

## **Eras Journal - Meyer, S. Abstract**

### **Abstract of Meyer, S. The rhetoric of the assimilation ideology in the remote islands of Okinawa: becoming Japanese or Okinawan?**

Being seen as peripheries of civilisation, the remote islands of Miyako and Yaeyama suffered from political, social and cultural marginalisation in the Ryukyu Kingdom.

With the fall of the kingdom and the establishment of the Okinawa prefecture in 1879, these islands, like other regions in the prefecture, were subjected to the policy of assimilation and 'Japanisation'. Assimilation was promoted in Okinawa in the name of modernisation and the idea of Japanese culture was closely associated with the notion of modernity and civilisation.

Pre-war newspapers in Miyako and Yaeyama demonstrate, however, that the advocates of assimilation skilfully exploited the issue of local identities and complex relations between Okinawa and the remote islands. They encouraged local people to combat their inferiority complex by presenting themselves as more 'modern' and 'civilised' than Okinawans.

Japanese culture was appropriated as a device for negotiating one's status within Okinawan society, and hence assimilation came to concern the matter of 'becoming Okinawan'.