

A Historical, Cultural, Comparative Study
On The Appropriate Habitat Of
Endangered Dugong In Okinawa
By Interviews And Literature Documentation

By The Association To Protect The Northernmost Dugong
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Chapter III History Of Dugong In Okinawa And Its Cultural Aspect

3.1. The Cultural Aspect Of Dugong

(1) The origin of the word “dugong” and its local names

The scientific name of dugong is ‘Dugong dugon’. The Malay word ‘dugong’ is considered to be a derivation of a western variety of the Austronesian word ‘royong’ meaning a whale. The name ‘dugong’ was adopted in Okinawa only recently. Just as the Iriomote Wildcat, now an endangered species, used to be called ‘yama maya’ and was eaten, dugong also used to be a delicious food for the Okinawa peoples. At the same time dugong was a cultural asset having a number of taboo-related names associated to Tsunami legends.

(1-1) Asian-Pacific names for dugong

‘Dugong’ is a Malay word; in the Indonesia it is called ‘duyung’, meaning a pretty girl, and in the Philippine (Itbayat Island) it is called ‘royong’ while its Chinese name is ‘ruliang’.

(1-2) Early names for dugong in Okinawa

One old name for dugong in Okinawa was ‘fitou’, meaning ‘people’; in Miyako it was called ‘hitoiu’, meaning mermaid and the Itoman fishermen called it ‘hitoiyu’ also meaning mermaid. The dugong was also considered as a kind of marine horse and called ‘un-uma’. According to Yanagida Kunio, a famed folklore specialist, dugong was once called ‘yonaitama’, meaning the sea-spirit; whereas in some places in Okinawa it was

called 'yonatama' or 'yonamata' or 'yonaitama', the names associated to Tsunami legends. For example, in the Shimoji Island near the Irabu Island, people used to tell how a captured 'yonatama' called out to the sea-spirit for rescue and asked for a 'sai' the sea-tide, so huge to wash away the whole village in the island. The 'sai' was also called 'zan'.

(1-3) Names of dugong in and around Okinawa

The name 'dugong', originally a Malay word, was adopted in Okinawa only after 1972 when the island was returned from the US to Japan. Its variation 'zugon' was used in Hontou, Kayo, and the Chinese word 'ruliang' was used in the Ishigaki Island.

The names associated to Tsunami such as 'zan' (Hontou) , 'zan no iyu' (Hontou), 'zanuyu' (Hontou, Amami, Ishigaki), 'zanoi' (Hontou, Yambaru), 'zanoi' (Iriomote), 'jan' (Amami, Aragusuku Island) or 'dan' (Amami) also were used.

The names meaning the sea-spirit such as 'yonaitama' (Miyako), 'yonaimata'(the Shimoji Island) also were used.

The names associating the dugong to a baby-like fish since its cry resembled the crying of a baby such as 'akanguwaiyu' or 'akanguwaiu' (Hontou,the Awakuni Island) or 'akanguwayu' (Hontou, Nago) were also used.

The names originating from the dugong's shape resembling a marine horse or a people such as 'keba' (official name for dugong used in the Ryukyu Royal Court), 'umi uma'(the Awakuni Island), 'hitou' or 'pitu' (Miyako), 'hito iyu' (Hontou, Itoman fishermen) or 'ningyo' meaning mermaid (Miyako) were also used.

Meanwhile in Suo-Ojima of Yamaguchi prefecture in mainland Japan the name 'dekondo' was used but this seems to have meant a kind of dolphin.

(2) Songs associated to dugong

Many of the dugong songs express desire for a large catch of the animal. Some describe in detail how dugongs were captured while others describe the joy of dugong hunt. When dugongs were caught people prayed in gratitude to the sea-spirit, as the

animal was thought to be the messenger of the spirit. The prayer songs convey the feeling of reverence to the spirit and its messenger similar to the Iyomante sung by the Ainu people when they caught a bear, the gift from the spirit.

Zanturi Yunta (Dugong Hunting Song)

(Contained in the 'Dugong Songs' compiled by Moriguchi Mitsuru)

The young islanders of the Aragusuku,
The competent hunters of our island,
Walk through the tide-break woods,
Walk through the Adan woods,
Chop off the pieces of the Adan roots,
Strip the bark from the Yuna tree,
Peel the skin from the Adan roots and dry it in the sun to weave a rope,
Soak the young bark of the Yuna tree in the sea water to weave another rope,
Choose a low tide to set a trap made from the ropes in the zan grazing trenches,
Finding a zan in the trap, the youths dive into the sea to chop off the zan tail by hatchet.

