

REFERENCES TO BUILDING LAWS IN REVISION OF A-SIGN CRITERIA IN RYUKYU, JAPAN

Shuta Kina

Graduate Student, Department of Civil Engineering and Architecture,
Graduate School of Science and Engineering, Saga University,
1 Hojo-machi, Saga City, Saga Prefecture, 840-8502, JAPAN
+81-90-9569-7058, 13577010@edu.cc.saga-u.ac.jp

Nobuo Mishima†

Professor, D.Eng., Department of Civil Engineering and Architecture,
Graduate School of Science and Engineering, Saga University,
1 Hojo-machi, Saga City, Saga Prefecture, 840-8502, JAPAN
+81-952-28-8703, mishiman@cc.saga-u.ac.jp

Yoko Taguchi

Lecturer, D.Eng., Department of Civil Engineering and Architecture,
Graduate School of Science and Engineering, Saga University,
1 Hojo-machi, Saga City, Saga Prefecture, 840-8502, JAPAN
+81-952-28-8615, ytaguchi@cc.saga-u.ac.jp

Abstract

In Okinawa, Japan, there remain many establishments called “A-sign” bars, which were managed by the US government during the period of its postwar reign. The A-sign bars were approved by the United States Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Islands (USCAR), which governed Ryukyu from 1952 until the reversion of Okinawa to Japanese control in 1972. The “A” in the phrase A-sign stands for the word “approved.” A-sign bars were controlled under the A-sign criteria, which were amended once in 1963. Their real intention and actual situation have not been clarified, although the amendment’s purpose is known, as it was carried out to prevent prostitution with reference to the local laws of the Government of Ryukyu. Therefore, the aim of this study is to clarify what the real citations were for revising the management criteria for the “A-sign bars in Okinawa, by drawing a comparison between the new A-sign criteria and the Ryukyu Laws. In doing so, this paper has determined the following: 1) the Ryukyu Laws are the Building Standard Laws and the Sanitation Law of Japan; 2) the criteria can be roughly classified into three categories—sanitary equipment and health, architectural spaces, and locations; and 3) the amendment of the criteria—meant to control American soldiers—was carried out not only by referring to Japanese laws, but also by introducing information from the New Criteria Booklet created by the US government. We believe that these results show that the amendment was intended to prevent prostitution as well as to address concerns about anti-American sentiment in Okinawa at that time.

Keywords: A-Sign Bar, Okinawa, Amendment of Criteria, Bar Management, US Control

† Corresponding author



(a) Dancing American soldiers.

(Retrieved from <http://duckdan.jugem.jp>)



(b) Counter of an A-sign bar.

(Retrieved from <http://ryukyeiken.web.fc2.com>)



(c) Exterior of an A-sign bar.

(Retrieved from <http://etekichi.seesaa.net>)



(d) Interior of an A-sign bar.

(Retrieved from <http://image1-3.tabelog.k-img.com>)

Figure 1: Photos of A-sign bars in Ryukyu.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Aim

In Okinawa, there remain many bars known as “A-sign bars,” as shown by photos in Figure 1. The people of Okinawa love them as forms of American culture in Okinawa, although their number is decreasing year by year. The A-sign bars were established under the control of the US government during its reign over Okinawa and were approved by the United States Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Islands (USCAR).

Several studies have attempted to clarify the situation of Okinawa in those days regarding A-sign establishments and to understand the relationship between Japan and the US. The purpose of the A-sign criteria has been elucidated by some journalists and researchers using USCAR’s archives (Yamazaki 2008). One of the biggest problems in Okinawa was prostitution, which women entered in order to survive poverty after World War II, and which spread venereal diseases. A-sign criteria were therefore instituted to dispel apprehension of



Figure 2: Scheme of analysis.

the spread of venereal diseases in the US army, and were later revised to prohibit prostitution. Yet, the details of the revision have not been made clear. The aim of this study is to understand what the real citations were for revising the management of the A-sign bars in Okinawa by drawing a comparison between the new A-sign criteria and the Ryukyu laws.

1.2 Study Method

In this study, we focused on the new A-sign criteria that were used from 1963 to 1972 in Okinawa—which were created by referring to abstracted important criteria from the New Criteria Booklet—and comparing them with the Laws of the Ryukyu Government. The contents of the criteria were roughly classified into three categories: sanitary equipment and health, architectural space, and location of establishment. The scheme of the analysis is shown in Figure 2.

2. OUTLINE OF A-SIGN ESTABLISHMENTS

2.1 History of A-Sign Establishments

The “A” in “A-sign” stands for the word “approved.” The A-sign program was meant to approve business for American servicemen. As mentioned above, this program referred to the Building Laws of the Ryukyu Government to prevent prostitution among American soldiers.

