryū Kunkunshi
from Nomura-ryū Ōngaku Kyōkai Kunkunshi (Jōkan)
Figure 3. *Kunkunshi* with Lyrics Transcribed in *Rōmaji*
Music sheet created by Katsumi Shinsato Sensei
CHAPTER 4. PERFORMANCE AS AGENCIES OF SYMBOLIC CULTURAL SUSTENANCE AND IDENTITY EXPLORATION IN AN OKINAWAN ETHNIC COMMUNITY

Martin Stokes writes:

“Music is socially meaningful […] because it provides means by which people recognize identities and places, and the boundaries which separate them. […] Musical performance, as well as the acts of listening, dancing, arguing, discussing, thinking and writing about music, provide the means by which ethnicities and identities are constructed and mobilized.” (Stokes 1994, 5)

That being said, music or expressive culture is also fluid and malleable. It can transform the space in which it is produced and performed. Its boundaries can be shifted, relocated and resituated. In this chapter, I will examine the role that musical performances play in empowering groups and encouraging cultural practices that shape such an ethnic community, real or imagined, and as a diasporic expression of “culture.”

In his Master’s thesis, in analyzing the maintenance of the Okinawan ethnic community in Hawaii, Wesley Ueunten broke down components of that community between an administrative system that “promotes Okinawan culture through planning and providing manpower for activities within the Okinawan community” (e.g. Hawaii United Okinawa Association) and a cultural system that includes the agents “who are dedicated to teaching, learning, and preserving Okinawan culture” (Ueunten 1989, 57).36 Katsumi Shinsato and the Shinsato Shosei Kai represent one of those links in that cultural system that sustain/maintain the Okinawan ethnic community in Hawaii through the teaching/learning/performing of Okinawan music via uta-sanshin.

In the previous chapter, I looked at the transmission/infusion of culture through the weekly lessons of the students. In this section, I will examine how, through the club and its activities, members learn about performing Okinawan culture.

**Defining Performance**

In her article “Performance” in the book *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, Susan Manning gives several definitions for “performance” as the concept evolved through different disciplines. She claims that the definition in the arts that once meant “a
set of artistic choices an actor, dancer or musician makes in realizing a preexistent text”
developed into one by American cultural scholars of “a mode of cultural production
composed of events bound in time and framed in space” (Manning 2007, 177). She states
that these cultural productions could appear, change, and vanish over time. In the social
sciences and humanities, there was a transition to a definition that included and
emphasized the ties between an identity and the act of performing. Manning claims that
performances of social identities may be based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class,
profession, region, and nationality (Manning 2007, 177-178).

That being the case, what do we make of cultural performances by a diasporic
community? The location, time, and context in which they take place must be
considered. But the very complex issue of ties between identity and cultural performance
requires the examination of meaning behind behavior/action and the expressions given in
the context (and location) in which something is performed, because as Hae-kyung Um
points out, performances may be “drawn from intercultural creativity and located in
multicultural milieu” (Um 2005, 1). As we will see, performances of the traditional
Ryukyuan/Okinawan performing arts have become very much transnational and, in the
process, authenticity and hybridity become issues that are often scrutinized and pondered
when considering such intercultural creativity in this multicultural environment.
However, the performing arts make it possible to assert some manifestation of Okinawan
culture in a distant diasporic community like Hawai‘i and the performances, as
expressions of “culture,” become one of the agencies for identity construction and
maintenance among the Okinawan diaspora in Hawai‘i.

The Importance of Performance

The transformation of Okinawan culture in Hawai‘i from a ‘culture of shame’ of
which some people were embarrassed by and felt should be kept hidden, to a “culture of
pride” which is now being shared freely with all, was a complex process with many
factors involved. Most importantly, this “renaissance” was the result of the global social
and political movements of the 1960s and 70s that included the civil rights movement and
the ethnic revitalization movement which called attention to the status of minorities, gave
minorities their voice, and made it “okay” for them to explore who they were. Without
this politics of identity with the acknowledgment of minorities, this kind of
transformation would not have occurred. This transformation was important for creating the critical context in which the performances take place and for which we now have receptive audiences.

It is remarkable that with more opportunities and venues to view Okinawan music and dance, significantly in the forms of performing arts, people recognize and acknowledge the rich, vibrant tones and colors of the Okinawan arts and have become more interested in understanding Okinawan culture. In order for this to have happened, performances were important to gaining more exposure for the Okinawan music and dance. Through performances, the arts have become symbolic icons of Okinawan culture and, by capturing people’s interests, they have also become a source of pride.

Performances are essential to the survival of an ethnic music, or any music for that matter, especially in a place that is not the land of origin. In his article, R. Anderson Sutton wrote that in a multicultural environment, the practice of sharing one’s music through performances give minority ethnic groups opportunities to make their presence known and to receive recognition/validation by others who observe these performances. In 1983, he wrote:

“Gaining recognition from the larger Hawaiian community is valued by performers of all ethnic groups in Hawaii. It is especially valued by less visible minorities such as the Okinawans. Participation in multi-cultural shows […] has long served as a sign of cultural legitimacy in Hawaii. Ethnic consciousness is high […] and i]n Hawaii one’s self image is very much dependent on one’s ethnic identity” (Sutton 1983, 62).

While this is certainly relevant today, this article was written over 30 years ago, and the Okinawan Festival had just gotten off the ground and was nowhere near the status it holds right now. Thus, it can probably be said that the Okinawan performing arts, at the time the article was written, did not have the same level of recognition that it has now.

Performance is certainly a key to recruiting students/members by having a presence in the musical landscape. Events such as the Hawaii United Okinawa Association’s annual Okinawan Festival and gatherings (New Year’s parties or summer picnics) of the Okinawan locality clubs always include Okinawan song and dance as part
of their programs. As Sutton also points out, these public performances are especially important for music groups as it affords them opportunities to be out there and to be heard as well as to be evaluated. While this may spur rivalries among different groups, these rivalries are also seen as a healthy condition that motivates students to do well for the group when they strive to be the best that they can be (Sutton 1983, 61-62). The performances become social arenas in which certain behaviors and interactions/social dynamics are on display. They serve a purpose to be a kind of gauge for performers to see where they stand in the larger scheme of things, although sometimes fueling people’s competitive nature.

But Sutton is also quick to point out that while rivalry plays a part in performance, camaraderie is also an important part of the performing arts’ survival as well. It brings people together in their quest to explore Okinawan culture and to enjoy the experience. He writes:

“[…] at the recitals which most groups give twice a year (spring and fall), a festive atmosphere prevails […] The whole event is so utterly different from the Western concept of a ‘recital’ that one hesitates to apply the word. More accurate, perhaps, is the notion of a music ‘party’ (a term used by some Okinawan musicians) which incorporates aspects not only of recital, but of celebration and group solidarity. One senses at both the parties and the practice sessions a strong feeling of cultural pride in the participants who are not just ‘performing music’ or ‘demonstrating skills,’ but enjoying the opportunity to be Okinawan in a context where, at least temporarily, they are not a minority.” (Sutton 1983, 64)

Performance is important because, while it is possible for one to play the *sanshin* alone, it presents the opportunity to polish one’s skills and discipline by listening to others play and being able to adjust one’s own playing to fit with others in harmony. Particularly in full ensembles, one must learn to listen to the different instruments and different parts to be able to perform successfully. Also, if dance is involved, it teaches the musicians to be attentive to the dancers’ movements and reminds the musicians that the dancers are the main foci for the audiences, thereby placing the musicians in the

---

37 “The [locality] clubs provided opportunities for musical performance, often with dance, at numerous social occasions.” (Sutton 1983, 58)

38 He says “most groups give [recitals] twice a year” but it is likely that he is referring specifically to the Nomura-ryū Ongaku Kyōkai’s “Haru no Taikai” (spring recital) and “Aki no Taikai” (fall recital) in which all students who study under the different teachers of the Nomura-ryū get together to play as an ensemble (including sanshin and koto) and also perform solos.
background. Therefore, the skilled jikata (地謡 or 地方), or accompanying musicians, will do their best to play in a way that makes it easier for the dancers to perform their dances.

Thus, while many of the Shosei Kai members admit to learning sanshin more for themselves and their personal enjoyment rather than for performing for others, most realize the importance of performances and they enjoy the social aspect of the occasional performances.

