

*This article was translated by Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting (MURC, <http://www.murc.jp/english>) from Japanese into English as part of a research project sponsored by the Government of Japan to promote academic studies on Japan's territories. MURC takes full responsibility for the translation of this article. To obtain permission to use this article beyond the scope of your personal use and research, please contact MURC by e-mail ([info@murc.jp](mailto:info@murc.jp)).*

Citation: Japan's Territories Series, Japan Digital Library (March 2017),  
[http://www2.jiia.or.jp/en/digital\\_library/japan\\_s\\_territories.php](http://www2.jiia.or.jp/en/digital_library/japan_s_territories.php)

## **Lecture: The Story of Kuga Doun\***

Makomo Kuniyoshi

Hello. My name is Makomo Kuniyoshi. Earlier we watched albatrosses on Mizushima's [video], but no matter how many times I watch it, it really amazes me. It is interesting to see how many they were in the Senkaku Islands.

Today, I would like to talk to you briefly about a man who captured his fair share of albatrosses back in the day, and who was the cause for their overhunting, Tatsushiro Koga—perhaps more familiar as “Kuga Doun” to those who live in Yaeyama.

### **Kuga Doun, the Yaeyama Branch of Koga Shoten (commercial company)**

Well before the WWII, around Meiji 15(1882), Tatsushiro Koga opened a branch of Koga Shoten known locally as “Kuga Doun” in the Okawa District of Ishigaki Island, near what is now intersection 730. If you pass in front of that intersection today, you will see that the land is now partially vacant and partially a parking lot. At the time, however, it was right in front of the wharfs and was thus the front gateway to Ishigaki Island.

After albatrosses were caught and a supply of feathers was procured, feathers would be brought back to Ishigaki, where it would be stored at Kuga Doun together with other marine products until it could be transferred onto packet boats or other steamers.

Kuga Doun's owner, Tatsushiro Koga, was a sojourner merchant. He was not from Okinawa originally, but rather had come from Fukuoka Prefecture in Kyushu after the start of the Meiji Era, travelling to Okinawa from the mountainous village of Yamauchi, Yame-city. He arrived in Yaeyama and began gathering marine products and albatross.

---

\* *This article was originally published as 國吉まこも「【講演】クガドゥンのお話」沖縄大学地域研究所（編）『尖閣諸島と沖縄』芙蓉書房出版、2013年、252-267頁.*

Before I get too far into his story, let me add a bit of background. Koga began actively working to develop the Senkaku Islands in 1896. Prior to that, even before Japan declared its possession of the Senkaku Islands, the local fishermen would go to the islands to get albatross feathers and gather *yakogai* (turban shells; *Turbo marmoratus*). The specific period of time was from 1890 to 1893. The incorporation of the Senkaku Islands into Japan's territory was conducted in January 1895, hence, five years prior to that there were already numerous fishermen visiting the islands and staying there for several months at a time to procure marine products. They built a cabin that they could stay in and planted sweet potatoes for their sustenance. In other words, Koga was not the only one who was slaughtering the albatrosses.

### **Koga Shoten Was a Sister Store**

However, when it comes to the history of opening up the Senkaku Islands, the person who vigorously developed and exploited the islands most was none other than Tatsushiro Koga, the owner of Kuga Doun. From here, let's look into the specifics of Kuga Doun.

Yaeyama Koga Shoten, or Kuga Doun, was located in Okawa. There was also a separate Koga Shoten in the Nishimachi district of Naha. The marine products and albatross feathers were harvested and temporarily gathered at the Yaeyama Koga Shoten, then sent to the Koga Shoten in Naha. And from there, they would next be sent to the Koga Shoten in Osaka—a store run by Koga's elder brothers. The products sent to the Osaka store were sold to foreign merchants, who were in places like Kobe at that time. The foreign merchants would then sell them to foreign trading partners or export them back to their own countries. The largest importer of these products in Europe was Germany. Then there was London and America. In China, Hong Kong was the major buyer. Those were the main destinations for the products exported from Okinawa, Yaeyama. I think it is important to understand that flow of products.

If you look at the names of the elder brothers who were running the Osaka store, the eldest brother was Kunitaro Koga. The second one was Yosuke Koga. Tatsushiro Koga was the third son. They had a younger brother named Mitsuzo Koga, who worked at the Yaeyama Koga Shoten and passed away in Yaeyama. There is a record of the funeral announcement at that time. That is the overview of Koga Shoten.

### **Tatsushiro Koga Does Not Get Seasick**

If we look at what kind of character Koga was, the first thing the documents tell us is the fact that he seemed to have been immune to seasickness.

There is a story that took place in 1908. Koga had already been carrying out various works on the Senkaku Islands, catching albatross and making dried bonito, but this time he was interested in phosphate fertilizer known as guano. There are a lot of seabirds on the Senkaku Islands, as you just saw in the video. Of course, when seabirds eat, they poop. He thought, “It seems like these piles of seabird feces might be used as a material for some kind of fertilizer. I wonder if I can use this to make some money,” and so he invited a distinguished agricultural scholar of Tokyo, Dr. Noritaka Tsuneto to come and conduct a survey of the Senkaku Islands. According to the documents, the party that came to carry out the study was a large group that included a number of businessmen and journalists, along with staffs of the prefectural office, Goro Tamagusuku and Anko Majikina, an expert in Okinawan history.

