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The Glory of an Island Kingdom - From Capt. Basil Hall to Samuel Wells Williams -

Plenary Session: Okinawa? Changing Times??

In 1816, Capt. Basil Hall, of the Royal British Navy, and his crew made a call at Naha. Capt. Hall's name has been well known among the people of Okinawa. His monumental work, entitled *An Account of a Voyage of Discovery to the West Coast of Corea and the Great Loo-Choo Island*, was published in 1818 in London. The publication was one of the early, if not earliest, works published about the people of Ryukyu. The work was written in English for the consumption of the readership in London. The favorable review of Capt. Hall's work by such a reputable publication as the *Edinburgh Review* aided its reputation among English readers. His work quickly started to acquire a large readership throughout Europe. Several extant volumes in European languages translated from Hall's original English work attest to the popularity of his work.

Capt. Hall's work marks the dawn of a new era for the people of an Island Kingdom of Ryukyu, having acquired for the first time, a reputation among Western people as the most civilized among the Asian nations. I consider this period of Capt. Hall and his English companion's arrival until the middle of the 19th century the most glorious period of time in the history of the island people and their kingdom.

The appearance of the dreadful Black Ships in 1853 in the East Asian waters headed by American Commodore M.C. Perry, of the United States Navy, marked a period where distinctly different American perceptions regarding the island people of Ryukyu began to emerge.

The year 2016, a mere 16 months from this writing, marks the 200th year of the memorable arrival of Capt. Basil Hall and his English crew. I would like to share with you, at this important juncture, some of my sentiments on the significance of the historic events which took place about 200 years ago.

Capt. Basil Hall's noble legacy, concerning the people of Ryukyu, was inherited by Samuel Wells Williams. Williams was a noted American scholar of things Chinese and himself a Christian missionary. Williams' rich experience with the people of Ryukyu and his scholarly work on them had a great impact upon Western perception of Ryukyu. Williams' legacy is of no less significance than Capt. Hall's.

In what follows, I would like to look into some of the more striking aspects of the relationship of Ryukyu with the Western world.