One Shosei Kai member, Student C says:

“We don’t always get to play together because we have classes on different days. But when we do have performances, it forces us to come together to practice and then we play better together when we can practice together, you know. It keeps us sharp. I mean, yeah, it’s good fun, but then we all try hard to sound nice too, yeah?” (Shosei Kai member, Student C, 2013)

They are able to mingle with others with whom they share a common bond in sanshin and maybe even learn more about the Okinawan culture through their interactions with one another. For some, it is the only space in which they claim that they are “doing something Okinawan” and performing their “Okinawan-ness.” Therefore, through this socialization process, some feel that the Okinawan culture is being instilled and developed in them in the only social space that they have to “become Okinawan” and where they think about “Okinawan.” As Shosei Kai member, Student C says:

“Before I took lessons, I didn’t really do anything Okinawan. In fact, I didn’t know ANYTHING about Okinawan stuff. I just thought it was Japanese! I didn’t know there was a difference. At least now I can say that I know how to play the Okinawan samisen!” (Shosei Kai member, Student C, 2013)

As Ueunten emphasizes:

“Even when not publicly performed, Okinawan music and dance have great symbolic importance as ‘something Okinawan’ that one does to reaffirm an Okinawan identity. Okinawan music and dance provides a starting point for youth and adults seeking their ‘roots.’ Parents and grandparents also encourage their children and grandchildren to learn music and dance as a way for them to learn about their heritage.” (Ueunten 2007, 103)

Some people in diasporic communities, i.e., Hawaii, who participate in Okinawan performing arts say that they do so because it makes them feel “Okinawan” when they
are doing something “Okinawan” to learn about their cultural heritage. It is interesting that they say that because the music and dance are but one part of “Okinawan culture.” Many old “traditional” Okinawan customs are no longer practiced in the daily lives of Okinawans in Hawai‘i and the performing arts are practically all that is left for them to experience “Okinawan culture.” Therefore, the performing arts serve as a “connection” to something Okinawan and to the past, while at the same time becoming something “different,” as it is played by and for those who live in lands far removed from Okinawa. This is in line with Hall’s statement that in order to look at the whole picture, we must also look at what has become in this transformation. Satomi Kurazumi maintains that through these constant performances, whether it be here in Hawai‘i or in any other part of the US, Okinawan music which many think of as unique to Okinawa has actually “become a part of America’s multiculture” as it has “been gradually absorbed into American society” (Kurazumi 1998, 1). However, in this case, this statement may be too much of an overgeneralized statement if she is talking about the total of American society.

The process of loss or erasure of what was Ryukyuan/Okinawan culture began years before the Okinawans set out overseas. After the Meiji Restoration, Japan’s earlier policies of making the Ryukyuans act and be foreign (non-Japanese) were abandoned when Ryukyu was officially claimed and annexed by Japan and eventually turned into Okinawa Prefecture in 1879. As part of its development and expansion of the nation-state, Meiji Japan’s policies of standardization were also imposed upon the Okinawans. Twenty years later, Okinawans began migrating overseas. As Ueunten points out, this process of cultural diminution was further intensified in Hawai‘i when Okinawans came into contact with the other Japanese on a daily basis. The Japanese community was already established in Hawai‘i with the first Japanese arriving more than 30 years before the Okinawans. Thus, the Okinawans, being the latecomers, faced being doubly discriminated against for being a minority (Okinawan) within a minority (Japanese). The Okinawans were seen as being ‘backwards’ with strange cultural practices by the Japanese. As a result, Okinawan culture turned into one of shame for the Okinawans, and many of their cultural beliefs and practices were kept hidden or were completely eliminated from their daily lives in Hawai‘i. This was especially true of the nisei Okinawans.
“It was the Naichi discrimination against Okinawans that made Okinawan identity salient for the nisei Okinawans while causing Okinawan nisei to reject their culture. That is, while discrimination made the nisei Okinawans very conscious of their Okinawan identity, because Okinawans were a target of discrimination from the Naichi, they did not actively preserve Okinawan culture and in many cases strove to cut their association with anything Okinawan.” (Ueunten 2007, 88-89)

However, what did survive in Hawai‘i, as well as in Okinawa and other diasporic communities, were the performing arts. In Hawai‘i, the sounds of the sanshin could be heard particularly at Okinawan bon dances, the one place where it was acceptable for Okinawans to perform their arts in public, even if the other Japanese found it “different.”³⁹ Both Ueunten and Sutton place Okinawan music and dance as forms of expressions of resistance against Okinawan cultural elements being swallowed up or completely eradicated in the process of standardization or assimilation. Thus, these performances were important for maintaining some ground on which they were able to perform their Okinawan culture to some extent.

However, it must be said that Shinsato and his group do not display this explicit sense of resistance that some other groups may have. While some of the other groups are focused on actively “protecting” and “revitalizing” Okinawan culture in Hawai‘i, Shinsato is content to just teach his students what he knows about the music and culture and let that be his contribution to perpetuating the culture. There is less (political) activism and this is also projected to his students who simply enjoy learning a part of the Okinawan culture and its social aspect.

Ueunten classifies Okinawan performing arts as a form of “symbolic culture.” Ueunten uses Herbert J. Gans’ work about the second-generation Jews in the U.S., which talks about “symbolic culture” as “an expression of something through which a group can exercise agency in expressing, defining, and performing identity in resistance to subjugation,” as a conceptual framework for discussing Okinawan culture and identity (Ueunten 2007, 102). When the “traditional culture” more or less disappeared from their daily lives and was no longer a living culture, Okinawans began to replace that with

³⁹ Even though Okinawan music was acceptable at bon dances, that is not to say that Okinawan music was not frowned upon by the other Japanese immigrants. According to Kurazumi, because Okinawans loved their music and it could be heard around the plantation, it was cause for prejudice and reason for Okinawans to be thought of as being “uncivilized people” by the other Japanese (Kurazumi 1998, 21-22).
“symbolic culture” that, just as Gans’ example of symbolic Judaism did for the Jews, enabled the Okinawans to feel “Okinawan.”

**Recitals**

A recital is not something taken on lightly, for it involves much planning with many details, from rehearsals and coordination among all performers to the aloha party following the recital. It is also a time when there is a need to observe certain protocols and proper etiquette. For example, there is a certain protocol that is followed when asking other groups for their assistance with the recital. Often, the sensei will approach the other group’s sensei and ask for their assistance for the upcoming recital. Whenever a group has a recital, other groups will generally help with the recital with tasks such as ushering, collecting tickets, or even performing for the recital. Then, there is also usually a kick-off party to which all these people are invited and tickets for the recital are distributed to the different groups to sell among their members. Thus, the groups always help each other out in this way, too, with ticket sales. But because of this kind of support, it is also very important to follow protocols to ask properly and to follow certain etiquette so that one does not offend anyone, because they always rely on the other groups’ goodwill to help them out. They realize the importance of maintaining these relationships and that they are reciprocal. This kind of support is what keeps the Okinawan performing arts a tight-knit community in Hawai‘i and provides a sense of the camaraderie.

As mentioned previously, though, Shinsato Shosei Kai rarely puts on recitals. In fact, in its 38-year history, Shinsato Shosei Kai has done five recitals: its first recital in 1976; a 10th anniversary recital in 1985; a joint recital with its brother group, Wado Kai, in 1991; a recital that was put together by the Shosei Kai members in honor of Katsumi Shinsato Sensei in 1998; and, at the time of writing this chapter, the Shosei Kai had just completed its fifth recital.

Shinsato Shosei Kai held its debut recital, or *nabiraki* 名開き, in July 1976 at the Farrington High School Auditorium located in Honolulu, Hawaii. It was a two-day event (July 30-31), titled “*Shinsato Shōsei Kai Kaimei Hirō Dai Ensōkai* 新里勝声会会名披露大演奏会 [A Grand Performance Announcing the Shinsato Shosei Kai].” The program line-ups were different for each of the days, with a variety of *koten* (classical) and *minyō*
(folk) numbers. They included dance performances by each of the different local Okinawan dance schools over the course of the two days. As was customary at the time, all the local dance schools were asked to participate by performing at the recital, so as not to cause an affront to any of them. Likewise, all the other Nomura-ryū sensei from other Hawai‘i schools were asked to perform as well. It also included guest performers from Okinawa -- the Itoman Yakaras, a well-known family in Okinawa that also included Uehara Tomoko, who is now the lead vocalist with the renowned Rinken Band. Shinsato invited the Itoman Yakaras to Hawai‘i specially to perform for this recital a couple of years after he had met them for the first time in Okinawa. Two years earlier, Shinsato saw one of their shows and met with the father/leader of the group, Uehara Choko, and the two became very good friends.

There were several interesting facts to note about that recital. In terms of the preparations for the recital, the Shinsato Family (wife, children, their spouses and extended family) did much of the labor and preparations for the recital. Some of the wives of the members were also actively involved in the preparations for the recital and did much of the work in the background. Meanwhile, the Shosei Kai members were all male, so the uta-sanshin voices were completely male, while the accompanying koto musicians and most of the dancers were female. Also, many of the members were issei or kibei nisei and in their 50s or older. Most were Okinawan with one exception, one person with a Hawaiian surname (his Japanese middle name was given but it was unclear whether that person was part-Okinawan), who also happened to be the only member younger than fifty performing.