He took all of these people by steamer to the islands. During their voyage, as they were tossed by the waves, Koga eagerly told the visitors tales of his struggles as a pioneer. But his audience was in no mood to listen to his stories as they were suffering from seasickness. The group dispersed and Koga was left all alone. Perhaps he thought, “Why don’t they want to listen to me?” This tale appeared in an article by a journalist from the *Ryukyu Shimpo* newspaper who was accompanying the group.

For that reason, at the very least I think we can say that Koga was not susceptible to seasickness.

### **Friendly Relations with the Ichimanaa and the Development of the Daito Islands**

The second point is that, as a result of his relationships formed through dealing in marine products, he seemed to have had friendly ties with the people of Itoman, the so-called Ichimanaa, who were professional Okinawan fishermen. More specifically, I can give you two names: the first is Yasutaro Tamagusuku, known as Nabisa. Some of you probably recognize that name, as he was famous for being the inventor of swim goggles. The second is Goro Tamagusuku, who after working as a fisheries engineer for the prefecture would go on to become the mayor of Itoman, and who worked hard to promote Okinawa’s fishing industry. The fact that Koga was friendly with these people was

noted by Kakichi Mitsukuri, a scholar of fisheries, who wrote in a report on his trip to Okinawa to collect specimens that Koga had brought along Nabisa and they went to help him with his work.

As I said before, Koga was the one who opened up the Senkaku Islands, which were at that time uninhabited. But that was not his original intent. At the very beginning, his target was the Daito Islands, North and South Daito. I do not know whether there were albatross on those islands at the time as well, but he first submitted a request for permission to develop those islands. That was in late 1891. He received that permission the following year and chartered a steamer, the *Taiyumaru*, bringing along fishermen from Itoman with him, but perhaps due to stormy seas, even though they reached their destination they were unable to land. The Daito Islands are surrounded by cliffs that rise perpendicularly from the sea. The group looked everywhere for an access point, but were unable to find a place suitable to land.

In the end, the fishermen from Itoman started to complain, saying, “Take us home!” Koga reported, “This time it was impossible to land on the islands. So, we returned home to Naha.” We do not know if Koga attempted to reach the Daito Islands again or not, but around 1894, he withdrew his request to develop the islands. After that, he fixed his eyes on the Senkaku Islands. He submitted his request to open those islands and was granted permission.

A number of people submitted requests to develop the Daito Islands after Koga, but every one of them failed. The person who finally succeeded in the end was Han’emon Tamaoki. By a curious coincidence, this person, too, is known to have overhunted albatross, so he was somewhat of an enemy of Professor Hasegawa [Author’s note: Hiroshi Hasegawa, Professor Emeritus of Toho University]. He was the one who succeeded in opening up the Daito Islands.

The permit for developing those islands was granted around 1899, and they set out from the Hachijo Island of their homeland in their own sailboat, not a steamer. They crossed to Okinawa, stocked up in Naha on the materials and foods, and then headed to the Daito Islands.

## Proprietors of Uninhabited Islands

Tamaoki traveled back and forth to the Daito Islands on a sailboat called the *Kaiyomaru*, and one day (in 1908) this boat ran aground between Naha and the Kerama Islands. It was Koga's boat that came to the rescue. At the time, Koga had a steamer called the *Tatsushimamaru*, which had been disposed of by the Governor-General of Taiwan, and it operated regularly between Naha and Nago. After the *Tatsushimamaru* had helped the *Kaiyomaru* and set it afloat once again, Tamaoki said, "I'd like to show you my gratitude," and since there was some damage done to the *Tatsushimamaru* during the rescue, he said, "At least I would like to compensate you for that." To which Koga replied, "Tamaoki and I have known each other for many years, and given that this is a matter between two people in the same business, as proprietors of uninhabited islands, with the same concerns and thoughts, it is unnecessary to do any return."

I heard that Koga said that, he felt that because they were kindred spirits with the same worries, as the proprietors of uninhabited islands, there was no need to think about something as trivial as compensation, and rather they celebrated the fact that nothing more serious had befallen the boat. There is something, I believe that at that time they took pride in their common profession.

They were exhibiting this kind of self-awareness of themselves as the proprietors of uninhabited islands around the same time that the fertilizer survey I mentioned earlier was being carried out. Large numbers of people were traveling to the Senkaku Islands and articles of these islands were appearing in various newspapers. The *Ryukyu Shimpo* ran a series of 11 articles that introduced Koga's efforts to develop the islands. There was an extremely interesting article on "The Senkaku Islands and Tatsushiro Koga." The newspaper began to get inquiries from people who read the article, saying, "If the island is such interesting, I want to go sightseeing there as well."

When Koga heard that, he refused, saying, "Oh no, no, no. It isn't that kind of an island. (It isn't a sightseeing island.) We are busy doing work on the island, so there is no time to deal with tourists." It seems he was quite stubborn.