The A-sign program was carried out by USCAR shortly after World War II until the return of Okinawa to mainland control. USCAR governed Ryukyu Island from 1952 to 1972. This program was carried out twice. The Old Criteria were in effect from 1952 to 1959 and the New Criteria from 1963 to 1972.

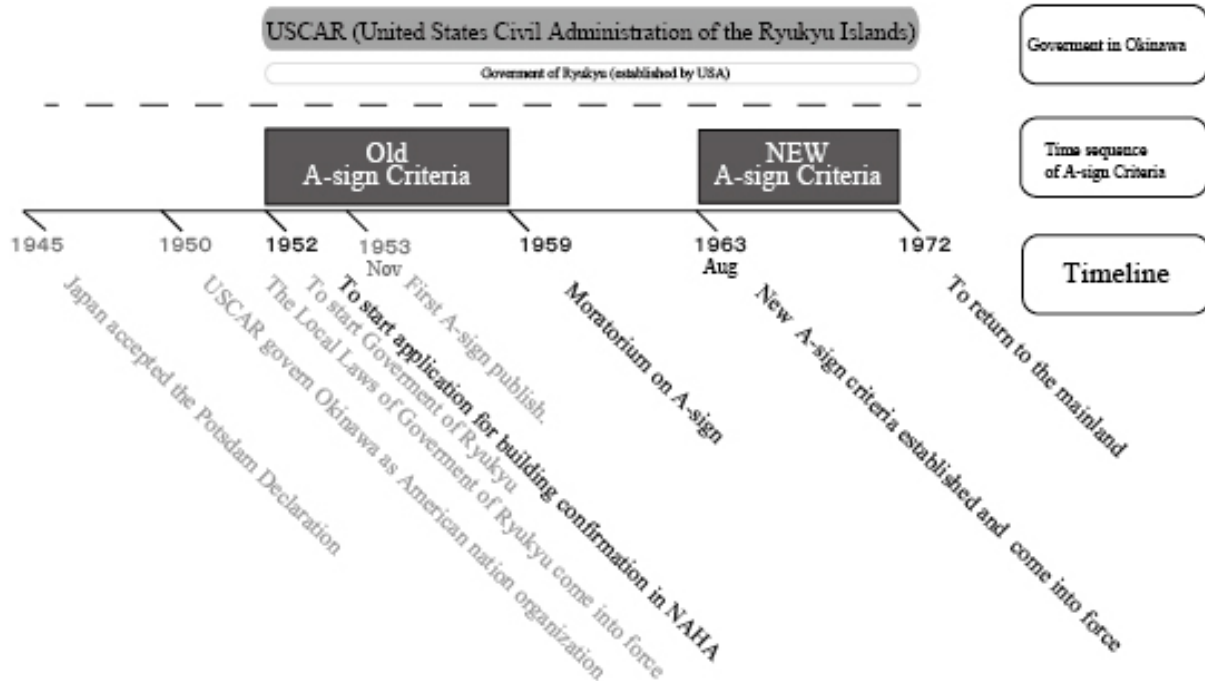


Figure 3: History of A-sign establishment.

2.2 New A-Sign Criteria

The new criteria are described in a booklet called “CRITERIA,” which says that the new criteria referred to the Laws of the Government of Ryukyu. It shows that the A-sign program was meant to harmonize completely with the Ryukyu Laws in order not to impose additional requirements but to make the criteria as compatible as possible with local policies and conditions.

3. REFERENCES OF RYUKYU LAWS TO NEW CRITERIA

3.1 Sanitary Equipment and Health

Some criteria regarding employees’ sanitary equipment and health did not correspond to the Ryukyu Laws, such as “Jewelry, except for wedding bands, will not be worn.” These criteria were introduced to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases in the US army.

When we calculated the number of criteria for sanitary equipment and health, almost all of the criteria corresponded to the Ryukyu Laws. Specifically, 73% of the criteria corresponded to sanitation laws, as Table 2 shows.

3.2 Architectural Space

As to architectural spaces, one of the most specific criteria regarded the size of A-sign establishments. In the provided potential sizes of business establishments, those establishments do not need to use materials that present safety nor prevent fire hazards. These criteria were severer than the Ryukyu Laws (see Table 3).

