

RESEÑAS

PEDRO IACOBELLI & HIROKO MATSUDA (eds.), *Rethinking Postwar Okinawa: Beyond American Occupation*, Lanham (MD), Lexington Books, 2017, 195 pp.

Okinawan studies are generally defined as interdisciplinary studies on the history, culture, and society of Okinawa and the Ryukyu archipelago in southern Japan. In 2010, the first introductory text-book on Okinawan studies in Japan was published¹. The editors note in the preface that current Okinawan studies are conducted globally and not within the binary framework of “the West” vs. “the Orient” but as a way to reimagine the non-unity and diversity of the categories with approaches of postcolonial and literary critiques. Therefore, Okinawan studies are relevant to the world. Studying Okinawa is an exploration of the close relationship between Okinawa and the international situation surrounding the islands—Katsukata=Inafuku *et al.* 2010).

Indeed, the book *Rethinking Postwar Okinawa: Beyond American Occupation* is at the forefront of Okinawan studies. It places Okinawa in a transnational context that has led researchers to question Okinawa itself from both postcolonial and transnational perspectives. The book also encouraged researchers to reconsider the hegemonic post-war Okinawan history writing that is dominated by “nationalism” discourses.

As the word *rethinking* implies, this is not an introductory text for Okinawan studies; this is a challenging selection of elaborate articles based on accumulated knowledge by previous research, aimed at opening up a new research horizon to unveil the social and cultural transformation in Okinawa and the Asia-Pacific region in the face of the ongoing presence of American military bases. The contributors of these articles are excellent researchers who have a keen and sincere interest in Okinawa and are from multiple disciplines such as history, sociology, cultural anthropology, and literary critique. Therefore, readers must have extensive knowledge about interdisciplinary humanities and social science to understand the forefront arguments surrounding Okinawa. It is possible to describe that the complexity, entanglement, and diversity of the discussions in this volume are reflections of the contemporary reality of the topos: Okinawa.

The Introduction by the editors, Pedro Iacobelli and Hiroko Matsuda, paves the road to understanding the profound discussions in this volume by showing the academic perspective in each chapter, that is, the perspective that comprehends that contemporary Okinawa has been built by multiple agencies, not just local Okinawans, the Japanese and the Americans. It also re-imagines Okinawa as a heterogenous and transnational space tightly interconnected to the rest of the Asia-Pacific region (x-xi). The editors explain the multiple meanings of its title as follows: 1) The book explores how people have struggled and envisioned the future of Okinawa beyond American occupation and elaborates

¹ Katsukata=Inafuku, Keiko & Maetakenishi Kazuma (eds.), *Okinawagaku nyūmon: kūfuku no sahō (Introduction to Okinawan Studies: A Manner of Hunger)*, Kyōto, Shōwadō, 2010.

on how these politics have been formed by multiple agential forces beyond the territory of Okinawa. 2) It examines how the establishment of foreign military bases brought about unintended consequences that moved beyond the geographical limits of the Okinawa prefecture. 3) It also implies that the American military presence in Okinawa should not simply be accepted as a legacy of the Cold War. The book illuminates how U.S. occupation in Okinawa has been associated with the colonial legacies of American domination in the Philippines and Hawaii (ix). From this perspective, this book “brings to the fore some of the lesser told stories behind the postwar history of the Ryukyu Islands; that is, the often unacknowledged consequences of the deep contradictions in a land that serves its people and foreign defense purposes at the same time” (xv).

This volume is composed of eight chapters. Chapter 1, by Hidekazu Sensui, provides a good conceptual introduction focusing on three Okinawan scholars who are famous in the field but are little known outside of Japanese readers: Iha Fuyū, Shimabukuro Zenpatsu, and Higashionna Kanjun. These Okinawan historians provided source materials and guidance to George Kerr, an American historian assigned by USCAR (United States Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Islands) to complete work on Ryukyu’s history. It is necessary to look at their arguments, backgrounds, and Kerr’s selective use of their works to examine how the existing Ryukuan history fit within the new narrative that USCAR expected Kerr to write. In postwar Okinawa, historiography became a contentious space in which people with competing historical accounts of the island’s past tried to get an edge in the ongoing negotiations over the sovereignty of the Ryukyu islands. In occupied Okinawa, postwar intellectuals sought interpretations about how their predecessors, such as Sai On (1682-1762) and Shō Jōken (1617-1676), had coped with the difficulties of defeat and foreign occupation, seeing it as a model for what to do. To conclude, Sensui argues that the history could be a mirror that reflects the historical view and the envisioning of the Okinawan identity by a historian who tried/ will try to write a history of the Rukyu Islands.