## Was Koga's Personality Stubborn and Eccentric?

What was Koga's personality? The 1916 edition of *Okinawa-Ken Jinjiroku* [Who's who in Okinawa], a biographical yearbook, touches slightly on Koga's personality. Incidentally, the author, Yoshi Hatakura, had visited the Senkaku Islands. Let's take a look at this book.

Although acknowledging that the businessman Tatsushiro Koga has had a number of successes in the marine product industry, Hatakura notes, "While a person like you [Koga] must be called a truly exemplary businessman, it is truly regrettable that you are so stubborn and eccentric that you cannot get along with people." He must have been quite asocial that the author would want to include such a comment in the article, so he was probably somewhat different from the average person.

Here's another story. I do not know if you would say this describes his personality, but Koga, who was successful both in his marine products business and as the person who opened the Senkaku Islands, was a famous and successful person in Naha as well. At that time, government officials came to Naha from Tokyo, and they held a reception for them as well as a lecture. They decided, "Let's have Koga speak as someone who opened up the Senkaku Islands," so it must have been something like today's event. They made the request to Koga, received his approval, and put an announcement in the newspaper. It said, "Speaker/presenter Tatsushiro Koga, developer of the Senkaku Islands." It is exciting to imagine what that stubborn, eccentric Mr. Koga might have talked about that day, isn't it? When we eagerly read on to find out, however, it says that on that day, he handed off the role to someone else.

It was on that very day, mind you. The organizers had drawn up the program and got Koga's approval, and he himself was at the event. But when it was time for him to speak, he said, "No, this person can speak better than me," and he had *Ryukyu Shimpo* journalist (Kurata Miyata) speak in his place. I think this episode also gives us a sense of Koga's personality that he was not like any other ordinary people.

## **Ichimanaa's Suspicious Fires**

In addition, let us take a look at the explanation how “Agariguya”[small huts in the east area] was formed given in the *Ishigakishi-shi Minzoku Hen* [History of Ishigaki, folk customs edition], which gives an overview of each area.

Following the abolition of feudal domains (1879), Tatsushiro Koga, who was the pioneer in opening up the Senkaku Islands, had established the Koga branch (a branch of Koga Shoten) as his frontline base, located near the coast of the Okawa district. At the time, the islanders called it Kuga Doun (Koga-den, referring to the Koga branch, in honorific way), showing a special level of respect. The Koga branch monopolized marine products by themselves, and naturally a very strong smell wafted in the air in the area around it. Around 1882, fishermen from Itoman also arrived, building small huts (*kuyaa*) to live in. Based on the fact that there were as many as 53 huts, it can be surmised that there was a fairly large number of fishermen living there. However, a major incident occurred when those Itoman fisherman were working to extract oil from sharks. The oil caught on fire and then spread to neighboring screw pines, reaching even to the Koga branch.

The suspicious fire started by the Ichimanaa burned down the Koga branch, and so they were forced to leave the port area and move to Agariguya as a result of this episode. This reminds me of another episode that I will share with you. Moving ahead in time, there was a separate suspicious fire started by the Ichimanaa that occurred around 1914.

The following story takes place onboard a steamer. A cargo ship that operated between Naha and Ishigaki was anchored in the Ishigaki Harbor, and at the time, the ship was loaded with about 600 cans (\*the volume of a can is “eighteen litter”)(the total volume is about 68 barrels) of oil. Some of the people from Itoman were smoking cigarettes and one of them tossed a butt in that direction. Fire broke out and there was chaos on the ship. If it exploded, it would have been a huge disaster. Fortunately, they were able to move quickly and throw all of the oil into Ishigaki Harbor so a tragedy was avoided, but of those 600 cans (about 68 barrels), 400 cans (about 45 barrels) belonged to Koga. I think it is interesting that the relationship between Koga and the Ichimanaa was marked by these suspicious fires.

I got so wrapped up in speaking that I forgot to introduce the photographs, but at the right (see the figure below) is an advertisement for the Osaka Koga Shoten. The address is “Nagahori Kita-dori Gochome, Osaka.” That was the location of the Osaka Koga Shoten. At the left (see the figure below) is the Naha Koga Shoten. There was also the Yaeyama Koga Shoten. All three of these used a trademark that featured a mountain mark and the character for number three. So it is safe to assume that they were sister stores.



Advertisements for the Naha Koga Shoten (left) and Osaka Koga Shoten (right)

### Overview of the Development Efforts

Next, let us turn to the products that were being handled by the Yaeyama Koga Shoten.

The major products were, as seen in the initial program, albatross feathers as first, and you might have noticed in the video you saw earlier, but there was another type of water bird there as well—the albatross cry sounds like *mou-mou*, while the other bird sounded like *kii-kii*—which is terns. Those were stuffed in large numbers. The marine products they handled included shells, shark fins,

tortoise shells, dried squid, although we have not been able to determine whether this was gathered in the Senkaku Islands or not, and there was also dried bonito flakes.

These products were caught in the Senkaku Islands and then brought to the Yaeyama Koga Shoten. Once a certain amount had been gathered, they were shipped to the store in Naha. Koga was therefore coming and going between the Senkaku Islands and Ishigaki Island to export the goods, but I would like to share more details on exactly how he was carrying out those shipping.

