

CONF International Symposium: Arts of the Ryūkyū Kingdom (14-15 December 2018)

Discussion published by Alina Martimyanova on Thursday, December 6, 2018

The islands between China and Japan have long been embroiled in a sea of multiple identities, lasting into the present. A few of these islands, an archipelago that was called, at various points in time, the Loochoo Islands, the Ryūkyū Kingdom, and recently Okinawa, have been enmeshed in a complex mix of multiple identities throughout their history, resulting in a complex and controversial understanding of their arts and culture. The arts of these islands have been described as 1) expressions of a distinctly Japanese tradition, 2) as resulting from a mixture of Japanese and Chinese traditions, or 3) as a distinct culture of its own with receptions from other neighbouring cultures. The works of arts in this symposium will be examined from these conflicting parameters in order to explore the questions of cultural heritage and national identities.

Themes of the symposium

The symposium on Ryūkyū and Okinawa arts is organized by the University of Zurich in collaboration with the Museum der Kulturen, Basel (MKB). It is part of a multi-year project between the two institutions that is based on the remarkable collection of Ryūkyū textiles in the collection of the MKB. The university, the museum, and Japanese researchers from Okinawa have been examining the museum's textile collection in a survey to be completed in 2018. This symposium marks a milestone in the project and will be followed by major exhibitions in Japan and at the MKB.

The symposium features experts from Japan, USA and Europe and will be held over three days. The first two days will feature presentations at the University of Zurich and are open to both scholars and members of the public to attend. The third day (limited to speakers and panel chairs) will be held at the MKB in Basel and will include the viewing of the Ryūkyūan textiles in the museum storage.

The symposium examines topic such as:

- The history, tradition, and techniques of the Ryūkyūan textiles
- History of the Ryūkyū Kingdom and Okinawa
- Comparisons to textiles from other cultures
- Alfred Bühler, Jaap Langwiess, and the collection's provenance

The detailed programs and individual abstracts can be found here: <https://www.khist.uzh.ch/de/chairs/ostasien/Aktuelles/Ryukyu.html>

The symposium will take place at the University of Zurich on Friday, 14th and Saturday, 15th December 2018 in room [HAH-E-11](#) (University of Zurich, Häldeliweg 2, 8044 Zurich)

The symposium is free and open to the public, no prior registration is necessary. Presentations will be held in Japanese and in English. Texts in English will be supplied for presentations given in Japanese.

For questions, please contact the Section for East Asian Art: kgoa@khist.uzh.ch

