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**Ryukyuan in Early Modern Japan: The Journey to Edo 1710-1850**

Panel: Aspects of History

Prior to the 1870s, the islands which today comprise Japan's Okinawa prefecture were ruled by the quasi-independent Ryūkyū Kingdom, which sent envoys to the shogunal capital of Edo (modern-day Tokyo) on eighteen occasions from 1634 to 1850. While in Japan, the members of these missions paraded through the streets of ports and post-towns in colorful street processions. My dissertation research examines the ways in which these Ryukyuan envoys deployed costume, banners, music, and other visual and performance elements to represent the political and cultural identity of their kingdom as subordinate to Satsuma and to the shogun, but as also being a culturally and politically distinct kingdom, a tributary to Ming and Qing China, inheritor of the greatness of Chinese civilization, and possessing its own distinctive identity and high culture. In this brief conference presentation, I will provide an introductory overview of the topic, which remains sorely under-discussed in English-language scholarship.