Table 1: Criteria for sanitary equipment and health.

| Example | Building Laws | Standard | Sanitation Laws |
|---|------------------|----------|--------------------------|
| Powered room ventilation systems will be provided for lounges and toilets. Rate of ventilation will not be less than 20 room air changes per hour. | Reference | | No reference |
| Female employees will wear hairnets and male employees will wear chef hats. Jewelry, except for wedding bands, will not be worn. Light-colored uniforms will be worn. | No reference | | Severer than Ryukyu Laws |
| Drainage pipes will be installed on all sinks to drain outside of the building into a suitable sewage disposal system. | Reference | | No reference |

Table 2: Number of criteria for sanitary equipment and health.

| Number of Criteria | Correspondence | | | No Correspondence | | |
|--------------------------|------------------|----------|-----------------|-------------------|----------|-----------------|
| | Building Laws | Standard | Sanitation Laws | Building Laws | Standard | Sanitation Laws |
| | 0 | | 32(5)* | 0 | | 12 |
| | 0.0% | | 72.7% | 0.0% | | 27.3% |

*Numbers in parentheses are the number of criteria that are severer than the Laws of Ryukyu.

Table 3: Criteria for architectural spaces.

| | Building Laws | Standard | Sanitation Laws |
|---|--------------------------|----------|-----------------|
| Walls and ceiling: the main cement block wall may be covered with an appropriate decorative material that does not present a safety or fire hazard. | Reference | | No reference |
| The size of business establishments, i.e., bars, cabarets, and restaurants, will be as follows: (a) Small Bars – 681 square feet. (63.3m ²) (b) Large Bars – 836 square feet (77.7m ²) (c) Cafes and Coffee Shops – 33m ² (d) Cabarets – 66m ² (e) Restaurants – 49.5m ² These figures are only used as guides, as the various establishments will be judged on their individual merits. | Severer than Ryukyu Laws | | No reference |
| Toilet stalls will be made with a minimum of one piece of plywood. | No reference | | No reference |
| Floors will be made of reinforced concrete slabs with damp proofing on drainage fill. | Severer than Ryukyu Laws | | No reference |

Table 4: Number of criteria for architectural spaces.

| | Correspondence | | | No Correspondence | | |
|---------------------------|----------------|----------|-----------------|-------------------|----------|-----------------|
| | Building Laws | Standard | Sanitation Laws | Building Laws | Standard | Sanitation Laws |
| Number of criteria | 11 (9)* | | 1 (1)* | 3 (0) | | 0 |
| | 73.3% (60%) | | 6.7% | 20.0% | | 0.0% |

*Numbers in parentheses are the number of criteria that are severer than the Laws of Ryukyu.

Table 5: Criteria for location.

| | Building Laws | Standard | Sanitation Laws |
|---|---------------|----------|-----------------|
| Location must be in a business district. | Reference | | No reference |
| Location must present an overall sanitary and attractive appearance. | Reference | | No reference |
| Location must be on a main street or main travel route. | No reference | | No reference |
| Density: no more than 3 large bars (25 to 40 persons) or 6 small bars (25 to 40 persons) shall be established per city block (200 × 200 meters). | No reference | | No reference |

Table 6: Number of criteria for location.

| | Correspondence | | | No Correspondence | | |
|---------------------------|----------------|----------|-----------------|-------------------|----------|-----------------|
| | Building Laws | Standard | Sanitation Laws | Building Laws | Standard | Sanitation Laws |
| Number of criteria | 4 | | 0 | 4 | | 0 |
| | 50.0% | | 0.0% | 50.0% | | 0.0% |

As Table 4 shows, there are many criteria for architectural spaces that are severer than those of the Ryukyu Laws (60.0%). This shows us that the A-sign criteria were based not only on Building Standard Laws, but also on their own original logic.

3.3 Location

At that time, the Building Standard Laws of Ryukyu had no criteria regarding the location of A-sign establishments. These criteria were not determined by the theory of land use districts.

The criteria contained standards that required A-sign establishments to be located in business districts and placed quantitative limits on the number of establishments per city block, but there were no criteria regarding commercial areas or special use restrictions.

