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Abstract

Kulturelle Identität der Region als Träger politischer Opposition im Staat: Zur Rolle Okinawas in Japan (1995-2000)

Gabriele Vogt

The Renaissance of the Okinawan Peace Movement of the years 1995 to 2000 can be understood as Okinawa's attempt at formulating a role of political opposition against the central government by actively presenting the region's strong cultural identity. The prefecture's goal was to escape the tight structures of national - and international - interdependence that joined Okinawa, the national government, and, in terms of security policy, a third actor, the United States. The self-perception of cultural identity as a narrative of victim among left-wing Okinawan politicians, competed with the right-wing politicians' self-perception of cultural identity as *Nichi-ryû dôso-ron*, an idea that strengthens the cultural coalition between Japan and Okinawa by proclaiming their cultures' common origins. Social movements that get their motivation out of the cultural identity of a minority may get very strong. However, as soon as the nation state finds its homogeneity threatened by a region's too offensive presentation of its cultural identity, the nation state will react and use its political and economically dominant position to weaken the regional identities and strengthen its own position. A social movement will thus not be successful if it cannot build up powerful alliances to other social movements throughout the country or even transnational alliances.