

Whispers of Rebellion: Okinawan Aesthetic Defiance Against Pseudo-Universalism

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Abstract:

Universalism, that lofty ideal which promises to unite diverse cultures beneath the banner of shared human values, has long dazzled the intellectual mind. It champions the ideal of transcending borders, of dissolving the boundaries that divide us, and of fostering a communion built upon mutual understanding and solidarity. Yet, beneath this shimmering veil, a more insidious force often lurks. When the particularities of a dominant culture are paraded as universally applicable truths, there emerges a phenomenon both subtle and treacherous: *pseudo-universalism*. It is a masquerade, one that quietly erodes the rights of minority groups, while at the same time stripping cultural diversity of its vibrant hues, bleaching it in the whitewash of hegemonic conformity.

This process of cultural erasure finds its most precise expression in moments of historical transformation. Consider the spring of 1879, when the distinctive red tiles of Shuri Castle gleamed under the sun as Japanese officials arrived to dissolve a kingdom. In the name of modernization, the Meiji government began reshaping Okinawan identity with a simple, devastating message: to be modern was to be Japanese, and to be Japanese meant erasing what made Okinawa distinct. Here, pseudo-universalism's double movement not only elevated particular cultural forms to universal status, it also simultaneously degraded local traditions to the status of primitive relics.

Yet within this landscape of enforced assimilation, resistance emerged through unexpected channels. Contemporary Okinawan literature stands as a persistent defiance against these homogenizing pressures, demonstrating how aesthetic expression becomes a crucial site of cultural survival. This paper seeks to unravel the complex ways in which literature and aesthetics serve as acts of rebellion against this suffocating force. Through the alchemy of creative expression, marginalized voices could challenge the dominant narratives, asserting their cultural identities and daring to present perspectives that resist conformity.

Sojourning in the literary landscapes crafted by Medoruma Shun in "*Hope*" and Mabuni Chōshin in "*White Ryukyuan Tombs*," we find narratives that bear witness to the aesthetic strategies employed to fend off the creeping encroachments of pseudo-universalist ideology. By navigating the works of authors from divergent corners of society, this paper unveils the pervasive reach of pseudo-universalism and underscores the unifying power of literature to confront and unravel the oppressive structures of conformity.