(The hunters chopped off the dugong's tail fin, a deadly weapon. In pain, the dugong would hit its tail fin hard against the sea-bed, breaking the bone. The hunters then easily captured the animal.)

The skull of the captured dugong was offered to the island founder spirit dwelling in the Isho Utaki to show gratitude. The dugong's skin was dried in the sun, cut to a certain size and offered as tribute to the Royal Court of the Ryukyu Dynasty. The dried skin was used to prepare special soup for the New Year ceremony or served to the special guests from China. The islanders used the remaining flesh and viscera as a special remedy for the easy birth and the dugong grease was used as the lamp oil.

(3) Folklores related to dugong

There are, roughly, eight types of folklores related to dugong.

(3-1) Dugong and Tsunami

In the late 18th century many villages were washed away by the Meiwa Tsunami which left a number of Tsunami legends with the dugong taking a part. Some of the legends depict dugongs as friendly and helpful to the people while some others picture

dugongs as being ominous. In Iriomote, Hateruma, Kuroshima, Ishigaki, Shiraho and Miyara, the dugongs warned the villagers of the coming Tsunami to return the favor of being released. In Miyako, Irabu, Hontou, Misatomagiri and Tokashiki, the villagers ignored the warning by dugong and were destroyed by the Tsunami. The Shiraho song handed down in Ishigaki and Iramina also follows this pattern. The Awakuni and Irabu legends tell how some villagers were saved while others were destroyed and how the Tsunami left ponds and lakes in its passage.

Example 1: Mermaid and the Tsunami (A folklore in the Nobaru village in the Ishigaki Island contained in 'Folklores In Okinawa' edited by Ishikawa Kiyoko and published by Okinawa Bunkasha.)

Once upon a time, a group of youths were playing the three-string instruments and blowing finger-whistle on a cape on the end of the Nobaru village located on the eastern shore of the Ishigaki Island. They heard a beautiful song coming from somewhere offshore. Every night since then, when the sea was calm and the moon bright the song was heard. One such night, an elder man caught a mermaid (dugong) while fishing. The mermaid prayed the old man to set her free. Moved by the request the old man released her. In return the mermaid warned the old man of an enormous Tsunami coming by the dawn. He hurried back to the village to break the news. The villagers ran to a high place for shelter and sent a youth to the neighbor Shiraho village to warn the villagers. The neighbor villagers, however, did not take the word of the youth serious. The dawn came with a strange calmness. It was a high tide time, but, as the villagers watched, the tide suddenly moved back toward offshore leaving the sea-bed bare. It was then the water offshore suddenly swelled and a mountain of the tide rushed upon the Ishigaki Island. All the villagers, except those who happened to be working in a nearby mountain, were washed away, houses and the fields were all gone. The villagers who listened to the mermaid's warning survived. They thanked the mermaid and worked hard to restore the village. Standing on the cape of the Nobaru village, people even today, hear the beautiful song of a mermaid on a calm moonlit night.

Example 2: Mermaid and the Tsunami (a legend in the Iriomote Island)

Once upon a time, the Iriomote islanders went out to the sea on a high tide night for fishing. They caught a large fish called 'pidu' (dugong) in a shallow water. The fish was enormous. The people sliced off its meat and hanged the remainder on a big piece of

amada wood to roast. The sea god then appeared and asked what was going on. The pidu answered, "Oh, I am being roasted. Please send here a large wave." "How large a wave do you want?" the god asked. "A wave so high as to reach the crescent moon," the pidu answered. A fukuripiya (filefish) overheard the conversation and chipped in saying, "The wave does not need to be that high. It is enough to reach the middle frame of the shatter of the houses". Momentarily, a huge Tsunami reaching the middle frame of the shatter rushed upon the village and washed away the houses, villagers and the pidu. The piece of amada wood, also washed away, was caught on something in the upstream of a creek near Hoshidate. The place came to be called the Amada-uchi. The field where a mountain of yuriki (draftwood) was piled up came to be called the Yuriki Masu. The field covered by a great number of fish is called the Buri Masu, and the field where many fukuripiya fish were found is called the Fukuripiya Masu.