Also interesting to note about the program booklet was that many of the performers were listed by their Japanese middle names, even if they had English first

\[\text{\footnote{Although Nomura-ryū is a koten association, performances here generally include a mix of koten and minyō to suit the audience because many in the audience tend to enjoy the lively minyō music over the slow, courtly koten music. Ueunten points out that it became common, even in Okinawa, for the performances to include both to appeal to the taste of a wider audience.}}\]

\[\text{\footnote{In the past, whenever a school had a recital, it was customary to invite other schools to perform at one’s recital. Thus, they would allow them to perform one or two numbers as part of the program. If someone was left out, it could cause an affront that would make for strained relations.}}\]

\[\text{\footnote{Koto players are accompanists and, therefore, generally do not sing with the sanshin players.}}\]
names and ordinarily went by them in their daily lives.\textsuperscript{43} One could wonder whether that was a symbolic way in which to maintain the bonds or lessen the gap between the issei and sansei, by using their Japanese middle names (which the issei could easily pronounce), instead of the often difficult (for the issei) to pronounce English first names. With the exception of some of the advertisements in the program booklet that were in English, everything was printed in Japanese, which might have been indicative of the type of audience that this performance drew. The majority of the audience was issei and kibei nisei who understood Japanese.

The second recital was in 1985 for the 10\textsuperscript{th} year anniversary of the Shosei Kai. This, too, like the first recital was a two-day event at Farrington High School. This recital included performances by dancers from the Nakasone Dance School and the Itoman Yakaras. There were some noticeable changes from the first recital. The one most noticeable change was that the Shosei Kai now had females in its membership, including one of Shinsato’s daughters. Of the 20 members, 7 were female. Also, coincidental or not, this was two years after the first United Okinawan Association’s Okinawan Festival, and there seemed to be a growing interest among the younger generation of Okinawans in the Okinawan performing arts. Thus, there were more members of the younger generation with a fair number of sansei as the membership of the Shosei Kai grew. While the program booklet included many messages written in Japanese, the program lineup was written in English, making it easier for the younger generations to read and learn the titles of the Okinawan songs and dances. While there were still some issei present, their numbers were getting smaller as they aged, and there clearly was a marked difference in the changing of the generations in the audience as well.

In 1991, the Shosei Kai held a joint recital with its brother club, the Wado Kai, in Los Angeles, California. The Shosei Kai participated in this recital to perform and celebrate Eikichi Miyagi Sensei’s 88\textsuperscript{th} birthday. It was important to Shinsato to make this trip to celebrate his former sensei’s birthday and perform with his club at this event,

\textsuperscript{43} This seemed to have been a common practice in the past. Even in Takenobu Higa’s book on Ryukyuan performing arts in Hawai‘i, he gives the performers’ names with their Japanese middle names instead of their English first names. For someone who is unfamiliar with the local Okinawan performing arts community this presents some difficulty, when later accounts of performances give an English name, in discerning if it is the same person.
being that it was a special occasion.\textsuperscript{44} It is unknown how many of the members actually went on this trip, as I was unable to locate neither a program booklet for this recital nor any other information.

The fourth recital was one planned by the members of the Shosei Kai to honor Shinsato Sensei for his many years of dedication to preserving the Okinawan culture. It was aptly titled, “\textit{Gu-un 御恩}” (English title: A Recital of Gratitude). It was held on August 2, 1998, at the Hawaii Theatre. This recital included guest performers from Shosei Kai’s brother school in Los Angeles, Wado Kai, the Itoman Yakaras from Okinawa, and the program included performances by all of the local dance schools. This recital reflected many changes as well. The Shosei Kai which featured twelve members in its debut recital grew its membership to fifty for this 1998 recital. While the twelve were all male in the debut recital, it was very noticeable that the female now outnumbered the men, with only thirteen out of the fifty members being male this time. Also noticeable was the number of younger people, sixteen who were twentysomething and under (four of whom were his grandchildren), with the youngest being two nine-year-olds. Thus, the membership ranged from nine to eighty-nine years of age. Of course, we have reached the generation where the great majority only understand English, so the program booklet was mostly in English, with only the occasional congratulatory messages written in Japanese.\textsuperscript{45} However, because it is always Shinsato’s wish that people understand the songs being sung, he also instructed that the romanized lyrics and translations of the songs be included in the program booklet.

Although the \textit{Gu-un} recital was planned by the Shosei Kai members, as always, the Shinsato Family all pitched in with the work that it took to put on this recital. Even for rehearsals, his wife cooked meals (often Okinawan dishes) for everyone to eat, and his children and their families (some even coming from Los Angeles especially for this recital) helped with setting up and did much of the offstage labor.

In the years following the fourth recital, the membership decreased significantly, mainly due to the fact that many of the younger members went off to college and had

\textsuperscript{44} In Okinawa, the 88\textsuperscript{th} birthday is grandly celebrated and is known as “tōkachi yuwe(トーカチユウェー)” in Okinawan and “beiju iwai (米寿祝い)” in Japanese.

\textsuperscript{45} By this time, there were few pre-WWII \textit{issei} remaining although there are still the post-WWII immigrants, or \textit{shin issei} as they are called.
other pursuits or others began their family life. Also, many of the older members either passed away or were no longer able to come to lessons and club activities. Thus, the membership went from fifty at the fourth recital to twenty-three at the fifth recital, still with the females out numbering the males, 18-5.

The fifth recital, titled “Magukuru 真心” (English title: With Deep Sincerity) was held at the Hawai‘i Convention Center on May 26, 2013. In 2012, some of the students told Shinsato Sensei that they wanted to do another recital because he was about to reach a milestone when he turned 90 in June of 2012 and that they wanted to honor him and his accomplishments. Planning for the recital began in July 2012, the kickoff party was held in January 2013, tickets distributed, and things looked as if they were going as planned. However, something unforeseen happened less than two months before the recital. Yoshiko Shinsato, Shinsato Sensei’s wife, suddenly passed away. Understandably, Shinsato Sensei was grief-stricken and the club members wanted to give the Shinsatos some time and space to mourn as a family. There was great uncertainty as to whether or not the club should go on with the recital or if it should be cancelled entirely. Of course, all lessons stopped. But after a couple of weeks had passed, some of the students broached the subject with sensei and after discussing it with sensei and his family, the club decided to go ahead with the recital as planned. The difference was that sensei would not be at the rehearsals and the members had to be responsible for themselves with practices and taking care of the details for the recital. Thus, rehearsals were held on Sundays at the Jikoen Temple to get everyone together and to be able to play together as a group.

While everyone was still mourning the loss of Yoshiko Shinsato, there was a renewed commitment to honor Shinsato Sensei. Until her passing, Yoshiko Shinsato had also put so much of her energy and effort to help keep the recital on track. At the end of the recital, the Shosei Kai dedicated and paid tribute to her memory as well and it was a very emotional moment for all present.

The camaraderie and support of the Okinawan performing arts community in Hawai‘i helped the Shosei Kai pull off the recital. Many of the other teachers offered their support and assistance, fully encouraging the club and wanting the recital to succeed.
at honoring Shinsato. Most of them attended the recital, properly making *aisatsu* [greeting] to Shinsato and offering words of support all the way through.

What is also different about these recitals from Western music recitals is that it is not only about showcasing the students’ performances, but also recognizing people with special presentation segments at these recitals. Often, flower bouquets are prepared as well as special framed certificates or plaques to commemorate the performances. When making the gift presentations, one will need to learn how to present the items and also how to receive the items. There is constant bowing and when receiving items, one should receive the item with both hands, regardless of how light the item might be. Thus, the ceremony is very Japanese/Okinawan with a sense of formality and during which proper etiquette is observed. This is something that might be unfamiliar and has to be taught to many of us with our American ways.

However, these recitals have gradually taken on a “*champuru*” [mix] of Okinawan, Japanese, and Hawaiian identity over the years and morphed into something that is very much a reflection of Hawai‘i’s Uchinanchu. While there is some formality with these presentations, there are also parts that are very Hawaiian with the lei presentations and hugs and kisses. Also, although Shinsato teaches mostly *koten* Okinawan music, the recitals have included mixtures of *koten* and *minyō*, along with dance performances, so the audiences enjoy the recitals and they are more attentive to the performances. As Ueunten points out in his dissertation, Okinawan musical performances have had to adapt to the audience, particularly outside of Okinawa. Many people prefer lively music to the slow tempo of the *koten* music. Thus, the recitals have a combination of both, along with the colorful visuals of the dances to make it more enjoyable. Also, to enhance and make them into cultural experiences as well, Shinsato likes to include the meanings of the songs either in the program booklets or explained by the MC during the recitals.

