

The Association of Comprehensive Studies for Independence of the Lew Chewan peoples

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Lew Chewan (Ryukyuan) peoples who can trace their ethnic roots to the islands of the Lew Chew are a distinctive group of peoples. In the middle of 15th century, Tome Pires mentioned Lew Chewan peoples called as Lequeos or Guores in *Suma Oriental*. He stated, “They don’t buy any slaves nor sell their people even in exchange for whole world. They bet their lives on it”. The Lew Chews were once a sovereign state with diplomatic relations with Asian countries as it is written in *Rekidaihouan*, the diplomatic documents of the Lew Chew. In 19th century this included treaties of friendship with Western countries.

Today, Lew Chewan peoples live not only in the Lew Chew islands, Japan, but all around the world. The “World Uchinanchu festival” is held every five years in Lew Chew and 2011 marked the 5th occurrence of this important event. In 2012, the first “World Youth Uchinanchu Festival” was held in Brazil. The Lew Chewan peoples have developed a world Uchinanchu network and will use this to maintain their language, culture and identity even in other countries to which they have immigrated.

The Lew Chew have been colonized by Japan and the United States since the Satsuma invasion of 1609 and the Meiji government’s annexation in 1879. Because of this, the Lew Chewans have become a stateless nation, a minority people and have been discriminated against, exploited, and ruled over. History makes clear that Japan sacrificed the Lew Chew islands in their Pacific War with the United States turning it into a hell on earth, and later pawned the islands to the US military in order to regain its state sovereignty in 1952. This led to 27 years of repressive occupation by the United States military following the end of war, and although the Lew Chew islands account for only 0.6% of “Japanese territory”, they hosts 74% of Japan’s U.S. military bases even after it’s reversion to Japanese sovereignty in 1972. In truth reversion was merely re-annexation by secret agreement. Currently, due to a 1997 revision to the Special Measures Law for land Used by American Forces, the US has deployed MV-22 Ospreys to the Lew Chew in 2012. It did so despite a near unanimous opposition on the island amongst the Prefectural Assembly, 41 municipal assemblies, the governor, mayors and the vast majority of Lew Chewans. This is further evidence of the continuing colonization and discrimination against Lew Chew / Okinawa.

The Japanese people have exploited Lew Chew for their own “peace and prosperity” and hope to be blessed with these benefits for their future. If this goes on, we Lew Chewan peoples shudder at the horror of future wars and fear we will never be able to live in peace. Also the economic domination of Japanese

corporations is expanding and the number of Japanese settlers is increasing. The Promotion and Development plan established by Japanese government has destroyed the environment of the Lew Chew and assimilation policy toward to the culture of the Lew Chewans has become embedded in their minds. As a result we find ourselves enslaved.

The Lew Chewan peoples are essentially an independent nation and are legal agents entitled to exercise the right to self-determination. Only the Lew Chewan peoples can determine the future of the Lew Chew. Lew Chew and their native people have, like all people in the world, rights to life, land, resources, a clean and safe environment, beneficial development, self-determination, internal sovereignty, external diplomatic relations, education and protection of language and culture. By gaining independence from Japan and removing all military bases from our islands we Lew Chewan wish to achieve our long sought-after goal of becoming a sovereign island of peace and hope that exists in friendship with other countries, regions and nations of the world.

With our stated aim of independence from Japan, we hereby establish the Association of Comprehensive Studies for Independence of the Lew Chewans (ACSILs). This is an association of the Lew Chewan peoples, by the Lew Chewan peoples, for the Lew Chewan peoples. Members of the association will be limited to Lew Chewan peoples who have ethnic roots in the Lew Chew Islands.

The association will conduct interdisciplinary and comprehensive research. Our members are all Lew Chewan peoples who aim to achieve the independence of the Lew Chew. The research will not be conducted solely for scholarly purposes. We accept the responsibility to analyze the problems of colonialism and seek a philosophical and political methodology to discuss issues, propose solutions and implement them. As a people that continued to live under colonial rule, we look forward to deepening our knowledge and understanding of our situation and truly decolonizing ourselves.

We do not hesitate at the possibility of independence, but want to take it seriously as both an object of study and a political project. We wish to address both for ourselves and others the questions related to making an independent Lew Chew a reality. What are the steps we need to undergo to realize this aim? What kind of decolonizing processes have been taken by other colonies around the world? What kind of economic policies should be in place before and after independence has been achieved? We will multilaterally and comprehensively study and discuss politics, public administration, international relations, prescriptive concept of the Lew Chewan peoples, identity, language revitalization, language right, art, education, gender, public welfare, environment, discrimination against minorities, issues of disparity, settler colonialism, and more. We will also conduct human resource development for the independence of the Lew Chew.

In addition, the association urges the research exchange with the peoples also seeking independence in various regions in the world. We will also conduct research exchanges with the peoples of the states who

have already achieved independence in order to learn from their experiences. These exchanges will create the basis for a worldwide network of grassroots and scholarly support for Lew Chewan independence. Based on these collaborations of scholarship we will also participate in forums and commissions of the United Nations, international conferences, in order to carry out a movement aimed at Lew Chewan independence.

We the Lew Chewan peoples were driven to these subordinate circumstances by Japan and the United States. We must protect our dignity, islands, oceans, skies, descendants, and the spirit of the ancestors by making our own nation. The Association of Comprehensive Studies for Independence of the Lew Chewan peoples has never been more necessary in order to the counter arguments of the Japanese government, various scholars and Lew Chewan peoples who have accepted a Japanese minority consciousness, that the Lew Chew should remain colonized or cannot survive as an independent nation.

According to the common article 1 of the ICCPR and the ICESCR, all peoples, including Lew Chewan peoples, have the right to self-determination. We aim to realize this statement and to advance research related to Lew Chewan independence in accordance with ICCPR articles 18 (“Freedom of thought, conscience, and religious liberty”), 19 (“Freedom of expression”), and 27 (“Rights of minority peoples”).

We hereby establish the Association than any previous in history in order to achieve “Amayuu” that allows us to live with peace, freedom and equality as a distinctive group of peoples. We call for the participation by all Lew Chewans who seek independence.

We renew our pledge to seek independence for the Lew Chewan peoples.

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