

English-language novels we have got hold of the Rosetta Stone for deciphering India or an elephant's foot.

*Susan Maitra is Associate Editor of the Journal.*

## State versus Defense

**Keystone: The American Occupation of Okinawa and U.S.-Japanese Relations**

Nicholas Evan Sarantakes, 2001, Texas A&M University Press, \$34.95, hardcover, 304 pages.

REVIEWED BY DAVID CASAVIS

Little corners of history, particularly when Americans have been involved in them, have always been popular reads for Foreign Service audiences. A pitched battle, a typhoon-prone landscape, and a forgotten colony on the edge of the Cold War are the stuff of cozy, satisfying evenings, far from television commercials and noisy children.

Nicholas Evan Sarantakes' book, *Keystone: The American Occupation of Okinawa and U.S.-Japanese Relations*, follows ably in that long tradition. Sarantakes, an assistant professor of history at Texas A&M University-Commerce, teaches U.S. diplomatic and World War II history. Those specializations serve him well here.

*Keystone* opens logically enough with a vivid account of the battle of Okinawa (the chief island in the Ryukyu chain) in 1945 to set the stage for the book's main story: a chronicle of the American occupation of the Ryukyus and the long campaign of the Japanese to regain the prefecture of Okinawa, which

had come under their control in 1879. Embedded in that overarching narrative is a fascinating account

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of a long-running policy clash between the U.S. Departments of State and Defense. Should the U.S. keep the Ryukyu Islands as a prize of war, or should they revert to Japanese control?

Incredible as it may seem to a 21st-century Foreign Service audience accustomed to defeat after defeat in the policy arena, State's view eventually prevails, but not without a fight. After an epic bureaucratic struggle, the turning point comes in Chapter Seven, when U.S. Ambassador to Japan Edwin O. Reischauer goes head to head with Lt. General Paul W. Caraway, the High Commissioner of the Ryukyu Islands.

Apparently there was no discussion of a third option, independence from Japan. In fact, Sarantakes implies that one reason State ultimately prevailed in its drive to return the islands to Japanese control was that the population of

750,000 Okinawans was not considered assimilable into the United States because they were "of alien culture and outlook."

Throughout the story, Sarantakes brings to life the voices of Foreign Service officers, both prominent and obscure; skillfully quoting their long-shelved cables and reports. But there is no lack of more famous figures, U. Alexis Johnson first and foremost among them. We meet him first as a language specialist starting his career in Tokyo and then follow his tenure as ambassador to Japan, including a seemingly unimportant visit by Richard Nixon in 1967. Amb. Johnson graciously (or shrewdly) afforded him standard VIP treatment, something the former vice president seldom enjoyed and never forgot. The next year, the president-elect named Johnson his under secretary of State for political affairs. When asked why, Nixon simply said that he trusted him.

Sarantakes also shows us an uncharacteristically indecisive President Truman and an adroit Dwight Eisenhower. As Army Chief of Staff, Eisenhower pragmatically recommended a Defense Department retreat on the issue of Okinawa, but once he became president, he promptly abandoned the idea of returning the prefecture to Tokyo.

*Keystone* is a good basic reference book for readers interested in postwar U.S.-Japanese relations, as well as Okinawa specialists. But it is Sarantakes' sympathetic portrayal of State's efforts to put the past behind and rekindle U.S.-Japanese relations that makes this an essential book for anyone interested in diplomacy. ■

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