While many had professed to learning *uta-sanshin* just for their own benefit and satisfaction, after performing at the recital and reviewing recordings of the performance, many felt that they wanted to work harder at improving and to learn more with their *uta-sanshin* studies. In interviews with students, many of them felt that the recital had motivated them to practice more seriously and to pay more attention to how they sound.
It made them realize the importance of playing with others, especially when playing as a full ensemble with taiko and fue (and sometimes koto), when they had to adjust their idiosyncratic ways in order to play in unison and harmony. They also said that even after the recital, they felt a renewed sense of energy and motivation to continue studying uta-sanshin.

Figure 4. Recital Booklets

*Shinnenkai* 新年会 (New Year’s Party)
Normally, because the school rarely holds recitals, the Shinsato Shosei Kai usually only performs twice a year: *shinnenkai* (New Year’s party) and the Okinawan Festival. The first performance of the year, or *hikizome* (弾き初め), is the *shinnenkai* (新年会) or New Year party. The New Year party is mainly for the club members to get together and perform as a group for family and friends. It is also a time for members to perform with others from the different classes. On a weekly basis, members only play with their own groups and often do not have the opportunity to play with people from the other classes.

In preparation for this *shinnenkai*, members are given a folder months in advance. A week or two after one *shinnenkai* ends, students get a preliminary folder filled with music to practice that could be used for the following year's *shinnenkai*. While the program is not finalized until closer to the end of the year and other songs may be added or struck during the year, many of the songs remain intact in the folder.

The venue for the *shinnenkai* has usually been a school cafetorium, but in recent years it has been held at the social hall at Jikoen Temple in Kalihi. While the performances usually run about two hours, it is an all day event for the members of the Shosei Kai and the Shinsato family who always work hard to make sure the party runs smoothly. Special care is taken with setting up the table that sits at the background. On the table, that is covered by a red festive cloth, are: the photos of Eikichi Miyagi and Shinsuke Yamashiro with lei draped around the frames, a set of sake vessels in which the club’s president will pour sake, the kagami mochi and tangerine, and other Japanese New Year’s decorations (e.g., pine, bamboo, and plum blossoms).

**Dress**

The formal Shosei Kai uniform consists of a mixture of Japanese and Western elements. First, there is the top part of a *nibushiki* 二部式 (two-part style) *montsuki* 紋付 kimono that is worn over a white undergarment for kimono called the *juban* 楠袢. The kimono is purple with an original *mon* 紋 (crest) disc on each side of the front of the kimono below the shoulders. The *mon* is the club logo that is two *sanshin* diagonally

---

*The Shosei Kai also has a more informal uniform that is used for the Okinawan Festival performance. Club members wanted something that was cooler because it would get very hot on stage at the festival. The kimono is traded in for a blue and white flowered aloha shirt with black pants and black socks. This is reflective of the place in which we live (Hawai‘i).*
crossing over each other at the sao (竿 or 橋; neck) with the character “Shō (勝)” in the middle. The flaps of the kimono are tied together, left over right\(^{47}\), with a light colored, gold brocaded obi.\(^{48}\) The uniform is complete with black slacks and black socks. This uniform is used for recitals and the New Year’s party performances. The uniform itself is a form of hybridity that reflects both Japanese and Western dress. It was adapted for the comfort of the wearer, less binding and constricting than a full, regular kimono, but still retained some form of Okinawan (albeit Japanese) dress.\(^{49}\)

![Figure 5. Shinsato Shosei Kai Formal Dress 2011 Shinnenkai Group Photo](image)

\(^{47}\) The kimono flaps are always placed left over right because it is considered “bad luck” to dress with the flaps reversed, right over left. This refers to the custom of how people would dress a corpse in a kimono in preparation for a funeral with the flaps right over left.

\(^{48}\) It is interesting to note that it is usually the women from Okinawa who dress all the members in their kimono, particularly with the tying of the obi because that is the most difficult part.

\(^{49}\) According to Ueunten, the dress is also part of what makes it an “Okinawan” performance: “The most potent form of symbolic Okinawan culture is the music and dance preserved, practiced, propagated, and performed by Okinawan cultural performers. The performance of Okinawan music and dance at an event will make it an “Okinawan” event. Further, Okinawan dance performers are usually recognizable by Okinawan costume, hairstyle, make-up, and dance implements. Musicians often wear Japanese or Okinawan kimono when performing, but their most distinguishing features are their instruments, especially the Okinawan sanshin” (Ueunten 2007, 103).
Program

As the formal program begins, most students sit Japanese style with their legs folded under them, while a few others sit on regular chairs. At the start of the program, students give their New Year’s greeting to Shinsato, “Akemashite omedetōgozaimasu, kotoshi mo yoroshiku onegaishimasu” 明けましておめでとうございます、今年もよろしくお願いします [Happy New Year, please look after us again this year, too]” while bowing. The president of the club goes to the front to pour sake into the special cups placed on the special table. Then, the MC of the program gives a toast with small cider-filled paper cups. The MC leads the toast, “Banzai! Kanpai! Karii 万歳!乾杯! かりー!”

With that, the formal program begins with the Okinawan songs and dances.

The formal program is usually divided into two parts: gasshō (合唱), which everyone sings the songs together; and dokushō (独唱), which are solos or group performances by the different classes. Often, the gasshō part of the program is started with the performance of Kajadifu (かぎやで風), a celebratory song (and dance). As the MC announces each song, he/she explains the lyrics of the songs in English so that the audience has an idea of what the performers are singing. Midway through the gasshō

---

50 People are often surprised by the toast, particularly those from Okinawa. In Hawai‘i, most Japanese American toasts at weddings, or birthday parties are done with shouts of “banzai.” “Banzai” is not done in Japan since the end of WWII because of its militaristic associations. This is likely something only done in Hawai‘i. That particular “tradition” is included in the toast, along with the Japanese term for a toast and the Okinawan toast.

51 A dance is not always performed; sometimes it is only the song.
portion of the program, there might be a short break when the musicians need to re-tune their sanshin to a different scale and the rest of the gasshō is performed in that scale. Once the gasshō portion is finished, there is a short intermission so that the performers who perform for the dokushō can set up. Sometimes the program calls for solo performances while other times there are group performances done by the different classes. Once the dokushō portion is completed, the food, which we will discuss in the next section, is served. During this time, most of the students change into their casual clothes while others change into their costumes in preparation for a second, informal, program which begins midway through the meal.

The informal program is just that, very informal. Some members of the club and the friends perform for the guests while they enjoy the meal. It is a variety show which includes karaoke, hula, more Okinawan dance, and anything that the members would like to perform. It is noticeably different from the formal program when all the students are sitting properly on stage in their formal uniform. With this informal program, people have fun and it allows for interaction with the audience and audience participation. In between numbers, there are even lucky number drawings and donated prizes are awarded. When all of this is done, the program finally comes to a close with a lively freestyle Okinawan dance called kachaashi and people dance until the music stops.

**Food**

At the shinnenkai, food is always served following the performances. The shinnenkai is a combination of a musical performance as well as a New Year’s party for the club members and their families. The table is filled with all the usual local party dishes, usually Asian Pacific dishes such as: sushi, Chinese noodles, teriyaki beef, chicken katsu, namasu (pickled vegetables), mochi (Japanese rice cakes). There is always an abundance of food that includes some catered dishes as well as potluck items that the club members make themselves. Thus, some perform Okinawan culture in more ways than just singing and playing the sanshin at these shinnenkai. It can be said that Okinawan culture is manifested in some of the food that is served at the party. It goes beyond andagi; other Okinawan dishes, some of which were once considered ordinary Okinawan food in times past, have become special treats because of the rarity of their
appearances at the dinner table today. Some of the Okinawan foods that appear at the table are: *kubu irichi* (simmered cut-up sea kelp with daikon), *kandaba juushimee* (potato leaf rice porridge), shoyu pork, and varieties of *champuru* (Okinawan stir-fry) among others. For some, these parties also provide a learning experience about Okinawan food culture as well.

Therefore, these performances become cultural and sometimes spiritual experiences that cannot always be fully explained. They are simply meant to be enjoyed. Much like what Deborah Wong wrote about the term “*satori* (sudden illumination or enlightenment)” from which her taiko group *Satori Daiko* was named, the experience is something that is “beyond communication or explanation [that] it cannot be characterized emotionally or intellectually.” However, although it cannot be fully explained, one understands and knows when the entire performance brings a sense of fulfillment to the performers as well as to their audiences. As one Shosei Kai member, Student B, says:

“The performances bring a sense of satisfaction because we are able to play the songs in front of our families and friends. We go to lessons and people always ask, “So what did you learn?” but they don’t know what we do. So when we can show them that, “Eh, I’m learning something…something about myself too” then it feels really good. And when people tell you that you played well, then that’s even better!”

