

"Object Description of a Ryūkyū Textile"

The Ryūkyū Kingdom (琉球王国) turned its geographical position and historical background to its advantage and benefited from a flourishing trade. As a result, Ryūkyū created its own values and perspectives outside of the Japanese feudal state, but still shared some of the same principles as Japan. This is especially apparent in textiles, for which Ryūkyū is well known. The Ryūkyū *ryūsō* (琉装) may share some similarities with the Japanese kimono, but its appearances are distinctively different. The central goal of this presentation is to show the historical and social contexts behind a typical Ryūkyū *ryūsō*.

In this presentation, the characteristics of Ryūkyū textiles will be discussed with the aid of a *ryūsō* from the 19th century in the collection of the Museum der Kulturen in Basel. In the first part of this paper, I will systematically analyze the technical aspects of this *ryūsō*. The unusual mixture of fibers used as well as the intentions behind this choice will be discussed. Additionally, I will take a closer look at the weaving technique and the usage of gauze. The next part of the presentation will determine the age of the textile through indicators such as the usage of natural dyes, as well as the quality of the handwork.

The difference between the usage of a Japanese obi belt and a simple rope, which was custom in Ryūkyū, will also be illuminated. Additionally, the different cuts and size-differences between the two textile traditions will be examined. In the final part of my presentation, I intend to discuss the importance of the fiber mixture as well as the color choice in the creation of the *ryūsō*.