Chapter 2, by Asako Masubuchi, aims to intervene in the existing discussions of militarism, imperialism, and gender in U.S.-occupied Okinawa by exploring the lived experiences of Okinawan public health nurses who worked during that time. Masubuchi explains that the dominant binary framework that portrays Okinawan women either as victims or resisters is inadequate when analyzing the women who took on the intensively paradoxical and ambivalent positions of public health nurses under military occupation. Public health nurses had a strong sense of duty to serve the community in general, heal the war-torn Okinawan people, and contribute to the improvement of public health in postwar Okinawa. However, their sincerity and selfless devotion sometimes ironically resonated with the logic of Cold War U.S. expansionism. At the same time, however, public health nurses were acutely aware of the social diseases caused by the presence of U.S. militarism and tried to help the people suffering from the disease. The lived experience provided a ground from which the nurses constructed a sense of agency and distinctive subjectivity with which they could promote solidarity to fight for better lives of the people in the community under siege.

Chapter 3, by Johanna O. Zulueta, focuses on third-country nationals (TCNs), which make up a significant number of the labor force in the overseas construction of U.S. military bases. In Okinawa, Filipinos made up a large number of these TCNs, hired as professional and semi-skilled workers. Occupying a middle ground between the U.S. mili-

tary and the locals, these TCNs may be regarded as “passive occupiers,” although they see base work as way to alleviate their economic conditions. Utilizing two life stories of Filipino TCNs, this chapter revives the dismissed roles of TCNs in occupied Okinawa. Zulueta argues that the processes of racialization in Okinawa was complicated and the TCNs were ranked higher than the Japanese and the Okinawans in the racial hierarchy. That is, the occupation of Okinawa should not only be seen as a relationship between the occupied (i.e. Japan/Okinawa) and occupier (i.e. the United States), as there were also peripheral actors that played the role of the latter. Also, the TCNs played a significant role in creating Okinawa’s postwar culture and society by transmitting U.S. culture.

Chapter 4, by Ryan Masaaki Yokota, examines reversion-era debates over Okinawan regional autonomy by local intellectuals in order to understand how they dealt with their resentment over the “reversion” of Okinawa to Japanese administrative control in 1972. Yokota examines four different regional autonomy proposals respectively suggested by Taira Kōji, Kuba Masahiro, Higa Mikio and Noguchi Yūichirō, and highlights that important points of convergence can be seen in the works of these four different theorists. In all these major works, a range of perspectives contests Okinawan acquiescence to reversion on the terms set by the central government and reasserts an Okinawan position for self-determination and democracy. Yokota also suggests that the autonomy proposals during the early 1970s helped pave the way for these later developments by delineating the rationale and legal principles that could be used to justify, within the constraints of Japanese domestic law, an articulated position of Okinawan difference.

In Chapter 5, in order to discuss the formation of Okinawa’s multi-scale historical consciousness by examining its connectivity with anti-base activism in East Asia, Shinnosuke Takahashi examines the historical background of Okinawa Korea People’s Solidarity (OKPS), one of the first local civic groups which initiated internationalization of the Okinawan anti-base activism as a case study. Through the examination of the process by which OKPS’s activists gained an Asia and Pacific regional perspective on the meaning of their local activism, Takahashi discusses the efforts that OKPS have made to develop relationships with South Korean activists over the last twenty years and how those efforts have created a sense of solidarity and trust between different activist groups across national borders. It also shows that this solidarity movement generated a regional perspective in which Okinawan and Korean activists could reflect upon how their local activism impacts their counterparts. Takahashi suggests that one of the significant outcomes that OKPS has brought to the Okinawan anti-base movement is the idea of East Asia. Many of the local anti-base activists reflexively consider the continuity of American hegemony as a regional issue, which has enabled them to think of the implications of their activism beyond the local confinement.