(Shosei Kai member, Student B, 2013)

---

32 As a child, I remember thinking that andagi was a special occasion food that was served only during New Year’s, Obon, or at memorial services or celebrations. However, as andagi became regularly available at the Festival and at stores and such, it no longer holds the same special status. Instead, the foods that Okinawan people ate that are no longer served as often have become the special, nostalgic treats at these New Year’s parties.
CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

In the previous chapters, I described a kibei nisei’s musical activities -- teaching and performing -- as well as significant happenings in his life, all of which combine to form a mosaic of the life experiences of Katsumi Shinsato. Through the use of descriptive narratives, I intended to impress upon the readers the importance that this kibei nisei experience holds for disseminating Okinawan culture in this particular case study. These life experiences influence how and what Shinsato teaches about “Okinawan” expressive culture, the inculcation of “Okinawan traditions” and values through music, to the younger generations to whom he teaches uta-sanshin. Calling upon his experiences and employing music as the vessel through which he expresses and manifests his Okinawan values, he serves as a bridge between the older generations, with Okinawa, and with the younger generations as he shares his knowledge with them. Just as his own teachers have done with him, he has shown his students how the music could teach people about so many different aspects of Okinawan culture and life. In turn, this helps shape and influence his students’ perceptions of an “Okinawan” identity, although not always explicitly defined as such.

As I have demonstrated throughout this thesis, Shinsato teaches students what it is to be “Okinawan,” not by telling them what an “Okinawan” is or how to be or become Okinawan, but rather, leading by example and teaching what he knows about the music he loves while sometimes relating them to stories about things that happened in his own life. He teaches the concept of “Okinawan” through musical expressions and through his stories. He shares stories so students can relate to the songs that they are learning, the stories being a point of reference, making the songs more meaningful to them. Students learn about the richness of symbolism in Okinawan culture through the music lessons, for as we have seen, the music has become very much a symbolic culture. Performers’ interpretations become expressions of culture and the performances of such expressions are shaped by the performers’ understandings of these cultural symbolisms. Shinsato Sensei has emphasized that it is not only excellent technique or a good voice that makes for an expressive and exceptional rendition of a song. He maintains that if a singer truly understands the meaning and can infuse those thoughts and feelings into what he or she sings, it will reverberate and move the audience as well.
Since many of his students do not have the same cultural understanding about Okinawa as he, because the Okinawan culture is hardly part of their daily lives, explanations about what the symbols signify are required in order to build that foundation of understanding. To make that possible, he has had to change the way he teaches and the teaching materials over the years, accommodating and adapting to the students, their level of knowledge or understanding of the Okinawan/Japanese culture and language. He spends countless hours creating music sheets romanized for those who are unable to read Japanese and having the meanings of lyrics translated into English. Often, however, learning *uta-sanshin* piques an interest in the Okinawan language in some students as they learn language and culture through song and, with Shinsato’s understanding of this language, he also teaches them the Okinawan language as it appears in the lyrical *ryūka* (Okinawan poetry) they sing.

While he is not stifled by “tradition” and is quite liberal in his thinking, and is open to trying new things, valuing and respecting other people’s ideas, he teaches his students certain rules of etiquette that may seem very old-fashioned. But they are an important part of learning *uta-sanshin*, or any discipline, and helps build their understanding of the culture. For some the only time they are “doing something Okinawan” is at the lessons/practices or performances and that is where they learn appropriate Okinawan/Japanese etiquette or behavior (e.g., bowing) that is not usually practiced daily in their households. Such actions require and create a different psychic state, and through repeated practice, students learn certain Okinawan values and ways of thinking even about their relationships (such as with their sensei and with the other club members) that generally do not manifest themselves in the same way in American culture. For example, the *sempai-kohai* 先輩・後輩 [senior-junior] relationship is important to the traditional performing arts; if one understands one’s position in the relationship (i.e., when one needs to defer and how to negotiate), it makes navigating and learning in the larger Okinawan society smoother. In other words, as they behave in a certain manner at lessons, or during performances, they ultimately put on a performance of some form of “Okinawan-ness.”

In order for them to produce this performance of “Okinawan-ness,” however, at some point it becomes necessary to (re-)invent within themselves the traditions that they
might imagine to be that of their Okinawan ancestors (Hobsbawm, 1983), for many of them might not have been exposed to these “rituals” or practices within their own immediate families. There are those in the local Okinawan community in Hawai‘i, who have never been to Okinawa but still feel a strong affinity with their Okinawan heritage and try to “recapture” or “regain” what was lost with what Marilyn Ivy calls an “imagined nostalgia” (Ivy, 1995) for a “homeland” to which they have never been, based on what they have been told by others. However, Hall would argue that, by doing so, they are trying to go back to something to which they can only imagine and the results would not be the same as what was in the past (Hall, 1990). That being said, when many of the younger generations, sansei or yonsei, seek to “(re-)establish” these “traditional” practices in their lives, there is a sense of re-connection to an imagined past ancestral homeland using the representations put forth by others to help them fill in those gaps. That is where Shinsato Sensei is able to help them bridge the gaps in cultural understanding by relating his own experiences of growing up in Okinawa. Thus, the Shinsato Shosei Kai becomes an embodiment of an “imagined community,” but with cultural roots (Anderson, 1993). Alternatively, it is an ‘ohana (“family,” in Hawaiian) if you will, in which the American students, through their social interactions, learn those things from their kibei nisei sensei or other members who are Okinawan cultural performers53 (Ueunten, 2007).

The life experiences of the kibei nisei differ considerably from those of the Americanized nisei who were born and raised in Hawai‘i, as well as those born and raised on the continental US; they also differ from those of the shin issei who were born in Okinawa and came to Hawai‘i during the post-World War II years. The kibei nisei are sometimes viewed as being somewhere between the issei and the nisei generations, because many of their most impressionable years were spent in Okinawa. Yet, because of the unique situation of their being raised in Okinawa and later spending most of their lives in Hawai‘i upon their return, they have a deep understanding of Okinawan/Japanese cultural values and practices as well as a grasp of American/Hawai‘i’s local hybrid cultures to which they have had to adjust. They were able to connect with the issei

53 People who do things the “Okinawan way,” such as following lunar calendar, observances, offertories, etc., either because they are from Okinawa, grew up in Okinawa, or whose families in Hawai‘i continued to follow Okinawan practices.
Okinawans because many of these kibei nisei spoke and understood the Okinawan language and were probably more culturally aligned with the issei. Also, because of their schooling in a Japanese school system, their Japanese language skills were better than other nisei, Naichi or Uchinanchu, who were born and raised in the US.

As Kinuko Maehara Yamazato points out, the Okinawan kibei nisei played important roles in changing the images of Okinawans in Hawai‘i as well as bridging the cultural and social gaps between generations:

“Interacting with the first generation, especially, as well-educated people who had potential to change the lower status of Okinawans in Hawai‘i created new images of Okinawan Kibei Nisei. […] They were able to develop a “positive marginality,” contributing to change public impressions of Okinawans in Hawai‘i and to producing a distinct but equal identity in the Japanese community. Their education in Okinawa provided them with a better perception of themselves. Okinawan Kibei Nisei’s marginality and distinct identity shifted and developed as their Japanese education in Japan was valued by the Issei” (Maehara Yamazato 2007, 93-94).

Therefore, when it was permissible to resume cultural activities after the war, they became the bridge in communication who could teach other nisei and the younger generations about Okinawa and its cultural past, making them important cultural performers as well. Moreover, they played important roles in bridging or connecting people of different generations and between cultures.

Because he is a kibei nisei, Shinsato is able to read, write and understand Japanese and Okinawan and, therefore, easily communicates with the earlier issei as well as with the shin issei. He learned from the issei, carrying with him those memories and conversations with them which he continues to pass down to his students via the telling of little stories. Likewise, because he has lived in Hawai‘i continuously since his return at the age of sixteen, he is also able to communicate with the other nisei and younger generations in a mixture of Japanese and English and is able to come up with analogies that fit in with their cultural understanding and make the analogies relevant to them. Thus, like other kibei nisei, he plays an integral role in bridging the generational cultural gaps between the issei, Okinawa, and the Americanized nisei and younger generations.

While the musical lessons themselves are important to students’ learning, it is the social interactions that occur before, during, and after lessons that play an important role
in exposing members to various aspects of Okinawan culture. The group-specific dynamics for each lesson group create different kinds of interaction among themselves and also changes when the entire club gets together as well. The comfortable environment created for lessons in the Shinsato home made it possible for students to freely socialize. It is through this socializing process that one can witness the shift in the cultural boundaries, or code-switching, as people adapt their behavior (and possibly their identities) when interacting with other members in the club (Reed 2001, 327). The interactions may include telling or listening to stories of people’s lives in Okinawa, life on a pig farm in Hawai‘i, or how Okinawans prefer or cook different foods. Often, during the breaks in lessons, Okinawan food served by Yoshiko Shinsato also became part of that talk (how she prepared certain dishes, life experience stories connected to certain ingredients (e.g., how some people survived on sweet potato), etc.). For the younger generation, it is an opportunity to imagine those times and at the same time feel connected to our *sempai* by reflecting on their “Okinawan” experiences, whether it be in Okinawa or in Hawai‘i.