Around the time he first began developing the Senkaku Islands, Koga wrote in his own petition, “I was traveling back and forth between the Senkaku Islands and Yaeyama using a fishing boat.” The content of that petition was his complaint that “the development of the islands is gradually becoming more substantial and we are shipping more goods, and so it has become extremely difficult to travel back and forth between the Senkaku Islands and Ishigaki Island relying only on fishing boats.” He appealed to the Osaka Shosen Inc. [Shipping line company], which was operating the routes at that time, saying, “I would like to have some of the steamers on the Governor-General of Taiwan’s subsidized routes, some of the boats that go to Taiwan, to make port calls here.” It was a petition dated January 19, 1899.

So at the start of his efforts to develop the islands, he was going back and forth in a fishing vessel. Subsequently, boats from the Taiwan route did start to make port calls. That shifted to the Sakishima route operated by the Kaiun Kaisha\*<sup>1</sup> and then to the same route of the Koun Kaisha\*<sup>2</sup> run by the Sho family.

One more thing: It is said that there were inhabitants on the Senkaku Islands, but they did not move there because they wanted to live there; they were all migrant workers who were hired by Koga. There were ads placed in the newspaper to recruit workers who would relocate to the islands for work. For example, an ad from August 9, 1904, was an “uninhabited island ad.” At that time, they did not write that it was the Senkaku Islands. It was just an uninhabited island. At the time, people understood what that meant.

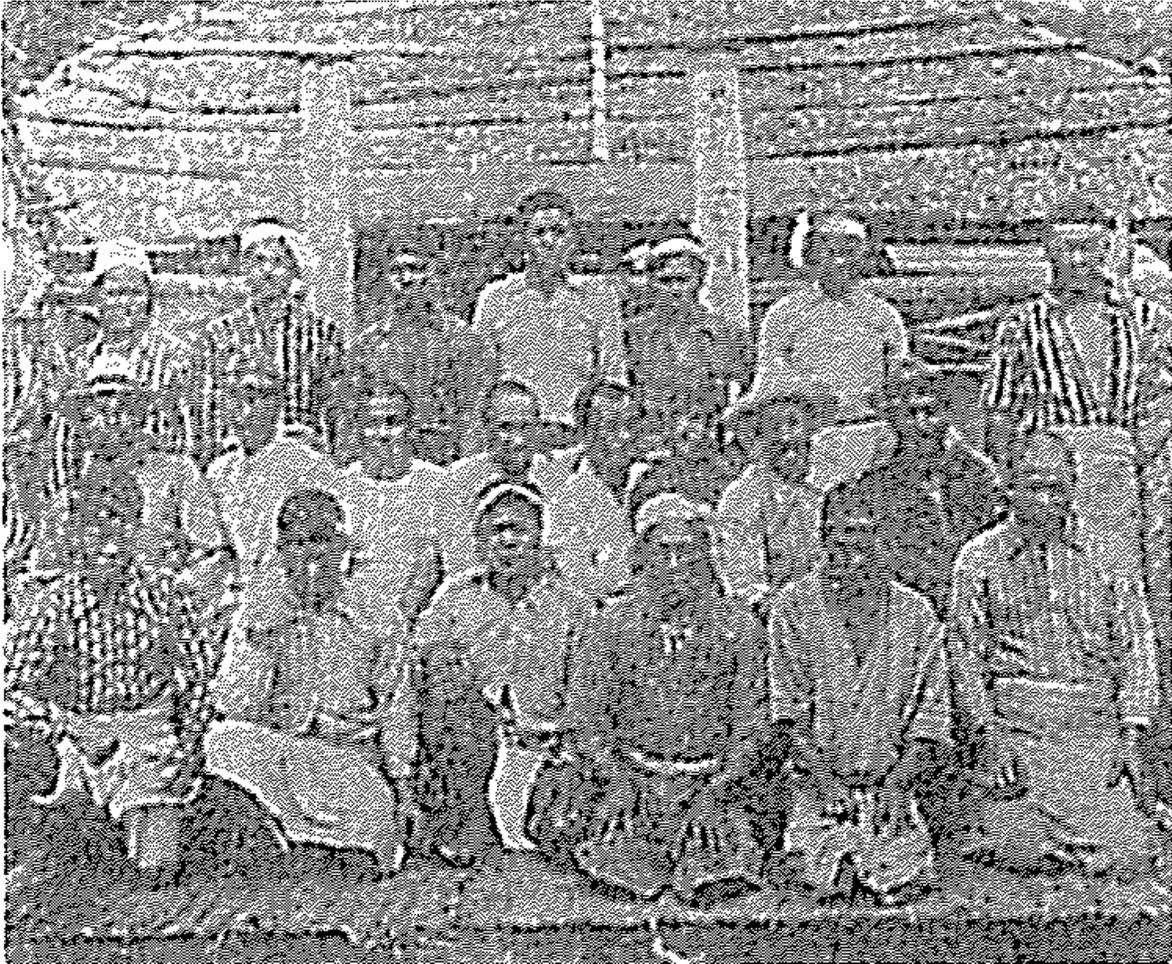
\*1 The Kaiun Kaisha was a shipping line founded by a merchant from Kagoshima. Steamers such as the *Daiyu-maru* and *Ninju-maru* sailed regular routes primarily between Naha and Sakishima. *Ninju-maru* often made port calls to the Senkaku Islands in the islands’ early pioneering days.