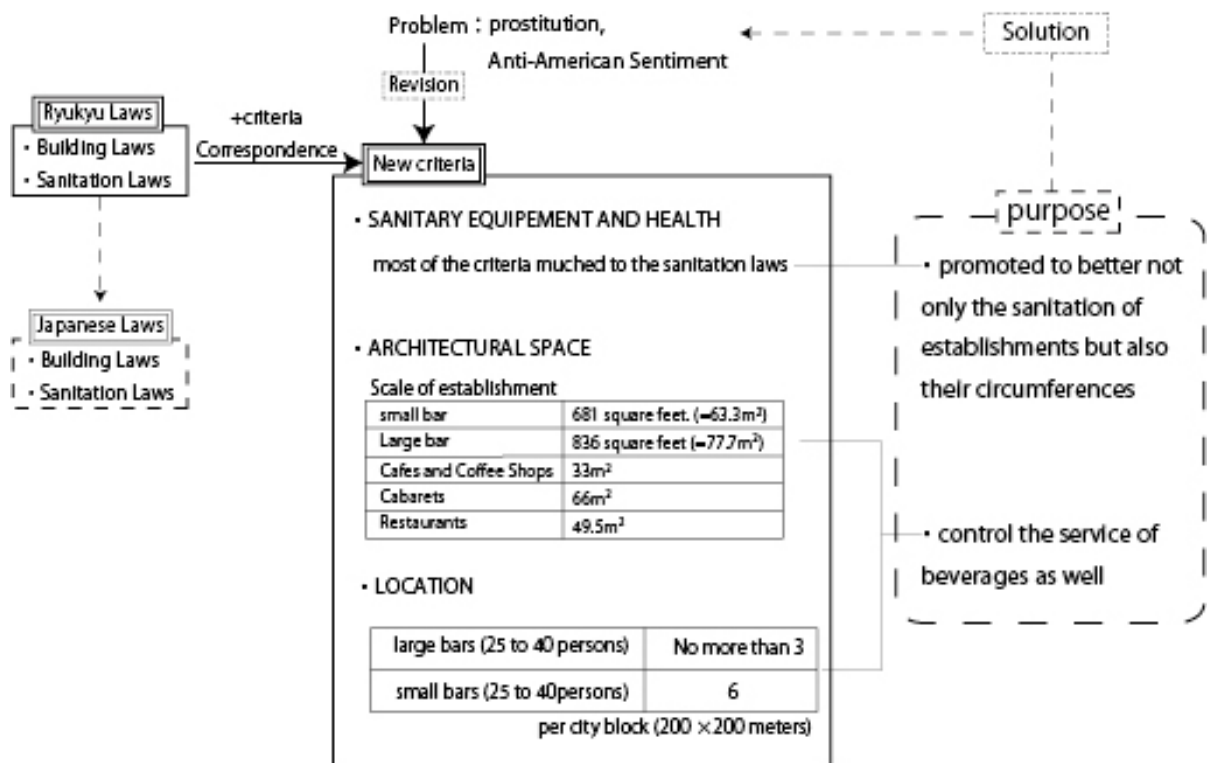


Figure 5: Structure of the introduction of the new criteria.

Therefore, we can say that these criteria were established without consideration of the building laws, but for other reasons.

As shown in Table 6, the number of criteria for location was not the main issue among all of the criteria. However, we can assert that these criteria are the most specific among the A-sign criteria, as none of them corresponded to the Building Standard Laws. We therefore believe that these indicate the purposes of the new A-sign criteria.

4. DISCUSSION

The analysis results of the A-sign criteria's references to the Ryukyu Laws can generate information about the new criteria, which were put in place to control the A-sign establishments in the following ways (see Figure 5): 1) The new criteria were introduced to cope with the problems of anti-American sentiment caused by prostitution in A-sign bars. 2) Although the new criteria referred to the Ryukyu Laws as described in the US government's booklet, the actual laws to which they adhered were Japanese building and sanitation laws. 3) The criteria not only referred to Japanese laws but also added completely new criteria created by the US government. 4) The criteria can be roughly sorted into three categories—sanitary equipment and health, architectural spaces, and locations. 5) As for sanitary equipment and health, most of the criteria matched existing sanitation laws. The criteria were promoted to better not only the sanitation of establishments, however also that of their circumferences. 6) Regarding architectural spaces and locations, the criteria were more severe than the Ryukyu

Laws. The criteria for the scale of establishments and the number of establishments per city block quantitatively limited the establishment of A-sign bars. 7) The purpose of the criteria on the scale of establishments was also to control the service of beverages.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper establishes the structure of the introduction of new criteria for A-sign establishments in Okinawa by comparing the new criteria with the Ryukyu Laws. We can conclude that we made clear one of the actual situations of the occupation of Okinawa by the US. Yet, our findings are limited to an analysis of documents, that is, our analysis could be stronger if utilized a combination of several methods other than just documentary reviews. So in future we would research further, e.g., comparison with some building laws of US, actual location or space of A-sign establishments under the criteria, the differences among A-sign establishments including those of other cities (in fact, Sasebo City has A-sign bars as well), and current value of A-sign establishments which still remain, in order to clarify a special characteristic of Okinawa.

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