Just as the lessons do, the performances encapsulate the Okinawan culture, albeit in a hybrid form that also includes elements of the local culture of Hawai‘i. While this display of hybridity may be criticized for lacking authenticity of an Okinawan performance, it reflects the various changes to the times and place in which these performances take place; these become the identity markers of the Uchinanchu in Hawai‘i. The unique sounds of the instruments especially elicit a certain feeling of “Okinawan-ness” as people listen to it and sometimes even create a sense of “nostalgia.” Likewise, playing the *sanshin* and singing the Okinawan songs, one cannot help but feeling immersed in the music as one feels the vibrations of the strings through one’s fingers as one plucks the strings and feeling the notes vibrate in one’s diaphragm, chest, and throat, as he or she is singing. The *ne-iro* 音色 (literally, “color of the sound”) or tone of the *sanshin* is unique, and provides a different feeling than from the Japanese *shamisen* on the same song. It evokes imageries of Okinawa, whether a person has been there or not, and certain emotions, whether or not he/she understands the language, simply by the tone of the instrument.
There needs to be a distinction made between the performances by Katsumi Shinsato during the days when he performed as part of the *jikata* (group of musicians) with the *issei* grandmasters and the performances put on by his students, i.e., the Shinsato Shosei Kai. Judging from his stories of the “old days,” there clearly was a hierarchy that was strictly observed by the performers then. They deferred to certain individuals who were seated in a certain rank and order. Their cultural thought processes were more Japanese (or Okinawan) than American. Thus, they understood the etiquette and protocols of the traditional arts and abided by them, giving the aesthetic part of the performance a different “look.” With the current Shinsato Shosei Kai members, the thought processes are very American with everyone being equal and, therefore, sometimes those elements are unfamiliar to them and it is difficult to know, let alone follow, the unspoken protocols of old that the traditional arts still observe. Thus, even in the performances, the members must be “coached” by those who understand those protocols. Nevertheless, the current programs/performances are reflective of the changes in the Hawai‘i Okinawans, not necessarily making them any less “authentic,” but rather very much a part of a transforming, vibrant and living culture.

Richard Jones-Bamman wrote in his dissertation about the *joik* (music of the Saami people in Europe):

“[…] *joik* remains an integral part of Saami culture because of its integrative quality. A *joik* connects the performer and his or her listeners, not only with each other, but with their collective past by uniting it with present experience - *joiking* effectively collapses time. Not all Saami can perform *joik*, but knowledge of the genre is still a key symbol of Saami communal identity. Even though its existence was long denied in public pronouncements, *joik* has continued to be practiced and heard.” (Jones-Bamman 1993, 2)

I particularly like the title of his dissertation, “*As long as we continue to joik, we'll remember who we are. *” Negotiating identity and the performance of culture: the Saami *joik* -- because I see a parallel to the Okinawans and their *uta-sanshin*. Like the *joik*, I think the *uta-sanshin* becomes a memory device through which certain people (re-)assert who they are and to which an “identity” is attached. The *uta-sanshin* has become transnational many times over due in part to the various Okinawan diasporic communities around the world. The *sanshin* has also become a global instrument which produces a
distinct sound and through *uta-sanshin* the Okinawan language (albeit in a poetic form) can be heard, despite the language being on the UNESCO Endangered Language list.\textsuperscript{54} However, it takes a “teacher” to guide and inculcate the very specific things that are required to ensure that these practices can be carried on by the future generations. The teacher is the link to the past and a link to the future. He/she will provide the connections with those who will carry on the teacher’s lessons into the future. But that is not to say that the practices are something static and do not change. They are not, and will change slightly over time, responding to new conditions and needs. But they are also something that maintains some form of the old culture, a memory device even, to which the people feel attachment.

Regarding the quote above from Jones-Bamman’s dissertation, the same could be said about the *uta-sanshin*, and other forms of music, that there is a connection between the performer and the listener and the music collapses time effectively for them. It connects them with a collective past in the modern time, but it is only with the explanations and background stories, such as those provided by Shinsato, that the music might be placed in a specific “past” time historically. Without those narratives, students would never be aware of the era in which the lyrics are placed. It must also be said that as he introduces students to certain elements of Okinawan culture, such as teaching a moral lesson through song, he might also remind them about the hardships that the *issei* and *nisei* went through to get us to where we are today. But in this way, the “Okinawan” culture now gets placed outside of Okinawa, as acted out by the *issei* and *nisei*, and is placed more immediately in Hawai‘i where the students are situated. For the students, it becomes more about “maintaining” their perceived “Okinawan” culture of their immediate ancestors in their own surroundings. Thus, in the music lessons, he bridges the ties between his students and the generations before them by relating through these narratives.

Of course, this thesis written by one of his students, is basically a case study of only one sensei and an examination of the ways in which he influences his students’ viewpoints of Okinawan identity through inculcation via expressive culture (music).

Other teachers may find other ways to teach their students about “Okinawan” culture and future studies of Okinawan cultural production may have to further examine other methods and processes of cultural transmission. I focused only on the ways in which Shinsato carries out his teachings about Okinawan language and culture with his students based strictly on the participant observation and interviews with fellow club members.

Ironically, while Shinsato is deeply involved in an Okinawan traditional art and others may simply see or think his mannerisms as “Okinawan,” he is not overly conscious or so concerned about having an Okinawan identity per se. For him, an “Okinawan” identity is a tacit one. When asked in an interview (Shinsato, 2012) what he thought about Okinawa/being Okinawan, he laughed and avoided the question. Observations and conversations with him indicate he does not necessarily feel the need to point out that he is Okinawan or what he is doing is “Okinawan” as much as do some of the younger generations. Because of his past experiences and the fact that he interacts with Okinawan people constantly, he simply does what he does “naturally” and does not spend much time thinking about what it means to be “Okinawan.” He lives it every day and shares what he knows about Okinawa and its culture, but an “Okinawan identity” is not something that he spends much time thinking about. In perpetuating the Okinawan culture, his goal is only “practicing Okinawan” or simply “being Okinawan” rather than “thinking about being Okinawan.” For others, they feel the need to provide some way to prove their “Okinawan-ness” and they put forth great effort to bring that to the forefront, particularly the younger ones who are seeking to “re-capture” what they feel is being “lost.” Thus, it may be said that one becomes (self-)conscious about one’s own “identity” only when it is being questioned or threatened by another.

For someone who never felt that he would be able to teach students when approached by his sensei years ago to take over the club, he has become a sensei to well over a hundred students over the past 38 years and is seen by his students as one of their most valuable resources to Okinawan culture. He said that he has grown into the position of sensei, learning every step of the way in this journey (Shinsato, 2007). However, being the humble person that he is, more than teacher, he still sees himself as a lifelong student on the path of the *uta-sanshin*. 
In the months since his wife’s passing, Shinsato has had to adjust to various changes. He has moved from his home in Kalihi to live with one of his children. Lessons are now held in the social hall of a Buddhist temple, Jikoen, once a week on Sundays with all the classes combining into one group. But he is still very busy with transcribing music sheets for all of his students and has put together the next program for the coming year’s New Year’s performance.

Although he has not designated a successor for the Shosei Kai for the future and, therefore, the club might likely end when he no longer teaches, my hope is that his students all learn valuable lessons beyond music that they will carry with them in other aspects of their lives and will not forget what they learn from him. For as long as they remember these lessons and will continue to think about them and implement them, their children and grandchildren will also be the beneficiaries of such lessons. They, too, can learn “Okinawan” thought and culture through the conscious examples put forth by the students of Katsumi Shinsato. As Shinsato Sensei emphasizes, knowledge is not something for us to hoard for ourselves; for if we do not share it with others, it does not go beyond the individual and will be forgotten and eventually disappear. As he notes, while we reach back with one hand to learn from our predecessors and ancestors, we also extend a hand forward so that we may also go forward to guide, teach, and pass on whatever knowledge was graciously shared with us and become part of that chain of humanity. This sharing of knowledge connects us to each other and from which we all benefit when we are able to pass down the rich cultural heritage to our future generations.