\*2 The Koun Kaisha is a local Okinawan company, established with capital from the Sho family, the former royal dynasty of the Ryukyu Islands. During the midst of the development period, the steamer *Kyuyo-maru* frequently made port calls to the Senkaku Islands.

### **Bestowal of the Medal with Blue Ribbon**

Now I'd like to take a look at some of the photos of the development work.

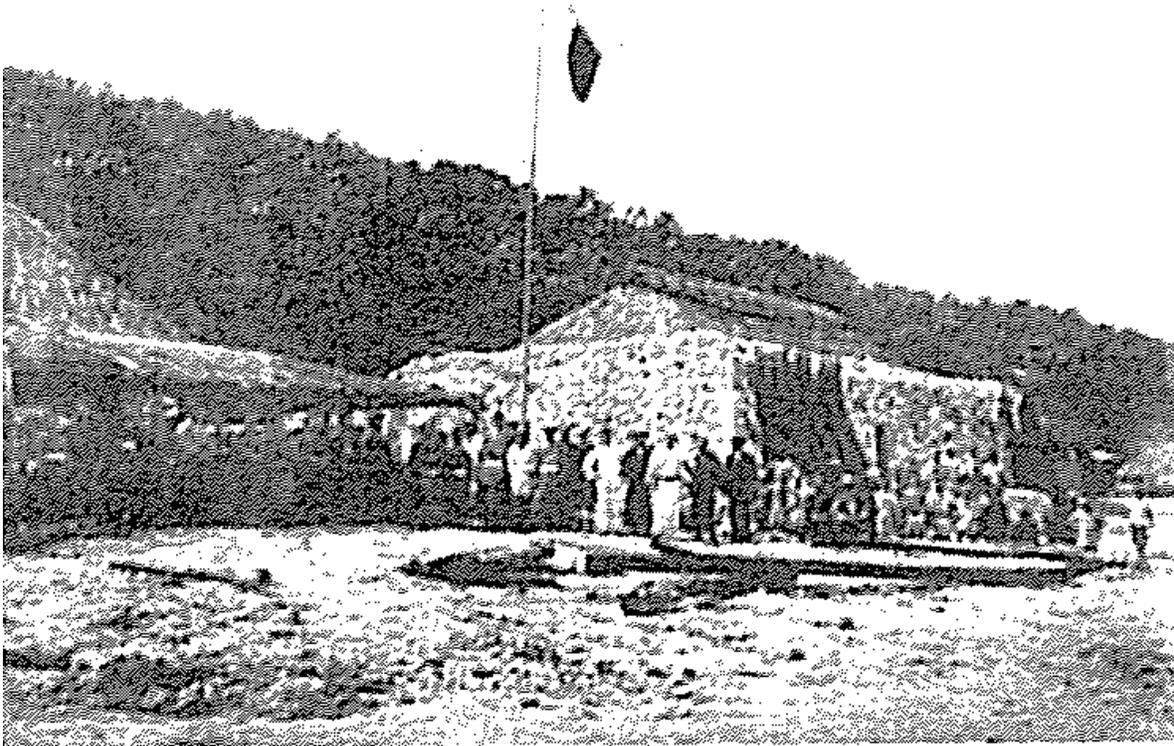
This one was taken in 1908, at the time of the phosphate fertilizer survey, and these people were migrant workers. What is interesting is that there is a girl in the photo—can you see her? She's in the middle of the middle row. This girl was “born in the Senkaku Islands around 1901” according to an account from the girl herself after WWII. She was the daughter of Yakita Izawa, and her name is Maki Izawa. The person holding her is her father, Yakita (See; Photo dated 1908, from *Senkaku Retto Nooto* [A Note about Senkaku Islands], by Shogoro Takahashi).



**At the land cultivated by Koga on Kobi Island (1908)**

Even prior to Japan's incorporation of the Senkaku Islands into its territory, from around 1891 to 1893, Yakita was leading fishermen to the Senkaku Islands to gather marine products, and later, when Koga was granted permission to develop the islands, Koga hired him to supervise the site, and he was therefore in a position to supervise the development process on site. He was in the Senkaku Islands until around 1909, but after that he went to Taiwan and elsewhere and his connection to the Senkaku Islands ended. An inscription at the back of the photo notes "Kobi Island [Author's note: Kobi Island is also known as Kuba Island], the land Koga cultivated." So this photograph was taken on what is now Kuba Island. The developers are wearing shirts and have headbands on, so these are the type of people that were there.