Example 3: Mermaid and the Tsunami (a legend in the Hateruma Island contained in the 'A Hundred Folklores Of Okinawa', published in 1966 by the Welfare Department of the Okinawa Prefecture)

Among the Hateruma islanders there is a saying from the old days, "Never pursue a fish on hook if it pulls on the line and tries to come on board". The saying continues, "Cut the line at once and hurry back to the shore". This saying is based upon an experience by three fishermen who, as the legend tells, had an alarming encounter with a mermaid. One of the three, according to the legend, had a powerful strike while on a boat fishing. Strangely, the game did not try to free itself and instead pulled on the line to approach the boat. The fisherman, believing he had a big game, also pulled on the line until he saw under-water a long-haired woman. Thinking that he caught a drowned person the fisherman released the line. The woman was, indeed, a mermaid and asked for a hand so that she could come on board. The three, although unsure of themselves, did help her on board. The mermaid then asked them to take her ashore to visit their village, assuring them that she would never cause them any harm. The fishermen felt eerie at first, but appeased by the pretty face of the mermaid, took her back to their village. The mermaid looked around the island with curiosity. Many villagers came out to see her and made a commotion. At the same time an elder of the village happened to be on a nearby hill and heard an ominous rumbling of the sea and, as he looked, a mountain of tide was rushing to the shore from far away. "Watch out ! A Tsunami is coming !", he shouted but the villagers were too busy staring at the mermaid and did not take heed. When the Tsunami hit the village, the people realized the

situation and rushed to the nearby heights. The mermaid, meanwhile, waved her hand to the coming tide as if to welcome it and was carried away by the wave. Strangely, the places hit hard by the Tsunami were exactly the places visited by the mermaid.

(3-2) The folklores describing how people caught and ate dugongs

In places such as Hontou Shimajiri and Tamagusuku, Tsuken Island, Iriomote Ohara and the Taketomi Island where dugongs were often captured there remain folklores telling the way how they were caught and eaten.

Example: When I was young I saw two dugongs between Kurima and Nagayama. My uncle captured them. The female dugong had breasts. Their heads were like horse heads, the tails were like those of dolphins and their meat tasted like beef or horse meat. Maybe we were cursed for killing the dugongs because, after eating them, we have seen the baby pigs born without legs.

(3-3) Totemic legends

There are a number of paternity groups holding as their totem dolphin, turtle, shark or others. In various places in Motobu, legends of such paternity groups often contain taboos prohibiting to eat the totem animals. In Katsuren, for example, there is a legend according to which the paternity group there used to be cannibals until pigs were introduced from China and they began eating pork instead of people meat. However, there is no evidence showing that any part of the Okinawa had a cannibal tradition, and the Katsuren legend may suggest that their ancestors used to eat dugong. From the remains of some shell heaps the bones of the Ryukyu boars together with those of dugongs are found. It is thus obvious that the indigenous boar were eaten before pigs were introduced from China.

(3-4) The Omorososhi tales of capturing dugongs

The dolphin hunt in Nago used to be a common practice and was called 'pitudoï', 'pit' meant the dolphin and 'doi' the rallying cry. A dugong may have been mistaken as a dolphin or a small whale. In the Omorososhi, a compilation of old songs, there are songs describing how dugongs, together with turtles were captured. The people in Okinawa used to believe that the food obtained in the sea was a gift from god sent from the far

away Nirai Kanai (paradise).

(3-5) Dugong sighting

In Sakishima area, especially in Yaeyama and Miyako regions including the Awakuni Island, also in the Ogami Island of the Miyako Archipelago, Karimata, Kawahira Bay in Yaeyama and in the Miyara Bay, dugong sighting stories were told. Some of the stories tell how a mother dugong in the shallow water was nursing a baby, and some others tell how a dugong was taking a nap.

Example 1 A zan in Mijikin (This story was recorded in 1996 and contained in “The Folklores In Tamagusuku”, edited by Professor Shoji Endo of the Okinawa International University and published by the Tamagusuku Village Board Of Education in 2002)

It was in the early Meiji period around 1870, when the Ryukyu Dynasty still existed, that a dugong was sighted on the Mijikin Beach near the Hamakawa Itaki bordering Nakandakari and Hyakuna. The strange-looking animal was sitting on the beach staring around. Its face was like a horse and the body like a fish. No one in the village had seen an animal like that and a large crowd gathered. Uncle Kusakwa, a well-informed person, said that the animal must be a zan, a trouble-some mermaid. His word first scared the villagers until they realized that nothing ominous was happening. Some people suggested to bring the animal to the Shuri castle to obtain some reward. The people gathered upon the animal, beat it almost to death, so that it could not fight back. But the animal died by the time they reached the castle and the people got no reward.