This brings to mind one of the ryūka verses Shinsato teaches his students:

我が誠尽くち  
他所ぬ為しりば  
他所ぬ為んなどぅぬ  
為どうなゆる

Wa ga makutu tsikuchi  
Yusu nu tami shiriba  
Yusu nu taminnadu nu  
Tami du nayuru  
- author unknown

[When you do something for someone with the utmost sincerity, you are not just doing it for another’s sake, but for your own sake as well. For when you do good for others, that good will be returned tenfold when you least expect it.
When you do something, do it from the heart and do not do it to get something in return. For in the end, your actions will be for your own good as well.\[^{55}\]

Shinsato teaches in order for his students to learn, but if they are able to pass down this knowledge to others in the future, they will have done something to do their ongaeshi 恩返し or repaying their debt to their sensei as well, whether through music or not. They also will or should become the bridge, like their sensei, between the next generation and those who came before them.

So what are the lessons in being “Okinawan”? What does it mean to be “Okinawan”? Can a non-Okinawan perform “Okinawan”? As Hall (1990) and Yano (2012) have mentioned, concepts such as identity and culture neither transparent nor simple, particularly in a diasporic community. If we were to talk about a cultural performance, anyone, including a non-Okinawan, would be able to perform “Okinawan.” In this way, “Okinawan” becomes a mindset by which someone feels and behaves in accordance with the unspoken Okinawan norms and values through one’s participation in a performance of culture. However, not everyone who is of Okinawan ancestry participates in a performance of culture.

It is also important to state that the Uchinanchu identity in Hawai‘i is different from that of Okinawa or anywhere else, as it is a localized Okinawan identity specific to a place and time. Makoto Arakaki (2007) says:

“The global Uchinaanchu community is multiethnic and hybrid. Okinawans in Hawai‘i have very little in common with other Okinawans in other parts of the world, except perhaps for a willingness to share the spirit of yuimaaru [cooperation]. Nonetheless, it is through this affectionate and humane discourse that Uchinaanchu and the Uchinaanchu at heart touch one another. […] Unlike exclusive and fixed identities established through national agendas, diasporic Okinawan identities may be nonessential, decentered, nonexclusive, transnational, and fluid, even for those from the Okinawan homeland. […] In this diasporic space Uchinaanchu at heart is – as James Clifford (1994) would assert – continually challenged and transformed.” (Arakaki 2007, 209-210).

\[^{55}\] The explanation of the verse is translated into English by the author based on explanations written in Japanese by Katsumi Shinsato.
So as not to be exclusivist, the term “Uchinanchu-at-heart” has been used often to describe those who are not of Okinawan ancestry but who display behaviors that exemplify Okinawan values.

It is also important to remember that while one transmits his knowledge to his students, he is not in control of what students make of that information. Through music, he is able to teach them about HIS Okinawa and Okinawan values and traditions as a kibei nisei or one who grew up in Okinawa. It is one representation of Okinawa. As Deborah Wong says, we can only have access to a representation of something because we “don’t and can’t have access someone else’s experiences,” making the process “translative” (Wong 2004, 22). For him, relaying that representation and teaching his students, that is perpetuating the Okinawan culture.

While this thesis is a case study of particular identities in a specific diasporic community, it can be extended to look at processes by which identities are conceptualized through music. Processes such as socialization, ritualization, and narrativization that are particularly important and necessary in diasporic communities to learn to perform identity, provide the mechanisms for such performances and recreate a culture which can connect people to an ancestral homeland. These processes can be applied broadly to other diasporic communities in various locations. This thesis applies theories of social scientists such as Geertz, Hall, and Wong in its analyses and extends them by giving specific examples of the processes involved in transmitting culture through performances.

It is not enough to merely talk about an identity without understanding the mechanics of how an identity comes into being. We need to look at the processes by which culture is inculcated and identities are formed. Thus, I also look at how individuals learn to perform culture and “??-ness” as part of that process and what role that plays in inventing and circumscribing a community. Deborah Wong wrote in her book *Speak it Louder: Asian Americans Making Music*:

“If performance is a site of cultural production, then it is important to look closely at the realities created *through* performance [. …] When difference of any kind is explored through performance, the result is necessarily performative – that is, if ‘discourse produces the effect that it names’ (Butler 1993: 2) then performing something means making or becoming something.” (Wong 2004, 4)
Wong emphasizes that performance creates “new critical realities and the operationalization of the process of performance is key to this” (Wong 2004, 5), and describes music as performative. Expressive culture, such as music, is particularly conducive to transmitting cultural values and traditions because it is capable of transforming space and time, even when it is transnational. Its boundaries can be shifted, repositioned, or relocated as it is fluid, malleable, and adaptable, making it flexible to transforming identities. Wong views expressive culture as “strategic responses to ‘historically differentiated forms of disempowerment’ (Lowe 1996:96) that are often directed toward social activism and community building” (Wong 2004, 5).

It is always important to remember that identities and cultures are also shaped by the environment (political, social, economic, even geographical) in which we live, interactions with others, and our life experiences. Thus, identities and cultures are affected by internal and external tensions that play against each other; they are not static and change as transformations take place. And, they must change. As Hall mentioned, while it may be important to see where we came from, who we were, it is also important to look at these processes involved in making us who we are and what we have become, including the representations of “us” given by the Other (Hall 1990). In other words, we must look at what Hall calls the “3 presences” to get the “big,” comprehensive, picture of how our identities and cultures are conceptualized because they all become part of the narratives that, when pieced together, make a composite of who we are as a community. That is why identity is a complex matter; identities are multiple, they are not always explicit and could be tacit in nature.

Also, the methods employed in the transmission processes to teach performance or cultural behavior -- repetition, translation/transliteration, and personal narratives -- are particularly necessary and useful in a diasporic setting. Meanings, symbolisms, and cultural elements are all embedded in music. It is through the repetition, ritualization, that students learn and that then makes it part of their “tradition” and makes them participants in “traditional” arts culture. This thesis also looks at adjusting social and cultural coding or as Gay Garland Reed says, “fastening, unfastening, and refastening” to negotiate the identities to fit the circumstance/situation.
Thus, this case study will make a contribution to diasporic studies, by helping people think about the politics of identity and the accompanying transmission processes. Moreover, it contributes to the discussion of how expressive culture plays an important role in transforming and evolving identity and culture in the environment in which they are placed.
MC (Jill Kuramoto): Our first honoree this afternoon is Katsumi Shinsato. Shinsato Sensei was introduced to the sanshin at five years old. At the time, he couldn’t afford to buy a traditional sanshin, so he made one which consisted of a tin can, some wood, and three pieces of string. With no formal training, Shinsato Sensei began teaching himself the basics of sanshin and developed his own free style of playing. In 1971, he earned his shihan or instructor designation from his teacher, Shinsuke Yamashiro. And in 1975, Shinsato Shosei Kai was established. And last year, Shinsato Sensei was recognized by the Okinawan Prefectural Government as a Distinguished Contributor from Overseas for his dedication to promoting Okinawan culture through his teaching the sanshin. Please enjoy the video as we honor Sensei Katsumi Shinsato.

Narrator (Wayne Miyahira): From father to son, from sensei to students, traditions such as music and dance are handed down from one generation to the next, creating a legacy for an entire community. That has been the path of Katsumi Shinsato Sensei. With the strong support of his loving family, he is on a lifelong quest to study Okinawan music, uta-sanshin, and share his vast knowledge with his students in the same manner as masters before him.

Shinsato Sensei’s first exposure to the sanshin was from music played on a phonograph which his father sent to him from Hawaii.

Shinsato: 一応、あの、私は、あの、おとうさんがハワイからこっち平安座に来られて、私をハワイに連れて行くとこられていたんですけれど、その時は子供だから、No, 私は学校に行きたいからハワイ行きたくないと言って、so 僕のかわりに兄さんをハワイに連れて行ったわけ～ですよ。それで、だ、それ、向きで、ハワイからあの音の、何っていうかな、大きく、あの、何という、今もあるかないかわからないけれど、あの、レコードを遊ぶ machine…

[My father had come to Henza from Hawai‘i to take me [back] to Hawai‘i, but I was still a kid, so I said, “No, I want to go to school so I don’t want to go to Hawai‘i.” So instead of me, my father took my older brother to Hawai‘i. So then…from Hawai‘i…long time ago, they used to have that big, what was that called?…I don’t know if they still have it, but, that machine that played the records…]

Interviewer (Bonnie Miyashiro): 蓄音機?