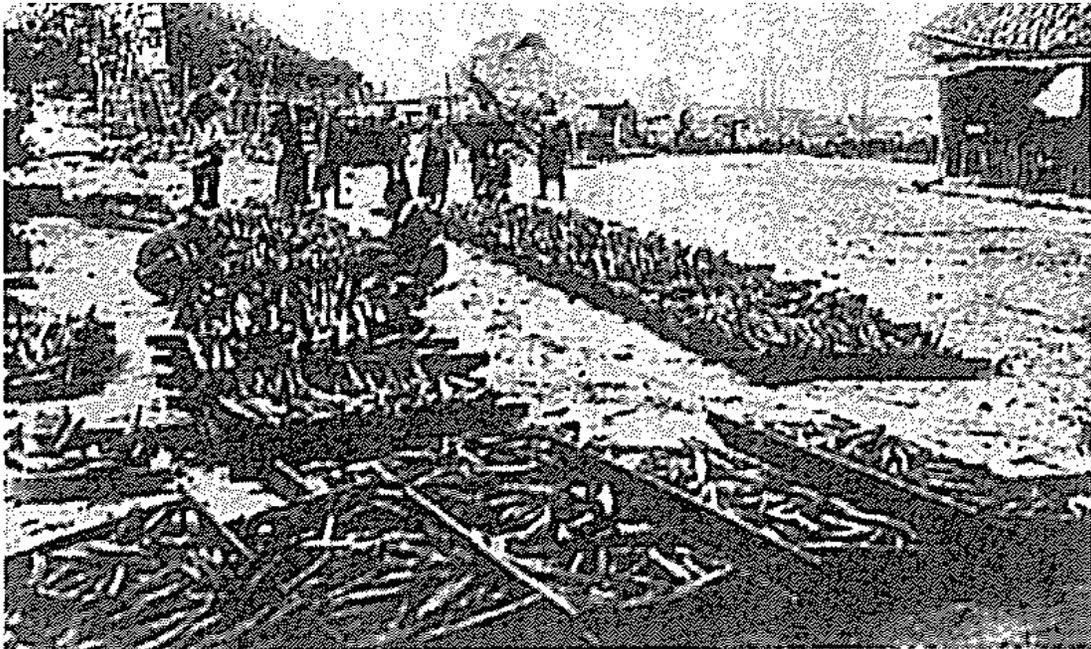
This is Uotsuri Island around 1908. The hut on the right surrounded by a stone wall is a bonito cooking hut. In front of that, there stands a huge Japanese flag, and to the left are women who were probably female factory workers hired by Koga from the Tosa region of Shikoku to process the dried bonito. The relatively well-dressed people in the middle were a group of businessmen, as well as researchers that had come to see the island at that time. To the right, in front of the hut, were probably the fishermen from the bonito boats. Leaning against the front of the hut should be the fishing rods for catching the bonito.



**Commemorative photo at Uotsuri Island (1908)**

These photos were taken around the same time. Photo (1) shows the interior of the dried bonito factory, which was built on this scale at that time. There were a large number of wooden steam baskets lined with bonito. Photo (2) shows the interior of a bonito cooking hut. It is equipped with

large, round iron pots, and there are three or so lined up. At the time, this was the standard type of facilities that were used. The boastful-looking person at the back is Koga. Photo (3) shows that there were Okinawans as well as bonito fishermen and female factory workers shaving bonitos coming from the mainland on the island at this time. Koga hired people from all areas, so there were a variety of people on the island. This person is holding a shamisen [a Japanese traditional three-stringed musical instrument that looks like banjo]. I wonder what type of music he played as a diversion from the island life.



**(1) Manufacturing dried bonito (1908)**



**(2) Bonito boiling hut (1908)**



**(3) There is a man holding a shamisen, second from the left (1908).**

In 1909, Koga was awarded the Medal with Blue Ribbon by the Japanese government. Thirteen years have passed since first starting to open the Senkaku Islands, the country finally recognized his efforts as well.

The following year, in 1910, his friend Ryokudo's letter to the editor appeared in the newspaper in praise of Koga's achievements. It is a bit long, but I love this passage, so I would like to share it with you.

Tatsushiro Koga, I am deeply elated, as your friend, to hear the good news that you have been awarded the Medal with Blue Ribbon. When you first began your business in the Senkaku Islands, there were many who doubted whether your endeavors would succeed, and worse yet, there were some who secretly mocked you. It was not easy to carry out your work on those isolated, uninhabited islands across the distant seas. You faced many difficulties—you had to offer generous payment before you finally were able to assemble enough workers, you had to charter a steamer and somehow manage to supply food to the island, you excavated a rocky reef to create a mooring where boats could anchor, and cultivated vegetables for provisions in case of an emergency. In addition, you shifted from gathering bird feathers to creating bird taxidermy, and from fishing for shellfish to building bonito-fishing boats—your business was not going as planned, and I think you faced various other tribulations as well.

Now, your operations are running smoothly, resources have been discovered that should bring your business further growth, and your ventures are rapidly expanding. The fact that you are finally the envy of others is the product of your enthusiasm and energy. Without your superhuman efforts, you may not have been able to consistently move forward, and I cannot imagine that you would have been able to turn this island into a treasure island as you have.

In this way, you have overcome hurdles and the country recognizes here and now some part of that success. I think the extent of your joy must be beyond what I could even imagine.