Example 2 Akanguiyu (Baby-like fish)

Seventy years ago, when an old uminchu (person of the sea) was eighteen years old, he saw a dugong laying down facing toward the west on a western cape of the Awakuni Island. His fellow islanders believed that the animal was a messenger of the Dragon god of the sea and offered a prayer.

(3-6) A folklore telling how a monstrous dugong was defeated by a rock

A folklore in the Awakuni Island stands out as it depicts dugong as a fearful carnivorous monster defeated by the Funjiishi, the guardian rock of the village.

(3-7) Stories of persons who married the dugongs

Folklores in Tokunoshima, various parts of Miyako, the Ikema Island and the Irabu Island tell of men who married dugongs. One such story tells of a man married a dugong who left him and returned to the sea after the couple quarreled. He missed the wife badly and kept calling her, “Koi, koi (come back, come back)” until he turned into a rail bird.

Similar stories of marrying the sea creatures such as a turtle, ray, shark or a maiden of the Sea-Dragon’s palace are also known.

Example: Marrying the maiden of the Sea-Dragon’s palace

A fisherman helped a sea-turtle leading her babies to the sea. In return the turtle invited him to the Sea-Dragon’s palace where he married the eldest daughter of the Dragon. He returned to the village with wife as a rich man. The wife was indeed a mermaid and when her true identity was disclosed she had to return to the sea. At times though she came back to see her three children and the husband. Eventually she took two of her children back to the Sea-Dragon’s palace and lived there happily together.

(3-8) Dugongs taught the first Okinawans how to procreate

Various legends concerning the ancestors of the Okinawa people exist. The following legend in the Kouri Island is unique in placing dugongs as creatures who taught the first peoples how to procreate.

Example: Dugongs and the first peoples (a legend in the Kouri Island in Nakijin, contained in a document compiled by the Nakijin Historical Culture Center)

Once upon a time there lived a girl and a boy in the Kouri Island near the western shore of Hontou. The two lived naked and innocently eating rice cake sent by gods from the heaven. As the time passed, however, they learned to store food and, by this time, gods had ceased to send rice cake down. The two looked for the rice cake in vain and

came down to the beach every morning to gather fish and crabs to eat. They learned the hardship of working. One day, as they were working, the two happened to see a pair of dugongs mating. For the first time in their life they came to understand the meaning of making love and procreation. At the same time they began to feel ashamed of their nudity and covered their bodies by Kuba leaves. The Kouri people of today are descendants of these two first peoples.

3-2 The Dugong Chronology

- 1) Prehistoric period (from B.C. 2000 to A.D. 12th century when the Ancient Ryukyu Age began)

Dugongs were captured and eaten as shown by their bones, unearthed together with the bones of sea-turtles and the Ryukyu bores, from various shell heaps and other relics in the Ryukyu Archipelago belonging to the middle or the late periods of the Okinawa Shell Heap Ages. The dugong bones were also used to make bracelets, dices, needles, combs and arrowheads.

Caption of photo: Dugong bones exhibited in the Yomitan Museum (right side of the photo)

The shell heaps from which the dugong bones and other relics were unearthed:

Jikohara shell heap (BC 2000~400); needles and ornamental hairpins made from bones were found

Murokawa shell heap (BC 2000~1000); butterfly shaped bone products were found

Fukidehara excavations (BC 1000~400); butterfly shaped bone products were found

Shimizu shell heap (BC 1st century ~AD 1st century); shows the dugongs together with dolphins and turtles were eaten

Katsuren gusuku (castle)(14th~15th century); dices made from bones were found

Nakijin gusuku (14th~16th century); disc shaped bone products and arrowheads were found

Kouribaru excavations in the Kouri Island (middle period)

The fourth shell heap of Nakadomari excavations in Onnason (middle period)

The Iejima Nagarabaru shell heap in Iejimason (late period); more than a

hundred relics were found

Dugong remains were also found from the Amami and Yaeyama excavations and Japanese mainland sites.