[Phonograph?]
Shinsato: 蓄音機。はい、そう、そう、蓄音機。それを送ってくれたんですよ。それぞれのレコード聴き、聴いて、ちょっと覚えたわけね。自分でも、今なって、本当不思議である。どうしてこの音楽の高さ自分でわかったかな。聴いて、もう、あっ、これはミージルの高さ、なんだかんだ、ねっ、そういうして、音楽覚えた。だから、音楽聞いたのやっとのしがだから13、14になると、自分の先生を、学校の先生らも踊らせていく。今に考えると、本当に恥ずかしいことしたなと思った。

[Phonograph. Yes, that’s right, phonograph! He sent that to us. Listening to the record, I remembered some of it. Now when I think of it, even I think it’s fascinating. I wonder, how did I ever learn the pitch of the music? I listened to it and I said, “Ah, this is the pitch of the miihiru” and I learned the music that way. So, after listening to the music and doing it, I must have been about 13 or 14, I would make my teachers, the teachers at school, dance. Now when I think back, I feel like I did something really embarrassing.]

Narrator: Shinsato Sensei’s father also played the sanshin. While at a playing session, Eikichi Miyagi Sensei noticed the young Shinsato’s interest and invited him to play with them.

Shinsato: この、私は、あの、ハワイに来て、あの、あの晩、お母さんが用事があって、そのお母さんの連れて用事をこう行ったならば、帰り道でお母さんが、「お父さんが宮城先生のところに居るから、あそこに行きますよ」と言っとって、あそこに行ったわけなんですよ。で、行ったら、もうそこのハウスはいっぱいで、サミセンを弾く人がらいっぱいだったんですね。それで、自分が好きだから、ずっと傍に座っとって、聴いとると先生、宮城先生が立って来られて、あの、「こっち来なさい、来なさい」と言って。そうやって、先生の傍に座ったならば、ご自分が弾かれた、私たちに来て、「あんたも遊びなさい。」そのきっかけで。それから、あの、もう宮城弦声会に入ったわけ。それがきっかけで。

[When I came [back] to Hawai‘i, that night my mother had some business to tend to, so I went with her and on the way home she said, “Father is at Miyagi Sensei’s place so we’re going there.” So I went there. Then, when we went there, the house was full of people playing samisen. And because I liked it so much, I just sat there listening. Then, Miyagi Sensei stood up and came over and said, “Come here, come here.” That is how I sat next to Sensei and as he played, he urged me, “You play too.” With that I began. That was how I joined the Miyagi Gensei Kai. That was the beginning.]

Narrator: Shinsato Sensei continued to study Okinawan music for his own enjoyment.

Shinsato: 音楽習ったけれど、この、音楽を習う、教えるということはひとつも考えたことがない。ただ、もう、音楽習って、自分の楽しみでするというあれで、あの、まあ、ひとつは自分の親、お父さんが三線を分か(だいぶ)持って居(お)られたから。お父さんが、「これ[ユーメン]みんなでやるから」と言うほうでそれで、音楽ずっと今まで続いてきたわけ。
[I learned the music, but I never gave it much thought about what it was to study or teach music. I only thought of it as my personal enjoyment and I learned it, but one reason was because my father had quite a collection of sanshin. My father said, “You’re all going to play these” and so I continued doing music until now.]

Narrator: Shinsato Sensei expresses much gratitude to his two sensei, Eikichi Miyagi Sensei and Shinsuke Yamashiro Sensei.

Shinsato: 自分は両先生に非常に可愛がられて so 今までなってきたことをただ感謝の気持ちがいっぱい。ただそれだけなんですね。なにも別に、こう、育ったなーということもないけど、両先生の自分らが経験されたことを「こうだったんだよ、私らはこうして教えたらんだよ」ってこういって、それが一番私が楽しみなの。

[I was treated very well by both sensei, so now I am just filled with gratitude for all the things that have happened. That’s all. I wouldn’t say that they raised me, but they both shared their experiences, “This is how it was. This is how we taught”…that was what I always looked forward to.]

Narrator: What he learned from his two sensei he is now passing on to his students.

Shinsato: だから、両先生から言われたこと忘れずに今自分の弟子に、こう、また「こうだったって先生からいわれた。だから、あんたがたもそうしてあれしなさいよ」とって今途中で一時間ぐらいずっと弾いて、また半時間ぐらいはちょっと話小をしたりその時にまた云って聴かしたり「自分も先生からあんたとしてもついしましょけんめいになりなさいよ」って

[That’s why, I don’t forget what I was told by both sensei and now I tell my own students, “I was told this by my sensei. That’s why all of you do so too.” And for about an hour we’ll play the music and for about half an hour we talk. Then, I tell them again, “That’s how I learned from my sensei, so all of you too, do your best.”]

Granddaughter Celeste Sekigawa: …I think for more of the culture and, um, things that are, I guess, are a part of Okinawan culture, usually we wouldn’t know anything.

Granddaughter Cori Shimabukuro: We probably wouldn’t know anything.

Celeste Sekigawa: Because of him, I mean, we’ve been exposed to many different things, like you know, like cultural…and shamisen, and even dance. You know, we just see it and we’re always around it so we at least have a better understanding of the arts and appreciation for it.

Shinsato Shosei Kai member, Marleen Nishimiya: Sensei is such a wonderful man. He is so patient, he is so nice, that I totally enjoyed, you know, the experience.
Grandson Adam Tamayoshi: He’s really kind and giving and always thinking of others. He always…when we go over to practice, he’s always…if…he can tell if maybe something’s wrong, maybe we need to take a break, or if we wanna…if we’re tired and just when you see him around other people he’s always giving.

Grandson Grayson Nose: His heart. He has a real good heart. I mean, just…you can see the way he deals with his family and his students. I mean, it’s really sincere. He’s very sincere.

Narrator: Shinsato Sensei transcribes the musical notes for each song of their annual new year’s program, creating a unique music book, or *kururunshi*, for each member of his school.

Shinsato Shosei Kai member, Richard Kochi: これはほんと先生がこううちのこう新年宴会のため毎年ほんとだったら作ってあるんですけどその 30 名っていうのねその会員のために毎日先生が一生懸命になって作りに朝から晩までやっておこういうにしてきれいにくるるんしを作ってから、ね、も、みんなにあげて、もう大変感謝しています。

[Sensei makes this every year for our New Year’s party. Sensei works so hard on this everyday, from morning until night, to create the music book so beautifully and gives one out to each of the 30 members. I am so grateful for it.]

Narrator: Student Karen Sugikawa says there’s probably no other sensei like Shinsato Sensei anywhere.

Shinsato Shosei Kai member, Karen Sugikawa: 先生素晴らしいですからね。もう依怙贔屓（えこひいき）なしで老いも若きも、も、本当に有難いですよ。こんな先生はどこにもいらっしゃらないんじゃないかと思います。本当のこと。

[Sensei is so wonderful. I am so grateful because, young or old, he doesn’t play favorites. I don’t think there is another sensei like him anywhere. Really.]

[End of video]

MC (Cyrus Tamashiro): At this time, I’d like to ask Weston Oshiro to escort his grandfather, Sensei Katsumi Shinsato, to the stage.

MC (Jill Kuramoto): The Legacy Award will be presented to Sensei Katsumi Shinsato by HUOA President David Arakawa and Legacy Award Banquet Honorary co-chairs James Iha and Ryokichi Higashionna.

MC (Cyrus Tamashiro): Katsumi Shinsato Sensei’s Shinsato Shosei Kai will be performing Kagiyadefu and Unna Bushi. In ancient times, Kagiyadefu, or Kajadifu, was a song that was performed only in front of the king of the Ryukyus. Today, it opens
joyous and auspicious occasions like our Legacy Awards gathering. The students and family members of honoree Katsumi Shinsato Sensei proudly offer the visual and musical presentation of Kagiyadefu for their dear Sensei. In turn, it is Sensei Shinsato’s wish to congratulate all of today’s Legacy Award honorees with the wonderful expression of Kagiyadefu. The verse of Kagiyadefu is translated as follows:

To what can I compare the happiness that is in my heart today.
It is as refreshing and beautiful as a flower bejeweled with dew.

Ladies and gentlemen, Shinsato Shosei Kai and dancers Claudia Higa and Jenny Sakauye present Kagiyadefu.

[Performance by Shinsato Shosei Kai]

Figure 7. Katsumi Shinsato and Grandchildren at 2007 Legacy Award Banquet
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Hawaii United Okinawa Association. 2007. Legacy Award Banquet: Segment on Katsumi Shinsato [DVD].


Jones-Bamman, Richard Wiren. “‘As long as we continue to joik, we’ll remember who we are.’: Negotiating Identity and the Performance of Culture: The Saami Joik.” PhD diss., University of Washington, 1993.


_________. "Why There are No Asian Americans in Hawai‘i: The Continuing Significance of Local Identity." In *The Political Economy of Hawai‘i (Social Process in*


Shinsato Shosei Kai member, Student C. Interview by Lynette Teruya, 22 June 2013, Honolulu. Audio recording. 99 Ranch Market Food Court, Honolulu.


Yano, Christine. “ANTH 487 1- Identity.” Lecture, Department of Anthropology, Saunders Hall, Honolulu, HI, August 20, 2012.