Finally now, Urashima (metaphor of a dreamy person detached from the real world) has become the envy of people

I am so deeply moved to see you savoring the joy at last.

The vision of success that you are laying out for the future of the island is no fantasy like the palace of Princess Otohime but something you will most definitely realize. And it will be to the benefit of the nation. I am praying for your success. —Ryokudo

Koga had various struggles, including procuring and transporting workers and supplies for daily living. His business transformed from catching *yakogai* (turban shells; *Turbo marmoratus*) to bonito fishing, from gathering albatross feathers to manufacturing stuffed terns. This passage shows that Ryokudo (a.k.a. Choi Goeku) had been keeping watch over the development of the islands both as a friend and as the president of the Koun Kaisha.

## **Conclusion**

Tatsushiro Koga actively worked to develop the Senkaku Islands. As I have told you, he hired a variety of people and succeeded in developing the islands. However, while still in the midst of opening them up, on August 28, 1918, he passed away. His son, Zenji Koga, succeeded him, carrying on the Koga Shoten operations and the development of the Senkaku Islands, but there are few traces of this generation in the documents that would indicate that he was enthusiastically continuing to open up the Senkaku Islands. It is questionable whether Zenji himself even stepped foot on the Senkaku Islands.

After World War II, Prof. Moriteru Arasaki interviewed Zenji's wife, Hanako, who recounted, "He was not enthusiastic about business," indicating that his passions lay elsewhere. He became a sports journalist for a local newspaper (at his own expense), and traveled to Germany at his own expense to cover the Berlin Olympics. There was an article in a Yaeyama newspaper prior to the war about Zenji's arrival on the island, but his title was given as newspaper reporter, not appearing as the owner of Kuga Doun, the Koga Shoten.

However, when Zenji transferred ownership of the Senkaku Islands to the final person to hold the lease on the lands prior to the Japanese Government's acquisition of the ownership of three Senkaku Islands, he imposed a condition, "Leave the natural environment of the islands intact so the wildlife can be conserved." And it seems that the leaseholder followed those directions, so perhaps Zenji felt some need to atone for his father's overhunting of albatrosses and terns.

Against that backdrop, the Koga Shoten temporarily dissolved in 1940, but after the war, Seiei Teruya, a former manager of the Koga Shoten and some others carried on the work and established a trading company called Nankai Shokai.

The company continued to operate until around 1972, the time of the reversion of Okinawa, but now there are no traces of it. Where Kuga Doun once stood before the war, there is now nothing at all.

It's time to end my note. Thank you for your attention.



**Commemorative photo taken when Nankai Shokai participated in a commercial and industrial festival in the city of Ishigaki (1956). The floats and bonito-patterned lanterns give a sense of the substance of the businesses at that time. Photo provided by Noriko Tamori and Yoriko Nasu (grandchildren of Seiei Teruya).**

## [Supplemental Materials] The Koga Shoten Managers

### Managers and Key Players at the Yaeyama Koga Shoten

✧ Yakita Izawa—From Kumamoto Prefecture. Believed to have been the on-site leader who supervised the development of the Senkaku Islands.

Source: “Kobi Jima” [Kobi Island], *Chigaku zasshi dai-12-shu 143-go* [Journal of Geography, vol. 12, no. 143], 1900.

“According to testimony from Yakita Izawa of Kumamoto Prefecture, who is currently residing on Kobi Island, since 1891 he has been bringing fishermen from the Ryukyu and traveling to Uotsuri Island and Kuba Island to gather marine products and the albatrosses on these islands. At that time, the voyage was made in just a dugout boat or a sculling boat. They would not remain long time on the islands before returning home to the port of Ishigaki. He went to these islands again in 1893, and on the way home they encountered a typhoon and were washed ashore in Fuzhou, China, but he somehow managed to cheat death and survive.”

In addition, Yakita’s daughter, Maki Izawa, speaks about having been born on Kobi Island. That would mean that her birthplace was the Senkaku Islands, Yaeyama-gun, Okinawa Prefecture. According to Maki, after returning to their hometown in Kumamoto Prefecture around 1910, she traveled with her father to Taiwan.

✧ Entaro Otaki—Birthplace unknown. Koga’s nephew.

Otaki is also thought to have been one of the leaders in the early phase of opening up the Senkaku Islands. He was leading the developers and traveling to the islands from 1898. Perhaps he had a talent for cartography since he created a map of Uotsuri Island which was quite detailed for that time.

Source: “Kiryu Shonin Annai (3)” [Guide to sojourner merchants], *Ryukyu Shimpo*, October 1, 1900.

“Tatsushiro Koga is from Oita Prefecture, and his elder brother, Yosuke Koga, is in Osaka. Given that the majority of their trade is of marine products, they have long been employing people from Itoman to fish and hunt in the area of the uninhabited islands, and are planning to

undertake development of the islands. The manager of the Koga Shoten, Entaro Otaki, traveled to China with Tatsushiro Koga to observe trade there, and while they were there, they felt that they needed to study English, and so Otaki is currently studying in Kyoto.”