2) The Ancient Ryukyu Age and the first part of the Ryukyu Dynasty Era (12th century ~ 16th century)

Toward the middle 12th century the hunting-gathering culture of the Okinawa ended and the agricultural and the gusuku ages began. In 1429 the first Sho clan unified the Hontou and started the Ryukyu Dynasty which was succeeded by the second Sho clan in 1470. As the Dynasty grew more powerful by means of a successful marine trade it put the surrounding islanders under its domination and unified the Ryukyu Archipelago including the places from the Amami Island to the Sakishima Islands. In 1479 a document of the Yi Dynasty of the Korean peninsula (1392 ~ 1910) records, for the first time, that a keba (marine-horse, meaning dugong) was sent by the Ryukyu King Sho as a tribute. From 15th century until 16th century, the Ryukyu Court had a base in Fukkien in China to actively engage in a trade and diplomacy in the south-eastern Asia. The Court offered tribute to the Min Court of China and also had a contact with the mainland Japan.

The dugong skin, dried in the sun, was considered as an elixir and sent as tribute to the Korean and Chinese Courts. The dugong meat, viscera and fat were used by the local people as food, medicine for an easy delivery.

3) The Modern Ryukyu era

In 1609 the Shimazu family, the ruler of the Satsuma clan in Kyushu, invaded Ryukyu. The invasion was motivated by a desire to exploit the Ryukyu resources and to acquire a better position in trading with China so that the tight economy of the clan might be rebuilt. The Sho kings were made to send mission to the Edo Shogunate and the Ryukyu became a subject state of the Satsuma clan.

In 1623 an epic called the Omorososhi was compiled. It consists of 22 volumes of spiritual or poetical songs. The volume 11 of the epic contains a song describing how people captured zan (dugong).

In 1633 a severe capitation was introduced to Miyako and Yaeyama peoples. The Aragusuku people in Yaeyama, lacking enough water to irrigate the rice paddies,

were made to pay the capitation in the form of dugongs. In various parts of Yaeyama there are legends describing the dugong hunt.

In 1727 the “Yaeyama Island Note” describing the local products was published, and the dugong was mentioned as one of such products even though its harvest was scarce.

In 1771 a powerful Tsunami caused by an earthquake of magnitude 7.4 on the Richter scale, called the Meiwa Tsunami, hit the Miyako and Yaeyama archipelagoes leaving approximately 12,000 people dead or missing and more than 2,000 houses swept away. The tidal wave was as high as 40 to 80 meter and the one third of the Yaeyama population was lost. A various legends in the Ishigaki and Miyako Islands connect the Tsunami to dugong. A set of taboos related to dugong was made and spread even to the Hontou Island.

A book of regulations and rules “Okinanaga Oyakata Yaeyama Kibochō”, published in 1885, notes:

- i) The Aragusuku was the only community made to pay tribute to the Royalty in the form of dugong.
- ii) The rule stated that any excess harvest of dugong, after paying the capitation, was supposed to be preserved. But, in actuality, they were distributed to the people. There were even some officials who put a part of the capitation to the black market.

4) The Modern Okinawa era

In 1871, following the Meiji Restoration in 1868, the clan system was abolished and replaced by the prefectures. In 1879 the Ryukyu Dynasty was ended and the Okinawa prefecture, under the auspice of the Japanese government, was established.

In 1884 the Itoman fishermen invented mikagan, a pair of swimming goggles, which made it possible to introduce agya, a large scale netting. They established, for the first time in Okinawa, a deep-sea fishing company. They built small fishing villages in many places including Amami, Taiwan, the Japanese mainland, Korea, south-east Asian countries and the southern-Pacific Islands. The agya method was so exhaustive especially in inshore areas that the Itoman fishermen were sometimes

expelled from the fishing grounds. As a result more fishing villages were built in remote areas. Itoman fishermen also taught the Abu villagers in the eastern shore of the Hontou Island the effective method to capture dugongs.

According to “The Preparatory Report On The Yaeyama-Amami Fishing” published in 1888 the dugongs were frequently sighted.

In 1889 a new method of cornering whales and dugongs using nets was introduced.

During 23 years starting from 1894 to 1916 more than 300 dugongs were captured.

