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GONICK, GLORIA. *Splendor of the Dragon: Costumes of the Ryukyu Kingdom*.

With an essay by Ichiko Yonamine. Los Angeles: Craft and Folk Art Museum, 1995. 48 pages. Map, illustrations, exhibition checklist, bibliography, glossary. Paper, n.p.

Splendor of the Dragon is the catalogue for an exhibition of Okinawan costumes held at the Craft and Folk Art Museum of Los Angeles from November 1995 through January 1996. The beautifully illustrated volume introduces the cultural background of these costumes with a condensed history of the Ryukyu Kingdom's cultural contacts with Imperial China, Southeast Asia, Korea, and also Japan. Despite its brevity, this history describes some of the more painful moments in the islands' relationship with Japan. The publication of this small book is thus most timely, as it comes at the historical moment when Okinawa is calling attention to the unequalness of its relationship with Japan and, through her, with the United States. It is a gentle and yet clear reminder that (to take just one example) claims on Okinawa as a source of Japanese culture are often close to attempts at appropriation. Okinawa's position at the intersection of various cultures has shaped its own culture into what people call a *chanpuruu*, "a mixture of various elements" (23), like a dish consisting of heterogeneous ingredients. *Splendor of the Dragon* is an effort to increase appreciation for this mixture and explain how it emerged through a historical process of borrowing and interchange with the neighboring countries. Although some of the borrowing occurred under politically humiliating conditions, it led to a peak of artistic and technical sophistication that is a tribute to the distinctive forms of Ryukyuan expression.

This is a straightforward publication, not weighed down by heavy scholarly discussion, and yet it is a solid guide to Ryukyuan forms and feelings that is written with great empathy for the people and their culture. A short section guides the reader to appreciating the materials and techniques of dyeing. There is also a handy glossary of Okinawan terms. After the pleasure of reading this book the reviewer only regrets that he did not have a chance to see the exhibit.

Peter KNECHT