✧ Yonekichi Tsutsumi—From Fukuoka Prefecture. The village of Tadami is next to Yamauchi Village. Perhaps the manager of the Yaeyama Koga Shoten.

In *Ishigakishi-shi Yaeyama Shiryoshu 2: Toyokawa-ke Bunsho I [The history of Ishigaki-city, materials of Yaeyama vol. II, Documents of Toyokawa family I]*, it is recorded that Jinnosuke Matsumura and Yonekichi Tsutsumi, Tatsushiro Koga’s representative, were granted rights (March 30, 1903) to dig for Kulu [hong lu] (a material used for dyes that was native to the region). It can be surmised that Koga was actively expanding his business to Yaeyama’s agricultural products as well. Also, according to registers and other documents, Yonekichi Tsutsumi’s name appears as the owner of the Koga Shoten’s Okawa lot together with Ishi Tsutsumi, and in Takuji Iwasaki’s *Ishigaki-jima Annai-ki* [A guide to Ishigaki Island], it was recorded that the manager of the Koga branch at the time (late Meiji period) was Teiko Tsutsumi.

✧ Mitsuzo Koga—Probably from Fukuoka Prefecture. Youngest of the Koga brothers. Possible that he led the bonito fishing on the Senkaku Islands.

Source: Funeral notice in the *Okinawa Mainichi Shimbun* dated February 11, 1911.

“Our younger brother, Mitsuzo, who had been trying to recover from illness for some while, finally gave way and passed away in Yaeyama at 10 a.m. on February 10. We announce his death to those he had the honor to become acquainted with in life. Funeral services will be held today in Yaeyama.

February 11, 1911

His brothers: Kunitaro Koga, Yosuke Koga, Tatsushiro Koga”

✧ Satanosuke Minegishi—From Miyagi Prefecture. Later transferred his family register to Okinawa Prefecture.

He was born in December 1856, so he was the same age as Koga. Sometime around 1883, he became a staff of the Okinawa prefectural government, and around 1893 he was posted to Yaeyama. At the beginning of the Taisho Era, he retired from the prefectural government and became a manager of the Yaeyama Koga Shoten. As seen in the Sakishima travel journal written by Chofu Ota, at the time Minegishi was a clerk at the Yaeyama government office at the end of the Meiji Era, his hobby was *ikahiki* (squid trawling), and we can find a glimpse of his connection to the Kaigetsu-kai (a club for aficionados of *ikahiki* that had a more than century-long tradition in Yaeyama).

He was given the nickname “high-collar” (a term meaning fashionable, or dressed in the latest Western style) by the *Sakishima Shimibun*, and I once heard a story from Dr. Tetsuo Takara that recalled his childhood’s episode that helps us imagine where that nickname came from. “When I hear the words ‘Kuga Doun,’” he said, “I think back of a gramophone. There used to have a gramophone there, which was very rare at the time, so all of the children (at that time) were curious and would go to see it.” Also, two buildings north of the Koga Shoten at that time was Sakata Shoten (the owner was Yasujiro Sakata), Koga’s rival store. In the writings Sakata left behind, he mentioned manager Minegishi, touching on the interaction between the two store’s owners at the time.

◇ Seiei Teruya—From Naha, Okinawa Prefecture.

After graduating from Naha Commercial High School, Teruya began working at the Naha Koga Shoten. He later was transferred to the Yaeyama store, working under manager Minegishi, and then became his successor after Minegishi died of an illness.

He was the founder of the Nankai Shokai after the war. In the Yaeyama Koga Shoten advertisements at the time (*Sakishima Asahi Shimibun*, January 1, 1929), the names that appeared were Seiei Teruya, Saiin Iji, Sonsei Kishaba, Sonsho Ohama, Taro Higa, Chuichi Gushi, and Ansuke Kuroshima.



**At left is Seiei Teruya, head of the Yaeyama Koga branch, and at right is Yosuke Koga, elder brother of Tatsushiro Koga, the head of the Osaka Koga Shoten.**

**This is a valuable photographic material of showing the connection between the Yaeyama and Osaka shops in the prewar period (1926). Photo provided by Noriko Tamori and Yoriko Nasu (grandchildren of Seiei Teruya).**

◇ Ryoko Kinjo—From Shuri, Okinawa Prefecture. Head of the Senkaku and Arakawa bonito flake factories.

Although it is not clear when Kinjo came to Yaeyama, he appears to have overseen the manufacturing of bonito flakes first in the Senkaku Islands and then, after having vacated the Senkaku Islands factory, at the Arakawa factory. The name of the bonito fishing boat at the time, the *Koga-maru*, was heard from a number of the elder residents of Itoman. Kinjo's son, Ryosei, is still in good health and living on Ishigaki Island, where he enjoys squid trawling.

## **Conclusion**

In modern times, there is a history of various people from all over Japan, as well as from Taiwan and elsewhere, moving to Okinawa's Yaeyama Islands to live. That is probably why it is sometimes called the United States of Yaeyama.

The people who were involved in the development of the Senkaku Islands were also diverse bunch. I hope through these stories you have gotten the sense that the history of these islands is certainly connected to the lively efforts of the people of modern Japan.