

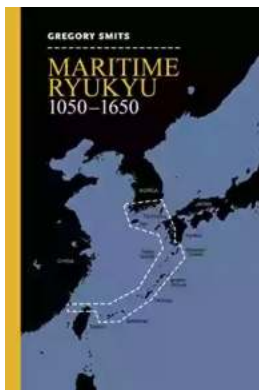
Unraveling the Secrets of Maritime Ryukyu: A Historical Journey with Gregory Smits

Maritime Ryukyu, a region encompassing the present-day Okinawa Prefecture in Japan, holds a rich historical heritage that has fascinated scholars and history enthusiasts for centuries. To delve into the captivating saga of this maritime kingdom, renowned historian Gregory Smits offers his invaluable insights. Join us on an incredible journey through time as we explore the intriguing history of Maritime Ryukyu from 1050 to 1650.

The Enigmatic Beginnings

The story of Maritime Ryukyu begins in the early eleventh century when a distinct kingdom emerged in the Ryukyu Islands. Gregory Smits, an expert in the field, sheds light on the kingdom's origins, tracing its roots back to the interaction between Pacific Islander migrants and the indigenous population.

Smits reveals how the kingdom of Maritime Ryukyu thrived due to its strategic location on the East Asian trade routes. As traders from China, Korea, and Southeast Asia traversed these waters, this dynamic kingdom became an essential hub for commerce and cultural exchange.



Maritime Ryukyu, 1050–1650

by Gregory Smits (Kindle Edition)

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 3592 KB

Text-to-Speech : Enabled

Enhanced typesetting : Enabled

Print length : 384 pages

Screen Reader : Supported



The Golden Age of Maritime Ryukyu

Maritime Ryukyu reached its zenith during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a period known as its golden age. Gregory Smits, with his meticulous research and expertise, uncovers the reasons behind the kingdom's remarkable success.

One of the key factors contributing to Maritime Ryukyu's golden age was its unique diplomatic strategy. Smits elucidates the island kingdom's adeptness in maintaining amicable relationships with the Chinese Ming Dynasty alongside various Southeast Asian powers and even European traders. This enabled Maritime Ryukyu to prosper both economically and culturally.

Additionally, Smits highlights the role of maritime activities in Maritime Ryukyu's prosperity. With their exceptional seafaring skills, the Ryukyu people engaged in long-distance trade, connecting East Asia to Southeast Asia and beyond. This maritime prowess allowed them to accumulate wealth and establish themselves as vital players in the region.

The Challenges and Decline

As with any historical narrative, the story of Maritime Ryukyu also encompasses its fair share of challenges and decline. Gregory Smits throws light on the internal and external factors that contributed to the gradual decline of this once-mighty maritime kingdom.

Internal conflict plagued the latter half of Maritime Ryukyu's history, leading to a fragmented and weakened political structure. Smits explores the impact of this division on the kingdom's economy and relationship with external powers.

Moreover, as the regional geopolitical landscape changed, the emergence of new naval powers and shifts in trade dynamics significantly affected the fortunes of Maritime Ryukyu. Smits analyzes these external factors and their role in the kingdom's decline, providing a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by the Ryukyu people during this period.

Continuing the Legacy Today

Despite its decline, the legacy of Maritime Ryukyu continues to shape the identity of the Okinawa Prefecture and its people. Gregory Smits offers a glimpse into the cultural remnants of this maritime kingdom that can be observed to this day.

The profound influence of Chinese culture on the Ryukyu Islands is a testament to the extensive historical interactions between the two regions. Smits discusses the spread of trade, customs, and traditions, resulting in a unique blend of influences that form the distinct cultural tapestry of Okinawa.

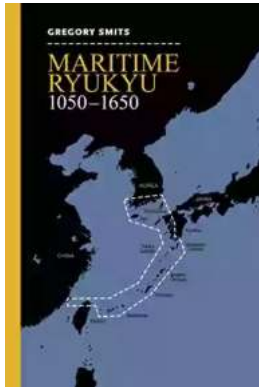
Furthermore, Smits explores the impact of Maritime Ryukyu's rich history on modern-day Okinawa's geopolitical significance. The region's strategic importance as a military base and its vibrant cultural heritage attract tourists and researchers alike, adding to the ongoing importance of studying and preserving the maritime kingdom's legacy.

