Recently, many schools have been actively teaching folk performing arts. An analysis of folk performing arts transmitted through school education has revealed that such approaches are becoming more diverse year by year. In particular, the introduction of subjects related to tradition and culture in the regular curriculum has become even more common since the New Teaching Guidelines included the provision of “transmission of tradition” after the Fundamental Law of Education was revised in 2006. The three high schools located in Ishigaki Island in the Yaeyama Islands, Okinawa Prefecture, and examined as case studies in this paper also restructured their curriculums to introduce education on Yaeyama Performing Arts after the High School Teaching Guidelines were revised.

The adoption of folk performing arts in school education varies depending on the region. For example, some communities are no longer able to take a responsible role in passing down folk performing arts and therefore schools partially act as their substitutes. In the case of the Yaeyama Islands analyzed in this study, three local high schools are teaching folk performing arts while being involved with their respective communities. In this process, however, none of the folk performing arts has been separated from the communities; rather, their connections with the communities have been strengthened.

In this context, this paper aims to reveal the current situation and outlook of how to preserve and transmit Yaeyama Performing Arts through the case studies of ongoing education about them at three high schools in the Yaeyama Islands as well as the analysis of historical, social, and cultural backgrounds of the islands. At the same time, this paper examines the impacts of the exchanges of people between the Yaeyama Islands and Okinawa Main island in the early-modern Ryukyu era to uncover what kind of people were involved to form today’s Yaeyama Performing Arts and how they have been adopted in school education. More specifically, at first, this paper investigates the impacts that traditional Ryukyu art performers who had previously served the royal court of Ryukyu brought to the Yaeyama Islands after the kingdom was transformed into Okinawa Prefecture, as well as the impacts of their arts introduced to the Yaeyama Islands on the establishment and development of Yaeyama Performing Arts. Next, by analyzing the “Institute” that played an important role in
spreading performing arts in Okinawa and Yaeyama after World War II, this paper describes changes in those responsible for preserving and transmitting performing arts. Based on these results, this paper analyzes the current impacts of Okinawa and Japan’s main islands caused by the movements of students and teachers of the Yaeyama three high schools in and out of the Yaeyama Islands to reveal the process of creating Yaeyama Performing Arts. Thus, the process of creating and transmitting today’s Yaeyama Performing Arts is illustrated through the case studies of the three high schools in the Yaeyama Islands.

Key words: movement, transmission of folk performing arts, Yaeyama Performing Arts, traditional Ryukyu Performing Arts, school education