In 1902 the capitation system was ended. The quota and regulations of the dugong hunt also were forgotten. The motor ships started to be used by the fishermen since 1905. As the agya fishing method was adopted in many places, more dugongs were captured. The most of dugong hunt was carried out in Yaeyama and Miyako. In the early part of the 20th century the officially recorded dugong catch numbered more than 30 in a year. Taking the poaching into account it is possible that about 50 dugongs were captured annually. Considering the fact that the dugongs have a low productivity this was certainly an over-hunting.

By 1912, when “The Fishery Report II Of Miyako And Yaeyama” was published, dugongs were rarely sighted and its capture was banned.

After the First World War ended, in 1924, a serious famine called “Sotetsu Hell” hit the Okinawa.

In 1933 the dugong was designated as a Natural Treasure in Yaeyama and Taiwan, then under the auspice of the Japanese government.

5) The Pacific War and the post war period

The Pacific War began in 1941 and ended in 1945 putting the Okinawa under the US occupation until it was returned to Japan in 1972. The 75% of the US military bases in Japan still exists in Okinawa.

Immediately after the end of the war a severe food shortage made people use dynamite to capture fish causing a drastic fall of the dugong population.

In 1955 the Ryukyu government designated the dugong as a Natural Treasure.

In 1960, in Amami, the last official sighting of the dugong was reported while in 1967 dugong was officially sighted in Iriomote for the last time.

As the Okinawa was returned to Japan in 1972 the dugong was designated as a Natural Treasure. The Okinawa dugong was then considered extinct, although our investigation shows that the dugongs had been caught and eaten even during the 1960's.

In 1975 an International Marine Exposition was held in Okinawa and dugongs captured and kept in the Indonesia were exhibited. Later the Ministry of Education carried out an investigation of the order of sea cow and an International Symposium On The Dugong was held. In 1993 the Fishery Agency banned the capturing of the dugong based upon the Fishery Resource Protection Law.

In 1996 the Special Action Committee on Okinawa (SACO) reached to an agreement to relocate the US military base in Futenma, Okinawa to another place in Okinawa. In December 1977, the referendum in Nago, a candidate for the relocation site, clearly refused to accept the base. The Love Dugong Network, a group to save the dugong in Okinawa, was formed (it later changed name to the Dugong Network Okinawa). Although an investigation carried out, from 1997 to 1999, by a dugong study group led by Professor Kasuya of the Mie University in the Yaeyama water failed to find any dugong or its trenches, a mass media made public in 1998 a photo of wild dugongs in Henoko providing a proof for the dugong's survival in the area. In October 1999 the Dugong Protection Foundation in Okinawa, a group against the US military bases and working to save the dugong from extinction was formed. In November of the same year the Association to Protect The Northernmost Dugong was established.

In April 2000 an International Symposium On Dugong was held in Tokyo, Kyoto and Okinawa attended by Professor H.Marsh of the James Cook University of

Australia and Professor Kasuya.

The IUCN Congress held in Amman, Jordan in October 2000 issued an advice to the Japanese government to protect the dugong.

The Ministry of Environment, pressured by the wide spread opinion to protect the dugong, carried out a Broad Survey of the Okinawa Dugong and Their Grazing Spots from 2001 to 2003.

In February 2002 the UNEP issued a statement warning that the Okinawa dugong is in danger of extinction.

In July 2002 the Japanese government chose the offshore Henoko, the only remaining habitat and breeding area of the Okinawa dugong, as the relocation site of the US base in Futenma.

In September 2003 four dugong protection groups and three individuals filed a suit against the US Ministry of Defense and Its Director General for offending the Cultural Asset Protection Law.

In 2003 the Wildlife Protection and Hunting Regulation Law was revised and the dugong was included in the list of animals banned from hunting.

On April 19, 2004, the Naha Defense Installation Agency made a move to undertake an on-site investigation of the offshore Henoko without waiting for the Environmental Impact Assessment to start. The protestors joined the local elders who had been engaged in an anti-military sit-in for 2639 days.

In October 2004, the IUCN Congress held in Bangkok, Thailand issued an advice , for the second time, to protect the Okinawa dugong.

On October 29, 2005, the Japanese and the US governments declared, in the interim report of the Japan-US Military Reorganization Counsel, their basic agreement to change the relocation site of the Futenma base from the offshore Henoko to the coast area bordering the Camp Schwab. The planned new site, the Oura Bay, will be the new stage of anti-base actions.

On November 1, 2005, the Okinawa dugong was included in the list of the Critically Endangered Species of Class A1 in the revised version of the Okinawa Prefecture Red Data Book.