Chapter 6, by Ayako Takamori, focuses on the tensions that arise in identifying as mixed race, both in the context of Okinawa and Japan. She argues that mixed race in the Japanese popular imagination is Janus-faced, while simultaneously embodying the new, progressive Japan with cosmopolitan values. On the other hand, it also reflects traces of defeat, occupation, and unequal political and military relations mapped onto sexual relations, particularly in Okinawa. As for individual experiences of being mixed race in Okinawa, they vary greatly with diverse life trajectories of the individuals. The structurally and systemically produced unevenness of mixed-race experiences require the criti-

cal re-examination and complication of the focus on “identity” through such concepts as hybridity; hybridity too easily celebrates identities that traverse borders and categories without attention to material conditions of power and systems of inequality. Criticizing the concept, she insists that critical mixed-race studies has been gaining significance.

In Chapter 7, Ariko S. Ikehara situates Okinawan writing in a decolonial context that she calls the *champurū* text. Ikehara explains that “*champurū*” is an Okinawan word for mixing and/or being mixed, and often refers to the Okinawan way of blending cultures, and how “third” is a decolonial concept used in multiple disciplinary fields that resists the binary productions of knowledge that arises from the colonial context. In this sense, *champurū* text is considered to be a “third expression” for alternative knowledge productions. This chapter examines how *champurū* writing as a third text of Okinawan writers yields to Okinawa’s postwar life and landscape of the overlapping borders of place, race, and space— concepts that are intimately and intrinsically bound and formulated in the backdrop of U.S. military occupation and presence. The focused Okinawan postwar literatures of Sakiyama Tami, Yoshihara Komachi, and Nakada Tsuyoshi center on postwar life in Koza City, a former military town where America and Okinawa blurred and emerged as a third space that presented neither Japanese nor American, representing a “third race.” Ikehara looks into Sakiyama’s format of writing. She uses various forms of Japanese and Okinawan, mixing, deconstructing, and recombining (*champurū*-ing) to produce the surreal-real story. Sakiyama’s use of *Shimakutuba* (island language) is regarded as a strategy to produce a language of possibility. In the respective stories of Yoshihara Komachi and Nakada Tsuyoshi, the authors link different nodes of colonial history and present and produce a *champurū* effect in their text that blurs the line between life and fiction, literature and history, and past and present. By analyzing these *champurū* texts, this chapter offers a methodological intervention in the academies to disrupt the ideas of impossibility that are inherent in the Western “binary” thinking that creates geo-political “borders” and cultural and language “barriers” of Asia and Asian languages, limiting other epistemological possibilities and preventing them from flourishing and integrating into the vast fields of knowledge.

The final chapter of Laura Kina highlights the works of Okinawan documentary photographer Ishikawa Mao, who has chronicled the postwar history of Japanese and American militarization and the lives of Okinawans working in peripheral industries. Kina examines the transnational framing of Okinawan and African American bodies, whose identities and experiences have been constituted by the American militarization of spaces in both Japan and the United States by analyzing Ishikawa’s “Hot Days in Camp Hansen!!” series (1975-1977) that features Okinawan and mainland hostesses fraternizing with African American servicemen, as well as her 1987 “Life in Philly” series that explores the everyday lives of African American servicemen in the U.S. after their life in Okinawa. Kina indicates that these works provide a gendered, racial, and economic critique of the U.S. and Japanese empires abroad and at home. By comparing two works, marked differences in the response of her subjects became apparent, which reflect the power relationship of binaries of male/female or black/white. Kina concludes that Ishikawa’s work provides a critique of militarization that is problematized by black sexuality and the subjectivity of Okinawan women.

As seen above, this volume aims to rethink Okinawa from transnational and postcolonial perspectives, giving it the ability to recapture the figure of the social and cultural

transformations of Okinawa in the timeline of its history from the early modern ages of Ryukyu Kingdom to now and in the spatial breadth of the Asia-Pacific region. This book is also successful in answering the research questions multidirectionally by interweaving various discussions and new insights about Okinawa into respective chapters.

Finally, let me add something from my own interest. Further study to dissolve the issues of prostitution and militarism that strongly connect the ongoing structural poverty of Okinawa and that of the Okinawan women/girls, and the sexual/gender violence against local women by military personnel from the relation of gender, race, class, and militarism would be of value to the field of Okinawan studies.

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