Maritime Ryukyu 1050-1650 encapsulates a riveting chapter in human history that encompasses trade, diplomacy, cultural exchange, and tumultuous transformations. Gregory Smits, with his extensive knowledge and thorough research, offers a captivating glimpse into this era.

Exploring the origins, golden age, challenges, and legacy of Maritime Ryukyu allows us to appreciate the complexities and resilience of the Ryukyu people. As

we navigate through the remarkable tales of this maritime kingdom, we discover a profound connection to both the past and the present.

So join Gregory Smits on this enchanting historical journey, as we unearth the secrets of Maritime Ryukyu and trace the footprints of those who once ruled the seas.



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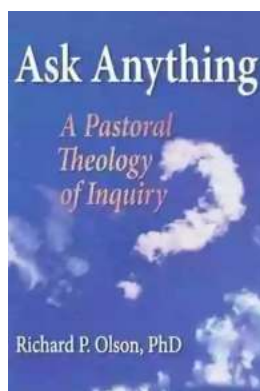
Why do Ryukyu's official histories locate the origins of its early dynastic founders in Iheya and Izena, small islands located northwest of Okinawa? Why did the Ming court extend favorable trade terms to Ryukyuan rulers? What was the nature of Okinawa's enigmatic principalities, Sannan, Chūzan, and Hokuzan? When and how did the Ryukyu islands become united under a single ruler? Was this Ryukyuan state an empire, why did it go to war with the powerful Japanese domain of Satsuma in 1609, and what actually happened during that war? Answers to these and other key questions concerning early Ryukyuan history can be found in this bold reappraisal by a leading authority on the subject.

Conventional portrayals of early Ryukyu are based on official histories written between 1650 and 1750. Taking an interdisciplinary approach, Gregory Smits

makes extensive use of scholarship in archaeology and anthropology and leverages unconventional sources such as the Omoro sōshi (a collection of ancient songs) to present a fundamental rethinking of early Ryukyu. Instead of treating Ryukyu as a natural, self-contained cultural or political community, he examines it as part of a maritime network extending from coastal Korea to the islands of Tsushima and Iki, along the western shore of Kyushu, and through the Ryukyu Arc to coastal China.

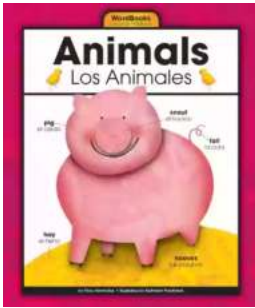
Smits asserts that Ryukyuan culture did not spring from the soil of Okinawa: He highlights Ryukyu's northern roots and the role of wakō (pirate-merchant seafarers) in the formation of power centers throughout the islands, uncovering their close historical connections with the coastal areas of western Japan and Korea. Unlike conventional Ryukyuan histories that open with Okinawa, *Maritime Ryukyu* starts with the northern island of Kikai, an international crossroads during the eleventh century. It also focuses on other important but often overlooked territories such as the Tokara islands and Kumejima, in addition to bringing the northern and southern Ryukyu islands into a story that all too often centers almost exclusively on Okinawa.

Readers interested in the history of the Ryukyu islands, premodern Japan, and East Asia, as well as maritime history, will welcome this original and persuasive volume.



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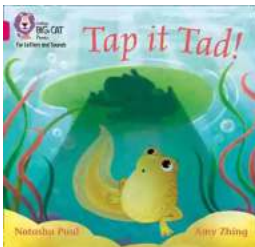
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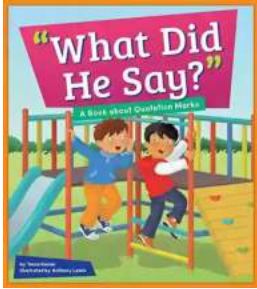
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